OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG NIGERIA POLICE FORCE IN KADUNA STATE

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Abstract
This study examined the influence of occupational stress on coping strategies among Nigeria police force in Kaduna State. Survey design was used for the study. The study population consisted of personnel of Nigeria Police College Kaduna. 50 personnel were randomly selected across various units of the college. The sample was made of 35 males and 15 females. The Well-Being Process Questionnaire was used to obtain information from the participants. The study used Pearson Product Moment Correlation, independent t-test and a description statistics to test the formulated hypotheses. The result revealed that: There was a significant relationship between poor working condition and occupational stress among Nigerian Police officers ($t=5.091, df=198, p=0.05$). There was a significant difference in occupational stress between Female and Male Nigerian Police Officers. There was a significant difference in occupational stress between Junior and Senior Police Officers.
It was recommended that government should improve manpower and conditions of service by building more barracks to provide adequate accommodation for policemen.

Keywords: Occupational Stress, Coping Strategies, Service Delivery, Job Hazards, Nigeria Police Force.

Introduction
Police officers in Nigeria are confronted with difficult working conditions including dealing with problematic criminals, and numerous occupational stresses that make the police profession stressful. Occupational stress may cause emotional weakness, mood fluctuation, unstable sleep patterns, lack of concentration, depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Mogadeghrad, 2014). Newton, Teo, Ho, and Thomas (2016) categorized occupational stressors to include (a) job-related factors such as work load, responsibility, role conflict and job demands, (b) organizational factors such as organizational structure, policies and procedures, pay and benefits, job security, and leadership style. Ogunyemi and Laguda (2016) appraised human resources as the most significant element to organizational success, especially in the security and hospitality industry.

An organization or a society can contribute to the police officers’ unethical behavior when factors that contribute to occupational stress are not addressed (Ogunyemi & Earnest, 2015). Rosenbusch et al. (2015) inferred that the government should address occupational stress among the police officers to ensure effective and efficient service delivery among the police officers.

Police services have always been one of the most challenging and stressful services in the world and with changing times it is becoming even more so. The major brunt of this job is borne by constables as they are the foot-soldiers of police in Nigeria. They have to deal with angry mobs, counter-insurgency operations, traffic control, VIP security, political rallies, religious festival crowd control, and various other law and order duties without losing their composure and sensitivity. They have to face potentially hazardous situations that can result in physical or mental trauma or even death in the line of duty. Their work stress can be further aggravated because of their personality traits or wrong coping methods. Majority of Indian and international studies have found high stress levels in police, which is disturbing as psychiatric morbidity in police can have many direct and indirect negative consequences for society. Therefore, apart from physical fitness, they have to be mentally fit to do full justice to their duties (Deb, et al, 2018).

The lifestyles and experiences that law enforcement officers engage in everyday can only be understood by those who work in law enforcement agencies. Officers’ lives are put at risk to save others’ lives. As criminals are arrested, society feels justice is served. This justice comes at a price, as some law enforcers experience stress, cynicism, and job burnout. The lives of the police officers are stressful for several reasons. First, the officers put their lives at risk every day. Second, the officers are involved in events such as domestic issues, witnessing fatalities, and other potentially life scarring events. Stress is a factor, and depending on whether the
officer copes with the traumatic events in a positive or negative manner in some cases determines the overall psychological well-being and overall health of the officer.

In Nigeria, some police officers exhibit little or no enthusiasm towards job duties and perform below the standard police expectation as a result of the occupational stress associated with police service (Yun, & Borhanian, 2013). Ninety-one percent (91%) of police officers in Nigeria are confronted with psychological illness and injuries as a result of occupational stress (Adegoke, 2014; Rose & Unnithan, 2015). Lack of attention to police officer welfare by government, insufficient annual leave, and poor salaries demotivate police officers in performing their civic duties (Rose & Unnithan, 2015).

Police officers in dealing with stress greatly affect how they carry out their daily lives and how they treat family and friends. Some officers who cannot cope with stress turn to alcohol and other vices that can lead to family conflict. In extreme cases, suicide is the end result of stress. There are some aspects of policing which can overwhelm Police officers; signs of depression are possible if coping and general help are not sought out. Olson and Surrerette (2014) explain the causes and effects of stress in relation to anxiety and depression. In general, people who become depressed with their jobs also experience a decrease of care in their lives. Consequently, in their jobs, satisfaction decreases, work days are missed, and more mistakes are made than usual (Lindholm, & Segovis, 2015). Also, while on the job the employee becomes less efficient and may be close to quitting or being fired. Outside the job, the employees may lose interest or withdraw from friends and from their overall support system. Because of the stressful environment in which police officers work, there is a possibility they will suffer stress and therefore be ineffective.

Stress is a condition that occurs when the individual perceives a mismatch between the demands of a situation and the resources at his disposal based on his interaction with his environment. According to Coon and Mitterer (2019), stress is the mental and physical condition that occurs when we adjust or adapt to the environment and a perceptual phenomenon arising from a comparison between the demand on the person and his ability to cope. Stress can be either good or bad. When stress is good, it is referred to as Eustress and this is the pleasurable stress that accompanies positive events (Cox and Mackay, 2016). Stress becomes distress (bad stress) when the stress response becomes too intense or lasts too long (Gherman, 2018). However, a certain degree of stress is required in life to propel the individual to act, and there is a level of stress that is needed for optimum performance. Stressors are conditions or events that challenge or threaten a person’s wellbeing. Events or conditions can only be appraised as stressors when the individual perceives that they are threatening and that he lacks the wherewithal to effectively deal with them (Selye, 2012). Auerbach and Gramling (2018) have grouped stressors into three major categories: Catastrophic events e.g.s. Earthquakes, wars, and violent physical attacks etc., Major life changes e.g.s. the death of a spouse or close family member, divorce or losing job; and Daily hassles e.g.s. work related irritations interpersonal relationships, financial workers etc. This last group may seem the least disturbing but in reality many of the stresses individuals face in life arise from this category. They are experienced on a daily basis and thus add up to create a great deal of strain on the mind and body. Researchers have found that exposure to daily hassles is more predictive of illness than exposure to major life events (Auerbach and Gramling, 2018).
Coping strategies refer to different strategies utilized when encountering particular stressful conditions. Aaron (2010) conducted a study of police officers in Charlottesville, VA that corroborates other results on avoidant coping styles. The purpose of the study was to examine dissociation and the psychological functioning of the officers. In this study, several interesting results were found. First, dissociation needs to be defined. Aaron (2010) defines dissociation as “the splitting off from the awareness, thoughts, feelings, or memories of a painful or distressing event”. Dissociation is seen as a negative way of coping because the individual is trying to forget about the traumatic event by forcing the memory away or avoiding the event altogether which is also known as avoidant coping. The results of this study showed that the more stressful events the officers experienced the higher the amounts of dissociation the officers experienced. Also, the strongest correlation with dissociation was linked to the officers’ perception of events over which they had no control. This shows that traumatic events do not always correlate with stress. Overall, the results of this study showed how police officers handle the different negative aspects of the job and how it can greatly influence their psychological well-being. If police officers deal with or confront a traumatic event right after it happens rather than forcing the painful event from their memory, then there is a better chance of not having dissociation and instead having a mentally healthy police officer. In contrast to negative forms of coping, a focus of this study is to examine the role of positive coping in relation to police stress. Patterson (2013) conducted a study examining coping strategies focusing on social support. In this study, the researcher sought to find the relationships between work stress, life stress, problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. From this study several interesting results were found when examining the types of coping methods implemented by the police officers. Patterson (2013) first explained the background of social support in relation to problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Previous literature has indicated that problem-focus coping is primarily used during stressful times at work, whereas emotion-focused coping is primarily used to cope with stressful events that occur during life in general (Folkman & Lazarus, 2019). However, other research had shown that these two coping methods can be integrated in social support form (Folkman & Lazarus, 2011). When discussing work stress and life stress, Patterson (2013) explains that the source of support is important when examining sources of stress because different types of support have different impacts on stress levels. For example, if police officers receive support from a person at work who is also a source of stress, their stress may increase rather than decrease (Kaufmann & Beehr, 2019). Also, when discussing support and stress, Patterson lays out the model of the main effects and buffering effects of social support and coping. In this model, the researcher explains that the more social support available the more likely stress will be reduced because coping and support methods are combined. The results of Patterson’s (2013) study showed that emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping can be combined as one when seeking social support. Secondly, Patterson’s hypothesis is partially supported concerning the prediction that life stress is more stressful because the police officers showed higher stress levels in their life when compared to their work life. This can be inferred because the police officers view events and problems that occur in their lives as taking a higher priority compared to events that happen at work.

Webster (2013) explained that the police officer’s job is uniquely stressful. Some of the stress identified is inherent potential for danger, unique authority to use coercive force on citizens, a propensity for social isolation, and responsibility for the safety of others even at their danger
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(Weber, 2013). Stress among police officers has resulted in ill-health such as elevated mortality rates for illness, post-traumatic stress disorder, burnout, suicide, and mental ill-health symptomatology. Yun, Kim, Jung, and Borhanran (2013) appraised that despite intense interest in predicting the outcomes of police stress, it is difficult to ascertain the subject because research findings are inconsistent.

Yun et al. (2013) illustrated that police officers suffer disproportionately from cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, and metabolic diseases as well as a menagerie of psychological disorders. Other somatic manifestations of stress are insomnia, headaches, and back pain experienced by police officers (Rose & Unnithan, 2015; Yun et al., 2013). Yun et al. (2013) extended the effect of police officer stress is not only harmful to the officer’s physical health, but it has a spiral effect on spouses and other family members, leading to marital disputes, divorces, and even inter-family violence. Yun et al. (2013) compared the subculture membership and occupational stress among work and family service in the law enforcement personnel in the US survey. The findings revealed a less significant relationship between police officer subculture and occupational stress. Tyagi and Dhar (2014) using qualitative methodology, explained how the human aspect as working condition of the police officer had been neglected by the respective government authorities. Police officers are subjected to physical stress such as dealing with victims, exposure to violence, threats, and uncertainty in shift timing (Tyagi & Dhar, 2014). Physical stress experienced by police officers may reduce once there is positive communication between police reporting officers and subordinates (Chu & Tsao, 2014).

Maran, Varetto, Zanda, and Franscini (2014) investigated male and female police officers in Northern Italy using a correlational quantitative method on performance on the field. Findings reveal that both men and women police officers are self-critical and operate on pessimism and self-blame on the job. Some of the factors causing stress are shift work, excessive overtime, heavy workload, poor working conditions, and negative public perception of the police force in Nigeria (Maran et al., 2014). Maran et al. (2014) suggested that future studies could evaluate how simple training courses and support programs could be useful and effective tools for preventing occupational stress in Italy. The work of a police officer demands 24 hours and 365 days of work in a year; which indicates that police officers work every day of the years. The daily shifts of police officers in patrol subject such officers to job stress and work hazard.

Doessel and William (2014) published a quantitative study noting that the welfare condition of men and officers of the Nigeria police force is inadequate as compared to the welfare conditions for police officer in the western world. Some of the poor welfare could be traced to poor habitable quarters, barracks, kits, salaries and the inability to care for family adequately (Albert & Okoli, 2016). Sleep deprivation due to long hour shift may contribute to officers’ irritability with the general public and the inefficiency to maintain calm in situations to drained attentiveness (Ruddel, Lithopoulos, & Jones, 2014).

Blazinska, Rusnak, and Kacmarikova (2017) discovered that men in the lowest grade are confronted with high rates of illness, absenteeism than those in the highest grade. The result also showed that during the economic downturn and high unemployment, sickness absence is low, while in a time of economic growth and low unemployment, sickness absence from
work is high. Blazinska et al. (2017) inferred that workers might fear to lose their job in poor economic conditions and therefore are unwilling to report any sickness to the employer. Kent and Zunker (2013) concluded that sickness absence in women is significantly higher than in men in the Slovak Republic. The ratio of men and women sickness absence in Nigeria requires further studies.

Maran, Varetto, Zedda, & Franscini (2014), using a quantitative methodology, analyzed the poor salaries of police officers, unease among police officers, and occupational stress in a population of 485 male and female police officers in northern Italy. Maran et al. (2014) found out that female officers were attracted to both the salary and service aspects of police work. He further found out that women in all occupational service roles were less pay in both organizational and occupational workplaces. Maran et al. (2014) identified the common stressors as (a) interpersonal conflict (b) shift work, (c) excessive overtime, (d) heavy workload, (e) poor working conditions, (f) constant interaction with the public, and (g) poor police officer salary. Some of the psychological symptoms of occupational stress are (a) poor salary, (b) anxiety and depression, and (c) mental health imbalance. Morabito, Watson, & Draine (2013) appraised police work to be measured as effective when crime rates are low, response times are fast, and clearance rates are high. The personnel readiness to the reduction in crime rates, increase in response time, and increase in clearance rates are not emphasized in the police force services in Nigeria (Morabiti et al., 2013). In ranking the factors that cause stress to the police officer, such factors that appear more are (a) having friends among police officers, (b) low salary paid to police officers, (c) using policing as gaining job experience to better career (Morabiti et al., 2013). Despite the study on poor salary and unease of police officers, these researchers fail to address the factors resulting in occupational stress to police officers in Lagos, Nigeria.

Chae and Boyle (2013) found that inadequate sleep by police officers could result in occupational stress that affects police officer’s job performance. The result of multiple risk factors such as lack of sleep, increased workload, and lack of annual leave could have a cumulative effect in increasing the risk for suicidal ideation among police officers.

Quah (2014) investigated whether law enforcement personnel are at greater risk for suicide than those in the general population. Police officer’s job has been found to be highly stressful and characterized by unexpected events, exposed to trauma, irregular sleep pattern due to unstable shift, an extended period of boredom, unregulated shift period, and tension associated with public relations. There appears to be no study on the factors resulting in an inability to sleep leading to occupational stress among police officers in Lagos, Nigeria.

Lanacre (2016) found that increased levels of stress may generate psychological strain on police officers. Police officer’s jobs require adequate energy to carry out the daily task of protecting life and property. Police officers feel demoralized by the increased rate of crime in the society which is beyond the control of the police officer as a result of uncoordinated effort (Schwarz, 2016). The psychological stress of incidents such as depression, and unpleasant state of mind as a result of working late and lack of rest could result in occupational stress among police officers (Lornudd et al., 2016). The unresolved psychological stress of the police officer could be linked to the negative behavior of the police officers such as mood swing, anxiety,
intense fear, and isolation (Rosenbusch, & Earnest, 2015). Several challenges have been associated with the Nigeria Police by many authors and they include problems with recruitment, training, indiscipline and corruption, ethnicity and culture, low level of confidence in the Nigeria Police force, poor interpersonal relationship with the public, poor funding and mismanagement of available funds, and creation of parallel security organizations (Idubor, 2012).

The Nigeria Police Force has also claimed that some of the reasons it is unable to perform effectively include lack of adequate logistics and communication, inaccessibility of roads, lack of signposts, information withholding by the public and inadequate personnel. Stressors in Police work can be divided into two categories: organizational and occupational stressors (Brown & Campbell, 2019) Stressors have been an issue of concern in the vocational life of officers in and around the world, (Brown & Campbell, 2014). These stressors have been implicated in a variety of work outcomes such as high rate of employee turnover, absenteeism, lowered morale, low productivity, personal physical and psychological distress, addictions and family problems. Also, Anderson, (2016) noted that the entire system of law enforcement in the United States manifests antecedents of stress. Officers usually come into the service with enthusiasm, to make their own contribution to change the world through crime prevention and eradication, however when the reality of the enormity of task of the job dawn on them in the course of their duty, many officers get emotionally and psychologically overwhelmed and become disillusioned and their morale plummets (Anderson, 2018). Police officers do not only become stressed in the course of their duties, they are also often subjected to undue and harsh criticisms from the same people they work very hard to protect, (Finn & Tomz, 2016). The experience of supervision of police officers is usually rigorous, tough and sometimes punitive, (Violanti & Aron, 2013). Moreover, the police officer’s file is often filled with queries, and this further lowers their morale, thereby increasing their stress level.

Wood (2012) contended that as officers become increasingly distressed and become sad; it can consequently affect the physical, social and vocational aspects of their life. Perrier and Toner, (2014) also opined that Stress tends to reduce the immune systems of officers. They sometimes refuse to accept social and emotional support and therefore report poor health more often. This results into heavier workload (and stress) for available officers on duty who have to cover for the absentee officer. Many officers turn to alcohol, over-the-counter sleep aids, and other addictive behaviours in order to try to numb their distress. This, along with the unspoken rule against discussing feelings, contributes to officer’s psychological distress and often exacerbates poor family relations. Spouses and children of officers often live separate due to frequent redeployments; this affects their children’s moral development and even their academic and social life. Police officers are prone to sexually transmitted diseases as a result of this, but more importantly divorce is rampant among officers which usually, cause yet another stressor in the officer’s life (Ansen & Colon, 2015).

In Olson and Surrette’s (2014) study, research was conducted on police officers in Massachusetts to test three hypotheses: First, if depression is correlated with anxiety. Second if stress is related to anxiety and, third, if stress is related to depression. The results of the study showed a positive relationship in all three hypotheses. The strongest relation was found between stress and depression. These results indicated how stressful the policing occupation
is and how severe the effects of stress can be when examining psychological symptoms such as anxiety and depression. When discussing police stress and depression, it is important to examine the increasing problem of police suicides. Stevens (2018) notes several interesting findings about police suicides. First, he states that police officers are more likely than workers in any other profession to commit suicide. Second, police officers are two times more likely to die by their own handgun than in the line of duty. Violanti, (2016) Also, police officers are six times more susceptible to suicide when compared to the general population. An interesting note, Stevens (2018) explains that the officers who commit suicide are often found by their fellow police officers. This causes the statistics on police suicides to be skewed because the police may manipulate the scene in a way that makes it look like the death occurred in a no suicidal way to create an alternative scenario for the family’s sake and further examination of police stress, depression, and suicide. Harpold and Feemster (2012) discuss the killing of one police officer and the harm of his surviving partner. The surviving police officer witnessed his partner being killed by the offender but managed to remain alive and escape. This horrific event occurred in 1963. At that time, no type of counseling was available to police officers. A primary reason for not having any programs or counselors on hand to assist the officers with their problems was because of the tough guy image the police officers wanted to be portrayed as. Police also were unable to vent their inner turmoil to other officers. The surviving officer of the negative event developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) because of the inability to cope with the event and the many years the case spent in court. Thankfully, today help is available to the officers needing help. In response to this overwhelming need for research on police stress in regards to negative types of stress, a program called Project Shield was created by the National Institute of Justice to probe major law enforcement agencies on the negative sources of stress. Several interesting results were found. This study focused on the emotions, behaviors, and physical and psychological effects of stress. Many of the respondents said they increased their alcohol consumption and hit their fellow officers and family members. Also, many of the respondents said they were more stressed when they attended funerals or when they knew someone who died.

The majority of research on Police officers’ stress indicates that the occupation creates or contributes to psychological and physical ailments resulting in high incidents of cynicism, absenteeism, alcoholism, post-traumatic stress disorder, burn out, early retirement resignation from the force and tragically suicide (O’Toole et al., 2010; Toch, 2002).

The stress that the Police officers encounter on their jobs is made even more dangerous by the fact that it is ongoing and persistent. This unrelenting stress leads to chronic stress, which is very destructive. Violanti and Aron (2015) in their study of over 400 Police officers in Buffalo, U.S.A. discovered among other things that officers over the age of 40 had a higher 10-year risk of a coronary event compared to average national standard, 72 percent of female officers and 43 percent of male officers, had higher than – recommended cholesterol levels, and that Police officers as a group had higher than average pulse rates and diastolic pressure. The Measure of cortisol known as “stress hormone” increases when a person is under chronic stress. When cortical levels become days regulated due to chronic stress, it opens a person to disease. The body becomes physiologically unbalanced, organs are attacked, and the immune system is compromised as well. Constantly high cortical levels are dissociated with less arterial elasticity, a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Shift rotation in police work especially those
that are after midnight wreaks havoc on the Police officer and his family. There is also the problem of physiological disruption of circadian rhythms, moreover being awake at night while one is supposed to be sleeping can greatly impair judgment and decision making which in turn can mean the difference between life and death in a crisis moment. In addition to this, the risk of substance abuse may also increase because the officer may resort to excessive use of stimulants to stay alert during the day; especially when there is shortage of workers and officers are required to do double shifts.

Violanti (2018) has stated that police work is carried out in psychologically stressful work environment filled with danger, high demands, and ambiguity in work encounters, human misery and exposure to death. This kind of environment no doubt leaves scars on not just the bodies of Police officers but on their minds as well. The study by Violanti on how the stress of Police work affects an officers’ physical and mental health found that 23 percent of male and 25 percent of female officers reported more suicidal thoughts than the general population (13.5 percent). A previous study by Violanti and Aron (2015) found that suicide rates were three times higher among Police Officers than other municipal workers were. He also found that women police officers are probably under more stress than male officers are. Police work according to him is still a male occupation and women feel socially isolated on the job.

Oshodi (2011) reports that police officers who have suffered some traumatic events may have some emotional reactions such as flashbacks, nightmares, physical sensation of fear, excessive sweating and pain. He adds that the traumatic deaths of fellow officers could lead to numbing, being always on-guard, hyper-vigilance, jumpiness, insomnia, irritability, panic, irregular heartbeats, and alcohol/drug abuse. The disparaging attitude of the public and media towards them makes them lose a sense of their dignity and by extension, the dignity of others. They now appear to be cold, cynical and unfeeling, unwilling to help, the exact opposite of what a Police officer should be.

Previous research suggested female police officers experience a unique blend of causes related to occupational stress, such as occupational stressors, organizational stressors, and interpersonal stressors. Ellrich (2016) evaluated occupational stress as stress arising from the essential aspects of police work. Occupational stress can include exposure to danger and external threats from the public. Police officers are likely to be exposed to traumatic events and encounter violence, including accidents, shootings, assaults, domestic violence, murders, sexual assaults, and deaths (Dawson & Davies, 2017). Abuse from the public when interacting with crime victims, crime perpetrators, and witnesses, as well as operating within the criminal justice system, appearing in court, completing police reports, and working fluctuating shifts are cited as occupational stress that is part of police work (Chen, 2016). Brutal and random incidents, such as killing a fleeing suspect in the line of duty or witnessing a fellow police officer being killed are a traumatic experience that police officers consider a source of occupational. All police officers are trained to be prepared for traumatic events such as these; however, female police officers often are faced with believe like they have to prove to their male counterparts that they are physically and mentally capable and prepared for the possibility of such an event. Lee and Yun (2014) inferred that male officers expressed apprehension that their female partners could not be counted on as back up support in a violent confrontation.
In further research on gender and stress, Morash, Kwak, and Haar (2016) conducted research on police stress comparing and contrasting male and female stress. To fully understand the results of the study, it is pertinent to examine previous literature regarding gender and stress. First, when examining female stress, traditional stress sources are present. Morash et al. (2016) explain that females are more likely to work in larger departments and more likely to work in urban areas. Second, females are more likely to endure stress than males because of their minority status. When examining state that males experience a perceived lack of influence in the department and feel they have little input in their job. An interesting point when comparing police department size is that the size of the department can be a potential source of stress because large departments are located in large cities and generally have more problems compared to small, rural departments. The primary difference between the two types of departments is that large departments handle matters formally, whereas the smaller departments handle events or problems informally. Because the rural police departments are in small towns, they have the ability to police informally and lower stress levels can be found. In this study, conducted by Morash et al. (2016), the variables of interest for this thesis are workplace problems and social support. Social support can include peers, friends, and family. The findings indicate that females experience more stress than males. The sources of stress include harassment, underestimation of ability, and lack of influence. The primary stress differences indicated that males experienced workplace problems and females did not. These findings confirm previous literature that males perceived they had little influence or input in their job. As for females, lack of influence on the job was not a significant source. Also, both males and females perceived sexual jokes or profanity as a source of stress when carrying out their jobs (Morash et al., 2016).

Utilizing coping strategies effectively are significant in managing job stress. Coping strategies that are appropriate in various circumstances enable one to reduce job stress. Otherwise, inability to cope with job stress sufficiently would lead to emotional disturbances, mental disorders, unhealthy body and social isolation. Coping strategies according to Sipon et al., (2014), functions as survival skills in encountering various challenges in life as well. In brief explanation, coping strategies is significant element in life functioning and individual development. Coping strategies refers to different strategy utilized when encountering particular stressful conditions. According to Masten (2016), coping strategies requires wider context by taking into account the context of physiology, emotion, and external behavior, and attention, interpersonal and social environment. According to Friedlmeier (2006), coping strategies is a social interaction and physical context in real life situations. Therefore, social and physical sections should be considered when discussing about coping strategy.

There are studies indicated that police officers tended to use healthy method or adaptive coping strategies when encountering with job stress. Exercise can be considered as an effective mean to mitigate job stress among police officers (Alexander & Walker, 1994). Relaxing leisure can be applied to cope with job stress (Iwasaki et al., 2005). However, according to Gerber et al., (2010), there is no significant connection between exercise and job stress; but, the increase number of physical fitness practice by police officers would be able to reduce job stress in general. Bezerra, Minayo and Constantino (2013) considered physical exercise as the most successful approach to alleviate the consequences of job stress.
There are studies indicated that police officers tended to use maladaptive coping strategies when encountering with job stress. According to Gershon et al., (2012), the most significant jeopardy factors connected with job stress were maladaptive coping behaviors. Maladaptive coping usually refers to the drinking alcohol, excessive smoking and eating to alleviate job stress. Leino et al., (2011) stated that maladaptive coping strategies were utilized when there were an intolerable feelings or circumstances derived from job stress. While, Marksa and Howellb (2016) argued that police officers took drugs as harm reduction in performing their job. Violanti (2013) argued that police officers who are in high level of job stress tended to employ maladaptive coping.

There are several terms refer to avoidance coping strategies such as denial, blame, escape, avoidance, and escapist coping strategies. The results indicated that there were studies on avoidance coping strategies. Avoidance coping strategies were positively linked to work-family conflict and psychosomatic symptoms associated with psychological stress significantly increased distress and ineffective coping approach in policing, and increase level of chronic fatigue exhaustion and negative feelings of professional value of cynicism (Wiese et al., 2013). However, avoidance coping strategies might influence the strength of the body. Some studies also showed that avoidant coping strategies as a compounding factor when encountering with job stress among police officers (Williams, Ciarrochi & Deane, 2010). The source of job stress derived from interpersonal issues is the strongest predictor of avoidance coping (Morash et al., 2016).

Several studies showed that social support coping strategies was utilized when police officers were under stress. Social support was resulted in higher levels of distress associated with individual psychological strain (Kaufmann & Beehr, 2013). A shocking result indicated that there is a direct impact on both mental and physical health affected from social support (Kirkcaldy & Furnham, 2015). However, police officers make limited use of social support and possibly social disturbance could hinder social support connection (Jenkins, 2017). Therefore, police officers are comfortable to obtain social support from coworkers and close friends only (Page & Jacobs, 2011). Besides, social support networks are effective according to ranks in policing, geographical areas of the workplace and societal culture. For example, superintendents used social coping methods least frequently. The importance of social support group also relevant in districts area as compared with other places and also societal culture that valued social support obtains the most benefit in relationships with others (Morash et al., 2006).

The primary theory that is applicable to police stress is Agnew’s general strain theory. This theory states that negative emotions of stress can lead to crimes such as violence. Even though this theory is traditionally applied to juvenile crime, it is applicable to police stress especially when examining domestic violence. If the stressed individual cannot cope with stress, negative emotions and actions are probable.

When examining police stress, Robert Agnew’s general strain theory (GST) is best applicable (Agnew, 1992). Agnew’s GST is based on emotions such as anger, negative emotions, and personal relations. Agnew also elaborated on strain by adding three subcategories: failure to achieve positively valued goals, loss of positively valued stimuli, and the presentation of
negatively valued stimuli. When discussing strain, a clear definition is necessary. Agnew simplifies strain by describing strain as a condition that makes people uncomfortable. This uncomfortable feeling or situation can potentially lead people to engage in crime, but not everyone does so. How the person reacts to the strain depends on a few variables. First, coping skills play an important role. If people are unable to cope with the strain by communicating how they are feeling, the negative emotions can lead to violence or other types of crimes. The second variable to help insulate a person from crime is family bonds.

**Hypotheses**

(i) There will be a significant relationship between poor working conditions and occupational stress among Nigeria police officers in Kaduna state

(ii) Female police officers will experience a higher significant level of occupational stress than the male counterpart working in Kaduna state

(iii) Junior police officers will experience a higher significant level of occupational stress than the senior police officers working in Kaduna state.

**Method**

**Participants and Procedures**

Survey design was used to sample the opinion of respondents and study population consisted of personnel of Nigeria Police Force domiciled in Police College training command, Kaduna. 50 personnel were randomly selected across the various department and units of the training college. The sample was made up of 35(70%) males and 15(30%) females. Age of participants ranged between 24-55 years with a mean age of 34.5years. The two instruments were administered individually to the participants who were recruited based on their willingness and availability by the researchers with the help of one research assistant. The research assistant was trained on the procedures for administration of the questionnaire. The researchers obtained official permission from the authorities of the Nigerian Police College (training institute) Kaduna.

**Instrument**

The Wellbeing Process of Occupational Stress Questionnaire which was developed by Williams (2014) with 20 items. Single-item measures were taken from the Wellbeing Process of occupational stress Questionnaire (WPQ). Williams (2014) developed single-item measures for variables associated with well-being within an organizational context. Items measuring various constructs including work demands, work resources (e.g., job control, work support), coping, personality characteristics, and well-being outcomes (e.g., depression, anxiety, and job satisfaction) were created. The approach to the development of these items involved the use of a stem followed by examples of original items of the multi-item scale to provide evidence on what the statement represents and increase congruence between the single item and multi-item measures. For example: I feel that my work is too demanding (for example: I have to work fast, I have to work hard, I have conflicting demands). Using a sample of nurses and university employees, Williams (2014) validated the single-items against multi-item measures and demonstrated that these items displayed a satisfactory representation of the constructs being measured. Williams also demonstrated that the predictive validity of the single-item measures was comparable to the multi-item scales, which it has logical validity index of 0.76 (76%) which qualify the researcher to carry out the study.
The Wellbeing Process of **Coping Strategies questionnaire developed by** Galvin and Smith (2015). This section was interested on how people respond when they are confronted with difficult or stressful events in their lives which have 10 items with scoring level of 1, 2, 3 and, 4. The questionnaire asked the respondents to indicate what they generally do and feel when they experience stressful events. Obviously, different events bring out different responses, but they were to think about what they usually do when they are under a lot of stress.

To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, the scores from 10 respondents in the pre – testing of the instrument was used in establishing the internal consistency using the Cronbach Alpha procedure by Galvin and Smith (2015, 2016) which examined well-being in nursing and postgraduate students using single-item erasures from the WPQ and found it consistent in outcome of internal consistency reliability of 0.78 (78%). The result shows moderately high coefficient value which indicate that the instrument is reliable to be used for the study.

Based on the evidence, the approach taken by Williams and Smith has demonstrated that the items that comprise the WPQ showed acceptable psychometric properties and can provide the same indicators of well-being as their multi-item measures. The application of these measures was considered suitable for the current research work given the circumstances of testing multiple constructs and the mindfulness of response burden given the population under study.

**Measure**

The following scales of Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Independent t-test were used to test the hypotheses to see the level of relationship and differences among the study variables.

**Result**

**Hypothesis 1**

*There will be a significant relationship between poor working condition and occupational stress among Nigerian Police Officers in Kaduna*

**TABLE 1: T-test Statistic showing relationship between Poor Working Condition and Occupational Stress among Nigerian Police Officers in Kaduna state**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>Poor Working Condition</th>
<th>Occupational Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Working Condition</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Stress</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source, field survey, 2020

Table 1 above, shows the relationship between working condition and occupational stress among Nigerian police officers in Kaduna state. Result indicates that there is a negative
correlation between the two variables which are poor working condition and occupational stress. The statistically significant relationship is at \( P > 0.05 \), which means that the correlated variables tend to decrease together with small strength of relationship.

**Hypothesis 2**
*Female Police Officers will experience a high significant level of occupational stress than Male Police Officers.*

**TABLE 2: T-test Statistic Showing Differences between Female and Male Officers of Nigerian Police Force in Kaduna state**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>27.408</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>43.408</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source, field Survey, 2020

Table 2 indicates that, at confidence interval of the difference of 95%, the t-test calculated is expressed as \( t = 5.091, \ df = 198, \ p = 0.05 \). Hence the research hypothesis is accepted since the calculated t-test value is greater than the tabulated t-test value of 1.9840. This therefore clearly revealed that Female police officers experience more occupational stress than their male counterparts.

**Hypothesis 3**
*Junior Police Officers will experience a high significant level of occupational stress than senior police Officers.*

**TABLE 3: T-test Statistic Showing Differences between Junior and Senior Officers on Level of Occupational Stress**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Officers</td>
<td>41.408</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 indicates that, at confidence interval of the difference of 95%, the t-test calculated is expressed as \( t=5.091, \) \( df=198, \) \( p=0.05. \) Hence, the research hypothesis is accepted since the calculated t-test value is greater than the tabulated t-test value of 1.9840. This result clearly indicated that junior police officers do experience higher stress than the senior police officers in Kaduna state Nigeria.

Discussion

This study set out to examine three hypotheses as thus: there will be a significant relationship between poor working condition and occupational stress among Nigerian Police officers. There will be a significant difference in occupational stress between Female and Male Nigerian Police Officers. There will be a significant difference in occupational stress between Junior and Senior Police Officers.

Based on the findings, it was agreed that the pressure of law enforcement job put police officers at risk for high blood pressure insomnia, increased level of destructive stress hormone, heart problems, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide. This finding is in line with the work of Selye (2012) where he argued that Police work is the most stressful occupation in America. Violanti and Aron (2015) in their study found that Police officers have one of the highest suicide rates in America. They also have a high divorce rate and are perpetual drinkers. The majority of research on Police officers’ stress indicates that the occupation creates or contributes to psychological and physical ailments resulting in high incidents of cynicism, absenteeism, alcoholism, post-traumatic stress disorder, and burn out, early retirement resignation from the force and tragically suicide.

The stress that the Police officers encounter on their jobs is made even more dangerous based on the fact that it is ongoing and persistent. This unrelenting stress leads to chronic stress, which is very destructive. The body becomes physiologically unbalanced, organs are attacked, and the immune system is compromised as well. Constantly high cortical levels are dissociated with less arterial elasticity, a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Shift rotation in police work especially those that are after midnight wreaks havoc on the Police officer and his family. There is also the problem of physiological disruption of circadian rhythms, moreover being awake at night while one is supposed to be sleeping can greatly impair judgment and decision making which in turn can mean the difference between life and death in a crisis moment. In addition to this, the risk of substance abuse may also increase because the officer may resort to excessive use of stimulants to stay alert during the day; especially when there is shortage of workers and officers are required to do double shifts.

There is a direct need for creating an enabling work environment for police officers in Nigeria and strengthening of medical centers in police stations and barracks with appropriate manpower to encourage and assist police officers get professional assistance to deal with their stress. This is important because a reliance on defensive coping strategies such as alcohol drinking, smoking and other addictive behaviours ultimately lead to blocking of...
feelings. This may get to point where they are scared to feel anything, because of the fear of becoming overwhelmed (Miller, 1995). This may consequently impair the quality of their judgment and decisions on scene as well as compound the stress. The increasing reports of police harassments of public members by police officers, numerous cases of extra-judicial killings, extortions and other vices from police officers may be consequences of poor judgments occasioned by the use of alcohol and other addictive behaviours of the police officers.

Secondly, Findings from this study show that female police officers experience high significant stress level than the male police officers. The plausible explanation of this finding could be attributed to the cultural values of the Nigerian society. The female population has a lot of responsibilities to carry out such as taking good care of the home and children, exchanging family visitation and engaging in series of social gatherings. The male population on the other hand is considered to be the breadwinner of the family whose responsibility is just to release fund for the attainment of physiological needs of the family. However, the responsibilities of the female population as a result of cultural values and societal expectations have negative effect on their physical wellbeing and coping mechanisms on the job. They usually have very little time to ease their pent-up tension that they have been keeping or harboring from their workplace. This finding is in consonance with the previous findings of Compos and Williams (2010) who found that women reported more symptoms of stress than men.

Finally, findings also revealed that junior police officers experienced significant level of stress than senior police officers. This results reflects what Webster (2013) said where he reported that junior police officers experience more stress on the job than the senior police officers. This could be as a result of their job description and condition of service and differentials of remuneration. Consequently, Blazinska, Rusnak and Kacmavikova (2017) contended that men in the lowest cadre of the police job are always confronted with high rates of illness and absenteeism than those in the highest grade.

**Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Study**

Since the sample size represented only police officers in the Kaduna state police College Training command, generalization of the study should be done with accurate care. It is pertinent to state that future studies in this area should cover other police command within and outside the state in other to ensure adequate geographical spread and generalization.

**Conclusion**

Findings revealed that poor working conditions of the personnel of the Nigerian Police force is responsible for the various type of occupational stress they experience and this could be responsible for the police extortion of the public particularly commercial drivers because they have to feed their families. This situation which should be condemned in all ramifications has now become a daily occurrence as policemen can be seen collecting money on the road unashamedly. Office accommodation is grossly inadequate and that they also have no barracks accommodation. In most cases where available, police barracks are dilapidated, in different states of disrepair due to neglect and lack of maintenance culture. Result of this study indicated that female police officers experienced a significant higher job stress than their male
counterparts. It was also found in this study that junior police officers experienced more stress on the job than the senior police officers.

It is recommended that there is a need to recruit more men into the police in order to cope with the increasing crime rate and to ensure better protection for the citizens. Regular street patrols, which featured prominently in the colonial days and shortly after independence have stopped, apparently due to insufficient manpower. Efforts should be made to build more barracks and provide accommodation, remuneration and salaries commensurate for policemen. In addition, the conditions of service should be improved upon. This is necessary if we are working towards a new regime in the police. It is common knowledge that corruption exists in the agency. There is no doubt that until the welfare condition of police in Nigeria is substantially improved, efforts at reducing corruption among the men and officers of the agency will not be successful while it would also be difficult to get the best out of the agency. All cases of outright neglect must be looked into if the police are determining to improve performance of its men and officers in crime prevention and control.

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