

## Level of Psychological Stress In Relation To Stress Coping and Self-Esteem among Police Officers

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examined the level of psychological stress in relation to self-esteem and coping mechanism among police officers in Salug Valley, Zamboanga del Sur. Results showed that there was no significant relationship between psychological stress towards active coping, social ease, tease reduction and spiritual practice, but that wellness and thought control are highly significant with psychological stress. The majority of respondents showed a superior stresscoper in terms of thought control, and their self-esteem was not affected by psychological stress. It is recommended that further studies apply to different programs and larger sampling.*

**KEYWORDS:** *psychological stress, stress-coping, self-esteem, psychological well-being*

### INTRODUCTION

The world is currently experiencing a pandemic of an infectious disease called COVID19, which has drawn global attention. Psychological distress has been recognized for thousands of years and is a well established risk factor for short- and long-term mental health problems. Common stressors include fear of falling ill and dying, losing or being separated from loved ones, avoiding health facilities due to fear of becoming infected, the possibility of losing livelihoods, fear of being isolated in quarantine and feelings of helplessness, boredom and loneliness. Public emotional responses include fear, anxiety and so on, and negative social behaviors are often caused by fears and associated risks. These behaviors can evolve into a wide range of public mental health consequences, including emotional reactions, anger, excessive tension, health risk behaviors, social isolation, mental disorders (such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, panic attacks) and lowered health perception.

Studies have found that the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic may be different among healthcare workers, the general public and patients. Frontline workers may experience additional stressors such as stigmatization, strict biosecurity measures, high workloads and long working hours, and decreased opportunities for seeking social support. Understanding the psychological impact from different populations and countries is important for identifying high-risk people and designing interventions, as well as planning resources and promulgating policies.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study determined the level of psychological stress in relation to self-esteem and coping mechanism among police officers in Salug Valley . Specifically, this study:

1. Determine level of psychological stress among police officers;
2. Determine the level of stress coping among police officers in terms of wellness, thought control, active coping, social ease, tension reduction, and spiritual practice;
3. Determine the level of self-esteem among police officers;
4. Explore the relationship between psychological stress and stress coping among police officers;
5. Explore the relationship between psychological stress and self-esteem
6. Propose a wellness program for the police officers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized a descriptive-correlation research design to assess the stress coping, psychological distress and the coping of police officers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research was conducted in Salug Valley, Zamboanga del Sur. The respondents were police officers from the selected Municipal Police Station in Salug Valley Area, namely: Tambulig MPS, Molave MPS, Mahayag MPS, Josefina MPS, Dumingag MPS and Ramon Magsaysay MPS. In determining the number of respondents, Cochran's formula was used from the total population. Sampling process was done through random sampling. The study employed the Level of Psychological Stress Among Police Officers Questionnaire, adopted from Psychological Stress among Police Officers by Kessler [1]; Level of Stress Coping Among Police Officers Questionnaire, also adopted questionnaire by Kessler, [1]; and Level of Self-esteem Among Police Officers Questionnaire, adopted questionnaire by Rosenberg [2]. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the level of spiritual leadership, service quality, and job satisfaction. The Spearman Rho correlation coefficient was determined to establish the interrelationships among spiritual leadership, service quality and job satisfaction.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Level of Psychological Stress of Police Officers**

Table 1 presents the data of the psychological stress among police officers. Police officers showed low level of psychological stress as evidenced by the overall mean of 1.44 and standard deviation of 0.31. Police officers frequently find themselves in conflict situations, where they are under pressure from others, where they are criticized, judged, and where they are subjected to numerous requests. Despite this, they manage to overcome it and demonstrate to the public that despite their overburdened workloads and responsibilities, they can still achieve their objectives.

The result further indicates that indicates that police officers remain calm in some alarming situations. However, they feel rested after accomplishing the tasks being assigned. Feeling mentally exhausted and trouble during relaxation hours is common most especially when they have necessary things needed to be done. Given that police work involves frequent exposure to

occupational challenges (Morash et al.) [3] and potentially traumatic occurrences (Lieberman et al.) [4].

In the study of Weiss et al. [5] police officers are exposed to critical occurrences that can result in both death and injury. Stress and unpleasant stress reactions Critical occurrences are situations that are outside of a police officer's normal range of experiences and have the potential to overwhelm the officer's psychological defenses and coping systems. The violent loss of a partner, taking a life or shooting someone in the line of duty, and duty-related violent injuries are only a few of the most impactful and difficult law enforcement critical incidents

Police officers have been the frontline of danger. Therefore, society should recognize their psychological well-being. Psychological assistance is required since it aids in the formation of police officers' emotional identities. This is a regular service for groups dealing with high levels of work stress, such as police officers. Psychological stress experienced by police officers due to psychological or physical tension coming from high-risk, high-intensity, and high-workload environment variables must be balanced for officers to have coping capacities and mitigate deteriorated scenarios (Jiang) [6].

In addition to the operational pressures that come with the job, Studies have revealed that factors associated with police work have a positive impact. Even the organization's structure and climate can be a problem. For the police officer, this is a significant source of stress. Shift schedules that interfere with sleep and social life Poor interpersonal relationships, authoritarian management styles supervisory relationships, interdepartmental politics, a lack of proper planning and resources, and a lack of motivation Excessive paperwork, a lack of autonomy in executing jobs, and a lack of appreciation for work accomplishments are just a few of the issues.

In this pandemic, police officers are confronted with various novel challenges that increase their stress when they engage in a potentially dangerous situation, putting additional strain on their health, emotions, and other factors. They are under pressure to adhere to the various health procedures required, and they must guarantee that the public is safe and well-ordered. Police officers maintain emotional and mental stability to show the public a strong citizen in the country in the face of adversity.

Table 1. Level of Psychological Stress among Police Officers

Variable	Weighted Mean	StDev	QI
Level of Psychological Stress	1.44	0.31	

Note. Stress Scale: Very High ( 3.00-4.00);High ( 2.00-2.99);Low ( 1.01-1.99); Very Low (0.99-1.00

### Level of Stress Coping among Police Officers

Table 2 present the data of the level of stress coping among police officers. Police officers showed a superior stresscoper in terms of thought control as evidenced by the overall mean of 3.67 and standard deviation of 0.41. Although they were exposed to different threatening situations during

the pandemic, they were able to manage to lessen the anxieties and compose themselves with difficult situations.

It revealed in the data that majority of the respondent had great extent on the believe that they coped well with highly stressful situations. Never let their confident run away and are being able to control their emotions. When things are not going well, very likely are they view the situation as being temporary rather than permanent and focus their attention on those aspects of the situation that can be manage during complex situations. When highly stressed, they are capable of changing their thinking to calm down. Most police officers said they dealt with stress by planning, dealing with difficulties quickly, making priorities, maintaining strong relationships, and approaching circumstances honestly.

Since the police have a significant role in containing the spread of COVID-19, efficient management of the pandemic's demands is critical to protecting police officers' ability to operate, well-being, and health. Given that stress can have tremendous consequences on performance (Nieuwenhuys & Oudejans) [7] and health (McEwen & Stellar) [8], one strategy for guiding police officers safely through this crisis is to lower their stress by strengthening their coping resources. However, so far, the literature has only examined stresses and routes for offering officer assistance in a narrative format, with no empirical data collected (Jennings & Perez) [9].

Table 2. Level of Stress Coping among Police Officers

Variable	Weighted Mean	StDev	QI
Wellness	3.08	0.42	Above Average
Thought Control	3.67	0.41	Superior
Active Coping	3.00	0.34	Above Average
Social Ease	3.00	0.31	Above Average
Tension Reduction	3.07	0.60	Above Average
Spiritual Practice	3.12	0.50	Above Average

*Note.* Stress Coping Scale: Superior Stresscoper (3.26- 4.00); Above Average Stresscoper( 2.26- 3.25); Average Stresscoper( 1.26-2.25); Below Average Stresscoper( 1.00- 1.25)

### Level of Self-Esteem among Police Officers

Table 3 present the data of the level of self-esteem among police officers. Respondents showed a high level of self-esteem as evidenced by the overall mean of 2.50 and the standard deviation of 0.27. Majority of the respondents were satisfied with themselves and think that the number of good qualities is enough to perform their task and responsibilities as frontliners. Most of the respondents feel that they are worthy and nothing to be despair of whatever situations their in. They could have more respect and positive attitude toward for themself.

It is widely accepted that having a positive self-perception has numerous advantages. High self-esteem is associated with psychological happiness and health, whereas low self-esteem is associated with psychological distress and possibly depression. Those who have high self-esteem appear to profit from it like they feel good about themselves. They can deal effectively with obstacles and negative feedback. They live in a social context where they believe people value and respect them.



Although having exceptionally high self-esteem has negative implications (Baumeister) [10], most people appear to enjoy happy and productive lives.

People with low self-esteem, on the other hand, perceive the world through a more negative lens, and their general hate for themselves impacts their impressions of the world. In addition, self-esteem has been linked to sadness, shyness, loneliness, and alienation, and low self-esteem is aversive to individuals who have it. Thus, even if self-esteem has no significant impact on career performance, productivity, or other objective outcome measures, it affects one's enjoyment of life. Most people, on the other hand, would prefer to have high self-esteem if they had the option.

Table 3. Level of Self-Esteem among Police Officers

Variable	Weighted Mean	StDev	QI
Level of Self-Esteem	2.50	0.27	High

Note. Stress Scale: Very High ( 3.00-4.00);High ( 2.00-2.99);Low ( 1.01-1.99); Very Low (0.99-1.00)

### Relationship between Psychological Stress and Stress Coping among the Police Officers

Table 4. Relationship between Psychological Stress and Stress coping among the Police Officers

Variable	r value	p value	Remarks
Psychological Stress and Stress Coping as to:			
• Wellness	0.30	0.00**	Highly Significant
• Thought Control	0.20	0.01**	Highly Significant
• Active Coping	0.06	0.49	Not Significant
• Social Ease	0.11	0.20	Not Significant
• Tension Reduction	0.03	0.72	Not Significant
• Spiritual Practice	0.13	0.13	Not Significant

Legend: 0.00-0.01\*\* Highly Significant      0.02-0.05\* Significant      above 0.05 Not Significant

Table 4 present the test of the relationship between the psychological stress and stress coping among police officers. It shows that majority of p values are greater that 0.05 level of significance. As shown in the table below, there is no significant relationship between psychological stress towards active coping, social ease, tease reduction and spiritual practice. However, wellness and thought control are highly significant with psychological stress.

One of the most stressful jobs is that of a law enforcement officer. Officers are constantly exposed to critical occurrences, are frequently ridiculed and vilified, and do not always receive support from their superiors or the general public. Furthermore, they work unpredictable hours, which may limit

access to social assistance for these issues and can be a source of stress in and of itself (e.g., family resentment due to missed holidays and special occasions). Critical incidents and other work-related stressors, according to research, can cause police to utilize maladaptive coping methods, including avoidance, and to suffer negative outcomes, such as alcohol problems (Swatt, Gibson, & Piquero) [11] and posttraumatic stress disorder (Weiss et al., 2016) [5].

While some officers employ adaptive coping methods like exercise to deal with stress, others utilize maladaptive ones (such as detachment, repressing, and avoidant behaviors) that can lead to difficulties (Violanti et al.) [12]. Even though avoidant coping is the least successful coping technique it is the most congruent with the police subculture, which shuns revealing vulnerability) and fosters another kind of maladaptive coping—alcohol use (Violanti et al.) [12].

As millions of people working from home during this pandemic condition, police personnel who deal with the general populace to ensure their safety and wellbeing are at risk of stress and other mental health problems in addition to the risk of the infection itself. Their psychological well-being is significant as they deal with tremendous stress. This should be ensured and taken while their job is too risky. To combat the negative subculture among police officers, the Philippine National Police must develop adaptive coping techniques as a preventative approach. Also, research and development officer resiliency programs will educate cops better on coping abilities.

### Relationship between Psychological Stress and Self-Esteem among the Police Officers

Table 5. Relationship between Psychological Stress and Self-Esteem among the Police Officers

Variable	<i>r value</i>	<i>p value</i>	Remarks
Psychological Stress and Level of Self-Esteem	0.06	0.43	Not Significant

*Legend: 0.00-0.01\*\* Highly Significant      0.02-0.05\* Significant      above 0.05 Not Significant*

Table 5 shows the test between the relationship of psychological stress and self-esteem among police officers. This finding implies that psychological stress do not relate to the self-esteem of the respondents. Regardless of whatever of the psychological stress they experience at work it does not necessary affect their self-esteem.

Under the nature of preserving citizens' life-protection order, police officers are subjected to various direct and indirect event experiences that could constitute a fatal threat to their self-esteem, both physically and mentally. These encounters operate as a case study and upset human bodily and psychological homeostasis, causing physical and emotional discomfort.

There is a statistically significant mismatch between self-esteem and stress reaction in the study of Ruiz, Pioquinto, and Amparado [13]. The psychological significance of self-esteem is widely acknowledged. It is usually considered that self-esteem is trait-like, and hence self-esteem levels within individuals are consistent throughout time. Self-esteem is a concept that is almost as common as intelligence. In fact, "self-esteem has been linked to almost every variable at some point in the past, including personality correlates such as happiness and shyness; cognitive correlates such

as self-serving attributional bias; and behavioral correlates such as task effort and persistence." Thus, police officers have a higher sense of public power and social responsibility than other occupational groups.

## CONCLUSIONS

Police officers have a lot of things to do, yet they remain calm in some alarming situations. However, they sometimes did feel tired, nervous that nothing could calm them down. Harassment, work overload, worries, and tension contributed to their psychological stress that sometimes they felt hopeless and restless. Moreover occupational stress among police officers should be given special attention since its potential negative consequences influence society more immediately and critically than stress reactions in most other occupations. Officers who are under a lot of stress or have been under a lot of stress are more likely to make mistakes and overreact, which can jeopardize their performance and public safety. Despite these, majority of the respondents showed a superior stress-copier in terms of thought control. This means that they develop coping strategies and manage to overcome the stress they encounter as frontliners and demonstrate to the public that they can still achieve their objectives despite their overburdened workloads and responsibilities. In terms of their self-esteem, it does not relate Psychological stress to respondents. Regardless of the psychological stress, they experience at work; it does not necessarily affect their self-esteem.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings and conclusions, it is recommended that the police officers have webinars regarding taking care of their well-being. Manage their psychological stress, develop their stress-coping mechanism, and boost their self-esteem. Police officers in the higher rank have to also conduct debriefing to their subordinates on handling their work, life, and other priorities to gain peace of mind to maintain good well-being. Furthermore, the Philippine National Police should design and conduct more resiliency programs designed to teach officers to improve coping skills and training in managing stress due to work overload and personal aspects of these officers that might affect their balance. In addition, provide a health education including emotion-regulation skills to help them learn and use adaptive coping strategies to deal with stress.

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