Stress Management Among Police Officers in Municipality of Maribojoc During COVID-19 Pandemic

GLENN AMEN
amenglenn2@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7412-9192

Corresponding Authors
Jiether Bumotad
bumotadjiether@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-2311-702X

Mark Leo Chatto
chattomarkleo77@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-1595-704X

Chrizza Dagodog
dagodogchrizza50@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0004-0407-8398

Marychrist Elic
marychristelic632@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-3890-3141

Roy Escatron
rescatron79@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4342-4807

Joseph James Morata
jjmorata162@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6806-7471

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the stress management of police officers in the Municipality of Maribojoc during the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, to determine the existence of work-related and non-work-related stressors faced by police officers in the municipality of Maribojoc and identify the preferred strategies that help to cope with those stressors in times of or during a pandemic. The researchers utilized a quantitative research method and conducted the survey in the municipality of Maribojoc. There were 21 total police officers who participated in the survey. The gathered data was statistically interpreted. The results showed that the majority of the respondents' age ranged from 31–40, the majority were male, the most of them were single, and the

Marijane Telmo
marijanetelmo27@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8648-2185

Theresil Marie C. Lapez
tmclapez@universityofbohol.edu.ph
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1269-0283

majority had years in service of under 1–10 years. The common stressors they experienced were spending too much time wearing and discarding personal protective equipment (PPE), having anxiety, and being sleepless because of long duty hours. The preferred stress management strategies that helped the police officers to cope with those stressors were meditation, morning exercises, and resilience training as a daily routine, as well as engaging oneself in deep prayers and regular intake of healthy meals that can improve their physical, emotional, and mental condition.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is one of the most critical problems that human effort entails. Stress can be described as a real or interpreted threat to the physiological or psychological integrity of the person resulting in physiological and/or behavioral effects (McEwen, 2007). Stress is a feeling of mental strain and tension in the psychological sciences. Low levels of stress can be desirable, useful, and even safe. Stress, in its positive form, can boost biopsychosocial wellbeing and enhance performance. In addition, positive stress is considered to be an important factor for motivation, adaptation, and response to the environment. However, high levels of stress may lead to biological, psychological, and social issues, and even serious harm to people (Shahsavarani, Azad Marz Abadi & Kalkhoran, 2015).

A person may be caught in a situation that induces or causes stress. The police officers are influential members of society. Yet, they can also be vulnerable to stress. They are the most visible arm of the government. They are needed in the community at times of risk, crisis or challenge, public health emergency, whether manmade or natural. Police departments all over the world are facing unprecedented problems as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, these difficulties are connected to the scope and size of the tasks the police are expected to undertake and to the evolving nature of the role of the police during the pandemic. While health workers are on the frontline, the police are active at every point of the response and become the main contact with the public to answer questions

and solve problems. Police forces are plagued by additional emergency missions: implementation of public health directives, including quarantine or travel bans, protecting health care facilities, crowd control, assistance in managing mass deaths, preserving vaccines or other drugs, and even public education and risk coordination. The preparation of the response is not spontaneous, since the police may not have previously collaborated with any of the agencies with which they can coordinate their response plan, including public health, medical officials, and other suppliers of essential infrastructure such as telecommunications, electricity, and water. Moreover, the use of the military to implement emergency measures in many countries presents obstacles to the relationship between the police and the military in terms of authority and accountability (Patterson, Chung, & Swan, 2012).

While the role of the police in security threats and emergencies is usually well known, it is far from clear during the COVID-19 pandemic, adding another dimension to the complexity of the police response. In fact, unlike public health programs, most of the national response plans to COVID-19 do not recognize the position of the police or make little mention of it in general and broad terms. It is commonly stated that in addition to the regular duties, the police have a part to play in promoting the fight against disease and in protecting people from contamination. This secondary position assigned to the police can also be seen in the additional financial and other forms of help reserved to the police by the government relative to other organizations, in particular those operating on a health response. Hence, they are expected to be more accessible, interactive, responsive, and dynamic in the society. Stress has been found to impact not only the work performance of officers but also their personal lives and relationships. Since police officers are the first to respond to potentially traumatic circumstances, their ability to handle stress effectively is vital not just to their own mental health, but also to the safety of society as a whole. Research has found that police officer who has trouble dealing with stress display ill-adapted actions and personality characteristics such as remoteness, authoritarianism, cynicism, depersonalization, emotional indifference, distrust, and excessive alcohol usage. High levels of stress can lead to extreme physiological (headaches, stomach aches, backaches, ulcers, heart attacks) and psychological (anxiety, depression, flashbacks, and panic attacks) symptoms. Stress among police officers has also been related to violence and can also have a detrimental impact on the law

enforcement agency due to prosecutions arising from the performance of the officers. Other consequences include the impaired performance of officers, reduced efficiency, poor morale, poor public relations, labor-management problems, tardiness at work, and missing work, and turnover of officers (Patterson, et. al., 2012).

This study is therefore designed to determine the existence of work-related and non-work-related stressors faced by police officers in the municipality of Maribojoc, especially during the pandemic, and to provide important information to guide effective strategies that can reduce the impact of these stressors.

Conservation of resources (COR) theory. This theory emphasized that stress arises in any of three contexts: when people suffer a lack of resources, when resources are at risk, or when people spend their resources without benefit. Four types of resources are proposed: object resources, i.e. physical items such as home, clothing, or access to transportation; situation resources, e.g. jobs, personal relationships, personal resources, e.g. skills or self-efficiency; and energy resources, which promote the achievement of other resources e.g. income, credit or information (Krohne, 2002).

Psychological Stress: The Lazarus Theory. Two principles are fundamental to every psychological stress theory: perception, i.e. an individual's assessment of the importance of what is happening to their well-being, and coping, i.e. an individual's effort in thinking and behaving to manage particular demands (Lazarus, 1993).

Psychological stress refers to a relationship with the world that a person considers to be important for his or her well-being and in which the demands are taxed or surpass the available coping tools (Lazarus, 1986). This term applies to two mechanisms as core human-environmental mediators: cognitive evaluation and coping (Krohne, 2002).

Systemic Stress: Selye's Theory. The popularity of the stress definition in science and mass media is primarily attributed to the work of the endocrinologist Hans Selye. In several animal studies, it has been found that a variety of stimulus events, e.g. heat, cold and toxic agents applied vigorously and long enough, are capable of producing similar effects, i.e. not unique to any stimulus event. In addition to these non-specific changes in the body, each stimulus naturally causes its specific effect, such as heat, vasodilatation, and cold vasoconstriction. According to Selye, these unpacifically induced changes constitute a stereotypical,

i.e. a specific pattern of the systemic stress response. Selye describes this stress as a disorder manifested by a syndrome that consists of all unpacifically mediated changes in the biological system (Krohne, 2002).

Resource stress theories are not specifically concerned with stress-creating causes, but with tools that sustain well-being in the face of stressful experiences. Several social and personal constructions have been suggested, such as social support (Schwarzer and Leppin 1991), a sense of coherence (Antonovsky 1979), toughness (Kobasa, 1979), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), or optimism (Scheier and Carver, 1992). Whereas self-efficacy and optimism are the only protective factors, hardness and sense of coherence are tripartite approaches. Hardness is an amalgamation of three components: internal discipline, determination, and a sense of challenge rather than a hazard. Similarly, the sense of coherence is to assume that the universe is meaningful, predictable, and ultimately benevolent. A variety of forms have been investigated in the field of social care, such as instrumental, informational, evaluation, and emotional support (Krohne, 2002).

The general relationship between the degree of controllability of a stressor and the use of monitoring or blunting techniques can be moderated by both situational and personal factors. In this situation, noxious stimulation can be so severe that blunt strategies, such as attention diversion, are ineffective in reducing stress-related arousal. As far as personality is concerned, there are relatively stable individual variations in the tendency to use blunting or monitoring while dealing with a stressor (Krohne, 2002).

Stress means different things to different people in different situations. A general definition of stress that applies to a wide range of human scenarios is a condition in which an individual is awakened and made nervous by an uncontrollable aversive challenge. For example, being stuck in heavy traffic on a highway, a hostile employer, unpaid bills, or a predator are all examples of stressors. Fear and anxiety are caused by stress. The fear reaction will result in either battle or flight depending on the circumstances. The individual's perception of their ability to cope with the stressor influences the magnitude of the stress and its physiological effects. Stress is a highly individual phenomenon that differs between individuals based on individual vulnerability and resilience, as well as between various kinds of tasks. According to one poll, having to complete paperwork was more stressful for many police officers than the hazards

of chasing criminals. The seriousness of work stress is determined by the magnitude of the demands placed on the individual, as well as the individual's sense of control or decision-making latitude in dealing with the stress. Of course, stress is not limited to the workplace. There is a large body of research on the role of stress in the development and/or exacerbation of illness in almost all organ systems of the body. Stress, which is inextricably related to fear, plays a critical role in behavioral disorders such as phobias, major depression, and bipolar disorder. Stress and fear aggravate schizophrenia, and individuals with schizophrenia often struggle to cope with stress. As a result, stress-inducing alterations in lifestyle patterns place a significant burden on mental health (Fink, 2016).

Model of Emotional Intelligence, Self-Leadership, and Student Stress Management. This model is especially applicable to students because exposure to emotional management and self-leadership techniques can help students not only handle their current stressors more effectively but also improve coping skills that can help them effectively with the stress of their future jobs. College students are the primary source of potential members of the company, and teaching students how to cope effectively with stress during their academic careers will help prepare them to cope with challenging circumstances in their future workplaces. College students face a variety of stressors, ranging from the pressures of their academic work to the difficulties of maintaining interpersonal relationships. These stressors are also compounded by inadequate control of emotions and self-leadership (Houghton, Wu, Godwin, Neck, & Manz, 2012).

Work-related stress tends to play a critical role given its pervasive existence and long-term impact; however, due to the reliance of stress on the subjective interpretation of work-related demands and individual genetic behavioral characteristics, an accurate evaluation may be elusive. According to the employment pressure model, lowering, changing organization and in general low employment and job, management is recognized conditions of work stress that ultimately become correlated with illness, absenteeism, and cardiovascular disease. Mechanisms connecting chronic stress to increased cardiovascular risk are complex and multi-faceted. In humans, stress can act indirectly by causing risky lifestyles such as smoking, decreased physical activity, and increased calorie intake, thereby worsening cardiovascular danger. Stress can also function directly by influencing major regulatory systems, in particular, the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis and the autonomic nervous system

(ANS), leading to the abnormal release of catecholamine that impairs vascular output, unduly elevated sympathetic drive, and thus contributes to increased arterial pressure (Lucini, Riva, Pizzinelli, & Pagani, 2007).

Psychological stress can be minimized by practicing mindfulness, a state of consciousness that directs the attention and awareness of the person to the present moment, and by creating a non-judgmental, conscious awareness of the moment-to-moment experience of one's surroundings, emotions, feelings, and behavior (Morledge, Allexandre, Fox, Fu, Higashi, Kruzikas, & Reese, 2013).

The purpose of this study is to determine the existence of work-related and non-work-related stressors faced by police officers in the municipality of Maribojoc and identify the preferred stress management strategies that help to cope with those stressors in times or during a pandemic.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers used quantitative method with the aid of a survey questionnaire to determine the sources of stress and stress management strategies adopted by police officers of Maribojoc Police Station during a pandemic. It concerns the situation that remains on the routine of their duties during this pandemic.

Maribojoc is a coastal town in the southwestern part of Bohol. The municipality is 14 km away from the capital of the province, Tagbilaran City, and can take approximately 30 minutes from the capital to the city that gives convenience to the researchers for gathering data. Maribojoc, considered a 4th class municipality, with an area of 5192 hectares subdivided into 22 barangays. According to the 2007 census, the town has a population of 18,113.

The researchers distributed survey questionnaires to the police officers of Maribojoc Police Station which has 22 active personnel including the officer-in-charge, whose duty is in the field like enforcing lockdowns, implementing social distancing policy, and other health standard protocols where they are contributing more stressors.

The researcher-made questionnaire was pilot tested on ten (10) personalities who have the same socio-cultural profile as the respondents, which garnered a result of; (Part I) Sources of Stress - 0.916, (Part II) Work-related Stress Management Strategies – 0.791, and (Part III) Personal Stress Management Strategies – 0.746. The questionnaire has passed the reliability test for the accepted value is above 0.700.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the Sources of Stress of Police Officers, results revealed that the three top stressors or sources were, Spending too much time wearing and discarding personal protective equipment (PPE), Experiencing anxiety, and lastly being Sleepless because of long duty hours with 3.00 as a weighted mean for the three. The three least stressors were, Shifting schedules and work rotations with 1.24 as a weighted mean, Promoting a safer community with 1.24 as a weighted mean, and lastly, Working with the public with 1.14 as a weighted mean. The overall mean for the sources of stress of police officers yielded 2.23 as the composite mean, which means that Police Officers recognized the sources of stress they were experiencing.

For the Preferred Work-related Stress Management Strategies, results revealed that the three highest factors for the preferred work-related stress management are corporate meditation to improve mental fitness or mentality with 3.00 as a weighted mean, doing Morning routine exercises with 3.00 as a weighted mean, and lastly, the resilience training to reduce the impact of operational stress on health and behavioral outcomes. The three items or factors with the least prefer work-related stress management are the clear promotional criteria for advancements with 2.38 as a weighted mean, the Professional counseling once a month with 2.29 as a weighted mean, and lastly, relaxation with 2.19 as weighted mean. The overall mean for the preferred work-related stress management yielded 2.60 as a composite mean, which means that Police Officers fairly recognized the preferred work-related stress management strategies to help them cope with their stress.

The Preferred Personal Stress Management Strategies results revealed that the three highest factors for the preferred personal stress management among Police officers are, Engaging oneself in prayers with 3.71 as the weighted mean, Taking exercise with 3.43 as the weighted mean, and Eating regular meals with 3.38 as the weighted mean. The three-factor which is least preferred by police officers are Preparing for morning and the night before duty with 2.19 as a weighted mean, Holidaying with 2.19 as a weighted mean, and lastly, treating oneself to massage, shopping, or watching movies with 2.14 as the weighted mean. The overall mean for these strategies yielded 2.75 as the composite mean, which means that Police Officers fairly recognized the preferred personal

stress management strategies to help them cope with their stress.

On the Significant Relationship between Respondents' Profile and Sources of Stress, results revealed that there was no significant relationship between age and the sources of stress among police officers, with a p-value of 0.283 is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, the Work-related Stress Management Strategies are not related to the age of the respondents. On Sex and Work-related Stress Management Strategies, there was no significant relationship between sex and the sources of stress among police officers, with a p-value of 0.613 is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, the Work-related Stress Management Strategies were not related to the sex of the respondents. On Civil Status and Work-related Stress Management Strategies, there was no significant relationship between civil status and the sources of stress among police officers, with a p-value of 0.631 is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, the Work-related Stress Management Strategies were not related to the civil status of the respondents. Then, on Years in Service and Work-related Stress Management Strategies, there was no significant relationship between years in service and the sources of stress among police officers, with a p-value of 1.000 is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, the Work-related Stress Management Strategies were not related to the years in service of the respondents.

On the Significant Relationship between Respondents' Profile and Personal Stress Management Strategies, results revealed that on the age groups and Personal Stress Management Strategies, there was no significant relationship between age and the sources of stress among police officers, with a p-value of 0.186 is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, the Personal Stress Management Strategies were not related to the age of the respondents. On Sex and Personal Stress Management Strategies, there was no significant relationship between sex and the sources of stress among police officers, with a p-value of 1.000 is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, the Personal Stress Management Strategies are not related to the sex of the respondents. On the Civil Status and Personal Stress Management Strategies, there was no significant relationship between Civil Status and the sources of stress among police officers, with a p-value of 0.505 is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, the Personal Stress Management

Strategies were not related to the civil status of the respondents. Then on the Years in Service and Personal Stress Management Strategies, there was no significant relationship between Years in Service and the sources of stress among police officers, with a p-value of 1.000 is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, the Personal Stress Management Strategies are not related to the years in service of the respondents.

On the Significant Relationship between Sources of Stress and Work-related Management Strategies, results revealed that there was a significant relationship between the variables, with a p-value of -0.055 is less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the Sources Of Stress were related to Work-Related Stress Management Strategies.

On the Significant Relationship between Sources of Stress and Personal Stress Management Strategies, results revealed that there was no significant relationship between the variables, with a p-value of 0.055 is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, the Sources of Stress were not related to Personal Stress Management Strategies.

On the Significant Relationship between Work-related Stress Strategies and Personal Stress Management Strategies, results revealed that there was a significant relationship between the variables, with a p-value of -0.273 is less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, Work-Related Stress Management Strategies was related to Personal Stress Management Strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

From the data gathered and presented from the study of the Stress Management Among Police Officers in Municipality of Maribojoc during the COVID-19 pandemic, the common stressors they are experiencing were spending too much time wearing and discarding personal protective equipment (PPE), experiencing anxiety, and being sleepless because of long duty hours. To help them cope with their stress or stressors engaging oneself in corporate meditation, morning exercises, and resilience training as a daily routine as well as engaging oneself in deep prayers and with regular intake of healthy meals can improve their physical, emotional, and mental condition. Police Officers of Maribojoc Police Station fairly

recognized the common stress they are experiencing and the things or stress management strategies that will help them cope with stress from work-related, non-work-related, and personal stress management strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations:

1. In every police station, seminars and counseling on psychological, mental, neurological aspects should strictly impose among them. It is not every day that police officers are in a good mental state because of huge workloads, being exposed to life-threatening events. These seminars should at least be held once a year or more to instill discipline, proper work ethics, integrity and may remind them of the things they took on the oath to be a good public servant.

2. Self-regulatory techniques and exercises to reduce negative thoughts enhance sleep; strengthen the use of effective coping strategies, relaxation exercises to reduce stress with resiliency to diminish the impact of operational stress promoting good health and good behavioral outcomes.

REFERENCES CITED

Antonovsky, H., & Sagy, S. (1986). The development of a sense of coherence and its impact on responses to stress situations. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *126*(2), 213-226. https://bit.ly/3Zs6nOD

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological review*, *84*(2), 191.

Fink, G. (2016). Stress, definitions, mechanisms, and effects outlined: lessons from anxiety. In Stress: Concepts, cognition, emotion, and behavior (pp. 3-11). Academic Press. https://bit.ly/3f6GZKv

Houghton, J. D., Wu, J., Godwin, J. L., Neck, C. P., & Manz, C. C. (2012). Effective stress management: A model of emotional intelligence, self-leadership, and student stress coping. *Journal of Management Education*, *36*(2), 220-238. https://bit.ly/3j7dfx7

Kobasa, S. C. (1979). Stressful life events, personality, and health: an inquiry into hardiness. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *37*(1), 1. https://bit.ly/3kwOQGu

Krohne, H. W. (2002). Stress and coping theories. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Behavioral Sceinces*, *22*, 15163-15170. https://bit.ly/2YyHfIz

Lucini, D., Riva, S., Pizzinelli, P., & Pagani, M. (2007). Stress management at the worksite: reversal of symptoms profile and cardiovascular dysregulation. *Hypertension*, *49*(2), 291-297. https://bit.ly/2YAhSWT

McEwen, B. S. (2007). Physiology and neurobiology of stress and adaptation: central role of the brain. *Physiological reviews*, *87*(3), 873-904. https://bit.ly/39GkYzc,

Morledge, T. J., Allexandre, D., Fox, E., Fu, A. Z., Higashi, M. K., Kruzikas, D. T., ... & Reese, P. R. (2013). Feasibility of an online mindfulness program for stress management—a randomized, controlled trial. *Annals of behavioral medicine*, *46*(2), 137-148. http://bit.ly/2NapTiM

Patterson, G. T., Chung, I. W., & Swan, P. G. (2012). The effects of stress management interventions among police officers and recruits. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, *8*(1), 1-54. https://bit.ly/3avTgo2

Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1992). Effects of optimism on psychological and physical well-being: Theoretical overview and empirical update. *Cognitive therapy and research*, *16*(2), 201-228. https://bit.ly/3J1SaTj

Schwarzer, R., & Leppin, A. (1991). Social support and health: A theoretical and empirical overview. *Journal of social and personal relationships*, *8*(1), 99-127. https://bit.ly/3ktvmCE

Shahsavarani, A. M., Azad Marz Abadi, E., & Hakimi Kalkhoran, M. (2015). Stress: Facts and theories through literature review. *Journal of Medical Reviews*, *2*(2), 230-241. https://bit.ly/2MJdBxJ