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OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN PROTECTION DESK (WCPD) POLICE OFFICERS IN RELATION TO JOB PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Policing is often considered a male-dominated profession characterized by hard and unpredictable work environments – demanding long hours, surprise deployments, and exposure to high-risk scenarios. Policewomen, particularly those assigned to the Women and Children Protection Desks (WCPD), often endure heightened occupational stress due to the dual load of professional tasks and traditional family roles. This study studied the amount of occupational stress experienced by WCPD officers in Pagadian City and its link to their job performance. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational quantitative research approach, the study involved 49 respondents from various municipal police stations in Zamboanga del Sur. Data were examined using frequency distribution, percentage, weighted mean, t-test, and Pearson r correlation. Findings revealed substantial disparities in occupational stress levels based on respondents' position and educational qualifications. Among performance indicators, personal attributes obtained the highest average rating of 4.20 (interpreted as very excellent). Moreover, rank was found to have a statistically significant influence on work performance. The study further confirmed that organizational and operational stressors significantly correlate with the job performance of WCPD officers. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to address occupational stress among female police officers, especially those balancing frontline duties and protective services for women and children.

KEYWORDS: *WCPD police officers, occupational stress, job performance, organizational stressors, operational stressors, gender roles in policing*

1.0. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, women have made significant strides toward gender equality by entering professions traditionally dominated by men, including law enforcement. The police force, long regarded as a masculine institution, presents numerous occupational challenges such as prolonged duty hours, unpredictable deployments, high-risk environments, and exposure to traumatic events (Bora, Borah, & Kalita, 2016). Despite increasing gender diversity, women in policing—particularly those assigned to Women and Children Protection Desks (WCPD)—face unique and compounding stressors. These include not only operational demands but also socio-cultural expectations to fulfill domestic responsibilities, resulting in heightened work-life imbalance (Patterson et al., 2021).

Research has consistently indicated that police officers experience both acute and chronic occupational stress, which significantly affects their psychological well-being, physical health, and job performance (Acquadro Maran, Zedda, & Varetto, 2018). Female officers, in particular, are more vulnerable to workplace stress, often due to their efforts to gain acceptance and respect in a male-dominated environment (Luhar & Shukla, 2019). Persistent gender bias, limited career advancement opportunities, and lack of institutional support exacerbate their stress levels, leading to dissatisfaction and burnout (Jovanović et al., 2023).

These issues are grounded in Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which posits that stress arises from the threat or actual loss of resources—be they personal, social, or professional (Hobfoll et al., 2018). When occupational stress becomes a resource-draining factor, it negatively impacts career satisfaction and, consequently, job performance. Empirical studies support this theoretical framework. For instance, Lambert et al. (2017) and Allisey et al. (2014) demonstrated that excessive workplace stress diminishes police personnel's motivation, job satisfaction, and overall effectiveness.

In the Philippine context, especially in city and municipal police stations across Zamboanga del Sur, WCPD officers face daily exposure to emotionally distressing cases involving women and children. These include listening to traumatic victim statements,

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managing recurring reports from the same complainants, empathizing with victims while maintaining procedural objectivity, handling evidence, and frequent court appearances—all of which contribute to cumulative stress (Rief & Clinkinbeard, 2021). Furthermore, limitations in logistical support, personnel shortages, and the unpredictable nature of law enforcement duties intensify their occupational strain (Ashifa, 2019).

Given these multifaceted challenges, it is essential to investigate the occupational stress experienced by policewomen and how it impacts their job performance. Such an inquiry will inform researchers, policymakers, and institutional leaders in developing responsive strategies and policies to reduce stressors and promote a more supportive work environment for WCPD officers.

2.0. OBJECTIVES

- To determine the profile of the respondents in terms of age, rank,years in service, and educational qualification.
- To assess the occupational stress management of the respondents in terms of operational and organizational stressors.
- To examine whether there is a significant difference in the respondents' rating of occupational stress management when analyzed according to their profile.
- To evaluate the level of performance of Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) Police Personnel in terms of output, job knowledge, work management, concern for the organization, and personal qualities.
- To determine whether there is a significant difference in the level of performance of WCPD Police Personnel when grouped according to their profile.
- To establish whether there is a significant relationship between occupational stress management and the performance of Women and Children Protection Desk Police Personnel.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive-correlational research approach to evaluate the association between organizational and operational stress experienced by Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) officers in municipal and city police stations across Zamboanga del Sur. Forty-nine purposively selected WCPD policewomen with at least two years of service participated as respondents. Data were acquired using standardized and validated instruments—the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-OP) and the Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-ORG)—adapted from McCreary and Thompson (2006), each comprising 20 items scored on a 3-point Likert scale. The questionnaire also includes demographic factors such as age, rank, years of service, and educational achievement. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed, including informed consent and assurance of secrecy. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency and percentage, were utilized to summarize respondent profiles, while weighted mean and correlational analysis were employed to analyze the amount and linkages of occupational stressors. Ethical research methods were strictly observed, including getting informed consent, ensuring anonymity, and safeguarding the well-being of all participants. The data collection procedure required gaining authorization from both police authorities and engaging respondents safely and respectfully. Following collection, the data were aggregated, statistically analyzed, and safely disposed of after analysis to ensure confidentiality. The study's conclusions sought to ascertain if the marine police fulfilled the expectations of the communities they serve regarding public safety and order.

4.0. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. Age of the Respondents

Age Bracket	*Frequency*	*Percent*
25 and below	-	
26-35	25	51.02
36-45	22	44.89
46-55	2	4.08
Total	49	100

Table 1 demonstrates that the majority of responders (51.02%) are aged between 25 and 35 years, reflecting a primarily young and energetic workforce. This age distribution accords with the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) recruitment guideline, which mandates that applicants must be between 21 and 30 years old. The presence of younger officers may lead to increased physical performance and adaptability in the field. However, it's noteworthy that as officers age, there is a natural loss in physical fitness, which can impair job effectiveness (Violanti et al., 2019). Additionally, younger officers may face higher levels of professional stress due to insufficient expertise in handling difficult situations (Jetelina et al., 2020). Therefore, adopting tailored training and support mechanisms for younger officers is vital to alleviate stress and promote job performance. JAMA Network

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Table 2. Profile of Respondents in terms of Rank

Ranks	F	Percent
Police Woman	3	6.12
Corporal	14	28.57
Staff Sgt.	25	51.02
Master Sgt.	5	10.20
Sr. Master Sgt.	1	2.04
Chief Master Sgt.	1	2.04
Total	49	100

Table 2 demonstrates that a considerable number of the respondents (51.02%) have the rank of Staff Sergeant, indicating a workforce with substantial experience and leadership duties. The rise to higher ranks within police organizations often entails a combination of tenure, performance assessments, and successful completion of promotional examinations (Lexipol, 2021). Officers at the Staff Sergeant level generally serve as first-line supervisors, playing a critical role in mentoring junior officers and ensuring operational success (Dowd, 2021). Their position includes a balance of administrative chores and field operations, requiring excellent leadership and decision-making skills. The presence of experienced Staff Sergeants can positively influence team chemistry and overall departmental performance.

Table 3. Years of Service of the Respondents

Length of service	*F*	*P*
5 years and below	2	4.08
6-10	22	44.90
11-15	21	42.86
16-50	3	6.12
21-25	1	2.04
26-above	-	
Total	49	100

As demonstrated in Table 3, 44.90% of respondents have served between 6 to 10 years, showing a workforce with moderate experience. This tenure permits officers to achieve skill in their positions while yet being adaptive to new circumstances. Research reveals that officers with 6 to 10 years of service may face heightened stress levels due to greater responsibilities and exposure to traumatic situations (Violanti et al., 2018). However, this phase also offers opportunity for professional growth and resilience building through continuing training and support systems (Otto & Gatens, 2022). Implementing comprehensive wellness programs can benefit in minimizing stress and increasing long-term professional satisfaction among mid-career officers.

Table 4. Educational Qualifications of Respondents

Educational Qualification	*F*	*P*
Bachelor's Degree	45	91.84
Bachelor's MA units	2	4.08
Master's Degree	2	4.08
Master's Degree with Doctoral Units	-	
Total	49	100

Table 4 demonstrates that a great majority of responders (91.84%) hold a bachelor's degree, highlighting the emphasis on higher education within the police force. Higher educational attainment among police officers is connected with improved critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and communication abilities (Carlan, 2017). Moreover, officers with advanced education are more likely to take leadership responsibilities and contribute to organizational development (Dowd, 2021). Encouraging continual education and professional development can boost the overall efficacy and professionalism of the police force.

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Level of Stressors

Table 5. Level of Operational Stressors of WCPD

Stress	*AWV*	*D*
1. Over-time demands	2.18	M
2. Not enough time available to spend with friends and family	1.85	M
3. Fatigue	1.87	M
4. Occupation related health issues	1.78	M
5. Limitations to social life	2.09	M
6. Working alone at night	2.09	M
7. The risk of being injured on the job	2.20	M
8. Finding time to stay in good physical condition	1.97	M
9. Feeling like always on the job	2.34	H
10. Work related activities on days	2.37	H
11. Lack of understanding from family and friends about work	1.79	M
12. Eating healthy at work	2.16	M
13. Negative comments from the public	1.92	M
14. Paperwork	2.36	H
15. Making friends outside the job	2.19	M
16. Shift in work	2.01	M
17. Friends/family feel the effects of the stigma associated with job	1.73	M
18. Traumatic events	1.69	M
19. Managing social life outside of work	1.74	M
20. Upholding a “higher image” in public	2.35	H
Total	2.03	M

Table 5 indicates the amount of operational pressures faced by Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) officers. Item 10, "feeling like always on the job," earned the highest average weighted mean of 2.37, classified as High. This reflects the ongoing demand placed on officers, even outside regular working hours, and a sense of inescapable obligation. Conversely, item 18, which scored 1.69 (Medium), demonstrates reduced stress in some regions of fieldwork. These findings correspond with prior studies demonstrating that heavy paperwork, unpredictable schedules, and frequent exposure to traumatic occurrences are common contributors to operational stress among law enforcement professionals (Korre et al., 2016; Violanti et al., 2019).

While stress is frequently seen negatively, scientists have realized that a certain degree of stress—known as eustress—can be constructive, inspiring individuals to perform better under pressure (Gutiérrez et al., 2015; Noblet et al., 2020). In the context of policing, operational stress may motivate officers to build resilience and innovative coping techniques. However, prolonged unmanaged stress can lead to burnout, psychological distress, and poor job satisfaction (Garbarino et al., 2021; Rosa et al., 2023), underlining the need for support systems and wellness programs specific to female officers.

Table 6. Level of Organizational Stressors of WCPD

Stress	*AWV*	*D*
1. Staff shortages	2.11	M
2. Bureaucratic red tape	1.79	M
3. Perceived pressure to volunteer free time	1.82	M
4. Unequal sharing of work responsibilities	1.34	L
5. Lack of resources	1.84	M
6. Dealing with the court system	2.14	M
7. Lack of training on new equipment	1.62	L

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8. The need to be accountable for doing job	2.18	M
9. Constant changes in policy/legislation	2.01	M
10. Inadequate equipment	1.62	L
11. Dealing with supervisors	2.22	M
12. Inconsistent leadership style	1.40	M
13. Excessive administrative duties	1.82	M
14. Leaders over-emphasize the negatives	1.70	M
15. The feeling that different rules apply to different people (e.g., favoritism)	1.62	M
16. Feeling like you always have to prove yourself to the organization	1.37	L
17. Internal investigations	1.89	M
18. Too much computer work	1.92	M
19. If you are sick or injured your co-workers seem to look down on you	1.23	L
20. Staff shortages	1.49	L
Total	1.76	M

Table 6 indicates the organizational stresses faced by WCPD officers. The item with the greatest average weighted value (2.22 – Medium) dealt to "dealing with supervisors," while the lowest (1.23 – Low) concerned things less commonly experienced by respondents. Officers voiced displeasure about staff shortages, heavy administrative responsibilities, poor equipment, and bureaucratic restraints. These are traditional organizational stressors often reported in hierarchical and resource-limited workplaces, leading to decreased morale and higher risk of emotional tiredness (Rousseau, 2018; Queirós et al., 2020).

Research underlines that organizational stress has a major impact on job performance, particularly when leadership lacks consistency, transparency, or emotional intelligence (Kula, 2017; Violanti et al., 2018). Additionally, systemic concerns including unfair distribution of task and the pressure to perform beyond duty hours can promote discontent. Thus, strengthening supervisory techniques and maintaining enough resources are vital in lowering organizational stress and establishing a healthy, inclusive working climate (García et al., 2021; Duran & Perez, 2022).

Table 7. Summary Table on Stressors of WCPD

Variables	***Means***	***D***
Operational	2.03	M
Organizational	1.76	M
Over-all Mean	1.90	M

Table 7 reveals that WCPD officers experienced moderate stress overall, with operational stressors scoring higher (mean = 2.03) than organizational stressors (mean = 1.76). This means that day-to-day field demands—rather than institutional or bureaucratic pressures—are the major sources of stress. Interestingly, gender may play a moderating impact in how stress is perceived. Studies have revealed that women police officers demonstrate stronger emotional resilience and composure under stress, albeit they often internalize symptoms more than men (Violanti et al., 2016; Bindu, 2020).

Bindu (2020) underlined that while women officers report significant stress, they tend to express it through emotional channels rather than aggressiveness. Violanti et al. (2016) also demonstrated that female police experience heightened risks of stress-related physical health disorders such hypertension and hypercholesterolemia. Yet, their adaptive coping techniques and compassionate communication abilities typically enable individuals to manage high-stress encounters effectively (Kurtz et al., 2017; Nelson & Smith, 2022). These findings underscore the necessity for gender-responsive support systems in police wellness programs.

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Table 8. Significant Difference on Occupational and Organizational Stressors and Profile of Respondents

Variables	*X2*	*P-Value @ .05*	*Decision*
Age and Occupational Stress	6.32	.031	Not significant
Rank and Occupational Stress	3.97	.073	Significant
Years of Service and Occupational Stress	5.21	.045	Not significant
Educational Qualification and Occupational Stress	6.14	.062	Significant

Table 8 demonstrates that rank is the only variable demonstrating a statistically significant difference with occupational stress, as evidenced by a p-value of 0.073, while age provided the lowest p-value (0.031), which was not significant at the standard level. This implies that stress levels among Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) personnel fluctuate significantly depending on their status. Higher-ranked officers may suffer distinct pressures such as administrative burdens, leadership pressure, or role conflict, which distinguish their experience from lower-ranked individuals.

Several research support the assumption that work stress is substantially influenced by position in the hierarchy. For instance, Violanti et al. (2018) revealed rank-specific disparities in stress among police, with mid- and upper-level officers having larger psychosocial issues. Kula (2017) further underlined that leadership roles are more sensitive to job discontent due to ambiguous objectives and accountability demands. Similarly, Purba and Demou (2019) showed that role ambiguity, widespread in mid-ranking officers, predicts increased stress. The stress-experience discrepancy associated to rank underlines the need of devising interventions based on hierarchical role (Basinska & Wiciak, 2020; Padmanabhanunni & Pretorius, 2023).

Table 9. Level of Performance of WCPD

Performance	*Ratings*	*AWV*	*D*
Output	86	3.60	VS
Lab Knowledge	86	3.60	VS
Work Management	89	4.05	VS
Interpersonal Relationships	88	4.02	VS
Concern for Organization	89	4.05	VS
Personal Qualities	90	4.20	VS
Over-all Rating	88	3.92	VS

Table 9 reveals that personal attributes obtained the highest mean score (4.20) among all evaluated performance characteristics, interpreted as Very Satisfactory. This encompasses attributes such as ethical integrity, gender sensitivity, empathy, and commitment, crucial for police dealing with sensitive sectors like women and children. Output and job knowledge followed closely with mean ratings of 3.60, likewise rated Very Satisfactory.

The Philippine National Police (PNP), in partnership with UN agencies, has long supported ethical standards, gender responsiveness, and continual training as part of its framework for WCPD officers (Norlock, 2019). Supporting this, Johnson et al. (2021) stressed that police performance—especially in sensitive units—is significantly linked to soft skills and emotional intelligence. Similar studies by Murphy and Barkworth (2016) and Todak (2017) found that officers with strong personal values and relational competency display better levels of public trust and internal satisfaction. Equipping WCPD officers with both technical expertise and psychosocial sensitivity is thus crucial to assuring good service (de Guzman et al., 2022; Choudhury et al., 2020).

Table 10. Significant Difference in the Performance of WCPD and Profile

Variables	*X2*	*P-Value*	*Description*
Age and Performance	2.14	.013	Not significant
Rank and Performance	3.62	.52	Significant
Years of Service and Performance	4.38	.34	Not significant
Educational Qualification and Performance	3.49	.049	Not significant

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In Table 10, rank again emerged as the sole profile feature with a statistically significant difference in relation to performance (p = 0.62), while age, years in service, and educational attainment did not indicate significance. This implies that performance evaluations differ greatly across ranks, potentially due to experience, access to training, and leadership duties offered at higher positions.

Rank-related inequalities in performance are generally linked to differing work scopes and training levels. For example, senior officers may have more exposure to investigation procedures and crisis handling (Kurtz et al., 2017; Goswami, 2015). Ng'ang'a Karihe (2016) observed that job happiness and performance are influenced by position, suggesting the need of understanding unique role expectations across rank hierarchies. Furthermore, when leadership expectations increase, so do psychological and organizational demands (Queirós et al., 2020; Padmanabhanunni & Pretorius, 2023), underlining the necessity for role-specific evaluation criteria.

Table 11. Significant Relationship between Occupational Stress and Performance

Variable	*Means*	*Mean*	*r-value*	*P-Value @ .05*	*D*
Operational and Performance	2.03 3.92	1.89	.90	.25	Significant
Organizational and Performance	1.76 3.92	2.16	.92	.16	Significant

Table 11 illustrates a positive association between occupational stress and performance, with organizational stress and performance exhibiting an r-value of .90 (p = .25), and operational stress and performance showing r = .92 (p = .16). These results imply that although both correlations are statistically significant, operational stress has a slightly greater link with job performance. This supports the premise that stress, when managed well, can boost productivity and vigilance among police.

Goswami (2015) underlined that stress impacts employees' cognitive and emotional functions, often resulting to reduced productivity when unchecked. Gutshall et al. (2017) revealed how stress impacts police officers' memory and decision-making, particularly in junior and veteran officers. Violanti et al. (2018) showed that while modest stress could boost alertness, persistent stress is detrimental to long-term performance. Coping methods and work-life balance programs are crucial in reducing burnout and maximizing performance (Lozano et al., 2016; Demou et al., 2019).

5.0. Conclusion

Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) police personnel continue to retain integrity and complete their tasks with professionalism, even in the face of increased operational and organizational challenges. While workplace constraints are inherent in contemporary policing, many officers display resilience and dedication to their oath of service. When managed well, such pressure can serve as a source of motivation, fostering vigilance, adaptation, and productivity. However, when these expectations become overwhelming and resources or institutional assistance are insufficient, they can escalate into considerable occupational stress.

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study show that women police officers exhibit a great capacity to manage stressors without compromising their performance. Their ability to retain composure, apply sound judgment, and sustain high performance under duress demonstrates a particular strength in managing the difficulties of law enforcement. Although stress is an inescapable feature of their professional landscape, these officers display emotional resilience and professional competence, which not only defends their well-being but also enhances the quality of the service they perform.

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