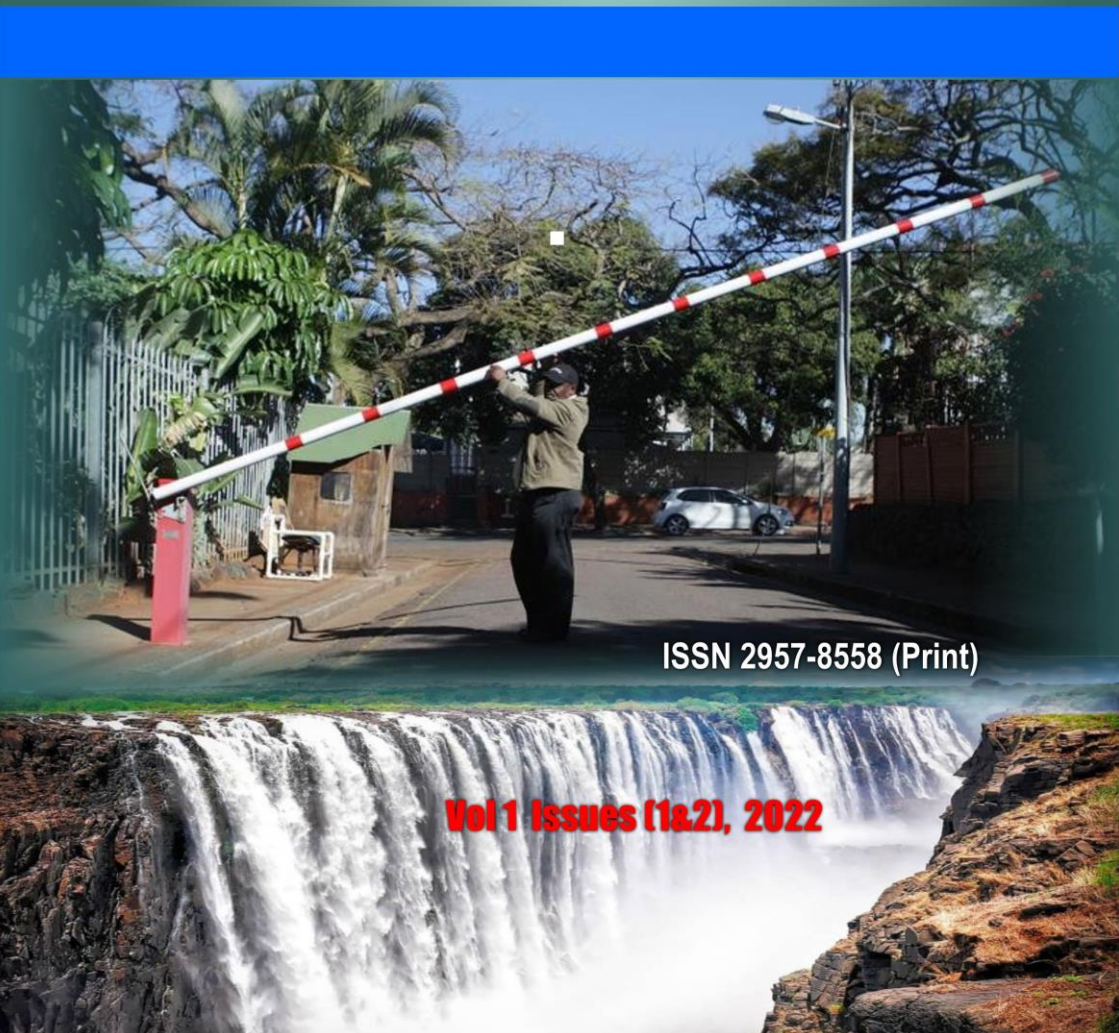




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The purpose of the *Ngenani - Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University Journal of Community Engagement and Societal Transformation Review and Advancement* is to provide a forum for community engagement and outreach.

## CONTRIBUTION AND READERSHIP

Sociologists, demographers, psychologists, development experts, planners, social workers, social engineers and economists, among others whose focus is on community development.

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## SCOPE AND FOCUS

The journal is a forum for the discussion of ideas, scholarly opinions and case studies of community outreach and engagement. Communities are both defined in terms of people found in a given locale as well as defined cohorts, like the children, the youth, the elderly, and those living with a disability. The strongest view is that getting to know each community or sub-community is a function of their deliberate participation in matters affecting them by the community itself. The journal is produced bi-annually.

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**Names of authors:** beginning with the first name and ending with the surname

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**Abstract:** must be 200 words

**Keywords:** must be five or six containing words that are not in the title

**Body:** Where the authors are more than three, use *et al.*

Italicise *et al.*, *ibid.*, words that are not English, not names of people or organisations, etc. When you use several authors confirming the same point, state the point and bracket them in one bracket and in ascending order of dates and alphabetically separated by semi-colon e.g. (Falkenmark, 1989, 1990; Reddy, 2002; Dagdeviren and Robertson, 2011; Jacobsen *et al.*, 2012).

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# THE EFFICACY OF COUNSELLING PROGRAMMES IN REDUCING WORK-RELATED STRESS AMONG POLICE OFFICERS: A CASE STUDY OF ZRP WATERFALLS

EDISON ZVAVAHERA<sup>1</sup>, ADMIRE MTHOMBENI<sup>2</sup>, SHARON CHISANGO<sup>3</sup>, MATILDA SINGENDE<sup>4</sup>, EDWARD TSHUMA<sup>5</sup>, PATRICK KARIBE<sup>6</sup> AND CHRISTABEL NYATHI<sup>7</sup>

## Abstract

*The article is based on a study that sought to make an investigation into the efficacy of counselling in reducing occupational stress among police officers. The research was inspired by the continued trend of poor performance, depression, anxiety and mood swings by police officers at the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) Waterfalls. The research's objectives were to investigate the sources of stress among members of the police service, to determine the effects of stress on police officers and the efficacy of counselling on stress. A sample size of 60 police officers was used which was determined using the Yamane 1967 approach. Stratified random sampling was used for quantitative data and convenience sampling for qualitative data. The study also sought to proffer ways in which work-related stress can be reduced. The study adopted a pragmatism research philosophy and incorporated both quantitative and qualitative research designs that ensured triangulation. The study employed a questionnaire and interview guide as instruments to gather empirical data, presented in the form of tables and charts produced using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data was presented thematically and saturation was used to determine sample size. Data was collected from police officers stationed at ZRP Waterfalls.*

**Keywords:** Burnout, Zimbabwe Republic Police, employee performance

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## INTRODUCTION

Stress is increasingly becoming a common phenomenon among employees, including police officers across the globe (Gaidhane *et al.*, 2020). Most police organisations have adopted counselling as an intervention mechanism to deal with work-related stress. Puebla and Demou (2019) found that occupational stressors such as role conflict, job demands, poor management practices and poor work relations exacerbate the susceptibility of police officers to mental illnesses. Queiros *et al.* (2020) established that policing is a stressful profession and that work stress diminishes the psychological and physical health of members of the police service, their performance and their interactions with citizens. Queiros *et al.* (*ibid.*) also concluded that mental health at workplaces has become a cause for concern, resulting in depression, anxiety, burnout and even suicide, which is prevalent among police officers. The growing levels of obligations have resulted in employees working for long hours and also requiring them to exert more effort and energy to meet the expected performance requirements (Mark and Smith, 2012). Kamalakumati (2013) propounded that stress is dynamic and complex and undesirable levels of stress negatively influence the total performance of an individual and the organisation at large. Organisationally, stress affects performance, and counterproductive work behaviour and results in antagonism between citizens and their police for excessive use of force (Queiros *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, the organisation's managers should endeavour to properly manage stress levels so that work is done efficiently. Dakasku and Musa (2020) posit that counselling is resorted to in such cases to assist individuals in solving problems that arise in assisting various aspects of their lives or in assisting them to maximise their overall personal development so that they can be more useful to the society in which they live.

At the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) Waterfalls, personnel are divided into Administration, Crime and Operations sections. Operations consists of 12 members who are augmented by members from other sections who from time to time leave their sectionss to beef up personnel in Operations. The station's duty roster and deployment register depict that members' time off is often forfeited and uncommitted working hours are a common phenomenon. Members are often seconded to the Traffic Section whilst work is piling in their offices. Some police officers are failing to cope with the pressure of work against a background of diminishing personnel levels and rising demands. Poor performance has been the result as demonstrated in Table 1.

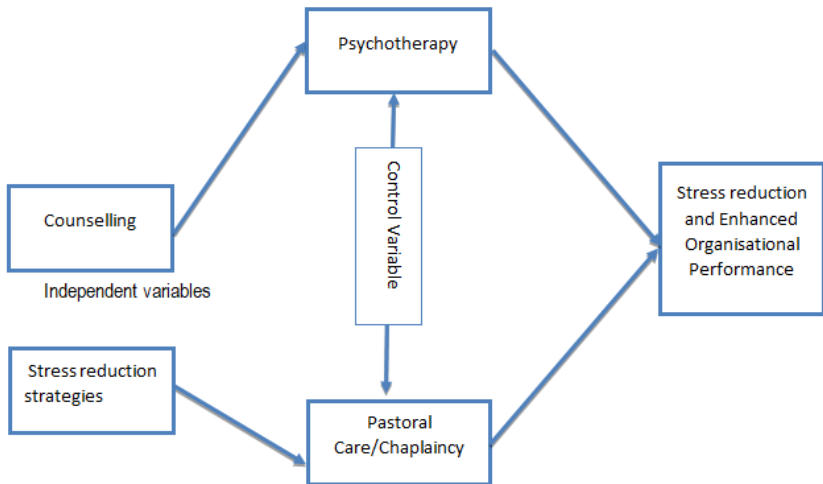
**Table 1: Police Performance (ZRP Waterfalls 2019 and 2020 Annual Crime Reports)**

Year	Cr	Detected	Total Arrests
2019	4 929	1 209	1 209
2020	5 078	1 501	1 501

Table 1 depicts an increase in crime by 3% from 4 929 cases in 2019 to 5 078 cases in 2020. Detection and arrests were very low.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The research determined the relationship between counselling and work-related stress. Counselling and stress reduction strategies are the independent variables that will be manipulated using the control variables (Psychotherapy and Pastoral care/Chaplaincy) to determine the behaviour of the dependent variable (stress). Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study.



**Figure 1:** *Conceptual Framework* (Researcher, 2022)

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### ***PERSON-ENVIRONMENT FIT THEORY***

This theory is of much importance in amplifying the causes of work-related stress. The theory sets prominence on the interface and analogy between the person and the environment (Manhema, 2017). In simpler terms, this model entails that the interface between an employee and his work setting controls whether or not a situation is stressful for that person. It assumes that human behaviour is a function of the person and the environment and if the fit between the person and the environment is incompatible, the outcome is stress (Vianen, 2018). This theory requires the ZRP to measure individual officers' competencies which are matched with the environment that the individual officer operates in. Therefore, the objective measurement of the person's skills, abilities and needs and of the environment's demands and resources



negatively impact the implementation of the Person-environment Fit theory. The theory not take into account instances where individual officers perform more than one different duty in different environments, a common phenomenon in the police.

### **CAUSES OF STRESS**

Many authors vary on the causes of work-related stress. Chikwem (2017) asserts that some of the causes of work-related stress among police officers include paramilitary structures, responsibilities associated with tasks such as protecting people, rescuing traumatised people, role conflicts and dangerous work demands. Critical incidents defined as adverse events that result in a range of symptoms from exhaustion to progressive mental illness have also been identified as sources of police stress. According to Mushwana *et. al.* (2019), failure by management to support their subordinates, perceived biased promotion chances, poor working conditions, alleged unfair disciplinary processes, poor interactive relationships with colleagues and low salaries, are among the organisational causes of stress in the South African Police Services (SAPS). Inadequate counselling was also cited as being related to stress.

Other organisational stressors may include organisational policies and strategies, working conditions, job stability, organisational structure, design and culture, management styles and lack of opportunities for personal growth and advancement, physical environment, rewards, job security, time pressure, long working hours, inadequate staffing, exposure to noxious hazardous substances, lack of supervision, inadequate training and misuse of power (Anbazhagan *et al.*, 2013; Trivellasaet *et.al.*, 2013; ILO, 2016).

### **EFFICACY OF COUNSELLING ON STRESSED POLICE OFFICERS**

Counselling theories provide a roadmap for the counsellor to use as a guide when conceptualising client problems, deciding on effective interventions and measuring progress (Fall *et. al.*, 2017). A personal guiding theory (Barth *et. al.*, 2019) involves the use of the counsellor's own experience and observation. Counsellor professional identity development includes an array of components, knowledge and skills (Bernard and Goodyear, 2019). Barth *et. al.* (2019) believe that a personal guiding theory is a counsellor's foundation philosophy that guides therapeutic work with clients and consists of personal values and beliefs, worldview and personality.

The theory enables the counsellor to approach counselling from a wider spectrum. The use of previous experiences, worldview on problems and counselling and personality traits, increases the chances of success in counselling. The theory encompasses the counsellor's values and beliefs which are subjective and may conflict with those of the client. The beliefs and values of police officers, just like any other groups of people, vary and the results of counselling may not be achieved as intended.

Research by Wango *et. al.* (2018) on counselling interventions and the use of counselling skills in the Kenyan Police Service, used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach and adopted a metaphysical stance on methodology. The concept of phenomenology is an umbrella term encompassing both a philosophical movement and a range of research approaches.

Wango *et.al.* (*ibid.*) studied the significance of counselling on police officers using the grounded theory hierarchy. He distinguished formal counselling from the use of counselling skills. Counselling was defined as a process in which an expert with the requisite knowledge and skills is involved in a formal relationship of assisting a client who is in a situational difficulty while counselling skills are a collection of techniques and strategies used to enhance communication in the counselling process and relationship.

The grounded theory hierarchy allows police officers to communicate their concerns to a person they can identify with or their superiors. The concerns include fears, frustrations, disappointments, anxieties and worries. Police officers may alternatively seek help from professional counsellors, psychologists or chaplains. However, the theory poses a potential conflict when a person who is a police officer is a counsellor at the same time. The dual relationship does not promote confidentiality and autonomy which is key in counselling. In the context of Zimbabwe, a developing country, resources are a constraint to engaging professional counsellors and psychologists to provide counselling services to police officers. It will also be expensive to train counsellors for the organisation.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

Globally, police officers are exposed to work-related stress, which might lead to them being at risk of cardiovascular diseases, exceeding that of the general population (Magnavita *et. al.*, 2018). However, there is evidence to suggest that police officers use fewer counselling services than the general population which harms their health in the long term (Mushwana, 2019). On the other hand (Faulkner, 2018) asserts that there appears to be a trend towards the use of mental health counselling services among police officers. In the United Kingdom, Sheard *et. Al.* (2019) found that a high proportion of police personnel (15% to 83% ) reported having experienced mental health issues, believing their work has an adverse impact on their psychological health and also believing that not enough support is available for mental health. The study was consistent with Houdmont and Davis (2016) who found that 58% of officers reported their job was very or extremely stressful and 63% of the respondents had sought professional help regarding their mental health.

In Scotland, counselling and environmental workplace changes are among the potential interventions which could further mitigate rising mental health issues with police cultures (Evangelia *et. al.*, 2020). This suggests that a lot still needs to be done concerning counselling as an intervention mechanism in reducing stress. Wango *et al.* (2018) posits that counselling and other interventions must be tailor-made to meet the requirements of police officers because policing is unique and counselling in the police is a distinctive service. Sefotho (2020) asserts that in Lesotho, the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS), managed by the Commissioner of Police, has a Counselling Unit to provide psychosocial support to officers needing relief from work-related stress and trauma. The unit also provides counselling support to officers with mood disorders and with work-family conflict issues that would impact work performance. Manhema (2014) has opined that in Zimbabwe, work-related stress is frequent and its impacts on the performance of police officers cannot be borne, hence the need to devise strategies to manage stress across the entire organisation. The ZRP has placed counselling under the purview of chaplains who are seconded to police institutions. The Chaplains Department falls under ZRP Support Sections and is mandated to provide spiritual guidance and welfare services to police officers and their families (ZRP Chaplaincy, 2016).

A survey was conducted in Hong Kong on the impact of job and family factors on work stress and engagement among Hong Kong police officers (Faulkner, 2018). The survey was based on a random sample of 514 male and female police officers and multi-variety regression was employed to assess the effects of demand and resources on work stress and work engagement. It was found that family-work conflicts, and organisational and operational factors, affected work stress and work engagement among police officers. Constructive coping was found to be positively related to work and negatively associated with work engagement. The study was conducted in a developed country with working conditions for police officers different from those in Zimbabwe, a developing nation. Therefore, the present study will be carried out in Zimbabwe where stress causes might be different. This necessitates the need to conduct the present study to see if the results may be replicated.

Lily Chi-Fang Tsai *et. al.* (2018) conducted a study in New York on modelling job stress among police officers, the interplay of work environment, counselling, support and family discussion with co-workers. The study comprised 594 sworn police officers from 21 agencies in New York City. Results indicated that sex, race, education and tenure do not have a direct influence on job stress. In addition, both undesirable working environments and counselling support directly influence police total job stress.

However, this study was based on secondary data from the National Institute of Justice which examined only one time period (1995). Many changes have occurred since then and the study falls short of longitudinal studies to provide a more reliable understanding of the factors that influence job stress. The current study will use primary data gathered from the sample population. The research will also narrow down to the direct effects of counselling.

Sefotho and Seema (2020) conducted an exploratory study on utilising counselling services by police officers in the Lesotho MPS. The study investigated police officers' inclination to utilise counselling services. A descriptive survey method was used and the results were that officers perceived their workplace counselling services inaccessible due to lack of privacy as well as risks of stigmatisation for poor career prospects. However, the results cannot be generalised as it was carried out in a specialised section (the Lesotho Mounted Unit). Different results might be achieved if a mixed methodological approach is used instead of only the descriptive survey.

On the other hand, Diphorn, (2020) conducted a study in Kenya to examine the availability and effectiveness of counselling programmes in the Kenyan Police Service. A descriptive research approach was adopted in the study by Sefotho and Seema (2020). The target were police officers who had served 10 years or more in different police stations in Nairobi. The results indicated that accessibility of employee counselling programmes in the Kenya National Police Service was minimal and the attitudes of police officers towards counselling are principally negative.

Manhema (2014) carried out a study on the effects of occupational stress on the performance of members of the police service in Bulawayo West Police District. The researcher utilised questionnaires to gather data. The study established that the police job is highly stressful and counselling was proffered as an intervention to reduce work-related stress. The research does not determine the direct relationship between stress and counselling which the current study seeks to address.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a mixed research approach. Questionnaires were distributed to police officers of rank of inspector and below and interviews conducted with members at ZRP Waterfalls. A sample size of 60 police officers was used which was determined using the Yamane 1967 approach. Stratified random sampling was used for quantitative data and convenience sampling for qualitative data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### CAUSES OF WORK-RELATED STRESS (N=60)

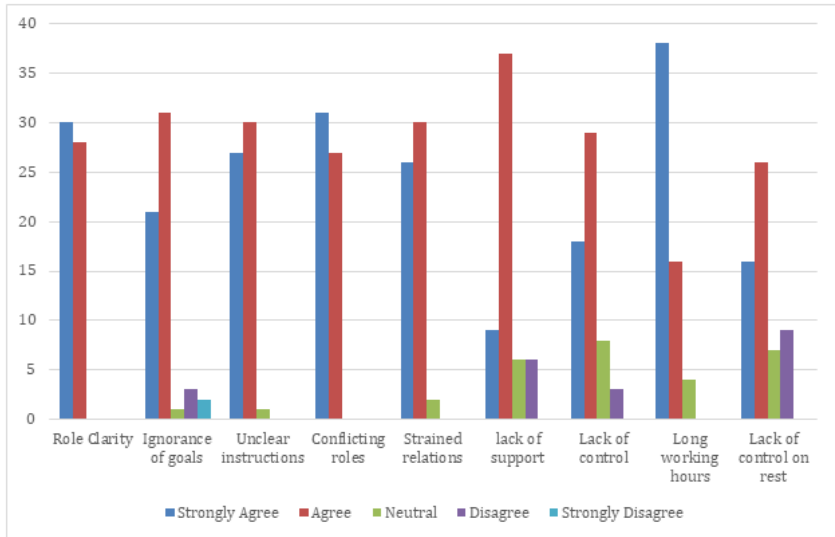


Figure 2: Responses on causes of work-related stress (Researchers, 2022)

#### **ROLE CLARITY**

The majority of respondents concurred on the view that lack of role clarity causes work-related stress. This points to the fact that lack of clarity on how to get the work done is among the leading causes of stress on police officers. The results are in sync with the view by Chikwem (2017), who postulated that some causes of operational stress among police officers include operational assignments to protect life, rescuing accident victims, performing conflicting roles and risky duties.

#### **IGNORANCE OF GOALS**

Figure 2 depicts that respondents agree and strongly agree that ignorance of work-related goals causes stress in workplaces. A smaller fraction of the respondents were in disagreement. The results show that if an employee is not aware of goals and yet he is expected to achieve the goals, the result is stress since he will be working towards an unknown objective. He cannot plan his work and may not know the priorities of his work. This view was supported by Hunters *et al.* (2017) who observed that supervisor behaviours such as lack of structure and unclear goals produce stress and strain among employees.

### ***UNCLEAR INSTRUCTIONS***

The research gathered that most of the respondents were in agreement with the view that ambiguous instructions can result in stress. Almost all (98%) of respondents concurred with this view and only 2% disagreed. Michie (2002) also found that performing blurred tasks or incompatible roles can result in stress. The results thus depict that if the instructions are not clear, work may be done wrongly. This may require the employee to redo the task thereby increasing the pressure of work.

### ***CONFLICTING ROLES***

All the respondents agree and strongly agree with the idea that conflicting roles contribute to work-related stress. The fact that 100% of respondents agreed that assigning conflicting roles to police officers causes stress makes it one of the leading causes. Generally, police work is stressful but the stress increases when one is assigned conflicting roles. Due to lack of personnel at the station, members may be required to do investigations, operations as well as patrols which are all demanding tasks. The police officer will get stressed as he tries to balance the tasks. The view is in sync with the proposition by Setda (2019), who said that the existence of role conflict causes work stress and hinders the performance of employees.

### ***STRAINED WORK RELATIONS***

of the Respondents agreed that strained work relations result in work-related stress (97%). However, only two respondents were neutral. The results show that if employee relations are strained, the work environment is also tense. They may not share their work challenges. The result will be stress and burnout. In support of this view, Mushwana *et al.* (2019) postulated that poor interpersonal relationships was among the organisational causes of stress.

### ***LACK OF SUPPORT FROM COLLEAGUES***

A major fraction of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that lack of support from colleagues causes work-related stress. There were a notable number of those who disagreed with the idea that lack of support from colleagues caused stress and 11% were indifferent. The data collected depicted that police officers' perception of the connection between lack of support and stress varied by individuals, with the majority agreeing that lack of support causes stress. Harmsen *et al.* (2018) on the same note posited that highly demanding jobs, absence of support, inadequate opportunities for learning and poor employee working environments contribute to stress.

### ***LONG WORKING HOURS***

It was gathered that 93% of the respondents were in agreement with the idea that long working hours result in work-related stress. The findings are in sync with Anbazhagan *et al.*, (2013), Trivellasaet *et al.* (2013); and the ILO (2016) who perceived that job

security, time pressure, long working hours, inadequate training and misuse of power causes stress.

***LACK OF CONTROL OVER REST AND PACE OF WORK***

Most of the respondents agree and strongly agree that lack of control over rest and pace of work contribute to work-related stress. A smaller population of the respondents were either neutral or in disagreement with the idea. To buttress these findings, the ILO (2016) viewed that time pressure was among the causes of stress among employees.

**EFFECTS OF WORK-RELATED STRESS**

**Table 2: Effects of work-related stress (n=60) (Researchers, 2022)**

Effects	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Failure to meet targets	20	29	5	4	-
Neglect some tasks due to pressure	15	34	3	6	
Anger/Friction with colleagues	30	26	2	-	-
Poor quality results	18	40	-	-	-
High error rate	33	25	-	-	-
Anti-social personality disorder	13	39	4	2	-
Depression	41	17	-	-	-

***FAILURE TO MEET TARGETS***

Table 2 depicts that most of the respondents had a view that work-related stress leads to employees failing to meet targets. This means that when employees are stressed, their performance decreases and targets are not met.

***NEGLECT SOME TASKS DUE TO PRESSURE***

More than half of the sampled population positively considers that neglect of some tasks due to pressure is a result of stress at workplaces. However, an insignificant proportion was either neutral or disagreed with the same view.

***ANGER/FRICTION WITH COLLEAGUES***

Most of the respondents concurred with the view that anger or friction amongst colleagues is caused by work-related stress.

### **POOR QUALITY RESULTS**

All the respondents perceived that work-related stress leads to poor results. This shows that it is a leading cause of stress among police officers at ZRP Waterfalls.

### **HIGH ERROR RATE**

More than 50% of the respondents concurred that a high error rate is the effect of work-related stress. The rest agreed to the same phenomenon and none had neutral, disagree or strongly disagree ideas.

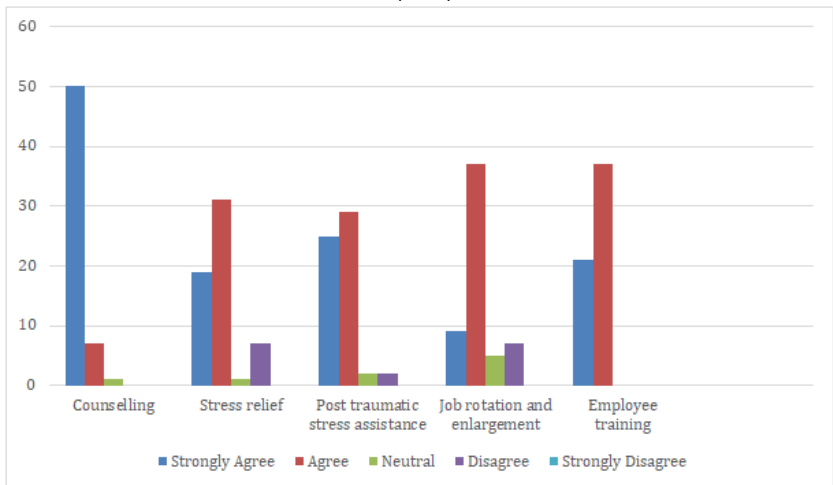
### **ANTI-SOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER**

The majority of the respondents agreed, with some strongly agreeing, that anti-social personality disorder is the effect of work-related stress. However, a marginal proportion had either a neutral view or disagreed.

### **DEPRESSION**

NONE of the respondents had different views.

### **WAYS TO REDUCE WORK-RELATED STRESS (N-60)**



**Figure 3:** Ways to reduce work-related stress (Researcher, 2022)

### **COUNSELLING**

The majority of respondents agreed that counselling can remedy work-related stress. Holman *et al.* (2018) classified Stress Management Interventions following the focus of stress management and the level at which the intervention takes place. He cited counselling as a tertiary intervention to stress as it seeks to re-orient or revamp those



who have already been affected by stress and are reeling from psychological frailty. The results thus show that counselling stressed police officers should be prioritised to minimise the impact of stress on members.

### ***STRESS RELIEF PROGRAMMES (LEAVE AND TIME OFF)***

Most of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that stress relief programmes such as leave and time off can help to solve stress among employees. However, a marginal figure had a neutral view or disagreed with the above as a remedy to work-related stress. The results of this study are supported by Greeshman *et al.* (2018) who postulate that it is important for organisations to conduct some stress relief programmes such as providing employees with adequate breaks from work as a means to reduce fatigue. Giving time off to employees may help to refresh their minds.

### ***POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS ASSISTANCE***

The majority of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that post-traumatic stress assistance can contribute to mitigating work-related stress. A few had either neutral or disagreed with the same idea. Sanchez (2021) noted that police officers are required to encounter traumatic events daily due to the nature of their profession, hence the need for post-traumatic stress assistance.

### ***JOB ROTATION AND ENLARGEMENT***

Almost two-thirds of the sampled population agreed that job rotation and enlargement is another way of reducing work-related stress while several strongly agreed. Very few had a neutral view or disagreed. This view was supported by Kempkotter *et al.* (2018) who found that working can be made more interesting by adopting job rotation. Boredom, wearisomeness or exhaustion associated with higher stress levels are reduced.

### ***EMPLOYEE TRAINING***

The respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that employment training reduces work-related stress. None had other views. This shows the importance of training in reducing stress. Stogner *et al.* (2020) agree that police training has the potential to promote resilience to reduce stress.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that work-related stress is a common phenomenon among police officers. The major causes of police work stress emanate from the nature of police work and lack of clarity on how the work should be accomplished. It can also be concluded that apart from counselling, allowing employees to take time off or leave and equipping them with the requisite knowledge about their work are necessary stress management interventions. The research

concluded that lack of role clarity, long working hours, unclear instructions, ignorance of work goals, conflicting roles and lack of support and control over work are all causes of work-related stress. As such, the leading causes were lack of role clarity and conflicting roles to which all respondents agreed.

In light of these conclusions, it is recommended that the ZRP needs to train more counsellors that must be posted in all police stations to offer quality counselling services. The police can also consider outsourcing counselling services to professional counsellors to reduce current levels of stress among police officers. Also, it is recommended that regular training be carried out for all police officers, particularly supervisors so that they give unambiguous instructions which have been identified as a source of stress. The current research has not been exhaustive in all aspects of employee motivation through counselling. Further research on how to improve the morale of ZRP members in times of distress such as COVID-19 pandemic, which claimed the lives of several police officers, must be carried. Also, further research must be conducted at the provincial level or national level to avoid generalised results as those gotten from a specific police station, in this instance, ZRP Waterfalls.

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