

Glimpse from the hats: Mental health issues of PNP personnel

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Abstract

Increased workload to PNP personnel, particularly during the pandemic, may lead to stress and exhaustion, affecting their mental health. This research study aims to explore the mental health issues and perceptions of PNP personnel during the pandemic, aiming to identify and address their stress-related experiences. By seeking help when experiencing stress, effective interventions can help personnel cope with the pandemic's effects. By involving personnel with the knowledge and capability to assess and address stress-related problems, researcher can extend and provide support to the personnel. Twelve (12) police officers took part in the research. The Colaizzi method, which is referred to as the rigorous and qualitative method, was employed by the researcher to identify, comprehend, characterize, and illustrate the participant experiences. It is also employed to extract the phenomena under study's experience. Significant themes and sub-themes that outlined the duties of police officers, their mental health state, the challenges and struggles they faced, and potential interventions to address their mental health concerns emerged from the data analysis. Mental health training is crucial for the police workforce, as it affects performance, communication, and safety. It helps officers cope with stress, learn, and work well in their duties. Mental health awareness and support are vital during the pandemic, as it helps them withstand pressure, interact with people, and make decisions. Despite some mental health issues, policemen are content with the services and support provided. They agree that mental health awareness is essential, and that management should support colleagues. Police personnel should prioritize work-life balance, providing support and time for families. Regular mental health assessments, mentoring, counseling, and monitoring performance for those police officers with mental health issues are essential to be able to render their duties effectively and efficiently.

Keywords: mental health, police management

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1. Introduction

Health, according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 1973), is "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity". This is a very vital component of human life in which it sometimes determines whether an individual can live longer or not and also reflects how an individual takes care of his/her body. There are many aspects of health including physical, mental, emotional and even social. Each of these aspects contributes to an individual's wellness and overall quality of life. Mental health is one of the major aspects of a person's overall health. Mental health is crucial for individuals to handle life's challenges, reach their full potential, work efficiently, and contribute to the community. It supports decision-making, relationship-building, and societal impact, ensuring overall well-being. Furthermore, it is necessary for socioeconomic, communal, and individual development. (WHO, June 2022). Mental health is an important factor in being a police officer. As members of the Philippine National Police (PNP), they are mandated to enforce the law, prevent and control crimes, maintain peace and order, ensure public safety and internal security with the active support of the community. Moreover, additional duties were added to these main functions when the pandemic started. Rendering these duties and responsibilities requires police officers to have a healthy mental health to enable them to work effectively and efficiently. A healthy mental health will also help them to cope with the day-to-day stress and pressure brought by the increased workload.

As the Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic arises in 2020, many of us have been inflicted with the virus that made us not only physically ill but also affecting our mental health. Not only individuals were being affected and inflicted by the virus that causes COVID-19 but also organizations, businesses and other entities that bring services to the public. As to our organization, the Philippine National Police (PNP), they served as one of the frontliners during this pandemic conducting not only law enforcement services but also COVID-related duties and responsibilities in line with the Minimum Public Health Standards (MPHS) and Inter-Agency Taskforce Guidelines in relation with the COVID-19 response. Police officers were one of the front liners during pandemic and community health depended heavily on their readiness as they faced the COVID-19 public health emergency head-on. When the pandemic first started, not much was known about how police officers saw the virus or how police departments trained officers to operate in a highly infectious setting (Helfers et al. 2022). Philippine National Police (PNP) personnel were tasked to implement guidelines of the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) in line with the COVID-19 response. Other personnel who have medical-related courses were tasked to render services such as conducting COVID-19 Tests like Real-Time Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) Test, Rapid Antibody Test and Rapid Antigen Test. They were also tasked to conduct COVID-19 vaccination not only to PNP personnel but also to the community belonging to different categories.

As these duties and responsibilities are being rendered by PNP personnel, both operational and public safety, these may affect not only their physical health but also their mental health. This occurrence may have the effect of stress and exhaustion on our personnel which may lead to affecting their mental health. In our current situation, an increase in workload and responsibility to police officers may cause stress that can further affect their ability to function and deliver tasks given to them. Police officers' work may be significantly impacted by organizational pressures in addition to job-related stress (Otto et al. 2022). Thus, this research study aims to explore the mental health issues of PNP personnel and to understand the perceptions and stress-related experiences of PNP personnel during pandemic. By identifying and determining these effects through research, the study can help address their problems in terms of how they think, how they feel and how they can cope with what they are going through. Seeking help when experiencing stress is important. However, acknowledging that a person needs help to address his/her stress can be challenging. In this research, researcher can address the matter in terms of proper and applicable interventions. Effective interventions may help the personnel cope with

mental health effects of pandemic and related events. They can seek help from personnel that have the knowledge and capability of assessing and addressing stress-related problems and they may be able to extend and give help to our personnel. Mental health is really an important aspect of an individual's overall health because this can help our ability to properly function each day. If an individual has a healthy mental health, he/she can be physically healthy, can cope with stresses of life, can have good relationships with others and can deliver and work productively and efficiently.

Objectives of the Study - This study aimed to explore the mental health issues of PNP personnel and to understand the perceptions and stress-related experiences of PNP personnel during pandemic.

Theoretical Framework - Tidal Model of Mental Health Recovery begins with the process of engagement with the patient through accepting their needs. Exploring the different dimensions to increase awareness of the current situation and determine what needs to occur. This gives emphasis on making people feel more secure and developing plans to help reduce threats to the patient or those around him. Moreover, this draws on values about relating to people and helping others in their moments of distress. It offers a framework for care practice that facilitates the assessment of a patient's needs and the creation of individualized care plans. Three domains are used in the process of engaging with the patient: the self, the world, and others. The self-domain is where people sense their universe of experiences. The nurse investigates these dimensions to raise awareness of the situation in the present and ascertain what needs to happen at that precise moment. The global domain is where the patient keeps his or her story. This involves an emphasis on helping individuals feel safer, and the nurse assists the patient in creating a security strategy to reduce dangers to the patient or those around him or her. In order to jointly examine the tale and uncover any hidden meanings, as well as the patient's resources, the nurse employs a particular type of inquiry to determine what steps should be taken to aid in the patient's recovery. The patient's history, present, and future relationships are represented by the other domain. This includes the nurse, in addition to other healthcare team members, friends, relatives, and more allies. According to the notion, each person's unique life experiences—such as their sense of self, perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors—have an impact on their mental health.



Figure 1. Tidal Model of Mental Health Recovery

2. Methods

Research Design - This study utilized Descriptive-Phenomenological Qualitative Research Design which seeks to collect information that explains how individuals experience a phenomenon and how they feel about that certain phenomenon. This is also a way to understand subjective experiences and to gain knowledge from participants' insights. This study is primarily designed to explore the mental health issues of PNP personnel and to understand the perceptions and stress-related experiences of PNP personnel during pandemic that may further

affect their mental health brought by additional duties and responsibilities in line with the COVID-19 and application of interventions on how they can adapt or cope in these stress-related effects.

Setting and Participants - This study was conducted in four (4) city police stations of Batangas Police Provincial Office (BPPO) namely Batangas City Police Station, Tanauan City Police Station, Lipa City Police Station and Sto Tomas City Police Station. These police stations were selected since the number of personnel stationed is higher compared to other municipalities. Further, these are highly populated and dense where police officers must render their duties and responsibilities with a larger area of responsibility. This study utilized twelve (12) PNP personnel who agreed to participate designated as Assistant Intelligence-Administration Police Non-Commissioned Officer (PNCO), Intelligence PNCO, Police Community Affairs and Development Unit (PCADU) PNCO, member of Warrant and Subpoena Section, Intelligence-Research PNCO, member of Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD), Physical Fitness and Sports Section (PFSS) PNCO and Receiving PNCO. They were selected based on their operational duties regardless of age, gender, length of service and rank.

Sampling Technique - The researcher utilized the Purposeful Sampling Technique which involves selecting participants who can provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under study. In this case, participants of this research study were those police officers who rendered administration and operational duties with additional COVID-related tasks and duties during pandemic.

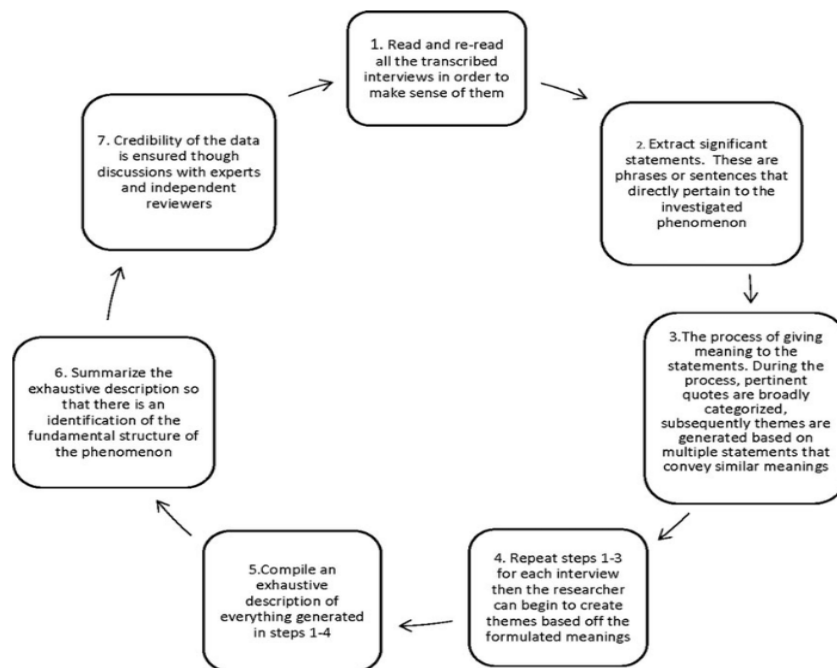
Instrument of the Study - This study utilized Semi Structured Interview as the research instrument for this study. This type of interview allows the interviewer to delve deeper into specific themes or responses while also providing a pre-planned set of open-ended questions. The questions were formulated based on the objective of the research study that will determine mental health issues of PNP personnel and to understand the perceptions and stress-related experiences of PNP personnel during pandemic that may further affect their mental health and to identify how they can adapt or cope to these effects. The questions consisted of indicators that explore if there are any stress-related effects to police officers brought by stress related to work and increased workload due to pandemic that may further affect their mental health.

Data Gathering Procedures - The researcher prepared interview-guide questions to get data/information to the participants. The face-to-face interview lasted for about ten (10) to fifteen (15) minutes for each participant to include an introduction, the purpose of the interview and the research study and gave them an informed consent as to make their participation in the interview voluntary. The set of questions/statements indicated were formulated in accordance with the relevance to the objective of the research study. Permission to gather data among the participants was ensured before the actual conduct of the interview giving them the assurance in the application of strict confidentiality with regards to their information and responses. A total of twelve (12) police officers participated in the face-to-face interview wherein as a result of data saturation, enough data has been provided by the participants with the same themes, ideas and opinions came out repeatedly through the course of the interview.

Ethical Consideration - Every research study has its corresponding ethical consideration which is a set of principles that guide the researcher's research design and practice. This research study requires participation of PNP personnel from different city and municipal police stations within Batangas PPO thus adherence to certain code of conduct is a must when collecting data from the respondents. This principle also helps protect the rights of the respondents as they participate in this research study and makes sure that their participation is voluntary, informed and that the respondents are safe. If the respondents voluntarily participated, they have the option to withdraw their participation at any given time. They will be informed of the purpose, background and risks of the study to be conducted before they decide to participate in the research study. Furthermore, the respondents' data will be treated with strict confidentiality; not disclosing their basic information and other pertinent data.

Data Analysis - The study utilized twelve (12) Police personnel who participated. Using the Colaizzi method, which is known as the rigorous and qualitative method, the researcher used to find, understand, describe,

and depict the experiences of the participants. It is also used to uncover the experience of the phenomenon under investigation. This includes a seven-step method for data analysis:



3. Results and discussions

The study utilized 12 Police personnel who participated from different sections of the 5 city police stations designated as Assistant Intelligence-Administration Police Non-Commissioned Officer (PNCO), Intelligence PNCO, Police Community Affairs and Development Unit (PCADU) PNCO, member of Warrant and Subpoena Section, Intelligence-Research PNCO, member of Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD), Physical Fitness and Sports Section (PFSS) PNCO and Receiving PNCO. Using the Colaizzi method which is known as the rigorous and qualitative method the researcher used to find, understand, describe and depict the experiences of the participants, It is also used to uncover the experience of the phenomenon under investigation.

Theme 1. Police Officers' Roles

Police officers' roles vary depending on the specific jurisdiction and department they serve in. Police officers play a crucial role in promoting community engagement and trust through initiatives such as community policing programs and outreach events. Additionally, they may collaborate with other law enforcement agencies to share information and resources in order to effectively combat organized crime and address larger-scale criminal activities. Additionally, police officers often engage in community outreach efforts, such as educating the public on crime prevention and participating in community events. Overall, police officers play a critical role in maintaining peace and order, protecting individual rights, and promoting a safe and secure environment for all citizens.

Sub-Theme 1: Law Implementer - Police officers as law implementers are responsible for maintaining peace and order within the community. They enforce laws, investigate crimes, and protect citizens from harm. In addition to their traditional roles, modern police officers also play a crucial role in building trust and fostering positive relationships with the community they serve. By engaging in community outreach programs and being accessible to the public, they strive to create a safer and more harmonious society for everyone.

Participant 5 (Police Staff Sergeant) said “*I am tasked to ensure the timely submission of reports regarding intelligence and counterintelligence concerns. I am also tasked to ensure the safety and safety of vital installations and PNP organizational security within our area of responsibility together with my other team members*”. Along with the mentioned participants, Participants 6 and 7 were working in the same field and discussed that “*As a counterintelligence officer, I am tasked to ensure timely submission of compliance regarding intelligence and counterintelligence operations to ensure personnel, vital and PNP installation, and PNP organization security within our area of responsibility*”. The law enforcement community views officers as law enforcers, but the majority of an officer's time is spent on non-law enforcement duties. The focus on crime control and peacekeeping/order maintenance is gaining traction in contemporary society. While both the public and police officers emphasize the crime control role, duties like arrests and citations make up less than 30% of an officer's daily responsibilities, reflecting a shift towards increasing police legitimacy and community relations. Particularly in the age of community policing, the more routine peacekeeping function characterizes an ordinary officer's day.

Sub-Theme 2: Stringent Educator - The role of a police officer extends beyond just enforcing laws and maintaining order in the community. They also serve as stringent educators, ensuring that citizens are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities. Through community outreach programs and educational initiatives, police officers aim to empower individuals with the knowledge and understanding necessary to make informed decisions and contribute positively to society. By providing resources and guidance, police officers play a crucial role in promoting a safe and law-abiding community.

Participant 9 claimed “*I am designated as PCR member of Batangas City police station and our role in the organization focuses more on interacting with the Community by conducting outreach programs, bloodletting, tree planting, barangay and school visitations and many more.*”. Further, Participant 10 and 12 were both PCR NCO who claimed that their responsibility is to bridge the gap between the Community and the police by winning their hearts and minds through an information campaign about the plans, programs and activities of the police that will have a positive impact on their lives such as the delivery of basic services that the community needed.

Police executive boards and governmental institutions are regarded as the main bodies that establish the parameters of the training program that police instructors follow. Both local and remote resources, such as staff, equipment, facilities, and training time, are governed by these administrative frameworks. The findings show that police instructors are passionate about teaching, creating supportive learning environments, and incorporating their own perspectives into training, despite limitations in resources and pre-established frameworks, but they face criticisms about the quality of their training (Kleygrewe et al. 2022).

Sub-Theme 3: Engaged Authority - They are responsible for enforcing laws, apprehending criminals, and ensuring the safety of the public. Police officers undergo rigorous training to develop their skills in conflict resolution, communication, and critical thinking. They work tirelessly to protect and serve their communities, often putting their own lives at risk to maintain peace and justice. Their commitment to upholding the law and protecting citizens is crucial in maintaining a safe and secure society.

As per Participant 2, “*the main role and responsibilities of PCADU PNCO is to ensure the participation of the community in the programs and policies of the PNP. However, in relation to the current undertakings of the PNP to establish a drug-free community, PCADU personnel are tasked to monitor persons who used illegal drugs and voluntarily surrendered to the PNP to ensure their continuous rehabilitation and help them to avoid relapse on drugs by promoting meaningful community activities, self-care, and balance life*”.

The police's mission includes protecting internal security, quelling disturbances, and fostering community relations. They also uphold the rule of law, respect human rights, and maintain good community relations. However, human rights violations, police brutality, misconduct, corruption, and crime can persist in industrialized nations, damaging police departments' reputations. Therefore, it is crucial for police departments

to have robust systems in place to prevent and address such issues promptly. Transparency, accountability, and regular training programs can help ensure that police officers uphold the highest standards of professionalism and integrity, fostering public trust and confidence in law enforcement agencies. (Singh 2022).

Theme 2. Mental Health of a Police Officer

According to their job descriptions, police are normally in charge of upholding law and order, protecting the public, and stopping, identifying, and looking into illegal activity. They refer to individuals who are legally qualified to uphold law and order as members of a public organization. They play a crucial role in responding to emergencies, resolving conflicts, and apprehending individuals who pose a threat to society. Additionally, their presence serves as a deterrent to potential criminal activities, promoting a sense of security within communities. The study explored the mental health of policemen in relation to their duties and responsibilities as law enforcers. It is true that all participants claimed that Mental Health gives a significant effect on their duties and responsibilities as law enforcers.

Mental health of a police officer is a crucial aspect that often goes overlooked. The nature of their job exposes them to traumatic events and high levels of stress on a regular basis. This can take a toll on their mental well-being and lead to conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. It is important for police departments to prioritize the mental health of their officers and provide them with adequate resources and support to cope with the challenges they face. Regular mental health check-ins, therapy, and peer support programs can greatly contribute to ensuring the overall well-being of police officers and enhancing their ability to serve and protect their communities effectively.

Sub-Theme 1: Hard Hat (Physical Stamina and Resilience) - Physical stamina and resiliency of police officers when it comes to mental health are crucial for their overall well-being and ability to effectively perform their duties. The demands of the job, including exposure to traumatic events and high-stress situations, can take a toll on an officer's mental health. Therefore, it is important for police departments to prioritize and provide adequate resources for mental health support, such as counseling services and wellness programs, to ensure officers can maintain their physical stamina and resilience in the face of adversity. This not only helps protect the officers' mental well-being but also enhances their ability to serve and protect the community. Participants 1 and 2 discussed that the nature of the work environment of police officers often affects their mental well-being. For police officers to be resilient, effective, and capable of carrying out their tasks, they must pay attention to their mental health because police officers are at high-risk of developing mental illness, from physical activity to psychological threats in the organization and the community.

An officer's physical health can be severely impacted by reacting to high-stress events, which can lead to persistent discomfort, injuries, and tiredness. Burnout and increased absenteeism rates can result from long hours, shift work, and a lack of breaks. Giving police officers access to regular physical training programs and tools is one way to handle these physical demands. They may increase their strength and stamina, lower their chance of being hurt, and enhance their general health and well-being by doing this. Additionally, limiting the harmful impacts of long hours and shift work can be accomplished by offering chances for rest and recuperation, such as frequent breaks and enough time off.

The officers' ability to identify and control their reactions to stressors in both personal and professional settings was enhanced by the resilience-building training. Comparing the officers to a control group, the officers reported lower levels of stress, depressive symptoms, negative emotions, and greater vitality and tranquility. There have also been improvements in family relationships, increased cooperation and communication in work teams, and improved work output. Police organizations might greatly benefit from training in resilience building and self-regulation abilities as it can enhance decision making and judgment while lowering the risk of on-the-job driving accidents and the use of excessive force in stressful situations. Reduced organizational liabilities, fewer citizen complaints, fewer litigation, and an improvement in community safety are possible results.

The multiple acute and chronic stresses of police employment place a heavy load on physical and psychological health in the absence of good self-regulation, which can have a number of detrimental physiological, emotional, and behavioral effects. Programs that aim to promote organizational fairness are among the potential approaches to better mental health. Programs could include training for supervisors on effective communication and conflict resolution, as well as implementing transparent and unbiased promotion processes. By addressing concerns of unfair treatment and fostering a supportive work environment, police departments can promote better mental health among their officers. Ultimately, prioritizing organizational fairness can lead to increased job satisfaction, improved morale, and ultimately better performance in law enforcement agencies (Stogner et al. 2020).

Sub-Theme 2: Cushioned Protection (Coping Stressful Life) - Coping stressful life of police officers can be challenging and can take a toll on their mental and emotional well-being. It is crucial for police officers to have effective coping mechanisms in place to manage the high levels of stress they face on a daily basis. From participating in regular physical exercise and engaging in hobbies to seeking support from colleagues or professional therapists, finding healthy ways to decompress and process the demands of their job is essential for maintaining their overall well-being. Additionally, police departments should prioritize providing resources and support systems to ensure that officers have the necessary tools and assistance to navigate the unique stressors they encounter in their line of work. Participants 3 and 5 both agreed that *“Mental health should be a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with stresses of life. Like in our line of service, there are lots of stressful situations that we can encounter so as to cope and overcome those stresses or challenges, our mental health should be in a healthy and well state so that we can work productively”*.

The police have been involved in preserving public order and social security in order to preserve societal stability. Because of this, police personnel might feel more negative emotions, which could result in more serious mental health problems. There has been focus on the critical role that police personnel' mental health plays. Additionally, police officers had to assist the health administration with additional police work. The more stress and risk a police officer perceives at work, the more detrimental effects this has on their mental health. Moreover, it is imperative to prioritize the enhancement and development of awareness of mental health screening among law enforcement personnel. Legislators and social psychology health care providers ought to build an internal team to handle mental health issues and provide guidance on creative ways to manage stress.

Sub-Theme 3: Strap of Sanity (Support Groups) - Support groups play a crucial role in maintaining the mental health of police officers. These groups provide a safe space for officers to share their experiences, challenges, and concerns with others who can relate to their unique profession. Being able to connect with peers who understand the stresses and traumas of police work can help officers feel understood and validated, reducing feelings of isolation and promoting psychological well-being. Additionally, support groups can offer coping strategies, resources, and professional guidance to help officers effectively manage stress, prevent burnout, and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

As per Participant 6 *“In my opinion, this is significant since it will enable us to cope with the stress of life, learn well and work well in our line of duty. Mental health awareness and support for PNP personnel is vital, particularly during the pandemic, because this time of crisis it helps determine how we handles stress, relate to others and make choices”* and for Participant 11 *“I believe mental health is very important and plays a vital role in the life of police officer. It is important to note that police officers have relatively high stressor due to the nature of the job. Having solid support to cope with the stresses of life and work is one key to be able to continue with whatever difficulties that may come”*. In these support groups, officers can learn techniques for self-care and stress management, such as mindfulness exercises and relaxation techniques. They can also receive guidance on seeking professional help, such as therapy or counseling, if needed. Moreover, support groups can serve as a platform for discussing strategies to improve departmental policies and practices that may contribute to stress and mental health issues. By addressing these systemic issues, support groups can contribute to the overall well-being of police officers and help create a healthier and more supportive work environment.

Additionally, by normalizing conversations around mental health within law enforcement, the stigma can be broken down; that often prevents officers from seeking help. This can lead to increased awareness and proactive steps towards addressing mental health issues before they escalate. Moreover, investing in mental health resources for police officers can also contribute to reducing burnout and turnover rates within the profession, ensuring a more stable and experienced workforce. Ultimately, by supporting the well-being of police officers, everyone can foster a culture of compassion and empathy that not only benefits the officers themselves but also strengthens the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Officers who serve and protect the public run a serious risk of suffering physical or mental injuries. At crime scenes, police officers deal with a wide range of scenarios involving abuse, violence, and murder. There are other aspects of police work that are also taxing, such as the threats that come with apprehending violent offenders. Repeated exposure to these stressors and events may be associated with the development of mental illnesses, such as anxiety, depression, somatization, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and burnout. Officers can concentrate more on their work and the likelihood of mental health problems is decreased when they have peace of mind.

Theme 3: Interventions to Mental Health Issues

Interventions to mental health issues of police officers are crucial for ensuring the well-being of these individuals who face high levels of stress and trauma on a daily basis. Implementing therapy programs specifically tailored for police officers can help them address and manage the unique challenges they face in their line of work. Additionally, providing comprehensive mental health resources and support networks within police departments can encourage officers to seek help when needed and reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health treatment. By prioritizing the mental health of police officers, everyone can contribute to creating a healthier and more resilient police force, ultimately benefiting both the officers themselves and the communities they serve. Stress can often go unrecognized, leading to constant stress and a lack of seeking treatment. Officers may deny their stress for fear of being viewed as weak or incapable of handling their job. Management plays a vital role in protecting the interest of the service and its manpower. For that reason, the study had the extracts on this matter.

Sub-Theme 1: Spiritual wellness - This can play a crucial role in supporting their overall well-being. Incorporating spiritual practices such as meditation, mindfulness, and prayer can help officers find solace and inner peace amid the high-stress nature of their work. These interventions can provide a sense of purpose, meaning, and connection, allowing officers to better cope with the challenges they face and improve their mental health. By addressing the spiritual dimension of their well-being, police departments can promote a holistic approach to mental wellness and support the overall resilience of their officers. Ways on how to address mental health issues spiritually include practicing mindfulness and meditation, seeking guidance from a trusted spiritual leader or mentor, engaging in prayer or religious rituals, and connecting with a supportive community of like-minded individuals. Additionally, exploring and embracing one's personal beliefs and values can provide a sense of purpose and meaning, which can greatly contribute to mental well-being. By nurturing the spiritual aspect of oneself, individuals can find solace, inner peace, and a renewed sense of hope, ultimately aiding in the journey towards improved mental health.

Participant 3 cited that, *“Our station conducts police information and continuing education to address personal issues and concerns. We also meet with pastors on a weekly basis for spiritual guidance. We have open communication in our station where even our personal concerns are discussed and addressed”*. Participants 4 and 9 highlighted the spiritual program conducted by the PNP which are My Brother’s Keeper and Squad Weekly Interactive Meeting (SWIM) to further address the issues on mental health of PNP personnel.

In a variety of contexts, spirituality has been recognized as a useful tool for those attempting to control symptoms associated with stress. The concept of spirituality given in this phenomenological research is "a state or experience that can provide individuals with direction or meaning, or provide feelings of understanding,

support, inner wholeness or connectedness," yet there is no one "universally" recognized definition of spirituality. The views of police officers on the relationship between work performance and the use of spirituality to handle high job demands and occupational stress. The fact that law enforcement personnel frequently put their lives in danger while doing their duties suggests that these duties involve some element of spirituality (Robinson 2019).

Sub-Theme 2: Mental health wellness - This is crucially important in ensuring their overall well-being and the effectiveness of their duty. Recognizing the tremendous stressors and traumatic experiences that police officers face daily, it is essential to implement comprehensive mental health wellness programs specifically tailored to their needs. These programs should not only focus on reducing stigma around seeking help but also provide accessible resources and support networks to address the unique psychological challenges that come with their line of work. By prioritizing mental health wellness for police officers, everyone can create a more resilient and mentally healthy law enforcement community, ultimately benefiting both the officers themselves and the communities they serve.

Participants 1, 2 and 11 shared that the police station management is committed to addressing mental health issues through initiatives such as allowing personnel to undergo mental health training, access to mental health and having a confidential point of contact for employees who they think are having difficulties in performing their tasks to discuss concerns, thereby increasing the station & awareness and openness. As to participants 5 and 12, they have mentioned about the counseling being given by such a unit who has the authority to do so saying that *"The PNP has a designated office or section, which is the neuropsychiatric section that may address or manage mental health issues of its personnel. Personnel can seek counseling to this section through telephone call or even face to face counseling"* and *"So the present management addresses the mental health issues by giving access to all its personnel of the possible interventions such as mental health seminar, psychosocial support and counseling by the RMDU4A"* respectively. Participant 6 cited that *"BANTAY KAISIPAN program and conduct of anger management seminar, which supports the mental health of the PNP personnel"*.

Law enforcement leadership plays a crucial role in fostering a mental health and wellbeing environment for officers. Policies, practices, and procedures should consider mental health, allowing for access to mental health care when necessary. Organizational leadership should promote mental health, encourage conversations, and foster a sense of community. This can help officers develop camaraderie, prioritize mental health, and deal with job effects. However, the unique challenges of law enforcement, perceived lack of support, stigma, and lack of knowledge about mental health can contribute to officer stress. These factors can make it difficult for officers to seek help and may lead to the development of mental health issues. To address these challenges, it is important for law enforcement agencies to provide comprehensive training on mental health awareness and support, as well as establish confidential and easily accessible resources for officers to seek assistance. Additionally, implementing regular mental health check-ins and creating a culture that values emotional well-being can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health in law enforcement.

Sub-Theme 3: Social cohesiveness - One useful solution for police personnel' mental health concerns is social cohesion. When police officers engaged in conflict with individuals suffering from mental illness, it was because of conduct they saw as unreasonable and illogical, such as physical and verbal abuse. Law enforcement personnel are susceptible to high blood pressure, sleeplessness, elevated levels of harmful stress hormones, cardiac issues, PTSD, and suicide due to the demands of their jobs. As a result, it is critical to promote greater mental health awareness and give law enforcement officers' mental health top priority. In conclusion, improving the identification of mental illnesses and particular communication may be achieved by cultivating a collaboration between the police and the mental health care system through training and education initiatives as well as regular police operations.

Participant 2 stated that *"I think it is important to create an anonymous feedback system where PNP personnel can provide feedback on their mental health and have their concerns addressed. Because there is still a stigma in our organization about seeking mental support. I think provide additional training to PNP personnel"*

on how to identify and address mental health issues. Increase access to mental health resources and we should encourage open communication and destigmatize mental health conversation, which I think will contribute to a healthier environment". As for Participant 11, "There are support system or resources within the PNP. But in my opinion, it is inadequate to support all PNP personnel". Moreover, for Participant 12, "The existing support system within the PNP that I know of are the services provided by RMDU4A such as the mental health seminar or the psychosocial support and counseling. But what is available to me specifically are those from my loved ones or trusted persons surrounding my environment". Peer support programs are quite lacking in the PNP which is intended to give police officers both practical and emotional help from their colleagues. Police can discuss their thoughts and experiences with other police who have gone through similar circumstances in this voluntary, confidential program. The program's objectives are to lessen the stigma attached to mental health problems and to motivate law enforcement to get assistance when necessary.

The rise in severe mental illnesses has led to police officers becoming first responders in crisis situations. They often play a crucial role in determining if a person with mental illness belongs in the criminal justice or mental health system. Inappropriate performance can lead to criminalization. Police may have to wait long for psychiatric emergency services, affecting their ability to perform other tasks. Their discretion in initiating contact with mental illness patients may be influenced by their own attitudes or beliefs. This highlights the importance of providing proper training and resources to police officers in order to effectively handle crisis situations involving individuals with mental illnesses.

Sub-Theme 4: Intellectual Enhancement - This can be a promising approach. By providing officers with opportunities to engage in activities that stimulate their intellectual capacity, such as attending educational workshops or participating in critical thinking exercises, it can help them develop a deeper understanding of their own emotions and thoughts. This can ultimately lead to better self-awareness and emotional regulation, enabling them to effectively cope with the stressful and traumatic experiences they encounter on the job. Additionally, intellectual enhancement can also promote more open communication and a supportive culture among fellow officers, creating a conducive environment for addressing mental health concerns and seeking help when needed.

Participant 3 cited that "Different programs are being implemented by the organization, such as Stress Management Seminar training to properly handle our stress. We also have Squad Weekly interactive meetings, or my brother's keeper to strengthen our spiritual beliefs". As to Participant 11, "They are conducting mental health awareness training and seminars to address these issues". Furthermore, Participant 12 cited that "So the present management addresses the mental health issues by giving access to all its personnel of the possible interventions such as mental health seminar, psychosocial support and counseling by the RMDU4A".

The next wave of interventions for individuals with mental illnesses in the police workforce should focus on improving procedural justice experiences, developing evidence through integrated data sets, and balancing case-based and place-based approaches, which must integrate into the police workplace system. These areas of concentration are essential for addressing the particular difficulties that people with mental illnesses in the police force encounter. It guarantees that everyone, including those with mental illnesses, receives fair and equitable treatment by enhancing procedural justice experiences. Furthermore, generating evidence from integrated data sets will support the development of successful plans and programs catered to the particular requirements of this population. Last but not least, achieving a balance between place-based and case-based strategies will guarantee that interventions are successful both individually and in building a welcoming and inclusive policy workplace culture.

Theme 4: Challenges and Struggles of Police Officers

The challenges and struggles of police officers include constantly putting their lives on the line to protect the community, dealing with high levels of stress and trauma, and facing increasing scrutiny and criticism from the public. Additionally, there were challenges during times of pandemic. Also, police officers must navigate complex legal and ethical dilemmas daily, making split-second decisions that could have long-lasting

consequences. Furthermore, they often work long hours, sacrificing personal time and family life to maintain public safety. Despite these challenges, police officers remain dedicated to upholding the law and serving their communities with integrity and compassion. Mental health in the workplace is a concern due to high costs of depression, anxiety, burnout, and suicide among police officers. Job stress has consistently increased in the last decade, negatively impacting both individuals and organizations. This chronic stress leads to poor mental health, decreased job performance, increased absenteeism, and strained relationships. The negative effects of job stress can also extend into personal life, affecting relationships and overall quality of life. Despite numerous studies on occupational stress and burnout among police officers, researchers often use instruments designed for other professional groups, which may not account for the unique challenges faced by police officers, such as emotional labor and physical risks. Therefore, developing specialized instruments to capture these challenges is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of occupational stress on police officers' well-being and guiding targeted interventions.

Sub-Theme 1: Piercing Flame - work load with longer hours of work - This can lead to fatigue, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction. This can further impact their mental and physical well-being, as well as their ability to effectively perform their duties. Additionally, the added pressure and demands can strain personal relationships and result in a higher risk of developing mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Therefore, it is crucial for police departments to prioritize work-life balance and provide adequate support systems to mitigate the negative effects of increased workload and longer hours on their officers.

Statement from Participant 5, *“Being inflicted by the COVID-19 and being away from their families were some of the challenges that police officers faced during pandemic. It was difficult to deal with it because while performing duties, we were risking our own health and cutting time to be with our families. Dealing with it with a positive mind and most importantly praying during those times is very significant for us to cope with these challenges”* and from Participant 6, *“Being away from their family while they are risking their lives and rendering services to the community. Dealing with it in a positive manner and praying is a significant factor for everyone to cope during those difficult times”*. Participant 10 cited that *“In my opinion, one of the biggest challenges that PNP personnel face during the pandemic is not being able to go home to their family due to exigency of duty. It is such a heartbreaking experience to be able to help other people overcome the stress they are dealing with at the expense of not being able to be there for your own family. However, as a police officer, we are taught and trained by the fact that the public interest comes first before anything else”*.

Front-line staff members, particularly physicians, paramedics, and law enforcement officers, have been subjected to significant health hazards, psychological discomfort, and work-related stress since the COVID-19 epidemic. The government implemented a travel ban, a 14-day quarantine, and lockdown as a result of the COVID-19's rapid spread. This resulted in an increased workload for police personnel as they attempted to enforce the restrictions. The front-line personnel have increased anxiety, psychological anguish, and occupational stress due to their tremendous workload and sometimes life-threatening situations. It is also important to comprehend how police officers see psychological discomfort, work-related stress, and health risks during the epidemic (Huang et al. 2021). The pandemic increased the effects of demanding workloads and potentially fatal situations on the health of front-line police personnel. During COVID-19, police officers' experiences with health hazards, job stress, and psychological distress should be observed. Strategies for reducing these risks, as well as work stress and psychological distress, should be investigated in order to support front-line police officers during a pandemic. Implementing strategies such as regular mental health check-ins, access to counseling services, and flexible schedules can help alleviate some of the stress faced by police officers. Encouraging officers to engage in self-care activities and promoting a culture of open communication can also contribute to their overall well-being. By taking proactive steps to address the impact of stress on their officers, police departments can ensure a healthier and more resilient workforce, ultimately benefiting both the officers and the communities they serve.

Sub-Theme 2: Dripping fear -fear of having disease - Dripping fear of police officers for having the

covid-19 disease has sparked concerns about how individuals with the virus are being treated in society. The fear stems from the lack of understanding and misconceptions surrounding the transmission and severity of the virus. It is crucial to educate the public and law enforcement agencies about the facts, ensuring that police officers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and protective measures to ensure everyone's safety and well-being. Police officers were greatly concerned for the health of their families but not merely getting inflicted by the virus. Moreover, while thinking of their personal and family's health, additional tasks and duties were given to police officers as this pandemic arose which has contributed to their stressors. As Participant 2 cited *"The increased risk of virus exposure, increased workload, and prolonged working hours have impacted their physical and mental well-being. During the early emergence, there are various measures initiated like prioritizing our own safety while continuously performing duty which was a bit contradicting because we work mostly in the community where the exposure is relatively high, and then undergo trainings to be more familiar with the virus so when the community ask questions, we know what and how to answer them. I constantly reassure myself to think of strategies that I can make to lessen the effects of these stressors to me"*.

For Participant 8 *"I think the most specific stressor that we faced was that the PNP was one of the frontliner who ensures that the public health standard is being implemented. Different checkpoints need to be established and also some of my colleagues were also infected with the virus and going to be isolated, so some works are left unfinished, and you are obligated to do this task"*. The COVID-19 virus has been spreading globally since the end of 2019. The police have carried out normal pandemic prevention tasks. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, police officers' secondary trauma has been found to positively impact both emotional exhaustion and insomnia; intolerance of uncertainty has been found to positively affect emotional exhaustion; resistance to organizational change has been found to positively affect both intolerance of uncertainty and emotional exhaustion; and COVID-19 fear has been found to positively influence secondary trauma. During a pandemic, frontline workers frequently experience higher levels of psychological strain than those in other occupations (Hung et al. 2022). Frontline workers have both physical and psychological stress because to COVID-19, which is a global occurrence [36]. Police officers are susceptible to catching the virus while on duty during a pandemic, and abrupt modifications to a government's pandemic prevention strategy also make officers feel more uneasy.

Resiliency of police officers is essential in their line of work. They are constantly exposed to high-stress situations, witnessing traumatic events and dealing with dangerous individuals. Despite these challenges, police officers must remain composed, focused, and able to make split-second decisions. Building and maintaining resiliency is crucial for their mental and emotional well-being, as well as their ability to effectively serve and protect the community. It allows them to bounce back from adversity, cope with the demands of the job, and continue to perform their duties with professionalism and integrity. Physical stamina of police officers as compared to the ballistic shell of a ballistic helmet is equally important in ensuring their safety and effectiveness in the line of duty. While the ballistic shell of a helmet provides crucial protection against potential head injuries, the physical stamina of police officers enables them to withstand the demanding physical challenges they face daily. It allows them to endure long hours of standing, running, and engaging in high-intensity situations, ensuring they can perform their duties efficiently, even under extreme conditions. Therefore, both the ballistic shell of a helmet and the physical stamina of police officers are essential elements in safeguarding their well-being and enabling them to serve and protect their communities effectively.

Methods of adaptation of police officers comparable to an adjustable strap include training and education to improve knowledge and skills, flexibility in handling different situations and changing environments, effective communication and problem-solving skills, as well as the ability to quickly adapt to new technologies and techniques. These methods, like an adjustable strap, allow police officers to adjust and respond to the ever-evolving demands and challenges of their profession. Ultimately, these adaptations help ensure that police officers are equipped to effectively serve and protect their communities. These methods also include developing coping strategies, such as mindfulness or meditation techniques, seeking support from colleagues or supervisors, and participating in regular physical exercise to manage stress. Additionally, police officers may benefit from attending stress management workshops or training sessions to learn skills that can help them navigate

high-stress situations. It is also crucial for police organizations to prioritize mental health and offer resources such as counseling services or peer support programs to ensure the well-being of their officers. Overall, the implementation of various adaptation methods is essential in helping police officers effectively manage stress and maintain their overall mental and emotional wellness.

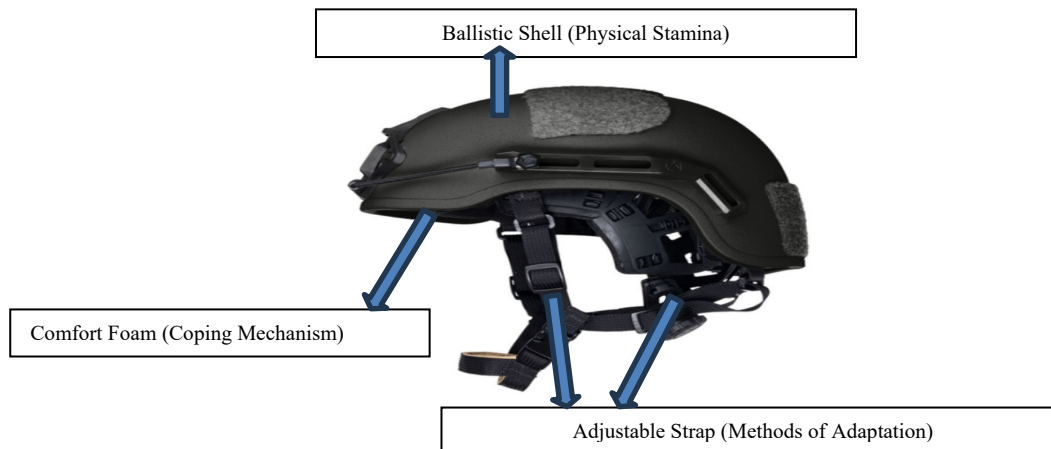


Figure 2. Manaig Resilience Model for Uniformed Personnel

Coping mechanism of police officers comparable to a comfort/support foam, providing them with the resilience and stability needed to face the daily challenges of their profession. Similar to how the support foam of a ballistic helmet conforms to the head, police officers develop coping mechanisms that allow them to adapt and respond effectively to the various situations they encounter on the job. These coping mechanisms serve as a protective layer, helping them maintain their mental and emotional well-being amidst the stress and trauma inherent in their line of work. Just like a support foam mattress, these coping mechanisms offer a sense of comfort and relief, enabling police officers to bounce back and continue serving and protecting their communities. Police officers must also possess mental resilience. This is crucial for making split-second decisions during high-pressure situations and for enduring the emotional toll that comes with the job. By maintaining a healthy mindset and seeking support when needed, police officers can better cope with stress and trauma, ultimately enhancing their overall performance and the quality of their service to the community. The combination of physical stamina and mental resilience is what allows police officers to fulfill their duty of protecting and serving the public with dedication and professionalism.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Formal Training on Mental Health should be conducted among all Police Workforce. The feelings of contentment and discontentment of the police personnel are validated as elements that affect performance and communication process within the organization and will promote safety in the system of the Police workforce. Mental Health is found to be significant during the performance of duties and responsibilities. In PNP, Mental Health enables us to cope with the stress of life, learn well and work well in our line of duty. Mental health awareness and support for PNP personnel is vital, particularly during the pandemic, because this time of crisis it helps determine how to handle stress, relate to others and make choices. Mental Health in the police workforce, it plays a vital role in performing one's job in a suitable state of mind because it compasses not our emotional but also social well-being, it embraces how police officers. It embraces how a police officer can perform his or her duties and responsibilities in order to give to the public his full service, despite facing challenges that affect the mental aspect, despite some mental health issues, the policemen are assured of their contentment in the services and support given to them as police personnel although some discontentment were said, overall feedback seemed positive. Police personnel also agreed that it is essential that Mental Health awareness be in place in the police

organization, common understanding that sometimes colleagues may also suffer but have to be supported by the management. Results of the study also depicted that Police personnel should have a work-life balance, especially the provision of support and time for their families. Areas for improvement should be considered and continuous protection to the interest of police personnel in relation to service, family and community services should be emphasized, Mental Health Assessment in regular basis, mentoring and counseling if necessary, PULISTENIKS, BANTAY KAISIPAN and monitoring of police performance for those manifesting Mental Health Issues should be given priority to attain the goal of Mental and physical well-being of police personnel.

Based on the conclusions obtained, the following are hereby recommended. The PNP management should have baseline data on the Mental Status of all the Police personnel, especially among the newly hired ones for the purpose of monitoring and future reference if required. Training on Mental Health should be intensified. Training field supervisors can identify trauma and stress-related issues in their subordinates by detecting negative stress reactions and chronic stress indicators. They can offer resources and assistance, such as switching zones, taking time off, or professional counseling, to help officers manage stress effectively and prevent it from escalating into serious mental health issues. This proactive approach contributes to a healthier and more resilient police force. Supervisors should hold supervisor-subordinate meetings, aligned with quarterly employee reviews, where stress management is discussed. Stress management among employees should be given due consideration to give the opportunity to all the police personnel to address their concerns and sources of burnout in the workplace. PULISTENIKS, BANTAY KAISIPAN, Coaching and Mentoring and face-to-face or one-on-one interviews should be done periodically to avoid further deterioration of performance of the individual police officer and the whole organization itself. Police departments should promote support for police families by encouraging them to join support groups within or nearby agencies. They should also establish a safe space for officers' families to discuss their experiences and seek advice. Additional resources, such as workshops or counseling services, can further enhance overall wellbeing. Future researchers are encouraged to do research like this to establish more information and tangible references of those who will need guidance on Mental Health among Law Enforcers.

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