



ASSESSMENT OF STRESS COPING MECHANISMS BY BORDER POLICE UNIT OFFICERS OF THE NATIONAL POLICE SERVICE, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The research assessed coping mechanisms by police officers in BPU. The study used Resource Dependence theory. Descriptive Survey research design using mixed method approach in data collection was employed in the study. The target population of 3000 police officers serving in the BPU and a sample size of 300 respondents was statistically significant. The study adopted Stratified Random Sampling that entailed clustering and apportioning respondents to various strata according to their rank. The participants filled semi-structured questionnaires containing open and close-ended questions, responded to interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs). Collected quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using SPSS version 21 and Ms Excel; and Qualitative data analyzed thematically. Among major findings include; BPU is a male-dominated entity with 97 percent being male police officers and 3 percent females. Majority of police officers serving in the unit were youthful with those below 40 years comprising sum of 90 percent. Marital status indicated majority respondents at 74 percent were married. Most police respondents at 78 percent had secondary education. Bulk of respondents at 80 percent were constables. Majority with 6-10 years of service in APS were at sum of 65.33 percent; Those with 7-10 years of service in BPU were 23 percent; Border community respondents males were 82 percent and females 18 percent, indicating patriarchal nature of local population; majority of border community respondents were 31-40 years at 40 percent, implying that majority of those who interact with BPU officers were youthful; Majority of border community respondents were traders at 37.50 percent. The study showed that Police officers adopted both adaptive and maladaptive stress coping mechanisms. They adopted diverse coping mechanisms to overcome the stress. Grounded on these findings the study recommended that police officers be equipped with required knowledge and skills to enable them adopt healthy stress coping mechanisms to overcome resource constraints, survive in the work environment and perform optimally.

Key Words: Stress Management, National Police Service

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INTRODUCTION

Manjarrez (2015) defines border Security as the holistic state of safeguarding the border from security threats aimed at minimizing susceptibility to criminal elements while supporting licit movement of people, trade and sovereignty; for socio-economic and political health of the nation and citizens (pp.795-796). This encompasses protection of land, air and sea borders, and ports of entry/exit.

According to Polner (n.d.) the border atmosphere is intricate with various actors driven by contradictory interests. Thus, borders are melting points of economic and political opportunity for world nations. Scholars Gerstein, et al (2018) elucidates that border denotes a country's sovereignty thus define territory in which government discharges its mandate and resources must be deployed to guard them (pp.1,3-4). Allocation of vital resources boost border security for nation's socio-economic and political health.

A study by Thomson (2000) posits that South Africa Act of 1909 mandated military with border security but were poorly funded (pp.152-153). In 1993, police took charge due to failing border security (Steinberg, 2005, pp.1-3). Resource constraints impeded police performance leading to rampant cross-border theft of vehicles, terrorism, and smuggling (Okumu 2011, p.8). To mitigate the situation, in 2005 military buttressed border police (BCOCC, 2019). Resource constraints impeded performance by staffs.

According to Njagi (2004) colonial regime in Kenya created modern borderline that defined territorial integrity, dividing traditional border communities. Border communities being people living or working along the border sharing cross-border kinship ties such as cultural identity, family ties, trade and other attributes. Criminals utilize these cross-border kinship ties to proliferate criminality (pp.30-33). The concept of Multi-Agency operations was thus mooted to provide unified effort in border security (Interior Ministry Kenya, 2018). Each agency is allocated resources differently leading to

fragmented budget thus lack of synergy which hamper performance of duty.

In 2008 government created Rural Border Patrol Unit (RBPU) to play a leading role in border security (AP, 2019, para.4). Staffs conduct security operations such as patrols, Vehicle Checkpoints, arrests, community policing/engagement and joint operations with other agencies each with varying levels of resource allocation resulting to mixed grades of performance (AP, 2010, pp.19-38). Resource challenges affected performance.

Chhabra (2013) explains that welfare of border security personnel is supreme (pp.1-3). Resources determine efficacy of border police officers (Administration Police, 2010, p.38). Resources required include financial, human, logistics and animals among them K9 and camels. Technological and surveillance kit include Night Vision, UAVs, Binoculars, Ground sensors, Frequency Jammers, Bomb detonation and computers (Ministry of Interior, 2015, pp.12-13). Rescue machinery reinforce personnel on the ground (NPS, 2013, p.26). Therefore, resources challenges impair effective performance.

In 2018 RBPU was renamed Border Police Unit (BPU) in the Restructuring Programme that charged Administration Police Service (APS) of National Police Service (NPS) with provision of Protective and Border Security (Ombati & Obala, 2018, para.15-19). Core duty of the entity is to deliver border security to buttress national security. Queirós, et al (2020) postulate that resource constraints comprise organizational stressors that elicit occupational stress which negatively impact on mental health of police officers (pp.2-3). This hampers job performance.

Okumu (2011) posit that border porosity increases Kenya's vulnerability to criminality (pp.4-6). National Crime Research Centre (2017) found out the number of border police officers is low compared to vast area of jurisdiction; a situation compounded by innumerable resource challenges

(p.9). Thus, human resource component should match demand emanating from the task ahead.

Statement of the Problem

Resources are critical inputs for successful performance of border security staffs. These investments facilitate border security operations against prevailing security threats to enhance national security. There have been recurrent insecurity issues at the borders but there is a dearth of empirical knowledge on the effects of resource constraints in BPU vis-a-vis work performance.

Various studies investigate role of police in managing cross-border security threats in Kenya but not exhaustively about resource constraints, and consequent effects on performance. Resources are important in enabling delivery of vibrant quality services in border security. The studies conducted focused on training, conflict management and peacebuilding, security operations and stress management. Though informative they are limited in explaining effects of resource constraints on performance. Personnel efficacy is largely determined by resources among other aspects. Thus, resource constraints could lead to poor performance and consequently jeopardize national security.

This study is grounded on cognizance that despite presence of BPU officers on the ground, cross-border security threats continue to impede national, regional and global peace and security; and little is known about the impact of resource constrictions on performance of personnel towards realization of safe and secure borders. Therefore, the problem that underpinned this study was that even though resources are critical in management of border security, few studies have focused on how they influence the performance of BPU officers in providing security. This study sought to establish the effect of resources on performance of border security personnel.

Purpose of the Study

Purpose of this study was to assess stress coping mechanisms by Border Police Unit officers of the

National Police Service. The research answered the following question;

- Which coping mechanisms have police officers embraced in Border Police Unit of the National Police Service?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Coping Mechanisms Embraced by Officers in the Border Police Unit

Della-Rossa (2014) posit that in British Columbia, police developed varied coping mechanisms to occupational stress dictated by individual resources like energy levels, skills, psycho-social support, health status, beliefs and commitment to maintain equipoise with environment. Males engaged in alcoholism, drug abuse, smoking, overeating and disengagement from family and friends. Females sought social support, venting, focusing on emotion, escape and keeping written records (pp.ii, 5-16). Coping mechanisms adopted by staffs in Kenya's border police needed to be determined through this study.

Border Police in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras adopted varied coping strategies to overcome resource limitations in the light of reduced budgetary allocation. They abdicated duties and non-state actors stepped in to fill the void (Espach & Haering, 2012, pp.4-6). Nevertheless, the scholars did not exhaustively establish the relationship between resource constrictions and performance of border police officers.

Cole, et al (2017) postulate that in the backdrop of underfunded police agency, an officer who joined Violent Extremism by subscribing to the Islamic States of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), became radicalized and attacked a Jordanian training facility leaving a trail of fatalities, injuries and devastation (pp.10-12). However, the scholar did not establish effect of the coping mechanisms on performance, a gap this study sought to address.

Nigerian police face diverse resource constraints in border policing. Adegoke (2014, pp.21-27) argued

that corrupt behaviour appears to be coping mechanism to supplement poor remuneration, hence a reaction to socio-economic stress factors in the work environment. It is not clear whether corruption reported among police officers in Kenya is a form of coping mechanism to resource constraints and this study sought to unearth the facts.

Maiyo (2015) postulate that in Kenya, NPS employees have been accused of corruption ostensibly to supplement their salaries seen as meager (pp.1, 27-33). Birech, et al (2013) found out that a section of police officers engages in alcoholism with undesirable consequences apparently to cope with job-related stress (p. 142). Nonetheless, the scholar fails to critically examine coping mechanisms by border police personnel and related effects on performance, a gap the study sought to address.

In view of the above, it is apparent that resources affect efficacy of police personnel. It is not clear whether criterion for resource allocation by government is informed by actual needs at the grassroots. There is hence need for empirical data to serve as baseline for informed decision making in strategic resource apportionment. This study hence aimed at examining effects of resources on performance of border security personnel.

Theoretical Framework

Resource Dependence Theory

The Resource Dependence Theory was coined in 1978 by American scholars Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald Salancik who posit that an organization exists in an environment alongside other organizations with competing and contradicting demands and interests leading to constraints. As an open system, the organization interacts with the rest and responds to changes in environmental conditions (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003, pp.xix-1).

The theory explains organizational behaviour in acquiring and maintaining vital resources for survival and asserts import of external environment as a source of capitals, comprising social context of

organizations in public or private sector in understanding management decisions and actions. Decisions are impacted by actors controlling the assets, because resources wield power that influence organizational behaviour (pp.1-2).

Werner (2008) asserts that reliance on resources influences organizational behaviour where the institution becomes reliant on benefactor who seek to control it through rules, regulations, policies and decision making (pp.10-12). A study by Hillman, Withers and Collins (2009) supports the argument and posit that to understand organizational processes and structures there is need to comprehend ecology of the organization in relation to its environment (pp.1404). The organization is thus a living entity.

Organization's managers engage in activities to reduce constraints and attain equilibrium with environment. To be effective they manage stakeholders' demands upon which the entity depends for resources and support (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003, pp.1-3). Nienhüser (2008) clarify that internal occurrences are both a function of the organization, structure, leadership, procedures and an outcome of environment (pp.10-11).

This theory will be applicable in the study because BPU exists in an environment hosting other organizations in both public and private sectors. The entity interacts with environment, acquires and sustains critical resources, and as an open system responds to occurrences in the operating surroundings in efforts to reduce constraints and attain equilibrium; which affect organizational behaviour.

Providers of resources seeks to control the Unit leading to constraints. They enact laws, formulate policies and regulations to address common interests that affect Border Police Unit. A change in the environment can increase or decrease resource allocation thus affect performance of personnel who are recruited from the social environment. The unit competes for resources alongside other entities resulting to contradictions. The leadership ensure

its survival by taking measures among them succession strategies that encompass resource management, laced with constraints that impede performance.

The theory however, focuses on how resources are acquired and sustained from external environment for survival of organization but does not address how they are utilized and resultant constraints to realize organization's goals and objectives. This weakness hence necessitated a second theory to complement it.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was used in the study and entails describing phenomenon under study and its attributes in a natural setting focusing on 'what' rather than 'how/why' something occurred, without manipulating variables (Akhtar, 2016, p.68). Target population encompassed 3000 police officers serving in BPU deployed throughout the unit's jurisdiction in Kenya (Personnel records, 2018). Border Communities were targeted because they were the immediate consumers of security services. Researcher applied Stratified Random Sampling to select 300 respondents out of 3000 personnel across rank and file.

Stratified sampling was applied where there is high degree of variation within a population and purpose is to ensure every stratum is adequately represented. This method has highest freedom from bias and accord the respondents equivalent opportunity to be nominated in their stratum thus evade selective prejudice which enable research to yield approximations of entire population parameters, with high degree of accuracy from a comparatively homogeneous population (Taherdoost, 2016, p.20-22). Thereafter simple random sampling was used to obtain the respondents from each stratum. In addition, simple random sampling was used to select 60 members of border communities to participate in the study. Therefore, total sample size of respondents who filled questionnaires was 360 participants.

Police leaders were engaged as key informants based on their level of management. This provided a systematic means of data collection and analysis aimed at testing theoretical perspectives of the study which indicated objectives, conceptual framework and research questions. This is illustrated in the tables below;

On data collection, the study employed primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires containing open and close ended questions. Closed questions had predetermined responses and gathered quantitative data while open-ended questions granted respondents liberty to respond and gather qualitative data. Questionnaires enabled researcher to collect large amount of data promptly.

Researcher facilitated Focus Group Discussion (FGD) using guiding questions, to discuss study objectives and collect large volume of data from many different people simultaneously, obtaining background information, stimulating new ideas and creative concepts in a short duration. This enabled researcher to access conscious, semi-conscious psychological and socio-cultural information from participants. Hence, it allowed verification of data collected from interviews, generating insight and allowed researcher to observe personal and group feelings, perceptions and opinions economically.

Pilot study was done as a preliminary on a small scale to examine feasibility of the study with respect to process, resources and management. This was done using questionnaires to identify errors and correct them before carrying out the main study. It was done at the BPU Headquarters using 30 police officers who possessed similar features to the population covered, at a different locality from where the main study was conducted. Findings were used to establish strengths and weaknesses of questionnaire, ambiguities and errors, and allowed me to make adjustments. This hence provided groundwork for the main research but respondents were not engaged in the actual study

Researcher facilitated FGD to participants at their duty stations for ease of convenience and interviews that required narratives from respondents. The researcher also conducted observation and note-taking to capture unspoken word and employed good listening skills. This ensured that large volume of data was captured during the study.

Questionnaires contained both open-ended and closed questions to limit respondents to given variables of interest in the study, and also give room to express their views in a practical manner. Researcher first briefed participants on topic of the study and expressed his expectations, took them through the questions and explained how to respond to the questions. Researcher then gave them the questionnaires to fill at their convenience and return within the next two days.

Researcher was assisted by 1 trained Research Assistant, who was a university degree holder to help in collecting data using multiple streams such as engaging with respondents to find required data for the study. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically where it was coded by assigning numbers, congregated into themes and combined according to groups to establish patterns and trends. These were presented in form of arguments and responses. This technique gave summaries

about the data collected and presented qualitative descriptions in a manageable system. The study applied theories in analyzing relationship between resource constraints and performance.

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Coping mechanisms adopted by police officers to overcome resource challenges

Researcher queried from police respondents about coping mechanism adopted by staffs to overcome resource constraints in the BPU. This was important for objective three to shed light on how personnel overcame occupational stress to survive in the work environment as they performed their duties. According to Pastwa-Wojciechowska and Piotrowski (2016) coping with job-related stress is among the crucial proficiencies in the police profession (p.2). In spite of the resource challenges faced by personnel, they continued to perform their duties signifying that they adopted coping mechanisms to overcome the constraints. In this regard the respondents were requested to allude how they overcame resource challenges by indicating extent to which they agreed or disagreed with constructs concerning the mechanisms as shown below indicating coping mechanisms adopted by police officers to overcome resource challenges.; Strongly Agree=5 Agree=4 Neutral =3 Disagree=2 Strongly Disagree=1

Table 1: Responses on over-eating as coping mechanism

Construct	5		4		3		2		1	
Drug Abuse	41	14%	58	19%	41	14%	89	30%	71	24%
Alcoholism	33	11%	68	23%	38	13%	89	30%	72	24%
Absenteeism	33	11%	75	25%	38	13%	81	27%	72	24%
Desertion of duties	35	12%	69	23%	45	15%	82	27%	68	23%
Promiscuity	23	77%	59	20%	48	16%	91	30%	80	27%
Over-eating	32	11%	44	15%	45	15%	93	31%	85	28%
Seeking Psycho-Social Support	68	23%	86	29%	49	16%	50	17%	46	15%
Seeking Spiritual nourishment	79	26%	99	33%	52	17%	22	73%	38	13%
Venting (Expression of strong emotions)	50	17%	86	29%	68	23%	58	19%	38	13%
Meditation	55	18%	100	33%	60	20%	52	17%	33	11%
Keeping written record of issues	59	20%	215	72%	70	23%	31	10%	25	83%
Disengagement from family and friends	42	14%	57	19%	61	20%	60	20%	80	27%

Any other.....

Source: Researcher, 2021

On Drug Abuse, cumulatively majority of respondents at 54 percent rejected the proposition that police officers engaged in drug abuse to cope with job stress and the minority at 33 percent respondents supported the construct, whereas 13 percent were neutral. Nonetheless, it was apparent that a section of personnel abused drugs as coping mechanism, which ostensibly impacted on performance. In a study by Pastwa-Wojciechowska and Piotrowski (et al, 2016), drug and substance abuse among police officers in Poland led to reduced quality of service delivery (p.2). This was corroborated by Page (2006) who found out that police officers in rural Oklahoma were smoking cigarettes to cope with job stress which was harmful to their health (p.18). Poor health of police officers consequently negates performance of duty.

Notably, the greatest number of participants at 54 percent rejected the construct that border police officers consumed alcohol to overcome stress from resource constraints, whereas 34 percent respondents supported the premise, whereas only 13 percent remained impartial. Nonetheless, a Key Informant insinuated there were cases of excessive consumption of alcohol ostensibly to survive in the stressful work environment.

His views were corroborated by Pastwa-Wojciechowska, et al (2016) whose study findings revealed that in Poland, police were frequently abusing alcohol, in efforts to manage work-related stress while drunk officers who turned up on duty while intoxicated tainted image of the organization (pp.2-5). Most respondents at 51 percent rebutted the suggestion that absenteeism from duty was a coping mechanism practiced by personnel whereas 34 percent being the marginal was supportive of the view; and only 13 percent were nonaligned. This implied that there existed cases of absenteeism in the Border Police Unit which apparently impaired performance. Fekedulegn, et al (2015) revealed that police in America absented themselves from work which impaired productivity (para.2,3,5,11,19). This apparently had negative impact on job performance.

Notably, a large section of participants at 50 percent invalidated the view that police officers serving in the border police unit deserted duties whereas the minority at 35 percent approved there were cases of desertion; and a paltry 14 percent abstained. A Key Informant affirmed desertion was common in the unit which violated provisions of instruments of discipline among them SSOs which affected service delivery. Due to increasing desertion cases Rwandan police invested heavily in research to address the menace that threatened national security (Rwanda National Police, 2018, p.16).

Responses on promiscuity were that majority at sum of 57 percent contradicted the perspective that personnel in the BPU engaged in promiscuousness as coping strategy, the total minority 27 percent supported the standpoint and 16 percent opted to be neutral. Despite the largest number of respondents refuting the proposition that they engaged in promiscuity as a coping mechanism it is worthy to note that a section was in support of the view. A Key Informant alluded that there were cases of promiscuity. Pastwa-Wojciechowska, et al (2016) found out that police in Poland adopted non-adaptive stress coping approaches such as promiscuous behaviour to overcome occupational stress (pp.2-3). This indeed had consequences that negated performance.

When Researcher sought respondents' views on overeating as a stress coping strategy, majority at cumulative 59 percent contradicted the construct that personnel engaged in overeating, minority at total of 26 percent concurred whereas 15 percent were neutral. It can thus be deduced that a section of personnel adopted overeating as coping strategy against stress from resource constraints. Balgaonkar (2014) found out that there were cases of overeating among Indian police to cope with stress which led to obesity (p.1131). Poor health among security personnel hampered performance.

When responding to seeking psycho-social support greatest number of respondents at sum of 55 percent concurred with the construct whereas

smaller number at total of 32 percent were of contrary opinion and cumulative 16 percent were impartial. It is apparent that police officers in BPU largely sought psycho-social support to overcome stress. Tshababa, et al (2019) affirmed that Zimbabwe Republic Police utilized psycho-social support to manage job stress. Further, persons with strong psycho-social support had ability to depend on other people to enable them manage traumatic circumstances (p.162). Seeking psycho-social support thus impacted positively on performance.

Most respondents at sum of 59 percent affirmed the suggestion they sought spiritual nourishment for strong body, mind and soul in the backdrop of resource constraints and there were dissenting voices by a small section of respondents at 20 percent. Apparently, a huge chunk sought spiritual nourishment to cope. This was supported by Robinson (2019) who found out that job-related stress impeded police officer's performance in America and personnel employed spiritual nourishment as therapeutic approach to overcome stress and enhance service delivery (pp.33-34).

Participants also indicated that,

"There were challenges in getting spiritual nourishment due to lack of dedicated Chaplains in the various camps. The only Christian and Muslim chaplains available were based at the Unit Headquarters and rarely visited us in the field" (Focus Group Discussion on 12/03/2020).

Due to nature of duty, Unit officers are unable to join mainstream society during worship services in churches or mosques. Despite having a number of chaplains deployed in the entity, they were not enough for all camps, leaving gaps in spiritual nourishment. Lack of provision of chaplaincy services was identified as a challenge facing police officers by Ransley Task Force Report (2009) which found out that police officers in Kenya lacked spiritual nourishment despite working in hazardous, high risk and stressful environmental conditions (p.143-144). The problem hence was spiritually malnourished personnel whose spiritual and mental health was impaired.

During a field visit Researcher observed a structure being utilized as a worship centre by police officers. This is depicted in the picture here-below;



A section of Border Police Unit staff during a worship service, at Kulan field base Chapel in Dadaab, Garissa County. Source: Researcher, 2020

Researcher sought opinion of respondents on Venting where majority at total of 46 percent

concurred, minority at 32 percent disproved the statement and 23 percent were neutral. Evidently,

the largest number of research participants pointed out that they let out resource issues affecting them as a measure to cope with the situation. A study by Maran, et al (2014) on Italian police personnel discovered that more females sought emotional support, spiritual nourishment and venting where they freely voiced strong feelings as compared to males in efforts to manage occupational stress (pp.10, 18). Venting enables personnel to release pent up energy and hence improved performance.

On Meditation, bulk of respondents approved the postulation that personnel serving in the Border Police Unit at totality of 51 percent engaged in the practice whereas minority at sum of 28 percent opposed the argument and 20 percent remained neutral. This involved reflecting on stressing issues by engaging in mental exercise and concentration on breathing repetitively to focus and redirect one's thoughts in order to achieve greatest height of self and spiritual awareness to cope with stress from resource constraints for healthy body, mind and soul.

Apparently, most police officers in the BPU meditated as a coping strategy against stress. A study by Gomes and Afonso (2016) revealed that Portuguese Military Police Officers meditated by practicing mental exercises to manage stress emanating from stressors such as resource constraints in the work environment (p.58). This helped them to achieve highest level of psychic awareness.

Researcher sought perspectives of respondents on keeping written record of issues stressing them and sum of 72 percent were the majority who supported the proposition, minority at 18 percent rejected the view and 23 percent were neutral. Writing down one's thoughts or feelings about stressful issues, events, situations or other factors enhanced proper understanding and enable the individual to release strong feelings held in the mind and also negative thoughts thus relieving the writer.

During a research mission Researcher was shown notebooks that officers recorded the stressing issues in their photos and self-recorded videos using computing devices which helped them gain better understanding and take measures to overcome the stress. John-Akinola, et al (2020) found out that Nigerian Police adopted writing and maintaining records of issues affecting them to cope with job stress. This ostensibly helped them to focus, remember and understand stressors, let go of repressed energy and thoughts.

On Disengagement from family and friends, sum majority at 47 percent rebutted the construct but minority at 33 percent supported it and 20 percent were neutral. Thus, most informants were of the contrary opinion but minority agreed. Lipp (2009) found out that senior police officers in Brazil sought support from family and friends as a coping mechanism to work-related stress from resource constrictions (p.596). In Poland healthy social relationships and emotional support from workmates, friends and spouses reduces stress among police officers (Pastwa-Wojciechowska, et al, 2016, p.2). Healthy social networks were important for good health of officers and consequently performance.

During an interview session a participant intimated that,

"We improvise what is unavailable using local materials such refrigerators by making charcoal coolers using timber, twigs and charcoal where we occasionally sprinkled water preserve meat, fruits and vegetables. Before acquiring MRAPs and APCs we lined metal plates of worn-out bullet-proof jackets inside land cruisers to protect us from enemy shots and placed sand bags on the floor to guard against IEDs (Interview with Silver, 15/12/2020).

Police officers used locally available things to make equipment, machines or other items that were lacking which enabled the item made to solve the

problem at hand and hence serve intended purpose bordering that of actual machine or equipment. They hence got the need addressed to a large extent. Scholar Egbodo (2019) espouses that improvisation is done when the original item needed is unreachable, inappropriate, not affordable or missing; using locally available materials in the immediate environment. The improvised item fulfils the purpose of the original one (pp.1-2). To further cope with resource constraints a respondent intimated that;

“There are situations where we join hands with other security agencies among them KDF to conduct joint operations against Al Shabaab terrorists. They have specialized equipment that are not in our arsenal and this creates synergy which enhances complementarity and consequently better performance” (Interview with Diamond on 29/12/2020).

Joint security operations were encouraged by the strategic leadership for agencies to complement each other’s capabilities and maximize output. As a common practice, agencies deployed in a given location combine efforts to address security needs of the area. This promoted the spirit of teamwork, cooperation and collaboration among players.

During one of the several field data collection visits Researcher observed a team of border police unit officers engaging in shooting range practice at a facility under the custody of Kenya Defence Forces. Another participant said,

“When financial constraints hit hard, we reduce costs by avoiding the commodities we could do without such as reducing meat and fruits consumption from daily to weekly and eating more vegetables instead. We also rear chicken to supplement meat (Oral interview with Platinum, 2020).

Due to budgetary constraints, most police leaders scaled down consumption of meat and fruits to

ensure stocks lasted until due date for resupply, and rearing chicken provides personnel with eggs and meat. This served to sustain well balanced diet for personnel.

According to a Key Informant they shared resources with other agencies to supplement the little they had or what they lacked. His sentiments are exemplified in the quote;

“When our water bowser breaks down, KDF assist us with the precious commodity as we arrange to repair ours (Oral interview with silver, 15/12/2020).

There lacks piped water in areas where most field base camps are located and hence personnel have to travel to water points far from camps to replenish their stock. Largely, there is one water bowser lorry in each camp and it develops mechanical issues commanders have to explore other ways to get water for use in the camps.

A respondent intimated that,

“In the spirit of being our brother’s keeper, we engage in peer counseling to share issues affecting us with trusted colleagues, and promote physical fitness by doing exercises such as jogging and weight lifting. Others play chess and darts. We also have football tournaments with youth from local communities in the school playground about two Kilometers from our camp. Officers also called their spouses, children, other family members and friends to know how they were doing (Oral interview with silver, 15/12/2020).

Staffs shared issues affecting them with those close to them and reinforced with physical exercises. They played games with local youths for bonding and build trust and confidence in addition to promoting their overall health. Regular communication with loved ones encouraged them to continue performing their duties. Balgaonkar (2014) postulate police in India embraced

counseling, talked to friends and family members in efforts to overcome stressful work environment.

A respondent said,

“We also keep dogs to help in alerting us about enemy in the vicinity” (Interview with Bismuth on 17/12/2020).

Rearing pets in camps served to enhance alertness by police officers because the animals would caution them in advance of approaching persons or animals near the camps. The pets had strong senses and could detect unusual movements better than the officers.



Photo showing BPU officers on patrol accompanied by camp dogs, inside Boni forest, Lamu County in Coast Region. **Source: Border Police Unit (2015).**

The above photo depicts officers on foot patrol while accompanied by dogs reared at the camps. The pets are popular among personnel because of their sharp sense of smell thus help in detecting the enemy from a distance and alert them to respond accordingly. Without the animals the officers would find it difficult to sense the enemy and would be at risk of surprise attacks by the *Al Shabaab* terrorists and other criminals.

On training, a respondent said,

“Border police unit employees participated in joint trainings with Kenya Police officers, military personnel and non-uniformed civil servants when

undertaking various courses among them counter-terrorism, incident command system, peace operations and disaster management; offered in Kenya School of Government, national police and military training institutions locally and abroad” (Oral Interview with Silver, 15/12/2020).

This created synergy in imparting knowledge and skills in officers and also synchronizing their approach to security operations. The joint trainings provide platform for participants to interact and develop strong bond and thus enrich social capital. This made it easy to appreciate the role of each agency in national security and have shared values.



Photo showing researcher during a field visit at Kulan Field base Camp in Dadaab, Garissa County. **Source: Researcher (2020).**

Caption: The vehicle was donated by UNHCR to support refugee security operations by police officers in the area.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Surviving stressful work conditions laced with resource constraints requires positive and active strategies. The coping strategies were largely determined by personal capabilities informed by level of knowledge and understanding of the strategies, and peer influence. Further, personnel adopted group coping mechanisms and offered mutual support.

Police officers developed diverse coping mechanisms that can be regarded as both 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' in order to survive in the work environment. Despite majority rejecting engagement in the 'unhealthy' coping strategies such as drug abuse, the minority who concurred serve as indicator there were cases of the maladaptive behaviour.

Majority of respondents indicated they engaged in healthy coping strategies such as seeking psychosocial support, spiritual nourishment, venting emotions, meditation, keeping written records of issues, making calls to loved ones, and disengagement from loved ones informed by individual competencies and energy levels. Collective mechanisms included physical exercises, taking leave, games and sports, worship sessions,

peer counselling, creativity and improvisation using locally available materials. Personnel also engaged in entertainment sessions to bear with the stress.

In view of the above, it is ostensible that officers adopted diverse strategies to overcome stressors induced by resource constraints to gain equilibrium with environment to continue functioning. They adopted strategies that could be viewed as defective among them drug abuse, alcoholism, absenteeism, desertion, overeating, disengagement from loved ones and promiscuity. Though majority refuted these 'unhealthy' strategies, minority confirmed their prevalence.

The 'healthy' strategies include seeking psychosocial support, spiritual nourishment, venting, meditation, journaling, physical exercises, meditation and calling loved ones. There were efforts by the leadership to provide required resources but the demand outstripped supply. Apparently coping mechanisms depended on individual competencies among other factors. Nonetheless, police officers demonstrated the will to overcome resource constraints and deliver their mandate.

The study findings revealed that police officers developed diverse coping mechanisms to overcome the resource challenges. These included adaptive, coping mechanisms which were embraced by large population of the BPU. They re-energized police officers to continue putting their best foot forward. On the other hand, a smaller population adopted non-adaptive coping strategies leading to elevated stress potency among personnel. Thus, it is evident that avoidance approaches were the most ineffectual, and subsequently surge dangers for undesirable consequences.

The study recommended there is need to empower police officers to adopt healthy and adaptive coping strategies by deploying professional Counselors and

other mental health experts to address overall well-being of officers, to enable them survive in the occupational environment, and thus boost performance and consequently enhance delivery of quality service to the nation.

Recommendation for further Research

The study assessed stress coping mechanisms by Border Police Unit officers of the National Police Service. The study thus recommends that more research be conducted on other factors influencing performance of border security personnel to further enrich existing body of knowledge. These include; Coaching and mentorship, motivation, knowledge co-creation, organizational culture, employee satisfaction and change management.

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