



## **Prevalence of Job Burnout among Police Officers in Nairobi County, Kenya**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Job burnout has been on increase among police officers leading to mental health problems such as depression, PTSD, suicide among others. The current study aimed to examine the prevalence of job burnout among police officers working within Nairobi County. The study employed descriptive research design to examine the levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment among the police officers. The study target population was 6,899 police officers within Nairobi County. Stratified, simple random sampling techniques were adopted in selecting a sample size of 371 police officers. The data was collected using Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 23. The results showed the prevalence of emotional exhaustion was high among the police officers with mean score of 5.92. Also, the results showed the police officers had experienced moderate job burnout with a mean score of 5.53. In addition, the findings reported that the police officers had moderate personal accomplishment with a mean score of 4.16. The study recommends to government to address workload management, empathy training and peer support programs to tackle burnout. Most importantly, there should be regular monitoring and evaluation of job burnout levels among officers. Countering the significant manifestation job burnout symptoms among officers demands the introduction of Early Intervention Programs.

**Key Words: Prevalence, Job Burnout, Police Officers, Nairobi County, Kenya**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Besides workplace conflicts and job insecurity, job burnout features as a common cause of PTSD among police officers. By definition, it is a state of emotional and physical exhaustion, which results in reduced attainment and loss of identity (Schuster, 2021). It is important to note that according to the International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 11th edition, job burnout is categorized as a syndrome, which is a consequence of workplace stress that has not been appropriately managed. In essence, when stress response is not successful like in PTSD cases, one of the major underlying causes associated with it is job burnout. Further, Schuster (2021) in the study on burnout and PTSD highlight its main features as energy depletion or feelings of exhaustion, negativism or cynicism towards one's job, feelings of inefficiency at work, and heightened mental distance from one's workplace. Additionally, burnout is prevalent among emotional workers, individuals engaging in specialized or dangerous work, individuals from whom the society demands high moral standards in their work, and people who have numerous accountabilities (Schuster, 2021). In the line of duty, police face dangerous situations, and the public demands high moral standards from them, which confirm potential reasons why they may experience burnout and develop PTSD as the current study aims to assess.

Similar to job insecurity and workplace conflicts, there are studies that reflect on job burnout among police officers. Globally, there was a study undertaken in Poland by Ogińska-Bulik and Juczyński (2021) on burnout and posttraumatic stress symptoms in police officers exposed to traumatic events. The study main objective was to determine the mediating role played by rumination in the association between job burnout and PTSD and whether it was a prognostic factor for PTSD symptoms among police officers in Poland. A cross-sectional survey research design was applied across a target population of officers from various departments of the Provincial Police Headquarters and the City Police Headquarters. Random sampling technique was adopted in identifying the 120 police officers who comprised the study sample. The main research tools comprised a Posttraumatic Checklist for DSM-5, The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory OBI, and The Event-Related Rumination Inventory. Findings from the study established that there was a non-significant association between job-burnout and PTSD among police officers due to the introduction of rumination. Specifically, rumination weakens the association since officers experiencing job burnout and who ruminate about traumatic events are more likely to develop PTSD compared to officers experiencing burnout and not ruminating. Although the study confirm a common feature of job burnout associated with PTSD (heightened mental distance from one's workplace), it does not address its causes and other notable features like negativity among the police officers. The current study sought to fill these knowledge gaps by addressing the prevalence of job burnout among police officers.

Additionally, global studies have been conducted on burnout among police officers. Queiros et al. (2020) carried out a study on burnout and stress measurements among police officers in Portugal. The burnout measures that the study sought to link to stress among police officers included enthusiasm for the job (demonstrating, for instance, the ambition to accomplish a person's professional goals because they are a source of personal achievement); psychological exhaustion (emotional and physical exhaustion related to job tasks, increased by dealing every day with people who present difficulties or problems); indolence (negative attitudes of indifference and cynicism when dealing with persons demanding things related to a person's job tasks); and guilt (negative feelings, behaviors, and attitudes in the workplace, elicited by interactions during labor relations). The study utilized a mixed research approach which comprised of a literature review and cross-sectional survey of police officers from the National Portuguese Police. The literature review identified 108 studies which use a multiplicity of questionnaires to measure burnout or occupational stress among police officers, but few studies use specific police stress questionnaires. Sample sizes were mostly below 500 participants and studies were mainly developed in the last decade in the USA and Brazil, but also in another 24 countries, showing the extent of the interest in this topic. The survey was undertaken on a sample of 2057 police officers from the National Portuguese Police. Questionnaires were the research tool adopted to examine the socio-demographic characteristics, stress, burnout, and distress issues among the police officers. Findings from the study showed that there were low enthusiasm levels, and high psychological exhaustion, guilt, and indolence levels among the police officers. However, the study has a research gap since it fails to link the specific burnout aspects to PTSD manifestations. Furthermore, it was based on a survey on three different regions, which fall outside the current study's scope hence generates a variance in findings. This current study sought to fill these gaps by looking at prevalence of burnout among police officers in Nairobi County.

Regionally, studies have also been conducted on prevalence of job burnout among police officers. For instance, Nkosi (2019) conducted a study on burnout among police officers in the South African Police Service (SAPS) at Elukwatini SAPS, Mpumalanga Province. A qualitative research approach was utilized in the study. Convenience sampling technique was employed in selection of the study sample that comprised 30 police officers. The research tool that was used was an interview schedule. The study revealed causes of burnout among police officers. Notably, the threatening and challenging conditions under which they work, both in the field and with regard to their administrative duties was the main cause for burnout among the officers. Additionally, the officers work for extra hours and undertake extra duties due to staff shortages. Despite the study clarifying sources of job burnout that align with those mentioned in the overview section, it does not address its features such as exhaustion, negative feelings, and low morale. The current study aimed to fill this gap by examining the prevalence of job burnout among police officers.

There are additional regional studies reflecting on job burnout and its stressful impact on police officers. John-Akinola (2020) carried out a study on stress experience and its coping mechanisms among the police in South-Western Nigeria. Among the stress signs associated with burnout that the study examined were feelings of fatigue, sleepiness, body weakness, and low work efficiency. The study utilized descriptive cross-sectional research design on a target population of police officers in Ibadan, the capital city of Oyo State, Nigeria and the largest city in West Africa. Multi-stage sampling technique was applied in the selection of 342 study participants, and a self-administered questionnaire used the research instrument. Findings from the study showed that most police officers experience stress, and specifically confirmed they experience symptoms such as sleeplessness, weakness and sickness of the body, fatigue and a cracked voice. Findings further showed that depression was another experience associated with stress among the officers. However, the study did not address the prevalence of burnout among police officers.

Locally, there have studies addressing job burnout among police officers. For instance, Mbugua (2013) carried out a study on trauma management among Kenyan police officers in Nairobi County. The main objectives of the study were to investigate trauma causes among officers, evaluate their effects, and establish necessary interventions. A descriptive research design was applied across a target population of 2000 officers within Nairobi County. Random sampling technique was utilized in selection of the final study sample comprising 100 police officers. Instrumentation consisted of questionnaires that collected data on respondents' demographic characteristics, work stress, trauma measures, and coping mechanisms the officers adopt. Study findings revealed various factors associated with burnout at work such as negativity and cynicism as exemplified by lowered interest in activities and feeling moody and irritable over small problems. Despite the mention of burnout features, there are evident knowledge gaps concerning burnout causes, its prevalence rates, and additional features such as exhaustion among police officers. The current study aims to address these gaps by looking at prevalence of job burnout in levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment.

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## METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive research design to examine the prevalence of job burnout among the police officers. The study was conducted in Nairobi County, Kenya. The location of the study was chosen based on rampant incidences of suicide among the police officers. For instance, the Kenyan Section of the International Commission of jurists (ICJ Kenya) and members of the Police Reform Working Group indicated that there are increasing suicide and attack cases among the police officers in Kenya due to unaddressed psychosocial and mental issues (Kimathi, 2021). Therefore, police officers across Kenya including its capital, Nairobi have unaddressed psychological issues, which make it appropriate to examine the prevalence of job burnout among police officers. In total, the study population comprised 6,899 police officers who are within Nairobi County (National Police Service, 2023). The population targeted was integral since it offered insight on the state of issues concerning job burnout among police officers in the county.

Through Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula and simple random sampling a sample size of 364 police officers from 13 police stations in Nairobi County were selected to participate in the study. The data on prevalence of burnout among police officers were collected using Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) standardized tool, which traces its origin to Christina Maslach and Susan Jackson, is the top burnout measure, and integrates three general scales. They include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1996). Emotional exhaustion measures feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work whereas depersonalization measures an unfeeling and impersonal response toward recipients of one's service, care treatment, or instruction (Maslach et al., 1996). Thirdly, personal accomplishment measures feelings of competence and successful

achievement in one's work. Each of the above-mentioned scales has their specific cut-off scores. For emotional exhaustion, higher scores indicate greater emotional exhaustion whereby a score between 0 and 16 signals low emotional exhaustion, between 17 and 26, moderate emotional exhaustion, and 27 and above, higher emotional exhaustion. For depersonalization, higher scores indicate higher depersonalization whereby a score between 0 and 6 signals low depersonalization, 7 and 12, moderate depersonalization, and 13 and above, high depersonalization. In the case of personal accomplishment, higher scores indicate a lower sense of personal accomplishment, which is associated with higher burnout. More precisely, 39 and above signals low personal accomplishment, 32 to 38, moderate personal accomplishment, and 0 to 31, high personal accomplishment.

The data was collected from police officers in Nairobi County after obtaining approval from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa and research permit from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Additionally, there was approval documentation sought from the Kenya Police Service to authorize collection of data among police officers. Once all these approvals were obtained, appointments were made at the various police stations to engage with police officers. The participants were given the consent form before filling the questionnaires. Through the help of the research assistants, the participants were given the questionnaires to fill in their designated work stations and collected after filling. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics with SPSS Version 23.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was set to examine the prevalence of job burnout among police officers in Nairobi County, Kenya. First, the demographic details of the participants such as gender, age, education level, marital status, religion, and work experience presented followed by the findings on the prevalence of job burnout and particularly on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment.

### Demographic Details of the Participants

The results showed that 60 % of the participants were male, whereas 40 % were female. Essentially, there is representation of women in the police force in Nairobi County. Based on age, 60 % of the participants were between ages 35 – 45 years. This was followed by 33.3 % and 6.7 % who were aged below 25 - 35 years of age and 45 - 55 years respectively. In regard to educational level, 4.3, 20 % of the participants had only attained a secondary school qualification, whereas 80 % had certification from a tertiary institution. In regard to marital status, 4.4, 84.4 % of the participants are married followed by the separated and singles who comprise 6.7 % each. Only 2.2 % of members of the police force are divorced. The findings indicate that 68 % of the participants are Christian whereas 32 % are Muslim. The results showed that over half (55.3%) had a work experience of between 3 – 6 years. This was followed by 31.8 % and 8.2 % who had a work experience of 1 – 3 years and 10 years and above respectively. Only a small percentage (4.7 %) of the respondents had a work experience of 6 - 10 years.

### Prevalence of Job Burnout among Police Officers in Nairobi County

A descriptive statistics was run to examine the prevalence of job burnout in levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Prevalence of Job Burnout**

	Mean	Std Dev.
<b>Emotional Exhaustion</b>		
Emotionally drained feeling	5.61	2.035
Working with people all day requires a great deal of effort	5.75	1.677
I feel like my work is breaking me down	5.21	1.775
I feel frustrated by my work	5.91	1.695
I feel like I work too hard at my job	5.92	1.960
It stresses me too much to work in direct contact with people	3.42	2.529
I feel like I'm at the end of my tether	5.23	2.195
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>37.05</b>	<b>13.866</b>
<b>Depersonalization</b>		
I feel like my colleagues are objects	2.02	2.112
I feel tired when waking up in the morning	5.53	2.205
I feel like my colleagues are responsible for some of their problems	2.59	2.096
I'm at the end of my patience at the end of the work day.	4.12	2.830

I really don't care what happens to my colleagues	2.93	2.438
I have become more insensitive to people at the workplace	4.96	2.330
I have become uncaring	2.39	2.237
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>24.54</b>	<b>16.248</b>
<b>Personal Accomplishment</b>		
I accomplish many worthwhile things in the workplace	3.68	2.746
I feel full of energy	3.13	2.428
I am easily able to understand what my colleagues feel.	3.57	2.754
I look after my colleagues at work	4.16	2.241
In my work, I handle emotional problems calmly	3.73	2.820
Through my work, I feel I have a positive influence	3.19	2.513
I am easily able to create a relaxed atmosphere with my workmates	2.34	1.911
I feel refreshed when I have been close to my colleagues	3.33	1.757
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>27.13</b>	<b>19.17</b>

Results in table 1 showed that emotional exhaustion generally have higher mean scores with many officers indicating that they experience emotionally drained feeling with a mean score of 5.61. Furthermore, many officers felt that working with people all day requires a great deal of effort since the mean score is 5.75. Similarly, there are many officers who felt like their work is breaking them down as illustrated by a mean score of 5.21. There are also a majority who feel frustrated by work as shown by a mean score of 5.91. Many officers also feel like they work too hard at their job as shown by the mean score of 5.92. There are also a significant number of officers who feel that it stresses them too much to work in direct contact with people as confirmed by a mean score of 3.42. Lastly, findings on emotional exhaustion indicate that many officers feel like they are at the end of their tether as shown by a mean score of 5.23. The findings align with a study by Mbugua (2013) on trauma management among Kenyan police officers in Nairobi County. According to the study some of these emotional exhaustion features were indicated as the factors linked to job burnout. More precisely, the study revealed various factors associated with burnout at work such as negativity and cynicism as exemplified by lowered interest in activities and feeling moody and irritable over small problems (Mbugua, 2013). In essence, police officers in Nairobi County experience high levels of emotional exhaustion.

Findings on depersonalization show that fewer officers felt like their colleagues are objects with a mean score of 2.02. However, many officers feel tired when waking up in the morning as shown by the mean score of 5.53. A significant number of officers feel like their colleagues are responsible for some of their problems since the mean score is 2.59. Many officers feel like they are at the end of their patience at the end of the work day as indicated by the mean score of 4.12. There is also a significant number of officers who really don't care what happens to their colleagues as illustrated by the mean score of 2.93. Additionally, many officers have become insensitive to people at the workplace as shown by the high mean score of 4.96. Lastly, there are some officers who have become uncaring since the mean score on this statement is 2.39. These findings extend those from another study by Queiros et al. (2020) on burnout and stress measurements among police officers in Portugal. Findings from the study showed that there were low enthusiasm levels, and high psychological exhaustion, guilt, and indolence levels among the police officers (Queiros et al., 2020). Other findings from a study by Kheswa (2019) on work-related stress among social workers in Eastern Cape Province of South Africa concur with these findings. Notably, some workers would treat their clients without compassion due to the high stress levels and exhaustion (Kheswa, 2019).

Results regarding personal accomplishment confirm that many officers feel like they accomplish many worthwhile things in the workplace as indicated by the mean score of 3.68. Another significant number indicated that they feel full of energy as shown by the mean score of 3.13. Likewise, there are many officers who are easily able to understand what their colleagues feel since the mean score on this statement is 3.57. Furthermore, a majority of officers confirmed that they look after colleagues at work with a high mean score of 4.16. There are also many officers who feel like they handle emotional problems calmly at work as indicated by the mean score of 3.73. There are officers who also feel that through work, they have a positive influence as shown by the mean score of 3.19. Another significant number feel like they are able to create a relaxed atmosphere with their workmates as indicated by the man of 2.34. There are also many officers who feel refreshed when they have been close to their colleagues since the man score is 3.33.

The findings on personal accomplishment show that many officers feel they accomplish worthwhile things. Furthermore, many officers do not feel full of energy or refreshed by their work. However, there are a significant number of officers who expressed higher levels of care for their team or colleagues. The total score of 27.13 reveals that there is high level burnout among officers. The findings align with those from the study by Queiros et al. (2020) on burnout and stress measurements among police officers in Portugal. In this study, low enthusiasm levels, and high psychological exhaustion, were established as some of the signs of job burnout among the police officers (Queiros et al., 2020). However, the study findings do not agree with the findings in a study by Kheswa (2019) on work-related stress among social workers in Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The study showed that some workers would treat their clients without compassion due to the high stress levels and exhaustion (Kheswa, 2019). In essence, there are varied responses about personal accomplishment among police officers in Nairobi County.

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## CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there is emotional exhaustion among the police officers in Nairobi County. The police officers are emotionally drained and frustrated in carrying out their work. They also experience stress when they are interacting with others in course of their duty. In addition, the police officers experiences depersonalization and especially feeling tired when they are waking up in the morning. They are also become insensitive when they handling others in their place of work. Despite of experiencing emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, the study concluded that police officers have a sense of personal accomplishment. Finally, the study concludes that it is possible to experience emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment at the same time.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends to National Police Service to address emotional exhaustion by having workload management, implementing mandatory rest periods, and wellness programs. Also, the National Police Service should enhance a sense of personal accomplishment among police officers through recognition and reward programs, offering opportunities for career development such as promotions and trainings. Counselors need to combat depersonalization among police officers through empathy training and peer support programs. In addition, counselors need to undertake regular monitoring and evaluation of job burnout levels among police officers.

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