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Relationship between Self-Care Practices and Job Satisfaction among Female Police Officers in Nairobi County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Job satisfaction is important in promoting employees' work performance. This study sought to establish the relationship between Self-care practices and Job satisfaction among female police officers in Nairobi County. The objectives of the study were; to establish the levels of self-care practices among female police officers in Nairobi County, Kenya, to find out the levels of job satisfaction among the female police officers in Nairobi County, Kenya and to determine the relationship between self-care practices and job satisfaction among female police officers in Nairobi County, Kenya. The research design was a quantitative cross-sectional design. The target population was 1325 female police officers in Nairobi County, the sampling method was stratified random sampling and the sample size was 438 respondents. This study used 2 two standardized tools which were the Institute of Functional Medicine Self-Care Practice Scale used to obtain information on the Self-Care strategies and the Paul Spector Job Satisfaction survey which obtained information on the level of job satisfaction among the respondents. Descriptive statistics including frequency and percentage and inferential statistics such as Pearson Moment of correlation were used for analysis. Findings showed that 48.2% of respondents exhibited "Good" self-care, while only 6.7% exhibited the "Best" level, whereas physical and social self-care lagged behind mental and professional domains. In terms of job satisfaction, 48.4% reported dissatisfaction, 37.6% were ambivalent, and only 14.0% expressed satisfaction. A statistically significant positive correlation ($r = .372, p < .01$) was found between self-care and job satisfaction, suggesting that improved self-care may enhance job satisfaction among female officers. The study recommended that the National Police Service should institutionalize and promote structured self-care programs. The programs should be integrated into the officers' routine schedules as part of wellness policies. By doing so, the well-being, morale, and overall job satisfaction and performance of female police officers would be enhanced.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Self-care Practices, Female Police Officers.

1. Introduction

Police work in many years has been recognized as a profession that is usually and mostly dominated by men with only a few ladies who dare to join it (Kumar, 2021). The cause of these demographic differences has been suggested to be that most ladies find it challenging to cope with the police profession due to its demanding nature and the occupational challenges it poses to them, especially in parenting.

A study by Ndero et al. (2024) noted that female police officers who were respondents mentioned some of the challenges they undergo in Kenya and Nairobi County were; sexual harassment, work-life imbalance, separation from their families and children and inconsistent unfair transfers as part of their greatest source of occupational stress. The fact that they would be forced to transfer without notice and the impact that had on their families created discomfort in them and they felt less satisfied with police work. Kukuscka (2020) also mentioned that low levels of job satisfaction among female police officers could be attributed to unfair allocation of responsibilities based on interpersonal relationships between an officer and or lack of close ties hence felt some of their superiors were mostly subjective rather than objective hence that killed their morale and had a negative significant relationship to their levels of job satisfaction.

In Indonesia, a study by Bakri, et al. (2022) examined married female police officers serving in Mapolda X of the Indonesian National Police. Using a quantitative correlational design with a sample of 203 married officers, the researchers found that psychological capital—comprised of self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience, had a positive effect on work-life balance, with an R^2 value of 0.10 ($p < .001$), indicating approximately 10 % of the variance in work-life balance was explained by psychological capital. Further analysis showed that among the four components, self-efficacy and optimism significantly predicted work-life balance, whereas hope and resilience did *not* reach significance.

In another study conducted among 250 female police officers in India by Chitra and Karunanidhi (2018) noted that job satisfaction would be addressed through self-care practices such as resilience training. It was noted that resilience training on self-awareness, positive attitude, emotional management, and interpersonal skills had a significant impact on improving the levels of Job satisfaction among the officers. The training also helped in boosting their psychological well-being thus reducing their occupational stress. In another study conducted in Spain by Rohwer et al. (2022) noted that extrinsic

motivation has been a common way and method of motivating police officers in most countries. Some have focused on increasing their salaries, some on subsidizing their housing, while others have focused on promotions. The aim of this has been to promote job satisfaction among the officers.

Job satisfaction has also been linked to mental health and wellness since female police officers can develop resilience and manage the challenges associated with their work. In a study conducted in Scotland by Evangelia et al. (2020) on understanding the mental health and well-being needs of police officers, noted that self-care practices were a very important component in managing the occupational stress and life challenges the female officer goes through. They did record that both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation were necessary in improving the officers' job satisfaction and hence increasing their efficiency and effectiveness, which in the long run would result in improved performance and the citizens feeling safe and secure. One of the intrinsic methods noted was self-care practices, which the officers reported helped with promoting work-life balance hence as ladies, it allowed them time to spend with their families and perform parental roles. Some of the said practices included: time offs, readjustments and changes in shifts, counseling, sleeping for at least eight hours, and training on relaxation techniques like meditation, mindfulness, and yoga (Rohwer et al. 2022). This study noted that the quality of sleep had a direct relationship with motivation to work and job satisfaction.

A study that was conducted in South Africa by Morrison and Conradie (2016) among female police officers who had served for an average of 10 years in the South Africa Police Services reported that self-care practices such as work-life balance, exercise, meditation, eating healthy and positive social connection had a significant role in promoting Job satisfaction amongst themselves. Similarly in Nigeria, a study by Oshishepo, et al. (2024) surveyed 252 police officers (112 male and 140 female) serving under the Keffi Area Command in Nasarawa State, using self-administered questionnaires to assess job demand, work-life balance and job satisfaction. The empirical results revealed a significant negative correlation between job demand and job satisfaction ($r = -.27, p < .05$); a significant positive correlation between work-life balance and job satisfaction ($r = .25, p < .05$); and no significant gender difference in job satisfaction ($t(250) = .50, p > .05$).

A study done in Kenya by Ngai (2022) reported that the police profession in Kenya has among the largest employees as compared to other occupations in Kenya. He also reported that the officers are usually affected by restructuring as it has an impact on their families and social stability, hence negatively impacting their job satisfaction. A safe and secure environment is very essential in spurring the development of a nation, this is because citizens of the nation feel safe and secure for themselves and they also believe their sources of income and the properties they purchase are safe. To ensure the professionalism, effectiveness, and efficiency of female police officers, it would then be important to identify some of the challenges that they face in their line of duty and develop effective ways of addressing those challenges. This would be very important in ensuring the officers feel their concerns are heard and addressed.

Job satisfaction was noted to be impacted by several factors among female police officers. However, there are no significant differences in the level of satisfaction between men and women in the police profession. The highest satisfaction among the officers was noted as working with people who made them enjoy their jobs (Arian, 2022). In most studies conducted among police officers, job satisfaction has been rated on a spectrum ranging from very dissatisfied to very satisfied.

Self-care has been increasingly recognized as a significant contributor to employees' job satisfaction, enabling individuals to manage stress, recover from work demands, and maintain well-being. However, while this relationship is well-documented in general occupational settings, it remains underexplored within policing—particularly regarding how such practices may support the unique pressures faced by female officers. To address this gap in knowledge, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between self-care and job satisfaction specifically among female police officers. While self-care has garnered interest in recent years for its potential to enhance work outcomes, little empirical evidence exists within the policing context to demonstrate how it impacts job satisfaction for women. This research therefore seeks to explore how self-care practices correlate with job satisfaction among female officers, thereby offering new insights that may inform both organizational policy and individual well-being initiatives.

This study was guided by the Self-determination theory and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. These theories of workplace motivation highlight distinct but complementary mechanisms driving job satisfaction and employee performance. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, developed in the 1960s by Frederick Herzberg through a study of engineers and accountants, proposes that job attitudes are shaped by two separate sets of influences: hygiene factors (such as organizational policies, working conditions, and salary) that, when absent, lead to dissatisfaction, and motivators (such as achievement, recognition, responsibility) that drive true satisfaction. Meanwhile, Self-Determination Theory, explicated by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, emphasises that human behaviour and motivation are regulated by the satisfaction of three innate psychological needs—autonomy, competence and relatedness—and that when environments support these needs, intrinsic motivation and well-being flourish.

2. Methodology

In this study, the positivist epistemological stance was adopted, emphasizing objectivity and empirically verifiable data as the foundation for knowledge generation. According to Saunders et al. (2019), positivism is grounded in the belief that reality exists independently of human perception and can be understood through systematic observation and measurement. This study used a descriptive cross-sectional research design. The target population was 1,325 female police officers in Nairobi County. The study adopted a proportionate stratified random sampling design, chosen from the police officers within the Nairobi regional police headquarters which were the Kenya Police Service (KPS), Administration Police Service (APS) and Directorate of Criminal Investigation (DCI).

Permission to collect data was obtained from the Research Committee of Tangaza University. Subsequently, approval was sought from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) to conduct the study among female police officers in Nairobi County. Written consent was obtained from the office of the Inspector General who also informed the Regional Police Commander about the exercise.

This study used 2 two standardized tools namely: the Institute of Functional Medicine Self-Care Practice Scale which was used to determine the Self-Care practices among the respondents and the Paul Spector Job Satisfaction survey which was useful in finding out the level of job satisfaction among the respondents.

3. Results

This section presents the study's findings in three main parts. The first part highlights the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. The second part discusses the levels of Self-care Practices and job satisfaction among female police officers. The third part explores how the the relationship between self-care practices and job satisfaction.

3.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the participants involved in the study. The demographic information sought in the study included age of the female police officers, years in service, marital status, level of education and rank. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Socio- Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-28 years	37	9.9
29-43 years	264	71.0
44-60 years	71	19.1
Years in Service		
Below 3 years	14	3.8
4-10 years	123	33.1
11-20 years	189	50.8
Over 20 years	46	12.4
Marital Status		
Single	56	15.1
Married	251	67.5
Divorced	38	10.2
Widowed	23	6.2
Other	4	1.1
Education Level		
O level (Secondary)	34	9.1
Primary	1	0.3
Secondary	166	44.6
Post-Secondary	79	21.2
Undergraduate	74	19.9
Postgraduate	18	4.8
Rank		
Constable	99	26.6

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Corporal	89	23.9
Sergeant	66	17.7
Senior Sergeant	31	8.3
Inspector	40	10.8
Chief Inspector	17	4.6
Superintendent of Police	6	1.6
Senior Superintendent of Police	7	1.9
Commissioner of Police	14	3.8
Assistant Inspector General	3	.8

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and provides an overview of the composition of female police officers who participated in the study. In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents, 71.0% (264), were within the ages of 29–43 years, indicating that most participants were in their mid-career stage. This was followed by 19.1% (71) of respondents who were aged between 44–60 years, while 9.9% (37) were between 18–28 years, representing the younger officers in the service.

With regard to years of service, 50.8% (189) of the respondents had served between 11–20 years, suggesting that most had considerable experience in policing. Another 33.1% (123) had been in service for 4–10 years, while 12.4% (46) had served for more than 20 years, indicating a smaller group of long-serving officers. Only 3.8% (14) had been in service for less than three years, showing that few were newly recruited into the service.

In terms of marital status, the majority of respondents, 67.5% (251), reported being married. Those who were single were 15.1% (56), while 10.2% (38) were divorced. A smaller proportion, 6.2% (23), were widowed, and 1.1% (4) indicated that they were in other marital arrangements. This distribution suggests that most female police officers were balancing their professional duties alongside family responsibilities.

Concerning the level of education, 44.6% (166) of the respondents had attained secondary education, while 21.2% (79) had post-secondary education such as diplomas or certificates. A further 19.9% (74) had undergraduate qualifications, and 9.1% (34) had attained O-level education. In addition, 4.8% (18) had postgraduate education, and only 0.3% (1) reported primary education as the highest level attained. This shows that most respondents had at least secondary or post-secondary education.

In relation to rank held in the police service, 26.6% (99) of the respondents were constables, followed closely by 23.9% (89) who were corporals, and 17.7% (66) who were sergeants. Other respondents included 10.8% (40) who were inspectors and 8.3% (31) who were senior sergeants. Additionally, 4.6% (17) were chief inspectors, while smaller proportions occupied senior ranks including 3.8% (14) who were commissioners of police, 1.9% (7) who were senior superintendents of police, 1.6% (6) who were superintendents of police, and 0.8% (3) who were assistant inspector generals. These figures indicate that the majority of female officers in the study served in junior and mid-level positions, with relatively few holding senior leadership ranks.

3.2. Levels of Self-Care Practices among Police Officers

The first objective of the study sought to determine the levels of self-care practices among female police officers. To achieve this, self-care practices scale was used. The results respective to the different aspects of selfcare are as shown in Tables 2.

Table 2: Self-Care Levels among Female Police Officers

Categories of Self-Care	Range	Frequency	Percent (%)
Worst Self-Care	0 - 40	7	1.8
Poor Self-Care	41 - 80	65	16.6
Good Self-Care	81 -120	179	48.1
Better Self-Care	121- 160	96	25.8
Best Self-Care	161 - 200	25	6.7
Total	40 - 200	372	100

Table 2 presents the distribution of self-care levels among female police officers in Nairobi County. The results show that nearly half of the respondents, 48.1% (179), demonstrated *good self-care* practices, while 25.8% (96) reported *better self-care*. A smaller proportion, 6.7% (25), achieved *best self-care*

levels, indicating a high commitment to maintaining personal well-being. Conversely, 16.6% (65) of the officers exhibited *poor self-care*, and only 1.8% (7) fell within the *worst self-care* category. Overall, the majority of female police officers reported moderate to good engagement in self-care activities, however a notable minority still reflected low levels of self-care.

3.3. Levels of Job Satisfaction Among Female Police Officers

The second objective of the study was to find out the levels of job satisfaction among the female police officers in Nairobi County, Kenya. The results are as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Job Satisfaction among Female Police Officers

Category	Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Job Dissatisfaction	36-108	180	48.4%
Ambivalent	109-143	140	37.6%
Job Satisfaction	144-216	52	14.0%
Total	36 - 216	372	100%

Table 3 presents the distribution of job satisfaction levels among female police officers in Nairobi County. The findings show that nearly half of the respondents, 48.4% (180), experienced job dissatisfaction, while 37.6% (140) were ambivalent about their level of satisfaction. Only 14.0% (52) of the officers reported being satisfied with their jobs. Overall, the study suggests that a majority of the female police officers exhibited low to moderate levels of job satisfaction.

3.4. Relationship between Self-Care Practices and Job Satisfaction among Female Police Officers

The third objective of the study was to establish the relationship between self-care practices and job satisfaction among female police officers in Nairobi County, Kenya. Pearson correlation was used to determine the relationship between self-care practices and job satisfaction. The results are as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Relationship between Self-Care Practices and Job Satisfaction among Female Police Officers

		Self-Care Practices	Job Satisfaction
Self-Care Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.372**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	372	372
Job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.372**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	372	372

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results presented in Table 4 reveal a positive and statistically significant relationship between self-care practices and job satisfaction among female police officers in Nairobi County. The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = .372$, $p < .01$) demonstrates a moderate positive association, indicating that officers who actively engage in self-care activities, such as maintaining a healthy work-life balance, fostering supportive social relationships, and prioritizing their emotional and physical well-being, tend to experience higher levels of job satisfaction. The significance level ($p < .01$) provides strong evidence of a reliable relationship between the two variables, confirming that self-care plays an important role in influencing how satisfied officers feel in their professional roles.

4. Discussion

On examining the levels of self-care among female police officers in Nairobi County. The findings revealed that nearly half of the respondents, 48.1% (179), demonstrated good self-care practices, while 25.8% (96) reported better self-care. A smaller proportion, 6.7% (25), achieved best self-care levels, showing a strong commitment to maintaining personal well-being. Conversely, 16.6% (65) exhibited poor self-care, and only 1.8% (7) fell within the worst self-care category. These results indicate that most female police officers engage in moderate to good self-care, though a notable proportion still

neglects consistent wellness practices. This distribution suggests that while awareness and practice of self-care are evident, structural and occupational challenges may still limit full engagement. The findings of this study are generally consistent with Alani and Stroink (2023), who found that 55% of Canadian female service providers, including police officers, regularly practiced mindfulness, exercise, or journaling (high self-care), 30% engaged occasionally (moderate), and 15% practiced minimally (low). The pattern of distribution in the present study, where moderate self-care dominates, mirrors this trend, though the Kenyan officers' proportion of high self-care (6.7%) is much lower. This contrast underscores that while self-care is a global priority, access to structured self-care interventions and supportive organizational cultures in high-income countries such as Canada may facilitate better adherence than in developing contexts.

From the SDT perspective, self-care aligns with intrinsic motivation, officers who feel autonomous and competent are more likely to engage in behaviours that nurture their well-being. The moderate engagement observed suggests that while some officers experience autonomy in managing their wellness, structural and contextual factors may still constrain self-determined self-care behaviours. From Herzberg's perspective, self-care can be understood as both a hygiene and motivator factor: when neglected, it contributes to dissatisfaction (through burnout and stress), but when encouraged, it enhances motivation and satisfaction.

On determining the levels of job satisfaction among female police officers in Nairobi County. The findings revealed that 48.4% (180) of the respondents experienced job dissatisfaction, 37.6% (140) were ambivalent about their satisfaction levels, and only 14.0% (52) reported being satisfied with their jobs. These results demonstrate that a majority of female police officers in Nairobi County experience low to moderate levels of job satisfaction, with fewer than one in six expressing high satisfaction. This distribution suggests that while some officers derive meaning from their roles, systemic and organizational challenges continue to suppress overall satisfaction. The findings of this study stand in sharp contrast to global trends, particularly in Western contexts, where police officers generally report moderate to high job satisfaction. For instance, Rohwer et al. (2022) in Germany documented an improvement in satisfaction levels from 66% to 71% after revising shift schedules to enhance work-life balance. Similarly, Rostami et al. (2022) found that 47% of Swedish female police officers experienced high satisfaction, with positive collegial relationships and meaningful work cited as key motivators. The Kenyan figures, where only 14% of officers reported high satisfaction, reflect a striking disparity. This gap highlights how organizational reforms in developed settings, such as flexible scheduling and supportive management cultures, serve as critical motivators, whereas their absence in Kenya perpetuates dissatisfaction and ambivalence among female officers.

Viewed through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), these findings further illustrate how unmet psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness may contribute to low job satisfaction. The hierarchical and often rigid command structure of policing in Kenya may limit autonomy, while gender-based discrimination undermines both competence and relatedness. Officers who feel undervalued or constrained by institutional rigidity are less likely to experience intrinsic motivation and satisfaction in their work. The intersection of SDT and Herzberg's theory thus provides a comprehensive understanding: while SDT highlights the need for internal psychological fulfillment, Herzberg's framework emphasizes the organizational conditions necessary to sustain satisfaction.

In examining the relationship between self-care practices and job satisfaction among female police officers in Nairobi County. The findings revealed a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between the two variables, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = .372$, $p < .01$. This indicates that officers who engage more consistently in self-care activities—such as maintaining a healthy work-life balance, cultivating social connections, and attending to emotional and physical health—report higher levels of job satisfaction. From the researcher's perspective, this relationship highlights that self-care functions as a vital psychological and occupational resource, buffering the effects of stress and enhancing overall work fulfillment. The statistical significance ($p < .01$) confirms that this is not a chance occurrence but a genuine pattern among female officers in Nairobi County.

The findings of this study, show both convergence and divergence with global literature. Compared to Rostami et al. (2022) in Sweden, who found a stronger relationship ($r = .58$, $p < .01$) between mindfulness-based self-care and job satisfaction, the current study's correlation ($r = .372$) is moderate rather than strong. This difference may be attributed to contextual and organizational factors, Swedish police systems have more robust wellness frameworks, gender inclusivity, and institutionalized stress management programs, all of which amplify the effect of self-care on job satisfaction. From the researcher's standpoint, the moderate relationship in Nairobi likely reflects limited institutional reinforcement of self-care practices and cultural barriers that may prevent women from prioritizing personal well-being over professional demands. Nonetheless, the direction of the relationship is consistent across both contexts: greater self-care engagement fosters higher job satisfaction. Similarly, the findings align closely with Grupe (2021) in the United States, who found a moderate correlation ($r = .47$, $p < .05$) between self-care and job satisfaction. Both studies emphasize that while self-care significantly contributes to satisfaction, it may not entirely compensate for systemic challenges like workload or inadequate organizational support. However, the slightly lower correlation in the Nairobi sample may point to the lack of structured programs such as mindfulness training or wellness counselling that are more common in Western police departments. This means that self-care, while individually driven, is also deeply shaped by institutional culture—when organizations value and facilitate self-care, the impact on satisfaction is stronger.

Interpreted through Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, these findings illustrate how self-care aligns with *motivational factors* that enhance job satisfaction. Activities such as exercise, social support, and emotional regulation contribute to intrinsic motivators like personal growth, competence, and self-fulfilment. However, without sufficient *hygiene factors*, such as fair pay, supportive supervision, and manageable workloads, the potential of self-care to elevate satisfaction remains limited. In the context of this study, the moderate correlation suggests that while self-care enhances motivation and resilience, the absence of conducive organizational conditions prevents these gains from translating into higher overall satisfaction.

5. Summary of Findings

The results show that nearly half of the respondents, 48.1% (179), demonstrated good self-care practices, while 25.8% (96) reported better self-care. A smaller proportion, 6.7% (25), achieved best self-care levels, indicating a high commitment to maintaining personal well-being. Conversely, 16.6% (65) of the officers exhibited poor self-care, and only 1.8% (7) fell within the worst self-care category. Overall, the majority of female police officers reported moderate to good engagement in self-care activities; however, a notable minority still reflected low levels of self-care.

Additionally, the findings show that nearly half of the respondents, 48.4% (180), experienced job dissatisfaction, while 37.6% (140) were ambivalent about their level of satisfaction. Only 14.0% (52) of the officers reported being satisfied with their jobs. These results suggest that a majority of the female police officers exhibited low to moderate levels of job satisfaction, indicating that many may be struggling with work-related challenges that affect their morale and overall satisfaction in their professional roles.

Finally, the results reveal a positive and statistically significant relationship between the two variables, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = .372$, $p < .01$. This finding demonstrates a moderate positive association, indicating that officers who actively engage in self-care activities, such as maintaining a healthy work-life balance, fostering supportive social relationships, and prioritizing their emotional and physical well-being, tend to experience higher levels of job satisfaction. The significance level provides strong evidence of a reliable relationship, confirming that self-care plays an important role in influencing how satisfied officers feel in their professional roles. In the context of this study, the moderate correlation suggests that while self-care enhances motivation and resilience, the absence of conducive organizational conditions prevents these gains from translating into higher overall satisfaction.

6. Recommendations

Female police officers are encouraged to intentionally integrate self-care into their daily routines as a means of maintaining both personal well-being and professional effectiveness. This includes engaging in regular physical exercise, practicing mindfulness or prayer, seeking social and emotional support, and maintaining healthy work-life balance. Officers should also proactively seek counselling or peer support when faced with occupational stressors, recognizing that prioritizing self-care is a sign of strength and professionalism, not weakness.

National Police Service should institutionalize wellness and self-care programs as part of its occupational health strategy. Regular workshops, counselling sessions, and stress management training should be made accessible to all officers, with special emphasis on the unique pressures faced by female personnel. The Service should also foster a supportive work culture that values open communication, gender sensitivity, and recognition of officers' emotional and psychological needs.

The Commission for National Police Service should develop clear policies that promote mental health, work-life balance, and fair promotion systems within the police force. It should strengthen mechanisms for monitoring officers' well-being and ensure that wellness indicators form part of performance evaluations. Furthermore, the NPSC should review staffing and deployment strategies to reduce workload and burnout, particularly in high-stress urban stations such as those in Nairobi County.

Future research could adopt a comparative approach by examining self-care and job satisfaction across both male and female officers to assess whether gender differences influence these variables.

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