

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG POLICE OFFICERS IN CAPE COAST  
METROPOLIS

BY

SAMUEL ARTHUR

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## DECLARATION

### **Candidate's Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name: Samuel Arthur

### **Supervisors' Declaration**

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name: Dr. William Boateng

Co-Supervisor's Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name: Dr. Raphael Avornyo

## ABSTRACT

The police profession has been identified as one of the most stressful occupations in the world. Using the ABCX model of stress and stress process model (SPM), the study sought to examine factors that influence occupational stress among Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The study adopted a cross-sectional design using mixed method approach of research. Stratified random sampling technique was used to sample 194 Police Officers from five police stations while purposive sampling technique was used to select six senior Police Officers and four Station Officers. Data were collected using both questionnaires and interview guide. The study revealed that majority of the Police Officers considered the organisational aspects of their work as more stressful as compared to the physical hazards associated with their work. Notable among these stressors included lack of accommodation for personnel, performing two or more responsibilities at the same time, inadequate or using poor quality equipment, public criticism and “never off duty”. The most common coping strategies used by Police Officers in the study were doing what has to be done one step at a time and thinking about how best to handle a problem. Findings revealed no significant differences between age, gender, ranks, years of service and perceived work stress. However, significant differences were found between marital status and educational levels of Police Officers. It was recommended that since stress was due more to organisational factors, efforts should be made by the police administration to take corrective measures such as changes within the police organisation and establishment of stress management programmes for Police Officers.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my mother, Madam Aba Twebah, and my wife Mrs Jessica Gifty Arthur.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENT	PAGE
DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
DEDICATION	v
TABLE OF CONTENT	vi
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
ACRONYMS	xiii

### CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	7
Objectives of the Study	11
Research Questions	12
Hypotheses	12
Significance of the Study	13
Scope of the Study	14
Definition of Terms	14
Organisation of the Study	15

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Introduction	16
Theoretical Framework	16
The Concept of Stress and Occupational Stress	21
The Stress Process	23
Factors Contributing to Occupational Stress	25
Sources of Work Stress among Police Officers	28
Perceptions and Interpretations of Stressful Events	30
Individual Differences in Reaction to Stress	31
Socio-demographic and Occupational Characteristics that Influence stress	33
Symptoms and Consequences of Stress	39
Strategies for Coping and Managing Workplace Stress	42
Empirical Studies on Stress among Police Officers	45
Conceptual Framework	52
Chapter Summary	56

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Introduction	58
Research Design	58
Study Area	59
Target Population	61
Sample and Sampling Procedure	62
Sources of Data	64

Data Collection Instruments	64
Pre-testing of Instruments	67
Data Collection Procedures	67
Data Processing and Analysis	69
Ethical Considerations	69
Limitation of the Study	70
Chapter Summary	70
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</b>	
Introduction	71
Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents	71
Occupational Characteristics of Respondents	74
Sources of Stress among Police Officers	77
Operational Stressors among Police Officers	77
Organisational Sources of Stress among Police Officers	81
Interpretations of Stressful Events by Police Officers (Perceived Work Stress)	94
Stress Coping Strategies used by Police Officers	104
Stress Symptoms among Police Officers (Severity of Stress Symptoms)	110
Association between Perceived Work Stress and Severity of Stress Symptoms	116
Relationship between Socio-demographic, Occupational Characteristics and Perceived Work Stress	119
Relating the conceptual framework to the findings of the study	127



**CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

Introduction	128
Summary	129
Conclusions	133
Recommendations	135
Suggestions for Further Research	136
REFERENCES	137
APPENDICES	151
APPENDIX A	151
APPENDIX B	157
APPENDIX C	160
APPENDIX D	162

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. Distribution of Police Officers by Police Station and Rank	62
2. Breakdown of Sample according to Police Station and Rank	63
3. Age Distribution of Respondents	72
4. Level of Education of Respondents	74
5. Respondents' Years of Service	75
6. Ranks of Respondents	76
7. Gender and rank of respondents	77
8. Operational Stressors among Police Officers (Frequency of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months)	78
9. Role Related Stressors among Police Officers (Frequency of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months)	81
10. Lack of Resources as a Source of Stress (Frequency of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months)	83
11. Interpersonal Stressors among Police Officers (Frequency of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months)	90
12. Rankings from most to least occurring Stressful Events (within the Last Six Months)	93
13. Operational Stressors among Police Officers (Severity of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months)	95
14. Role Related Stressors among Police Officers (Severity of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months)	96

15. Lack of Resources Stressors (Severity of Stressful Events)	98
16. Interpersonal Stressors among Police Officers ((Severity of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months	100
17. Rankings of Job Events from Most to Least Stressful	102
18. Stress Coping Strategies used by Police Officers	106
19. Behavioural Symptoms of Stress among Police Officers	111
20. Physical Symptoms of Stress among Police Officers	113
21. Psychological Symptoms of Stress among Police Officers	114
22. Pearson Correlation between Perceived Work Stress and Severity of Stress Symptoms	118
23. T-test showing Relationship between Gender and Perceived Work Stress	120
24. T-test showing Relationship between Marital Status and Perceived Work Stress	121
25. Kruskal-Wallis test showing Comparison for Years of Service and Perceived Work Stress	122
26. Kruskal-Wallis test showing Comparison for Hierarchical Rank and Perceived Work Stress	123
27. Kruskal-Wallis test showing Comparison for Educational level and Perceived Work Stress	125
28. Kruskal-Wallis test showing Comparison for Age and Perceived Work Stress	126

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Hill's ABCX model of stress	17
2. Influence of work-related stressors on perceived work distress	53
3. Test for normality on perceived work stress	117

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

CISM	Critical Incident Stress Management
EAP	Employee Assistance Programme
GNP	Gross National Product
GPS	Ghana Police Service
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MTTD	Motor Traffic and Transport Department
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RHQ	Regional Headquarters
SPM	Stress Process Model
SD	Standard Deviation
SPSS	Statistical Product and Service Solution
UCC	University of Cape Coast
VMBR	Visual-Motor Behaviour Rehearsal
WASSA	West Africa Security Service Association
WHO	World Health Organisation

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background to the Study**

Work plays an important role in the lives of most people because it provides a source of income for them and their families. It has an impact on various life roles (Rothmann, 2008). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2004), work can make a person feel that he or she is playing a useful role in society. The work environment thus represents an important life domain for people in that it contributes to overall personal satisfaction and accomplishment. However, the workplace is considered as one of the key environments that affect our physical and mental health. In view of its central role in life, work demands a significant part of individuals' time and energy which can create frustration, stress and various other behavioural outcomes (Rothmann, 2008). Shadid, Latif and Sohali (2011) therefore asserted that stress is a common element in any kind of job and working persons have to face it.

Stress has been described as a process whereby environmental stimuli place an undue strain on a human being resulting in psychological and physiological changes that increase the risk for disease (Lazarus, 1993). Stress can be based on a number of factors affecting various domains, including pressure at work and at home (Kaila, 2002). The focus of the present study is on stress that occurs at the workplace (i.e. occupational stress, job stress or work stress). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) (1992) defined occupational stress as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirement of the job does

not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker. In order to maintain competitiveness, many organisations require their employees to assume greater and more widely prescribed work responsibilities. The pressure related to undertaking broader job duties may lead employees to experience greater levels of stress related to their work roles (Stamper & Johlke, 2003). According to Ivancevich, Matterson, Freedman and Phillips (1990) stress can be caused by environmental, organisational and individual variables. Brown and Campbell (1990) classified occupational stress as factors intrinsic to the job, role in the organisation, relationship at work, career development, organisational structure and climate and home-work interface.

Research indicates that individual differences also affect our perceptions and interpretation of events around us (Vokic & Bogdanic, 2008). Pearlin (1989) argued that perceived stress is subjective to every individual, that is what one person may interpret as very stressful event, another may not. Pearlin therefore concluded that individuals who are exposed to stressful conditions do not necessarily suffer the same outcomes. Research indicates that while some individuals accept stress with open arms; others get depressed and frustrated (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Clark and Cooper (2000) therefore asserted that the experience of stress symptoms is both subjective and dependent on individual differences. For instance, Chueh, Yen and Yang (2011) found that individuals who perceived high-work stress reported more severe psychosomatic symptoms than those who perceived low-work stress.

How one perceives stressful event is often patterned by one's social background, including gender, social class, age, race, geographical location and the availability of coping networks and resources (Blaug, Kenyon & Lekhi, 2007;

Brown & Campbell, 1990; Omolayo, 2012; Vokic & Bogdanic, 2008). Seyle (1984) asserted that a problem or an event need not cause stress but if one is not able to solve that problem then it becomes stressful.

Occupational stress is recognised world-wide as a major challenge to workers' health and the healthiness of their organisations (ILO, 1992; WHO, 2004). It is increasing globally in organisations, professions, and among employees, employers, families and society in general (Karimi & Alipour, 2011). Job stress and its negative consequences for employees' health and well-being affect workers in almost every corner of the world (Parveen, 2009). Various research findings indicate that prolonged stress poses threat to the health of workers and in turn to the organisation (Brown & Campbell, 1990; McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). According to McShane & Von Glinow, organisations suffer business loss as a result of occupational stress through absenteeism, lateness to work, increased sick leaves, high medical bills, high staff turnover, costs of training, replacement of staff and lowered performance. McShane and Von Glinow indicated that employees in the United States and other developed countries experienced job stress as a serious issue. The researchers concluded that work related stress cost American business somewhere between \$200 and \$300 billion each year in lower productivity, higher absenteeism, turnover, alcoholism and medical costs (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010).

Research indicates that occupational stress is also a major health issue for modern organisations and employees (WHO, 2004). The stressful situations of the workplace due to occupational stress lead to negative personal effects like anxiety,



headache, depression, stomach distress, upper respiratory infections, various bacterial infections and cardiovascular disease (Agolla, 2008; Greenberg, 2005). This implies that occupational stress poses threat to individual and organisational well-being and therefore need to be addressed.

The presence of stress at work is almost inevitable in many jobs (Shadid et al., 2011). The stress experienced by different occupation types and job roles has been discussed in many papers with a number of different occupations being described as experiencing above average levels of stress (Abualrub, 2004; Nicoara and Amelia, 2012). One profession that has been identified in the stress literature as experiencing above average stress level is the police profession (Brown & Campbell, 1990; Alexander, 1999). Police officers play crucial roles in society and their work has often been recognised as one that is highly stressful and dangerous given its exposure to confrontation, violence and traumatic incidents, including the possibility of injury or death (Robertson & Cooper, 2004). In fact, it has been described as one of the most stressful occupations in the world (Alexander, 1999; Brown, Fielding & Grover, 1999). Police officers are known to suffer from very high levels of stress through performing work that is both physically and emotionally draining (Dick, 2000).

The major activities carried out by the police include the protection of life and property and enforcing the law. The nature of the work also involves patrol, investigations, traffic direction, accident attendance, scene of crime and internal disturbances such as riot (Brown & Campbell, 1990). They also spend a great deal of their time on assisting activities and conflict resolution among individuals or in a

community. Along with this, certain aspects of the work, such as high demands, shift work and frequent contact with citizens, is the reason why this occupation is defined as a highly stressful occupation (Morales- Manrique & Vanderrama-Zurian, 2012).

A variety of research has examined the potential sources of police stress (Brown & Campbell, 1990; Evans & Coman, 1993; Hart, Wearing & Headey, 1995). Two broad categories of occupational stressors among police officers have been identified (Bano, 2011; Brown & Campbell, 1990). The first involves the very nature of police work, such as the physical threat, violence, exposure to danger, court appearances, the delivery of sudden death notifications and facing the unknown. The second refers to the organisational aspects of police work such as, management style, poor communication, staff shortages, inadequate resources, time pressure, increased bureaucratic procedures, work overload and lack of support (Brown & Campbell, 1990; Nicoara & Amelia).

Many theories have been proposed to explain the causes of stress at the workplace. Since the study is within the context of sociology, two sociological theories were used, namely, the ABCX stress theory (Hill, 1949) and the stress process model (SPM) (Pearlin, Liberman & Menaghan, 1981). The theories have been discussed in detail in Chapter Two. These theories were chosen because they were considered relevant in discussing circumstances under which the individual is exposed to stress.

Clark and Cooper (2000) asserted that stressors do not act on a passive individual; he or she is likely to take actions to cope with sources of stress. It is

when these coping strategies fail that an individual will experience negative stress outcomes. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as the behavioural and cognitive efforts to manage stressful situations that are appraised as taxing personal resources. Research indicates that the extent to which a stressor affects the individual is accounted for, in part, by one's coping resources and strategies (Carr & Umberson, 2013). Wiese, Rothmann and Storm (2003) argued that when a successful coping strategy is followed (e.g. problem-solving), goals are attained and professional efficiency is improved. On the contrary, when a poor coping strategy is used (e.g. passive coping), stress is likely to occur. Research indicates that high levels of stress are associated with ineffective coping strategies whereas low degrees of stress are associated with constructive coping strategies (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) avowed that stress is a self-perpetuating process not only because it impedes the attainment of professional goals, but also because it depletes coping resources.

It is evident that occupational stress poses a potential threat to the well-being of individual Police Officers in the Ghana Police Service (GPS) as well as the police organisation. However, no studies regarding the factors that contribute to stress among Police Officers in Ghana, and more specifically in the Cape Coast Metropolis were found in the literature. The study therefore sought to explore factors that could contribute to stress among Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Cape Coast Metropolis is one of the six Metropolis in Ghana and the only among the 20 districts in the Central Region. The Metropolis is predominantly

urban with three-quarters of its population living in urban areas (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2013). In 1984 the population of the Metropolis was 84,477 and it increased to 118,106 in 2000 and 169, 894 in 2010 (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2013). This indicates that the Metropolis has witnessed tremendous growth in population. The increase in population has increased the work demands of the police in the Metropolis. Such demands are reported to increase stress (Powell, 1990).

Besides, Morsah, Haarr and Kwak (2006) indicated that urban areas are marked by high density, high levels of crime and disorder. The Central Region recorded 14,358 crime cases in 2013 and 18,679 in 2014. Out of the total number of cases recorded in 2013 (14,358), the Cape Coast Metropolis documented 847 cases. In 2014, the Metropolis recorded 984 criminal cases out of 18,679 cases recorded in the region (Regional Police Headquarters, Cape Coast, 2014). This indicates that crime rate increased in the Metropolis within the period of 2013 to 2014. In view of this, Collins and Gibbs (2003) argued that in metropolitan forces, exposures to stressors are likely to be far greater in both frequency and intensity because of high population density and crime rate. The Cape Coast Metropolis was chosen for the study to ascertain if increases in population and crime rate in the Metropolis have resulted in stress among the police and if so address the situation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The provision of security to citizens and communities is an essential function of a modern state (Gyamfi, 2012). The Police Service is the key state agency

responsible for this function, and is thus strongly linked with the well-being of individuals and communities through its routine provision of preventive, administrative and punitive services (Gyamfi, 2012; Pienaar & Rothmann, 2006). Pienaar and Rothmann asserted that the productiveness, motivation and health of a police service are important factors which contribute to a country's stability, economic growth and development. Biggam, Power, Carcary and MacDonald (1997) contended that for the police to fulfil their duty successfully, the work-force must be effective. However, stress undermines the efficiency of police officers (Biggam et al., 1997; WHO, 2004).

The work of the police is regarded as an extremely stressful occupation (Alexander, 1999). Police occupational stress is a widespread problem because of its numerous negative effects on individuals and on police organisations. The increasingly intense environment faced by police women and men, on daily basis leaves them at high risk of developing a stress reaction (Brown & Campbell, 1990). Police officers who experience high levels of occupational stress report a high incidence of negative physical, psychological and behavioural stress effects that affect their work performance (Agolla, 2008; Morash et al., 2006). Specifically, they commonly have poor health, are frequently absent from work, are dissatisfied and exhausted, experience burnout, and because of weak organisational commitment, they may not fully invest themselves in their work or they may retire prematurely (Morash et al., 2006).

The effects of police stress may also have an adverse effect on the development and maintenance of working relationships with the public, especially

their violence towards citizens (Biggam et al., 1997; Neely & Cleveland, 2012). Stress among police officers has also been associated to police misconduct which has a negative effect on the police organisation due to lawsuits resulting from officers' performance (Patterson, Chung & Swan, 2012). Research indicates that stress among police officers also influences work-family conflict (Kop, Euwema & Schaufel, 1999).

Regardless of the negative impact of occupational stress on individual police officers, on police organisations and the community where officers serve, the police service, including the GPS has failed to address the matter of stress among police officers (WHO, 2004). Water and Ussery (2007) posit that, police culture leads officers to believe that they are special population that has superhuman abilities and no weakness when actually they are particularly vulnerable due to their need for constant vigilance. Thus, not only does the individual officer deny his or her risk factors, but departments also ignore the problem (Water & Ussery, 2007). It is therefore critical to understand the sources of police occupational stress and to implement strategies for reducing stressors or, if they cannot be reduced, for assisting officers in coping effectively with them.

Kortum and Ertel (2003) indicated that the existing research on occupational stress among police officers has been conducted mainly in Anglo-American countries, with scarcely few studies in sub-Saharan Africa (Agolla, 2008; Omolayo, 2012; Oweke, Muola and Ngumi, 2014, Pienaar & Rothmann). Most researches on occupational stress among police officers used only quantitative approach to research. This study however used the mixed method approach which combines

both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Again, virtually all researches on occupational stress in Ghana focus on occupations such as teaching, banking and the medical profession (Sackey & Sanda, 2009; Sackey, Boahema & Sanda; 2011). The current study seeks to fill the void in research by exploring factors which influence occupational stress among Police Officers in Ghana, and particularly in the Cape Coast Metropolis in order to understand and predict this risk factor more effectively, and to implement strategies for reducing stress.

According to Morsah et al. (2006) the broader context of police work includes indicators of life quality and social disorders, for example, the percentage poor in the area served by the police department, the amount of crime in the area, and metropolitan versus county setting. Morsah et al. indicated urban areas are marked by high density, high levels of crime and disorder. It is therefore imperative to investigate whether the dramatic increase in population in the Cape Coast Metropolis (for instance, 118,106 was recorded in 2000 and by 2010 went up to 169,894 (GSS, 2013), crime rate (e.g. 847 in 2013 to 984 in 2014 ), increase demands on the Ghana Police Service (in terms of international terrorism, armed robberies, ethnic conflict, cybercrime, narcotic drugs and increasing population pressure) and inadequate resources needed by the police to function effectively (Aning, 2006) have indeed resulted in Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis experiencing stress

According to Powell (1990) officers who serve small cities, sub-urban, and rural areas do have different behaviours and attitudes from those who work in large urban and metropolitan centre. The more militaristic, bureaucratic, discipline-

oriented nature of large urban departments may result in stressors beyond individually perceived workplace problems (Morsah et al., 2006). Officers from large urban areas generally have greater stress across a number of variables including organisational structure, administrative and interactions with other areas of the criminal justice system (Weber & Leeper, 1998). Weber and Leeper argued that officers from large urban areas are often exposed to additional stressors in other areas because they deal with crime that requires greater interaction with the public. Collins and Gibbs (2003) added that in metropolitan forces, exposures to stressors are likely to be far greater in both frequency and intensity. So the question is what are the factors that influence stress among police officers serving in a Metropolitan area? How do police officers cope with stressful events at the workplace? It was in the quest to find answers to these questions that the study examines occupational stress among Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study was to examine the nature and factors that influence stress among Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identify the stressors Police Officers encounter at the workplace.
2. Explore stress coping strategies and programmes use by Police Officers.
3. Assess how Police Officers interpret the stressors they encounter at work.
4. Explore the symptoms of stress as experienced by Police Officers.
5. Determine the association between perceived work stress and severity of stress



symptoms among Police Officers.

6. Ascertain whether there is a significant relationship between demographic characteristics of Police Officers (age, gender, marital status, years of service, educational level and rank) and perceived work stress.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the objectives of the study, the specific research questions raised are:

1. What stressors do Police Officers encounter at the workplace?
2. What stress coping strategies and programmes do Police Officers use?
3. How do Police Officers interpret the stressors they encounter at work?
4. What symptoms do Police Officers experience when under stress?
5. What is the association between perceived work stress and severity of stress symptoms among Police Officers?
6. What is the relationship between demographic characteristics of Police Officers (age, gender, marital status, years of service, educational level and rank) and perceived work stress?

### **Hypotheses**

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant positive association between perceived work stress and severity of stress symptoms among Police Officers.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is significant difference between the demographic characteristics of Police Officers (age, gender, marital status, years of service, education level and rank) and perceived work stress.

## **Significance of the Study**

There was the need to investigate occupational stress among police officers as its potential negative consequences affect society in more direct and critical ways than stress in most other occupations. The success of the Police Service depends to a larger extent on the wellbeing of its members. Officers operating under severe and chronic stress may be at greater risk of error, accidents and over-reaction that can compromise their performance, jeopardize public safety and pose significant liability costs to the Police Service (Ranta & Sud, 2008). Pienaar and Rothmann (2006) stated that failing to take into account the frequency of stressful incidents that police officers experience can lead to underestimating the effects of moderately stressful events that are frequently experienced and overestimating highly stressful situations that rarely occur. Therefore, knowing the different stressors and factors that contribute to its aggravation and alleviation, the Police Administration would be equipped to provide interventions and programmes for Police Officers that are prone to stress impacted by their work and will enable them to manage their stress in a healthy and efficient manner.

The importance of police work cannot be underestimated and Nel and Burgers (1998) insisted that our society will not be able to heal itself without healing the police. It is important to give attention to the impact of stress in a police environment because of its impact on the well-being of an individual officer, on the police organisation as a whole, and the community where officers serve. Effort to reduce officer's stress may be pivotal in community relations, since a marked

increased has occurred in citizens' complaints about incidents involving officers who had high levels of stress that affected their ability to handle conflicts properly.

Moreover, the outcome of the study when made available would provide information on the stressors of police officers that can be used as basis for policies of recruitment and retention of police officers in the Police Service and stress management techniques for them. The result of this study may also be used as a bottom-line data by future researchers who may have interest studying occupational stress among Police Officers in Ghana.

### **Scope of the Study**

The entire police force in Ghana is too large to be covered within a limited time frame; therefore the study was limited to Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Officers in the Metropolis were selected to extract their opinions regarding stress-related conditions associated with their work. The study does not cover stressors outside the work environment (i.e. non-work or home-interface stressors). This is because the focus of the study is pitched on work stress.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Stressors:** Any environmental circumstances directly or indirectly affecting an individual.

**Stress:** Is self-perceived negative or unpleasant impact that the individual experiences when exposed to a stressor.

**Occupational stress:** Is self-perceived negative or unpleasant impact that an individual experiences at the work place when exposed to a work-related stressor.

**Stress symptoms (Crisis):** This is reserved for the experience of specific stress indicators such as depression, aggression, headache, heart diseases, more accidents, sleep disturbance etc.

**Coping strategies:** Are the various behavioural and cognitive mechanisms used by individuals to manage stressful situations that are interpreted as exceeding personal resources.

### **Organisation of the Study**

The study is organised into five chapters. Chapter one covers the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, the research questions and hypotheses, significance and scope of the study, definition of terms and the organisation of the work. Chapter two focuses on the literature review including the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that guided the study.

Chapter three looks at the methodology of the study. The chapter describes the research design, study area, study population, sample and sampling procedure, sources of data, research instruments, data collection procedure and data processing and analysis. Data collected for the study is analysed and discussed in chapter four. Finally, summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations are the focus of the last chapter.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter reviews occupational stress related literature. The chapter discusses sociological theories as well as the conceptual framework that guided the study. The concept of stress and occupational stress, factors that influence stress among police officers and symptoms associated with stress are discussed. Individual differences which influence stress are also examined. Some stress coping strategies and empirical evidence on stress among police officers have also been reviewed.

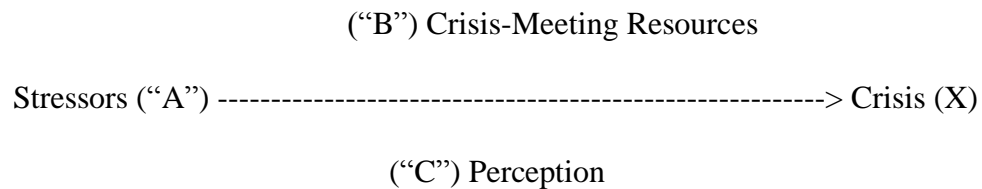
#### **Theoretical Framework**

Numerous sociological models have been offered to address the question of how and under what circumstances the social and work environment exposes people to stress. This section of the chapter examines sociological theories that explain stress. The study was guided by the Classical ABCX stress theory (Hill, 1949) and stress process model (SPM) (Pearlin et al., 1981). These theories were chosen because they are considered relevant in discussing circumstances under which the individual is exposed to stress which may relatively culminate in stress outcomes or crises. The general arguments, assumptions or tenets underlying these theories and how they relate to occupational stress are discussed.

### **ABCX stress theory**

Hill (1949) developed the ABCX stress theory through his study of the impact of economic depression on families. The theory was formulated after the Great Depression based on extensive observations of families who survived contrasted with those whose families did not. As Hill interviewed families who had lost their jobs and were living in abject poverty, he looked for factors which contributed to family survival of these circumstances. Based on this, he theorised that there are two complex variables which act to buffer the family from acute stressors and reduce the direct correlation between multiple stressors and family crisis. These were articulated into what he called ABCX theory of family stress. Given the socio-economic circumstances of workers of today, this theory may have some currency for studying occupational stress among Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Classical ABCX theory (Hill, 1949) posits that “A” (stressors) interacts with “B” (resources/coping mechanism(s) that is, informal and formal social supports) which in turn interacts with “C” (the meanings given to the stressor) to affect “X” (distress or crisis). The components of the model have been illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Hill’s ABCX model of stress.**

Source: Hill (1949).

Hill (1949) used the term stressor (“A”) to refer to a situation for which the family has had little or no prior preparation and must therefore be viewed as problematic. Hill argued that crisis-precipitating events (stressors) affect families based on the hardships that accompany them. He emphasised that whether or not a stressor led to hardships determined whether a family defined a stressor positively or negatively. Examples of hardships of families that experienced the stressor according to Hill included sharp changes in income, housing inadequacies, illness of wife or children, wife having to work and to take on both parenting roles, and child-discipline problems stemming from the father’s absence. The theory posits that stressor (“A”) interacted with the crisis-meeting resources (“B”).

The crisis-meeting resources (“B”) are the factors in family organisation that, by their presence, kept the family from crisis or, by their absence, urged a family into crisis. Hill (1949) summarised the family’s crisis-meeting resources to include family integration and family adaptability. Moreover, the crisis-precipitating event and the resources available interacted with the definition or meaning given to the event. The subjective definition made of the event (“C”) equalled the meaning or interpretation of the event and its accompanying hardships for the individual. The tendency to define the stressor events and the accompanying hardships of the stressor as crisis-producing and challenging made the individual to be more crises prone. Hill indicated that the crisis-precipitating event or stressor (“A”), the resources (“B”), and the definition of the event (“C”) interacted to lead to crisis or stress outcome (“X”).

A family in crisis (“X”), according to Hill (1949), would have role patterns influx and shifting expectations. Families in crisis might also experience sharp changes in the sexual area, such as in the frequency and pattern of sexual relations.

### **The stress process model**

The stress process model (SPM) as first described by Pearlin et al. (1981) has been the prevailing and the most prominent theoretical framework used by sociologists in an effort to explain stress and its effect, social distribution of mental health as well as uncovering relevant social experiences and circumstances that account for such observed distribution (Thoit, 2010). The model posits that individuals’ potentially stressful experiences and the way in which they are affected by these experiences may originate in the social orders (structure) of which they are part. Thus, stressors and coping resources according to the model arise out of one’s social context and combine in ways that determine mental health risk (Pearlin, 1989).

The most comprehensive of the structures pointed out by Pearlin (1989) are the various systems of stratification that cut across society, such as those based on social and economic class, race, ethnicity, gender, and age. These systems exemplify the unequal distribution of resources opportunities and self-regard. A low status within them may itself be a source of stressful life conditions (Pearlin (1989). Disadvantaged individuals, for example, are more likely to be exposed to more stressors and have fewer available coping resources relative to their advantaged counterparts (Pearlin, 1989).



Another important structural context identified by the theory is how social institutions arrange their statutes and roles. Occupying a major institutionalised role is accompanied with persistent encounters coupled with a host of conditions and expectations that exert a structuring force on experience. The theory stipulates that when experiences are threatening and problematic, they may result in stress (Pearlin, 1989). Moreover, one does not act alone as occupant of a role. Rather, one role is part of a broader role set or a group of complementary roles around which important interpersonal relations are structured. For example, one cannot be a husband without a wife, a colleague without a fellow worker. Relationships formed by role set are considered important to the parties involved. When such relationships are problematic and filled with conflict, they can produce considerable stress (Pearlin, 1989).

Pearlin et al. (1981) conceptualised the stress process model as involving three main concepts namely: sources of stress, mediating resources, and outcomes of stress. Sources of stress are classified into: life events, which cause stress as they occur at a point in time; and chronic life strains, which develop over longer periods of time. Like the ABCX model of stress, the stress process model indicates that the exposure to a source of stress does not necessarily result in the manifestation of stress. However, there are various contributing factors that may impact the relationship. This, Pearlin (1989) termed as mediators. Factors that mediate the relationship between stress and stress outcomes include, but are certainly not limited to coping and social support. According to Pearlin (1989) outcomes of stress

involves the manifestation of organismic stress. These are classified as physical (physiological), psychological and behavioural in nature.

The stress process model is relevant to the study of occupational stress among police officers taking into consideration the task structure or the roles and statuses of police officers within the organisation. The structure, roles and various statuses within the police profession may influence stress experiences of police officers.

### **The concept of stress and occupational stress**

Stress has been a difficult concept to define although researchers agree that it is increasing globally among employed and non-employed people (Jex, Beehr & Roberts, 1992). There is no uniformly adopted definition of stress and researchers have used dozens of definitions (Jaramillo, Nixon & Sam, 2005). Thus, the term is subject to numerous explanations from diverse academic perspectives (Kinman & Jones, 2005). Social scientific researchers, for instance, are no more unified in their definitional approaches (Blaug et al., 2007). For example, one school of thought perceives of job stress as a response to person-to-person behaviour (i.e. sociological). Another school of thought holds that stress is psychological in nature and pertains to the person's perceptions (Jaramillo et al., 2005).

The lack of consensus amongst researchers in the field is illustrated by the findings of a study conducted by Jex et al. (1992) that analysed articles published in six eminent journals in the field of organisational behaviour over a period of several years. The researchers indicated that stress was defined in several ways: as a

stimulus from the environment, as a response to environmental stimuli, and as a stimulus-response relationship.

In spite of the disagreement on the meaning of stress, there are a number of working definitions which suggest the phenomenon still has some meaning. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress arises from a disparity between the perceived demands made on an individual and their perceived ability to cope with these demands. If demands are high and perceived ability to cope are high, then a person will not feel stressed. Daft and Marcic (2004) defined stress as an individual's physiological and emotional response to stimuli that place physical or psychological demands on the individual and create uncertainty and lack of personal control when important outcomes are at stake. These stimuli, called stressors, produce some combination of frustration and anxiety.

From the definitions considered above, it can be concluded that stress comes as a result of pressures or excessive demands faced by individuals which produce physical, psychological and behavioural reactions of which the individual requires an adaptive response. For the purpose of this study stress is defined as self-perceived negative or unpleasant impact that the individual experiences when exposed to a stressor. Hitherto, the concept of stress has been considered in a general way but since the focus of the study is concerned with matters within organisations, it is necessary to also sharpen the emphasis on workplace stress.

The ILO (1992) defined occupational stress as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirement of job does not match the capabilities, resources or need of the worker. Ganster and Rosen (2013) defined

work stress as the “process by which workplace psychological experiences and demands [stressors] produce both short-term [strains] and long-term changes in mental and physical health” (p. 2). Beer and Newman (as cited in Rollinson, 2005) identified workplace stress as conditions arising from the interactions of people and their jobs which are characterised by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning.

From a different perspective, Parker and Decotis (1983) used the term job stress to describe the feeling of a person who is required to deviate from normal or self-desired functioning in the work place as a result of opportunities, constraints, or demands relating to potentially important work-related outcomes. For the purpose of this study occupational stress is defined as self-perceived negative or unpleasant impact that the individual experiences at the work place when exposed to a stressor.

### **The stress process**

Selye (1984), a pioneer in stress research first documented the stress experience in his classic book *The Stress of Life*. In an attempt to determine whether exposure to unpleasant or harmful environmental conditions would result in stimulus-specific responses or in a generalised response to all stimuli, he developed a model of the body’s stress reaction which he termed General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). The model states that stress consists of three processes. The first stage is primary appraisal, which is the process of perceiving threat to oneself. This is followed by the secondary appraisal where the individual generates a response to the threat. The third stage is the exhaustion

stage. Here, as a result of long-continued exposure to the same stressor, to which the body has become adjusted, the body's easily available resources are exhausted (Greenberg, 2005). The three phases of stress developed by Selye describe the stress experience and give us a vivid demonstration of how damaging stress is on the body and how serious avoiding constructive coping strategies can be.

Selye's model has been subjected to several criticisms by researchers such as Arnold and Lazarus (as cited in Melucci, 2004). According to Arnold and Lazarus, the level of stress is influenced by the way in which people view their situation; hence stress is subjective (Melucci, 2004). Despite the various criticisms levelled against Selye's model, it must be admitted that the model has contributed to the advancement of the study of stress and the different phases through which stress progresses.

Besides Selye's model, one prominent model in stress research is the transactional model developed by Richard Lazarus. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed a model (cognitive appraisal) that underscores the transactional nature of stress. The model states that environments can influence people and that people can influence environments, hence stress is a two way process. By this, the environment produces stressors and the individual finds ways to deal with them. The model is in two parts, namely primary and secondary appraisal. During the primary appraisal stage, a person will be seeking answers to questions regarding their well-being. A secondary appraisal is the individual's attempt to define what coping options are available for dealing with the harm, threat or challenge. If demands are greater than the resources to meet it, stress occurs (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Lazarus (1993) argued that four concepts must be elaborated when describing the stress process. These include the stressor (or causal agent); the evaluation of the stressor, differentiating between the stressful and non-stressful components; the process by which the person copes with these stressful demands; and the effects or stress reactions of the individual. The stress models developed by the various theorists provide us with many valuable tools for understanding the nature of stress.

### **Factors contributing to occupational stress**

Stress does not appear in a vacuum, but it is the result of some causes, termed factors of stress or stressors. Pearlin (1989) indicated that stress can be caused by many different events and experiences, some of which depend on the individual and some shaped by social structure and environment and the location of people within them. There is no doubt that the experience of stress is subjective and is mediated by personal evaluation of a situation by the individual. There are nevertheless a number of substantive factors that can be identified as potential causes of work-related stress depending on the particular job (Jaramillo et al., 2005).

The workplace factors that have been found to be associated with stress have been categorised as those to do with the content of work and those to do with the social and organisational context of work (Michie, 2002). Michie classified these stressors into five major categories. These include factors intrinsic to the job, role in the organisation, career development, relationships at work and organisational structure and climate.

In examining work-related stressors, McShane and Von Glinow (2010) outlined four main categories which include physical environment/organisational, role-related, interpersonal and task control stressors. They explain that the physical environmental stressors include loud noise, temperature variations, strenuous activities, poor lighting or harsh lighting and safety hazards. The role-related stressors denote conditions where there is difficulty on the part of the employees in understanding, reconciling or performing the various roles in their lives. These include role conflict, role ambiguity, workload and task characteristics. The interpersonal stressors involve poor supervision, office politics and conflicts with co-workers and clients. Situations where individuals flop to attain a sound working relationship with their immediate superiors or are unable to get on well with fellow team members or from other sections as well as customers can all be a source of considerable unhappiness.

In agreement with McShane and Von Glinow (2010), Rollinson (2005) identified four sources of work stress. These include environmental, organisational, immediate social and individual stressors. Rollinson described the environmental stressors that are found in the environment of an organisation as forces that can become worrying or potentially disturbing to individuals. These include economic, political, and technological factors. Economically, rising interest rates, rising unemployment figures, and news of decreased national competitiveness are all potential to a person's security, news of which evokes feelings of uncertainty. In the technological sense, keeping pace with new technological developments can be a problem for almost everyone and since technological change establishes a

requirement for individuals to adapt, it results in stressful situations (Rollinson, 2005).

With regard to organisational stressors, organisational structure, politics and culture need to be considered. According to Rollinson (2005), in structures that are too rigid, people can feel that there are a few opportunities for growth and personal development, whilst very loose, ill- defined structures can give rise to feelings of role ambiguity and anxiety. Considering organisational politics, Rollinson argued that some people go one step further and manoeuvre behind the scenes for their own ends, and the effects can bring an element of frustration and sometimes resentment. Of equal importance is the fact that if a highly pressurised work environment is part of the organisational culture, there can be heavy work demands on employees and this can create stressful conditions (Rollinson, 2005). Michie (2000) reiterated that an organisational culture of unpaid overtime also causes stress. On the other hand, a culture of involving people in decision making, keeping them informed about what is happening in the organisation, and providing good amenities and recreation facilities reduce stress (Michie, 2000).

Rollinson (2005) further indicated that the immediate social conditions can also create stress. These involve relations with one's immediate superior, the nature of a workgroup and interpersonal relationships with group members. The last category of work-related stressors identified by Rollinson (2005) is the individual stressors which denote certain features of an individual's role that can be stressful. They include job design, role overload, physical conditions, role ambiguity and role conflict.



Another interesting feature Goetsch (1999) observed about the causes of work stress has to do with shift work which disrupts bodily rhythms. Shift work requires that some employees work when the majority of people are resting. It has traditionally been required by the medical community, the transportation industry, utilities, security and increasingly by retail sales. From a safety viewpoint, shift workers are subjected to more workplace stress in terms of weariness, irritability, depression and lack of interest in work (Goetsch, 1999).

### **Sources of work stress among police officers**

Nicoara and Amelia (2012) highlighted that in police work, there are many causes of stress similar to those found in other professions (e.g. shift work, poor supervision, inadequate and insufficient equipment), but there are also stressors specific to this activity. Most often, researchers group the stressors faced by police officers into two broad categories namely: operational stressors and organisational or contextual stressors (Brown & Campbell, 1990; Wiese et al., 2003).

Operational stressors refer to the various aspects of the very nature of police work, such as danger, violence and crime (Alexander, 1999; Kop et al., 1999). Additional stressors inherent in the police work are shift work, the responsibilities for protecting others, continued exposure to injured persons, the need to keep composed even if provoked, the presence of firearms, shooting, routine and periods of inactivity and boredom, conflict, constant threat to the officer's security and safety (Brown & Campbell, 1990).

Organisational stressors on the other hand refer to stress which emanates as a result of certain characteristics of the police organisation itself and include stressors such as staff shortages, management styles, and inadequate resources, lack of communication and work overload (Kop et al., 1999). Nicoara and Amelia (2012), however, categorised the stressors emanating from the police agency itself into three major sub-categories. These include stressors emanating from managers and management styles adopted by the police institution, professional recognition and insufficient human and material resources.

Another source of police stress emanates from the relationship with the public or society. From the society, stress originates from a perceived lack of support from the community, public complaints against police officers, and the negative image of the media about police work and police officers as well as frequent exposure to intentional or accidental violence (Nicoara & Amelia, 2012).

Yet another source of stress in police work involves work-family relationship. Research on work-family conflict has long recognised that the personal lives of police officers were often affected by the unique nature of police work which, in turn, made officers perceive their job as more stressful (He, Zhao & Ren, 2005).

Numerous studies have found that police officers typically regard the organisational aspects of their work to be more stressful than the operational nature of police work because officers have to deal with these stressors on a regular if not daily basis (Brown & Campbell, 1990; Alexander, 1999). Thus, instead of the nature of police work itself being stressful, these studies have found that police stress has more to do with the organisational context in which police officers work

than their operational duties. Hence, job stress among police officers is produced first and foremost by the organisation and management and to a lesser degree by task-related factors or routine operational duties. In view of this, Sauter and Murphy (1995) argued that police work may in fact not be different from other jobs, at least in terms of the factors that contribute to levels of occupational stress. These findings suggest that job stressors are more often to be found in the job context than in the job content.

### **Perceptions and interpretations of stressful Events**

Vokic and Bogdanic (2008) emphasised that individual differences affect our perceptions and interpretations of events around us. Pearlin (1989) acknowledged that perceived stress is subjective to every individual. In other words, what one person may interpret as a very stressful event may be interpreted differently by another person. Pearlin reiterated that how one perceives a stressful event(s) is often patterned by one's social background, including gender, social class, age and the availability of coping networks and resources. Thus, perceptions of stress may be influenced by a person's relative status or social position in a web of social relationships. Pearlin further argued that stress exposure varies a lot across social position and experience in terms of number of exposures and also the type of exposures. So, again, structural position shapes many aspects of stress from perceptions to exposure or risk of stress.

In the work environment, Blaug et al. (2007) highlighted that the degree of stress an individual experiences is, to an extent, dependent upon his or her own

appraisal of the demands of their work. The subjective appraisal will in turn be affected by a range of socio-economic factors including gender, age, race, geographical location, housing, health, community networks, among others. Stress levels also seem to depend on what a person interprets as threatening or challenging, and whether that individual believes he or she is able to cope with it. All these social and psychological variables, according to Blaug et al., may profoundly affect individual experiences of stress so much so that stress appears, ultimately, to be 'in the eye of the beholder' (p. 4). Blaug et al. therefore concluded that subjective and self-reported evaluations of stress are just as valid as objective data such as statistics on accidents or absenteeism.

In a related development, Johnson et al. (2005) agreed that the amount of stress a person experiences at work is likely to be the result of an interaction of a number of factors such as the type of work they are doing, the presence of work stressors, the amount of support they receive both at work and at home and the coping strategies they use to deal with stress. Certain occupations are more likely to involve an emotional element of work suggesting that employees in these occupations are likely to be more vulnerable to stress than occupations that do not require emotional displays (Johnson et al., 2005).

### **Individual differences in reaction to stress**

Stress is a subjective experience which is not necessarily easy to identify in another person and it is apparent that similar situations will produce entirely different reactions in different individuals (Price, 2004). McShane and Von Glinow

(2010) and Michie (2002) affirmed that individuals differ in their risk of experiencing stress and in their vulnerability to the adverse effects of stress. For instance, the stress literature indicates that members of disadvantaged social groups are especially vulnerable or emotionally reactive to stressors (Thoit, 1995). Pearlin (1989) therefore concluded that individuals who are exposed to stressful conditions do not necessarily suffer the same outcomes. Clark and Cooper (2000) also reiterated that the experience of stress symptoms is both subjective and dependent on individual differences. If a source of stress is positively perceived, the individual will not experience negative outcomes.

Available evidence suggests that individual differences have a moderating effect on reactions to potentially stressful situations (Ivancevich et al., 1990; Pearlin, 1989). Two individuals may be exposed to the same stressors yet they experience different levels of stress or stress symptom. This happens because the same situation can be perceived as incredibly overbearing or challenging by individuals in different self-concept. McShane & Von Glinow (2010) attributed this to three reasons.

Firstly, it has to do with perception. Individuals perceive the same situation differently. For instance, people with high self-efficacy (a belief that one can perform a specific task successfully) are less likely to experience stress consequences in that situation since the stressor is less threatening. Secondly, some people tend to have more stress symptoms than others in the same situation because they have lower thresholds of resistance to a stressor. Comparatively, people who exercise regularly and have healthy lifestyles experience less stress outcomes.

Thirdly, the reason could also be attributed to the fact that people use different coping strategies (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010).

Cohen, Fink, Gadon and Willits (1992) concluded that perhaps there is no way to create universally appropriate levels of stress but then it is possible to identify signals that indicate that individuals are experiencing so much stress. It is therefore impractical to argue that all people working in certain occupation will experience the same amount of stress. Rather it makes sense to underscore that employees working in high-risk occupation will have a greater chance of experiencing negative stress outcomes (Johnson et al., 2005).

### **Socio-demographic and occupational characteristics that influence stress**

Researchers have long argued that many stressful experiences could be traced back to surrounding social structures and people's locations within, and personal characteristics of the individual (Pearlin, 1989; Vokic & Bogdanic, 2008). Demographic variables that are proven to relate to someone's job stress and health relationship include gender, age, marital status, job experience, hierarchical level and education (Affum-Osei & Azunu, 2016; Pearlin, 1989; Rintaugu, 2013; Vokic & Bogdanic, 2008). These variables, according to Pearlin (1989), could provide insights to better understand an individual's stress process.

One major variable that often appears in the discourse of occupational stress is gender. Aneshensel (1992) indicated that men and women may occupy the same role such as a worker, but they may be exposed to different constraints as a consequence of gender stratification. According to Vokic and Bogdanic (2008),

there is a general tendency in stress literature according to which females experience higher level of occupational stress regarding gender-specific stressors and have different ways of interpreting and dealing with problems in their work environment. For instance, Ganster and Shaubroeck (1991) indicated that women experience the greatest level of stress as they are more vulnerable to the demands of work to the extent that they often have more non-work demands than men. A recent study conducted by Affum-Osei and Azunu (2016) among workers in commercial banks in Ghana revealed that female employees reported high level of occupational stress compared to their male counterparts. Moreover, Sackey, Boahema and Sanda (2011) showed that female managers in Ghana are more likely to report of more stress experience in the workplace than their male counterparts. However, in contrast to the above findings, Vokic and Bogdanic found that there was no significant difference in stress perceived by Croatian males and females.

Relatedly, various researchers have shown that gender is a key explanatory factor in predicting the sources and coping strategies of stress among police officers (Brown & Campbell, 1990; Omalayo, 2012). The review of literature on police stress reveals that female police officers are more likely to encounter higher levels of harassment, over hostility, and other negative social interactions on the job compared to their male counterparts (He, Zhao & Archbold, 2002). He et al. attributed the cause of the maltreatment to the police organisational culture which is adversarial to female officers, especially because they are a minority group in a male dominated organisation. Diverse research findings have also been reported for gender and occupational stress among police officers. Whiles some researchers

reported differences in the level of perceived stress for male and female police officers (Brown & Campbell, 1990; Omolayo, 2012) others revealed no differences between the two genders (Amin, 2015; Taylor & Bennell, 2006). According to Brown and Campbell, the sources of stress experienced by female police officers differ from male officers. Moreover, female police officers cope with stress differently from male officers.

The marital status of a worker is believed to influence experience of work stress (Affum-Osei & Azunu, 2016; Rintaugu, 2013). In a study to compare the degree of occupational stress experienced by married and unmarried working women in insurance companies, Nagaraju and Nandini (2013), found out that there were differences in employees' marital status and the level of occupational stress perceived. The findings of the study indicated that working married women faced more difficulties in their lives as they experienced more stress and depression as compared to non-working women. Similarly, Affum-Osei and Azunu, and Parveen (2009) reported higher level of occupational stress among married working women in commercial banks than their unmarried counterparts in Ghana and in Hyderabad city. Aneshensel (1992) confirmed that working outside the home or working as a homemaker may both generate stress for women.

Vokic and Bogdanic (2008) also established in their study that marital status is significantly related to occupational stress level perceived with married people experiencing higher levels of stress. Amin (2015) found significant difference between the levels of stress among married and unmarried police officers. The various authors explained this in the light of traditional trends, demands of society,



and more roles responsibilities to the married as mothers or fathers, wives or husbands and home-makers as well as workers.

Age has been found to be related with occupational stress (Rakshase, 2014; Rintaugu, 2013), with employees within the ages of 31-40 reporting high levels of stress (Affum-Osei & Azunu, 2016). Vokic and Bogdanic (2008) revealed that the ability to handle stress associated with job in organisations increases with age. For instance, Dua (as cited in Vokic & Bogdanic, 2008) observed that younger staff members reported more job stress than older staff. The major explanation for such a finding is that older employees have often reached a stage where career development is not their major concern, and hence a number of job characteristics which may cause stress to younger staff, who have their career ahead of them, do not cause stress to older staff. On the contrary, a study conducted by Aminabhavi and Triveni (as cited in Affum-Osei & Azunu, 2016) found that age has no influence on occupational stress. However, Deschamps, Paganon-Badiner, Marchand & Merle (2003) found that there is association between the perceived stress level of police officers and age.

Education has also been considered by some researchers as an important factor in policing. According to Jones, Jones and Prenzer (as cited in Tankebe, 2010), education, more especially tertiary education, is considered by advocates of police professionalization as an instrument that helps to improve basic operational skills, negotiation and problem solving. Education also contributes to the development of greater understanding and tolerance of minority groups as well as different lifestyles and more ethical decision making (Tankebe, 2010).

Ranjit and Mahespriya (2012) in their study affirmed that there is a significant difference in the level of job stress with various educational qualifications. Affum-Osei and Azunu (2016) also established that there is significant relationship between educational qualification and occupational stress. Affum-Osei and Azunu suggested that employees with lower qualification experience high level of occupational stress because higher education employees are able to handle stress and burnout. In a study of educational level, job satisfaction, and stress among sixty law enforcement officers, Gatson (2002) found that officers having high school degrees reported more stress than did their counterparts with bachelor degrees, though the results were not significant. Dantzker (1999) examining the relationship between the educational level of law enforcement officers and organisational stress, found that the stress level of the officers with high school diplomas was greater than that of those with associate degrees, but the officers with bachelor degrees reported higher levels of stress than the less educated officers did. Park (2007) in his study also confirmed that low levels of education were associated with higher levels of stress.

Hierarchical level (rank) is found to relate significantly with the occupational stress level (Brown & Campbell, 1990; Affum-Osei & Azunu, 2016), with middle managers experiencing the highest level of stress, and low level managers experiencing the lowest level of stress (Vokic & Bogdanic, 2008). Vokic and Bogdanic attributed this to middle managers intermediate position, as they are responsible for lower levels, and report to higher levels. Dua (as cited in Vokic &

Bogdanic, 2008) also found that staff employed at the higher job levels were found to be less stressed than those employed at the lower job levels.

Brown and Campbell (1990) remarked that the occupational characteristic which is mostly associated with exposure to stressors and experience of their consequences among police officers is rank. For instance, the rank of sergeant is reported with the highest overall levels of exposure to stressors and reported felt stress (Brown & Campbell, 1990). It is believed that this rank has both operational and management stressors to contend with, whereas constables proportionally are more likely to experience police operational stressors. Brown and Campbell indicated that officers of the rank of Inspector or above proportionally are more likely to experience organisational/management stressors than police operational stressors. However, Rakshase (2014) found that there was no significant difference on the score of occupational stress between senior police officers and constables.

Rakshase (2014) disclosed that tenure of service (experience) is an important factor which affects the level of occupational stress and coping styles among police personnel. Stewart and Barling (1996) showed that job experience can moderate the stress-mood relationship. Stewart and Barling suggested that experience in one's job may provide employees with formal (training programmes) or informal (socialisation) opportunities to develop coping strategies that enable them to function effectively in stressful setting. Ranjit and Mahespriya (2012) maintained that years of experience have an influence on job stress and that the higher the years of experience, the higher the job stress.

On the contrary, Affum-Osei and Azunu (2016) revealed that individuals with low level of experience tend to experience high levels of occupational stress and employees who had 8 years and above experience tend to report low level of work stress. Rakshase (2014) also reported a significant difference on the score of occupational stress between officers who are below fifteen years of service and above fifteen years of service. Patterson (1992) found a curvilinear relationship between years of experience and perceived stress, with officers with the least and most experience perceiving lower levels of stress than officers with intermediate levels of experience.

### **Symptoms and consequences of stress**

Clark and Cooper (2000) acknowledged that the consequences of exposure to stress are more varied and affected by numerous factors. Pearlin (1989) confirmed that the same stressors do not necessarily lead to the same stress outcomes. The WHO (2004) indicated that the experience of work stress can cause unusual and dysfunctional consequences at work which can affect both individuals and organisations. Within the organisation setting, stress is becoming a major contributor to health and performance problems of individuals, and unwanted occurrence and costs for organisations (Vokic & Bogdanic, 2008).

Vokic and Bogdanic (2008) classified the consequences of occupational stress into those on individual and those on organisational level. On the individual level researchers have classified these consequences into three main subgroups, namely physiological, psychological and behavioural symptoms or outcomes

(McShane & Von Glinow, 2010; Patterson et al., 2012; Pearlin, 1989). Physiological reactions may be termed as having higher than normal probability of death from certain illness such as increased blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases, and injuries and health problems such as headaches, back ache, high blood sugar, suppressed immune system, insomnia, muscle pains and stomach problems (Jaramillo et al., 2005; McShane & Von Glinow, 2010; Vokic & Bogdanic, 2008).

On the other hand, psychological or emotional reactions may include psychological distress, aggressiveness, boredom, loss of concentration, depression, disregarding of social norms and values, dissatisfaction of job and life, feeling of futility, emotional fatigue, burnout, moodiness and extreme cases of suicide (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010; Vokic & Bogdanic, 2008). According to Jaramillo et al. (2005), emotional reaction which may be termed as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can also be so severe. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is always associated with severe and prolonged stress after one's exposure to a series of traumatic events. This may lead to job dissatisfaction and cynicism (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). The WHO (2004) confirmed that in extreme cases long-term stress or traumatic events at work may lead to psychological problems and be conducive to psychiatric disorders resulting in absence from work and preventing the worker from being able to work again.

Behavioural reactions entail reduced level of job performance, errors of judgment, irresponsibility, low morale, absenteeism, tardiness, early retirement, job dissatisfaction, less organizational commitment, inability to make sound decision, and quitting the job altogether (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010; Jaramillo et al.,

2005). This may occur at the organisational level; however at the individual level they may include violence, isolation, excessive smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse and alienation (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010).

Clark and Cooper (2000) stated the possible symptoms of stress to include high blood pressure, chest pain (physiological), depression, anxiety, irritability (psychological), excessive drinking and smoking (behavioural symptoms). Clark and Cooper further argued that these symptoms may in the long term result in coronary heart disease (physical) and mental breakdown (physiological ill-health). On the organisational level, Vokic and Bogdanic (2008) classified the consequences of occupational stress into two major subgroups. The first deals with organisational symptoms such as poor morale among the workforce, poor relationships with clients, high accidents and mistakes, premature retirement, more internal conflicts, low quality products and services and damage to the corporate image and reputation of the organisation. The second deals with organisational costs including costs of reduced performance and productivity, high replacement costs in connection with labour turnover, increased sick pay, compensation cost and increased health-care cost.

Similarly, consequences of police officers work stress have been classified as physiological, emotional and behavioural reactions (Agolla, 2008). Police officers who are under stress may experience somatic and mental problems and burnout (Rothmann, 2008). According to Agolla the perceived police stress symptoms may include feeling restless, numbed responsiveness, phobic avoidance, trouble in concentrating, worries and thinking of concerns at night and weekend, disturbing

images of the incident, sleeping disturbance and feelings of lack of energy. However, the researcher revealed that the officers disregard the following stress symptoms statement: taking over the counter medication, high blood pressure, feeling lack of confidence and engaging in smoking and drinking alcohol.

### **Strategies for coping and managing work place stress**

The harmful and costly consequences of stress show the need for strategies to reduce stressors within organisations as well as the stress that occurs (Vokic & Bogdanic, 2008). Clark and Cooper (2000) pointed out that stressors do not act on a passive individual; he or she is likely to take action to cope with sources of stress. It is when these coping strategies fail that an individual will experience negative stress outcomes. Coping strategies represent efforts, both behavioural and cognitive, that people invest in order to deal with stressful encounters (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Researchers have indicated that the extent to which a stressor affects health outcomes is accounted for, in part, by one's coping resources and strategies (Carr & Umberson, 2013; Forgarty et al., 1999).

A review of the literature on stress reveals that individuals in a variety of professions usually take two approaches to reduce stress (Burke, 1993; Rakshase, 2014). The first approach, according to Burke, emphasises the strengthening and enhancement of individuals and their resources. Burke argued that if individuals at work had more competence, resource, they would experience fewer adverse consequences from occupational stress. The second approach involves reducing the sources and incidence of occupational stressors in the work environment. If one

reduced the number and strength of occupational stressors, individuals at work would experience less stress (Burke, 1993).

Clark and Cooper (2000) and Rakshase (2014) classified coping styles into two major types: proactive, problem-focused coping styles and emotion-focused coping styles. Proactive, problem-focused coping deals with the problem itself (for example, improving time management skills to cope with a heavy workload). Here one tries to alter the situation that is causing the stress. Emotion-focused styles on the other hand aim to mitigate the side-effects (for example, smoking or drinking alcohol to reduce feelings of anxiety or depression). Not surprisingly, positive coping strategies (problem-focussed) are considered to be more appropriate approaches to reduce psychological and physical stress (Rakshase, 2014)

Relatedly, Koeske, Kirk and Koeske (1993) identified two types of coping: control coping (for example, 'took a day at a time, 'one step at a time', considered several alternatives for handling the problem'; tried to find out more about the problem') and avoidance coping (for example, 'avoided being with people in general'; 'kept feelings to myself; drinking more').

In dealing with workplace stress, Vokic and Bogdanic (2008) suggested three measures. Firstly, there is the need for organisations and their employees to become more aware of the degree to which stress is an unnecessary cost, and a cost which they must seek to eliminate if their organisations are to survive and grow. Secondly, work-related stress should become an issue which must increasingly feature on the agenda of efficient management practices, and thirdly training and employee assistance programmes dealing with stress should be at employees' disposal.



Various workshops, seminars and conferences should increase employees' awareness of the cost associated with employee stress, and should teach them how to cope with stressful situations and states.

According to Patterson et al. (2012), the police organisation provides various forms of interventions to help police officers to manage stress. Notable among this is the training designed to help recognise signs of stress along with ways of coping. The authors indicated that there are more specific interventions used by the police organisation including: the use of spot checking and scanning, positive self-talk, deep breathing, anchoring, cognitive rehearsal and desensitisation. Others include progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, imagery and biofeedback, goal setting, stress debriefing, time management, financial planning, visual-motor behavioural rehearsal (VMBR), critical incident stress management (CISM), physical fitness and social support (Patterson et al., 2012). The above strategies focus on individual officer's ability to manage stress.

Hurrel (as cited in Patterson et al., 2012) argued that training officers to cope with stressful work events particularly organisational work events found in the work environment that are beyond officers' control may be ineffective. Patterson et al. suggests that management intervention for police officers should include training police officers to coping effectively, and in addition interventions should address the organisational environment and the connection between officers and the police organisation.

Coping styles, in part, can be influenced by the availability of coping resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping resources are the personal and social

attributes individual draw upon when dealing with stress (Carr & Umberson, 2013). Forgarty et al. (1999) averred that coping resources enable individual to encounter stimulus, appraise it as stressful, and yet deal with it in such a way that less strain results. One main resource identified by social psychologically-oriented stress researchers is social support (Carr & Umberson, 2013)

Carr & Umberson (2013) defined social support as the functions performed for an individual by significant others, including family, friends, and colleagues. The type of support provided may be instrumental (e.g., financial), emotional (e.g., listening to one's problem), or informational (e.g., providing advice) (Carr & Umberson, 2013). Carr & Umberson argued that, being married or cohabiting with a significant other is a major source of social support. Other studies have also shown that married individuals have lower rates of morbidity and mortality compared with non-married individuals (Johnson et al., 2005).

Nicoara and Amelia (2012) argued that peer support is especially salient to police officers for two reasons: first, police officers lives literally depend on each other in dangerous situations, and secondly, police work-related stress may only be completely comprehensible to fellow police officers. Police officers who perceive themselves as having a strong work-related peer support system perceived their jobs as being less stressful.

### **Empirical studies on stress among police officers**

There have been many studies regarding the prevalence, sources and effects of stress among police officers. Suresh, Anantharaman, Angunsamy and Ganesan

(2013) conducted a study on sources of job stress in police work in Chennai, India. The purpose of the study was to determine which job events were perceived as significant source of stress in police work. The researchers used a quantitative approach of conducting research using questionnaires. They developed a Police Stress Inventory purposely for the study. The sample consisted of 450 police personnel who included Inspectors, Sub-inspectors, Head constables and Constables belonging to both sexes. The sample was randomly drawn from six police ranges. Out of the 450 questionnaires distributed 241 were returned of which 220 were found usable yielding 53.6%. The respondents were made to rate certain job situations as least stressful (0%) to most stressful (100%). The study revealed that majority of the police officers considered the organisational and social aspects of their job as more stressful as compared to the physical hazards on the job. Notable among these stressors included never off duty, lack of time for family, political pressure from outside and inadequate facilities. It was concluded that since stress is due more to organisational factors, efforts should be made by the police administration to take corrective measures such as changes within the police organisation.

Sundaram and Kumaran (2012) also explored the frequency of stressful events and stress coping strategies used by grade III police constables in Tamil Nadu, India. One hundred and fifty grade III police constables from eight sub divisions comprising 52 police stations participated in the study. The study reported that seeing criminals going free and lack of personal time were most stressful events faced by the police constables. Moreover, the study showed that poor organisational

policy was the major stressor for grade III police constables. The most common coping strategies used by the police officers in the study were waiting for right time to do the job and thinking of how best to handle a problem.

Chueh et al. (2011) explored the association between the severity of psychosomatic symptoms and perceived work stress among male police officers in Southern Taiwan. By using stratified random sampling, a total of 698 male police officers were recruited into the study with a response rate of 73.4%. The study used a structured self-administered questionnaire on demographic and working characteristics, the severity of psychosomatic symptoms; perceived work stress, and social support to collect data anonymously. The results of multiple regression analysis suggested that the police officers who perceived high-work stress reported more severe psychosomatic symptoms than those who perceived low-work stress. Moreover, the results revealed that social support had a moderating effect on the association between severities of psychosomatic symptoms in police officers. The researchers reported that perceived work stress is an indicator of psychosomatic symptoms in police officers. Strategies for reducing psychosomatic symptoms of police officers included police administrators taking into account the level of work stress as well as more attention being paid to resource of social support.

Bano (2011), in her research, identified causes of stress and also empirically investigated the socio-demographic factors affecting stress level among police officers. Findings revealed that political pressure, lack of time for family, negative public image and low salary were the primary causes of stress among police personnel. It was observed that stress is significantly pronounced among those

police personnel who are younger, more educated, posted in rural areas and have less work experience.

Taylor and Bennel (2006) also examined the stress of Ontario police officers by asking them to rank the degree of stress caused by operational and organisational stressors. The results indicated that none of the stressors caused a great deal of stress, but overall, organisational stressors caused more stress than operational stressors. Rating of stress did not differ with respect to gender, rank, marital status, having children, amount of exercise, and alcohol intake, but differences were found in relation to age, education level, health problems, and job satisfaction. Findings indicated that, overall, the sampled officers did not experience excessive amount of stress, although they were slightly more stressed by organisational stressors than operational stressors.

Amin (2015) studied the level of occupational stress among police personnel in Jammu and Kashmir, India. The study was based on a sample of 100 police officers, 50 females and 50 males. In the study two independent variables were studied, that is marital status and gender. Mean, standard deviation and t-test were applied for data analysis. The results revealed no significant difference between the levels of occupational stress among male and female police officers. However, significant difference was found between the levels of occupational stress among married and unmarried police persons.

Anderson, Litzenberger and Plecas (2002) also identified common stressors and magnitude of stress reactivity in police officers during the course of general duty police work. The aim of the study was to differentiate between physical and

psycho-social stress among police officers. The study used heart rate as the primary indicator of autonomic nervous system activation in addition to observed physical activity. Data was collected through 76 full shift ride alongs. The results, confirming previous research based on self-report data alone, demonstrated that police officers experience both physical and psychological stress on the job. The results also suggested that the highest levels of stress among the police occurred just prior to and during critical incidents, and that officers do not recover fully from that stress before leaving their shift. The researchers concluded that there is the need to consider stress reactivity and repressors in the assessment of police officers and also the need for debriefing after critical incidents and increased training in stress management and coping strategies.

In Africa, Oweke et al. (2014) investigated the causes of occupational stress among police constables in Kisumu County, Kenya. The study adopted the causal comparative ex-post facto design. The target population was 451 police constables and 12 officers commanding stations in the four police divisions in Kisumu County. Stratified random sampling technique was used to sample 105 police constables and four officers commanding police stations. The data was collected using a Police Constable Questionnaire and an Officer Commanding Station Interview schedule. Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences for windows (version 20). Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (chi-square) were used in data analysis. The key findings of the study were that police constables in Kisumu were experiencing occupational stress. Working environment, workload and work schedule were causes of occupational stress among the respondents. The

study recommended that the Police Service Commission should develop a policy on stress management to guide the induction, operations and counselling of police constables on their day to day duties.

Pienaar and Rothmann (2006) also carried out a research on occupational stress in the South African Police Service (SAPS). The objectives of the study were to develop and validate measure that could be used by the South African Police Service to identify the frequency and intensity of occupational stressors and to assess the differences between the stressors for race, rank and gender groups. A cross-sectional survey design was used. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 2145 police officers from nine provinces in South Africa. The Police Stress Inventory was developed as a measuring instrument. Three internally consistent factors were identified. These factors were labelled job demands, lack of support and crime related stressors. The most prominent stressors identified were other officers not doing their job, inadequate or poor quality equipment, inadequate salaries, and seeing criminals go free. Analysis of variance showed differences in stressors for rank, race and gender groups.

Agolla (2008) investigated the causes of police work stress, symptoms and coping strategies among the Police Service in Botswana. The data was based on a sample of 229 police officers in Gaborone and its surrounding. A total of 10 police stations were sampled for the study. A simple convenient random sampling technique was employed to sample the participants. The researcher adopted a survey approach using quantitative method only. Data was analysed using a simple descriptive statistics and frequency tables. The findings revealed the following as

the major police work stressors: getting injured while on duty, using of force when the job demands to do so, inadequate resources, work overload and low salary. The study also identified exercising, socialising, healthy diets, career planning and employee training as coping strategies used by the police to cope with stress at the work place.

In Ghana, Sackey et al. (2011) examined the relationship between occupational stress and the perceived effectiveness of men and women managers in Ghanaian organisations. The purpose of the exploratory study was to examine the sources and extent of occupational stress experienced by male and female managers in Ghana. The study participants were men and women occupying managerial positions in both private and public organisations. Data collected from 135 managers using questionnaires were analysed using both descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The major findings from the study revealed that female managers in Ghana are more likely to report of more stress experience in the workplace than their male counterparts. The results indicated that female managers perceived role conflict and alienation as job stressors while the male managers perceived block career as major source of workplace stress. They concluded that despite the female managers experiencing enormous level of occupational stress, there were no significant differences between their managerial effectiveness and that of the males.

Sackey and Sanda (2009) conducted a research on the influence of occupational stress on the mental health of Ghanaian professionals. The aim of the study was to examine the existing relationship between stress and the development of health outcomes such as depression, anxiety and physical symptoms among

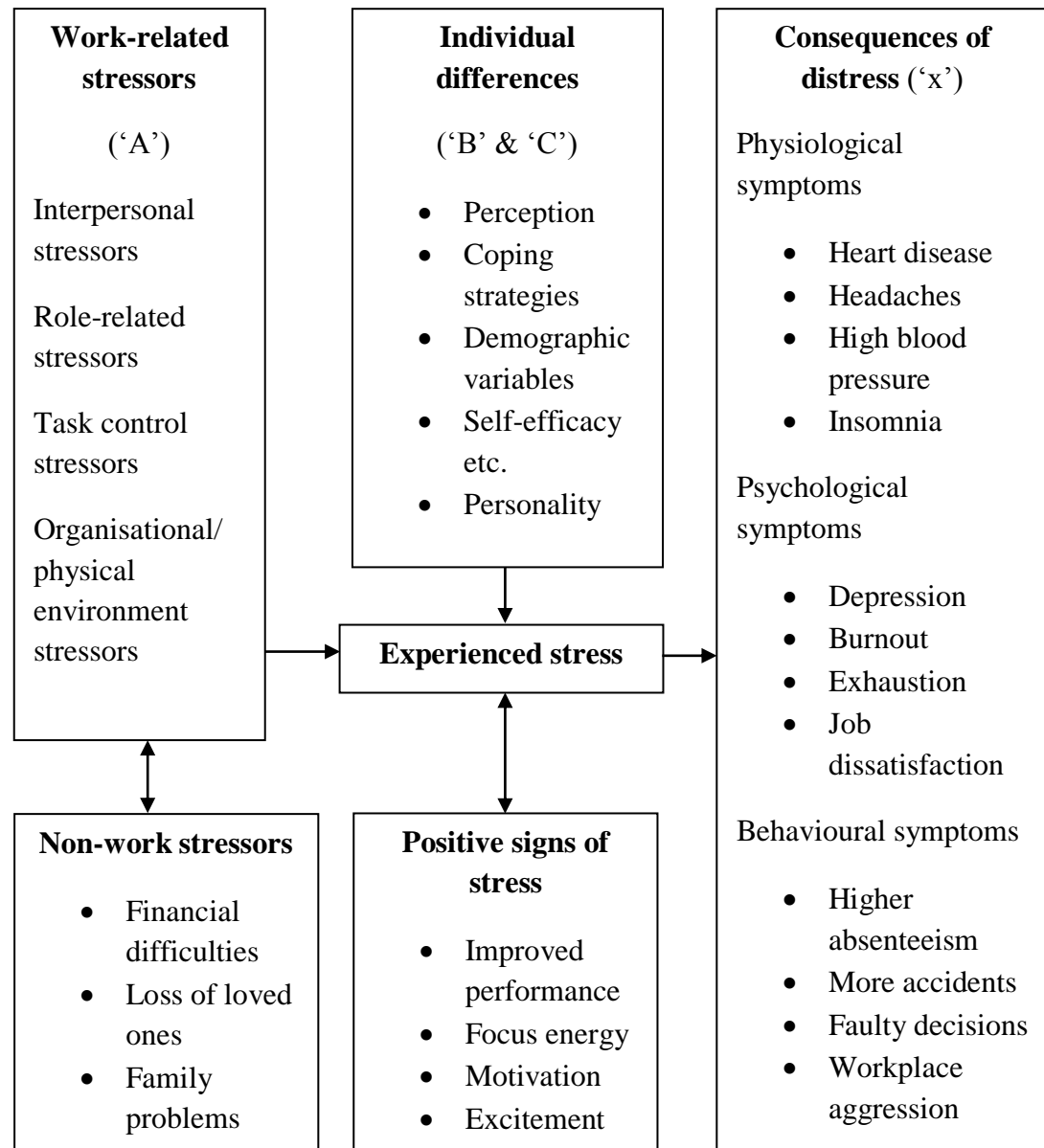


women in lower and middle management positions in some organisations in Ghana. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 170 female managers. Data were collected using both questionnaires and interviews. The occupational stress indicator, the depression, anxiety and stress scale, and the Beck's anxiety inventory were developed to collect the data. The authors argued that women occupying positions at the managerial level experienced a number of work-related stressors which negatively affected their health. Since work-related stressors were predictors of women managers' ill-health in the work environment, the study concluded that organisations should be aware of the stressors to guard against the deterioration of job performance of their women managers.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The term stress is shrouded in a thick veil of conceptual confusion and divergence of opinion (Motowildo, Packard & Manning, 1986). This explains why there is lack of consensus among researchers on the definition of stress. The main variables in this study are work-related stressors, individual differences and stress symptoms. The conceptual framework for the study follows the thinking of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), who viewed stress as a complex, multivariate process, resulting from a broad system of variables involving inputs, outputs and the mediating activities of appraisal and coping. According to this transactional approach, the stress process is dynamic, and constantly changing as a result of the continual interplay between person and environment. Lazarus (1993) indicated that stress results from the interplay of system variables and processes and this depends

on an appraisal by the person that the person-environment relationship at any given instant is one of harm, threat, or challenge.



**Figure 2: The influence of work-related stressors on perceived work distress**

Source: Adapted from McShane and Von Glinow (2010)

As illustrated in Figure 2, occupational stress is conceptualised as a complex process that consists of three major components. The first component is potential sources of work stress (work-related stressors). This includes interpersonal

stressors, role-related stressors, task control stressors and organisational/physical environment stressors. The model also has two-way arrow, indicating that stressors from work spill over into non-work and vice versa. The second component comprises individual differences (e.g. coping strategies, perception, demographic variables, personality etc.), the third component comprises the reactions that are evoked when a stressor is interpreted as threatening (e.g. physical, psychological and behavioural symptoms of stress (crisis). Thus, the researchers' concept of occupational stress is limited to a response to stimuli that may have dysfunctional physiological, psychological, and behavioural consequences.

The conceptual framework of the study is thus based on the premise that job conditions illustrated on the left part of the model partly determine the experience of stress. Whether a job actually leads to stress depends on individual differences an individual has. This is illustrated on the upper part of the model. Individual differences such as perception, coping strategies and socio-demographic variables serve as intervening variables to the stress process. When stress is experienced by an individual, its symptoms can surface as physiological, psychological and behavioural outcomes (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010).

In summary, the framework for the study presumes that occupational stress among police officers is first of all caused by specific objective events that occur at work (work-related stressors). The more frequent and the more intensely stressful the events are for an individual, the greater the level of self-perceived work stress. However, in order for an individual to experience stress, first, the sources of stress must be negatively perceived and secondly, the individual must display inadequate

coping. The experience of stress symptoms or crisis is therefore both subjective and dependent on individual differences. If a source of stress is positively perceived, for example, as a challenge to be overcome, then the individual will not experience negative outcome and vice versa (Clark & Cooper, 2000).

Linking the two theories of stress to the conceptual framework of the study, it could be deduced that individuals in the course of performing their work activities encounter situations that expose them to stress (work-related stressors) which corresponds to the “A” component in the ABCX stress theory and sources of stress in the stress process model. These stressors may emanate from the organisation’s structure or characteristics as well as roles performed by the individual in the organisation. This is illustrated on the extreme left of the conceptual framework (Figure 2). The ABCX stress theory and the SPM postulate that encountering stressful event does not automatically result in crisis or stress outcome. However, the process is mediated by certain variables, such as the available coping strategies to the individual (“B”) and the appraisal of the stressful event (“C”) in ABCX theory and the mediating resources in the SPM. This corresponds to the individual differences in the upper part of the conceptual framework in Figure 2.

As shown in the framework, if the individual interprets the stressful event negatively, and also shows inadequate coping resources (e.g. lack of support from co-workers, supervisors and family members) the individual will experience negative stress outcome (“X” component of ABCX theory and stress outcome in the SPM). The “X” component in the ABCX theory and stress outcome in SPM

corresponds to the right part of the conceptual framework which is the consequences of distress.

To relate the theories and conceptual framework of the study to occupational stress among police officers, it could be deduced that every organisation has its own formalised systems of work (structure). The environment that is most commonly the place of work of police officers is what makes the difference. Brown and Campbell (1990) established that the main sources of police stress are directly connected with the task structure or the roles and statuses of police officers within the organisation. Such job conditions may include: heavy workload, role ambiguity and conflict, poor relationships with co-workers and the public, exposure to danger and lack of equipment for work that is narrow, repetitive and monotonous among others. Moreover, the various socio-demographic characteristics of police officers such as marital status, gender, rank, experience and age may influence their experience of stress. The relationship between police stress and stress outcomes could also be mediated by coping resources such as colleagues, supervisors and family members available to the police. The above illustrations clearly show that there is a link between the theories used and the conceptual framework.

### **Chapter Summary**

In sum, the above review clearly shows that there are various factors that expose police officers to stress at the work place. Much of the review was in relation to the stress process model (Pearlin et al., 1981) and Hill's ABCX model of stress (Hill, 1949) which indicate that work related factors do not necessarily result

in the experience of occupational stress. Instead, the process is mediated by individual differences such as perceptions and appraisal of stressful event and the coping mechanism available to the worker. Moreover the review shows that certain socio demographic and workplace characteristics influence the exposure to stressors and its adverse consequences. The empirical researches also indicate that stress in police work is mostly attributed to the organisational factors in policing rather than the very nature of police work. This study sought to verify if some of the claims in the literature are applicable to the study and if so, appropriate recommendations would be made to that effect.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the methodology adopted by the researcher for the study. It covers the research design, the study area, target population, sources of data, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments, pre-testing of instrument, data collection procedure, data processing and analysis procedure.

#### **Research Design**

According to Kumar (2005), research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems. Design dictates what is needed to answer your research questions. Occupational stress among Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis was studied adopting a descriptive cross-sectional design. The study also used a mixed method approach of research comprising quantitative and qualitative methods.

Cross-sectional research design was adopted because it is designed to acquaint a researcher with a particular topic with the aim of providing a picture of a situation as it naturally occurs (Babbie, 1992). It studies a research problem at a point in time and not within a longer time frame (longitudinal studies). It also studies problems, attitudes or issues by taking a cross-section of the population (Kumar, 2005). This design was considered useful because the problem of study involves a detailed explanation of how the work environment influences stress. Besides, the issue of this study could not be directly observed.

A mixed method approach was also chosen because it captures the best of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2002). In this situation, the advantages of collecting both close-ended quantitative data and open-ended qualitative data prove advantageous to best understand the research problem.

### **Study Area**

The study was conducted in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Cape Coast is the regional capital of the Central Region of Ghana. Cape Coast Metropolis is one of the six Metropolis in Ghana and the only among the 20 districts in the Central Region. The Metropolis is bounded on the South by the Gulf of Guinea, on the West by the Komenda Edina Eguafo-Abrem Municipality, on the East by Abura Asebu Kwamankese District and on the North by the Twifo – Hemang - Lower Denkyira District. It covers an area of 122 square kilometres and is the smallest Metropolis in Ghana. It has a population of 169,894. Forty-nine per cent of its inhabitants are males and 51 per cent are females. Majority of the inhabitants (77%) live in the urban areas. The dominant occupation in the Metropolis includes farming, fishing and trading with few people working in the service sector (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2013).

In this area, there are five police stations, namely Kotokuraba Police Station, the University of Cape Coast (UCC) Police Station, Metro Police Station, the Regional Headquarters (RHQ) Police Station at Pedu and the Regional Motor Traffic and Transport Department (MTTD) at Cape Coast.



The Kotokuraba Police Station which is located at Kotokuraba falls under Cape Coast District 'A' (in terms of police division). The station is headed by a Station Officer (popularly called 'In-charge') who has a rank of Chief Inspector, and is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the station. The station also has a Criminal Investigation Department (CID) which is responsible for investigating all criminal cases reported to the station. Other officers in the station are charged to perform the core mandate of the Police Service which is protection of life and property.

The Metro Police Station located at Bakano (a suburb in Cape Coast) falls under Cape Coast District 'B' (in terms of police division). The station is headed by a Station Officer who has a rank of Chief Inspector. The Station Officer has a supervisory role and therefore oversees the day-to-day activities of the station. This police station also has a Criminal Investigation Department. Just like the Kotokuraba Police Station, other officers here are charged to perform the core mandate of the Ghana Police Service.

The UCC Police Station is located on the UCC campus. The station falls under Cape Coast District 'B'. It is headed by a Station Officer who has a rank of Chief Inspector and thus has a supervisory role. The station also has a Criminal Investigation Department.

The RHQ is located at Pedu. It is headed by the Regional Commander of Police who is assisted by an Assistant Commissioner of Police. All the police divisions and districts in the Central Region report to the Regional Commander. A police station is also located within the RHQ which is headed by a Station Officer.

The RHQ has several Departments headed by Heads of Department. In all there were 11 departments located at the RHQ. In addition, two Medical Doctors were stationed at the RHQ. The RHQ also has a Welfare Officer responsible for the wellbeing of the officers.

The Regional MTTD station is located at Cape Coast. It is one of the Departments under the RHQ. However, it is located outside the premises of the RHQ and was therefore considered as a police station for the purpose of the study. It is headed by a senior police officer (Chief Superintendent of Police). The main function of the department is to ensure road safety in the region.

### **Target Population**

The target population consisted of all uniformed Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. All the five police stations in the Metropolis were selected for the study. In all, there were 460 Police Officers in the Metropolis. They comprised of senior police officers (from the rank of Assistant Superintendent of Police and above), supervisors (Chief Inspectors and Inspectors) and junior police officers (from the rank of Constable to Sergeant). The distribution of the Police Officers according to police station and rank is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: *Distribution of Police Officers by Police Station and Rank*

Police station	Rank			
	Senior officers	Supervisors	Junior officers	Total
RHQ	16	43	268	327
Metro	2	7	60	69
MTTD	2	4	31	37
Kotokuraba	1	1	16	18
UCC	-	2	7	9
Total	21	57	382	460

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

### **Sample and Sampling Procedure**

The study used both probability and non-probability sampling techniques to select the respondents. Due to the heterogeneous nature and size of the group, every Police Officer in the target population could not be selected for the study. To ensure that every officer has an equal chance of being selected, the study used stratified random sampling technique to select the Police Officers at the various police stations for a meaningful representation of the population under study. The researcher obtained the list of names (sampling frame) in each of the police stations, and grouped them based on their ranks. He further used a list of random numbers to select the officers in the strata. Stratified sampling procedure was used to ensure that the various ranks in the Ghana Police Service were proportionally represented in the sample. The officers were ranked as junior officers (i.e. from the rank of

Constable to Sergeant), supervisors (from the rank of Inspector to Chief Inspector) and senior officers (Managers) (from the rank of Assistant Superintendent of Police and above).

According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table for determining sample size for research activities, a sample size of 210 is valid for a population of 460. Therefore, 210 Police Officers were randomly selected for the study. Table 2 shows the sample distribution of Police Officers by police station and rank.

Table 2: *Breakdown of Sample according to Police Station and Rank*

Police station	Rank			Total
	Senior officers	Supervisors	Junior officers	
RHQ	7	20	122	149
Metro	1	3	28	32
MTTD	1	2	14	17
Kotokuraba	1	-	7	8
UCC	-	1	3	4
Total	10	26	174	210

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

The sample size for each stratum was determined according to the proportion in which they occurred in the population. By this, the population of each stratum was multiplied by 210 and divided by the total population (460). For instance, in the senior officers' stratum, 21 was multiplied by 210 and divided by 460 to give 10. The rest followed the same pattern.

In order to help clarify and gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study, Heads of Department, Welfare Officer and a Medical Doctor (senior officers) as well as Station Officers were purposively selected and interviewed. The total number of Heads of Department for the selected police stations was 15. When they were contacted only four agreed to be interviewed and the rest opted for questionnaires for the reason that they had busy work schedules and they were not prepared to be interviewed outside the workplace. Four Station Officers agreed to be interviewed when they were contacted. Out of two Medical Doctors, one granted the audience to be interviewed. The Welfare officer was also purposively selected and interviewed. In sum, six senior Police Officers and four Station Officers were purposively selected for the study.

### **Sources of Data**

The study utilised both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were obtained from the respondents in the field. The secondary data were obtained from the Ghana Police Service.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The survey instruments used for the study were questionnaire and a structured interview guide. The structured interview guide is made of a predetermined set of questions, using same wording and order of question as specified in the interview guide (Kumar, 2005). The development of the instruments was informed by existing literature. The questionnaire had both close-ended questions and open-ended

questions. With regard to the close-ended questions, respondents were required to tick appropriate answers, while in the case of the open-ended questions respondents were offered the opportunity to express their views freely. The questionnaires were self-administered, since the respondents were literates. The questionnaire comprised four sections, namely, sections A, B, C and D.

Section A covered socio-demographic and occupational characteristics of the respondents. There were seven items including age, sex, marital status, educational level, rank, years of service and department of the Police Officers. These variables are believed to influence experience of stress and its related outcomes among police officers (Deschamps et al., 2003; Pienaar & Rothmann, 2006).

Section B was used to explore the sources of work-related stressors among the Police Officers as well as their perceived level of work stress. The sources of stress covered were the operational and organisational aspects of police work. A number of studies have been published regarding stressors among police officers (Agolla, 2008; Collins & Gibbs, 2003; Pienaar & Rothmann, 2006; Suresh et al., 2013). Based on the list of specific situations and events in the literature that appeared to adversely affect police stress, the questionnaire for the study was developed. Each of the items describes a job-related stressful event and assesses both the frequency and perceived stress associated with that event.

With regard to the sources of stressful events at the workplace (frequency of event), respondents were asked to rate on a five-point Likert type scale how often they have been exposed to certain work-related stressors within the last six months.

Responses ranged from 1(*never*) to 5(*very often*). The total scores ranged from 15 to 75. The higher the total scores, the higher the level of exposure to stressful events.

To measure the level of perceived work stress, respondents were subsequently asked to rate each of the stressful events regarding the level of stress perceived as a result of the exposure on a five-point Likert type scale. The five point grading scale was used to link respondents' verbal description of perceived levels of stress to a numerical scoring system with responses ranging from 1(*not stressful*) to 5(*very stressful*). These scores reflected the individual's subjective rating of the stressfulness of the event. The minimum total score is 15 and the maximum is 75. The higher the total scores, the higher the level of stress perceived.

Section C measures the severity of stress symptoms among the respondents. The symptoms were categorised into physiological, psychological and behavioural symptoms based on the review of the literature (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). They had to indicate how often they had experienced various stress symptoms within the last six months on a five-point Likert type scale with responses ranging from 1(*never*) to 5(*very often*). The minimum total score is 15 and the maximum is 75. The higher the total scores, the higher the level of severity of stress symptoms perceived.

Section D assessed the coping strategies and resources used by the respondents when under stress. Respondents were asked to specify what they do to manage their stress at the workplace. They were also required to indicate the extent to which they had used specific stress coping strategies to manage stressful events on a five-point Likert type scale ranging from 1(*never*) to 5(*very often*).

The researcher used the interview guide to elicit and gain deeper information from Station Officers, Department Heads, a Welfare Officer and a Medical Officer who were purposively selected. Themes covered in the interview guide included sources of stress, symptoms of stress and stress coping strategies used by Officers.

The questionnaire was used because it enhances easy administration and analysis and the interview guide was used since it saves time and presents information collected from all the different respondents in almost the same form and order. This made the analysis of the data simpler and easier.

### **Pre-testing of Instruments**

A pilot study was conducted to ascertain whether the questionnaire was understandable. Police Officers in the Elmina District in the Central Region of Ghana were used for the pilot study. They were selected for the pilot study because they had similar characteristics as the population under-studied. The questionnaire was tested using 10 per cent of the total sample size ( $n = 21$ ). The results of the pilot-test enabled the researcher to reframe and delete some portions of the questionnaire. It became evident that the items on the questionnaire were many so items which shared similar meanings were rephrased as one. Few changes to the questions on the interview guides were also required after the pilot testing exercise.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data were collected over a period of one month from 2<sup>nd</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> September, 2014. Five police stations were considered in the collection of data for the study in



a non-random way. The researcher visited each of the five Police Stations to seek permission for the questionnaire to be filled voluntarily and anonymously by the Police Officers. During the visit, the general objective of the study and the processes of collecting data were explained to the Officers. The researcher and a field assistant personally delivered the questionnaires to the Police Officers at their various police stations mostly during the morning. Since the respondents were literate they answered the questionnaires themselves. Respondents had up to a week to complete the questionnaire. This was because respondents would have sufficient time after working hours to complete the questionnaires. The researcher followed up to deal with any difficulties respondents had in filling the questionnaire.

The researcher arranged with the Station Officers, Heads of Department, the Welfare Officer and the Medical Doctor to interview each of them on agreed dates independently at their various police stations. The researcher, through face-to face interactions asked questions specified on the interview guide, and recorded and sometimes wrote the answers given by the informants. The entire interviews were done during the day. The average interview duration per informant was 45 minutes. It was not problematic getting access to the Police Stations and the Officers because prior to the researcher's visit permission had been sought from the Regional Police Commander, Cape Coast, who sent approval letters to the various stations in the Metropolis for the onset of the study.

Out of the 210 questionnaires administered, 202 were returned representing a response rate of 96 per cent. However, out of this, eight questionnaires were not fully completed and therefore were not added to the final questionnaires analysed.

In all, 194 questionnaires were analysed while six senior Police Officers and four Station Officers (supervisors) were purposively interviewed.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

The data collected were edited, coded and analysed. The data were processed and analysed using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) for Microsoft windows (version 16.0). Descriptive statistics such as the mean and frequency were used to describe respondents' socio-demographic and occupational characteristics.

Inferential statistics including t-test analysis, Kruskal-Wallis test and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient were used to look at the various relationships that existed among variables of interest. The responses from the interview were analysed manually by rearranging the raw information according to an outline (themes) and then narrative report was written to incorporate it. Findings from the study were presented in contingency Tables.

### **Ethical considerations**

Since the police institution is a sensitive one, the researcher took an introductory letter from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Cape Coast to seek permission from the Central Regional Police Commander and the Cape Coast Metropolitan Police Commander before embarking on the study. The Central Regional Police Commander sent approval letters to the various police stations in the metropolis for the onset of the study.

The respondents and the informants participated on voluntary basis and they were assured that absolute confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained. In order to ensure confidentiality of the information obtained from the respondents, their identities were kept anonymous. They were assured that whatever information they gave would be used only for academic purposes and would be protected.

### **Limitations of the study**

The study used cross-sectional design. In view of this, its findings could not be generalised or applied to other police population in Ghana or elsewhere.

### **Chapter Summary**

The chapter described the methodology used for the study. The study used a descriptive cross-sectional design. The mixed method approach to research was used. The target population for the study included all uniformed Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. In all, there were 460 uniformed Police Officers comprising senior Police Officers, supervisors and junior Police Officers. Stratified random sampling technique was used to sample 210 respondents while a purposive sampling technique was used to select six senior Police Officers and four Station Officers (supervisors). The study used questionnaires and interview guide to collect data from 210 respondents and 10 informants respectively. Quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Product and Service Solution for windows (version 16.0) while qualitative data were analysed manually according to selected themes. Results of the study were presented in contingency Tables.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to examine factors that influence occupational stress among Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Data were collected from randomly sampled Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. This chapter presents the results of the data analysed and discussion of findings. The analysis was based on the research objectives and the theoretical frameworks (ABCX model of stress and the stress process model) that guided the study. The first section of the chapter focuses on the socio-demographic and occupational characteristics of the respondents. The rest of the chapter reports on the objectives of the study including sources of stress among Police Officers, interpretations of stressful work events by Police Officers, coping strategies used by Police Officers, and stress symptoms experienced by Police Officers. The chapter further examines the association between perceived work stress and severity of stress symptoms. Finally, the chapter explores relationship between socio-demographic and occupational characteristics of Police Officers and perceived work stress.

#### **Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents**

Background information of respondents in a study of this nature offers a good understanding of the responses given and reflects the extent to which the data provided could be relied upon. As indicated by Pearlin (1989), an individual's way of perceiving things around him or her could be the result of the interplay of the

interaction of a number of familial, personal and social background factors. Socio-demographic variables considered relevant to the present study include gender, age, marital status and educational level. These variables are believed to influence occupational stress among police officers (Amin, 2015; Brown & Campbell, 1990; Rakshase, 2014).

#### Age of respondents

Sager (1990) indicated that the ability to handle stress associated with job in an organisation increases with age. The major explanation for such a finding is that older employees have often reached a stage where career development is not their major concern, and hence a number of job characteristics which may cause stress to younger staff, who have their career ahead of them, do not cause stress to older staff. Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents' age.

Table 3: *Age Distribution of Respondents*

Age	Frequency	Per cent
20-29	90	46.4
30-39	68	35.1
40-39	22	11.3
50-59	14	7.2
Total	194	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

The results indicated that the highest age of the respondents was 59 years while the least age was 20 years with a mean age of 33 years. The findings from

the study indicated that 46.4 per cent of the respondents were between the ages of 20- 29 years; while 35.1 per cent and 11.3 per cent had their ages ranging from 30-39 and 40-49 years respectively. Only 14 officers representing 7.2 per cent were 50 years and above. This indicated that majority of the personnel were in their youthful age and were deemed to be very vibrant and energetic which is a prerequisite for modern day policing. The ages of the respondents allowed the researcher to determine whether younger or older Police Officers perceived more occupational stress.

Majority (72.2%) of the respondents were male, while the females constituted 27.8 per cent. This confirms studies by other researchers that policing is traditionally a male-dominated profession, probably due to the masculine nature of the work (Robinson, 2013). A significant number (126) of the respondents representing 64.9 per cent were married, while 35.1 per cent were unmarried.

#### Level of education of respondents

Education has been identified as important factor in policing. According to Jones et al. (as cited in Tankebe, 2010), education more especially tertiary education, is an instrument that helps to improve basic operational skills, negotiation and problem solving among police officers. The respondents' educational background is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: *Level of Education of Respondents*

Education level	Frequency	Per cent
Secondary school	104	53.6
Diploma	52	26.8
University degree	38	19.6
Total	194	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

With regard to level of education of the respondents, more than half of them (53.6%) were Senior High school graduates, while 19.6 per cent had earned University degrees. It could be deduced that the educational attainment of most of the respondents was relatively low since most of them were Senior High School graduates.

### **Occupational characteristics of respondents**

Some occupational characteristics are believed to influence stress. Previous studies suggest that the rank (Brown & Campbell, 1990) and years of service (Rakshase, 2014) of police officers are important occupational characteristics associated with stress among the police. In view of this assertion, these variables were investigated among the respondents. Table 5 and 6 presents some of the occupational characteristics of the respondents.

### Respondents' years of service

Rakshase (2014) emphasised that the tenure of service (experience) is an important factor which affects the level of occupational stress and coping styles among police personnel. In view of this, the researcher sought to find out the number of years respondents had served in the Ghana Police Service. Respondents' years of service is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: *Respondents' Years of Service*

Years of service	Frequency	Per cent
≤ 5	92	47.4
6-10	44	22.7
11-15	22	11.3
16-20	12	6.2
> 20	24	12.4
Total	194	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

The study indicated that the maximum years of service of respondents in the Ghana Police Service were 34 whereas the minimum year was one. The mean number of years respondents had served was nine. Over all, the study showed that 47 per cent of the respondents had served between one to five years. This implies that, on average each respondent had spent nine years working for the Ghana Police service.



## Ranks of respondents

Affum-Osei and Azunu (2016) found that rank relates significantly with occupational stress level. Lowe (2005) argued that as one advances in his or her career, his or her responsibilities increase. The respondents were at liberty to specify the rank they occupied in Ghana Police Service. Table 6 gives a clear picture of the ranks of the respondents.

Table 6: *Ranks of Respondents*

Rank	Frequency	Per cent
Junior officers	162	83.5
Supervisors	22	11.3
Senior officers	10	5.2
Total	194	100

source: Fieldwork, 2014

The ranks of the respondents were grouped into junior officers, supervisors and senior officers. Junior officers (Constables, Corporals and Sergeants) constituted 83.5 per cent, supervisors (Inspectors and Chief Inspectors) were 11.3 per cent and senior officers (Assistant Superintendent of Police and above) were 5.2 per cent. The small percentage of the senior officers was attributed to their smaller percentage in the police population in general.

Table 7: Gender and rank of respondents

		Rank			
		Junior officers	Supervisors	Senior officers	Total
Gender	Male	116	14	10	140
	Female	46	8	0	54
Total		162	22	10	194

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

It is observed from Table 7 that 116 out of 162 junior officers were males while 46 were females. Similarly, out of 22 supervisors, only 8 were females. It is noteworthy to state that out of 10 senior officers none was a female. From the study, it can be deduced that as the rank increases, the number of females reduce. To add, top most ranks in the police service were dominated by males.

### **Sources of Stress among Police officers**

The first objective of the study was to explore work-related events or situations that were likely to expose the respondents to stress. To this effect, respondents were asked to indicate how frequent they had been exposed to certain work events within the last six months. These events were classified as operational and organisational stressors.

### **Operational stressors among Police Officers**

Table 8 presents data on the operational stressors the respondents had been exposed to within the last six months.

Table 8: *Operational Stressors of Police Officers (Frequency of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months)*

Operational stressors	Never F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)
Arresting a violent person or criminal	38 (19.6)	118 (60.8)	38 (19.6)
Attending to scene of death or fatal road traffic accident	50 (25.8)	98 (50.5)	46 (23.7)
Handling conflicts and crises	40 (20.6)	118 (60.8)	36 (18.6)
Directing traffic	44 (22.7)	106 (54.6)	44 (22.7)
Total	172 (88.7)	440 (226.7)	144 (84.6)

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

In line with the “A” component of the ABCX model of stress (Hill, 1949) and a source of stress in the SPM (Pearlin et al., 1981), the study revealed that the respondents were exposed to different types of operational stressors. The nature of the questions adopted for the study demanded the use of a rating scale. Ratings of “Never”, “Rarely”, “Sometimes”, “Often” and “Very often” were used in the questionnaire. However, to make the analysis simpler, “Rarely” and “Sometimes” were collapsed to “Sometimes” whiles “Often” and “Very often” were collapsed to “often”.

The study revealed that majority of the respondents (60.8%) sometimes arrested a violent person or criminal, whiles 19.6 per cent often did that. In finding out as to whether respondents had attended the scene of death or fatal road traffic

accident within the last six months, 50.5 per cent admitted that they sometimes did that while 23.7 per cent pointed out that they were often made to attend such scenes.

Handling conflict and crises is one of the major functions of the police (Brown & Campbell, 1990). When asked whether they had performed such a function within the last six months, majority (60.8%) of the respondents indicated that they sometimes handled conflicts and crises whereas 18.6 per cent reported that they often did that.

The last variable that was considered under the operational stressors of the police was directing of traffic. The M.T.T.D mostly performed that function. However, officers from other departments were in some situation assigned to perform such functions too. The results of the study brought to light that majority of the respondents (54.6%) sometimes directed traffic while 22.7 per cent often performed such function.

Four Station Officers and four Heads of Department interviewed disclosed other operational police stressors. One stressor that came to light was engaging in shoot-out with armed robbers. It became evident that the uncertainty of facing the unknown in policing exposed officers to various degrees of occupational stress. A 50 year old Head of Department with 25 years of experience shared the following sentiments:

*Sometimes we get information that armed robbers have blocked a particular road or are attacking a particular household and we are to go to the scene to salvage the situation knowing very well that they are ready. You see, in situations like this, the one who fires first is the winner. A situation like this exposes us to stress (September, 5).*

Moreover, one Head of Department revealed that sometimes Police Officers were attacked by criminals and in such circumstances they resorted to the use of force which made them aggressive and thus experienced stress.

Another major stressor related to the operational duties of the police that was confirmed by two Heads of Department and three Station Officers was attending to accident scenes. The bloody nature of some accident scenes and the hassles of removing dead bodies from cars exposed Police Officers to stress. An informant from the M.T.T.D narrated his story of having to help remove eleven dead bodies from a car involved in an accident and how stressful that event was.

One Station Officer revealed that presidential assignments carried out during visits by the president to the Metropolis also sapped the energy of the personnel. This is because during such visits they were expected to do more. Other operational events that were mentioned by four Heads of Department and four Station Officers as factors contributing to stress among Police Officers included: crowd control, night patrols, bodyguard duties at banks and residences, barrier duties, confrontation by mentally retarded people and recalcitrant behaviour of some drivers as well as other members from the community.

## Organisational sources of stress among Police Officers

The police organisational set up including its internal policy and management is believed to be a potential source of stress (Brown & Campbell, 1990; Taylor & Bennel, 2006). The organisational stressors among the respondents were grouped into role related demands, lack of resources and interpersonal stressors.

### Role related stressors among Police Officers

In line with the SPM, it could be argued that the role one performs at the workplace could be a potential source of stress (Pearlin et al., 1981). This normally occurs in the form of role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload and task characteristic (Ivancevich et al., 1990; McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). Table 9 presents role related stressors among the respondents.

Table 9: *Role Related Stressors among Police Officers (Frequency of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months).*

Role related stressors	Never F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)
Having too much work to do	8 (4.1)	94 (48.5)	92 (47.4)
Excessive paper work	14 (7.2)	86 (44.3)	94 (48.5)
Performing two or more responsibilities at the same time	14 (7.2)	94 (48.3)	86 (44.3)
Shift work	44 (22.7)	106 (54.6)	44 (22.7)
Total	80 (41.2)	440 (195.9)	316 (162.9)

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Cole (2004) and Rollinson (2005) have identified workload as a potential source of stress in organisations. As indicated by the results in Table 9, 47.4 per cent of the respondents said that they often had too much work to do while 48.5 per cent said that they sometimes had too much work to do. It could be deduced that work overload was a source of stress among the respondents. This confirms previous studies of Oweke et al. (2014) and Agolla (2008) which identified workload as a cause of occupational stress among police officers in Kenya and Botswana respectively.

On the issue of excessive paperwork, 48.5 per cent of the respondents acknowledged that they often did excessive paperwork whereas 44.3 per cent sometimes did that. Asked as to whether they performed two or more responsibilities at the same time, 44.3 per cent of the respondents indicated that they often did that whereas 48.5 per cent stated that they sometimes did that. McShane and Von Glinow (2010) argued that employees who are made to perform two or more responsibilities at the same time have divided attention and therefore make more mistakes.

Shift work is one of the characteristics of the work of the police and it is believed to be a potential source of stress (Goetsch, 1999). When asked whether they performed shift work, majority of the respondents (54.6%) opined that they had sometimes done that while 22.7 per cent said they had often done that. This supports the argument of Goetsch that shift work is a characteristic of police work.

## Lack of resources as a source of stress among Police Officers

In a modernized or advanced society, financial, material and human resources that are needed to ensure effective operations of institutions including the Police Service are supposed to be adequately provided for (Ortega, Brenner & Leather, 2007). Agolla (2008) identified inadequate resources as a major factor that contributes to stress among police officers. Table 10 shows responses given on lack of resources as a source of stress among the respondents.

Table 10: *Lack of Resources as a Source of Stress (Frequency of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months)*

Lack of resource stressors	Never F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)
Inadequate staff	32 (16.5)	94 (48.5)	68 (35.0)
Inadequate or using poor quality Equipment	28 (14.5)	98 (50.5)	68 (35.0)
Lack of opportunity for career Advancement	24 (12.3)	76 (39.2)	94 (48.5)
Lack of accommodation	8 (4.1)	64 (33.0)	122 (62.9)
Total	92 (47.4)	332 (171.2)	352 (181.4)

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

The study disclosed that 48.5 per cent of the respondents sometimes encountered a situation where they had to work with inadequate staff at their station while 35.0 per cent often encountered such a situation. Kop et al. (1999) and



Nicoara and Amelia (2012) identified staff shortage as a major source of stress among police officers.

Relatedly, majority (50.5%) of the respondents declared that within the last six months they had sometimes carried out their functions with inadequate or poor quality equipment. Additional 35.0 per cent also said that they were often exposed to such occurrences at their stations. A similar study conducted by Pienaar & Bennell (2006) identified inadequate or poor quality equipment as a major source of stress among the police in South Africa.

Responses to lack of opportunity for career advancement showed that 48.5 per cent of the respondents often lacked opportunity for career advancement. Another 39.2 per cent avowed that they sometimes faced challenges in advancing their career path. It could be deduced that most of the respondents had difficulty or lacked opportunities in advancing their career path. This finding confirms the assertion by Ross and Altmair (1994) that human resource management practices such as lack of training, promotional opportunities and mid-career development can make people experience some amount of stress.

The assertion that police officers lack or have poor accommodation was also investigated. The study discovered that a significant majority of the respondents (62.9%) often did not have access to accommodation. Again, 33.0 per cent averred that they sometimes have problem getting accommodation. Lack of accommodation was therefore identified as a major source of stress among the respondents during the period of the study.

Two Station Officers and one Head of Department interviewed confirmed that poor or lack of accommodation for Police Officers was a major stressor which hindered their effective operation in the Metropolis. Per the rules and regulations of the Ghana Police Service, all police personnel are expected to stay at the police barracks. However, the study revealed that most of the personnel stayed in rented apartment outside the barracks because they could not get accommodation at the barracks. Two Station Officers and one Head of Department described their accommodation as “indecent”. A 55 year old Head of Department with the M.T.T.D remarked about a building at a barracks:

*As you can see, this building was built several decades ago. The roof has been ripped off. Even up till now we are still using the “Man-hole” (a pit used for toilet) in this modern time. All these factors at times contribute to the very stressful nature of the work* (September, 10).

Another major source of stress revealed by two Heads of Department, two Station Officers as well as a Welfare Officer was inadequate personnel. The United Nation’s Police-Population ratio is 1:500. However, in Ghana the ratio stands at 1:727 which is below the United Nation’s recommended standard (Boadi & Abbey, 2016). A 59 year old Head of Department with 30 years of experience had this to say:

*The personnel are not enough. We are to cover the whole of Cape Coast but due to inadequate personnel we cover only points* (September, 10).

A 47 year old Station Officer with 19 years of experience reiterated that:

*When we are not operating at full capacity in terms of strength, that is inadequate personnel, we have to perform 12-hour duty on shift bases and because of this we need to exert more energy and this exposes us to stress. Moreover, as a result of that, we don't get enough time for our families and other social activities*  
(September, 17).

Eight out of 10 informants interviewed attested that long working hours was a major source of stress among the Police Officers. According to Ranjit and Mahespriya (2012) and Aycan, Eskin and Yavuz (2007), workers who work for long hours are exposed to more work-related stress. The normal working hours for the police in Ghana is eight hours a day. This is organised into three shift working schedules, that is; 6:00 am to 2:00 pm, 2:00 pm to 10:00 pm and 10:00 pm to 6:00 am. However, eight informants revealed that because of inadequate personnel, officers were sometimes made to work for 12 hours a day (6:00 am to 6:00pm or 6:00 pm to 6:00 am). Two Heads of Department remarked that sometimes the officers were called to duty even after the normal working hours when the need arose. This revealed the intensity of police exposure to long working hours as a source of stress. A 41 year old Station Officer with 15 years of experience had this to say:

*I have been in the Cape Coast Metropolis for the past three years and I have done eight hour duty once, the rest have been 12- hour*

*duties. Because of long working hours, I am not able to have enough time for my family (September, 10).*

A 52 year old Station Officer stated that:

*As a Station Officer, I normally work for eight hours. However, I join the Patrol Team four times every month after work. This affects my social and family life (September, 5).*

A 50 year old Head of Department with 19 years of experience said:

*The normal working hours for me is eight hours. I am supposed to start at 7:30 am and finish at 4:00 pm. However, because I am an investigator, I can be called to perform extra duties after work. Sometimes, after work, I can be called to attend to emergency cases. As far as my department is concerned, we don't close early (September, 22).*

The above findings confirmed previous research findings of Suresh et al. (2013), Sundaram and Kumaran (2012), and Bano (2011) who disclosed that lack of personal time and lack of time for family were a major source of stress among the police.

Another major organisational stressor that looked more worrisome among the Police Officers as revealed by all the 10 informants was “never off duty” or round the clock duty. It is the function of the police to protect life and property. This requires continuous monitoring throughout the week. Coupled with the problem of inadequate personnel, the police operate twenty four hours (24 hours) a day and seven days a week. Thus, in the Ghana Police Service, there is nothing like “off

day” or “holiday”. This to a greater extent affects the social life of the Police Officers as well as their relations with their family. It was confirmed by all the 10 informants that every officer was entitled to a 42-day annual leave. However, they were quick to add that even while on leave, they could be called upon to duty at any time. In view of this, Police Officers on leave were made to report to the nearest police station. The reason the informants gave was that they could be called upon to assist when their services were needed by the police station even though they were on leave. According to them, this affects their social and family life and exposed them to stress. A 41 year old Station Officer with 15 years of experience stated:

*For the past two years I have not been able to visit my family back home in the northern part of Ghana because of my busy work schedule. This has also had serious effect on my social relationship with friends and loved ones (September, 10).*

This finding is consistent with previous findings of Suresh et al. (2013) who identified “never off duty” as a major source of stress among the police in Chennai, India.

Three Heads of Department, four Station Officers and a Welfare Officer indicated that lack of appropriate logistics needed by the police was a major contributing factor to the stressful nature of the police work in the Metropolis. For the police to operate fully and effectively, they needed logistics such as vehicles, walker-talkers, uniform, boots, computers and other modern police equipment. The aforementioned informants acknowledged that, though there has been considerable

improvement in the service in terms of logistics, what they had was still not adequate to ensure effective operation. A typical example cited was inadequate vehicles at the various stations. Some of the police stations visited did not have vehicles at all for their operations. A Welfare Officer interviewed revealed that even when vehicles were available, fuelling was a major problem.

Three Station Officers and two Heads of Department indicated that excessive paper work was a major source of organisational stress for the Police Officers. The activities in the work of the police involve a lot of writing. Two Station Officers complained that even in this technological era, most of their records were handwritten. They remarked that continuous sitting and writing made them felt back and neck pains. They therefore expected the police administration to be abreast with modern means of storing information such as the use of computers.

Another major stressor revealed by two Station Officers was lack of opportunity for promotion especially among the non-commissioned officers (from the rank of Constable to Chief Inspector). Normally, Police Officers were promoted to the next level of rank every four years based on the recommendation of their superiors. However, two Station Officers reiterated that non-commissioned officers were rarely promoted. This was attributed to several factors among which included: one, if the officer has been charged for an offense. Secondly, the delay of promotion to next the level due to the fact that there is no room for that; and thirdly, not having achieved the level of education required for promotion. By the time an officer is due for promotion if he or she has not upgraded himself or herself, he or she has to wait for a period of four years before promoted to the next rank. They pointed out that it

was difficult for officers to upgrade themselves because they were hardly granted study leave. They added that if an officer tried to upgrade himself or herself without approval, he or she would be charged for an offence. One Station Officer said that most of the officers were willing to upgrade themselves. However, they could not do that because they were not granted study leave.

#### Interpersonal stressors among Police Officers

Research indicates that the kind of interpersonal relationship that exists at the workplace could be a potential source of stress for employees (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). Table 11 presents how frequent officers were exposed to certain interpersonal stressors at the workplace and the community within which they worked.

Table 11: *Interpersonal Stressors among Police Officers (Frequency of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months)*

Interpersonal stressors	Never F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)
Dealing with unsupportive boss	68 (35.1)	90 (46.4)	36 (18.5)
Dealing with unsupportive Colleague	60 (31.0)	106 (54.6)	28 (14.4)
Public criticism	6 (3.1)	66 (34.0)	122 (62.9)
Total	134 (69.2)	262 (135.0)	186 (168.5)

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Michie (2002) maintained that managers who are critical, demanding, unsupportive or bullying create stress. The results of the study revealed that 46.4 per cent of the respondents sometimes dealt with unsupportive bosses while 35.1 per cent indicated that they had never encountered such situation within the last six months. Besides, data gathered showed that majority (54.6%) of the respondents had sometimes dealt with unsupportive colleagues. McShane and Von Glinow (2010) remarked that working with a colleague who is unsupportive can expose one to stress.

Effective policing to a greater extent depends on the support from the community or the public that the police serve. However, the study discovered that a significant proportion (62.9%) of the respondents had often received criticism from the public even as 34.0 per cent admitted that they were sometimes criticised by the public. It could be inferred that public criticism of the police was a major source of stress for the police in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

The type of relationship between superiors and their subordinates could be a source of potential stress (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). All the informants (10) revealed that the relationship that existed between them and their colleagues was cordial. This is because the police profession calls for discipline and revolves around teamwork.

The relationship between the police and the community they served was also described as very cordial by all the 10 informants. However, three out of four Station Officers interviewed added that sometimes the behaviour of some community members made their work very stressful. One stressor identified was the



unwillingness of the public to give out information to the police when they needed it most. A 47 year old Station Officer with 19 years of experience opined that:

*The relationship between the police and the community is cordial. For the police to perform effectively, they need support from the public. But sometimes the public is not willing to give out information to the police and this makes the work very stressful (September, 17).*

A 41 year old Station Officer with 15 years of experience said:

*They (the public) see us as their enemies. They make our work stressful because they are not willing to give out information. Sometimes we need relevant information that can help our investigation proceedings from the public. But in most cases, they are not willing to give out such information. This makes our work difficult and stressful (September, 10).*

To know the most occurring stressful events that the respondents were exposed to, they were asked to rate on a five-point Likert type rating scale on how often they had been exposed to certain work-related stressors within the last six months with responses ranging from 1(*never*) to 5(*very often*). The higher the total scores, the higher the level of exposure. Table 12 indicates the rankings from most to least occurring stressful event among the respondents.

Table 12: *Rankings from Most to Least Occurring Stressful Events (within the Last Six Months)*

Job event	Mean	SD
Public criticism	4.072	1.153
Lack of accommodation	3.907	1.198
Having too much work to do	3.536	0.998
Excessive paper work	3.536	1.205
Performing two or more responsibilities at the same time	3.412	1.131
Shift work	3.391	1.284
Lack of opportunity for career advancement	3.391	1.399
Inadequate staff	3.123	1.344
Inadequate or using poor quality equipment	3.113	1.270
Handling conflict or crisis	3.742	1.800
Arresting a violent person or criminal	3.732	1.091
Directing traffic	3.680	1.226
Attending death or fatal road accident scene	2.587	1.202
Dealing with unsupportive colleague	2.433	1.318
Dealing with unsupportive boss	2.443	1.226

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Table 12 indicates the mean intensity of frequency of stressful events faced by respondents within the last six months. It became clear that “public criticism of the police” (Mean = 4.072, SD = 1.153), “lack of accommodation for personnel” (Mean = 3.907, SD = 1.196), “having too much work to do” (Mean = 3.536, SD =

0.998), “excessive paper work” (Mean = 3.536, SD = 1.205), “performing two or more responsibilities at the same time” (Mean = 3.412, SD = 1.131), “shift work” (Mean = 3.391, SD = 1.131), “lack of opportunity for career advancement” (Mean = 3.391, SD = 1.399) and “inadequate staff” (Mean = 3.123, SD = 1.344) were the most occurring stressful events among the police in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Brown and Campbell (1990) reported that the most frequently reported sources of stress among their police sample were workload, long working hours, lack of resources, manpower shortage, increased bureaucratic procedures and management styles. These results are confirmed by the present study. The finding is also in agreement with previous researches conducted by Alexander (1999), Brown and Campbell (1990) and Kop et al. (1999) which concluded that the police are most often exposed to the organisational stressors than the operational stressors.

### **Interpretations of Stressful Events by Police Officers (Perceived Work Stress)**

In their study of work stress, Blaug et al. (2007) found out that the degree of stress an individual experiences, is to a large extent dependent upon his or her own appraisal of the demands of their work. In view of this assertion and in relation to the definitions or interpretations made of stressors (*representing the “C” component of the ABCX model of stress*), the respondents were asked to indicate how they saw the stressors they were exposed to at their workplace by using the following ratings; “not stressful”, slightly stressful”, moderately stressful”, very stressful” and “extremely stressful”. However, in the presentation of the results, the ratings of “slightly stressful” and “moderately stressful” were collapsed under

“moderately stressful” whiles “very stressful” and “extremely stressful were pulled under “very stressful”. The variables that were considered were grouped under operational stressors and organisational stressors. How the respondents interpreted the operational stressors is presented in Table 13.

Table 13: *Operational Stressors of Police Officers (Severity of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months)*

Operational stressors	Not stressful F (%)	Moderately stressful F (%)	Very stressful F (%)
Arresting a violent person or criminal	28 (14.4)	48 (24.8)	118 (60.8)
Attending to scene of death or fatal road traffic accident	38 (19.6)	52 (26.8)	104 (53.6)
Handling conflicts and crises	24 (12.4)	104 (53.6)	66 (34.0)
Directing traffic	26 (13.4)	66 (34.0)	102 (52.6)
Total	116 (59.8)	270 (139.2)	390 (201)

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

The respondents were first asked to indicate how they saw the arrest of a violent person or criminal. The majority of them (60.8%) found such an encounter very stressful. With regard to the interpretation given to attendance at a fatal or road traffic accident, majority (53.6%) of the respondent indicated that it was very stressful to be exposed to such an event even though 19.6 per cent saw it as not stressful. On the issue of handling conflict and crises, most of the respondents

(53.6%) acknowledged that it was a very stressful experience while 34.0 per cent described such a situation as moderately stressful. In addition, 52.6 per cent of the respondents admitted that directing traffic was a very stressful activity.

#### Severity of organisational stressors among Police Officers

Table 14 presents how the respondents interpreted the role related stressors they encountered at the workplace.

Table 14: *Role Related Stressors among Police Officers (Severity of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months).*

Role related stressors	Not stressful F (%)	Moderately stressful F (%)	Very stressful F (%)
Having too much work to do	18 (9.3)	70 (36.1)	106 (54.6)
Excessive paper work	34 (17.5)	98 (50.5)	62 (32.0)
Performing two or more responsibilities at the same time	4 (2.0)	76 (39.2)	114 (58.8)
Shift work	66 (34.0)	78 (40.2)	50 (25.8)
Total	122 (62.8)	332 (166)	332 (171.2)

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

In Table 14, majority of the respondents (54.6%) reported that it was very stressful doing too much work while 36.1 per cent attested that it was moderately stressful situation. This finding is consistent with previous findings of Oweke et al. (2014) and Agolla (2008) who reported work overload as a major cause of

perceived work stress among police officers. With regard to excessive paper work, more than half of the respondents (50.5%) saw it as moderately stressful whereas 32.0 per cent maintained that it was a very stressful activity.

In assessing whether performing two or more responsibilities at the same time was stressful for the respondents, the results obtained clearly indicated that perceived stress level was high among the respondents. As demonstrated in Table 13, majority of the respondents (58.8%) stated that it was very stressful when they performed two or more responsibilities at the same time while 39.2 per cent reported that they experienced moderate stress when they performed two or more responsibilities at the same time. This implies that the respondents experienced high level of stress when they were made to perform two or more responsibilities at the same time.

Shift work plays a significant role in the Ghana Police Service. The study brought to light that shift work was not seen as causing much stress among the respondents. As many as 40.2 per cent of the respondents said that shift work was moderately stressful while 34.0 saw it as not stressful situation.

Ortega et al. (2007) argued that police officers work in a distinct environment, subjecting themselves to potentially traumatic events. Therefore additional stressors in the police environment such as the imbalance or unavailability of the needed resources can engender further stress for them. Table 15 indicates how the respondents saw lack of resource stressors.

Table 15: *Lack of Resources as a Source of Stress (Severity of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months)*

Lack of resource stressors	Not stressful F (%)	Moderately stressful F (%)	Very stressful F (%)
Inadequate staff	22 (11.3)	76 (39.2)	96 (49.5)
Inadequate or using poor quality Equipment	20 (10.3)	56 (28.8)	118 (60.8)
Lack of opportunity for career Advancement	18 (9.3)	70 (36.1)	106 (54.6)
Lack of accommodation	16 (8.2)	24 (12.4)	154 (79.4)
Total	76 (39.1)	226 (116.5)	474 (244.3)

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

When asked whether they considered working with inadequate staff as stressful, respondents gave different responses. Almost half of them (49.5%) declared that working with inadequate staff was very stressful. Again, 39.2 per cent of the respondents asserted that it was moderately stressful to work with inadequate staff. This could be attributed to the fact that one has to put in much effort which put strain on the body. The study further revealed that a significant majority of the respondents (60.8%) regarded working with inadequate or poor quality equipment as a very stressful situation. However, a minute portion (10.3%) indicated that it was not stressful to work with inadequate or poor quality equipment. This means that working with inadequate or poor quality equipment was seen by the

respondents as contributing to the stress they experienced at the workplace. This confirms the study of Pienaar & Rothmann (2006) who identified inadequate or poor quality equipment as a cause of work stress among police officers.

In assessing whether lack of opportunity for career advancement caused stress for the respondents, the study recorded 54.6 per cent for those who said it was very stressful and 36.1 per cent for those who regarded it as moderately stressful. Ross and Altmaier (1994) confirmed that human resource management practices such as lack of training, promotional opportunities and mid-career development can make people experience some amount of stress.

On the issue of stress due to lack of or poor accommodation, respondents gave the impression that stress was high among them. A significant majority of the respondents (79.3%) stated that lack of accommodation for officers was a very stressful situation. Only 16 respondents representing 8.2 per cent said such a situation was not stressful. This signifies that lack of accommodation for personnel contributed significantly to perceived stress level of Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. This confirms the argument of Ortega et al. (2007) who indicated that the imbalance or unavailability of the needed resources for work can engender further stress for the police.

Interpersonal relationships at the workplace contribute to the level of stress at work (McShane and Von Glinow, 2010). Table 16 presents how respondents interpreted interpersonal stressors at the workplace.



Table 16: *Interpersonal Stressors among Police Officers (Severity of Stressful Events within the Last Six Months)*

Interpersonal stressors	Not stressful F (%)	Moderately stressful F (%)	Very stressful F (%)
Dealing with unsupportive boss	36 (18.6)	48 (24.7)	110 (56.7)
Dealing with unsupportive Colleague	30 (15.5)	56 (28.9)	108 (55.7)
Public criticism	22 (11.4)	44 (22.7)	128 (65.9)
Total	88 (45.5)	148 (76.3)	346 (178.3)

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

According to Harris, Harris and Harvey (2008) employees who perceive their supervisors as supportive report higher levels of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and job performance, and are able to cope with stressful situations. The results in Table 16 revealed that most of the respondents experienced high levels of stress when they dealt with unsupportive bosses. The study indicated that 56.7 per cent of the respondents considered unsupportive relationship with their bosses as very stressful while 24.7 per cent of them recognised it to be moderately stressful. This finding is consistent with the claim that a management style that is too autocratic or too participative can certainly create stress at the workplace (Cole, 2004; Rollinson, 2005).

Dealing with unsupportive colleague was another source of stress identified among the respondents. The study disclosed that majority (55.7%) of them saw such a situation as very stressful as 28.9 per cent regarded it as moderately stressful.

According to Insel and Rothmann (2006), the community or society the individual lives in can also be a major source of stress. One major source of stress revealed by the study was criticism of the police by the public. As to whether this was seen as a stressful experience among the respondents, the study revealed that a very high proportion of the respondents (65.9%) indicated that it was very stressful when the public criticised them whereas 22.7 per cent saw it as moderately stressful. It could be deduced that public criticism was seen as a very stressful situation among the respondents. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Nicoara and Amelia (2012) that identified negative public image about the police as contributing to stress among police officers.

To know the work-related events which were perceived as most stressful by the respondents, they were asked to rate on a five-point Likert type scale the level of stress they perceived as a result of exposure to certain work events. The five-point grading scale was used to link the respondents' verbal description of perceived work stress to a numerical scoring system with responses ranging from 1 (*not stressful*) to 5 (*very stressful*). It should be noted that the higher the total scores, the higher the level of work stress perceived. Table 17 shows the rankings of job events from most to least stressful.

Table 17: *Rankings of Job Events from Most to Least Stressful*

Job event	Mean	SD
Lack of accommodation	4.123	1.297
Public criticism	3.773	1.354
Performing two or more responsibilities at the same time	3.649	1.143
Inadequate or using poor quality equipment	3.556	1.279
Lack of opportunity for career advancement	3.494	1.272
Dealing with unsupportive boss	3.433	1.516
Having too much work to do	3.391	1.267
Dealing with unsupportive colleague	3.381	1.391
Arresting a violent person or criminal	3.381	1.406
Attending death or fatal road accident scene	3.288	1.488
Inadequate staff	3.278	1.285
Directing traffic	3.216	1.297
Handling conflict or crisis	2.989	1.147
Excessive paper work	2.804	1.284
Shift work	2.443	1.284

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Table 17 shows the ranking of mean severity of stressful event perceived by the respondents. “Lack of accommodation for personnel” (Mean = 4.123, SD = 1.297), “public criticism” (Mean = 3.773, SD = 1.354), “performing two or more responsibilities at the same time (Mean = 3.649, SD = 1.143), “inadequate or using poor quality equipment” 3.556, SD = 1.279), and “lack of opportunity for career

advancement” were perceived as the most stressful organisational events by the respondents. Operational stressors that were reported included “arresting a violent person or criminal (Mean = 3.381, SD = 1.406) and “attending death or fatal road accident scene” (Mean = 3.288, SD = 1.488). This finding is consistent with previous researches that indicate that police officers mostly considered the organisational aspect of their work as causing more stress than operational activities (Alexander, 1999; Brown & Campbell, 1990; Sundaram & Kumaran, 2012; Suresh et al., 2013; Taylor & Bennel, 2006).

Interviews conducted also confirmed the findings above. Six out of 10 informants revealed that stressful events especially the operational stressors were part and parcel of the job and therefore normal. However, the six informants stated that stressors emanating from the organisational structure are not normal because they arise as a result of a deficiency in management style. For instance, they argued that it was the responsibility of management to provide the necessary logistics needed by the personnel. Whenever there was a shortfall with respect to this provision, officers most at times went through various degrees of stress. A 59 year old Head of Department with 30years of experience affirmed that:

*Every work has challenges attached to it. For instance, confronting a criminal is not an easy task, yet I find myself doing that. I see this as normal because I cannot do the work without confronting them. However, factors relating to the organisational structure that cause stress are not normal because the Police Service can change that (September, 10).*

A 50 year old Station Officer with 19 years of experience said:

*We are trained to endure stress. The training itself is stressful and as such we are used to. We are psyched to see it as normal*  
(September, 22).

The present study confirms previous finding of Brown and Campbell (1990) who found that organisation and management features were more stressful than operational duties in the ratio of 4:1.

### **Stress Coping Strategies used by Police Officers**

As depicted and predicted by the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, it is not all stressors that degenerate into crisis. It all depends on the coping strategies and resources available for dealing with the stressful events as well as the interpretations that the individual made of those events (Pearlin et al., 1981). This section of the study explored the stress coping strategies and resources available (*representing the "B" component of the ABCX model and mediating resources as stipulated in the SPM*) and utilised by the Police Officers in coping with the diverse stressors they encountered at the work place. Respondents were made to reflect on the various stressors they encountered and consider how they coped with them.

When asked whether they were able to stay at work throughout the working hours when under stress, 91.8 per cent of the 194 respondents said they did while 8.2 per cent said they did not. Some of those who indicated that they were able to stay at work said they did either because they encouraged themselves (self-motivated) or because they forgot about the stress and concentrated solely on the

work. Four Station Officers, four Heads of Department, a Medical Officer and a Welfare Officer interviewed confirmed this assertion by the respondents. The 8.2 per cent, who indicated that they were not able to stay at work pointed out that they asked permission from appropriate authorities and went home to either rest or seek medical attention from health personnel and psychologists when the stress became severe.

Of those who mentioned that they stayed at work, most of them indicated that they normally stopped work for a while, walked around for a short time and then resumed. Others pointed out that they relaxed or engaged in conversation with other colleagues. Some of them disclosed that they read (e.g. service instruction, old dockets and newspapers), listened to music or surf the internet to reduce the stress they were going through. Others stated that they just endured the pains because they had been trained to do so. A 50 year old Head of Department with 19 years of experience reiterated that:

*I have been trained for my work. So I don't have any choice but to work irrespective of how stressful it might be. In fact, I try to cope with the situation because there is no option than to stay at work (September, 22).*

It is significant to note that some of the respondents took solace in the fact that their work was time-bound and that the day's work would surely end. It is noteworthy to state that all the responses given as techniques for coping with stress were tangible. Cole (2004) affirmed that stress is an individual phenomenon and as such it is only

the individual who knows whether a particular technique for combating stress works for him or her.

In addition to the above stress coping strategies, the respondents were further asked to indicate how often they used other stress coping strategies. This is presented in Table 18.

Table 18: *Stress Coping Strategies used by Police Officers*

Stress coping strategies	Never F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)
Think about how I might best handle the problem	10 (5.2)	92 (47.4)	92 (47.4)
Do what has to be done one step at a time	4 (2.1)	88 (45.3)	102 (52.6)
Take in alcohol	144 (74.2)	48 (24.8)	2 (1.0)
Take medication (Drugs)	120 (60.9)	66 (34.0)	8 (4.1)
I relax and meditate	20 (10.3)	132 (68.0)	42 (21.6)
Engage in physical exercise	16 (8.2)	134 (69.1)	44 (22.7)
Try to act as if nothing is bothering me	20 (10.3)	106 (54.7)	68 (35.0)
Total	330 (171.2)	666 (343.3)	358 (184.4)

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

When asked whether they thought about how best they could handle work stressors, 47.4 per cent of the respondents said they sometimes did and 47.4 per cent of them also acknowledged that they often used this stress coping strategy when under stress.

The respondents were asked whether they did what had to be done one step at a time to manage the stress at the work place. The results obtained showed that 52.6 per cent of them representing a majority did that and 45.3 per cent sometimes did that. When asked to indicate whether they resorted to the use of alcohol to manage their stress, a significant majority (74.2%) of the respondents declared that they never used alcohol to alleviate stress while 24.8 per cent said that they sometimes did. It is significant to note that only 1.0 per cent of them often consumed alcohol under stressful situations.

Similarly, the study discovered that a greater proportion of the respondents (61.9%) never used drugs in managing stress although 24.8 per cent acknowledged that they sometimes resorted to this technique when under stress. This finding is consistent with the research of Agolla (2008) which indicated that police officers disregarded taking over the counter medication and engaging in smoking and drinking alcohol as stress coping strategies.

In finding out whether the respondents used relaxation and meditation as a stress coping strategy, a significant majority (68.0%) of them asserted they sometimes did that whereas 21.6 per cent declared that they often did that.

It is an undisputable fact that physical exercise is one of the approaches to stress management (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). To ascertain this, respondents were asked to indicate how often they engaged in this activity. Results from the responses given showed that 22.7 per cent often did that and the majority (69.1%) sometimes did that.



In an attempt to manage the stress emanating from the work place, 54.7 per cent of the respondents stated that they sometimes tried to act as if nothing was bothering them whereas 35.0 per cent of them indicated that they often acted as such. The findings are consistent with previous work of Agolla (2008) which reported that waiting for the right time to do the job and thinking of how best to handle a problem were the most common coping strategies used by police officers.

Spielberger and Sarason (1975) asserted that social networking is an effective technique and resource for managing stress. In view of this, respondents were asked to indicate whether they consulted or talked to others about how they felt about stressful events they encountered at the work place. A significant majority (61.9%) of the respondents said that they consulted or talked to others when under stress while 38.1 per cent indicated that they did not.

The respondents who indicated they consulted or talked to others when under stress were further asked to state the category of people they consulted. It became clear that most of them talked to their colleague officer while others talked to or consulted family members, friends, counsellors, religious leaders and medical doctors. This category of people could serve as buffering resources against exposure to stress outcome as predicted by the SPM (Pearlin et al., 1981). Previous researches indicate that social support is a mediating factor to the exposure to stress and its outcomes (Alsund, Lam, Starrin & Nilsson, 2014; Carr & Umberson, 2013).

In furtherance to discovering stress coping strategies and resources available and used by the respondents, the study enquired as to whether they were aware of any Employee Assistance Programme(s) (EAPs) or stress management programmes

designed by the police administration for Police Officers. It became evident that a significant majority of the respondents (89.7%) were unaware of any such programmes. However, 10.3 per cent avowed that they were aware of such programmes and mentioned keep fit exercises and welfare meetings.

Nine out of 10 informants interviewed confirmed that even under stress officers were able to stay at work although on rare occasions some gave excuses and went to hospital or take casual leave and went home to relax. With regard to the strategies they adopted in alleviating workplace stress, four Station Officers, four Heads of Department and a Welfare Officer remarked that they took a stroll, chatted with colleagues and read materials such as newspapers and old dockets. Others listened to music and surf the internet. It became obvious that the stress coping strategies used by the 10 informants were not quite different from that of the 194 respondents.

Again, six out of 10 informants reiterated that when they realized an officer was stressed out, they talked to them or asked them to stop work for a while and resumed later. It came to light that officers who became stressed out while working on the field were replaced. The Welfare Officer emphasized that he first worked on the emotional stability of the Police Officers through counselling and re-assured them of the need to overcome stressful events in order that they would not have negative effect on them. He added that if the stress was related to logistics he ensured that the requisite logistics were supplied to them if available. He pointed out that when the level of stress became severe officers were recommended to see a Medical Doctor.

The doctor interviewed remarked that he recommended relaxation and sleeping for those whose stress was not severe while those experiencing severe stress were given medication. Other stress coping strategies recommended by the Medical Doctor included recreational activities such as games or sports, and engaging in physical exercises.

When asked whether the police institution had stress management programmes designed to help officers cope with stress, the informants gave mixed responses. Majority (7) of them claimed they were unaware of such programmes. Those who acknowledged awareness of such programmes mentioned programmes such as end of year party organised by all security personnel in Ghana popularly known as West African Security Services Association (W.A.S.S.A), in which hardworking security personnel in the country are awarded. The programme serves as an occasion for socialization which helps to relieve stress. Other programmes mentioned included keep fit exercises and welfare meetings during which officers were able to voice what was troubling them in relation to their work.

### **Stress Symptoms among Police Officers (Severity of Stress Symptoms)**

Stress manifests itself in different ways. The “X” component of the ABCX model explains the crisis stemming from stress (“A”) as a result of the wrong use of the “B” and the “C” in the model. How effectively one combines the use of the “B” (coping strategies) and “C” (interpretation of the stressor) will predict whether stress will or will not result in crisis. The SPM also predicts that stress is likely to result in crisis when the individual shows inadequate mediating resources. The

consequences associated with stress were classified under three major categories as reviewed in the literature (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). These included: Behavioural, physical (physiological) and psychological symptoms.

In order to make the analysis easier and precise, data gathered were grouped into three categories. The ratings of ‘rarely’ and ‘sometimes’ were collapse under ‘sometimes’ whiles ‘often’ and ‘very often’ were collapsed to ‘often’.

#### Behavioural symptoms of stress among Police Officers

Table 19 presents some common behavioural symptoms of stress experienced by the respondents.

Table 19: *Behavioural Symptoms of Stress among Police Officers*

Behavioural symptoms	Never F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)
Being aggressive	68 (35.0)	114 (58.8)	12 (6.2)
Taking alcohol	136 (70.1)	54 (27.8)	4 (2.1)
Feel like quitting the police service	116 (59.8)	66 (34.0)	12 (6.2)
Absenting myself from work	164 (84.5)	26 (13.4)	4 (2.1)
Total	484 (249.4)	260 (134.0)	32 (16.6)

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

The researcher asked the respondents whether they were ever aggressive, took alcohol, felt like quitting the service and absented themselves from work when under stress. With regard to being aggressive, 58.8 per cent indicated that they sometimes became aggressive while 35.0 per cent maintained that they were never

aggressive. With regard to the consumption of alcohol when under stress, a very high proportion (70.1%) of the respondents stated that they never took alcohol when under stress; 14.4 per cent mentioned that they sometimes did and 2.1 per cent admitted that they often did that. This finding is in agreement with the research of Agolla (2008) who disclosed that police officers disregarded drinking alcohol as a symptom of their stress.

When the respondents were asked whether they had ever felt like quitting the Police Service when under stress, 59.8 per cent representing the majority mentioned that they had never thought of that, 34.0 per cent acknowledged that they sometimes felt that way. Asked whether they had ever absented themselves from work when under stress, a significant majority (84.5%) of the respondents said they had never absented themselves from work even when under stress within the last six months. This implies that the respondents were very punctual at work.

#### Physical symptoms of stress among Police Officers

Variables considered under the physical symptoms of stress included headaches and back pains, high blood pressure, insomnia and fatigue. This is presented in Table 20.

Table 20: *Physical Symptoms of Stress among Police Officers*

Physical symptoms	Never F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)
Headaches and back pains	16 (8.2)	126 (65.0)	52 (26.8)
High blood pressure	110 (56.7)	64 (33.0)	20 (10.3)
Insomnia	52 (26.8)	100 (51.5)	42 (21.6)
Fatigue	16 (8.2)	110 (56.7)	68 (35.1)
Total	194 (99.9)	400 (206.2)	182 (93.8)

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Respondents were asked whether they had experienced physical symptoms of stress including headache and back pains, high blood pressure, insomnia and fatigue. A significant majority (65.0%) of the respondents stated that they sometimes felt headaches and back pains while 26.8 per cent emphasised that they often experienced such symptoms. In agreement with Clark and Cooper (2000) and Cole (2004), frequent headaches and back pains were identified as physical symptoms associated with stress among the respondents.

With regard to high blood pressure, majority of the respondents (56.7%) said they never experienced high blood pressure when under stress whereas 33.0 per cent said that they rarely did. This finding is in agreement with the outcome of the research by Agolla (2008) who revealed that most police officers ignored high blood pressure as symptom of their stress.

In relation to insomnia, 51.5 per cent of the respondents asserted that they sometimes had trouble sleeping when under stress; 26.8 per cent never experienced

such crisis and 21.6 per cent often did. On the issue of fatigue, majority of the respondents (56.7%) stated that they sometimes felt that way while 35.4 per cent pointed out that they often did.

#### Psychological symptoms of stress among Police Officers

This part of the study sought to bring to light the psychological manifestation of stress among the respondents. Issues that were considered included poor concentration, depression, forgetfulness and fear. Table 21 provides details of the responses gathered from the respondents.

Table 21: *Psychological Symptoms of Stress among Police Officers*

Psychological symptoms	Never F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)
Poor concentration	42 (21.6)	132 (68.1)	20 (10.3)
Feeling depressed	40 (20.6)	122 (62.9)	32 (16.5)
Forgetfulness	62 (32.0)	116 (59.7)	16 (8.3)
Exercising fear	96 (49.5)	78 (40.2)	20 (10.3)
Total	240 (123)	448 (230.9)	88 (45.4)

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

It became evident from the study that 21.6 per cent of the respondents never had problem concentrating on their work when under stress while a significant proportion of them (52.6%) disclosed that they sometimes had such problem. McShane and Von Glinow (2010) indicated that when employees are not able to concentrate at work, they commit a lot of errors.

Data gathered from the study also revealed that 20.6 per cent of the respondents never felt depressed when under stress. A significant proportion (62.9%) of them affirmed that they sometimes felt depressed under stressful situation. On the symptom of forgetfulness, the results revealed that 32.0 per cent of the respondents never forgot when they encountered stressful situations while 59.7 per cent representing a majority admitted that they sometimes did.

Police officers are sometimes exposed to the unknown. In view of this, they were asked whether they exercised any fear when they were confronted with the unknown putting them under stress. Results obtained indicated that almost half of the respondents (49.5%) never exercised fear when confronted with the unknown whereas 40.2 per cent of them claimed that they sometimes exercised fear when confronted with the unknown.

In furtherance to discovering the crises that emanate from respondents' exposure to stressors, 10 informants comprising four Heads of Department, four Station Officers, a Medical Officer and a Welfare Officer were asked to indicate whether officers complained of any physical and psychological distress as a result of their work. With the exception of one Unit Head, the rest of the informants (9) answered in the affirmative. They indicated that sometimes officers complained of physical symptoms of stress such as headaches, back pains, body weakness, neck pains, waist pains and fatigue. They hinted that those officers who sat for long hours usually complained of neck pains, back pains and waist pains. This confirmed the responses given by the respondents.



On the psychological symptoms, nine out of 10 informants mentioned frustrations, sleeping disorders, inability to concentrate leading to mistakes. One informant said that officers got frightened at the least sound and sometimes felt worried.

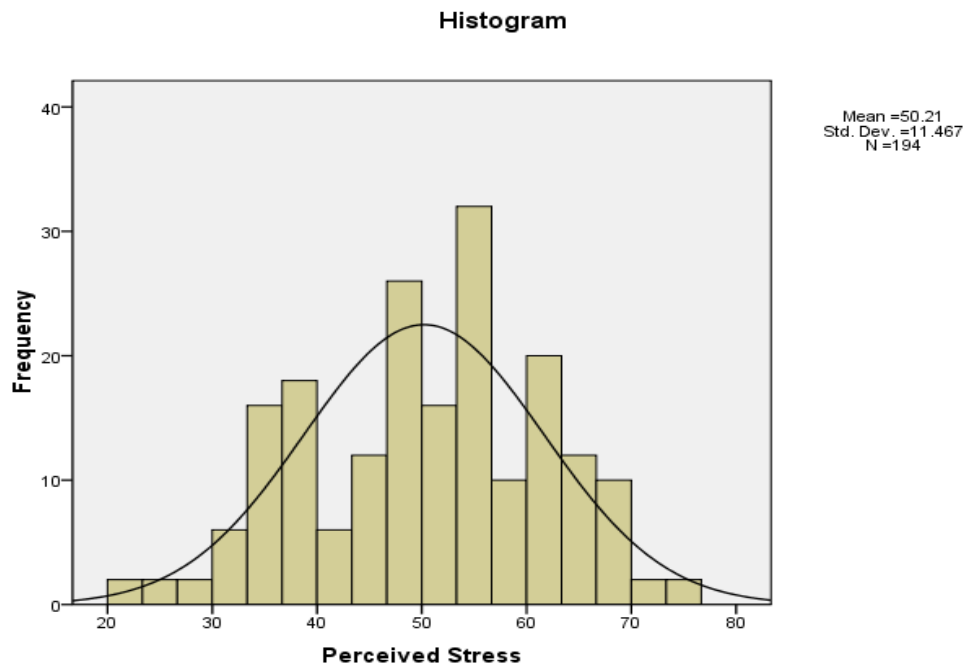
The informants were further asked to indicate whether they observed changes in the behaviour of their officers as a result of their work. Nine out of 10 informants answered in the affirmative. The impression they gave was that officers showed several behavioural symptoms of stress. The most common ones mentioned included; not being serious with work, committing repeated mistakes, aggressiveness and unwillingness to perform the duties they were supposed to perform which culminated in disciplinary action taken against them. They reiterated that when the stress became severe some officers felt like quitting the profession.

Data gathered from the Medical Doctor indicated that Police Officers sometimes reported symptoms associated with stress. These included sleeping disorders, fatigue, aggressiveness, suicidal tendencies, weight loss, absenteeism and headaches.

### **Association between Perceived Work Stress and Severity of Stress Symptoms**

The “X’ component of the ABCX model of stress presupposes that stress could lead to crisis (stress outcome or symptoms) depending on how the individual saw or interpreted stressful events (‘C’) and the available coping mechanism used (‘B’). One of the objectives of the study was therefore to find out whether there was any association between how the respondents saw or interpreted stressful work

events (perceived work stress) and the severity of stress symptoms experienced. To establish the strength, magnitude and direction of association between the variables, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used. However, for a data to be subjected to correlation analysis, the dependent variable must meet certain stringent assumptions. The variable must be normally distributed and pass the assumption of linearity (Pallant, 2005). In view of this, preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of these assumptions. In the present study, the dependent variable was total perceived work stress and the independent variable was severity of stress symptoms. The dependent variable was first subjected under the assumption of the test for normality. See Figure 3.



**Figure 3: Test for normality on perceived work stress**

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

From Figure 3, it became clear that the dependent variable was normally distributed among the respondents. Moreover, the data also assumed linear relationship. Since total perceived work stress variable passed the assumption on normality and linearity, Pearson product-moment correlation was run to determine the association between respondent's perceived work stress and severity of stress symptoms. The result of the test is summarised in Table 22.

Table 22: *Pearson Correlation between Perceived Work Stress and Severity of Stress Symptoms*

		Perceived work stress	Severity of stress symptoms
Perceived work stress	Pearson correlation	1.000	0.313**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	194	194
Severity of stress symptom	Pearson correlation	0.313**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	194	194

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

The results from the correlation analysis revealed that there was a significant positive association between respondents' perceived work stress and severity of stress symptoms ( $r = .313$ ,  $p \leq .000$ ,  $n = 194$ ). This implies that the more police officers perceived certain work events as stressful, the more they are likely to experience stress symptoms. In other words, stress symptoms were more likely to increase among Police Officers when they saw work factors as stressful. This

finding is consistent with previous study of Chueh et al. (2010). Their study revealed that police officers who perceived high work stress reported more severe psychosomatic symptoms than those who perceived low-work stress.

Moreover, the strength of the relationship was medium ( $r=.313$ ). Different authors suggest different interpretations, however, Cohen (1988) suggests  $r = .30$  to  $.49$  as medium. It could be deduced that even though there was positive association between police officers' perceived level of work stress and severity of stress symptoms, the association was moderate (medium). This supports the hypothesis that, there is a significant positive association between perceived work stress and severity of stress symptoms among Police Officers.

The moderate positive association between overall perceived level of work stress and severity of stress symptoms among Police Officers indicates that other factors could play diverse role. These factors are believed to include age, gender, rank, marital status, years of service and educational level (Brown & Campbell, 1990; Omolayo, 2012; Vokic & Bogdanic, 2008). Others include social support and the personality traits of the workers (Pearlin, 1989; Robbins & Judge, 2007).

### **Relationship between Socio-demographic, Occupational characteristics and Perceived Work Stress**

Various researchers have indicated that there is a relationship between demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, years of service, job status and education and occupational stress (Affum-Osei & Azunu, 2016; Rakshase, 2014; Vokic & Bogdanic, 2008). In order to find out whether

respondents differ or not with regard to their demographic characteristics and occupational stress, they were categorised into subgroups using six individual differences. These include gender, marital status, age, educational level, rank and years of service.

#### Gender of Police Officers and occupational stress

An independent t-test was run to ascertain whether differences existed between the male and female Officers in terms of their perceived work stress (both organisational and operational stress). The results of are presented in Table 23.

Table 23: *T-test showing Relationship between Gender and Perceived Work Stress*

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	P-value
Perceived work stress	Male	140	51.11	10.255	0.123
	Female	54	47.48	13.972	

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

The results indicated that there was no significant difference in job stress perceived by male and female Police Officers since the p-value of 0.123 is higher than the alpha value of 0.05. This implies that male and female Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis did not perceive significantly differential job stress although male's average (Mean = 51.11) was greater than female's average (Mean = 47.85). This finding is in consonance with recent findings of Amin (2015) and Taylor and Bennel (2006) who found out in their surveys that there was no significant difference in work stress perceived by male and female police officers. However, this finding contradicts findings of Omolayo (2012) who revealed that

female police officers experience significant high level of job stress than their male counterparts. It could be deduced that the gender of the respondents did not significantly influence how they perceived work-related events as stressful.

#### Marital status of Police Officers and occupational stress

Marital status of a worker is believed to influence experience of work stress (Affum-Osei & Azunu, 2016, Rintaugu, 2013). An independent t-test was run to ascertain whether differences existed between married and unmarried Police Officers in terms of perceived work stress. The result is presented in Table 24.

Table 24: *T-test showing Relationship between Marital Status and Perceived*

	Marital status	N	Mean	SD	P-value
Perceived work stress	Married	126	51.57	10.999	0.024
	Unmarried	68	47.68	11.962	

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Marital status was found to be significantly related to the level of work stress perceived by the respondents. Results, as shown in Table 24, revealed that there is a significant difference between married and unmarried police officers' perceived level of work stress. As indicated in Table 23, the p-value of 0.024 is less than the alpha value of 0.05, hence married Police Officers experienced significant high level of stress than their unmarried counterparts. The reason for this finding could be attributed to the fact that probably in the Ghanaian society married people have a lot of responsibilities to carry out such as taking good care of their homes and children, exchanging family visitation among others. Perhaps, because of their

work/family conflict, they experience higher levels of stress (Mean = 51.57) than the unmarried (Mean = 47.68). Moreover, married people usually have little time to ease their pent-up tension that they have been keeping or harbouring from their workplace. This finding confirms the previous findings of Amin (2015) who found significant difference in the level of occupational stress between married and unmarried police officers. Similar findings among other professionals were reported by Affum-Osei and Azunu (2016) and Nagarayu and Nandini (2013).

#### Years of service and occupational stress

Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine whether a significant difference existed between categories of years of service (experience) of respondents and perceived work stress. The result is presented in Table 25.

Table 25: *Kruskal-Wallis test showing Comparison for Years of Service and Perceived Work Stress*

	Years of service	N	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$	df	P-value
Perceived work stress	$\leq 5$	92	88.87	5.595	4	0.123
	6-10	44	109.05			
	11-15	22	104.41			
	16-20	12	114.83			
	> 20	24	94.42			

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

The results from Table 25 indicates that there was no statistically significant difference between years of service of respondents and perceived work stress since the p-value is greater than the alpha value (p-value = 0.231, alpha = 0.05). This implies that experiences of Police Officers do not influence their levels of stress perceived at the workplace. This finding contradicts previous work of Rakshase (2014) who found significant difference in the scores of occupational stress between officers who had served below fifteen years and those who had served above sixteen years. The finding is however consistent with the work of Patterson (1992) who found that officers with the least and most experience perceived lower levels of stress than officers with intermediate levels of experience.

#### Hierarchical rank of Police Officers and occupational stress

Occupational characteristic which is most obviously associated with exposure to stress is rank of officers (Brown & Campbell, 1990). The relationship between rank of the respondents and perceived work stress is presented in Table 26.

Table 26: *Kruskal-Wallis test showing Comparison for Hierarchical Rank and Perceived Work Stress*

	Rank	N	Mean	$\chi^2$	df	P-value
			Rank			
Perceived work stress	Junior officers	162	98.43	0.502	2	0.778
	Supervisors	22	96.05			
	Senior officers	10	87.70			

Source: Fieldwork, 2014.



Motowidlo et al. (1986) emphasised that people develop coping strategies to deal with stress. Because this takes time, senior organisational members should be more fully adapted and therefore, should experience less stress. The results from the study, however, revealed that level of work stress perceived by the respondents did not differ significantly with respect to their ranks since the p-value is greater than the alpha value (p-value = 0.778, alpha = 0.05). Thus, although junior officers perceived the highest level of occupational stress (Mean rank = 98.43) followed by supervisors (Mean rank= 96.05) and senior officers (Mean rank = 85.70), the differences among their perceived levels of work stress was not statistically significant. This finding agrees with the finding of Omolayo (2012) who found out that senior police officers do not experience more job stress than the junior ones. Taylor and Bennel (2006) reported similar findings among police officers in Ontario. However, the study is in contrast with the work of Brown and Campbell (1990) who found significant differences between the rank of police officers and occupational stress perceived.

The implication of this finding is that status on the job has no significant effect on the stress perceived by police officers. Omolayo (2012) therefore posits that every job activity has its attached stressors, which workers executing that work activity will have to experience. These job stressors are present in all work activities.

## Educational level of Police Officers and occupational stress

Education has been considered as an important factor in policing, especially tertiary education (Tankebe, 2010). The study sought to find out if educational level of the respondents had any influence on occupational stress perceived. The results from the study are presented in Table 27.

Table 27: *Kruskal-Wallis test showing Comparison for Educational Level and Perceived Work Stress*

	Education	N	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$	df	P-value
Perceived work stress	Secondary	104	84.65	17.767	2	0.000
	Diploma	52	124.73			
	University degree	38	95.39			

Source: Fieldwork, 2014.

The results from Table 27 clearly show that there was a statistically significant difference between the educational level of the respondents and their perceived level of work stress since the p-value is less than the alpha value (p-value = 0.000, alpha = 0.05). The results indicate that respondents holding Diploma reported the highest level of work stress (Mean rank = 124.73). This finding supports the research finding of Taylor and Bennel (2006) who found significant difference between the educational level of police officers and perceived work stress. Relatedly, Dantzker (1999) examining the relationship between the education level of law enforcement officers and organisational stress, found that the stress level of the officers with high school diplomas was greater than that of those with associate

degrees. The implication is that the education background of the police plays a significant role in their experience of occupational stress.

#### Relationship between age and occupational stress

Sager (1990) argued that the ability to handle stress associated with job increases with age. The major explanation given for such a finding was that older employees have often reached a stage where career development is not their major concern, and hence a number of job characteristics which may cause stress to younger staff, who have their career ahead of them, do not cause stress to older staff. Table 28 shows the relationship between age and perceived work stress among the respondents.

Table 28: *Kruskal-Wallis test Showing Comparison for Age and Perceived Work Stress*

	Age	N	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$	df	P-value
Perceived work stress	20-29	90	86.83	6.842	3	0.077
	30-39	68	109.65			
	40-49	22	104.86			
	50-59	14	95.50			

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

The study found no significant difference between the age of the respondents and their perceived levels of work stress since the p-value was greater than the alpha value (p-value =0.077, alpha = 0.05). Although there was no significant difference with regard to age and perceived level of work stress, the results revealed

that respondents in the age group of 30-39 years experienced more stress followed by those in the age group of 40-49 years. It was also observed that those at either ends of the age range (20-29 and 50-59) reported less perceived work stress than the intermediate age groups (30-39, 40-49). This finding contradicts the findings of Taylor and Bennel (2006) which reported significant difference between the age of officers and work stress perceived.

### **Relating the Conceptual Framework to the Findings of the Study**

The Conceptual Framework of the study depicts that some factors at the work place (work-related stressors) can expose an employee to distress. However, this process is mediated by certain variables including perception, coping strategies and some demographic and occupational characteristics. The study revealed that the Police Officers encountered various stressors at the work place. As depicted by the Conceptual Framework, the finding also clearly indicated an association between perceived work stress and severity of stress symptoms or distress. However, this result did not happen automatically. The process was influenced by some socio-demographic characteristics such as marital status and educational level.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study. The study sought to examine factors that influence occupational stress among Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. A descriptive cross-sectional design using mixed method approach was adopted for the study. A sample of 194 serving Police Officers were administered with questionnaires while six senior Police Officers and four supervisors were purposively selected and interviewed. Descriptive analysis of the data collected was done using the Statistical Product for Service Solution for windows (version 16.0).

Using Hill's ABCX model of stress and the stress process model (SPM), the study sought to address the following objectives: (a) to identify sources of police stress; (b) assess how Police Officers interpret the stressors they encounter at work; (c) explore various stress coping strategies and programmes used by the police; (d) explore the symptoms of stress as experienced by Police Officers; (e) determine the relationship between perceived work stress and severity of stress symptoms; and, (f) ascertain the relationship between the demographic characteristics of Police Officers (age, gender, marital status, years of service, education level and rank) and perceived work stress .

## Summary

The results of the study clearly indicated that organisational factors especially those related to organisational climate (structure and management) were the most influential determinants of occupational stress among Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The respondents saw operational factors that exposed them to stress as “normal” while those related to the work structure and management were seen as “abnormal”. It also became evident that Police Officers’ perceived level of work stress was positively associated with severity of stress symptoms or crisis. Police officers’ marital status and educational level were influential factors in their perceived levels of work stress.

## Findings

The major findings that emerged with regard to the objectives of the study are further summarised below.

In relation to work-related events that exposed Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis to stress (*‘A’ component of the ABCX model of stress and sources of stress in the SPM*), major findings indicated that:

- Police Officers considered public criticism and lack of accommodation as the most frequently occurring stressors among them.
- Police Officers were most often exposed to stress caused by organisational factors. Notable among them included: lack of accommodation for personnel, work overload, excessive paperwork and performing two or more

responsibilities at the same time. Others included inadequate personnel and logistics, long working hours and ‘never off duty’ for personnel.

- Police Officers also considered operational activities such as handling conflict or crisis, arresting violent persons or criminals, engaging in shoot-out with armed robbers, attending accident scenes and carrying out of presidential assignments as factors that relatively exposed them to stress.

Findings on the interpretation of stressful work events by the respondents (“C” component of the ABCX model of stress) revealed that:

- Police Officers saw the organisational and social aspects of their work as factors causing more stress than operational activities.
- Organisational and social factors that caused most stress included lack of accommodation for personnel, public criticism, performing two or more responsibilities at the same time, inadequate or using poor quality equipment, lack of opportunity for career advancement and “never off duty”.
- Operational activities that were perceived to be most stressful by the respondents included arresting a violent person or criminal and attending death or fatal road accident scenes.
- The informants considered the operational stressors caused by operational activities as “normal” because they saw them as part and parcel of the job. However, they considered the stressors caused by organisational factors as “not normal” because they saw them as management inefficiency.

Findings with regard to coping strategies and resources available and used by Police Officers (*'B' component of the ABCX model of stress and mediating resources in the SPM*) revealed that:

- Even under stress most Police Officers were able to stay at work (61.9%)
- The coping strategies mostly used by the Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis were those considered positive (problem focused coping strategies) such as: 'doing what has to be done one step at a time', 'thinking about how I might best handle the problem' and 'talking to colleague officers about how I am feeling about a stressful event' and exercises.
- Police Officers had social support as a resource that could be used as a buffer against exposure to work stress. This support came from colleagues, family members, counsellors, religious leaders and Medical Doctors.
- The majority of the respondents reported that they did not know of any Employee Assistance Programme specifically designed by the police institution to help them cope with stress at the workplace. However, certain social events such as the annual organisation of the W.A.S.S.A, helped officers shed off the stress they experienced.

In consonance with the "X" component of the ABCX model and consequences of distress in the SPM, the following findings were observed among the Police Officers.

- The more Police Officers regarded certain work events as stressful, the more likely they experienced stress symptoms. In other words, stress symptoms



increased among the Police Officers when they interpreted work related events as stressful.

- The most commonly reported symptoms of stress by the Police Officers included headaches and backaches, fatigue, trouble sleeping, feeling depressed and poor concentration on the work.

The key findings for the association between perceived work stress and severity of stress symptoms were as follows:

- The relationship between perceived work stress and severity of stress symptoms was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation. There was a moderate positive correlation between the two variables ( $r = 0.313$ ,  $n = 194$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) with higher levels of perceived work stress associated with a relatively high level of stress symptoms. Thus, perceived work stress was significantly correlated to severity of stress symptoms among the respondents.
- The study revealed a moderate positive association between perceived work stress and severity of stress symptoms. This implies that, the more police officers perceived work-related events to be stress inducing, the more likely they were to report high level of stress symptoms. In other words, as self-perceived work stress increased, stress symptoms also increased among Police Officers but in moderate form.

Concerning the relationship between socio-demographic, occupational characteristics and perceived work stress, the following findings surfaced:

- Significant differences were observed between marital status and perceived work stress. Married Police Officers perceived more work-related stress than unmarried police officers. This may probably be attributed to the extra duties at home. Obviously married working officers are liable to fulfil all commitments equally at home and at workplace, as compared to unmarried working officers. The potential for work/family conflict and stress increase as married Police Officers struggle with the demands of balancing their work and family.
- The study also found significant difference between educational levels in relation to perceived work stress among the respondents. However, no significant differences were observed between gender, rank, years of service and age in relation to perceived work stress among the respondents.

## **Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study

- Police officers were often exposed to the organisational factors that influence stress (that is organisational structure and management style) as compared to the operational activities such as arresting criminals.
- Stressful work event may or may not lead to experience of stress and this depends on how the individual interprets the event and the available coping strategies used by the individual.
- Police Officers perceived organisational climate (structure and management) as more stressful than the operational activities.

- Police Officers regarded the operational activities that caused stress as relatively “normal” because they were seen as part and parcel of their responsibilities in the service. However, they considered organisational factors that caused stress as “abnormal” because they considered them as deficiencies in the police organisational structure and management style.
- Socio-demographic characteristics influence occupational stress among Police Officers. There was connection between marital status, educational level and perceived work stress, while gender, age, years of service and rank were not connected to it.
- There is moderate positive association between perceived level of work stress and severity of stress symptoms and this implies that if Police Officers perceive work events as negative, they would experience more stress symptoms. Also the moderate association implies that other factors could play a contributing role in the experience of occupational stress. These factors include socio-demographic characteristics such as marital status and level of education.
- The coping strategies mostly used by Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis were those considered positive (problem-focused coping strategies), such as: ‘doing what has to be done one step at a time’, ‘thinking about how I might best handle the problem’ and ‘talking to colleague officers about how I am feeling about stressful event’, and regular exercising

## **Recommendations**

Based on the conclusions drawn on occupational stress among Police Officers in Cape Coast Metropolis, the following recommendations are made to management of Ghana Police Service:

- Since stress among Police Officers is mostly due to organisational factors, management should target sources of stress in the police organisation by changing organisational climate or task structure. Management can reduce the level of stress by providing the necessary logistics and resources needed by the police personnel to function effectively.
- The police department must introduce and implement stress management programmes which will go a long way to reduce stress. The department should offer counselling for the Police Officers by establishing a counselling Unit, which can easily be accessible by the police. It is recommended that this Unit focus its activities on both the organisational and individual level.
- Courses on occupational stress and coping strategies should be introduced in Police Colleges and training centres in order to enhance the capacity of Police Officers to cope with stress in the workplace.
- It is also recommended that necessary effort should be put in place to give more opportunity to the officers to further their education since educational level of the respondents was a major factor that influenced their stress level.
- The researcher suggests that during recruitment, socio-demographic dimensions of the Police Officers should be examined. Certain employee groups perceive higher levels of stress than others. Having that in mind the

police organisations should attach greater importance to socio-demographic characteristics of individuals when recruiting, developing and motivating as those characteristics provide a good standing point for understanding and predicting how people respond under different stress conditions.

- In the light of the enormous work overload imposed on the Police Officers, it is recommended that the police institution should make every effort to increase the number of personnel. Moreover, responsibilities of the police officers must be considered based on their capacity because police-population ratio of Ghana (1:727) (Boadi & Abbey (2016) is below the international standard of 1:500.

### **Suggestion for Further Research**

It is suggested that further research of occupational stress among Police Officers is investigated in other districts in Ghana in order to increase the knowledge base in this area of study. It is also suggested that subsequent studies under police stress probe into detail the surface findings revealed by the study.

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**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR POLICE OFFICERS**

This survey seeks to examine **Occupational Stress among Police Officers in the Cape Coast Metropolis**. Please you have been randomly selected to take part in the study. It is purely for academic work. I will be most grateful if you can spare few minutes to answer the questions that follow. Be assured that all information given would be treated as strictly confidential. Therefore feel free and be sincere in the answers you provide. Please do not write your name.

**SECTION A**

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON RESPONDENTS**

Please tick {√} where applicable

1. Sex (a) Male { } (b) Female { }
2. How old are you? .....
3. Marital status (a) Married { } (b) Single { } (c) Divorced { } (d) Widowed
4. Current level of educational attainment (a) Secondary school { } (b) Diploma { } (c) Graduate { } (d) Postgraduate { } (e) Other, specify.....
5. How many years have you worked with the Ghana Police Service?
6. What is your current rank? .....
7. Which Department do you work with? .....

## SECTION B

### I: SOURCES OF WORK STRESS (Frequency of stressful events)

There are some statements below with numbers ranging from 1-5. Consider **how often you have been exposed to** the following conditions in the last six months and tick the number that best describes your opinion using the guidelines below.

1...Never 2....Rarely 3...Sometimes 4...Often 5.....Very often

Factor and items	<i>Never</i> (1)	<i>Rarely</i> (2)	<i>Sometimes</i> (3)	<i>often</i> (4)	<i>Very often</i> (5)
<b>Operational stressors</b>					
8. Arresting a violent person or criminal					
9. Attending the scene of death or fatal road traffic accident					
10. Handling conflicts and crises					
11. Directing traffic					
<b>Job Related stressors</b>					
12. Having too much work to do					
13. Excessive paper work					
14. Having to perform two or more responsibilities at the same time					
15. Shift-work					
<b>Lack of resources</b>					
16. Inadequate staff					
17. Inadequate or poor quality equipment					
18. Lack of opportunity for career advancement					
19. Lack of accommodation					
<b>Interpersonal stressors</b>					
20. Dealing with unsupportive boss					
21. Dealing with unsupportive colleague					
22. Dealing with unsupportive community members					

## II: Severity of stressful events (Perceived work stress)

There are some statements below with numbers ranging from 1-5 indicating different stress levels. Carefully read and tick the number that applies to you by **rating each statement in order of how stressful you consider it to be.**

<b>Items</b>	<i>Not stressful</i> (1)	<i>Slightly stressful</i> (2)	<i>Moderately stressful</i> (3)	<i>Very stressful</i> (4)	<i>Extremely stressful</i> (5)
<b>Operational stressors</b>					
8. Arresting a violent person or a criminal					
9. Attending the scene of death or fatal road traffic accident					
10. Handling conflicts and crises					
11. Directing traffic					
<b>Job Related stressors</b>					
12. Having too much work to do					
13. Excessive paper work					
14. Having to perform two or more responsibilities at the same time					
15. shift-work					
<b>Lack of resources</b>					
16. Inadequate staff					
17. Inadequate or poor quality equipment					
18. Lack of opportunity for career advancement					

<b>Interpersonal stressors</b>					
20. Dealing with unsupportive boss					
21. Dealing with unsupportive colleague					
22. Dealing with unsupportive community members					

### SECTION C

#### SEVERITY OF STRESS SYMPTOMS

Please consider **how often you have experienced** the following conditions in the last six months and tick the number that best describes your opinion.

<b>Factor and items</b>	<i>Never</i> (1)	<i>Rarely</i> (2)	<i>Sometimes</i> (3)	<i>Often</i> (4)	<i>Very often</i> (5)
<b>Behavioural symptoms</b>					
59. Being aggressive					
60. Taking alcohol					
61. Feel like quitting the police service					
62. Absenting myself from work					
<b>Physical symptoms</b>					
63. Headaches and back pains					
64. High blood pressure					
65. Insomnia					
66. Change in sexual drive					
<b>Psychological symptoms</b>					
67. Poor concentration					
68. Feeling depressed					
69. Forgetfulness					
70. Exercising fear					





There are some statements below. Please indicate how often you have used each of the statement when under stress as a result of your wok for the past six months.

<i>Coping strategies</i>	<i>Never (1)</i>	<i>Rarely (2)</i>	<i>Sometimes (3)</i>	<i>often (4)</i>	<i>Very often (5)</i>
51. Think about how I might best handle the problem					
52. Do what has to be done one step at a time					
53. Take in alcohol					
54. Take medication (Drugs)					
55. Talk to colleague officers about how I am feeling					
56. I relax and meditate					
57. Engage in physical exercises					
58. Try to act as if nothing is bothering me					

THANK YOU FOR YOUR VALUABLE TIME

**APPENDIX B**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STATION OFFICERS AND HEADS OF  
DEPARTMENT**

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANT**

Please tick {√} where applicable

1. Sex (a) Male { } (b) Female { }
2. How old are you? .....
3. Marital status  
(a) Married { } (b) Single { } (c) Divorced { } (d) Widowed
4. Current level of educational attainment  
(a) Secondary school { } (b) Diploma { } (c) Graduate { } (d) Postgraduate { }  
(e) Other, specify.....
5. How many years have you worked with the Ghana Police Service?
6. What is your current rank? .....
7. Which Department do you work with? .....

**SOURCES OF POLICE STRESS**

1. As a Station Officer/Head of Department Head, what do you consider to be the greatest source of stress for your officers in their work?
2. What other factors/situations do officers complain of most as sources of stress in their work?
3. Do male and female officers report different stressors in your station? If yes, what unique stressors do they complain of? If no, what do you think contribute to this situation?
4. Have you personally experienced any stress within the last six months in your career? If yes, can you please tell me more about that?

5. How would you describe the relationship between the senior officers and their subordinates in your station?
6. How would you describe the relationship between the police officers and the community they serve in terms of support and cordiality?

### **INTERPRETATION OF STRESSFUL EVENTS**

7. In general how do officers view the stressful events they encounter in relation to their work?

### **SYMPTOMS/OUTCOME OF STRESS**

8. Do officers complain of any physical and psychological distress attributed to their employment in the police service? If yes, what are some of the commonest physical and psychological signs they show or report of?
9. Do you sometimes notice changes in behaviour or attitude towards work among the officers as a result of work-related stress? If yes, can you mention some of the changes in behaviour that you notice?
10. What affects the police administration most about stress among officers?

### **STRESS MANAGEMENT/COPING STRATEGIES**

11. Are officers able to stay at work throughout the normal working hours when under stress? If yes, what do they do to cope with the stress associated with the work? If no, what do they do when they stay away from work?

12. How does your outfit handle an officer that appears to be suffering from stress?
13. What steps/measures has your station taken to reduce officer stress?
14. Do you have any Employee Assistance Programme or stress management program? If yes, can you mention some of these programmes? How often is this programme(s) organised? Do officers participate in or use this programme (s)? If no, why not?
15. If you are asked to recommend some measures and techniques for managing stress among your officers, what measures and techniques would you recommend?
16. What do you think should be the way forward for stress management among police officers?
17. Do you have additional comments or insights that you think would be useful for my research

THANK YOU FOR YOUR VALUABLE TIME

**APPENDIX C**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MEDICAL OFFICER**

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON PARTICIPANT**

Please tick {√} where applicable

1. Sex (a) Male { } (b) Female { }
2. How old are you? .....
3. Marital status  
(a) Married { } (b) Single { } (c) Divorced { } (d) Widowed
4. Current level of educational attainment  
(a) Secondary school { } (b) Diploma { } (c) Graduate { } (d) Postgraduate { }  
(e) Other, specify.....
5. How many years have you worked with the Ghana Police Service?
6. What is your current rank? .....
7. Which Department do you work with? .....

**SYMPTOMS OF POLICE STRESS**

1. What do we mean when we say someone is under stress?
2. Have you ever had the chance of handling a stressed officer?
3. What symptoms did he/she complain about for you to diagnose that he/she is under stress?
4. Apart from these symptoms, what other symptoms do officers show when they are stressed? (a) Physically (b) Behaviourally (c) Psychologically
5. Do men and women patients (police officers) report similar symptoms of stress? If no, what are the differences?

## **SOURCES OF POLICE STRESS**

6. What do you think are the causes for the symptoms reported by your patients?
7. What will you say are the factors in the work place that expose police officers to stress?

## **STRESS MANAGEMENT/COPING STRATEGIES**

8. If you realise that your patient (police officer) is experiencing stress, what are some of the measures you recommend?
9. Apart from the above recommendations, what other stress management techniques can individuals use in managing stress?
10. Do you have any Employee Assistance Programme or stress management program in place for police officers?
11. If yes, state some of the program (s). If no, why not?
12. If you have, do police officers participate or use this programme when under stress?
13. What do you think should be the way forward for stress management among police officers?
14. Do you have additional comments or insights that you think would be useful for my research?

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR VALUABLE TIME**

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR WELFARE OFFICERS

#### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON PARTICIPANT

Please tick {√} where applicable

1. Sex (a) Male { } (b) Female { }
2. How old are you? .....
3. Marital status  
(a) Married { } (b) Single { } (c) Divorced { } (d) Widowed
4. Current level of educational attainment  
(a) Secondary school { } (b) Diploma { } (c) Graduate { } (d) Postgraduate { }  
(e) Other, specify.....
5. How many years have you worked with the Ghana Police Service?
6. What is your current rank? .....
7. Which Department do you work with? .....

#### SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

8. Have you ever had the chance of handling a stressed officer?
9. What symptoms did he/she complained of?

#### SOURCES OF POLICE STRESS

10. As the welfare officer, what do you consider to be the greatest source of stress for your officers in their work?
11. What other factors do officers complain of as a source of stress?
12. Have you personally experienced any form of stress within the last six months in your career?

## **STRESS MANAGEMENT AND COPING STRATEGIES**

13. How do you manage the stress that comes with your work?
14. If you realise an officer is under stress, what are some of the measures you recommend?
15. Do you have any Employee Assistance Programme in place for police officers?  
If yes, mention some of programmes. If no, why not?
16. If you have stress management programme, how often do you organise it? Do officers participate or use those programmes?
17. Do you have any additional comments or insight that you think would be useful for my research?

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR VALUABLE TIME**