

**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**RISK FACTORS AND COPING STRATEGIES FOR OCCUPATIONAL STRESS  
AMONG PRISON OFFICERS IN NAIROBI COUNTY IN KENYA**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF  
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
(COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY) OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY**

**NOVEMBER 2013**

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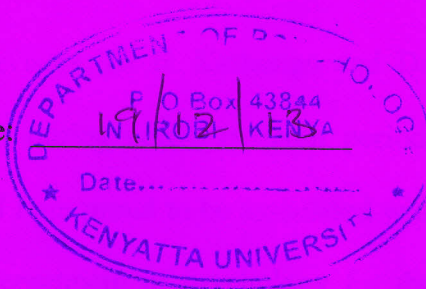
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## DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University or for any other award.



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This project has been submitted for review with our approval as University supervisors.

1.



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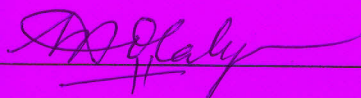


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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like first and foremost to thank God Almighty for seeing me through and giving me the opportunity to complete this project

My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisors, Dr B. Kathungu and Dr W. Olaly for their devotion, guidance and encouragement during entire research period. Indeed they have promoted my intellectual well-being and I am proud to be associated with them. I would also like to thank all the members of the department of psychology for their assistance in my academic progress that culminated in the writing of this project.

A special note of thanks goes to my family for their patience, support and understanding which contributed to the completion of the work.

My appreciation goes to the commissioner of prisons for allowing me to collect data for the study in various prison institutions. I also thank the prison officers in Kamiti Medium prison, Industrial area prison and Langata women prison for their cooperation and support during the time of data collection.

Finally I wish to extend my gratitude to all my classmates for the shared views, experiences and for being a source of encouragement and inspiration to me.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my husband, Gerald and my children Marksam, Mirijed, Rewel and Mercylynn.

## ABSTRACT

Occupational stress has been considered a major problem in the service industry. It affects the health of employees and also reduces the work productivity of an organization. It is predicted that by the year 2020, stress will be a major cause of workplace ill health in the world if no precaution is taken against the problem. Statistics indicate that majority of prison officers, like most other workers, go through major stress. Limited studies have been done on risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress among male and female prison officers. The current study sought to investigate whether there are male and female differences with regard to experiencing of work-related stress, risk factors for occupational stress and coping strategies among male and female prison officers in Nairobi County. The study was guided by the Effort-Reward Imbalance theory which forms the basis of the study. The study used descriptive survey design. The target population for the study were the prison officers in all the 6 prisons in Nairobi County. Multistage sampling approach, combining purposive sampling for prisons and stratified random sampling for prison officers was used to obtain the required sample of 114 respondents. A questionnaire was used to collect data which was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequencies, percentages and graphs were used to present the data. The study provided data on risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress specific for male and female prison officers in Nairobi County prisons. The study found that majority of prison officers were stressed in the work place due to occupational stress or sand this affected their social life, health and productivity. Sharing of houses was highly reported by the prison officers as the major risk factor causing high occupational stress closely followed by housing conditions, working under pressure, availability of job promotions, risking being injured on the job, and working conditions. As much as positive coping strategies are used by majority of the prison officers, the study findings indicate that there are a large number of prison officers who use negative coping strategies for occupational stress such as taking a lot of alcohol, drug abuse and peddling, absenteeism from work while others are in perseverance of the stress. According to the study findings, majority of the officers felt that causes of occupational stress can be alleviated through several measures such as improving working conditions, increasing the number of houses, avoiding pressure to juniors, providing counselling services, and time management. The data may be useful to policy makers and implementers in the prisons department by providing evidence that may inform the development and implementation of policies focusing on the unique needs of both male and female prison officers with regard to prevention and reduction of stress.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>x</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS &amp; ACRONYMS</b> .....	<b>xi</b>
<b>DEFINITION OF TERMS</b> .....	<b>xii</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background to the Study .....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem .....	7
1.3 Purpose of the Study .....	8
1.4 Objectives of the Study .....	8
1.5 Research Questions .....	9
1.6 Hypotheses .....	9
1.7 Justification and Significance of the Study .....	10
1.8 Scope and limitations of the Study .....	10
1.9 Assumptions of the Study .....	10
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</b> .....	<b>12</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	12
2.2 Theoretical Framework .....	12
2.2.1 Effort-Reward Imbalance Theory .....	12
2.3 Review of Related Literature .....	14
2.3.1 Levels of Occupational Stress among Male and Female Prison Officers .....	14
2.3.2 Risk Factors for Occupational Stress among Male and Female Prison Officers .....	16
2.3.3 Coping Strategies for Managing Occupational Stress.....	19

2.3.4 Strategies that can be Adopted to Reduce Occupational Stress .....	22
2.4 Summary of Literature Review .....	28
2.5 Conceptual Framework for the Study on Occupational Stress among Prison Officers. ....	30
<b>CHAPTER THREE .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>31</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	31
3.2 Research Design .....	31
3.3 Study Variables .....	31
3.4 Site of the Study .....	31
3.5 Target Population .....	32
3.6 Sampling Technique and Sample Size .....	32
3.7 Research Instruments .....	32
3.8 Validity and Reliability .....	33
3.9 Pilot Study .....	33
3.10 Data Collection Procedures .....	34
3.11 Data Analysis and Presentation .....	34
3.12 Data Management and Ethical Considerations .....	35
<b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION.....</b>	<b>36</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	36
4.1.1 Response rate.....	36
4.2 Demographic data.....	36
4.2.1 Gender .....	36
4.2.2 Age .....	37
4.2.3 Level of education .....	37
4.2.4 Marital status .....	38
4.2.5 Years of service .....	39
4.2.6 Rank of the officers .....	39
4.2.7 Living premises .....	40
4.3 Quantitative Data Analysis .....	41
4.3.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis.....	41
4.3.1.1 Levels of occupational stress .....	41
4.3.1.3 Coping Strategies for Occupational Stress.....	44
4.3.1.4 Possible Strategies that can be Adopted to Reduce Occupational Stress.....	46

4.3.2 Inferential Statistical Analysis .....	48
4.3.2.1 To Determine if there are Significant Differences between Male and Female Prison Officers with regard to Levels of Occupational Stress.....	48
4.3.2.2 To Determine if there are Significant Differences between Male and Female Prison Officers with regard to Risk factors for Occupational Stress.....	49
4.3.2.3 To Determine if there are Significant Differences between Male and Female Prison Officers with regard to Coping Strategies for Occupational Stress .....	50
4.4 Summary of Findings.....	50
<b>CHAPTER FIVE .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>53</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	53
5.2 Discussion .....	53
5.2.1 Objective One: To establish levels of occupational stress among male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya. ....	53
5.2.2 Objective Two: To establish risk factors for occupational stress among male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya .....	54
5.2.3 Objective three: To identify coping strategies for occupational stress among male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya.....	55
5.2.4 Objective four: To identify possible strategies that can be adopted to reduce occupational stress and improve coping with stress among male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya. ....	57
5.2.5 Objective five: To determine if there are significant differences between male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya with regard to; levels of occupational stress, risk factors for occupational stress and coping strategies for occupational stress.....	58
5.3 Conclusion .....	59
5.4 Recommendations.....	60
5.5 Suggestions for further research.....	61
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>67</b>
A1 Work plan.....	67
A 2 - Research Budget .....	68
A 3 – QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRISON OFFICERS .....	69
<b>A-4: Questionnaire for Key Informants .....</b>	<b>76</b>

Authorization letter

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 .....	36
Figure 4. 2 Age .....	37
Figure 4.3 Level of education .....	38
Figure 4. 4 Marital status.....	38
Figure 4. 5 Years of service .....	39
Figure 4. 6 Rank of the officers.....	40
Figure 4. 7 Living premises .....	40
Figure 4.8 Level of occupational sheets .....	42

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Levels of occupational stress .....	43
Table 4. 2 Risk factors for occupational stress.....	43
Table 4.3 Coping strategies for occupational stress .....	45
Table 4. 4 Chi-square results for the first hypothesis.....	46
Table 4. 5 Chi-square results for the levels .....	49
Table 4. 6 Chi-square results for risk factors.....	49
Table 4.7 Pie -square results for coping strategies .....	50

## ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

<b>GK</b>	Government of Kenya
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>KHRC</b>	Kenya Human Rights Commission
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Coping Strategies** The approaches used by the prison officers to manage occupational stress.
- Occupational Stress** Is the stress that results among the prison officers from the work they do.
- Risk Factors** Are the factors that predispose one to the likelihood of becoming stressed

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Stress is being encountered today at ever-increasing rates. World Health Organization (WHO) (1995) considered stress to be “the twentieth century disease” prevalent in almost every occupation around the world and one that has become a “global epidemic.” Recently, stress has been termed by the United Nations (2010) as the 21<sup>st</sup> century killer. WHO (2005) confirms that one of the biggest sources of such stress in the current culture is work. WHO thus defines work or occupational stress as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the workers.

Some researchers have done studies concerning the cost of occupational stress in organizations and found that they incur big losses in terms of monetary value. For instance, a study done in America by Greenberg, (2004) reveals that one of the reasons that occupational stress has been receiving so much attention globally is that work stress claims have been on the rise and costing organizations and businesses billions of dollars. These costs of occupational stress have been variously estimated. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2006) estimates that stresses on the job cost organizations over \$250 billion per year globally. These costs include salaries for sick days, cost of hospitalization and outpatient care, and cost related to decreased productivity. ILO adds that in the United States the number of stress claims has trebled in the last 6 years with 15 percent of workers compensation claims being for stress. ILO also emphasises that inefficiencies arising from occupational stress may cost up to 10 per cent of a country’s Gross National Product (GNP).

Due to these stress claims, WHO (2005) is predicting that by the year 2020, stress will be a major cause of workplace ill health in the world if no precaution is taken against the problem.

In many parts of Africa, occupational stress has also been reported. In one study, Ongori and Agolla (2006) from Botswana confirm that human resource practitioners, counselors, professionals and managers in various organizations are concerned about the impact of occupational stress in organizations. In their study they revealed that occupational stress affects employee turnover, productivity and firm performance. Cooper (2004) from south Africa adds that occupational stress contributes to low motivation and morale, decrease in performance, high turnover, sick leave, accidents, low job satisfaction, low quality products and services, poor international communication and conflicts. In addition, Harvey and Brown, (2006) from Ghana argues that the major stressors in the workplace includes changes in technology, downsizing, competition for promotional opportunities, lack of employee empowerment and lack of participation in the decision making.

Closer home in Kenya, studies on occupational stress have confirmed that Kenyan workers also experience high levels of stress. Sagara (2008) and Odul (2007), have evidence from their studies that indicates both operational and organizational sources of stress are prevalent. For instance Sagara says that employees working under the current harsh conditions ( like poor housing and poor remunerations) are likely to be exposed to high levels of stress which may severely impair their ability to cope not only with their duties as officers, but also to cope with their social life and remain psychological healthy individuals.

While occupational stress has been experienced in most occupations, there is evidence that some occupations are more stressful than others. For instance a study by the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (2004), show that prison officers experience higher levels of stress than most other occupational groups. This is because of the difficult

and demanding job they do of reforming and rehabilitating the prisoners. The study ranked the prison officers, the miner and police officers as the most stressed occupations in Britain. A similar study by Walters (2005) from Malaysia indicates that the inadequacy of officers and lack of resources to protect them from harm are some of the factors causing significant stress among prison officers.

In Africa too, cases of occupational stress among prison officers have been reported. For instance Omorotionwman (2005) established that the work environment in the Nigerian penitentiaries are not conducive hence prison staff experience a significant amount of stress in their work, which lead to high job turnover, high rate of sick leave and troubled relationships with inmates, other staff and family members. In addition, Gray and Pond (2000) in South Africa reveals that occupational stress has been prevalent among prison officers and is related to heart disease, hypertension, upper respiratory tract infections, peptic ulcers, reduced immunity, migraines, alcoholism, depression, suicidal tendencies, anxiety, as well as other mental disorders. In addition these effects translate into decreased performance and motivation, increased health care costs, disability payments, sick leave, absenteeism and turnover within the prisons.

The problem of occupational stress in prisons has also been reported in Kenya. A report on Kenya's prisons (The Nairobi Chronicle or Madoka Report, (2008) acknowledges the presence of occupational stress among male and female prison officers. In addition, research done by Kamugi (2005) and Kiminda (2006) supports that prison officers experience higher levels of occupational stress than most other occupational groups which have contributed to low work output within the Kenya prisons.

From the above discussion, it is clear that occupational stress among prison officers is a global, regional, and local problem. Considering the impact of stress on productivity at the workplace, it is important to understand the factors that may predispose prison officers to such occupational stress as well as the coping mechanisms they adopt to deal with such stress. Such an understanding would aid in helping to make correction that would assist in reducing workers vulnerability to occupational stress as well as enhancing the coping.

A review of literature indicates that there are several risk factors that predispose prison officers to occupational stress. These include personal stressors, job related stressors and organizational stressors. Personal risk factors are such as; personal problems (eg death of a loved one), gender differences, and negative relationship with spouse, children or other family members. Job related risk factors include, role conflict, role overload and under load, role ambiguity, and environmental and career stress. Organizational stressors include misunderstandings among the officers, conflicts and interpersonal disagreements, lack of communication and consultation, physical danger (i.e., violence from dangerous inmates with criminal history) and poor working conditions. In Kenya, Mbalo (2007) reports that one of the risk factors causing occupational stress in prisons is personal stressors while Njihia (2005) identifies poor housing, lack of promotion and poor remuneration as the risk factors. However ways of coping with the stressors are still limited according to these researchers.

Studies suggest that there are differences between males and females in the experience of occupational stress as well as the risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress. Such studies include one done in Nigeria by Okoza and Aluende (2010). Similarly a study by Herex (2005) indicated that female officers experience higher levels of stress than male officers. These findings are however not conclusive. This is because other studies such as those by Gloria (2004) and Owen (2012) suggest that there are no differences between males and females in the experiencing of occupational stress as well as risk factors for occupational

stress. Therefore there is need for further studies to explore this area deeper in order to add clarity to the knowledge in the area.

In addition, most studies of occupational stress among prison officers in Kenya have not given much consideration for exploration of differences among male and female prison officers on the risk for experiencing of stress and coping with occupational stress. It is this situation that calls for studies exploring differences in experience of occupational stress risk factors and coping among male and female prison officers in Kenya.

Research on coping among male and female prison officers is very limited. This problem is also identified by Biggam (2004) who confirms that coping among prison officers has received limited consideration both in terms of the extent of such research, as well as the types of coping explored. In addition, Hedge (2002) reveals that coping strategies are limited among the male and female prison officers. Therefore analyses of coping measures used by occupations with which prison officers might be compared to be considered in turn. Further, (Beehr, 2007) argues that even though there has been a rapidly increasing growth in occupational stress research, knowledge about coping with stressful work among male and female prison officers has lagged by comparison. Coping studies that focus on prison work stress have been described as being in their infancy, limited somewhat in their scope, and few in number (Cox, 2000). He also points out that coping is an important part of the overall stress process. However, it is perhaps the least well understood despite many years of research.

There are differences in coping strategies between male and female prison officers. In the United States, Patterson (2003) in his research investigated on coping strategies and the results indicated that seeking social support buffered the relationship between work events and distress. In particular, the female officers in the study reported fewer stressful work and

life events, and lower levels of distress. The author postulated that the reason for this might be that marriage, as a form of support, and exposure to fewer work life events result in enhanced psychological well-being for female officers. In addition, female officers reported higher usage of the social support strategies of coping. It was proposed the reason why male officers did not score highly on this coping style may reflect the social environment of the police, (which is compared to prison officers), which can actively mitigate against the expression of emotion. Female officers reported higher usage of the social support strategies of coping. This gender difference with regard to social support has also been identified by Biggam (2007).

There are various strategies and techniques for coping with stress among male and female prison officers. This has been supported by Smith, (2002) in America who claims that the technique of active coping involves the development of internal capacities for male and female prison officers coping with stress. This technique has three domains including individual oriented techniques, environmental oriented techniques and organizational oriented control methods. The individual technique has three coping mechanisms including restructuring/self-control, positive self- instruction and thought stopping techniques as well as cognitive anticipation approach (Thompson, 2007). Environmental oriented strategies are designed to provide environmental changes intended to facilitate the ability of the individual to handle stress. They include, diversion of one's mind, attention, and energy to a thing that contains little or no stress, taking holidays, games and recreation, listening to music, taking walks and relaxation.

There are suggestions on stress coping strategies among the male and female prison officers. These officers are exposed to stressful conditions and do not necessarily suffer the same outcomes (Pearlin, 2003). He says there is an approach that the officers can take in

attempting to reduce stress. This approach focuses on constructive coping strategies which are aimed at gaining family and social support from family and friends in order to reduce stress. In addition the male and female prison officers can be engaged into a counselling program within the organization where most of their problems can be attended in order to cope with the stress.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Documented research on sources of stress conducted both locally and internationally has uncovered many potential stressors at the prison workplace. In the local scene, the bulk of studies on occupational stress have focused on stress correlates such as motivation, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Kiminda, 2006) and (Kamau, 2007). For instance a study done by Njihia (2005) concentrated on factors contributing to occupational stress among the prison officers, endorsing that work overload, job security, career development, working conditions among others, are the major stressors. Similarly, Mbalo (2007) adds that one of the risk factors causing occupational stress among prison officers is personal stressors which include: death of a loved one, serious illness of oneself or a loved one, divorce, having negative emotions, negative relationship among male and female prison officers, spouse, children or other family members. Nevertheless, there are limited studies that have established the levels of occupational stress, risk factors and the nature of coping especially with emphasis on differences between male and female prison officers in Kenya. This gap drives the researcher to undertake the current study. The central task of this study was to find out the occupational stress levels, identify the risk factors and the coping strategies for occupational stress with emphasis on differences between male and female prison officers in Nairobi County in Kenya.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the levels, risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress among prison officers in Nairobi County in Kenya, with an emphasis on comparison between males and females. This provided data that informed interventions to reduce and enhance coping with occupational stress among prison officers.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

In this study the objectives were:-

1. To establish levels of occupational stress among male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya.
2. To establish risk factors for occupational stress among male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya.
3. To identify coping strategies for occupational stress among male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya.
4. To determine if there are significant differences between male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya with regard to:
  - a) levels of occupational stress.
  - b) risk factors for occupational stress.
  - c) coping strategies for occupational stress.
5. To identify possible strategies that can be adopted to reduce occupational stress and improve coping with stress among male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya.

## 1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the levels of occupational stress among male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County, Kenya?
2. Which are the risk factors for occupational stress among the male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County, Kenya?
3. What are the coping strategies for occupational stress among male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County, Kenya?
4. Are there significant differences between male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County, Kenya with regard to:
  - a) levels of occupational stress?
  - b) risk factors for occupational stress?
  - c) coping strategies for occupational stress?
5. What are the possible strategies that can be adopted to reduce occupational stress and improve coping with stress among male and female officers in prisons within Nairobi County, Kenya?

## 1.6 Hypotheses

1. There are significant differences between male and female prison officers with regard to levels of occupational stress.
2. There are significant differences between male and female prison officers with regard to risk factors for occupational stress.
3. There are significant differences between male and female prison officers with regard to coping strategies for occupational stress.

### **1.7 Justification and Significance of the Study**

The study was justified in that it sought to provide comparative data on males and females with regard to levels of occupational stress, risk factors as well as coping strategies for occupational stress among prison officers which is generally scarce in Kenya. The study provided data on levels, risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress specific for male and female prison officers in Nairobi County prisons. The data may be useful to the policy makers and implementers in the prisons department by providing evidence that may inform the development and implementation of policies focusing on the unique needs of both males and females with regard to prevention and reduction for stress.

### **1.8 Scope and limitations of the Study**

The study covered the male and female prison officers in 3 prisons (Langata, Industrial area, and Kamiti) out of the total 6 prisons in Nairobi County. The report by the researcher was suspected to be biased due to the limitation of getting the correct information especially because the respondents may have been dishonest or misunderstood the questions. To minimize this problem the researcher explained to the respondents any question which may have been unclear and in addition made them aware of the importance of being honest on what they wrote on the questionnaire.

### **1.9 Assumptions of the Study**

The study made several assumptions. It was assumed that male and female prison officers had some level of occupational stress and that they were aware of the risk factors contributing to the stress. It was also assumed that they had information on how they coped with such stress and were willing to give that information with honesty. In addition, it was assumed that

the sampled male and female prison officers used in the study were obtained through stratified random sampling and were a representation of prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents review of related literature on the study on risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress among male and female prison officers in Nairobi County. The chapter begins by giving a theoretical framework of the study followed by review of related studies. It ends with a summary of the literature review and a conceptual framework.

#### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This attempts to highlight one of the theoretical perspectives that the study has adopted. These theories influence organizational policies in improving and understanding the behaviour, wellbeing, motivation, and output of its workers. One theory has been discussed and forms the basis of the study as below.

##### **2.2.1 Effort-Reward Imbalance Theory**

The Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) model originated from Siegrist (1998). It is a more recently evolved model. This model is a transactional theory of stress in the sense that it focuses more on the interaction between environmental constraints or threats and individual coping resources. The model is important to the prisons set-up, as for instance good working environment is very important to the male and female prison officers. In case the environment is not conducive, it may affect the male and female prison officers differently and can result to different levels of occupational stress which in return causes ill health to the prison officers and low productivity to the organization. Thus the model is based upon the idea that work-related benefits depend on a reciprocal relationship between efforts and rewards at work (Van Vegchel, 2002). This means that if the rewards are low, also the efforts

will be low. Hence the prison officers will not put effort in their work if the rewards are low and this will contribute to poor work performance leading to low productivity to the organization.

Rewards are distributed to employees by three transmitter systems: money (i.e. adequate salary), esteem (e.g. respect and support) and security/career opportunities (e.g. promotion prospects, job security and status consistency) (de Jonge, 2000). This model can form a base to the prison department where the male and female prison officers' efforts will be rewarded highly in terms of adequate salary, promotions, have job security to realise job motivation, high self-esteem and in the long run high productivity of the organization. In essence, high efforts/low reward conditions may cause a state of emotional distress, for instance to the male and female prison officers who may be affected differently due to gender characteristics.

Importantly, the ERI further identifies extrinsic effort and intrinsic efforts (Dollard, 2003). It assumes that a combination of both sources provides a more accurate estimate of experienced stress than a restriction to one of these sources (de Jonge, 2000). Intrinsic efforts refer to a personal characteristic of coping, a pattern of excessive striving in combination with a strong desire of being approved and esteemed (Dollard, 2003). This pattern is referred to as over-commitment. However this may be reflected differently among the male and female prison officers as based on how the risk factors and coping strategies affect them. In the current study, it was important to motivate the male and female prison officers through high reward for high effort made in order to reduce the distress.

## **2.3 Review of Related Literature**

This section consists of four subsections starting with levels of occupational stress among male and female prison officers, Risk factors for occupational stress among male and female prison officers, coping strategies for managing occupational stress and ends with strategies that can be adopted to reduce occupational stress.

### **2.3.1 Levels of Occupational Stress among Male and Female Prison Officers**

Occupational stress is the harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker which can result to poor health and even injury (Niosh, 1999). While stress that relates to the work environment in prisons has received increasing attention globally, limited studies on male and female differences on occupational stress levels are available. Some of the studies on what has been done on gender related studies include that in America by Southern Criminal Association (2004) which found that female and male prison officers' experience similar levels of stress as measured both objectively and subjectively. In addition, a more recent study by Owen (2012), reports that levels of stress do not vary along gender, education level, institution and race. Nevertheless, other studies disagree and argue that gender is significantly related to stress for example, those done by Triplett and Zupan (2006). In addition, similar studies done in Nigeria by Okoza and Aluende (2010) reveals that gender has a significant effect on stress as experienced by prison officers. In Kenya such studies on gender differences on risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress among male and female prison officers are limited as the researchers have concentrated on factors that contribute to occupational stress. Moreover, there is no clarity in the global data as concerns the differences among male and female prison officers' experience of occupational stress. Therefore there is need for further studies to explore this area deeper in order to add clarity to

the knowledge in the area. It is this situation that calls for studies exploring differences in experience of occupational stress risk factors and coping among male and female prison officers in Kenya.

Women tend to report similar levels of job satisfaction as men in most areas of work, and higher levels of stress than their male counterparts in many areas of human services work performed by both genders. In some studies in UK (e.g Morash and Haar 1995) the levels of stress reported for both genders are similar, but the origins for men and women may differ. For instance, women may be “stressed” by the same factors that affect men in the workplace and by additional circumstances that are generally particular to their status as females (e.g., sexual and gender harassment). For example, Morash and Haar (1995) found in their study of the police work environment that “an additional 5 percent of the variance in women’s stress can be explained by workplace problems due to subgroup status, notably bias and language harassment.”

It has been established that there has been an increase in the scholarly pursuit in the way in which men and women experience differently the role of the prison officer, as well as the stresses associated with the role, as women increasingly have entered into the traditionally male domain of law enforcement (Wells, 2006). This is due to the fact that the prison environment is an exceedingly masculinized organisation wherein the traits of the dominant group (like physical strength and a willingness to use force are emphasised and valued and where the essential skills for the job are assumed to be masculine in nature. This has been explained by the work of Carlson (2003) in UK who claims that male officers resent the presence of women co-workers in men’s prisons because women are perceived as possessing limited physical strength in responding to emergencies and may not be reliable backups in dangerous inmate encounters. These variances may result to different levels of occupational

stress among the male and female prison officers and also different coping strategies. These facts helped to compare the outcome of the current research with what is happening in other regions as the study tried to find out the risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress among male and female prison officers in Nairobi County in Kenya.

### **2.3.2 Risk Factors for Occupational Stress among Male and Female Prison Officers**

Occupational stress among male and female prison officers has been of increasing concern to both the employer and government for over 20 years as confirmed by Midgley, (2006) from New Zealand. He argues that more recently, work stress has assumed greater importance for the employer as the risk of being held legally liable for damages to stressed male and female prison officers has increased, and the pace of organisational change has accelerated.

The correctional work world presents comparable challenges for women and men. It requires the same job skills, intelligence, perseverance, patience, professionalism and degree of humour from both male and female prison officers. Not surprisingly, the existing social science literature indicates that when the perceptions of men and women regarding of their jobs in corrections are compared, many more similarities than differences are apparent. These parallel perceptions of the correctional work world appear to hold for all. These statements raise some queries in the mind of the researcher whether this also applies to the Kenyan prisons. The current research will help to answer some of the questions.

Under equal employment law, women and minorities cannot be denied correctional positions if they meet qualification requirements, particularly with respect to female employees. This has created a major issue in which the male inmate's rights to privacy have confronted the female applicant's right to employment (Stinchcomb, 2000). In contrast men believe that prison is a place where women are especially unsafe, because men are conditioned to protect

women, they may feel that in addition to working with the inmates they have an added responsibility to protect the women officers. These feelings can make both men and women to be stressed and uncomfortable with each other. Women may feel patronized as if they are merely being tolerated rather than appreciated and affirmed for their work (Stinchcomb, 2000). The researcher will try to find out the situation in the Kenyan prisons as the officers may have a different opinion.

Numerous organizational risk factors have been implicated in causing job stress and burnout among male and female prison officers. In this connection some researchers have identified some categories of major risk factors that cause stress among prison occupation (Cooper, 1988 & Hedge, 1992). Some of these risk factors include:

Shift-work; Prison warders must contend with a schedule that makes it difficult to socialize with civilian friends and can place enormous stress on family life. According to psychologist Lynn (1996), a former Boston police officer, "People are by nature diurnal animals who are not meant to work midnights. You miss social functions; you end up irritable all the time"

Another source of work stress is the role in the organization. Stress among the male and female prison officers come from role ambiguity and role conflict. Role ambiguity arises when people do not have a clear picture about their work objectives, their co-workers' expectation of them, and the scope and responsibilities of their jobs. There can be a situation where a prison officer may not have clear instructions on how to deal with problem and relays on his or her judgement, at the risk of being subject to discipline because he or she did not follow procedures. Role conflict emerges when one has to choose between competing demands or expectations. In this study, it is expected to find out if there are role conflicts.

Workload can also be a potential stressor where male and female prison officers have too many tasks to perform. This may be prevalent among middle and top rank officers who may have more to do than time in which to do it. For instance, Rogers (2010) confirms that an increasing number of prison officers in UK are suffering from psychiatric and stress related illnesses as a result of the difficult and demanding job they do. This has made the prison service lose loyal and committed staff while the lives of these officers and their families are often irreparably damaged. Work under-load is where there isn't enough work to do, which can also be a source of stress for male and female prison officers. It may also refer to situations where an officer may be engaged in trivial respective boring jobs, which offer little mental stimulation (Nurse, 2000).

In a study done among Irish male and female prison officers Empirical evidence suggested that administrative practices, such as the level of organisational support for employees, were the most robust predictors of the prison officer workplace stress. Auerbach (2003) conducted a study among 413 juvenile correctional officers (JCO) in Ireland and 84 of their supervisors. On the job-specific SSOSQ (Specific Sources of Occupational Stress Questionnaire) lack of support by the agency, long hours, and inadequate tools for the job eclipsed physical danger as stressors. Auerbach (2003) concluded that the model male and female officer is committed to doing a good job and that many of his or her primary stressors are aspects of the job situation that are viewed as interfering with being able to do so. The outcomes of the aforementioned studies suggest that effective stress management programs for prison officers need to focus on ways to give them more autonomy, control, flexibility, and decision-making authority in their everyday work.

A host of issues can also act as potential stress factors throughout the male and female prison officers working life. Lack of job security; retirement, frustration of having reached one's career ceiling, or not having been promoted and poor pay can result in extreme stress. Matteson (1980) suggested that individuals suffering from "career stress" often show high dissatisfaction, job mobility, burnout, poor work performance, and less effective interpersonal relationships.

In addition, Johnson (1978) adds that events in everyday life take a toll on officers' health and may cause a lot of stress. Such hustles include marital conflicts, economic challenge, parenting challenges, divorce, death, sickness, retrenchment, fear of job loss, lack of promotion among others. This can be witnessed even with male and female prison warders like every other human being as they are vulnerable and prone to stress due to psychological pressure.

Job mismatch can also cause stress among male and female prison officers Mulligan (1998). Studies have shown that if one does not have what it takes for a job, he gets quite stressed. Mental health and job satisfaction is vital if one has to face one's personal and professional challenges adequately. It would be of interest in this study to find out how well fitted the male and female prison officers are in their jobs. This is all the more important since the officers are involved in the delicate task of rehabilitating prisoners and must have what it takes to be in the job.

### **2.3.3 Coping Strategies for Managing Occupational Stress**

Research on coping among male and female prison officers is very limited. This problem is also identified by Triplett (1996) who confirms that coping among prison officers has

received limited consideration both in terms of the extent of such research, as well as the types of coping explored. Therefore analyses of coping measures used by occupations with which prison officers might be compared to will be considered in turn. In addition, (Beehr, 1995) argues that even though there has been a rapidly increasing growth in occupational stress research, knowledge about coping with stressful work among male and female prison officers has lagged by comparison. Coping studies done in UK that focus on prison work stress have been described as being in their infancy (Kuhlmann, 1990), limited somewhat in their scope (George, 1991) and few in number (Latack, 1986). Cox, (2000) also points out that coping is an important part of the overall stress process. However, it is perhaps the least well understood despite many years of research.

There are various strategies and techniques for coping with stress among male and female prison officers. This has been supported by Smith, (2002) in South Africa who claims that the technique of active coping involves the development of internal capacities for male and female prison officers coping with stress. This technique has three domains including individual oriented techniques, environmental oriented techniques and organizational oriented control methods. The individual technique has three coping mechanisms including restructuring/self-control, positive self- instruction and thought stopping techniques as well as cognitive anticipation approach (Watson, Deary, and Thompson, 2007) in New York. Environmental oriented strategies are designed to provide environmental changes intended to facilitate the ability of the individual to handle stress. They include, diversion of one's mind, attention, and energy to a thing that contains little or no stress, taking holidays, games and recreation, listening to music, taking walks and relaxation.

According to Smith (2002), organizational oriented strategies focus on many areas or variables within the business including favouring delegation of power and responsibility that build in leisure and relaxation into the system and management practices that reduce administrative bottlenecks. The time management technique involves the art of learning to prioritize tasks and demands to focus attention on the important and argent things first by sticking to the habit of having a task diary or task list for the day or week and ranking them as must do, should do and could do (Blanton, 1989).

In support of the above strategies, Farber, (1983) states that the most effective way of coping with stress among male and female prison officers is to quit doing what one is doing and do something else, whether that means changing jobs or changing careers. In addition, the officers should reduce and manage stress at work by identifying the factors involved, then take steps to deal with the problem either by changing the work environment or changing the way they deal with the stressor.

In addition, Farber (1983) further suggests that we employ complex combination of direct action and relaxing methods to cope with stress. Direct actions are behaviours such as fight or flight, which are designed to alter a troubled relationship with one's social or physical environment. Relaxing methods refer to thought or actions whose goal is to relieve the emotional impact of stress and not actually to alter the threatening or damaging event. Goldstein (1980) adds that the way each of us appraises life events becomes part of the way we cope with problems and determine how much stress we experience. This information helps the researcher in the current study to be aware of the different ways the male and female prison officers appraises their life events in the Kenyan prisons.

Other authorities give the management for stress as, apportioning responsibilities to people as they can safely handle, positive reinforcement, teaching employees to recognize and accept change, avoiding too much administration, teaching employees to recognize their own stress signs, treating people as people and not slaves or tools, controlling competitiveness, and putting purpose into people's lives, criticizing but with care and thought, remember that failure is not a dirty word, and master the art of reprimand, do not fuss, encourage hands off management and use good planning to diffuse deadlines (Willis,2005). If such coping strategies as mentioned can be followed in prisons among the male and female prison officers in Kenya, a great reduction on stress levels can be observed.

In order to reduce their Karoshi risk the Japanese managers have come up with their preferred solutions of coping with stress to resolve the problem areas which including work fewer hours, change the company culture, work flexible hours, reduce or avoid commuting, work from home, change jobs or relocate, have more staff, earn more, retire and reduce stress, breath in deeply, make friends, exercise regularly, don't stay up late, do what you love and eat plenty of fruits (Willis, 2005).

#### **2.3.4 Strategies that can be Adopted to Reduce Occupational Stress**

It may not be possible for the male and female prison officers to completely remove stressors from their occupation. There are however certain preventative measures the officers can take to reduce the exposure and vulnerability to stress. One way is for the male and female prison officers to identify the specific stressors and types of contexts which constitute the greatest contributor to stress in order to deal with them. It is also imperative to determine one's own physical and psychological strengths and weaknesses so as to identify one's own specific

vulnerabilities (Greenwood, 1997). Review of literature suggests that some useful strategies that can be adopted include:

### ***Avoiding stressors***

By examining in detail the daily pattern of living in relation to the categories of physiological, psychological and environmental causes of stress, the male and female prison officers may easily identify the specific stressors which can lead to stress. Thus they may take appropriate action to reduce exposure to such stressors, for example one may refrain from ingesting foods and substances one is allergic to. They may also seek to avoid other individuals who consistently exhibit agonistic behaviour (Cooper, 1988).

### ***Reducing vulnerability***

If the male and female prison officers' self-analysis reveals specific vulnerabilities, he or she may take actions to abate them. They can also exercise more control over improvement in that area, for example if one finds that he/she performs better with extended hours of sleep he/she can change his sleeping habits. Likewise the officers can control their posture, physical exercise regime and certain other biological rhythms (Greenwood, 1997). A minor change in any of these factors could convert what might have been a stressful event into a malignant or beneficial one. On a broader basis, with an improved understanding of the nature and causes of the stress response, the male and female prison officers can adopt a different attitude towards stress in general. The prison officers choice of response in such an event may be based on his/her assessment of the long-range benefits of the emotional reaction (Cooper, 1988). The researcher will find out in the current study the strategies that can be adopted in the prisons in Nairobi County among the male and female officers with the assistance of the mentioned ones.

### *Diversion techniques*

According to Greenwood (1997), when there is too much stress on one part of the body, diversion is necessary. Diversion is any activity, which changes the focus of attention from the stress-producing stimuli. In some instances male and female prison officers may seek to divert known stressors away from themselves, for example facing an agonistic attack from someone, the prison officer may divert the attack to a common but indefinite enemy, to a situation or to an inanimate object, or he/she may seek to divert the agonistic behaviour itself by humour or agreement or other specific gestures (Greenwood, 1997). Conversely one may divert oneself away from a threatening stressor, one may simply ignore the agonistic behaviour of another, and one may shield oneself from stressful situations or the perception of stressful events. Diverting stressful context is also vital. There is hardly any concatenation of human events which does not contain some elements of humour. With due exercise of tact and discretion the male and female prison officers may make positive efforts to influence others' perceptions and thereby actually change the context itself not merely the individual's own view of it. One simple effective way of accomplishing this end is to convert an otherwise serious situation into a game situation

In addition there are a number of other factors identified that may serve to mitigate stress and improve on coping among male and female prison officers, who have been considered as same profession as police officers, such as: social support, locus of control and personality hardiness. Together with personal resources, people have access to resources in their social environment. Specifically, male and female prison officers' relationships with others are a potential source of support during times of stress. The effect of social support on adjustment to work stress has received a considerable amount of empirical attention (Stranks, 2005). The concept of social support refers to social networks (i.e., family, friends, and co-workers) that

can provide the police officer with resources; both tangible (i.e., emergency financial assistance) and intangible (i.e., feelings of belonging or self-worth) in order to reduce and also cope with stress (Stranks, 2005).

Social support has been identified as a resource that helps male and female police officers reduce and also cope with job stress through supportive relationships with others (Cooper, 2000). Cooper asserts that social support simultaneously can function as a problem focused and an emotion-focused coping and stress reduction strategy. For instance, talking to a co-worker about a stressful event can function as a problem-focused coping strategy when the individual receives tangible information that aids to resolve the event. Talking to a police officer about a stressful event, functions as an emotion-focused coping strategy when the emotional support obtained is used to regulate emotional responses arising from the event (Patterson, 2003).

Like prison officers, police officers encounter experiences of physical danger, including the threat of serious injury or death to themselves, and exposure to others who have been seriously injured, killed, or otherwise traumatised (Cooper, 2000). Patterson (2003) in his research investigated the effects of coping (problem-focused and emotion-focused) and seeking emotional support on distress among police officers. A convenience sample of police officers was recruited from a mid-sized police department located in a north-eastern city in the United States. A total of 345 surveys were distributed to police officers during the roll call period, and of these surveys, 233 police officers returned completed surveys, resulting in a response rate of 67%. The results indicated that seeking social support buffered the relationship between work events and distress. In particular, the female officers in the study reported fewer stressful work and life events, and lower levels of distress. The author

postulated that the reason for this might be that marriage, as a form of support, and exposure to fewer work life events result in enhanced psychological well-being for female officers.

This gender difference with regard to social support has also been identified by (Greenwood, 1997). In their study among 699 Scottish police officers, six distinct styles of coping were assessed; the use of social support, task strategies, logic, home/work relationships, time management and involvement. Female officers reported higher usage of the social support strategies of coping. It was proposed the reason why male officers did not score highly on this coping style may reflect the social environment of the police, which can actively mitigate against the expression of emotion. In the current study the gender difference in the level of occupational stress may confirm if there is a relationship between the social environment and the expression of emotion among the male and female prison officers.

In addition, Stranks (2005) argue that individuals with an internal locus of control (a belief in themselves having control over their own 'destiny') are less likely to doubt the efficacy of their attempts to confront a problem than individuals with external control beliefs (beliefs that success or failure are attributable to outside forces). This opinion is exemplified by previously mentioned quantitative research conducted by Botha and Pienaar (2006) among South African prison officers. The Work Locus of Control Scale was used to measure participants' locus of control within the work environment. Results indicated that the officer with a strong internal locus of control may experience less negative affect, and less strain from occupational stress. This corresponds to Owen's (2006) finding among prison supervisors, which revealed that maintaining an internal locus of control is a significant factor in reducing occupational stress. This is also very important in guiding the current study as the researcher will find out the situation among the prison officers and then compare the findings

to conclude if it is true that the locus of control have an effect on the level of occupational stress.

However, there have been efforts put in place by organizations for managing occupational stress among their workers. For example, according to Willis (2005), Japanese managers have come up with solutions to manage occupational stress including work fewer hours, change the company culture, work flexible hours, reduce or avoid commuting, work from home, change jobs or relocate, have more staff, earn more, retire and reduce stress, breath in deeply, make friends, exercise regularly, don't stay up late, do what you love, and eat plenty of fruits. Such information will guide the researcher to find out the efforts put in place in the Nairobi County prisons for managing occupational stress among the prison officers.

In addition managers and supervisors of some of the largest corporations in America, like IBM, Price Waterhouse, Xerox, Mobil, Deloitte and Touche among others, have realized how a company saves costs when occupational stress of its workers is well managed ( Downey, 2004). For instance, Downey, (2004) observes that these corporations offer child- care programs to alleviate stress associated with leaving children during work. In addition some of these companies open their own elementary schools for workers' children while others offer flextime where the workers are allowed to schedule themselves more consistent with their lifestyles and priorities. All this is aimed at managing the workers stress as they are not troubled by the children's education and also their lifestyle is taken care of.

Kenya as one of the developing countries has not been left out in the effort of managing stress among the workers who are mostly affected like the prison department. In line with vision 2030, the Kenya Government is committed to improving the prisons' environment as evidenced by the prison reforms which started in 2003 and still on-going. The goal of the reforms is to reduce occupational stress among the prison officers as they improve on training

and working conditions, reduction of the number of suspects in the remand homes, opening up of prisons and correctional institutions to the outsiders to facilitate public scrutiny and a reorientation of the services to correctional activities among others. In the long run these reforms are believed to aid in stress management among the prison staff. In addition some Kenyan researchers have done some studies on prisons' occupational stress management where they have focused on stress correlates such as motivation, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, behaviour modification and burnout. These studies have been done by; Kiminda (2006) and Kamau (2007) among others. However the current study will seek to find out the level of occupational stress and the risk factors and if there are differences in the risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress among the male and female prison officers in Kenya.

#### **2.4 Summary of Literature Review**

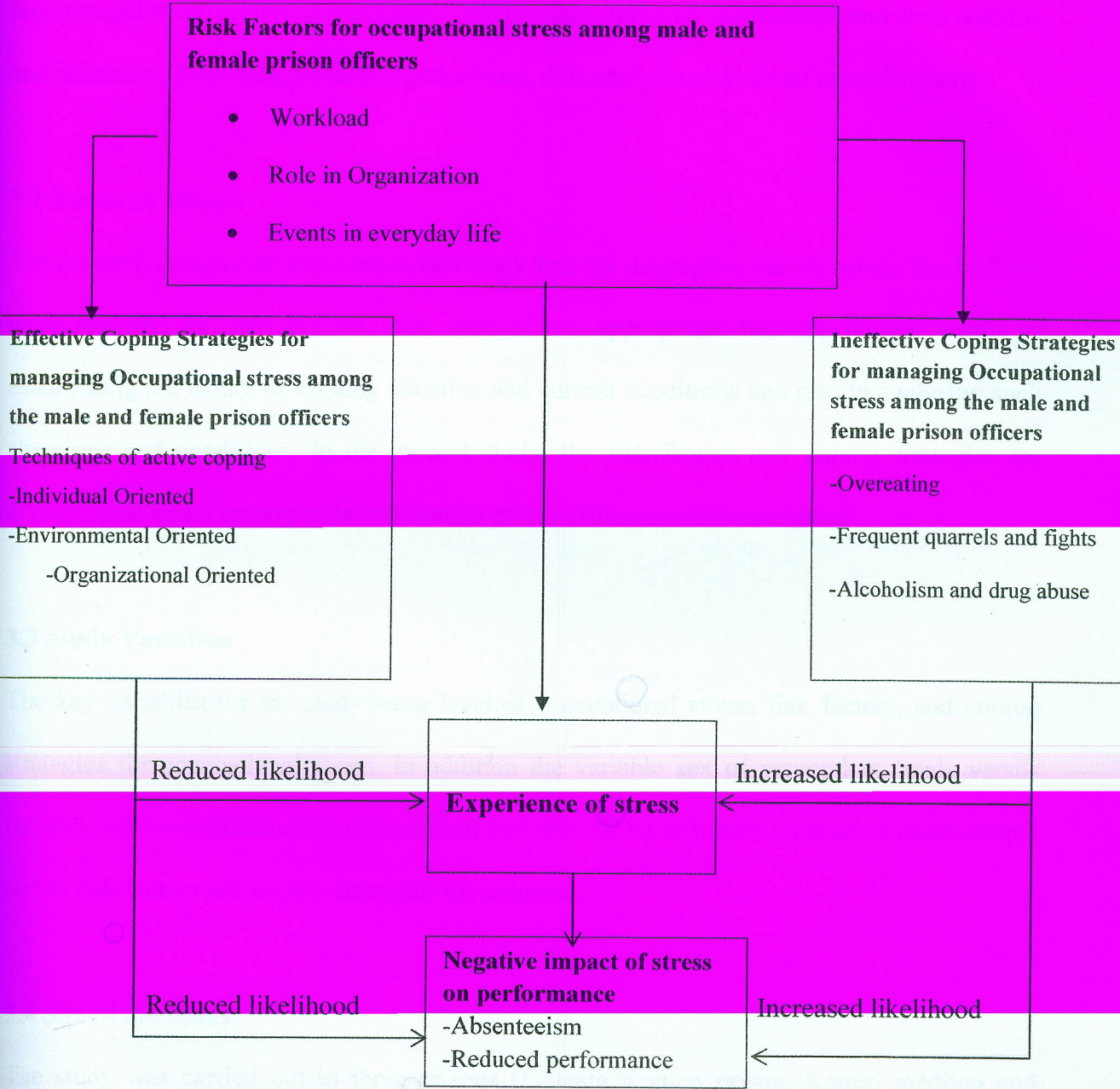
Evidence from published literature on occupational stress has been explored in this review. Theoretical model of stress, the Effort-Reward Imbalance model, have been examined to investigate how they are conducive to understanding occupational stress thereby contributing to its successful management. In the current study, this theory form a basis in understanding if there are differences in coping strategies and risk factors for occupational stress and their levels among the male and female prison officers in Nairobi County. Review of related literature consisted of four subsections starting with levels of occupational stress among male and female prison officers, Risk factors for occupational stress among male and female prison officers, coping strategies for managing occupational stress and ended with strategies that could be adopted to reduce occupational stress.

Concerning the levels of occupational stress among male and Female Prison officers, it has been established that stress that relates to the work environment in prisons has received increasing attention globally. However there are limited studies on the levels of occupational stress and also male and female differences on the risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress. Hence the gap to be filled in the current study is to investigate the levels, risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress among prison officers with emphasis on differences between male and female prison officers in Nairobi County in Kenya. With regard to risk factors of occupational stress among male and female prison officers, the literature has identified several predictors such as: role in the organization; work load; lack of job security, job mismatch, events in everyday life (i.e., marital conflicts, death, sickness, fear of job loss, lack of promotion), conflict and gender issues in an environment that is traditionally seen as male dominated. Analysis of coping strategies used by police officers, with which prison officers may be compared to, have been considered. Such coping measures include the technique of active coping which involves the development of internal capacities for male and female prison officers coping with stress. This technique has three domains including individual oriented techniques, environmental oriented techniques and organizational oriented control methods. There are however certain preventative measures the male and female prison officers can take to reduce the exposure and vulnerability to stress. Some of the useful strategies that can be adopted by the male and female prison officers include: Avoiding stressors, reducing vulnerabilities, diversion techniques, social support, locus of control and personality hardiness. The current study seeks to find out the level of occupational stress and whether there are differences on the risk factors and coping strategies among the male and female prison officers in Nairobi County as there are limited studies that address this.

**2.5 Conceptual Framework for the Study on Occupational Stress among Prison Officers.**

The following is a conceptual framework that sought to illustrate the relationship between variables in the study on risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress among prison officers in Nairobi County in Kenya.

**Figure 2.2 Conceptual Framework**



*Author: Gatebi 2013*

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the methodology for the study on risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress among male and female prison officers in Nairobi County, Kenya. Consequently it contains a brief description of the research design, location of the study, target population, sampling techniques, sample size, research instruments and their validity and reliability, pilot data, collection procedures, data analysis and ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The research design that was used in this study was the descriptive survey where the findings were reported as they existed. The design was appropriate because it was useful in establishing the nature of existing situation and current conditions and also in analysing such situations and conditions. In the current study, the risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress among male and female prison officers were investigated.

#### **3.3 Study Variables**

The key variables for the study were level of occupational stress, risk factors, and coping strategies for occupational stress. In addition the variable sex of respondent (male versus female) was investigated as an independent variable and its influence on level of occupational stress, risk factors and coping strategies investigated.

#### **3.4 Site of the Study**

The study was carried out in three prisons (Langata women prison, Kamiti medium and Industrial area prison) in Nairobi County in Kenya. These prisons were purposively chosen as the study site since they are big and are served by many male and female prison officers.

Langata women prison is in Langata sub-county, Industrial area prison in Makandara sub-county while Kamiti is in Kasarani sub-county, all located within Nairobi County.

### **3.5 Target Population**

Population refers to the larger group from which the sample is taken. There are six prisons in Nairobi County where five are for men prisoners and only one for women prisoners and these constituted the study population. Hence the target population for the study comprised all the 1224 male and female prison officers in the 6 prisons in Nairobi County.

### **3.6 Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

The sample was drawn from a sampling frame of lists of the prison officers from the various sections such as: welfare, administration, farm, etc. Based on the gender of inmates, the size of prison and the number of male and female prison officers serving there, purposive sampling was used as part of multistage sampling procedure to select three prisons with the required characteristics out of the total six prisons in Nairobi County. This sampling technique allowed the researcher to use cases that had the required information with respect to the objectives of the study. Stratified random sampling was also used in order to ensure representative of both males and females in the target population. A total sample of 114 male and female prison officers was obtained. In addition, purposive sampling was also used to select the officers in charge of administration of the three prisons or their deputies to be the key informants due to their position, role and experience.

### **3.7 Research Instruments**

The main research instrument used in this study was the structured and semi-structured questionnaire in order to cover the various aspects of the research questions. The

questionnaire had five sections on: biographic and contextual data, level of occupational stress, risk factors for occupational stress, coping strategies on management of occupational stress as well as suggestions on possible strategies that can be adopted to reduce occupational stress among male and female prison officers. The research tool was borrowed from other researchers namely, Njihia, (2005), Kiminda (2006) and Kamau (2007) who had used the instrument in their studies on populations and samples in Kenya that were similar to the subjects of the current study.

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability**

The reliability and validity of the instruments that were used in this study was based on the fact that they had been used on populations and samples similar to the subjects of the studies by Njihia, (2005), Kiminda, (2006) and Kamau, (2007) and were found to be valid and reliable. The instruments had been used with male and female prison officers in a number of prisons in Kenya. In addition a test-retest method was used to estimate the degree to which the same results could be attained with a repeated measure of accuracy of the same concept in order to determine the reliability of the instrument. Furthermore the researcher requested a panel of three judges competent in the area being investigated to assess the relevance of the content used in the questionnaire developed. They examined the questionnaire and their recommendations were incorporated in the final questionnaire.

### **3.9 Pilot Study**

To verify the validity and reliability of the research instruments, a pilot study was carried out to identify some of the inevitable problems of converting the authors' questionnaire design into reality. Research has shown that respondents may interpret questions in different ways to the investigator (Cormack, 2000). The questionnaire was piloted on 10% of the targeted

sample drawn from the three prisons (i.e. 11 prison officers in total). The pilot sample was excluded from the final sample. The inconsistencies in response were noted and the necessary improvements made before the actual study. Further, the pilot study established; whether the questionnaire covered all the intended dimensions of the study, the ambiguity of the questionnaires and the adequacy of the space allowed for open questions. With the help of this pilot study, the questionnaire was adjusted accordingly in order for the respondent to give the information as required.

### **3.10 Data Collection Procedures**

A preliminary visit to the prisons targeted was made in order to ascertain the logistics of administering the research instruments and to inform the prison authorities of the intended period of the study. The instruments were distributed to the respondents by the researcher and assistants. Respondents were given time to complete answering the questionnaires individually. All the questionnaires were then gathered after the given response time was over.

### **3.11 Data Analysis and Presentation**

After collecting the data it was edited, coded, and keyed into a computer for analysis. The statistical package for social science (SPSS) computer package was employed to facilitate the analysis of the data. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data. These included means, Standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages. Inferential statistics, specifically the chi-square was used to test for differences between male and female prison officers with regard to the study variables. Frequencies, percentages and graphs were used to present the data.

### **3.12 Data Management and Ethical Considerations**

An application to conduct the study in the prisons was made through the commissioner of prisons at the prison headquarters. This was done three months prior to the time of data collection. The author also took a certificate of Good Conduct to accompany the application. In addition the author sought authority from Kenyatta University and also obtained a permit from National Council for Science and Technology (NCST) for conducting the research. Another critical ethical consideration in this study was informed consent. Before the questionnaires were administered, full details of the research themes and purpose were given to respondents who could then volunteer to participate. Anonymity and the privacy of the respondent were ensured to maintain confidentiality. Thus there was no provision for identification of respondents by name or any other form on the questionnaires. In addition, ethical standards were upheld during data analysis by ensuring that the data collected was not manipulated to alter the research findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis and the presentation of the findings of this study. The chapter has findings on the demographic information of the respondents, the levels of occupational stress, risk factors for occupational stress, coping strategies used by the officers, the possible strategies which can be adopted to reduce occupational stress, and the tested hypotheses of males versus females as regards risk factors for occupational stress, coping strategies and the levels of occupational stress.

##### 4.1.1 Response rate

This study administered 114 questionnaires to the three prisons in Nairobi County. The total numbers of questionnaires returned were 102. This represents a response rate of 89.47%. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) a response rate of 50% is adequate for an analysis, 60% is good and 70% is excellent. Thus this response rate was considered highly useful and reliable for analysis.

#### 4.2 Demographic data

##### 4.2.1 Gender

The study collected data on the gender of the respondents who took part in this study. The findings are shown in figure 4.1

**Figure 4.1 Gender**

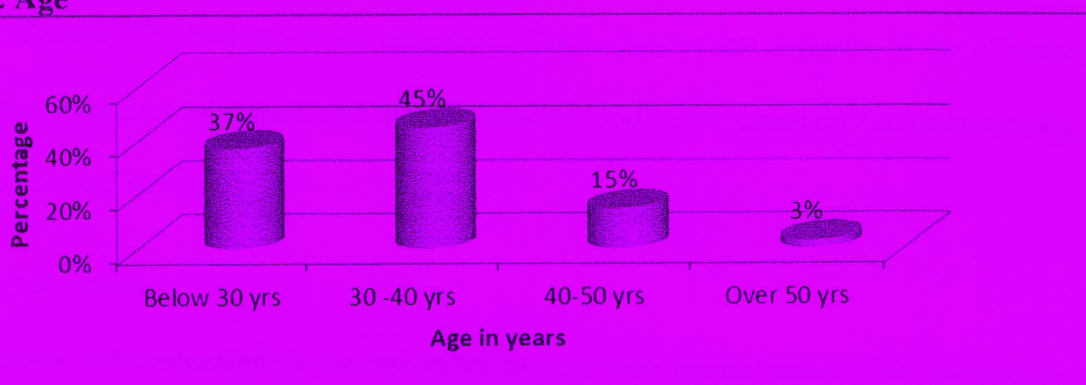


The findings shown in figure 4.1 indicates that majority of the respondents who took part in this study were females (51%) while males accounted for (49%). This shows that the study collected more views from females than from males.

#### 4.2.2 Age

The age of a person can be used to determine whether the person is productive or not. It also tells experience of a person in doing some things in life. This study collected data on the ages of the respondents as shown in figure 4.2.

Figure 4. 2 Age



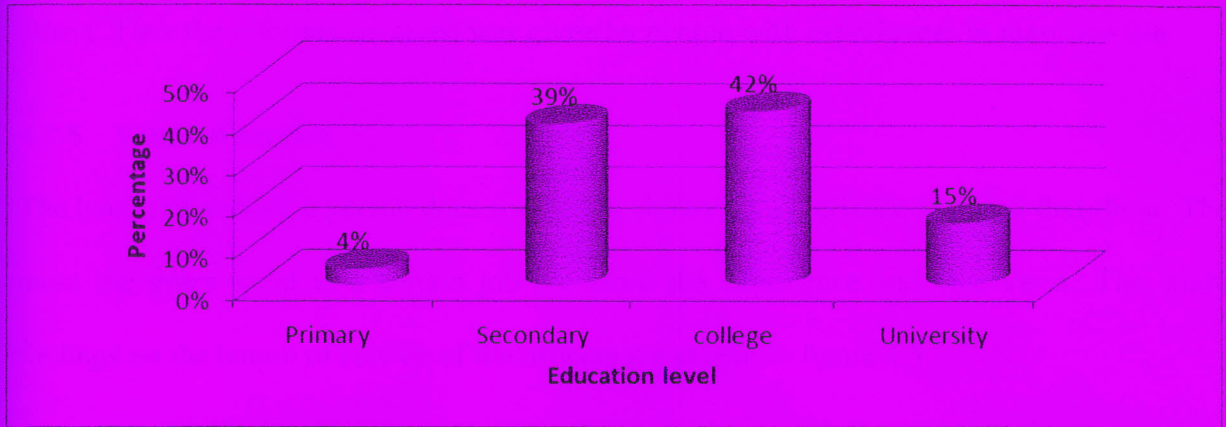
The information presented in figure 4.2 shows that most of the officers (45%) are between the age brackets 30-40 years followed by those aged below 30 years (37%). This shows that most of the officers who took part in this study were mature young but mature enough to give relevant information on the state of their occupational stress.

#### 4.2.3 Level of education

The study collected data from the respondents on their levels of education. The results on their levels of education are shown in figure 4.3.

The data summarised in figure 4.4 shows that most of the prison officers who took part in this study were married (81%). A small portion of 11% was single while others had complicated

**Figure 4.3 Level of education**

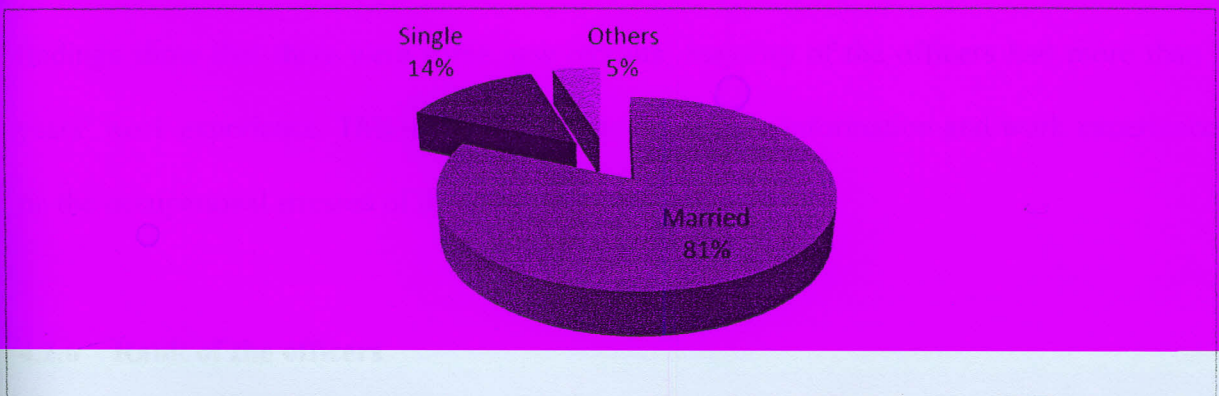


The findings presented in figure 4.3 shows that most of the prison officers had college education (42%) and approximately 39% had completed their secondary education. A small proportion of about 15% had university education. This indicates that majority of the officers had more than secondary education and therefore understood better issues on occupation risks involved and coping strategies.

#### **4.2.4 Marital status**

The respondents were requested by the researcher to state their marital status. The findings on their marital status are shown in figure 4.4.

**Figure 4. 4 Marital status**



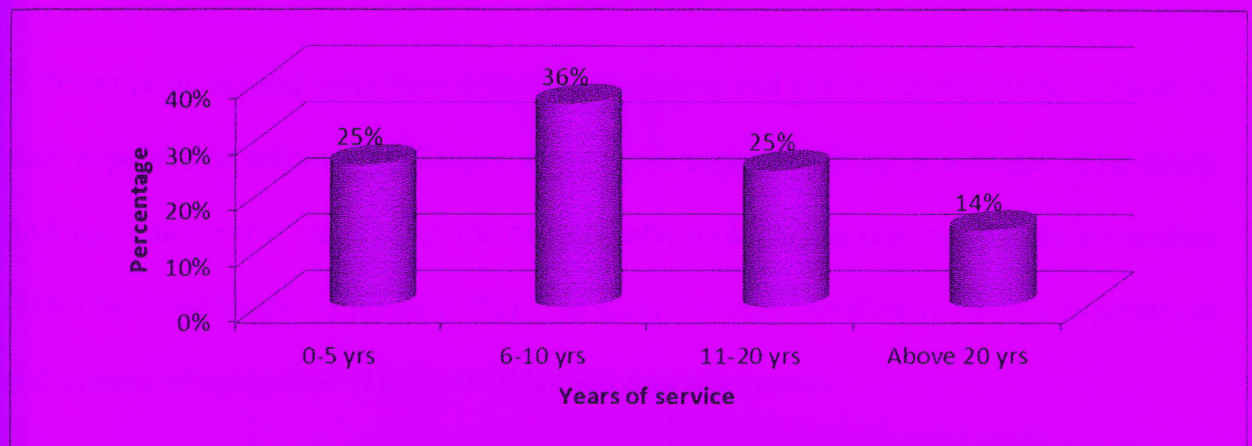
The data summarised in figure 4.4 shows that most of the prison officers who took part in this study were married (81%). A small portion of 14% was single while others had complicated

issues in their marriages such as desertion, separation, divorce, death of partner among others. Thus the information given was given by people with experiences in marriage life.

#### 4.2.5 Years of service

The length of service a person does something shows his experience in doing that thing. The more the years spent in a certain job the more the experience and vice versa. The study findings on the length of service of the officers are shown in figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 Years of service

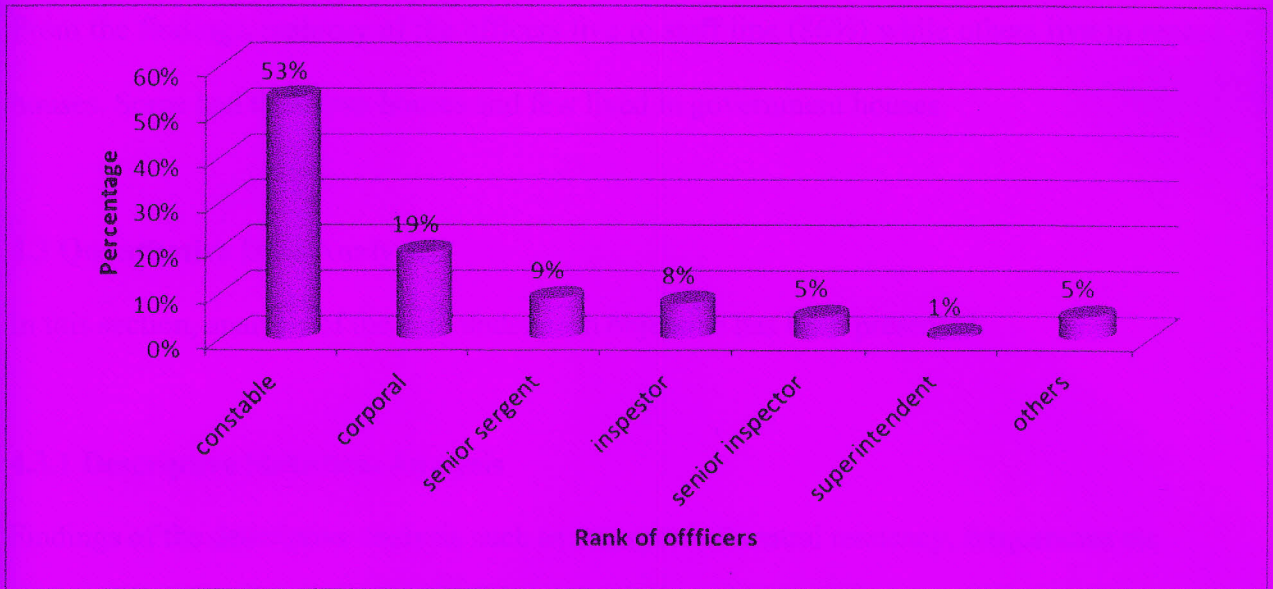


The information summarised in figure 4.5 shows that about 36% of the prison officers have worked for duration between 6-10 years, 25% have worked for 11-20 years and another proportion of 25% have also worked for a period of less than 5 years. Although the study findings show that there were some new recruits, majority of the officers had more than 5 years' work experience. This indicates that they had more information and work experiences on the occupational stresses of their job.

#### 4.2.6 Rank of the officers

The study collected information on the rank of the officers who took part in this study. The findings on the ranking of the officers are shown in figure 4.6.

Figure 4. 6 Rank of the officers

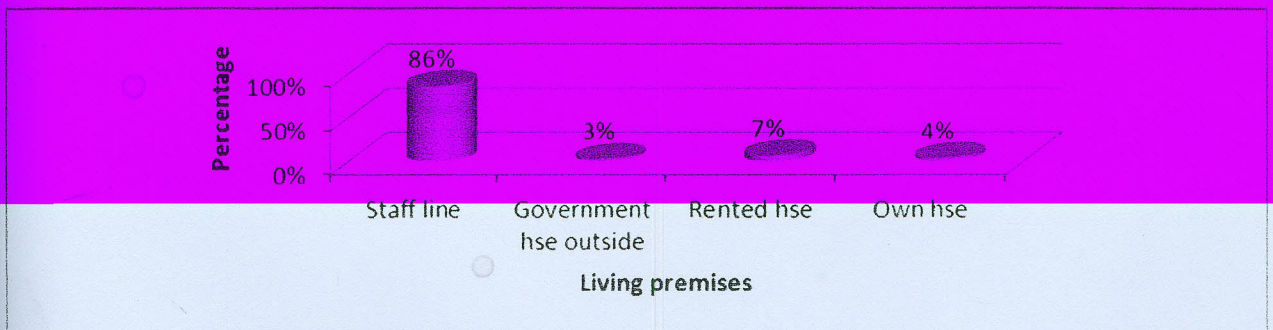


Different positions and ranks have different experiences and challenges associated to them. A staff experiences different challenges from those experienced by a manager. The study findings indicate that majority of the officers who took part in this study were constables (53%) followed by the corporals (19%). The study findings therefore reflect the experiences and stresses of occupation of the constables and prison corporals.

#### 4.2.7 Living premises

The study collected data on the places where the officers lived. The results of the study are shown in figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7 Living premises



The information contained in figure 4.7 indicates the living premises of the prison officers. From the findings, majority of the officers live in staff line (86%) while others live in rented houses. Some had their own houses and few lived in government houses.

### **4.3 Quantitative Data Analysis**

In this section, analysis of the data under each objective has been presented.

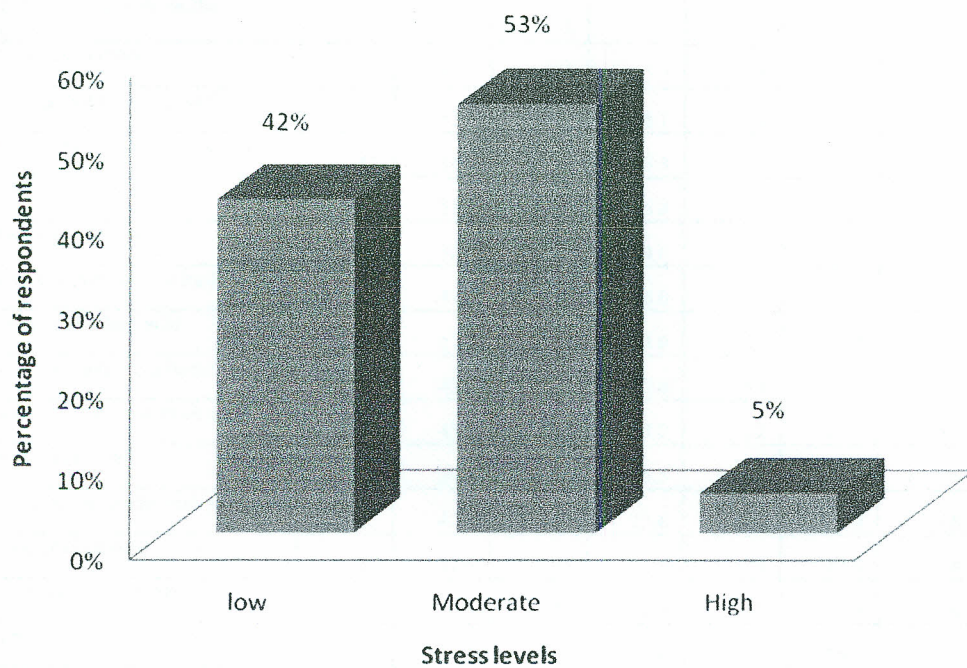
#### **4.3.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis**

Findings of the descriptive analysis such as measures of central tendency, frequencies etc have been presented in this section.

##### **4.3.1.1 Levels of occupational stress**

The study sought to establish the levels of occupational stress among male and female prison officers. The data was captured using the four- point likert scale and was analyzed using the sum of the scores for all 20 items for each individual. The individual scores of stress levels ranged between 20 and 80 with 20 being the lowest and 80 the highest. The score of each individual was then categorized either as high stress (61-80), moderate (41-60) or low stress (20-40). The results of the data collected are shown in figure 4.8.

**Figure 4.8 Levels of occupational stress**



The findings presented in figure 4.8 indicate that out of the 101 respondents in the study, those who displayed moderate stress levels were 54 (53%) and high stress levels were 5 (5%) respondents. These findings show that majority of the respondents (58%) were stressed in the work place due to occupational stressors.

The study wanted to establish the risk factors for occupational stress among the male and female prison officers. The data was collected using a four-point likert scale and was analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The results are shown in table 4.1

**Table 4.1 Risk factors for occupational stress**

Risk factor description		High Stress		Moderate Stress		Slight Stress		No stress		No. of respondents
		No	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1	Sharing house with another person	64	66.0	6	6.2	15	15.5	12	12.4	97
2	Housing condition	61	62.2	15	15.3	13	13.3	9	9.2	98
3	Risking being injured on the job	51	53.1	27	28.1	11	11.5	7	7.3	96
4	Availability of job promotions	51	56.0	18	19.8	15	16.5	7	7.7	91
5	Working condition	50	51.5	26	26.8	16	16.5	5	5.2	97
6	Working under pressure	50	56.2	13	14.6	17	19.1	9	10.1	89
7	Working overtime for long hours	47	49.0	25	26.0	13	13.5	11	11.5	96
8	Amount of salary paid	46	47.4	32	33.0	12	12.4	7	7.2	97
9	Working away from home	43	43.9	22	22.4	19	19.4	14	14.3	98
10	Availability of in-service training	42	45.2	16	17.2	22	23.7	13	14.0	93
11	Heavy workload	39	39.8	25	25.5	28	28.6	6	6.1	98
12	Negative comments from public	37	42.0	12	13.6	21	23.9	18	20.5	88
13	Work environment	37	41.6	24	27.0	20	22.5	8	9.0	89
14	Leave days you go every year	34	37.4	24	26.4	15	16.5	18	19.8	91
15	Conditions of facilities at work	31	37.8	22	26.8	22	26.8	7	8.5	82
16	Enough time spent with the family	30	33.0	26	28.6	17	18.7	18	19.8	91
17	Relationship with administration	27	29.3	25	27.2	23	25.0	17	18.5	92
18	Escorting prisoners everywhere	25	27.5	20	22.0	24	26.4	22	24.2	91
19	Feeling tired	25	28.4	26	29.5	29	33.0	8	9.1	88
20	Feeling lonely/isolated	24	26.4	22	24.2	19	20.9	26	28.6	91
21	Personal problem(family)	21	22.8	22	23.9	30	32.6	19	20.7	92
22	Time to socialize with friends	18	20.7	20	23.0	27	31.0	22	25.3	87
23	Relationship with colleagues	15	15.8	15	15.8	32	33.7	33	34.7	95
24	Shift of work	15	16.9	23	25.8	28	31.5	23	25.8	89

According to the findings shown in table 4.1, sharing of houses was highly reported by the prison officers (66%) as the major risk factor causing high occupational stress closely followed by housing conditions (62.2%). Other risk factors reported by more than 50% of the prison officers as causing high stress among them include, working under pressure (56%), availability of job promotions (56%), risking being injured on the job (53.1%) and working conditions (51.5%). The study also show that there are risk factors reported by nearly 50% of

the officers equally causing high stress and include, working overtime for long hours (49%), amount of salary paid (47.4%) and availability of in-service training (45.2%).

Additional data on risk factors for occupational stress among the prison officers was also collected from the key informants who were moreover the superiors. The findings are shown in table 4.2.

**Table 4.2 Risk factors for occupational stress as indicated by Key informants**

	<b>Frequency of Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Workload	1	20
Poor working conditions	3	60
Lack of refresher courses	1	20
Total	5	100

The findings in table 4.2 show that poor working conditions were highly reported by majority of the key informants (60%) as the main cause of occupational stress. Similarly, the same was also observed by over half of the prison officers (51.5%) as a cause of high occupational stress as indicated in the previous table 4.1. The key informants gave some examples of poor working conditions factors such as, financial constraints, poor housing and poor leadership in some areas.

**4.3.1.3 Coping Strategies for Occupational Stress**

The study sought to establish the coping strategies adopted by the prison officers to deal with occupational stress. The data was collected using a four-point likert scale and analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The findings are shown in table 4.3.

**Table 4.3 Coping strategies for occupational stress**

	Coping Strategy	Frequently used		Fairly often		Sometimes		Never		No. of respondents
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1	Manage my time well	43	48.3	21	23.6	24	27	1	1.1	89
2	Prayers	36	40	25	27.8	13	14.4	16	17.8	90
3	Talk to understanding friends/family members	33	35.5	24	25.8	27	29	9	9.7	93
4	Keep home and work separate	29	32.2	19	21.1	22	24.4	20	22.2	90
5	Set priorities and deal with problems accordingly	28	31.1	25	27.8	33	36.7	4	4.4	90
6	Confronting problems/person	27	31.8	20	23.5	27	31.8	11	12.9	85
7	Remain calm under pressure	26	28.6	17	18.7	37	40.7	11	12.1	91
8	Enjoy life outside work	25	27.8	17	18.9	30	33.3	18	20	90
9	Exercise a lot	25	28.1	16	18	30	33.7	18	20.2	89
10	Seek a lot of social support	24	27	26	29.2	29	32.6	10	11.2	89
11	Don't let things get to me	19	21.3	16	18	36	40.4	18	20.2	89
12	Take a lot of alcohol	16	18.2	11	12.5	16	18.2	45	51.1	88
13	Seek counseling services	13	16	8	9.9	31	38.3	29	35.8	81

According to the data findings shown in table 4.3, the greatest number of prison officers mostly use positive coping strategies to manage their occupational stress such as managing their time well (71.9%), followed by prayers (67.8%), talk to understanding friends/family members (61.3%), setting priorities and deal with problems accordingly (58.9%) and social support (56.2%). It is surprising that very few prison officers (25.9%) seek counseling services when stressed even though it's a positive coping strategy. However, as much as the positive coping strategies are used by majority of the officers, the study findings indicate that there is a large number of prison officers (30.7%) who take a lot of alcohol as a negative coping strategy. In addition, data findings from the open ended questions collected from the prison officers show that negative coping strategies are highly embraced. For instance, (12.6%) are in drug use, (7.8%) stay away from work when stressed while others (20.4%) are in perseverance of the stress. Similar information on negative coping strategies was gathered from the 5 key informants who were also their supervisors as indicated in table 4.4.

**Table 4.4 Coping strategies for occupational stress as specified by Key informants**

	Frequency	%
Drug use and peddling	2	40
Absenteeism	2	40
Counseling	1	20
Total	5	100

The data findings in table 4.4 indicates that (40%) of the key informants established that prison officers use drugs as well as peddle them to inmates , another 40% of the informants reported that the officers are usually absent from work when stressed and only 20% seek counselling services offered by the welfare department which is discouraging. This information complements the one given by the prison officers above on use of alcohol as a negative coping strategy.

#### **4.3.1.4 Possible Strategies that can be Adopted to Reduce Occupational Stress**

The findings of the study indicate that 86% of the officers felt that occupational stress could be reduced using certain strategies such as frequent counselling, motivation at work places, establishing good relationship with the administrators, sharing problems with workmates, improving the living facilities in their staff lines, availing medical care, equal treatment for all officers regardless of their ranks, provision of leave pass when necessary, improvement of salaries, engaging in games and providing recreational facilities.

Among the strategies suggested, most of the officers (89.9%) cited that both male and female prison officers can adopt the same way these strategies to deal with occupational stress.

However, about 10.1% felt that the strategies could not be adopted the same way by both

male and female officers. This was because workload of the females and that of males are different, as male officers were mostly assigned masculine jobs unlike female officers.

According to the study findings, majority of the officers (83.9%) felt that causes of occupational stress can be alleviated through several measures which include: improving working conditions, increasing the number of houses, avoiding pressure to juniors, providing counselling services, and time management. In addition, the officers cited that some measures could be used to help them deal with occupational stress such as provision of recreational facilities, engaging the officers in sports, holding workshops for the officers and improving the officers' salaries.

Majority of the officers in the study (61.2%) confirmed that the prison department has put in place some measures of assisting the officers experiencing psychological problems at the workplace. These are mostly counselling services through the welfare department, giving leaves to the officers and holding motivational seminars and workshops with the officers. However, 38.8% cited that there were no measures taken by the department to help officers deal with stress and that officers were left on their own to sort their problems solely.

According to the findings, the officers claimed that their job satisfaction would increase if some changes were introduced such as having training, increasing the strength of the staff, introducing qualified counsellors, officers' issues to be taken with confidentiality and the researchers to give feedback to them. The key informants in the study similarly suggested that occupational stress among the prison officers can be alleviated through leadership trainings being done to the officers, increase the salaries of the officers and enhance financial management skills, increase the number of houses and improve their conditions, improve counselling services and improve the premises where counselling is done as well as improving the working conditions of the prisons officers. The informants further expressed

fear due to the fact that occupational stress contributes to a decline in work performance. According to the findings, occupational stress leads to unwarranted absenteeism, lack of

### 4.3.2 Inferential Statistical Analysis

The study sought to establish whether there are significant differences between male and female prison officers on the levels of occupational stress, the risk factors at work place and the coping strategies adopted by the prison officers to deal with occupational stress. This was achieved by testing the study hypothesis using chi-square as shown. The chi-square was used to determine whether there were statistical significance differences between males and females on the three factors. A  $p =$  value below 0.05 shows a significant statistical difference while  $p$  values which are greater than 0.05 indicates insignificance differences.

#### 4.3.2.1 To Determine if there are Significant Differences between Male and Female

##### Prison Officers with regard to Levels of Occupational Stress.

$H_0$ : There are no significant differences between male and female prison officers with regard to levels of occupational stress.

A Chi-square was done to test this hypothesis

**Table 4.5** Chi-square results for the Levels

	Value	df	Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	56.529(a)	58	.530
Likelihood Ratio	77.090	58	.048
Linear-by-Linear Association	.052	1	.820
N of Valid Cases	99		

The hypothesis of the study was tested using Pearson chi-square as shown in table 4.5 From the findings the chi-square values on level of occupational stress was ( $\chi^2 = 56.52$ ,  $p=0.53$ ). This shows that there was no significant statistical difference between the males and the females on the level of occupational stress they experienced at work place. Thus the study accepts the null hypothesis that there are no significant statistical differences on the level of occupational stress experienced by male and female prison officers. This means that the male and female prison officers experience the same levels of occupational stress.

#### 4.3.2.2 To Determine if there are Significant Differences between Male and Female Prison Officers with regard to Risk factors for Occupational Stress

$H_0$ : There are no significant differences between male and female prison officers with regard to risk factors for occupational stress. A chi-square was done to test this hypothesis.

**Table 4.6 Chi-square results for risk factors**

	Value	df	Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	70.330(a)	71	.500
Likelihood Ratio	97.003	71	.022
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.071	1	.150
N of Valid Cases	97		

The findings shown in table 4.6 show the chi-square of the gender and the risk factors. From the findings, the chi-square on risk factors was ( $\chi^2 = 70.33$ ,  $p=0.50$ ). This shows that there was no significant statistical difference between the type of risk factors exposed to the male and female officers. The study therefore accepts the null hypothesis that there was no significant statistical difference between the female and male prison officers with regard to the types of risk factors for occupational stress exposed to them.

### 4.3.2.3 To Determine if there are Significant Differences between Male and Female

#### Prison Officers with regard to Coping Strategies for Occupational Stress

$H_0$ : There are no significant differences between male and female prison officers with regard to coping strategies for occupational stress.

A chi-square was done to test this hypothesis

**Table 4. 7 Chi-square results for coping strategies**

	Value	df	Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	46.298(a)	40	.228
Likelihood Ratio	60.701	40	.019
Linear-by-Linear Association	.031	1	.859
N of Valid Cases	93		

The hypothesis was tested and the results are presented in table 4.7. According to the findings, the chi-square value on coping strategies was  $\chi^2=46.29$ ,  $p=0.22$ . The results indicate that there were no big differences on the coping strategies used by the males and the ones used by the females. Therefore, the study accepts the null hypothesis that there is no significant statistical difference between the coping strategies adopted by the males and those of the female prison officers.

#### 4.4 Summary of Findings.

The study findings depict that prison officers in Kenya experience some psychological stress while working. The findings show that majority of the respondents (58%) were stressed in the work place due to occupational stressors. According to the findings, sharing of houses was highly reported by the prison officers (66%) as the major risk factor causing high occupational stress closely followed by housing conditions (62.2%). Other risk factors

reported by more than 50% of the prison officers as causing high stress among them include, working under pressure (56%), availability of job promotions (56%), risking being injured on the job (53.1%) and working conditions (51.5%).

The study findings also indicate that there is a large number of prison officers (30.7%) who take a lot of alcohol as a negative coping strategy. In addition, data findings from the open ended questions collected from the prison officers show that negative coping strategies are highly embraced. For instance, (12.6%) are in drug use, (7.8%) stay away from work when stressed while others (20.4%) are in perseverance of the stress. The data findings in table 4.4 indicates that (40%) of the key informants established that prison officers use drugs as well as peddle them to inmates , another 40% of the informants reported that the officers are usually absent from work when stressed and only 20% seek counselling services offered by the welfare department which is quite discouraging. This information complements the one given by the prison officers above on use of alcohol as a negative coping strategy.

According to the study findings, majority of the officers (83.9%) felt that causes of occupational stress can be alleviated through several measures which include: improving working conditions, increasing the number of houses, avoiding pressure to juniors, increasing the strength of the staff, providing counselling services and handle officers' issues with confidentiality, and time management. In addition, the officers cited that some measures could be used to help them deal with occupational stress such as provision of recreational facilities, engaging the officers in sports, holding workshops for the officers and improving the officers' salaries.

The key informants in the study similarly suggested that occupational stress among the prison officers can be alleviated through leadership trainings being done to the officers, increase the salaries of the officers and enhance financial management skills, increase the number of houses and improve their conditions, improve counselling services and improve the premises where counselling is done as well as improving the working conditions of the prisons officers.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The study set out to establish the risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress among prison officers in Nairobi County in Kenya. This chapter presents a discussion of the findings which covers the objectives, then conclusions and lastly the recommendations. Further the chapter has a section of the suggested areas for further research.

#### **5.2 Discussion**

The discussion of the findings is centered on the study objectives starting with the first one as follows:

##### **5.2.1 Objective One: To establish levels of occupational stress among male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya.**

The study findings show that prison officers undergo a considerable degree of occupational stress. The study results indicate that majority of the respondents had a stress level between 41 and 80 which was moderate to high stress. Such stress level can affect the prison officers' health as well as the work performance. According to Omorotionwman (2005), such stress levels lead to high job turnover, high rate of sick leave and troubled relationships with inmates, other staff and family members. The productivity of an organization also goes down.

The findings of the current study support the findings of a study done by Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (2004), which found that prison officers experience higher levels of stress than most other occupational groups due to the difficult and demanding job they do of reforming and rehabilitating the prisoners. In addition, the Nairobi Chronicle or Madoka Report, (2008) acknowledges the presence of occupational stress among male and female prison officers and confirms the results of this study. Also the findings support a

research done by Kamugi (2005) and Kiminda (2006) in Kenya which indicates that prison officers' experience higher levels of occupational stress than most other occupational groups and this have contributed to low work output within the Kenya prisons. According to WHO (2005), by the year 2020, stress will be a major cause of workplace ill health in the world if no precaution is taken against the problem. Thus measures need to be taken to curb stress in work places and maintain the productivity of the officers given the crucial role they play in a country's prisons.

### **5.2.2 Objective Two: To establish risk factors for occupational stress among male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya**

The findings show that sharing of houses was highly reported by the prison officers as the major risk factor causing high occupational stress closely followed by housing conditions. Other risk factors reported by more than half of the prison officers as causing high stress among them include, working under pressure, availability of job promotions, risking being injured on the job and working conditions. The study also show that there are risk factors reported by nearly half of the officers as equally causing high stress which include, working overtime for long hours, poor remunerations, and unavailability of in-service training. In addition, result findings from the key informants show that poor working conditions, which they gave examples of financial constraints, poor housing and poor leadership in some areas, were highly reported by majority of them as the main cause of occupational stress. Sharing of houses and also the conditions of these houses appears to affect the officers more since majority of them are married and sharing the same house with two to four families as some indicated may turn to be so stressful.

The findings are in tandem with Sagara (2008) conclusions that employees working under the current harsh conditions such as poor housing and poor remunerations are likely to be exposed to high levels of stress which may severely impair their ability to cope with their duties as officers. The current findings also support a number of other studies done by various researchers such as one done by Walters (2005) from Malaysia who found that the inadequacy of officers and lack of resources to protect them from harm are some of the factors causing significant stress among prison officers. Also a study done by Omorotionwman (2005) in Nigeria established that the work environment in the Nigerian penitentiaries were not conducive which made prison staff to experience a significant amount of stress in their work. Additionally, prison officers encounter experiences of physical danger, including the threat of serious injury or death to themselves, and exposure to others who have been seriously injured, killed, or otherwise traumatized (Cooper, 2000). Further, a study by Njihia (2005) identified poor housing, lack of promotion and poor remuneration as the risk factors in work places like prisons. All these studies have been reinforced by the findings of this study. It is a fact that for any organization to operate efficiently, vital resources must be available. Shortage of these resources greatly affects the operations of the workers and is likely to cause them stress.

### **5.2.3 Objective three: To identify coping strategies for occupational stress among male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya.**

According to the data findings, the greatest number of prison officers mostly use positive coping strategies to manage their occupational stress such as managing their time well, followed by prayers, talking to understanding friends/family members, setting priorities and dealing with problems accordingly, social support, and seeking counseling services. It is so surprising that very few prison officers seek counseling services when stressed. The study

supports a research done by Willis(2005) who indicated that Japanese managers have come up with their preferred solutions of coping with stress to resolve the problem areas which including work fewer hours, change the company culture, work flexible hours, reduce or avoid commuting, work from home, change jobs or relocate, have more staff, earn more, retire and reduce stress, breath in deeply, make friends, exercise regularly, don't stay up late, do what you love and eat plenty of fruits.

However, as much as the positive coping strategies are used by majority of the officers, the study findings indicate that there are a large number of prison officers who take a lot of alcohol as a negative coping strategy. When almost a third of the prison officers take alcohol in order to cope with occupational stress, it means some of them are unlikely to report to work because of hang over, others may become violent and cause harm to themselves, family members or even inmates. This affects the organization's work output as well as the health of the officers. Additional data findings from the open ended questions collected from the prison officers also show that negative coping strategies are highly embraced. For instance drug use, absenteeism from work and perseverance of the stress. Similar information on negative coping strategies was gathered from the 5 key informants who were also their supervisors. The study findings show that most of the key informants indicated that prison officers use drugs as well as peddle them to inmates for financial gains and others are usually absent from work especially when stressed. The current study complements information on coping strategies to the existing limited information as put by Biggam (2004) who confirmed that coping among prison officers has received limited consideration both in terms of the extent of such research, as well as the types of coping explored.

#### **5.2.4 Objective four: To identify possible strategies that can be adopted to reduce occupational stress and improve coping with stress among male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya.**

The study findings indicated that the level of occupational stress facing prison officers can be alleviated through counselling, motivation at work places, establishing good relationship between the juniors and the administrators and sharing problems with workmates. These coping strategies were also suggested by Biggam (2007) who claimed that male and female prison officers can be engaged into a counselling program within the organization where most of their problems can be attended in order to cope with the stress. The study further found that the officers' levels of stress could be contained by improving the living facilities in their staff lines, increasing the number of houses, availing medical care, equal treatment for all officers regardless of their ranks and also avoid pressure to juniors, improved time management, provision of leave pass when necessary, improvement of salaries, holding seminars for revitalizing the officers, engaging in sports and providing recreational facilities.

In line with vision 2030, the Kenya Government is committed to improving the prisons' environment as evidenced by the prison reforms. The goal of the reforms is to reduce occupational stress among the prison officers as they improve on training and working conditions, reduction of the number of suspects in the remand homes and also opening up of prisons and correctional institutions to the outsiders to facilitate public scrutiny and a reorientation of the services to correctional activities among others. There is hope that this will improve the situation in the prisons and hence reduce the stress.

**5.2.5 Objective five: To determine if there are significant differences between male and female prison officers in prisons within Nairobi County in Kenya with regard to; levels of occupational stress, risk factors for occupational stress and coping strategies for occupational stress.**

From the findings all the factors, that is levels of occupational stress, risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress had a p-value greater than 0.05 showing that there were no significant differences between males and females on the factors. This implies that males and female officers experience the same levels of occupational stress, same risk factors and adopt similar coping strategies. These findings are contrary to the findings by Patterson (2003) who argued that there were differences in the coping strategies used by male and female prison officers. Moreover, a study in America by Southern Criminal Association (2004) found that female and male prison officers experience similar levels of stress as measured both objectively and subjectively thus being supported by the findings. The findings also supports the studies done by Gloria (2004) and Owen (2012) which advocated that there are no differences between males and females in the experiencing of occupational stress as well as risk factors for occupational stress.

The theory used in the study was Effort-Reward Imbalance model. This model is a transactional theory of stress in the sense that it focuses more on the interaction between environmental constraints or threats and individual coping resources. The study findings, supports this theory since the more the environmental constraints or threats, the lower the individual coping resources and vice versa. From the findings, it means that environmental constraints of poor housing facilities, sharing of these houses, poor remunerations, poor working conditions, fear of injuries and many more risks makes the prison officers more vulnerable in coping hence making them experience moderate level of stress.

### 5.3 Conclusions

Based on the study findings, conclusions are made as follows:

Prison officers undergo a considerable degree of occupational stress. The study results indicate that majority of the respondents experience high levels of occupational stress.

Sharing of houses was highly reported by the prison officers as the major risk factor causing high occupational stress closely followed by housing conditions, working under pressure, availability of job promotions, risking being injured on the job and working conditions.

As much as the positive coping strategies are used by majority of the officers, the study findings indicate that there are a large number of prison officers who use negative coping strategies that negatively affect their health and also the efficiency of the organization.

Examples of the negative coping strategies they use include, take a lot of alcohol, use of drugs and also peddle to inmates, absenteeism from work and perseverance of the stress.

The level of occupational stress facing prison officers can be alleviated through counselling, motivation at work places, establishing good relationship between the juniors and the administrators and sharing problems with workmates. In addition, levels of stress could be contained by improving the living facilities in their staff lines, increasing the number of houses, availing medical care, equal treatment for all officers regardless of their ranks and also avoid pressure to juniors, improved time management, provision of leave pass when necessary and improvement of salaries.

Male and female officers experience the same levels of occupational stress, same risk factors and adopt similar coping strategies. There are no differences on the level, type of risks factors and the coping strategies they have adopted to deal with occupational stress.

## 5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

The study found that majority of the respondents experience high levels of occupational stress. The commissioner of prisons through the government needs to address the issues indicated by the prison officers as causing high occupational stress to them to reduce the stress.

Sharing of houses, conditions of the houses, working under pressure, availability of job promotions, risk of being injured on the job and working conditions are some of the risk factors that cause high stress among the officers. The commissioner of prisons through the government requires acting upon these factors like building more decent houses, consider the promotions of the officers and improve the working facilities and also the officers' security.

A large number of prison officers use negative coping strategies for occupational stress. These officers need to be helped by the prison authority through counseling and if there are some who are addicted, they can be referred for medical treatment and then more follow up given to the officers. As noted through the study, very few officers go for counseling in the welfare department hence it's also important for the authority in the prisons to find out what could be the problem.

To alleviate the levels of occupational stress among the prison officers, the prison authority requires addressing the issues as stated by the officers such as motivation of the officers, improving counselling facilities as well as working conditions among others.

## 5.5 Suggestions for further research

The study collected data on the prison officers from only three prisons in Nairobi County.

This phenomenon could be different in other prisons which were not considered in the study.

It is recommended that a similar study be done in other prisons and the findings compared with the current findings so as to understand more on the occupational stress of the officers.

The current study dealt on the level, risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress.

Little was done on the relationship between occupational stress and job performance. It is

suggested that a study be done to determine the relationship between occupational stress and

job performance of the prison officers.

The study only covered the prison officers. A research could be conducted to cover other

organizations like police units to compare the results.

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## APPENDICES

### A1 Work plan

Period	Activity
September	2013 Pilot Study
September	2013 Data Collection
October	2013 Project Writing
November	2013 Project Submission

## A 2 - Research Budget

### Item Cost (Ksh)

#### Proposal Development and Data Collection

Printing of 50 pages @ Kshs 30	1,500
Binding 4 copies @ Khs 120	480
Photocopy 4 copies @3Ksh per page	600
Travelling and subsistence (3 weeks)	35,000
Research assistants	15,000
Photocopying 120 copies of questionnaire (6 pages each)	5,000
Contingencies (10%)	5,000
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>62,580</b>

#### Production of final Document

Data Processing	13,000
Printing 90 pages @ Kshs 30	2,700
Binding 6 copies @ Kshs 320	1,920
Contingencies	1,600
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>19,220</b>

<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>81,800</b>
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### A 3 – QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRISON OFFICERS

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Sophia Gatebi a student of counselling psychology in Kenyatta University.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to get your views on some of the factors that affect you in your work as a prison officer. Please read the statement carefully and tick or fill in the gaps with the response that best represents your honest opinions.

The information that you will give will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will not be used for any other purpose other than for this research hence you don't require to give your name. Your opinions will be of great importance towards the success of this research.

Kindly respond to all items.

#### Section A: Personal Data

1. Gender                      Male                       Female
  
2. Age                      Below 30 years
- 30-40 years
- 40-50 years
- Over 50 years
  
3. Level of education
- Certificate of primary education.....
- Secondary education
- College
- University
- Others (specify).....

4. Marital status: Married [ ]  
Single [ ]  
Other (specify).....

5. How many years have you served since employment?  
1-5 years [ ]  
6- 10 years [ ]  
11-20 years [ ]  
Above 20 years [ ]

- 6 What is your rank?  
Constable [ ]  
Corporal [ ]  
Senior Sergeant [ ]  
Inspector [ ]  
Senior inspector [ ]  
Superintendent [ ]  
Senior Superintendent [ ]  
Others (specify).....

- 7 Where do you live?  
Staff line [ ]  
Government house (outside) [ ]  
Rented house [ ]  
Own house [ ]  
Others (specify).....

## Section B: Levels of Occupational Stress

Using the scale below, please tick the description that best reflect your feelings or state at the workplace.

		Very often	Fairly often	Sometimes	Never
1.	Frequent headache				
2.	Sleep disturbance				
3	Loss of appetite				
4	Absenteeism from job				
5	Diminished productivity				
6	Depression				
7	Muscle ache and pain				
8	Excessive eating/smoking/alcohol				
9	Easily angered				
10.	Chronic illness like high blood pressure				
11	Disinterested with my work				
12	Feeling tired and body weakness				
13	Reduced concentration and memory				
14	Crying easily and frequent anxiety				
15	Stomach pains/ulcers/indigestion				
16	Reduced sex drive				
17	Consistent colds and fungal infections				
18	Inability to make decisions				
19	Frequent sick offs				
20	A lot of complaints				

**Section C: Risk Factors of Occupational Stress**

Below is a list of items that describe different aspects of being a prison officer. Please rate the level of stress that each of the items below generates in you using the following scale. Kindly, tick where appropriate.

High stress	Moderate stress	Slight stress	No stress
4	3	2	1

		4	3	2	1
1.	Heavy workload				
2.	Working overtime/ for long hours				
3.	Amount of Salary paid				
4.	Working conditions				
5	Sharing house with another person				
6	Working away from home				
7.	Risking being injured on the job				
8	Housing conditions				
9	Relationship with colleagues				
11	Shift of work				
12	Time to socialize with friends				
13	Negative comments from public				
14	Relationship with administrators				
15	Feeling lonely/isolated				
16	Escorting prisoners every where				
17	Feeling tired				
18	Enough time spent with family				
19	Leave days you go every year				
20	Availability of in-service training				
21	Availability of job promotions				
22	<i>Working under pressure</i>				
23	Work environment				
24	Condition of facilities at wok				

25. Any other, specify.....  
 .....

## Section D: Coping Strategies for Occupational Stress

This section lists several ways of coping with occupational stress.

Using the scale below, please tick the number that reflects the best coping strategy you use when stressed by events at the workplace.

		Frequently Used(4)	Fairly often(3)	Sometimes ( 2)	Never (1)
1	Manage my time well				
2	Seek a lot of social support				
3	Remain calm under pressure				
4	Talk to understanding friends/family members				
5	Set priorities and deal with problems accordingly				
6	Don't let things get to me				
7	Keep home and work separate				
8	Enjoy life outside work				
9	Exercise a lot		<input type="radio"/>		
10	Take a lot of alcohol				
11	Prayers		<input type="radio"/>		
12	Confronting problems/ person				
13	Seek counseling services				

14 any other, specify

.....  
 .....

**Section E: Possible Strategies that can be Adopted to Reduce Occupational Stress**

1. In your own opinion, do you think there are possible ways that can be used to reduce stress at your workplace? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If yes, list them below.

.....  
.....  
.....

2. Among the strategies you have mentioned above, do you think the male and female officers in this prison can adopt the same way? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If no, state the differences in the adoption strategies among the male and female prison officers.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Open- ended Questionnaire on Coping Strategies**

1. In your own opinion do you think that the causes of occupational stress can be alleviated or reduced?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

If yes, what would you suggest are workable measures that can be used at your work place to reduce

stress?(i).....(ii).....  
.....(iii).....  
...(iv).....

In your own opinion, how do prison officers cope with the problem of work stress?

.....  
.....

What do you think are the workable measures that can be taken towards helping the officer's deal with problems of occupational stress?

i).....(ii).....

(iii).....

(iv).....

Does the prison department have certain ways of assisting officers experiencing psychological problems at the work place? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If yes, state some of the ways:

.....  
.....

If " No " how do the officers with such problems cope with them?

.....  
.....

Indicate any other information you would like to share that would be useful to the researcher.

.....  
.....

Thank you for your response

**A-4: Questionnaire for Key Informants**

Kindly respond by ticking appropriately to support the required information to the best of your knowledge.

1. Gender [ M ] [ F ]

2. Working experience [1-5 yrs] [6-10yrs] [11 and above yrs]

3. Educational level .....

4. Have you attended other courses besides your academic qualifications?

Yes / No

5. In your view do you think male and female prison officers are stressed while performing their work?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

6. In your opinion, who are stressed more, male or female officers?

.....

7. What do you think are the reasons for your response above?

.....  
.....

8. What do you think causes occupational stress among the prison officers in your organization?

i) -----

ii) -----

Thank you for your response

iii) -----

9. Do you think there is an urgent need to address occupational stress among prison officers?

Yes /No

10 How in your opinion do officers cope with the problem of occupational stress in your organization?

-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

11. How does the organization respond to stress cases involving the officers?

.....  
.....  
.....

12. What would you recommend done to alleviate the problem of occupational stress among the prison officers or to assist them cope?

i)-----

ii)-----

iii)-----

Thank you for your response.



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Date:

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12<sup>th</sup> September, 2013

Sophia Wangui Gatebi  
Kenyatta University  
P.O.Box 43844-00100  
Nairobi.

## RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application dated 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2013 for authority to carry out research on "*Risk factors and coping strategies for occupational stress among prison officers in Nairobi County, Kenya,*" I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Nairobi County for a period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2013.

You are advised to report to the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Nairobi County before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf of the research report/thesis to our office.

DR. M. K. RUGUTT, ~~PhD~~, HSC.  
DEPUTY COMMISSION SECRETARY  
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