THE EFFECTS OF COMPASSION FATIGUE, EMOTIONAL DETACHMENT, LOW ACHIEVEMENT, ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, AND POLICE JOB SATISFACTION

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Abstract:
This study examines the effects of age, experience, gender, education, compassion fatigue, emotional detachment, low achievement, and administrative support on police job satisfaction. Moreover, it examines the complex relationships between compassion fatigue, emotional detachment, low achievement, administrative support, and police job satisfaction. The sample comprised 167 police personnel, of whom 33% were male and 67% were female, with an average age of 37 years and 14 years of experience. A special instrument was developed based on a literature review, achieving an acceptable reliability level of Cronbach's alpha of .70. Regressing the effects of age, experience, gender, education, compassion fatigue, emotional detachment, low achievement, and administrative support on police job satisfaction showed that these predictors explained 24% of the variance in police job satisfaction. Table 2 shows a significant effect of all predictors combined on police job satisfaction (F=6.895, α=.000). Table 3 indicates that three variables have a unique contribution to police job satisfaction. These variables are compassion fatigue (t=-2.601, α=.010), administrative support (t=-5.710, α=.010), and gender (t=-1.908, α=.05). Moreover, there is a significant relationship between compassion fatigue, administrative support, and police job satisfaction. Understanding emotional stress, numbness, achievement, administrative support, and job satisfaction is crucial for designing effective workplace interventions to improve employee morale, performance, and retention.
Keywords: Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Detachment, low Achievement, Administrative Support, Police Job Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The police occupation is inherently stressful due to its complex, unpredictable nature and high risks. Experiencing traumatic events, exposure to violence, time uncertainties, and public criticism often puts police officers at an increased risk for substantial psychological problems: emotional stress, job burnout, and diminished work satisfaction (Klebe et al., 2019). The emotional strain, including anxiety, stress, and exhaustion due to chronic exposure to occupational hazards, is mounting (Violanti & Aron, 2015). Unresolved, this stress can manifest through physical and psychological symptoms affecting cognitive performance, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships (Farnsworth et al., 2014). Recent research has indicated that the chronic nature of work-related stress might provoke emotional numbing (i.e., a feeling of being emotionally disconnected and diminished affective responsiveness). Although this can be seen as a coping strategy, it is not conducive to motivation or a sense of accomplishment in the end (Balmer et al., 2019). Job satisfaction is negatively impacted by emotional numbness, which affects work performance, well-being, and job retention (Sacco et al., 2019). However, perceived achievement – the experience of a sense of professional control and success – is associated with greater motivation and job satisfaction (Ali et al., 2020). In addition, organizational and management support greatly influences stress reduction and job satisfaction in police officers (Cheng & Bartram, 2018). A positive organizational climate and support from leadership can help staff

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overcome the negative consequences of stress and emotional detachment, promoting resilience and positive work attitudes (Ma et al., 2018). Nonetheless, despite the increasing research on this matter, the interaction between emotional stress, numbness, achievement, administrative support, and job satisfaction is still not fully addressed, particularly within law enforcement, where there are distinguishable stressors.

Research Problem Although single aspects such as occupational stress, emotional callousness, and job satisfaction have already been studied in this population, the joint contribution of these variables is not yet clear. More specifically, little is known about how emotional stress leads to the experience of emotional numbness, the effects of this numbness on perceived performance and job satisfaction in the workplace, and the potential role of administrative support in moderating or mediating these relationships. Because job satisfaction is essential to police officers' mental health, performance, and retention, examining these dynamics is necessary to develop precise interventions that improve organizational support and officer well-being. This paper aims to explore the following specific issues: How does the combined and unique influence of age, experience, sex, education, compassion fatigue (CF), emotional logic (EL), low accomplishment (LA), and organizational support affect officer job satisfaction? How are compassion fatigue, emotional detachment, lack of achievement, administrative support, and police job satisfaction related to each other? Answering these questions can help us better understand occupational well-being in policing and, based on this knowledge, guide policy reform and support programs aimed at increasing job satisfaction and improving psychological resilience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue, commonly defined as emotional exhaustion and reduced empathy, has been identified as a serious concern among members of the police service who work in emotionally demanding roles such as victim support or crisis intervention (Figley, 1995; Craig & Elpool, 2014). It is considered a symptom of secondary traumatic stress developed from repeated exposure to other people's pain (Bride, 2007). Within law enforcement, compassion fatigue has undermined officers' empathy and decision-making ability, leading them to distance themselves from victims and the community (Ragusa et al., 2019). While compassion fatigue may act as a form of coping, a prolonged state of compassion fatigue has been negatively linked with burnout and low job satisfaction (Adams et al., 2020). The psychological effects of occupational stress have been the subject of much research, and this can negatively impact mental and physical health. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress is defined as the process of appraising demands as exceeding resources, which leads to strain, predominantly emotional and physiological. Spector and Fox (2002) identified sources of work-related stress, such as workload, role ambiguity, and interpersonal conflicts, which result in burnout—a state positively associated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, along with a negative association with personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Meta-analyses by Giga et al. (2014) also found a strong association between occupational stress and reduced job satisfaction, as well as the intention to quit.

Emotional Detachment

Emotional numbness that people experience tends to be a component of burnout or emotional exhaustion, which manifests as feelings of detachment and apathy (Shirom, 2003; Balmer et al., 2019). Horwitz et al. (2017) highlighted that the diminished ability to experience positive or negative emotions can largely act as a psychological defense mechanism, produced over time by chronic stress exposure, allowing workers to temporarily cope with their problematic emotional states, yet interfering in the long term with social life and motivation at work. Emotional numbing reduces empathy and decreases motivation and performance in spread-too-thin situations (Maslach et al., 2001; Balmer et al., 2019). Despite its high prevalence, few studies have investigated whether emotional numbness is only indirectly mediated between the effects of continuing stressors and job outcomes. Emotional disengagement is a form of self-distancing that officers use to cope with job stress and exposure to trauma. Temporary relief notwithstanding, long-term disengagement takes an emotional toll on individuals, negatively affecting social interactions, diminishing job engagement, and cultivating a sense of alienation (Eby et al., 2017). Emotional detachment has been empirically associated with increased burnout and a decreased sense of accomplishment, which impacts job satisfaction (Kahn et al., 2017; Shim et al., 2018).

Achievement

Achievement perspectives are important to several employee motivation theories, notably Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which holds that competence and relatedness are essential for intrinsic motivation. Diminished self-efficacy and feelings of achievement have, in turn, been associated with reduced levels of motivation and job satisfaction (Salanova et al., 2006). Conversely, perceived success is positively associated with work engagement and organizational commitment (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). However, the mediating effect of organizational support in consolidating performance and promoting success under stressful conditions is less explored. Perceptions of being less successful or having inferior professional efficacy are associated with lower motivation and job satisfaction among patrol officers (Kim & Ploeg, 2018). Chronic stress, empathy fatigue, and emotional numbing can undermine officers' self-efficacy, resulting in perceived helplessness and resentment (Tsang

et al., 2018). Such perceptions result in a decrease in intrinsic motivation and an increase in turnover intention, which further drives down job satisfaction overall (Li et al., 2019). Research highlights the need to consider perceptions of accomplishments as critical to sustaining morale and organizational commitment.

Administrative Support

Support from supervisors and the organization is important for attenuating the negative effects of stress. Eisenberger et al. (1986) found positive effects of perceived organizational support (POS) on job satisfaction, loyalty, and performance. Aryee et al. (2002) also found that supportive leadership reduces burnout and enhances well-being. More importantly, Rhoades and Eisenberger's (2002) study found that organizational support buffers employees from stress and diminishes emotional exhaustion. However, few studies have systematically investigated the moderating role of administrative support in emotional numbness and its subsequent consequences on academic achievement or satisfaction. This is a gap worthy of exploration. Organizational and leadership support is critical in counteracting the negative effects of fatigue from caring and emotional exhaustion on officers' distress (Bakker et al., 2020). Fostering resilience and job satisfaction within the context of high stress is essential. Supportive leadership, availability of resources, and access to training can enhance resilience and promote job satisfaction even in a high-stress environment (Santos et al.). In contrast, perceived lack of support increases feelings of helplessness, alienation, and dissatisfaction (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kim & Ploeg, 2018). Although important, many police organizations do not have structured support mechanisms, and further research is warranted to examine effective organizational-level interventions.

Police Job Satisfaction

The level of job satisfaction that police officers experience has specific factors that include stress, emotion, perceived success, and support from their organization. Greater compassion fatigue and emotional detachment are negatively associated with job satisfaction, which is driven by the scope of meaning and engagement (Cheng et al., 2019). Conversely, strong organizational support and perceived accomplishment increase job satisfaction, which has implications for better mental health outcomes and organizational attachment (Bakker et al., 2020). Understanding how these factors fit together is important for retention and police performance in general.

Research Gaps

To date, few studies have examined how compassion fatigue, emotional detachment, and organizational support influence job satisfaction in policing organizations. Particularly, there is a dearth of research on how compassion fatigue and emotional detachment mediate the association between perceived accomplishment and job satisfaction, as well as how administrative support moderates these paths. Addressing this gap may provide insight into what targeted interventions can be implemented to improve officer well-being and organizational outcomes. Although existing literature substantiates that stress, emotional numbness, job attainment, and organizational support are related to job satisfaction, the intermediate mechanisms between them remain unclear. In particular, the mediation of emotional numbness in the stress-satisfaction linkage and the possibility that administrative support may moderate this process have been under-investigated. Understanding these mechanisms would help organizations design interventions that maintain employee well-being and productivity during high-stress situations.

METHODOLOGY

Sample. Table 1 shows the sample characteristics. The sample consisted of 167 police personnel, with 33% being males and 67% being females, with an average age of 37 and an average of 14 years of experience.

Instrument. A special instrument was developed based on a literature review, with an acceptable reliability of Cronbach's alpha of 0.70. The instrument was composed of dimensions including compassion fatigue, emotional detachment, low achievement, administrative support, and police job satisfaction. Each dimension contains five questions on a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 1 sample characteristics

Variable	statistics
Age	Mean=37
Experience	Mean= 14
Gender	Males 33% Females 67%
Education	High school 51% BA 34%

Findings

Regressing the effects of age, experience, gender, education, compassion fatigue, emotional detachment, low achievement, and administrative support on police job satisfaction showed that the predictors explained 24% of the variance in police job satisfaction. Table 2 showed a significant effect of all predictors on police job satisfaction

(F=6.895, α=.000). Table 3 shows that three variables uniquely contribute to police job satisfaction. These variables were compassion fatigue (t=-2.601, α=.010), administrative support (t=-5.710, α=.010), and gender (t=-1.908, α=.05).

Table 2 The effect of age, experience, gender, education, compassion fatigue, emotional detachment, low achievement, administrative support, on police job satisfaction.

	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	α
Police satisfaction	Regression	1589.222	8	198.653	6.895	.000b
	Residual	4148.948	144	28.812		
	Total	5738.170	152			

Table 3 Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	15.599	2.935		5.315	.000
Compassion Fatigue	-.377	.145	-.204	-2.601	**.010**
Emotional Detachment	.125	.112	.091	1.116	.266
Low Achievement	-.037	.111	-.026	-.333	.739
Administrative Support	.489	.086	.434	5.710	**.000**
gender	-1.804	.945	-.139	-1.908	**.05**
age	.064	.071	.099	.909	.365
experience	-.042	.082	-.056	-.509	.611
education	-.529	.476	-.082	-1.112	.268

Table 4: The Relationship between compassion fatigue, emotional detachment, low achievement, administrative support, and police job satisfaction.

	Compassion Fatigue	Emotional Detachment	Low Achievement	Administrative Support	Police Satisfaction
Compassion Fatigue	1	.354**	.383**	.064	-213**
Emotional Detachment	.354**	1	.301**	.333**	.116
Low Achievement	.383**	.301**	1	.094	-060
Administrative Support	.062	.331**	.094	1	-452**
Police Satisfaction	-.213**	.116	-.060	.452**	1

α ** .001   * .05

Table 4 shows significant relationship between compassion fatigue, administrative support, and police job satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study help clarify why job satisfaction among police officers is complex, highlighting individual and organizational-level determinants. Integrating factors such as compassion fatigue, administrative support, and gender was a significant predictor of job satisfaction. The inverse relationship between compassion fatigue and job satisfaction is consistent with prior studies emphasizing the negative effects of emotional exhaustion on job-related functioning (Figley, 2002). Compassion fatigue, due to repeated exposure to trauma, can inhibit police officers from feeling fulfilled in their jobs and subsequently affect their job-related performance (Pfifferling & Gilley, 2000). Supervisory support was shown to be influential on work satisfaction, reiterating previous results that suggested supportive leadership minimizes workplace stress, increases morale, and promotes job satisfaction (Tucker, 2005). Resources, open channels of communication, and acknowledgment appear to be important factors in creating supportive work environments that can mediate some of the stressors inherent in policing. One interesting characteristic was that males were significantly less satisfied with their jobs than females; this might be explained by different roles or culture (He et al., 2005). Sex differences in coping styles may also affect job satisfaction, and therefore, there is room for tailored support to be investigated.

The complex relationships among compassion fatigue, emotional distress, low attainment, administrative support, and job satisfaction, as revealed by the analysis of a sample of over 9,000 employees, underline their interrelated nature. This adds evidence to the idea that improvement in one area, such as administrative support, could have a positive spillover effect on other areas, namely diminishing compassion fatigue and overall job satisfaction (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

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CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study advance knowledge on police job satisfaction, elucidating the combined roles of compassion fatigue, administrative support, and gender. Strategies include training and support for compassion fatigue, managerial support for administrative burden, and addressing gender-specific issues that can lead to greater job satisfaction, with important implications for more effective policing. Insight into the dynamic interplay between emotional stress, emotional numbing, success, administrative support, and job satisfaction is essential for effective workplace intervention planning. Companies that invest in emotional well-being and support practices are likely to realize better employee morale, performance, and retention. Future research should focus on the longitudinal course of these variables, as well as the effectiveness of targeted organizational interventions.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional longitudinal studies are needed to determine the causal ordering of the factors and other potential moderators (e.g., organizational culture, community involvement). Designing interventions to target these predictors may, in turn, increase job satisfaction and ultimately improve the quality of community policing.

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