

**BURNOUT, STRESS AND COPING IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
POLICE SERVICE IN GAUTENG**

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Mini-dissertation submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister Artium in Industrial Psychology at the Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys.

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November 2002  
Potchefstroom

## COMMENTS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The references as well as the editorial style as prescribed by the *Publication Manual (4<sup>th</sup> edition)* of the American Psychological Association (APA) were followed in this dissertation. This practice is in line with the policy of the Programme in Industrial Psychology of the PU for CHE to use APA style in all scientific documents as from January 1999.
- The mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article. The editorial style specified by the *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology* (which agrees largely with the APA style) is used, but the APA guidelines were followed in constructing tables.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I herewith would like to thank the following key individuals and organisations, which assisted and contributed to the completion of this mini-dissertation:

- My Lord and Saviour, for the ongoing miracles in my life.
- Prof. S. Rothmann, my Study Leader, for his tremendous inspiration, guidance, encouragement, patience and his contribution to this study.
- To the participants in the research project for the collection and capturing of the data.
- To my mom, dad and brother, to my fiancé, Terence, and my best friend Germaine, for their endless love and support and never giving up on me.
- To San Geldenhuys, Yvonne Engelbrecht, Martie Esterhuizen, and Hendra Pretorius of the Ferdinand Postma Library – thank you!
- The personnel of the South African Police Service in Gauteng for their participation and contributions in this study.
- To Prof. Faans Steyn for assistance in writing the SAS programs.
- To Caren Swanepoel for her time, assistance and friendship in conducting the research.

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation.

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## ABSTRACT

**Title:** Burnout, stress and coping in the South African Police Service in Gauteng.

**Key terms:** Burnout, police, stress, coping, validity, reliability.

Since its transformation in 1994 the South African Police Service (SAPS) has undergone large scale changes. In South Africa, Gauteng is one of the most prominent crime areas, reflecting the highest crime rate throughout the country. The escalation in crime has led to the increase in traumatic incidences. Due to these incidences plus inadequate resources, a high incidence of trauma amongst police members is consequently reflected, as well as increased rates of suicide. These prolonged stressors that police members are subjected to over lengthy periods of time coupled with inadequate coping strategies can lead to individuals within the SAPS within Gauteng, experiencing burnout.

Burnout is a syndrome consisting of three dimensions: They are exhaustion, which refers to the depletion and draining of emotional resources, feelings of being overextended and cynicism. Cynicism reflects a negative, cynical and callous attitude towards recipients, and / or extreme, detached responses to aspects pertaining to the job and lack of professional efficacy, which is the tendency to evaluate aspects negatively in regard to personal accomplishments and competence at work. Burnout in the human service industry is a particular growing phenomenon.

The objective of this research was to determine the relationship between burnout, stress and coping of employees of the SAPS in Gauteng. A stratified random sample ( $N = 234$ ) was taken of uniformed members of the SAPS in Gauteng. The Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey, COPE and Police Stress Inventory were used as measuring instruments. Pearson-product correlation coefficients, t-tests, analysis of variance and canonical correlations were used to analyse the data.

The results showed that stressors namely job demands, lack of resources and police stressors were associated with exhaustion, cynicism and low professional efficacy. Job demands, lack of resources and police stressors were associated with problem-focused coping.

Passive coping strategies were associated with lack of social support, exhaustion, cynicism and low professional efficacy.

Recommendations for future research were made.

## OPSOMMING

**Titel:** Uitbranding, stres en coping in die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisie diens in Gauteng.

**Sleuteltermes:** Uitbranding, polisie, spanning, coping, geldigheid, betroubaarheid.

Die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisie diens (SAPD) het sedert sy transformasie in 1994 grootskaalse veranderinge ondergaan. Gauteng is een van die mees prominente misdaadareas in Suid-Afrika. Dit het dan ook die hoogste misdaadsyfer in die hele land. Die eskalering in misdaad het tot □ styging in die getal traumatiese gebeure gelei. Hierdie gebeure saam met onvoldoende hulpbronne reflekteer 'n hoë voorkoms van trauma, asook 'n hoë voorkoms van selfmoord, onder polisiebeamptes. Die voortdurende spanning waaraan polisiebeamptes oor lang tydperke blootgestel word, saam met onvoldoende coping-strategieë kan lei tot uitbranding van individue verbode aan die SAPD in Gauteng.

Uitbranding is 'n sindroom wat uit drie dimensies bestaan, naamlik uitputting, wat na die lediging en dreinerings van emosionele bronne verwys, gevoelens van ooreising, en sinisme. Sinisme reflekteer 'n negatiewe, siniese en verharde houding teenoor die ontvanger daarvan, en / of ekstreme, afsydige reaksies op aspekte wat betrekking het op eie werk en professionele bekwaamheid. Dit openbaar ook 'n neiging om aspekte van persoonlike bekwaamheid negatief te beoordeel. Uitbranding in die diensindustrie is 'n sterk groeiende verskynsel.

Die doel van hierdie navorsing was om die verband tussen uitbranding, stres en coping van die werknemers van die SAPD in Gauteng vas te stel. 'n Dwarsnee-ontwerp ( $N = 234$ ) is uit uniformlede van die SAPD in Gauteng geneem. Die Maslach Uitbrandingsvraelys - Algemene Opname, COPE en Polisie-stres-Opname is as meetinstrumente gebruik. Pearson korrelasies, t-toetse, variansie-ontleding en kanoniese korrelasies is gebruik om data te analiseer.

Die resultate bewys dat stressors, naamlik werksvereistes, tekorte aan hulpbronne en polisie-stressors verband hou met uitputting, sinisme, en lae professionele bekwaamheid. Werksvereistes, gebrek aan hulpbronne en polisie-stressors hou verband met probleem-



gefokusde coping. Passiewe coping-strategieë het gepaard gegaan met 'n gebrek aan sosiale ondersteuning, uitputting, sinisme en lae professionele bekwaamheid.

Aanbevelings vir toekomstige navorsing is aan die hand gedoen.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

This mini-dissertation deals with the possible relationships between burnout, stress and coping of police members in the South African Police Service in Gauteng.

This chapter focuses on the problem statement, objectives and basic hypothesis, as well as the research method.

### 1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

For the development and benefit of South Africa it is imperative that the police service consists of healthy, enthusiastic and productive individuals. The challenge facing the South African Police Service (SAPS) includes environmental work stresses and organisational and role pressure. Police work has long been viewed as one of the most stressful occupations (Reisers, 1974). As a result, police officers have more stress-related physical complaints and psychological problems in relation to other service occupations (Lobel & Dunket-Schetter, 1990). Kroes (1976) affirms that there is a decline in work performance (low morale, absenteeism), physical and psychosomatic conditions (ulcers, headaches) and a negative psychological state (emotional burnout, frustration, depression and anger). Work stress results in high levels of sickness, absenteeism, burnout and premature retirement from the force (Burke, 1993; Brown & Campbell, 1990).

Attention has recently been focused on research pertaining to the psychological burnout among police officers (Burke & Deszca, 1986; Maslach & Jackson, 1982). According to Hills and Norvell (1991), burnout experienced by individuals within helping professions (jobs with high interpersonal contact levels) is a particular, serious problem.

The transformation in South Africa to a democracy, in 1994 witnessed intense conflict. Between 1990 and 1994, 16 000 individuals died due to violence (Bekker, 1992). Improved policing and monitoring decreased some of the violence. However, it changed the pattern thereof and not the extent thereof.

Since 1990, the increased levels of violence and crime rates can be related to political, economical and social trends, which were in existence prior to the transformation in South Africa, but has since been accentuated by it (Shaw, 1995). Heightened levels of crime have resulted in high incidences of trauma, consequently resulting in high incidences of trauma amongst police officers (Van der Walt, 2002).

The South African Police Force transformed in 1994 into the South African Police Service. The aim of the transformation of the SAPS is to meet the requirements of the policies of the South African government, the constitution and the intense need to create a safe and secure environment for all South African citizens. This transformation process could, however, not be conducted independently and was conducted while continuing to perform police tasks. Thus the transition sometimes hindered police within their capacity to combat crime. As a result, crime placed pressure on police transition (Van der Spuy, 1993). As concern among citizens escalates due to the increased levels of crime, the police are simultaneously subjected to severe stress as a result of the transformation (Shaw, 1995). It can therefore be concluded that individuals within the police service are at high risk of experiencing burnout.

Burnout is a metaphor that is used to describe a state or process of mental exhaustion (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). The initial conception of burnout was shaped by pragmatic rather than academic concerns, the work was exploratory and the goal was to articulate the burnout phenomenon (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). In the second empirical phase, burnout research became more systematic. Furthermore, the concept of burnout, that was initially closely linked to the human services, where people do 'people' work of some kind, has been expanded towards all other professions and occupational groups.

Burnout is viewed as a syndrome that consists of three dimensions, namely exhaustion, cynicism and lack of professional efficacy. Exhaustion refers to the draining and depletion of emotional resources and feelings of being overextended. Cynicism reflects in having a negative, cynical and callous attitude towards recipients and / or excessively detached responses to aspects of the job. Lack of professional efficacy implicates the tendency to evaluate aspects negatively with regard to competence and personal accomplishments at work (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996). Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) state that burnout could impact negatively on both the individual and the organisation.

Negativity impacts within the individual resulting in aggression, depression and loss of motivation, in turn negatively reflecting on the organisation, resulting in poor productivity, increased absenteeism and turnover.

The most frequently studied occupational groups in respect of burnout are physicians, nurses, social workers and teachers, whereas, despite the remarkable amount of literature on job stress in policing, it has infrequently been examined (Kop, Euwema & Schaufeli, 1999). Studies pertaining to burnout with regard to police officers have both identified individual characteristics and job conditions associated with burnout (Burke & Richardsen, 1993; Golembiewski & Munzenrider, 1988; Maslach, 1982).

Burnout and the causes thereof can be attributed to organisational factors, work-related attitudes and personality characteristics. This research will focus on the relationship between coping, stress and burnout (Alexander, Walder, Innes & Irving, 1993; Biggam, Power, MacDonald, Carry & Moodie, 1997; Brown & Campbell, 1990; Evans & Coman, 1992). Beehr, Johnson and Nieva (1995) concluded that the primary concern in burnout pertains to coping, viz. the manner in which an individual undertakes to ward off adverse strains caused due to the attempt of dealing with job stressors. Latack and Havlovic (1992) viewed coping as the cognitive and behavioural efforts directed at person-environment transactions that threaten to tax the individual's resources. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and Lazarus (1966) state that coping incorporates two major coping strategies.

Problem-focused coping incorporates activities focused on managing and rectifying the stressor or stressful situation. However, passive or avoidance coping occurs when the individual directly attempts to curtail the emotional strain being experienced by means of avoidance or denial and by utilising physical means or cognitive means to achieve this result (Pines & Aronson, 1988). Beehr et al. (1995) established that there was a negative relationship between individual strains (exhaustion, somatic complaints and suicidal thoughts) and problem-focused strategies amongst police officers.

Passive or avoidance-coping strategies such as excessive smoking, overeating, alcohol and drug use are viewed as maladaptive coping strategies within police officers (Hurrell, 1995; Nordlicht, 1979).

Burke (1993) additionally encountered high levels of cigarette, drug and alcohol use and physical isolation as a means of a coping strategy within the police force. These coping attempts are viewed as maladaptive and are futile.

Two categories of stressors emerge within police work. The first aspect is that pertaining to the nature of police work, namely facing the unknown, violence, exposure to danger and physical threats. Secondly, the organisational stressors are poor communication, lack of support and management style. According to Kop, Euwema and Schaufeli (1999) organisational stressors are more prevalent than the nature of work stressors. Rothmann and Van Rensburg (2001) conclude that stressors attributing to burnout in respect of individuals within the SAPS are factors relating to the authoritarian structure, lack of participation in decision-making, poor interpersonal skills, lack of support, unfair discipline and promotions and the nature of the work at hand. Consistently long working hours, poor working conditions and exposure to trauma and constant fear contribute to burnout.

In the whole of South Africa, Gauteng has the highest crime rate. In Gauteng, trauma statistics indicate that at least one in every seven individuals are at risk of being injured one way or another, as compared to the rest of South Africa, where one in every 15 individuals are at risk of being injured. South Africa has the highest incidence of trauma in the world. Per annum, 11 000 individual lives are claimed due to hijackings, murders and suicides, Gauteng having the highest rates of murder and rape cases in all of South Africa (Van der Walt, 2002).

Police members in South Africa have the most dangerous occupation in the world. In 2001, 143 police members were attacked in Gauteng. On average four police were killed in the line of duty on a monthly basis. International observers have referred to the situation as not being that of a normal police agency but rather that of peace keeping forces (Van der Walt, 2002). To add to the stress experienced within the service, South Africa is not only inadequately policed, but police resources are also unevenly spread (Shaw, 1995).

Another growing concern amongst the SAPS is suicide. In 1995, members within the SAPS were 11 times more likely to take their own lives as compared to members of the public (Van der Walt, 2002). The causes thereof have been linked to factors caused by stress, such as substance abuse, moodiness, hopelessness, depression and aggression (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Van der Walt, 2002).

Due to the crime statistics reflected within Gauteng as being the highest crime area in South Africa, as well as the increase in suicides, it could be stated that burnout could probably be experienced by police members in Gauteng.

The SAPS has undergone tremendous change since the transformation. Traumatic incidences have increased as crime has escalated. Gauteng is one of the most prominent areas of crime within South Africa. Due to the trauma incidences, consequently reflecting a high incidence of trauma amongst police members, plus inadequate resources and high rates of suicide, it is important to determine the levels of burnout, stress and coping that could be prevalent within the Gauteng Police Service. Information with regard to the possible role of burnout, stress and coping is lacking in this regard, as no such studies pertaining to these dimensions have yet been conducted within the SAPS in Gauteng.

If it is ascertained that there is a relation between these variables and burnout, programmes such as selection, recruitment, induction, training, development and performance management should be contemplated. They would facilitate the development of psychological strengths, such as valuable coping strategies, to bring about a reduction with regard to burnout within the police service.

The following research questions arise, based on the above-mentioned description of the research problem:

- How are the relationships between coping strategies, stress and burnout conceptualised in the literature?
- What are the relationships between coping strategies, stress and burnout in the SAPS in Gauteng?
- Can coping strategies and job stress predict burnout of members of the SAPS within Gauteng?

## **1.2 AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

The research aim can be divided into a general aim and specific objectives.

### **1.2.1 General aim**

The general aim of this study is to determine the relationship between coping strategies, job stress and burnout in the SAPS in Gauteng, and to determine whether coping strategies and job stress could predict the burnout of police members.

### **1.2.2 Specific aims**

- To conceptualise coping, stress and burnout, as well as their relationships to each other, from the literature.
- To determine the relationships between coping strategies, stress and burnout in the SAPS in Gauteng.
- To determine whether coping strategies and job stress could predict burnout of members of the SAPS within Gauteng.

## **1.3 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method consists of a literature review and an empirical study.

### **1.3.1 Literature review**

The literature review focuses on the relationships between coping strategies, job stress and burnout.

### **1.3.2 Empirical study**

#### **1.3.2.1 Research design**

A survey is used to attain the research objectives. The specific design is a cross-sectional survey, whereby a sample is drawn from a population at one time (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997). Information collected is utilised to report the population at that time. The design can also be used to assess interrelationships among variables in the populations.



According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997), this design is ideal to address the descriptive and predictive functions affiliated with correlational research.

### 1.3.2.2 Study population

A stratified, random sample ( $n = 234$ ) is taken from police personnel within Gauteng, South Africa.

### 1.3.2.3 Measuring battery

The *COPE Questionnaire* (COPE) is used to measure participants' coping strategies. The COPE is a multidimensional 53-item coping questionnaire that indicates the different ways that people cope in different circumstances (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989). Although the original questionnaire measures 13 different coping strategies, Pienaar (2002) subjected the COPE to a principal components factor analysis with a varimax rotation. Three internally consistent factors were extracted, namely Problem-focused coping (16 items), Passive coping (13 items), and Seeking social support (7 items). The alpha coefficients of the three scales are 0,93; 0,86 and 0,87 respectively. All these values are acceptable ( $\alpha > 0,70$ , Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), and thus indicate the internal consistency of the factors of the COPE. Test-retest reliability varies from 0,46 to 0,86 and from 0,42 tot 0,89 (applied after two weeks).

The *Police Stress Inventory* (PSI) is used to measure participants' job stress. The PSI focuses on common work situations that often result in psychological strain. Each of the 44 items describes a job-related stressor event and assesses both the perceived severity and frequency occurrence of that event. Firstly, participants rated each of the 44 items regarding the intensity of stress on a 9-point scale. The frequency part of the questionnaire asked "how many times in the last six months" did you experience the source of stress. Pienaar (2002) subjected the PSI to a principal components factor analysis with a varimax rotation. Three internally consistent factors were extracted, namely Job demands (17 items), Lack of resources (14 items), and Police stressors (8 items). The alpha coefficients of the three scales are 0,92; 0,92 and 0,89 respectively. All these values are acceptable ( $\alpha > 0,70$ , Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), and thus indicate the internal consistency of the factors of the PSI.



The *Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey* (MBI-GS) (Maslach et al., 1996) is used to measure burnout. The MBI-GS has three subscales: Exhaustion (Ex) (five items; e.g. "I feel used up at the end of the workday"), Cynicism (Cy) (five items; e.g. "I have become less enthusiastic about my work") and Professional Efficacy (PE) (six items; e.g. "In my opinion, I am good at my job"). Together the subscales of the MBI-GS provide a three-dimensional perspective on burnout. Internal consistencies (Cronbach coefficient alphas) reported by Schaufeli et al. (1996) varied from 0,87 to 0,89 for Exhaustion, 0,73 to 0,84 for Cynicism and 0,76 to 0,84 for Professional Efficacy. Test-retest reliabilities after one year were 0,65 (Exhaustion), 0,60 (Cynicism) and 0,67 (Professional Efficacy) (Schaufeli et al., 1996). All items are scored on a 7-point frequency rating scale ranging from "0" (never) to "6" (daily). High scores on Exhaustion and Cynicism, and low scores on Professional Efficacy are indicative of burnout. Storm (2002) confirmed the 3-factor structure of the MBI-GS in a sample of 2396 SAPS members, but recommended that Item 13 should be dropped from the questionnaire. She also confirmed the structural equivalence of the MBI-GS for different race groups in the SAPS. The following Cronbach alpha coefficients were obtained for the MBI-GS: Exhaustion: 0,88; Cynicism: 0,79; Professional Efficacy: 0,78 (Storm, 2002).

#### **1.3.2.4 Statistical analysis**

The statistical analysis is carried out with the help of the SAS-program (SAS Institute, 2000). Cronbach alpha coefficients, inter-item correlation coefficients and factor analysis are utilised to assess the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) and inferential statistics are used to analyse the data. Effect sizes are used to decide on the significance of the findings.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients are used to specify the relationships between the variables. A cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect, Cohen, 1988) will be set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients. T-tests and analysis of variance are used to determine the difference between groups.

Canonical correlation is used to determine the relationships between the dimensions of burnout, stress and coping. The goal of canonical correlation is to analyse the relationship between two sets of variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Canonical correlation is considered a descriptive technique rather than a hypothesis-testing procedure.

## **1.4 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS**

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Research article

Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

## **1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter the problem statement, the aims of the study and the research method were discussed. A prospective chapter division was also indicated.

Chapter 2 contains the research article.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# **BURNOUT, STRESS AND COPING IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE IN GAUTENG\***

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## **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this research was to establish the relationships between burnout, stress and coping of employees of the South African Police Service (SAPS) in Gauteng. A cross-sectional design was used. The sample consisted of 234 employees of the SAPS in Gauteng. The Maslach Burnout Inventory, Police Stress Inventory and the COPE were administered. Canonical analysis showed that high job demands, lack of resources and police stressors were associated with burnout. Job demands, lack of resources and police stressors were associated with problem-focused coping. Passive coping strategies were associated with lack of social support, exhaustion, cynicism and low professional efficacy.

## **OPSOMMING**

Die doel van hierdie navorsing was om die verband tussen uitbranding, stres en coping van werknemers van die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisie (SAPD) in Gauteng vas te stel. 'n Dwarsnee-ontwerp is gebruik. Die steekproef het bestaan uit 234 werknemers van die SAPD in Gauteng. Die Maslach Uitbrandingsvraelys, Polisie-stres-opname en die COPE is as meetinstrumente gebruik. Kanoniese analise het getoon dat die ernstige werksdruk, gebrek aan hulpbronne en polisie-stressors verband hou met uitbranding. Werksdruk, gebrek aan hulpbronne en polisie-stressors het verband gehou met probleemgefokusde coping. Passiewe coping-strategieë het verband gehou met 'n gebrek aan sosiale ondersteuning, uitputting, sinisme en lae professionele bekwaamheid.

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\* The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the authors and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF.

For the development and well-being of South Africa it is imperative that the police service consists of optimally well-balanced police officers. Current variables challenging the South African Police Service (SAPS) are divided into two categories, namely environmental work stressors (authority, danger and violence) and organisational and role pressures compounding and resulting in this occupation to be viewed as one of the most stressful occupations (Reiser, 1974). Kroes (1976) confirmed this statement, additionally stating that police work is more stressful than any other occupation. Recent attention has been focused on research relevant to psychological burnout amongst police officers (Burke & Deszca, 1986; Maslach & Jackson, 1982).

The transformation to democracy in South Africa in 1994 witnessed intense conflict whereby 16 000 died of violence between 1990 and 1994 (Bekker, 1992). Improved monitoring and policing curbed some of the violence. However, it did not change the extent, but only the pattern thereof. The increased levels of violence and crime rates since 1990 are related to political, economic and social trends that were in existence prior to the transformation in South Africa, but has since been accentuated by it (Shaw, 1995). These heightened levels of crime have resulted in high incidences of trauma, consequently resulting in high incidences of trauma amongst police officers (Van der Walt, 2002).

In 1994 the South African Police Force transformed into the South African Police Service. The aim of the transformation of the SAPS was to meet the requirements of the constitution, policies of the South African government and the immense need to create a secure and safe environment for all South Africans. This transformation could not be conducted independently but was conducted simultaneously while performing police tasks. The transition hindered the police in their capacity to combat crime. In turn, crime placed pressure on police transition (Van der Spuy, 1993). With the growing public concern with regard to crime rates the police within this same time period are subjected to severe stress as a result of the transformation (Shaw, 1995). Thus, individuals within the police service are at a high risk of experiencing burnout.

Gauteng has the highest crime rate within South Africa. Trauma statistics indicate that at least one in every seven individuals within Gauteng, compared to one in every 15 South Africans are at risk of being injured in one way or another. South Africa has the highest incidence of trauma in the world.

Per annum, 11 000 individual lives are claimed due to motor vehicle accidents, whereas more than 20 000 individual lives are claimed due to suicides, hijackings and murders, Gauteng having the highest rates of rape and murder cases throughout South Africa (Van der Walt, 2002).

Police in South Africa, have the most dangerous occupation in the world. On average four police were killed on a monthly basis and 143 police were attacked in the line of duty in Gauteng, in 2001. International observers have referred to the comparison of the situation as not being that of a normal police agency but rather that of peace keeping forces (Van der Walt, 2002). To add to the stress experienced, South Africa is not only inadequately policed, but police resources are also unevenly spread (Shaw, 1995).

Suicide amongst the SAPS is becoming a growing concern. In 1995, members in the SAPS were eleven times more likely to take their own lives as compared to members of the general public (Van der Walt, 2002). The causes thereof have been factors due to stress such as hopelessness, substance abuse, moodiness, depression and aggression (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Van der Walt, 2002). Due to the high crime rate reflected in the statistics of Gauteng as being the highest crime area in South Africa and the increased suicide rate, it could be stated that burnout could probably be experienced by police members in Gauteng.

Due to transformation, the SAPS have undergone tremendous change. Gauteng is one of the most prominent areas of crime in South Africa. Traumatic incidences have increased as crime has escalated, due to these trauma incidences, consequently reflecting a high incidence of trauma amongst police members plus inadequate resources and high rates of suicide. It is important to determine the levels of burnout, stress and coping that could be prominent within the Gauteng Police Service. Information with regard to the possible role of burnout, stress and coping is lacking in this regard, as no such studies pertaining to these dimensions have yet been conducted within the SAPS in Gauteng.

Burnout reflects negatively on both the individual and the organisation (Schaufeli & Enzmann (1998). Kroes (1976) stated these negative effects as deterioration in work performance (low morale, absenteeism), negative psychological states (frustration, anger) and psychosomatic and physical conditions (ulcers, headaches) reflect on the individual.

Negative results on the organisation include poor productivity, increased absenteeism and turnover (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Continuous stressors result in burnout (Brown & Campbell, 1990). Two aspects emerge as potential work stressors within police work. Kop, Euwema and Schaufeli (1999) state that the first aspect relates to the nature of police work, namely violence, exposure to danger, physical threats and facing the unknown. The second aspect is organisational stressors such as management style, poor communication and lack of support. Factors contributing to burnout amongst South African police officers are lack of support, unfair promotions and discipline, authoritarian structure, lack of participation in decision-making, poor interpersonal skills and the nature of work at hand, constant fear, long working hours, exposure to trauma and poor working conditions (Rothmann & Van Rensburg, 2001).

Progressive unsuccessful attempts to cope with a variety of stressful conditions result in burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). The primary concern in burnout relates to coping. Latack and Havlovic (1992) view coping as the behavioural and cognitive efforts directed at person-environment transactions that tax or threaten an individual's resources. Coping incorporates two main coping strategies (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Coping strategies can be adaptive or maladaptive. Problem-focused coping incorporates activities focused on rectifying and managing a stressful situation or the stressor, while in passive or avoidance coping the individual avoids or denies the emotional strain being experienced by direct cognitive or physical means to achieve the desired result (Pines & Aronson, 1988). Adaptive coping strategies related in a negative relationship between individual strains (exhaustion) and problem-focused strategies amongst police officers (Beehr et al., 1995). Maladaptive coping strategies result in high levels of cigarettes, drug and alcohol use and physical isolation as coping strategies in the police force. These coping attempts are futile.

If it is ascertained that there is a relation between these variables and burnout, programmes such as selection, recruitment, induction, training, development and performance management should be contemplated to facilitate the development of psychological strengths. They are valuable coping strategies to bring about a reduction with regard to burnout within the police service.



## **Burnout, job stress and coping**

Burnout in individuals is a result of long-term involvement pertaining to situations that are emotionally demanding. This is evident particularly for individuals in the human service professions. Burnout is conceptualised as a psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-GS) measures burnout. According to Maslach, Jackson and Leiter (1996), burnout incorporates the following three dimensions:

- Exhaustion – it refers to the depletion or draining of emotional resources and the feelings of being overextended.
- Cynicism – it refers to interpersonal dimensions of burnout and results in a negative, callous or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job.
- Professional Efficacy – it refers to the self-evaluation dimension of burnout and is a feeling of competence, productivity and achievement at work.

Burnout is a multidimensional syndrome consisting of the above-mentioned dimensions. The first dimension, namely exhaustion is referred to as the key dimension of burnout (Shirom, 1993). All three dimensions of the syndrome are essential and pertinent for defining the presence of burnout (Leiter, 1988). Burnout and the causes thereof can be attributed to organisational factors, work-related attitudes and personality characteristics. Burnout reflects negatively on both the individual and the organisation.

According to Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998), symptoms experienced by the individual include increased tension, anxiety, aggression, difficulty with complex tasks, restlessness, chronic fatigue, headaches, insomnia and loss of motivation, thus negatively reflecting on the organisation in terms of poor productivity, increased absenteeism and turnover.

Job burnout, a specific type of job stress, includes alterations in perceptions of humans and altered perceptions of personal competence (Savicki & Cooley, 1983).



Events related to the workplace that contribute to burnout are occupational stressors. An increase in occupational stressors leads to burnout in the form of exhaustion and exhaustion in turn results in additional occupational stress (Mills & Huebner, 1998). Stress is defined as any transactional process in which the organism experiences an alteration of psychological homeostasis (Burchfield, 1985). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define stress as a particular relationship between an individual and the environment, which is appraised by the individual as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and therefore endangering his or her well-being.

Previous literature reflects two distinguishable categories of potential stressors in police work (Brown & Campbell, 1990; Evans & Coman, 1992). The first aspect concerns the nature of police work, such as facing the unknown, violence, physical threat and exposure to danger. The second aspect incorporates organisational stressors, such as lack of support, management style and poor communication. Brown and Campbell (1990) confirmed that organisational factors related to the highest levels of associated stress. Burke (1994) stated that burnout related to job stressors, mainly organisational factors.

Kop, Euwema and Schaufeli (1999) conducted a study on 358 Dutch police officers and concluded that organisational stressors included work overload (mentioned by 71% of police officers), staff shortages (81%), lack of communication (70%), inadequate resources (78%) and time pressure (74%). Operational stressors, such as the use of force (40%), arresting violent individuals (49%) and appearing in court (44%) were mentioned less frequently. Evans and Coman (1992) suggest that job stressors are more frequently rooted in the job context rather than in job content.

Brown and Campbell (1990) state that work stressors are significantly related to burnout. According to Stearns and Moore (1990) exhaustion strongly correlated with increased cynicism towards the government and the general public. However, professional efficacy is not related to these variables. It is conclusive that exhaustion and cynicism are highly related to stressors of police officers:

According to Cherniss (1981), burnout is an indication of a failure to cope adequately with stress. Carver, Scheier and Weintraub (1989) state that individuals have a constant coping precedence that is employed across a broad range of situations.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define coping as both an intra-personal and action-orientated effort to manage internal demands and environmental conflicts and demands among them, which exceed or tax individuals' resources. Pines and Aronson (1988) state that there are active and passive dimensions to coping. Active, confronting or problem-focused coping is an attempt to solve the problem by cognitively analysing the situation and by applying concrete actions in order to alter the source of the stress. This form of coping is only effective on a cognitive or behavioural level if the situation is perceived as offering opportunities to control the stressor (Latack, 1986). Passive or avoidance coping is a strategy that incorporates denial or avoidance of the stress by utilising physical means or cognitive means (Pines & Aronson, 1988).

Maslach and Jackson (1984), Pines and Aronson (1988) and Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998), relate inadequate coping strategies that are affiliated with burnout, which results in negative attitudes towards life itself, work and people. According to Maslach and Jackson (1984), prolonged job stress and a variety of negative stress conditions accompanied by unsuccessful attempts to cope, result in burnout.

Previous studies relating to police officers ascertained that continuous stress hinders psycho-physiological and cognitive processes and desirable emotional states, resulting in the necessity to possess appropriate coping strategies in reaction to stress (Fleishman, 1984). Loo (1984) stated that the short and long-term effects of stress are relative to the individual's use of effective coping strategies. Inadequate coping skills result in the determining factor of the frequency and intensity of stress experienced by police officers. Maladaptive coping results in burnout and premature resignation from the force (Burke & Deszca, 1986).

Passive coping in the police force can be both adaptive or maladaptive. Passive coping is viewed as adaptive, as stated by Kohn (1996) if the situation requires passive coping such as remaining impartial in a life-threatening situation. Passive coping not applied in such a situation would be termed maladaptive, as stress levels increase resulting in reduced levels of well-being. Roth and Cohen (1986) state that this form of coping is only relative on a short-term basis; long-term effects can be detrimental.

Passive coping could be viewed as maladaptive in police officers (Graf, 1986). Findings indicated that the majority of the 77 police officers were not coping effectively as stressful events were dealt with ineffectively. Evans and Coman (1992) confirmed that police officers reported being emotionally detached and not compliant with discussions concerning job stress. Burke (1993) established that police officers physically isolated themselves from others and utilised high levels of alcohol, drugs and cigarettes to cope with stress experienced through work.

Peele (1991) confirms these findings of the utilisation of alcohol to reduce stress, in turn resulting in long-term effects of inconsistent mood states, poor emotional regulation, depression, insomnia, poor marital relations and heightened chronic fatigue and poor work performance. Long-term effects of passive coping are ineffective and results in burnout.

Problem-focused coping is viewed as an adaptive coping mechanism. This form of effective coping identifies congruency between individual coping preferences and situational characteristics in which stress is encountered (Roth & Cohen, 1986). Individuals who use this type of coping strategy experience less anxiety and stress than those who cope passively. Problem-focused coping enhances the ability of the police officer to remain task and goal orientated and thus enabling the officer control over the majority of stressful situations. These officers view their occupation as serving and protecting the community and respecting the integrity of others.

A review of 12 studies with reference to coping styles has revealed that individuals who suffer from burnout, cope with stressful events in a passive manner, whereas problem-focused coping is associated with lower levels of burnout (Enzmann, 1996).

Lee and Ashforth (1996) found that for personal accomplishment, problem-focused coping explained 15% of the variance, whereas passive coping showed a weaker relationship of 5% of the variance. Problem-focused coping was strongly related to personal accomplishment; this was due to a process of mutual reinforcement and problem-focused coping enhanced feelings of accomplishment and vice versa. Passive coping is related to withdrawal from work and clients, which is a core symptom of burnout (Cherniss, 1980). Etzion and Pines (1996) found that problem-focused coping were associated with lower levels of burnout whereas passive coping was associated with higher levels of burnout.

## METHOD

### Research design

A survey was utilised to attain the research objectives. The specific design is a cross-sectional survey, whereby a sample is drawn from a population at the same time (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997). Information collected is utilised to report the population at that time. The design can also be used to assess interrelationships among variables within the populations. According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997) this design is ideal to address the descriptive and predictive functions affiliated with correlational research.

### Participants

The participants were employees of the SAPS in the Gauteng province ( $N = 234$ ). The mean age of the participants were 34,45 years and they had an average of 12,53 years of service. The characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Characteristics of the Participants*

Item	Category	Percentage
Size	Small	20,51
	Medium	34,62
	Large	44,87
Sex	Male	78,54
	Female	21,46
Race	White	42,11
	Black	57,02
	Coloured	0,88
Rank	Constable	5,29
	Sergeant	20,19
	Captain	58,65
	Inspector	12,50
	Snr.Supt.	2,88
	Other	0,48
Education	Grade 10	7,39
	Grade 11	6,09
	Grade 12	56,52
	Technical college diploma	3,48
	Technicon diploma	21,30
	University degree	1,30
Marital Status	Post graduate degree	3,91
	Single	15,86
	Married	54,63
	Divorced	23,79
	Separated	4,41
	Remarried	1,32

**Measuring instruments**

The following measuring instruments were used in this study:

The *COPE Questionnaire* (COPE) was used to measure participants' coping strategies. The COPE is a multidimensional 53-item coping questionnaire that indicates the different ways that people cope in different circumstances (Carver et al., 1989). The COPE is a self-report instrument where the respondent rates his or her coping strategies using a four point scale. Although the original questionnaire measures 13 different coping strategies, Pienaar (2002) subjected the COPE to a principal components factor analysis with a varimax rotation.

Three internally consistent factors were extracted, namely Problem-focused coping (16 items), Passive coping (13 items), and Seeking social support (7 items). The alpha coefficients of the three scales are 0,93; 0,86, and 0,87 respectively. All these values are acceptable ( $\alpha > 0,70$ , Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), and thus indicate the internal consistency of the factors of the COPE. Test-retest reliability varies from 0,46 to 0,86 and from 0,42 to, 0,89 (applied after two weeks) (Carver et al., 1989).

The *Police Stress Inventory* (PSI) was used to measure participants' job stress. The PSI focuses on common work situations that often result in psychological strain. Each of the 44 items describes a job-related stressor event and assesses both the perceived severity and frequency occurrence of that event. Firstly, participants rated each of the 44 items regarding the intensity of stress on a 9-point scale. The frequency part of the questionnaire asked "how many times in the last six months" did you experience the source of stress. Pienaar (2002) subjected the PSI to a principal components factor analysis with a varimax rotation. Three internally consistent factors were extracted, namely Job demands (17 items), Lack of resources (14 items), and Police stressors (8 items). The alpha coefficients of the three scales are 0,92; 0,92 and 0,89 respectively. All these values are acceptable ( $\alpha > 0,70$ , Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), and thus indicate the internal consistency of the factors of the PSI.

The *Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey* (MBI-GS) (Maslach et al., 1996) was used to measure burnout. The MBI-GS has three subscales: Exhaustion (Ex) (five items; e.g. "I feel used up at the end of the workday"), Cynicism (Cy) (five items; e.g. "I have become less enthusiastic about my work") and Professional Efficacy (PE) (six items; e.g. "In my opinion, I am good at my job"). Together the subscales of the MBI-GS provide a three-dimensional perspective on burnout. Internal consistencies (Cronbach coefficient alphas) reported by Schaufeli et al. (1996) varied from 0,87 to 0,89 for Exhaustion, 0,73 to 0,84 for Cynicism and 0,76 to 0,84 for Professional Efficacy. Test-retest reliabilities after one year were 0,65 (Exhaustion), 0,60 (Cynicism) and 0,67 (Professional Efficacy) (Schaufeli et al., 1996). All items are scored on a 7-point frequency rating scale ranging from "0" (never) to "6" (daily). High scores on Exhaustion and Cynicism, and low scores on Professional Efficacy are indicative of burnout. Storm (2002) confirmed the 3-factor structure of the MBI-GS in a sample of 2396 SAPS members, but recommended that Item 13 should be dropped from the questionnaire.

She confirmed the structural equivalence of the MBI-GS for different race groups in the SAPS. The following Cronbach alpha coefficients were obtained for the MBI-GS: Exhaustion: 0,88; Cynicism: 0,79; Professional Efficacy: 0,78 (Storm, 2002).

### Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of the SAS-program (SAS Institute, 2000). Cronbach alpha coefficients, inter-item correlation coefficients and confirmatory factor analysis were used to assess the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) were used to analyse the data.

T-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to determine differences between the sub-groups in the sample. Tukey Studentized Range tests were done to indicate which groups differed significantly when ANOVAS were done. The following formula was used to determine the practical significance of differences ( $d$ ) when t-tests were used (Steyn, 1999):

$$d = \frac{Mean_A - Mean_B}{SD_{MAX}}$$

where

$Mean_A$  = Mean of the first group

$Mean_B$  = Mean of the second group

$SD_{MAX}$  = Highest standard deviation of the two groups

The following formula was used to determine the practical significance of difference in means between two groups (Steyn, 1999):

$$d = \frac{Mean_A - Mean_B}{\text{Root } MSE}$$

where



$Mean_A$  = Mean of the first group

$Mean_B$  = Mean of the second group

Root MSE = Root Mean Square Error

A cut-off point of 0,50 (medium effect, Cohen, 1988) was set for the practical significance of differences between means.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables. In the case where the distribution of scores was skew, Spearman correlation coefficients were computed. A cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect, Cohen, 1988) was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients.

Canonical correlation was used to determine the relationships between the dimensions of burnout, stress and coping. The goal of canonical correlation is to analyse the relationship between two sets of variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Canonical correlation is considered a descriptive technique rather than a hypothesis-testing procedure.

## RESULTS

The descriptive statistics, alpha coefficients and inter-item correlations of the measuring instruments, namely the MBI-GS, PSI and COPE are given in Table 2.



Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics, Alpha Coefficients and Inter-Item Correlations of the Measuring Instruments*

	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	<i>r</i> (Mean)	$\alpha$
<b>MBI-GS</b>						
Exhaustion	11,16	8,18	0,56	-0,57	0,57	0,87
Cynicism	7,34	5,74	0,72	0,07	0,41	0,73
Professional Efficacy	27,00	8,30	-1,21	1,34	0,39	0,80
<b>PSI</b>						
Job Demands	81,30	26,33	-0,32	-0,08	0,37	0,91
Lack of Resources	79,35	23,19	-0,45	-0,21	0,42	0,91
Police Stressors	43,92	15,26	-0,40	-0,51	0,45	0,87
<b>COPE</b>						
Problem-focused Coping	65,60	12,70	-0,80	0,77	0,33	0,91
Passive Coping	26,50	7,42	0,28	-0,45	0,24	0,81
Seeking Social Support	19,77	5,57	-0,43	-0,64	0,51	0,88

Table 2 shows that acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients varying from 0,73 to 0,91 were obtained for the scales (see Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The mean inter-item correlations of most of the scales are acceptable ( $0,15 \leq r \leq 0,50$ , Clarke & Watson, 1995). The inter-item correlations of one scale, namely Exhaustion is somewhat high.

It is evident from Table 2 that most of the scales of the measuring instruments have relatively normal distributions, with low skewness and kurtosis. It is only Professional Efficacy that showed relatively higher skewness and kurtosis.

The product moment correlation coefficients between burnout, stress and coping are given in Table 3.

Table 3

*Product-Moment Correction Coefficients between the MBI-GS, the PSI and the COPE*

Item	Exhaustion	Cynicism	Professional Efficacy	Job Demands	Lack of Resources	Police Stressors	Problem-Focused Coping	Passive Coping
<b>MBI</b>								
Exhaustion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cynicism	0.56 <sup>+++</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Efficacy	-0.14 <sup>+</sup>	-0.14 <sup>+</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Stress</b>								
Job Demands	0.38 <sup>**</sup>	0.26 <sup>+</sup>	0.10	-	-	-	-	-
Lack of Resources	0.27 <sup>+</sup>	0.20 <sup>+</sup>	0.29 <sup>+</sup>	0.71 <sup>***</sup>	-	-	-	-
Police Stressors	0.20 <sup>+</sup>	0.16 <sup>+</sup>	0.22 <sup>+</sup>	0.62 <sup>***</sup>	0.62 <sup>***</sup>	-	-	-
<b>COPE</b>								
Problem-focused Coping	-0.07	-0.13 <sup>+</sup>	0.32 <sup>+</sup>	0.01	0.13 <sup>+</sup>	0.06	-	-
Passive Coping	0.28 <sup>+</sup>	0.23 <sup>+</sup>	-0.23 <sup>+</sup>	0.20 <sup>+</sup>	-0.06	0.05	0.10	-
Seeking Social Support	-0.13 <sup>+</sup>	-0.15 <sup>+</sup>	0.12	-0.10	-0.09	-0.09	0.55 <sup>***</sup>	0.11

\*  $p \leq 0.05$  – Statistically Significant

+  $r > 0.30$  – Practically Significant (medium effect)

++  $r > 0.50$  – Practically Significant (large effect)

Inspection of Table 3 indicates that Exhaustion is positively related to Cynicism (practically significant, large effect). Exhaustion is positively related to Passive Coping and negatively related to Seeking Social Support. Cynicism is negatively related to Problem-focused Coping and Seeking Social Support. Professional Efficacy is positively related to Problem-focused coping (practically significant, medium effect) and negatively related to Passive Coping.

Job Demands were related to Passive Coping, while Lack of Resources was related to Problem-focused Coping. Problem-focused Coping is positively related to Seeking Social Support.

The PSI was tabulated to reflect job demands, lack of resources and police stressors. The stressors for police members in Gauteng are given in Table 4.

Table 4

*The PSI – Job Demands, Lack of Resources and Police Stressors*

Item	Intensity	Frequency	Severity
<b>Job Demands</b>			
Overtime	4	4	16
New duties	4	4	16
Crisis situations	4	5	20
Extra tasks	5	5	25
Increased responsibility	4	5	20
Critical decisions	4	4	16
Noisy work area	4	4	16
Interruptions	5	5	25
Demanding activities	4	4	16
Paperwork	5	5	25
Deadlines	4	4	16
Insufficient personal time	4	4	16
Completing others' duties	5	4	20
Shift work	4	3	12
Over-supervision	4	4	16
Domestic violence	5	3	15
Restructuring of organisation	4	3	12
<b>Lack of Resources</b>			
Lack of advancements	5	4	20
Fellow employees' lack of job performance	6	6	36
Lack of support of Supervisor	5	4	20
Lack of recognition	5	5	25
Lack of equipment	6	5	30
No co-operation with Supervisor	4	3	12
Negative attitudes – organisation	5	4	20
Insufficient personnel	5	5	25
Lack in organisational decisions	5	4	20
Inadequate salary	6	5	30
Competition for advancement	4	4	16
Inadequate supervision	5	4	20
De-motivated co-workers	5	5	25
Staff shortages	6	6	36
<b>Police Stressors</b>			
Delivering bad news	4	2	8
Person killed-line of duty	5	2	10
Fellow officer killed in the line of duty	6	2	12
Racial Conflict	5	3	15
Handling mass demonstrations	4	2	8
Being physically attacked	5	2	10
Dealing with the media	3	2	6
Seeing Criminals go free	6	5	30

With regard to the PSI, the most severe of all three stressors was lack of resources. Those items most prominent under lack of resources were: fellow employees lacking in job performance, insufficient personnel, lack of recognition, lack of equipment, inadequate salary, de-motivated co-workers and staff shortages. The next prominent stressor was job demands. The most prominent items under job demands were; extra tasks, interruptions and paper work. Police stressors were the least prominent stressor, with only one item being prominent, namely seeing criminals go free.

The results of the differences between the burnout of police members in various sizes of police stations ranging from small, medium to large stations are reported in Table 5.

Table 5

*The Differences between Burnout of Police Members Based on Stations of Various Sizes*

Item	Small	Medium	Large	<i>p</i>	Root MSE
Exhaustion	12.42	12.48*	9.47 *	0.02 *	8.07
Cynicism	7.54	8.25	6.55	0.13	5.71
Professional Efficacy	26.88	26.58	27.36	0.81	8.32

\*  $p \leq 0.05$  Statistically Significant

Table 5 shows that a statistically significant difference exists between medium and large stations. The medium stations results reflected higher levels of Exhaustion and Cynicism and lower levels of Professional Efficacy as compared to larger stations, which reflected lower levels of Exhaustion and Cynicism and a higher level of Professional Efficacy.

The results of the differences between the burnout of police members based on marital status are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*Differences Between Burnout of Police Members Based on Marital Status*

Item	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	P	Root MSE
MBI							
Exhaustion	8.06	11.65	12.15	9.30	18.00	0.06	8.14
Cynicism	7.03	7.48	6.70	8.70	13.33	0.33	5.76
Professional Efficacy	24.89	27.39	28.35	26.20	24.33	0.35	8.19

\*  $p \leq 0.05$  Statistically Significant

Table 6 shows that no significant differences exist between the burnout of police members with different marital status.

Because literature indicated that there may be differences between male and female police members, t-tests were conducted to confirm this.

Table 7 shows differences between the burnout of gender groups.

Table 7

*Differences Between Burnout of Police Members Based on Gender*

Item	Male		Female		p	d
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
MBI						
Exhaustion	11.00	8.21	11.72	8.09	0.58	-
Cynicism	7.01	5.68	8.72	5.76	0.06	-
Professional Efficacy	26.93	8.51	27.66	6.81	0.53	-

\*  $p \leq 0.05$  Statistically Significant

Table 7 shows that no differences exist between the burnout of male and female police members.

Canonical correlation was performed between a set of stressors and burnout, stressors and coping as well as burnout and coping using SAS CANCORR. Shown in the tables are correlations between the variable and canonical variates, standardised canonical variate coefficients, within set variance accounted for by the canonical variates (percent of variance) redundancies and canonical correlations.

The results of the canonical analysis of stressors and burnout are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

*Results of the Canonical Analysis: Stressors and MBI*

Stressor Set	First Canonical Variate		Second Canonical Variate	
	Correlation	Coefficient	Correlation	Coefficient
Job demands	0.90	0.44	-0.42	-1.44
Lack of resources	0.94	0.58	0.28	1.00
Police stressors	0.71	0.07	0.23	0.51
Percent of variance	0.74		0.10	Total = 0.84
Redundancy	0.13		0.01	Total = 0.14
Burnout Set				
Exhaustion	0.82	0.73	-0.57	-0.59
Cynicism	0.59	0.16	-0.30	0.06
Professional Efficacy	0.55	0.56	0.83	0.82
Percent of variance	0.44		0.37	Total = 0.81
Redundancy	0.08		0.04	Total = 0.12
Canonical Correlation	0.42		0.32	

The first canonical correlation was 0.42 (17% overlapping variance); the second was 0.32 (10% overlapping variance). The other canonical correlation was 0.02. With all three correlations included  $F(9, 555.04) = 8.12, p < 0.0001$  and with the third canonical correlation removed  $F(1, 230) = 0.74, p < 0.0001$ . Subsequent F-tests were not statistically significant. Therefore, the first two pairs of canonical variates accounted for the significant relationships between the two sets of variables. Total percentage of variance and total redundancy indicate that the stressor and burnout sets of the first and second pairs of canonical variates were moderately related.

With a cut-off correlation of 0.30 the variables in the stressor set that were correlated with the first canonical variate were Job Demands, Lack of Resources and Police Stressors. Among the burnout variables, Exhaustion, Cynicism and Professional Efficacy correlated with the first canonical variate. The first pair of canonical variates indicates that a high loading on job demands (0.90), lack of resources (0.94) and police stressors (0.71) are associated with a high loading on exhaustion (0.82) and smaller loadings on cynicism (0.59) and professional efficacy (0.55).

The variables in the stressor set that were correlated with the second canonical variate were Job Demands. Among the burnout variables, Exhaustion, Cynicism and Professional Efficacy correlated with the second canonical variate. The second pair of canonical variates indicated low job demands (-0.42) are associated with low levels of exhaustion (-0.57) and low levels of cynicism (-0.30) and a high level of professional efficacy (0.83).

The results of the canonical analysis of stressors and coping are shown in Table 9.

Table 9  
*Results of the Canonical Analysis: Stressors and Coping*

Stressor Set	First Canonical Variate		Second Canonical Variate	
	Correlation	Coefficient	Correlation	Coefficient
Job Demands	-0.33	-0.47	0.82	0.27
Lack of Resources	0.07	0.14	0.92	0.62
Police Stressors	0.06	0.27	0.69	0.10
Percent of variance	0.18		0.36	Total = 0.54
Redundancy	0.05		0.07	Total = 0.12
Coping set				
Problem-focused Coping	0.58	0.55	0.33	0.32
Passive Coping	-0.68	-0.66	0.17	0.13
Seeking Social Support	0.36	0.12	-0.07	-0.16
Percent of variance	0.42		0.41	Total = 0.83
Redundancy	0.12		0.08	Total = 0.20
Canonical Correlation	0.53		0.44	

The first canonical correlation was 0.53 (28% overlapping variance); the second was 0.44 (19% overlapping variance). The other canonical correlation was 0.11. With all three correlations included  $F(18, 636.88) = 7.61, p < 0.0001$ , and with the third canonical correlation removed,  $F(4, 227) = 0.60, p < 0.001$ . Subsequent F-tests were not statistically significant. Therefore, the first two pairs of canonical variates accounted for the significant relationships between the two sets of variables. Total percentage of variance and total redundancy indicate that the sets of the first pair of canonical variates had a high relatedness and the second pair was moderately related.

With a cut-off correlation of 0.30 the variable in the stressor set that was correlated with the first canonical variate was Job Demands. Among the coping set, Problem-focused Coping, Passive Coping and Seeking Social Support correlated with the first canonical variate.

The first pair of canonical variates indicates that low job demands (-0.33) are associated with high problem-focused coping (0.58), low levels of passive coping (-0.68) and a moderate level of seeking social support (0.36).

The variables in the stressor set that were correlated with the second canonical variate were Job Demands, Lack of Resources and Police Stressors. Among the coping variables, Problem-focused Coping correlated with the second canonical variate. The second pair of canonical variates indicates that high levels of job demands (0.82), lack of resources (0.92) and police stressors (0.69) are associated with problem-focused coping (0.33).

The results of the canonical analysis of burnout and coping are shown in Table 10

Table 10

*Results of the Canonical Analysis: Coping and MBI*

	First Canonical Variate	
	Correlation	Coefficient
Cope Set		
Problem-focused Coping	-0.63	-0.65
Passive Coping	0.70	0.78
Seeking Social Support	-0.38	-0.11
Percent of variance	0.35	
Redundancy	0.09	
Burnout		
Exhaustion	0.56	0.36
Cynicism	0.55	0.33
Professional Efficacy	-0.79	-0.78
Percent of variance	0.41	
Redundancy	0.10	
Canonical Correlation	0.50	

The first correlation was 0.50 (25% overlapping variance). The other two canonical correlations were 0.21 and 0.04. With all three canonical correlations included,  $F(9, 555.04) = 9.16, p < 0.0001$ . Subsequent F-tests were not statistically significant ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Therefore, the first pair of canonical variates accounted for the significant relationships between the two sets of variables. Total percent of variance and total redundancy indicate that the first pair of canonical variates was moderately related.



With a cut-off correlation of 0.30 the variables in the cope set that were correlated with the first canonical variate were Problem-focused Coping, Passive Coping and Seeking Social Support. Among the burnout variables, Exhaustion, Cynicism and Professional Efficacy correlated with the first canonical variate. The first pair of canonical variates indicated that low problem focused coping (-0.63), high levels of passive coping (0.70) and weak social support (-0.38) are associated with exhaustion (0.56), cynicism (0.55) and low professional efficacy (-0.79)

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed that job demands, lack of resources and police stressors are related to exhaustion that encompasses feeling overextended and the depletion of one's emotional and physical resources and cynicism which is associated with having negative, callous or detached responses to various aspects of the job. However, police members who experienced stress because of lack of resources and police stressors also showed a higher professional efficacy, which are feelings of competence, productivity and achievement at work, as a result of problem-focused coping, which is viewed as an adaptive coping mechanism. Lee and Ashforth (1996) stated that job stressors correlated the least with professional efficacy. Mills and Huebner (1998) confirmed that increased occupational stressors lead to burnout and burnout leads to additional occupational stress. The higher the levels of job stressors combined with inadequate coping mechanisms, the higher the levels of exhaustion and cynicism and the lower the levels of professional efficacy experienced by the individuals at hand.

Problem-focused coping was moderately related to professional efficacy. Problem-focused coping results in less stress and anxiety being experienced and enables the individual to remain task and goal orientated. Passive coping was negatively related to professional efficacy. Passive coping in this regard is viewed as maladaptive because stressful events are dealt with ineffectively and physical isolation is experienced, resulting in higher levels of exhaustion and cynicism and lower levels of professional efficacy. Seeking social support was negatively related to exhaustion and cynicism, probably because social support might act as a buffer against exhaustion. In line with the model developed by Storm (2002), it is possible that seeking social support helps to reduce exhaustion, which leads to lower cynicism.

The findings of this study confirm the results of previous studies. Beehr, Johnson and Nieva (1995) established that there was a negative relationship between individual strains such as exhaustion and problem-focused strategies. Enzmann (1996) identified burnout in individuals that coped passively and lower levels of burnout in individuals who utilised problem-focused coping. Rohman (1988) found that active coping marginalised the relation between the stressor and burnout and that passive coping resulted in higher levels of burnout.

The results of the canonical analysis showed the relationship between stress and burnout as high levels of job demands, lack of resources and police stressors leading to exhaustion, cynicism and low professional-efficacy. Lack of resources reflected the highest factor loading, the second highest factor loading was job demands, followed by police stressors. Furthermore, it is clear from the results that job demands, lack of resources and police stressors were strongly related to exhaustion and moderately to cynicism. Therefore, these stressors result in the depletion of emotional resources, feelings of being overextended and eventually in negative, callous or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job (see Storm, 2002). This result also confirms the findings of Brown and Campbell (1990) as well as Mills and Huebner (1998) that exhaustion is related to job demands. Also, the strong correlation between stress because of job demands and stress because of job resources might support the finding of Storm (2002) that a lack of job resources impact on exhaustion through job demands.

It seems that police members who use problem-focused coping, seek social support and tend not to cope passively, experience less job demands. Police members with these coping strategies probably tend to manage job demands better. It is also clear that police members who cope by seeking social support, experience high job demands, a lack of job resources and police stressors. These police members should be a target for intervention.

Problem-focused coping assists individuals with dealing with the stressors presented adequately whereas passive coping enhances the levels of anxiety in individuals accentuating the stress experienced due to the stressors at hand thus resulting in not dealing with the stressors at hand in an adequate manner. Hurrell (1995) confirmed that maladaptive (passive coping) skills of police officers could result in chronic, long-term stress, thus leading to burnout.

Problem focused coping in turn resulted in individuals being able to empower, manage and improve on resources when dealing with stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Beehr (1976) stated that seeking social support acts as a buffering effect in which high job stressors are weakened in the presence of social support.

Social support acts as a buffer to stress. Lack of social support heightens anxiety levels, as does passive coping, thus leading to burnout. Passive coping results in individuals remaining stressful (Alkus & Padesky, 1983) and manifests in disrespectful and distrustful relations with the community. An inappropriate coping strategy will result in heightened unpleasant emotions, anxiety and a lack in desirable personal dispositions and mental withdrawal (Violanti & Arton, 1993).

The results of the PSI showed that a lack of resources had the most variables with the highest scores reflecting staff shortages, inadequate salary, lack of equipment, lack of recognition and lack of performance on behalf of co-workers. Job demands had fewer variables with high scores namely extra tasks, interruptions and paper work. Police stressors reflected the fewest variables with high scores namely one, seeing criminals go free.

Contact with clients, duration of interaction, number of interactions and time spent with clients relative to job duties increased exhaustion (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Inadequate facilities (Gaines & Jermier, 1983) and low peer support (Burke, Shearer & Deszca, 1984), lack of support and poor communication (Brown & Campbell, 1990) contribute to burnout. Compensation viewed as inadequate and lack of career advancement resulted in exhaustion (Eisenberg, 1975). Golembiewski (1990) stated that lenience towards criminals leads to burnout with officers.

Brown and Campbell (1990) stated that organisation factors related to the highest levels of stress. Kop, Euwena and Schaufeli (1999) confirmed this finding, in that organisational stressors are more prevalent than the nature of the work stressors. The results of the canonical analysis and the results of the PSI confirm this statement, as lack of resources was predominant, followed by job demands and lastly police stressors. The culmination of the variables within and individual's occupation on a continuous basis will result in exhaustion, cynicism and low professional efficacy when passive coping mechanisms are utilised and the police member does not seek social support.

However should problem-focused coping and seeking social support be employed, the individual will probably experience lower levels of exhaustion and cynicism and higher levels of professional efficacy.

Differences between police officers based on the size of stations showed a statistical difference between medium and large stations. Medium stations' results reflected higher levels of exhaustion, cynicism and lower levels of professional efficacy. A possible explanation for this is that medium sized stations are confronted by more job demands because of a variety of roles fulfilled by each member. Larger stations reflected lower levels of exhaustion, cynicism and a higher level of professional efficacy. However this finding was not practically significant.

Differences based on gender and marital status reflected no statistical significance. Weinberg, Edwards and Garone (1980) indicated that women reported more burnout than men. Women are likely to experience more burnout than men because of the conflicting interest between their family and career, however in this study it was not reflected that women reported more burnout than men, as there was no statistical significance between marital status and gender with regard to burnout.

A limitation of this study was that a cross-sectional design was utilised. Accordingly, it is not possible to determine the causality of relationships between the variables.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The SAPS should attend to the stress and coping strategies of their employees with regard to burnout. The following recommendations are made in this regard: Firstly, in a combined management and educational approach that builds interventions, fostering engagement, should be adopted in the SAPS. The engagement intervention enhances the quality of work life and should successfully promote the well-being of employees.

Secondly, pre-service training programmes addressing aspects of coping, emotional strain and burnout are needed. Current officers within the force should offer stress management techniques and receive education identifying the symptoms and initial signs of burnout and how to manage the situation in this regard. The ongoing knowledge and supervision of effective stress management techniques could lead to the reduction of burnout.

Thirdly, as most stressors are at work, the approach is two fold in improving the organisational well-being of the individual employees. Team-based interventions will assist employees in dealing with stress and reducing burnout. As burnout should be managed and dealt with effectively throughout an individual's life, police officers should be offered the alternative of an external psychologist if it is their preference to encourage the prevention of burnout or to enhance the recovery process of burnout.

Fourthly, in house training for problem-focused coping skills should be supplied by means of enabling employees to adapt to adaptive coping skills in the form of stress management skills. Coping skills can then be identified and monitored. Stimulating problem-focused skills and identifying these skills, enable employees to successfully cope and in turn reduce burnout.

Fifthly, the strengths of officers who encompass higher levels of professional efficacy while dealing with job demands, lack of resources and police stressors, should be identified. Through this identification of strengths in-house training programmes can be developed in this regard. The customised in-house programme can enhance the levels of professional efficacy in individuals who experience lower levels of professional efficacy and thus enhance the reduction of burnout.

Future research should focus on causal relationships between stress, coping and burnout. Longitudinal studies could be done on burnout with regard to absenteeism and turnover as to verify whether there is a direct relationship between burnout, absenteeism and turnover.

Research with regard to burnout and personality dimensions could determine the effects of personality differences on burnout dimensions.

Research could be conducted before and after a stress management intervention to ascertain the effects on burnout. Burnout could be measured before and after the stress management intervention as to determine the effectiveness of such an intervention in relation to the reduction of burnout. Lastly, research could be conducted before and after a coping skills intervention to establish the results on burnout dimensions. Burnout should be measured before and after the coping skills intervention as to determine the effectiveness of such an intervention in relation to the reduction of burnout.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The chapter encompasses conclusions regarding the literature review and the empirical study. Thereafter the limitations of the research are mentioned. Lastly recommendations to solve the research problem and future research suggestions are presented.

#### **3.1 CONCLUSIONS**

The general aim of this research was to investigate the relationship between burnout, stress and coping in the SAPS in Gauteng. The following conclusions are derived at pertaining to the constructs of burnout, stress and coping.

Burnout is conceptualised as a psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job. Burnout comprises of three dimensions, namely exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy. Exhaustion refers to the depletion or draining of emotional resources and the feelings of being overextended. Cynicism relates to the interpersonal dimension of burnout and results in a negative, callous or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job and professional efficacy refers to the self-evaluation dimension of burnout and is a feeling of competence, productivity and achievement at work.

Stress is a particular relationship between an individual and the environment, which is appraised by the individual as exceeding or taxing his or her resources and consequently endangering his or her well-being. It is any transactions process in which an organism experiences an alteration of psychological homeostasis. Police work reflects two distinguishable categories of potential stressors. The first reflecting the nature of police work, such as exposure to danger, violence, physical threat and facing the unknown, the second aspect incorporating organisational stressors, such as poor communication, management style and lack of support.

Coping is both an intra-personal and action-orientated effort to manage internal demands and environmental conflicts and demands among them, which tax or exceed the individual's resources. Coping strategies can be adaptive or maladaptive. Coping consists of active and passive dimensions. Active or problem-focused coping is an adaptive coping strategy that consists of attempts to solve the problem by cognitively analysing the situation and by applying concrete actions, in order to alter the source of the stress. Passive coping is a strategy that incorporates avoidance or denial of the stress by utilising cognitive or physical means to achieve the result. Passive coping can be viewed as both adaptive or maladaptive in police work. Passive coping in life threatening situations is viewed as an adaptive coping strategy. Passive coping is an adaptive coping strategy on a short-term basis and is viewed as a maladaptive coping strategy on a long-term basis. Maladaptive coping includes excessive alcohol and drug abuse, overeating and excessive smoking.

From the literature it can be concluded that an increase in occupational stressors and inadequate coping strategies contribute to burnout.

Conclusions made with reference to the empirical objectives are reflected below.

Exhaustion was positively related to cynicism and negatively related to professional efficacy, problem-focused coping and seeking social support. Cynicism was negatively related to professional efficacy, problem-focused coping and seeking social support. Professional efficacy was negatively related to passive coping and positively related to problem-focused coping with a medium effect.

Job demands, lack of resources and police stressors were related to exhaustion and cynicism, but also professional efficacy. This may indicate that although stressors contribute to exhaustion and cynicism, police officers still maintain professional efficacy. Furthermore, low job demands seem to be related to less exhaustion and cynicism, as well as high professional efficacy.

Lack of resources was the most prominent stressor reflecting items as fellow employees lacking in job performance, insufficient personnel, lack of recognition, lack of equipment, inadequate salary, de-motivated co-workers and staff shortages.

Job demands reflect fewer stressors such as extra tasks, interruptions and paper work. Police stressors were least prominent with one prominent stressor, seeing criminals go free.

Police members who use problem-focused coping strategies, who do not cope in a passive way and who seek social support, experience less job demands. Police members who seek social support to cope with stress tend to experience more job demands, lack of job resources and police stressors.

Differences between police officers based on the size of the stations reflected a statistical difference between medium and large stations. Medium stations reflected higher levels of exhaustion and cynicism and lower levels of professional efficacy, compared to larger stations that reflected lower levels of exhaustion, cynicism and a higher level of professional efficacy, but the findings were of no practical value. Differences based on gender and marital status reflected no statistical significance.

From the results it can be concluded that stress was associated with high levels of job demands, lack of resources and police stressors that are related to problem- focused coping. Passive coping resulted in lack of support, leading to exhaustion, cynicism and low professional efficacy. Stressors, namely job demands, lack of resources and police stressors led to burnout, namely exhaustion, cynicism and low professional efficacy. Lack of resources reflects as being the dominant stressor, secondly job demands and lastly police stressors. Low job demands resulted in high levels of professional efficacy and low levels of burnout.

### **3.2 LIMITATIONS**

As a cross-sectional design was employed, in order to determine the relationship between variables thereof. Thus the causal nature of the relationship is not really known. Also, conceptual overload of conceptual definitions occur on specific constructs.

Another limitation could be the possibility that some officers did not trust the confidentiality clause in the test booklet and could have partially or totally inaccurately completed the booklet in fear of being personally identified.

### **3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations for the organisation and future research are made in this section.

#### **3.3.1 Recommendations for the organisation**

A combined management and educational approach that builds interventions encouraging engagement should be utilised. The engagement intervention would enhance the quality of work life and successfully promote employees' well-being.

Pre-service training programs addressing issues regarding how to cope with emotional strain and burnout, with ongoing supervision and knowledge of effective stress management techniques could reduce burnout. Officers currently in the force should be offered stress management techniques and receive education on identifying the signs and symptoms of burnout and how to reverse the situation.

In addition, improving organisational and individual employees' well-being by offering team-building workshops, team-based interventions, thus improving communication and support amongst co-workers could assist employees in dealing with stress and reduce burnout. External psychologists should be made available to police officers to encourage the management of burnout throughout their careers. External psychologists should be utilised if it is the preference of the police officers, as burnout is a facet of life that should be managed correctly, either to prevent burnout or to recover from burnout.

In-house training for problem-focused coping skills, by means of enabling employees to employ adaptive coping skills, in the form of stress management skills programmes should be incorporated. Coping skills can then be identified and monitored. Maladaptive coping such as excessive alcohol, drug-use, overeating and excessive smoking should be monitored. Stimulating problem-focused coping and identifying these skills as well as encouraging access and commitment to stress management training, enables employees to successfully cope and in turn reduce burnout.

The strengths of officers who encompass high levels of professional efficacy while faced with the adversity of high job demands, lack of resources and police stressors should be identified. An in-house training programme can be developed consisting of the strengths identified within these police officers. This customised in-house programme can benefit other police officers, who encompass low professional efficacy. The benefit of the programme can be utilised to reduce burnout.

### **3.3.2 Recommendations for future research**

- Future research should be conducted to pinpoint the causal nature and determine the relationship between variables, as to ascertain which variable causes burnout as well as the relationship between this variable and the remaining variables.
- Longitudinal studies on burnout, inclusive of registered absenteeism and turnover should be conducted, as to determine whether there is a direct relationship between burnout and absenteeism and turnover.
- Research with the inclusion of the personality dimensions should be undertaken to establish the effects of personality differences on burnout dimensions.
- Research should be conducted before and after a stress management intervention to determine the results on burnout dimensions. To conclude as to how effective the intervention was in relation to the deduction of burnout, burnout dimensions should be measured prior to the stress intervention and after the stress intervention.
- Research should be conducted before and after a coping skills intervention to determine the results on burnout dimensions. Burnout dimensions measured before and after the coping skills intervention would conclude how effective the intervention was with regard to the reduction of burnout.



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