



The Impact of Operational Stressors Among Police Officers in Managing Anti-Illegal Drugs Operation in Masbate Police Provincial Office

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the impact of operational stressors on police officers engaged in anti-illegal drug operations, highlighting the importance of promoting well-being and effective law enforcement aligned with global and national security goals. Despite extensive global research on police stress, limited localized studies in the Philippine context—particularly at the provincial level—create a gap in understanding how operational stressors specifically affect officers in anti-illegal drug operations, thereby establishing the originality of this study. It aims to determine the profile of police officers, identify common operational stressors, describe their patterns and levels, assess their impact on performance and well-being, and propose a stress management program. The study utilized a quantitative research design employing a descriptive approach, with respondents drawn from police officers



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of the Masbate Police Provincial Office through total enumeration sampling; data were collected using a validated self-constructed structured questionnaire administered through an online platform, and analyzed using statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, ranking, and weighted mean. Findings revealed that police officers experience significant stress from operational demands, workload, organizational factors, and public perception, which commonly occur and exert varying levels of impact on decision-making, job satisfaction, mental and physical health, interpersonal relationships, and community engagement, as reflected in the frequency, ranking, and weighted mean results across identified variables. Based on these results, the study concludes that operational stressors substantially influence police performance and well-being, thereby necessitating the implementation of a Comprehensive Stress Management and Wellness Program to enhance resilience, improve job performance, and support the overall welfare of police personnel.

INTRODUCTION

Policing in the contemporary global environment is increasingly characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and heightened exposure to psychological and operational risks. The evolving nature of crime—particularly the expansion of transnational drug trafficking networks, organized crime syndicates, and technologically mediated offenses—has intensified the demands placed on law enforcement institutions. Police officers are routinely required to operate in volatile and high-stakes environments that necessitate rapid decision-making under conditions of ambiguity and threat. Empirical evidence from recent international studies demonstrates that such conditions contribute to disproportionately high levels of occupational stress, with police personnel exhibiting elevated risks of anxiety, depression, burnout, and post-traumatic stress disorder compared to the general population (Lee et al., 2020; Wagner et al., 2020). Furthermore, cumulative exposure to critical incidents and chronic organizational pressures has been shown to impair cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, and operational effectiveness, thereby posing significant challenges not only to individual well-being but also to institutional performance (Jetelina et al., 2020; Syed et al., 2020).

In the Philippines, policing faces similar challenges, particularly in the context of intensified anti-illegal drug operations. The Philippine National Police (PNP), as the primary law enforcement agency, has implemented large-scale initiatives such as Project Double Barrel to combat illegal drug activities. While these efforts have resulted in significant operational accomplishments, they have also exposed

police personnel to heightened levels of stress due to prolonged working hours, exposure to violence, and high-risk engagements. According to the Philippine Public Safety College (2021), approximately 42% of PNP personnel report experiencing extreme work-related stress, indicating a substantial gap between operational demands and personnel well-being. Moreover, existing literature highlights that inadequate psychological support, organizational pressures, and stigma surrounding mental health further exacerbate stress among police officers, negatively affecting their performance and overall quality of life (Fix & Powell, 2024; Lim & Parreño, 2020; Mendoza et al., 2020; Queirós et al., 2020).

At the local level, these issues are particularly evident in the Masbate Police Provincial Office, where police officers assigned to anti-illegal drug operations face unique and persistent operational stressors. These include the dangerous nature of field operations, heavy workloads, organizational and leadership challenges, legal and ethical dilemmas, and issues related to public perception. Continuous exposure to these stressors contributes to emotional exhaustion, burnout, and reduced operational effectiveness among officers. Despite the critical nature of these challenges, stress management initiatives within the local policing context remain limited, underutilized, and often hindered by stigma and lack of institutional support. This creates a problematic situation where officers are expected to perform optimally in high-risk environments without adequate psychological and organizational resources to support their well-being. In this context, the Masbate Police Provincial Office provides a critical setting for examining how operational stressors are experienced in a localized, resource-constrained, and high-risk policing environment, thereby highlighting the gap between existing practices and the need for structured, context-specific stress management interventions. Given these global, national, and local challenges, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge by systematically examining the impact of operational stressors on police officers engaged in anti-illegal drug operations in Masbate Province. By identifying key stressors and analyzing their effects on performance and well-being, the study provides an evidence-based foundation for developing a Comprehensive Stress Management and Wellness Program tailored to the needs of law enforcement personnel. Addressing these issues is expected to enhance officers' resilience, improve job satisfaction and operational effectiveness, and strengthen institutional capacity. Ultimately, if these concerns are effectively addressed, the study can contribute to improved police performance, better mental health outcomes, and stronger community trust, thereby supporting the broader goals of sustainable development and effective governance.

FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on three complementary theories that collectively explain the relationship between operational stressors and the well-being and performance of police officers engaged in anti-illegal drug operations. First, the Operational Stressor Theory posits that stress arises from cumulative exposure to high-risk environments, traumatic events, and prolonged operational demands, which strain an officer's psychological and physiological capacity to function effectively (Adler et al., 2009). Second, the Work-Related Stress Theory, grounded in the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and supported by Person-Environment Fit Theory (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011), explains that stress is a result of an individual's cognitive appraisal of environmental demands relative to available resources, emphasizing how mismatches between personal values and organizational conditions lead to burnout and reduced performance. Lastly, the Work Demand Theory, based on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model (Demerouti et al., 2001), highlights that excessive job demands such as workload and emotional strain, when not balanced by sufficient organizational resources like leadership support and training, result in health impairment and diminished motivation. Together, these theories provide a multidimensional framework for understanding how operational stressors influence police officers' decision-making, job satisfaction, health, and overall effectiveness.

This study adopts the Input–Process–Output–Outcome (IPOO) model as its conceptual framework to illustrate the flow of variables. The input includes the police officers' profile, identified operational stressors, and their impact on performance and well-being. The process involves data collection through survey questionnaires and descriptive quantitative analysis to summarize and interpret patterns of stress. The output presents the assessment results, leading to the development of a Proposed Comprehensive Stress Management and Wellness Program. The outcome reflects the enhancement of police officers' well-being, resilience, and operational effectiveness, with a feedback mechanism that supports continuous organizational improvement.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the impact of operational stressors on police officers managing anti-illegal drug operations in the Masbate Police Provincial Office. Specifically, it aims to: (1) determine the profile of police officers in terms of age, gender, civil status, rank, years in service assigned in the

unit, and trainings; (2) identify the common operational stressors experienced by police officers managing illegal drug operations in terms of the nature of operations, workloads and job demands, organizational and leadership factors, legal and ethical challenges, and public perception; (3) assess the impact of identified operational stressors on decision-making and operational effectiveness, job satisfaction and work motivation, mental and physical health, interpersonal and professional relationships, and community relations; and (4) propose a comprehensive stress management and wellness program to address these operational stressors.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to examine the operational stressors experienced by police officers engaged in anti-illegal drug operations and their corresponding impacts. This design focuses on describing existing conditions and patterns as they naturally occur, without manipulating any variables. It allows for a systematic and objective presentation of data related to the respondents' profile, the stressors they encounter, and the effects of these stressors on their performance and well-being.

Instrumentation

The study utilized a self-constructed structured questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into three main parts. The first part gathered information on the respondents' demographic and professional profile, including age, gender, civil status, rank, years in service, and training. The second part identified the common operational stressors experienced by the respondents, categorized into areas such as the nature of operations, workload and job demand, organizational and leadership factors, legal and ethical challenges, and public perception. The third part assessed the impact of these stressors on various aspects of performance and well-being using a four-point Likert scale. The instrument was subjected to expert validation and pilot testing to ensure its clarity, reliability, and appropriateness.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering process was conducted in a systematic and organized manner to ensure accuracy and reliability. The researcher first secured formal permission from the Masbate Police Provincial Office. Upon approval, the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents through an online platform using Google Forms, allowing accessibility and convenience. The survey remained

open for a period of seven days to provide sufficient time for participation. Follow-ups and coordination with unit heads were conducted to ensure adequate response rates. All collected data were handled with strict confidentiality and securely stored to prevent unauthorized access.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study consisted of police officers directly involved in anti-illegal drug operations within the Masbate Police Provincial Office. This included both Police Commissioned Officers and Police Non-Commissioned Officers, covering personnel in frontline and supervisory roles. A total of 194 respondents participated in the study, providing a comprehensive representation of officers engaged in operational activities related to illegal drug enforcement.

Sampling Technique

The study employed total enumeration as the sampling technique, wherein all eligible members of the target population were included in the research. This approach ensured that every police officer involved in anti-illegal drug operations within the selected area had the opportunity to participate. By including the entire population, the study minimized sampling error and provided a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the operational stressors experienced by the group.

Study Site (Research Locale)

The study was conducted at the Masbate Police Provincial Office, located in Masbate City. The province is characterized by its geographic dispersion, consisting of island and rural communities, which present unique challenges for law enforcement operations. Factors such as logistical constraints, socio-economic conditions, and the wide coverage area contribute to the complexity of policing in the region, making it a suitable setting for examining operational stress among police officers.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to ensure meaningful interpretation. Frequency and percentage were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents and the occurrence of operational stressors. Ranking was applied to identify the most common stressors experienced by the respondents. Additionally, the weighted mean was used to assess the level of impact of these stressors on performance and well-being based on responses from the Likert scale. These statistical tools enabled a clear and

systematic presentation of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection. The respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by not disclosing personal identities and by securely handling all collected data. The information gathered was used solely for academic purposes, and all procedures complied with institutional ethical standards.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were used in a limited capacity during research. AI assistance was utilized primarily for language enhancement, grammar checking, and supporting parts of the data interpretation to enhance the analysis based on the researcher's original findings. However, all research data, core analysis, interpretation, and conclusions were developed, reviewed, and validated by the researchers. AI tools were not used to fabricate data, generate original research findings, or replace the intellectual contributions of the authors. The authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, validity, and integrity of the submitted work.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents and interprets the findings in relation to the study objectives. Results are presented in tabular form, followed by discussions supported by relevant literature.

Profile of Police Officers Managing Anti-Illegal Drug Operations

This section delves into the demographic profile of police officers who are directly involved in managing anti-illegal drug operations in Masbate Province. The profile includes key variables such as age, gender, civil status, rank, and years of service. Understanding these characteristics facilitates the how's and knows of personal and professional attributes that may affect the intensity and nature of stress experienced in the performance of duty. Furthermore, this variable aims to explore potential correlations between an officer's background and their capacity to manage the complex challenges and inherent risks involved in anti-illegal drug operations.

Age

The age of police officers is a significant factor in determining their operational readiness, psychological resilience, and capacity to handle the rigors of anti-illegal drug operations. Younger officers often bring high levels of physical energy and adaptability to frontline duties, while older, more seasoned personnel contribute invaluable experience, emotional stability, and refined judgment developed over years of service. By analyzing the age distribution of the force, the study identifies the demographic maturity of the unit and evaluates how different life stages may influence an officer’s vulnerability to or resilience against operational stressors.

Table 1

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
20- 30 years old	34	17.5
31- 40 years old	103	53.1
41- 50 years old	53	27.3
Above 50 years old	4	2.1
Total	194	100

The findings indicate that the majority of police officers fall within the 31 to 40 age group, suggesting a workforce in its operational prime. This indicates that the workforce is largely composed of officers in their operational prime, combining physical capability with accumulated field experience, which may enhance performance but also increase vulnerability to cumulative stress exposure over time. This concentration reflects a balance of experience and physical capability necessary for high-risk anti-illegal drug operations. However, this also implies increased exposure to cumulative stress due to sustained operational demands and leadership expectations. These results conform with occupational stress literature, which highlights that mid-career police officers are especially vulnerable to cumulative stress from extended exposure to high-risk environments, despite the enhancement of their coping strategies and professional skills (Queirós et al., 2020; Violanti et al., 2021).

While officers in this age group benefit from enhanced decision-making and situational awareness, prolonged exposure to high-intensity operational stressors may negatively affect mental health and overall performance. Younger officers may be more vulnerable due to limited experience, whereas mid-career officers may face compounded pressures from both operational responsibilities and leadership roles. From a resilience perspective, these results support the view that

resilience develops through repeated exposure to operational stressors, enabling experienced officers to better regulate stress and maintain performance under pressure (Andersen et al., 2020; Jetelina et al., 2020). These findings highlight the need for age-specific stress management interventions to support resilience and well-being across career stages. Existing studies confirm that policing involves continuous exposure to high-risk stressors, which contribute to psychological strain and burnout, although experience can improve stress regulation and decision-making under pressure

Gender

Gender is a significant demographic variable in law enforcement that influences operational roles, social dynamics, and the perception of occupational stressors. While policing has traditionally been a male-dominated profession, the increasing integration of women into high-stakes units—such as anti-illegal drug operations—reflects evolving organizational structures and a shift toward more diverse tactical teams. Analyzing the gender distribution of the force allows for a better understanding of how different gender-related perspectives and experiences shape the unit's collective resilience and professional environment.

Table 2
Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	174	89.7
Female	20	10.3
Total	194	100

The findings indicate that the majority of police officers involved in anti-illegal drug operations are male, suggesting that frontline policing remains a male-dominated field. This suggests that traditional role assignments persist in high-risk policing, which may influence both exposure to operational stress and differences in coping mechanisms between male and female officers. This distribution reflects the persistence of traditional norms and organizational practices that associate high-risk operational roles with male personnel. However, this also implies potential disparities in role exposure and stress experiences between male and female officers.

Female officers, although fewer in number, may face additional pressures related to role expectations, workplace integration, and work–family demands, while male officers may be more likely to suppress stress due to occupational

norms. These differences can influence coping strategies, well-being, and overall performance in high-risk operations. These findings highlight the need for gender-sensitive stress management interventions and organizational support systems to address varying stress experiences. These findings are consistent with occupational stress and resilience literature, which highlights that gender plays a significant role in shaping both exposure to stressors and coping responses in policing environments. Studies show that female officers are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion and organizational stress, while male officers tend to internalize stress and delay coping responses, reflecting gendered differences in resilience and stress management (Frenkel et al., 2021; Zeng et al., 2020).

Civil Status

The civil status of police officers serves as a primary indicator of their domestic responsibilities and the extent of their external support systems. For those involved in high-stakes anti-illegal drug operations, being married or single can significantly influence how they process operational stress and the degree of work-family conflict they experience. By analyzing this profile, the study identifies the domestic context of the force, allowing for the development of wellness programs that address the specific needs of officers with families versus those who may lack immediate domestic support.

Table 3
Civil Status

Civil status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	35	18
Maried	155	79.9
Widowed	3	1.5
Seperated	1	0.5
Total	194	100

The findings indicate that the majority of police officers managing anti-illegal drug operations in the Masbate Police Provincial Office are married, suggesting that personnel assigned to high-risk operations largely have significant family responsibilities. This implies that a significant portion of the workforce balances demanding operational duties with family responsibilities, potentially increasing work–family conflict and emotional strain. This distribution reflects that experienced officers are often balancing demanding operational duties

with domestic obligations. However, this also implies increased vulnerability to work–family conflict, as unpredictable schedules and high-risk assignments may interfere with family roles and emotional well-being. While marriage may provide emotional support, it can also heighten stress due to concerns about personal safety and its impact on dependents. In contrast, single officers may have greater operational flexibility but may be more susceptible to social isolation. These results more directly substantiate the literature on occupational stress and resilience, highlighting that work–family conflict constitutes a major stressor in high-risk professions, including policing. Research demonstrates that married officers frequently encounter heightened emotional stress stemming from conflicting professional and familial obligations, whereas social support systems are essential in enhancing resilience and coping abilities. Conversely, insufficient social support among single officers may diminish resilience, even in the absence of familial pressures (Sadiq, 2022; Viegas & Henriques, 2021). These findings show the need for family-sensitive policies and support systems, such as flexible scheduling and counseling services, to enhance the well-being and resilience of police personnel.

Rank

The rank of a police officer defines their level of authority, scope of responsibility, and nature of daily duties within the organizational hierarchy. In anti-illegal drug operations, rank often determines whether an officer is engaged in frontline tactical execution or tasked with administrative supervision and strategic command. Analyzing the rank distribution is essential to understanding the chain of command and identifying which cohorts bear the primary physical and psychological burdens of field-based narcotics enforcement.

Table 4
Rank

Ranks	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Police Majoy	2	1
Police Captain	2	1
Police Executive Master Sergeant	6	3.1
Police Chief Master Sergeant	7	3.6
Police Senior Master Sergeant	10	5.2
Police Master Sergeant	30	15.5
Police Staff Sergeant	40	20.6
Police Corporal	61	31.4
Patrolman/Patrolwoman	36	18.55
Total	194	100

The findings indicate that anti-illegal drug operations in the Masbate Police Provincial Office are primarily handled by junior non-commissioned officers, showing that frontline responsibilities are concentrated among lower-ranking personnel. This highlights that frontline operational risks are concentrated among lower-ranking personnel, which may intensify their exposure to stress while limiting their control over decision-making. This suggests increased exposure to high-risk and demanding tasks, while limited authority may further contribute to operational stress. The low presence of higher-ranking officers reflects a supervisory structure with less direct field involvement. These results are consistent with the research on workplace stress and resilience, which suggests that lower-ranking officers are more often assigned to frontline and high-risk responsibilities, rendering them more susceptible to stress and burnout due to their restricted control over work conditions and decision-making power. These circumstances exacerbate psychological stress and diminish coping abilities, necessitating supportive leadership and organizational resources to enhance resilience and alleviate stress among frontline personnel (Syed et al., 2020; Violanti et al., 2021). These findings highlight the need for stronger leadership support and targeted stress management interventions to protect and support frontline officers.

Years of Service in the Unit

The tenure of a police officer—measured by their years in service—is a critical indicator of their operational maturity, technical proficiency, and exposure to

chronic occupational stress. In the context of anti-illegal drug operations, “years in service” represents the transition from a novice learning the complexities of narcotics enforcement to a veteran who has developed sophisticated coping mechanisms and tactical intuition. By analyzing the length of service within the unit, the study identifies whether the force is primarily composed of seasoned professionals or relatively new recruits, which directly impacts the unit’s collective resilience and training needs.

Table 5
Years of Service in the Unit

Years of service in the unit	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	6	3.1
1 to 3 years	18	18
4 to 6 years	41	41
7 to 10 years	45	45
More than 10 years	84	84
Total	194	100

The findings indicate that the workforce managing anti-illegal drug operations in the Masbate Police Provincial Office is predominantly composed of long-serving officers, with the largest proportion having more than 10 years of service. This reflects a highly experienced workforce; however, prolonged exposure to high-risk operations may contribute to cumulative stress, fatigue, and potential burnout. This suggests a high level of operational experience, reflecting strong tactical skills and familiarity with high-risk assignments. However, this also implies increased exposure to cumulative stress, as prolonged service in demanding environments may lead to operational fatigue and burnout. The relatively small number of newly assigned officers highlights limited workforce renewal and potential gaps in succession planning. These findings are consistent with the literature on stress at work and resilience, which demonstrates that years of service markedly affect both stress exposure and the enhancement of coping abilities among police officers. While experienced personnel often cultivate enhanced resilience and superior decision-making through recurrent exposure to critical incidents, extended tenure in high-risk settings is concurrently linked to cumulative stress, fatigue, and burnout, potentially undermining long-term mental health and performance (Andersen et al., 2020; Baldwin et al., 2022; Frenkel et al., 2021; Syed et al., 2020). These results show that we need to keep an eye on our health, manage stress, and develop our staff in a balanced way to

keep both performance and well-being high.

Trainings

Specialized training is a cornerstone of professional development in law enforcement, providing officers with the specific technical skills and legal knowledge required for complex tasks like narcotics enforcement. In the high-stakes environment of anti-illegal drug operations, formal training acts as a critical buffer against operational errors and psychological stress by increasing an officer's competence and confidence. By analyzing the training profile of the unit, the study identifies whether the force is equipped with the specialized expertise necessary to navigate the intricate legal, tactical, and ethical demands of their current assignments.

Table 6
Trainings

Trainings	Frequency	Percentage
None/ Not Applicable	164	84.10
Criminal Investigation Course	4	2.05
Drug Enforcement Course	5	2.57
PDEA Intelligence Seminar	4	2.05
Response indicated 'Yes,' however, the specific training was not identified	18	9.23
Total	194	100%

The findings indicate that the majority of police officers managing anti-illegal drug operations in the Masbate Police Provincial Office have not undergone specialized training, with most reporting no formal preparation in drug enforcement. This suggests a reliance on experiential learning rather than formal preparation, which may limit operational efficiency and increase susceptibility to stress and procedural errors. Officers largely rely on field experience rather than structured training in intelligence, investigation, and legal procedures. However, this also implies increased vulnerability to operational stress and reduced efficiency, as the absence of formal training may limit decision-making accuracy and procedural competence. The small proportion of trained officers and unclear training records further highlight gaps in institutional support and capacity development. The outcome is consistent with studies on workplace stress and resilience, which underscores that structured training is an essential asset in high-risk professions, improving operational readiness, decision-making precision, and

stress management capabilities. Insufficient training heightens susceptibility to stress, operational mistakes, and diminished performance, whereas ongoing and specialized training enhances resilience by augmenting competence, confidence, and adaptability in challenging settings (Christopher et al., 2020; Ledesma & Tinagan, 2020; Queirós et al., 2020). Also, the findings emphasize the need to strengthen training programs, mandate participation in specialized courses, and integrate training into career development to enhance operational effectiveness and officer resilience.

Common Operational Stressors Experienced by Police Officers Managing Illegal Drug Operations

Police officers involved in managing illegal drug operations often face intense and recurring stress due to the high-risk and demanding nature of their duties. These operational stressors can significantly affect their performance, decision-making, and overall well-being. This section presents what the commonly experienced operational stressors are by Police Officers in Masbate PPO in managing illegal drug operations, the nature of operations in terms of workloads and job demands, organization and leadership factors, legal and ethical challenges, and public perception.

Nature of Operations

Anti-illegal drug operations involve high-risk and unpredictable situations that create significant stress for police officers. Tasks such as surveillance and arrests require constant vigilance and rapid decision-making, affecting both performance and well-being.

Table 7
Nature of Operations

Indicators	Frequency	Ranking
1. Frequent exposure to life-threatening situations during anti-illegal drug operations.	114	1
2. Inadequate equipment or firearms significantly hinders operational effectiveness.	21	5
3. Lack of intelligence information before operations is a common challenge.	47	4
4. The unpredictable nature of drug-related incidents creates constant pressure.	67	3
5. Insufficient logistical support (e.g., vehicles, communication devices) adds to operational stress.	69	2

The results in Table 7 indicate that the nature of operations is a major source of stress among police officers. This shows the inherently dangerous and unpredictable environment of drug enforcement, where constant exposure to risk significantly contributes to psychological strain and operational pressure. Exposure to life-threatening situations ranked first, highlighting the high-risk environment that leads to significant psychological and physical strain. Insufficient logistical support ranked second, showing that limited resources increase operational difficulty and stress. The unpredictable nature of drug-related incidents and lack of intelligence information further contribute to uncertainty and pressure, requiring rapid decision-making and increasing risk. Although less frequent, inadequate equipment also affects confidence and effectiveness.

These results are in line with research on stress in the workplace and resilience, which says that police work is dangerous and unpredictable, which makes it much harder on the mind and body. Being in dangerous and quickly changing situations all the time raises stress levels, and not having enough resources makes things even worse by making it harder for officers to deal with stress. In this context, resilience is shaped by both individual capacity and the presence of institutional support systems that facilitate officers’ adaptation and performance under pressure (Laufs & Waseem, 2020; Stogner et al., 2020).

Workloads and Job Demand

Workload and job demand contribute to stress in anti-drug operations, as officers handle high-risk tasks and heavy administrative duties. Long hours and

unpredictable assignments can lead to fatigue and burnout.

Table 8
Workloads and Job Demand

Indicators	Frequency	Ranking
1. Extended working hours due to drug-related cases occur regularly.	103	1
2. High volumes of paperwork and documentation contribute to stress.	71	2
3. Operational demands frequently cause physical and mental exhaustion.	54	4
4. Work responsibilities often conflict with personal time.	61	3
5. Sudden or unplanned assignments significantly increase operational stress.	53	5

The results in Table 8 show that workloads and job demand significantly contribute to operational stress among police officers. This indicates that excessive workload and time demands are key drivers of fatigue and burnout, potentially affecting both performance and long-term well-being. Extended working hours ranked first, indicating that prolonged duties lead to fatigue and increased risk of burnout. High volumes of paperwork and work–life conflict further intensify stress, while physically and mentally demanding tasks add to overall exhaustion. Although less frequent, unplanned assignments also contribute to stress by disrupting schedules. Overall, excessive workload and administrative demands create a high-stress environment that affects both well-being and performance. These findings align with occupational stress and resilience literature, particularly the Job Demands–Resources framework, which explains that excessive workload, time pressure, and cognitive demands significantly increase stress and burnout when not balanced by adequate organizational support. Heavy workloads and extended working hours limit recovery time, intensify work–family conflict, and heighten fatigue, thereby weakening coping capacity. In this context, resilience is influenced by the availability of organizational resources that help mitigate the negative effects of high job demands and sustain performance in high-risk environments (Sadiq, 2022; Giorgi et al., 2020; Zeng et al., 2020).

Organization and Leadership Factors

Organizational support and leadership significantly influence police officers’ stress and working conditions. Factors such as management practices, staffing, and workplace dynamics can either support resilience or contribute to psychological

strain, affecting morale and operational effectiveness.

Table 9
Organization and Leadership Factors

Indicators	Frequency	Ranking
1. Unclear or inconsistent directives from superiors create confusion.	34	4
2. Lack of manpower in the unit increases workload stress.	116	1
3. Unequal task distribution within the team affects morale.	45	3
4. Constructive feedback or guidance from supervisors is often lacking.	25	5
5. Internal politics within the organization negatively impact operational efficiency.	63	2

The results in Table 9 show that organizational and leadership factors significantly contribute to operational stress among police officers. This suggests that structural and leadership limitations play a critical role in shaping stress levels, as insufficient staffing increases workload and reduces operational support. Lack of manpower ranked first, indicating that insufficient personnel increase workload and fatigue. Internal politics and unequal task distribution further contribute to stress by affecting fairness, teamwork, and morale. Communication issues, such as unclear directives and limited feedback from supervisors, also add to confusion and pressure in high-risk operations. Overall, both structural limitations and leadership challenges create a stressful work environment that affects well-being, coordination, and operational effectiveness. These results align with studies on work-related stress and resilience, which underscores that organizational and leadership factors are essential determinants of stress in policing. Poor leadership, lack of support from the organization, and not enough freedom to make decisions all make people more emotionally exhausted and stressed at work. Structural problems like not enough staff and unclear communication make the psychological strain even worse. In this context, resilience is fortified by effective leadership, transparent communication, and supportive organizational systems that augment coping capacity and mitigate the adverse effects of operational stress (Fayyad et al., 2022; Lambert et al., 2023; Murad et al., 2021). These results show that staffing, transparency, and leadership need to be improved. To improve well-being and how well things run, it is important to make support systems and performance management stronger.

Legal and Ethical Challenges

Strict adherence to legal and ethical standards in anti-drug operations creates significant stress due to accountability and procedural demands. Officers must balance high-risk enforcement with strict compliance, where the pressure of scrutiny and precision leads to persistent operational stress.

Table 10
Legal and Ethical Challenges

Indicators	Frequency	Ranking
1. The need to strictly adhere to legal and ethical standards despite operational urgency creates pressure.	75	2
2. Concerns about potential human rights violations contribute to stress.	56	4
3. Fear of facing legal complaints or administrative cases after operations is common.	88	1
4. Complying with judicial procedures and legal documentation poses challenges.	67	3
5. The presence of corrupt elements within law enforcement lowers morale.	31	5

The results show that legal and ethical challenges significantly contribute to operational stress among police officers. Fear of legal complaints ranked first, indicating strong anxiety over post-operation accountability, which may affect confidence and decision-making. The need to strictly follow legal and ethical standards, along with compliance with judicial procedures, further increases cognitive and administrative burden. Concerns about human rights violations and organizational integrity also contribute to stress, though to a lesser extent. These findings imply that legal and ethical pressures require stronger institutional support. This reflects the high accountability environment in policing, where legal risks and procedural scrutiny add significant psychological pressure during and after operations. These findings align with occupational stress and resilience literature, which emphasizes that legal accountability and ethical demands in policing create substantial psychological strain, particularly when officers must balance enforcement with fairness under high-pressure conditions. Fear of legal consequences, moral responsibility, and procedural scrutiny contribute to emotional exhaustion and decision-making stress, while high job demands further intensify pressure and reduce well-being. In this context, resilience is supported through institutional mechanisms such as legal protection, ethical training, and organizational support systems that help officers manage moral and

cognitive demands effectively (Lee et al., 2020; Wu & Makin, 2021; Blumberg et al., 2020).

Public Perception

Public and media perceptions significantly influence police morale, particularly in high-risk operations. Positive recognition can enhance motivation, while negative publicity and criticism increase stress and reduce confidence, shaping the overall operational environment.

Table 11
Public Perception

Indicators	Frequency	Ranking
1. Negative public reactions toward anti-drug operations are frequently encountered.	83	1
2. Media reports criticizing anti-drug operations impact motivation.	62	4
3. Lack of community support hinders efforts to combat illegal drugs.	79	2
4. Accusations of police misconduct in anti-drug operations contribute to stress.	64	3
5. Lack of public trust in law enforcement affects job performance.	52	5

The perception significantly contributes to operational stress, with negative public reactions and lack of community support emerging as the most influential factors. The external criticism not only affects officer morale but also complicates field operations by reducing cooperation and increasing resistance. Issues such as accusations of misconduct and negative media coverage further intensify stress by placing officers under constant scrutiny, which may lead to cautious decision-making and reduced operational confidence. This shows that outside social pressures and public scrutiny have a big effect on officer morale, confidence, and overall effectiveness in the field. These results are consistent with the literature on workplace stress and resilience, which highlights that public perception and external scrutiny are major sources of psychological pressure in law enforcement. Bad press, low public trust, and constant scrutiny from the community and media raise anxiety, lower morale, and affect decision-making, especially in high-risk operations. How fair and right something seems also has a big effect on how motivated and happy police officers are. In this context, resilience is bolstered by positive police-community relations, transparency, and organizational support

that assist officers in navigating external pressures and sustaining confidence in their roles (Nix & Pickett, 2021; Krauss et al., 2021). To lessen outside pressure, improve cooperation, and help law enforcement get better results, it is important to strengthen relationships with the community, be open, and communicate.

Impact of Identified Operational Stressors

This part presents the impact of operational stressors on police officers engaged in anti-illegal drug operations. These stressors influence various aspects of their professional and personal functioning, affecting their performance, well-being, and interactions in the line of duty. Understanding these effects is essential in identifying areas where support and interventions are needed to maintain effective and sustainable law enforcement practices.

Decision-Making and Operational Effectiveness

Decision-making and operational effectiveness are critical in anti-illegal drug operations, where officers must act quickly under pressure. However, exposure to high-risk conditions and operational demands can impair judgment and reduce effectiveness in the field.

The operational stressors have a high impact on decision-making and operational effectiveness, with all indicators rated as High Impact. Stress most strongly affects quick decision-making and risk assessment, suggesting that cognitive functions are particularly vulnerable under pressure. It also contributes to hesitation, reduced focus, and decreased composure, which can impair timely and effective action during operations. In general, the findings show that stress not only affects individual performance but also influences overall mission success.

Table 12
Decision Making and Operational Effectiveness

Indicators	TWM	A. I
1. Stress affects the ability to make quick and sound decisions during anti-drug operations.	2.72	HI
2. Stressors impact the ability to assess risks accurately before conducting an operation.	2.68	HI
3. Operational stressors lead to hesitation or delays in executing police interventions.	2.63	HI
4. Stress affects the ability to remain focused and composed during high-pressure situations.	2.60	HI
5. Stress-related factors influence the success rate of anti-illegal drug operations.	2.61	HI
AWM	2.65	HI

Legend: 3.50-4.00 - Very High Impact (VHI), 2.50-3.49 - High Impact (HI), 1.50-2.49 - Moderate Impact (MI), 1.00-1.49 - No Impact (NI)

These results suggest that stress disrupts both cognitive and operational capabilities, making officers more prone to delayed or cautious responses in high-risk situations. This highlights the importance of strengthening resilience and decision-making capacity under pressure. The findings imply the need for targeted interventions such as resilience training, simulation-based exercises, and stress management programs. Strengthening organizational support, including workload management and leadership, is also essential to reduce stress and improve overall operational effectiveness.

These results correspond with previous studies on stress in the workplace and resilience, indicating that operational stress markedly diminishes cognitive functions, including attention, perception, and decision-making, especially in high-risk settings. Stress diminishes memory precision and information processing, heightens the probability of errors stemming from fatigue and sleep disturbances, and progressively undermines cognitive and emotional functioning. These effects together make work less effective and put more stress on the mind. In this context, resilience is bolstered by training, stress management interventions, and organizational support systems that improve officers' capacity to sustain cognitive performance and adapt proficiently under pressure (Andersen et al., 2020; Di Nota et al., 2021; Giessing et al., 2020; Ryu et al., 2020; Scullin et al., 2020). These findings reinforce the need for comprehensive strategies that integrate resilience-building programs and organizational support to sustain decision-making effectiveness and overall police performance.

Job Satisfaction and Work Motivation

Job satisfaction and work motivation influence officers' commitment in high-risk anti-illegal drug operations. However, continuous exposure to danger, heavy workload, and stress may reduce motivation and overall job fulfillment.

Table 13

Job Satisfaction and Work Motivation

Indicators	TWM	A.I
1. Operational stressors reduce my enthusiasm for performing my duties.	2.61	HI
2. Work-related stress decreases my motivation to participate in anti-illegal drug operations.	2.55	HI
3. Resigning or requesting reassignment was considered due to stress from drug-related operations.	2.43	MI
4. Stress impacts the level of job satisfaction in law enforcement.	2.53	HI
5. The emotional toll of anti-drug operations decreases work motivation.	2.52	HI
AWM	2.53	HI

Legend: 3.50-4.00 - Very High Impact (VHI), 2.50-3.49 - High Impact (HI), 1.50-2.49 - Moderate Impact (MI), 1.00-1.49 - No Impact (NI)

The operational stressors have a high impact on job satisfaction and work motivation. Stress most strongly reduces enthusiasm and motivation, indicating that prolonged exposure to demanding conditions weakens officers' engagement in their duties. It also affects overall job satisfaction and contributes to emotional exhaustion, suggesting that stress not only influences performance but also how officers perceive and value their work. Although less pronounced, the consideration of reassignment indicates that stress may gradually affect retention. These findings suggest that continuous exposure to stress diminishes both motivation and emotional commitment, potentially affecting long-term workforce stability.

These results are consistent with the literature on occupational stress and resilience, particularly the Job Demands–Resources framework, which posits that excessive job demands and persistent pressure result in emotional exhaustion, diminished motivation, and decreased job satisfaction, particularly in high-risk occupations such as policing. Long-term stress makes people less engaged and less happy with their jobs, and not getting enough help from the company makes these bad effects even worse. In this context, resilience is bolstered by supportive leadership, efficient workload management, and organizational resources that

foster motivation, improve well-being, and ensure long-term commitment among employees (Hu et al., 2021; Sadiq, 2022). The findings imply the need for strategies that enhance motivation and well-being, such as improved working conditions, stress management programs, and supportive leadership. Strengthening engagement and providing career support are essential to maintain morale, prevent burnout, and sustain operational effectiveness.

Mental and Physical Health

Mental and physical health are essential to police officers’ performance, particularly in high-stress operations. Continuous exposure to pressure, irregular hours, and emotional strain can lead to fatigue and health issues that affect overall effectiveness.

Table 14
Mental and Physical Health

Indicators	TWM	A.I
1. Experienced fatigue or exhaustion due to the demands of anti-drug operations.	2.51	HI
2. Stressors from drug-related operations contribute to anxiety, depression, or sleep disturbances.	2.37	MI
3. Suffered from physical ailments (e.g., headaches, high blood pressure) due to operational stress.	2.35	MI
4. Prolonged exposure to stressful situations affects overall mental well-being.	2.41	MI
5. Operational stress impacts the ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle.	2.42	MI
AWM	2.412	MI

Legend: 3.50-4.00 - Very High Impact (VHI), 2.50-3.49 - High Impact (HI), 1.50-2.49 - Moderate Impact (MI), 1.00-1.49 - No Impact (NI)

These findings align with occupational stress and resilience literature, which shows that prolonged exposure to operational stress disrupts sleep, impairs cognitive and emotional functioning, and increases the risk of anxiety, depression, and burnout among police officers. Stress-related fatigue and unhealthy coping behaviors further contribute to physical health problems, indicating that the cumulative effects of stress gradually weaken both mental and physical resilience over time. In this context, resilience is strengthened through early psychological interventions, adequate recovery, and wellness programs that support both physical and mental health in high-risk environments (Craddock & Telesco, 2022; Grupe et al., 2021; Ogińska-Bulik & Juczyński, 2021; Sørengaard et al.,

2021). The findings show the need for improved workload management, mental health support, and wellness programs. Ensuring adequate rest, promoting healthy lifestyles, and providing early psychological interventions are essential to prevent long-term health issues and sustain officer performance.

Interpersonal and Professional Relationships

Interpersonal and professional relationships are essential for teamwork and coordination in high-risk police operations. However, operational stress can disrupt communication, weaken trust, and affect both workplace dynamics and personal relationships, highlighting the need for a supportive and balanced work environment.

Table 15
Interpersonal and Professional Relationships

Indicators	TWM	AI
1. Stress from anti-drug operations causes conflicts between my colleagues and me.	2.29	MI
2. Work-related stress negatively affects my relationships with family and friends.	2.28	MI
3. I struggle to communicate effectively with my peers due to operational stress.	2.24	MI
4. Stress impacts teamwork and coordination within my unit.	2.29	MI
5. Operational pressure affects my ability to maintain professionalism in interactions with superiors and subordinates.	2.26	MI
AWM	2.27	MI

Legend: 3.50-4.00 - Very High Impact (VHI), 2.50-3.49 - High Impact (HI), 1.50-2.49 - Moderate Impact (MI), 1.00-1.49 - No Impact (NI)

The results show that operational stressors have a moderate impact on interpersonal and professional relationships. Stress contributes to workplace conflicts, reduced teamwork, and communication difficulties, indicating that pressure can weaken coordination and mutual understanding. It also affects relationships outside work, suggesting that stress extends beyond the professional setting. While not severe, these consistent effects may gradually impact unit cohesion and overall work dynamics. These results suggest that ongoing stress can subtly disrupt relationships over time, affecting both collaboration and personal connections.

These findings align with occupational stress and resilience literature, which indicates that exposure to high job demands and traumatic events contributes

to work–family conflict, emotional exhaustion, and reduced job satisfaction, thereby straining both personal and professional relationships. Operational stress is also associated with burnout, decreased empathy, and social withdrawal, which can weaken communication, teamwork, and overall unit cohesion. In this context, resilience is supported through strong social support systems, effective communication, and organizational practices that promote work–life balance and positive work environments, helping officers maintain healthy relationships despite operational pressures (McCanlies et al., 2018; Purba & Demou, 2020; Papazoglou et al., 2020; Stogner et al., 2020). The results highlight the need to improve teamwork, communication skills, and stress management programs. Encouraging work–life balance, supportive leadership, and a positive work environment is essential to maintain strong relationships and effective coordination in high-pressure operations.

Community Relations

Community relations are a vital aspect of effective policing, particularly in anti-illegal drug operations where trust and cooperation between officers and citizens significantly impact success. The ability of officers to maintain positive public engagement despite the pressures of their work is essential to sustaining police legitimacy and fostering collaborative crime prevention efforts. Understanding how operational stress influences these interactions provides critical insights into improving police-community partnerships.

Table 16
Community Relations

Indicators	TWM	A.I
1. Operational stress affects the ability to engage positively with the community.	2.35	MI
2. Stressors reduce the willingness to participate in community policing initiatives.	2.34	MI
3. Public distrust, criticism, or negative perception increases stress levels.	2.37	MI
4. Operational stress impacts the ability to foster good relationships with community stakeholders.	2.37	MI
5. Stress from anti-drug operations hinders the ability to promote police-community collaboration.	2.34	MI
AWM	2.35	MI

Legend: 3.50-4.00 - Very High Impact (VHI), 2.50-3.49 - High Impact (HI), 1.50-2.49 - Moderate Impact (MI), 1.00-1.49 - No Impact (NI)

The results show that operational stressors have a moderate impact on community relations, consistently affecting officers' interactions with the public. Public distrust and negative perceptions are the most influential factors, indicating that external pressures shape stress and communication. Stress also affects relationship-building, positive engagement, and participation in community policing, while reducing collaboration. Overall, operational stress influences trust, engagement, and partnerships, which may weaken long-term police-community relationships.

These findings align with occupational stress and resilience literature, which indicates that exposure to critical incidents and job-related pressures affects officers' trust and interactions with the public, thereby weakening relationship-building efforts. Stress and demanding work conditions may also foster an "us versus them" mindset, limiting effective communication and engagement with community members. In addition, public perception and trust play a crucial role in shaping police-community relations, as negative feedback and low confidence in law enforcement reduce cooperation and increase psychological pressure on officers. In this context, resilience is strengthened through community engagement, transparency, and organizational support systems that help officers manage external pressures and maintain positive public interactions (Bonnar-White et al., 2022; Burke, 2020; Deri et al., 2020). The findings suggest that even moderate stress can affect community engagement. Improving communication, transparency, and trust-building is essential in addressing public distrust. Providing stress management support can help maintain officers' motivation. Strengthening interpersonal and community relations training, along with organizational support, can enhance public trust and sustain effective police-community partnerships.

Comprehensive Stress Management and Wellness Program to Address Operational Stressors

The "LIGTAS ISIP, LIGTAS BUHAY" Comprehensive Stress Management and Wellness Program (CSMWP) is a structured and holistic initiative designed to address the multidimensional operational stressors experienced by police officers engaged in anti-illegal drug operations. Grounded in psychological and occupational frameworks, the program integrates mental health support, physical wellness, organizational reforms, and resilience training to enhance officers' overall well-being and operational capacity. It responds directly to the identified stressors by providing systematic interventions that promote psychological stability, physical health, and effective coping mechanisms in high-risk environments.

The program adopts a phased implementation approach supported by

continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure sustainability and effectiveness. Through coordinated efforts among key agencies and support systems, it aims to improve resilience, reduce burnout, strengthen morale, and enhance operational performance. Ultimately, the program seeks to institutionalize a culture of wellness within the police organization, enabling officers to maintain optimal functioning while fostering stronger relationships within the unit and with the community.

CONCLUSION

The demographic and professional composition of personnel reflects diversity in experience, role exposure, and capacity to manage operational demands, indicating that individual differences influence how stress is encountered and managed in high-risk policing environments. Building on this, the operational setting itself is marked by a convergence of high-risk field conditions, heavy workload demands, organizational and leadership constraints, legal accountability pressures, and heightened public scrutiny, all of which collectively create a multidimensional and persistent source of stress in anti-illegal drug operations. As a result, the impact of operational stress becomes extensive, significantly impairing decision-making and operational effectiveness, reducing motivation and job satisfaction, and moderately affecting health, interpersonal relationships, and community engagement—demonstrating that stress influences both performance and overall functioning. This study contributes novel insight by integrating the analysis of operational stressors across these domains with the development of a comprehensive wellness program framework, ensuring that each identified stressor directly informs targeted intervention strategies. Given these cumulative conditions, there is a clear need for the development of a Comprehensive Stress Management and Wellness Program, which serves as a structured and integrated response to address the systemic and multifaceted nature of operational stress. To enhance practical application, the study highlights actionable measures for police leadership and policymakers, including strengthening resilience training, improving workload distribution, enhancing leadership and organizational support systems, and institutionalizing accessible mental health services. Furthermore, the findings emphasize the importance of bridging the gap between operational demands and officer well-being by aligning policies, resources, and support mechanisms with the actual stress conditions experienced in the field, thereby promoting sustained performance, improved morale, and long-term organizational effectiveness.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

This study translates empirical findings on operational stressors among police officers into a practical and evidence-based intervention through the development of the “*LIGTAS ISIP, LIGTAS BUHAY*” *Comprehensive Stress Management and Wellness Program (CSMWP)*. Grounded in the identified multidimensional stressors—ranging from high-risk operational demands, organizational constraints, legal pressures, and public scrutiny—the program serves as a direct application of research into actionable strategies aimed at improving officers’ well-being and performance. The translational value of this research lies in bridging the gap between theoretical understanding and real-world policing practice. Findings indicating that operational stress significantly affects decision-making, motivation, health, interpersonal relationships, and community engagement were used to design targeted interventions that address these domains holistically. The program integrates psychological support services, resilience training, organizational reforms, logistical support, and community engagement initiatives, ensuring that both internal and external stressors are systematically addressed.

Furthermore, this research supports institutional change by providing a structured framework that can be adopted by police units, particularly those engaged in anti-illegal drug operations. By incorporating preventive, supportive, and developmental services, the program enhances officers’ coping mechanisms, promotes mental health awareness, and strengthens professional competencies. It also emphasizes continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure sustainability and effectiveness over time. Ultimately, the study demonstrates how research findings can inform policy and program development within the Philippine National Police. The implementation of this wellness program is expected to reduce burnout, improve operational efficiency, strengthen interpersonal and community relations, and foster a culture of resilience and well-being. As such, this translational research contributes not only to academic knowledge but also to practical improvements in policing practices and organizational performance.

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