
**STRESS AND ANXIETY OF PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE (PNP):
BASIS FOR A DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined organizational stress, operational stress, and anxiety among 630 Philippine National Police (PNP) personnel of the Special Operations Units (SOUs) of the PNP Drug Enforcement Group (PNP-DEG), most of whom were entry-level officers holding baccalaureate degrees. Anchored in Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, the study used a quantitative descriptive-comparative and correlational design, gathering responses through the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op), Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org), and Job Anxiety Scale (JAS). Results showed generally low levels of occupational stress and work-related anxiety across all measured domains, reflecting strong professional resilience and adaptive coping. Welch's ANOVA revealed that educational attainment and rank significantly influenced organizational stress ($p < .05$), while operational stress and all anxiety dimensions remained statistically uniform across demographic groups. Pearson correlation further confirmed a significant positive relationship between stress and anxiety ($p < .01$), indicating that heightened occupational friction systematically raises psychological tension. Grounded in these findings and the mandates of Republic Act No. 11036 (Philippine Mental Health Act), the study proposes an institutionalized three-phase development program comprising routine psychological screening, resilience-oriented cognitive reframing, and continuous stress-threshold monitoring to strengthen mental health recovery, reduce occupational stigma, and sustain long-term operational readiness.

KEYWORDS: Occupational stress; Anxiety; PNP personnel; Rank; Development program.

1. INTRODUCTION

Policing is widely recognized as a high-risk profession in which chronic organizational and operational pressures can erode psychological well-being, job performance, and decision-making [1]. Studies of frontline law enforcement personnel report a high prevalence and severity of stress-related symptoms relative to other occupations [2], with far-reaching implications for morale, retention, and public safety.

In the Philippines, officers of the Philippine National Police (PNP) contend with additional layers of strain — resource limitations, irregular schedules, and bureaucratic constraints — on top of the universal hazards of policing. Evaluations of Philippine public-sector frontline service providers link chronic logistical inadequacy directly to occupational stress and diminished psychological well-being [3], and local studies of PNP personnel similarly point to workload and resource-related pressures as recurring sources of strain [4]. Despite these concerns, empirical research quantifying stress and anxiety specifically among the PNP Drug Enforcement Group's (PNP-DEG) Special Operations Units (SOUs) — the organization's frontline drug-enforcement arm — remains limited.

Understanding how stress and anxiety in this population vary by rank and educational attainment, and how the two constructs relate to one another, is necessary to design an intervention proportionate to actual need. This study therefore examined organizational stress, operational stress, and anxiety among 630 PNP-DEG SOU personnel; tested whether these levels differ significantly by rank and educational attainment; examined the relationship between stress and anxiety; and used the findings as the empirical basis for a three-phase institutional development program.

2. Literature Survey

The study is anchored in the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping [5,6], which frames stress as arising from an individual's cognitive appraisal of external demands relative to their perceived coping resources: when demands are appraised as exceeding available resources, psychological distress and anxiety follow. An officer's self-efficacy — their belief in their own capacity to execute tasks under pressure — further shapes this appraisal process and its behavioral outcomes [7].

Empirical literature on police stress consistently separates operational stressors (the acute, event-driven dangers of frontline work) from organizational stressors (the chronic, administrative and structural pressures generated by the agency itself), with rank and organizational position identified as a stable moderator of the latter [8]. Chronic

organizational strain — excessive workload, poor supervisory support, and structural friction — has been linked to burnout and, in more severe cases, aggressive or violent on-the-job behavior [9], echoing the resource-demand imbalance described in occupational models of workplace burnout [10]. Officers who rely on maladaptive or avoidant coping strategies report higher stress and poorer psychological outcomes than those who employ adaptive, problem-focused coping [11], and unmanaged occupational stress has been associated with a broad range of negative mental, physical, and behavioral outcomes [12], including post-traumatic distress [13] and, in prospective designs, elevated risk of post-traumatic stress disorder [14]. These effects extend into officers' physical health, with occupational stress shown to disrupt sleep quality through demanding shift and work characteristics [15].

Systematic reviews of the coping literature confirm that adaptive coping mechanisms buffer officers against the psychological toll of stress exposure [16,17], while studies of traumatic exposure in policing show that unresolved operational strain can progress to clinical post-traumatic symptoms if left unaddressed [18]. At the organizational level, chronic structural stressors have also been directly linked to elevated police suicide risk [19] and diminished day-to-day performance [20], underscoring that organizational, rather than purely operational, factors are frequently the more consequential long-term threat to officer well-being. Institutional and peer-based support structures have, in turn, been shown to buffer specialized personnel against these cumulative pressures [21].

Locally, Philippine-based studies of police personnel similarly report significant occupational stress linked to workload and resource constraints [22,4], and personnel with a stronger capacity to convert hardship into adaptive response tend to manage occupational stress more effectively [22]. Consistent with international findings, structured institutional training has been shown to mitigate operational anxiety among Philippine police personnel, equipping officers with the cognitive and tactical readiness needed to function under pressure [23]. At the policy level, Republic Act No. 11036 (the Philippine Mental Health Act) and its implementing rules mandate the integration of proactive, workplace-based mental health services across government institutions [24], establishing the legal foundation for an institutionalized, rather than purely voluntary, approach to police wellness.

Taken together, the literature converges on a central finding: organizational strain, more than the inherent danger of police work, is the more consistent driver of burnout, anxiety, and long-term psychological decline, and its effects are shaped by demographic and structural variables such as rank. This synthesis frames the present study's premise — that a structured,

institutionalized development program, rather than ad hoc, individually focused coping, is required to sustain the long-term psychological readiness of PNP-DEG personnel.

3. Problem Definition

This study assessed the levels of stress and anxiety among PNP-DEG Special Operations Unit personnel and used the findings as the basis for a targeted development program. Specifically, it sought to: (1) describe the profile of PNP personnel in terms of rank classification and highest educational attainment; (2) determine the level of stress experienced in terms of organizational and operational stressors; (3) determine the level of anxiety in terms of stimulus-related anxiety and avoidance behavior, social anxieties, health-related anxieties, cognition of insufficiency, and work-related worries; (4) determine whether stress and anxiety differ significantly when personnel are grouped according to rank and educational attainment; (5) determine whether a significant relationship exists between the level of stress and the level of anxiety; and (6) propose a development program grounded in the findings.

Two null hypotheses were tested at $\alpha = 0.05$:

H01: There is no significant difference in the perceived level of stress and anxiety among PNP personnel when grouped according to rank and educational attainment.

H02: There is no significant relationship between the perceived level of stress and the perceived level of anxiety among PNP personnel.

4. METHODOLOGY/APPROACH

This study used a quantitative descriptive-comparative and correlational design. The descriptive component established the demographic profile of respondents and quantified perceived organizational stress, operational stress, and anxiety; the comparative component tested for differences by rank and educational attainment; and the correlational component examined the relationship between stress and anxiety.

Data were gathered through a structured online questionnaire (Google Forms) covering three sections: a researcher-developed demographic profile, and two standardized instruments — the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op) and Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org) [25] (Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$ and $.92$, respectively), each rated on a 7-point scale from 1 ("No Stress At All") to 7 ("A Lot of Stress"); and the 70-item Job Anxiety Scale (JAS) [26] ($\alpha = .85$ – $.94$ across five dimensions), rated on a 5-point scale from 1

("Absolutely Disagree") to 5 ("Absolutely Agree"). Formal permission to use both instruments was secured from their developers.

The population comprised 905 Police Non-Commissioned Officers assigned to 18 Special Operations Units (SOUs) of the PNP-DEG nationwide. A total enumeration (census) approach was attempted; 630 personnel responded, for a 69.6% response rate, with the distribution of respondents across strata closely mirroring the population distribution.

Following endorsement from PNP-DEG leadership and unit administrative offices, the survey was administered online nationwide in 2026, preceded by a digital informed-consent process. Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies) summarized the primary variables. Because Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated non-normality typical of a sample this size, the Central Limit Theorem was invoked to justify parametric analysis. Levene's test indicated heterogeneity of variance across groups, so Welch's ANOVA (with Tukey HSD post hoc comparisons where applicable) was used to test for group differences, and Pearson product-moment correlation was used to test the stress-anxiety relationship. All analyses used IBM SPSS Statistics at $\alpha = 0.05$. The study followed standard ethical protocols for voluntary participation, anonymity, and data-privacy compliance.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents and sampling summary. (N = 630)

Category	f	%
Rank		
Patrolman	466	74.0
Police Corporal	95	15.1
Police Staff Sergeant	35	5.6
Police Master Sergeant	8	1.3
Police Senior Master Sergeant	9	1.4
Police Chief Master Sergeant	13	2.1
Police Executive Master Sergeant	4	0.6
Highest Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's Degree	613	97.3
Bachelor's with Master's Units	11	1.7
Master's Degree	6	1.0
Total Respondents (of N = 905 population; 69.6% response rate)	630	100

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Profile of Respondents

Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of respondents. The workforce was predominantly composed of entry-level personnel, with Patrolmen comprising 74.0% ($n = 466$) of respondents, and the vast majority (97.3%, $n = 613$) holding a bachelor's degree only. This concentration of frontline personnel in the entry ranks means that the baseline stress and anxiety levels captured in this study primarily reflect the ground-level experience of junior officers in high-risk drug-enforcement operations, while their generally strong educational foundation may function as a cognitive buffer supporting adaptive appraisal of workplace demands [6,7].

5.2 Level of Stress

Table 2. Summary of occupational stress levels.

Stress Type	Mean	Interpretation	Leading Indicators (Mean)
Organizational	2.81	Low	Lack of resources (3.19); Staff shortages (2.99); Dealing with the court system (2.97)
Operational	1.88	Low	Risk of injury on the job (2.32); Limited time with friends/family (2.11); Traumatic events (2.09)

Both organizational stress ($M = 2.81$) and operational stress ($M = 1.88$) were rated “Low” overall (Table 2). Lack of resources, staff shortages, and dealing with the court system were the leading organizational stressors, while risk of injury, limited time with family, and exposure to traumatic events led the operational domain. This pattern — logistical and structural friction outweighing interpersonal conflict — is consistent with resource-demand models of occupational stress, in which insufficient institutional resources relative to job demands produce a persistent baseline strain rather than acute conflict [10]. That physical danger, while the highest-rated operational item, still fell within the “Low” range suggests personnel have largely normalized operational risk as a routine feature of their duties, consistent with reports that structured institutional training builds the tactical and cognitive readiness needed to function under pressure [23]. This pattern nonetheless warrants monitoring, as unaddressed low-level structural friction can accumulate into more serious strain over time [19].

5.3 Level of Anxiety

Table 3. Summary of anxiety levels by dimension.

Dimension	Mean	Interpretation
Stimulus-related anxiety and avoidance behavior	1.51	Low Anxiety
Social anxieties	1.30	Low Anxiety
Health-related anxieties	1.27	Low Anxiety
Cognition of insufficiency	1.29	Low Anxiety
Work-related worries	1.46	Low Anxiety

Anxiety was rated “Low” across all five dimensions (Table 3), with stimulus-related anxiety and avoidance behavior registering the highest mean (1.51) — driven largely by hyper-alertness while on duty rather than avoidance of the workplace itself. This combination of moderate vigilance and minimal avoidance is functionally adaptive for law enforcement work: it preserves cognitive resources for rapid tactical decision-making without the workplace impairment that characterizes clinical anxiety. Left unregulated, however, sustained hypervigilance carries a documented risk of progressing to more serious post-traumatic symptoms over time [14,18], reinforcing the case for structured “decompression” practices following high-stakes deployments.

5.4 Differences by Rank and Educational Attainment

Table 4. Welch's ANOVA results for stress and anxiety by educational attainment and rank. (N = 630)

Variable	Educ. F	Educ. p	Rank F	Rank p
Organizational Stress	7.106	.013*	10.215	.000*
Operational Stress	3.128	.093	0.871	.531
Stimulus-Related Anxiety	2.681	.122	0.812	.572
Social Anxieties	2.737	.118	0.952	.479
Health-Related Anxieties	2.823	.112	1.143	.369
Cognition of Insufficiency	2.563	.131	1.235	.325
Work-Related Worries	1.991	.192	0.833	.557

* $p < .05$.

Welch's ANOVA (Table 4) indicated that educational attainment ($F = 7.106$, $df1 = 2$, $df2 = 9.337$, $p = .013$) and rank ($F = 10.215$, $df1 = 6$, $df2 = 25.509$, $p = .000$) each significantly influenced organizational stress, while neither variable produced significant differences in operational stress or any anxiety dimension (all $p > .05$). This selective effect is consistent

with the literature identifying rank as a stable moderator of organizational, rather than operational, stress [8]: as officers accumulate rank, administrative and supervisory demands intensify, while the frontline dangers and general psychological pressures of policing remain comparatively constant across the hierarchy. Practically, this suggests that administrative and leadership-focused interventions should be differentiated by rank and educational attainment, while operational mental health support should remain uniformly accessible to personnel regardless of position.

5.5 Relationship Between Stress and Anxiety

Table 5. Correlation matrix for stress and anxiety variables. (N = 630)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Organizational Stress	—						
2. Operational Stress	.679**	—					
3. Stimulus-Related Anxiety	.407**	.571**	—				
4. Social Anxieties	.314**	.455**	.774**	—			
5. Health-Related Anxieties	.259**	.407**	.741**	.917**	—		
6. Cognition of Insufficiency	.298**	.439**	.715**	.906**	.922**	—	
7. Work-Related Worries	.371**	.487**	.679**	.777**	.760**	.782**	—

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

All correlations among the stress and anxiety variables were positive and significant at the .01 level (Table 5), leading to rejection of H02. Operational stress correlated most strongly with stimulus-related anxiety ($r = .571$), indicating that field-level pressure is a primary driver of heightened alertness and tension, consistent with prospective evidence linking sustained operational stress to elevated post-traumatic and anxiety symptoms over time [14]. The anxiety sub-scales were also highly inter-correlated (e.g., cognition of insufficiency and health-related anxieties, $r = .922$), suggesting these states cluster into an integrated psychological response rather than operating independently. Because stress and anxiety are this tightly linked, interventions targeting a single stressor — such as resource-related organizational strain — are likely to produce measurable improvements across multiple anxiety domains simultaneously, supporting a holistic rather than piecemeal approach to occupational wellness [24].

5.6 Proposed Development Program

Table 6. Institutional Psychological Maintenance and Resilience Enhancement Development Program.

Phase	Objective	Key Strategies	Responsible Office / Timeline
I. Screening	Establish and monitor baseline psychological health; detect early signs of operational fatigue	Mandatory quarterly psychological wellness testing (PSQ, JAS) integrated into operational clearances; confidential one-on-one post-deployment debriefings	PNP Health Service; Unit Commanders — Quarterly
II. Training	Mitigate cognition of insufficiency and equip personnel with psychological detachment skills	Intensive seminars on stress management, cognitive reframing, and resilience embedded into mandatory career schooling; flexible scheduling to accommodate frontline duties	PNP Training Service; HRDD — Biannually
III. Monitoring	Continuously track organizational stressors and provide immediate logistical and psychological interventions	Unit logistics audits to identify critical equipment/personnel shortages; internal reporting dashboard for resource gaps; formalized “post-operation decompression” as official duty	Admin. and Resource Mgmt. Division — Monthly tracking; annual review

Grounded in these findings, the study proposes an Institutional Psychological Maintenance and Resilience Enhancement Development Program, structured in three phases (Table 6): (I) routine, quarterly psychological screening using the same standardized instruments applied in this study; (II) biannual resilience and cognitive-reframing training differentiated by rank and educational attainment; and (III) continuous logistical and stress-threshold monitoring to address resource-related organizational friction before it accumulates. Institutionalizing screening and “decompression” practices as standard duty, rather than voluntary options, is intended to bypass the occupational stigma that otherwise discourages personnel from seeking support, and is grounded in the legal mandate of RA 11036 [24].

6. CONCLUSION

The PNP-DEG Special Operations Units workforce is predominantly composed of entry-level, non-commissioned Patrolmen holding baccalaureate degrees. Personnel perceive both organizational and operational stress, and all five dimensions of anxiety, at generally low levels, reflecting strong professional resilience and adaptive coping rather than the absence of occupational strain. Educational attainment and rank significantly shape organizational stress specifically, while operational stress and anxiety remain uniform across these demographic

groups, indicating that frontline and general psychological pressures affect personnel irrespective of rank or education. Critically, stress and anxiety are significantly and positively related across all measured dimensions, confirming that unaddressed occupational stress systematically elevates psychological tension. These findings support the adoption of an institutionalized, three-phase development program combining routine screening, resilience training, and continuous monitoring to sustain the long-term mental well-being and operational readiness of PNP-DEG personnel.

7. Future Scope

Because this study was confined to uniformed PNP-DEG personnel within the Special Operations Units and relied on self-reported survey data, its findings may not generalize to other PNP units or law-enforcement agencies operating under different mandates, and are subject to the response biases inherent in self-report instruments. Future research should extend this design to other PNP formations and comparable law-enforcement agencies, incorporate qualitative methods to explore the lived experience of hypervigilance and organizational friction in greater depth, and track additional demographic variables such as length of service and gender. Longitudinal evaluation of the proposed three-phase development program is particularly needed to determine whether institutionalized screening and resilience training measurably reduce organizational stress and anxiety over time, and whether rank- and education-differentiated interventions outperform uniform, force-wide programming. Unit commanders and PNP leadership may also consider integrating the program's logistical-audit component into standard operating procedure, given the recurring role of resource deficits as a driver of organizational strain.

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