



BEHIND THE SHIELDS: EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF STRESS AND OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES AMONG PERSONNEL OF THE POLICE SECURITY PROTECTION GROUP

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ABSTRACT

Operating under a strict zero-failure mandate, personnel of the Police Security and Protection Group (PSPG) face unique workplace pressures that impact their professional effectiveness and personal well-being. Guided by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and the Work-Home Resources perspective, this phenomenological study explored the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and operational challenges of close protection officers. Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 PSPG officers and analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step qualitative framework with member-checking verification. Findings revealed that high job demands manifest as unpredictable deployments, 12-to-18-hour shifts, and equipment shortages, initiating a health-impairment process marked by chronic fatigue and medical vulnerability. Rigid hierarchies and leadership deficiencies generate role confusion and fractured trust, while operational exhaustion spills over into domestic life, causing severe work-to-family conflict. To navigate these stressors, officers deploy emotional resources (spiritual faith, family support, peer camaraderie) and cognitive coping strategies (compartmentalization, radical acceptance, strict adherence to orders). Despite structural hardships, personnel protect career satisfaction by framing adversity as performance benchmarks and anchoring their purpose in pride for their sworn oath. Evidence-based institutional wellness programs and resource-aligned policies are proposed.

KEYWORDS: Police Security and Protection Group (PSPG), Qualitative Phenomenology, Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Coping Mechanisms, Operational Challenges, Lived Experiences.

I. INTRODUCTION

Behind the highly organized images of secured public events and protected dignitaries lies a demanding operational environment faced by the personnel responsible for ensuring their safety. Members of the Police Security and Protection Group (PSPG) of the Philippine National Police (PNP) are tasked with safeguarding high-ranking government officials, visiting foreign dignitaries, and critical installations. Their responsibilities require constant vigilance, rapid decision-making, and continuous readiness to respond to potential threats at any moment. While these officers play a crucial role in maintaining national security and public safety, the nature of their work exposes them to significant occupational stress and operational pressures that may affect both their professional performance and personal well-being. Legislative measures such as Republic Act No. 6975 and Republic Act No. 8551 mandate the PNP to promote the welfare and professional development of its members; however, specialized protective security personnel face operational realities that test the boundaries of these statutory protections.

Globally, occupational stress among law enforcement and protective security personnel has emerged as a critical concern, intersecting with multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and SDG 4 (Quality Education). Organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the International Association of Chiefs

of Police (IACP) highlight that specialized protection roles encounter unique stressors where errors carry severe consequences, leading to psychological fatigue, emotional strain, and impaired well-being.

The theoretical foundations of this inquiry rest on contemporary occupational psychology frameworks. According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, employees exposed to high job demands rely on personal and organizational resources to prevent stress and maintain performance (Bakker et al., 2023). Possessing adequate personal resources—such as resilience, self-regulation, and coping skills—buffers against demanding conditions and sustains work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). When job demands become excessive, the Work-Home Resources perspective explains that stress spills over into domestic life, causing work-family conflict (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). Conversely, supportive leadership and positive workplace relationships contribute significantly to employee motivation and resilience (Kohnen et al., 2024), while perceiving work as meaningful fosters perseverance and job satisfaction despite severe occupational challenges (Bakker et al., 2024).

In the Philippines, national policy frameworks including the PNP's Holistic Approach to Wellness Program, NAPOLCOM Memorandum Circular No. 2018-002, Civil Service Commission Memorandum Circular No. 6 (s. 2012), and the Philippine Development Plan (PDP)—emphasize officer wellness and human capital development. However, a critical organizational problem persists: most existing wellness programs are designed for the general police population. They



fail to address the specific, high-stakes operational stressors experienced by PSPG personnel, particularly those under the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO). These officers contend with frequent redeployments, 12-to-18-hour shifts, manpower shortages, logistical deficits, long-distance geographic displacement, and high-stakes coordination under an uncompromising "zero-failure" mandate. This operational exhaustion, combined with rigid command hierarchies and schedule unpredictability, creates severe physical fatigue, work-to-family conflict, and organizational strain.

This study solves this gap by systematically exploring the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and operational challenges of PSPG personnel through a qualitative phenomenological approach. By capturing empirical narratives from key informants, the study identifies how officers navigate systemic demands through cognitive reframing, spiritual faith, peer solidarity, and personal resilience. The ultimate objective and practical output of conducting this research is the formulation of an evidence-based, unit-tailored institutional wellness and operational support program

the PSPG Continuous Quality & Welfare Enhancement Program. This intervention directly bridges the gap between general police wellness policies and the specialized needs of close protection officers, enhancing officer well-being, organizational justice, and operational readiness.

1.2. Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker et al., 2023) and the Work-Home Resources (W-HR) Perspective (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). The JD-R model posits that excessive job demands (e.g., heavy workload, unpredictable hours, threat exposure) lead to exhaustion and health impairment when unbuffered by adequate job resources (e.g., leadership support, training, equipment). Conversely, personal and social resources foster work engagement and resilience. The W-HR perspective explains how operational depletion spills over into domestic life, causing work-family conflict.

1.3. Problem Statement & Objectives

This study explored the lived experiences of PSPG personnel regarding occupational stress and operational challenges. Specifically, it addressed five research objectives:

1. Identify organizational and interpersonal challenges affecting officers' professional effectiveness and personal well-being.
2. Examine how these challenges shape job satisfaction and sense of purpose.
3. Identify coping mechanisms employed to navigate organizational and interpersonal stressors.
4. Analyze officer perceptions of operational impacts on effectiveness and well-being.
5. Propose an evidence-based institutional support/wellness program based on the findings.

II. METHODS

2.1. Research Design & Approach. A qualitative phenomenological design was utilized to capture the depth, subjective meanings, and lived realities of PSPG personnel. Phenomenological inquiry allowed for an inductive exploration

of how officers interpret and cope with protective security pressures.

2.2. Participants & Locale. The study was conducted within the jurisdiction of PSPG units in the National Capital Region (NCR), Philippines. A sample of 12 active, uniformed PSPG officers participated in the study. Participants were selected via purposive criterion-based sampling, with maximum variation sampling applied across ranks, years of service, and protective assignment types. Inclusion criteria required at least six months of active protective detail experience and a willingness to share narratives confidentially.

2.3 Data Collection. Data were gathered through individual, semi-structured, face-to-face in-depth interviews using a self-constructed, expert-validated interview guide. Questions explored operational demands, workplace dynamics, personal coping, domestic impacts, and career purpose. Interviews were conducted in private settings to minimize social desirability bias, audio-recorded with explicit consent, and transcribed verbatim. Ethical clearance was granted by the Institutional Review Board, adhering strictly to the Data Privacy Act of 2012, informed consent protocols, and participant anonymization.

2.4 Data Analysis & Trustworthiness. Transcripts were systematically analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step qualitative framework:

1. Familiarization with transcripts through repeated reading.
2. Extracting significant statements directly relevant to stress and operational challenges.
3. Formulating meanings while exercising epoché (phenomenological bracketing).
4. Clustering themes into broader domain categories.
5. Developing an exhaustive description of the phenomenon.
6. Producing the fundamental structure (essence) of the lived experiences.
7. Member-checking with participants to verify thematic accuracy and credibility.

An audit trail was maintained throughout to ensure dependability, confirmability, and methodological rigor.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Security and Protection Group (PSPG) officers. Using Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step phenomenological framework, the findings detail organizational, interpersonal, and operational challenges, coping strategies, and impacts on job satisfaction and purpose. Theoretical interpretations integrate the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker et al., 2023) and the Work-Home Resources (W-HR) Perspective (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023) with empirical literature.

3.1. Organizational and Interpersonal Challenges Affecting Effectiveness and Well-Being

Frontline PSPG officers operate within a unique, high-stakes security ecosystem governed by a strict zero-failure policy. The findings reveal that structural rigidity, unpredictable tasking, vertical command gaps, and negative work-to-family spillover converge to create significant organizational and interpersonal challenges that negatively impact both professional effectiveness and individual health.



3.1.1. Unbending Systems, Endless Demands

This theme encapsulates the severe structural and institutional pressures built directly into the operational mandate of the PSPG. Because protective security deals with high-stakes targets and Threatened Individuals (T.I.), the organization enforces a zero-tolerance operational framework characterized by grueling hours, immediate deployment changes, and rigid physical requirements. This structural rigidity leaves individual officers with minimal personal control, turning institutional protocols into direct sources of operational exhaustion.

"Ang aking karanasan sa mga hamon ng organisasyon sa PSPG ay ang mabigat na pasanin at workload, hindi sapat na mga mapagkukunan, at hindi malinaw o nagkakapatong-patong na responsibilidad (IDI1:SS2)." (My experience in organizational challenges in PSPG are heavy workload, inadequate resources and unclear or overlapping responsibilities.)

Informant 1 encounters this specific organizational challenge because of systemic resource gaps coupled with administrative structural issues within the unit. The lack of explicit job boundaries creates role ambiguity, forcing the officer to carry overlapping task assignments simultaneously without adequate logistical support, which directly compromises workflow efficiency.

"Ang interpersonal na hamon na naranasan ko sa aking unit at lugar ng trabaho na nakakaapekto sa aking pang-araw-araw na tungkulin ay ang distansya o layo ng aking workplace sa aking lugar na inuuwian at tinitirhan (IDI2:SS4)." (The interpersonal challenge I experienced in my unit and workplace that affects my daily duties is the distance of my workplace from the place where I go home and live.)

Informant 2 undergoes this struggle due to the centralized nature of specialized police protective details, which are frequently based far from personal residences. Long commutes and geographic displacement create immediate operational vulnerabilities, such as a severe shortage of preparation time and structural difficulties in arriving at assignment details punctually.

3.1.2. Divided Ranks, Fractured Trust

This theme highlights the critical interpersonal strains, horizontal peer frictions, and vertical command gaps that disrupt the workplace environment. Within protective security units, absolute trust, rapid coordination, and clear communication are mandatory requirements for operational safety. However, rigid rank divisions, top-down autocratic leadership, and communication breakdowns isolate individual officers, creating an emotionally draining social environment.

"Mga hamon o nakakaapekto sa ating profession ay ang ating ibang mga kasamahan na sobrang taas ang lipad, hinde maka-Diyos at maka tao (IDI4:SS10)." (The challenges or things affecting our profession are some of our colleagues who are excessively arrogant, not God-fearing, and lack humanity.) Informant 4 experiences relational strain due to toxic workplace attitudes and an elitist mindset among certain peers or superiors. This structural arrogance creates behavioral friction and

alienates team members, replacing collaborative mutual respect with social distance and ethical disconnects.

"Ang hindi malinaw na instruksyon, huli o naantalang utos sa loob ng lugar ng trabaho at hindi pagkakaunawaan ay maaaring magdulot ng kalituhan sa pagitan ng mga magkakatrabaho (IDI5:SS12)." (Unclear instructions, late or delayed directives within the workplace and misunderstanding can cause confusion between co-workers.)

Informant 5 highlights a broken vertical communication structure within the chain of command. When strategic instructions are passed down late or framed ambiguously, officers on the ground are left with severe role confusion, wasting vital operational time attempting to clarify directives.

3.1.3. Drained on Duty, Distant at Home

This theme reflects the severe negative spillover effect where intense work-related fatigue, constant hypervigilance, and demanding operational constraints completely erode the personal and familial well-being of personnel. Because the job requires sudden reassignments and an always-available mindset, officers find it impossible to mentally or emotionally de-escalate from their tactical roles.

"My experiences are some times naka duty ako ng almost month at nagagalit na ang asawa ko (IDI7:SS12)." (My experiences are that sometimes I am on duty for almost a month, and my spouse gets angry.)

Informant 7 details the emotional strain resulting from prolonged operational isolation and extended field deployments. Being physically separated from the household for up to a month deprives the home of the officer's presence, shifting domestic burdens entirely onto the spouse.

"Dahil sa tungkuling ito ay hindi natin makamit ang kapayapaan ng isip, laging may kaakibat na pagkabalisa sa kaligtasan at tungkulin, nasa duty man o off duty (IDI8:SS21)." (Because of this duty we cannot achieve peace of mind, there is constant anxiety tied to safety and duty, whether on duty or off duty.)

Informant 8 undergoes intense psychological strain due to operating under a zero-failure policy for VIP targets. The profound accountability for another individual's absolute survival creates continuous psychological hypervigilance, preventing relaxation even when off active duty.

Qualitative evidence shows that PSPG personnel face organizational and interpersonal pressures that undermine effectiveness and well-being. Guided by the JD-R Model (Bakker et al., 2023) and W-HR Perspective (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023), findings reveal that structural rigidity, command gaps, and work-to-family spillover strain officers. Zero-failure mandates, unpredictable deployments, and 12–18-hour shifts cause operational fatigue and somatic distress (3.1.1). Literature confirms that strict duty structures, sleep deprivation, and staff shortages intensify stress and impair decision-making (Dela Cruz et al., 2023; Lee & Wu, 2024; Philippine Public Safety College, 2024; Sakuma et al., 2025). Ambiguous directives, autocratic leadership, favoritism ("hindi patas na pagtrato"), and rank arrogance ("sobrang taas ang lipad")



further erode trust and team cohesion (3.1.2). Organizational Justice theory (Cardenas et al., 2024) shows that unfairness turns social resources into psychological burdens, accelerating burnout and internal discord (Alvarado, 2025; BMC Public Health, 2024; Gershon et al., 2024). These strains also bleed into officers' home lives, destroying personal boundaries (3.1.3). Chronic inability to disengage off-duty leaves officers depleted at home. Studies confirm that irregular shifts, unpredictable deployments, and chronic fatigue undermine family communication and fuel work-family conflict (Carvalho et al., 2023; Luna, 2023; Sousa et al., 2023; Valmari et al., 2023).

3.2. Ways Challenges Shape Job Satisfaction and Sense of Purpose

This domain captures the psychological, emotional, and motivational processes of PSPG officers, illustrating how ongoing operational hardships actively reshape how they view their career satisfaction, professional mastery, and fundamental sense of purpose.

3.2.1. Hard Times as a Drive to Do Better

This theme outlines the transformative way organizational hurdles act as a catalyst for professional growth. Instead of causing permanent disillusionment, structural pressures force officers to adopt a mindset of continuous learning and reframing, defining job satisfaction through active mastery.

"Ito ay nagiging batayan upang magstrive sa pagkakaroon ng mas maayos na trabaho (IDI10:SS19)." (This serves as a basis to strive harder for a better performance in our job.)

Informant 10 experiences this driving force because standard institutional duties present recurrent difficulties. To find value in their role, the officer consciously re-evaluates stressful situations as motivational benchmarks rather than giving in to frustration.

"Naiimpluwensyahan ng mga pang-organisasyon at interpersonal na hamon na ito ang aking pagiging epektibong propesyonal sa pamamagitan ng kakulangan din sa sa wasto o tamang oras ng pagpunta sa duty dahil sa kakulangan sa oras o panahon (IDI11:SS25)." (These organizational and interpersonal challenges influence my professional effectiveness due to a lack of proper time management when arriving on duty because of time constraints.)

Informant 11 encounters scheduling friction due to time constraints and structural distance. This logistical struggle directly teaches the officer adaptive time management, forcing them to reshape daily travel routines to maintain operational effectiveness.

3.2.2. Pride in the Badge and the Call to Protect

This theme centers on how a deep vocational calling protects the informants' sense of purpose from being ruined by structural stress. When confronted with organizational flaws, personnel anchor their commitment in their internal oath ('sinumpaang tungkulin') and the historical honor of public service.

"Ang matinding hamon sa aming mga deployed PSP ay ang manatiling tapat sa PNP organization at imintina ang antas ng PSPG ng naayon sa sinumpaang tungkulin (IDI1:SS22)." (The intense challenge for us deployed PSP officers is to remain loyal to the PNP organization and maintain the standards of the PSPG in accordance with our sworn oath.)

Informant 1 undergoes an internal struggle during isolated field deployments. The officer experiences the daily need to defend institutional integrity, deliberately leaning on their sworn oath to resist outside pressures and maintain high organizational standards.

"To serve and protect ito ang isang motto na naka uhit na sa aking puso na ng nagbibigay ng malaking epekto sa mga karanasan ko bilang meyembro ng PSPG (IDI2:SS12)." (To serve and protect is the very motto engraved in my heart that greatly impacts my experiences as a member of the PSPG.)

Informant 2 integrates the core values of the police organization into personal identity. By keeping this motto engraved in their heart, the officer reinterprets exhausting protection details not as meaningless burdens, but as a direct realization of life's purpose.

3.2.3. Winning the Shift through Teamwork and Safety

This theme highlights how micro-level operational victories and peer solidarity validate the informants' vocational drive. In volatile security environments, immediate job satisfaction is tied directly to finishing a protective assignment safely alongside a reliable team.

"Ang mga aspeto ng trabaho na nagpaparamdam sa aking kasiyahan sa kabila ng mga hamon na aking nararanasan ay ang pagpapatunay at pagsisilbi bilang isang pulis na magagampan sa tungkulin ng maayos at responsable (IDI4:SS14)." (The aspects of the job that give me satisfaction despite the challenges I experience are proving myself and serving as a police officer who can perform duties properly and responsibly.)

Informant 4 finds validation because successfully executing a complex protective mission serves as undeniable proof of professional competence under pressure.

"Kapan kasundo mo ang mga katrabaho at umaayon lahat ang mga plano mo (IDI5:SS18)." (When you are on good terms with your coworkers and all of your plans run smoothly.)

Informant 5 experiences satisfaction because protective operations depend on seamless horizontal coordination. Being on good terms with teammates mitigates tactical anxieties and ensures security protocols run smoothly.

Findings show that while PSPG personnel face severe systemic hardships, these challenges do not inevitably lead to occupational despair. Instead, officers adapt psychologically, emotionally, and motivationally, reshaping their career satisfaction and sense of purpose. Guided by the JD-R Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024; Bakker et al., 2024; Kohnen et al., 2024), organizational challenges become catalysts for growth, as officers reframe difficulties into motivation to improve. This cognitive reframing, supported by high Adversity Quotient and



problem-focused coping, fosters learning and engagement (Calusor, 2025; Kukucska et al., 2023; Olivar et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2024). Growth is reinforced by an internalized vocational calling anchored in their oath and police motto, which acts as a personal resource buffering against burnout (Abu Dhabi Police Case Study, 2022; Ortega, 2025; Resurreccion, 2024; Wu et al., 2025). Job satisfaction is further renewed through operational victories and supportive peer networks that boost engagement and counterbalance stress (Drew et al., 2024; Kohnen et al., 2024; Prato, 2024; Wales et al., 2023).

3.3. Coping Mechanisms Employed by PSPG Officers

This domain categorizes the active cognitive, behavioral, and relational coping strategies used by PSPG officers to protect their psychological well-being from workplace stress and high-intensity protection details.

3.3.1. Drawing Strength from Faith and Family

This theme outlines the primary external support systems that officers use as emotional anchors. To withstand intense workplace pressure, officers rely heavily on spiritual grounding and domestic relationships, transforming these spaces into safe havens away from tactical demands.

"Ang inaasahan kong suporta pag nahaharap sa mahihirap na sitwasyon sa aking tungkulin ay ang dasal mula sa ating Panginoon pangalawa ay ang mga taong inaasahan kong makakatulong sa akin (IDI7:SS25)." (The support I rely on when facing difficult situations in my duty is prayer to our Lord, and secondly, the people I expect to help me.)

Informant 7 turns to God in prayer during critical field duties, gaining an immediate psychological buffer that provides comfort and mental clarity when human institutional resources fall short.

"Ang aking pamilya ang nagsisilbing supporter ko (IDI8:SS27)." (My family serves as my supporter.)

Informant 8 relies on the home as a secure space away from rank hierarchies and constant vigilance. Unconditional family emotional support allows the officer to decompress safely.

3.3.2. Keeping Boundaries and Staying Calm under Pressure

This theme covers deliberate emotional and psychological boundaries maintained on duty. Officers utilize active compartmentalization and controlled focus to prevent situational stress from bleeding into private lives or harming field execution.

"Ang mga problema sa trabaho ay di ko inuuwi sa bahay ganun din sa problema sa bahay di dinadala sa trabaho (IDI10:SS26)." (I do not bring work problems home, and similarly, I do not bring family problems to work.)

Informant 10 practices strict boundary enforcement. Mixing domestic stress with tactical duties creates dangerous field distractions, while bringing workplace anxiety home damages family relationships.

"Manatiling kalmado at wag mag react ng hindi ikaw ang main involve (IDI11:SS22)." (Stay calm and do not react if you are not the one mainly involved.)

Informant 11 maintains emotional neutrality in volatile social environments around VIP details. Jumping into secondary arguments escalates security risks, requiring calculated detachment.

3.3.3. Rigid Compliance and Trusting the Process

This theme addresses the protective behavior of strictly sticking to institutional rules and protocols. Officers minimize administrative anxiety and decision fatigue by submitting completely to the established chain of command.

"Kinakaharap ko ang mga hamon sa organisasyon at interpersonal sa aking trabaho sa pamamayan ng pagiging determinado, pagitiyaga at pagiging responsable (IDI1:SS26)." (I face organizational and interpersonal challenges in my work by being determined, persevering, and responsible.)

Informant 1 uses disciplined perseverance to manage vertical hierarchy gaps and horizontal peer friction, keeping personal tension from compromising execution.

"Pumasok araw-araw, Go with the flow lang (IDI3:SS24)." (Go to work every day, and just go with the flow.)

Informant 3 adopts radical acceptance against unpredictable schedule shifts, letting go of the need for personal control and reporting to duty daily with a resilient mindset.

Qualitative findings show that PSPG personnel use a mix of cognitive, behavioral, and relational coping strategies to protect their psychological well-being. Guided by the JD-R Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024; Kohnen et al., 2024), officers draw on family, peers, and spiritual resources as key social job resources that buffer stress (Kohnen et al., 2024; Drew et al., 2024; Prato, 2024; Wales et al., 2023). Internally, they practice self-regulation and cognitive compartmentalization by maintaining boundaries between personal and professional life, conserving mental energy and preventing burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024; Carvalho et al., 2023; Drew et al., 2024; Olivar et al., 2024; Sousa et al., 2023). In the face of administrative ambiguity and command gaps, officers adopt strict protocol adherence and radical acceptance, turning institutional rigidity into a protective resource that insulates them from decision fatigue and role confusion (Cardenas & Nabe, 2023; Espartero, 2023; Puci et al., 2021; Segovia, 2024; Wales et al., 2023).

3.4. Informants' Perception on the Impact of Operational Challenges

This domain covers how physical, logistical, and structural demands take a heavy toll on the informants' bodies, minds, and domestic lives, directly influencing their overall field effectiveness and quality of life.

3.4.1. Drained Bodies and High-Stress Shifts

This theme encapsulates direct physical degradation and chronic exhaustion caused by the zero-failure operational



environment. Long standing hours, sleep deprivation, and relentless pressure drain officers' energy, posing long-term risks to physical health and on-duty sharpness.

"Nagkakasakit sa trabaho kadahilanan ng sobra sa stress (ID14:SS25)." (Getting sick at work due to excessive stress.)

Informant 4 experiences physical health breakdown because chronic stress triggers severe bodily deterioration over time, weakening immune defenses.

"Kadalasan pag may especial event ang ating bansa at nariyan mga mahabang orasan na sinusubok ang ating lakas at kagalingan sa pagtatanggol sa mga bisita (ID15:SS26)." (Usually when our country has a special event, there are long hours that test our physical strength and skills in protecting international visitors.)

Informant 5 undergoes extreme physical testing during international summits. Mandatory expansion of the security footprint forces officers to stand watch for grueling, uninterrupted hours.

3.4.2. Canceled Family Plans and No Free Time

This theme focuses on severe work-life conflict created by unpredictable deployment schedules. Because protective security mandates require constant availability, officers are frequently forced to sacrifice personal freedom and family milestones.

"Ang mga pabigla-biglang task at deployment ay mabigat para sa akin, dahil napipilitan akong unahin ang tungkulin at ikansela ang mga nakaplano nang lakad ng aming pamilya (ID17:SS28)." (Sudden tasks and deployments are difficult for me, as I am forced to prioritize duty and cancel my family's pre-planned outings.)

Informant 7 experiences domestic disappointment due to immediate, crisis-driven reassignments that repeatedly override personal commitments.

"Minsan pag kailangan may trabaho ng mahabang oras at wala ng oras para sa pamilya at iba pa (ID18:SS30)." (Sometimes when you are required to work long hours, there is no more time left for your family and other personal matters.)

Informant 8 experiences total time deprivation. Extended operational duties consume all available hours, leaving the officer unable to connect with spouse and children.

3.4.3. Inflexible Rules and Lack of Equipment

This theme outlines structural and administrative deficiencies that actively hinder performance. Implementing strict security protocols without adequate gear or clear institutional organization creates unnecessary friction on the ground.

"Lack of equipments materials are the reasons that affect performance (ID10:SS28)." (The lack of equipment and operational materials is what directly affects performance.)

Informant 10 experiences operational hindrance due to supply chain lags. Being deployed without proper communication gear or safety materials compromises tactical execution.

"Kapag hindi maayos ang organization membro din nito ang hindi maayos na makakatapos sa trabaho (ID11:SS26)." (When the organization is not well-structured, its members will also fail to complete their work properly.)

Informant 11 highlights administrative flaws where ambiguous command frameworks cause instruction tangles, impeding frontline security execution.

Qualitative findings reveal that close protection duties impose severe physical, emotional, and systemic strain on PSPG personnel. Chronic exhaustion and physical decline are common in the zero-failure environment, compromising situational awareness and slowing reaction times (Bakker et al., 2023). Unpredictable deployments fuel significant work-home conflict, forcing officers to cancel family plans and use rare days off for recovery instead of connection (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). Research confirms that sustained high-stress assignments, lack of rest, and irregular shifts drive burnout, poor health, and domestic strife among law enforcement (Carvalho et al., 2023; Kyron et al., 2022; Lee & Wu, 2024; Manaig, 2024; Resurreccion, 2024; Sakuma et al., 2025; Sousa et al., 2023). Operational friction also arises from rigid administrative rules and persistent equipment shortages, producing effort-reward imbalances and systemic frustration (Bakker et al., 2023). These organizational defects, compounded by interference from civilian companions and VIP staff, are often more detrimental to officer well-being and job performance than field hazards (BMC Public Health, 2024; Gershon et al., 2024; Luceño-Moreno et al., 2021; Philippine Public Safety College, 2024).

3.5. Comprehensive Theoretical Synthesis

The qualitative findings of this study demonstrate an interconnected relationship among organizational challenges, coping mechanisms, job satisfaction, operational effectiveness, and personal well-being among PSPG personnel. Operating under a strict zero-failure mandate, officers are continuously exposed to severe organizational challenges, including rigid deployment schedules, equipment deficits, divided ranks, and unyielding hypervigilance. Guided by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker et al., 2023) and the Work-Home Resources (W-HR) Perspective (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023), these unmitigated job demands trigger a dual-pathway health-impairment process. Physically and psychologically, chronic exhaustion and sleep deprivation drain energy reserves, leading to bodily breakdown and impaired situational awareness. Logistically and interpersonally, unpredictable schedules severely disrupt home life, creating a negative work-to-family spillover that deprives officers of restorative recovery space and strains domestic relationships. Left unchecked, these organizational stressors directly erode both individual well-being and overall operational effectiveness.

To counteract these pervasive stressors and preserve professional efficacy, PSPG personnel deploy a multi-layered system of coping mechanisms alongside distinct sources of job satisfaction. Officers utilize external social resources



specifically spiritual faith and supportive family havens as primary emotional anchors away from tactical demands (Kohnen et al., 2024). On duty, personnel engage internal personal resources through strict cognitive compartmentalization and emotional neutrality to preserve mental clarity and de-escalate workplace friction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). Furthermore, officers adopt a strategy of rigid compliance and radical acceptance, using strict adherence to official directives to shift strategic liability up the chain of command, thereby mitigating role ambiguity and decision fatigue (Wales)

Simultaneously, job satisfaction functions as a vital internal buffer; officers sustain their sense of purpose by taking pride in their sworn oath ('sinumpaang tungkulin'), reframing operational hardships as benchmarks for professional growth, and celebrating ground-level team victories ('winning the shift'). Ultimately, these adaptive coping mechanisms and internalized sources of purpose interrupt the stress-to-burnout trajectory, allowing PSPG personnel to safeguard their psychological well-being, protect unit cohesion, and maintain frontline operational effectiveness despite persistent institutional strains.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Conclusion

PSPG officers face extreme structural and operational pressures, including grueling hours, unpredictable deployments, and strict zero-failure mandates that undermine both physical health and domestic stability. Interpersonal and command-level friction such as ambiguous directives, autocratic communication, and perceived favoritism further intensifies occupational stress and erodes organizational trust. Despite these challenges, officers maintain resilience through cognitive reframing, spiritual faith, family support, and peer camaraderie, upholding their sworn commitment to protect. However, current institutional wellness initiatives are generally designed for broader police forces and require specialized structural adaptation to address the unique demands of executive protective units.

4.2 Recommendations

To address the unique challenges faced by PSPG personnel, leadership and the PNP Directorate should establish transparent administrative guidelines for deployment schedules, equipment distribution, and career development to promote organizational justice. Mental Health and Wellness Officers are encouraged to develop specialized, unit-specific psychological support programs, such as mandatory post-deployment debriefings, family life workshops, and resilience training. PSPG personnel should sustain active peer-support networks, access counseling services without stigma, and practice adaptive work-life boundaries where possible. Finally, future researchers are urged to conduct longitudinal

quantitative studies to assess the effectiveness of these interventions on stress levels, retention, and performance within specialized law enforcement units.

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