

**EXPLORING BURNOUT AMONG POLICE OFFICERS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
POLICE SERVICE (SAPS) AT ELUKWATINI SAPS, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE**

**BY**

**LETTA NOLUSINDISO NKOSI**

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**College of Humanities**

**School of Social Sciences**

**University of KwaZulu-Natal**

**Supervisor: Dr. Kathryn Pillay**

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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the thesis, “Exploring burnout among police officers in the South African Police Service (SAPS) at Elukwatini SAPS, Mpumalanga province,” is my own work, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. None of the present has been submitted previously for any portfolio examination in any other University.

Student signature ...  Date : 16 May 2019

Supervisor signature:  Date: 16 May 2019

## **ABSTRACT**

Employees in the South African Police Service (SAPS) work under constant physical, emotional and psychological stress due to the demands of their work. This results in anxiety and trauma, which sometimes leads to burnout, and even suicide. The motivation for this study is the lack of research relating to this topic, specifically within the South African context. Many studies focus on employees in the helping professions such as psychologists and social workers, however there is limited scholarship on the police profession. This study was therefore conducted with the aim of exploring burnout among police officers in the South African Police Service (SAPS), specifically at the Elukwatini SAPS, in Mpumalanga province. I used a self-developed semi-structured interview schedule to elicit information from participants through face to face interviews. Open-ended questions were used as a framework to guide the interview process with each interviewee. The findings of this study reveals that a variety of factors contribute towards burnout amongst police officers at Elukwatini, including the threatening and challenging conditions under which they work, both in the field and with regard to their administrative duties. The results reveal that police officers work long hours and also perform extra duties due to staff shortages. In addition, departmental stressors which include, limited chances for advancement, shortage of working equipment/resources, position/role dispute, position/role overload, unfair practices in relation to compensation, and overtime contribute to both physical and emotional exhaustion.

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## **DEDICATION**

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore burnout among police officers in the South African Police Service (SAPS) at Elukwatini SAPS, Mpumalanga province. In this chapter the motivation for the research is discussed in terms of the problem statement, significance of the study, research questions and aims of the research. In addition, descriptions and explanations of different concepts used in the study are offered. Lastly, the structure of the dissertation as well as a summary of chapters is provided.

### 1.2 Background and outline of research problem

Burnout is often conceptualised as an effective reaction to on-going stress at work, and is characterised by the slow reduction, over a period of time, of the resources that provide an individual with energy; it is principally demonstrated through emotional, physical and cognitive fatigue (Shirom, 2003). Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) define burnout as a “progressive loss of idealism, purpose, energy and concern as a result of conditions of work” (p. 162).

According to Anshel (2000), policing is more stressful when compared to other careers or professions. The police profession is challenging and police officers are always exposed to incidents that place their lives in danger (Ireland, Malouff, and Byrne, 2007; Young, Koortzen, and Oosthuizen, 2012). In addition, the incidents that police officers are exposed to do not only affect them but their families as well, because they end up feeling unsafe in the communities they live in, and this leads to vulnerability (Young et al., 2012). Thus, this shows that the experience of burnout has a negative impact on the well-being of workers.

The changes that took place after 1994 in South Africa affected law enforcement services in the country (Newham, 2000). For instance, some of the police centres were closed down, and as a result the police services lost members with specialised skills, experience and knowledge (“SAPS: A brutal police”, 2013). Incidents such as unlawful acts, brutality and harmful protests also add to the load placed on the members of law enforcement, which may result in stress and burnout on workers. In addition, from the year 2010 protest actions increased by 96% in South Africa (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2015) and the country was thus reported as the “protest capital of the world” (Bianco, 2013, p. 1). The anxiety levels of officers are revealed in cases such as the shootings at the Marikana mine, where police officers shot at protesting mine workers and killed 34 miners, injuring 78 in August 2012 (“Nearly 300”, 2012). Police officers also have to face the fear of being attacked or murdered. In 2015, there were approximately 60 police officers killed (Hartleb, 2015) and 1501 attacked during the financial year of 2014/2015 (“About 1500 police officers”, 2015).

South Africa has experienced important socio-economic and political changes over the past twenty five years. This has contributed to high instances of crime and violence which results in police personnel experiencing “...a variety of duty related stressors such as witnessing a fellow officer killed or killing someone in the line of duty, recovering bodies from a vehicle accident, witnessing domestic violence, and responding to cases involving child battery” (Gulle, Tredoux and Foster, 1998). Police officers may also be exposed to the aggression from communities (Jones and Kagee, 2005) resulting in bodily harm of a police officer, or murder of police officers or even suicide as a result (Mostert and Joubert, 2005). Within the human service occupations, burnout is predominantly researched in the health (33.8%) and teaching (26.6%) professions, however, law enforcement constitutes only 3.4% of all burnout research on occupations (Schaufeli and Enzmann, 1998).

Despite this stressful nature of the police profession, only a few studies focus on burnout among police officers. Therefore, it was necessary to investigate burnout and possible causes thereof in the South African Police Service, focusing on the police officers of the Elukwatini SAPS, Mpumalanga province.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

This research study is significant as it aims to explore burnout among South African police officers of the Elukwatini SAPS, Mpumalanga province. By identifying this, the research would be of benefit to the SAPS as it contributes to knowledge and the further understanding of the functioning of the police officials in stressful conditions. The reason for conducting this study is the lack of research relating to this topic, specifically within the South African context, because police officers are responsible for our daily safety. Many studies focus on helping professions such as psychologists and social workers, only few studies have been conducted on the police profession. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct research on this topic, because of all occupations, as the literature reveals, police work is considered highly stressful.

### **1.4 Aim of the research**

The research aims are divided into a general aim and specific objectives.

#### **General aim:**

The general aim of the study is to present a qualitative report of police officers experiences of burnout at Elukwatini SAPS in Mpumalanga Province.

#### **Specific objectives**

The specific research objectives are as follows:

#### **To explore:**

1. The main causes of burnout amongst police officers.
2. The factors that influence the experience of burnout amongst police officers.
3. The effects of burnout on work flow process.
4. The effects of burnout on police officers work life.
5. Recommendations to prevent and or to manage burnout of SAPS members.

## **1.5 Research questions**

**The following key questions were asked:**

1. What are the main causes of burnout amongst police officers?
2. What professional factors influence the experience of burnout amongst police officers?  
(For example: workload or work activities related to rank, duration of service, promotions, shortage of working equipment, salaries, shortage of workers and departmental stressors.)
3. How does burnout affect work flow process?
4. What recommendations could be made to prevent and or to manage burnout of SAPS members?
5. How does burnout affect police officers work life?

## **1.6 Explanation of concepts**

An effort will be made to describe and explain applicable concepts significant to this study. The following terms will be described and explained: Burnout which forms a part of the stress process; Symptoms and causes of burnout; Relationship between stress and burnout; Burnout in connection to line of work; Job stress and burnout; The effect of job stress and burnout on labour; Factors of stress and burnout within the job situation; Stress and the manifestation thereof (contributory factors), and lastly a definition of the term police official and rank will be provided.

### **1.6.1 Burnout**

In the process of manifestation of stress, burnout can play a critical damaging role in the life of the individual. Just as with stress itself, the concept of burnout is difficult to conceptualise within simple definitions. There are different explanations from different researchers about the burnout phenomenon. Some authors have described the concept of burnout as an effective response to growing work-related stress and the core content of this stress is the gradual depletion of individual's coping resources (Moore, 2000; Shirom, 2003; Shirom, Nirel et al., 2006). In addition,

the gradual depletion of individual's coping resources may lead to the experience of the three facets of burnout which are; physical fatigue, emotional exhaustion and cognitive weariness. Physical fatigue refers to one's feelings of exhaustion as well as low energy levels to carry out daily work-related activities. Whereas, "emotional exhaustion is characterised by a lack of energy and a feeling that one's emotional resources are used up, this may coexist with feelings of frustration and tension." (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993, p. 644). Lastly, cognitive weariness refers to one's feelings of reduced mental/physical agility which results in slow thinking processes.

Various determinants of emotional exhaustion have been described by Cordes and Dougherty (1993) with the three most vital ones being work overload, role conflict and interpersonal relationships. "Work overload is described as the perception of too much work to accomplish in the time available which is suggestive of the existence of a mismatch between the person and the job" (Powell, 1993, p. 53). On the other hand, "role conflict" is described as another origin of inner weariness which usually appears when an employee has his/her own assumptions that are totally different from the seniors in the institution. Wanting to resolve these different assumptions may result in bitterness and inner weariness (Jackson, Schwab, and Schuler, 1986). Moreover, cynicism of workers reveals that they are no longer interested in doing their work activities due to reduced tolerance levels (Mostert and Joubert, 2005).

The third source of burnout is the likelihood to assess oneself in a negative way especially the individual's performance that may cause the individual to be unhappy about themselves as well as being dissatisfied with accomplishments on the job. Furthermore, this may lessen the productivity of the individual which may directly jeopardise the standard of tasks rendered (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993; Philip, 2004). Furthermore, it is a state that manifests when individuals experience a cycle of resource losses over a period of time at work. According to Edelwich and Brodsky (1980, p. 162) burnout can be defined as a "progressive loss of idealism, purpose, energy and concern as a result of conditions of work". According to Figley (1995) burnout starts slowly and increases as time goes on. While professionals such as counsellors, educators and lawyers were diagnosing burnout daily and related it to bodily and intellectual symptoms, burnout is still not acknowledged as a mental disorder (Schaufeli, 2003).

## **1.6.2 Symptoms of burnout**

Burnout patients report many symptoms such as reduced job satisfaction, physical complaints, and fatigue, sleep disturbances and impaired cognitive performance (Schaufeli and Enzmann, 1998; Taris, 2006; Schmidt et al., 2007).

In addition, Saatchi (2005) has classified burnout symptoms as follows:

- Emotional indicators: inability to show empathy towards others, feeling depressed, feeling trapped and losing interest in a job, feeling discouraged and feelings of being detached from others.
- Attitudinal indicators: finding it difficult to trust workplace management, complaints from others, doubtfulness to others and lastly questioning the integrity and goodness of people (Saatchi, 2005).
- Behavioural indicators: conflict with colleagues, management team and family members, being a workaholic which leads to minimal social and recreational activities
- Psychosomatic indicators: recurrent headaches, exhaustion, painful muscles, sleeping problems, gastrointestinal disorders and menstrual irregularities in females.
- Organisational indicators: lack of client/customer care, underperforming at work, absenteeism, involving oneself in fraud and theft and injuries at work (Saatchi, 2005).

### **Burnout and secondary symptoms**

In addition, there are also secondary symptoms associated with burnout (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli and Buunk, 2003; Schaufeli and Enzman, 1998; Shirom, 2003b). Schaufeli and Enzman (1998) argue that ordinary people view signs such as misery, a feeling of worry, and physical symptoms such as pains or fatigue that causes major emotional distress and problems functioning, as burnout, however the above signs should be regarded as secondary symptoms of burnout, as these symptoms do not explain burnout in its entirety. In order to fully comprehend how burnout affects individuals physically and psychologically you must take these symptoms into account.

This will be explored in greater detail in the literature review chapter; however, the signs which correlate with burnout are detailed in the following section beginning with depression.

### Burnout and depression

Morris and Maisto (2005) argue that depression is a mood disorder and is distinguished as immoderate guilt or feelings of worthlessness, insufficient interest in activities and devastating emotions such as sadness. In addition, when it comes to vigour, individuals who suffer from a mood disorder such as depression find it difficult to be entertained by the tasks they used to enjoy (Shirom, 2003a, 2003b). Depression is distinguished by signs such as feeling extremely tired, unhappy and also feeling like nothing is worthwhile (Shirom, 2003b). According to the study conducted by Berry (1998) and Morris and Maisto (2005) it was discovered that depression varies with regard to severity.

### Burnout and anxiety

Feelings of worry and anxiety, and related somatic symptoms such as pain/fatigue that occurs when a person feels extreme anxiety and physical symptoms (Gorter, Eijkman and Hoogstraten, 2000) was studied and the results revealed that burnout may overlap with the feeling of worry in difficult circumstances and it can reduce the individual's ability to survive (Shirom et al., 2005). On the other hand, Beehr (1998) is of opinion that anxiety is linked to work related situations and further notes that that it stems in a particular undesirable or unwanted behaviour which results in feelings of worry which is likely to be experienced by individuals who occupy higher positions in businesses. Even though the feeling of worry can be correlated to work related activities, it may also negatively affect individuals over the course of their lives and this can force them to avoid the situation in order to be able to cope.



### Burnout and somatic complaints

Somatic complaints are described as health-related problems, like uncontrolled sweating, problems with circulatory system, heart issues, sleeping problems, repetitive headaches, skin manifestations and gastro-intestinal problems, (Gorter, Eijkman and Hoogstraten, 2000; Heyns, Venter, Esterhuyse, Bam and Odendaal, 2003). In addition, the feeling of irritable uncontrolled behaviour, forces most individuals to avoid their commitments and as a result a personality disorder which is characterised by unwarranted mistrust and suspicion can occur and it can have negative consequences on the sufferer in a way that the victim can end up withdrawing from family and friends. Shirom et al (2005) argue that when individuals are burned-out they may present somatic symptoms. Therefore, when it comes to activities that are work related, burnout as well as other signs that are related to burnout may have a negative impact on the worker's performance (Heyns et al., 2003).

### Burnout and performance

Researchers find it hard to give concrete supporting evidence about the relationship between burnout and the way in which people perform in their workplaces (Bakker et al., 2004). The study conducted by Shirom (2003b, 2003c) revealed that burnout is connected to negative end results, for instance lack of energy. Burnout does not only affect the individual who is feeling burned out, but it can also affect other members who work in the same organisation with the individual who is experiencing burnout. Parker and Kulik (1995) report a higher percentage of workers who leave an organisation and are replaced by new employees, and also individuals who are always absent from their workplaces. Thus, as a result the performance of the entire organisation may decrease. Maslach and Leiter (1997) further divulged a decrease in the dedication of organisations.

The study conducted by Bakker et al. (2004) also failed to provide concrete evidence that proves that burnout is not related to the lack of individual's performance. However, in spite of concrete evidence that proves that burnout is not related to the lack of worker's performance, Bakker et al.

(2004) contended that burnout snares workers negatively, in such a way that they end up not seeking help in coming out from their condition. As a result, such employees continue to underperform. Furthermore, burnout can also reduce worker's ability to believe in themselves, especially when it involves solving problems that are related to work (Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli and Schreurs, 2003; Shirom, 2003b).

### **1.6.3 Causes of burnout**

Organisational researchers state that job burnout is not only caused by individuals but it can also be caused by the work surroundings (Beehr, 1998; Savicki and Cooley, 1983). According to the World Health Organisation (1998) organisational factors that results in work stress are the following; employee's treatment, subjective rules, and lower chances of moving from one position to the higher one. In addition, according to Demerouti et al. (2001) individual's working conditions consist of two elements, which are job demands and job resources. Demerouti et al. (2001) went further and defined job resources as organisational aspects that are used to achieve work goals and work-related activities. In addition, in developing the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, Demerouti et al. (2001) assumes that in any type of occupation, burnout develops whenever job demands are higher than the resources available. In addition to the above, Schaufeli and Bunk (2003) propose that burnout develops when resources are lost as on the other hand, when employees have enough resources available to carry out work activities they develop a positive attitude towards their work, thus it shows that sufficient resources have a positive influence on individuals (Hobfoll, 1989).

In addition, previous research by Leiter and Maslach (2005), points to six specific causes of burnout at work:

- **Lack of control:** when employees feel like they have little or no control over their work or when they see that their sense of control over what they do is undermined they become stressed (Karasek et al., 1981). In addition, one study that was measuring job demands and lack of control has discovered that high job demands and lack of control are harmful to individual's health and morale. Thus, individuals in this category experienced much higher

rates of coronary disease and depression than those in other categories (Karasek et al., 1981).

- **Values conflict:** Mismatch between employee's core values and the core values of the organisation results in conflict, the above is often caused by the fact that many organisations post their mission statements and values on marketing websites but when individuals get an opportunity to work for those organisation they find that only few organisations abide by the mission's statements and values they post on marketing websites, thus this results in conflict of values (Leiter and Maslach, 2005)
- **Insufficient reward:** when employees feel like they are taken for granted or not recognised it becomes a problem. Many organisations demand employees to do more work and sometimes work overtime with little income (Leiter and Maslach, 2005)
- **Work overload:** work overload is another source of stress/burnout. Employees are sometimes given too much work and little time to complete the tasks and in other cases they are given work of two or more people, this in turn causes stress and stress created by work overload is not something to be ignored (Leiter and Maslach, 2005). According to a Gallup survey on employee engagement, 50% of worker's report being "not engaged" while another 20% report being "actively disengaged" (Sorenson and Garman, 2013).
- **Unfairness:** favouritism is one of the biggest challenges on employees. Unfair treatment and promotions which are done behind closed doors affect employees negatively and it also lessens their morale.
- **Breakdown of community:** conflict among employees and managers at work affect employees. Employees find it difficult to work with colleagues who think they are superior to them (Leiter and Maslach, 2005).

In addition to the above, Nel (1999) and Koortzen (1996) distinguish between internal and external causes of stress in police officers. Internal causes involve those at a personal, organisational and station level. On the other hand, external causes involve law enforcement sectors where police officers work, public and social spheres. When it comes to internal causes, Koortzen (1996) made a distinction between internal working conditions and the individual self, arising in three categories. Furthermore, other theorists are of opinion that inherent stressors that are caused by the nature of police work itself are independent from organisational stressors which are the results of

the procedural nature of the police organisation (Alexander, Walker, Innes and Irving, 1993; Biggam, Power, MacDonald and Carcary, 1997; Brown and Campbell, 1990, 1994; Van Rooyen, 1987; Violanti and Aron, 1994). In addition, other authors are of the opinion that organisational stressors have a greater impact on police officers when compared to inherent stressors (Brown and Campbell, 1990, 1994; Kop, Euwema and Schaufeli, 1999; Violanti and Aron, 1994).

#### **1.6.4 The relationship between stress and burnout**

According to Cherniss (1980a), stress is perceived as coming before burnout, while on the other hand burnout is a process that starts with extreme levels of stress that can cause tension, frustration, irritation and fatigue. Burnout is not stress and does not precede stress but is the result of experiencing excessively high levels of stress (Cherniss, 1980a; Cox, 1978; Glicklen, 1983; Pines and Aronson, 1988; Spaniol and Caputo, 1980; Smuts, 1988). According to other researchers, the literature indicates that the police profession is demanding and it causes stress to the lives of employees, colleagues of the members who are burned out, as well as family members. Stress and burnout in this context will then clearly have an impact on the police officer's quality of life.

#### **1.6.5 Burnout in connection to line of work**

In the seventies burnout appeared to be a syndrome that was associated with the occurrences of physical, emotional and behavioural symptoms in many professions especially in the helping professions, which negatively impacts work. Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) identify the term burnout to refer to the progressive diminishing of idealism, energy and goal orientation of an individual in these professions as a result of their working conditions, for example, inadequate training, long working hours and so on. Pines and Aronson (1981) conceptualise burnout as a result of sustained job stress. On the other hand, Jackson and Maslach (1982), as well as Perlman and Hartman (1982) define burnout in the occupational area as a psychological response which is more dominant in professions which involve a high degree of emotional contact with others. Burnout flourishes more in workplaces if there is a gap or high demand between the nature of the job and the nature of the person doing the job (Maslach and Leiter, 1997). To sum up, the above

information supports each other in showing that burnout has a more negative impact on helping professions, one of them being the police profession.

### **1.6.6 Job stress and burnout**

Gold (1985) is of the opinion that a stressor has its origin within the occupation of the individual and its results are known as job stress. Job stress occurs in the relationship between the individual and the environment, which requires the individual to adjust to the environment. This type of stress occurs when an individual is challenged by circumstances, threats or limitations. A job situation becomes more stressful as soon as it becomes more demanding when it is compared to an individual's ability to handle it (Beehr and Newman, 1978; Brief, Schuler and Van Snell, 1981; Ross and Altmaier, 1994).

Employees perceive their work situation according to how often particular job requirements places stress on them, and the level of support provided by fellow employees (including managers and colleagues), as well as the organisation's policies and procedures that govern the workplace. In addition two categories of occupational stressors in policing have been identified which are issues such as a lack of trust in supervisors, a deficiency in communication and constant organisational change, which combine to form the first category of stressors (Alexander, Walker, Innes and Irving, 1993; Biggam, Powers, McDonald, Carcary and Moodie, 1997; Brown and Campbell, 1990, 1994). The second category involves the nature of police work, which includes aspects of threat, vulnerability to danger, and shift work.

### **1.6.7 The effect of job stress and burnout on labour**

Burnout is most certainly discovered in employee's work performance. This tendency is distinguished by workers who are frustrated and suffer from lack of encouragement. This brings about changes in the way clients are serviced (Chermiss, 1980a). Burned out employees fail to react to the feelings of others (Pines and Aronson, 1981). The International Labour Organisation (1981) has also found that job stress and burnout are important factors in the police sphere. These

negative effects of burnout also affect the family life of the burnt out employee. Burnout conditions can lead to poor family relationships, marriage discord and disintegration of marriage. In addition, it can affect employees negatively because the employee's immune system may become weak, they may struggle to communicate effectively with other people and they may also abuse alcohol and drugs. Burned-out employees tend to be ignorant when it comes to given tasks at work and their work performance may also decrease (Freudenberger, 1975; Maslach and Leiter, 1997).

In addition, burnout also leads to frequent absenteeism and it may also lessen the morale of workers (Freudenberger, 1974, 1975; Jackson and Maslach, 1980; Maslach, 1976; Pines and Maslach, 1980). Furthermore, burnout has been linked with different self-reported indices of personal distress, including physical exhaustion, insomnia, increased use of alcohol and drugs, and marital and family problems. Burnt out employees do not only leave their specific occupational milieu but often change professions (Pines and Aronson, 1981).

### **1.6.8 Factors of stress and burnout within the workplace**

Cherniss (1980a) indicates five sources of stress within the working environment, which lead to burnout; namely doubt, over competence, problems with clients, bureaucratic meddling, little or no stimulation and satisfaction, and poor relationships with colleagues. The following four dissimilar dimensions have been identified within the working environment, namely psychological, physical, social and organisational dimensions.

- **Psychological Dimension-** burnout arises when the worker feels that he/she no longer has power over the support that he/she gives and has no say in the policy stipulations that influence his/her work. The psychological dimension includes feelings of frustration, helplessness and failure that heighten feelings of ineffectiveness (Cherniss, 1980a and b; Maslach, 1986; Paine, 1982). Here McLean (1985) found that work overload correlates positively with stress and burnout.
- **Physical Dimension-** features like noise and physical planning of the working environment also effect the mental and physical well-being of employees (Cherniss, 1980a and b; McLean, 1985; Paine, 1982). Burke (1989), found a strong relationship between a negative

working environment, stress and burnout. The working environment itself and internal elements are vital factors in the physical dimension.

- **Social Dimension-** the social dimension of the working environment is of importance in professions especially in helping professions because they are people oriented, therefore unfavourable social environments can expand the chances of burnout on employees. There are working conditions that causes conflict between employees themselves, rather than promoting a healthy working relationship between them because they find themselves competing with each other for privileged jobs, recognition and promotion. Poor communication and relationships can also exist when more than one group of professionals work together and the one does not respect the other for his/her professionalism (Maslach, 1986).
- **Organisational Dimension-** there are factors that interrelate with burnout that exist in the organisational dimension, which include bureaucracy, administrative problems and the individual's role within the organisation. Bureaucracy does not add to the service of the public and may result in burnout in an employee who is idealistic and caring. Role conflict has serious outcomes for the individual's subjective experience of stress. The more conflicting demands placed on the individual by the working environment, the more burnout occurs (Chemiss, 1980a and b; Paine, 1982).

### 1.6.9 Stress

According to Spielberger, Vagg and Wasala (2003), stress is recognised as a compound process that consist of three major mechanisms: sources of stress that are experienced in the work environment, the perception and appraisal of a particular stressor by an employee, and the emotional reactions that are a response to perceiving a stressor as threatening. Other researchers clearly state that the concept of stress should be approached from different perspectives (Hemming, Baum and Singer, 1984; Holroyd and Lazarus, 1982; Meichenbaum and Turk, 1982). In addition to the above statement, the reason why stress should be approached from a different perspective is because researcher's interest in the field of study varies (Claus, 1980). Ackerman (1992) suggests that stress is a personal and subjective reaction which goes hand in hand with

certain psychological reactions, psychosomatic symptoms and emotional experiences. Criticism against the conceptualising of stress in terms of stimuli and reaction is that it provides a simplistic relationship in which stress is found and provides a skewed emphasis of stimuli in the environment (Cox, 1978). Claus and Bailey (1980) agree with Cox, stating that the definition of stress is broader, multi-faceted and a phenomenon that is often wrongly interpreted. Gold (1985), in accordance, proclaims that other researchers use stress as an umbrella term for the entire study field, which includes stressors that lead to stress reactions, the reactions themselves and the different favourable factors for such reactions.

In addition, many researchers in their studies about stress and related matters support the interactional approach. Lazarus (1977) claims that stress is a field, which surrounds every circumstance whereby environmental or internal demands, or both, exceed the individual's resources. Gold (1985) sees stress as an energy-demanding negative emotional experience, which usually follows after a stimulus that is cognitively evaluated and is interpreted as being threatening. Folkman (1984) is of the opinion that stress is a unique relationship between the individual and the environment and which is evaluated by the individual as being overly demanding or exceeding his/her resources and in so doing, threatens his/her well-being.

In addition, “stress may be viewed as the embodiment of conflict resulting from demands for performance of bodily and social (including occupational) functions imposed by any constellation of environmental and psychological factors that either stimulate or inhibit one's ability to satisfactorily perform physiological, psychological, or social (including occupational) functions” (Kurke, 1995, p. 392). According to Anderson et al. (2002) stress is defined as the response of an individual to the perceived imbalance between the demands of the situation, and the resources one has at his/her disposal to respond successfully. According to Carson and Kuipers (1998), stress can be divided into three separate categories. The first category stems from outside sources such as too much pressure from work, shortage of working equipment and insufficient assistance from superiors and fellow colleagues. The second category can be seen as the sources that are barriers when it comes to negative effects of stress on individuals. The third category consists of sources of stress which can be positive or negative.



Hans Selye (1974) divided stress into two parts, i.e. *distress* and *eustress*. Distress is identified as the destructive type which is distinguished by anger and aggression while eustress is identified as the constructive type which is distinguished by emotions associated with empathic concerns for others and positive striving that would benefit the community. With the above mentioned interactional approach and different studies taken into consideration, it is vital to describe and explain further about factors that contribute to the stress process in order to comprehend how stress take place in people's lives. James and Brett (1984) perceive these variables as contributory factors that can exercise influence and establish relationships in the manifestation of stress. The factors namely stressors, stress reactions, perceptions of self, stress coping and social support will be examined further below.

#### **1.6.10 The manifestation of stress: contributory factors**

**Stressors:** Gold (1985) sees a stimulus or stressor as any force strong enough to bring out an intense response from an individual. Opposed to this, Girdano and Stotelmeyer (1980) are convinced that stressors can cause eustress, which can somehow motivate an individual to do better, for example the level of job performance can increase, good health and productivity. While on the other hand, Charleswoth and Nathan (1984) classify stressors as emotional stressors, chemical stressors, job stressors, phobic stressors, environmental stressors, adaptations, decision-making, mobility, sickness and pain.

Some of the work stressors that confront police officers are boredom, lack of respect from members of the public, excessive paperwork, contacts with the public that are sometimes negative and confrontational, shift work, threats of violence, and the militaristic nature of the bureaucratic structure of policing. Because of these stressful aspects of policing a variety of symptoms and reactions may occur. Symptoms such as deteriorating work performance, negative psychological states (depression, anger and burnout) and psychosomatic and physical conditions (Burke, 1998). Other research with police members indicated increased rates of, post-traumatic stress, burnout, alcohol abuse and suicides, decreased levels of job satisfaction and job performance as prevalent in their lives (Anshel 2000; Nel 1994; Rothmann and Agathagelou, 2000; Rothmann and Strijdom, 2002).

**Stress reaction:** A stress reaction occurs when stress is not properly managed and when unresolved conflicts exist and conformity is not automatically restored (Gold, 1985). These reactions can include happiness, anxiety, rage, grief; frustration, drugs, lack of sleep and exercise, or any adaptations of these states (Kaplan et al., 1993). Roos and Moller (1988) categorise stress reactions as physiological (headaches, fatigue, accelerated heart rate, sweat), emotional (aggression, depression, anxiety, frustration, rage, unhappiness), cognitive (poor self-confidence, inability to handle criticism, concentration deficit) and behavioural (poor appetite, lack of sleep, irresponsible, inability to complete tasks). If stress persists it can cause serious stress reactions, such as, chronic anxiety, depression, or even illnesses such as arthritis, asthma and abdominal pains (Ross and Moller, 1988). But then, people react to stressful situations differently, it depends on the way in which the person perceives a situation to be stressful or threatening.

**Perceptions of self:** Self-perception refers to approval or rejection and it is a measure of whether an individual sees himself/herself as capable, worthy, successful, meaningful or not (Greenberg and Valletutti, 1980). Bums (1979) have defined perceptions of self as follows: “it involves the totality of the person and provides such an all-embracing concept of self, that self comes to mean the total person.” (p. 17). Raath and Jacobs (1993) is again of the opinion that: “The core of man's life, the world in which he lives, as he perceives it, is his own-self- as he sees it and experiences it.” (p. 8). Whether or not a situation is perceived as stressful or threatening by an individual depends upon his/her perception of self. According to Plug, Meyer, Louw and Gouws (1993), the self-image is synonymous with self-concept and it is the person's view and perception of himself/herself, which includes emotional, evaluative, and cognitive elements. Gerdes, Moore, Ochse and Van Ede (1988) see the self-image and the self-concept in the same light and unfold it as a person's view of his/her own traits. In addition, Claus and Bailey (1980) are of the opinion that the two terms are related, but acknowledge that when self-image is discussed, then the self-concept is also touched upon. Therefore, they conceptualise self-image as a perception, which is primarily and decisively cognitive in nature and self-image is vital to individuals. While on the other hand, self-concept represents a dynamic system of perceptions which include all the facets of a person and not only that which is important to him at that moment (Claus and Bailey, 1980).

Another researcher, who perceives these terms as independent claims that; the term self-concept is the totality of the individual's thoughts and emotions (Rosenberg, 1979). According to Combes and Avila (1985), the self-concept is a pattern of perceptions of the self, which contains a feeling of reality for the individual. With regards to the term self-image, Haynes, Hamilton-Lee, and Corner (1987) conceptualised it as the framework wherein an individual's perceptions, instincts and inner emotions are formed through environmental occurrences. Coopersmith (1967) views the importance of the evaluation component of the self-image employing the concept of self-esteem, which he defines as follows: "In short, self-esteem is a personal judgement of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes that the individual holds towards himself, it is a subjective experience which the individual conveys to others by verbal report and other overt expressive behaviour." (P. 4).

Different studies with older people showed that pathology is related with dissatisfaction with self, greater contradiction between observed self and the ideal self and inaccurate insight into the real self (Pope, McHale and Craighead, 1988; Rosenberg, 1979). Baum, Singer and Baum (1981) in their study ten years ago found that middle aged individuals who in their youth enjoyed good health, manifested a higher self-esteem. In relation to the antecedents of self-esteem, Coopersmith (1967) found that it depends upon a person's behaviour and relative position within his framework of reference whether a person believes that he/she is a success or failure and not on the broader and abstract context of general socio-cultural standards. Coopersmith (1967) suggests that individuals should focus more on those areas where they perform well rather than those areas where their job performance is inferior, since it will result in each individual experiencing higher self-esteem through his/her immediate peer group. With regards to job performance, it was found that low self-esteem could lessen productivity and job achievement (Greenberg and Valletutti, 1980). Low self-esteem leads to a disproportionate relationship between aspirations and job performance, which can lead to a negative self-evaluation. An individual with high self-esteem is closer to his/her aspirations which can lead to positive self-evaluation. People with low self-esteem will only differ in their personal perceptions but will strive towards the same job levels and aims as that of persons with high self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967).

Coopersmith (1967) further stated that the individual's ability to interpret occurrences or situations is vital for the development of self-esteem. Encapsulated herein, is that the individual's experience of success in terms of intrinsic self-worth, the resultant aspirations, interpretations of events and defence of his esteem, are dependent upon his experience in terms of these within his immediate peer socio-cultural group. A well-developed self-evaluation construct is of cardinal importance as a link in the chain of the stress process. Self-evaluation will determine if a potential stressor will be perceived as an observed stressor and whether specific mechanisms will be needed to manage the reactions to these stressors.

**Stress coping:** stress coping is regarded as the most vital contributory factor in the manifestation of stress, thus if individuals experience high job demands with limited resources it becomes difficult for them to cope with stress (Folkman et al., 1991). According to Lazarus (1966, 1976) stress coping can be seen as another form of problem solving in order to enable the individual to sustain his/her well-being. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) provided the definition of stress coping. They have defined stress coping as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of a person” (p. 178). These coping processes are based on Lazarus's interactional theory. Lazarus (1966, 1976) further explains that managing stress comprises two processes, namely, direct action and indirect action. Direct action is described as the behaviour that can be seen whereas indirect action is described as the behaviour which is unseen which results in the experience of stress.

The behaviours that can be seen which has been mentioned when describing direct actions, is the behaviour which is aimed at changing the person's reciprocal relationship with his or her environment and it can occur in many ways, for instance, escapism, aggression as well as making preparations prior to danger (Lazarus, 1976). Escapism is another form of stress coping mechanism whereby an individual try by all means to physically take himself/herself out from the existing danger. Secondly aggression usually goes hand in hand with the experiences of stress but it is not effective enough as a form of stress coping (Lazarus, 1976). Lastly a preparation prior to danger is a form of behaviour whereby an individual takes actions in expectation of danger. When it comes to indirect action, Lazarus (1976) draws a distinction between symptom-directed and intra-

psychological methods in order to reach this condition. Symptom-directed methods involve the use of substance abuse, calmatives, etc., while on the other hand intra-psychological methods involves cognitive defence mechanism tools, such as denial, repression, projection, identification, substitution, and intellectualising (Folkman, 1984). In summation stress coping processes are strongly influenced by available resources. These coping resources include biological resources (health and stamina), material resources (money which can buy goods and services), psychological resources (intelligence, nurturing, coping style, flexibility, self-esteem, control and skills of assertiveness) and social resources (people from whom tangible, emotional and informative support can be obtained) (Eckenrode, 1991; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

**Social support:** This contributory factor indicates a feeling that someone cares about the individual, that others value her/him and that she/he belongs to a specific social network. Cobb (1976) proposes the possibility that social support leads to greater flexibility and changing of roles and identities depending on the demands that are placed by stressors. Recent research findings suggest that those individuals who have social support at their disposal during crisis are protected from various pathological conditions. It is suggested that social support can cushion the individual against potentially negative effects of stress and can further coping and adaptation (Cohen and Wills, 1985; Ross and Altmaier, 1994). Membership of a social network may determine the most effective means of stress coping. Thus it clearly appears that social support has a nexus with stress coping mechanisms (Cobb, 1976).

## **Summary**

The narrative above has provided an in depth discussion of the following concepts: Burnout which forms a part of the stress process; Symptoms and causes of burnout; Relationship between stress and burnout; Burnout in connection to line of work; Job stress and burnout; The effect of job stress and burnout on labour; Factors of stress and burnout within the job situation; Stress and the manifestation thereof (contributory factors). Equally important to this discussion is providing clarity on the definitions of the term police official and rank, as was operationalised in this study. This discussion is provided below.

### **1.6.11 Police official**

The police official can be described as a uniformed member of the police service who has completed his or her training at the police training college as well as practical exposure in the field as a student. The term police official as mentioned in this study refers to the permanent member of the SAPS who has been employed by the South African government to protect and serve the citizens of South Africa.

### **1.6.12 Rank**

The term rank refers to the position or grade that police officials have at the South African Police Service. The ranking order in the SAPS begins at the rank of Constable, Sergeant, Inspector, Captain, Superintendent, Senior Superintendent, Director, Assistant Commissioner, Divisional Commissioner, Provincial Commissioner, Deputy National Commissioner and the National Commissioner. In addition, only limited studies revealed the interdependence that exists between positions, which are referred to as ranks in the police field, and stress levels. But then, Lord (2005) reveals that individuals who are in lower ranked positions such as sergeants are likely to encounter more levels of stress that stems from tasks added to their daily work activities such as management work. Kirckaldy et al. (1998) indicate that police officers who are in higher positions or are more experienced, encounter lower levels of stress because they can assign or distribute other tasks to other police officers who are under their supervision, they can also plan in advance and they have the ability to compile a more desirable “time-tabling”. Thus, the above enables them to complete work activities in a steady methodological manner that is not overwhelming and this creates an enjoyable working environment. Although, the above does not work for other police officers who are in lower ranks such as constables or the ones who are responsible for patrolling, as they work directly with criminals, and are also exposed to traumatising incidents (Stephens, 2005).

## **1.7 Outline of the study**

The dissertation consists of six chapters of which:

Chapter one of this dissertation focuses on the introduction of the study, problem statement and framework of this study. In addition, concepts are discussed in detail in this chapter.

Chapter two provides a discussion of the literature review and detailed explanation of the theoretical framework used in this research.

Chapter three is the methodology chapter; it defines and justifies the qualitative research methodology used to provide answers to the research questions. Initially, the chapter substantiates the use of qualitative research methods to collect data from the participants who have the information and the reasons for the sampling in terms of selecting participants. In addition, attention was given to the setting in which the research was conducted, how data was collected and analysed, as well as ethical issues.

Chapter four provides a comprehensive report of the results of the contemporary study.

The answers to the research questions are explained in Chapter five. In addition, this chapter provides conclusions drawn from data obtained. Lastly, recommendations and suggestions for further research are also presented in this chapter.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the background to this research study. Thereafter, the problem statement was formulated along with the aim of the research which is to explore burnout among South African police officers of the Elukwatini SAPS, Mpumalanga province. In addition, the research questions and objectives of the study were presented, followed by operational definitions and detailed explanations of different concepts. Finally, the layout of the chapters was provided. The next chapter provides a brief overview of the literature relating to burnout. It also explores and reviews previous scholarship pertaining to this research study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the existing literature on this topic. In so doing the history of SAPS, the role of police officials, and the outcomes of burnout will be discussed. In addition, an explanation of occupational stress and police stress, an overview of previous studies on burnout and stress in relation to police officials, the impact of stress on police officers, and an explanation of how police officers react to stress will be provided, in order for the reader to understand the stress process. Finally, a detailed explanation of the theoretical framework used in this research will be provided.

#### **2.2 Burnout and stress in policing**

According to Helfrich (2007), in 2007, 2, 2 million incidents of crime were reported to the South African Police Service. During the year 2005 until 2006 crime rate incidents increased by 76% and 585 police officials were killed in the years between 2001 – 2006 (Naidoo, 2006; SAPS, 2006). These incidents contributed to the experience of stress among police officers (Naidoo, 2006; “Stress taking”, 2006) because they were forced to attend more crime scenes and to work more hours to cover for their colleagues who had died or were injured (Breytenbach, 2009). Between the years 2006 – 2011 more police officers were murdered and this added to the existing pressure on police officials which resulted in stress and low performance (“Police under pressure”, 2011). In addition, minister of police Mr BH Cele declared that the South African Police Service has undergone a great loss of police officers in a deliberate attack at Engcobo police station, in the Eastern Cape Province. “This was followed by several incidents of continued brutal and senseless killing of police officers” (South African Police Service Annual Report, 2017/2018, p.6). Moreover, statistics show that “a total number of 85 police members were murdered on and off duty, during 2017/2018, including 29 members on duty and 56 members off duty, compared to 83, in 2016/2017” (South African Police Service Annual Report, 2017/2018, p.14). It was also



discovered that, “In the SAPS, the incidence of injuries sustained while on duty among police officers was 4.7, 6.8 and 4.3% for 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16, respectively” (Mona, Chimbari and Hongoro, 2019 p. 15). According to Haisch and Meyers (2004) these incidents then may lead to trauma which can result to post-traumatic stress disorder.

Jones and Kagee (2005) argue that police personnel in general, and in South Africa in particular, are exposed to various duty-related stressors that are significantly different, in terms of quality and quantity to those experienced by the general population. In addition, Shane (2010) conducted a study among 461 police officers from two departments in Michigan and New Jersey to examine the impact of organisational stressors on police performance. The findings of the above research were largely in line with previous researchers which suggest several factors i.e., bureaucracy, management and organisational capacity of police organisations are sources of stress that subsequently leads to lower performance from workers. On the other hand, a study conducted by Gulle et al. (1998) of 91 SAPS members in the Cape Peninsula, showed that in comparison to stressors reported by police in the United States, most of which were inherent in the nature of the job, South African Police stressors were more organisationally oriented. In addition, the findings of this research further indicated that the sample drawn in South Africa indicate higher levels of stress when being compared to the sample drawn in the United States of America (USA). The results further indicated that the pressure placed on South African Police Officers is affecting employees negatively. In addition to the above, “a study conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) among London police officers revealed that 46% of police officers reported work to be extremely stressful” (Mona, Chimbari and Hongoro, 2019 p. 15).

According to Mostert and Joubert (2005), the negative effects of job stress on employees and their work are such that it is necessary to explore the processes involved when job stress is studied. Rothmann and Jorgensen (2007) conducted a study to explore the sources of stress experienced by police officers of the Local Criminal Record Centre in the SAPS. The results revealed stressors including staff shortages, excessive paperwork, inadequate or poor quality equipment, working unsociable hours and exposure to violent situations. In addition to the above, Lanagam- Fox, Deery and Van Vliet (1997) have found in their research that the relationship with police officers, long working hours, poor salaries, problems with clients, bureaucratic meddling and poor opportunity

for promotion were the most relevant causes of burnout. Similarly, in their review of the literature Mona, Chimbari and Hongoro (2019) discovered that “a study among 497 Israeli border police, revealed that lack of resources, low salary and workoverload were common stressors in the workplace” (p. 15). It has been argued further by Arter (2008), that the effects of formal pressure from police organisations and pressures generated by the police subculture often lead police to experience a great deal of stress in their occupational, social, and family lives, resulting in cynicism, burnout, and retirement on the job, as well as a host of physical and emotional ailments. Furthermore, another South African study investigating stress among police officers in the SAPS identified high job demands and the lack of resources as being the main sources of stress (Meyer, Rothmann, and Pienaar, 2003). In addition, a study that was conducted in the United states of America with 365 participants’ ‘police officers’ showed more risk of post-traumatic stress disorder between the law enforcement members, because of life threatening situations they come across to (Mona, Chimbari, and Hongoro, 2019). Indeed, as the literature indicates, the nature of police work is acknowledged as highly stressful and particularly hazardous (Selye 1978; Alexander, 1999; Anshel, 2000; Paton and Violanti, 1999).

Nel and Burgers (1996) argue that the South African Police Service is not united anymore, and does not offer support to its employees. Most police officers find it difficult to adjust to the new changes that occurred after 1994 and as a result they experience stress. According McCafferty (1992) some police officers end up killing themselves because of the experience of stress in the workplace. Other researchers also discovered that law enforcement members have suicidal thoughts (Pienaar, Rothmann, and van de Vijver, 2007) as a result of their work, which is the biggest concern in the South African Police Service (de Wet, 2004; Rothmann and Van Rensburg, 2002; Storm and Rothmann, 2003). Sa Joe (2003) reported that the extensive job stress, which includes being constantly exposed to criminal activities and violence, is one of the main reasons for suicide. Furthermore, according to Rothmann and van Rensburg (2002) suicidal behaviour may be considered a psychological disturbance and is associated with potentially severe mental and/or physical health outcomes. Suicidal behaviour can be plotted on a continuum varying in severity from thinking about it, through to intent, and finally an attempt to actual completion (Reynolds, 1991a).

Recent studies suggest that it is possible for individuals to cope with stress, but then it is a long term process it does not happen overnight (Folkman, 2011b). People tend to use coping methods in order to manage stressful situations, circumstances and emotions (Folkman, 2011b). Other studies have also shown that law enforcement employees find it difficult to adjust to the demands placed on them physically and emotionally (Harsh and Meyers, 2004; Sunndaram and Kuruman, 2012; Waters and Ussery, 2007). Thus, some of the employees end up using substances such as alcohol and drugs just to avoid the situation (SAPS, 2011; “Traumatised cops turning to the bottle, says study”, 2011).

My study differs from these studies, in that the aim of this study is to explore burnout among police officers in the South African Police Service in the Elukwatini SAPS, Mpumalanga province. The motivation for this study was the lack of research relating to this topic, specifically within the South African context. The research would be of benefit to the SAPS as it contributes to knowledge and further understanding of the functioning of police officials in stressful situations.

## **2.3 The South African Police Service**

### **2.3.1 History of SAPS**

The responsibilities of the South African Police Service in South Africa’s political history incorporated sustaining the apartheid regime and the oppression of millions of South Africans, which consequently resulted in a poor and distrustful image of the police, particularly among black South Africans (Levin, Ngubeni and Simpson, 1994). The constitution established the restructuring of the SAPS at national and provincial level to rectify the challenges faced by the police and extend better control over the country (Rwelamira, 1997). These changes were accompanied by substantial organisational restructuring, reviewing and redefining the role of the police officer in the ‘new’ South Africa, and re-establishing police legitimacy (Nel and Burgers, 1998; Nel, 1999).

## 2.4 The police official

Botha (in Johnson, 2001) defines the role of the police as based on mutual expectations and obligations communicated in the interaction between the public and the police. This position attaches itself to policing by consent, crime prevention and law enforcement, which continues to remain the agreed upon manifest function of the police (Johnson, 2001). Bittner (in Newham, 2001) argues that three distinct areas classify the police role: (1) law enforcement (the primary function), (2) regulatory control, and (3) peacekeeping. In addition, social support offered by police to the community encompasses a considerable proportion of the police role (Shane, 1980). Botha (in Johnson, 2001) supports this claim by declaring that the police function incorporates both law enforcement and non-crime service functions, with sixty percent of calls to police unrelated to crime, but to personal issues and injuries. Consequently, confusion resulting from the tension between the law enforcement and social service role may ensue as police members have a propensity to adopt one particular course, thereby rejecting the other (Johnson, 2001). Subsequently, countless long serving and traditional police officers experience their new roles to be confusing and even traumatic (Nel and Burgers, 1998).

## 2.5 Outcomes

Most investigations that have been done about the outcomes of burnout are related to job performance. Some attention has also been paid to health outcomes, given that burnout is considered a stress phenomenon as outlined below (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001)

- **Job performance:** Organisations are experiencing a high rate of employee absenteeism, actual turnover; and some individuals end up leaving their jobs, however for people who do not leave their employment, burnout results in lower productivity and effectiveness at work (Burke and Greenglass 2001). Burnout does not only affect the individual but also people in their lives such as their families, in addition; there is evidence that burnout has a negative “spill over” effect on people’s home life (Burke and Greenglass 2001). Burnout is a serious issue because it also affects the colleagues of the individual who is experiencing burnout

by causing personal conflict and job conflict and ends up disrupting job tasks therefore, burnout is argued to be “contagious” (Burke and Greenglass 2001).

- **Health:** There is another argument which says people who are mentally healthy manage or cope better with chronic stressors and they are less likely to experience burnout than people who are mentally unhealthy (Jenkins and Maslach 1994). On the other hand, another study addressed this statement by analysing data of people who were employed in emotionally demanding roles, such as “helper” jobs or employment that dealt with individuals in stressful situations. The results revealed that those who were healthier, psychologically, in their teenage years through to early adulthood were more likely to get in, and remain in, these helping jobs, and they further demonstrated more involvement and satisfaction with their employment (Jenkins and Maslach 1994).

## **2.6 Situational factors: Where does burnout occur?**

The research that has been done over the past twenty-five years has focused more on the situational factors that interrelate with burnout (Spielberger, Vagg and Wasala, 2003). The findings of this study shows a much more visible effect of the impact of job related activities on employees who are experiencing this phenomenon. The focus here therefore will be on job characteristics, organisational characteristics and occupational characteristics.

- **Job characteristics:** According to Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001), there are both quantitative job demands as well as qualitative job demands. Studies of qualitative jobs demands have paid attention on role ambiguity and role conflict, and both these roles show a moderate to high correlation with burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). Role ambiguity takes place when there is lack of information for doing the job well. On the other hand, role conflict occurs when clashing demands have to be met at workplaces (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). Quantitative job demands include demands such as too much work given to individuals which needs to be completed in a short period of time. These job demands have been studied by many burnout researchers and the results support the idea that burnout is caused by work overload. Too much work given to workers and limited

times to finish the given task strongly correlates to burnout, especially the exhaustion dimension.

In addition to studying the presence of job demands, burnout researchers have investigated the absence of job resources and the resources that has been studied thoroughly is social support (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). There is also evidence that have been provided to show that lack of support is strongly related to burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). The support given to workers by supervisors is more vital than the support coming from co-workers as it motivates workers to do well. Another set of job resources is information and control; in summation people who lack participation in decision making are more likely to experience burnout than those who actively participate in decision making (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001).

- **Occupational characteristics:** More recent research has focused on occupations that included contact with people, for example extensive relationships with the managers, meaning workers relied more on managers with regard to information on how the job tasks had to be performed, but then other studies used occupations where by contact with other people was minimal, meaning here the contact was more with computer programmes (Zapf et al 2001). Even though the burnout concept seems to be related to this wider range of occupations, there was still the theory stating that the cause of emotional stressors on people in workplaces was interrelated to burnout (Zapf et al 2001). Another study that was conducted subsequently did not find enough evidence to support such a theory, instead the evidence that was gathered showed that job related stressors such as too much work given to workers which had to be completed in a short period of time and also role conflicts were found to be more highly related to burnout than client related stressors (Zapf et al 2001). Furthermore, new research concentrated more explicitly on emotion such as the ability to be able to be empathetic with clients and also the ability to be able to show emotions on the job, in addition the new research also found that these emotion factors do account for additional variance in burnout scores over and above job stressors (Zapf et al 2001). In addition, a current comparison that has been made by one approach on burnout profiles for five occupational sectors which are; law enforcement, social services, teaching, medicine

and mental health, in two countries (Holland and United States) revealed similar results for occupational profiles in both nations (Schaufeli and Enzmann 1998).

Profiles of law enforcement such as police officers and prison guards were distinguished by high levels of cynicism and inefficacy and low levels of exhaustion (Schaufeli and Enzmann 1998). In addition, to the findings or results of this study it is vital to keep in mind that, there are also other confounding variables in the law enforcement occupation which must be taken into account, for example males predominate in the law enforcement occupation and cynicism is usually higher for males than females and it is also not clear on this research findings about how sampling was done whether males dominated in the study or vice versa, and there was also a lack of information on substantive national difference (Schaufeli and Enzmann 1998). However, the profiles of workers in social services and mental health care were different in both nations, in Holland the levels of cynicism were average whereas in the United States the levels of cynicism in the social services were high (Schaufeli and Enzmann 1998). On the other hand, teaching was distinguished by the highest level of exhaustion, and the level of cynicism was close to the nation's average. The level of exhaustion and cynicism in medicine was lower in both nations' with only slightly higher levels of inefficacy. Lastly, mental health workers in the United States experienced lower levels of exhaustion and cynicism whereas in Holland these levels were higher. Thus, these comparisons of profiles on different occupation's show that there are vital traits of various professions that lead to the experience of burnout (Schaufeli and Enzmann 1998).

- **Organisational characteristics:** The organisational context is shaped by larger cultural, social and economic factors. The increasing rate of occupational sectors has required organisation's to thoroughly rethink the causes of burnout on employees. Currently, organisations have undergone a lot of changes, such as downsizing, retrenching and mergers that have had negative effects on the lives of their employees (Rousseau 1995). This is perhaps most evident in changes in the psychological contract e.g. the belief in what the employer is obliged to provide based on perceived promises of reciprocal exchange (Rousseau 1995). Thus, these changes are forcing employees to work more hours, put more

effort, flexibility as well as skills and in spite of these they still receive lesser chances of being permanently employed, job security, less career opportunities and many more. In addition, the breach of the psychological contract is likely to cause burnout because it scrapes away the idea of interdependence, which is vital in sustaining the individual's well-being (Rousseau 1995).

## **2.7 Individual factors: Who experiences burnout?**

It has been argued by Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) that individuals bring unique qualities to the work setting; these qualities include demographic variables such as formal education (different qualifications levels) and different work related attitudes which will be discussed further below:

- **Demographic characteristics:** There are many demographic traits that have been linked to burnout such as the demographic variable of gender (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). Although the demographic variable of gender has not been proven as the strong cause of burnout but despite this it has been shown that burnout is likely to be experienced by more females than males. Many different studies have been conducted in order to support this notion and different results have been obtained, some studies show higher levels of burnout for men and others show high levels of burnout experiences for women (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). In addition, women in some studies have scored higher on exhaustion and males usually score higher on cynicism (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). However, these results could be related to different occupations which are preferred by different genders, for example; in most cases males are mostly likely to join law enforcement occupations than females (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). When it comes to marital status, individuals who are not married are most likely to suffer from burnout when comparing them to the individuals who are married and on the other hand, individuals who are single experience burnout more than the individuals that are divorced (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001).



Another demographic variable that has been studied is ethnicity but only few studies have been done on this kind of demographic variable so it makes it impossible to conclude the findings or to summarise any empirical trends (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). When it comes to education, some studies have found that employees who are highly educated are mostly likely to experience burnout when compared to employees who are less educated. But then this information is not clear enough, because education is also related to other variables such as status and occupation. Thus, this finding is not sufficient enough, because you may find that employees who are highly educated experience burnout more than the ones who are less educated, reason being that most of the time if you are highly educated in an organisation you get a higher position meaning more responsibilities and higher stress (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). In summation, out of all the demographic variables that have been studied the most consistent one that is related to burnout is age. The studies that have been done have shown that younger employees are most likely to be burnout victims than older employees. Age is contradicted with work experience, thus individuals who recently started a new job are more likely to experience burnout than those with much experience, but then these expectations have not been studied thoroughly (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001).

- **Job attitudes:** Employees bring different attitudes and expectations into workplaces. Some join organisations having higher expectations such as being promoted to higher positions in a short period of time (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). Therefore, in this case these kinds of individuals end up working very hard, pushing themselves to the limit just to be recognised. This therefore leads to exhaustion and cynicism, when their hard work is not recognised or does not yield the expected results. In other instances, the expectations become higher because of the nature of the job such as excitement, challenges and fun. Such high expectation is regarded to be unrealistic; therefore, one theory has been that they are a risk factor for burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001).

## **2.8 Occupational stress**

Occupational stress refers to individuals' response to work demands beyond their knowledge and ability, and which challenge their capacity to cope (Leka, Griffiths, and Cox, 2003). Sethi and Schuler (1984) described four issues related to occupational stress and coping which have become foremost issues for organisations: (1) concern for employee health and wellbeing, (2) the economic implications for organisations, (3) legal responsibility on employers to ensure safe and healthy work environments, and (4) organisational effectiveness (O'Driscoll and Cooper, 2002).

It has been argued that mismanaged or ignored occupational stress will generate distress for the individual, and ultimately extend into detrimental outcomes for the organisation (O'Driscoll and Cooper, 2002). Recently, most research has been conducted on occupational stress specifically for two purposes (Straub, 2002). The first one is that many people will experience work-related stress in their workplaces at some point, whether sooner or later. Lastly, occupational stress can be prevented or avoided and it may lead to more opportunities for intervention (Straub, 2002). The impact of occupational stress is often short-term and it does not cause or lead to chronic psychological or physical consequences (Straub, 2002; Cox, 1978). Although this does not apply to all individuals, people react differently to stress situations, and some may endure chronic and continuous work stress (Straub, 2002; Johnson, 2001; Cox, 1978). The issues of absenteeism and employee turnover rates, loss of productivity, and expenses in terms of employee health are the results of the broad health, economic and social consequences of continuously high stress levels (Pienaar and Rothmann, 2006; O'Driscoll and Cooper, 2002; Johnson, 2001).

## **2.9 Police stress**

As discussed earlier, the SAPS have encountered many changes in the past years, and these changes influenced the nature of the police officer role, causing role ambiguity and role conflict (Sutherland and Cooper, 2000). SAPS members face unique demands including the struggle of supporting both freedom and societal regulation, as well as policing communities within stringent legal constraints, which may lead to the appraisal of duties as distressing or taxing (Violanti, 1983). Some changes that have been experienced by the SAPS also include changes relating to job role

structure which are intrinsic and happen regularly in the SAPS, which has led to significant transformation to the organisation. Role conflict occurs when an employee experiences confusion regarding contrasting demands or mismatched goals relating to the job (Sutherland and Cooper, 2000), role ambiguity is a lack of clarity about one's role at work, and role overload is the number of diverse roles an individual has to perform and the extent of work required (O'Driscoll and Cooper, 2002). However, the role of police officer has been reconsidered within both the organisation and country.

In addition, McCreary, Thompson and Sullivan (2004) define the concept of stress as the response to emotional pressure suffered for a prolonged period of time in which an individual perceives they have little or no control, as well as anticipated demands and pressures that affect life events. The experience of stress in the police profession is perceived as dissimilar when compared with other professions. Stress in police environments is perceived as different when looking at other occupations. The research conducted by McCreary et al. (2004) with regard to police stress also distinguishes the interpersonal relationship of police officers with the public as well as their colleagues.

## **2.10 Police officers' stress and burnout**

The following is a discussion of how police officers experience stress and burnout; this will provide a clearer understanding of burnout within this context. Police officers are constantly under pressure, and exposed to multiple stressors and uncertainty (Blum, 2000; Brown and Campbell, 1994; Oliny, 1991; Ransley and Mazerolle, 2009). In addition, Stone (2004) proposed that a police job is a consuming job which results in stress being experienced during tasks that aim to ensure public safety through crime prevention and law enforcement. Ranta and Sud (2008) proposed that individuals who work in law-enforcement are more prone to die because of work related stressors rather than being killed in crime scenes. Exposure of police officers to stressors can be detrimental to the job performance, the public image of the police (especially in the use of excessive force), has individual consequences like turnover, absenteeism, physical and mental

diseases and, especially, suicide due to easy access to a gun (Brown and Campbell, 1994; Hackett and Violanti, 2003; Selye, 1978; Turvey, 1995).

According to the data that was collected between the year of 1998 and 2005 when comparing different professions against occupational stress, it was revealed that being a police officer was the second most stressful activity (Gonçalves and Neves, 2010; Johnson et al., 2005). Thus, these findings have made many researchers curious and piqued interest in the study of police officers specifically in relation to stress and burnout. Investigations relating to the causes of burnout have mainly focused on external triggers, especially organisational or social influences, ignoring individual reactions and personality as a possible cause of burnout (Alarcon et al., 2009). It is well known that occupational stress is frequent in today's society, provoking physical and mental illness, and decreasing the quality of services (Stinchcomb, 2004). According to Ransley and Mazerolle (2009), the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an era of uncertainty, bringing terrorism, violence, poverty, and crime to different countries, requiring police forces to adapt quickly to new demands. However, when there is a mismatch between job demands and the person's adaptive resources, occupational stress occurs and can lead to burnout (Schaufeli and Buunk, 2003). The next section will give a brief overview of the impact of stress on work.

### **2.10.1 Impact of stress**

Police stress may affect multiple levels including the individual, the family, the SAPS as an organisation and the community at large (Nel, 1999). Widespread symptoms among police officials include an increase in substance use, suicide ideation and suicide, extramarital affairs, anxiety, depression, emotional numbness and loss of motivation (Nel, 1999). The following symptoms represent the most salient outcomes of stress, as evident from its impact on the individual and the plethora of research conducted on these issues.

- **Post-traumatic stress disorder:** Nel (1999) states that continuous and excessive exposure to traumatic situations with, or without counselling, may eventually result in Posttraumatic

Stress Disorder (PTSD). Exposure to events involving actual or threatened death, or serious injury, may result in the development of three categories of psychological symptoms: (1) the continuous re-experiencing of the event; (2) the determined avoidance of stimuli related to the trauma; and (3) increased arousal (Jones and Kagee, 2005). Moreover, symptoms of intrusion (in the form of dreams or flashbacks); disturbances in the body's natural cycle; changes in sleeping, eating, or sexual habits; and emotional responses such as crying or aggression may occur (Joseph, Williams, and Yule, 1999; Nel, 1999).

- **Suicide:** South African suicide rates and studies reveal that SAPS officers are eleven times more likely to commit suicide than the average South African citizen (Meyer et al., 2003), and five times more likely to commit suicide in comparison to police suicide rates internationally (Pienaar et al., 2007). Conceptualising suicide reveals numerous activities and ideas, including suicide completion, overt intention, and suicide attempt, as well as suicide ideation, which represents a salient risk factor for suicide attempts and completion (Swanepoel and Pienaar, 2004; Violanti, 2004). Suicide ideation refers to cognitions concerning suicidal activities and objectives, and is often an early indication of serious suicidal behaviour and psychological disturbance (Rothmann and Strijdom, 2002; Pienaar et al., 2007). It concerns ideas about death, suicide, and severe self-injurious actions and thoughts about suicidal behaviour (Rothmann and Strijdom, 2002).

## 2.11 Stressors

In order to understand stress and its complexities it is important to uncover the sources of stress (Nelson and Burke, 2002). According to Burke (1994) there is evidence that the work setting, specifically work stressors, influences the psychological burnout levels of police officers. Drawing primarily from the research of Maslach-Pines and Keinan (2006), the most common sources of occupational stress that can be expected to have a measure of impact on work engagement in the workplace have been grouped into four main categories, namely: (a) task related stressors, (b) organisational stressors, (c) external stressors, and (d) personal stressors. An explanation of the above stressors is as follows:

### **2.11.1 Task-related stressors**

Task-related stressors refers to those stressors related to the fundamental nature of the police officer's role (Maslach-Pines and Keinan, 2006), and are further divided into acute versus chronic stressors (Anshel, 2000). Acute stress is derived from an extreme or unusual external stimulus perceived as threatening and which provoke significant changes in psychological, physiological, and behavioural reactions (Anshel, 2000). In the police service, sources of acute stress include facing unpredictable and dangerous situations (Anshel, 2000), physical danger, including the threat of serious injury or death to themselves, and exposure to others who have been seriously injured, killed, or otherwise traumatised (Aaron, 2000). In addition, many officers are afraid of being injured or killed (Toch, 2002). According to Maslach-Pines and Keinan (2006), the highest ranking acute stressors are violence and the fear of violence; however, topping the list of acute stressors is the death of a fellow officer on duty or having to take a life in the line of duty and, shooting incidents (Abdollahi, 2002).

Peltzer (2001) conducted a study on stress and traumatic symptoms among police officers in the SAPS. The study showed that the most persistent and stressful incidents as reported by police officers were the following: responding to a scene involving the accidental injury of a child, finding a corpse after a murder, the pursuit of an armed suspect, duty-related violent injuries (shooting), and accidents with a departmental vehicle (Peltzer, 2001). Chronic stress refers to stress that builds over time and does not resolve itself quickly (Anderson et al., 2002). The most common chronic police stressors are related to the structure of the police officer's work, including work overload and shift work (Toch, 2002); on-going harassment by others; and regular patrols in an unsafe area (Anshel, 2000). Other chronic stressors include role conflict and role overload (Brown and Campbell, 1994).

### **2.11.2 Organisational stressors**

Organisational stressors are interconnected to the organisational structure of the police service (Brown and Campbell, 1994), and are further divided into two groups, namely: job demands and a lack of resources (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Primary work demands for police officers

include lack of administrative support, lack of voice in decision-making, lack of opportunities for advancement, coupled with inadequate supervision, bureaucratic nature of police departments and large amounts of paper work (Brown and Campbell, 1994; Toch, 2002). Job demands and a lack of resources contribute to stress, which results in burnout and low work engagement (Rothmann et al., 2005).

### **2.11.3 External stressors**

According to Maslach-Pines and Keinan (2006), external stressors originate outside the police service. External stressors include: (a) a demanding and at times hostile public, (b) sensational media that appears to be hostile to the police, (c) a judicial system that is easier on criminals, and (d) ineffective punitive system.

### **2.11.4 Personal stressors**

According to Maslach-Pines and Keinan (2006), personal stressors include work-home conflicts. A career as a police officer requires a heavy psychological price (e.g., guilt feelings) that results from the conflict they experience between their work and family demands (Brown and Campbell, 1994). The relationships that people share within the home environment can also be a source of stress. Balancing more than one role may not always be easy and the person fulfilling these roles may at times feel as if he or she does not have sufficient resources to cope with the demands of the situation (Brannon and Feist, 2004). Mostert et al. (2006) conducted an investigation on the mediating role of positive work-home interaction between job resources and work engagement of police officers. The results of this study revealed that job resources have a strong and positive relationship with work engagement and positive work-home interaction. Based on the results of this study, it appears that if job resources are available they may assist police officers to cope with the demanding aspects of their work (Mostert et al., 2006).

In conclusion, stress in the policing environment can be seen as deriving from different sources. The level of stress that individual's experience also depends largely on their perception of these sources and on their perceived ability to cope (Brannon and Feist, 2004).

The following section discusses life stressors (within the context of police work), these life stressors will be thoroughly explained with the aim of providing a clearer understanding of life stressors within the police context.

### **2.12 Life stressors (within police context)**

Stressors can be divided into different categories in the police context, such as financial problems, sound human relations with colleagues, individuals who do not want to co-operate at work, household problems, overall well-being of individuals and unreasonable demands and policies from the top management (Moos, 1986, 2002). In some studies, police work in general has been described as a profession that is highly demanding (Anshel, 2000; Arrigo and Shipley, 2005). Other researchers in their studies have divided events that causes stress in the lives of police officers into two categories namely; organisational stressors and operational stressors (Arrigo and Shipley, 2005; Hart et al., 1995; McCreary et al., 2004). Aspects such as feeling threatened physically, brutality, exposure to dangerous circumstances and taking a dangerous person to prison are examples of operational stressors. Whereas on the other hand, examples of organisational stressors are; shortage of working equipment, poor interpersonal relationships, shortage of employees and too much pressure placed on police officials (Arrigo and Shipley, 2005; Hart et al., 1995; Kop et al., 1999). According to Hart et al. (1995) Law enforcement officers sometimes feel positive because of self-motivation and high morale. The section that follows focuses on providing comprehensive information about environmental factors that plays a role in the lives of police officers in the police environment, (Moos, 1994).



### **2.12.1 Dealing with co-workers**

The bad behaviour of other individuals in organisations does not only put their lives in danger but may also threaten or challenge the lives of other individuals (Hayes, 2002). Sometimes workers in organisations are required to work together in teams/groups in order to complete some tasks. During the process of forming a work group or team there are different stages that must be followed or observed, which are forming, storming, norming, and performing. Tuckman (1965), described the above four stages as follows: “Forming refers to the early stages of group’s life, as people come together and begin to find ways to interact and share common purpose; on the other hand, storming is the stage where group roles, relationships and values are contested and negotiated, including issues of leadership and control; while norming refers to the stage at which group roles, norms and expectations begin to be established; lastly performing describes the point at which group processes are established and the group is able to work within these constraints in relatively effective ways” (p. 10). In addition, the last stage which is performing reveals that it is possible for a group to work together effectively and be productive without any challenges and adjustment (Freedman and Leonard, 2002; Handy, 1999; Kakabadse et al., 1995). Sometimes it becomes a challenge for employees to work in groups or teams because, when working with colleagues a quarrel may arise and it can also cause stress (McCreary and Thompson, 2006). Team quarrels may also be a source of strain (Hayes, 2002). There are negative and positive conflicts and conflicts arise in different ways.

In addition, historically, there were more men employed in the police services, however presently, females are well represented even in higher positions, and this changes created co-operative and no-cooperative disputes (Van Wyk, 2005). In other cases, group disputes occur due to poor leadership which clashes with what the group has agreed on, as well as poor human relations. Lack of working equipment and skills, and skills of group members can also lead to the experience of stress (Freedman and Leonard, 2002; Robbins and Finley, 1995). Disputes due to poor communication can also arise amongst colleagues or seniors (Luthans, 2001). These disputes can arise due to varying opinions, style, role conflict and even role overload. However, a dispute which is positive can lead to good performance which in turn can benefit the entire organisation. Even though it has been proven that a conflict which is positive can produce good results towards the

success of the organisation, many studies also reported circumstances which can result in conflict within organisations (Kahn and Quinn, 1984; Luthans, 2001; Robbins, 2003). Obstructive disputes may arise in the storming and norming stage when a group is formed. In unfavourable conditions, employees may develop favourable opinions about themselves which can add towards the group's sound human relations, thus this contributes positively to people who belong to highly cohesive groups because these individuals become very productive and motivated than individuals working in low cohesive groups. Furthermore, if individuals belong to a group that has sound human relations they tend to refuse if they are asked to leave that particular group (Berry, 1998; Hayes, 2002). The above can also be appropriate to law enforcement surroundings. As stated by Van Wyk (2005) as well as Haarr and Morash (2005), a work group with one dominating racial category might experience conflict when it comes to the minority racial group.

### **2.12.2 Different rules apply to different people**

According to the study conducted by De Beer and Korf (2004), thirty-six percent of law enforcement participants indicated that unfair preferential treatment also played a part in law enforcement stress situations, as it was believed that certain orders were only given to particular individuals. In addition to the above, one example to support the above statement is that if one law enforcement official broke the law he/she will be seriously dealt with, while the other one who broke the same law might just get a simple verbal message. Grote (1996) believes that the process of evaluating an employee by means of the performance appraisal interview may also be a cause of lack of consistency, for example someone in authority may rebuke an employee for bad performance but overlook another employee for the same performance thus, in this instance the individual may feel that orders are only enforced on certain individuals. Poor working relationships between lower ranks and seniors can also lead to the experience of stress (Hayes, 2002). Furthermore, VanWyk (2005) reported that in most cases law enforcement officials are treated unfairly by their seniors.

### **2.12.3 Feeling you have to prove yourself to the organisation**

According to McCreary et al. (2004) an employee may encounter stress and too much pressure when he/she must regularly prove him/herself to the organisation with the aim of being recognised as the best employee in the organisation that the employee is working for. Stress comes into view when the employee's need as well as goals does not correspond with the ones of the organisation (Lowman, 1993; Newell, 2002). The employee's expectations and the organisations expectations on the employees usually bring conflict. The institution places too much pressure on employees and expect individuals to perform well regardless of the pressure and commitment (Salaman, 2000). In supporting the above statement, Martins (2000) believes that the pressure is located in the trust that management has in the individual. However, as Martin (2000) argues, this trust can be easily be broken because of poor communication between lower levels and seniors. Furthermore, as this trust continues to decrease the employee may start to work under pressure just to re-gain the trust from the management and this may lead to the experience of stress. In addition, Grote (1996) supports Salaman (2000) by stating that sometimes employees feel like their efforts in organisations are not recognised. Furthermore, in relation to the SAPS, since the democratic transition in 1994, organisations including the SAPS are going through significant changes which have been negatively affecting employees (Louw, 2001; Martins, 2000).

### **2.12.4 Excessive administrative duties**

Immoderate management can also cause role overload, which exists when an individual fulfils multiple roles simultaneously and lack the resources to perform them (Edwards et al., 1998). Sometimes drastic changes in law enforcement bring more work responsibilities to police officers. Work arrangement aimed at reducing/overcoming job dissatisfaction arising from repetitive tasks, with the aim of raising productivity levels by offering non-monetary rewards such as greater rewards and greater satisfaction also adds on the tasks of management and junior ranks which can also lead to role overload (Lord, 2005). As organisations have reduced their labour force, more responsibilities have been added to employees that have not been made redundant which makes it difficult for these employee's to be productive as they used to be because of the added responsibilities that were not stated on the document given to each employee that describes the

general tasks and other related duties and responsibilities of a specific position. For instance, because of the drastic changes that occurred after 1994 in South Africa, other duties that were being performed by clerks were added to managers and other employees in organisations (Edwards et al., 1998). According to Schaufeli and Buunk (2003), excessive workload and having no say over your job is related to the experience of burnout. To sum up, the above mentioned factors exist when there are changes in the police environment (Lord, 2005).

### **2.12.5 Constant changes in policy/legislation**

As mentioned earlier, in South Africa many institutions, including the police services, were affected by drastic changes that came with the new laws and regulations in 1994 (Tinarelli, 2000). While transformation can occur in different ways (Hammer, 1997; Robbins, 2003), such changes may result in the feeling of worry for the members of law enforcement (Lord, 2005). The above planned change efforts may also lead to stressful consequences for these employees (Sperry, 1995).

### **2.12.6 Staff shortages**

Research done in South Africa with regard to Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R) (Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli, 2003); foresee that stress resulting from shortage of equipment affects employees more when compared to other types of stressors affecting members working for the South African law enforcement agencies. The issue of shortage of workers as well as working with colleagues who are not co-operating may lead to the experience of stress. The above research showed concrete evidence between job demand and staff shortages. Stressful job demands refer to factors such as performing work activities not listed in the document that states the individual's role and responsibilities (job description), too much paper work, and also doing someone else's work. In addition, not having enough resources, such as staff, makes it more difficult for employees to complete their work activities effectively (Wiese et al., 2003). Many employees find it difficult to grasp new information because they end up being exposed to many activities at once which creates confusion and in turn makes employees look as if they are incompetent (Lord, 2005).

### **2.12.7 Bureaucratic red tape**

According to Robbins (2003) the system that is used by institutions for controlling or managing organisations “bureaucracy” has its own strong and weak points. The weak points of bureaucracy are obsessional pressure for adhering to policies. According to Ingraham, Thompson and Sanders (1997) the law enforcement organisations are accountable for this obsessional pressure. In relation to the South African Police Service, South African police officials who are patrolling, are required to do many task simultaneously, tasks such as keeping intelligible records from different sources, e.g. keeping record in case of dockets occurrence book at once instead of focusing on patrolling only. While on the other hand the strength of bureaucracy is that efficiency of bureaucracy is of high standard, meaning officials have to adopt a specific set of processes to handle tasks and situations which may arise. Red tape takes place in a form of incidents report, for example when states or organisations property has been damaged, such as during a car chase or shooting incident. There is a rule or procedure that must be followed by officers, which is to give seniors “commanders” a report through the “radio control centre” about any incidents occurring which may lead to unnecessary pressure on police officers who are already experiencing an overabundance of work (Haarr and Morash, 2005).

### **2.12.8 Too much computer work**

According to Robbins (2003) many organisations are now relying more on technology and computers, as most activities are being computerised compared to previous eras. The use of intranets in organisations is preferred by employees, it makes communication systems much easier for them. However, as discussed previously after 1994, the employee’s workload was increased in that they are now forced to do administration duties which requires the use of computer and internet skills (Lord, 2005). Further, law enforcement employees operating outside ‘patrolling’ may be forced to spend more time doing office jobs than to follow the job description set for their level. Too much computer work may have many negative impacts on the organisation, especially to seniors or old employees who are technologically disadvantaged together with police officers who never attended computer courses at school, these employees’ may be more frustrated than the ones who are familiar with computer usage (Lord, 2005).

### **2.12.9 Lack of training on new equipment**

New scientific knowledge may enhance worker's lives and enable them to complete their work activities effectively, but only if they receive adequate training. According to Robbins (2003) the aim of technical education is to upgrade and improve the worker's skills. Technical education is vital because of the following reason namely: outcomes of new technology and constructional design. For instance, the new changes have forced workers to grasp new methods as well as new skills. However, employees who received inadequate training may be more depressed when being compared to employees who have received adequate training when it comes to new technology developments (Lord, 2005).

### **2.12.10 Perceived pressure to volunteer free time**

According to Salaman (2000) all organisations all over the world have their own working pace when it comes to the number of hours and days that employees are expected to work yearly. Lord (2005) states that law enforcement work has normal working hours and other duties called 'shift work' e.g. detectives are required to perform more activities like assisting with any emergencies at any time of the day. In addition, even though the members of police force are on leave, most of the time they are required to cancel their leave and attend meetings, court proceedings or other duties (Lord, 2005). Thus this affects law enforcement work. Morris and Maisto (2005), further added that if employees they work twenty-four hours without rest their 'circadian rhythm' may be affected. Thus, employees who work at night should be given time to rest the next day. Failure to do so, may lead to symptoms of burnout. The law enforcement members may also encounter the feeling of worry as well as stress if they do not get time to spend with their families. Further, because of overtime, police officers may also go through marriage problems which could lead to divorce. In addition, the issue of shift work does not only affect employee's marriages, but it also decreases employee's performance at work, affect their overall well-being as well as the ability to communicate effectively with other people (Muchinsky, 1993). Shift work does not only affect family lives, researchers have indicated that police officers also experience problems with health and social adjustment, which are caused by the pressure that is placed on individuals (Warr, 1999).

### **2.12.11 Dealing with supervisors**

McCreary et al. (2004) believe that supervisors who are easy to talk to usually create less stressful working environments than unapproachable supervisors who lack leadership skills (Kets de Vries and Miller, 1987; Sperry, 1996; Steinmetz, 1969). Thus, the above statement shows that supervisor's traits and their leadership styles can also add to the experience of stress of employees who are under these supervisor's leadership. (Van Wyk, 2005).

### **2.12.12 Inconsistent leadership**

According to Kouzes and Posner (1997) "inconsistent leadership" may cause challenges when it comes to setting of rules/ commands. McCreary et al. (2004) argues that "inconsistent leadership" may also lead to the experience of stress in the law enforcement environment. In contrast, employees who are under good leadership are less likely to experience stress and unnecessary conflicts also become minimal (Kerley, 2005; Violanti, 2005). In addition, Paton (2005) believes that the police environment can be a happy one if employees can work under leader's who are approachable and who offer consultations. On the other hand, Kelting (1995) states that "inconsistent leadership" can cause divisions in the law enforcement environment. For example, members in higher positions do not fully understand why police work exists, in that they are just working because they need money, not that they are passionate with this career, and on the other hand police officers from lower ranks are pressured from people in the public when it comes to different expectations they have that "something drastic" must happen in certain crime circumstances. In addition, lack of support from leaders can also add to the "loneliness feeling" in law enforcement employee's which in turn could lead to another subdivision in the law enforcement environment which is called "cop culture". In summation, according to the study which was conducted in the year 2004 by De Beer and Korf (2004) twenty-one percent of police participants revealed that they encounter "leadership inconsistency" in the SAPS.

### **2.12.13 Lack of resources**

The study conducted in South Africa (Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli, 2003) reveals that the issue of inadequate working equipment is much more drastic when being compared to other sources of stress in the SAPS. In addition, the study conducted by De Beer and Korf (2004) also revealed that the issue of inadequate working equipment is more drastic in the SAPS when compared to other stressors, because forty-eight percent of participants stated that they encounter stress due to inadequate working equipment. The stated study also indicated a concrete correlation between “job resources” and “job demands”. In summation, resources such as shortage of employees, low salaries and lack of working equipment may cause challenges and may also hinder employees from performing their tasks to the best of their abilities (Wiese et al., 2003).

### **2.12.14 Unequal sharing of work responsibilities**

According to Robbins (2005) unequal distribution of work activities comes from “social loafing” whereby others do not want to cooperate, for example employees who only depend on their team mates when it comes to completion of work activities. In addition, when working with individual’s who do not complete the tasks assigned to them it becomes even more difficult for other employees to complete their own tasks plus the added work from their irresponsible team mates (Wiese et al., 2003). On the other hand, McCreary et al. (2004) are of the opinion that most employees do not mind completing the tasks assigned to them efficiently, the problem is the way work responsibilities are being assigned amongst them (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998; Lowman, 1993; Luthans, 2001). Furthermore, Bakker et al. (2003) discovered that employees who are irresponsible and not accountable also add to the sources of stress in the police environment.



### **2.12.15 When sick or injured co-workers seem to look down on each other**

McCreary et al. (2004) indicate that employees who are not feeling well may encounter stress even due to constant thoughts about their fellow colleagues who are going to undermine them when they are absent. In contrast, Toch (2002) believes that police officers do offer a shoulder to cry on to their colleagues who are going through hard times but only to select people and not to everyone. Paton (2005) states that people are not the same, because some employees are more prone to sicknesses and they encounter stress easily than other employees. As a result, medical practitioners may book these employees off for some time depending on the condition. Thus, employees who are at work will be required to perform their duties as well as the duties of the other employees who were booked off sick, and in turn this may lead to work overload and the employees may feel burned out. According to the study conducted by De Beer and Korf (2004), forty-four point eight percent of police participants stated that if one employee is not feeling well, other employees undermine that individual employee. According to the results of the above study, this matter was rated as another source of stress in the police environment. According to Robbins (2003) training sessions should be provided to police officers so that they can understand that lack of support and insensitivity towards other colleagues can also lead to the experience of stress.

### **2.12.16 Internal investigations**

In cases of disciplinary measures, the SAPS environment also requires “internal investigation” to take place, e.g. misconduct (Stevens, 2005) However in other instances individuals are falsely drawn into allegation’s and in this regard, police officers may feel pressured or strained because of this. Thus, Stevens (2005) states that the way employees are being disciplined should be objective, in order to reduce the impact of stress when being investigated. Any internal investigations may have a negative impact on any employee, regardless the fact that an employee is innocent or not (McCreary et al., 2004).

### **2.12.17 Dealing with the court system**

According to McCreary et al. (2004), the issue of the “court system” can also lead to the experience of stress for the law enforcement members when not supervised in an appropriate manner. At other times police officers view the “court system” as ineffective, ruling leniently on offenders, but on the other hand too restricted on procedural issues such as evidence admission. In addition to the above, night shifts do not only affect employee’s personal lives but it also makes it difficult for them to think and testify properly in courts because of the exhaustion caused by night shifts and this may also lessen employee’s performance and morale (McCreary et al., 2004).

### **2.12.18 The need to be accountable for doing your job**

McEvan (2001) states that the level of “accountability” differs from organisation to organisation. Accountability is the obligation of an individual or organisation to account for its activities and also accept responsibilities for them. According to Hunsaker (2001) all workers in organisations should be held accountable for their given tasks when working individually or in a team. This will help in decreasing “social loafing” or “free riding”. Since 1994, members of the restructured SAPS, were held accountable for the “safety” and “security” of South Africans (Mufamadi, 1994). However, the need for accountability may also lead to the experience of stress, but then other individuals take the need of accountability positively.

### **2.12.19 Inadequate equipment**

Consequences of inadequate equipment in organisations were discussed in previous sections. Adequate working equipment enables individual employees to perform their duties effectively. (Robbins, 2005). Completing activities related to work and providing good service delivery with limited resources makes police officers jobs difficult and it also leads to the experience of stress. The following section provides information on how police officers cope with stress as well as how employees react to stress.

## 2.13 Stress coping

More studies were conducted on the activities and strategies of the members of law enforcement and thus a light has been shed on this topic (Farber, 1983; Stevens and Yach, 1995; Alexander, Walker, Innes and Irwing, 1993; Ainsworth and Pease, 1987). The results of these studies reveals that using effective coping techniques and strategies plus social support plays a vital role in lessening stress (Carpenter, 1992). Furthermore, Van Dijkhuizen (1981) focuses attention on organisational change in response to stress. In addition, he identified three phases in an organisation's strategy to cope with stress. This study focused on looking through organisations in order to be able to determine a stressful situation, for example a situation that causes stress to a large number of people working in the organisation/department.

According to Alexander, Walker, Inoes and Irving (1993), the involvement of shift systems, training and line management style in considering how to deal with stress implies the need for any strategy to be sanctioned at the highest level. As, Ainsworth and Pease (1987) makes reference to the feeling of helplessness. These authors further explain that this is lack of control over the events of one's life and they believe that control is a basic human need but one's sense of control differs from one person to the other. Thus, it is vital for individuals to be aware of their personal experiences because some individuals start new jobs convinced that any issues they come across would be different to their previous experiences; while other individuals start new jobs equally convinced that the opposite will occur.

Furthermore, planning for your life prior to retirement helps to reduce or eliminate stress in that life changing period by giving people a sense of control over what is happening in their lives. In addition, it is vital for people to know what is happening inside their bodies, because people who become quickly aware of their own internal body states are less prone to stress-induced illness, because once they know what is happening inside their bodies, they can do something about it (Ainsworth and Pease, 1987). Other individual approaches on stress research focus on relaxation which is regarded as an effective tool which can be used to reduce stress experiences but it is not enough, because in workplaces it not entirely up to individuals to relax but rather it depends on the

workload given to employees. Thus, the emphasis should be on organisational change (Ainsworth and Pease, 1987).

### **2.13.1 Stress reactions**

People react differently to stress, it depends on individual's perceptions of the situation and there are also signs of 'stress centres' in the organisation which suggest that something about the organisation is causing the stress. Dijkhuizen (1981) provided a useful checklist of signs of stress as follows:

- Decreased work performance
- High absenteeism
- High staff turnover
- Irritability and much personal conflict
- Less social support from colleagues
- Family problems
- Increased smoking or drinking
- Sleeplessness
- Changed clothing habits (becoming more scruffy or less scruffy)
- Changed eating habits (forgetting meals, eating fast or excessively)
- High cholesterol levels
- Fight-flight reactions (attacking and ridiculing or withdrawing from contact with others).

These features will be experienced by different people in different kinds of environment. Some will thrive in situations that make others chain-smokers, irritable, and illness-prone (Dijkhuizen, 1981).

In addition, Alexander, Walker, Innes and Irving (1993) are of opinion that the negative effects of stress fall into a number of related but different categories. Firstly, stressed police officers can become ill or so affected that they are forced to be absent from work. In this context absenteeism may affect both the employee and the employer. The second category involves poor job performance and job dissatisfaction. The individual's motivation may be reduced or the officer's

performance of complex tasks may be impaired by chronic stress, and this will tend to produce feelings of dissatisfaction. Furthermore, the dissatisfaction may negatively affect work performance which in turn can make a person not to be productive as he/she was before. Thirdly, officers end up adopting a coping behaviour which is dysfunctional such as; smoking inappropriately and drinking too much just to avoid stress, anxiety or depression. In addition, such negative behaviour by the police is not likely to achieve the desired results. Given that the negative effects of occupational stress in the police service are this pervasive, and involve so many aspects of officer's roles and their organisational management, any strategy for controlling and managing stress in the service will need to be understandable and synchronised (Alexander, Walker, Innes and Irving, 1993).

## **2.14 Burnout**

Regardless of how many times police officers have conveyed their concern about the stressful aspects of their profession still little research has been done on burnout amongst them. Throughout the course of the eighties, more and more researchers became interested in the subject of burnout and this resulted to an overabundance of literature and burnout was seen as an occupational hazard of police work (Biggam, Power, MacDonald, Carcary and Moodie, 1997; Delpont, 1990; Koortzen., 1996; Alexander and Walker, 1996; Bonifacio, 1991). In addition, Cherniss (1980b) in his research on psychological burnout between men and women has identified eight elements of occupational framework, which was seen as indicative of stress or a negative change in disposition. These elements include orientation, workload, stimulation, extent of client contact, concur with institutional aims, autonomy, leadership and supervision and social isolation.

On the other hand, Alexander, Walker, Innes and Irving's (1993) study with the Grampian Police Force in Scotland has shown the following results:

- Burnout can be active in terms of external behaviour, like hostility.
- Burnout can be passive in terms of interpersonal; psychological processes like withdrawal.

- Burnout usually manifests itself in individuals who are sensitive, dedicated, enthusiastic, compassionate, idealistic, energetic, productive and nurture expectations.
- Burnout comprises the basic components of emotional, physical, and cognitive fatigue, depersonalization, a decrease in personal effectiveness and divergence from normal behaviour patterns.

The following studies and findings of researchers further highlight the relationship between self-esteem and burnout amongst policemen. Ainsworth and Pease (1987) have discovered that low self-esteem by police officers outstandingly relates with the emotional fatigue and depersonalising sub-scale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. In support of this, Alexander et al (1993) have shown that police officer whose needs for self-actualisation (including the need for self-esteem) have not been satisfied are more prone to burnout. Fallon (1997) found that policemen with positive self-concepts, who display a greater degree of competence in their professional functioning could handle stress more effectively. They also see themselves as less burnt out and they are satisfied with their colleagues and management and maintain a strong sense of job satisfaction. There exists substantial evidence that law enforcement members who scored highly on ratings on the positive “self-concept scale” are prone to display lower ratings on the burnout behaviour scales (Alexander, Walker, Innes and Irwing, 1993). Farber (1987) has studied the self-concept from a more variable dimensional framework. Opposed to the above researchers, in his study he included the relationship between burnout and the discrepancies amongst police officer’s perceptions of themselves and the way that others see them.

Farber (1987) argues that that low self-concept positively interrelates with burnout. As soon as the process of burnout starts, it is highly possible that the police officer’s self-esteem will be affected as well and then burnout will possibly take place if an individual’s self-esteem and his belief in his own capability do not bear his endeavours to manage the unavoidable frustrations and stress in the police. Farber's results have indicated that in relation to burnout, what is vital is how police officers see themselves rather than how they perceive others to see them. The findings of his research revealed that police officer's perceptions of how others view their professional satisfaction and competence are important predictors of burnout. The next section will now present literature on the distinction and relationship between burnout and stress.

## **2.15 Distinction and relationship between burnout and stress**

Previously there was a challenge and confusion in understanding the relationship and differences between burnout and stress among policemen. However subsequent research has revealed how both these concepts are related (see for example Brown and Campbell, 1990; Cooper, Davidson and Robinson, 1982; Cooper and Smith, 1985; Pines and Aronson, 1981; Bellak, 1975; Maslach, 1976; Alexander, Walker, Innes and Irwing, 1993; Ainsworth and Pease, 1987; Bonifacio, 1983; Stevens and Yach, 1995). Even though, the two concepts are seen as distinct entities, Helliwell (1981) has discovered that stress and burnout existed within a particular relationship to one another and that within these parameters persistent negative stress may result in the experience of burnout. In addition to this statement, Pines and Aronson (1981) suggests that the stress and burnout ratings by police officers relate positively. On the other hand, Gold (1985) and Lazarus and Monat (1985) suggested that stress and burnout must be known as two separate concepts and from their experiences and investigation in the field they have discovered separate definitions for these concepts. Buwalda's (1990) framework of relevance for stress is focused on the following definition, "a negative, unpleasant feeling (e.g. conflict, threat, anxiety), or disagreeable emotion (e.g. tension, frustration, anger and depression) which one experiences as a result of the demands made upon one" (p. 180). On the other hand, burnout is conceptualised as a chronic, protracted reaction or symptoms of excessive stress (Lazarus and Monat, 1985) with emotional fatigue, depersonalisation, and poor personal fulfilment (Maslach and Jackson, 1986) as possible reactions or symptoms of burnout.

Furthermore, Maslach and Jackson (1984) stated that job dissatisfaction, inclination to abandon work, family problems and poor health are regarded as consequences of burnout. The above information about burnout interrelate with Plug's et al. (1993) definition of burnout in relation to occupation, which stated that it was a protracted and intense form of job dissatisfaction which is characterised by emotional dulling, cynicism and low productivity. From the previous studies it shows that negative factors such as work overload, anxiety, frustration and tension contribute to the experience of stress amongst policemen and these factors which manifest before burnout begins results negatively on policemen's abilities to perform work and to handle their personal lives. The

following section discusses biographical variables in the manifestation of burnout and stress among police officers.

## **2.16 Biographical variables in the manifestation of stress and burnout amongst police officers**

The research results that have been provided by scholars regarding the relationship between stress, burnout and biographical variables is not clear enough (Alexander et al., 1993). Regardless of this, it can be anticipated that these variables play a vital role in the factors that can be assigned to work-related stress and burnout amongst police officers. Maslach (1986) is of the opinion that marital status, age, gender and training are biographical variables that can influence the experience of stress and burnout. Russel et al (1987) has discovered that marital status plays a significant role in the causes of burnout. In addition, Alexander et al (1993) has found that married male constables took more leave days when compared to single constables and when it comes to alcohol consumption, single constables were found to be at the high risk than married constables. With regards to age, Alexander et al. (1993) stated that older male constables reported less underwork than younger male constables. Older female constables scored higher on depression because they reported more overwork and they felt that law enforcement did not recognize the efforts they put in at work. In addition, the report showed that they had taken more leave days. While on the other hand young male sergeants were bothered by what they perceived to be pointless stumbling blocks in their workplaces (Alexander et al., 1993).

In addition, it was also discovered that younger police officers experience feelings of personal satisfaction less often than older police officers. In addition, younger senior officers reported a higher level of depression than older senior officers. Furthermore, young police officers reported more emotional fatigue and higher levels of depersonalisation than those more experienced officers do (Gold, 1985). This shows that experience also plays a role in causing burnout, the more experience the officer has in the position the lower is the emotional experience of burnout; the less experience the officer has on the position the more is the emotional experience of burnout. From these results it shows that the more individuals grow older, they become more stable, matured, balanced and less susceptible to *excessive* stress (Gold, 1985). Gold (1985) is of the opinion that men and women experience burnout in more or less the same way. Education also plays a role in



the variables that causes burnout experience. Employees who have no tertiary education are most likely to experience burnout than employees who have tertiary education (Stevens and Yach, 1988). In addition to this, Paine (1982) supports the above author and is of opinion that employees who lack training cannot handle stress in an appropriate manner when it occurs and this causes a negative impact on these individuals because they end up feeling personal and professional failure which in turn may lead to burnout. In summation, as indicated by literature in this research, it has become clear that stress and burnout cannot be viewed as separate entities.

In addition to the above biographical variables, Martocchio and O'Leary (1989) conducted a meta-analysis of studies investigating the relationship between gender and occupational stress and the researcher's conclusion was that there were no differences in experienced stress between males and females. On the other hand, international studies revealed that police officers report different amounts of job related stressors on the basis of different ranks carried by police officers (Brown and Campbell, 1990; Brown, Cooper and Kirkcaldy, 1996; Kaufmann and Beehr, 1989), race and ethnicity (Violanti and Aron, 1995), and gender (Wexler and Logan, 1983). According to Patterson (2001), there is a link between various demographic variables and law enforcement work stress including age, education, gender, race, rank, section-assignment, and years of police experience. Pienaar and Rothmann (2006) have discovered that race had a vital impact on the experience of occupational stress in the SAPS; this information was based on the results from their study of stress among 2145 police members. In comparison with blacks, whites coloured and Indians it was discovered that whites and Indians experienced a greater intensity and recurrence of stress experience, these comparisons were made by looking at aspects such as promotion, salary and recognition. Gender impacted significantly on occupational stress with females experiencing crime-related stressors less intensely and frequently than their male counter-parts. Pienaar and Rothmann (2006) contend that "the fact that females are less operationally involved also explains why they experienced crime-related stressors less intensely and frequently" (p.76).

Rank was also reported as one of the aspects that lead to the experience of occupational stress in the police environment. When comparing different ranks from the SAPS, it was found that police officers who carry the rank of constable, experienced stress regularly because of job demands, lack of support, and crime related stressors. While, Brown and Campbell (1990) found that sergeants

reported a higher number of work events compared with other ranks and experienced greater perceptions of stress than did patrol officers (Savery, Soutar and Weaver, 1993). Terry and Calan (1997) revealed that police officers who have higher positions in the SAPS hierarchy experience higher levels of perceived stress. Cooper and Bramwell (1992) demonstrated that potential sources of stress differ between sub-cultures and status groups within the same organisation. The length of service also plays a role in the causation of occupational stress in the SAPS. The experience of work stress seemed to decrease with an increase in years of police experience (Violanti, 1983) and officers who had more years of experience reported lower levels of perceived work stress (Patterson, 1992).

## **2.17 Theoretical framework**

This section will discuss the two theories that were used in this study to explain the experience of burnout and stress as well as their origins. Theory in research is vital because it enables the researcher to examine, understand and interpret the data collected. The multidimensional theory of burnout and the person within context/job-person fit model, were used as the theoretical framework for explaining the experiences of burnout and stress. However, the person within context / job-person fit model is taken to be the key theory used in this research, although ideas from other theories are also incorporated in order to enrich the model and to give it more clarity.

### **2.17.1 Multidimensional theory of burnout**

The Multidimensional Theory of burnout acknowledges that job burnout is a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job. The three key dimensions of this are, overwhelming exhaustion, feelings of cynicism detachment from the job; and a sense of ineffectiveness and failure (Maslach, 1982; Maslach and Jackson 1982, Maslach and Leiter, 1997). Applied to the police profession, this theory can have a great impact on understanding the world in which police officers live in, as well as a complete understanding of how they are affected by burnout. In addition, Multidimensional theory of burnout conceptualizes burnout in terms of three core components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1993; Maslach and Jackson, 1981a. 1986). Emotional exhaustion is a state whereby

individual workers feel extremely tired emotionally, in such a way that they end up being left with insufficient power to go on the following day at work. Whereas, depersonalisation is whereby workers feel disconnected from other people and this is the result of emotional exhaustion, while on the other hand reduced personal accomplishment is when worker's capability and work rates start to lessen (Maslach; Maslach and Jackson, 1981a, 1986, pp. 69).

The Multidimensional Theory of burnout is relevant to this study because this theory states "that burnout is an individual stress experience embedded in a context of complex social relationships and it involves the person's conception of both self and others" (Maslach, 1993, p. 69; Maslach and Jackson, 1981a, 1986, p. 69). This links closely with Maslach's concern that burnout not only affects the individual worker but everyone affected by the individual. The results of job burnout can lessen individual's personal and social functioning. It is a very serious issue, because people resort to resigning from workplaces because of the experience of burnout. Job burnout affects people from different workplaces in different career fields, and it is not just a recent occurrence. Recently, as other occupations have become more oriented to 'high-touch' customers service, the phenomenon of burnout has become relevant for these jobs as well (Maslach and Leiter, 1997). Thus, based on the Multidimensional theory of burnout, it was possible for the researcher to understand how participants are affected by burnout personally, professionally and socially.

### **2.17.2 Extending theoretical framework**

#### **The person within context/Job- person fit model**

Current work on burnout has started to create new theoretical frameworks that combine both individual and situational factors (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). "Many of these interactional models view person and environment as independent entities, but characterise them along commensurate dimensions so that the degree of fit, or congruence, between person and environment can be assessed" (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001, p. 413). In addition, French et al. (1974) are of opinion that this approach is clear in some of the earliest models of job-person fit, whereby the concept (better fit) was assumed to predict better adjustment and less stress.

Therefore, a model of job-person fit is taken to be the appropriate framework for understanding burnout.

French et al. (1974), argue that individuals are often framed in terms of their personalities or how well they understand their jobs, rather than being framed based on how well they handle their feelings and pressure. Likewise, the job is usually described in terms of particular duties and not the organisational context. Thus, the idea of the term fit is often used to predict certain outcomes such as; choice of job 'entry issues' and adapting to the job 'newcomer issues' (French et al., 1974). In addition, in this regard burnout develops in a later stage in the process, whereby an individual has been working for a particular organisation for a while and is experiencing a more severe misfit between him/herself and the job. Therefore, here the challenging part is to expand the job-person paradigm to a more compound conceptualisation of the person situated in the job context (French et al., 1974). In addition to the above, Maslach and Leiter (1997), started to address this challenge by developing a model that places focus on the issue of match or mismatch, between the person and six domains of his/her job environment. "The greater the gap, or mismatch, between the person and the job, the greater the likelihood of burnout; conversely, the greater the match (or fit), the greater the likelihood of engagement with work". (Maslach and Leiter, 1997, p. 413).

In addition, Rousseau (1995), indicates that "one new aspect of this approach is that the mismatch focus is on the enduring working relationship people have with their job; this relationship is similar to the notion of a psychological contract" (p.413). Firstly, mismatches emerge when working relationships / working environment starts to change to something that individual workers perceive as inappropriate. Rousseau (1995), takes it one step further by stating that "whereas prior models of job-person fit predict that such fit produces certain outcomes (such as commitment, satisfaction, performance, and job tenure), this new model hypothesises that burnout is an important mediator of this causal link, in other words, the mismatches lead to burnout which in turn leads to various outcomes" (p.413 - 414). This is applicable to this study, as the literature indicated that; the transformation in 1994 did not only cause drastic changes in the country but also in the police service (Newham, 2000). In addition, the literature also indicated that South Africa has undergone significant socio-economic and political changes over the past three decades, which negatively affected the SAPS and contributed to police officers experiencing stress and burnout.

The model that was formulated by Maslach and Leiter (1997) that focuses on the degree of match, or mismatch, between the person and six domains of his or her job environment include the following six domains which are; workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values. Maslach and Leiter (1997) go on to explain that “Burnout arises from chronic mismatches between people and their work setting in terms of some or all of these six areas” (p. 414). In addition, according to Maslach and Leiter (1997), the above six domains of work life assemble in a framework that incorporate the major organisational antecedents of burnout. Thus, in order for the reader to completely understand these six domains of work life, a full description of the six domains is given in the following paragraphs as specified by (Maslach and Leiter, 1997).

### **Workload**

Maslach and Leiter (1997) indicates that “a mismatch in workload is generally found as excessive overload, through the simple formula that too many demands exhaust an individual’s energy to the extent that recovery becomes impossible” (p. 414). This is applicable to this study, as the literature indicated that during 2005 and 2006 there was an increase in the number of criminal incidents and this increase during that period added to the strain and anxiety experienced by police force (Naidoo, 2006; “Stress taking”, 2006). Thus, as the result police officers had to tend to additional crime scenes and had to work many hours’ overtime (Breytenbach, 2009). In addition, a workload mismatch may also be caused by choosing a wrong profession or when a certain individual worker lacks the required skills for a particular job. Other jobs require workers to display emotions, so emotional work is draining because sometimes it forces workers to show emotions inconsistency with their feelings (Maslach and Leiter, 1997). Maslach and Leiter (1997) also states that “generally, workload is most directly related to the exhaustion aspect of burnout” (p. 414).

### **Control**

Maslach and Leiter (1997) indicates that “a mismatch in control is generally related to the inefficacy or reduced personal accomplishment aspect of burnout” (p. 414). In most cases, mismatches in control in workplaces occurs when workers feel like they don’t have control over their job tasks or have little control over the resources they need to complete daily tasks. In

addition, as previously stated in this chapter, when individuals feel like they don't have control over their work or when they are not involved in decisions taken in organisations they work for, it becomes a problem. Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) indicate that people who lack participation in decision making are more likely to experience burnout than those who actively participate in decision making. Thus the above shows that when workers have control or when they are given an opportunity to participate in decision making they become positive and this reduces the experiences of burnout. In addition, if workers are given enormous responsibilities at work it becomes difficult for them to complete given tasks in an effective manner and in turn they might encounter challenges when it comes to controlling the pressure placed on them (Maslach and Leiter, 1997). Maslach and Leiter (1997) also states that "it is distressing for people to feel responsible for producing results to which they are deeply committed while lacking the capacity to deliver on that mandate (p. 414).

## **Reward**

Reward is the third type from the six mismatches; this type of mismatch occurs when workers are undercompensated or when workers feel like they are not recognised at work. The feeling of being unrecognised or unappreciated negatively affects workers; it lessens their morale, because workers end up not seeing a need of working hard (Maslach and Leiter, 1997). Maslach and Leiter (1997) takes it one step further by stating that "this lack of recognition devalues both the work and the workers. In addition, the lack of intrinsic rewards (such as pride in doing something of importance and doing it well) can also be a critical part of this mismatch and lack of reward is closely associated with feelings of inefficacy" (p. 414-415). This type of mismatch is very applicable to this study, because as the literature indicates, the relationship with police officers, poor salaries and lack of opportunities for advancing to senior positions also leads experiencing stress (Deery and Van Vliet, 1997). Thus, this shows that this type of mismatch negatively affects workers.

## **Community**

Maslach and Leiter (1997) state that, "the fourth mismatch occurs when people lose a sense of positive connection with others in the workplace. People thrive in community and function best

when they share praise, comfort, happiness, and humour with people they like and respect” (p. 415). Maslach and Leiter (1997) also states that “some jobs isolate people from each other, or make social contact impersonal” (p. 415). In addition, this mismatch also occurs when there are unresolved conflicts among employees/employers and such conflicts affect workers emotionally because they end up not being able to support one another as colleagues (Maslach and Leiter, 1997).

## **Fairness**

A fifth mismatch occurs when workers feel like they are not treated fairly in the workplace. Maslach and Leiter (1997) point out that “a lack of fairness exacerbates burnout in at least two ways. Firstly, the experience of unfair treatment is emotionally upsetting and exhausting; secondly unfairness fuels a deep sense of cynicism about the workplace” (p. 415). Unfairness can occur in many different ways specifically within the workplace; it can occur when people are being promoted to higher positions that they do not deserve, or when work activities are not distributed equally to individual workers in the same position. In addition, the literature indicates that thirty-six percent of law enforcement participants showed that unfair preferential treatment also play a part in law enforcement stress situations ascribed to the fact that other individuals are of opinion that certain orders are only enforced on particular individuals (De Beer and Korf, 2004). Thus the above shows that this type of mismatch is very relevant to the study. In addition, “if procedures for grievance or dispute resolution do not allow for both parties to have a voice, then those will be judged as unfair” (Maslach and Leiter, 1997, p. 415).

## **Values**

The last area of mismatch occurs when there is a conflict between values. A mismatch between workers values and organisational values is a serious problem and it affects workers. In some cases, workers do things that they do not believe in or things that they perceive as unethical, for example, “in order to make a sale or to obtain a necessary authorisation, they might have to tell a lie or be otherwise deceptive or not forthcoming with the truth” (Maslach and Leiter, 1997, p. 415). Maslach and Leiter (1997, p. 415) also state that “people can also be caught between conflicting

values of the organisation, as when there is a discrepancy between the lofty mission statement and actual practice, or when the values are in conflict (e.g. high quality service and cost containment do not always co-exist)”

## **Summary**

The theory and model presented in this chapter each provide deeper comprehension about burnout, tension as well the overall well-being of individuals. Maslach (1998) states that; “Significant progress in understanding burnout has been based on the development of new, rather than traditional, theoretical perspective” (p. 82). The job- person fit model was chosen as the theory that adequately explained the term burnout. This model provides a clearer understanding as well as a full description of the six areas of job- person mismatch. Maslach (1998) also states that “the six mismatch model may be a particularly useful framework for developing interventions, because it focuses attention on the relationship between the person and the situation, rather than either one or the other in isolation; It thus provides an alternative way of identifying the sources of burnout in any particular job context, and of designing interventions that will actually incorporate situational changes along with personal one’s” (p. 82).

## **2.18 Conclusion**

In the above chapter, attention was given to existing literature on burnout and stress in policing, followed by the history of SAPS, the role of police officials, the outcomes of burnout, situational factors (where burnout occurs), individual factors (who experiences burnout), explanation of occupational stress and police stress, and an explanation of how police officers react to stress, in order to provide a clearer comprehension about the stress ‘process’. Finally, the theoretical framework that informs this study, was outlined. The next chapter presents the methodology used in the study. Furthermore, a detailed explanation of how data was collected and analysed will be provided.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the methodology used in the study to investigate the experience of burnout among police officers in the South African Police Service (SAPS) at Elukwatini SAPS, Mpumalanga province. Research methodology and methods are different aspects of the research project, whereas methodology is a general principle to guide your research, methods are the tools that are used for the purpose of data gathering, such tools include interviews, surveys, observations etc. In this chapter, I will illustrate and explain how the research methodology has been implemented. Initially, the chapter substantiates the use of qualitative research methods used to collect data from the research participants and the reasons for the sampling in terms of selecting participants. All procedures used for data gathering are identified and the data analysis methods are discussed. Finally, ethical issues are considered.

#### **3.2 Research design**

Qualitative research methodology was followed in this study. Babbie (2010, p. 4) refers to methodology as the “science of finding out”. Qualitative research methodology was followed as it allowed the researcher to uncover the meanings ascribed to the subjective experiences of police officers to measure their experiences of burnout in the workplace. The qualitative research methodology originates from the research questions posed (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In addition, Hennink et al (2011, p. 10) indicates that what the researcher wants to find out is based on how research questions are framed. Qualitative research is completed through creating an interactive relationship between people, spaces and objects (Ezzy, 2002). The qualitative approach was the most suitable approach for this study because it has methods that are focused on interpreting people’s feelings and experiences rather than quantification and measurement (Terre Blance, Durheim and Painter, 2006). The objective of qualitative research is never to predict, but rather to describe and possibly explain events and experiences (Willig, 2008).

Merriam (2009, p. 14) argues that with qualitative research, “the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive”. As outlined by Hennik, Huntter, and Bailey (2011), the purpose of qualitative research is to understand or explain behaviour and beliefs, understand processes, and understand the context of participant’s experiences. In addition, “qualitative researchers also study people in their natural settings to identify how their experiences and behaviour are shaped by the context of their lives, such as the social, economic, cultural or physical context in which they live” (Hennink et al, 2011, p. 9).

Qualitative data collection and analysis is often more time-consuming and labour intensive, therefore qualitative researchers work with relatively small numbers of participants. In addition to the above, qualitative research studies a small number of people as its aim is to deeply understand the topic under investigation and it is concerned with the “process or meanings individuals attribute to their given social situation” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011, p. 45). Sarantakos (2005, p. 45) also indicates that “it presents the information gathered verbally in a detailed and complete form, not in numbers or formulae”. In qualitative research, the researcher plays a pivotal role in the creation of knowledge, and influences and shapes the research process; therefore, reflexivity must be considered (Willig, 2008). Therefore, in order to gain an appropriate interpretation of the issue under study I needed to be reflexive concerning relationships and interactions of the study population.

Reflexivity indicates that “researchers take constant stock of their actions and their role in the research process and subject these to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of their data” (Mason cited in Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005, p. 43). In addition, Pillow (2003, p. 175) also states that reflexivity is important as it legitimises, validates and questions the research process. Thus researchers need to “use reflexivity continually throughout the research process” in order for the research to validate the research process (Hennink et al, 2011, p. 20). Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006:146) went further and indicated that there are two types of reflexivity namely: personal reflexivity and interpersonal reflexivity. Personal reflexivity alludes to how researchers reflect on their own backgrounds which may have an influence on the research process, while on the other hand interpersonal reflexivity recognises that the personal dynamics between researcher and

participant as well as the interview setting can influence knowledge creation (Hennink et al, 2011:20). Therefore, this research applies both personal and interpersonal reflexivity to comprehend how data was created through the data gathering process.

The purpose of this study was to gather an in-depth understanding of the experience of burnout among police officers in the South African Police Service (SAPS) at Elukwatini SAPS, Mpumalanga province. The use of qualitative methodology also allowed the researcher to explore and capture the depth and richness of information that emerged as the interviews unfolded. In addition, this methodology was also suitable as it allowed the researcher to identify issues from the participant's perspective and provided an understanding of their perceptions and experiences of occupational stress and work engagement. This study is narrowed down to South African Police Officers working at Elukwatini SAPS in Mpumalanga province.

### **3.3 Measuring instrument**

#### **3.3.1 Data collection method**

Qualitative interviews were used to gather data. Qualitative interviews are seen as the primary method through which information is sourced in this study. According to Hesse-Biber (2011:94) qualitative interviewing can yield exploratory and rich descriptive data on aspects of social life that one has little or no knowledge of. By using interviews, descriptive information was obtained with the aim of understanding the lives of participants (police officers of Elukwatini Police Station) and how they are affected by burnout. Qualitative interviewing is widely used to create data through verbal communication between interviewer and participant. During the interview process the role of the researcher is to ask questions, listen to participant's responses and work towards issues that are seen vital as well as to give verbal support to the participant by using probes to motivate the interview dialogue (Hesse-Biber, 2011). In addition the verbal support given to participants by the researcher during the interview process creates an informal environment/atmosphere which enables the participants to be free and more open.

The data was collected at the Elukwatini SAPS through a series of semi-structured interviews with participants. Eisner (1980) describes this interviewing technique as the most important data collection technique that a qualitative researcher has at his/her disposal. In addition, Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) as well as Creswell (2009) states that the main aim of conducting interviews is to gather information straight from the interviewees mind. An interview enables researchers to obtain information that they cannot get from questionnaires. In addition, Delpont, Fouche and Strydom (2007:292) define “semi-structured interviews as organised conversations around areas of particular interest”.

In broad terms, semi-structured interviewing means that wide spectrums of interests are discussed at the beginning of the interview. It is not necessary that these interests are addressed in any specific order and the original wording of the questions do not need to be predictable. In semi-structured interviews “the interviewer has a clear list of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered” (Denscombe, 2007, p.176). Therefore, I used a self-developed semi-structured interview schedule to elicit information through face - to - face interviews. Open-ended questions were used as a guideline with each interviewee. Flick (2007) notes that “open- ended” items are very useful because they allow the researcher to ask extended questions to the interviewee with the aim of gaining a clearer comprehension about the circumstance. Thus the interaction between me the researcher and the participants enabled me to gain deep understanding of the experience of burnout among police officers at the Elukwatini Police station in Mpumalanga province. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty police officers.

Most of the questions were answered in SiSwati as a way for the participant to better express themselves. The responses from the participants were recorded and later transcribed in English. The SiSwati responses were translated and analysed according to the major themes and patterns of the study. The data was separated into individual recorded tapes and written information for a specific interview. The audio data was then transcribed according to the transcription of data steps that were suggested in order to correctly transcribe audio data (Emily, 2015).

In addition, as noted by Smith (2007) the advantage of semi-structured interviews is that it facilitates rapport, it allows greater flexibility of coverage and allows the interview to go into novel

areas, and it tends to produce richer data. In addition, Leavy (2011, p.102) also explains that “semi-structured interviews also allow individual respondents some latitude and freedom to talk about what is of interest or importance to them”. In addition, the use of semi-structured interviews facilitated the use of probes to increase understanding of meaningful realities. As defined by (Hennink et al., 2011), probing is a technique used to gain further clarity, depth and detail from participant’s responses. It can stimulate further discussion or focus the discussion to explore specific issues in-depth. In-depth interviews therefore, are useful when detailed information about a person’s thoughts and behaviours are needed or the researcher wants to explore new issues in greater detail (Boyce and Neale, 2006).

### **3.4 Sampling**

Sampling involves studying a proportion of the target group in the research conducted. Sampling is divided into two parts namely: probability and non-probability (Babbie, 2010). Probability sampling refers to sampling whereby all the individuals in the population under study has the same chance of being selected and it is also representative of the total population and findings can be generalised to the whole population under study (Sarantakos, 2005; Babbie, 2010; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). On the other hand, a non-probability sampling technique means the samples are selected in a process that does not give all the individuals in the population equal chance of being selected. In addition, non-probability sampling is often used in qualitative and explorative research whereby the purpose of the research is to obtain information, get an understanding of the population group and to uncover issues that the larger population have no or limited knowledge of (Sarantokos, 2005).The information received from participants when using a non-probability sampling technique is used to gain an understating of participant’s experiences or the meanings that they give to social issues (Davies, 2007; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011).Therefore, since this research is based on understanding and exploring burnout among police officers in the South African Police Service (SAPS) from their perspective, the non-probability convenience sampling technique was used in this study.

The convenience sample design enables the researcher to select participants based on availability. In addition, I was able to select participants based on their gender, race, marital status, rank and length of service. Each of these factors were important to answer the questions posed by this study.

### 3.5 Sample

I had planned to interview thirty police officers but due to the nature of police officers working shifts, some patrolling outside, some who were on courses and due to the unforeseen circumstances of sick leave and other forms of leave thus only twenty police officers were interviewed, eight females and twelve males.

#### Demographic details of participants:

Participant Number	Name	Rank	Gender	Race	Marital Status	Years of Service
1	Sizwe	Constable	Male	Black	Single	9
2	Zandile	Captain	Female	Black	Married	30
3	Vuyiswa	Constable	Female	Black	Married	3
4	Mike	Captain	Male	Black	Married	27
5	John	Lt Colonel	Male	Black	Married	38
6	Mandla	Constable	Male	Black	Single	5
7	Bongani	Constable	Male	Black	Single	11
8	Joseph	Warrant Officer	Male	Black	Married	28
9	Joy	Constable	Female	Black	Single	4
10	Jacob	Constable	Male	Black	Single	2
11	Zamanda	Constable	Male	Black	Single	5
12	Bongi	Constable	Female	Black	Single	8
13	Sally	Constable	Female	Black	Single	4
14	Kate	Constable	Female	Black	Married	4
15	Kim	Captain	Male	Black	Divorced	27
16	Mthunzi	Sergeant	Male	Black	Married	18
17	Lucky	Sergeant	Male	Black	Married	13
18	Chantel	Constable	Female	Black	Married	8
19	Sakhile	Constable	Male	Black	Divorced	6
20	Jamie	Constable	Female	Black	Single	10

### 3.6 Procedure

All the participants in this study were accessible through the institution in which they worked, i.e. the South African Police Service. Thus, a gatekeeper was used to elicit verbal co-operation from the participants and to schedule appointments for interviews. Gatekeepers are people who have the power to grant or withhold access to the setting (Seidman, 2006). Thereafter, the researcher personally delivered a letter to all participants which outlined the purpose of the study. Each participant was assured that the research was completely confidential and anonymous so that they could give an honest account of their individual experiences. These issues of anonymity and confidentiality are discussed in greater detail in the ethics section at the end of this chapter. Due to the nature of police work i.e. working shifts, some police officers were interviewed during the day and others during the night shift over a period of one week. Therefore, dates for the interviews were arranged with each participant. On the day of the interview, each participant was given an informed consent form which was explained to them. Each participant was given ample time to read and sign the consent form which contained pertinent information about their rights as participants. Once the consent form was signed, an indication of the expected duration (approximately two hours) of the interview was given to them.

A biographical questionnaire was used to gather information about the demographic characteristics of each participant. This questionnaire did not request the names of participants, thus ensuring anonymity. All the interviews were conducted during July 2018 at the interviewee's place of work. The interviews were conducted in one of the offices at Elukwatini SAPS in the Mpumalanga province. The reason for choosing this venue was to enable police officers to remain in a familiar environment and thereby reduce disturbances. Each participant was interviewed individually and at a different time in order to maintain confidentiality and privacy. I utilised a voice recorder to record data during the interviews. Specific consent for tape-recording was included in the informed consent form that was signed prior to the interview. The disadvantage of using a voice recorder is that the participants may find the use of a voice recorder to be distracting, particularly in the early stages of the interview (Waltz, Strickland and Lenz, 2010). Furthermore, the use of a recording device is exacerbated by the increased time and cost involved in transcription (Waltz et al., 2010). However, the use of a voice recorder is a powerful tool for qualitative research. It not only ensures

verbatim recording, but also allows the researcher to keep their full attention focused on the participants, to communicate that they are listening to what is being said and to probe into important cues (Rubin and Babbie, 2008).

### **3.7 Data analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data (as outlined by Rubin and Rubin, 2005) where the data was examined and grouped according to themes that emerge. In quantitative data analysis the focus is on numbers, however qualitative data analysis deals with meaning (Dey, 1993). According to Dey (1993), the core of qualitative data analysis lies in the process of describing phenomena, classifying it, and seeing how concepts interconnect. For this reason, thematic content analysis was employed to analyse the verbal material. This transcribed record of the interview data was used for detailed in-depth analysis. The method of analysing data using thematic content analysis is considered to be reliable because it involves the application of a set of systematic and transparent procedures for processing data (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). Thematic content analysis is described as a method of interpreting qualitative data through the “systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes and patterns” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1278).

The primary stage of the data analysis of open-coding took place concurrently with the process of data collection. It was expected that in-depth interviews could result in large quantities of narrative data; therefore, preparations to handle this on a daily basis were done from the beginning of the study. The focus was to have as much credibility, dependability, transferability and conformity of the results obtained (Hammersley, 1990). I utilised the narrative and meaning approach for analysing my data. According to Bryman and Burgess (1999) even the transcript from the tape recording might not be able to capture the emotional context. In order to fulfil this, notes were added to the transcription to provide for this. This included the intonation of voice, pauses and other emotional expression such as laughter and exclamation. The analysis included, critically examining the collected data by coding, identifying emerging issues and summarising the data regarding the added notes on emotions. Follow up on themes, questions and issues that emerged from the data were done. Assessment of both the quality of collected data was done on an ongoing basis to identify information categories and recurrent thematic patterns.



Recurrent themes and emerging issues have been considered with major importance and constitute the major element of the data discussion and recommendations. Convergence, divergence and inconsistency between data from different sources were noted. This was done by getting submerged in data which involved devoting a lot of time to repeatedly reading data, going over every word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and noting the added non-verbal communication that was jotted down during data collection (Burnard, 1991).

The following steps were taken with the data analysis process:

**Step 1:** Data was recorded onto different audios with each audio tape representing a single interview.

**Step 2.** I immersed myself with the data by listening and re-listening to each and every interview.

**Step 3:** I wrote down the police officers response from the interviews and also used the notes that I had taken from the different interviews, the notes included their personal biography, and their emotions when asked the interview questions.

### **3.8 Data capturing**

Most of the interviews were recorded via the voice recorder because participants agreed to be recorded and they felt like their identity will not be compromised because of the voice recording that they agreed upon. The few that did not agree to be recorded, in this case, responses were hand written, typed and saved into the computer.

### **3.9 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in a qualitative study is essential to establish if the study findings are credible, transferable, confirmable and dependable. Qualitative research tends to make use of small samples to refrain from generalizing claims about the findings (Creswell, 1998). Rather, qualitative

research attempts to magnify detailed perspectives about specific elements which may establish cases which emerge within the wider universe (Manson as cited in Silverman, 2010). Thus, the research does not aim to be statistically generalizable. The interviews were used as my sample records. The strategies that were used to ensure honesty from participants were applied in this study. For instance, the police officers that participated in the study were informed that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary and the participants were free to withdraw at any time. Some participants were curious, they wanted to know who am I, whether I was a student or someone from media, I then explained that I am a student and also showed them my student card.

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

Ethics in research is important as it protects the participants “from unethical research procedures” which could cause harm to participants (Ali and Kelly, 2012, p. 59). Before eliciting participants, appropriate procedures were followed; the research proposal was approved by the Board of Ethics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, which ensured that the questions being asked to respondents were fair and did not produce any psychological harm to participants. Thereafter, a gate keeper’s letter from the SAPS was obtained and permission was granted by the SAPS head office to conduct the study at Elukwatini police station in the Mpumalanga province. The reason for conducting the study was explained to participants and participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to conducting interviews.

The consent form highlighted the nature of the study and provided the participants with the details of the researcher as well as the supervisor so that participants could contact either one of them if they had any questions regarding the study or their rights as participants in the research. Participants were also asked permission to use a recording device to record the interview. The recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher ensuring that no one else had access to the recordings. During the writing of the analysis chapter, the participant’s identities were concealed by using pseudonyms. The above steps were followed so as to ensure that the research followed ethical procedures, ensuring that participant’s identity and integrity was protected throughout the research process.

### **3.11 Summary of the chapter**

This study adopted a qualitative research design and semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used. A convenience non-probability sampling technique was used to select the participants. A sample of twenty participants, including twelve males and eight females were interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data during face-to-face interviews. Thematic analysis allowed for the data to be scrutinised and to be drawn together under themes. Finally, ethical procedures were also followed throughout this research, such as obtaining ethical clearance, explaining to voluntary participants the reasons behind conducting this research, and ensuring that information received remained confidential so as to protect the identity of participants. The main focus of this section was on the procedures used to collect and analyse. The next chapter provides a discussion and analysis of the data obtained.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH RESULTS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the main findings from the interviews conducted with the SAPS police officers of Elukwatini police station, Mpumalanga province. This chapter attempts to highlight and explain some of the challenges experienced by the police officers. In this chapter, the research findings have been categorised according to common central themes and sub themes. The chapter will also highlight the components that add to the experience of stress and burnout according to participant's responses. Within this investigation, the participants will be referred to as participant one to participant twenty. In the following section, the research questions are answered by comparing themes and sub-themes as uncovered by the researcher, applying thematic content analysis.

<b>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b>	<b>THEMES</b>	<b>SUB THEMES</b>
<b>Question 1:</b> What are the main causes of burnout amongst police officers?	Circumstantial factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frightening/Threatening conditions.</li> <li>• Challenging/demanding conditions.</li> </ul>
<b>Question 2:</b> What professional factors influence the experience of burnout amongst police officers? (For example: workload or work activities related to rank, duration of service, promotions, shortage of working equipment, salaries, shortage of workers and departmental stressors.)	Factors influencing the experience of burnout	<p><b>Departmental stressors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited chances for advancement.</li> <li>• Shortage of working equipment/resources.</li> <li>• Position/role dispute.</li> <li>• Position/role overload.</li> <li>• Unfair practices in relation to compensation and overtime.</li> <li>• Shortage of workers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Job related stressors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traumatic events.</li> </ul>

<b>Question 3:</b> How does burnout affect work flow process?	Burnout effects on workflow process	Unreasonable working hours.
<b>Question 4:</b> What recommendations could be made to prevent and or to manage burnout of SAPS members?	Recommendations	Recommendations from police officers.
<b>Question 5:</b> How does burnout affect police officers work life?	Burnout effects on police officers work life	Unreasonable demands from higher rank and high volumes of work

**4.2 Causes of burnout**

**4.2 1 What are the main causes of burnout amongst police officers?**

One main theme with two sub-themes emerged after coding and analysis of interview data with regards to main causes of burnout amongst police officers. The manner in which the themes are presented is outlined in the following section and the findings are discussed further below.

Research question

Question 1: What are the main causes of burnout amongst police officers?

Theme 1

Circumstantial factors

Sub-theme

Frightening/Threatening conditions

Challenging/demanding conditions

**4.2.1.1 Theme one: Circumstantial factors**

The traits of circumstances that cause them to be threatening, damaging, challenging, and frightening are regarded as circumstantial factors. Anshel (2000) suggests that job-related stress

of police officer's may be attributed to a combination of circumstantial factors and poor coping skills, other than the immanent nature of police work.

### **Sub-theme: Frightening/Threatening situations**

Participant three reviewed her situation of being a police woman under the visible policing section as threatening to her work and personal life. She is one of the police officers who work at the Community Service Centre. She explained the above in detail by saying *“Myself I am in the CSC, we work with people, we work with community complaints, we also work with prisoners, we count them every hour, we feed them, eight o'clock its breakfast, lunch is at twelve and supper is at four pm”*. She went on and said *“we work with the community and we stay in the same community. So it affects my personal life because you come across the criminals in town and sometimes the male prisoners in the cells you will hear them saying we will meet at home.”* So here the participant is feeling threatened personally. A threat is a suitable evaluation of circumstances which causes risks to one's psychological or physical wellbeing. According to Anshel (2000), the evaluation of a condition as a threat should go with the thinking of the worst case scenarios and then taking suitable awareness. In this case the participant is feeling threatened thinking of the worst case scenarios that can happen in her life. In addition, the nature of police work is inherently demanding and frequently includes incidents of danger (Ireland, Malouff, and Byrne, 2007) and police officers are often exposed to multiple distressing occurrences throughout their years of service (Young, Koortzen, and Oosthuizen, 2012). Furthermore, according to Young et al. (2012) these disturbances have an adverse effect on self-assurance, authority, as well as the perception of invulnerability, which might make it harder for police officers to cope in the streets.

Similarly, participant twenty shared his point of view, adding that *“My job is not right it affect my family because they are not safe because of my job. They can even be killed by the community outside”*. In addition, Jones and Kagee (2005) also discovered that police personnel may also be vulnerable to the attack from communities. Participant fourteen on the other hand went on to state that *“sometimes commanders shift their work responsibilities to us juniors, so they overwork us because we also have our work. So you have to comply with whatever demands you cannot say no*

*because you will be in trouble*". In this situation the participant follows what he is told to do, as she anticipates dismissive results for non-compliance.

### **Sub-theme: Demanding/ challenging conditions**

Primary work demands for police officers include lack of administrative support, lack of voice in decision-making, lack of opportunities for advancement, coupled with inadequate supervision, bureaucratic nature of police departments and large amounts of paper work (Brown and Campbell, 1994; Toch, 2002). In addition, another South African study investigating stress among police officers in the SAPS identified high job demands and the lack of resources as being the main sources of stress (Meyer, Rothmann, and Pienaar, 2003).

The above was confirmed in the following relevant excerpts:

Participant one: *"Yes our job is demanding, for example as investigators even when you are on leave if you see someone you are investigating you must arrest him/her. At loss section, if someone who was involved in an accident refuses to cooperate that stresses us because we are always given deadlines to submit the files. Even station commander's places demands on us because even at night you must always be informed with everything, so you become a police for twenty-four hours"*.

Participant ten: *"Yes a lot, because police officers are few and the population is too much, so sometimes we end up not fulfilling everyone's dream but we try our best to do what we can"*.

Participant fourteen: *"Yes our job is demanding because we work more hours than the actual hours we must work. I have to knock off at four but meeting begins at four because people from communities knock off from their different workplaces at four and because of this I end up knocking off at half six. I only rest on Saturdays and Sundays. Sometimes I attend campaigns for projects and sometimes I have to pay from my pocket in order for the project to be successful because we struggle even with donations so it also demands financially...and hey it also drains my energy I do not rest when I have a project and it affects me because sometimes I even oversleep"*.

Participant sixteen: *“yes it is demanding in a sense that we’ve got a problem because we have a shortage of manpower while we’ve got a high volume of workload so we have to go an extra mile in order to push work”*

Participant seventeen: *“Too much sometimes we come to work at seven in the morning and knock off at eight at night so our job is demanding and challenges are too much.....sometimes people complain because they do not know that our workload is too much sometimes you don’t even get off day and because of this you won’t even be able to go and visit your family and another cause is the issue of staff shortage because the workload is too much for a single person”*.

Participant twenty: *A lot, because sometimes we work office hours, sometimes overtime even on weekends. Sometimes you can even work after hours. It is demanding because if a person says come and assist you have to come and it affects me a lot because sometimes we are expected to work on weekends forgetting that there are funerals at home....as for me I am from far sometimes we work even month end and end up not being able to go home. Our job demands too much it is not right because our commanders wishes that we can work every weekend so this job is not right it demands we do not rest.*

Different participants shared their different stories on how their job is demanding. The following aspects have been identified by the above participants supporting why they say their job is demanding, these aspects include: unbearable demands from commanders, insufficient time with families, staff shortage, high workload, long working hours and very limited days off. These aspects that have been identified by participants play a significant role in helping and supporting the statements that police work is demanding. The participants spoke about the nature of their job stating how it affects them personally and even family wise. They mentioned that their job is demanding and challenging because they are police officers twenty-four hours, because sometimes their commanders call them even at night. Another aspect that was mentioned by the participants is the issue of working long hours and weekends which affects them in the way that sometimes they don’t get to spend time with their families and it leaves them exhausted, another participant mentioned that sometimes she even oversleeps because of long working hours. Analysing the responses, it is clear that police work is demanding and challenging. In addition, the World Health



Organisation (1998), also discovered that the organisational factors that results in job burnout are management style, inflexible rules of a job, lack of job security and few opportunities for promotion. Organisational researchers state that the causes of job burnout are found in both the individual and job environment (Beehr, 1998; Savicki and Cooley, 1983).

Maslach and Leiter (1997) in explaining the in person context theory indicates that “a mismatch in workload is generally found as excessive overload, through the simple formula that too many demands exhaust an individual’s energy to an extent that recovery becomes impossible” (p. 414). It has been argued further by the above mentioned authors that “generally, workload is most directly related to the exhaustion aspect of burnout” (p. 414). In addition the data in this study reveals that commanders also place additional demands on police officers because participant twenty stated that, *“Our job demands too much it is not right because our commanders wishes that we can work every weekend so this job is not right it demands we do not rest”* and it has been argued further by participant one that, *“station commander’s places demands on us because even at night you must always be informed with everything, so you become a police for twenty four hours”*. This shows that police officers do not have control over their jobs. In addition, the in person context theory indicates that “a mismatch in control is generally related to the inefficacy or reduced personal accomplishment aspect of burnout” (Maslach and Leiter 1997, p. 414). In most cases, mismatches in control, in workplaces occurs when workers feel like they don’t have control over their job tasks.

#### **4.3 Professional factors that influence the experience of burnout amongst police officers**

One main theme with two main sub-themes emerged after coding and analysis of interview data with regards to professional factors that influence the experience of burnout amongst police officers. The manner in which the themes are presented is outlined in the following section and the findings are discussed further below.

## Research question

Question 2: What professional factors influence the experience of burnout amongst police officers? (For example: workload or work activities related to rank, duration of service, promotions, shortage of working equipment, salaries, shortage of workers and departmental stressors.)

## Themes

Factors influencing the experience of burnout

## Sub-themes

### **Departmental stressors**

Limited chances for advancement

Shortage of working equipment/resources

Position/role dispute

Position/role overload

Unfair practices in relation to compensation and overtime

Shortage of workers

### **Job related stressors**

Traumatic events

### **4.3.1. Theme one: Departmental stressors**

#### **Sub-theme: Limited chances of advancement**

The reason why this type of stressor is in existence is because of other environmental factors of the police profession. There is tough competition that police officers face to get a promotion, mostly if they have reached an elevated level in the hierarchy. This therefore means that in the

police environment, professional recognition or advancement is based on the grade obtained in all police units. Although there are many requests for advancement only few police officers are actually promoted (Oigny, 2010, pp. 3-6). The following participants conveyed that they are not satisfied with the system that the SAPS is using when it comes to promotion procedures, in addition they also mentioned that there are very limited chances for promotion and they therefore remain in one position/rank for a long period of time and they viewed the above mentioned as contributing factors to their experience of stress.

Participant eight said *“Some stressors include...you see me I am twenty-eight years in this service and I am eighteen years in this rank....so long staying in rank/ or if the strategy of promotions does not satisfy you it stresses you”*. Participant twenty commented by saying: *“Long staying in one post causes stress they must give us posts”*. Participant one expressed his frustrations on this issue of advancement by saying: *“Rank becomes a problem for example you become a Sergeant for fifteen years.... its stressful and demotivating, it would be nice working knowing that you will be promoted”*. On the other hand participant seventeen said that: *“The way other people are given ranks is unfair, sometimes the SAPS hire people on the spot and give them higher ranks, and some people get hired even though they did not attend the same recruitment training we attended at college, they just hire them because of their qualifications or other reasons, some they have higher ranks than ours some same as ours and they do not know how hard we have worked for these ranks, so some policies being applied here when it comes to promotions and ranks sometimes they are not fair”*.

When analysing participant's responses it shows that the issue of staying in one rank for a long time negatively affects these police officers. Briefly, the term rank refers to the position or grade that police officials have at the South African Police Service. According to Kirkcaldy, Brown, and Cooper (1998), a lack of recognition in one's personal ambitions and career goals because of organisational restriction can result in a source of stress. According to the person in context theory, a mismatch occurs when workers feel like they are not recognised at work. The feeling of being unrecognised or unappreciated negatively affects workers; it lessens their morale, because workers end up not seeing the need for working hard (Maslach and Leiter, 1997). Maslach and Leiter (1997) takes it one step further by stating that *“this lack of recognition devalues both the work and the*

workers. In addition, the lack of intrinsic rewards (such as pride in doing something of importance and doing it well) can also be a critical part of this mismatch and lack of reward is closely associated with feelings of inefficacy” (p. 414-415).

In addition, one participant raised the issue of unfairness relating to promotions or advancement, and as Maslach and Leiter (1997) note, according to the person in context approach, another mismatch occurs when workers feel like they are not treated fairly in the workplace. Maslach and Leiter (1997) add further that “a lack of fairness exacerbates burnout in at least two ways. First, the experience of unfair treatment is emotionally upsetting and exhausting; secondly unfairness fuels a deep sense of cynicism about the workplace” (p. 415). Unfairness can occur in many different ways specifically within the workplace, it can occur when people are being promoted to higher positions that they do not deserve, or when work activities are not distributed equally to individual workers in the same position. Therefore, this demonstrates that police officers are aware that they are being treated unfairly and they want this to change.

### **Sub-theme: shortage of working equipment/resources**

Shortage of working equipment/resources is a huge problem in the SAPS. It causes stress amongst law enforcement members because it becomes difficult for them to deliver service on time because of lack of resources.

The above was confirmed by the following relevant excerpts:

Participant five: *“When there are shortages of physical resources you become stressed example vehicles. Sometimes they take vehicles for repair if they are not in good condition and during that process you stress and worry on how you are going to reach point B without a car.”*

Participant nine: *“here we don’t have vehicles you see even now there are complaints but we are unable to go and attend them because there is only one vehicle and when we get there they shout at us saying that we are not doing our job.”*

Participant twelve: *“shortage of cars is a problem it causes stress because sometimes we use two cars for a big place.”*

Participant fourteen: *“Not having enough resources also add in stress especially if you have to work but there are no resources.”*

Participant sixteen: *“shortage of resources is also stressing...even the working environment is not conducive as you see my office does not have curtains, now it is cold I don't have a heater and when it is summer you cannot sit and work in the office.”*

Participant eighteen: *“working resources causes stress a lot sometimes we have a lot of work to do but there are no vehicles because we have to share and you will find that we all have a lot on our plates and there are due dates especially in our section, every docket must be submitted on time, so you will stress because there are no cars especially us we work with cars in most cases. So sometimes you will find that I went with the car to Durban to work and those who are left in the office will struggle. Even computers are a problem because we share and it becomes a problem because everything we do must be captured so waiting for someone else to borrow you a computer is time consuming.”*

The above excerpts indicate that the participant's working environment is affected by shortage of equipment/resources. It causes stress because participants have mentioned that sometimes they get in trouble when they do not deliver on time, with management disregarding the fact that it is not their fault but the shortage of resources that is the cause. In addition, it becomes difficult for police officers to deliver the service to the community in time and community members do not know the real cause behind this and this negatively affects the SAPS workers. The study conducted in South Africa (Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli, 2003) reveals that the issue of inadequate working equipment is much more drastic when being compared to other sources of stress in the SAPS. In addition, the study conducted by De Beer and Korf (2004) also revealed that the issue of inadequate working equipment is more drastic in the SAPS when compared to other stressors, because forty-eight percent of participants stated that they encounter stress due to inadequate working equipment.

Furthermore, authors such as, Rothmann et al. (2005) argue that, factors such as high job demands and limited resources also adds to the experience of stress, and in turn it results in burnout and low work engagement.

In addition to the above, Meyer, Rothmann, and Pienaar (2003) are of the opinion that high job demands and lack of equipment are contributors to stress. Completing work activities and providing good service delivery with limited or lack of resources makes police officers jobs difficult and it also leads to the experience of stress. According to the person in context theory, in most cases, mismatches in control in workplaces occurs when workers feel like they don't have control over their job tasks or have little control over the resources they need to complete daily tasks. The participants also stated that sometimes they are only provided with two cars to use, and this makes it difficult for them to work and in the end community members place blame on them. Maslach and Leiter (1997) also state that "it is distressing for people to feel responsible for producing results to which they are deeply committed while lacking the capacity to deliver on that mandate" (p. 414).

#### **Sub-theme: Position/role dispute**

According to Saiyadain (2003), one of the common problems being experienced by police officers of the SAPS in the police environment is position/conflicting roles. The following excerpts from interviews provide evidence of this:

Participant seven: *"sometimes when minors commit a serious crime you play a role of a parent, social worker and police at the same time and your mind get tired"*.

Participant seven: *"sometimes they report a person who is mentally ill and that matter belongs to health but regardless of that they give us the responsibility to look after that person until health people can arrive...and if a person is mentally ill he/she becomes a patient not suspect but if the family members come and ask for assistance from us we do not send them away we assist them"*.

Participant eleven: *“here if a parent decided to leave her child I must take over and make sure that the child is safe and there are people who are responsible for that which are social workers not us”*.

Participant nineteen: *“Sometimes you find that there are MEC’S coming and there are people who specifically deal with crowd, me I am not trained to do that but sometimes I go and assist”*.

Participant twenty: *“You see here we also attend operations e.g. strikes and we can get hurt because we are not trained for that”*.

According to participant’s responses it shows that role dispute is a serious issue in the SAPS. The South African Police Service has encountered so many changes in the past years, and these changes influenced the nature of the police officer role, causing role ambiguity and role conflict (Sutherland and Cooper, 2000). Role conflict occurs when an employee experiences confusion regarding contrasting demands or mismatched goals relating to the job (Sutherland and Cooper, 2000), and role ambiguity is a lack of clarity about one’s role at work, and role overload is the number of diverse roles an individual has to perform and the extent of work required (O’Driscoll and Cooper, 2002). The above was confirmed by the participants, because the study has discovered that police officers are frequently expected to perform in roles that are not part of their duties, and at times they even perform duties that belong to other departments for example the Department of Health, this was confirmed by participant seven: *“sometimes they report a person who is mentally ill and that matter belongs to health but regardless of that they give us the responsibility to look after that person until health people can arrive...and if a person is mentally ill he/she becomes a patient not suspect but if the family members come and ask for assistance from us we do not send them away we assist them”*. Sometimes duties that are not part of their job description can cause a negative impact on their lives because some are not trained to perform them. In addition, Brown and Campbell (1994), further stated that sometimes police officers become forced to take on other roles such as that of a social worker. This study also revealed this as participant eleven states that *“here if a parent decided to leave her child I must take over and make sure that the child is safe and there are people who are responsible for that which are social workers not us”*.

However, balancing more than one role may not always be easy and the person fulfilling these roles may at times feel as if he or she does not have sufficient resources to cope with the demands of the situation (Brannon and Feist, 2004). Therefore, in addition Schaufeli and Bunk (2003) are of opinion that “role overload”, “lack of control” and a “lack of expressing one’s potential” are strongly related to sources of stress which leads to burnout.

### **Sub-theme: position/ role overload**

Position/ role overload is regarded as the most the most stressful aspect in the work life of junior police officers in junior positions and this has been supported by the following participant: *“You see here our job or allocation of work duties depends on the rank you are carrying e.g. when you are sitting in your section working sometimes more papers arrive for signatures and sometimes you become busy until knocking off time and when that time comes you will hear the Captain saying why didn’t you sign this papers if you can ask the captain back and say why didn’t you sign here because we were all here when they arrived and we were all busy, you will hear the Captain saying what do you mean by not obeying to my rules.... So here it really depends on the rank some commanders they just point things...so the way tasks are being assigned to individuals is not fair ours as juniors is too much”* (Participant 3).

Participant four: *“You see in this Constable rank we run and it is not fair.... because high carrying members they just sit on top and give commands”*.

Participant fourteen: *“I would say that the way work is assigned according to book is fair, but when it comes to reality it is not.... because sometimes commanders shift their work responsibilities to us as juniors so they overwork us because we also have our own responsibilities...so you have to comply to the commands you cannot say no”*.

Participant sixteen: *“work allocation is not fair, because the thinly paid has a lot of burden of work to do compared to those who are getting better salaries”*.



Participant seventeen: *“Here Sergeants and Constables they sometimes get too much work and it affects us”*. Lord (2005) also discovered that employees such as sergeants may encounter stress that originates from the added duties of administration.

Most participants especially those in junior positions stated that sometimes their commanders shift their work responsibilities to them and this affects them negatively as they also have their work responsibilities. In addition, Kirckaldy et al. (1998) state that senior employees are less likely to experience stress when compared to lower ranks because they have the right to delegate other duties to certain members’ in the organisation. In 1985, Gudjonsson and Adlam conducted research of one hundred and twelve senior British police officers and their study results showed that police officers who joined the organisation very early on reported less stress than the junior police officers. In addition, participant sixteen went further to state that *“work allocation is not fair, because the thinly paid has a lot of burden of work to do compared to those who are getting better salaries”*. Similarly, Maslach and Leiter (1997) also point out that *“a lack of fairness exacerbates burnout, firstly the experience of unfair treatment is emotionally upsetting and exhausting; secondly unfairness fuels a deep sense of cynicism about the workplace”* (p. 415).

### **Sub-theme: Shift work and time pressures**

According to Salaman (2000) all organisations all over the world have their own working pace when it comes to the number of hours and days that employees are expected to work yearly. Lord (2005) states that law enforcement work has normal working hours and other duties called ‘shift work’ e.g. detectives are required to perform more activities like assisting with any emergencies at any time of the day. In addition, even though the members of police force are on leave, most of the time they are required to cancel their leaves and attend meetings, court proceedings or other duties (Lord, 2005). Thus this affects law enforcement work. The above was confirmed by the following participant, participant two: *“You see on the detective’s section if they are busy with the pointing out process whereby there is a person who want to confess they call me even when I’m off I come and assist”*. Participant eighteen: *“as an investigating officer you must have informers around...people who will tell me what’s happening where in that case those people can call you at any time even at night and sometimes I have to wake up even when neighbours have problem I*

*have to attend even when I am not on duty*". Participant 19: *"Myself I only do office hours but for example I am in between because I am the only one in this section that they can communicate with...sometimes you just get a call from work when you are just relaxed cooking and after that call you become forced to attend the matter and sometimes you were working during the day and you are tired"*.

Morris and Maisto (2005) state that working at night or a night shift is not good for an individual's wellbeing because it affects their circadian rhythm. Thus, employees should be given enough time to rest after working night shift if not police officers will then develop various symptoms and this result in the experience of burnout. In addition, if police officers are compelled to work every day without getting rest days they may develop stress and anxiety because of not getting time to spend with their families and friends. Further, because of overtime, police officers may also experience family and marital difficulties. Participant five expressed the inconvenience of working longer hours as: *"being a police man is affecting my family because sometimes I have to dedicate my job more than my family in order to make the employer happy....and I spend most of my time at work and little time with my family"*. In addition, the two participants made the following comment: *"Today I am divorced because of this work and now I don't get enough time with my children"*. Participant nineteen: *"This job of mine is taking all my time in such a way that my wife ended up leaving me"*. In addition, the International Labour Organisation (1981) has also found that job stress and burnout are important factors in the police sphere. These negative effects of burnout also affect the family life of the burnt out employee. Burnout conditions can lead to poor family relationships, marriage discord and disintegration of marriage.

The multidimensional theory of burnout has categorised burnout into three components. One component that is strongly related to the study and to the participants is depersonalisation. Depersonalisation is whereby workers feel disconnected from other people and this is the result of emotional exhaustion, while on the other hand reduced personal accomplishment is when worker's capability and work rates start to lessen (Maslach; Maslach and Jackson, 1981a, 1986, pp. 69). In addition, Leiter (1993) in applying the multi-dimensional theory of burnout argues that any profession that places more demands on employees that result in exhaustion is likely to damage one's sense of achievement/accomplishment. The author went on to state that if employees are

feeling exhausted it becomes difficult for them to perform to the best of their abilities or to gain a sense of accomplishment.

### **Sub-theme: Unfair practices in relation to compensation and overtime**

Many theories postulate that an imbalance occurs when it comes to excessive endeavours and insufficient benefits which lead to the experience of occupational stress and burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Schaufeli, Van Dierendonck, and Van Gorp, 1996; Siegrist, 1996). Farber (1991), argues that the imbalance between excessive endeavours and insufficient benefits describes the condition of unfairness that can result in emotional depression and that if the above is ignored it can lead to long term illnesses and this in turn may lead to burnout, and psychosomatic complaints (Bakker, Killmer, Siegrist, and Schaufeli, 2000a; Bosma, Peter, Siegrist, and Marmot, 1998; Peter et al., 1998; Siegrist, Peter, Junge, Cremer, and Seidel, 1990; Stansfeld, Bosma, Hemingway, and Marmot, 1998). In addition, the issue of low salaries and unpaid overtime is a problem for police officers and this was confirmed by the following participants:

Participant one: *“Salary is not enough and we have more bills to pay.... even after pay day we do not see the money we are paid it is too little it feels like we are working for nothing”*.

Participant two: *“In most cases we complain about money because some of us they end involving themselves in illegal things because of the little salary they are paying us so if they can add it we can be able to do our own things”*.

Participant three: *“Sometimes you stay longer in scenes and wait for ambulance even if your knocking time can arrive you must wait in the scene until the ambulances arrive.... for example, there was a time where they bombed at the mall and the guys we work with waited in that scene until their knocking off time passed and ended up knocking off at nine pm since they started working at six am and that overtime was unpaid”*.

Participant five: *“You see here we receive little salaries and whatever we receive must be in line with the standard of living or economy...in order for members not to get tempted and become disloyal to the organisation because the more they become stressed because of more the more they become tempted and then become involved to unlawful activities...so if the organisation can uplift that the stress can decrease as well because, for example if you have a friend who is working at Eskom you may find that your friend is driving a very nice and expensive car and for you as a police member in order for you to drive that car you must be involved in corruption activities and find yourself in haste in turn become disloyal to the organisation and become near to the door of jail and it’s all because of the little salaries they are paying us”*.

Participant 17: *“You see us we have a lot of work and its painful because we do not have what is called overtime we only have extra time meaning rest days and even those rest days you get them once you are extremely tired so it is really not fair we also want to be paid for overtime we also want money like other people not rest days”*.

Many participants revealed that their salaries are not in line with the standard of living they aspire to. In addition, they also stated that sometimes they work late and do not receive overtime pay. There is therefore an imbalance between excessive efforts and little rewards received that leads to job stress and burnout. According to the person in context theory reward is the third type from the six mismatches; this type of mismatch occurs when workers are undercompensated or when workers feel like they are not recognised at work. In addition, Deery and Van Vliet (1997) in their research they have discovered that the issue of minimal wages as well as the promotional procedures applied at SAPS when it comes to moving from lower rank to higher rank were the main causes of burnout. Thus, this shows that the issue of little rewards negatively affects workers.

### **Sub-theme: Shortage of workers**

The issue of staff shortages is a problem because it leads to the experience of stress. According to research done in South Africa with regard to Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R) (Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli, 2003); argue that employees experience stress more if they do not have enough equipment to perform their tasks or when there is a shortage of employees.

The above was confirmed by the following relevant excerpts:

Participant ten: *“We are struggling here because we are few and the population is more than us.....so sometimes we end up not fulfilling everyone’s dream.”*

Participant twelve: *“It is not nice working here because there is too much work so we need enough staff members”.*

Participant sixteen: *“This job is demanding in a sense that we’ve got a problem because we have a shortage of manpower while we’ve got a high volume of workload so we have to go an extra mile in order for us to be able to push the work....this organisation has got a lot of stress as I am saying that we’ve got a lot of work to do and we are expected to work according to time that is why it is strenuous to us at times, we don’t even have enough time with our families because it’s like we work twenty four hours because even when you are at home you think about the work you have to do the next morning and the work that you did not do”.*

Participant 17: *“Here challenges are too much. Sometimes people complain because they do not know that we have a lot of work.... sometimes you cannot even take a leave and then end up not being able to go and see your family and all of this are caused by the issue of staff shortage because this workload is too much for one person”.*

Different participants shared their various experiences of how they are affected by the issue of staff shortages. The responses from the participants, as mentioned above, demonstrates that the issue of shortage of workers does not only affect their work life but it also affects their personal lives in a sense that sometimes it becomes difficult for them to take leave because they have so much to do and cover since there is an issue of shortage of workers and this then affects their relationships with their families because they end up not getting time to spend with them. In addition, a career as a police officer requires a heavy psychological price (e.g., guilt feelings) that results from the conflict they experience between their work and family demands (Brown & Campbell, 1994). According to Wiese et al (2003), not having enough resources such as staff lead

to poor performances because it becomes difficult for employees to perform various tasks or to deal with work related crises if they do not have sufficient equipment and especially if they must also do tasks that are not in their job descriptions.

#### **4.3.2. Theme two: Job related stressors**

##### **Sub-theme: traumatic events**

Stressors that are related to jobs are those stressors that are related to the nature of police officer's responsibilities (Maslach-Pines and Keinan, 2006). Various authors have argued that, in the police service there are sources of acute stress such as facing unpredictable and dangerous situations (Anshel, 2000), physical danger, including the threat of serious injury or death to themselves, and exposure to others who have been seriously injured, killed, or otherwise traumatised (Aaron, 2000). Police officials are always the first ones to go to crime scenes so sometimes they become traumatised by what they see in different accidents. Here are some of the police officer's voices about the traumatic events they face in their work lives.

Participant sixteen: *"Here other experiences we come across they traumatise us and then at the end they cause negative impacts in our lives and here we do not have proper counselling in such a way that some of us they end up experiencing post-traumatic stress"*.

Participant eighteen: *"There is a time where we must go to accident scenes.... remember we are the ones who must arrive first whether the person is badly hurt or not...sometimes we attend the autopsy procedure whereby the doctor must check the cause of the death and seeing those people causes trauma and lot of stress and it damages our brains a lot"*.

Participant five: *"We experience stress in this organisation. Especially if you lose your colleague in a painful way such as being shot you become traumatised...for example in my olden days while I was only three years in this organisation working at Soweto we went out with my colleague to*

*buy food we were working at night so the drinks were not enough so he went back to buy and he never came back he was shot and during that time there were no counselling session they would just tell us that's over boy do not cry and you become affected especially when you have a community member that you must assist after losing your fellow colleague you just feel like sending the person back.*” This participant reveals that he is still traumatised because he never received counselling and had to deal with this matter on his own. In addition, the above participant also stated that after a traumatising experience it becomes difficult to assist community members, in line with this Saatchi (2005) argues that emotional indicators such as inability to show empathy towards others, feeling depressed, feeling trapped and losing interest in a job, feeling discouraged and the feeling of being detached from others is one of the symptoms of burnout.

Participant twelve: *“In other times we attend situations whereby when we arrive you get someone full of worms and what traumatised me the most was when I attended a scene whereby there was a lady who was burnt by her boyfriend and left dead (skeleton) and I was so traumatised in such a way that after that accident I never wanted anything to do with males as in like relationships because in my mind I could not stop thinking that males they are all killers”.*

These excerpts clearly indicate that the police officers job is not only demanding but it is also traumatising because they have to be present in all crime scenes whether robberies, car accidents or homicides, and they are the first ones to arrive, even if people from the department of health arrive before them they must still wait for police officers to take statements. So participant's responses reveal that their job causes trauma in their lives and because of lack of proper counselling they become affected for their entire lives. The above statement was supported by participants five response, where he stated that his colleague died a long time ago and he never received counselling. In addition, other examples are the physical assault of a police officer, the violent death or suicide of an officer who is a close friend, or a response to a scene involving police officers (Mostert and Joubert, 2005).

#### **4.4 Burnout effects on workflow process**

One main theme with one sub-theme emerged after coding and analysis of interview data with regards to burnout effects on the workflow process of police officers. The manner in which the themes are presented is outlined in the following section and the findings are discussed further below.

##### Research question

Question 3: How does burnout affect work flow process?

##### Theme

Burnout effects on workflow process

##### Sub-theme

Unreasonable working hours

##### **Sub theme: Unreasonable working hours**

According to Salaman (2000) all departments have different working arrangements when it comes to employee's working hours meaning when you sign a contract you will know how many hours you are going to work per day/ or per week. According to this study many participants complained about the issue of unreasonable working hours, sometimes they work until they feel exhausted and it then becomes difficult for them to work the following day. Muchinsky (1993) points out that when employees are forced to work extra hours it affects the way they perform at work and it does not only affect their productivity but it also affects their health.

The following excerpts have been gathered from the interviews that are in line with the above:



Participant four: *“During elections we work more overtime sometimes we knock off four am and wake up and attend cases that are relevant to you....it affects workflow because it becomes difficult to execute duties well after an overtime work”*.

Participant eleven: *“There is time where they deploy us to national operations during festivals in December time and also good Friday and it becomes difficult because you have to travel to that particular roadblock and the end it becomes an unpaid overtime and it affects us because at the end of the day you must come back to work they do not even check that you knocked off late on the previous day and as the result it becomes difficult for us to work the next day”*.

Participant thirteen: *“There is a day whereby we worked until ten pm instead of six pm and it affects us because tomorrow you have to be at work at six am and you are tired because you did not sleep enough, so we will just work just to push time and day”*.

Participants fifteen: *“This job is very demanding because you have to work extra hours and it affects the workflow the next day”*.

Participant eighteen: *“Remember we attend accidents maybe as I’m saying maybe its four o clock and here comes the accident and it differ how the accident happened...so you must be there and wait for relevant people for example pathologists.....if someone has died you have to wait until all the stakeholders come, you cannot dessert the scene of the crime, so there was a time where I waited for the pathologist until my knock off time, I waited there until I felt tired and it affected me the next day at work because I was tired because of the extra time I worked and even failed to perform at work”*.

Various responses that were gathered from the research participants revealed that unreasonable working hours affect police officer’s workflow and it does not only affect the workflow but it also affect their health because sometimes they do not get enough sleep, and they sometimes work until they feel that they are exhausted. It has been argued that emotional exhaustion is a state whereby individual workers feel extremely tired emotionally, in such a way that they end up being left with

insufficient power to go on the following day at work (Maslach, 1993; Maslach and Jackson, 1981a, 1986). In addition to the above, Morris and Maisto (2005), further added that if employee's work twenty-four hours without rest their 'circadian rhythm' may be affected.

#### **4.5 Recommendations made by the police officers of Elukwatini police station to prevent and manage burnout of SAPS members.**

##### Research question

Question 4: What recommendations could be made to prevent and or to manage burnout of SAPS members?

The recommendations provided by police officers during their interviews reveals that they are in need of more staff members, as well as working resources. The participants stated that the workload is too much and the cause of this is shortage of workers. In addition, according to Maslach & Leiter (1997), the in person context theory postulates that if workers are given enormous responsibilities at work it becomes difficult for them to complete given tasks in an effective manner and in turn they might encounter challenges when it comes to managing or controlling pressure. This shows that the issue of staff shortage and resources is affecting SAPS employees and this was confirmed by the following participants:

Participant three: *"They must add members after that we can work well because when you work alone it becomes difficult you will find that you have to certify and on the other side you have to go and release the prisoner so the workload becomes too much"*.

Participant five: *"SAPS should hire more police (Human resource)"*.

Participant eight: *"They must add more human resource that can utilize and serve the community smoothly and that will enable us to have a reasonable reaction time in order for us to create a good relationship with communities and not to end up being enemies"*.

Participant nine: *“They must add man power because here we are not many and sometimes people they go on leave especially when they sick and sometimes you will find that there is a prisoner in hospital and that prisoner cannot be left alone the police officers should always be around to make sure that the prisoner does not escape and when you are on duty at hospital you are not allowed to work alone you must be two but because of shortage of manpower you will end up working alone and it is risky because the prisoner can escape for example if you went out to buy food, so if they can add manpower for us things will be better and we will even be able to do our work in a good manner without being overworked and you will work happy and go back home not overworked and tired and do other things”.*

Participant twelve: *“Add workers because there is too much work enough staff members it can be better”.*

Participant thirteen: *“Hire more people”.*

Participant fourteen: *“Hire more staff”.*

Participant fifteen: *“We have a shortage of human resources so they must add manpower”.*

Participant sixteen: *“Add more workers because shortage of manpower is stressing”.*

Participant seventeen: *“Hire more members.”*

The above findings correlate with the results from other studies, because the study conducted by (Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli, 2003) shows that the experience of stress that is caused by shortage of working and human resources are more drastic when compared to other sources of stress in the SAPS. In addition, according to Demerouti et al. (2001) individual's working conditions consist of two elements, which are job demands and job resources. Demerouti et al. (2001) went further and defined job resources as organisational aspects that are used to achieve work goals and work-related activities. In developing the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, Demerouti et al. (2001) maintain that in any type of occupation, burnout develops whenever job

demands are higher than the resources available. In addition, the findings of the above author also relate to the findings of this study because the participants stated that they do not have enough working resources, thus they have made the following recommendations:

Participant four: *“The organisation should add more and proper resources”*.

Participant five: *“The SAPS must beef up physical resources such as vehicles”*.

Participant eight: *“They must give up enough resources”*.

Participant nine: *“They must give us what we need if we need vehicles they must give us”*.

Participant ten: *“They must just give us state resources in order for us to have resources when they are needed in different situations”*.

Participant thirteen: *“They can add facilities here and there”*.

Participant fourteen: *“If we can get enough resources because .... especially if you have to do your work but you do not have resources”*.

Participant twelve: *“They must add resources for us because we have shortage of cars for example we use two cars for a big place”*.

Participant sixteen: *“Work on resources we have a shortage and it is stressing even the working environment is not conducive as you see my office does not have curtains now it is cold I do not have a heater and when it is summer I cannot sit and work in the office because of the sun”*.

Participant eighteen: *“They must just add resources like computers because everything we do must be captured”*.

Participant twenty: *“They must give us transport so that we can be able to work...there is no transport and we need transport for most of our tasks”*.

Schaufeli and Bunk (2003) argue that burnout develops when resources are lost. However, when employees have enough resources available to carry out work activities they develop a positive attitude towards their work, thus it shows that sufficient resources have a positive influence on individuals (Hobfoll, 1989). Maslach & Leiter (1997) went further to state that “it is distressing for people to feel responsible for producing results to which they are deeply committed while lacking the capacity to deliver on that mandate” (p. 414), such as shortage of resources and workers. This indicates that the issue of shortage of workers and resources is hindering police officers from doing their job tasks efficiently.

Other participants mentioned the issue of promotions/advancements to other positions. The participants stated that remaining in one rank for a long time is stressful and demotivating. Thus the participants have made the following recommendations in this regard:

Participant one: *“If they can change the promotion system. Rank becomes a problem for example you become a sergeant for fifteen years it is stressful and demotivating it would be nice working knowing that you will be promoted”*.

Participant eight: *“I wish they can change the strategy of promotion, you see me I am twenty-eight years in this service and I am eighteen years in this rank so long staying in one rank is stressful”*.

Participant twenty: *“If they can give us posts things can be better because staying in one post for a long time causes stress”*.

On the other hand, other participants complained about the issue of salaries, they have mentioned that they are not satisfied with the salaries that they are getting. In addition to the above, Lanagam-Fox, Deery and Van Vliet (1997) have found in their research that the relationship with police officers, long working hours, poor salaries, problems with clients, bureaucratic meddling and poor

opportunity for promotion were the most relevant causes of burnout. These above findings relate strongly to the findings of this study and it was confirmed by the following participants:

Participant one: *“They must add money because this issue of salaries is stressful. Salary is not enough and more bills even when we get paid we do not see the money if feels like we are working for nothing if they can increase our salaries we can grow personally and have children”*.

Participant five: *“SAPS should add money and the money we receive should be equivalent to the economy in order for members not to be tempted and end up being disloyal to the organisation because the more they stress about money is the more they become tempted and then involve themselves to unlawful activities so if the organisation can uplift that stress will be reduced”*.

Participant two: *“You know most of the time we complain about money so that’s why they involve themselves in illegal things so if they can add money things can be better and we will be able to get what we need”*.

Participant ten: *Money have to be the way it supposed to be”*.

There is also evidence that has been provided to show that lack of support is strongly related to burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). The support given to workers by the organisation is more vital than the support coming from co-workers as it motivates workers to do well. This was confirmed by participant seven who stated that: *“Social workers should come once in a month for consultations”*. In addition, participants also recommended that the organisation should create a space for recreational activities, as participant seven said *“the organisation must provide gym and more sports activities”* and participant twelve said *“they must give us time for sports and music so you can relax”*.

Many organisations demand employees to do more work and sometimes work overtime with little income or unpaid overtime (Leiter and Maslach, 2005). This was also discovered in this study as participants mentioned that sometimes they work overtime and are not paid for those extra hours they have worked. Thus participant seventeen made the following recommendation: *“We also want paid overtime just like other members not rest days we also want money”*. Lastly two

participants raised the matter of well-being of workers and thus made the following recommendations:

Participant four: *“Manage organisation professionally and government should take workers lives seriously”*.

Participant sixteen: *“If the SAPS management can learn to take good care of its employees we can be able to enjoy because it’s like they do not care about because all they want is just you when you are fit to work that is when they want you. But when you are sick and lying at hospital for maybe some of their reasons they do not even give a damn about you then should it happen that you made a mistake they do not even take too long to dismiss you whether you are dead they do not care so we are just working but we are not enjoying anything, because they only care if you have to deliver if you are unable to deliver they don’t care”*.

#### **4.6 Burnout effects on police officers work life**

One main theme with one sub-theme emerged after coding and analysis of interview data with regards to effects of burnout on police officers work life. The manner in which the themes are presented is outlined in the following section and the findings are discussed further below.

##### Research question

Question 5: How does burnout affect police officers work life?

##### Theme

Burnout effects on police officers work life

##### Sub theme

Unreasonable demands from higher rank and high volumes of work

### **Sub theme: Unreasonable demands from higher rank and high volumes of work**

The police officers of the Elukwatini police station have also faced the challenge of high volumes of work to do under a short period of time and the issue of being forced to follow the channel of command that is being used at the SAPS which sometimes the police officers see as unreasonable because other participants stated that control comes from up and they are forced to comply to whatever demands are placed on them without asking any questions and this affects their work life because sometimes they end up experiencing a great deal of stress that they can't even control themselves in such a way that they end up needing counseling.

The above was confirmed by the following participants:

Participant eleven: *“As I have said their control is another way because it comes from up, whatever instruction that comes from the province must be executed regardless of how it is going to be on you and it is so stressful because sometimes you can even kill yourself especially if there is a case that involves you I was once accused but then at least we have social workers/psychologists that can consult because it is too stressful because sometimes it takes time to go for hearing and you have to stay home until the hearing so it becomes more stressful when you are at home doing nothing you even lose weight because you even lose appetite at the organisation doesn't care”*. Thus, Stevens (2005) argues that the way employees are being disciplined should be objective, in order to reduce the impact of stress when being investigated. Any internal investigations may have a negative impact on any employee, regardless the fact that an employee is innocent or not (McCreary et al., 2004).

Participant twenty: *“You see my work causes stress and in turn the experience of stress also affects my work life and a lot because there was a time where I was absent from work because I had to go and consult a psychologist for counselling and it was work related stress”*.

The above participants shared their different stories on how they ended up seeking help from counsellors. When analysing participant's responses it shows that their work is demanding and it affects not only their well-being but also their work lives. The participants stated that sometimes



they become stressed and end up going to see psychologist and they have to be absent from work so in turn it affects their work life because they cannot do both work and counselling so it means they have to put their jobs on hold for that moment so it shows that stress is affecting employees greatly. On the other hand, Burke and Greenglass (2001) in their study also discovered that, organisations are experiencing a high rate of employee absenteeism, actual turnover; and some individuals end up leaving their jobs, however for people who do not leave their employment, burnout results in lower productivity and effectiveness at work. Maslach and Leiter (1997) stated that the results of job burnout can lessen individual's personal and social functioning. It is a very serious issue, because people resort to resigning from workplaces because of the experience of burnout. Job burnout affects people from different workplaces in different career fields, and it is not just a recent occurrence.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the results of the semi-structured interviews that were conducted at Elukwatini SAPS in Mpumalanga province to contribute to the existing knowledge on how employees experience stress and burnout. An interpretation of the research findings was discussed based on the themes and sub-themes taken from the participant's views and experiences of stress and burnout. The themes were compared and integrated with the pertinent literature. In the following chapter the conclusions drawn from data obtained from the study are made.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

The results of this study were detailed in the previous chapter. In this chapter, a general review of the findings of the study as well as the conclusion of the results incorporated with previous research is presented. Finally, the summary of findings, followed by recommendations for the organisation and future research is presented.

Previous research conducted in the SAPS indicates that police officers face different stressors in the organisation (Collins and Gibbs, 2003; Shane, 2010; Gulle et al., 1998; Pienaar and Rothmann, 2006). Although, people react differently to stress, for example when other individuals face high job demands, unreasonable working hours or shifts they show burnout symptoms whereas other individuals facing the same challenges they do not show any symptoms of burnout (Naude and Rothmann, 2006). This shows that people react differently to stress, if one individual perceives something as stressful it does not mean that everyone is going to perceive that particular situation as stressful. In addition, Cranwell-Ward and Abbey (2005), in their study also discovered that participants appraised stressors differently on the basis of their cognitive appraisal of the situation or event. For example, in this study, some participants viewed the issue of salaries as a stressor whereas others viewed the issue of staying in one post for too long as the stressor, so thus people in the same occupation may perceive stress differently.

Thus, in this study the findings in terms of the main causes of burnout indicate that participants experience circumstantial factors which are related to threatening conditions and challenging conditions. The participants stated that they do not feel safe because of the job they are doing because some community members do not differentiate their personal lives and work lives so they see them as threats in such a way that they feel like even their families are at risk. When it comes to job demands other researchers such as Brown and Campbell (1994) and Toch (2002) discovered that the primary job demands for police officers include lack of administrative support, lack of voice in decision-making, lack of opportunities for advancement, associated with inadequate supervision, bureaucratic nature of police departments and large amounts of paper work and this study also discovered the above through participant's responses. The results reveal that police

officers work long hours and also perform extra duties because they have the problem of staff shortages. Participants indicated that their job is demanding and challenging because they become police officers for twenty-four hours, because sometimes their commanders call them even at night. Another aspect that was mentioned by the participants is the issue of working long hours and weekends, as they do not get time with their families and it leaves them exhausted, another participant mentioned that sometimes she even oversleeps because of long working hours.

The results further indicate that participants experience departmental and job-related stressors. The first theme addressed departmental stressors which included; limited chances for advancement, shortage of working equipment/resources, position/role dispute, and position/role overload, unfair practices in relation to compensation, overtime and lastly the issue of shortage of workers. The examples of departmental stressors provided by participants in the present study indicate that stress is mostly caused by the issue of shortage of working equipment and shortage of workers. The participants also indicated that a limited chance for advancement, position/role dispute, and position/role overload in relation to compensation and overtime also adds to their experience of stress. These findings support the view of Robbins (2005), who argues that adequate working equipment enables individual employees to perform their duties effectively and to provide good service delivery but with limited resources it becomes difficult for police officers to achieve the above and in turn it leads to the experience of stress.

The second theme identified job related stressors as a cause of stress. This theme included traumatic events influencing participant's experience of stress. The results reveal that traumatic events also add to the experience of stress, participants specified that they are always the first ones to arrive in all scenes so they see everything and sometimes they become traumatised because of painful situation they come across in crimes and accident scenes. In addition, departmental stressors and job related stressors were considered as the primary causes of stress in police work although departmental stressors such as lack of equipment and staff shortages are more stressful. This shows that police officers are being trained to use various equipment but when it comes to doing the job they do not receive sufficient equipment.

In addition, the findings in terms of the burnout effects on workflow process of police officers reveals that sometimes police officers become forced to work extra hours and some of them work unpaid overtime, they receive rest days instead of money, but then other police officers in this study indicated that they do not want rest days they also want paid overtime like other employees in their organisation. Participants' responses reveal that most employees are expected to work even after their shifts end. In addition, most employees complained that during busy holidays they work until exhaustion. For example, they are always the first ones to arrive on the scene of an accident and are the last ones to leave, as they are not allowed to leave scenes until everything has been cleared up so they stay there until well after the end of their shift without additional compensation. In addition, they are expected to be present at work the following day.

Another participant clearly stated that "This job is very demanding because you have to work extra hours and it affects the workflow the next day". In summation the participants stated that the issue of working hours affects them greatly because sometimes they do not even get enough time to rest or to sleep.

The police officers of the Elukwatini SAPS also provided recommendations on how burnout can be managed. Most participants' mentioned the issue of shortage of workers. The police officers complained that there is so much to be done, because they always receive high workloads so they were of opinion that if the organisation can hire more people things will be better and they won't be forced to work up until they feel extremely exhausted. The participants also mentioned that if they can get more colleagues to work with they will even be able to take leave days and spend time with their families. In addition, Rothmann and Jorgensen (2007) conducted a study to explore the sources of stress experienced by police officers of the Local Criminal Record Centre in the SAPS. The results revealed stressors including staff shortages, excessive paperwork, inadequate or poor quality equipment, working unsociable hours and exposure to violent situations. This study revealed similar results.

Another recommendation that was stated by most participants was the issue of shortage of working resources. Police officers were of opinion that if the SAPS department can provide sufficient working equipment the experience of stress is going to lessen, because it becomes difficult for

them to perform their duties or to deliver if they do not have sufficient equipment. One important resource that they mentioned is that of vehicles, one participant stated that sometimes they only give them two cars for a big area and then it becomes difficult for them to move from point A to point B and this affects them because sometimes community members complain that police officers they are never around when needed.

In addition, Mostert et al. (2006) conducted a study on mediating the role of positive-work-home interaction between job resources and work engagement of police officers and the research results revealed that if police officers have sufficient equipment needed to perform their tasks they cope better with the job demands at. In addition, the study conducted by De Beer and Korf (2004) also revealed that the issue of inadequate working equipment is more drastic in the SAPS when compared to other stressors, because forty-eight percent of participants stated that they encounter stress due to inadequate working equipment. Thus this shows that the issue of shortage of resources is affecting the members of the SAPS and this was confirmed by many participants.

The last aspect to be discussed is the burnout effects on police officers work life. In this regard participant's responses revealed that the way procedures are being implemented in the SAPS is affecting them. The participants stated that at the SAPS they are guided or ruled by the channel of command. Commands come from the province and they are expected to comply with those commands. The police officers of the Elukwatini police station have also faced the challenge of high volumes of work to do under serious time constraints and the issue of being forced to follow the channel of command that is being used at the SAPS are sometimes viewed by the participants as unreasonable as it affects their work life because sometimes they end up experiencing a great deal of stress that they can't control themselves which results in them needing counselling.

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings of this study indicate that police officers experience stress in their workplace due to the demanding nature of their jobs. The police officers are faced with various challenges in the SAPS department. Challenges such as shortage of workers and working equipment. The findings also reveal that their career choice has had a great impact on their work life and family life. These

police officers indicate a very strong passion for their job and passion to protect the people of this country, this was revealed by various recommendations that the participants have made on how the organisation can make their working environment a better place.

## **Recommendations**

### Recommendations for the organisation

The following are the recommendations for the SAPS department as well as for future research. The findings of this research study add to the existing literature on stress and burnout in the police services. Further, the findings of this study might be helpful to comprehend what helps some individuals to continue work and remain engaged in a highly stressful profession. Another recommendation is that employers should become aware of the causes and symptoms of burnout. Further, access to psychological services may also help the police officers in the SAPS by providing support during stressful situations. Another recommendation that might be helpful will be for police officers to attend workshops that are aimed at addressing ways in which police officers can deal with stressors as they surface. Further, when relating stressful job demands as a cause of burnout, stressful demands such as excessive paper work and working overtime, these should be considered targets for intervention. Thus, police management should also play their role in attending to stress caused by a lack of resources such as staff shortages and poor salaries.

The nature of burnout has been shown to negatively affect police officers professionally and personally, thus the recommendation regarding this matter is that: the police organisation should design and implement planned interventions to assist its employees (police officers). These interventions should be designed for the long term and deal with the root cause rather than just the symptoms (Lee and Ashforth, 1996). These interventions include techniques such as “self-monitoring, self-assessment, didactic stress management, promoting a healthy lifestyle and relaxation” (Schaufeli and Enzmann, 1998, pp. 146-168). There are various interventions which can be implemented, such as individual-based interventions which may be helpful in reducing burnout symptoms. In addition, stress-management programmes that use a cognitive-behavioural approach are also effective in lessening stress reactions, including burnout. Although, according

to Schaufeli and Bakker (2002), organisation-based programmes should supplement such individual-based programmes in order to be continuously effective. In order to be able to address burnout effectively it is vital to consider educational interventions as well as the ways the management of the SAPS can operate, the reason being that changing the individual and the work setting is not effective in itself, as change takes place where both these areas are developed in an integrated way (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001).

### Recommendations for future research

Recommendations for future research include accessing a larger sample and including more police stations around different provinces. Biographical variables play a vital role in the experience of stress and burnout among police officers, as is shown in chapter two. Therefore it is advisable that the future studies should give attention to this aspect. The researcher recommends that similar studies be done in other provinces and districts as well. In addition, the existing body of research on police officers and burnout have focused more on quantitative design thus the researcher recommends that future studies should use qualitative methods to extract rich narrative data on the lived experiences of employees of the SAPS. Further, when considering job stress as a cause of burnout, it is recommended that certain aspects of the tasks of police members are reconsidered (e.g. excessive paperwork, working overtime, inadequate salaries and poor quality equipment). Finally, by identifying that burnout is a significant issue within the SAPS at present; I recommend that more resources and attention be focused on resolving these issues, thereby increasing productivity and work satisfaction.

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