

## **EDUCATION-BASED PROMOTION PROCEDURE PREDISPOSING POLICE OFFICERS TO THE RISK OF DEPRESSION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose of Study:** This study assessed the relationship between education/qualification-based promotion procedures and the risk of depression symptoms among police officers in Nairobi City County.

**Problem Statement:** Law enforcement exposes officers to a multitude of challenges, significantly impacting their mental well-being and elevating the risks of depression. However, law enforcement in Nairobi County in Kenya is affected by the risk of depression as a result of education-based promotion procedures.

**Methodology:** The study employed the descriptive survey research design on a population of population of 3010 junior police officers assigned to various police divisions in Nairobi County. Yamane's 1967 formula was utilized to select a sample of 354 respondents comprising junior police officers as well as mental health practitioners, officers from IPOA, and officers commanding stations. Questionnaires and interview guides were used for data collection. The reliability of the research instruments was estimated using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, while validity was established through the expert opinion of university supervisors. Data analysis was aided by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 25.0. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data, while thematic analysis was used for qualitative data.

**Result:** Data analysis results were presented as frequency distributions and in prose narration. The findings revealed that education-based promotion procedure predisposes police officers to the risk of depression in Nairobi County in Kenya.

**Recommendation:** The Ministry of Interior and Coordination of the National government should initiate programs and interventions streamlining promotion criteria by removing a human element and replacing it with technology that automatically selects qualified persons.

**Keywords:** *Depression, Institutional factors, Police Officers, Risk of Depression symptoms.*

## INTRODUCTION

Depression is a prevalent mental health issue that affects people from a wide range of backgrounds and occupations (Fonseca, Brito & Coelho, 2019). However, particular pressures that are inherent in their work environment, several professions, most notably law enforcement, face disproportionately high rates of depression. The stresses and institutional issues together pose a serious global threat to police personnel's mental health (Parkes et al., 2019). The consequences of depression extend beyond individual well-being, impacting overall societal health and sustainable development goals (Díaz-Redondo, Juárez-Vela, Fernández-Vazquez, Rodríguez-Blázquez, Martínez-Martín, Rodríguez-Rodríguez, & Forjaz, 2017). When it comes to law enforcement, depressed police may perform worse on the job, have strained relationships with coworkers, and be less productive (Muchiri, 2022). The consequent decline in the efficacy of law enforcement may jeopardize public safety and undermine institutional trust, impeding attempts at social cohesion and sustainable development.

Depression among police officers interrupts the performance of the police officers and hinders effective and efficient service delivery in society. Prenzler and Drew (2018) found out that the promotion practices in countries such as the United Kingdom, USA, and Australia, where employment procedures are designed to recognize and promote the most qualified candidates while minimizing discriminatory barriers. These countries often implement rigorous merit-based systems aimed at ensuring fairness and equality in career advancement. The study further highlighted the pressures that accompany the pursuit of promotions, particularly in hierarchical professions like law enforcement. The intense competition for promotions could lead to significant stress for employees, especially when they perceive the promotion process as unfair or biased.

Although the literature on education-based promotion procedures on depression among police officers in Africa is scanty, the limited available predictions portray depression among law enforcement as being mainly on the rise in sub-Saharan Africa. Okechukwu et al. (2022) asserted that for officers who have no education and the education-based promotion procedure is applied, officers left out of the promotion procedures feel demotivated which leads to depression. The research by Kagwanja et al. (2020) offers a valuable perspective on the challenges associated with promotion practices in environments where resources are limited, roles are unclear, and political meddling is prevalent. The study argues that these factors can have a direct impact on job promotion procedures, leading to increased stress levels among police officers. This stress is particularly pronounced in settings where promotions are

perceived as being influenced by factors other than merit, such as political favoritism or resource constraints. The findings suggest that in such environments, the promotion process can become a source of significant anxiety and frustration for police officers leading to depression.

Despite proactive measures aimed at addressing the mental health of police officers in Kenya, depression is still a significant issue in the law enforcement field, as seen by alarming figures on officer suicide rates. This agrees with the findings of Mukii (2021) which concludes that 60 police officers commit suicide annually due to various economic, and professional restrictions that law enforcement workers face. Therefore, this study is necessary to assess the relationship between education/qualification-based promotion procedures and the risk of depression symptoms among police officers in Nairobi City County.

### **OBJECTIVE**

The main objective of the study was to assess the relationship between education/qualification-based promotion procedures and the risk of depression symptoms among police officers in Nairobi City County.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 3010 junior police officers serving in various stations in Nairobi County in Kenya. Using Yamane's 1967 formula for determining sample size, a sample of 354 respondents was selected through clustered random sampling technique. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the main respondents while an interview guide was used to collect data from key informants who included mental health practitioners, officer commanding stations and officers from IPOA. The reliability of the research instruments was determined using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient whose reliability coefficient value was 0.786 thus considered reliable. Data were analyzed using the chi-square test statistic with the help of SPSS version 25.0. The results were presented in tables, figures, and prose narration.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the study were discussed and presented as follows:

#### **Demographic Information of the Respondents**

The study respondents were required to indicate their gender, age, marital status, and level of education. The data analysis indicated that 38.8% of the respondents were female, while the

remaining 61.2% accounted for male respondents. The study focused on police officers aged 18 years to those who have attained the age of 60 years. Age distribution analysis indicated that 24% of the respondents were aged 18-26 years, 32.0% were aged between 27-35 years, 31.2% of the respondents were aged between 36-44, and 13% of the respondents were aged 45 years and above. The results concerning the marital status of the respondents showed that 42.1% were single, 24.7% were married, 16.7% were divorced, and 16.4% were widowed. The respondents' submissions showed that the majority of the respondent's level of education 64.2% was in secondary school while 35.8% had a college education. It was noted that no respondent had only primary school education since the minimum qualification for joining the national police service was a secondary school certificate.

**Education-Based Promotion Procedure Predisposing Police Officers to the Risk of Depression**

This study aimed to determine whether there was a significant differences in education-based promotion criteria predisposing police officers to depression based on demographic variables, including gender, age, marital status, and level of education in Nairobi County, Kenya. The analysis involved conducting a chi-square test statistic to test the hypothesis at a significance level of  $\alpha=0.05$ . Information in Table 1 below shows the test findings.

**Table 1: Education-Based Promotion Procedure/Grouping Variable**

<b>Education-based procedure /Grouping variable</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Education level</b>
Lack of promotion procedures.	0.897	0.730	0.920	0.366
Lack of consideration of police skills, experience, and contribution	0.380	0.511	0.398	0.004
Minimal promotion frequencies	0.711	0.570	0.999	0.210
Lack of communication of promotion criteria	0.130	0.787	0.349	0.737
Unequal promotion opportunities among police officers	0.281	0.504	0.046	0.217
Dissatisfaction with promotion practices in the National police service	0.170	0.730	0.912	0.467

The data in Table 1 above indicates no significant differences in education-based promotion criteria predisposing police officers to depression based on demographic variables, including

gender, age, marital status, and level of education in Nairobi County. This means that the majority of the participants were in agreement that education-based promotion criteria predisposed police officers to depression. However, considerations of police skills, experience, and contributions indicated a significant influence as education-based promotion criteria on police officers' stress based on the respondents' demographic variable of the level of education, with a p-value of 0.004. This illustrated that respondents with different levels of education had different views on the aspect of police skills, experience, and police officers' stress as factors contributing to police officers' depression. Likewise, the equal promotion opportunities among officers showed a significant influence on stress among police officers based on the respondents' demographic variable of marital status with a p-value of 0.046.

Descriptive statistics were conducted to determine education-based procedures predisposing police officers to the risks of depression in Nairobi County. The supposed facilitation was measured on a five-level Likert scale from very strongly agree to strongly disagree. Information in Table 2 below represents the findings.

**Table 2: Descriptive on education-based promotion procedure predisposing police officers to the risk of depression**

Statement Rating	SA	A	U	D	SD
Lack of promotion procedures.	22.0%	27.7%	21.2%	17.5%	11.6%
Lack of consideration of police skills, experience, and contribution	4.0%	46.6%	11.9%	15.8%	21.8%
Minimal promotion frequencies of officers	24.0%	37.0%	11.9%	17.5%	9.6%
Lack of Communication of promotion criteria	18.1%	34.7%	15.5%	19.8%	11.9%
Unequal promotion opportunities among police officers.	11.9%	33.1%	21.2%	15.8%	18.1%
Dissatisfaction with promotion practices in the National police service	23.7%	37.3%	17.5%	15.5%	5.9%

The results in Table 2 outline the respondents' responses in percentages based on their level of agreement with statements on education-based promotion procedures predisposing police officers to depression in Nairobi County, Kenya

The majority (60 %) of the respondents affirmed that they were likely or very likely to be predisposed to risk of depression as a result of education-based promotion procedures.

Regarding the statement to determine if the promotion criteria considered police skills, experience, and contribution. 4.0 % strongly agreed, 46.6% agreed and 11.9 % were undecided.

15.8% and 21.8% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This result revealed that despite some respondents disapproving that lack of consideration of police experience, skills, and contributions leads to depression among police officers in Nairobi County. Furthermore, the study sought to determine if minimal promotion frequencies predisposed police officers to depression, 24.0% strongly agreed, 37.0% agreed and 11.9% were neutral. 17.5% and 9.6% disagreed and strongly disagreed that minimal promotion frequencies expose police officers to depression. From these results, it's a clear indication that most of the respondents attribute their depression to promotion frequencies. Notably, these promotion frequencies allow the police officers to have pay raises hence sorting financial constraints.

The study further sought to ascertain whether lack of communication of promotion criteria leads to depression among police officers in Nairobi County. From the responses the study established that 18.1% strongly agreed, 34.7% agreed and 15.5% were neutral in their responses. Further 19.8% and 11.9% disagreed and strongly disagreed on the statement. The study sought to determine whether Unequal promotion opportunities among police officers contribute to depression among them, from the responses, 11.9% and 33.1% agreed and strongly agreed 21.2% of the respondents were neutral while 15.8% and 18.1% agreed and strongly agreed on the statement that lack of equal promotion opportunities disposes police officers to depression.

Finally, on the aspect of dissatisfaction with the promotion practices in the national police service, from the responses, 23.7% and 37.3% agreed and strongly agreed with the statement while 17.5% were undecided. 15.5% and 5.9% disagreed and strongly disagreed that dissatisfaction with the promotion practices leads to depression among police officers in Nairobi County.

Interviews were conducted to triangulate findings from mental health practitioners, officers commanding stations, and officers from independent oversight Authorities. Convicted. The qualitative data gathered were thematically analyzed and presented in prose narration. In response to the theme of lack of promotion procedure criteria in the national police service that leads to depression among police officers, an officer commanding station affirmed "*the method of promotion can create pressure on police officers, particularly when perceived as unsatisfactory or unfair which eventually leads the officers to depression due to unclarity of the procedure*". The findings of this study indicate that police officers were in agreement lack of clear promotion criteria leads to unfairness which in turn leads to depression among police officers. The findings agree with Prenzler and Drew (2018) who noted that, in hierarchical

professions like law enforcement, the pursuit of promotions introduces pressures for employees, and the failure to secure promotion negatively impacts those aspiring to advance in their careers and further exposes the law enforcement officers to depression.

Regarding the lack of consideration of police skills, experience, and contribution, mental health practitioners resounded “The police officers get into depression as a result of the failure of the national police service to consider skills, outstanding contribution, and experience during the promotion of the officers which in turn leads to depression of the officers due to the feeling of unappreciation in this County”. These sentiments are in agreement with the findings of Otto et al. (2022) who argued that consideration of skills and experience typically adhere to employment procedures that prioritize the recognition and selection of the most qualified and skilled candidates for career advancement, aiming to eliminate discriminatory barriers based on ethnicity or gender.

Concerning minimal promotion frequencies and their relation to depression among police officers in Nairobi County, the Officer commanding station said “*The national police service there is a periodic promotion which is not predictable which in turn affects the police officers.*” He further added, “*The promotion is guaranteed therefore, the morale of the officers is affected and to some extent pushing some of them to depression*”. The findings by Okechukwu et al. (2022) posit that promotion done after a long period exposes police officers to depression since it is coupled with unfairness and injustices.

Regarding unequal promotion opportunities and dissatisfaction with promotion practices within the national police service. Officers from the independent police oversight Authority said “*depression among police officers in Nairobi County has been attributed to unfairness in promotion opportunities and promotion practices that are full of favouritism and corruption*”. They added, “*Unfair treatment disadvantages officers who lack godfathers in the service which results in depression leading to some extent suicide among officers*”. This argument corroborates the findings of Kagwanja et al. (2020). Who argues lack of clear promotion practices in the national police service raises police officers' stress levels which turn to depression. The research further indicated the vices of the promotion practices affect organizational resilience and officers' well-being which in turn affects professional growth.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- i. The Ministry of Interior and Coordination of the National government may initiate programs and interventions streamlining promotion criteria by removing a human



- element and replacing it with technology that automatically selects qualified persons. This will enhance fairness and ensure a corruption-free exercise for all police officers.
- ii. The Ministry of Interior and Coordination of the National government should recruit mental health practitioners and deploy them to police stations to offer counseling services to police officers who are already battling depression.

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