

COPING STRATEGIES AND THE TRAUMA EXPOSURE PTSD JOB PERFORMANCE PATHWAY AMONG POLICE OFFICERS IN NJORO SUB-COUNTY, KENYAJones Orina Omwenga¹ and Dr. Daniel A. Otwor²¹ Department of Psychology, Kisii University, Kenya² Management University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Background: Exposure to distressing events is a routine occupational concern in policing. Coping may change the association of trauma exposure with post-traumatic stress symptoms and job performance. **Objective:** To examine the reported moderated mediation effect of coping strategies on the trauma–post-traumatic stress–performance pathway among police officers in Njoro Sub-County, Kenya. **Methods:** A cross-sectional mixed-methods thesis sampled 147 officers from a target population of 238 across five stations; 128 questionnaires were returned (87.1%). Five station commanders were interviewed. This paper presents the third objective using the thesis's regression table that includes an index of moderated mediation. **Results:** Trauma exposure was positively associated with post-traumatic stress symptoms ($B = 0.478$, $SE = 0.067$, $p < .001$); symptoms were negatively associated with job performance ($B = -0.372$, $SE = 0.072$, $p < .001$). Coping was positively associated with performance ($B = 0.248$, $SE = 0.066$, $p < .001$), and the symptom-by-coping interaction was positive ($B = 0.163$, $SE = 0.064$, $p = .012$). The table reports an index of moderated mediation of 0.086 ($SE = 0.032$, $p = .007$), without a confidence interval. **Conclusion:** The reported interaction is consistent with coping modifying the symptom–performance association. The moderated mediation claim remains provisional pending reconciliation of conflicting thesis tables and estimation of conditional indirect effects with confidence intervals.

Keywords: coping strategies; job performance; Kenya; moderated mediation; occupational trauma; police officers; post-traumatic stress

1. INTRODUCTION

Police officers can encounter distressing events repeatedly while also facing demands for sound judgement and sustained service delivery. The psychological and occupational consequences may vary according to the resources officers use to manage stress. A review of routine critical incident exposure in police personnel found that incident-specific factors were more consistently associated with post-traumatic stress outcomes than several individual characteristics (Wagner et al., 2020). Yet the relationship between symptoms and work performance, and whether coping modifies it, remains context dependent.

In Njoro Sub-County, the parent thesis examined trauma exposure, post-traumatic stress symptoms and self-reported job performance. This manuscript addresses its third objective: whether coping strategies modify the indirect association between exposure and performance through symptoms. The corresponding null hypothesis states that this indirect association does not vary with coping.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The transactional theory of stress and coping treats coping as a changing response to appraised demands and available resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In the present framework, trauma exposure is X , post-traumatic stress symptoms are M , coping is W and job performance is Y . If coping moderates the M -to- Y path, the indirect association of X with Y through M can vary across W . A positive $M \times W$ coefficient, where the main M coefficient is negative, could indicate attenuation at higher coping scores, provided the scale is coded so higher values mean more adaptive coping.

Moderation of one path and a nonzero overall indirect effect do not by themselves describe the conditional indirect effect. Hayes (2015) defines an index that captures linear change in the indirect effect over the moderator and recommends interval estimation. This distinction is particularly relevant when coping combines several behaviours that may have different meanings. The thesis groups problem solving, emotional regulation and support seeking as adaptive approaches and also records less adaptive responses; the exact composite scoring is not available in the reported results.

3. METHODS

Study design and participants. This secondary manuscript draws on a cross-sectional mixed-methods study carried out in five Njoro Sub-County police stations during March–August 2025. The thesis states that 238 officers formed the target population. Stratified sampling selected 147 officers, of whom 128 returned questionnaires; five Officers Commanding Stations participated in qualitative interviews. The officer response rate was 87.1%.

Measures and analysis. Questionnaires measured occupational trauma exposure, post-traumatic stress symptoms, coping strategies and self-reported job performance. The thesis describes hierarchical regression and interaction terms. Its reported models include a direct trauma–performance path, trauma–symptom and symptom–performance paths, coping as a predictor, and a symptom $\times$ coping interaction. The present manuscript reproduces Table 13 of the thesis because it is the only one of three Objective 3 result tables to label and quantify an index of moderated mediation. No participant-level data were available for reanalysis. The thesis does not specify the scale items and

scoring used in this model, interaction centering, model covariates, analytic n, missing-data treatment, bootstrap procedure or confidence intervals. Thus, results are reported as associations rather than causal effects.

Ethical considerations. The thesis describes voluntary written consent, private data collection and confidentiality. The approval reference and research authorization should be inserted from original records before journal submission.

4. RESULTS

The thesis reports that more than 70% of responding officers experienced at least one traumatic event in the preceding six months, although it does not give an exact numerator in the text used here. Its Objective 3 results are summarized in Table 1. The tabulated p-values reported as 0.000 are rendered as $p < .001$.

Table 1. Coping and the trauma–symptom–performance pathway (thesis Table 13)

Reported path	B	β	SE	t or z	p
Trauma exposure → performance, direct	−0.196	−0.182	0.071	−2.76	.006
Trauma exposure → symptoms	0.478	0.454	0.067	7.13	< .001
Symptoms → performance	−0.372	−0.351	0.072	−5.17	< .001
Coping → performance	0.248	0.221	0.066	3.76	< .001
Symptoms × coping → performance	0.163	0.141	0.064	2.55	.012
Indirect association via symptoms	−0.178	−0.159	0.057	−3.14	.002
Index labelled moderated mediation	0.086	0.073	0.032	2.69	.007

Note. B = unstandardized coefficient; β = standardized coefficient; SE = standard error. The source does not provide confidence intervals or conditional indirect effects at specified coping values. The index is reproduced as labelled in the thesis; its computation cannot be independently verified.

The positive trauma–symptom coefficient and negative symptom–performance coefficient are consistent with a negative indirect pathway. The positive symptom × coping interaction suggests that the negative symptom–performance slope becomes less negative as the coded coping score rises, assuming higher scores indicate more adaptive coping. The reported index is positive, but the absence of an interval estimate and coding details restricts interpretation. Commander interviews broadly described peer and family support as useful ways officers manage occupational stress; these accounts offer context, not a separate quantitative test of the model.

5. DISCUSSION

The results suggest coping is relevant to the relationship between post-traumatic stress symptoms and self-reported work performance. A main coping coefficient of 0.248 and interaction coefficient of 0.163 in the selected thesis table point toward variation in performance at different coping levels. This interpretation depends on the construction and direction of the coping measure. A single composite could obscure differences between problem-focused and less adaptive responses, and the thesis does not present adjusted slopes at low, medium and high coping values.

A methodological concern is that the thesis reports three Objective 3 tables with different coefficients and even opposing signs for the symptom × coping interaction: Table 11 reports $B = -0.172$, Table 12 reports $B = 0.156$, and Table 13 reports $B = 0.163$. The tables may represent different model specifications, but their differences are not explained. Table 13 reports an index with $p = .007$, whereas no bootstrap confidence interval, the usual basis for inference on a moderated mediation index, is supplied (Hayes, 2015). The paper therefore cannot treat the conditional indirect pattern as settled.

The cross-sectional design cannot establish whether exposure preceded symptoms, whether coping changed later performance, or whether perceived performance influenced symptoms and coping. Common-method reporting may inflate associations. The officer sample is drawn from one sub-county; the analytic number used for each model may be smaller than 128 because of missing responses. The five commander interviews add operational context but do not validate the quantitative effect sizes. These limits should be reported transparently under STROBE guidance (von Elm et al., 2007).

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The selected thesis table reports a significant symptom × coping interaction and a positive index labelled moderated mediation. The evidence supports further analysis of coping as a possible modifier of the trauma–symptom–performance pathway, while its size and direction require verification against the original data. An institutional response can provide confidential access to psychological support and strengthen peer-support and supervisory practices without assuming that one approach suits every officer. Future analysis should distinguish coping subscales, reconcile the three models, specify covariates and coding, report conditional indirect estimates with bootstrap confidence intervals, and include independently assessed work outcomes where feasible.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Results are based on self-report data from a cross-sectional study in one sub-county. The article reproduces a selected thesis table and cannot independently verify its regression output, conditional effects or index calculation. Inconsistent model tables and missing confidence intervals are material limitations for publication.

DECLARATIONS

Funding: Not reported in the thesis. Conflict of interest: Author statement required. Data availability: Access arrangements should be confirmed with the thesis author and responsible institution. Ethics approval: Reference and authorization details to be inserted from the study records.

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