



## ANALYSIS OF POLICE OFFICERS' ATTITUDES REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL FITNESS IN STRESS PREVENTION

### ANALIZA STAVOVA POLICIJSKIH SLUŽBENIKA O ZNAČAJU KONDICIJSKE PRIPREMLJENOSTI U PREVENCIJI STRESA

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#### ABSTRACT

Workplace stress or professional stress is a specific type of stress that is highly prevalent among police officers. Police officers are exposed to high levels of stress and its negative impact on their physical and mental health, as well as their social lives. The aim of this research is to determine the attitudes regarding the connection between physical fitness and stress prevention among police officers. The sample consists of 516 employees from police departments in the Central Bosnia Canton. The sample is structured with 312 male participants and 204 female participants. Both descriptive and analytical methods were applied in this research, as the descriptive method was used to describe the distribution of the studied phenomenon, while the analytical part followed the logic of the research. Analyzing all the results, it can be concluded that there is a high level of satisfaction with the management of work processes among police officers and with stress reduction in the workplace. The conclusion arises about the necessity of increasing the number of hours of police training, primarily for basic and investigative police work, in stress prevention among police officers. The results of comparative analysis indicate that there is no statistically significant difference among participants based on gender. The results show that the age of the participants significantly influences their attitudes towards overall satisfaction with management quality. The results suggest that participants who have been employed the longest and make the most use of the existing infrastructure express more positive attitudes.

**Key words:** police, stress, physical fitness, burnout, prevention.

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## SAŽETAK

Stres na radnome mjestu ili profesionalni stres je specifična vrsta stresa, koja je izrazito prisutna kod policijskih službenika. Policijski službenici izloženi su visokom nivou stresa i njegovom negativnom uticaju na fizičko i psihičko zdravlje, te na njihov socijalni život. Cilj istraživanja je utvrđivanje stavove o povezanosti kondicijske pripremljenosti u prevenciji stresa kod policijskih službenika. Uzorak ispitanika čini 516 uposlenika policijskih uprava iz Srednjobosanskog kantona. Uzorak je strukturiran od 312 ispitanika muškog pola i 204 ispitanika ženskog pola. U ovom istraživanju su primijenjena oba oblika Servej metode – i deskriptivni i analitički metod, jer se deskripcijom vršio opis distribucija proučavane pojave, dok se analitičkim dijelom ove metode slijedila logika istraživanja. Analizirajući sve rezultate možemo zaključiti da postoji visok stupen zadovoljstva upravljanja procesom rada policijskih službenika i smanjenja stresa na poslu. Nameće se zaključak o nužnosti povećanja broja sati policijskih treninga prije svega osnovne i kriminalističke policije, u prevenciji stresa kod policijskih službenika. Rezultati uporedne analize ukazuju na to da nema statistički značajne razlike između ispitanika s obzirom na pol. Rezultati pokazuju da dob ispitanika bitno utiče na stavove ispitanika o opštem zadovoljstvu *kvalitetom upravljanja*. Rezultati upućuju na zaključak da su pozitivnije stavove iskazali ispitanici koji su najduže zaposleni i najviše koriste postojeću infrastrukturu.

**Ključne riječi:** policija, stres, kondicijska priprema, „sagorijevanje“, prevencija.

## INTRODUCTION

Policing is an extremely complex profession as it is focused on preventing and detecting criminal activities of all kinds and scales, carried out through the preventive and enforcement roles of the police. During the execution of such activities, a high level of professionalism is expected from police officers in terms of timely execution of official tasks, as well as respect for the dignity of those towards whom such activities are directed (Garner, 2008). The basic prerequisite for such expectations is the stable and strong personal characteristics of the police officer, as well as a satisfactory level of mutual respect, tolerance, and willingness to assist colleagues (Violanti and Aron, 1995). Job demands for police officers are higher compared to other occupations, thus requiring the police officer to exert more effort in dealing with workplace stress, that is, reducing cumulative stress manifested as 'burnout' at work. In order to achieve this, they must strengthen and develop stable personal characteristics to better cope with workplace stress.

Mikić (1988) defines stress as the relationship between a person and their environment, which takes into account both the person's characteristics and the nature of the environment. It also emphasizes that stress represents such a relationship between a person and their environment that they perceive as excessively demanding for their adaptive resources or capacities, and threatening to their well-being. Sources of stress among police officers are classified into four main groups: organizational stressors, family stressors, stressors related to personal characteristics, and job-related stressors (Glavina and Vukosav, 2011).

Due to the nature of their work and dealing with people, the occupation of a police officer can be considered one of the most stressful professions.

The consequences of stress among police officers can be categorized into four groups: physical consequences of stress, psychological consequences of stress, social consequences, and organizational consequences of stress (Glavina and Vukosav, 2011).

The prevailing belief is that working in police structures is stressful, but contemporary literature seeks to find empirical support for this assumption, seeking answers to questions such as: What are the causes of stress and burnout among personnel employed in the police, and in what ways does stress manifest?

The aim of this research is to determine the attitudes regarding the connection between physical fitness and stress prevention among police officers.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

### **Sample of participant**

The sample consists of 516 employees from police departments in the Central Bosnia Canton. The sample is structured with 312 male participants and 204 female participants.

### **Measuring instruments**

The research utilized a questionnaire survey. The first set of questions, located at the beginning of the questionnaire, was designed to collect basic socio-demographic data from the participants involved in the study. The second part of the instrument pertains to questions related to the level of satisfaction with stress management effectiveness and physical fitness status.

### **Data processing methods**

The t-test was applied to determine the difference in means and the statistical significance of differences between participants based on gender and age. The survey method was used in the study to examine the satisfaction of employees with the management of police departments. Both descriptive and analytical methods of the survey method were applied in this research, as the descriptive method was used to describe the distribution of the studied phenomenon, while the analytical part followed the logic of the research. All analyses were performed on a personal computer using the statistical data analysis software (SPSS 17.0 - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - for Windows).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The research findings indicate that the value of the chi-square test is  $\chi^2 = 144.55$ , and it is statistically significant at a significance level of 0.001, demonstrating that the research findings are different, i.e., there are varying opinions among the participants regarding overall job satisfaction (Table 1).

Table 1. Overall satisfaction and willingness to work under the same conditions

Variable	Answers	Frequency F	Percentages %	$\chi^2$	p
General satisfaction with the quality of conditions	Yes	96	18,6	144,55	0,000
	No	120	23,3		
	Partially	300	58,1		
	Sum	516	100%		
I would work again under the same conditions	Yes	424	82,2	559,44	0,000
	No	24	4,7		
	Partially	68	13,3		
	Sum	516	100%		

The results show that 18.6% of the participants are generally satisfied with the organization of the police departments, while 23.3% are dissatisfied. Over 58% are undecided, which calls for a serious analysis of the work of these police departments. The direction in which the business policy of these police organizations should move is to create favorable conditions and improve the factors that participants consider important but are lacking in the police departments to a sufficient extent (Table 1). Certainly, the fact that over half of the undecided participants gives hope that with a serious approach and addressing the shortcomings, these police departments have a more certain future. The analysis of the results indicates that approximately 82% of the participants would work again under the same conditions. It is evident that working conditions, despite the existing shortcomings, can be a sufficient reason for participants to engage again in the same job.

This study also examined overall satisfaction with the quality of management and the process of physical fitness preparation, as well as the existence of differences among participants based on gender and age. Satisfaction with the quality of management refers to satisfaction with working hours, salary, organization, physical fitness preparation, and nutrition.

By analyzing the data from Table 2, it can be determined that the participants are often or always satisfied with physical fitness preparation, organizational structure of work, nutrition, and salaries. However, they are never or sometimes satisfied with working hours and leisure time. These findings indicate a generally positive attitude of the participants towards satisfaction with management effectiveness and physical fitness preparation. However, they also suggest that there is room for improvement in these areas.

Table 2. Satisfaction with organizational structures

Variables	N	M	SD	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always	Sum
Satisfaction with physical fitness preparation	16	,83	1,18	8 (6,11%)	17 (12,98)	30 (22,90%)	76 (58,01%)	131 (25,39%)
Satisfaction with nutrition	16	,89	,06	11 (14,10%)	17 (21,79%)	22 (28,21%)	28 (35,90%)	78 (15,11)
Satisfaction with working hours	16	,95	0,77	13 (35,13%)	16 (43,24%)	4 (10,81%)	4 (10,82%)	37 (7,17%)
Satisfaction with salaries	16	,91	0,58	15 (17,24%)	23 (26,44%)	27 (31,03%)	22 (25,29%)	87 (16,86%)
Satisfaction with organizational structure of work	16	,24	1,20	20 (16,00%)	27 (21,60%)	32 (25,60%)	46 (36,80%)	125 (24,22%)
Satisfaction with leisure time	16	,60	0,97	25 (43,10%)	15 (25,86%)	12 (20,69%)	6 (10,35%)	58 (11,25%)
Sum	16	,77	0,47	92 (17,83%)	115 (22,29%)	127 (24,61%)	182 (35,27%)	516 100.00%

The determination of the significance of the differences in mean scores using the t-test in participants' attitudes towards stress management satisfaction, based on gender, is presented in Table 3. The results of the comparative analysis indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between participants based on gender, as the p-value of 0.64 is not statistically significant. Therefore, gender does not influence participants' attitudes towards the quality and effectiveness of stress management.

Table 3. Differences between participants based on gender

Indicators	Gender	N	M	SD	diff. in M	t	p
General satisfaction of stress management	M	312	3,77	0,49	0,20	-0,47	,64
	F	204	,79	,45			

Analysis of the results in Table 4 shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the General Satisfaction scores among the respondents based on their age, as indicated by  $F=3.05$ . The means range from 0.80, which is the lowest satisfaction score reported by respondents aged 20-25, to 3.84 for respondents aged 25-30. These results indicate that age significantly influences the respondents' attitudes towards general satisfaction with the quality of management, with satisfaction increasing as age increases. Analyzing all the results, we can conclude that there is a high level of satisfaction with the management of the work process among police officers and a tendency towards reduced workplace stress.

Table 4. Differences between respondents based on age

Variable	Age	N	M	SD	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
General satisfaction	20-25	80	,80	0,41	3,05	0,01
	25-30	128	3,84	0,44		
	30-35	240	3,79	0,50		
	25-40	32	3,65	0,51		
	40-45	20	3,45	0,47		
	Over 45	16	3,69	0,47		
	Sum	516	3,77	0,47		

## CONCLUSION

The prevailing belief is that working in police structures is stressful, and contemporary literature seeks empirical support for this assumption by exploring the causes of stress and burnout among police personnel, as well as the various manifestations of stress. Partial answers to these questions are provided by contemporary literature and research on job satisfaction, professional stress, and burnout in police institutions, primarily focusing on prevalent job satisfaction theories and research findings related to personal background and work environment, such as organizational structure and job characteristics. Additionally, studies examine the psychosocial reactions to job-related stress in police institutions, including resignations, psychosomatic reactions, burnout, and the cumulative results regarding specific stressors in policing, such as role problems, work overload, demanding social relationships (with colleagues and superiors), health and safety risks, inadequate salary, and low social status. High levels of skills and knowledge developed and maintained through police training are necessary for the safe and successful work of police officers. General physical fitness encompasses a process of harmonious and comprehensive development of all functional, motor, and morphological characteristics. Physical conditioning improves all body regions, enhances the efficiency of organs and organ systems, and elevates functional and motor abilities while considering sensitive developmental stages and strengthening weak links in the musculoskeletal system. Good physical fitness serves as the foundation upon which other police knowledge and abilities are built. Therefore, respondents consider working conditions important. They are also willing to work for lower financial compensation if their employer provides quality working conditions. These findings suggest that management should prioritize employee physical fitness and working conditions as crucial elements in their work. Respondents provided answers that deviate from expected values, indicating various job-related deficiencies.

They emphasize the need for better financial conditions and higher-quality human resources, which serves as a significant warning to management about the direction of future activities. Thus, management should work on improving financial conditions and profiling and enhancing the quality of human resources. Comparative analysis results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between respondents based on gender. Therefore, gender does not influence respondents' perceptions of stress management effectiveness. The mean satisfaction score is higher among female respondents, indicating that they tend to have more positive values in the workplace.

These results demonstrate that respondents' age significantly affects their perceptions of overall satisfaction with management quality. The findings suggest that the highest ratings and more positive attitudes were expressed by respondents who have been employed for the longest duration and make greater use of infrastructure. On the other hand, even respondents with shorter employment durations expressed more negative views about job organization. Thus, there is a high level of satisfaction with the management of work processes among police officers, as well as a tendency towards reduced workplace stress.

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