Research Article

The Coping of the Police officers under Police Provincial Region 5's

Wisamon Srisuttinan*, **Surin Sutthithatip, Rapin Chayvimol and Doldao Purananon**

Department of Research and Applied Psychology, Burapha University, Long-Hard Bangsaen Road, Chonburi Province, Thailand

***Corresponding author**
Wisamon Srisuttinan, Department of Research and Applied Psychology, Burapha University, Long-Hard Bangsaen Road, Chonburi Province, Thailand

Abstract
The Police job is one of the careers that have to cope with many daily problems. Theses stressful situation have resulted in physical and mental illness among the policemen in Thailand. This research aims to investigate 8 coping strategies used by the police officers under the Provincial Police Region 5. The questionnaire was used to collect data from 228 samples, including the police commanders and the police officers of the Provincial Police Region 5. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as, frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation. The hypotheses were test using One-way ANOVA. The finding revealed that, Problem solving strategy was mostly used by them. Followed by, Adjustment of thought strategy, and Social- support strategy, respectively. The hypothesis test revealed that the police officers with different marital status and work departments have significant difference in using coping strategies.

Keywords: Coping strategies, Problem solving, Police officer

Recently, crime and terrorism has become more threatening to the people in Thailand. Safety of the people has been at risk. The career that is directly responsible for the security of the people and the community are the police who during their operation, frequently face with such immediate problems that caused stress and fatigue. This led to declining in work efficiency and uninteresting in work.

Generally, the police officers in the office were classified according to their work characteristics, in to two groups. The former were those who did the administration work in the office, such as, receiving petition and complaints from the people. The latter are those who work outside the police station to do public relation, crime protection and suppression work, etc. This latter group needed to meet with many kinds of people. Moreover, their work characteristics didn't allow them to reject any request for help from the people. So they were on duty 24 hours per day and no weekend. Moreover, they usually work in dangerous and tense situation which has resulted in their stress and fatigue [1].

The Police Hospital revealed that from the year 2008-2012, one hundred fifty five police officers had committed suicide. Majority of them were at the age between 41-50 years old and worked as Police Senior Sergeant Major. Most of the suicide police officers worked for the investigation division and the Provincial Police office 1-9. Among the provincial police station that are under the Provincial Police office. The Provincial Police station 5 had the largest number of suicide police officers. A psychiatrist from the Police hospital explained this suicide phenomenon that many factors can be the causes of police' suicide, such as, family matters, economic situation, and daily work problems. When the police officers faced with many problems at the same time and didn't have a right way to solve the problem they were incline to do the suicide.

There are police suicide incidents have reflected how importance coping strategies were when people facing with problems. There are several coping strategies which had brought in to attention. Tobin develop a coping strategies inventory comprised of [2];

Problem Solving: This subscale includes items referring to both behavioral and cognitive strategies designed to eliminate the source of stress by changing the stressful situation.

Cognitive Restructuring: This subscale includes cognitive strategies that alter the meaning of the stressful transaction to be less threatening, to be viewed by its positive aspects.

Social Support: This subscale includes items that refer to seeking emotional support from people, one's family, and one's friends.

Express Emotions: This subscale includes items referring to releasing and expressing emotions.

Problem Avoidance: This subscale includes items referring to the denial of problems and the avoidance of thoughts or action about the stressful event.

Wishful Thinking: This subscale refers to cognitive strategies that reflect an inability or reluctance to reframe or symbolically alter the situation. The items involve hoping and wishing that things could be better.

Self Criticism: This subscale refers to criticizing or blaming oneself for what happened.

Social Withdrawal: This subscale includes items that reflect blaming oneself for the situation and criticizing oneself.

Using positive coping strategies, such as problem solving, cognitive restructuring, and social support may lead to successful problem solving. On the other hand some negative coping strategy may lead to suppression, depression, or suicide. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the coping strategies used by the police officers in Provincial Police Region 5. And to propose a guideline for improving coping strategies for them.

Methods
Population and sample
The population of this research referred to the police officers, who worked for the Provincial Police Region 5, including the police commanders and the police officers. The samples size of this study was 228. Stratified random sampling was used to select participants for this research.

Instrument
The questionnaire employed in this study was developed based upon the knowledge obtained from the literature review. It was also developed in response to the research framework, research objectives, and research hypothesis.

The questionnaire was divided in to two sections. The first section contained questions about personal information of the respondents. The second one consisted of the 72 scales to measure the use of 8 coping strategies. These scales were developed based upon Tobin's Coping strategies inventory [2].

Data Collection
The questionnaire was handed to 228 participants and 100% of them were returned to the researcher.

Data Analysis
There were two categories of statistics used in this study to analyze the research result. The descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to describe personal information and the levels of using coping strategies of the participants.

The inferential statistics, such as, the F-test (One-way ANOVA) was employed in testing of research hypothesis.

Result
The statistics mean and standard deviation were used to determine the level of coping strategies used by the respondents. The finding revealed that "Problem solving strategy" was mostly used by the police officers (mean= 3.00), followed by "Cognitive restructuring strategy" (mean = 2.98) and "Social support strategy" (mean= 2.76). While "Express emotional strategy" was pointed out to be the least used by the police officers. (Mean = 2.53) (Table 1)

Table1: Mean and SD of Coping strategies used by the respondents

Coping strategies	$\overline{X}$	S.D.
Problem Solving	3.00	0.73
Cognitive Restructuring	2.98	0.83
Express Emotions	2.53	0.90
Social Support	2.76	0.86
Problem Avoidance	2.55	0.90
Wishful Thinking	2.74	0.83
Self Criticism	2.66	0.80
Social Withdrawal	2.59	0.87

The first hypothesis test revealed thatthe police officers with different marital status had significant difference in using "Problem solving strategies" at 0.05 significant level. The finding also showed no significant difference in using other coping strategies. (Table 2)

Table 2: Comparingcoping strategies used by the police officers with different marriage status

Variables	Sum of Squares	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Problem Solving	Between Groups	3.38	2	1.69	3.22*	0.04
	Within Groups	118.00	225	0.52		
	Total	121.38	227			
Cognitive Restructuring	Between Groups	1.43	2	0.72	1.05	0.35
	Within Groups	153.62	225	0.68		
	Total	155.06	227			
Express Emotions	Between Groups	0.28	2	0.14	0.17	0.84
	Within Groups	182.02	225	0.81		
	Total	182.29	227			
Social Support	Between Groups	1.63	2	0.82	1.11	0.33
	Within Groups	165.80	225	0.74		
	Total	167.44	227			
Problem Avoidance	Between Groups	3.48	2	1.74	2.17	0.12
	Within Groups	179.94	225	0.80		
	Total	183.42	227			
Wishful Thinking	Between Groups	2.32	2	1.16	1.69	0.19
	Within Groups	154.87	225	0.69		
	Total	157.19	227			
Self Criticism	Between Groups	2.24	2	1.12	1.78	0.17
	Within Groups	141.81	225	0.63		
	Total	144.05				
Social Withdrawal	Between Groups	3.54	2	1.77	2.36	0.10
	Within Groups	168.58	225	0.75		
	Total	172.12	227			

The second hypothesis test indicated that the police officers with different work types had significant difference in using "Problem solving strategies", "Express emotional strategy", "Social support strategies", "Problem avoidance strategy", and "Wishful thinking strategy". (Table 3)

Table 3: Comparingcoping strategies used by the police officers with different work type

Variables	Sum of Squares	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Problem Solving	Between Groups	5.41	4	1.35	2.60*	0.04
	Within Groups	115.98	223	0.52		
	Total	121.38	227			
Cognitive Restructuring	Between Groups	5.66	4	1.42	2.11	0.08
	Within Groups	149.39	223	0.67		
	Total	155.06	227			
Express Emotions	Between Groups	9.26	4	2.31	2.98*	0.02
	Within Groups	173.03	223	0.78		
	Total	182.29	227			
Social Support	Between Groups	17.87	4	4.47	6.66*	0.00
	Within Groups	149.57	223	0.67		
	Total	167.44	227			
Problem Avoidance	Between Groups	12.49	4	3.12	4.08*	0.00
	Within Groups	170.93	223	0.77		
	Total	183.42	227			
Wishful Thinking	Between Groups	6.49	4	1.62	2.40*	0.05
	Within Groups	150.70	223	0.68		
	Total	157.19	227			
Self Criticism	Between Groups	5.34	4	1.34	2.15	0.08
	Within Groups	138.71	223	0.62		
	Total	144.05	227			
Social Withdrawal	Between Groups	2.85	4	0.71	0.94	0.44
	Within Groups	169.27	223	0.76		
	Total	172.12	227			

*significant level at 0.05

Discussion

The research finding revealed that majority of the respondents use Problem solving strategy in coping with their problems. This maybe because the police officers recognized that problem solving strategy was the process of unfolding the problem, finding causes and the way to solve the problem. This outcome was consistent with the study of Larzarus, Folkman and Supapun Kodjarus which stated that "Problem solving was an approach that aimed to execute the problem or the incident, by trying to understand the antecedents of the problem and finding any possible ways to solve the problem [3, 4]. This result also congruent with the problem-solving definition given by Tobin (2001) who stated that the problem-solving strategy is one form of coping strategies which was a process of thinking in order to understand the root of the problem and to find systematic way to solve the problem.

Cognitive-reconstructing strategy and Social support strategy were at the second and third rank of coping strategy which were used mostly among the respondents. The Cognitive-reconstructing strategy was a coping strategy which aims to adjust the relationship that cause stress or to lessen its threatening. While the Social support strategy was a method of copping the problem by building relationships with other people and finding new ideas to solve the problems. This strategy allowed the respondents to exchange experiences with other people and helped lessen their stress which led to better problem solving. The research result is consistent with the study of Scheier, et al. which stated that Social support strategy referred to the way the people asked other people for help or suggestion concerning the problem they were facing [5]. They sometimes ask for support and encouragement from other people for emotional reason. The result was also congruent with the statement of Frydenberg, Lewis and in Vena Mingmaung which stated that Social-supported strategy was a way the people searched for support from social and executed the problem solving using suggestion or assistance from other people [6, 7].

The finding from hypothesis test yielded that the police officers worked in different types of work had significant difference use of coping strategies , regarding, Problem solving strategy, Emotional express strategy, Wishful thinking strategy, Social support strategy, and Problem avoidance strategy. The finding also revealed the significant difference in using coping strategies, such as, Emotional express strategy, Wishful thinking strategy, and Problem avoidance strategy, between two pairs of the police officers whose type of work were different. Which are (1) Administration vs. Prevention and suppression (2) Investigation vs. Prevention and suppression. The result was due to different characteristics of work, since the administration works tend to produce less tense, therefore the police officers in this division were tended to have better way to handle the problems.

The police officers who worked in the investigation division might encounter more problems at work. However, they were able to solve the problem. On the other hand the police officers in the prevention and suppression division usually face with immediate problems, therefore they had more stressful and tended to have different way in solving the problem.

In order to encourage better problem handling and to relief the police officers' stress. The author suggested that the commanders of the Police Provincial Region 5 should support stress- relief activities, such as, mediation, group seminar, etc. Moreover, they should organize a training course concerning problem solving to provide their officers with knowledge about problem solving. Apart from this the psychiatrist should be invited to the police office from time to time to give suggestions to the police officers.

Conclusion

Police work is one of the careers that have to cope with daily problems and stressful situations that possibly lead to depression and suicide among the police officers. This study aims to investigate 8 coping strategies used by the police officers under the Provincial Police Region 5. The questionnaire was used to collect data from 228 samples, including the police commanders and the police officers of the Provincial Police Region 5. The finding revealed that , Problem solving strategy was mostly used by them. Followed by, Adjustment of thought strategy, and Social- support strategy, respectively. The hypothesis test revealed that the police officers with different marital status and work departments have significant difference in using coping strategies. The author suggested that stress- relief activities, such as, mediation, group seminar, etc., should be organized to lessen stress of the police officers. Moreover, the training course concerning problem solving was required to provide the police with knowledge about problem solving. Apart from this psychiatrists should be invited to the police office from time to time to give suggestions and assistance to the police officers.

Reference

1. Lukkhana Plenkam (2007) Factors Affecting Job Performance in Part of Crime Prevention and Suppression of the Noncommissioned Police Officers of Chumphon Provincial Police. Master of Arts in Community Psychology Faculty of Education Silpakorn University.
2. Tobin, Davie (2001) User Manual for the Coping Strategies Inventory.
3. Larzarus, Folkman (1984) Stress, Appraisal, and Coping. New York: Springer.
4. Supapun Kodjarus (2002) Stress and Management of Stress in Psychology, Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press p.62-77.
5. Scheier MF, Matthews KA, Owens JF, Magovern GJ Sr, Lefebvre RC et al. (1989) Dispositional optimism and recovery from coronary artery bypass surgery: The beneficial effects on physical and psychological well-being. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57: 1024-1040.
6. Frydenberg, Erica, Lewis, Ramon.(1993) Boys play sport and girls turn to others:Age,gender and eathnicity as determinants of coping.Journal of Adolescene. 16: 252-266.
7. Vena Mingmaung (1997) The effect of group reality therapy on coping strategies of low academic achievement mathayom suksa three students. Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Chulalongkorn University.