



Masculine Psyche Culture Mitigating Work-Life Balance Among Female Police Officers in Central Region, Kenya

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Abstract—Work-life balance is key to overall health of an individual in the domains of physical, social, economic, spiritual, cognitive and emotional wellbeing. However, the nature of police work requires toggling between conflicting demands and application of undue pressure in arresting situations. This favours the aggressive nature of men as opposed to the nurturing attitudes among women. Thus, female police officers become more vulnerable to being physically harmed in combat, having limitations in social, economic and spiritual endeavors due to labeling or stereotyping as well as experiencing both cognitive and emotional distress in the line of work. This poses the risk of female police officers tendency to expend more time and energy on work at the expense of family and social life. Therefore, this study sought to examine masculine psyche culture mitigating work-life balance among female police officers in Central Region of Kenya. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study whose population was 163 comprising of 158 female police officers and five accredited therapists from the national police service. Stratified sampling technique was used to select a sample of 133 respondents. Questionnaires and interview guide were employed for data collection. Descriptive statistics and themes were used for data analysis purposes enabled by statistical package of social sciences version 22. The findings indicated that masculine psyche culture diminished the experience of work-life balance among female police officers in central region in Kenya. As a result, there was need for relevant psychotherapeutic interventions and programs geared towards enhancing work-life balance in the context of masculine psyche culture within the police service in Kenya.

Index Terms— Culture, Masculine psyche, police officers, police service, Work-life balance.

1. Introduction

Police subculture is crucial in the explanation of police behavior and attitudes towards female police officers. Traditional characterizations of the police service culture have focused on describing the shared values, attitudes and norms created within the occupational and organizational environments of policing (Pauline, 2004). However, a single police service culture may not subsist as different attitudinal subgroups of police officers exist given that police departments have become more heterogeneous. This expectation is supported by the representation of racial minorities, females and college educated personnel who bring to policing different

outlooks and attributes based on past experiences that may affect the way in which police collectively interpret the world around them. Women were not permitted to serve as police officers during the first 100 years of policing (Melchionne, 2010). After years of debate and government involvement, women were allowed into the police service then identified as police force at the beginning of the 1800s. Although entry was permitted, initially female police officers were not granted the full rights and responsibilities provided to the male counterparts.

In U.S.A., research has revealed that female police officers have encountered difficulties primarily as a result of the negative attitudes within the confines of the work environment (Melchionne, 2010). The male brain tends to be more efficient to lateralize and compartmentalize, which has the advantage of making him more task-focused while the female brain has more nerve connections and constantly cross-signals and takes in more hence tending to see and feel more than the male brain (Gurian, 2001). In addition, the society has socialized the male child to conform to what the culture values as masculine in terms of being in control of one's emotions, winning at all costs and not showing vulnerability. This masculine psyche renegades female police officers to take up roles that are less challenging and unthreatening. According to Casey and Houghton (2010) a good police culture is one that has values that prioritize community partnership and promotes informal interaction and change of attitudes towards various community members and groups. In general, the police service culture has been dominated by the colonial systems whereby torture, brutality, and corruption is rampant. Members of Police subculture share values that enable officers to survive what at times is a difficult and emotionally taxing job. Values such as supportiveness, teamwork, perseverance, empathy and caring enable officers to cope with post-traumatic stress.

Police culture entails the operational and ethical behavior of police officers and the manner in which officers carry out duties (Hassell *et al.*, 2011). Most Police organizations are engaged in a continual purposeful attempt to make employees conform to and internalize the culture and provide shared understandings of organizational interests. The strength of organizational

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culture depends directly on the range and depth of shared values held among an organization's employees. The masculine culture negatively impacts female police officers especially those who have families (Barratt *et al.*, 2013). Female Police Officers face multiple obstacles related not only to police work but also to fitting in and finding a place within policing. The organizational policies, structures, values and standards of the Police subculture tend to segregate female officers. Policing relies heavily on shift work, which can be especially difficult for women who are looking after children, the structure of policing that exists purposely oppresses female police officers and the nature of policing celebrates masculine ideas which effectively limit women's participation (Susan, 2006). Pregnancy and childcare reaffirm masculine structures within the police service culture that has not implemented policies that are family friendly such as maternity/paternity leave, flex time, and in-house day care options (Dorothy, 2009). The structure of the system creates challenges for women, and in many cases makes it difficult to maintain work-life balance for female police officers. This implies that more time and energy is placed on work meaning the police officers don't have quality time set aside for other aspects of life like making time for families, friends, community participation, spiritual growth, self-care and other personal activities, in addition to the demands of the workplace.

2. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to examine the masculine psyche culture mitigating work-life balance among female police officers in Central region of Kenya.

3. Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted on a population was 163 police officers from 5 police stations in the Central Region of Kenya. The entire population was included as study respondents meaning that the census sampling method was used in determining the sample size. Ethical considerations were put in place to protect the rights of the respondents and meet the fundamental requirements of conducting research such as ethical clearance and acquisition of research permit. A pilot study was conducted in the Eastern Region in Kenya to enhance the validity and reliability of the research instruments. The data were collected using questionnaires and interview guide. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were employed for data analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study and the discussions were organized as demographic characteristics of the respondents and then masculine psyche culture and work-life balance.

A. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were important in the study to divulge the nature of the study participants. The findings about age categories of the respondents indicated 9% between 21 and 30 years, 69%

between 31 and 40 years, 19% between 41 and 50 years and 3% above 50 years. The respondents indicated their religious affiliation and the results reflected 93.6% were Christians, 4.3% Muslims and 2.1% other religions. Concerning work experience, 73% of the respondents had worked for less than 10 years while 27% had worked for 10 years and above. The police officers were asked to indicate the level of education and the results showed that 44% had a diploma, 22% a certificate, 24% a bachelor's degree while 10% had post graduate qualifications. This shows that the respondents had the knowledge and experience to inform the objectives of the study. Mathew and Boston (2005) found out that post-high school training positively influenced police officer's performance while Susan and James (2013) stated that graduate police officers had a career advantage over those without degrees for this qualification fostered efficiency in detecting and curbing crime.

B. Masculine Psyche Culture and Work-Life Balance

The study sought to examine the masculine psyche culture mitigating work-life balance among female police officers in Central Region in Kenya. The respondents were required to indicate the level of agreement with statements regarding masculine psyche culture and how these challenge the balance between work obligations and life experiences. The findings were represented in Table 1.

On average, information in Table 1 indicated that 65.97% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that masculine psyche culture mitigated work-life balance among female police officers. This concurs with the assertion that females who enter the police force are faced with the task of challenging the male dominated structure that dictates inequality in access to opportunities in terms of career progression, taking up responsibilities and enhancing competence (Davis, 2008). In the same vein, and the findings of Shelly *et al* (2011) asserts that female police officers are left to prove that they can handle every aspect of policing, including the physical and mental challenges which in return makes it difficult to enjoy working and at the same time bring up families. Contrary to the conventional beliefs about police masculine psyche culture, majority of the respondents (78.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that masculine psyche culture makes female police officers ineffective in the place of work and 77.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed that female police officers lacked the manly emotional fitness which discouraged effective execution of duty. This means that female police officers were as capable as the male colleagues in the line of duty. This is in agreement with studies which concluded that men and female are equally capable of fulfilling the role of police (Susan & Martin, 2006) but also contradict the findings that senior police officers doubt female officers can equal male officers in most job skills (Bloch & Anderson, 2014). Thus, it is important for senior police officers to involve female police officers in all calls for duty instead of leaving out the female police officers from some roles such as combat, regions that are deemed highly risky or night patrols. The evidence for this inference is the view by 75.2% of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that masculine

Table 1
Descriptive statistics on masculine psyche culture and work-life balance

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
The belief that police is a masculine job, make female police ineffective in the place of work.	8.5	10	2.8	29.8	48.9
The belief that female police lack the manly emotional fitness discourages female police from effectively executing their duty.	3.2	15.7	3.2	33.7	44.2
The masculine approach to police training discourages female officers to do some duties at work.	46.1	16.7	2.2	17	18
The emphasis of masculine attribute of strength discourage female police from working effectively.	48.6	30.2	1.4	16.7	3
The masculine culture of authority and power emphasized in police service makes female officers feel second rated hence perform poor in work.	39.7	35.5	2.1	10.6	12.1
The masculine tailored progression interviews discourage female police officers from performing their duties effectively.	56.2	32.2	1.4	7.2	3.1
Female police officers who acquire police culture of masculine approach to life find it difficult socializing with their families and society.	29.1	41.1	4.3	7.1	18.4
Female police officers who adopt the police culture of commanding end up using command language to their husbands and children causing conflict and isolation.	20.2	27.2	3.5	25.2	23.9
Female police officers who emulate masculine culture of toughness and harassment are unable to socialize and participate in out of job spheres of life.	61.9	30.2	0.7	4.5	2.7
Female police officers who adopt masculine police culture of arrogance find themselves isolated by the community hence limited socialization.	58.9	34	0.7	4.3	2.1
The police masculine culture coercion, aggressiveness and strength makes female officers fear it and hence are ineffective in some tasks at work.	44.8	35.6	0	18.7	1
Average	37.93	28.04	2.03	15.89	16.13

Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD).

culture of authority and power emphasized in police force made female police officers feel second rated hence performed poorly in work and 88.4% who alluded that masculine tailored career progression interviews discouraged female police officers from performing duties effectively. Majority of the respondents 92.1%, 92.9% and 90.4% felt that female police who emulated masculine culture of toughness and harassment were unable to socialize and participate in out of job spheres of life, female police officers who adopted masculine police culture of arrogance found themselves isolated by the community hence limited socialization and that police masculine psyche culture of coercion, aggressiveness and strength made females fear the police service and hence were ineffective in some tasks at work respectively. This means that masculine psyche culture in the police service made it difficult for female police officers to adjust to life outside the work environment like family and social life.

The qualitative data from interviews revealed that masculine psyche culture in the police service mitigated work-life balance among female police officers. The accredited counsellor divulged that the training programs in police service emphasized masculine attributes that served to demand more physical effort from the female police officers. This had the ripple effect into few numbers of female police officers joining the police service. This finding was in line with the view that females were not allowed to join the police force by virtue of lack of masculinity (Melchionne, 2010). To retain the few female police officers in the service, light and less risky duties were allocated. The superintendent of police affirmed that both male and female police officers had similar abilities in terms of effectiveness in execution of duties. It was alluded that female police officers who showed required competence had equal chances of promotion as the men colleagues. The accredited counsellor suggested that female police officers tended to generalize masculine psyche culture tendencies such as aggression and coercion to interactions outside the work environment thus creating conflict at home, with friends and relatives. In line with this finding, Susan, (2006) determined

that female police officers were not able to engage professionally and nurture the family back home. Consequently, the female police officers experience challenges at home and within the community. The superintendent of police was of the opposing view as alleged by the main respondents that female police officers had limitations in career progression due to the masculine nature of the police service. The policy was that any police officer irrespective of gender had the same chances of promotion so long as they met the required criterion. This finding is similar to the sentiments of Hassell *et al.*, (2011) who purport that all police officers have similar training, competencies and share the same professional ethics.

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study

- i. Accredited counsellors may need to design evidence based psychotherapeutic interventions and programs geared towards enhancing work-life balance in the context of masculine psyche culture within the police service in Kenya.
- ii. The superintendent of police may consider allocating duties to female police officers as those allocated to male colleagues in order to enhance confidence and self-efficacy hence meaningful career progression. This is because both male and female police officers have similar knowledge, skills and competencies.

Policy makers in the criminal justice system may need to develop a police culture that prioritizes Community partnership promoting informal interaction and changing of attitudes among various community members and groups which accommodate the female police officers as skilled and competent professionals.

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