Burnout, job stress and violent behaviour among Dutch police officers

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Much has been published on burnout in the human services However, despite the extensive literature on job stress in policing, burnout in police officers has rarely been studied The present study examined stressors in police work, focusing specifically on the lack of reciprocity that officers experience in relations with civilians, colleagues and the police service It also investigated the relationship between burnout and the attitudes of officers towards violence, as well as to their own use of violence Dutch police officers (N = 358) completed a self-report questionnaire The results showed that (1) organizational stressors were more prevalent than task-related stressors, (2) compared to other service jobs, police officers report a particular profile on the three scales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)—a relatively low level of emotional exhaustion, an average level of depersonalization, and a high level of personal accomplishment, (3) burnout is associated with a lack of reciprocity between investments and outcomes in the relations that officers have with citizens, colleagues and their organization, and (4) burnout is positively related to attitudes towards use of violence and the use of violence during the officers' duty

1. Introduction

Burnout, the exhaustion of workers in service jobs, has been studied frequently over the past 25 years Recently, Schaufeli, and Enzmann (1998) counted over 3800 publications on burnout, most of which pertain to the human services. Occupational groups that are most often studied are those of teachers, nurses, physicians and social workers, whereas police officers have rarely been investigated, despite the extensive literature on job stress in policing

The present study focuses on stressors in police work in general, and more specifically on the lack of reciprocity that officers may experience in social exchange relations with civilians, colleagues, and the organization at which they are employed Finally, the present study investigates the relation between burnout and the attitudes of officers towards, and their use of, violence

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1 1   *Stressors in policing*
Two categories of potential stressors in police work are often distinguished (Alexander, Walker, Innes, and Irving, 1993; Biggam, Power, MacDonald, Carcary, and Moodie, 1997, Brown, and Campbell, 1990, 1994; Evans, and Coman, 1993) These are, first,

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various aspects of the very nature of police work, such as physical threat, violence, exposure to danger, and facing the unknown and, second, organizational stressors, for example management style, poor communication, and lack of support Findings indicate that the latter are more prevalent compared to the former Biggam *et al* (1997) confirmed the findings of the comparable police studies of Brown, and Campbell (1990, 1994) and Alexander *et al.* (1993) and concluded that the highest levels of associated stress are related to organizational factors These stressors include staff shortages (mentioned by 81 % of police officers), inadequate resources (78 %), time pressure (74 %), lack of communication (70 %), and work overload (71 %) Operational stressors, such as arresting a violent person (49 %), appearing in court (44 %) and the use of force (40 %) were mentioned less often Hence, job stress in policing is produced first and foremost by the organization and management and to a lesser degree by task-related factors or routine operational duties. This phenomenon is also observed in other occupations such as teaching (Cox, Boot, Cox, and Harrison, 1988), nursing (Hingley, and Cooper, 1986) and management (Davidson, and Cooper, 1983), where the most frequently reported causes of stress are work overload, time pressure and deadlines, and staff shortages. These findings suggest that job stressors are more often to be found in the job context than in the job content (Evans, and Coman, 1993) Rewarding aspects of a job will be found more in the job content, because this is often the reason why one chose a profession in the first place This might be particularly true for police work, as 'making money' will not be a main motive here. To get a balanced picture of these stressors and their effects it is important to look at both stressful and rewarding aspects of police work. Studies on stress in police work are typically limited to the (potential) stressors, thereby neglecting (potential) rewards The *first* aim of this study is to explore what kinds of stressors Dutch police officers experience in their work, in relation to its rewarding aspects

1 2 Burnout in policing

Burnout is conceived as a set of negative psychological experiences, reflecting a 'wearing out' from prolonged exposure to the stresses of work (Maslach, and Schaufeli, 1993) Burnout has been recognized as a serious problem, particularly for human service professionals (Maslach, 1982, 1993). Working with people may put an emotional strain on them The issue of demanding recipient contacts has frequently been dealt with in burnout research. Police work is also a service job and thus vulnerable to burnout.

Burnout is in general viewed as a syndrome consisting of three dimensions. *emotional exhaustion*, which refers to the depletion or draining of emotional resources; *depersonalization*, a negative, callous and cynical attitude towards recipients (e.g. civilians); and *reduced personal accomplishment*, i e. the tendency to evaluate oneself negatively with regard to one's accomplishments at work (Maslach, 1982, 1993) Research over the past two decades has shown that burnout is related not only to negative outcomes for the individual, including depression, a sense of failure, fatigue, and loss of motivation, but also to negative outcomes for the organization, including absenteeism, turnover and poor productivity (Schaufeli, and Enzmann, 1998)

Only a few studies on burnout among police officers are known to the authors (Burke, 1993, 1994, 1997, Burke, and Deszca, 1986; Cannizzo, and Liu, 1995, Gaines, and Jermier, 1983; Golembiewski, and Kim, 1990, Golembiewski, Sun, Lin, and Boudreau, 1995, Johnson, 1991; Stearns, and Moore, 1993) Interestingly, all the studies (except one) were carried out in North America and used the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to measure burnout

The studies by Golembiewski, and Kim (1990), Golembiewski *et al* (1995) and Burke (1994, 1997) were limited to possible antecedents of burnout They conclude that burnout is related to chronic job stressors (mainly organizational factors). Stearns, and Moore (1993) found that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization correlated strongly with decreased well-being and more cynical attitudes towards the public and government, whereas personal accomplishment was not related to these variables Cannizzo, and Liu (1995) reported that police officers with 16–25 years of work experience scored highest on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization Johnson (1991) found that female officers scored relatively high on emotional exhaustion, whereas males scored relatively high on depersonalization. Overall, it can be concluded that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are strongly related to stressors and work attitudes of police officers. However, none of these studies relate burnout to actual job performance, although it can be expected that, for instance, a more cynical attitude towards civilians will influence the way police officers behave in interactions with the public. Furthermore, none of these studies report scores on the MBI according to the instructions of Maslach (1982, 1993), making comparisons of the actual level of burnout between groups of police officers impossible. Therefore, the *second* aim of the present study was to compare MBI-burnout levels of Dutch police officers with those of other human service occupations

1 3   *Lack of reciprocity*

Recently, Buunk, and Schaufeli (1993, 1999) suggested that burnout stems from a lack of reciprocity that is experienced in social exchange relationships at an interpersonal level (in contact with clients), as well as at the organizational level. They draw upon equity theory (Adams, 1965). According to this theory employees perceive their exchange relationship to be unfair when their investments are not proportional to the rewards they receive from their clients or from the organization A growing number of studies among nurses (Schaufeli, and Janczur, 1994, Van Yperen, 1996, Van Yperen, Buunk, and Schaufeli, 1992), general practitioners (Van Dierendonck, Schaufeli, and Sixma, 1994), teachers (Van Horn, Schaufeli, and Enzmann, 1999) and correctional officers (Schaufeli, Van Den Eynden, and Brouwers, 1994) show that inequity is indeed associated with all three dimensions of burnout.

The *third* aim of this study is to explore the relation between lack of reciprocity and burnout. In the Netherlands, police officers work closely together in teams Therefore, social exchange relationships with colleagues are of major importance, and are added to the exchange with the public and the organization It was expected that lack of reciprocity at all three levels (public, organization and colleagues) would be positively related to burnout

1.4.   *Burnout and use of violence*

Burnout among police officers is characterized (amongst other things) by a negative, callous and cynical attitude towards citizens whom they are supposed to protect and to serve For two reasons a positive correlation between burnout and the use of violence by police officers is expected First, the threshold for exhibiting violent behaviour towards citizens is lowered when they are viewed as impersonal objects (typical for depersonalization), rather than as people Second, police officers who are emotionally exhausted and feel incompetent will lack energy and will have fewer alternatives to solving problems and conflicts in a constructive way Therefore, burned out officers will more easily use force to solve these problems, instead of investing in other strategies that require more mutual co-operation.

Accordingly, it was expected that burned out officers would have a more positive attitude towards the use of violence (Stearns, and Moore, 1993), and would use more violence as part of their conflict handling An investigation of this relationship between burnout and attitudes towards the use of violence was the *fourth* aim of the study

To summarize, the present study attempts to

(1) identify stressors in police work in relation to rewarding aspects of the job,
(2) assess burnout levels of police officers relative to other human services professionals,
(3) explore the relationship between burnout and lack of reciprocity with organization, colleagues and civilians, respectively, and
(4) investigate the relationship between burnout and the attitudes of officers towards the use of violence

2. Method

2 1 Subjects and procedure

As part of a larger study (Kop, Spaan, Van Der Lelij, and Driessen, 1997), 358 Dutch police officers filled out a questionnaire (response rate 76 %) Dutch police officers work in two ranks starting officers having less than 5 years of experience, and experienced (senior) officers having more than 5 years of work experience. Respondents were lower-ranking policemen and sergeants of two regional police forces, who were mainly active in patrol service Questionnaires were sent to the home addresses of all executive serving police officers within the forces Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed to all officers Most respondents were male (83%). this is representative of the overall population of Dutch police officers, which has less than 20 % females The mean age was 32 7 years (SD = 7 70 years), 70 % were in the lower ranks and 30 % were ranked as sergeant The mean length of work experience was 13.9 years (SD = 7 2 years).

2 2 Measures

A self-report questionnaire was constructed by the researchers, consisting of the following components

Biographic details, *stressful and rewarding work aspects*. In addition to biographic variables such as age, gender, rank and work experience, both positive aspects ('rewards') and negative aspects ('stressors') of the job were measured by means of two questions, 'What are the most stressful/rewarding aspects of your work?'. Respondents were invited to list up to three most stressful and the three most rewarding aspects A *post-hoc* categorization was made using content analysis

Burnout was measured with the Dutch version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Schaufeli, and Van Dierendonck, 1993, 1994). The MBI contains 20 questions regarding the three areas that typify burnout There are eight items for emotional exhaustion, for example 'I feel emotionally drained by my work' (Cronbach's α = 80), five items for depersonalization, for example 'I don't really care what happens to citizens' (α = .64) and seven items for personal accomplishment, for example 'I deal effectively with the problems members of the public' (α = 74) The items were scored on a 7-point rating scale, ranging from 'never' (0) to 'every day' (6) High levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and low levels of personal accomplishment are indicative of burnout

Lack of reciprocity in relations with civilians, colleagues and the police organization was assessed with one item for each relationship, concerning the balance between investments and outcomes, for example 'As police officer you put a lot of energy into dealing with

civilians, but you rarely get something in return'. Items were scored on a 5-point rating scale, ranging from 'completely not agree' (1) to 'completely agree' (5), a higher score indicating a greater lack of reciprocity.

Attitude towards use of violence during the interaction with civilians was assessed following Uildriks (1996) with six items For example 'When a suspected person behaves annoyingly, use of physical force is adequate' The items were scored on a 5-point rating scale, ranging from 'completely not agree' (1) to 'completely agree' (5) These sub-scales were taken together as one measure for attitude to violence ($\alpha = $ 81).

Violent behaviour was operationalized following Uildriks (1996), with four items for the actual use of violence during a police action. For example 'Did you use physical violence against civilians, such as push/grip in the last 12 months?' This also asked about (1) hit/kick, (2) hit hard-handed (for example with baton), and (3) use of the police firearm These kinds of violent behaviour were summed as one measure for violent behaviour ($\alpha = $ 76).

2 3   Analysis

A categorization of stressful and rewarding aspects of work was made through qualitative content analysis (Glaser, and Strauss, 1967) First, in the exploratory phase the central aspects of the answers were underlined Next, in the specification phase, comparable aspects were clustered and taken together Finally, in the reduction phase, categories were made and mutual relations between categories were determined To assess inter-rater reliability two independent judges were asked to classify the answers of the police officers into 20 categories of stressors and 14 categories of rewarding aspects Inter-rater reliabilities of stressful and rewarding work aspects were very high Cohen's $k = $ 94 ($N = 878$) and $k = .95$ ($N = 963$), respectively.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the number of times each stressor or rewarding aspect of police work was mentioned by the police officers, converted into a percentage of number of mentions of stressful and rewarding aspects respectively

3 1   Stressors in policing

Stressful aspects were cited fewer times ($N = 878$) than rewarding aspects ($N = 963$). A small minority of 34 (9%) and 21 (6%) police officers did not mention any stressful or rewarding aspect.

Twenty categories of stressors were identified. These can be divided into three main clusters organizational stressors, emotionally demanding situations, and non-effectiveness of policing As expected, organizational stressors were mentioned more often than stressors related to the job content. Descriptions of the three main clusters of stressors and the rewarding aspects of the job follow

First, officers mostly mentioned *organizational aspects* as stressors In particular they cited poor management, in terms of incapable or uninterested supervisors, bad mutual relationships, and a lack of internal communication (26% of citations) Furthermore, reorganizations (21%) and bureaucracy (11%) were frequently mentioned as well as too much office/inside work (19%), administration tasks (12%), night shifts (11%), work circumstances (9%), 'macho' or not motivated colleagues (8%) and workload (7%). The 358 police officers mentioned in total 450 (51%) organizational stressors

Table 1   Number of times each stressful or rewarding aspect of police work was mentioned by the police officers (N = 358), expressed as a percentage of mentions for each aspect respectively

Stressful (N = 878)	%	Rewarding (N = 963)	%
Failing/bad management	26	Contact with civilians	61
Emotionally demanding situations	25	Variation of work	41
Reorganization	21	Assistance and value for society	35
Office/inside work	19	Specific aspects of work	30
Poor effectiveness of police actions	17	Co-operation with colleagues	28
Dealing with annoying/dirty people	16	Freedom/responsibility	21
Administration	12	Shift work	14
Shift work	11	Catch a thief	11
Inefficiency/bureaucratic organization	11	Tension/action	9
Specific part of work	11	Work outside	6
Negative attitude towards civilians	11	Salary	3
Use of violence by police officers	11	Role of police	3
Dangers of work	9	Thankfulness of civilians	2
Work circumstances	9	Other	6
Colleagues macho. not motivated	8		
Workload	7		
Mediate in long lasting conflicts	6		
Reporting of small accidents	4		
Inadequate penalties	3		
Limited role of police	3		
Other	5		

The second category of stressor stems from the content of police work This includes *emotionally demanding situations*, such as informing relatives of a sudden death, dealing with suicide, fatal accidents, criminal or sexual offences with children, etc (25 %) It also includes dealing with annoying or dirty people, for example drug addicts or drunkards (16 %), the use of violence by officers (11 %), and the danger associated with the work, such as violence and aggression against officers, or risks of (for example) HIV (9 %) Other stressful aspects are specific parts of the job (11 %), such as mediation in conflicts (6 %) and taking reports of small accidents (4 %) Police officers mentioned a total of 286 stressful, emotionally demanding situations.

The last category concerns the *poor effectiveness of police actions*, reflected in feelings of 'beating one's head against a brick wall' This category includes lack of structural solutions, and treatment of symptoms rather than causes (17 %), a negative attitude of civilians towards police officers, lack of respect (11 %), inadequate punishment of crime (3 %) and the limited authority of police officers (3 %) Police officers mentioned poor effectiveness in total 124 times

The positive aspects of police work were mentioned 963 times. Contact with civilians or 'working with people' was rated as by far the most rewarding part of their work (61 % of all positive mentions) Other positive aspects included variation of work, freedom/ responsibilty, shift work, tension/action and working on the street in the midst of society Specific aspects of police work were often mentioned as rewarding These included (special) duties, such as working with a police dog, motor driving and contact with external institutions (30 %), while 'catching a thief' was also seen as rewarding Co-operation with colleagues was seen as an important positive aspect of police work, as almost one-third of the officers mentioned this (28 %).

To conclude (1) in contrast to earlier research, policing was experienced primarily as a rewarding job and this underscores the importance of a dual perspective on job stressors and

Table 2   Levels of burnout among Dutch police officers and Dutch reference group means and standard deviations

	Police ($N = 358$)		Reference group ($N = 3892$)		
	M	SD	M	SD	p
Emotional exhaustion	9 8	6 0	15 5	7 8	< 001
Depersonalisation	7 5	3 9	7 4	4 0	n s
Personal accomplishment	28 5	5 9	27 3	5 1	< 01

rewards in organizations, and (2) as expected, officers mentioned stressors related to organizational aspects more often than stressors directly related to the job

3.2   Burnout in policing

The level of burnout among police officers is shown in table 2 Most remarkable is that the level of emotional exhaustion was considerably *lower* than for the reference group, consisting of almost 4000 workers in the human services (e g nurses, physicians, mental health care staff, social workers) The reported level of depersonalization was comparable, and the average for personal accomplishment was slightly, but significantly higher compared to the reference group Thus, the police officers scored lower on two of the three dimensions of burnout

Interestingly, no differences were found between female and male police officers, emotional exhaustion t (354) $= -$ 37, n s , depersonalization t (354) $= 1.21$, n.s ; personal accomplishment t (354) $= 61$, n s This is in contrast to many studies reporting higher emotional exhaustion, and lower depersonalization for women compared to men (Schaufeli, and Enzmann. 1998)

Schaufeli, and Van Dierendonck (1995) published clinically validated cut-off points that can be used for distinguishing burned-out cases from non-cases. Based on these cut-off points, 6.3% of the officers were emotionally exhausted ($\geqslant 21$ points), 33% were depersonalized ($\geqslant 9$ points) and 26 4% felt themselves to be less accomplished ($\leqslant 28$ points)

3 3.   Lack of reciprocity

Table 3 shows the correlates between work experience, lack of reciprocity, burnout and (attitudes toward) using violence.

Police officers experienced relatively less reciprocity from the organization (mean = 2.43) compared with the public, t (353) $= 14$ 40, $p < .001$, and with colleagues, t (353) $= 30$ 00, $p < 001$. This confirms the results presented in table 1 where officers mentioned quite a lot of negative work aspects related to the organization Furthermore, table 3 confirms the importance of reciprocity from colleagues in police work (mean = 3 71), indicating that officers experienced most reciprocity in the relationship with their colleagues

To investigate the relationship between lack of reciprocity and burnout, three hierarchical multiple regression analyses were carried out with the three sub-scales of burnout as dependent variables As independent variables, work experience and gender were entered first (step 1), followed by the three levels of reciprocity (step 2). Age, rank,

Table 3 Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of variables (N = 358)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Demographic										
1 Work experience	13.2	7.94								
Reciprocity										
2 Organization	2.43	1.05	−.05							
3 Colleagues	3.71	.80	−.08	.26***						
4 Civilians	3.12	.91	−.17**	.17***	.10					
Burnout										
5 Emotional Exhaustion	1.22	.75	.20***	−.31***	−.21***	−.11*				
6 Depersonalisation	1.49	.77	.01	−.24***	−.23***	−.27***	.41***			
7 Personal Accomplishment	4.07	.84	.06	.06	.14**	.23***	−.10	−.18***		
Violence										
8 Attitude towards using violence	2.77	.50	−.28***	−.13**	−.10	−.36***	.03	.32***	−.36***	
9 Use of violence	3.50	4.04	−.17***	−.03	−.00	−.08	−.08	.24***	.06	.30***

***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$

Table 4   Predictors of the sub-scales of burnout ($N = 358$)

Step	Emotional exhaustion			Depersonalisation			Personal accomplishment		
Predictors	β	R^2	ΔR^2	β	R^2	ΔR^2	β	R^2	ΔR^2
1 Gender	10			− 05			− 04		
Work experience	26***			01			− 01		
		05	05***		01	01		01	01
2 Reciprocity (organization)	− 25***			− 17***			00		
Reciprocity (colleagues)	− 11*			− 16**			12*		
Reciprocity (civilians)	− 10			− 24***			21***		
		06	11***		15	15***		07	07***

*** $p < 001$,   ** $p < 01$,   * $p < 05$

Table 5   Burnout as a predictor of attitude towards violence and use of violent behaviour
(N = 358)

Step	Attitude towards violence			Violent behaviour		
Predictors	β	R^2	ΔR^2	β	R^2	ΔR^2
1 Gender	− 05			− 16**		
Work experience	− 24**			− 18*		
		09	09***		07	07***
2 Emotional exhaustion	− 03			− 17**		
Depersonalization	27***			27***		
Personal accomplishment	− 29***	27	18***	12	15	08***

***$p <$ 001,   **$p <$ 01,   *$p <$ 05

and length of service were excluded, because of high correlations with work experience (r ranging from .75 to 91), and therefore risks of multi-collinearity

Table 4 shows three significant correlates for emotional exhaustion Work experience and lack of reciprocity from both organization and colleagues contributed to emotional exhaustion Regarding depersonalization, lack of reciprocity at all three levels were significant correlating variables. Personal accomplishment was related to reciprocity in dealings with colleagues and civilians So, reciprocity was related to all three sub-scales of burnout, explaining 11 % of the variance of emotional exhaustion, 15 % of depersonalization, and 7 % of personal accomplishment, after controlling for work experience and gender

3 4.   *Burnout and violence*

Table 5 shows the results of two hierarchical multiple regression analyses, with the attitude towards the use of violence and the actual use of violence as dependent variables Again, work experience and gender were entered first as independent variables (step 1), followed by the three sub-scales of burnout (step 2) Burnout clearly correlates with both the attitude towards the use of violence and the reported actual use of violent behaviour

Police officers who scored higher on the depersonalization dimension ($\beta = .27$) or felt less competent ($\beta = -$ 29), had a more positive attitude towards the use of violence Furthermore, work experience was related to a less positive attitude towards violence ($\beta = -$ 24) A positive attitude towards violence was highest for young officers who were depersonalized and felt incompetent

Table 5 shows that all three components of burnout contributed significantly to actual violent behaviour Less emotionally exhausted ($\beta = -.17$) and depersonalized ($\beta =$ 27) police officers used more violence Besides burnout, gender ($\beta = -.16$) and work experience ($\beta = -$ 18) were related to the use of violence. Males (mean = 3.70) behaved more violently than females (mean = 2 55), t (127.09) = 2.63, $p <$ 01) To summarize, inexperienced, cynical, male officers used most violence

4.   Discussion

The main objective of this study was to investigate stressors in policing, levels of burnout among police officers, the antecedents of burnout and its relations with police work A new feature of this study is the balanced approach to stressors in relation to positive aspects of

police work Furthermore, in addition to the relevance of lack of reciprocity with organization and civilians, reciprocity of colleagues has been shown to be an important predictor of burnout Finally, burnout correlates with a more positive attitude to the use of violence and the more frequent use of violence by police officers.

4 1   *Stressors in policing*

The first aim of this study was to explore what kinds of stressors Dutch police officers experience in their work, with attention being given to the balance between stressful and rewarding aspects of work World mentioning is the large number of positive aspects of policing This is important, as these can be expected to compensate for the stressful aspects (Siegrist, 1996). For instance, Siegrist (1996) has shown that the balance between efforts (i.e high job demands) and rewards, rather than the latter only, is predictive for health, including cardiovascular disease. The picture of police work as a highly stressful occupation clearly needs some critical re-evaluation, given the many positive aspects mentioned in this study For police officers there is a clear and positive balance between stressful and rewarding aspects of their work.

Second, most stressors are related to organizational factors Police officers often mention poor management, reorganization, bureaucratic interference, administration, shift work, bureaucracy, and 'macho' or unmotivated colleagues. These results confirm the findings of previous police studies that emphasize the importance of organizational stressors compared to task-related stressors (Alexander *et al* , 1993; Biggam *et al* , 1997, Brown, and Campbell, 1990, 1994) The police organization does not appear to be radically different from other organizations in this respect (Hart, Wearing, and Headey, 1995) One needs to bear in mind, however, that the frequency of occurrence of stressors does not correlate with the stressfulness or impact of these stressors.

The results found in this study are in general comparable to those of previous studies carried out in the UK and USA This might be surprising, given sometimes large differences in national culture and related police practices In contrast to police practice in the USA, for example, Dutch officers usually work in pairs, and do not wear bullet-proof vests. Therefore, care should be taken when applying the results of this study to other countries More internationally comparative research is clearly needed

4 2   *Burnout in policing*

With regard to the level of burnout among the sample of Dutch police officers, it can be concluded that the level of emotional exhaustion was relatively low, whereas depersonalization and personal accomplishment were (almost) comparable to the norm group There are three possible explanations for the low level of emotional exhaustion

First, police work might not be so emotionally demanding as is often assumed in public opinion. As shown above, policing includes many positive aspects Furthermore, compared to other service jobs in the Netherlands there is a lot of time for police officers to recover from a stressful event. Police officers do a lot of administration and desk work, so there is not constant pressure on them as there is, for example, in jobs such as nursing or teaching. Besides that, the majority of the contact between police officers and civilians is unique, rather detached and short This variation in police work and lack of constant pressure means that officers are able to recuperate

Second, there might be a selection effect Police officers are especially selected for their resistance to stress For instance, in the Netherlands personality inventories are used in the

selection process High scores, particularly on the neuroticism dimensions, are generally a reason not to select the candidate

Third, the police culture, which is often described as 'macho', might suppress the admission of (emotional) problems These types of organizational cultures are also found in other male-dominated professions such as the military police, the military (Barling, and MacIntyre, 1993) and prison guards (Schaufeli *et al.*, 1994) In this respect, it is worth remembering that no differences in burnout level were found between male and female officers. This might point in the direction of an adaptation process of female officers (Van Vianen, and Fischer, 1998)

4 3   *Lack of reciprocity*

As expected, in this study a relationship was found between lack of reciprocity at interpersonal and organizational levels and higher levels of burnout (Schaufeli, and Janczur, 1994; Schaufeli, Van Dierendonck, and Van Gorp, 1996, Van Yperen *et al.*, 1992). A new finding of this study is that, besides reciprocity with clients and the organization, reciprocity in relation to colleagues was also found to be an important correlate of burnout This type of reciprocity is of growing importance, as many occupations nowadays are organized into (autonomous) working teams, where relationships with colleagues are stronger determinants for effectiveness and satisfaction than relations with superiors Therefore, research on reciprocity in relation to work stress should include relationships with colleagues

The officers who felt emotionally drained were those who were relatively experienced This confirms the findings of Cannizzo, and Liu (1995). Emotionally exhausted officers in particular felt that they invested more in relationships with both their colleagues and with the police organization than they received in return It can be speculated that older officers had invested a lot of time and energy in their colleagues and in the organization during their career The investments in the organization in particular are not reciprocated, resulting in emotional exhaustion Remarkably, lack of reciprocity with civilians showed *no* effect on exhaustion Instead it showed the strongest association with depersonalization, although a lack of reciprocity regarding both the organization and colleagues contributed to depersonalization This confirms the original idea of Maslach (1982, 1993) She stated that depersonalization occurs as result of a lack of reciprocity in the relationship between client and professional.

Personal accomplishment is predicted by work experience and reciprocity with colleagues and civilians Thus, personal accomplishment showed no association with organizational aspects, only with interpersonal contacts This is to be expected since personal accomplishment reflects the officers' competence to deal with civilians, not with the organization. Therefore, according to our findings, lack of reciprocity is an important predictor for all three dimensions of burnout, even when controlled for gender and work experience

4 4   *Burnout and violence*

The results of this study show a relation between burnout and (a more positive attitude to) the use of (self-reported) violence. Few studies so far have investigated the relation between burnout and job performance This study demonstrates the relevance and importance of doing so The attitude towards violence explains 27 % of the variance by burnout and work experience, with depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment as strongest predictors For violent behaviour, 15 % of the variance was explained by all three sub-scales

of burnout, gender and work experience. Male officers used more violence than did females Remarkably, police officers who were less emotionally exhausted used more violence, although this might stem from the finding that emotionally exhausted officers are less active Observations suggest that emotionally exhausted officers try to avoid confrontations with civilians (Kop, and Euwema, 1998) Hence, the likelihood of a violent confrontation decreases. As expected, depersonalization was the most important predictor for the use of violence. In accordance with theoretical expectations, police officers who are cynical and detached will use violence against civilians more easily. This suggests a typical negative pattern of interaction, where the depersonalized officers will behave more violently towards civilians, thereby creating a vicious cycle of negativism

The practical implications of this study are that police personnel management should pay serious attention to burnout in general and depersonalization among police officers in particular, in order to prevent escalating and violent behaviour Police departments should place greater emphasis on improving their organizational health (Hart et al., 1995) Although it is important to assist individual police officers whose psychological well-being is affected by their work. an organizational rather than an individual approach is more likely to be effective, as most stressors were found to be at an organizational level In police forces, teams are the most important organizational units, and should therefore be the focus of interventions. Recently, Van Dierendonck, Schaufeli, and Buunk (1998) showed that group-based interventions that aim at restoring reciprocity at various levels are effective in reducing sickness absenteeism and the emotional exhaustion dimension of burnout.

Acknowledgements

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