

**LEVELS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG PRISON WARDERS: A
CASE OF ELDORET PRISON, UASIN GISHU COUNTY**

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ABSTRACT

Occupational stress has become an issue of great concern as it occurs in any job and is even more prevalent now than during the past decades globally. Prison warders as a trained group of professionals are often exposed to unique and potent stressors due to the nature of their work which involves the duty of taking charge of an unwilling and potentially violent population. It was against this background that the study sought to investigate the level of stress experienced among prison warders. The specific objectives were to determine the occupational stress level; factors that contribute to stress and the coping strategies that prison warders employ in line of duty. Simple random sampling was used to select 188 participants from those who were on duty at their respective departments and purposive was employed to select the study site. The cross-sectional survey design was adopted in this study which was conducted at Eldoret Prison, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The study was guided by interactive model of stress which emphasizes on the structural characteristics of the person's relations with their job environment. A self-administered questionnaire was used in collecting data that was analyzed. The data collected was analyzed using ordinal logistic regression model (95% CL) to determine significant factors associated with occupational stress. The findings established that majority of the participants 91% had high stress levels. Significant factors contributing to stress reported by respondents included issues with finances, work demand, safety concerns, family and career. In addition, majority of the prison officers engaged in religion, planning, goal setting and positive way of thinking as coping strategies for reducing overall levels of occupational stress. In light of the findings, it was recommended that stress reduction programs and strategies be implemented due to observed high levels of occupational stress. It is further recommended that conferences and workshops should be organized where both senior warders and junior prison warders could discuss possible problems that emanate from work and which contribute to stress among prison warders. The findings will also be essential in providing working data for conducting further research.