

## ***RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPASSION SATISFACTION AND POLICE OFFICER WELL-BEING IN THE MALAYSIA***

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### ***ABSTRACT***

*This study quantitatively examined the association between compassion satisfaction and the well-being of 403 police officers in Malaysia. The study explored the relationship between compassion satisfaction and overall well-being as well as its specific domains, based on the PERMA model (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment). The sample population consisted of police officers in Malaysia, and data were collected using the adapted ProQOL-5 and PERMA-Profiler assessments. The results showed a significant positive correlation between compassion satisfaction and overall*

*well-being, with strong positive covariances across all PERMA domains, suggesting that higher levels of compassion satisfaction enhance various aspects of psychological well-being. Furthermore, the study found significant negative correlations between compassion satisfaction and negative outcomes such as burnout, compassion fatigue, and job-related stress, indicating that higher compassion satisfaction reduces these occupational stressors. These findings highlight the critical role of compassion satisfaction in promoting resilience and well-being while mitigating the negative impacts of stress in high-demand professions like law enforcement.*

**Keywords:** *Compassion Satisfaction, Police Officer Well-Being, PERMA Model.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Police officers, as first responders, are consistently exposed to high-stress situations, traumatic events, and life-threatening scenarios. These occupational challenges often result in significant impacts on their emotional, physical, and psychological well-being. Research has shown that chronic exposure to such high-intensity work environments places law enforcement personnel at increased risk for developing various health issues, including compassion fatigue (CF), burnout (BO), and secondary traumatic stress (STS) (Holsinger, 2020; Rowland, 2021). While much attention has been given to the detrimental effects of this stress, less is known about the positive elements that may support resilience and well-being within this profession.

Compassion satisfaction (CS), defined as the gratification professionals feel when they can effectively perform their duties, has emerged as a protective factor against the negative outcomes of stress and trauma in helping professions (Stamm, 2019). Within the law enforcement community, fostering compassion satisfaction may provide a pathway to improving well-being (WB) and mitigating the harmful effects of job-related stressors. Understanding the relationship between CS and well-being is crucial for developing interventions that promote psychological resilience and improve overall job performance in police officers.

In Malaysia, limited research has been conducted on how these factors interact within the police force. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the relationship between compassion satisfaction and the well-being of police officers in Malaysia, using the PERMA model (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment) to assess various domains of well-being. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of how positive psychological elements can help police officers cope with the occupational hazards inherent in their profession and enhance their quality of life both on and off duty.

## 2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Police officers in Malaysia routinely face a wide array of stressors as part of their daily work. These stressors include exposure to violent and traumatic incidents, long working hours, administrative burdens, and an unpredictable working environment. Over time,

these demands can significantly impact the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of officers. Research has shown that law enforcement personnel are particularly vulnerable to developing mental health issues such as burnout (BO), compassion fatigue (CF), and secondary traumatic stress (STS) due to their exposure to traumatic events (Holsinger, 2020; Rowland, 2021). These negative outcomes not only affect the personal health and well-being of the officers but also reduce their job performance, leading to a ripple effect that impacts the communities they serve. This has led to an increased focus on understanding the factors that contribute to police officers' well-being and how to manage the occupational stress they encounter.

Despite the growing body of literature on the challenges faced by law enforcement, the research has been largely skewed toward examining the detrimental effects of the profession (Bonner & Brimhall, 2022; Bonner & Crowe, 2022; Schuck & Rabe-Hemp, 2021; Somers & Terrill, 2022). Far less attention has been given to positive psychological factors such as compassion satisfaction (CS), which may act as a buffer against the negative outcomes of stress and trauma. Compassion satisfaction, which refers to the fulfillment and sense of achievement officers feel when helping others, has been shown in other helping professions to enhance resilience and well-being (Stamm, 2019). While it is hypothesized that compassion satisfaction may mitigate the harmful effects of job-related stress, the relationship between CS and police officer well-being in Malaysia has not been adequately explored.

Additionally, the well-being of police officers is a multifaceted construct, encompassing various domains such as Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA) (Seligman, 2018). Understanding how compassion satisfaction correlates with these specific domains could provide critical insights into how law enforcement agencies might foster a more supportive environment for officers. However, there remains a gap in the empirical research that explores the relationship between CS and these well-being domains within the context of Malaysian police officers. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the association between compassion satisfaction and overall well-being, with a particular focus on the PERMA model. The findings from this research are expected to contribute to the development of effective interventions that promote resilience, reduce burnout, and enhance job satisfaction among police officers.

## 2.1 Research Objectives

- To examine the relationship between compassion satisfaction (CS) and the overall well-being (WB) of police officers in Malaysia.
- To explore the correlation between compassion satisfaction and each domain of well-being (PERMA: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment) in police officers.
- To identify the extent to which compassion satisfaction can mitigate the effects of burnout, compassion fatigue, and job-related stress among police officers.

### **3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 Compassion Satisfaction and Well-Being in Law Enforcement**

Compassion satisfaction (CS) refers to the positive feelings individuals experience when they can effectively carry out their responsibilities and help others in meaningful ways. In the context of law enforcement, where officers are frequently exposed to high-stress situations, trauma, and emotional demands, CS can act as a protective factor. Research has shown that individuals who experience higher levels of compassion satisfaction often report better psychological and emotional well-being (Stamm, 2019). For police officers, who frequently confront distressing events, cultivating CS could serve as a critical strategy for enhancing resilience and reducing the negative impacts of their work, such as burnout (BO) and compassion fatigue (CF).

Despite the importance of understanding the role of CS in promoting officer well-being, limited research has focused on how CS correlates with well-being in police officers, particularly in Malaysia. Most existing studies have emphasized the detrimental effects of trauma and occupational stress, such as increased rates of depression, anxiety, and stress-related illnesses (Chopko et al., 2018; Papazoglou et al., 2021). However, a growing body of literature has begun to explore how positive psychological factors like CS can improve law enforcement personnel's mental health outcomes and overall life satisfaction (Andersen et al., 2018).

#### **3.2 The PERMA Model and Well-Being**

Seligman's PERMA model of well-being outlines five essential elements that contribute to human flourishing: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (Seligman, 2018). These domains are particularly relevant for professions like policing, where stress is inherent in daily activities, and maintaining well-being is critical for sustained performance and health. Officers who report higher levels of engagement, positive emotion, and a sense of meaning and accomplishment are better able to cope with stressors and maintain a healthy work-life balance (Butler & Kern, 2016).

The PERMA model has been successfully applied in various settings to measure and improve well-being. In policing, studies have shown that officers with higher PERMA scores experience greater job satisfaction and are less likely to suffer from the negative consequences of stress, such as burnout and compassion fatigue (Blumberg et al., 2018). However, specific research on how compassion satisfaction correlates with each PERMA domain remains limited, especially within the Malaysian law enforcement context. Understanding these correlations could provide valuable insights into how agencies might promote officer well-being through interventions designed to foster compassion satisfaction and enhance each domain of the PERMA model.

### **3.3 Compassion Satisfaction as a Buffer Against Burnout, Compassion Fatigue, and Job-Related Stress**

Burnout and compassion fatigue are common among law enforcement personnel due to their frequent exposure to traumatic events and high-pressure environments. Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, reduced sense of accomplishment, and cynicism, while compassion fatigue results from the emotional strain of continuously helping others (Stamm, 2019). Both conditions can have profound negative effects on officers' well-being, job performance, and personal lives.

Research suggests that compassion satisfaction may serve as a buffer against these adverse outcomes. Officers who derive a sense of fulfillment from their work and feel they are making a meaningful impact are less likely to experience burnout or compassion fatigue (Papazoglou et al., 2019). Furthermore, compassion satisfaction has been associated with lower levels of job-related stress, as officers who find meaning and satisfaction in their roles tend to be more resilient to the emotional demands of their work. However, empirical research examining these relationships specifically within the Malaysian police force is still lacking, which this study aims to address.

#### **Hypotheses**

Hypothesis 1 (H1):

- There is a statistically significant positive correlation between compassion satisfaction and the overall well-being of police officers in Malaysia.

Hypothesis 2a (H2a):

- There is a statistically significant positive correlation between compassion satisfaction and Positive Emotion.

Hypothesis 2b (H2b):

- There is a statistically significant positive correlation between compassion satisfaction and Engagement.

Hypothesis 2c (H2c):

- There is a statistically significant positive correlation between compassion satisfaction and Relationships.

Hypothesis 2d (H2d):

- There is a statistically significant positive correlation between compassion satisfaction and Meaning.

Hypothesis 2e (H2e):

- There is a statistically significant positive correlation between compassion satisfaction and Accomplishment.

Hypothesis 3a (H3a):

- Compassion satisfaction is negatively correlated with burnout among police

officers.

Hypothesis 3b (H3b):

- Compassion satisfaction is negatively correlated with compassion fatigue.

Hypothesis 3c (H3c):

- Compassion satisfaction is negatively correlated with job-related stress.

## **4.0 METODOLOGY**

This study aims to explore the relationship between compassion satisfaction and the well-being of police officers in Malaysia, along with its impact on burnout, compassion fatigue, and job-related stress. A quantitative research method was used to collect and analyze data in order to answer the research objectives. Below is a simplified overview of the methodology used:

### **4.1 Research Design**

This study used a correlational research design, meaning it examined how compassion satisfaction is related to well-being and its various domains (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment). It also explored whether compassion satisfaction influences burnout, compassion fatigue, and job-related stress. By measuring and analyzing these relationships, the study aimed to determine if compassion satisfaction can positively affect the well-being of police officers.

### **4.2 Population and Sample**

A convenience sampling method will be used. 411 sample of officers was selected to participate in the study. The sample size was large enough to ensure accurate and reliable results.

### **4.3 Data Collection**

Data was gathered using two modified and adapted questionnaires:

- The Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL-5) to measure compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue, burnout and job related stress.
- The PERMA-Profiler to assess the different domains of well-being (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment).
- The officers completed these surveys anonymously, ensuring honest responses and protecting their confidentiality.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using statistical methods to identify relationships between the variables. Specifically, Spearman's correlation was used to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between compassion satisfaction and well-being, as well as its individual domains. This method also helped assess how compassion satisfaction affects burnout, compassion fatigue, and job-related stress.

#### 5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic data, as shown in Table 1, indicates that the majority of participants were male (74.9%, n = 308), while females made up 25.1% (n = 103). In Table 2, it is evident that most of the participants were in the Non-Officer rank (65.0%, n = 267), with Officers representing 35.0% (n = 144). According to Table 3, the largest group of participants had 16-20 years of experience (35.0%, n = 144), followed by those with 11-15 years of experience (25.1%, n = 103), 6-10 years (18.2%, n = 75), over 21 years (12.2%, n = 50), and the smallest group with 0-5 years of experience (9.5%, n = 39). This breakdown provides a detailed overview of the sample's composition in terms of gender, rank, and experience.

Table 1: Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	308	74.9	74.9	74.9
	Female	103	25.1	25.1	100.0
	Total	411	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Rank

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Officer	144	35.0	35.0	35.0
	Non Officer	267	65.0	65.0	100.0
	Total	411	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-5 years	39	9.5	9.5	9.5
	6-10	75	18.2	18.2	27.7
	11-15	103	25.1	25.1	52.8
	16-20	144	35.0	35.0	87.8
	Over 21 years	50	12.2	12.2	100.0
	Total	411	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Figure 1, the covariance estimate between Compassion Satisfaction and Overall Well-Being is 1.461, indicating a strong positive relationship. According to Table 4, the critical ratio is 13.263, and the p-value is highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), confirming that this relationship is statistically significant. These results suggest that higher Compassion Satisfaction is strongly associated with higher Overall Well-Being, emphasizing the importance of compassion satisfaction in enhancing well-being.

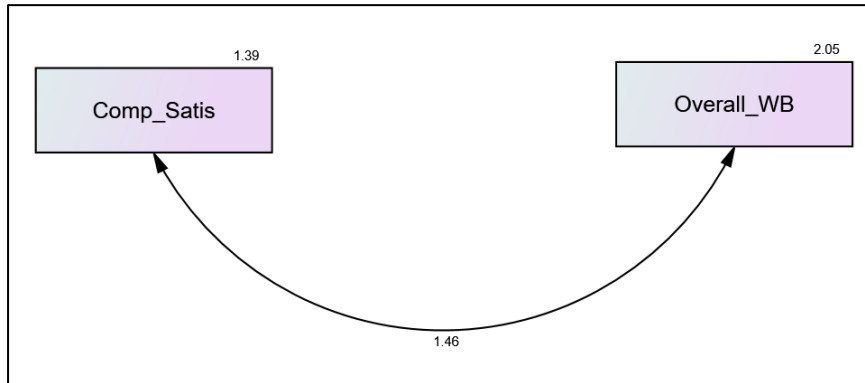


Figure 1: The covariance estimates for the variables Compassion Satisfaction and Overall Well-Being

Table 4: The hypothesis testing for the covariance between Compassion Satisfaction and Overall Well-Being

			<b>Estimate</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>P</b>
Comp_Satis	<-->	Overall_WB	1.461	.110	13.263	***

\*\*\* Indicate a highly significant at  $< 0.001$

Based on Figure 2, the covariance estimates between Compassion Satisfaction and the PERMA Domains show strong positive relationships. As detailed in Table 5, the covariance between Compassion Satisfaction and the domains ranges from 1.298 (Accomplishment) to 1.440 (Engagement), all with highly significant p-values ( $p < 0.001$ ). Additionally, the relationships among the PERMA domains themselves, such as between Positive Emotion and Relationships, show strong covariances, further emphasizing their interconnections. These results suggest that higher levels of Compassion Satisfaction are positively correlated with all domains of PERMA, supporting the hypothesis that compassion satisfaction significantly contributes to various aspects of well-being.



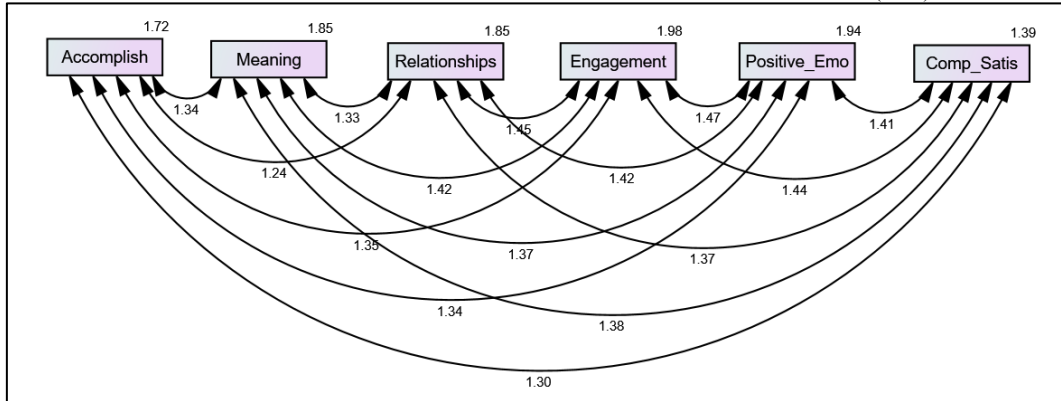


Figure 2: The covariance estimates for the variables Compassion Satisfaction and PERMA Domains

Table 5: The hypothesis testing for the covariance between Compassion Satisfaction and PERMA Domains

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Positive_Emo	<-->	Comp_Satis	1.414	.107	13.219	***
Comp_Satis	<-->	Engagement	1.440	.108	13.282	***
Comp_Satis	<-->	Relationships	1.372	.104	13.165	***
Comp_Satis	<-->	Meaning	1.377	.104	13.204	***
Comp_Satis	<-->	Accomplish	1.298	.100	13.024	***
Positive_Emo	<-->	Relationships	1.418	.117	12.130	***
Positive_Emo	<-->	Meaning	1.371	.115	11.878	***
Positive_Emo	<-->	Accomplish	1.339	.112	11.973	***
Engagement	<-->	Relationships	1.454	.119	12.250	***
Engagement	<-->	Meaning	1.418	.118	12.069	***
Engagement	<-->	Accomplish	1.348	.113	11.945	***
Relationships	<-->	Accomplish	1.244	.107	11.576	***
Meaning	<-->	Accomplish	1.337	.110	12.154	***
Relationships	<-->	Meaning	1.326	.112	11.801	***
Positive_Emo	<-->	Engagement	1.470	.121	12.153	***

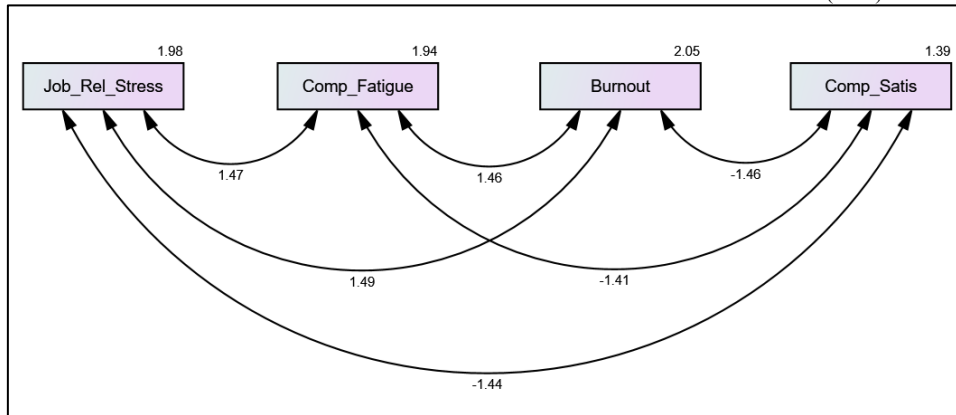


Figure 3: The covariance estimates for the variables Compassion Satisfaction and PERMA Domains

Table 6: The hypothesis testing for the covariance between Compassion Satisfaction and the negative outcomes (Burnout, Compassion Fatigue, and Job-Related Stress)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Burnout	<-->	Comp_Satis	-1.461	.110	-13.263	***
Comp_Satis	<-->	Comp_Fatigue	-1.414	.107	-13.219	***
Comp_Satis	<-->	Job_Rel_Stress	-1.440	.108	-13.282	***
Burnout	<-->	Comp_Fatigue	1.461	.122	11.974	***
Burnout	<-->	Job_Rel_Stress	1.487	.124	12.035	***
Comp_Fatigue	<-->	Job_Rel_Stress	1.470	.121	12.153	***

Based on Figure 3, the covariance estimates between Compassion Satisfaction and the negative outcomes (Burnout, Compassion Fatigue, and Job-Related Stress) demonstrate strong negative relationships. As shown in Table 6, the covariance between Compassion Satisfaction and these outcomes is negative, with values such as -1.461 (for Burnout), all of which are highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). Additionally, the positive covariances among the negative outcomes themselves, such as the relationship between Burnout and Compassion Fatigue (1.461), indicate these factors are closely related. These results suggest that higher levels of Compassion Satisfaction are associated with lower levels of burnout, compassion fatigue, and job-related stress, confirming the hypothesis that compassion satisfaction acts as a buffer against these negative outcomes.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

This study's methodology and conclusions underscore the crucial impact of Compassion Satisfaction on the well-being of police officers and its capacity to mitigate adverse consequences. The affirmative covariance estimates between Compassion Satisfaction and the PERMA domains—namely Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment—demonstrate that elevated levels of compassion satisfaction are

significantly correlated with enhanced overall well-being. The findings indicate that compassion satisfaction improves several facets of psychological well-being, reinforcing the idea that cultivating compassion satisfaction might result in increased fulfillment and resilience in high-stress occupations.

Furthermore, the inverse relationships between Compassion fulfillment and the adverse effects of Burnout, Compassion Fatigue, and Job-Related Stress indicate that elevated levels of compassion fulfillment substantially mitigate these harmful elements. These findings underscore that compassion fulfillment functions as a protective factor, alleviating the impact of work pressures in law enforcement.

The study illustrates that fostering compassion satisfaction within the police force can improve officers' well-being in several areas and diminish the risk of burnout, compassion fatigue, and occupational stress. These findings highlight the significance of treatments designed to enhance compassion fulfillment, hence promoting human well-being and organizational efficacy in high-demand professions like law enforcement.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Nasir, N. S. M.: Conceptualization; Roslan, R. : Methodology, Software, Writing-Original Draft Preparation; Zain, M. H. M. : Software, Validation, Muhammad, C. K.: Writing-Reviewing and Editing.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The manuscript has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration by other journals. All authors have approved the review, agree with its submission and declare no conflict of interest on the manuscript.

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