Exploring the impact of 12-hour shifts on police officers' personal lives: a case study in the City of Tshwane, South Africa

Radiakga Thabang Molokomme (a)*

(a) Faculty of Humanities Sciences, Department of Legal Sciences, Vaal University of Technology, Private Bag X021, Andries Potgieter Blvd, Vanderbijlpark 1911, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Shift work has become a necessity in various professions, including law enforcement, to ensure the continuous operation of essential services. The implementation of 12-hour shifts has become common practice in police departments, aiming to meet the demands of public safety. However, the implications of such extended work periods on the personal lives of police officers are significant and warrant exploration. This study focuses on examining the effects of a 12-hour shift schedule on police officers within the South African Police Service (SAPS) stationed in the City of Tshwane, Gauteng province, South Africa. Through qualitative research methods, data was collected from eight police officers with a minimum of two years of experience through face-to-face interviews. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data systematically. Findings reveal that the 12-hour shift system presents challenges in maintaining a healthy work-life balance, impacting officers' social and familial responsibilities, participation in cultural and religious activities, and overall well-being. Officers expressed concerns about fatigue, limited time for family and leisure activities, and conflicts with personal commitments. Addressing these challenges is crucial for enhancing the health and effectiveness of police personnel and ensuring a positive work-life balance. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by shedding light on the nuanced effects of the 12-hour shift system on police officers' personal lives, particularly in the South African context. Recommendations were also made to address the effects of the shift system on officer's personal life.

© 2024 by the authors. Licensee SSBFNET, Istanbul, Turkey. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Introduction

Shift work, particularly in professions such as law enforcement, has become a prevalent and necessary aspect of modern society. The continuous operation of essential services demands a workforce that operates outside the conventional 9-to-5 schedule (Riedy, Dawson, Vila & Violanti, 2020:484). Law enforcement is an indispensable pillar of societal order, with police officers often navigating challenging and high-stakes situations to ensure public safety. In the pursuit of this noble endeavor, many police departments have adopted non-traditional work schedules, including the implementation of 12-hour shifts (Molokomme, Khosa, Reyneke-Cloete & Mynhardt, 2023:212).

Shift work, characterised by non-traditional working hours, has been a subject of growing concern due to its potential effects on workers' physical and mental health, social life, and overall quality of life (Madia, 2022:7). This research endeavors to delve into the intricate interplay between the demanding nature of a 12-hour shift and its repercussions on the personal lives of police officers. As guardians of public welfare, officers frequently find themselves balancing the rigor of their professional duties with the imperative of maintaining a healthy and fulfilling personal life (Madia, 2022:7; Molokomme et al. 2023:211). Nkosi (2019:31) express that the extended duration of 12-hour shifts introduces a unique set of challenges, potentially influencing various aspects of their personal well-being, familial relationships, and overall quality of life.
The impact of a 12-hour shift on police officers' personal lives can be substantial. According to Molokomme et al. (2023:215), the extended work hours in law enforcement often lead to increased fatigue and stress, affecting overall well-being. The demanding schedule can strain family relationships and personal commitments, as officers may find it challenging to balance work and home life (Valmari, Nygren, Ghazinour & Gildenstam, 2023:2). The irregular and prolonged shifts may disrupt sleep patterns, contributing to physical and mental health issues (James, Honn, Gaddameedhi & Van Dongen, 2017:105). Additionally, Molokomme et al. (2023:216) opined that the limited time off between shifts can hinder opportunities for rest and recovery. The heightened stress levels and potential sleep deprivation may also impact officers' decision-making abilities and job performance (Gutshall, Hampton, Sebetchu, Stein & Broxtermann, 2017:464). Addressing these challenges associated with the 12-hour shift work system is crucial to maintaining the health and effectiveness of police personnel and ensuring a positive work-life balance (Dingman, 2020:95; Molokomme et al. 2023:216).

Previous research has touched upon various aspects of shift work, including its influence on temporal preferences, overtime work, and the choice between 8-hour, 10-hour, and 12-hour shift systems (Julseth, Ruiz, & Hummer, 2011:243; Sengupta, Aydin & Lieber, 2018:527; Kivimaki & Kawachi, 2015:5). The current study narrows its focus on the implications of the 12-hour shift specifically, shedding light on how this extended work period impacts South African police officers in terms of their personal and social lives. However, the implications of a 12-hour shift work on the quality of life, productivity, and overall well-being of individuals involved, warrant a thorough examination (Molokomme et al. 2023:167). This study delves into the multifaceted impact of 12-hour shifts on the personal and social lives of police officers, exploring the trade-offs between increased time off and potential disruptions to family life, and cultural activities. In the dynamic realm of law enforcement, where officers are expected to be vigilant and responsive around the clock, understanding the ramifications of 12-hour shifts extends beyond operational efficiency. It delves into the fabric of officers' lives, unraveling the intricate balance between dedication to duty and the preservation of personal well-being. The study seeks to unravel the complexities of time allocation, work-life balance, and the toll 12-hour shifts may take on the social and familial spheres of police officers' lives.

Therefore, this investigation aimed to examine the effects of a 12-hour shift schedule on police officers within the South African Police Service (SAPS) stationed at the City of Tshwane in Gauteng province, South Africa. This study holds significance as it contributes to understanding the effect of a 12-hour shift on officers' personal lives. Additionally, it adds to the existing body of knowledge in shift work, specifically in South Africa and law enforcement. Since there is limited scholarship on the effects of 12-hour shifts on officers' personal lives, specifically in the South African context. The study achieved its objective, by interviewing eight (8) police officers with a minimum of two years of experience from the city of Tshwane was gathered through face-to-face interviews, and data saturation was reached. Thematic content analysis was used to scrutinise the collected data, a method characterised by interpreting qualitative data through systematic coding to identify prevalent themes and patterns (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013:399). The subsequent sections will provide an overview of the shift system employed within the South African Police Service, followed by a preliminary review of relevant literature, and conclude with a concise outline of the research methodology, findings, and conclusions.

**Literature Review**

**Shift Work and Quality Of Life**

According to Nkosi (2019:31), shift work can also have a negative social impact, primarily because the workers’ working hours overlap with the most valued times in this area (the end of the day and the weekend). The value of time to shift workers and daytime employees was assessed by Baker et al. in 2003. They used temporal matrices to examine this and asked 220 workers (110 from each work schedule) to rate each weekly hour in accordance with the four spheres of life: work, social, leisure, and family (Baker, Roach, Ferguson & Dawson, 2003:315). Compared to daytime employees, shift workers showed more flexibility when it came to working hours, even though they preferred traditional schedules (Albertsen, Garde, Nabe-Nielsen, Hansen, Lund & Hvid, 2014:265). Albertsen et al. (2014:265) also state that officers working 12-hour shifts find it difficult to balance their work and personal lives of time in the social, recreational, and familial spheres.

Rengifo and Fowler (2016:35) hinted that there is little publicly available data, but that there is a great deal of variation in overtime across agencies and individuals. Vila (2006) asserts that few police departments regulate or restrict off-duty employment. The additional time officers may spend in a day working off-duty, working overtime, or commuting to and from work should be taken into consideration by agencies that are considering compressing officers’ schedules because the sum of these activities is frequently very high (Rengifo & Fowler, 2016:37). Amendola et al. (2011a:409) discovered that officers who worked 10-hour shifts had more court-related overtime than those who worked eight-hour shifts, but significantly less overtime related to regular work days (which was reduced by more than half). As mentioned above, this may be complicated by the agency’s previous schedule of seven consecutive eight-hour days. Amendola et al. (2011a:411) reported a significant decrease in work schedule interference with personal activities for those on an eight-hour shift system. Similarly, officers on a CWW (Compressed Work Week) were overwhelmingly better able to achieve a separation between work and non-work activities (Brown, Bradley, Lingard, Townsend & Ling, 2011:45).

Although it might be expected that some benefits of 10-hour shifts would also apply to those working 12-hour shifts, it does not appear to be the case. According to Amendola et al. (2011a:415), officers working 10-hour shifts reported a higher quality of work.
life than those who worked eight-hour shifts, but those who worked 12-hour shifts did not. Additionally, Pearsall (2012:37) argued that while officers who worked 10-hour shifts get significantly more sleep than those who worked eight-hour shifts, this was not the case for officers who worked 12-hour shifts. Even though officers who worked 12-hour shifts had higher average sleep than those working eight-hour shifts, these differences were not statistically significant (Pearsall, 2012:38).

Employees who worked 12-hour shifts reported feeling more awake and energised in the morning hours (Morales, 2014). In addition, Morales (2014) discussed the necessity of a recovery day, especially for officers who work shifts that require them to stay up late. Police officers occasionally receive calls to report to duty in situations where more manpower is needed, particularly during times when there are riots or unrest. Madia (2022:8) thus alluded that they do not get enough rest and have fewer days off. Since police work is inherently stressful, it follows that such arrangements interfere with officers’ personal lives, leave them with insufficient time to spend with friends and family, and prevent shift workers from feeling rested and energised (Amendola, Weisburd, Hamilton, Jones & Slipka, 2011b:10). Bazana, Campbell and Kabungaidze (2016:74) emphasised how the 12-hour shift system may disengage officers from their familial responsibilities, which may later result in family conflict. It has also been suggested that emotional exhaustion is a condition where specific employees experience extreme emotional exhaustion to the point where they lack the energy to function the following day at work (Grant, Berg & Cable, 2014:1202). Danish and Saleem (2020:2138) mentioned that, in addition to the aforementioned, workers’ circadian rhythms may be impacted if they work non-stop for 24 hours.

The 12-Hour Shift and Police Officers’ Productivity/Performance

Amendola et al. (2011b:14) examined 25 effect sizes across 12 sub-studies (of which only six were coded as having high levels of scientific rigour) and discovered that there was no effect on productivity for four of the studies, despite positive effects when supervisory ratings were taken into account. The effect of a CWW also varies depending on the performance being evaluated. For instance, there are conflicting results regarding cognitive function; some studies have found that people who work 12-hour shifts have lower cognitive function (Amendola et al. 2011b:20; Botonis, Koutouvakis & Toubekis, 2021:2170). Similar to how there have been conflicting results when interpersonal communication has been evaluated in relation to CWW, some have reported poor communication between officers and community members while working a CWW, while others have reported improvements in internal communication (Amendola et al. 2011b:4; Bergen-Cico, Kilaru, Rizzo, Buore, Burke & Silvia Pignata, 2020:60). There was a noticeable decrease in output during the final four hours of a shift, which was particularly noticeable in 12-hour shifts (Amendola et al. 2011b:4). Ball, Maben, Murrells, Day and Griffiths (2015:5) came to the conclusion that eight-hour shifts allowed for more sustained output. Longer shifts were thus not supported by either study. When such systems are implemented, fatigue and decreased alertness toward the end of a 12-hour shift can be a real concern (James & Vila, 2015:517). Additionally, it has been asserted that the negative aspects of fatigue and interference with family and social life outweigh the positive aspects of job satisfaction and service to the public (James & Vila, 2015:518). This is surprising because one of the purported advantages of 12-hour systems is more time for social, familial, and recreational activities. Other researchers have also reported similar social disruptions related to 12-hour shift systems (Nkosi, 2019:3; Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2012:4; Violanti, Fekedulegn, Andrew, Charles, Hartley, Vila & Burchfiel, 2013:362).

Increased Utilisation of Personal Time

According to Khan, Jackson, Kennedy and Conduit (2021:7), shift workers who work 12-hour shifts have more total days and consecutive days off, which allows them to complete more tasks at home, attend more to personal matters, go shopping during the week, and plan more social and family gatherings. When officers work 12-hour shifts, they typically know exactly how long they will be working and can pace themselves accordingly (Khan et al. 2021:7). This benefit is offset by the frequency with which employees are called unexpectedly to work a 12-hour shift on their days off, which in turn depends on the success of their voluntary overtime sign-up list and the overall staffing levels (Amendola et al. 2011b:37). This is mentioned in the study by Karaffa, Openshaw, Koch, Clark, Harr and Stewart (2015:122) that the 12-hour shift has an impact on police work, marital relationships, and religion. Karaffa et al. (2015:127) further view religion as an important way for police officers to relieve stress, address spousal conflict, and strengthen themselves emotionally and spiritually. Madia (2022:7) alludes that working irregular shift schedules has social ramifications. Some of these consequences include negative work/family spill-over, such as lower spousal satisfaction (Iskra-Golec, Smith, Wiczek-Ruzzycka, Siemiginowska & Watroba, 2017:121). Similarly, Presser (2014:96) stated that shift work can have a negative impact on childcare. The fatigue associated with night and rotating shift work is exacerbated when a night shift is followed by daytime parental responsibilities (Madia, 2022:8). This is especially common with children under the age of six (Bell, Viriden, Lewis & Cassidy, 2015:294). Night and rotating shift workers are also more likely to miss family and social events and see their friends less frequently, which result in lower life satisfaction in these areas (Shiffer, Minonzio, Dipaola, Bertola, Zamuner, Dalla Vecchia, Solbiati, Costantino, Furlan & Barbic, 2018:2). When night and rotating work shifts were introduced, the negative social consequences of insomnia and excessive sleepiness increased (Madia, 2022:7). It results in less daytime for engaging in cultural activities and participating in religious practices. People’s knowledge in South Africa is significantly influenced by their culture, and culture is a collective mindset that shapes people’s knowledge (Bazana et al. 2016:77).

Family Time and Flexibility of Sleeping Schedule

Twelve-hour shift officers have fewer opportunities to see their spouses and children on work days (Madia, 2022:8). Conflicts between childcare and daycare may also arise because many babysitters may not be able to increase their hours and because childcare
facilities’ hours do not necessarily coincide with shift schedules (Madia, 2022:8). Because there is less flexibility for sleep time, sleep schedule disruption may happen (Vila, 2006:976). In contrast, for an eight-hour schedule, night shift workers can decide whether to stay up and sleep later in the day or go to bed when they get home and sleep in the morning, depending on their sleep physiology (Chinoy, Harris, Kim, Wang & Duffy, 2016:871). The 12-hour shift workers do not have this flexibility, and when working nights, they need to condition themselves to sleep in the morning and into the early afternoon (Molokomme et al. 2023:169).

Methodology

Sileyew (2019:1) contends that methodology serves to provide a clear understanding of the research's objectives, while Akhtar (2016:68) argues that research methodology is a systematic process employing scientific procedures to enhance knowledge within a specific field. Research methodology, as emphasised by Newman and Gough (2020:4-5), is a technique employed to address a research question. In contrast, Turner and Danks (2014:25) posit that the research technique is a valuable tool for identifying and resolving social and economic issues in society. The researcher opts to utilise qualitative research methodologies to collect data for this study, given the nature of the topic and the significance of the Tshwane city center. According to Creswell (2014:4), a qualitative approach aids in understanding how study participants perceive the issue. Therefore, to gain more insights into the subject, the researcher finds it necessary to interview police officers from the city center of Tshwane, Gauteng province, specifically officers from the SAPS, regarding the effects of the 12-hour shift system on police officers’ personal lives.

Population and Sampling

This study has adopted a qualitative research design, incorporating semi-structured in-depth interviews and explanatory research. The study’s population consists of a thousand sworn in police officers deployed at the City of Tshwane in the Gauteng province. Non-probability sampling is employed based on the understanding and analysis of the impact of the 12-hour shift among police officers in the SAPS from their perspective. Volunteers are chosen based on availability, rank, service history, marital status, and gender, all crucial elements in addressing the study’s issues. Purposive sampling continues until data saturation is achieved, confirmed after the fifth interview with three additional interviews conducted (n=8). Below is the demographic profile of participants who participated in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Number</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Years of Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PO1</td>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO2</td>
<td>Constable</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO3</td>
<td>Constable</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>2 and ½ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO4</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>30 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO5</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>21 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO6</td>
<td>Constable</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO7</td>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>19 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO8</td>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>16 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: PO = Police officer

Data Collection

Data collection involves individual interviews with police officers from the city center of Tshwane, Gauteng province, using a semi-structured interviewing technique. The researcher had the chance to pose follow-up questions to ensure that the responses provided were clear and satisfactory. This allowed for better understanding and ensured that any ambiguities were addressed. Data was collected immediately after receiving a gatekeeper’s letter from the SAPS research ethics committee. The main question asked is what are the effects of the 12-hour shift work system on police officers’ personal lives?

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is employed to analyse the data systematically. Thematic content analysis, defined as coding and identifying themes and patterns in qualitative data, is used (Vaismoradi et al. 2013:399). Trustworthiness is ensured through the credibility of the well-known topic, the expertise of participants, and their first-hand experience with the 12-hour shift system. To enhance dependability, the researcher keeps comprehensive records of all research phases, including audiotaping interviews, taking notes, and transcribing data. The findings aim to be transferable to other police stations across South Africa, contributing to the improvement of police conditions and minimising the negative impacts of the 12-hour shift system on police officials (Bryman, 2012:392).

Findings

This section presents the findings from participants (Police officers) who are referred to as PO1-PO8. Three themes regarding the effects of the 12-hour shift on social or personal life emerged during the coding and analysis of the interviews. The participant excerpts are presented below, which is followed by a discussion of the findings.
Theme 1: No Time

The issue of time was a major consideration for all the participants and their time spent with family members. The participants stated that their high levels of fatigue from shift work had a significant impact on their social and personal lives. They claimed that fatigue had a significant impact on their ability to fulfill social and personal roles such as attending events, going to church, caring for children, attending school meetings, and socialising with friends. PO1 states that “It affects my personal life negatively, as there is no time for social life, school, or spending time with family and friends, so even the rest days are not enough. [you cannot] even make a plan to take a trip with friends because [on] your off days you must make sure that you use them to rest, and you can find out that there is a serious unrest in town so sometimes you will be called to come and assist, so it restricts your plans.” Also, “You neglect your family and wife and I, most of the time, you don’t even know what your child loves, and you don’t have time to attend to school meetings and you don’t have time to attend to family emergencies, because there’s a time where they called me at my child’s school to inform me that he was rushed to hospital, so I failed to answer the phone due to we were chasing criminals and that day it was a busy day at work, and I failed to be there for my child, so that’s painful because it’s like you are an irresponsible parent” (PO5). Additionally, four officers expressed issues around time, and PO3 mention that “I don’t have time to attend to my kids’ school events, because my off days I use them to rest and you can’t socialise on those four days off because you will have to rest. So that’s how it is, so we can’t even attend events because I use my off days to do home chores and to rest.” There is also “No time for family and friends, where family commitments suffer a great deal, as you fail to transport your kids to school and creche” (PO4). PO7 express that “[I]t also affects our personal life, because we don’t even have time to drink alcohol peacefully, because most of the time during weekends you’re on duty.” P8 feels that “[T]hey don’t have enough time to spend with your wife and bond with her, putting in mind that my wife does not work 12 hours, so you miss a lot.” Further, PO2 also have similar sentiments and stated that “I don’t have a social life, to be honest with you, because I’m always tired. After the night shift, the whole day I will be sleeping and I’ve got a very young child, so my kids are suffering because at night when I come to work I leave them alone. I’ll see them in the morning, prepare them to go to school, and then I leave the whole day, so I don’t have time for friends, time for that, I don’t have that time!” Also PO6 stated that “Since I am a person who likes gym, so I don’t have time to go to gym, so I am paying gym for free, as I’m always tired and any opportunity I use it to rest.”

The issue of time, and more specifically a lack of time, arose during the interviews, as seen above, with all the participants working 12-hour shifts. Two participants in particular were adamant about the time issue associated with shift work. The participants worked 12-hour shifts, either day or night, and only got four days off a week, which was explained as really only being three days of. PO1 in this regard stated that:

“you know how it works, it’s not four days because they count the day when you come back from your last night shift as a day off then also the fourth day you must report to duty, so they call it four days in and four days out, but it’s three days off”.

Theme 2: Challenge on Work Schedule and Cultural Participation

Two of the participants’ inability to participate in religious and cultural activities emerged as a recurrent theme. The 12-hour shift means less daytime for engaging in cultural activities and participating in religious practices as people’s knowledge in South Africa is significantly influenced by their culture, and culture is a collective mindset that shapes people’s knowledge (Bazana et al. 2016:77). These participants’ inability to take part in their various cultural or religious activities and ceremonies due to a lack of time had taken centre stage in their lives. PO1 stated that “There’s no time for church and not time for performing religious activities. As you know we are Africans, so it’s either you at work or tired and resting. PO8 also alludes to the fact that “[m]ost of time you don’t even get time to attend church, your wife and kids they always go alone at church while yourself you [are] at work.” It is also expressed that “religion is therapeutic as sometimes we face traumatic situations as police officer..... we need to connect with God to heal from those traumatic incidents we observe” (PO6). PO3 mentioned the disconnection with God as they stated that “You as an individual sometimes you miss that connection with God that you get from church through singing hymns and praising God” (PO2). PO7 also expressed that “[s]inging and praising God relieves a lot of burdens, so the shift we are working you don’t normally get time to attend church on a regular basis”. PO7 further stressed the issue of recusings themselves from participating in church leadership roles and mentioned that “[I]n lacking time to fully participate and engage in my church activities, I saw it fit to step down from being the Youth Chairperson due to not having enough time at my disposal, because when I was off I had no time since I had to do laundry and home chores, so you get exhausted.”

Theme 3: Challenges of Work-Life Balance

The results of the interviews showed that because of the shift system, the participants did not have time to spend with their families and friends. The participants typically “wanted to sleep” and believed that when they were awake, they “had to get ready for work”, and they generally felt too exhausted to care for their children adequately. This supported the general consensus that shift workers, and particularly those who work 12-hour shifts, often find it difficult to be fully present in their children’s lives. PO2 revealed that “My kids are suffering, and I have a very young child, so the whole day I’m not with them, and it’s worse during night shift; I leave them alone and will see them in the morning when I come back, then prepare them to go to school, so this is stressing.” Also that “There’s no time to attend to your children’s school activities, sport events, and etc!” (PO4). Additionally, PO7 mentioned that “We can’t even spend quality time with our children, because sometimes when you’re on leave, you receive calls or emails from work,
that there’s an emergency and just because you love your job and respect your superiors, you will have to leave short and go back to work, and worse part, I don’t stay with my family here in Pretoria!”

Furthermore, PO5 also stated that the effects of shift work on officers personal life is worsened as “It also causes problems and conflict in your marriage, as you sometimes neglect your wife and family, and sometimes you don’t even have that time to spend with friends and chill and drink alcohol, because the time you get you must spend it with your family and wife.” “Also, sometimes at home it creates conflict and affects my marriage, because they sometimes feel like I don’t have time for them. Always when I come back from work I’m sleeping, so it sometimes feels like you are an irresponsible parent!” (PO6). PO8 also stated the issue around work life balance and mentioned that “[T]here is no enough time to spend with both family and friends, and for friends [it] is even worse, because the little time you get, you need to prioritise and spend it with your wife and children.”

Discussion

Although their shifts were 12 hours long, they began much earlier than their scheduled working hours. The participants spent up to two hours getting ready, eating, and arriving at their transport point to be picked up by the police van or the shift commander, while others had to drive 15 to 30 minutes to work, depending on traffic. This effectively added two hours to their already lengthy 12-hour shifts. As a result, the participants experienced anxiety. Even though individuals in this study were aware of their personal and social activities, they found it increasingly difficult to fulfil these roles as they became more concerned with sleeping than anything else. The majority of officers indicated not having time for social activities and a love for the gym but were unable to be fully involved in it since working a 12-hour shift is tiring and one does not get the time to be fully committed to exercising at the gym. This is consistent with the statement made by Bazana et al. (2016:71) that people who work shifts frequently experience social marginalisation because their lives do not follow the typical rhythms of the day. Additionally, Amendola et al. (2011:10) stressed that since police work is inherently stressful, it follows that such arrangements interfere with officers’ personal lives, leave them with insufficient time to spend with friends and family and prevent shift workers from feeling rested and energised. Bazana et al. (2016:74) emphasised how the 12-hour shift system may disengage officers from their familial responsibilities, which may later result in family conflict. When the participants had the opportunity to be socially active, they preferred to spend their free time sleeping. The researcher thus posits that police officers are unable to fully participate in leisure activities and social and household responsibilities due to disrupted sleep patterns and fatigue associated with 12-hour shifts.

Furthermore, it is clear that the shift work schedule of the police has a detrimental effect on both their religious and cultural activities, as well as their family lives. As a result, their work schedule interferes with their free time, which they use to balance other responsibilities such as parenting and cultural and religious obligations. No time for religious or cultural activities is a problem that is supported by research by Bazana et al. (2016:77), Karaffa et al. (2015:122), and others on shift work and its impact on police work, marital relationships, and religion. Karaffa et al. (2015:127) viewed religion as an important way for police officers to relieve stress, address spousal conflict, and strengthen them emotionally and spiritually. It is evident from the above descriptions that working 12-hour shifts had a huge impact on the participants’ family lives, as it resulted in very little to no time for them to spend quality time with their children and spouses, or their friends. This issue evidently had a negative impact on the participants’ perception of themselves and their role as a parent, which reflects the issue and theme of no time and its spill-over effect on the lives of those involved. Iskra-Golec et al. (2017:123) mention that the negative impact of the 12-hour shift can spill over to the family, which can cause spousal conflict. This is supported by Madia (2022:8), who stated that officers who work the 12-hour shift have fewer opportunities to see their spouses and children on weekdays. Similarly, Presser (2014:96) stated that shift work can have a negative impact on childcare. Madia (2022:8) also mentioned that the fatigue associated with night and rotating shift work is exacerbated when a night shift is followed by daytime parental responsibilities. Thus, it can be deduced from the above that police officer are affected negatively by shift work as they don’t have time to perform other activities outside their occupation. This can also have an impact on officers’ overall performance as officers can sometimes be detached due to the stress of failing to honour some of their commitments and familial responsibilities.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the substantial impact of the 12-hour shift system on the personal lives of police officers within the SAPS stationed in the City of Tshwane, Gauteng province, South Africa. The challenges identified include difficulties in maintaining a healthy work-life balance, limited time for social and familial responsibilities, and constraints on participation in cultural and religious activities. Officers expressed concerns about fatigue, reduced quality time with family, and conflicts between work and personal commitments. The 12-hour shift schedule has led to social marginalisation, hindering officers’ ability to fully engage in leisure activities and household responsibilities. Additionally, officers reported feeling disconnected from their religious communities due to their demanding work schedules.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that police departments take proactive measures to address the challenges posed by the 12-hour shift system for officers within the SAPS stationed in the City of Tshwane, Gauteng province, South Africa. Firstly, there is a need to review and adjust shift schedules to provide officers with a better balance between work and personal life. Consideration should be given to implementing shorter shifts or providing more frequent rest days to mitigate fatigue and allow for increased time for family and leisure activities. Additionally, support programs aimed at promoting officers’ well-being and resilience
should be implemented, including counseling services, stress management workshops, and resources for coping with the demands of shift work. Furthermore, police departments should prioritize flexibility and accommodation for officers to participate in cultural and religious activities, recognizing their importance in officers’ lives and allowing for reasonable adjustments to shift schedules to facilitate participation. Training and education programs should also be provided to raise awareness about the challenges of shift work and equip officers with strategies for managing work-life balance effectively. Finally, continuous evaluation of the impact of shift schedules on officers’ well-being and productivity is essential, with regular feedback sessions and surveys informing future adjustments to shift policies.

Acknowledgment

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Collection, Formal Analysis, Writing—Original Draft Preparation, Writing—Review and Editing by author. The author has read and agreed to the published final version of the manuscript.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were obtained for this study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References


154


Publisher’s Note: SSBFNET stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

© 2024 by the authors. Licensee SSBFNET, Istanbul, Turkey. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0). International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478) by SSBFNET is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.