SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PROBATION OFFICERS WITHIN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

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DECLARATION

This research is my original work, and to the best of my knowledge, has not been presented for the award of any degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my siblings- Maurine, Tony, Jerry, Steve and Collins and my beloved children (Zaylee and Zion), whose guidance and patience shaped my academic journey, and to all probation officers whose resilience inspired this study. To all professionals working tirelessly in trauma-exposed environments, may this research contribute to their well-being and resilience.

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ABSTRACT

Probation officers working in Nairobi County are often exposed to traumatic and emotionally straining experiences while interacting with offenders, victims, and families in crisis, placing them at risk of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS). This can adversely affect their psychological well-being as well as family relationships. However, scholarly attention to occupational trauma among helping professionals remains inadequate in Kenya as limited study has examined STS among probation officers and its influence on family functioning. This study therefore examined the relationship between secondary traumatic stress and family relationships among probation officers in Nairobi County, Kenya. Targeting 108 probation officers and 10 Key Informants, the current study sought to determine the levels of STS among probation officers, assess family relationships, examine the relationship between STS and family relationships, and identify coping strategies used to manage unhealthy family relationships. This study used convergent parallel mixed-methods design with census sampling. Guided by Secondary Traumatic Stress Theory and Family Systems Theory, quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to 108 probation officers, while qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 10 key informants including Nairobi Regional Director, Nairobi County Director and head of stations within Nairobi County. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 29 through descriptive and inferential statistics, whereas qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The study revealed moderate to high levels of STS among officers, with overall STS mean score of 3.19. Family relationships were generally weak, with an overall mean score of 2.35. Inferential results showed a strong negative and statistically significant relationship between STS and family relationships ($r = -0.849$, $p < .001$). Regression analysis established that STS significantly predicted family relationship outcomes ($B = -0.429$, $p < .001$), explaining 72.5% of variations in family functioning ($R^2 = 0.725$). The results also found that officers depended on prayer, peer support, recreation, emotional support, and work-life separation as coping strategies to address occupational stress. The study concluded that STS on a high-level derail family relationship among probation officers and advocated for counseling services, trauma-informed training, manageable workloads, wellness programs, as well as family-centered organizational support initiatives.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

EAPs - Employee Assistance Programmes

JKIA - Jomo Kenyatta International Airport

KI - Key Informant

PACS - Probation and Aftercare Services

ProQOL - Professional Quality of Life

PTSD - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

STSS - Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale

STS - Secondary Traumatic Stress

WHO - World Health Organization

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Avoidance - Efforts to stay away from reminders of trauma, such as avoiding certain people, places, or conversations. In this study, it refers to coping strategies probation officers use to manage stress.

Burn-out - Emotional and physical exhaustion caused by long-term work stress. Operationalized as reduced energy, motivation, and effectiveness in probation officers.

Communication - The exchange of information, feelings, or support between people. Operationalized as the clarity, openness, and frequency of conversations within probation officers' families.

Compassion Fatigue - The emotional exhaustion emanating from prolonged caring for or listening to people in distress. In the current study, the term is used to reduced motivation, irritability, or withdrawal undergone by probation officers after prolonged exposure to trauma stories starts to overpower their ability to be supportive.

Emotional Availability – This is used to depict ability to be available and responsive to the family members' emotional need and in particular how probation officers operate within families despite work demand.

Empathy – this term is used to mean ability acknowledge and share others' feelings by probation officers. This entails connecting emotionally with offenders as well as their families, acknowledging their challenges while maintaining professional limits.

Exposure – this is used to refer to probation officers' continued interaction with traumatic material in work life such as cases involving violence and high level of victimization.

Family Relationships – These are interactions between family members, such as support, conflict, and knightess. In the current study, it means how probation officers as well as their families interact and address to each other in challenging times.

Hyper-arousal – This is used to depict a situation among probation officers characterized by constant alertness or tense, expressed by symptoms of irritability, sleep deprivation, or not relaxing.

Intrusive – This was conceptualized as bad thoughts, and imageries of traumatic events that in the mind. Operationalized as the frequency of such experiences reported by probation officers.

Offender – This is depicted to mean a person placed on non-custodial sentence and supervised by a probation officer.

Probation Officer – This is depicted to mean an officer employed for purposes of availing social inquiry reports to courts and other penal institution and also mandated to supervise offenders on non-custodial sentence.

Role Functioning – This is used to depict how objective a person undertakes his responsibilities in diverse aspects of like and in this case balancing between probation work and family expectations.

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) – This is used to mean emotional strain probation officers as a result of working with offenders, victims, and communities.

Trauma – This was used to mean deeply distressing experiences that overwhelm probation officers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed discussion on the background of the study, and statement of the problem. It also extends to research objectives, questions, significance, theoretical framework, as well as the scope and delimitation of the study. This chapter concludes with study's assumptions.

1.2. Background of the Study

Trauma is a condition characterized by experiences that overpower a person's 's ability to cope and can result psychological conditions (American Psychological Association, 2013). based on the definition of *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), trauma is direct or indirect exposure to real or threatened death, adverse harm, or sexual assault (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). If exposure happens indirectly through regular professional interaction with other people's traumatic situations, practitioners can experience Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS), also referred to as vicarious trauma. This presents with symptoms identical to post-traumatic stress disorder. STS emanates from empathetic interaction with victims and grows over time, affecting emotional regulation and objective functioning (Klareć et al., 2013; Evans, 2020a).

Around the world, traumatic exposure remains evident: about 70% of the populations undergo at least a traumatic situation in lifetime, and a non-trivial few develop trauma-associated conditions (Global Collaboration, 2018; WHO, 2024a). Professions such as healthcare, social work, emergency response, and justice sector are said to experience elevated STS ending up affecting mental health, job output, and interpersonal operations (Rhineberger-Dunn et al., 2016; Roberts, 2021). Global studies also indicate that STS is measured with standard tools

(e.g., STSS, ProQOL) and that organizational interventions can address symptom severity and support coping (Evans, 2020b).

Family relationships play an important role in determining personal wellness and social functioning. This encompasses recurrent interactions, emotional connections, as well as fulfilling household roles, with specific focus on communication, emotional availability, and role functioning (Olson, 2022). Around the world evidence continue to associate healthy family functioning to enhanced psychological resilience and informed coping, while dysfunctional family dynamics are linked to heightened conflict, emotional strain, and poorer living conditions (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020; Bachem et al., 2021). Evidence from high-income contexts indicate that when work issues or trauma interfere with communication or emotional availability, family's relationship satisfaction goes down. This also extends o reduced parenting consistency, which at the end affect mental health outcomes (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020).

The issue of trauma in sub-Saharan Africa is magnified by conflict, poverty, as well as communal violence, resulting in increased levels of PTSD and associated conditions (Andualem et al., 2024; Nget al., 2020). Evidence continues to indicate that employees with exposure to traumatic caseloads experience STS symptoms such as emotional fatigue, intrusion, and diminished empathetic ability; in most case compounded by inadequate accessibility to mental-health services and stigma accompanying help-seeking behaviour (Mabaso & Holtzhausen, 2017; Masson % Moodley, 2020). Other scholars also highlight that informal coping mechanisms like family and religious support arewidespread but inadequate to manage chronic vicarious trauma in systems with resource challenges (Seponski et al., 2020).

Africa presents strengths as well as vulnerabilities for family characteristics. Extended kinship and communal support always offer practical and emotional support that reduce stress, though collectivist structures are hindered by economic hardship, urban migration, and inadequate mental-health services accessibility (Mutuyimana & Maercker, 2023). Studies report that occupational demands like long working hours, increased caseloads, and exposure to stressing material, can diminish family communication, lower emotional responsiveness, and derail role performance, leading to family tension and parenting challenges (Towriss et al., 2020; Mashego et al., 2023).

In East Africa, context-knit stressors such as forced migration, tribal violence, and gender-based violence, amplifies direct as well as vicarious vulnerability for professionals. In the region, reports show that STS manifests among social workers and healthcare professional with emotional withdrawal, hyper-vigilance, as well as distorted care-giving capacity being the resultant effects (Mutuyimana & Maercker, 2023; Nabunya & Ssewamala, 2021; Pham, 2016). Qualitative research puts emphasis that extended family and community networks can help address stress but can also amplify silence on mental wellness, hindering absorption of formal help. East African scholars indicate this pattern while pointing out regional specificities. In the region, it is said that professionals with sustained exposure to emotional strain usually report reduced openness within families, social and emotional withdrawal, and diminished care-giving norms. With formal supports scarcity, these changes often increase and amplify family stress (Mutuyimana & Maercker, 2023; Kabunga et al., 2024; Tamir et al., 2024). Qualitative findings says that cultural norms on strength and confidentiality may hinder disclosure of stress, derailing opportunities for family-based support.

In Kenyan situation, judicial and social services workers face high caseloads and frequent interaction with traumatic accounts. Reports and l studies document occupational strain, burnout, as well as emerging STS evidence in the police force, correctional employees and

other related sectors (Ndetei et al., 2020; Muriithi, 2020; Irungu et al., 2024). In Kenya, policy recognizes trauma and the need for informed services (The Kenya National Framework for the Organization of Trauma Services, 2021). This is also evident Probation and Aftercare Service reports (PACS, 2021; PACS, 2025). These policies create vital principles shows institutional purpose, and acknowledges occupational vulnerability to traumatic situations and suggests staff supports. In addition, some probation stations access ad hoc Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), situational clinical training through PACS-JICA partnerships, and informal peer-support interventions (Kenya National Framework, 2021; PACS, 2021, 2025).

Nonetheless, policy statements alone fail to guarantee optimum service delivery, and the gap between policy intent and outcome reality remains a concern. Kenyan scholarship puts family relationships in the context of robust kinship obligations and increased social networks. However, evidence also shows vulnerability to stress among professionals. Studies in highly demanding professions in Kenya show that work-linked stress and urban challenges lower time and emotional energy required in family functioning, leading to communication issues and parenting problems (Ndetei et al., 2020; Irungu et al., 2024). Despite existence of organizational support, it is inadequate along scope and accessibility, leaving families to depend on informal coping mechanisms that are inadequate for high levels of stress.

Studies indicate that persons with STS often manifest symptoms such as withdrawal, emotional fatigue, irritability, as well as reduced emotional presence (Bachem et al., 2021). This can negatively influence marital expectations, parenting responsibilities, and overall family cohesion. As a result, family members can face stress-associated symptoms, resulting in repeated emotional stress (Chelagat, 2025). Recognizing trauma in Kenya provides an important foundation for interventions, though current frameworks and initiatives are inadequate in establishing family-based practices for probation officers.

Dealing with STS to avert its effect result in family dysfunction requires a shift from individualized responses to incorporated, confidential, culturally informed family approaches, routine clinical supervision, robust referral pathways, as well as empirical implementation interventions that consider officer's well-being and family functioning (Kenya National Framework, 2021; PACS, 2025). While the national framework and PACS interventions offer a basis, their operationalization remains irregular. They lack uniformity along resourcing, staffing, as well as service delivery necessary for routine trauma services for judicial staff in the country (Kenya National Framework, 2021; PACS, 2021). Piloting of trainings coupled with donor-funded projects have enhanced awareness and knowhow among probation officers, however these have always been time-bound without regularization. In addition, gains are not sustainable or implemented in all probation stations (PACS, 2025). Where EAPs have been implemented, they can address distress, however coverage remain patchy with further constrained emanating from organizational as well as cultural stigma and issues of confidentiality (Bober & Regehr, 2006; PACS, 2021). In a nutshell, recognizing it has not been adequately transferred into accessible, regular, and confidential assistance to probation officer. This inadequacy in implementation poses particular implications for family wellness since existing policies and interventions appear to emphasize

individual care while averting family-centred aspects. Models appear not mandating spouse or partner psycho-education, couple counselling, or parenting supports. This means that even as officers get individual counselling, their family members are unsupported (Kenya National Framework, 2021; Chelagat, 2025). Practical hindrances amplify this omission: majority of the stations have no on-site counselling or adequate clinical supervision (PACS, 2021; Tarichia, 2018), referral pathways between PACS, health services and community support remain irregular (PACS, 2021), and the inadequate number of trauma specialists hinders the feasibility of family therapy (Ndetei et al., 2020; Masson & Moodley, 2020).

Cultural norms and stigma also hinder help-seeking, as well as policy documents never incorporate explicit confidentiality interventions or anti-stigma efforts that would support uptake (Seponski et al., 2020). The joint impact of these limitations is prevalent in family outcomes. In the absence of family-focused interventions, probation officers' STS symptoms are likely to manifest at home, resulting communication challenges, reduced emotional availability, as well as role dysfunction (Tarichia, 2018; Bachem et al., 2021). Personalized counselling alone is unlikely to heal relational patterns or recover household routines unless supported by partner-inclusive psychoeducation and couple-level interventions that reconstruct understanding and ideal coping measures (Bober & Regehr, 2006; Chelagat, 2025).

In addition, inadequate routine supervision and family-level indicators in PACS reporting hinder proper assessment of whether available supports are enhancing outcomes (Kenya National Framework, 2021). In addressing these gaps, policies and practice need to extend to deliberately, resource-supported action. Emphasis needs to encompass family-centered interventions into PACS policies and EAP contracts, scaling resourced clinical supervision that explicitly focus on family impacts, and decentralizing assisting using task-sharing (training lay counsellors and supervisors in brief family interventions) to enhance station-level accessibility in the event of scarcity (PACS, 2021; Ndetei et al., 2020). Other supporting interventions need to address confidentiality and anti-stigma aspects, cerate simple family-based indicators (communication, emotional availability, role functioning) into monitoring systems, and co-design culturally inclusive strategies with officers and their families knit on Kenyan kinship and religious coping models (Mutuyimana & Maercker, 2023). Establishing ring-fenced resourcing and partnerships will be vital in piloting, evaluating, and scaling these approaches.

Nairobi's urban context evidenced by high crime rates, high caseloads a multifaceted social issue, amplifies exposure of officers as well as other justice employees (Kinyanjui, 2021; PACS, 2025). Local scholars and service documentations show that officers undergo emotional

fatigue, intrusive thinking and hyper-arousal, yet systematic measure of STS among Nairobi probation officers through standardized tools is inadequate (Tarichia, 2018). High exposure, inadequate institutional interventions, and stigma linked to counselling seeking underscores the need for targeted, contextual research on STS and its effects in Nairobi's probation employees. Nairobi Countycompounds these dynamics due to increased urbanization, cost of living, andhigh service demands. People working in Nairobi report challenges of striking a balance between work and family life. For probation officers, emotional strain to supervise offenders and interacting with traumatic situations may further lower emotional availability and household role engagement (Tarichia, 2018; Probation and Aftercare Service [PACS], 2025). Even with this, there is a paucity of structured, instrument-based evidence that measures communication, emotional availability, and role functioning among probation officers.

The interaction between secondary traumatic stress and family relationships falls under the locus of Family Systems Theory, which asserts that people are interconnected within family units, and issues affecting one member affects the whole system (Mawji, 2024). Along this model, STS experienced by professionals can find way into family life, challenging emotional balance and interpersonal relationships. Even with increased body of literature on secondary traumatic stress and family dynamics, limited scholarly work has examined these variables, especially among probation officers. Despite global and regional studies suggesting that occupational stress can enter into family life, adversely affecting communication, emotional connection, and role performance as argued by (Casas et al. (2022 and Roberts (2021), there is an inadequacy of empirical evidence within the Kenyan context on this relationship. This gap stands pronounced among probation officers in Nairobi County, whose routines exposes them to trauma especially for working in complex urban contexts. This study therefore sought to bridge this gap by examining how secondary traumatic stress interact with family relationships among probation officers in Nairobi County, by conceptualizing STS as intrusion, avoidance,

and hyper-arousal and family relationships as communication, emotional availability, and role functioning.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, Probation officers' role entail rehabilitating and supervising offender on community-based sentences. Nonetheless, their work entails frequent exposure to traumatic narratives, encompassing victimization, abuse, as well as human adversities. Scholarly work among helping and justice-sector workers show that such exposure heightens the vulnerability of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS), which is linked to intrusive recollections, emotional exhaustion, as well as detachment symptoms (Rhine Berger-Dunn et al., 2016; Roberts, 2021). Existing evidence documents increasing levels of occupational stress, burnout, as well as other related mental health issues among public professionals including those working in the justice contexts (Ndetei et al., 2020; Irungu et al., 2024).

Despite these studies offering evidence on psychological strain, limited work has given special emphasis on how STS is associated with family relationships among probation officers. Existing literature implies that occupational stress can reach family life, adversely affecting communication, emotional availability, as well as role performance (Bachem et al., 2021). For instance, Okwara, Kihara, and Karega (2026) reported 72.6% prevalence of STS**,** with 40.5% experiencing high or severe STS among probation officers. Intrusion and avoidance symptoms were more prominent than hyper-arousal symptoms. Nonetheless, these findings are mostly based on studies excluding family relationships or outside Kenyan probation contexts, hindering generalization.

In Nairobi County, probation officers operate in highly demanding environments characterized by increased caseloads and social issues. However, there is no empirical data on the prevalence of STS among them, its effects on family functioning, as well as coping strategies employed.

This indicate a knowledge gap, especially given that family stability is associated with individual wellness and professional efficacy.

In the absence of context-knit evidence, it remains challenging to how STS contributes to family strain among probation officers or to create objective interventions. This study therefore sought to examine how secondary traumatic stress and family relationships interacted among probation officers in Nairobi County.

1.4. Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of the current study was to examine how secondary traumatic stress (STS) influences family relationships among probation officers in Nairobi County.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

1. To assess the levels of secondary traumatic stress among probation officers in Nairobi County
2. To examine the nature of family relationships among probation officers on communication, emotional availability, and role functioning.
3. To determine how secondary traumatic stress interacted with family relationships among probation officers in Nairobi County
4. To establish the strategies that can be used by probation officers to manage unhealthy family relationships.

1.5. Research Questions

1. What are the levels of secondary traumatic stress among probation officers in Nairobi County?

2. What is the nature of family relationships, particularly in terms communication, emotional availability, and role functioning among probation officers in Nairobi County?
3. How does secondary traumatic stress influence family relationships among probation officers in Nairobi County?
4. In which ways can probation officers manage unhealthy family relationships?

1.6. Significance of the Study

The current study, which examined the impact of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) on family relationships among probation officers in Kenya, held considerable importance for different stakeholders, such as the target population and their families, justice entities, policymakers, as well as researchers.

For probation officers, the study was expected to offer recognition to the emotional demands of probation work, validate experiences of secondary trauma that were often minimized or overlooked. Through this study, probation officer would gain a deeper comprehension of STS symptoms like intrusive thoughts, avoidance, and hyper-arousal alongside their risk factors. This awareness was to promote self-identification when occupational stress adversely affects functioning. Understanding the impacts is also expected to enhance need for practical supports, like peer debriefing, confidential services, resilience awareness, as well as workload management. Notably, the study was expected to contribute towards destigmatizing mental health issues within probation department and the general criminal justice system, enabling officers to understand risks without fears.

For families, the current study was expected to validate the experiences of probation officers' immediate family members who often endure "silent" challenges associated with officers' trauma exposure. The study was expected to increase awareness of the need for officers to

create limits between work and family life. Findings were expected to support family-inclusive interventions like psycho-education, family therapy, outreaches, and support groups knit on justice employees' households.

For criminal justice entities, the Probation and Aftercare Service (PACS) and other justice partners were expected to benefit from evidence from this study which was expected to highlights the human cost of probation work. The findings were expected to offer guidance workforce planning, address burnout, enhance retention, and streamline supervision, induction, programs, as well as workload policies. This evidence would also form the basis for enhanced advocacy for funding toward wellness interventions, ultimately enhancing morale and the integrity of nun-custodial interventions.

For policymakers**,** locally supported findings from the current study were expected enable decision-makers to design policies that safeguard officer while promoting community safety. By addressing the root causes of STS, the findings were expected to inform on ways to reduce risks linked to impaired judgment and strengthen the probation services efficacy.

For communities and clients, the findings of this study were expected to inform on ways of ensuring a healthier probation workforce which would translate into more consistent engagement with offenders, balance between accountability and rehabilitation, and enhanced trust between justice institutions and communities.

For researchers and academics**,** the current study was expected to contribute to context-specific evidence to the limited body of literature on STS among probation officers. Its findings could serve as a model for similar studies in other regions or justice agencies, bridging gaps between policy, practice, and academics.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

The current study was done under the guidance of the Secondary Traumatic Stress Theory and Family Systems Theory. Secondary Traumatic Stress Theory (Figley, 1995) was used to explain the psychological effects experienced by professionals exposed to trauma through their routine interactions with clients' experiences. The theory asserts that long term empathetic engagements with traumatized people can result in symptoms like intrusion, avoidance, and hyper-arousal. Along the current study, the theory offered a framework to understand the independent variable (STS) by coming up with its concepts and how they manifested among probation officers. It also helped to suggest that these symptoms could extend beyond the workplace, affecting family dynamics and functioning.

Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978) was used to complement this assertion by explaining how personal stress affects the family as a unit. The theory argues that dynamics in a member's emotional life affects the whole family system, often causing changes in communication ways, emotional responsivity, and role outcomes. In the current study, the theory offered a basis to examine family relationships, operationalized as communication, emotional availability, and role functioning. It also assisted in explaining how STS symptoms among probation officers would "spill over" into family life, potentially affecting family stability or, how supportive family systems could address the effects of stress. Using these two theories offered a detailed framework for the study where Secondary Traumatic Stress Theory explained the origin of occupational stress, while Family Systems Theory explained its relational impact within the family environments

1.8. Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The currents study examined how secondary traumatic stress (STS) affected family relationships among probation officers working in the Nairobi County. It particularly examined STS levels, and the nature of family. It also assessed the relationship between STS and family relationship among probation officers as well as the coping interventions employed to maintain healthy family life. The study targeted eight probation stations under the Probation and Aftercare Service (PACS): Makadara, Kibera, Dagoretti, JKIA, Milimani High Court, Milimani Chief Magistrate Court, Mathari Liaison Office, and the Nairobi Probation Hostel. The urban context offered unique pressures such as increased caseloads, prolonged exposure, and inadequate psycho-social support, making it a good context to study the impact of STS.

The study target was all the 108 probation officers stationed in Nairobi stations. By narrowing to Nairobi-based officers, the study purposed to generate context-specific findings to inform strategic interventions and policy adjustments in the probation sector.

Secondary traumatic stress acted as the independent variable, conceptualized into three categories namely intrusion, avoidance, and hyper-arousal. The outcome variables were family relationships conceptualized as communication, emotional availability, and role functioning. On the other hand, the moderating variables encompassed coping strategies and support systems, such as supervision, peer support, recreational activities, and accessibility to psycho-social services. Self-reported survey and key informant interviews were used in data collection

1.9. Assumptions of the Study

This study remained cognizant of the following assumptions;

First, it was assumed that probation officers would respond to the research questions truthfully and accurately. The study also assumed that the selected tools- questionnaires and interview guides would appropriately capture and measure secondary traumatic stress and family

relationship dynamics. It was further assumed that any necessary contextual adaptations, pilot testing, and cultural considerations ensured that the instruments remained valid and reliable within the Kenyan justice context. The study was also based on the assumption that necessary permissions to conduct the study would be granted by relevant authorities, including the Probation and Aftercare Service (PACS), and that the research license would be issued by regulatory bodies. Finally, study also assumed that there would be no significant government or policy changes that might disrupt the operations of the probation service or affect access to respondents during the study period and that research assistants would act professionally during the study period and activities.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the background of the study. It has also presented the statement of the problem motivating the current study. This section has also stated the study objectives, questions, significance, scope as well as the assumptions guiding the study. The entire chapter has offered an understanding and conceptualization of the variables, the theoretical premises for the current study. By introducing the concepts, variables and theory, this section has provided the basis for the next chapter which his review of literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is a presentation of literature reviewed existing on secondary traumatic stress and its interaction with family relationships. It discusses global, regional, and local research along study objectives, theoretical basis, and gaps that this study sought to address. In addition, this chapter discuses conceptual framework for the current study.

2.2. Critical Review of Theories

This section dissects the interplay between Secondary Traumatic Stress and family relationships among probation officers in Nairobi along Figley's Secondary Traumatic Stress Theory (1995) and Bowen's Family Systems Theory (1978).

2.2.1 Figley's Secondary Traumatic Stress Theory

This theory was put forward by Charles Figley (1995) and offers main tenets for this study. Figley conceptualized STS as the emotional strain experienced by people with indirect exposure to trauma as a result of professional responsibilities. Unlike primary trauma, STS emanates from empathetic interactions with traumatized people (Figley, 1995). This theory presents three main symptom clusters which are (intrusion, avoidance, and arousal) which imply post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) but occur among people who have no direct experience with traumatic event (Figley, 2002). Intrusion is the recurrence of thoughts or images linked to clients' trauma; avoidance entails taking initiative to disengage from memory of traumatic material; while arousal occurs trough heightened irritability, inability to concentrate, or sleep problems. Its main terms, sustained exposure to clients' traumatic accounts can overwhelm professional's coping ability, resulting in emotional distress affecting professional as well as personal life.

In the current study's context, this theory provides a framework to assess how probation officers, through normal work interactions with offenders and survivors, can internalize the trauma. The indirect vulnerability comes out as secondary traumatic stress, which can impact family relationships along communication, emotional availability, as well as role functioning. This theory therefore offers guidance into how occupational stressors can spill over into an officer's family life.

The strengths of this theory lie in its ability to articulate how trauma can indirectly move. The theory also acknowledges empathy as a professional advantage and a vulnerability. In addition, it offers a locus to understand occupational stress among practitioners (Figley & Ludick, 2017). This theory is also widely applied in social work, counseling, as well as healthcare, offering vital on vulnerabilities faced by professionals.

This theory however, has some limitations. Many scholars have observed complexity and conceptual overlap among compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, and associated constructs, which complicates their evaluation (Halamová et al., 2024). It is also argued that most empirical validation happened in Western contexts, questioning its applicability in other regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa where cultural trauma expression may differ. This theory is also questioned for emphasizes vulnerability and symptomatology without accounting for resilience factors and organizational supports which an mitigate secondary stress. Finally, it is argued that the theory focuses mainly on personal-level processes and professional exposure; without elaborating on family dynamics or how organizational as well as cultural contexts can moderate spillover of effects into family life. This is been viewed as a reason to necessitate complementing frameworks to account for systemic family effects.

Nonetheless, this theory is justified as a guide for this study because it directly addresses secondary traumatic stress among probation officers and offer a basis for linking occupational exposure to trauma with family relationship outcomes. By applying it to the Kenyan context,

this study extends its relevance beyond Western contexts and bridges empirical gap in Sub-Saharan Africa. This theory applies to the first objective which is assessing the prevalence of STS among probation officers. Its inadequacies are addressed by subsequent family-based perspectives that account for wider social environment of probation officers.

2.2.2 Family Systems Theory

This theory came from the works of Murray Bowen (1978), who viewed the family as an interconnected emotional unit where the functioning of a member influences is influenced by those of others (Bowen, 1978). Its central principle is that families operate as systems governed by patterns of interaction, communication, and emotional regulation. Stress faced by one member often reaches the entire system, affecting entire family functioning. Main concepts include differentiation, emotional triangles, family projection processes, as well as multi-generational transmission of patterns (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). These concepts are relevant to the present study because secondary traumatic stress experienced by probation officers may affect the functioning of other family members through changes in communication, emotional availability, and role functioning. Differentiation relates to the ability of an individual to regulate emotions while remaining connected to family members, while emotional triangles explain how stress within one relationship may affect other relationships within the family. Family projection processes are relevant in understanding how emotional stress may influence children and other family members, while multi-generational transmission of patterns provides an understanding of how patterns of emotional functioning may continue within families (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

The theory is therefore relevant to the present study because probation officers are exposed to traumatic experiences in the course of their duties, which may result in secondary traumatic stress and influence their family relationships. Stress faced by one member may affect communication, emotional availability, and the performance of family roles. The theory

provides a framework for understanding how secondary traumatic stress among probation officers may extend beyond the workplace and influence the wider family system. It is therefore useful in explaining the relationship between secondary traumatic stress and family relationships among probation officers in Nairobi County.

In this study, the theory provides a model to understand how probation officers experience secondary traumatic stress and how it ends up into family situations. Symptoms such as intrusion, avoidance, not forgetting arousal can adversely affect communication, emotional availability, and role functioning. For example, high irritability or withdrawal can derail spousal relationships or parenting responsibilities. By putting personal stress in a wider family context, Bowen helps to explain how occupational trauma results into family relational dynamics.

The strengths of this theory lie in its multimodal aspect, which emphasizes interdependence and relational rather than isolating individual experiences. This theory has been applied in family therapy and studies, offering a robust framework to determine how stressors are addressed within family units (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2013). It also focuses on communication and emotional regulation which all converges with Family Assessment Device (Epstein et al., 1983), making it aligned to this study.

However, critics indicate that Bowen's perspective is abstract in nature and, in most cases, difficult for research operationalization (Titelman, 2014). Its orientation to western and developed world also hinders contextual applicability. Besides, its over-emphasis on long-term generational characteristics can underplay eminent stressors, such as occupational trauma, that affect family functioning in the short run.

Nonetheless, this theory is viewed as an important guide to this study for supporting Secondary Traumatic Stress Theory trough placing personal occupational stress along family domain.

Jointly, the two theories give a comprehensive locus to understand how probation officers' vulnerability to trauma affect their well-being as well as that of their family relationships.

This theory explains the study's second and third objectives and its systems-based dimension assists to explain how occupational stress impacts family dynamics, leading to communication or emotional withdrawal issues.

2.3. Review of Empirical Studies

2.3.1. Levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress among employees

Across the world, Secondary traumatic stress (STS) is documented among justice and care-giving professionals. Page et al. (2021) found that indirect exposure to trauma results in symptoms linked to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as intrusion, avoidance, and hyper-arousal. Casas et al. (2022) systematic review found that probation and parole officers undergo STS symptoms at measure similar to social workers as well as first responders. Occupational vulnerabilities encompassed increased caseloads, continuous exposure to emotional case content, inadequate supervision, and deepening avoidant coping mechanism. Notably, the review indicated methodological inadequacies such as inconsistent measurement instruments, inadequate longitudinal studies, sparse data from low- and middle-income countries linking STS to family functioning.

Roberts (2021) study among 302 probation and parole officers in Kentucky found that 46.1% of them scored at-risk measure for STS. Younger officers recorded increased symptom measures, and indirect trauma was strongly linked to stress. Nonetheless, the U.S. orientation, its cross-sectional model, and use of self-report hinder generalizability to Kenyan settings where culture and institutional contexts differ.

In Turkey, Eryalçın and Eryalçın (2025) also found that probation staff face emotional fatigue, safety concerns, and unhealthy work conditions. Institutional factors such as high caseloads and low supervisory support was also common. Though insightful, the small sample and use of unstandardized STS instruments limit wider applicability, indicating the need for instrument-based research in Nairobi that also incorporates family outcomes.

Most studies in Africa have focused on healthcare and social sectors and not probation officers. For instance, in South Africa Masson and Moodley (2020) found moderate STS and burnout among social workers, with scores associated with increased caseloads and low supervision. Another study found that emotion-focused and avoidant coping strategies predicted bad outcomes. On the other hand, peer support and supervision were reported as protective. Byansi et al. (2023) reviewed African studies finding that STS prevalence ranged from 20-35%, and driven by scarcity of resources, increased caseloads, and low supervision. These studies imply systemic vulnerabilities but lacked objective assessment of family functioning.

In South Africa Mashego et al. (2023) found that avoidant and emotion-targeted coping strategies were linked to increased STS symptoms, while problem-focused strategies was ranked protective. However, the inadequate sample and occupational focus hinder generalizability to Kenyan probation officers.

East African scholars emphasize direct trauma instead of vicarious trauma. Srahbzu and Gebeyehu (2021) found 15-25% PTSD prevalence in Ethiopian conflict zone. On the other hand, Mutuyimana and Maercker (2023) found pervasive emotional exhaustion among Rwandan social workers post-genocide. In Uganda, Kabunga et al. (2024) found that healthcare employees faced burnout and trauma symptoms associated with under-staffing and vulnerability to patient suffering. As such, these studies show parallels with STS but failed to assess family outcomes.

In Kenya, studies have confirmed occupational stress among justice professionals but fail to focus on probation officers. For example, Yalch (2024) found avoidance and emotional withdrawal in police force and humanitarian employees. Additionally, Irungu et al. (2024) reported that 40% of prison and police officers had mild threshold for STS, with increased scores among those interacting handling violent clients. Chelagat (2025) reported trauma symptoms in one in every four justice employees nationally, though probation officers were not part of the sample. Ugbong (2024) study among Kiambu County healthcare staff reported moderate STS levels though with weak correlations with social support.

In Nairobi County, Tarichia (2019) identified emotional strain, high caseloads, and inadequate autonomy as major stressors among probation officers. Coping was informally characterized by use of family or peers, with low access to formal support. Despite its insights, the study failed to use standardized STS instruments or measure family relationships.

2.3.2. Family Relationships influence on Communication, Emotional Availability, and Role Functioning

Globally, family relationships are at the epitome of understanding how occupational stress end up into family life. Perry-Jenkins and Gerstel (2020) studied how job environments shaped family dynamics across in different diverse social groups. It was revealed that emotionally demanding and low pay jobs often end up affecting communication, emotional connection, as well as role equilibrium. The study argued that emotional fatigue and ununiform care-giving schedules heightens family strain, particularly where institutional support lacks. Despite Perry-Jenkins and Gerstel (2020) being done in the US, ITS findings conceptually link to probation officers in Kenya, who undergo almost similar emotional demands and low control over work.

In Kentucky, Roberts' (2021) also found that officers in many situations withdrew from family activities, reporting fatigue and irritability, affecting family communications. Bachem et al. (2021) similarly reveal that about 35% of his sample had moderate STS symptoms and experienced heightened marital challenges and parenting deficits. The probation officers emotionally withdrew, became irritable, with low responsivity to family needs. This underscores the spill over effect of STS into individual and family aspects, reiterating the idea that STS is relational.

Casas et al. (2022) found consistent patterns of work-to-family spillover such as poor emotional availability, communication issues, irritability, and parental role disruptions. Notably, these effects were present among people with moderate STS, as well as among those meeting clinical thresholds.

In Africa, studies confirm similar trends. Towriss et al. (2020) found that people with moderate to high trauma-associated stress had significantly increased marital conflict rates, emotional withdrawal, as well as disrupted parenting. Emotional fatigue and hyper-arousal symptoms hindered healthy communication and responsiveness.

Mashego et al. (2023) also reported that trauma exposure strained marriages, promoted conflict, and challenges in parenting roles. Similarly, Mabaso and Holtzhausen (2017) study among police officers and nurses revealed that long-shift fatigue and avoidance coping strategies resulted in emotional withdrawal, poor communication, and reduced physical engagement in families. Avoidance coping was specifically linked to strained partner relationships as well as disrupted parenting routines.

In Rwanda, Mutuyimana and Maercker (2023) carried out a study among trauma-care providers focusing on those who worked with genocide victims and survivors. Through qualitative interviews supported by clinical assessments, it was found that professionals with moderate to

high STS symptoms had emotional distancing while at home. They also reported reduced responsiveness to family issues and mostly withdrew from intimate relationships. In Ethiopia, Tamir et al. (2024) cross-sectional study among caregivers in trauma-exposed settings revealed that 40% of caregivers had moderate to high STS with decreased parental supervision, emotional withdrawal, and unpredictable discipline practices. Similarly, Kabunga et al. (2024) found that continuous exposure to patients' suffering predicted STS and emotional fatigue. Those with higher STS were more likely to emotionally withdraw from family routines, hindering communication and empathy within family settings.

In Kenya, studies highlight the spill-over of occupational stress into family settings. Ndetei, Khasakhala, and Mathai (2020) carried out a mixed-methods study among front-line service providers in Nairobi and Mombasa, including mental health professionals, social workers, and correctional staff. It was found that 38% had moderate to severe STS, with emotional exhaustion, detachment, as well as sleep disturbance being common among them. It was also revealed that work-related trauma negatively affected family relationships especially by irritability, withdrawal, and diminished emotional availability.

Irungu et al. (2024), also found that 40% of correctional and law enforcement personnel had above the mild STS threshold. In addition, follow-ups indicated that chronic emotional strain resulted in irritability, emotional withdrawal, as well as interpersonal tension within families. Among 621 justice workers, Chelagat (2025 found that one in four reported clinical thresholds for STS, with emotional fatigue and withdrawal standing out. However, probation officers did not constitute the study sample.

In Nairobi, Tarichia (2019) examined stress among 45 probation officers. The findings indicated communication challenges and emotional distance in officers' families. In addition, they coped informally using family or peers, with inadequate access to formal support.

Nonetheless, the study failed explicitly connect these family outcomes to STS symptoms. It also used unstandardized tools, underscoring the need for focused research.

2.3.3. The Relationship Between Secondary Traumatic Stress and Family Relationships

Studies around the globe indicate a link between STS and family relations. Eryalçın and Eryalçın (2025) for instance in their correlational study in Turkey among public safety workers revealed a moderate negative correlation between STS and marital well-being. It was found that increasing one unit in STS would result in a 0.30-point drop in marital wellness. The officers indicated being emotionally withdrawn, irritable, with reduced intimacy. This imply that that STS derails family relationships.

In US, Bachem et al. (2021) undertook a study targeting social workers and found that about 35% of had moderate STS indicators. It was also revealed that they faced heightened marital tension as well as parenting deficits. Withdrawal, irritability, as well as reduced responsiveness to children's needs stood out. The study found that even small STS levels could disrupt family functioning, amplifying the relational impact of occupational trauma.

In a systematic review targeting studies on first responders as well as those in criminal-justice field, common characteristics of work-to-home spill-over remained prevalent. Trauma vulnerability was linked to reduced emotional availability, poor communication, irritability, as well as parenting role difficulties. These effects were present in clinical PTSD cases with even small STS levels.

Studies in sub-Saharan Africa also indicate connections between occupational trauma and family life. For example, in south Africa, Towriss et al. (2020) found that people with moderate to high trauma-associated stress had significantly increased rates of marital conflict, emotional withdrawal, as well as disrupted parenting roles. In addition, it was found that emotional fatigue and hyper-arousal symptoms disrupted communication and responsiveness within families.

In South Africa, Mashego et al. (2023) studied correctional staff and reported that trauma exposure was associated with marital strain, heightened conflict, and challenges maintaining parenting roles. Similarly, Mabaso and Holtzhausen (2017), found that fatigue from long shifts and avoidance coping led among police officers and nurses resulted in emotional withdrawal, poor communication, and reduced physical engagement in families. Avoidance coping strategy was specifically linked to strained partner relationships as well as disrupted parenting routines.

In Rwanda, Mutuyimana and Maercker (2023) examined trauma-care providers focusing on genocide survivors' caregivers. Through qualitative interviews and clinical assessments, it was revealed that those with moderate to high STS symptoms ended up emotionally distancing themselves at home. They also reported reduced responsiveness to family members and withdrawal from intimate relationships.

Tamir et al. (2024) found that 40% of caregivers in trauma exposed settings had moderate to high STS. These caregivers also reported reduced parental monitoring, emotional withdrawal, as well as inconsistent discipline practices. The disruptions were linked to fatigue, emotional numbing, as well as avoidance coping, which hindered caregivers' ability to be present and responsive within family settings.

Kenyan studies also confirm how occupational stress spill over into family life. For example, Ndetei, Khasakhala, and Mathai (2020) study among mental health professionals, social workers, as well as correctional staff revealed that about 38% reported moderate to severe STS. Symptoms including emotional strain, detachment, as well as sleep problems were common. Qualitative findings also revealed that work-linked trauma negatively affected family relationships along irritability, withdrawal, as well as inadequate emotional availability.

In Kenya, Irungu et al. (2024) surveyed 412 correctional and law enforcement personnel and found that 40% had above the mild STS measure. Follow-ups also revealed that chronic emotional strain resulted into irritability, withdrawal, as well as interpersonal tension within families. Also, Chelagat (2025) in a national study of 621 justice workers, it was revealed that one in four had STS, with emotional fatigue and social withdrawal remaining prevalent symptoms. Nonetheless, probation officers were not part of the study sample.

A study by Tarichia (2019) targeting 45 probation officers in Nairobi revealed reported communication breakdowns and emotional distance among officers' families. It was also found that they coped informally through family or peers with little accessibility to formal support. However, Tarichia (2019) did not explicitly connect these family outcomes to STS symptoms, nor used standardized tools.

2.3.4. Strategies Used by to Manage Unhealthy Family Relationships

Management of unhealthy family relationships remains a key concern in occupational and family research, especially for workers whose work makes them vulnerable to emotionally straining environments. Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) define coping as cognitive and behavioral initiatives to address stress. This offers an important locus to understand how probation officers handle tensions at home emanating from work pressures. Coping strategies can be problem-targeted, aimed at enhancing communication and addressing family strain, or emotion-focused, like regulating distress to avert negative spill-over into family settings.

Global scholars argue that coping mechanisms quality significantly determines family well-being among trauma-exposed staffs. The World Health Organization (2024b) argues that institutional strategies like counselling services, debriefing, and work-life balance policies not only address stress at work but also help avert emotional spillover that results in unhealthy family interactions.

In the UK, Evans (2020b) showed that mindfulness-based strategies enhanced emotional regulation and communication within families, mitigating tensions among social workers. Eryalçın and Eryalçın (2025) also that structured peer-support programs enhanced emotional availability to partners as well as children, addressing family strain by 50%. Roberts (2021) argue that probation and justice officers often depend on social support, exercise, hobbies, as well as supervision for stability in family settings. Anderson et al. (2017) also indicated that first responders who maintain open communication with family or participated in structured peer support had fewer family conflicts. On the other hand, avoidance-based coping like withdrawal or substance use was linked to strained relationships.

African scholars show that workers often rely on family networks and faith for family cohesion in the event organizational resources are scarce. Mashego et al. (2023) and Towriss, Zungu, and Pillay (2020) revealed that public safety workers in South Africa draw on communal supports like extended family, praying, and culturally supported rituals to restore emotional balance and family connection. These interventions help avert unhealthy relational patterns like detachment or irritability arising from occupational stress. Mabaso and Holtzhausen (2017) found that inadequate counselling access results in silence, withdrawal, and alcohol use, which derails family relations. In Nigeria, Adeniran (2018) found that police officers depended on religious coping strategies and spousal support, though high workloads rendered the interventions inadequate. Pham (2016) in Uganda and Srahbzu & Gebeyehu (2021) in Ethiopia showed that culturally supported practices such as storytelling, communal reflection, as well as family psycho-education supported emotional connectedness and addressed family conflict by about 15%. On the other hand, Kabunga et al. (2024) argued that social support, meditation, and peer discussions among Ugandan health workers assisted in restoring family emotional balance, though increased stress sometimes resulted in withdrawal from family members. This

duality indicates that despite coping mechanisms having the ability to reduce workplace distress, they do not fully protect family relationships.

In Kenya, the Ministry of Health through the National Trauma Services Framework (2021) proposed family-focused strategies like peer debriefing, counselling, as well as resilience seminars, though uptake remains a challenge. Irungu et al. (2024) revealed that officers accessing counselling had fewer family conflicts. On the other hand, Chelagat (2025) found that lack of family psycho-education in Employee Assistance Programs exposes families despite the vivid interpersonal spillover of work-related stress. Ndetei et al. (2020) assert that strategies like peer support, camaraderie, as well as prayer assisted police officers in supporting relational stability, though maladaptive interventions like withdrawal and alcohol use resulted in unhealthy family patterns.

In Nairobi, probation officers mostly depended on informal interventions like family talks, social networks, as well as religious engagement (Tarichia, 2018; PACS, 2023). Nonetheless, stigma regarding counselling often pushes them toward suppression instead of resolution, a pattern similar to Nairobi content moderators who deteriorated family relationships because of prolonged emotional strain in the absence of support (The Guardian, 2024).

2.4. Summary of Gaps from reviewed literature

Existing literature shows that secondary traumatic stress (STS) remains an occupational hazard among professionals working with traumatized people. However, a number of gaps remain and are categorized as follows: The reviewed studies reveal several gaps in relation to the present study. Page et al. (2021), Casas et al. (2022), Roberts (2021), Eryalçın and Eryalçın (2025), Masson and Moodley (2020), Byansi et al. (2023), and Mashego et al. (2023) established the presence of secondary traumatic stress among justice, probation, social work, correctional, and other trauma-exposed professionals, but most were conducted outside Kenya, focused on

different occupational groups, or lacked evidence on family outcomes. Srahbzu and Gebeyehu (2021), Mutuyimana and Maercker (2023), Tamir et al. (2024), and Kabunga et al. (2024) similarly examined trauma-related stress among professionals in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda but did not specifically examine probation officers or the relationship between STS and family relationships. In Kenya, Yalch (2024), Irungu et al. (2024), Chelagat (2025), Ugbong (2024), and Ndetei, Khasakhala, and Mathai (2020) provided evidence of STS and occupational stress among justice, correctional, law enforcement, and healthcare professionals, but probation officers were either not specifically studied or family relationships were not comprehensively examined.

Perry-Jenkins and Gerstel (2020), Bachem et al. (2021), Casas et al. (2022), Towriss et al. (2020), Mashego et al. (2023), Mabaso and Holtzhausen (2017), Mutuyimana and Maercker (2023), and Tamir et al. (2024) demonstrated that occupational and trauma-related stress may affect communication, emotional availability, marital relationships, parenting, and family roles, but they did not comprehensively examine these dimensions among probation officers in Nairobi County. Of particular relevance, Tarichia (2019) identified emotional strain, communication challenges, and emotional distance among probation officers in Nairobi, but did not explicitly link these family outcomes to STS, use standardized STS instruments, or examine communication, emotional availability, and role functioning together. Further, Folkman and Moskowitz (2004), Evans (2020b), Roberts (2021), Anderson et al. (2017), Mashego et al. (2023), Towriss et al. (2020), and the Ministry of Health (2021) identified different coping and support strategies, but limited evidence exists on strategies knit to probation officers for managing unhealthy family relationships.

Therefore, the reviewed literature leaves population, geographical, measurement, variable, relationship, and practical gaps, which the present study seeks to fill by assessing levels of STS, examining communication, emotional availability and role functioning, determining the

relationship between STS and family relationships, and establishing strategies for managing unhealthy family relationships among probation officers in Nairobi County.

2.5. Conceptual Framework

The figure below presents a conceptual framework for this study.

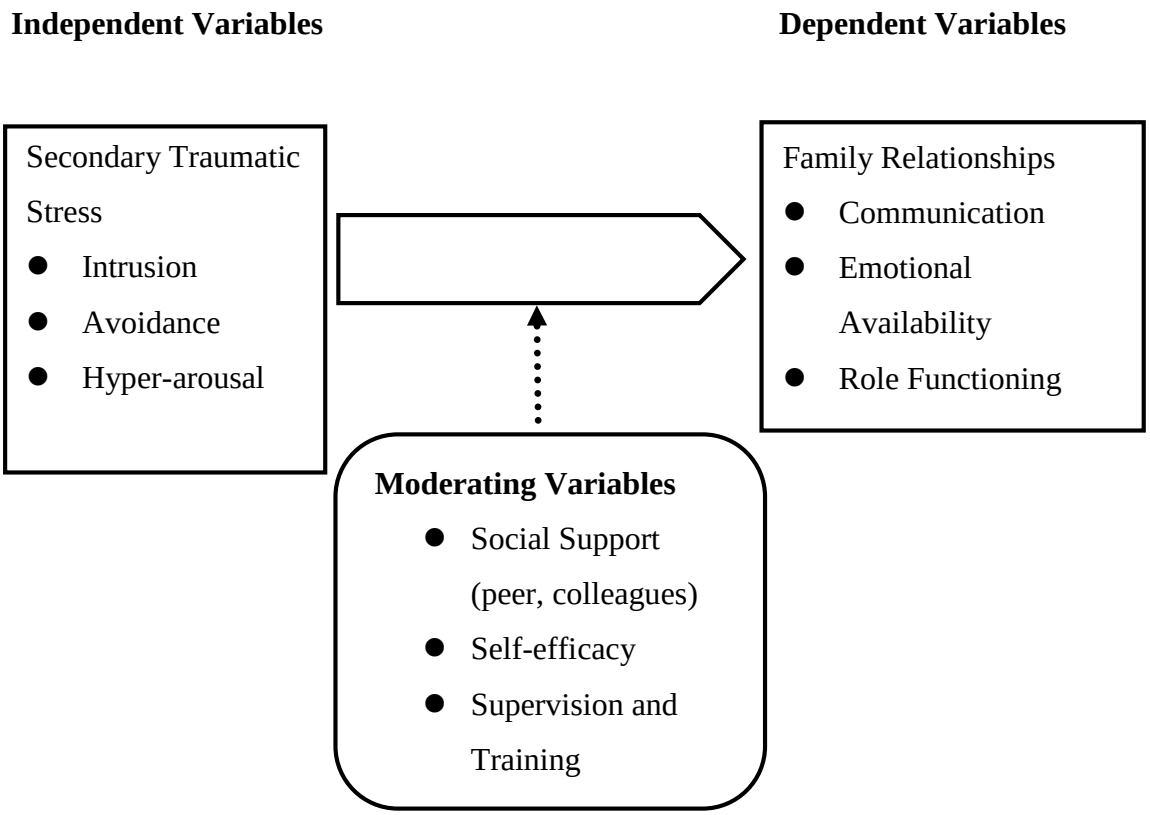

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Control Variables: Gender, Marital Status, and Role Differences (e.g., senior vs. junior officers).

The above conceptual framework shows how Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) interacts with Family Relationships among probation officers within Nairobi County. The independent variable (STS) is conceptualized as intrusion, avoidance, and hyper-arousal, while the dependent variable as communication, emotional availability, and role functioning. The moderating variables are social support, self-efficacy/coping styles, and supervision/training. This study projected that officers with strong social and professional support networks or

effective coping mechanisms were likely to experience less family strain despite high STS exposure. This framework aligns with Secondary Traumatic Stress Theory (Figley, 1995) and Family Systems Theory, which emphasize the inter-connectedness between personal stress responses and family functioning.

2.6. Chapter Summary

Globally, STS is well explored among care giving and justice sectors, with symptoms including intrusion, avoidance, and hyper-arousal getting into family life. African studies support these patterns, especially in high-stress contexts with inadequate mental health support. Regionally, trauma exposure is prevalent among probation officers remain not adequately researched despite their routine contact with offenders as victims.

Kenyan literature indicates that probation officers in Nairobi are exposed increased caseloads, emotional strain, and inadequate supervision, amplifying STS risk. Despite some studies addressing occupational stress, they did not adequately examine its impact on family relationships. The chapter have reviewed empirical work on STS along marital strain, emotional withdrawal, as well as role confusion, highlighting that no Nairobi-based study has directly linked STS to family outcomes. This chapter has also explored coping strategies with adaptive methods (social support, counselling, faith practices) contrasted against maladaptive ones (avoidance, substance use). Lastly, the conceptual framework has been used to show how STS associates with family relationships, with social support, coping styles, and supervision as moderators.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological model the study followed. This encompasses the design, study area, the target population, sampling method, data collection instruments, procedures, as well as ethical considerations. This chapter also discusses how validity and reliability were attained, and how data was analysed as per the objectives. It offers a wider road map for how the study was conducted to explore the connection between secondary traumatic stress and family relationships among probation officers in Nairobi County.

3.2 Research Design

The research design is an important aspect of research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study adopted a Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative perspectives to offer a holistic understanding of the research question. In this design, quantitative and qualitative data were simultaneously collected simultaneously, analysed independently, and later merged (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

The quantitative component measured the level of secondary traumatic stress among probation officers and its relationship with family relationships through statistical techniques. Quantitative data was particularly helpful in identifying patterns and testing relationships within a population (Kumar, 2019).

The qualitative aspect complemented these findings by assessing probation officers' lived experiences as well as view on how work-linked stress affected their family lives. Qualitative approaches helped to gain deeper insight into individuals' experiences and meanings of social phenomena (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The design was ideal since it allowed the researcher to collect numerical and narrative data from the same population. This approach allowed direct comparison and integration of findings. By use of quantitative and qualitative, the design enhanced validity through triangulation, where the strengths of one method cushioned the limitations of the other. As noted by Creswell and Clark (2018), integrating different forms of data yields results that are generalizable to the sample and contextually rich, providing new information that can inform policy and intervention initiatives.

3.3 Study Area

This study was carried out in Nairobi County, Kenya, which has eight probation stations under the Probation and Aftercare Service (PACS). These stations were Makadara, Kibera, Dagoretti, Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA), Milimani High Court, Milimani Chief Magistrate Court, Mathari Liaison Office, and the Nairobi Probation Hostel as shown in the Appendix IV. Nairobi is a diverse urban setting with increased caseloads and diverse socio-economic contexts, making it suitable to examine STS and family dynamics among probation officers.

3.4 Target Population

This study targeted all 108 probation officers attached to Nairobi County stations. These officers were directly engaged in offender supervision, victim support, as well as preparation of social inquiry reports, roles that makes them exposed to traumatic narratives. This target group was suitable to examine the link relationship between secondary traumatic stress and family relationships. Creswell and Clark (2018) note that a target population is the entire group of individuals with characteristics relevant to the research problem and from whom conclusions can be made.

3.5 Sampling Technique and Sample size

Information from the administrator, Nairobi County Probation Office, September 10, 2025 revealed that there were 108 probation officers stationed across eight stations within Nairobi County. The distribution was as follow; Makadara (26 officers), Kibera (21 officers), Dagoretti (4 officers), JKIA (12 officers), Milimani High Court, (8 officers) Milimani Chief Magistrate Court (20 officers), Mathari Liaison Office (6 officers), and the Nairobi Probation Hostel (11 officers).

Since the total number of probation officers in Nairobi County was relatively small (N = 108), a census sampling approach was used. Census sampling was used to eliminate sampling error and ensure representativeness (Kumar, 2019). Using this technique was appropriate for since it ensured that the experiences of all officers within Nairobi County were captured, thereby offering a detailed understanding of the connection between secondary traumatic stress and family relationships among probation officers.

For the qualitative aspect, 10 key informants were selected purposively. these were selected based on their rich, and relevant experiences as head of stations, the Nairobi County Director and the Nairobi Regional Director. These held supervisory roles and offered deeper insights into organizational issues and the influence of secondary traumatic stress on family relationships. A sample of 10 informants is enough in qualitative research, as it allows for rich narratives while attaining thematic saturation (Saldaña, 2016). Purposive sampling allowed deliberate selection of individuals who had relevant experiences and knowledge on the research topic (Patton, 2015).

Table 1: Sampling Matrix

No.	Station/Category	Target Population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique
1	Makadara Probation Station	26	26	Census
2	Kibera Probation Station	21	21	Census
3	Dagoretti Probation Station	4	4	Census
4	JKIA Probation Station	12	12	Census
5	Milimani High Court Probation Office	8	8	Census
6	Milimani Chief Magistrate Court Probation Office	20	20	Census
7	Mathari Liaison Office	6	6	Census
8	Nairobi Probation Hostel	11	11	Census
Total Quantitative Respondents		**108**	**108**	**Census**
9	Heads of Stations	—	7	Purposive
10	Nairobi County Director	—	1	Purposive
11	Nairobi Regional Director	—	1	Purposive
12	Another selected senior/supervisory officer	—	1	Purposive
Total Key Informants			**10**	**Purposive**
Overall Sample		**108 + 10**	**118**	**Census and Purposive**

Source: Researcher (2026)

3.5.1. Inclusion Criteria

The sampled included probation officers currently stationed and working in Nairobi County. Such officers were to have served for a period of not less than six months. This criterion was aimed at ensuring that participants had adequate work exposure and experience in probation service to offer relevant information on secondary traumatic stress and family relationships.

Key informants were probation officers in managerial position, specifically station in charges, the County Director, and the Regional Director.

3.5.2. Exclusion Criteria

Probation officers on extended leave, secondment, maternity leave, paternity leave, or any prolonged absence were not included in the study. In addition, those with less than six months of service in Nairobi County were alsoo excluded due to presumed limited occupational exposure.

3.6. Description of Data Collection Procedures

The data collection is an important part of research outlining systematic steps followed in obtaining information for the study, starting with authorization to the completion of data storage.

3.6.1 Authorization and Access

Before fieldwork, the researcher sought for an official research authorization letter from the Department of Psychology in CUEA and ethical approval from Tangaza University. This was followed by obtaining a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). In addition, a formal request for permission was made to the Probation and Aftercare Service (PACS) headquarters to access to probation stations within Nairobi County. This was followed by contacting respective station managers to brief them on the aim of the study, data collection time frame, and ethical safeguards. This also facilitated planning to minimize disruption to normal operations.

3.6.2 Participant Recruitment and Informed Consent

With a total number of 108 probation officers in Nairobi County, a census strategy was used for quantitative strand, with all eligible officers being included in the study. For the qualitative part, purposive sampling was used to select 10 key informants, including station in charges, the Nairobi County Director, as well as the Regional Director.

The probation officers were reached out through their respective managers and invited to participate in the study on voluntarily basis. Prior to data collection, the researcher shared information on study objectives, procedures, likely risks, and benefits of the study. All participants were availed with informed consent forms, which signed prior to participation. see Appendix I. Confidentiality and anonymity was emphasized in the entire research process.

3.6.3. Data Collection Instruments

This study used structured questionnaire and an interview guide as data collection instruments

a. Semi-Structured Questionnaire

A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from probation officers sampled through census approach.

Section A collected demographic information of respondents. Section B collected data on Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) through standardized Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS) developed by Bride (2007). This data collection instrument had 17 items assessing intrusion, avoidance, and hyper-arousal symptoms, making it relevant for probation officers with regular exposure to offenders' traumatic histories. Section C documented family relationships, assessed using Family Assessment Device (FAD) by Epstein, Baldwin, and Bishop (1983). The adapted version had 33 items organized along communication, emotional availability/affective functioning, as well as role functioning.

The FAD was suitable since its domains aligned with the study's dependent variables, indicating how occupational stress impacted family relationships. Despite Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS) having been widely applied in Western contexts, it was inadequate in Sub-Saharan Africa. Recent validation efforts in Kenya show its applicability but also underscore the need for contextual application for cultural relevance and clarity (Ugbong & Isoe, 2025). On the other hand, the Family Assessment Device (FAD) by Epstein, Baldwin, and Bishop (1983), has been validated in North American and European settings, showing strong reliability across its domains of communication, affective involvement, as well as role functioning. Nonetheless, evidence of its direct adaptation in Sub-Saharan Africa remain scarce. In this study, STSS and FAD were piloted and expert reviewed to ensure clarity, cultural relevance, as well as internal consistency within the Kenyan probation officer population. This strengthened construct validity while ensuring the rigor of internationally approved instruments.

Section D assessed coping strategies through 10 items covering social and emotional support, personal, spiritual coping, as well as professional or psychological interventions. This section indicated strategies officers applied to address stress and maintain wellness, highlighting resilience drivers at personal level. Lastly, Section E covered organizational support using 9 items measuring supervisor support, departmental policies, workload management, as well as wellness culture. This section contained institutional drivers that could prevent or exacerbate stress. This was aimed at ensuring that the findings were actionable for policy as well as intervention design.

Jointly, these sections offered a multi-level analysis on how probation officers faced and handled secondary traumatic stress, how it impacted family relationships, and what supports were availed at individual and organizational basis. This structure allowed the questionnaire to be comprehensive of generating generalizable and contextually rich findings. See Appendix II

In person and online forms were used in questionnaire self-administration, depending on logistical feasibility and participant consent. Sufficient time was given to complete the questionnaire in a private to reduce response bias.

b. Key Informant Interview Guide

An interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from Key Informants who included eight stations heads, county director, and the regional director. These persons were well positioned to offer strategic details into the organizational, professional, as well as family dynamics linked to probation work. The guide supported the questionnaire by examining issues at length, thereby supporting the design. The guide was semi-structured in nature with 10 questions, ensuring consistency across interviews while enabling flexibility for probing. This format allows coverage of objectives while enabling participants to detail experiences in verbatim (Magaldi & Berler, 2020).

Each interview took about 30-45 minutes and was done in private offices or neutral spaces to allow confidentiality. With participants' consent, audio recordings were made, with field notes to capture non-verbal cues as well as contextual information.

The instruments were administered in English because of assured literacy levels of probation officers and Key Informants. Nonetheless, participants who preferred Kiswahili while responding to sensitive family-related questions were allowed.

3.6.4. Data Management and Triangulation

Filled questionnaires were collected, coded, and securely kept. In addition, audio recordings were transcribed verbatim with quantitative and qualitative data being anonymized trough identification codes. Triangulation was attained through comparing quantitative findings with qualitative, thereby enhancing the validity and richness of results.

3.7. Pilot Study

Piloting is carrying out a small-scale preliminary investigation prior to the main research for purposes of testing design's feasibility, clarity, and reliability. This also extend to testing instruments, and procedures (Kumar, 2019). The pilot study was carried out at Limuru Probation Station in Kiambu County, with 12 officers and station head participating. Limuru was chosen because it shares same characteristics with the targeted population but neighbours the study area, addressing the risk of including the same participants in the final study.

Feedback helped to refine wording, structure, as well as sequencing to enhance accuracy and effectiveness (Kumar, 2019). It also informed revisions to enhance content validity and remove ambiguity. In addition, Cronbach's alpha was determined for the STSS and for each dimension of the Family Relationships scale, namely Communication, Emotional Availability, and Role Functionin) for internal consistency, with $\alpha \geq 0.70$ level being acceptable (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The pilot also assisted in estimating the time needed to complete the study and understand any logistical challenges while administering the tools. This strengthened the reliability of the tools and enhanced study quality.

Table 2: Reliability Results from the Pilot Study

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Interpretation
Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS)	17	0.969	Excellent
Communication	9	0.932	Excellent
Emotional Availability	13	0.898	Good
Role Functioning	11	0.927	Excellent

The Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS), comprising 17 items, obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.969. The Communication scale, consisting of 9 items, obtained an alpha coefficient of 0.932, while Emotional Availability, comprising 13 items, obtained an alpha coefficient of 0.898. Role Functioning, consisting of 11 items, obtained an alpha coefficient of 0.927. All the scales recorded Cronbach's alpha coefficients above the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency of the instruments.

3.8 Data Quality Control

In ensuring findings' credibility and trustworthiness, the study incorporated strategies to enhance validity and reliability.

3.8.1 Validity

Validity implies the extent to which a research instrument objectively measures the concept it is supposed to assess (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For the quantitative aspect, content validity was ensured through use of standardized instruments (STSS and FAD). Construct validity was enhanced through aligning instrument's domains with the study's conceptual framework. Expert review was further used to enhance appropriateness of the items for the Kenyan context.

For the qualitative part, validity was enhanced using credibility strategies like triangulation, member checking and maintaining an audit trail of coding decisions. These ensured that the qualitative findings were trustworthy and accurately reflected participants' views.

3.8.2 Reliability

Reliability is the consistency measurement across time and respondents (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). For the quantitative part of this study, reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient with values of 0.70 or higher being considered acceptable in social science research (Cronbach, 1951).

The Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS) has strong reliability in many previous studies, with alpha coefficients of 0.93, implying good internal consistency. Similarly, the Family Assessment Device (FAD) has been globally validated in family research with alpha values typically ranging from 0.72 to 0.92 depending on the domain measured. These standard established reliability levels were perceived meeting suitability of the instruments for the current study.

In particular, pilot data computed Cronbach's alpha for each scale and sub-scale. The instruments demonstrated internal consistency within the Kenyan probation officer context before full deployment. For the qualitative part, reliability was enhanced through systematic documenting of interview protocols, consistent use of the guide, and coding during thematic analysis. Triangulating of data sources, combining of survey responses with key informant insights, also strengthened the study's validity by providing multiple perspectives on the same phenomenon.

3.9 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the systematic process that organizes, examines, and interprets collected data to revel new patterns, test hypotheses, and also conclusions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It transforms raw data into structured insights that address the research objectives and answer the study questions.

In the current study, data analysis helped to understand the levels and correlations of secondary traumatic stress (STS) among probation officers, and its implications on family relationships. Besides, it assisted to identify coping strategies and institutional support models. The use of quantitative and qualitative data supported detailed and nuanced findings.

3.9.1. Quantitative Data Analysis

Responses from questionnaires were first checked for accuracy and completeness. Records with some missing information were excluded, while minor inadequacies were handled through appropriate methods including mean substitution or list-wise deletion. Data entry encompassed validation checks to reduce transcription errors.

Clean data was coded and analyzed through SPSS version 29. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize respondent demographics and secondary traumatic stress scores distribution. The family relationship items were measured through a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Considering the instrument had both positively and negatively worded statements, the negatively worded items were reverse-coded prior to composite scores computation. Reverse coding was run using the formula (X' = 6-X), where (X) represents the original response and (X') represents the reverse-coded score. As such, a response of 1 was converted to 5, 2 to 4, 3 remained 3, 4 was converted to 2, and 5 to 1. This ensured that all items were scored in the same direction, with higher scores representing better family relationship functioning.

After reverse coding, scores for communication, emotional availability, and role functioning were computed by obtaining the mean of the items constituting each dimension. The overall family relationship score was computed as the mean of all 33 items after the negatively worded items had been reverse-coded. This procedure guaranteed that positively and negatively worded items contributed consistently to the overall measure. The mean scores were interpreted using equal intervals derived from the five-point Likert scale.

The interval width was calculated as ((5-1)/5 = 0.80). Accordingly, mean scores of 1.00–1.80 were interpreted as very low, 1.81–2.60 as low, 2.61–3.40 as moderate, 3.41–4.20 as high, and 4.21–5.00 as very high. Therefore, lower scores indicated weaker family relationship functioning, while higher scores indicated stronger family relationship functioning.

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation to determine the strength and direction of relationships between secondary traumatic stress and family relationship measures. On the other hand, Multiple regression was helped to assess the extent to which secondary traumatic stress predicted variance in family relationship outcomes, while controlling for contextual variables like years of service, gender, and caseload. The findings were presented in tables and charts, with effect sizes.

3.9.2. Qualitative Data Analysis

Audio data from key informant interviews were transcribed verbatim with emphasis on accuracy checks. This started with the researcher reading transcripts repeatedly for purposes of gaining familiarity with the data. This was followed by deductive thematic analysis as guided by study objectives and conceptual framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Generation of codes were done along key constructs (e.g., intrusion, avoidance, arousal; communication; role functioning; emotional availability). This was followed by organizing them into wider themes capturing how probation officers and supervisors perceived the influence of work-associated trauma on family life. MAXQDA software was used in cording for purposes of systematic organization and easy retrieval.

Credibility was further enhanced by inter-coder agreement as well as member checking. A second coder independently coded a subset of transcripts, and any differences were subjected to discussion were discussed until agreement was reached. Member checking involved sharing summary interpretations with some participants to ensure that findings reflected their views.

3.10. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations play a critical role in ensuring that the researcher works within the regulatory limits. In this study, the researcher sought ethical approval from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, the Probation and Aftercare Services Department (PACS), and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Voluntary participation and harmlessness were safeguarded by allowing participants to participate freely and withdraw at any time without conditions. Informed consent and disclosure were observed through examination of the purpose, procedures, outputs, likely risks, and participants' rights prior to obtaining written consent. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained through assigning codes instead of names and protecting electronic files using passwords.

Integrity and transparency were upheld using honest data collection and adherence to standard research procedures. Fair subject selection was ensured by consistent inclusion and sampling criteria without bias or favoritism. Beneficence and non-maleficence were observed through reducing likely physical, psychological, social, as well as professional harm to participants. Lastly, ethical analysis and reporting were maintained by analyzing and reporting findings objectively without fabrication, falsification, or deliberate changing of results, while ensuring that participants and stations access them.

3.11. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The researcher confirms that no financial conflict of interest existed regarding to this study.

Nonetheless, given that the researcher has professional familiarity with the probation environment, potential for perceived professional bias could not be overlooked. In order to reduce this risk, participation was entirely voluntary. In addition, confidentiality and anonymity was emphasized with respondents being assured that their responses were exclusively for

academic purposes. In addition, standardized data collection instrument and objective analytical procedures were utilized for purposes of neutrality and credibility of results.

3.12. Dissemination of Findings

The current study's findings were disseminated using submission of the final research report to the university, thus, fulfilling academic requirements. Besides, a summary of findings was also shared with the Probation and Aftercare Service (PACS) department for purposes of informing policy and staff well-being interventions.

3.13. Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the methodological blueprint for the study. This includes research design, sampling methods, data collection tools, procedures, as well as ethical standards. The mixed-methods design allowed comprehensive assessment of STS and its influence on family relationships among probation officers in the study area.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the data collected during the study. The findings are presented according to the research objectives. Tables, charts and descriptive explanations and inferential have been used to illustrate the findings and offer a clear understanding of the research outcomes.

4.2. Response Rate

Table 3: Response Rate

Respondents' categories	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Probation officers	108	100.0%
Key Informants	10	100.0%
Total	**118**	**100%**

Table 3 above shows that the study attracted a total of 118 respondents with 108 being probation officers and 10 being Key Informants. The study attained a 100% response rate, with targeted probation officers and 10 key informants taking part in the study. This was enhanced by prior coordination with involved probation offices and station administrators, direct administration of questionnaires to probation officers, as well as individual administration of interview guides to key informants. The researcher-maintained contact with the participating stations and undertook necessary follow-ups during the data-collection period to ensure that the instruments were completed and returned. Consequently, all 118 targeted participants took part in the study, leading to 100% response rate.

4.3 Demographic information of respondents

Table 4: Age Distribution Analysis

Age Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
26-30	12	11.1%
31-35	28	25.9%
36-40	34	31.5%
41-45	18	16.7%
46 and above	16	14.8%
Total	**108**	**100%**

The findings in Table 4 above show that respondents aged 36-40 years (n = 34, 31.5%), those aged 31-35 years were (n = 28, 25.9%), 41-45 years were (n = 18, 16.7%), 46 years and above were (n = 16, 14.8%), while those aged 26-30 years were (n = 12, 11.1%)**.** This age distribution shows that most of respondents were in active professional and family years.

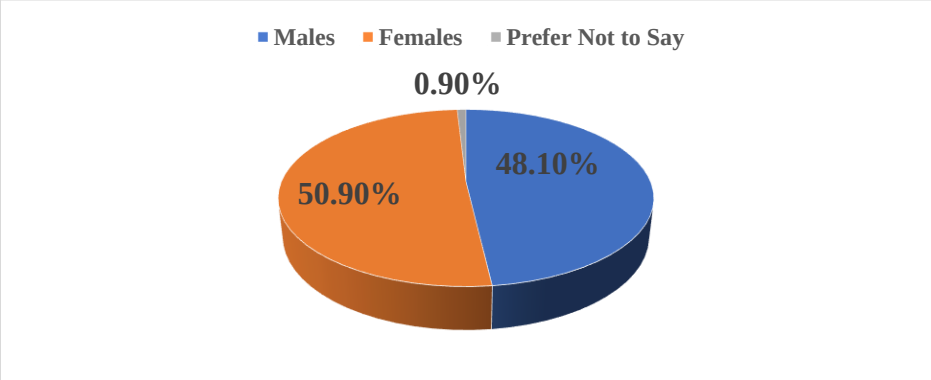

Figure 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents.

The figure 2 above shows that (n = 55, 50.9%) were female, 48.1% (n = 52) were male while (n = 1, 0.9%) selected the category "Other/Prefer not to say." This indicates that the study reached a somehow balanced gender dimension. The somehow higher proportion of female

officers shows that female gender constitutes a bigger number of probation officers in Nairobi County. With the emotionally straining of probation work, female officers are likely to face unique challenges linked to managing occupational stress with family roles. Thus, the somehow equal gender representation strengths the study by availing different perspectives on how secondary traumatic stress interact with family relationships among probation officers. This enhances the credibility of findings, enabling enhanced comprehension of occupational trauma and family dynamics across gender.

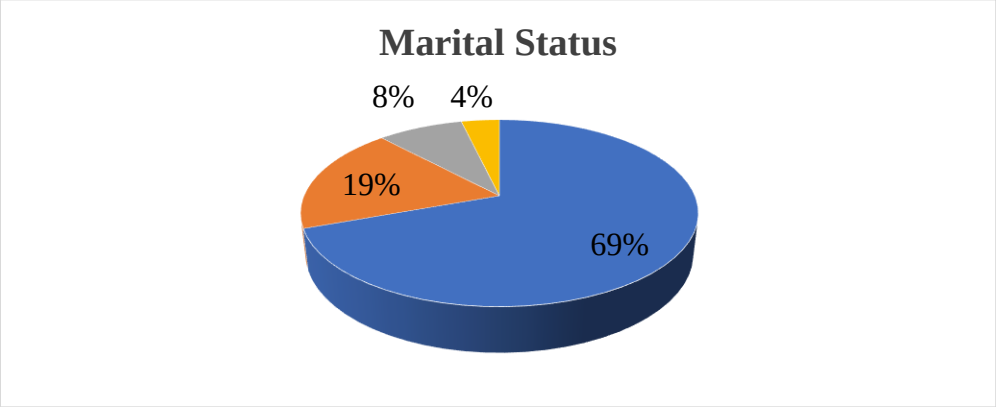

Figure 3: Marital Status Distribution of Respondents

Figure 3 highlights that 69.4% (n = 75) were in marriage, 18.5% (n = 20) were single, 8.3% (n=9), while 3.7% n = (4) reported having lost their partners through death. This marital status results show that occupational stress among probation officer has the potential to influence individual well-being as well as broader family dynamics.

Table 5: Number of Children among Respondents (N = 108)

Number of Children	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
None	8	7.4
1 Child	10	9.3
2 Children	22	20.4
3 Children	25	23.1
4 Children	18	16.7
5 Children	12	11.1
6 Children	8	7.4
7 Children	5	4.6
Total	**108**	**100.0**

Table 5 findings reveal that probation officers having 3 children were n = 25 (23.1%), followed by those with 2 children at n = 22 (20.4%). Those with 4 children stood at n=18 (16.7%), while those with 5 children were n=12 (11.1%). The study also found that n= 10 (9.3%) had one child, while n=8 (7.4%) had no child. Additionally, those with 6 children were n=8 (7.4%), while those with 7 children stood at n=5 (4.6%) of the respondents. These findings show that most probation officers actively engaged in family and parenting chores and as such, increased family responsibilities would result in spill-over effects of secondary traumatic stress into their households. These current findings support the relevance of exploring occupational trauma exposure on family relationships.

Table 6: Years of Service as a Probation Officer

Years of Service	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1-5 Years	25	23.1
6-10 Years	31	28.7
11-15 Years	36	33.3
16-18 Years	16	14.8
Total	**108**	**100.0**

The year of service distribution in table 6 shows that officers with 11-15 years were n = 36 (33.3%), 6-10 years of service were n=31 (28.7%) while n=25 (23.1%) had worked for 1-5 years**.** Those with 16-18 years were n=16 (14.8%)**.** These findings reveal that most officers had worked for more than six years, indicating a workforce with some exposure to emotionally demanding situations. As such, the years of service enhances the relevance of examining occupational trauma exposure along family relationships.

Table 7: Respondents Per Station

Probation Station	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
JKIA	12	11.1
Makadara	26	24.1
Kibera	21	19.4
Mathari Liason	6	5.6
Nairobi probation hostel	11	10.2
Milimani High court	8	7.4
Dagoretti	4	3.7
Milimani chief magistrate	20	18.5
Total	**108**	**100.0**

Based on table 7, Makadara station had the highest number of respondents with n = 26 (24.1%) followed by Kibera recording n=21 (19.4%), Milimani Chief Magistrate n=20 (18.5%), and JKIA n=12 (11.1%). Nairobi Probation Hostel and Milimani High Court each recording n=11 (10.2%), and n=8 (7.4%). Lastly, Mathari Liason and Dagoretti each recorded the least proportion of n=6 (5.6%) and n=4 (3.7%)**.** The findings indicate that respondents were fairly distributed in different probation stations thus, strengthening the current study's credibility.

Table 8: Respondents' Caseload Distribution

Caseload Range	**Frequency (n)**	**Percentage (%)**
10-15 Cases	29	26.9
16-20 Cases	28	25.9
21-25 Cases	27	25.0
26-30 Cases	24	22.2
Total	**108**	**100.0**

The caseload distribution in the table 8 shows that officers with 10-15 cases were n = 29 (26.9%), 16-20 cases were n=28 (25.9%), 21-25 cases were n=27 (25.0%), while the highest with 26-30 cases were n=24 (22.2%) of the respondents. The mean caseload was 20 cases indicating that probation officers in Nairobi County operate under moderate to high workload situations. This points to considerable caseload pressures with a possibility of alleviating emotional strain and issues in sustainable healthy family relationships. The caseload offers contextual understanding on the relationship between secondary traumatic stress and family functioning among probation officers.

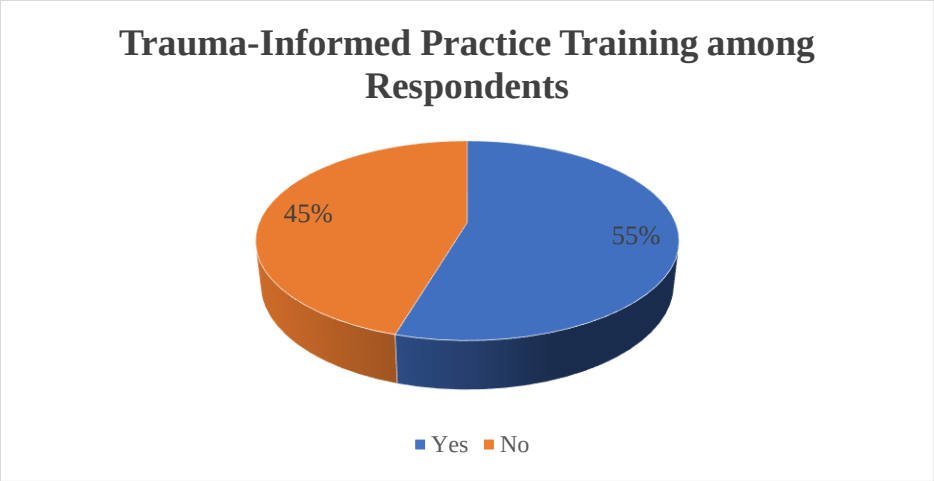

Figure 4: Trauma-Informed Practice Training among Respondents

In figure 4 above n=59 (54.6%) of respondents indicated having trauma-informed practice training while n=49 (45.4%) reported the contrary. The considerable proportion of trained officers may mean enhanced awareness of the psychological effects of trauma and enhanced professional ability to manage emotionally straining cases. The lack of the training among 49 respondents is significant to the present study because inadequacy may support emotional exhaustion, irritability, withdrawal, and challenges in balancing work and family demands.

4.4 Descriptive and Inferential Statistical Analysis of findings

4.4.1. To assess the levels of secondary traumatic stress among probation officers in Nairobi County

Table 9: Exposure to Trauma among Probation Officers

No.	Statement	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)
1	I hear detailed accounts of violence or abuse from clients.	3.63	1.01
2	I write reports or case files of violent offenses.	3.68	1.02
3	I write reports or case files that are sexual or abusive in nature.	3.57	1.09
4	I review written reports or case files that describe graphic events.	3.54	1.06
5	I interact with victims or survivors of violent crimes in the course of my work.	3.60	1.01
6	I respond to crisis situations involving harm or threat of harm.	3.66	0.97
7	I supervise offenders involved in criminal violence offenses.	3.68	0.99
8	I supervise offenders involved in sexual offenses.	3.69	1.03
	Total	**3.63**	**1.02**

Trauma exposure ratings in table 8 show that the overall mean of exposure was 3.63 with standard deviation of 1.02. On Likert scale, this show that officers frequently faced emotionally distressing situations. The statement *"I supervise offenders involved in sexual offenses"* reported high agreement with mean score of 3.69, and standard deviation of 1.03.

Similarly, the statement *"I write reports or case files of violent offenses"* statement reported a high mean of M = 3.68, and SD = 1.02, while *"I supervise offenders involved in criminal violence offenses"* with mean of 3.68 SD = 0.99. The findings further revealed that respondents frequently responded to crisis situations involving harm or threat of harm with M = 3.66, SD = 0.97. The statement *"I hear detailed accounts of violence or abuse from clients"* recorded a mean score of 3.63 (SD = 1.01). In addition, officers reported frequent interaction with victims or survivors of violent crimes at M = 3.60, SD = 1.01. The statements *"I write reports or case files that are sexual or abusive in nature"* reported M = 3.57, SD = 1.09 while "*I review written reports or case files that describe graphic events"* M = 3.54, SD = 1.06 also recorded high mean scores. These findings show that probation officers operate in environments that expose them to traumatic material which may increase secondary traumatic stress vulnerability, which can turn averse to family relationships.

Most key informants asserted that probation officers work in emotionally demanding environments with continuous interaction with traumatized clients, offenders, victims, and distressed families. KI1 – Nairobi Regional Director stated:

> "Probation officers handle difficult cases and situations every day. They listen to narratives of violence, abuse, neglect, family dysfunction, and delinquent behaviour. Over time, the repeated exposure emotionally affects them despite not being direct victims. This is a common thing if one is not self-aware on handling challenging situations"

In this finding, the regional director emphasized that officers faced indirect trauma by continuously engaging with emotionally straining client accounts. In addition, KI2 – Officer In-Charge, Makadara Station said:

> "Some officers deal with cases involving defilement, domestic violence, child neglect, and murder suspects almost daily. When you keep hearing bad narratives daily, it ends up affecting your emotional wellness. Such narratives can run in your minds for a long time and even distort health"

This finding by the officer shows that officers had repeated exposure to distressing case content that may perpetuate STS vulnerability. In addition, KI4 – Officer In-Charge, Kibera Station supported that probation officers absorb more emotional pain from clients. Some cases are emotionally heavy, particularly involving children or family violence.

The officer suggested that emotionally strong cases entailing vulnerable persons like children and victims of violence on a high-level result in emotional fatigue among officers. Similarly, KI8 – Officer In-Charge, Dagoretti Station concluded some officers are continuously interacting with persons faced by trauma, conflict, and emotional torture. Exposure to such conditions affects officers psychologically.

These findings therefore show that probation officers in the study area face high levels of exposure to traumatic and emotionally distressing experiences while delivering their mandates.

4.4.2 Intrusion Symptoms among Probation Officers

Probation officers were requested to indicate how often they undergone intrusion-related symptoms emanating from working with traumatized clients. The responses are tabulated below;

Table 10: Intrusion Symptoms among Probation Officers

No.	Statement	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)
1	I felt emotionally distressed by the trauma experienced by my client(s).	3.15	0.96
2	I had disturbing dreams about my client(s).	3.13	0.96
3	It seemed as if I was reliving the trauma experienced by my client(s).	3.11	0.96
4	I thought about my work with clients when I did not intend to.	3.09	0.93
5	I felt as though the trauma experienced by my client(s) was happening to me.	3.22	0.90
	Overall	**3.14**	**0.94**

In table 10, the statement *"I felt as though the trauma experienced by my client(s) was happening to me"* recorded the highest mean score of M = 3.22, SD = 0.90**.** Officers also moderately agreed that they felt emotionally distressed by clients' trauma experiences with M = 3.15, SD = 0.96 and had disturbing dreams related to their clients with M = 3.13, SD = 0.96**.** The respondents also reported moderately having experienced feelings of reliving clients' traumatic experiences at M = 3.11, SD = 0.96 and thinking about work unintentionally at M = 3.09, SD = 0.93**.** Generally, they experienced moderate levels of intrusion symptoms with overall mean score of M=3.14 (SD = 0.94)**.** On Likert overall rating, officers experienced moderate intrusion symptoms linked to secondary traumatic stress. This also means that repeated exposure can likely affect their emotional well-being negatively and potentially harm with family functioning.

4.4.3 Avoidance Symptoms Among Probation Officers

Table 11: Avoidance Symptoms Among Probation Officers

No.	Avoidance Symptom Statement	Mean	SD
1	I avoided people or places that reminded me of painful cases from work	3.00	1.02
2	I felt distant or emotionally cold when I'm with people	3.08	0.96
3	I stayed away from situations that brought back memories of certain clients	3.09	0.93
4	I kept quiet about how my work affected me	3.19	1.01
5	I pushed away feelings related to my clients' trauma	3.27	1.03
6	I avoided thinking about some clients or cases	3.29	0.99
7	I found it hard to connect emotionally with my family	3.10	1.02
		3.15	**0.99**

Based on table 11, the Item "I avoided thinking about some clients or cases" recorded highest mean at M = 3.29, SD = 0.99, followed by "I pushed away feelings related to my clients' trauma" with mean of 3.27, SD = 1.03. "I kept quiet about how work affected them" reported M = 3.19, SD = 1.01, while "I found it hard to connect emotionally with my family" had M= 3.10 (SD = 1.02). The overall mean stood at 3.15 with standard deviation was 0.99. The moderate consistency across statements show that avoidance symptoms are common among probation officers and this may increase emotional exhaustion, impact interpersonal relationships, and diminish general psychological well-being if not well managed.

4.4.4 Hyper-Arousal Symptoms among Probation Officers

Table 12: Hyper-Arousal Symptoms among Probation Officers

No.	Hyper-Arousal Symptom Statement	Mean	SD
1	I felt jumpy or easily startled by loud sounds or sudden movements	3.25	0.98
2	I found it difficult to concentrate on tasks	3.23	0.97
3	I got irritable or angry easily after work	3.23	0.95
4	I struggled to sleep because of work-related stress	3.34	0.99
5	I felt on edge or watchful, even when there is no reason to worry	3.26	1.01
		3.26	**0.98**

In table 12, the statement "*I struggled to sleep because of work-related stress*" recorded the highest w mean of M = 3.34, and standard deviation SD of 0.99. "*I felt on edge or watchful, even when there is no reason to worry"* came second with Mean of 3.26, and Standard deviation of 1.01. Items "*I felt jumpy or easily startled by loud sounds or sudden movements*" had M = 3.25, SD = 0.98 while *"I found it difficult to concentrate on tasks"* had M = 3.23, and of SD = 0. 97.*"I got irritable or angry easily after work*" reported M = 3.23, SD = 0.95, suggesting emotional strain and possible spill-over effects into interpersonal and family environments. The overall mean was 3.26 (SD = 0.98), suggesting that officers sometimes experienced increased emotional and physiological reactions associated with occupational trauma exposure. Despite the symptoms being generally moderate, their persistence would adversely affect psychological well-being, work output, and family environments.

Table 13: (Secondary Traumatic Stress) Intrusion, Avoidance and Hyper-arousal among Probation Officers

STSS Aspect	Number of Items	Mean	SD
Intrusion Symptoms	5	3.16	0.96
Avoidance Symptoms	7	3.15	0.99
Hyper-Arousal Symptoms	5	3.26	0.98
Overall STS	**17**	**3.19**	**0.98**

Most of the Key informants indicated that STS exhibit through emotional fatigue, intrusion, anxiety, emotional withdrawal, irritability, sleep challenges, and psychological strain. They indicated that continuous exposure to traumatic client narratives gradually affects emotional and psychological wellbeing among probation officers. KI5 – Officer In-Charge, Mathari Liason Station said:

> "You find probation officers appearing emotionally tired after dealing with challenging difficult cases. Some appear withdrawn, irritable, or mentally fatigued due to the emotional strain they absorb from work. Some of them end up feeling absorbed into the issues of clients and this makes them fatigued"

The findings this officer indicate that continuous exposure to traumatic work situations result in emotional fatigue and psychological strain. In addition, KI6 – Officer In-Charge, Nairobi probation hostel Station added:

> "There are some probation officers who struggle with sleep, anxiety, and emotional fatigue after handling traumatic cases repeatedly. Some of them end up carrying the stress home without knowing. For some who aren't able to exercise personal wellness, it can become an issue".

The KI5 shows that occupational trauma exposure impacts officers beyond the workplace and can distort emotional stability and wellness. KI3 – Officer In-Charge, JKIA Station further observed:

> "Some of my probation officers keep meditating about challenging cases even after work. The stress follows them home and affects their mental wellbeing. Some can end up being withdrawn, being reactive, and being hypersensitive making them to neglect their personal wellness".

This officer highlights the presence of intrusive thoughts and psychological preoccupation linked to traumatic case exposure. Similarly, KI10 – the County Director observed that *STS is* real among officers and that despite being professionals, they are still human beings and repeated exposure eventually affects their emotional wellness. These findings converge that officers experience moderate to high emotional and psychological strain emanating from continuous exposure to traumatic experiences.

Burnout and Emotional Exhaustion

Burnout linked to continuous exposure to traumatic experiences and high workloads was another key theme that stood out. Key informants reported that repeated emotional interaction with traumatized clients leads to fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and burnout. KI3 – Officer In-Charge, JKIA Station shared that Some probation officers become emotionally numb by time due to constant handling of painful cases without adequate recovery time. These findings indicated that repeated exposure without enough emotional recovery led to emotional detachment and burnout. KI8 – Officer In-Charge, Dagoretti Station added:

> "Increased caseloads jointly with traumatic work perpetuate emotional exhaustion. Probation Officers become tired mentally, emotionally, and even socially. This not only affects the quality of their work; it also ends up affecting their personal lives in their families and beyond"

This feedback shows that workload pressure and trauma exposure jointly increase vulnerability to emotional fatigue among officers. KI7 – Officer In-Charge, Milimani High court Station also reiterated that when Probation officers repeatedly handle emotionally challenging cases, burnout is unavoidable, especially without adequate support.

These findings mean that poor organizational support can increase emotional exhaustion among officers. The above findings under the first objective indicate that officers in Nairobi County face substantial exposure to traumatic experience, leading to emotional fatigue, psychological strain, and burnout linked to secondary traumatic stress.

The current study reveals that officers in Nairobi County experienced moderate to high levels of STS due to continuous exposure to emotionally disturbing casework experiences. Quantitative findings highlighted that increased exposure to violent, abusive, sexually offensive, critical situations, and traumatic narratives, resulted to trauma with mean score of 3.63. The respondents also moderate intrusion, avoidance, and hyper-arousal symptoms, with overall STS score of 3.19. Findings from KIs also explained that officers frequently handle emotionally difficult cases. They indicated that continuous exposure results in emotional exhaustion, burnout, intrusive thoughts, irritability, anxiety, and psychological fatigue.

These findings support Figley's Secondary Traumatic Stress Theory (1995) that professionals working with traumatized persons slowly absorb emotional pain through empathetic engagement. Based on this theory, such exposure may result in trauma-related symptoms even among professionals who are not direct victims. In this current study, probation officers demonstrated intrusion, emotional withdrawal, and hyper-arousal symptoms confirming that repeated exposure to clients' trauma adversely affects psychological wellness. The current study findings also converge with existing literature such as Irungu et al. (2024) which established that professionals within correctional or police services, counseling, and social work are highly vulnerable to secondary traumatic stress due to repeated interaction with traumatized populations. The demographic characteristics of respondents further reinforce these findings since most them had served for more than six years while handling moderate to high caseloads, increasing prolonged exposure to emotionally distressing situations.

4.5 To examine the nature of family relationships among probation officers on communication, emotional availability, and role functioning

4.5.1 Communication among Probation Officers

Table 14: Communication among Probation Officers

No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	I can freely talk with my family about my work experiences.	2.32	0.98
2	My family members listen when I share my worries about work.	2.41	0.89
3	I openly share my feelings with my family.	2.33	0.92
4	My family feels comfortable talking to me about difficult issues.	2.36	0.94
5	I listen carefully when my family members speak.	2.52	1.00
6	I handle disagreements at home through calm discussions.	2.48	0.96
7	I talk about work-related stress with my partner or children.	2.45	0.96
8	My family and I make time to talk regularly (for example, during meals or evening check-ins).	2.31	1.01
9	I feel emotionally safe expressing my thoughts at home.	2.39	0.95
	Overall	**2.40**	0.96

Based on the table above, statement *"I listen carefully when my family members speak"* recorded the highest mean at M = 2.52, SD = 1.00. "I *handle disagreements at home through calm discussions"* came second with M = 2.48, SD = 0.96 while *"I discussed work-related stress with partners or children*" followed with M = 2.45, SD = 0.96. Lower mean scores appeared in statements *"My family and I make time to talk regularly"* at 2.31 (SD = 1.01), and in "*I can freely talk with my family about my work experiences"* at 2.32 (SD = 0.98). The total mean score was at 2.40 (SD = 0.96) indicating that communication among probation officers and their families was moderately affected, possibly as a result of emotional fatigue, burnout, and exposure to traumatic experiences in the work environment.

4.5.2 Emotional Availability

Table 15: Emotional Availability

Item	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
10	I am emotionally present for my family after work.	2.30	0.89
11	My family feels emotionally supported by me, even when I am tired from work.	2.21	0.94
12	My work sometimes makes it hard for me to be emotionally available at home.	2.26	0.90
13	I show care and attention when spending time with my family.	2.30	0.92
14	My family sees me as a supportive and understanding person.	2.33	0.99
15	I find it difficult to connect emotionally with my loved ones.	2.37	1.02
16	I respond with empathy when my family members share their feelings.	2.31	1.02
17	I show affection and warmth regularly.	2.36	1.02
18	I sometimes feel emotionally drained and less present at home.	2.44	1.00
19	I make time to bond emotionally with my partner or children.	2.41	0.98
20	I sometimes feel distant when interacting with family members.	2.29	1.03
21	I recognize and validate my family members' emotions.	2.25	0.96
22	I feel capable of giving emotional comfort to my family.	2.47	0.99
	Overall	**2.33**	**0.94**

Based on table 14, "*I feel capable of giving emotional comfort to my family*" statement recorded the highest mean at M = 2.47, SD = 0.99, followed by moderately acknowledging making time to bond emotionally with partner or children at M = 2.41, SD = 0.98. On the contrary, many indicators pointed toward emotional strain and diminished emotional engagement within families. Officers indicated setbacks in emotional availability after work, feeling emotionally fatigued, and sometimes feeling distant when interacting with family members. The low means across these statements point that work demands can adversely affect officers' emotional well-being within family environments. The standard deviation values ranging from 0.89 to 1.03 points to moderate variability in ratings. This means that while some officers reported adequate emotional availability, a good proportions experienced difficulty managing emotional engagement and work-related demands. The findings imply that emotional availability was limited, potentially highlighting the impact of burnout and fatigue on family dynamics and emotional functioning in families.

4.5.3 Role Functioning

Table 16: Role Functioning

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
23	I am able to meet my family responsibilities even when work is stressful.	2.32	0.98
24	My work often interferes with quality time spent with family.	3.67	0.93
25	My family supports me in handling work-related stress.	2.37	0.94
26	I sometimes struggle to fulfil family roles due to tiredness from work.	3.66	0.96
27	My work experiences have occasionally strained my family relationships.	3.66	0.87
28	I actively take part in family routines and activities.	2.29	0.88
29	My job sometimes affects how well I perform my family duties.	3.72	0.93
30	I feel overwhelmed trying to balance work and family.	3.66	1.00
31	I help with household tasks regularly.	2.34	0.95
32	I try to be present at important family events.	2.33	0.99
33	I feel confident in my role as a parent or caregiver.	2.33	0.99
	Overall	**2.33**	**0.94**

Table 16 reveals that total mean stood at 2.33 with standard deviation standing 0.94. This indicate that work demands and stress can negatively be influenced by an officer's strength to meet family needs and keep an equilibrium. Most adversely worded items reported increased scores prior to being reverse coded, such as "*My job sometimes affects how well I perform my family duties*" (M = 3.72, SD = 0.93), "*My work often interferes with quality time spent with family*" (M = 3.67, SD = 0.93) (**when reverse corded, M=2.33**), and *"I feel overwhelmed*

trying to balance work and family" (M = 3.66, SD = 1.00) (**When reverse corded M=2.34**). This implies that officers understood that work demands interferes with family responsibilities as well as role performance within families. Conversely, positively worded items like "*I actively take part in family routines and activities"* (M = 2.29, SD = 0.88) and "*I am able to meet my family responsibilities even when work is stressful"* (M = 2.32, SD = 0.98) had lower scores, pointing to low participation and challenges managing work and family demands. The standard deviation values from 0.87 to 1.00 shows moderate variance in sample responses. This shows that despite some officers having better role functioning and family involvement, others were unable.

Table 17: Summary of Family Relationships

Dimension	Number of Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Communication	9	2.40	0.96
Emotional Availability	13	2.33	0.94
Role Functioning	11	2.33	0.94
Overall Family Relationships	**33**	**2.35**	**0.95**

It is worth noting that negatively worded items were reverse-coded prior to computing the dimension and overall family relationship scores. In addition, all reported composite means were interpreted along the same approach, with higher scores representing stronger family relationship functioning while lower scores representing weaker family relationship functioning.

The overall findings with mean of 2.35 and standard deviation of 0.95 suggest that officers' work can adversely affect family relationships by hindering emotional engagement, straining effective communication, and distorting role performance.

Key informants' views converged that emotionally demanding work impacts communication, emotional presence, family participation, and ability to balance responsibilities among probation officers.

Diminished Communication within Families

The KI interviews revealed that work-related stress often distorts healthy communication between officers and individuals in their families. They explained that emotionally strained probation officers may avert conversations, withdraw, or face difficulties to discuss emotional issues at home. KI2 – Officer In-Charge, Makadara Station responded that some probation officers avert discussing work-related issues at home since they feel their families may not understand the l weight of such cases. The officer suggest that probation officers can end up intentionally suppressing emotional discussions in the view of protecting family members or coping with workplace stress. In addition, KI7 – Officer In-Charge, Milimani High court Station reiterated:

> "When probation officers are mentally fatigued after work, they may not have the energy to communicate effectively with family members including children and spouses."

This shows exactly how emotional strain linked to probation work can diminish meaningful family interactions. KI1 – the Regional Director further added:

> "Work-related stress in some case affects openness in family communication. Some officers may become quiet, withdrawn, or emotionally unavailable because of complex work-place assignments. Some officers also become hyper-sensitive to issues when they reflect on work stress within family settings"

This respondent emphasized that occupational strain can adversely affect emotional openness and healthy communication in families. In the same way, KI9 – Officer In-Charge, Milimani chief magistrate station asserted that some probation officers isolate themselves emotionally due to inability to explain what they undergo and experience at work. These findings jointly

reveal that STS contributes to inadequate communication and emotional interactions in family relationships.

Emotional Withdrawal and Reduced Emotional Availability

Emotional withdrawal and reduced emotional availability were another major them that stood out in the interviews. Key informants shared that emotionally straining work often make officers depleted and unable to adequately engage with their family members. KI4 – Officer In-Charge, Kibera Station stated:

> "Some of our probation officers end up being emotionally disconnected after long exposure to traumatic narratives. Even when physically present at home, they are emotionally distant because they are immersed in the narratives they hear as they interact with their clients"

The Kibera officer suggests that STS can lower emotional connectedness and intimacy within probation officers' families. In the same way, KI6 – Officer In-Charge, Nairobi probation hostel Station added:

> "There are some probation officers who become emotionally tired and fail to connect fully with their spouses and children due to being overwhelmed by work-linked stress. Some continue to figure out how they can address clients' needs even when at private of family space"

This respondent highlighted the negative impact of emotional strain on emotional responsiveness and family connectivity. In addition, KI9 – Officer In-Charge, Milimani chief magistrate Station further said:

> "When probation officers repeatedly handle stressful cases and interact with mentally demanding situations, they sometimes become emotionally weak. They can also develop helplessness and desperation especially in situations they feel unable to offer help. This affects how they relate with their family members."

Similarly, KI5 – Officer In-Charge, Mathari Liason Station observed that emotionally challenging work can lower empathy and emotional warmth at home due to already mentally overwhelmed state.

To me, these findings conclusively demonstrate that exposure to occupational trauma adversely affects emotional availability and emotional engagement among probation officers.

Interference with Family Roles and Responsibilities

KIs also reported that probation officers' work interferes with o ability to effectively perform family roles and responsibilities. KI5 – Officer In-Charge, Mathari Liason Station explained that heavy workload and emotionally demanding routines in some cases make officers miss family activities or fail to have quality time with family members. These findings suggest that occupational responsibilities can lower active participation in family activities. Similarly, KI10 –County Director added that some probation officers find it challenging to balance work demands and family obligations, especially if they handle crisis cases or high caseloads. This shows that straining work conditions can result in work–family conflict among probation officers. KI3 – Officer In-Charge, JKIA Station also added:

> "Fatigue from demanding work can lower participation in family activities, parenting roles, and social interaction within families. Work demands sometimes affects officers' ability to perform family duties effectively due to emotional exhaustion. This happens especially among officer who are unable to balance between work and personal/family life"

In my view, these findings jointly show that occupational stress interferes with family role functioning and lowers effective participation in family roles. This reveals that probation officers experience challenges in communication, emotional availability, as well as family role functioning because of occupational stress and STS.

The current study established that family relationship functioning among probation officers was generally low. Communication within family relationships was rated moderate to low at M = 2.40, while emotional availability at M = 2.33 and role functioning at M = 2.33. These current findings suggest that occupational stress and emotional exhaustion negatively interfere with healthy family functioning.

Probation officers reported difficulties communicating with family members, emotional withdrawal, reduced emotional presence at home, and challenges balancing work responsibilities with family obligations. In addition, qualitative findings echoed that emotionally exhausted officers often withdraw, emotionally distanceed themselves, and psychologically become absent in their families. KIs further narrated that demanding work schedules and emotional fatigue diminish participation in family activities, parenting roles, as well as emotional connectivity.

In my assessment, these findings converge with Bowen's Family Systems Theory (1978), that the family operates as an emotional unit with stress affecting a member affecting the functionality of the entire system. This means that emotional strain by a probation officer due to occupational trauma impacts communication patterns, intimacy, and role performance in families. The mental exhaustion and withdrawal found in the current shows how unresolved occupational strain distorts family interaction and healthy functioning. These findings also agreed with scholars such as Roberts (2021) who found that occupational stress contributes to emotional detachment, communication difficulties, work-family conflict, and weak family cohesion. With most respondents reporting being family people with children, the effects of occupational trauma are likely to extend beyond individual officers to wider family relationships.

4.6. To determine how secondary traumatic stress related with family relationships among probation officers in Nairobi County

4.6.1 Pearson Correlation between Secondary Traumatic Stress and Family Relationship Measures

Table 18: Pearson Correlation Between Secondary Traumatic Stress and Family Relationship Measures

Variables	r	p-value	Interpretation
STS and Communication	-0.834	< .001	Strong Negative Relationship
STS and Emotional Availability	-0.785	< .001	Strong Negative Relationship
STS and Role Functioning	-0.409	< .001	Moderate Negative Relationship
STS and Overall Family Relationships	-0.849	< .001	Strong Negative Relationship

Based on the Pearson Correlation results above, the study found a strong negative and statistically significant connections between Secondary Traumatic Stress and communication in family relationships as reflected with ($r = -0.834$, and $p < .001$). This inferred that increase in stress were linked to inadequacy along communication between the officers and those in their families. Officers reporting high levels of traumatic stress symptoms were unlikely to communicate adequately, share emotional challenges, or sustain family interactions. Similarly, STS showed a strong negative link with emotional availability with ($r = -0.785$, and $p < .001$).

This shows that increased trauma-related stress levels lowered officers' emotional presence, empathy, warmth, and responsiveness in family environments. Respondents with increased STS were highly likely to face emotional fatigue and diminished emotional interactions in their family settings. The findings also indicate a moderate negative connection between STS and role functioning with ($r = -0.409$, and $p < .001$).

This showed that high levels of traumatic stress made it challenging for respondents to meet family roles, engage in family activities, and strike equilibrium between work and family life. Overall, higher levels of STS was negatively associated with the three aspects of family relationships.

4.6.2 Preliminary Tests for Regression Assumptions

Before carryng out the multiple linear regression analysis, diagnostic tests were undertaken to determine whether the data aligned with assumptions underlying regression analysis. The assumptions examined were normality, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity as well as residual independence.

Normality was assessed to know whether the variables and regression residuals had approximately normal distribution. This was done through graphical procedures, including histograms and normal probability (Q-Q) plots, together with an appropriate statistical test where applicable. The results showed that the distributions were sufficiently approximately normal for the regression analysis.

Multicollinearity was examined to know whether the independent variables were excessively correlated with one another. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance statistics indicated that the predictor variables did not exhibit problematic multicollinearity, as the VIF values were within the allowed range and the tolerance values were above the minimum recommended level.

Homoscedasticity was assessed by evaluating the scatterplot of standardized predicted values against standardized residuals. The residuals were reasonably distributed around the zero line without a clear systematic pattern or funnel-shaped distribution. This implied that the assumption of constant variance of residuals was adequate.

Residual diagnostics were also evaluated to assess whether the regression model was appropriately specified and whether there were influential observations that could substantially affect the results. The residual plots showed an acceptable pattern of residuals, with no serious violations that would invalidate the regression analysis.

As such, the assumptions necessary to undertake multiple linear regression were considered adequate. Thus, the multiple linear regression analysis was undertaken to determine whether secondary traumatic stress significantly predicted family relationship functioning with years of service, gender and caseload as controllers.

Table 19: Model Summary for Multiple Regression Analysis

Model Statistic	**Value**
R	0.851
R^2	0.725
Adjusted R^2	0.714
Standard Error	0.170
F Statistic	67.92
Significance (p)	< .001

The Multiple Regression model in table 19 above explained about 72.5% of the variance in family relationship changes with ($R^2 = 0.725$). This implied that STS jointly with the control variables were responsible for a huge proportion of differences in family relationships. Based on the model, the adjusted R^2 value of 0.714 also shows that the model sustains strength despite adjusting predictors' number used in the analysis. The general model indicates statistical

significance with ($F = 67.92$, $p < .001$), showing that the predictors in combination accounted for family relationship outcomes explanations.

4.6.3: Regression Coefficients Predicting Family Relationships

Table 20: Regression Coefficients Predicting Family Relationships

Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	t	p-value	95% CI
Constant	4.037	0.113	35.843	< .001	[3.814, 4.261]
Secondary Traumatic Stress	-0.429	0.026	-16.339	< .001	[-0.481, -0.377]
Years of Service	0.001	0.004	0.148	.883	[-0.007, 0.008]
Gender	0.044	0.038	1.159	.249	[-0.031, 0.119]
Caseload	-0.002	0.003	-0.701	.485	[-0.009, 0.004]

The above Coefficients imply that STS reported statistically negative significant predictor of family relationships ($B = -0.429$, $p < .001$). This shows that increasing secondary traumatic stress would diminish family relationship functionality. In particular, for a single STS unit increase, family relationship scores go down by about 0.429 units with other variables remaining constant. The confidence interval for secondary traumatic stress (-0.481, -0.377) failed to cross zero point, similarly affirming statistical significance and reliability. Conversely, years of service ($p = .883$), gender ($p = .249$), and caseload ($p = .485$) failed to prove statistical significance as predictors of family relationships with STS as control variable.

This further confirms that STS strongly influenced family relationship outcomes within the model. Generally, these results indicate that STS significantly and negatively predicted family relationship functioning among respondents. Thus, increasing exposure to traumatic and emotionally straining work environments can lower communication, emotional availability, and effective role functioning in families. To me, this confirms the study hypothesis that STS adversely affects family relationships in the group under study.

The KIs reported an unhealthy relationship between STS and healthy family functioning. They consistently reported that occupational trauma exposure results in emotional withdrawal, strained communication, family conflicts, emotional disengagement, and poor family relationships. They also emphasized that supportive family relationships can assist probation officers to cope with work-related stress and enhance emotional resilience.

Spill over of Occupational Stress into Family Life

Most KIs explained that stress experienced at work frequently spills over into officers' and family lives. KI1 –Regional Director stated:

> "There is off course a relationship between STS and family instability. Probation Officers who are emotionally drained from work may exhibit withdrawal, irritability, or disengagement at home. If one is unable to leave work issues at work and carries them home, automatically family relations are affected"

Similarly, KI8 – Officer In-Charge, Dagoretti explained:

> "When stress accumulates, probation officers can transfer frustration home. This can adversely impact communication, patience, as well as emotional connectivity within families. This depends with how the officer handles the stress. Some can become withdrawn or pass their frustrations to family members through anger"

KI4 – Officer In-Charge, Kibera added that some probation officers become emotionally absent due to their minds remaining occupied with cases even after reaching home."

These findings show that emotional stress emanating from emotionally demanding probation work negatively affects family interaction as well as emotional connectedness.

Increased family Conflict and Relationship Strain

The KIs interviews also uncovered that long exposure to occupational stress results in tension, misunderstandings, as well as family conflicts. KI7 – Officer In-Charge, Milimani High court said:

> "Stress can make probation officers irritable and impatient in family settings. Some may find it hard to listen to family members or develop rough tendencies. This sometimes result in misunderstandings or conflicts within families. Such officer may end up unconsciously perpetuating negative family environments"

Similarly, KI2 – Officer In-Charge, Makadara added that when probation officers are emotionally tired, family relationships suffer since they may withdraw themselves or shun conversations.

KI10 –County Director added:

> "Without adequate emotional support, work-related stress can slowly weaken family relationships and lower emotional closeness. It is not good to over—immerse in work issues at the expense of family wellness. Each officer belongs to a family and balance is important"

It can be said that these findings converge that STS contributes to relationship strain, diminished emotional intimacy, as well as weakened family connectedness.

Family Support as a Protective Factor

Despite the identified challenges, some KIs emphasized that supportive family relationships are critical in helping officers address occupational stress. KI5 – Officer In-Charge, Mathari Liason remarked that family support is vital since officers who have understanding spouses and supportive families cope better with stress.

Similarly, KI1 –Regional Director added:

> "A supportive family environment can assist officers recover emotionally from straining work experiences. It is therefore, good for officers to ensure that they have family support systems who are available to help them reduce stress. We belong to families and that is where everything positive must exist if our wellness has to be something we want"

KI6 – Officer In-Charge, Nairobi probation hostel reiterated that *Probation* officers who communicate openly with family members about stress are in better position to emotional pressure effectively. These findings agree that family support is a vital protective factor against adverse effects of STS.

The current study found a strong statistical negative significant relationship between STS and family relationships. Correlation analysis found strong negative relationships between STS and communication with $r = -0.834$, emotional availability at $r = -0.785$, and an overall family relationship at $r = -0.849$. A moderate negative relationship between STS and role functioning was established at $r = -0.409$. Regression analysis also confirmed that STS significantly predicted family relationship outcomes at ($B = -0.429$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that high STS weakens communication, emotional connectedness, and role performance within families. Officers with emotional exhaustion, intrusive thoughts, irritability, and psychological fatigue were found to have difficulties remaining emotionally present and supportive at family settings.

The qualitative findings echoed the results with KIs explaining that occupational stress often spills over into family life through irritability, withdrawal, poor communication, and strained relationships. This converges with Figley's Secondary Traumatic Stress Theory (1995) that prolonged exposure to others' trauma slowly affects emotional functioning and interpersonal relationships. Bowen's Family Systems Theory (1978) supports this by arguing that emotional strain experienced by one family member disrupts the emotional balance of a whole family

system. The findings demonstrate that STS among probation officers affects individual psychological well-being as well as family functioning and emotional relationships.

The findings agree with Mabaso and Holtzhausen (2017) which established that STS contributes to mental strain, emotional disconnection, family conflict, and poor family cohesion. However, qualitative findings revealed that supportive family relationships can assist officers to cope with occupational fatigue. Probation officers with supportive spouses, open communication, and emotionally understanding families are perceived to demonstrate advanced emotional resilience and healthier coping outcomes.

4.7. To establish the strategies that can be used by probation officers to manage unhealthy family relationships.

4.7.1 Coping Mechanisms Among Probation Officers

Table 21: Coping Mechanisms among Probation Officers

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I talk to trusted colleagues about difficult cases.	3.41	0.98
2	I seek emotional support from my family or friends when I feel stressed.	3.36	1.01
3	I rely on my supervisor for emotional or professional guidance.	3.12	1.04
4	I participate in peer discussions or debriefing sessions.	3.28	0.96
6	I engage in prayer, meditation, or other spiritual practices for comfort.	3.74	0.93
8	I intentionally take time to disconnect from work during my personal hours.	3.25	0.99
9	I engage in recreational, leisure activities, or outdoor activities (for example, reading, music, art).	3.18	1.02
10	I use humour or light-hearted activities to relieve stress.	3.47	0.95
	Overall	**3.35**	**0.99**

As reflected in table 21, the total mean for coping strategies stood at 3.35 and standard deviation of 0.99. Prayer, meditation, and other spiritual practices strategies recorded the highest scores of M = 3.74, SD = 0.93. Using humour or light-hearted activities also recorded a higher moderate score at M = 3.47, SD = 0.95, while engaging colleagues regarding complex cases recorded M = 3.41, SD = 0.98. Getting emotional support from family or friends stood at M = 3.36, SD = 1.01, peer discussions or debriefing sessions at M = 3.28, SD = 0.96 and intentionally taking time to disconnect from work during personal hours at M = 3.25, SD = 0.99, while recreational or leisure activities recorded a score of M = 3.18, SD = 1.02. Relying on supervisors for guidance recorded the least mean at M = 3.12, SD = 1.04. A range of 0.93 to 1.04 for standard deviation show moderate variance in responses. This shows that the level of strategy used varied with many officers combining some strategies. The overall coping stood at a moderate level**.**

4.7.2 Organizational Support

Table 22: Organizational Support among Probation Officers

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	My department offers counseling or debriefing sessions when needed.	3.33	0.86
2	There are clear policies that support staff mental health and well-being.	3.19	0.84
3	My supervisor encourages a healthy balance between work and family life.	3.31	0.96
4	I feel emotionally supported by my department when handling stressful cases.	3.26	0.87
5	My department recognizes the emotional impact of probation work.	3.21	0.91
6	I feel safe talking to my supervisor about emotional challenges.	3.27	0.84
7	My workload is manageable and allows time to rest and recover.	3.31	0.83
8	I receive training on stress management and trauma informed care.	3.31	0.86
9	My department promotes a culture of self-care and emotional well-being.	3.27	0.88
	Total	**3.27**	**0.86**

In table 22, the statement *"My department offers counseling or debriefing sessions when needed"* reported the highest scores at M = 3.33, SD = 0.86, followed by statements supervisors encouraging work-family balance at M = 3.31, SD = 0.96, manageable workload and recovery time at M = 3.31, SD = 0.83, and training on stress management and trauma-informed care at M = 3.31, SD = 0.86.

Nonetheless, lower mean scores were observed for statements linked to clear mental health policies at M = 3.19, SD = 0.84 and recognizing emotional impact of probation work at M = 3.21, SD = 0.91. The relatively low standard deviations across the statements from 0.83 to 0.96 imply moderate consistency in respondents' views. Generally, the findings reveal that while probation department offer some aspects of support, there remains need for enhanced organizational structures, policies, and workplace practices to enhance officer's wellness and emotional resilience.

4.7.3 Coping Mechanisms Considered Most Effective in Managing Work-Related Stress

Table 223: Coping Strategies Viewed as Most Effective in Managing Occupational Stress

Coping Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Peer debriefing	23	21.3
Taking leave and resting	22	20.4
Talking with colleagues	17	15.7
Prayer and meditation	16	14.8
Exercise and family support	15	13.9
Listening to music	15	13.9
Total	**108**	**100.0**

Based on the table 23 above, peer debriefing rated the highest with n=23 (21.3%), taking leave and resting at n= 22 (20.4%), and talking with colleagues at n= 17 (15.7%). Prayer and meditation with came fourth at n=16 (14.8%), while exercise and family support and listening to music recorded n=15 (13.9%) each. These findings indicate that officers combine professional support, personal recovery practices, social interactions, as well as spiritual coping strategies to manage work-related stress.

Table 234: Other Coping Strategies Used by Probation Officers to Maintain Emotional Balance and Family Well-Being

Coping Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Watching movies with family	24	22.2
Church activities	24	22.2
Weekend outings	21	19.4
Journaling	16	14.8
Reading books	23	21.3
Total	**108**	**100.0**

Table 24 indicated watching movies with family and church activities as most preferred with each recording n= 24 (22.2%). Reading books followed with n= 23 (21.3%), weekend outings at n= 21 (19.4%), while journaling at n= 16 (14.8%). These current study results imply that officers relied mostly on family-centered initiatives, spiritual involvement, leisure experiences, as well as individual reflective activities to enhance emotional stability and functional family dynamics.

Table 245: Additional Support Required to Manage Stress and Healthy Family Relationships

Additional Support Needed	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reduced workload	24	22.2
Family wellness programs	23	21.3
Regular counseling	19	17.6
Flexible schedules	19	17.6
More trauma training	23	21.3
Total	**108**	**100.0%**

Table 25 shows that reduced workload was most supported at n= 24 (22.2%). Family wellness activities and enhanced trauma training came second with n=23 (21.3%) each. In addition, counselling and flexible schedules followed with n=19 (17.6%). These current study findings indicate that officers like both organizational as well as psycho-social approaches to balance occupational stress with family roles. The results also imply that supportive workplace practices, manageable workloads, and officers' wellness initiatives are vital in supporting healthier family relationships and general work-demands among probation officers.

Table 256: Additional Comments Shared by Probation Officers

Response Theme	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
More counselors are needed	31	28.7
Family support is very important	23	21.3
The workload can be emotionally draining	18	16.7
Trauma training should be continuous	18	16.7
The department should support staff wellness	18	16.7
Total	**108**	**100.0**

In table 26, the need for more counselors reported highest with n= 31 (28.7%), followed by Family support at n=23 (21.3%), while workload can be emotionally demanding, the need for trauma training, and the importance of organizational support were uniformly mentioned by n=18 (16.7%). In sum, these responses stressed the need for robust organizational mental health support initiatives, manageable workloads, progressive professional training, and recognizing family support for probation officers to manage occupational stress.

The KIs revealed that officers combine personal, social, family-based, and organizational coping strategies in addressing emotional strain and family relationships.

Seeking Emotional and Social Support

KIs reported that probation officers commonly depend on colleagues, friends, and family members for emotional support. KI2 – Officer In-Charge, Makadara stated:

> "Many probation officers cope by through talking colleagues who understand the nature of their work. Sharing assists them to reduce emotional strain. While sharing, some of them request their colleagues to advise them on best ways to handle particular care and rejuvenate"

In addition, KI7 – Officer In-Charge, Milimani High court observed:

> "Probation officers who discuss stress with family members and trusted friends are usually able to manage emotional strain in a better way. The reason is that through talking or sharing, they get views on how to deal with situations which are emotionally straining"

These findings show the emotional and social support systems are important in helping officers to manage work-related stress.

Counselling and Psychological Support Services

KIs emphasized the importance of professional counseling services as a way to support officers' emotional wellness. KI10 –County Director said that *counseling programs are needed since officers are exposed to emotionally disturbing situations.*

Similarly, KI1 –Regional Director supported:

> "Professional counseling can assist officers to process traumatic experiences before affecting their family life. However, I reiterate that this only works if the services and available and accessible. It also depends on willingness of the officer to look for professional counseling services"

KI8 – Officer In-Charge, Dagoretti also observed that some probation officers suppress emotions because of lack of safe spaces for expression. Counseling can them manage stress.

The above KIs' statements suggest that counseling services are critical in enhancing emotional well-being and family functioning among probation officers.

Manageable Workload and Organizational Support

KIs revealed that manageable workloads and supportive organizational systems are a critical component to support probation officers deal with work pressures and maintain healthy family relationships.KI6 – Officer In-Charge, Nairobi probation hostel stated:

> "Heavy caseloads result in emotional exhaustion. Reducing workload would help officers attain better work–family equilibrium. When caseload is reduced, officer will get time to engage in healthy family routines. Personally, I try to ensure that my officers are not overwhelmed"

Additionally, KI3 – Officer In-Charge, JKIA added that probation officers need enough rest and manageable timelines since continuous exposure to traumatic cases can increase emotional strain.

KI10 –County Director emphasized:

> "Organizations need to strengthen staff wellness initiatives and develop supportive work environments that acknowledge the emotional strain of probation service work. This can extend to working with partners such as counsellor and motivational speakers who target wellness of officers in demanding workplaces"

These findings highlight that supportive workplace initiatives and reduced workload pressures are important in managing occupational stress among probation officers in the study area.

Trauma-Informed Training and Stress Management

KIs also stressed on the need for regular training on trauma management and emotional resilience.KI4 –explained:

> "Training is important because assists officers understand trauma reactions and informs them on healthier coping mechanisms. With training, officer can be well positioned to deal with emotionally demanding situations. This also helps them to balance between work and family/personal life"

Additionally, Regional Director stated that probation officers require regular training on stress management, emotional resilience, as well as work–life balance.

KI9 –added:

> "When officers get trained on emotional self-care, they are put in a better position to protect their mental health and family relationships. Some of them can also help their colleagues with difficulties on balancing work and personal life. I think training is an area that must be emphasized by the department"

The KIs' narratives show that trauma-informed training has the power to enhance emotional resilience and lower negative effects of STS.

Strengthening Family Bonding and Work–Life Balance

The KIs further empathized that maintaining robust family relationships and healthy work–life balance practices is a vital coping practice. KI5 – Officer In-Charge, Mathari Liason Station stated:

> "Our officers need to create time for family activities since emotional connection with family assists in stress management. There is need to have time with their families to avoid neglecting family roles. I always encourage my officers to at least ensure they spend time with their families and share some good time."

KI7 – Officer In-Charge, Milimani High court station added:

> "Simple activities such as family weekend, open communication, and emotional presence at home helps in strengthening relationships. Such activities can help one to offload work related strain and have healthy family life even when work is demanding. This is one strategy which I have used for most of the time"

KI2 – Officer In-Charge, Makadara Station concluded that balancing work and family is vital since probation officers who neglect family relationships can become vulnerable by time.

These findings conclude the last objective by demonstrating that officers need personal coping and institutional support strategies to adequately manage work-related stress and support positive family relationships.

The current study also found that probation officers use a combination of personal, social, spiritual, and organizational coping mechanisms to manage work-related stress and maintain family relationships. Findings indicated a moderate use of coping strategies like peer discussions, emotional support from family and friends, humour, recreational activities, and intentional separation of work from personal life.

Spiritual practices like prayer and meditation emerged as the most highly utilized coping strategies. Qualitative findings similarly emphasized the importance nature of counseling services, peer support, trauma-informed training, manageable workloads, and work-life

balance initiatives. KIs also identified reduced workloads, family wellness programs, regular counseling services, and stronger organizational support systems as important. These current findings support Figley's Theory, which emphasizes the vital nature of emotional recovery and coping support in managing trauma exposure among helping workers. Counseling interventions, peer debriefing, emotional support, as well as stress management strategies may help probation officers address traumatic experiences more effectively. This is further supported by Bowen's Theory (1978) who advocate for strengthened family communication and emotional connectedness as a way of promoting family functioning. The current study, shows that STS significantly impacts family relationships among probation officers in Nairobi County. This converges with previous scholars like (Mashego et al. 2023) that counseling services, trauma-informed training, employee welfare practices, regulated workloads, and family support systems is vital in supporting psychological as well as healthy family relationships among the officers.

4.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the detailed analysis and interpretation of data on research objectives. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, such as Pearson's correlation as well as multiple regression. On the other hand, qualitative data was analyzed along themes. The findings offered insights on the prevalence of STS, its connection to family functioning, coping strategies adopted, and the available support systems. By addressing all study objective, this chapter formed the basis for research summary conclusions, and recommendations in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is a summary presentations of major study findings, conclusions as per the findings or objectives, recommendations, as well as further research suggestions

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

5.2.1 Levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress among Probation Officers

The current study found that probation officers in Nairobi County underwent moderate to high levels of secondary traumatic stress because of prolonged exposure to traumatic and emotionally distressing case. The findings further revealed that officers dealt with cases characterized by violence, abuse, sexual offences, crisis situations, and emotionally straining client narratives. The trauma exposure score was high at M = 3.63, indicating frequent interaction with traumatic experiences. Moderate levels were evident for intrusion at M = 3.16, avoidance at M = 3.15, and hyper-arousal symptoms at M = 3.26, with an overall STS score of M's = 3.19. Officers reported emotional distress, intrusive thoughts, disturbing dreams, emotional withdrawal, irritability, anxiety, sleep difficulties, as well as emotional exhaustion linked to the nature of their work. KIs reported that officers frequently interacted with traumatized people, victims as well as distressed families. They argued that continued exposure to such narratives and emotionally straining cases result in mental fatigue, psychological strain, burnout, as well as emotional exhaustion among officers.

5.2.2 Family Relationships among Probation Officers

The current study found that family relationships among officers were generally weak and negatively affected by occupational stress. Communication was rated moderate to low at M =

2.40, emotional availability also as low at M = 2.33, while role functioning was also low at M = 2.33. The overall score was low at M = 2.35. Qualitative findings further indicated that emotionally exhausted officers often experienced withdrawal, emotionally distant, and less available within family settings. KIs explained that high workloads, emotional strain, and repeated exposure to traumatic cases negatively affect communication, emotional relationships, and participation in family life.

5.2.3 Relationship Between Secondary Traumatic Stress and Family Relationships

The study found a statistically significant negative relationship between STS and family relationships. Pearson correlation analysis resulted in a strong negative relationship between STS and communication with $r = -0.834$, an $p < .001$, emotional availability $r = -0.785$, and $p < .001$). The overall family relationships were $r = -0.849$, and $p < .001$). The study also established a moderate negative relationship between STS and role functioning with $r = -0.409$, and $p < .001$. The regression analysis also confirmed that STS significantly predicted family relationship outcomes with $B = -0.429$, and $p < .001$. The model also explained about 72.5% of the variance in family relationship outcomes with $R^2 = 0.725$, indicating that STS was a major factor influencing family functioning. KIs said that occupational trauma exposure in some cases spilled over into family life through irritability, emotional withdrawal, reduced communication, emotional exhaustion, as well as family relational challenges.

5.2.4 Strategies for Managing Unhealthy Family Relationships

The study found that probation officers utilize a mix of personal, social, spiritual, as well as organizational coping strategies to manage occupational stress and maintain healthy family relationships. Quantitative findings indicated moderate use of coping mechanisms with M = 3.35 on peer discussions, emotional support from family and friends, humour, recreational activities, and intentional separation of work from personal life. Prayer and meditation stood

out as most used coping strategy. The study further revealed moderate organizational support M = 3.27. Participants identified the need for manageable workloads, counseling services, family wellness programs, flexible schedules, trauma-informed training, and enhanced organizational support systems. KIs emphasized the importance of counseling services, emotional support, trauma-informed training, manageable workloads, work-life equilibrium, and strengthening family bonding. They also argued that supportive family environments, peer support systems, and wellness programs can assist probation officers to cope with occupational stress.

5.3 Conclusion

The current study therefore, concludes that probation officers in Nairobi County experience substantial exposure to traumatic and emotionally distressing situations in the course of their mandate. The study further concludes that STS negatively affects family relationships among probation officers. Occupational trauma exposure interferes with healthy communication, emotional availability, and effective role functioning within family settings. The study also concludes that STS is a significant predictor of family relationship outcomes among probation officers. The study further concludes that probation officers rely on multiple coping strategies to manage work-related stress and protect family lives. Finally, the study concludes that effective management of STS requires both individual and institutional interventions.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the current study findings and conclusions, the following are recommendations.

- On objective one, the study established that probation officers experienced moderate to high levels of secondary traumatic stress because of continuous exposure to traumatic and emotionally demanding cases. The findings revealed symptoms such as emotional

exhaustion, intrusive thoughts, anxiety, irritability, sleep difficulties, and burnout. Based on these findings;

- The Probation and Aftercare Service Department should establish regular counseling and psychological debriefing programs for probation officers.
- Routine mental health screening and employee wellness services should also be introduced to help officers identify and manage symptoms of secondary traumatic stress early.
- The department also need to strengthen trauma-informed training programs focusing on emotional resilience, stress management, self-care, and psychological coping skills to improve officers' preparedness in handling emotionally demanding cases.

On objective two, the current study found that family relationships among probation officers were generally low, particularly in communication, emotional availability, and role functioning.

- It is recommended that; probation officers should intentionally enhance communication and emotional interaction within their families by creating quality family time and engaging in healthy emotional discussions with spouses and children.
- The department should also introduce family wellness and work-life balance programs to help officers improve family relationships and emotional connectedness. For example, flexible work schedules and leave arrangements should be considered to enable officers spend adequate time with their families.

On objective three, the study found negative, statistically significant relationship between STS and family relationships. High levels of STS were linked to poor communication, emotional withdrawal, and weakened family relationships.

- It is recommended that the Probation departments establish regular psychological support programs to assist officers manage Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS).

On objective four, it was found that officers relied on coping interventions such as peer support, counselling, spirituality, emotional discussions, and family support to deal with work-associated stress and keep healthy family relationships. Nonetheless, the findings also indicated that organizational support remained moderate and needed enhancement. It is therefore, recommended that;

- The Probation Department must institutionalize counselling services, employee welfare interventions, peer debriefing sessions, as well as stress management trainings for probation officers. This would assist officers to develop healthier coping strategies and address their emotional exhaustion linked to trauma exposure.

5.5 Relevance of the Findings to Counselling Psychology

The findings of this study have important implications to the field of Counselling Psychology because they show that secondary traumatic stress is not only an occupational issue but also a psychological setback that can affect interpersonal as well as family functioning. The study found that higher levels of secondary traumatic stress are significantly linked to diminished family communication, low emotional availability, and challenges in family role functioning. These findings are directly relevant to counselling psychology since the discipline's emphasis is on promoting psychological well-being, emotional adjustment, healthy interpersonal relationships, coping, as well as effective functioning across different life contexts. The findings imply the need for counselling interventions to assist probation officers process work-associated traumatic experiences, control emotional responses, devise healthy coping strategies, and establish boundaries between work and family life. Individual counselling,

trauma-informed counselling, stress-management programmes, family counselling, and supportive psychological supervision may therefore be useful in preventing or reducing the negative effects of STS.

5.6 Limitations of the study

The study may have faced social desirability bias since probation officers were asked to report on critical issues, such as family conflict, emotional difficulties, secondary traumatic stress, as well as work-related issues. As public officers, some may have been unwilling to share experiences that could be perceived negatively or that portray them or their families unfavourably, potentially resulting in under-reporting of difficulties. To address this, participants were assured of confidentially, that no personally identifying information would be disclosed, and that the findings would be reported in aggregate and for academic purposes only. However, the possibility that some respondents gave socially desirable responses cannot be completely overlooked and may have affected the accuracy of reporting.

5.7 Further Research Suggestions

There is need that future studies considers the long-term psychological effects of STS among probation officers using longitudinal research designs as a way of establishing how trauma exposure predicts family functioning over time. Qualitative or mixed-method studies also need to be explored through incorporating spouses as well as family members of probation officers. This can help to comprehensively understand how occupational trauma affects family systems as well as interpersonal relationships within families.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Consent Form

Title of Study: Secondary Traumatic Stress and Family Relationships among Probation Officers within Nairobi County, Kenya

Researcher: Carren Adhiambo Oluoch (Catholic University of the Eastern Africa)

You are invited to participate in a study examining how probation officers' exposure to secondary traumatic stress influences family relationships. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire and/or take part in an interview. Participation will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without penalty. All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Responses will be coded, and no names will appear in the report. Data will be stored securely in encrypted files and locked cabinets. In cases where a participant discloses intent to harm themselves or others, confidentiality may be limited to allow appropriate referral or reporting for safety purposes.

There are no anticipated risks beyond normal emotional reflection. The study may benefit probation officers by informing policies that support well-being and family life balance.

Consent Statement

I have read and understood the information above. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

For any concerns regarding the ethical conduct of this study, participants may contact:

Head of Department, Counselling Psychology

Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA)

P.O. Box 62157–00200, Nairobi, Kenya.

Telephone: 0722980312

Email: ***emacharia@cuea.edu***

APPENDIX II: Questionnaire for Probation Officers

Title: Secondary Traumatic Stress and Family Relationships among Probation Officers in Nairobi County

Researcher: Carren Adhiambo Oluoch

Institution: Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Purpose: This questionnaire seeks to collect data on how secondary traumatic stress (STS) affects family relationships among probation officers in the Nairobi County.

Instructions for Completion:

Read each question carefully and choose the response that best represents your experience. For clarity, please answer all items; if you do not wish to answer a particular question, select "Prefer not to say." Please complete the questionnaire in one sitting.

Section A: Demographic Information

(The following information helps to contextualize the findings.)

Age:

26-30

31-35

36-40

41-45

46 and above

Gender:

Male

Female

Other/Prefer not to say

Marital Status:

Single

Married

Divorced

Widowed

Number of children: ___

Years of Service as a Probation Officer: ___ years

Current Probation Station: _____

Do you have training in trauma-informed practice?

Yes

No

Section B: Exposure to Trauma

Instructions: Please indicate how often you experience the following feelings or reactions when working with traumatized clients.

(1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very Often)

NO	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I hear detailed accounts of violence or abuse from clients.					
2	I write reports or case files of violent offenses					
3	I write reports or case files that are sexual or abusive in nature					
4	I review written reports or case files that describe graphic events.					
5	I interact with victims or survivors of violent crimes in the course of my work.					
6	I respond to crisis situations involving harm or threat of harm.					
7	I supervise offenders involved in criminal violence offenses					
8	I supervise offenders involved in sexual offenses					

Section C: Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale(STSS) (Bride, 2007)

Instructions: Below are statements about your experiences related to your work with clients. Please indicate how often you have experienced each in the past month by selecting the number that best represents your response.

(1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very Often)

NO	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
INTRUSION (thoughts and feelings that keep returning)						
1	I felt emotionally distressed by the trauma experienced by my client(s)					
2	I had disturbing dreams about my client(s).					
3	It seemed as if I was reliving the trauma experienced by my client(s)					
4	I thought about my work with clients when I did not intend to.					
5	I felt as though the trauma experienced by my client(s) was happening to me.					
AVOIDANCE (trying not to think, feel, or talk about trauma)						
6	I avoided people or places that reminded me of painful cases from work.					
7	I felt distant or emotionally cold when I'm with people.					
8	I stayed away from situations that brought back memories of certain clients.					
9	I kept quiet about how my work affected me.					
10	I pushed away feelings related to my clients' trauma.					
11	I avoided thinking about some clients or cases.					
12	I found it hard to connect emotionally with my family					
HYPER-AROUSAL (feeling tense, alert, or easily upset)						
13	I felt jumpy or easily startled by loud sounds or sudden movements.					

14	I found it difficult to concentrate on tasks.					
15	I got irritable or angry easily after work.					
16	I struggled to sleep because of work-related stress.					
17	I felt on edge or watchful, even when there is no reason to worry.					

Section C: Family Relationships

Instructions: Indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement regarding your family relationships.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

No	**Statement**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
COMMUNICATION						
1	I can freely talk with my family about my work experiences.					
2	My family members listen when I share my worries about work.					
3	I openly share my feelings with my family.					
4	My family feels comfortable talking to me about difficult issues.					
5	I listen carefully when my family members speak.					
6	I handle disagreements at home through calm discussions.					
7	I talk about work-related stress with my partner or children.					
8	My family and I make time to talk regularly (for example, during meals or evening check-ins).					
9	I feel emotionally safe expressing my thoughts at home					
EMOTIONAL AVAILABILITY						
10	I am emotionally present for my family after work.					
11	My family feels emotionally supported by me, even when I am tired from work.					
12	My work sometimes makes it hard for me to be emotionally available at home.					
13	I show care and attention when spending time with my family.					
14	My family sees me as a supportive and understanding person.					

15	I find it difficult to connect emotionally with my loved ones.					
16	I respond with empathy when my family members share their feelings.					
17	I show affection and warmth regularly.					
18	I sometimes feel emotionally drained and less present at home.					
19	I make time to bond emotionally with my partner or children.					
20	I sometimes feel distant when interacting with family members.					
21	I recognize and validate my family members' emotions.					
22	I feel capable of giving emotional comfort to my family.					
ROLE FUNCTIONING						
23	I am able to meet my family responsibilities even when work is stressful.					
24	My work often interferes with quality time spent with family.					
25	My family supports me in handling work-related stress.					
26	I sometimes struggle to fulfill family roles due to tiredness from work.					
27	My work experiences have occasionally strained my family relationships.					
28	I actively take part in family routines and activities.					
29	My job sometimes affects how well I perform my family duties.					
30	I feel overwhelmed trying to balance work and family.					
31	I help with household tasks regularly.					
32	I make an effort to be present at important family events.					
33	I feel confident in my role as a parent or caregiver.					

Section D: Coping Mechanisms

Instructions: Indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement regarding your family relationships.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

NO	**Statement**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1	I talk to trusted colleagues about difficult cases.					

2	I seek emotional support from my family or friends when I feel stressed.					
3	I rely on my supervisor for emotional or professional guidance.					
4	I participate in peer discussions or debriefing sessions.					
6	I engage in prayer, meditation, or other spiritual practices for comfort.					
8	I intentionally take time to disconnect from work during my personal hours.					
9	I engage in recreational, leisure activities, or outdoor activities (for example, reading, music, art).					
10	I use humor or light-hearted activities to relieve stress.					

Section E: Organizational Support

Instructions: Indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement regarding your family relationships.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

No	**Statement**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1	My department offers counseling or debriefing sessions when needed.					
2	There are clear policies that support staff mental health and well-being.					
3	My supervisor encourages a healthy balance between work and family life.					
4	I feel emotionally supported by my department when handling stressful cases.					
5	My department recognizes the emotional impact of probation work.					
6	I feel safe talking to my supervisor about emotional challenges.					

7	My workload is manageable and allows time to rest and recover.					
8	I receive training on stress management and trauma informed care					
9	My department promotes a culture of self-care and emotional well-being.					

Optional open-ended prompt

What coping strategies do you find most effective in managing work-related stress?

What other coping strategies do you use that help you maintain emotional balance and family well-being, not listed above?

What additional support would you like your organization to provide to help you manage stress and maintain healthy family relationships?

Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Thank you for your participation!

Your input will help improve the understanding of how secondary traumatic stress affects family relationships among probation officers in Nairobi.

APPENDIX III: Interview Guide for Key Informants

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate. This interview seeks to understand how probation work, particularly exposure to traumatic cases, influences family relationships. Your insights will help strengthen support systems for probation officers.

Core Questions

How would you describe the nature of probation officers' work in Nairobi County? (Probe: exposure to traumatic cases)

In your view, how does secondary traumatic stress manifest among probation officers? (Probe: emotional, behavioral, relational signs)

What impact do you think this stress has on officers' family relationships? (Probe: communication, conflict, support)

How do probation officers typically cope with work-related stress? (Probe: formal vs. informal strategies)

What role does family support play in helping officers manage secondary traumatic stress?

From your supervisory perspective, what organizational factors contribute to stress among probation officers? (Probe: workload, caseload, resources)

How does the probation service currently address officers' well-being and family life balance?

What gaps do you see in existing support systems for probation officers and their families?

What recommendations would you make to strengthen family support for probation officers experiencing secondary traumatic stress?

Is there anything else you would like to add about the relationship between probation work and family life?

Closing Remarks

Thank you for sharing your experiences and insights. Your responses will be very valuable in helping us understand the challenges probation officers face and in developing better support systems for their well-being.

Thank You!

APPENDIX IV: RESEARCH SCHEDULE

The study will be conducted over a period of approximately twelve months. The research activities will be undertaken systematically as shown in Table 3.X.

Activity	**Sept–Oct 2025**	**Nov–Dec 2025**	**Jan–Feb 2026**	**Mar–Apr 2026**	**May–Jun 2026**	**Jul–Aug 2026**
Proposal development	✓					
Literature review	✓	✓				
Proposal presentation and corrections		✓				
Ethical approval and research permit		✓	✓			
Development and pre-testing of research instruments			✓			
Data collection				✓		
Data coding and analysis					✓	
Interpretation and discussion of findings					✓	
Thesis writing					✓	✓
Submission and final corrections						✓

Source: Researcher (2025)

APPENDIX V: Research Permit (CUEA)

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
Department of Counseling Psychology

DATE: 4TH MAY 2026

To
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (NACOSTI)

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH PERMIT FOR CAREN ADHIAMBO ADM NO.1046401

This is to introduce the above mentioned student who is a masters' student pursuing Counseling Psychology. She has completed her course work and defended her proposal successfully. Her dissertation topic is …SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PROBATION OFFICERS WITHIN NAIROBI COUNTY,KENYA

……

I kindly request you to help her obtain the research permit.

Yours Sincerely,

04 MAY 2026

Dr. Stephen Asatsa,
HOD
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA (CUEA) P.O. BOX 62157 00200 Nairobi – KENYA
Tel: 020-2525811-5, 8890023-4, Fax: 8891084, Email: psychology@cuea.edu, Website: www.cuea.edu
Founded in 1984 by AMECEA (Association of the Member Episcopal Conference in Eastern Africa)

APPENDIX VI: Research License (NACOSTI)

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **319318**

Date of Issue: **21/May/2026**

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Miss.. CARREN ADHIAMBO OLUOCH of Catholic University of Eastern Africa, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: Secondary Traumatic Stress and Family Relationships among Probation Officers within Nairobi County, Kenya for the period ending : 21/May/2027.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/26/4189405**

319318

Applicant Identification Number

Ag. Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

See overleaf for conditions

APPENDIX VII: Authorization for Data Collection (PACS)

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
State Department for Correctional Services

PACS
PROBATION AND AFTERCARE SERVICE

Ref. No. PACS/1/57 VOL.111/ (70) **DATE: 29th May, 2026**

Carren Adhiambo Oluoch,
P.O Box 25058-00100
NAIROBI.
Email: c.adhiambo89@gmail.com

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT RESEARCH DATA FROM PROBATION AND AFTERCARE SERVICE

Reference is made to your letter dated **21st May, 2026** on the above-mentioned matter.

This is to notify you that your request has been received and found to be in order.

Consequently, pursuant to NACOSTI license No. **NACOSTI/P/26/4189405** dated **21st May, 2026** approval has been granted to collect data from Probation Officers in in Nairobi County. However, this approval and Authority is subject to the following conditions that must be adhered to failure to which it stands withdrawn and declared null and void; -

- That the approval and Authority is granted to Carren Adhiambo Oluoch and is not transferrable whatsoever.
- That you attach to the application documents a copy of the study questionnaire and research proposal.
- That you strictly adhere to ethical standards as outlined in the NACOSTI research license.
- That you maintain and ensure confidentiality and anonymity of information and that of the respondents.
- That filming and taking photos of PACS staff and clients without consent is prohibited.
- That you shall submit to the department a copy of the final research report (in both hard and soft copies).
- That the department reserves the right to review, vary and modify the conditions of this approval and authority at any time during data collection exercise including its cancellation without prior notice.

PROBATION AND AFTERCARE SERVICE
HEADQUARTERS
Taifa Road, Reinsurance Plaza, 11th Floor
P. O. Box 42335-00100, Nairobi. Kenya

Telephone: +254-020-2652335
Email: information@probation.go.ke
Website: www.probation.go.ke

@ProbationKE @ProbationKE
@ProbationKE @ProbationKE

The department on its part promises its commitment to offer you the best environment and support in line with its service charter as you collect data for your research study.

Shadrack Kavutai

Ag. SECRETARY, PROBATION AND AFTERCARE SERVICE

APPENDIX VIII: Ethical Approval (Tangaza University)

TANGAZA UNIVERSITY

Teaching Minds, Touching Hearts, Transforming Lives.....

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
TANGAZA UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

E-mail: iserc@tangaza.ac.ke **Website:** www.tangaza.ac.ke

OUR Ref: TU/ISERC2026/04/00166 **Date:** 14th May 2026

The Commission Secretary,
National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
P.O. Box 30623,
Nairobi, Kenya.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Recommendation for Research Permit – CARREN ADHIAMBO OLUOCH

This is to confirm that **CARREN ADHIAMBO OLUOCH** is the PI of a research protocol submitted to TU-ISERC for review. The protocol was reviewed and approved for a research permit.

Carren wishes to conduct research titled *"SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PROBATION OFFICERS WITHIN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA".*

I strongly recommend **CARREN ADHIAMBO OLUOCH** to the Kenya National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) for the issuance of a research permit. The permit will enable her to proceed with data collection for her study. Thanking you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Daniel M. Kitonga (Ph.D., MBA)
Chairperson, TU-ISERC

TANGAZA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND ETHICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE (TU-ISERC)
★ 14 MAY 2026 ★
P. O. Box 15055 - 00509
NAIROBI - KENYA

P.O. Box 15055 - 00509 Langata, Nairobi Kenya
Tel: +254 20 8097667 / 0732 897 000 / 0733 685 059 / 0722 204 724 / 0714 610 777
Email: inquiries@tangaza.ac.ke
Website: www.tangaza.ac.ke

APPENDIX IX: Map of Nairobi Sub-Counties and Probation Stations

Map of Nairobi showing the location of eight probation stations relevant to the study: Kibera, Mathari Liaison Office, JKIA, Dagoretti, Makadara, Milimani High Court, Milimani Chief Magistrate Court, and Nairobi Probation Hostel.

