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The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Petaling Jaya Police Officers

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Abstract
Police officers play a crucial role in guaranteeing the safety of residents by protecting their lives. However, due to the COVID-19 epidemic, police officers were supposed to organize local shutdowns, promote social distance, and enforce stay-at-home orders. Hence, this research aims to identify potential sources of stress, and causes of conflict. The respondents are the police officers from Petaling Jaya District Police Headquarter. Data is collected using a questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS. Findings show that most police officers feel stressed since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with their workload.

Keywords: Conflict; COVID-19; police officers; stress

1.0 Introduction
The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a roadmap for a more prosperous and sustainable future. Goal 16 stipulates that everyone should have access to justice and that courts and the justice system should be a key component of national accountability systems. As a result, police officers play a crucial role in guaranteeing the safety of residents by protecting their lives. There is a commitment to live in security and prosperity throughout the Goal 16 objectives. However, the COVID-19 epidemic, which produced societal turmoil and altered traditions, impacted citizens' safety and prosperity. As a result, police officers were expected to coordinate local shutdowns, create social distancing, and enforce stay-at-home orders.

Working in law enforcement is often portrayed as a stressful job that leads to conflict. Working as a police officer entails much stress and a lot of unpleasant situations. This can harm police officers' mental and physical health, interpersonal relationships, and work-life balance. Moreover, police work is a stressful job, which will affect their performance and interactions with citizens. In addition, mental health in the workplace has become a concern due to the high incidence of depression, anxiety, burnout, and even suicide among police personnel. As a result, it is necessary to regularly track stress and burnout levels to promote occupational health (Queirós, Passos, Bártolo, Marques, da Silva, & Pereira, 2020).

Malaysia issued a Movement Control Order (MCO) to halt COVID-19 from spreading around the country. The Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM), the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM), and other authorities regulate citizen movement. Their primary objective has been to protect individuals' health and well-being by regulating MCO enforcement since March 2020. The number of COVID-19 cases in Malaysia has been steadily increasing, adding to the police force's already severe workload — suffering that only these officers could explain in the name of ensuring Malaysians' safety. Despite the recovery MCO ending on December 31, 2020, the government has declared that the Conditional MCO will begin on October 14, 2020, in Sabah, Putrajaya, Kuala Lumpur, and Selangor, due to an unexpected rise of COVID-19 cases approaching triple digits. Because the function requires police officers to approach individuals at close range, even while wearing face masks, social distance cannot be imposed to maintain peace and order in the country. The spread of the COVID-19 illness is growing increasingly severe, and many police officers have been exposed to the disease's risk. COVID-19 infection has impacted the ability of police officers to execute their duties because they are on the front lines and closest to the people. Due to their sacrifices during the MCO, these officers may face various stress and conflict in carrying out their official duties.

Long and frequently rotating shifts, threats of violence, an increased requirement for hypervigilance, and a lack of public support combine to make policing one of the most mentally draining jobs, resulting in chronic stress (McCraty & Atkinson, 2012). Police officers work in a high-stress, high-conflict environment. As a result, law enforcement professionals suffer from mental health disorders at a higher incidence than the average population, even before dealing with added pandemic issues, stress, and uncertainty. Due to the pandemic's association with the officers' work, COVID-19 policing will be examined as a substantial stressor and confliction reaction. The mental health of police officers was surely influenced by a global calamity like the COVID-19 outbreak. As a result, quantifying the scope of these effects is crucial in justifying and effectively targeting officers' reactions, allowing agencies and individuals to weather the storm. The stress and conflict difficulties that police personnel confront are both addressed in this study.

2.0 Literature Review
2.1 Sustainable Development Goals
The public sector must play a significant role in making the planned 2030 SDGs a reality. Governments around the world cannot function effectively unless they have the enabling structures of public administration in place to carry out their mandates, which are primarily outlined in (political) manifestos, while also ensuring that the core mandate of meeting citizens' basic welfare needs is met through an efficient system. The operation of such a system must allow entities or agents to act in the best interests of providing high-quality services, as specified by legal legislation – this should also make it easier for agents to operate in the presence of information symmetry (Jackson and Jabbie, 2019). To support the smooth operation of the public service, especially in economic and social wellness, public service leadership should ensure that mandatory services are made accessible to the community (Jackson, 2020). As a result, the public sector must invest in strong security, such as police, to reduce crime. Goal 16 stipulates that everyone should have access to justice and that courts and the justice system should be a key component of national accountability systems. Institutional objectives include the police, prosecutors, courts, jail system, and justice and policing ministries. As a result, police officers play a crucial role in guaranteeing the safety of residents by protecting their lives. There is a commitment to live in safety and prosperity throughout the Goal 16 objectives. The protection of emergency service providers, such as doctors and police officers, is a top priority during COVID-19. However, in the face of the COVID-19 outbreak, police officers are confronted with a slew of new challenges that could put them under even more strain.

2.2 Definition of Stress
Workplace stress is psychological stress brought on by one's job. Occupational stress is a condition that lasts a long time. Understanding work-related stressors and taking steps to lessen them can aid in the management of occupational stress. Workers may experience occupational stress if they do not feel supported by their supervisors or coworkers, if they believe they have little control over the task they do, or if their efforts on the job are insufficiently rewarded. Workplace stress impacts employees' emotional well-being, physical health, and job performance, which is a concern for both employees and employers (Sulsky & Smith, 2005).

2.2.1 Potential Sources of Stress
Aside from dealing with COVID-19 pandemics, police officers may be subjected to other forms of stress.

a) General working conditions
Despite the importance of individual differences, empirical evidence shows that most people are stressed by their work environment. Such findings encourage greater attention on working conditions as a significant source of workplace stress and job redesign as a primary preventative intervention. Working conditions that generate occupational stress can also be present in one's workplace's physical environment. For example, noise level, lighting, and temperature are all characteristics of one's working environment. Changes in mood and arousal might occur if these attributes are insufficient for a thriving working environment, making it more challenging to execute the job successfully (Rout & Rout, 2002).

b) Workload
Dealing with workplace activity can be stressful and serve as a source of stress for employees. Because it represents a work requirement, the workload is a crucial component of the demand-control model of stress (Karasek, 1979). According to this theory, high-demand jobs can be stressful, especially if the person has little control over the job. Control, in other words, acts as a buffer or protective component when demands or workloads are high. This approach gave rise to the demand-control-support paradigm, which contends

that a combination of high control and high social support at work buffers the effects of high demands. The workload is also relevant to the job demands-resources model of stress, which holds that jobs are stressful when demands (such as workload) exceed an individual's abilities to deal with them (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001).

c) Status and Salary
Because employment with lower socioeconomic status (SES) generally gives workers less autonomy and greater volatility than jobs with higher SES, workplace status is linked to occupational stress (Schonfeld & Chang, 2017). Lower degrees of job control and work uncertainty is connected to poor mental and physical health. Furthermore, higher-paying occupations tend to provide people with more job-related freedom. Job-related autonomy is linked to better health, as previously established. In occupational stress research, the ability to "unconfound" the relationship between stressful working conditions, such as low levels of autonomy and salary, is a problem (Sinclair & Cheung, 2016). Researchers must learn more about how discrepancies in working conditions and pay affect health since money buys things (such as better insurance and higher-quality food) that help to improve or maintain health.

d) Bullying in the workplace
Workplace bullying is defined as the mistreatment of a person at work by coworkers or managers. Bullying is defined as a situation where the bully or bullies have more authority in the unit or organization than the target. Bullying can take various forms, including verbal, psychological, and even physical aggression. Bullying at work has negative implications for employees, such as depression and lower productivity (McTernan, Dollard & LaMontagne, 2013).

2.3 Definition of Conflict
Conflict is rarely viewed as constructive; yet, in specific settings (such as competitiveness), modest degrees of conflict can be seen as mutually beneficial, developing understanding, tolerance, learning, and effectiveness (Jowett, 2007). According to Afzalur (2010), all definitions of conflict require recognizing conflicting interests and the process of striving to stop the opposing perspective or perspectives. Based on this, Afzalur proposes a definition of conflict as "an interactive process characterized by incompatibility, disagreement, or discord inside or between social units."

2.3.1 Causes of Conflict
There are numerous causes of conflict, as evidenced by numerous works of literature. According to Isa (2015), the following factors might contribute to conflict in an organization:

a) Ineffective communication
A communication breakdown is one of the most common causes of workplace conflict. It could lead to a change in communication style or a complete communication breakdown. Employee A, for example, has reassigned a superior position to employee B, but none of them has been informed of the reassignment. It can lead to employee unhappiness and a problematic relationship between top management and coworkers. Due to a lack of good corporate communication, and organizational gossip will flourish. Interpersonal disagreement not only produces friction but also lowers staff morale and productivity.

b) Personality Differences
Another form of workplace conflict is a personality clash among employees. Employees come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, all of which impact their personalities. Employees that fail to notice or acknowledge the distinctions in each other's personalities cause organizational problems. An employee with a strong personality and a powerful voice, for example, can bring up specific difficulties. A coworker with this personality type may be insulted by a coworker with a different personality type. Others cannot accept such a disrespectful and straightforward manner, and it is one of the leading sources of workplace conflict. Police officers are exposed to potentially stressful situations and incidents as part of their duties. These can cause a great deal of personal distress and changes in mood and psychological functioning in the short term.

Although Isa (2015) concentrates on workplace conflict, the same principles can be applied to police officers.

3.0 Methodology
3.1 Research Design
The researchers have employed a cross-sectional study rather than a longitudinal, experimental, or quasi-experimental study as a research design. The variables in this cross-sectional analysis are observed without attempting to change them. Moreover, cross-sectional research allows for collecting data from a large number of people and the examination of differences between them. Another benefit of cross-sectional research is that it saves time and effort because data may be collected at a single point in time.

3.2 The sample
Respondents in this study were police officers from Petaling Jaya District Police Headquarters. The researchers used convenient sampling to distribute the online questionnaire to the respondents. The sampling size was decided on Krejcie & Morgan's sampling table (1970). Thus, according to the table, the sample size should be about 1500 respondents. However, only 53 respondents willing to answer the online questionnaire.

3.3 Instrument
The data are collected by using an online questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of three sections: the demographic profile, potential sources of stress, and causes of conflict.

3.4 Method of Data Collection
Online questionnaire (Google Forms) is used in this research because of their low cost and flexibility. An online questionnaire is a highly suggested approach when used in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic. The questionnaire was circulated via online platforms such as WhatsApp, and Facebook. The questionnaire is multilingual, with portions written in both English and Malay. The goal is to make the questionnaire more user-friendly while also ensuring that respondents who do not understand English can complete it. The researchers then used SPSS to analyze the data.

4.0 Findings and Discussion
4.1 Demography of the Study
4.1.1 Gender
According to the chart (figure 4.1), there are 83% (44) male police officers and 9% (17) female police officers responded to this online questionnaire.
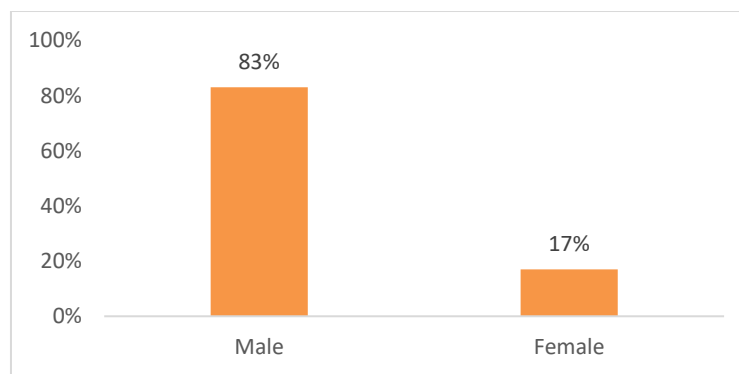

Fig. 1: Gender

4.1.2 The Rank of Police Officer
About 52%% (28) of the police officers are Corporal raking. This is followed by 23% (12) of the police officers who are Lance Corporal ranking. In addition, 13% (7) of the police officers are Constable ranking. Finally, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Sarjan Mejar and Sarjan comprise 4% (2).
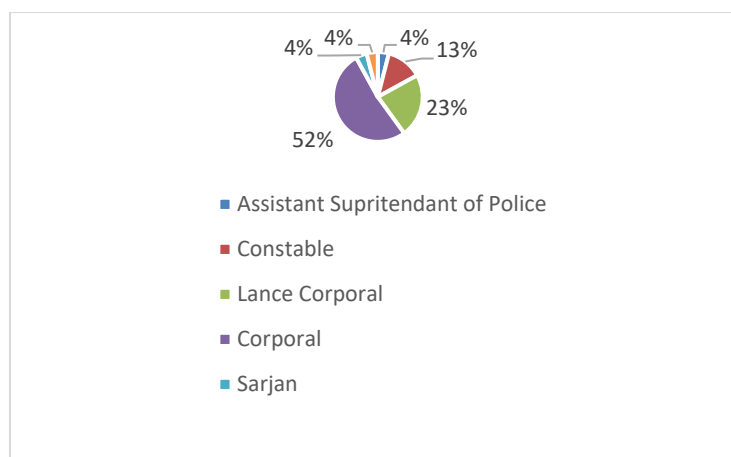

Fig. 2: The Rank of Police Officer

4.1.3 Period of Service
About 30% (16) of the police officers have working experience from 1 to 5 years. This is followed by 28% (15) of the police officers who have working experience from 6 to 11 years. In addition, 19% (10) of the police officers have working experience from 12 to 17 years. Police officers have working experience from 18 to 23 years, contributing to 17% (9). Police officers who have working experience from 24 to 29 years contribute to 4% (2). Finally, police officers who have working experience of more than 30 years contribute to 2% (1).
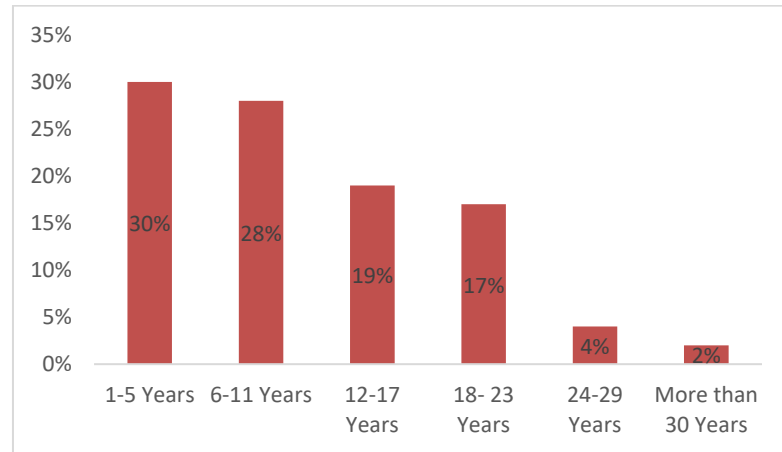
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Fig. 3: Period of Service

4.2 Potential Sources of Stress
4.2.1 General working conditions
For the question, are the tasks assigned to the police officers since the COVID-19 pandemic has put more work pressure on them than before, resulting in 70% of them agreeing compared to 30% (figure 4.4) of them that not. According to Barasa (2017), units of positive change in technological, human, and organizational environments substantially influence regular police officers' performance in order to improve the workplace conditions.
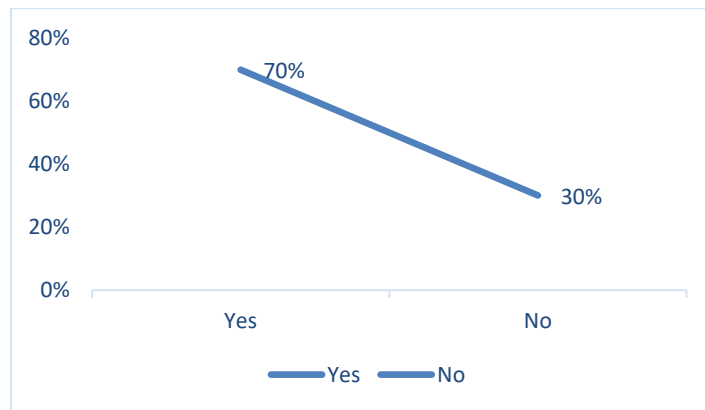

Fig. 4: General working conditions

4.2.2 Workload
For the question, whether the police officers feel more depressed since the COVID-19 pandemic along with the workload given to them, 59% of them did not feel depressed compared to 41% (figure 4.5) of them. According to a study conducted by Stotland and Pendleton (1989), the sources of stress and strain among high workload police officers appear to be stress-producing events in their lives in general and stress-producing events while performing the job of patrol officer and dealing with crime and related matters.
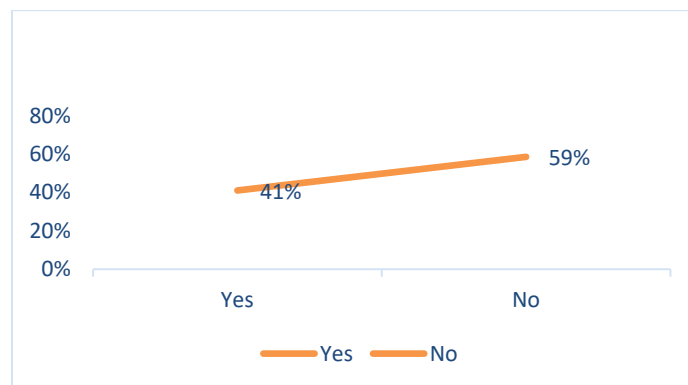

Fig. 5: Workload

4.2.3 Status and Salary

According to 57% of the police officers, since the COVID-19 pandemic, financial problems have not been stressors to them compared to 43% (figure 4.6) of the remaining police officers. The effectiveness of police officers' work performance was dependent on their salary (Chaiwuttisak, 2019). In other words, inequitable compensation may hurt their ability to perform well at work.
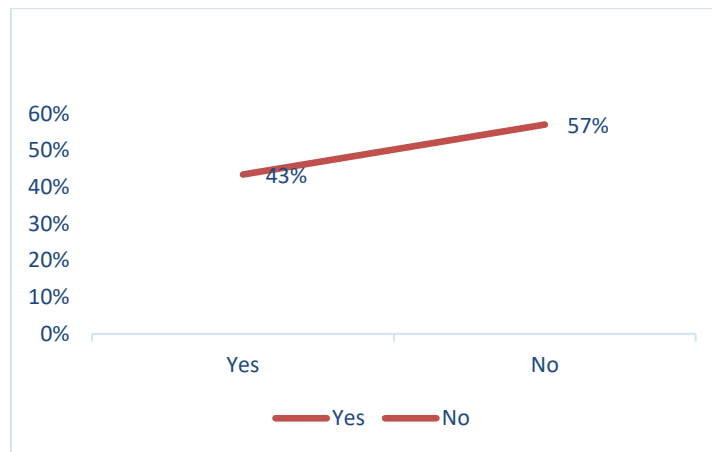

Fig. 6: Status and Salary

4.2.4 Bullying in the Workplace

According to 58% of the police officers, they are not felt more stressed with their supervisor/superiors or colleagues since the COVID-19 pandemic, along with the workload given to them (examples of lack of support from co-workers or negative co-worker behavior, including fights, work-related bullying) compared to 42% (figure 4.7) of the remaining police officers. According to Dick (2009), police officers engage in a high amount of negative behavior. Bullying, on the other hand, is primarily indirect and covert. Senior ranks are subjected to a broader range of behaviors, yet they are more likely to be bullied than lower ranks. The degree of bullying experienced was found to be a strong predictor of the managerial environment.
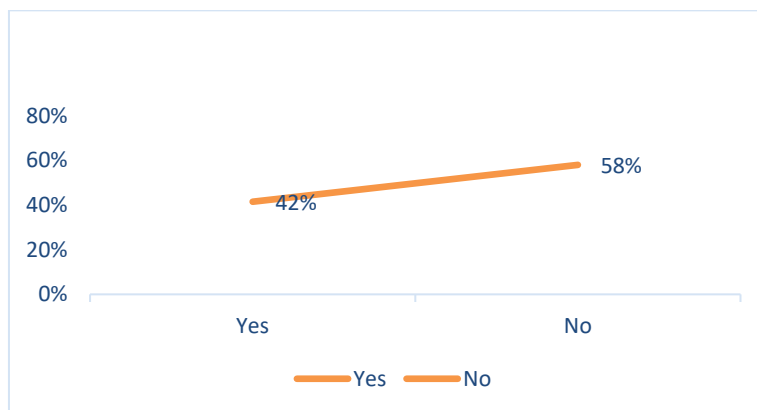

Fig. 7: Bullying in the Workplace

4.3 Causes of Conflict
4.3.1 Ineffective communication

For the question, did poor communication problems during COVID-19 between co-workers and supervisors cause conflict in the workplace, 66% of the police officers agreed compared to 34% (figure 4.8) of the remaining police officers. According to Schafer (2010), one-quarter of police officers said unsuccessful leaders lacked sufficient communication skills, such as an inability to comprehend the human needs and motives of individuals they attempted to influence.
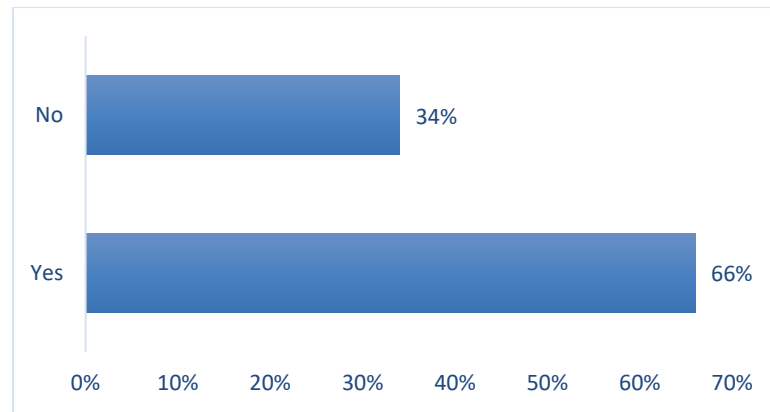
Fig. 8: Ineffective communication

4.3.2 Personality Differences
For the question, do different values/beliefs between co-worker's cause conflict in the workplace (including generation conflicts = examples gen-x, gen-y, gen-XY, etc.; 64% of the police officers agreed compared to 36% (figure 4.9) of the remaining officers. In their responsibilities, police officers are exposed to a variety of potentially stressful circumstances and incidents. These can create severe personal discomfort, resulting in mood and psychological functioning changes in the near term. According to some academics, police officers develop several traits during their careers, such as cynicism, aloofness, suspiciousness, and estrangement, that help them cope with the rigors of their professions (Evans, Coman & Stanley, 1992).
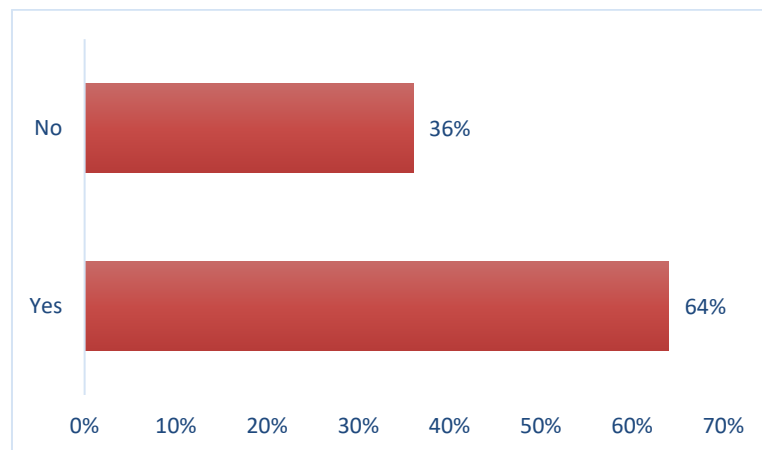

Fig. 9: Personality Differences

5.0 Conclusion
The tasks assigned to the police officers since the COVID-19 pandemic have put more work pressure on them than before. Near half of the respondents agreed that the police officers feel more depressed since the COVID-19 pandemic and their workload. Almost half of the respondents agree that since the COVID-19 pandemic, financial problems have been the stressors. Some police officers also felt more stressed with their supervisors/superiors or colleagues. Furthermore, most police officers agreed that poor communication problems and different values/beliefs during COVID-19 between co-workers and supervisors could cause conflict in the workplace. The limitation of this study is that many police officers have not answered the online questionnaire. The gap between males and females who answered the online questionnaire is also relatively high. As for future studies, there is a need for qualitative studies to understand more about the potential source of stress and causes of conflict. There is also a need to explore a possible solution to issues of stress and conflict among police officers. These studies are essential to ensure that our country can achieve SDGs, as highlighted by the UN.

Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study
This paper may contribute to criminal justice, psychological, and police practice and research fields.

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