

# Effectiveness of peer support in improving the well-being of police officers

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## Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of peer support programs in enhancing police officers' well-being, focusing on resilience, sense of belonging, and coping mechanisms. A quantitative, correlational research design was employed, involving 284 officers from the Bacolod City Police Office in the Philippines. Data were analyzed to determine the relationship between peer support and well-being indicators, as well as the influence of demographic variables, including age, sex, and years of service. Findings indicated that peer support programs were perceived as highly effective in improving officers' well-being across all measured domains. However, no significant differences were observed when grouped according to demographic factors, suggesting that peer support interventions provide consistent benefits regardless of individual characteristics. These results support key theoretical frameworks, including Social Support Theory, Stress and Coping Theory, and Resilience Theory, which emphasize the role of social networks and adaptive coping in managing occupational stress. The study concludes that peer support programs are an essential component of law enforcement wellness strategies. Institutionalizing structured peer support systems and integrating them into broader mental health initiatives are recommended to enhance officer resilience, morale, and overall effectiveness.

**Keywords:** *coping mechanisms, social support, stress coping mechanisms, resilience*

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## 1. Introduction

The well-being of police officers is a pressing concern worldwide, as the profession is inherently hazardous and exposes officers to high levels of stress, trauma, and burnout (Violanti et al., 2017; Ugwu & Idemudia, 2025). This concern is further underscored by elevated suicide rates among law enforcement, often linked to relationship problems, job stress, and repeated exposure to critical incidents (Violanti & Steege, 2021). Work-life balance, defined as the equilibrium between professional and personal life, is crucial, yet its disruption can result in poor health, burnout, and high turnover (Balaji, 2014). For PNP uniformed personnel, the demands of public service frequently require sacrificing personal health and family time, which impacts overall well-being. While studies show that peer support and effective coping strategies help officers manage stress, sustain resilience, and enhance both performance and life satisfaction (Guleria, 2023; Ryu et al., 2020) and the evidence shows that higher levels of peer support are linked to lower PTSD (Oglimen & Panday, 2025), the alarming trend highlights the need for effective interventions to support police officers' mental health and well-being.

In the Philippines, police officers face unique challenges that can exacerbate their mental health issues. The country's high crime rate, political instability, and lack of resources can take a toll on officers' mental health (Santre, 2024). A study by the Philippine National Police found that 70% of police officers in the country experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Manaig, 2024). The lack of support systems and resources for police officers in Bacolod makes it even more critical to address their mental health needs.

Fostering a culture of psychological safety within police departments, promoting access to readily available mental health resources, and implementing comprehensive wellness programs emerge as crucial steps toward safeguarding the longevity and resilience of officers (Berlanga et al., 2026). Moreover, strong support systems help ease the stresses of law enforcement, strengthening officers' mental and physical well-being and enhancing their ability to serve effectively (Lucia & Halloran, 2020). Officers are also more satisfied with their jobs when they receive sufficient resources, leadership, and training from their departments, underscoring the vital role of organizational support in sustaining resilience and performance (LaGree et al., 2023). Similarly, Agarwal et al. (2020) found that peer support programs in workplace contexts contribute positively to employees' well-being and relationships,

highlighting the importance of both organizational and peer-level support in fostering resilience and enhancing workplace functioning.

This study aims to assess the extent to which peer support improves the well-being of police officers in Bacolod City. The study specifically evaluates the effectiveness of peer support in enhancing officer well-being when participants are grouped by these demographic characteristics and examines whether significant differences exist across these groups. Through this analysis, the study aims to generate empirical evidence that can inform the design of tailored interventions, ensuring that peer support programs are responsive to the diverse needs of police officers while fostering resilience and promoting a healthier organizational environment.

This study seeks to understand how peer support works in the police context by examining the distinctive experiences and cultural differences of Filipino police officers. Recognizing the importance of officer well-being, this research examines how peer support can improve mental health, reduce stress and burnout, and minimize harmful coping mechanisms. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights to guide the development and implementation of evidence-based, culturally responsive peer support programs within the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other law enforcement agencies.

## **2. Literature Review**

Research consistently emphasizes the significant role of peer support programs in enhancing the well-being of police officers. Craig and Duran (2026) argues that evaluating these programs should extend beyond participation rates and instead focus on measurable outcomes such as improvements in mental health, job satisfaction, and overall quality of life. The use of validated assessment tools and continuous program evaluation enables agencies to identify areas for improvement, tailor interventions to officers' needs, and ensure that peer support programs provide meaningful assistance rather than symbolic participation (Joo et al., 2022). Similarly, the Milliard (2020) found that structured peer support programs significantly reduced stress- and anxiety-related sick days among officers while also strengthening camaraderie and trust within police organizations, thereby contributing to improved well-being.

Several studies further demonstrate how peer support programs promote resilience, mental health, and organizational support among police officers. Milliard (2020) explains that

peer support programs effectively promote positive mental health by leveraging trust and camaraderie among officers, making them particularly impactful within law enforcement settings where emotional support and shared experiences are essential. In the same way, Lynch et al. (2025) highlight the importance of proactive and preventive approaches to police well-being through peer support programs, emphasizing their capacity to normalize difficult emotions, foster supportive organizational cultures, and facilitate the early identification of mental health concerns. Levenson and Dwyer (2003) likewise found that structured peer support initiatives improve officers' mental health outcomes by increasing help-seeking behaviors, strengthening resilience, and enhancing overall well-being. These initiatives also foster a stronger sense of community and trust, encouraging officers to become more open about mental health issues. Supporting these findings, The Guardian (2020) reported the growing recognition of mental health challenges among police officers in the United Kingdom and noted that peer support programs have been instrumental in reducing stigma surrounding mental health while encouraging officers to seek assistance.

The literature also emphasizes that peer support contributes not only to occupational functioning but also to broader aspects of personal well-being. Santiago et al. (2020) argue that improving overall well-being requires greater effectiveness in personal relationships, professional responsibilities, and self-care practices. Accordingly, holistic well-being can only be achieved through a comprehensive approach that strengthens individual functioning across multiple areas of life. Greco (2022) similarly emphasizes that officers must first receive adequate support themselves before they can effectively assist others, underscoring the importance of comprehensive peer support systems for both professional performance and personal well-being at work and at home. However, officers' perceptions of peer support programs are not always uniform. Papazoglou et al. (2020) and Thoen et al. (2020) found that while some officers view peer support positively, others do not perceive such programs as particularly helpful, indicating differences in individual experiences and attitudes toward support mechanisms.

Demographic and experiential factors have also been identified as potential influences on the effectiveness and perception of peer support programs. Studies suggest that female officers may value peer support programs more than male officers, potentially contributing to improved retention (Ferraro, 2024). Research also indicates that officers early in their careers experience higher levels of stress, particularly during their first 15 years of service (Gullon-

Scott et al., 2024). In contrast, Price et al. (2022) found that age, gender, and years of service were statistically insignificant in determining the benefits and skills gained from peer support programs, suggesting that these interventions can be effective across different demographic groups. Supporting the importance of experience, Venville et al. (2024), in a study involving 18 VPSOs, police veterans, and police partners, found that both years of service and prior peer support experience influence officers' participation in and engagement with peer support initiatives. Officers with more extensive service and peer support experience were often more likely to assume mentoring roles, indicating that experience may shape both the effectiveness and sustainability of peer support programs.

Within the Philippine context, studies similarly recognize peer support as an important strategy for improving police officers' mental health and resilience. Lynch et al. (2025) explored mental health awareness initiatives within the Philippine National Police and identified peer support programs as effective approaches to addressing officers' psychological needs. Padhy et al. (2023) further suggested that peer support is a crucial factor in strengthening the resilience and well-being of Filipino police officers by enhancing their coping mechanisms. In addition, Kouvatsoou et al. (2022) emphasized that integrating Psychological First Aid (PFA) with peer support initiatives improves officers' well-being and resilience, particularly during crises.

### **3. Methodology**

#### ***3.1. Research Design***

The study used quantitative research design to assess the level of effectiveness of peer support in improving the well-being of police officers. By utilizing this approach, the study aims to determine if peer support can be a powerful tool for improving police officers' well-being in Bacolod City Police Office. The study also analyzed whether factors such as age, sex, and years of service significantly affected perceptions of peer support's effectiveness.

#### ***3.2. Participants of the Study***

The study involved two hundred eighty-four (284) participants selected from a total population of 1,121 using Cochran's formula. The participants were limited to uniformed personnel from the Bacolod City Police Office who were available and willing to participate during the survey period. To ensure representation across diverse groups, stratified sampling

was initially employed, wherein the population was divided into subgroups based on police stations, with each station serving as a stratum. However, practical constraints such as shifting schedules and availability led to the use of convenience sampling during the actual data collection. Thus, officers who were present and willing at the time of survey distribution were included.

Key demographic variables such as age, sex, and years of service were considered to ensure adequate representation, with participants categorized into age groups (younger than 30 and 30 years and older), sex (male and female), and years of service (1–5 years, 6–10 years, and more than 10 years).

**Table 1**

*Demographics of the police officers*

Variable	Groupings	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Younger than 30 years old	64	22.5
	30 years old or older	220	77.5
Sex	Male	198	69.7
	Female	86	30.3
Years of Service	1 – 5 years	73	25.7
	6 – 10 years	117	41.2
	More than 10 years	94	33.1
<b>Total</b>		284	100.0

As to age, the majority (77.5%) of participants are 30 years or older, while the remaining 22.5% are younger than 30. As to sex distribution reveals a predominantly male sample (69.7%) compared to females (30.3%). As to years of service, the largest group (41.2%) has worked between 6-10 years, followed by those with more than 10 years of service (33.1%), and lastly, those with 1-5 years of service (25.7%).

### ***3.3. Instrumentation and Data Gathering Process***

The study utilized a researcher-constructed questionnaire to assess the effectiveness of peer support in improving the well-being of police officers. The instrument was developed based on the study of Fallon (2023) and was composed of two parts: (1) the participants' demographic profile, including age, sex, and years of service, and (2) items measuring the perceived effectiveness of peer support. A 5-point Likert scale was employed to determine the level of agreement and disagreement of the participants. This scaling technique is widely used in survey research as it enables the quantification of attitudes and perceptions.

Prior to its administration, the questionnaire underwent content validation to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the objectives of the study. To ensure transparency and methodological rigor, a systematic data gathering procedure was followed. First, the researchers secured formal permission from the appropriate authorities of the Bacolod City Police Office to conduct the study. Upon approval, coordination with station personnel was undertaken to facilitate the distribution of the questionnaires. The researchers personally administered the survey to participants who were available and willing to participate at the time of data collection. The purpose of the study was clearly explained, and informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Participants were given sufficient time to accomplish the questionnaire, after which the completed forms were immediately retrieved to ensure a high response rate. Throughout the process, confidentiality and anonymity were strictly observed, and all responses were treated with utmost privacy. The collected data were then organized, encoded, and prepared for statistical analysis.

### ***3.4. Data Analysis***

Descriptive statistics were used to understand the characteristics of the officer population and the general level of well-being. Inferential statistics were employed to test the significance of any observed differences in well-being based on officers' profiles, thereby providing evidence of the effectiveness of peer support across different groups of officers. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the profile of the police officers in terms of age, sex, and years of service. These frequencies and percentages were calculated for each category within the identified variables.

The overall effectiveness of peer support in improving the well-being of police officers was evaluated by calculating the mean score of the well-being measure across all participants. Differences in the effectiveness of peer support across various subgroups of police officers based on their profiles (age, sex, and years of service) were also examined. Using t-tests or analysis of variance (ANOVA), the mean well-being scores among these groups were compared.

### ***3.5. Validity***

Validity refers to the goal that a test or scale is designed to achieve, essentially its correctness, or how accurately it measures what it is intended to measure (Bahariniya et al.,

2021). In this study, validity pertains to the questionnaire's capacity to accurately capture the responses of police officers regarding the effectiveness of peer support programs in improving their well-being. Ensuring validity means that the instrument reflects the real significance of the challenges and experiences of the participants, supported by input from experts in criminology and law enforcement.

To evaluate the appropriateness of the items in the questionnaire, each expert was asked to rate the instrument using the criteria established by Good and Scates (1954). This assures that the questionnaire was a valid and suitable tool for measuring the concepts under investigation and provided confidence in the accuracy and relevance of the data collected for the study. The validity of this study relied on the representatives of the sample, the content and construct validity of the questionnaire, the mitigation of potential biases, and acknowledging the limitations of a correlational design. The researchers ensured that the items adequately covered the constructs of peer support and well-being. This was achieved through a review of existing literature and expert input during the questionnaire development process. The questionnaire was carefully crafted to ensure that the items accurately captured the essential aspects of these constructs. The survey questionnaire developed for the research study met the university's standards with a calculated validity score of 4.33, classified as "Excellent."

### ***3.6. Reliability***

Reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of results obtained from a measurement instrument (Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020). It is a crucial component in assessing the overall validity of the questionnaire. To ensure reliability, the researchers conducted a pretest with 284 participants from Bacolod City Police Office. This pretest utilized Cronbach's alpha to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha is a statistical measure that assesses reliability by comparing the amount of shared variance, or covariance, among the items of the instrument to the total variance observed (Schrepp, 2020). A high Cronbach's alpha value indicates that the items are measuring a similar underlying construct, thus confirming the reliability of the questionnaire. By implementing this pretest, the researchers aimed to identify any potential issues with the questionnaire before administering it to the primary sample, thereby enhancing the robustness of the study.

A Cronbach Alpha score of .978 was achieved, surpassing the university's standards and signifying a high degree of internal consistency within the questionnaire. This result

suggests that the items within the instrument are consistently measuring the intended construct, making it a suitable and dependable tool for gathering data and drawing conclusions about the research topic. In essence, the researchers can be confident that the questionnaire will produce consistent and reliable results.

### ***3.7. Research Ethics***

The study was conducted in accordance with the research ethics guidelines established by the College of Criminal Justice Education and STI West Negros University, as well as the ethical principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration and the Data Privacy Act of 2012, ensuring utmost participant's rights and confidentiality. The researchers upheld the privacy of the participants by ensuring the confidentiality of their identities and significant statements throughout the study. A detailed Informed Consent Form was also provided to each participant, ensuring their voluntary participation. Participants were informed about the purpose and objectives of their involvement in the study, and any hard copies were destroyed through incineration a month after data collection.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

Table 2 shows the effectiveness of peer support in improving police officers' well-being, which obtained an overall weighted mean of 4.53, interpreted as very high. The highest-rated item, "*I feel more resilient to job-related stressors due to peer support*" ( $M = 4.53$ ), indicates that participants strongly perceive peer support as enhancing resilience and overall well-being. This finding supports Stress and Coping Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and Resilience Theory (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005), which emphasizes the role of social support in buffering stress and strengthening individuals' capacity to recover from adversity. It also aligns with Social Support Theory (Cohen & Wills, 1985), highlighting the importance of peer interaction in reducing the psychological demands of police work.

Consistent with Milliard (2020), the results suggest that peer support programs are effective in promoting positive mental health among police officers. Peer support is highly effective in improving the well-being of police officers in Bacolod City, regardless of age, sex, and years of service.

**Table 2***Level of effectiveness of peer-support in improving well-being of police officers*

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
I believe that peer support is helpful in improving the well-being of police officers.	4.39	0.672	Very High
I have found peer support to be a valuable resource in dealing with work-related stress.	4.42	0.686	Very High
I feel that the peer support program is effective in addressing the specific needs of police officers.	4.39	0.692	Very High
I believe that peer support should be more extensively integrated into the police force.	4.42	0.680	Very High
My department effectively promotes the benefits of peer support to personnel of BCPO.	4.44	0.677	Very High
Peer support provides a safe space to discuss work-related stress.	4.43	0.702	Very High
I believe the peer support program is accessible to all officers, regardless of rank or experience.	4.36	0.731	Very High
I believe peer support improves communication among officers.	4.43	0.687	Very High
I feel acknowledged and supported by my peer support group.	4.39	0.676	Very High
I feel more resilient to job-related stressors due to peer support.	4.53	0.456	Very High
Peer support helps reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness.	4.48	0.654	Very High
I believe peer support plays a vital role in maintaining officer mental health and wellness of BCPO personnel.	4.48	0.648	Very High
Peer support improved my relationships with colleagues.	4.48	0.637	Very High
Peer support has helped me gain more confidence in dealing with tough situations.	4.45	0.646	Very High
Peer support has been instrumental in helping me sustain a healthy work-life balance.	4.41	0.653	Very High
Peer support had a positive effect on my physical health.	4.40	0.673	Very High
Participating in peer support has made me feel more connected to the department.	4.47	0.626	Very High
I would recommend peer support to other officers.	4.44	0.672	Very High
I believe peer support helps reduce stigma surrounding mental health.	4.42	0.632	Very High
I believe that personnel of BCPO should participate in all peer support programs.	4.47	0.614	Very High
<b>Overall Statistics</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>0.561</b>	<b>Very High</b>

**Legend:** 4.21–5.00 - Very High; 3.41–4.20 High; 2.61–3.40 Moderate; 1.81–2.60 Low; 1.00–1.8 Very Low

Table 3 shows the effectiveness of peer support in improving police officers' well-being when grouped according to age, with an overall weighted mean of 4.44, interpreted as very high. The highest-rated item, "*I believe peer support plays a vital role in maintaining officer mental health and wellness of BCPO personnel,*" indicates strong agreement among participants that peer support sustains their well-being. This finding aligns with Milliard (2020), emphasizing the effectiveness of peer support programs in promoting positive mental

health through trust and camaraderie. It also supports Social Support Theory, which underscores the universal importance of emotional support, and reflects Resilience Theory by demonstrating that officers across age groups value mechanisms that enhance coping and recovery. The results further indicate minimal variation across age groups, suggesting that both younger and older officers consistently perceive peer support as effective, with no significant difference in their assessments.

**Table 3**

*Effectiveness of peer-support in improving well-being of police officers when grouped according to age*

Statement	Younger than 30 Years Old			30 Years Old or Older		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
I believe that peer support is helpful in improving the well-being of police officers.	4.41	0.635	Very High	4.39	0.683	Very High
I have found peer support to be a valuable resource in dealing with work-related stress.	4.45	0.615	Very High	4.41	0.706	Very High
I feel that the peer support program is effective in addressing the specific needs of police officers.	4.44	0.614	Very High	4.37	0.713	Very High
I believe that peer support should be more extensively integrated into the police force.	4.39	0.658	Very High	4.42	0.688	Very High
My department effectively promotes the benefits of peer support to personnel of BCPO.	4.38	0.630	Very High	4.46	0.691	Very High
Peer support provides a safe space to discuss work-related stress.	4.44	0.639	Very High	4.42	0.721	Very High
I believe the peer support program is accessible to all officers, regardless of rank or experience.	4.30	0.728	Very High	4.38	0.733	Very High
I believe peer support improves communication among officers.	4.36	0.675	Very High	4.45	0.691	Very High
I feel acknowledged and supported by my peer support group.	4.28	0.678	Very High	4.42	0.674	Very High
I feel more resilient to job-related stressors due to peer support.	4.33	0.691	Very High	4.59	0.764	Very High
Peer support helps reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness.	4.50	0.563	Very High	4.47	0.679	Very High
I believe peer support plays a vital role in maintaining officer mental health and wellness of BCPO personnel.	4.52	0.563	Very High	4.47	0.672	Very High
Peer support improved my relationships with colleagues.	4.44	0.588	Very High	4.49	0.652	Very High
Peer support has helped me gain more confidence in dealing with tough situations.	4.47	0.666	Very High	4.44	0.642	Very High
Peer support has been instrumental in helping me sustain a healthy work-life balance.	4.45	0.589	Very High	4.40	0.671	Very High

Statement	Younger than 30 Years Old			30 Years Old or Older		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
Peer support had a positive effect on my physical health.	4.41	0.610	Very High	4.40	0.692	Very High
Participating in peer support has made me feel more connected to the department.	4.50	0.563	Very High	4.46	0.643	Very High
I would recommend peer support to other officers.	4.41	0.583	Very High	4.45	0.697	Very High
I believe peer support helps reduce stigma surrounding mental health.	4.38	0.549	Very High	4.43	0.655	Very High
I believe that personnel of BCPO should participate in all peer support programs.	4.38	0.604	Very High	4.50	0.616	Very High
<b>Overall Statistics</b>	<b>4.41</b>	<b>0.510</b>	<b>Very High</b>	<b>4.44</b>	<b>0.577</b>	<b>Very High</b>

*Legend:* 4.21–5.00 - Very High; 3.41–4.20 High; 2.61–3.40 Moderate; 1.81–2.60 Low; 1.00–1.8 Very Low

The level of effectiveness of peer support when grouped according to age found no significant relationships in perceptions between officers below and above 30 years old. This supports the findings of Santiago et al. (2020), who emphasize that well-being interventions, including peer support, can be effective across different age groups when applied holistically. Lynch et al. (2020) noted that age alone does not significantly affect the perceived impact of peer-based interventions, emphasizing instead the importance of shared experience and trust.

**Table 4**

*Effectiveness of peer-support in improving well-being of police officers when grouped according to sex*

Statement	Male			Female		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
I believe that peer support is helpful in improving the well-being of police officers.	4.39	0.681	Very High	4.38	0.654	Very High
I have found peer support to be a valuable resource in dealing with work-related stress.	4.43	0.693	Very High	4.38	0.672	Very High
I feel that the peer support program is effective in addressing the specific needs of police officers.	4.37	0.714	Very High	4.42	0.641	Very High
I believe that peer support should be more extensively integrated into the police force.	4.42	0.692	Very High	4.40	0.656	Very High
My department effectively promotes the benefits of peer support to personnel of BCPO.	4.46	0.688	Very High	4.38	0.654	Very High
Peer support provides a safe space to discuss work-related stress.	4.46	0.702	Very High	4.35	0.699	Very High

Statement	Male			Female		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
I believe the peer support program is accessible to all officers, regardless of rank or experience.	4.40	0.711	Very High	4.26	0.770	Very High
I believe peer support improves communication among officers.	4.46	0.695	Very High	4.36	0.667	Very High
I feel acknowledged and supported by my peer support group.	4.42	0.670	Very High	4.30	0.687	Very High
I feel more resilient to job-related stressors due to peer support.	4.40	0.732	Very High	4.83	0.326	Very High
Peer support helps reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness.	4.51	0.666	Very High	4.42	0.622	Very High
I believe peer support plays a vital role in maintaining officer mental health and wellness of BCPO personnel.	4.48	0.674	Very High	4.48	0.589	Very High
Peer support improved my relationships with colleagues.	4.49	0.635	Very High	4.45	0.645	Very High
Peer support has helped me gain more confidence in dealing with tough situations.	4.46	0.642	Very High	4.42	0.659	Very High
Peer support has been instrumental in helping me sustain a healthy work-life balance.	4.41	0.675	Very High	4.41	0.602	Very High
Peer support had a positive effect on my physical health.	4.40	0.690	Very High	4.40	0.638	Very High
Participating in peer support has made me feel more connected to the department.	4.48	0.619	Very High	4.44	0.644	Very High
I would recommend peer support to other officers.	4.44	0.701	Very High	4.43	0.605	Very High
I believe peer support helps reduce stigma surrounding mental health.	4.43	0.623	Very High	4.40	0.656	Very High
I believe that personnel of BCPO should participate in all peer support programs.	4.48	0.619	Very High	4.44	0.606	Very High

**Legend:** 4.21–5.00 - Very High; 3.41–4.20 High; 2.61–3.40 Moderate; 1.81–2.60 Low; 1.00-1.8 Very Low

Table 4 shows the effectiveness of peer support in improving police officers' well-being by sex, with both males ( $M = 4.44$ ) and females ( $M = 4.42$ ) rating it as very high. Male officers rated highest item 11, "Peer support helps reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness" ( $M = 4.51$ ), while female officers rated highest item 10, "I feel more resilient to job-related stressors due to peer support" ( $M = 4.83$ ). These results indicate that peer support is highly valued across genders for reducing stress and isolation, consistent with Levenson and Dwyer (2003) who emphasized its role in fostering trust, community, and resilience. The findings further support Stress and Coping Theory and Social Support Theory, showing that emotional and instrumental support effectively reduce stress regardless of sex, while minor differences

reflect sex-specific coping strategies in law enforcement. Overall, both male and female officers perceive peer support as effective, with no significant differences.

The effectiveness of peer support based on sex showed no significant relationship in effectiveness between male and female officers, consistent with studies by Milliard (2020). Both male and female officers' benefit equally from peer support when the programs are inclusive and address the unique stressors of law enforcement work.

Table 5 shows that peer support effectiveness in improving police officers' well-being is consistently rated very high across all career stages, with mean scores of 4.52 for those with 1–5 years of service, 4.45 for 6–10 years, and 4.37 for more than 10 years. The highest-rated items were: *“Peer support helps reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness”* (M = 4.58) for 1–5 years, *“I feel more resilient to job-related stressors due to peer support”* (M = 4.73) for 6–10 years, and *“I believe that personnel of BCPO should participate in all peer support programs”* (M = 4.43) for more than 10 years. These results indicate strong agreement among participants that peer support improves well-being. Newer officers may benefit more from emotional and informational support, aligning with Social Support Theory, while those with longer service may rely on peer support for mentoring and adaptive behaviors, consistent with Resilience Theory. Overall, peer support remains highly effective across all career stages, with slight variations reflecting evolving needs as officers progress in their careers. Despite minor differences in mean scores, statistical analysis confirmed that these relationships were not significant.

Assessing peer support effectiveness across years of service revealed consistently high ratings regardless of tenure. This supports Padhy et al. (2023), who highlighted that peer support plays a vital role in resilience for both new and seasoned officers. Similarly, Kouvatso et al. (2022) emphasized that years of experience do not diminish the need for emotional support, especially in high-risk professions like policing.

Table 6 shows that the t-test results indicate no significant difference in the effectiveness of peer support when grouped according to age, with a p-value of .713 greater than the 0.05 alpha level. The F-statistic (1.607) and t-statistic (-0.368) confirm that officers across age groups perceive peer support similarly in terms of improving well-being.

**Table 5***Effectiveness of peer-support in improving well-being of police officers according to years of service*

Statement	≤ 5 Years			6–10 Years			More than 10 Years		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
I believe that peer support is helpful in improving the well-being of police officers.	4.52	0.604	Very High	4.39	0.693	Very High	4.30	0.685	Very High
I have found peer support to be a valuable resource in dealing with work-related stress.	4.53	0.603	Very High	4.43	0.711	Very High	4.31	0.704	Very High
I feel that the peer support program is effective in addressing the specific needs of police officers.	4.51	0.580	Very High	4.41	0.709	Very High	4.27	0.736	Very High
I believe that peer support should be more extensively integrated into the police force.	4.51	0.626	Very High	4.42	0.660	Very High	4.34	0.741	Very High
My department effectively promotes the benefits of peer support to personnel of BCPO.	4.51	0.626	Very High	4.43	0.699	Very High	4.39	0.691	Very High
Peer support provides a safe space to discuss work-related stress.	4.56	0.623	Very High	4.44	0.713	Very High	4.30	0.731	Very High
I believe the peer support program is accessible to all officers, regardless of rank or experience.	4.47	0.689	Very High	4.40	0.708	Very High	4.22	0.778	Very High
I believe peer support improves communication among officers.	4.51	0.669	Very High	4.44	0.724	Very High	4.36	0.653	Very High
I feel acknowledged and supported by my peer support group.	4.45	0.668	Very High	4.39	0.705	Very High	4.34	0.649	Very High
I feel more resilient to job-related stressors due to peer support.	4.49	0.609	Very High	4.73	0.732	Very High	4.31	0.734	Very High
Peer support helps reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness.	4.58	0.525	Very High	4.51	0.624	Very High	4.36	0.760	Very High

Statement	≤ 5 Years			6–10 Years			More than 10 Years		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
I believe peer support plays a vital role in maintaining officer mental health and wellness of BCPO personnel.	4.56	0.552	Very High	4.54	0.595	Very High	4.34	0.756	Very High
Peer support improved my relationships with colleagues.	4.49	0.556	Very High	4.54	0.623	Very High	4.38	0.705	Very High
Peer support has helped me gain more confidence in dealing with tough situations.	4.52	0.580	Very High	4.44	0.675	Very High	4.40	0.661	Very High
Peer support has been instrumental in helping me sustain a healthy work-life balance.	4.52	0.556	Very High	4.39	0.668	Very High	4.35	0.699	Very High
Peer support had a positive effect on my physical health.	4.47	0.579	Very High	4.39	0.693	Very High	4.37	0.718	Very High
Participating in peer support has made me feel more connected to the department.	4.62	0.517	Very High	4.43	0.634	Very High	4.40	0.677	Very High
I would recommend peer support to other officers.	4.49	0.556	Very High	4.44	0.725	Very High	4.38	0.690	Very High
I believe peer support helps reduce stigma surrounding mental health.	4.53	0.529	Very High	4.43	0.634	Very High	4.32	0.691	Very High
I believe that personnel of BCPO should participate in all peer support programs.	4.51	0.580	Very High	4.48	0.638	Very High	4.43	0.613	Very High
<b>Overall Statistics</b>	<b>4.52</b>	<b>0.483</b>	<b>Very High</b>	<b>4.45</b>	<b>0.574</b>	<b>Very High</b>	<b>4.34</b>	<b>0.592</b>	<b>Very High</b>

**Legend:** 4.01–5.00 - Very High; 3.01–4.00 High; 2.01–3.00 Neutral; 1.01–2.00 Low; 1.00 or below Very Low

**Table 6***Significant difference in the level of effectiveness of peer support grouped according to age*

Area	F-statistics	Significance	T-statistics	p-value	Result	Decision
Effectiveness Level	1.607	.206	-0.368	.713	not significant	Failed to reject the null

The outcome suggests that peer support is consistently effective regardless of age, reinforcing its universal value. As Milliard (2020) noted, peer support programs leverage trust and camaraderie to provide emotional support and normalize demanding experiences, which explains the consistently high ratings across groups. Overall, the findings highlight that peer support remains a valuable resource for police officers, unaffected by age differences.

**Table 7***Significant difference in the level of effectiveness of peer-support grouped according to sex*

Area	F-statistics	Significance	T-statistics	p-value	Result	Decision
Effectiveness Level	1.135	.288	0.317	.751	not significant	Failed to reject the null

Table 7 shows that the t-test results indicate no significant difference in peer support effectiveness when grouped according to sex, with a p-value of .751 greater than the 0.05 alpha level. The F-statistic (1.135) and t-statistic (.317) confirm that both male and female officers perceive peer support similarly in improving well-being. This outcome suggests that peer support is consistently effective across genders, reinforcing its universal applicability in fostering resilience and reducing stress among police officers.

**Table 8***ANOVA test on the level of effectiveness of peer-support grouped according to years of service*

Area	F-statistics	p-value	Result	Decision
Effectiveness Level	2.074	0.128	not significant	failed to reject null

Table 8 shows that the ANOVA results indicate no significant difference in peer support effectiveness when grouped according to years of service, with a p-value of 0.128 greater than the 0.05 alpha level. The F-statistic (2.074) confirms that officers across different service lengths perceive peer support similarly in improving well-being. This suggests that peer support remains consistently effective regardless of tenure, reflecting high satisfaction levels among participants. As Milliard (2020) emphasized, peer support leverages trust and

camaraderie to provide emotional support and normalize experiences, making it valuable for officers at all career stages.

The significant relationships in the perception of the participants based on demographic variables confirm that there are no statistically significant relationships by age, sex, or years of service. This underlines that peer support programs have a broadly positive and inclusive impact, contributing to the overall well-being of police officers regardless of personal background or work experience. These findings reflect the conclusions of Levenson and Dwyer (2003) who argue that peer support programs are universally beneficial when well-implemented. However, some literature, such as that by Santiago et al. (2020), suggests that tailored approaches considering demographic factors may enhance program reach and effectiveness. Still, the present study underscores the broadly inclusive impact of peer support interventions in law enforcement.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study set out to determine the effectiveness of peer support in improving the well-being of police officers in Bacolod City. The findings confirm that peer support programs are highly effective, with officers across age, gender, and years of service consistently reporting positive perceptions. No statistically significant differences were found among demographic groups, underscoring that peer support has a broadly inclusive and beneficial impact. Participants emphasized that peer support reduces stress, mitigates isolation, and fosters resilience, making it a vital resource in law enforcement. This research highlights the importance of institutionalizing peer support programs to strengthen organizational culture and promote officer wellness. These findings provide empirical evidence to guide policies aimed at reducing stigma, integrating mental health resources, and fostering solidarity within police departments.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that the Bacolod City Police Office institutionalize structured peer support programs to ensure their sustainability and consistent implementation across all units. Establishing formal policies and protocols will provide a clear framework for program operation and facilitate long-term commitment from both leadership and personnel. In addition, continuous training and professional development should be provided for designated peer support officers to strengthen their skills in communication, stress management, and conflict resolution, thereby enhancing the overall

effectiveness of the programs. Regular seminars, workshops and refresher courses can ensure that peer support officers remain up to date with best practices and emerging approaches in mental health and resilience-building. Furthermore, peer support initiatives should be integrated into mental health and wellness strategies to create a holistic approach to officer well-being. By linking peer support with counseling services, stress reduction programs, and organizational wellness policies, the police office can develop a comprehensive system that addresses both the emotional and psychological needs of its personnel. It is also recommended that mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of peer support programs be established, allowing the organization to identify areas for improvement, respond to emerging challenges, and ensure that these initiatives continue to meet the evolving needs of officers across different career stages, ages, and genders.

The study, however, has limitations. It was conducted within a single law enforcement agency, limiting generalizability. While broad well-being indicators were assessed, the specific mechanisms through which peer support influences mental health were not explored. Other potential influencing factors beyond demographics were also not examined. Future research should expand to different contexts and agencies, both locally and internationally, to explore how peer support impacts mental health across diverse settings. Studies may also investigate specific mechanisms such as emotional regulation or stress management through which peer support enhances well-being.

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### **Institutional Review Board Statement**

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards and research protocols of STI West Negros University. All procedures involving human participants complied with the Philippine National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Health-Related Research and the institutional policies for the protection of research participants.

### **AI Declaration**

The authors acknowledge the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the preparation of this manuscript. All AI-assisted content was thoroughly reviewed, verified, and edited by the author to ensure accuracy, integrity, and consistency with the study's objectives. The authors assume full responsibility for the final content of the manuscript.

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