



A REPORT ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH OF TRAFFIC POLICE PERSONNEL

Amrita P. Taide

Assistant Professor Dr. Ambedkar Institute of Management studies and Research
Nagpur.

ABSTRACT Work plays a dynamic role in sustaining life. Occupation is one of the major determinants of health, as each one of spends at least 8 to 10 hours in the workplace daily. The working population not only represents half of the world's population but also is the key contributors to socioeconomic development. The health of the working population is determined not only by the health hazards at the workplace but also by social and individual factors as well as easy access to available health services. The traffic police personnel face multiple occupational hazards. The main objective of the present review is to explore the impact of occupational health hazards on the health of traffic police personnel.

KEYWORDS : Traffic police, Occupational health, Occupational Hazards, Health effects

Work plays a dynamic role in sustaining life. Occupation is one of the major determinants of health, as each one of spends at least 8 to 12 hours in the workplace daily. The working population not only represents half of the world's population but also is the key contributors to socioeconomic development. The health of the working population is determined not only by the health hazards at the workplace but also by social and individual factors as well as easy access to available health services.

Occupational Health is the promotion as well as maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations. Here, the Identification and assessment of the risks from health hazards in the work place is important because people spend their complete 8-12 hours in the work place.

Moreover the Occupational environment too plays a key role on the health of the exposed. The effects of hazards on health get more severe when the duration of exposure increases. This fact is more observable in situations for the personnel engaged in traffic duty.

Traffic Police personnel play a pivotal role in maintaining the law, order and safety of the country. However, they face multiple occupational hazards. These personnel are continuously being exposed to vehicular emissions and have to always work in a noisy and polluted environment. They also have to undergo physical strain in an environment polluted by fumes, exhaust of vehicles, use of blowing horns, blow of dust in the air by a speeding vehicle, etc. Moreover, Standing for long duration in a static position makes them vulnerable to ergonomic problems. Managing high volumes of traffic density results into not only physical but also mental fatigue among traffic policemen making them susceptible to physical as well as mental stress. The physical and mental health indicators get highlighted with the increasing length of service. Outdoor occupations generally are hazardous in nature due to prolonged time of exposure to high concentrations of vehicular pollution making the employees face an increased risk of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. The Traffic police personnel are at the highest risk for the adverse health effect of air pollution, as compared to the general population. Occupational studies on traffic police personnel aids to understand the effects of vehicular pollution and its specific adverse effect.

The nature of duty of traffic police personnel make them suffer from many health hazards like skin irritations, varicose veins, arthropathy, photosensitivity, lung diseases, certain cardiovascular diseases, cancers etc.

Moreover besides being exposed to physical health hazards traffic police men are also frequently subjected to mental illness as well as anxiety. As the rules are frequently broken by people, it becomes hectic and a tiresome job for Traffic police personnel to maintain law and order. This probably can be a reason for them to develop high blood pressure and anxiety syndromes.

There are still more occupational disorders to list that the traffic police personnel face in day today life. Today, wherever we go, large vehicles are seen running along the road honking loudly, exposing these

personnel to high decibels of noise. However, sound waves below 90 decibels are not harmful; but, they become annoying at 80; and when they are above 85, they could lead to partial, complete, temporary or permanent hearing impairment upon prolonged exposure.

It is also to mention that, night time officers also have to smell the driver/rider's breathe, instead of using a proper breath analyzer. However, But there are various infectious diseases that spread through respiration and the droplet nuclei that are produced during breathing and coughing. In the meantime if the person being checked is harboring infectious respiratory disease like viral flu and tuberculosis etc. and if he happens to cough during the check, the officers could very well get infected.

Prolonged standing also results into some negative consequences on health. As the traffic police have to stand on streets every day for prolonged hours, they are likely to develop varicose veins, a dilation of the lower limbs caused due to damage of valves. Thus prolonged standing leads to swelling in the legs and a lot of discomfort. Moreover the condition gets worse during the rainy season as the dirty and infectious water from sewers frequently overflows onto the streets, and the traffic personnel have to move through these germ-ridden puddles putting themselves at the risk of diseases.

Another two potential conditions that traffic officers are likely to develop over a period of time are joint problem (arthropathy) and photosensitivity due to prolonged exposure to sunlight. The incidences of eye diseases are also found to be common in traffic police officers who work outdoors for a prolonged period of more than 20 years.

Long duty hours at traffic signals, dust, pollution and smoke emanating from the vehicles are also some of the major contributors of respiratory problems observed in Traffic police.

Moreover the traffic police are likely to develop cancer due to the contact with traffic benzene vapor during their daily work. Thus, an annual checkup and monitoring for benzene exposure among traffic police should be set up regularly as part of a program for primary prevention of occupation-- related cancer.

Most of the traffic police suffer with weight and respiratory problems due to irregular and bad food habits. Moreover they do not stand correctly. Thus it very much advisable that these personnel should make a practice of sitting for a couple of minutes when they are standing for long hours.

The traffic police personnel are surrounded by significant stress. Moreover, they are exposed to various health hazards. However, their nature of duty has more bearing on their deteriorating health. It is really difficult to avoid some of the risks but proper health management can definitely help boost up good health.

We are very much aware of the fact that prevention is better than cure but where prevention is vague, preservation and promotion of health becomes really important. Thus by inculcating health promotive

behaviors among traffic police personnel we can surely help them in improving their quality of life.

Health promotion is thus a process of enabling people to increase control over their own health. It covers a wide range of both, social and environmental interventions that are designed not only to benefit individual but also to protect individual people's health and quality of life by addressing as well as preventing the root causes of ill health, and not just focusing on treatment and cure. Thus, it is very important to assess the health promotive behavior of traffic police personnel and develop health awareness programs to enable them to improve and maintain their health.

Another matter of concern is the lack of awareness among the traffic police personnel regarding the hazards in their workplace. Moreover periodical medical examination is also an unknown entity. Usages of Masks are also rarely seen among traffic police. However, the police department apart from providing suggestions to ease traffic congestion and provision of masks to these workmen has done very little for their health.

Most of the cities now days are managed by traffic police who spend two thirds of their duty hours in the polluted working environment. Thus, an occupational health and safety issue of traffic police personnel is common in most of Indian cities and needs to be addressed as soon as possible, which can be achieved through Health promotion. Health promotion needs attention as it positively influences the health behavior of individuals and communities as well as the living and working conditions that influence their health. Health promotion not only improves the health status of individuals, but also the families, communities, states, and the nation as a whole. Health promotion enriches the quality of life for all people. It also reduces premature deaths. Health Promotion by focusing on prevention reduces the costs (both financial and human) that individuals, employers, families, insurance companies, medical facilities, communities, the state and the nation would spend on the medical treatment.

Thus, it really becomes important that more and more research is to conducted on the health and safety issues of police officers in order to identify the associated hazards and find ways to reduce risks. Moreover the promotion of good health also becomes very necessary so that these officers can be prevented from potential serious consequences caused due to their working condition and can lead a health life.

REFERENCES:

1. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25034905>
2. http://www.rguhs.ac.in/cdc/onlinecdc/uploads/05_N022_48016.doc
3. http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/jspui/bitstream/10603/151931/10/10_chapter%203.pdf