



DIFFERENT STRESSORS AFFECTING MENTAL STRESS OF CITY POLICEMEN IN NAGPUR: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY

Community Medicine

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ABSTRACT

Introduction - Stress is a complex phenomenon. An individual's experience of stress depends upon numerous aspects related to personality, environment, sociocultural situation, and several contextual factors. Occupational stress is a matter of concern in the current scenario. Occupational stress results in disruption of the psychological as well as physiological homeostasis of the individual, leading to deviant functioning in the working environment.

Material and Methods – It was Cross sectional study. Study setting were City Police stations till sample size achieved. Random selection of Policemans was done who have completed one year of job. Sample size was 178. Study conducted from sept 2015 -Dec 2017. The data collection was done between August 2016 and August 2017. All eligible policemen selected randomly and examined. The Professional Life Stress Test by Fontana was used.

Results - Prevalence of mental stress- 51%. Different stressors among the police personnel shows that most common stressor was unsettled conflicts with colleagues (80%) followed by other stressors like not having enough time to spend (68%), unable to speak mind to boss (66%) and others stressors.

Conclusion - Most common stressor was unsettled conflicts with colleagues (80%) followed by other stressors like not having enough time to spend (68%). Different stressors acted for different policemen.

KEYWORDS

different stressors, mental stress, policemen

INTRODUCTION

Indian police personnel can be broadly categorized into constables, inspectors, and officers. The constables belong to the lowest strata; they obey commands of inspectors/sub-inspectors and impart assigned duties as part of police work. The inspectors are placed at the intermediate level; they are expected to investigate cases and registered first information report.[1]

They also take care of public complaints and grievances and supervise the work of policemen subordinate to them.[1]

Stress can be defined as a physiological response to physical and mental demands or "An interaction between environmental forces and events called stress precipitators, which appear threatening to the person's reaction to the threat.[2]

Stress is a complex phenomenon. An individual's experience of stress depends upon numerous aspects related to personality, environment, sociocultural situation, and several contextual factors. Occupational stress is a matter of concern in the current scenario. Occupational stress results in disruption of the psychological as well as physiological homeostasis of the individual, leading to deviant functioning in the working environment.[3],[4]

Occupational stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the workers. The challenge at the work may get turned into job demands that cannot be met, relaxation may get turned to exhaustion, and a sense of satisfaction may get turned into feelings of stress.[5]

Evidence from the Health and Safety Executive suggests that 20% of workers feel 'very' or 'extremely' stressed at work, with the proportion rising to 49% in some occupational groups.[6]

Police work has been identified as the most psychologically stressful and critical profession in the world.[4],[7],[8]

AIM AND OBJECTIVE

To study different stressors affecting mental stress of city policemen.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

It was Cross sectional study. Study setting were City Police stations till sample size achieved.

Inclusion Criteria: Policemen completed one year of job & willing to participate.

Exclusion Criteria: Policemen who cannot be contacted for three successive visits.

Sample size:

It was calculated by assuming the prevalence of mental stress as 68.6% amongst policemen in Wardha city, India. Authors- Selokar D, Nimbarte S, Ahana S, Gaidhane A, Wagh V. (Austral Med J 2011;4(3):114 – 17). Sample size was 178.

Data collection:

The data collection was done between August 2016 and August 2017. Permission was obtained from institutional ethical committee and from the Commissioner of police. The study included 3 police stations in the city as per convenience. All eligible policemen selected randomly and examined till sample size met. Policeman who could not be contacted for three successive visits were excluded. Informed consent was taken before they participate in the study. Routine roll-call was selected as the most appropriate time to undertake the study to ensure most of participants were present. However some participants completed the study proforma in their evening duty time. The aim of the study and how to respond the questions was explained to each respondent. Participants were contacted during routine roll call and some police personnel were contacted in evening. Proforma was filled during interview. The Professional Life Stress Test by Fontana was used. A structured questionnaire was prepared in the local language. A total 24 questions were included in the questionnaire about the respondent's own life. Validity of scale was 0.636 (Nasee and Ahme 2013).[9] Participant's verbal descriptions of perceived stress linked to a numerical scoring system with responses such as 'yes', 'no', 'often', 'sometimes', or 'very rarely' being given scores between zero and four, respectively. The total score from each respondent calculated and used as an indicator of stress, rather than a precise measurement tool. Scores were graded as: ≤ 15 = stress is not a problem in the life of personnel who scored this level of stress and no treatment is required. 16-30 = a moderate range of stress for a busy professional person. It indicates that it is worth looking at how stress can reasonably be reduced. Treatment like counselling, meditation, yoga, etc. may be needed. 31-45 = stress is clearly a problem, and the need for remedial action is apparent. The longer the individual works under this level of stress, the harder it often is to rectify the situation. 45-60 = at these levels, stress is a major problem, and something must be done without delay.

Pilot study was carried out before main study to assess the feasibility and test the Proforma and necessary changes were made accordingly. Study subjects having mental stress were prescribed appropriate treatment when required and appropriately referred to specialties for psychological counselling & related therapy.

Statistical Analysis:

Data was analyzed and tabulated using frequency distribution tables and proportions.

RESULTS

Prevalence of mental stress- 51%. Mean mental stress score 16.46 ± 5.56(5-35) (Table1). Different stressors among the police personnel shows that most common stressor was unsettled conflicts with colleagues (80%) followed by other stressors like not having enough time to spend (68%), unable to speak mind to boss (66%), amount of work habitually exceed the amount of time available (57.5%), unable to get up late on weekends without feeling guilty (54%), feeling not adequately rewarded in terms of status and promotion for your abilities and commitment at work (50%) and others stressors (Table 2).

Table 1. Distribution of study subjects according to mental stress score Professional Life stress scale- Fontana)

Mental Stress Score	Study subjects	
	No.	(%)
0-15 (Stress isn't a problem)	98	49.00
16-30 (moderate range of stress)	97	48.50
31-45 (Stress is clearly a problem)	05	02.50
46-60 (stress is a major problem)	00	00
Total	200	100

Table 2. Different stressors among the police personnel

Stressors	Frequency (%)	Response
Two people who know you well are discussing you. Which of the following statements would they be most likely to use?	4(2%)	The less I see of X the better
Feeling you can seldom do anything right	41(20.5%)	Yes
Feelings of being hounded, trapped, or cornered	15(7.5%)	Yes
Indigestion	67(33.5%)	Yes
Poor appetite	37(18.5%)	Yes
Difficulty in getting to sleep at night	43(21.5%)	Yes
Dizzy spells or palpitations	44(22%)	Yes
Sweating without exertion or high air temperature	54(27%)	Yes
Panic feelings when in crowds or in confined spaces	24(12%)	Yes
Tiredness and lack of energy	77(38.5%)	Yes
Feelings of hopelessness ('what's the use of anything?')	53(26.5%)	Yes
Faintness or nausea sensations without any physical cause	11(5.5%)	Yes
Extreme irritation over small things	58(29%)	Yes
Inability to unwind in the evenings	34(17%)	Yes
Waking regularly at night or early in the mornings	27(13.5%)	Yes
Difficulty in making decisions	57(28.5%)	Yes
Inability to stop thinking about problems or the day's events	46(23%)	Yes
Tearfulness	5(2.5%)	Yes
Convictions that you just can't cope	16(8%)	Yes
Lack of enthusiasm even for cherished interests	14(7%)	Yes
Reluctance to meet new people and attempt new experiences	15(7.5%)	Yes
Inability to say 'no' when asked to do something	70(35%)	Yes
Having more responsibility than you can handle	68(34%)	Yes
Are you more or less optimistic than you used to be (or about the same)?	10(5%)	Less
Do you enjoy watching sports?	20(10%)	No

Can you get up late on weekends if you want to without feeling guilty?	108(54%)	No
Within reasonable professional and personal limits, can you speak your mind to your boss?	132(66%)	No
Can you speak your mind to your colleagues?	30(15%)	No
Can you speak your mind to members of your family?	17(8.5%)	No
Who usually seems to be responsible for making the important decisions in your life?	14(7%)	someone else
When criticized by superiors at work, are you usually:	71(35.5%)	Very upset?
Do you finish the working day feeling satisfied with what you have achieved?	7(3.5%)	only occasionally
Do you feel most of the time that you have unsettled conflicts with colleagues?	160(80%)	Yes
Does the amount of work you have to do exceed the amount of time available?	115(57.5%)	Habitually
Do you have a clear picture of what is expected of you professionally?	21(10.5%)	hardly ever
Would you say that generally you have enough time to spend on yourself?	136(68%)	No
If you want to discuss your problems with someone, can you usually find a sympathetic ear?	70(35%)	No
Are you reasonably on course towards achieving your major objectives in life?	39(19.5%)	No
Are you bored at work?	35(17.5%)	Often
Do you look forward to going into work?	4(2%)	hardly ever
Do you feel adequately valued for your abilities and commitment at work?	10(5%)	No
Do you feel adequately rewarded in terms of status and promotion for your abilities and commitment at work?	100(50%)	No
Do you feel your superiors actively hinder you in your work? Or do they actively help you in your work?	45(22.5%)	Hinder
If ten years ago you had been able to see yourself professionally as you are now, how would you have seen yourself?	49(24.5%)	falling short of your expectations
If you had to rate how much you like yourself on a scale from 1 (least like) to 5 (most like), what would your rating be?	8(4%)	1

DISCUSSION

In this study, different stressors among the police personnel were noted as per Fontana scale.

Bano B (2011) study reported causes of stress as perceived by police personnel like Bad Working condition (19.7%); Non-cooperation from public (62.1%); Political pressure (71.2%); Low salary (57.6%); Lack of departmental support (36.4%); Work overload (48.1%); Lack of time for family (68.2%); Torture by senior officers (30.3%); Excessive pressure from higher authorities (27.3%).[10]

Similar findings reported by Selokar D et al (2011) study where majority of the police personnel were subjected to stress as a result of criticism by superiors, working hours always exceeding shift hours, feeling inadequately rewarded, feeling inadequately valued for abilities and commitments and not feeling satisfied after finishing their work.[11]

Bano B (2011) study reported factors having stress on police personnel like place of posting (p= 0.020); Living with family (p= 0.489). Causes of stress as perceived by police personnel with percentage, Working condition (19.7%); Noncooperation from public (62.1%); Political pressure (71.2%); Low salary (57.6%); Lack of departmental support (36.4%); Work overload (48.1%); Lack of time for family (68.2%); Torture by senior officers (30.3%); Excessive pressure from higher authorities (27.3%).[10]

In Joseph J et al (2014) study, the main cause of stress as perceived by the respondents are political pressure(73.5%), lack of time for family

(67.3%), non-cooperation from public and negative public image (63.4%) and low salary (55.6%). In addition, a large number of them also referred other causes like lack of govt. Support (45.6%), work load (56.8%), frequent transfer (65.7%), lack of organisational and departmental support(46.7%), torture by senior officers (66.8%).[12]

Vijay M et al (2011) study reported Various stressors like Long hours of duty; Job pressure, Lack of social status, Absence of vertical mobility, Distorted reward & punishment, Lack of effective Leadership, Arbitrary postings, Frequent transfers, Political interference, Family pressure, Inadequate payments, Poor pay methods. [13]

CONCLUSIONS

Most common stressor was unsettled conflicts with colleagues (80%) followed by other stressors like not having enough time to spend (68%). Different stressors acted for different policemen. Prevalence of mental stress was high.

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