



## IMPACT OF JOB STRESS ON PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE OF POLICE PERSONNEL

### Arts

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### ABSTRACT

Police duty is always connected with responsibility, punctuality, dedication, and hard work, and it requires a high level of discipline. But police work is also related to stress, which is evident among the police personnel. Several studies reported the presence of stress among police personnel, which can have an impact on their personal and professional life. The night shifts, stressful events, frequent transfers, along with administrative/organizational pressure, pose the police personnel to and physical and psychological danger. The occupational stress faced by the police personnel lead to anger and aggression and can adversely affect the family and personal life. The present article focuses on finding out the impact of job stress on various aspects of police personnel life, such as personal, social, and professional life.

### KEYWORDS

Job Stress; Personal, Social & Professional Life; Personality; Coping Skills

### INTRODUCTION

Stress occurs when the magnitude of the stressor exceeds the individual's capacity to cope. Stress is generally considered as psychological perception and disturbance in mental and physical health. Environmental factors can influence these kinds of stressors. When an individual is not able to cope appropriately with the demands and pressure of the situation, it leads to distress. Lawrence (1995) stated that stress may cause physiological, behavioral, and psychological disturbances. Physiological changes include hormone release which triggers fight or flight response of humans. Under behavioral changes, it may excite people or even irritate them. Even it can bring behavioral changes and can induce addictive behavior, and some people can start drinking or smoke heavily, neglect exercise or proper nutrition, or overuse either the television or the computer. The response to stress may decrease the interpersonal relationship of an individual. Stress has also been known to play a part in anxiety and depression as a psychological change (Lawrence, 1995).

Stress is not avoidable in our lifestyle; even it has its presence in working areas too. Job stress is a mismatch between the individual's environments. It's not only the situations that lead to stress but rather it's a combination of situation, behavior pattern, and life circumstances that results in producing imbalance (Lindquist et al., 1986). Also, a transactional, process, and appraisal approach is needed to study work stress (Brief et al., 1995). Most of the research articles, books, projects say that work/job stress is a consequence of both personal and job/organizational factors (Jaramillo et al., 2005). Job stress can also be said as a feeling of psychological distress and tension from job circumstances, which varies occupation to occupation and results from external stressors (Lambert et al., 2017). Occupational stress is a period of adaption towards job demands, when there is an imbalance between response-ability as the individual and job expectation stress occurs (Myendeki, 2008). Ahmed and Ramzan (2013) also stated that job stress often referred to as "occupational stress inducers" is negatively related to the well-being and job satisfaction of employees.

### Stressors of Police Personnel

Police perform an extremely major role in law enforcement and community service in society. Organizational context leads to more stress among police compared to the actual work of police (Hart, et al., 2003). The involvement of the legal system and the role of the courts make the job of police more stressful (Amaranto et al., 2003). Buker & Wiecko (2007) in their study found that organizational issues were the major cause of stress among Turkish policemen. They also found a negative correlation between stress and job satisfaction/ motivation towards the works i.e. higher the motivation/satisfaction towards the works among police personnel the lesser the stress and vice versa. Frequent criticism by higher authorities, excess workload, reward less situation, poor work satisfaction have been identified as major stressors among police personnel (Selokar et al. 2011). Frequent night shifts marked with administrative and professional pressure is another

source of stress among police personnel (Ma et al., 2015). Besides, the work environment of police personnel is highly stressful which includes threats, uncertainty at work, encounters, political pressure, exposure to violence, and death. Parsekar, Singh & Bhumika (2015) conducted a study to identify the factors associated with the stress of police personnel and identified factors such as shortage of staff, inability to spend time with family and friends, occupation-related health issues, overtime demands, and fatigue as a major source of stress among police personnel. Similarly, Kaur, Chodagiri & Reddi (2013) conducted a study on 150 police officials of Andhra Pradesh, India, and reported that 35.33% of the police personnel in the sample were found to be suffering from psychological stress. Deb et al. (2008) conducted a study on traffic constable under Kolkata Police and found that 79.4% of them were moderately or highly stressed

### Impact of Job Stress on Personal and Family Life of Police Personnel

Stress is an integral part of the life of a professional police officer. When compared to the other occupations, police job is considered more stressful (Sever & Cinoglu, 2010; Gul, Serdar & Kenan, 2008) and police personnel are often at risk of psychosocial work stress. This stress can adversely affect the delivery of effective law enforcement and pose a threat to the safety of police officers, their co-workers, their family and friends, and the general public (Gershon, 1999:1). Parsekar, Singh & Bhumika, (2015) conducted a study on 76 constables of Udupi District, India and found that one-tenth of the participants had a chronic diseases and 13% were indulging in one of the habits such as smoking, consuming alcohol, etc. They also found 21% of the participants having moderate psychological distress and 25% as having high levels of stress. Routine occupational stress in the police officers has a strong impact on psychological well being which leads to post-traumatic stress symptoms (Lieberman et al., 2002). One of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress that most of the police officers experience is that the recollection of events; besides they have no way to avoid the arousing factors (Martin et al., 1986). Police personnel who work in a higher level of stress and high risk induced jobs have a positive correlation with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Haisch et al., 2004). It is evident that police officers have decreased performance when they have a high perceived stress level (Shane, 2010). Gul (2008) found that officers that make violent arrests were more likely to feel negative/depressed about their work. Baker (2008) reported that the police personnel are at higher risk of suicide than the general population; he further reported high rates of divorce and reduced quality of family life among police. Zukauskas et al. (2009) identified in their study on police officers that consequences of stress included depression, alcoholism, physical illness, and suicide. Barling (1990) investigated the relationship between job experiences and marital functioning and found that positive work experiences (i.e., job satisfaction) are associated with positive marital functioning, whereas negative work experiences (i.e., work stress) are associated with marital dysfunction.

Police usually work in shift duties, compared to other occupations. Police officers need to be very controlled in their emotional state, which in turn detach them from feelings and emotions towards their family members (Amaranto et. al., 2003). A police job requires exposure to emotionally filled interpersonal situations. People who work for society usually have a negative personal change as they work in very frustrating situations (Burke et, al., 1984). During a frustrating situation, police personnel experience psychological and emotional burnout, wherein family and work conflict have been identified as an affected area. The occupational stress of police officers directly or indirectly affects the interpersonal relationships of family members (Burke, 1993). Police personnel face life-threatening stressors which include risk associated with professional and family life. Families face major hardships including psychological fear and social stigmas. Marital conflict with a spouse, negative consequences, and stress in marital relationships like cohesion, lack of expressiveness, conflicts, lack of independence, lack of control towards family are often the consequences of job stress faced by police personnel (Maynard, et, al., 1980). Kohan et al. (2002) correlated job stress with high substance use among police. Police officers at times choose alcohol as a means of coping mechanisms for job stress and pave the way for violent, out of control behaviors and worrier mentality (Johnson, et, al., 2005). which can lead to domestic violence. Sever and Cinoglu (2010) reported that highly stressful police personnel are 4 times more likely to commit domestic violence. Some of the police lifestyles like shift rotations, frequent change in schedules, promotional practices, frequent transfers, can have serious family issues which in turn leads to a lack of strong interpersonal relationships (Maynard, et, al., 1982).

### Gender of Police Personnel and Stress Perceived

Gender is one of the most important aspects while considering the perception of stressors. An occupation like police have an equal share of psychological, emotional, physical stress on both male and female officers, but studies reveal the negative impact on job performance of women since they experience more stress compared to male (Derogatis & Savitz, 1999). Women would have a different way of conceptualization and adaption toward stress (Stotland, 1991). It's been in a debate that female use emotional focused coping whereas male use problem-focused coping strategies (Billings et al., 1981). Gender differences are found in the coping mechanism used in working male and female police officers (He et al., 2002). Female officers face more harassment, overt hostility, negative social interactions on the job and in society. The work environment often seems to be uncomfortable hence female officers are facing more stress compared to men (He et al., 2005). Findings also suggest that second shifts and night shifts remain a major source of stress for females when compared to men (Kurtz, 2012). The intradepartmental stress of both male and female officers are, negative attitude, training, exposure to tragedy, and trouble group blames and rumors (He, et al., 2015). Sexual harassment and discriminations are some of the major stressors among women police officers. Besides, female police personnel also experience issues such as lack of support of superior, poor quality equipment, underestimation of their physical and psychological abilities which increase their stress (Violanti, et al., 2016).

### Personality Traits and Perception of Stress

Persona is different for everyone and differs from one person to another based upon age, gender, environment, stress, coping, work attitude, and others in a different context. There is a link chain between the personality-work attitude-stressors-coping strategies-wellbeing of an individual (Ortega et, al., 2007). Not all the personalities' suits/fits for the police job, certain personality factors of an individual make it difficult to perform some police tasks and face the stressors. Psychological testing conducted during screening conditions indicates the importance of personality aspects of police person (Abdollahi, 2002). One of the psychologically stressful jobs is police work, which in turn leads to an increased risk of stress-associated diseases. For example, a police officer has to witness violence, handle dead bodies; shooting events, etc which make them more susceptible to mental illnesses such as PTSD (Violanti et al., 2006). Therefore, not all personality type is suitable for such type of jobs.

Personality traits such as neuroticism, psychoticism, extroversion have a significant association with coping methods like negative distortion, denial/blame which has a high impact on adverse psychological wellbeing (Kaur, Chodagiri & Reddi, 2013). Some personality traits of the five-factor model revealed that there is a strong association between low emotional stability with job strain and level of

stress with stress reactivity. Hence personality factors place an important role to overcome stress especially induced through environmental factors (Garbarino et al., 2014). It depends on the personality trait of the individual to perceive the workplace stressors which later leads to behavioral consequences. It is indicated from research that "neuroticism" (low emotional stability) is associated with depression. And individuals with "extroversion" traits reflect low positive emotions, and low agreeableness (Pienaar, et al., 2007).

Kaur, Chodagiri & Reddi, (2013) in their study on 150 police personnel reported traits of "neuroticism" and "psychoticism" in police personnel with significant psychological distress and thus positively correlated higher scores on general health questionnaire (GHQ). They also found the trait of "extroversion" in police personnel with no significant psychological distress and thus negatively correlated with high GHQ scores. Fontana et al. (1993) reported similar findings in their study and showed a positive correlation of stress with neuroticism and psychoticism and also a negative correlation between stress and extroversion traits. This illustrates that while people with neurotic and psychotic personality traits are more prone to developing stress when faced with the challenging tasks of police work, extroversion becomes a protective shield when dealing with the same.

### Coping Strategies of Police Officials

Perception and experiences of stress are very much individualized; each person has a different way to react to stressful situations and his reaction to stress is based on various internal and external variables. People adopt different coping styles to overcome stress. Bishop et al. (2001) in their study found that the majority of the police personnel seek to be positive and to be problem-oriented in overcoming their job stress. As occupational stress is different from general stress, the majority of the police officers choose different coping styles according to their age, gender, situation, etc. Along with problem-focused coping, direct-action coping is also used by police personnel (Biggam et, al., 1997). Social support can perform a function of problem-focused and emotionally focused coping strategies adopted by police personnel (Patterson, 2003). One of the findings suggests that resilience was present when there was greater use of rational coping rather than emotional coping. Furthermore, research indicates that police use both problem-focused and emotional-focused coping in different situations; problem-focused during occupational stress and emotion-focused coping during emotional stress due to work and family pressure (Balmer, et al., 2014).

Social support, acceptance/redefinition, and problem-solving, sharing problems with colleagues/ family members/friends, becoming a workaholic; viewing TV/listening music, doing exercise, smoking more cigarette, and devoting more time in religious activities are some of the coping skill strategies used by the police personnel to overcome their stress (Kaur, Chodagiri & Reddi, 2013; Deb et al., 2008). A study by Madu et al. (2006) also lists using humor, social support, meditation, and delegation of responsibilities as coping strategies used by police persons.

### Social Support and Police Stress

One of the social models that reveal that the cognition or thoughts related to stressors will ignore the reality that stressors or stressful experiences are not only the reasons for stress but individual possessing towards social support will experience the least stress. Social support helps the cops to cope with the psychological stress and negative consequences since they feel warmth (Cullen et. al., 1985). Police work for society and people outside to make them feel secure, the level of support, supportive people, and satisfaction towards the provided support reveals that more the social support will reduce the perceived occupational stress (Dantzer, 1987) therefore social support and perceived occupational stress has a positive correlation with each other (Graf, 1986). Social support can sometimes perform as a coping strategy for police officers. Social support of a spouse, children, family, and friends are considered beneficial for the psychological wellbeing of police (Patterson, 2003). Emotional social support is very important for working individuals since they use this strength as one of the coping strategies (Stephens, et al., 1997). Many pieces of research show that the effect of social support differs in situations. Support sources have to be of different types in different situations (Lord, 1996). Social support includes appraisal support, belonging support, tangible support, and esteem support which varies in different situations (Maan Diong, et al., 2005).

### Stress management of Police Personnel

Organizational and traumatic stress has a high impact on the job satisfaction of police officers. The management of occupational stress psychological health among police is different from the general population (Brough, P. 2004). Police experience severe physiological, psychological, and behavioral effects of stress. Police must tackle these stressors to overcome their stress and manage their work effectively. Stress can bring in change with biochemical, psychological imbalance. Studies suggest that relaxation and biofeedback techniques place an important role in the reduction of stress outcomes (DeFrank et al., 2013). Other studies on police stress management reveal that understanding mental skills of self could help the individual to manage stress psychologically (Le Scanff, et al., 2002). Majorly eye-movement desensitization and reprocessing have a strong impact on treating PTSD (Wilson, et al., 2001). Resilience training and self-regulation skills have also benefited police by improving their decision making and judgment ability. (McCraty et al., 2012).

### CONCLUSION

Police individuals are common people like any other, but what makes them different from others is their occupational. The demand for their profession teaches them to behave in different ways, which can stigmatize the profession as well as the person. Their professional responsibilities bring make them venerable to different types of psychological problems. The socio-demographic variable also plays an important role in terms of stress vulnerabilities. Identifying the personality factors during the recruitment process and inculcating coping abilities can help the police personnel to overcome severe challenges in their professional and personal life. Mental health services are essential for police personnel. There is a need to train the police personnel appropriate stress management techniques to help them their stress and ultimately improve their quality of work.

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