



Stress Among Police : A Case Study On The Police Personnel At Waghodiya, Panigate & Airport Road Police Station In Vadodara City

* Kalpesh Dhirubhai Naik

* Assistant Professor; Department of Commerce and Business Management, Faculty of Commerce; The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara

ABSTRACT

The Purpose of this research is to find out level of stress among police personnel at Waghodiya Police Station in Vadodara city. Open ended Questionnaire has been used to collect the data among police personnel at three different police station. Each and every employee has been included in this study of the same police station.

The finding of the study suggests that there is a significant difference of level of stress among police personnel at various police station. Sources of stress vary as per their nature of profile, shifts, designation, role and responsibilities.

Keywords : Stress, Police, Mental Stress, Physical Stress, Waghodiya police station

Introduction:

The Police Department in Vadodara, Gujarat, India, like any other Police Department, has officers that are being negatively affected by stress. Stress can come in many forms. Some sources of stress can be the internal or external pressure to succeed, conflicts among family and friends, a lack of self-confidence, or even not getting enough sleep. Especially difficult for police officers is the fact that they do shift work. They are assigned to a particular shift and they must work regardless of holidays or other special occasions. This is especially difficult for the police family, as they often do not understand why their spouse is not home with the family. The family often feels that the officer places his/her job significantly above his/her family.

Some officers react to situations presented in different ways. Something that may severely stress one officer may not stress another officer in the same way. One officer may thrive if given a project deadline while another officer may feel all types of pressures and stressors to make the deadline.

Stress can cause a multitude of problems in the officer's professional and social life. Stress can lead to numerous sicknesses and when the officer brings that stress home to his family life it can cause his family to feel negative towards his/her job. This is just another added form of stress that the officer has to attempt to manage.

In the 20th Century, "Stress" became part of medical jargon to indicate an overloading on the human body. It was in 1935 that Cannon related the concept to equilibrium tendencies in the body. When the sympathetic nervous system and the endocrine system are activated in a certain way then the individual is said to be under stress. Hans Selye (1936) thereafter explored the syndrome of "just being sick." He showed that almost any assault, fright, frustration, physical injury or infection produced the same sequence of physiological changes within the body called General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). Selye attempted to identify it as a basic / cause of all human ills. After World War II the stress concept was granted a place in psychological jargon.

In India, the presence of stress among policemen is felt but not recognized as the major enemy of law enforcement professionals as yet. Media reports of police brutality and

indiscipline can be perceived as warning signs of job stress, emphatically pointing to the mismanagement of this crucial problem so far (Mathur, Pragma, 1994). Job stress is a phenomenon which is unmistakably part of mankind's work environment. The policeman's work environment also does not escape from this reality.

Though work stress is not necessarily a negative phenomenon and if managed purposefully can be instrumental to effective performance, excessive stress can produce adverse effects and thus needs to be prevented. Especially with regard to a vital social agency like the police, the negative implications of occupational stress assume greater significance. In fact, concern over the high incidence of occupational stress in the police in United States of America has reached such a proportion that an International Law Enforcement Stress Association (ILESA) formed in 1978 which publishes its own quarterly magazine entitled Police Stress. Highlighting the significance of the same, in the first issues of this magazine Hans Selye, the "Father of Stress Research", in his opening address suggested that police is a uniquely high stress occupation. According to Selye (1978): "Unlike most professions, it ranks as one of the most hazardous, even exceeding the formidable stresses and strains of air traffic control."

The functions of the police encompass preservation of law and order, to safeguard people from attack and to protect property among others. The society expects the cop to play the varied roles with equal elan. He is a helper, saviour, friend and referee. Then as a law enforcer he makes an arrest or uses force to enforce the rule of law. This roller coaster ride is a process difficult to understand functionally and incomprehensible emotionally (Bratz, 1979).

With the growing incidence of crime and widening role expectations, the mental and physical health of police personnel assumes greater significance than before. Stresses may be triggered from social change, economic conditions, police organization, the total criminal justice system, the demands made on policemen's time and of their families who are also experiencing stress, the job of policemen in general, and from the cumulative and interactive effects of these stressors (Grencik, 1975).

The purpose of this research paper was to identify the effects that stress has on the police officer as it relates to his professional and family life and what the department can do to assist the officer in stress management. Also, to identify stressors and find appropriate ways to handle situations of stress before they become unmanageable and cause negative impact on the officer and his/her family life. The main focus of this research paper was to not only identify stressors, but to educate officers to more effectively manage their stress to avoid personal and family crisis.

Review of Related Literature:

It is surprising to note that so far only two papers relating to police stress have been included in the All India Police Science Congress held annually in India. These two papers (Pillai, 1987 and Mathur, Pragya, 1995) appeared after a gap of more than seven years. However, there has been some evidence of interest in the past decade and studies of stress in police have been gradually emerging (Bhaskar, 1986; Channabasavanna, 1996; Chaudhary, 1993; Dangwa, 1982; Mathur Pragya, 1994; Pillai, 1987; Ramachandran, 1989; Suresh, 1992; Tripathi et. al., 1993).

Stress appears to be the inevitable price or a career in a police force (Barry, 1987; Colwell, 1988). Indeed Somodevilla (1978) suggested "that a police officer is under stress and pressure, unequalled in any other profession." In the recent years, there has been a spurt in research on occupational stress in police, particularly in the US and Britain. "There is considerable evidence suggesting that more enforcement officers are killed by job related stress than they are by criminals. For every police officer slain by an assailant in the line of duty, hundreds perhaps thousands succumb to the insidious, long range effects of job induced pressures" (Territo and Vetter, 1981). The destructive effect of stress on police personnel has been given due recognition in the western countries and steps have been taken there to combat the menace of police stress. With growing sensitivity to the potential of damaging stress factors, support systems are being developed at the individual and organizational level for easing off those stresses which are most harmful.

The topic of stress has found interested researchers in the diverse fields of clinical medical and occupational psychology (Cox, 1978, Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend, 1974, Marshall and Cooper, 1981, McLean, 1979). In the field of occupational stress the police have been the subject of a great deal of attention. Many studies have shown that the job of policing is an extremely stressful one (Heiman, 1975; Kroes, 1976; Nelson and Smith, 1970, Niederhoffer and Niederhoffer, 1978).

In fact, concern over the high incidence of occupational stress in the police in America has prompted the formation of an "International Law Enforcement Stress Association" (ILESA) which publishes its own quarterly magazine entitled Police Stress. It was in the first issue of this magazine that the father of stress research, Hans Selye in his opening address, suggested that the police are in a uniquely high stress occupation. Reiser and Klyver (1987) deduce that in the past 15 years more than 100 articles, several books and a variety of manual have been published on police stress.

Hollin (1989) indicated some issues that interest the researcher with reference to police stress. Being congruent with the present study, it would be worthwhile to mention them here. With regard to the police there are three principal issues : what is stressful about police work? Which officers are the most vulnerable? And what effects does it have on police officers? The initial attempts to define the sources of stress in police work relied upon personal experiences and observations (Eisenberg, 1975, Kirkham, 1974, Reiser, 1974; Roberts, 1975; Stratton, 1978a, 1978(b); Symonds, 1970).

One of the pioneering publications concerning the emotional hazards of police work was that of Martin Symonds (1970) whose association of twenty nine years with the New York City Police Department exposed him to the nature of police

work and the stresses it places on the individual. He stated, "The job of being a policeman is unique. It is one of the few occupations that a man engages in for which he is feared, sometimes hated, occasionally reviled or even assaulted in the ordinary performance of his duties."

Symonds (1970) reflected upon the effect on the personality of the individual of the forces of change emanating from the police job, the shattering of illusions and the pressures from conformity from the police organization. In step with the purpose and direction of this study, the literature on police stress is reviewed with emphasis on manifestations and symptoms of strain that facilitate recognition of problem, identification and delineation of the stressors experienced by law enforcement agents, and coping behaviour among law enforcers.

Job stress exacts a heavy toll in terms of the physical, psychological, social and job related consequences for the individual. The Psychological Services Unit of the Dallas, Texas Police Department has set forth its assessment of job related stresses, the immediate response to stress and the long term response to stress.

The first constructive step toward coping more effectively with stress is to recognize its presence (Territo and Vetter, 1981). The fifteen most prevalent stress warning signs for law enforcement which would facilitate the recognition of the problem by police administrators and supervisors have been enlisted by the Psychological Services Unit. According to Kaslof (1989), the emotional, psychological or physical stress experienced by police officers may vary by career stage and by ability, to handle stress.

Stern (1973) proposed that there was a high rate of ulcers in the US police and this has also been verified empirically by Hurrell (1977). In addition to heart disease, Davidson's (1979) isolated stress induced health maladies in the Northern Territories Police consisting of higher incidences of hyper tension, asthma, hay fever, repeated skin trouble, ulcers, trouble with gastrointestinal tract, migraine and headaches, mental illness or nervous breakdown, and gout compared to the same age and sex in the Australian male population sample.

Coman and Evans (1991) studied stressors facing Australian police in the 1990s and suggested that Australian police officers like their counterparts in the US and UK face a number of job content and job context stressors which make policing a highly stressful occupation. Job content events include organizational structure and communication, supervisory practices, career pathing concerns, work environment which stresses detachment from others, suspiciousness toward the community and cynicism regarding the job.

Mathur, K. M. (1994) closely observed the sources of stress to the CRPF and BSF personnel deployed in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, North eastern States and other parts of the country and identified the following sources among others, traumatic events like witnessing dead bodies of their colleagues or innocent people; separation from their families and children; irregular grant of leave and refusal of grant of leave; inadequate resources and inequities in pay and job status, job overload, non recognition; constant threat to life and subsequent tension.

Research Methodology

Objectives:

The Objectives of this paper are divided into two categories namely main Objective and sub objectives:

Main Objectives:

The purpose of this research paper was to identify the effects that stress has on the police officer as it relates to his professional and family life and what the department can do to assist the officer in stress management.

Sub Objectives:

- i. To identify stressors and find appropriate ways to handle situations of stress before they become unmanageable and cause negative impact on the officer and his/her family life.
- ii. This research paper was to not only identify stressors, but to educate officers to more effectively manage their stress to avoid personal and family crisis.
- iii. The other objectives of this research paper is to find out the stress level, various sources of stress and the coping strategies among police personnel in Vadodara city with special reference to the police station located at Waghodia, Pani Gate and Airport Road.

Research Design:

The research design for this study is descriptive in nature due to the data requirement. The data which is collected through primary method are partly qualitative in nature so it needs detail description hence the research design is descriptive in nature.

Sampling Techniques and size:

Non probability convenience sample had been used for this study and the sample size was 60 police personnel from the three police stations around Vadodara city.

Methods of Data Collection:

Primary methods of data collection had been used for this study. A close ended structured questionnaire had been designed with the help of expert in this area. Total 90 questionnaires distributed among police personnel at three police stations around Vadodara city and successfully collected 60 completed questionnaires.

Reliability and Validity of the Study:

The study is valid if its measures actually measure what they claim to and if there are no logical errors in drawing conclusions from the data (Garson, 2002). Therefore different steps were taken to ensure the validity of the study. The theories that have been selected for the study was clearly described and research question has been formulated based on the previous theories. To check the content validity of the questionnaire various expert in the field of academics and Psychology from the different organization were contacted and the components of questionnaire were modified as per their instructions.

According to Garson (2002), reliability is a measure if the extent to which an item, scale or instrument will yield the same score when administered in different times, location or population, when the two administrations do not differ in relevant variables. The objective is to make sure that if another investigator will follow the same procedures and used the same case study objects, the same conclusion would be made.

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Index was used to evaluate internal consistency of each construct. Hair et al. (1998) suggests that that acceptable level of reliability index should be maintained at a minimum of 0.5 in order to satisfy for the early stages of research; and over 0.7 is considered to be a good level.

Sr. No.	Item	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Remark
1	Mental Symptoms of stress	11	0.793	Desired Level of Alpha is 0.700
2	Physical Symptoms of Stress	13	0.688	Desired Level of Alpha is 0.700
3	Other symptoms of Stress	3	0.752	Desired Level of Alpha is 0.700
4	Personal Sources of Stress	7	0.891	Desired Level of Alpha is 0.700
5	Inter Personal Sources of Stress	5	0.725	Desired Level of Alpha is 0.700
6	Sources of Stress (Work Spheres)	11	0.863	Desired Level of Alpha is 0.700
7	Recreational Sources of Stress	4	0.843	Desired Level of Alpha is 0.700
8	Symptoms and Sources of Stress (Total)	54	0.927	Desired Level of Alpha is 0.700

Limitations of the Study:

Major limitation of this study includes the following points:

- i. To collect the data from police personnel is very difficult without the permission of higher authority. Taking permission from the higher police official becomes very difficult due to the political interference.
- ii. Second major limitation of this study is that the suggestions and recommendations cannot be generalized. It will only applicable to the concern police personnel of the three police stations in Vadodara city.

Delimitation of the study:

The major delimitation for this study is the selection of police station for the data collection. Due to permission and the time consumption in taking response from the police personnel the study is delimited to only three police stations in Vadodara city.

Analysis and Findings:

With the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) data have been analyzed. Table 1 shows the Descriptive Statistics of the respondents.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	60	3	6	4.82	.770
Gender	60	1	1	1.00	.000
Qualification	60	2	3	2.35	.481
Religion	60	1	1	1.00	.000
Category	60	1	3	1.33	.572
Place of Residence	60	3	3	3.00	.000
Marital Status	60	1	1	1.00	.000
Number of Dependant	60	2	3	2.38	.490
Location of Police Station	60	3	3	3.00	.000
Unit of Current Posting	60	1	1	1.00	.000
Rank in the Police Force	60	4	4	4.00	.000
Experience	60	2	3	2.43	.500
Income in Rupees	60	2	4	3.55	.534
Number of Family Members in Police Department	60	1	1	1.00	.000
Valid N (list wise)	60				

The above table summarizes the overall finding about the Demographic profile of the respondents. Table shows the respondent are within the age group of 3 and 6 which means the respondent are under the age group of 31 50. The average age of the respondent is around 40 years. In gender category table indicate that only one code which is for male category. So the total 60 respondents are male as far as their gender is concern. There is a variation in qualification among the respondent.

Some respondent are graduate while the others are post graduate. All the respondents are belongs to Hindu religion as table shows. There is a variation in category of respondents some are belonging to the general category while others are in OBC and SEBC, there is no any respondents belong from the category of schedule tribes. Marital status of the respondents shows that all are married.

There is a variation in number of dependents among respondents. Some of the respondents are having 2 dependents while rests of the respondents have 3 dependents. As far as place of residence is concern all the respondents reside in rural areas due to the geographic location of the police station. The locations of the police station are rural areas of Vadodara city.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	31-35	1	1.7	1.7	1.7
	36-40	21	35.0	35.0	36.7
	41-45	26	43.3	43.3	80.0
	46-50	12	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table - 2 indicate that the age breakup of the respondents. Code 3 represents the age group of 31 35 years category while code 4 is for 36 40. Code 5 is for age group of 41 45 while code 6 is for age group of 46 50 years of age. Approximately 43% of the respondents are belonging to the age group of 41 50. As far as breakup of gender is concern all the respondents are male so the table is not required in this case.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Grad	39	65.0	65.0	65.0
	PG	21	35.0	35.0	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	General	43	71.7	71.7	71.7
	SC	14	23.3	23.3	95.0
	SEBC	3	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	37	61.7	61.7	61.7
	3	23	38.3	38.3	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	34	56.7	56.7	56.7
	3	26	43.3	43.3	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	1.7	1.7	1.7
	3	25	41.7	41.7	43.3
	4	34	56.7	56.7	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 contains the output of Sources of stress among police personnel in the Vadodara city. Working long hours and post retirement departmental issues are the major sources of stress among police personnel of Vadodara city. My work is boring and not challenging, Struggle to meet deadline is the second important sources of stress among police personnel. Most of the police personnel feels that they are suffering from heavy stress due to the Struggle to meet deadline, Struggle to get along with superior and Have to tolerate a lot of frustration. Feel overloaded with work has the lowest Standard error of mean which indicates that the difference between actual value and the mean value are less while on the other hand Struggle to get along with superior has the highest value of Standard error of mean which indicate that the difference between actual value and mean value is very high.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Feel Overloaded with work	60	3.72	.640	.083
Struggle to meet deadline	60	3.95	1.016	.131
Carry a lot of responsibility	60	3.57	.998	.129
Struggle to get along with superior	60	3.10	1.160	.150
Have to tolerate a lot of frustration	60	3.33	1.100	.142
Work Long Hours	60	4.05	.699	.090
No Control over my work schedule	60	3.80	.684	.088
Dissatisfied with my salary	60	3.87	.747	.096
My work is boring and not challenging	60	3.98	.676	.087
Perfectionist in the execution of my task	60	3.70	.889	.115
Post retirement departmental issues	60	4.02	.770	.099

Table 9 shows the output of one sample t test. Finding of the study indicate that sources of stress at work sphere are very important among the police personnel in Vadodara city. Among work sphere sources of stress the most important are Feel Overloaded with work, Work Long Hours, No Control over my work schedule, My work is boring and not challenging.

Among these four sources of stress feel over loaded with work and working long hours are most common sources of stress among police personnel in Vadodara city. As table shown that mean difference in working long hours is high which means that all the police personnel have some variation in this regard. Some are thinking that stress are highly related with level of stress while others are thinking that it has less influence on level of stress.

	Test Value = 0			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Feel Overloaded with work	44.967	59	.000	3.717	3.55	3.88
Struggle to meet deadline	30.128	59	.000	3.950	3.69	4.21
Carry a lot of responsibility	27.690	59	.000	3.567	3.31	3.82
Struggle to get along with superior	20.699	59	.000	3.100	2.80	3.40
Have to tolerate a lot of frustration	23.482	59	.000	3.333	3.05	3.62
Work Long Hours	44.863	59	.000	4.050	3.87	4.23
No Control over my work schedule	43.036	59	.000	3.800	3.62	3.98
Dissatisfied with my salary	40.089	59	.000	3.867	3.67	4.06
My work is boring and not challenging	45.625	59	.000	3.983	3.81	4.16
Perfectionist in the execution of my task	32.249	59	.000	3.700	3.47	3.93
Post retirement departmental issues	40.405	59	.000	4.017	3.82	4.22

Table 10 is an output of ANOVA which is drawn to analyze the mental symptoms of stress among police personnel in Vadodara city. Total 10 items considered for mental symptoms for stress. F value in the ANOVA table gives the values at which hypothesis can be tested on the basis of level of significance / Confidence level.

Conclusion & Recommendation:

As in analysis part major focus given to the Sources of stress at work sphere and found that Feel Overloaded with work, Work Long Hours, No Control over my work schedule, my work is boring and not challenging. Police personnel at three different located Police station feels that overloaded with work and working long hours are the major sources of stress so higher authority need to manage this for the better and smooth function of the organization. Government may take an action and appoint new personnel to reduce the overload among police personnel in the Vadodara city. Working long hour is also major sources for stress among police personnel in Vadodara city for this higher authority and government agencies may take the necessary action to improve the situation. Working long hours might be control with the help of hiring some part time worker or contractual police personnel for the better administration and smooth conduction. It will be helpful for both the government organization and police personnel.

Under stress the efficiency of police personnel badly affected and hence they are not able to work efficiently and as per the expectation of the organization. So government need to think

on this issue seriously and appoint some new police personnel to reduce overload and working hours of the police personnel in Vadodara city.

Table 10 :

Table: 10: ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Worry a lot	Between Groups	.463	2	.232	.981	.381
	Within Groups	13.470	57	.236		
	Total	13.933	59			
Irritability	Between Groups	1.432	2	.716	1.894	.160
	Within Groups	21.551	57	.378		
	Total	22.983	59			
Easily Frustrated	Between Groups	1.029	2	.514	.979	.382
	Within Groups	29.955	57	.526		
	Total	30.983	59			
Aggressive Outbursts	Between Groups	1.034	2	.517	2.397	.100
	Within Groups	12.299	57	.216		
	Total	13.333	59			
Poor Concentration	Between Groups	.262	2	.131	.857	.430
	Within Groups	8.721	57	.153		
	Total	8.983	59			
Forgetfulness	Between Groups	2.260	2	1.130	6.491	.003
	Within Groups	9.923	57	.174		
	Total	12.183	59			
Depression	Between Groups	2.458	2	1.229	5.777	.005
	Within Groups	12.125	57	.213		
	Total	14.583	59			
Poor Motivation	Between Groups	3.901	2	1.951	15.130	.000
	Within Groups	7.349	57	.129		
	Total	11.250	59			
Want to be alone always	Between Groups	4.672	2	2.336	7.803	.001
	Within Groups	17.062	57	.299		
	Total	21.733	59			
Poor Self Esteemed	Between Groups	.756	2	.378	1.558	.219
	Within Groups	13.827	57	.243		
	Total	14.583	59			

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