



STRESS AMONG POLICE CONSTABLES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The stresses relating to jobs have become predominant features of modern life. Police force experiences greater levels of stress. The aim of this paper is to analyze the stressors in female and male police constables. A comparative analysis among male and female personnel was done. The occupational stress index was conducted on 25 female and 25 male police constables serving in Kota city of Rajasthan. The results indicate that stress was commonly perceived among both the gender, but the differences were perceived in the following factors- Role overload, Role conflict, political pressure, Responsibilities, powerlessness and intrinsic factors.

Keywords- Stress, occupational stress, police, stressors

Introduction

We are living in an era of growing complexities and pressures where human constitutions and capabilities are being taxed severely. Occupational stress has become a common phenomenon in this era of fast changing and developing world, exerting a far-reaching effect on employees' behavior and adjustment on as well as off-the-job. This is the reason that researchers, academicians and administrators have emphasized on work stress and its impact on workers behavior over the past one decade.

Selye was the first to use the term "stress" to describe as a set of physical and psychological responses to adverse condition (Fevre et.al.2003). Mc Grath (1976) noted that a stress involves an interaction of person and environment. Acc to him "there is potential for stress when an environmental situation is perceived as presenting demand which threatens to exceed the person's capabilities and resources for meeting it, under conditions where he expects a substantial differential in the rewards and costs from meeting the demand versus not meeting it.

Occupational stress refers to individual's response to work demands beyond their knowledge and ability, and which challenges their capacity to cope (Leka, Griffith & Cox 2003). Acc to Margolis and Kroes (1974) job stress is a condition worth interacting with worker characteristics to disrupt psychological or physiological homeostasis. The causal situation conditions are job stresses and the disrupted homeostasis is job related strain.

Every occupation has job stress but in varied degree and the police force is also no exceptions to this. However, the severity of stress in police personnel depends upon their status in the organization.

Policing refers to organization that functions to combat and prevent crime, uphold public order, protect all citizens and maintain and enforce the law. Police constables in India stand at the lowest rank in the police organization. In order to maintain the disciplinary and legislative homeostasis of the society, the police force

works day and night. Police personnel in India face many challenges while carrying out their duties which adversely impact their wellbeing and work performance.

Policing is a male dominated field. In the recent years the number of women in the police has increased. The lady constables are deployed for duties like dealing with women offenders, juvenile, duties at fairs, during festivals, VIP visits, employed in lockup with women suspects, for office work, investigating cases against women etc. Whereas their counterpart, the male constable is engaged in variety of duties like patrol, beat system, crime detection and prevention, traffic control, maintain law and order during any disaster, election duties, rallies, riot control, escort duties of VIP'S officers, prisoners etc.

Sources of stress

Various studies have been done to understand the different stressors in police organization. Some of the major reasons observed by management and social scientists are-negative working environment, long duration of working hours, lesser time for family members, irregular or improper eating habits, sleepless nights, insufficient participation in decision affecting duties, lack of resources, inadequate salary, shift work, bias attitude of supervisor, lack of training, poor organizational policies, lack of recognition of good work, disturbed emotional state, lack of support, little control over their work schedule lack of opportunity for advancement (Sundaram &Sekar 2015) etc.

These above stated reasons would arouse stress among police force which could be manifested in physical, psychological and behavioral problems like depression, fatigue, irritability, unable to concentrate, loss of motivation, increase in substance use, suicide ideation and suicide etc.

The role of gender in the experience of occupational stress is highly relevant variable. The female police officers are often met with resistance and discrimination, many encounters numerous barriers and dilemmas in their carriers, and may also be exploited by male colleagues (Greene& del carmet 2002). The external work environment is also not suitable to female officers than male (He,Zhao& Ren 2005).The women in police are dealing with operational hassles like abusive cases, handling riots, forcible arrest. Women are experiencing stress due to poor basic facilities, inadequate man power, poor status in the department ,domination, lack of recognition(Karunanidh & chitra,2010) Some studies report that female police officers are prone to more stress than their male colleagues ((He,Zhao& Ren 2005).where as some studies refute by stating that female officers experience lower level of distress and fewer stressful work events in comparison to male officers(Patterson 2003)

Methodology

Objective-

To make a comparative analysis of the stress among male and female constables with respect to various dimensions.

Hypothesis-

- 1) There will be no significant difference in stress between group of female and male constables.
- 2) There will be no significant difference on different stress dimensions between the group of female and male constables.

Sample-

A purposive sampling was adopted to collect data from male and female police constables posted at various thanas in the Kota city of Rajasthan. A total of 50 constables (25 female &25 male) were included in the study. The age of sample ranged between 24 to 50 years. The work experienced ranged between 6 to 30 years.

Tools-

The occupational stress index by Dr A.K Srivastava & DR A.P Singh was used. The scale consists of 46 items, each to be rated on the five-point scale. Out of 46 items 28 are 'true-keyed 'and 18 are false -keyed. The items relate to almost all relevant components of the job life, comprising of following 12 subscales.

1) Role overload 2) Role ambiguity 3) Role conflict 4) Unreasonable group and political pressure 5) Responsibility for persons 6) Under participation 7) Powerlessness 8) Poor peer relations 9) Intrinsic impoverishment 10) Law status 11) Strenuous working condition 12) Unprofitability.

Discussion

After collecting the responses from the samples to the items, they were scored according to the procedure. The individual scores were put to statistical analysis which is presented in the table below. The objective of the study was to make a comparative analysis of the stressors / dimensions among the female and male police constables. The table 1 reveals that the overall mean of female group (mean value=131) is much lower than male group (mean value=156.16). The difference between the two groups is significant (t value=3.72). Thus, the first hypothesis has a been rejected that there will be no difference in the stress level among the female and male group

Table 1 indicating mean, S.D and t-value on different dimensions of occupational stress and overall difference between the group of female and male constables.

s.no	Occupational stressor	Female N=25		male N=25		t-value
		Mean	S. D	Mean	S.D	
1	Role overload	20.8	4.4	26.08	3.86	4.43**
2	Role ambiguity	11.64	3.18	12.6	3.71	.96
3	Role conflict	14.32	3.40	16.52	3.41	2.24*
4	Unreasonable group and political pressure	12.64	2.67	14.64	3.54	2.22*
5	Responsibility for persons	9.2	2.08	10.52	2.06	2.22*
6	under participation	12.24	3.37	13.36	4.45	.98
7	powerlessness	8.52	2.84	10.68	3.32	2.43*
8	Poor peer relations	11.6	2.34	10.92	1.90	1.09
9	Intrinsic impoverishment	9.25	2.39	12.32	3.04	2.22*
10	Low status	8.36	3.08	7.76	2.44	.92
11	Strenuous work condition	10.72	2.13	11.8	4.03	1.17
12	unprofitability	6.92	1.89	6.84	2.03	.14
13	Overall occupational stress	131	22.56	156.16	24.29	3.72**

*Indicates significance at .05 level and ** indicates significance at .01 level

As can be seen from Table 1, 6 dimensions -role overload, role conflict, political pressure, responsibilities, powerlessness and intrinsic motivation have been found significant, as the obtained t value is 4.43,2.24,2.22, 2.2,2.43,2.22 respectively between female and male constables. Thus, the second hypothesis that there will be no significant difference between the female and male groups on different stress dimensions have been rejected.

The results can be interpreted in the sense that male constables are more likely to suffer stress, as they have more duties to perform, the duties are of varied dimensions-like patrolling, escort, traffic control, investigation, maintaining law and order etc. There is lack of time for families, little control over their work schedules etc. Whereas the female constables have specified duties as compared to male counterpart. Lady constables are

employed in office work, lockup with women suspects, investigation of cases against women and juvenile offenders only etc. The burden of duties is less. It is because of these reasons, role overload, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, responsibility, powerlessness, intrinsic impoverishment have emerged as a major stressor for male constables as compared to female constables.

As it can be reflected from the table1, factors like role ambiguity, under participation, poor peer relation, low status, strenuous working conditions and unprofitability contribute to stress for both the groups. The salary scale is low, they work in harsh climatic conditions and for long duration, at times the job is seldom challenging, it is boring and repetitive, where their skills and abilities are not utilized and therefore, they do not get sense of accomplishment. The work environment is uncomfortable, there is absence of basic facilities like proper toilets, drinking water etc., also the physical work environment exposes them to high level of air and noise pollution

Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the overall occupation stress among the group of female and male constables. The results reveal that factors like role overload, role conflict, political pressure, responsibilities, powerlessness and intrinsic motivation contribute for stress for male constables as compared to women constables.

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