OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG POLICE IN INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

Police are considered to be the most ubiquitous sector of the society. The frontliners to prevent crimes and find ways to reduce it with own plans and actions. The dynamic personalities of the society, where in they risk their valuable life for the safety and protection of another being. The integral part of every nation, who is working towards protection of life, liberty, dignity of members of the society and enforce the law impartially. The police are the first approachable unit, that people consider in order, to any issues related to life, safety and security threat. The various ranks and positions of police officers depends upon their functions or allotment of duty according to their departments. Police station is termed to be the chief center for registering crime. The police are empowered to investigate cognizable and non-cognizable offences. The Police are most exposed unit to all sorts disturbing event happening in the society. The internal disturbance thus develops, as a result of duty, but if it"s not channelized to out throw, then can further lead to psychological harm. Understanding the need for their mental health improvement is a major need globally.

Definitions of occupational stress
The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defined occupational stress 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 worker".

"A perceived, substantial imbalance between demand and response capability, under conditions where failure to meet the demand has important, perceived consequences" defined   by McGrath (1970).

„"A condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning"" Beehr and Newman (1978).
Carson and Kupiers (1998), defines the process of stress can be divided into three levels. In the first level there are stressors that come from external sources, e.g., high job demands, a lack of resources and lack of support from supervisors and colleagues- these are specific occupational stressors. The second level can be seen as variables that act as a buffer against the effects of stress on individuals. The third level in the process consists of the outcomes of stress which can be positive or negative.

TYPES OF STRESS

Stress is stigmatized to be the negative reaction towards body. This isn"t the case always though. It can be considered healthy in order to enhance your performance. Negative as well as positive events tends to induce stress within the person. But there are types of stress that we need to well understand.

Baseline stress: Daily routine can induce stress within the person, depending upon the role to be performed at home and job. "Baseline or underlying stress can be caused due to various tensions regarding the individual, emotional, family or societal levels. Facing sudden new assignments in the individual"s life such as new work environment, meeting new people, communication gap with family due to immigration etc. could be causal factors. But one usually copes up to this within few weeks of regular work engagement.

Acute stress: Termed to be a short-term stress. It"s a body"s reaction to the stress that we perceive to be the threat to our wellbeing. Could be it physical or even psychological. This type of stress prepares our body to protect itself and shows up a survival function.

Cumulative Stress: When there is constant exposure to high levels of ongoing stress, this may result in a cumulative or chronic stress. This type of stress causes discomfort, drains out physically and makes one mentally ill, if occurs too frequently. This type of stress is long lasting and is severe too. The

circumstances that make one feel distress may not be the same for another although individual perception creates a difference.

Critical Incident Stress: An unexpected or a sudden incident, that makes one lose control, involves life threat, may have an emotional or physical loss is considered to be Critical incident stress. Examples could be natural disasters, multiple-casualty accidents, sexual or other types of harassments, traumatic death in a family, and any such events that shakes the person internally. As these critical incidents can happen uncertainly, there are specific occupational groups who are exposed to such traumatic events. Fire-fighters, emergency health care-workers, search and rescue personnel, Police officers, United nation peacemakers, etc. are most prone groups. This type of stress is considered to be threat to life, Immediate actions as well as awareness is needed from the organizations (Staff Counsellor"s Office (OHRM/MSD)2017).

CAUSES OF STRESS

The cause of stress known to us can lead a path way to cope with it. Stress could emerge from the body, mind and environment. A study conducted by Staple (1996), environmental stress could be caused due to noise disturbance, safety issues, crowded workplace, inadequate ventilation, pollution. Illness, injuries or straining of body are examples of bodily stress. Stress from the mind is the most common one that emerges every day. Negative thinking, improper reasoning towards some issues impacts the person to deal effectively (Rue,1992).

Job Mismatch: A conflict between the employers" skills or abilities that doesn"t match with the job demands. Role ambiguity and role overload are also sources of stress where employee is unclear about their performance. The expectations by the employers (reward, penalties), where it is incompetent with the job. The type of role overload, also plays an important role. Quantitative role overload occurs, when the employers are asked to do more than they have to in a given period of time. Whereas qualitative role overload is where the employees feel that they do not have specific skills and abilities to do the assigned work, Treven (2005).

Working Conditions: Improper physical work conditions, insufficient lightning conditions, no regulation of temperature, no noise control could be very distressing. Long working hours in police occupation in order to deal with cases is one of the factors.

Working relationships: The relationships with the employee, working with superiors, peers, subordinates, the different groups of people in a sector could give arise to various issues. Sometimes, limited social interactions and few who do not wish to involve themselves in decision making also tends to create problems (Stoner & Fry, 1983).

Positive life events: Marriage, birth of a child, promotion in job, buying of a new house, show up to be the positive life events but even then, these requires high level of adjustments in living. As police officials, do not have a personal life within the society, due to their job role demand of long working hours, such events can develop mental stress (Sarson, et. al, 1978).

Pressure: Pressure to perform well, failure at work place, inability to complete a task in a given time, get fired at times, The pressure to avoid these events can itself cause stress (Lahey 2001).

REMEDIES TO COPE WITH STRESS

Good social support: Good social support plays an important role in coping with stress. Discussing issues with a close friend or a professional counsellor have resulted in improvement of immune system functioning and reduction in need for medical care (Pennebaker, Colder & Sharp 1990, Richard Beal et. al. 2000).

Rational thinking: The stress experienced depends upon the cognitive appraisal of the stimulus. Stressful encounter, cognitive appraisal, coping and behavioural outcomes are 4 phenomenological processes which are involved in the appraisal of stressful situation (Puffer
& Brakefield 1989). The way we tend to see a particular event, rationalizing it with an irrational thought, will in turn lead to observe things with a different light.

Practical planning: Planning and time management technique can be considered to be effective mode of coping. Employees can make proactive adaptive response if they plan about the up, forthcoming events (Newman & Beehr,1979).

Psychological training on muscle relaxation technique: (Nunes; et.al, 1987), This technique has shown an effective result in regard to coping. The limited time asset to deal with stress associated. This technique doesn"t prove to provide long-term solution. But such related techniques could be used, with counselling training, Stress management program, workshops related to importance of maintaining, healthy mental health and support services for a longer time asset.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

International studies

Evangelia Demou, et al, 2020 Study on understanding the mental health and wellbeing needs of police officers and staff in Scotland, where 30 superintendents (n=20 men, n=10 women) including 8 stakeholders (n=6 women, n=2 men) were interviewed using telephonic and face to face interview method. Mental health issues, health and health related behaviour, employment, and beneficial workplace interventions were the topics of the interview discussion. Thematic analysis approach was used for the study. Work-related stressors, working long hours, organizational culture does contribute to MH issues. Stigma about mental health, stops from discussion of sensitive issues. Further, an intervention strategy is an important need in the police culture to help them cope up with the event related stressors.

A study over occupational stress, anxiety, and coping strategies in police officers in Italy, **D. Acquardo Maran, et. al, 2015,** Six hundred seventeen out of 1840 officers completed the Police stress Questionnaire, and Distress Thermometer to measure occupational stress. To measure anxiety State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI Y-1 and STAI Y-2) was made use of, and Brief COPE questionnaire was used to measure the coping strategies. Findings reveled that higher amount of organizational stress and distress in females than males. Male police patrol officials in the Operational Service (OS) scored high on the trait anxiety. Adaptive planning strategies was used by male officers who exhibited organizational and operational distress. Venting and self-distraction strategy was used most often by females then males as means of coping.

Occupational stress among Nigerian Police officers, where they examined the coping strategies and consequences, **Wakil Ajibola Asekun, 2015**. 300 police officers were selected randomly for the study, out of which 245(n=189 and n=56) officers" data was used. Work stress inventory (WRI) developed by (David Barone 1982) to find organizational stressors and stressors related to job risk in emergency. And a self-report on Coping with the use of means as alcohol, smoking and religious practices were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics for demography and Multiple Regression analysis was used for testing the hypothesis of the study. Findings reveal that use of alcohol and smoking by police officers to cope with stress was seen. Religiosity is also been used as means of coping. Lack of professional help is available to these services to deal according to emotional focused coping.

Shih-Ya Kuo,2014 thoroughly studied Occupational stress, job satisfaction and affective commitment to Policing among Taiwanese police officers.1,315 survey responds were digitized. Affective commitment scale, with 4 items, 5-point Likert-type scale was used, along with 6 type Job stressors, which are factors intrinsic to job rating from strongly agree (=5) to strongly disagree (=1), Organizational context, Role in organization, Relationships at work, relations with supervisors, career development and extra-organizational factors, and Job satisfaction scale was made use off. Descriptive statistics, Confirmatory factor analysis, Structural equation Modeling and SEM was used for analysis of data. Harmonious relationship at the work were considered to be perceived as both job satisfaction and commitment towards the job. Getting along with the supervisors and colleagues at the work system are considered to be as critical factors to affective commitment and job satisfaction among the policing in Taiwan.

The research article pours light upon the relationship in between level of blood pressure and occupational stress among police officers of Kandy regional area of Sri Lanka, **K. Keerthirathne et. al; 2020**. A descriptive cross-sectional study, where in 228 out 204 police officers were selected, which include the Inclusion and exclusion criteria, stratified random sampling method was used for data collection. Previously developed and validated Self- administered questionnaire,10- point Likert Type scale was used and Standard sphygmomanometer, instrument to measure blood pressure was included. The studies found that occupational stress is high in female police officers. Lower rank police officers were prone to high level of stress whereas police constables (among selected sample) show no stress at all. According to study, a significant relationship has been found in between occupational stress and systolic (p=0.010, r=0.22) and diastolic (p=0.010, r=0.180) blood pressure among male and police officers in Kandy region.

National Studies

G Ragesh, et. al, 2017 in this study „occupational stress among police personnel in India", a cross-sectional survey was conducted among the police personnel (male and female) from Calicut urban police district, Kerala. Police personnel from all designation were considered except for Indian police service. A data sheet covering socio-demographic profile, physical- mental health related details was designed. Tools such as Operational Police stress questionnaire (PSQ-OP) and Organizational Police stress questionnaire (PSQ-ORG) was used to measure occupational stress. Operational and organizational stress show significant result among police officers. Lower age group (21-35) and lower-level rank officers have high higher level of stress. Significant 4% show mental illness and 29% report to have substance abuse. Urgent need of implementing Intervention strategy is a must.

Wani M. Amin, 2015 studied occupational stress among police persons in Jammu and Kashmir. 100 subjects were included in the study 50 male and 50 female further categorized into 25 married male/ female and 25 unmarried male/female. Occupational stress index developed by Dr. A.K Srivastava and Dr. A.P. Singh was used to measure Occupational stress. Mean, S.D and t-test, statistical tools were used for data analysis. Married and unmarried police persons were found to be significant at 0.05 level concluding that marital status has an influencing factor for occupational stress. No significant difference was seen among male and female police personnel on the level of occupational stress.

This study is based on the Occupational stress in Himachal Pradesh Police Constabulary **Shyam L. Kaushal et. al; 2020**. Purposive sampling method was used to choose constabulary 250 Police personnel. Organizational Role Stress scale (ORS) developed by Pareek (1983) to measure occupational stress. ANOVA, t-test, descriptive statistics and other statistical tools were used for data analysis. Results show that high level of stress is faced by constabulary. Males, higher education qualification, less experienced in the field, younger age group, as well as married faced high level of stress. Shift system, need based training program implementation is required.

Dr. Pinki, et.al; 2020, a study on Occupational stress and work-family conflict among police constables from Punjab. Sample size of 300 was chosen for the study. The age group of 25-40 years was selected using random sampling. Work-family conflict Scale developed by (Carlson, Kacmar and Williams, 2000) and Occupational Stress Index by (Srivastava and Singh, 1981) was used to collect data. Male and female significantly differ on Occupational stress. Male constables have been proved to manage stress better in comparison with their counterparts.

A cross-sectional study in North India, focused upon depression, anxiety, and stress among Police personnel during COVID-19 Pandemic **Dhriti Bapna, et. al; 2021**, random selection of 8 police stations and 13 check-posts for the study was implied. 298 Police personnel were screened for the study. The participants perceived stress, that they could be risk to their family for being allotted duty at the COVID-19 containment zone. Higher levels of anxiety and depression was noted in female than males, but no significant difference was noted. Data was collected using Depression, Anxiety and Stress-21 scale (DASS). MS Excel, Epi info and R software was used for statistical analysis.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDIES

Out of the 10 research studies reviewed, National and International. It is found that occupational stress is an overall combination of organizational and Operational stress. Organizational stress is the stress associated with the organizational culture, poor management, relationships at work, long working hours, outdated equipment, role conflict are causal factors leading to poor performance (Stuti Jalan et.al; 2020).

Also, operational stress is associated with doing the job. Psychological difficulty arising due to job performance. Often exposures to life threatening events, such as dead bodies as a result of natural disaster or visiting sites of murder or suicide, riots etc. have resulted in increase of anxiety disorders as well as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder within the police officials. Mental health issues are on rise among this group and also on the verge of severity. Significant no. of police officials is already prone to severe psychological issues.

Positive life events such as marriage, birth of a child in family, have become a stress factor due to lack of adjustment and management. Operational stress can also produce physical health problems such as headache, stomach upset, disturbance in sleep patterns which can worsen any existing psychological health issues. Increase in significant blood pressure levels due to occupational stress in police officials is also reported (I.K. Keerthirathne, et. al; 2020). Within India, operational stress is proved to be higher in younger age groups and lower level of police personnel. This could be due to less years of experience in the field.

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Female officers faced a higher level of operational stress as compared to males. This could be due to multiple role performance in their personal as well as professional level management (Ragesh et al.).

Educational qualification of the officials also plays a role, post graduates faced a higher level of stress than just those with matriculation who had the least level of stress (Shyam L. Kaushal, et. al, 2020). Depression, anxiety and stress have shown to be higher among those married police officials than those unmarried. Thus, positive life events do impact negatively (Sarson, et. al,1978). This could be result of inadequate time with the family, therefore positive life events add to psychological stress. Long hours of policing causes hindrance for the personal space and give rise to conflict.

Organizational stress was seen high among male officers than females as they have overtime demand and late-night shifts (Shyam L. Kaushal et. al, 2020). Substance use is also seen, such as using of alcohol, and multiple drugs as a means of coping due to occupational stress (G Ragesh et al; 2017). Maladaptive coping behaviors is a significant factor in association with job stress (Gershon et al; 2002). Due to current ongoing pandemic, posting for duties at COVID-19 containment zones, the responsibility needed to face by the police personnel is not just a threat to themselves but also to their families. Long hours of duty with inadequate safety measures and multiple role performance are mentally distressing (Dhriti Bapna, et. al; 2021). Occupational stress does have a measure impact not just physically but significantly over psychological aspect too. Immediate intervention plans are needed to be implemented.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- This study is a theoretical frame work towards the occupational stress experience by Police in India.
- Studies conducted on Police officials of Scotland, Italy, Nigeria, China, Sri Lanka and India were added. Studies from other regions could also be included.
- Occupational stress is the major highlight of this study, other factors affecting could also be considered.

SUGGESTIONS

- Other research methods could be used for further researches.
- An intervention-based study could be conducted.

CONCLUSION

Implementation of Intervention program among the police departments is need of an hour. Adequate training needs to be provided to the new comers in the field. Counselling sessions for the officials shall be made mandatory. A need for Forensic psychologist in the field to conduct therapeutic sessions and also educate about various self-handling techniques to help them deal effectively is required. Training the Police personnel to adapt to more of emotional- focused coping, mindfulness techniques rather than maladaptive dependence could make a major difference. Also organizing recreational activities for the police officials and at time with inclusion of their family members can enhance the family bondage. Application of stress relieving program within organizational context could also benefit the individuals.

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