

A Study on Sources of Occupational Stress Among Police Constables

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Abstract

Stress is a most important universal health challenge affecting the well-being of service providers especially those working in the human service sectors like; police officers, teachers, health care providers and media specialists. This study was provoked by emerging information from studies that, stress is a quiet killer that affects the health of service providers leading to; mental, physical, and emotional disorders. In Tamil Nadu state in particular studies on occupational stress among police constables are very little. The target population was 600 police constables Grade I II & III in Tuticorin District of Tamil Nadu. Findings revealed that Seeing criminals going free because of lack of evidence and court leniency”, “Killing someone in line of duty , Lack of opportunity for advancement”, “Shortages of staff members were the primary sources of stress among police constables. It also emerged that stress is significantly more pronounced among those police personnel who are younger, more educated, posted in rural areas and have less work experience. The findings of the study that gender of the police constables influenced level of occupational stress. The study recommends that: Police service commission should develop a policy on stress management to guide the induction, operations and counselling of Police Constables on their day to day duties.

Key words: Police constables, Stress, sources of stress

Introduction

The workplace environment is one of the key factors that affect people’s physical and mental health. The workplace and work itself contributes to a person’s identity and provides income (World Health Organization, 2005). However, circumstances under which people work can be poorly organized posing risks to workers. Workplace

problems are distinct from other stressors, for example, difficulties in balancing a job and family responsibilities or a person's personality traits and related methods of coping with workplace problems. Workplace problems are troublesome features of the work. Stress is rated as a silent killer among other illnesses such as: HIV/AIDS, heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Stress in the work place is a worldwide issue. A report by the World Health Organization, (2005) revealed that the police service has failed to address the matter of stress among police officers. This failure has stifled natural efforts towards building a stronger human resource base which is invaluable for development in all its spheres in the police.

Numerous studies have identified Police work as one of the most psychologically stressful and critical profession in the world (Govender, 2008; Kayal, 2004). Malach-Pines and Keinan, (2007) noted that due to the inherent nature of police work, this profession was likely to be one of the most stressful occupations in the world. Water and Ussery (2007) argued that hazards associated with the occupational stress as dangerous. They attributed stress to the nature of policing. Work environment is one of the sources of police stress. It can be internally and externally. Internally work environment include factors that are related to organizational structure and climate can be even greater sources of stress for police officers^{15,19,20} shift schedules that disrupt normal sleep patterns and social life , authoritarian, management styles, poor interpersonal-relationships with supervisors, interdepartmental politics, lack of adequate planning and resources, lack of promotion and transfer opportunities, excessive paperwork, lack of autonomy in performing duties and lack of recognition for work accomplishments are among the organizational stressors faced by members of the police force (Shunmuga sundram and Jeyakumaran, 2012).

The police department also uses the service of a psychologist who provides welfare and counseling services to its officers specifically counseling (Government of Kenya, 2007). Police officers are given pre-service physical tests to determine their health status prior to employment, but still there was evidence suggesting that the officers developed stress disorders (Waters & Ussery, 2007). There is concern over cause of the rising number of incident where junior police officer are killing their seniors, colleagues, family members and committing suicide in Kenya. In light of this scenario, there was need for research to be done on causes of occupational stress among police officers in Kenya and Kisumu County. Study conducted on occupational stress and gender shows that there was no difference between male and female with regard to work related stress.

The police personnel, in India, are facing number of occupational problems. Tamil Nadu police force is no exception to this. Tamil Nadu police have to perform risky duties. At the same time the hours of work, as compared to other types of labour, are more in number. They have to work with limited man power resources. The organizational hierarchy is such that they have to work under tension. In such situation policemen have to maintain law and order in the state. All these things lead to occupational stress. This has resulted into number of problems such as depression, somatic complaints and mental disturbances and in some extreme cases suicide also. In view of the above situation, it is felt that the occupational stress of the police officers in Tamil Nadu must be studied. Therefore, the following objectives were

framed in the present investigation. 1) To study the socio-economic status and job profile of the police officers in the study area, 2) To evaluate the police officers' perception about the nature of occupational stress faced by them, 3) To measure the frequency of occurrence of occupation stress among the police officers

Research Methodology

The research design chosen is descriptive as the study reveals the existing facts. Descriptive research is the study which describes the characteristics of a particular individual, or a group. This study is about selected variable of stress. This study is based on the police constables in Tuticorin district. The research concentrated on eight sub divisions comprising 52 police stations and the researcher collected 600 samples from grade II,I,III police constables. The researcher used convenience sampling for the study. The researcher prepared structured questionnaires for data collection for this study. The questionnaires included questions on demographic profile and causes of stress. Primary data were collected through the questionnaire directly from the respondents and the secondary data were collected from government records, books, journals and the Internet. The researcher used descriptive analysis for data analysis.

Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1: Gender of The Respondents

Sl. No	Gender	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Male	326	54.30
2.	Female	274	45.70
	Total	600	100

The above table indicates that 326 constables forming 54.3per cent of the total constables were male gender and the rest of 274 constables forming 45.7per cent of the total constables were female gender.

Table 2: Age of The Respondents

Sl. No	Age	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	20-29 years	299	49.80
2.	30-39 years	191	31.80
3.	40-49 years	94	15.70
4.	50-59 years	16	2.70
	Total	600	100

Table indicates that 299 constables forming 49.8per cent of the total constables were in ages 20-29 years, 191 constables forming 31.8per cent of the total constables were in ages 30-39 years, 94 constables forming 15.7per cent of the total constables were in ages 40-49 years, and 16 constables forming 2.7per cent of the total constables were in ages 50-59 years.

Table 3: Educational Qualification of The Respondents

Sl. No	Educational qualification	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	School level	97	16.20
2.	UG	417	69.50
3.	PG	78	13.00
4.	Professional	8	1.30
	Total	600	100

The above table narrates that 97 constables forming 16.2per cent of the total constables were having school level education, 417 constables forming 69.5per cent of the total constables were having under graduate level education, 78 constables forming 13per cent of the total constables were having post graduate level education, and the rest of 8 constables forming 1.3per cent of the total constables were having professional education.

Table 4: Religion of The Respondents

Sl. No	Religion	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Hinduism	462	77.00
2.	Islam	100	16.70
3.	Christianity	38	6.30
	Total	600	100

The table depicts that 462 constables forming 77per cent of the total constables were following Hinduism religion, 100 constables forming 16.7per cent of the total constables were following Islam religion, and 38 constables forming 6.3per cent of the total constables were following Christianity religion.

Table 5: Community of The Respondents

Sl. No	Community	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Other castes	280	46.70
2.	Backward castes	143	23.80
3.	Most backward castes	48	8.00
4.	Scheduled castes	129	21.50
	Total	600	100

The above depicts that 280 constables forming 46.7per cent of the total constables were belonging to other castes, 143 constables forming 23.8per cent of the total constables were belonging to backward castes, 48 constables forming 8per cent of the total constables were belonging to most backward castes, and 129 constables forming 21.5per cent of the total constables were belonging to scheduled castes.

Table 6: Place of The Residence of The Respondents

Sl. No	Place of residence	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Rural	433	72.2
2.	Urban	167	27.8
	Total	600	100

The able designates that 433 constables forming 72.2per cent of the total constables were belonging to rural areas, and 167 constables forming 27.8per cent of the total constables were belonging to urban areas.

Table 7: Marital Status of The Respondents

Sl. No	Marital status	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Married	276	46.00
2.	Unmarried	284	47.30
3.	Divorced	18	3.00
4.	Separated	22	3.70
	Total	600	100

Table specifies that 276 constables forming 46per cent of the total constables were married, 284 constables forming 47.3per cent of the total constables were unmarried, 18 constables forming 3per cent of the total constables were divorced, and 22 constables forming 3.7per cent of the total constables were separated.

Table 8: Number of Dependents of The Respondents

Sl. No	Number of dependents	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	One member	73	12.20
2.	Two members	359	59.80
3.	Three members	148	24.70
4.	Four members	17	2.80
5.	Five members	2	0.30
6.	Six members	1	0.20
	Total	600	100

Table indicates that 73 constables forming 12.2per cent of the total constables were having one dependent member in their family, 359 constables forming 59.8per cent of the total constables were having two dependent members in their family, 148 constables forming 24.7per cent of the total constables were having three dependent members in their family, 17 constables forming 2.8per cent of the total constables were having four dependent members in their family, 2 constables forming 0.3per cent of the total constables were having five dependent members in their family, and 1 constable forming 0.2per cent of the total constables were having six dependent members in their family.

Job Profile

The table below shows the classification of police constables based on their designation. The designations given to police constables were grade I, II and III.

Table 9: Designation of The Respondents

Sl. No	Designation	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Grade I	200	33.30
2.	Grade II	250	41.70
3.	Grade III (HC)	150	25.00
	Total	600	100

The above table shows that out of the total 600 police constables of the study, 250 police constables forming 41.7per cent were grade II, 200 police constables forming 33.3per cent were grade I, and the rest of the 150 police constables forming 25per cent were grade III (HC).

Table 10: Years of Experiences of The Respondents

Sl. No	Experiences	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than 5 years	169	28.20
2.	6-10 years	184	30.70
3.	11-15 years	141	23.50
4.	16-20 years	73	12.10
5.	More than 20 years	33	5.50
	Total	600	100

The ensuring table depicts that 169 constables forming 28.2per cent of the total constables were having a service less than 5 years, 184 constables forming 30.7per cent of the total constables were having a service of 6 years to 10 years, 141 constables forming 23.5per cent of the total constables were having a service of 11 years to 15 years, 73 constables forming 12.2per cent of the total constables were

having a service of 16 years to 20 years, and 33 constables forming 5.5per cent of the total constables were having a service more than 20 years.

Table 11: Monthly Income of The Respondents

Sl. No	Monthly income	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Rs.5200-20200 plus grade pay Rs.2400	200	33.30
2.	Rs.5000-20000 plus grade pay Rs.1900	250	41.70
3.	Rs.5200-20200 plus grade pay Rs.2800	150	25.00
	Total	600	100

The above table shows that out of the total 600 police constables of the study, 250 police constables forming 41.7per cent were grade Ii and had a salary slab of rs.5000-20000 plus grade pay Rs.1900, 200 police constables forming 33.3per cent were grade I and had a salary slab of Rs.5200-20200 plus grade pay Rs.2400, and the rest of the 150 police constables forming 25per cent were grade III (HC) and had a salary slab of Rs.5200-20200 plus grade pay Rs.2800.

Perception About Occupation

Nature of stress faced by police constables

Table 12: Stress Due To Job Demand

Variables	Mean	Rank
Assignment of disagreeable duties	1.93	18
Assignment of new or unfamiliar duties	1.94	17
Performing tasks not in job description	2.14	10
Periods of inactivity	2.05	15
Assignment of increased responsibility	1.99	16
Competition for advancement	2.11	12
Frequent changes from boring to demanding activities	2.06	14
Shift work	2.23	6
Delivering a death message or bad news to someone	2.22	7
Attending to incidences of domestic violence	2.10	13
Reorganization and transformation within the organization	2.15	9
Killing someone in the line of duty	2.33	2
Handling hard situations	2.27	3
Having to handle a large crowd/mass demonstration	2.26	4
A forced arrest or being physically attacked	2.14	10
Having to go to court	2.16	8
Having to deal with the media	2.25	5

Seeing criminals go free (for example because of lack of evidence, court leniency)	2.34	1
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The above table shows that “Seeing criminals going free because of lack of evidence and court leniency” is the top ranked stressful activity with the mean value of 2.34. “Killing someone in line of duty” is the second ranked stressful activity with the mean value of 2.33. “Handling hard situations” is the third ranked stressful activity with the mean value of 2.27. “Assignment of new or unfamiliar duties and Assignment of disagreeable duties” are the least ranked stressful activity with the mean value of 1.93 and 1.94.

Table 13: Stress Due To Lack of Resources

Variables	Mean	Rank
Lack of opportunity for advancement	2.29	1
Fellow workers not doing their job	2.07	13
Inadequate support by supervisor	2.10	10
Lack of recognition for good work	2.26	4
Inadequate or poor quality equipment	2.10	10
Inadequate salary	2.13	8
Difficulty getting along with supervisor	2.16	6
Insufficient personnel to handle an assignment	2.14	7
Lack of participation in policy-making decisions	2.27	3
Poor or inadequate supervision	2.06	14
Noisy work area	2.10	10
Insufficient personal time (e.g., coffee breaks, lunch)	2.18	5
Poorly motivated co-workers	2.12	9
Staff shortages	2.28	2

The above table shows that above variables are creating stress due to lack of resources, in that “Lack of opportunity for advancement” is the first ranked stress activity with the mean value of 2.29, “Shortages of staff members” is the second ranked stressful activity with the mean value of 2.28. “Poor or inadequate supervision and Fellow workers not doing their job” are the least ranked stressful activities created due to lack of resources.

Table 14: Stress Due To Police Occupation

Variables	Mean	Rank
Working overtime	2.13	7
Dealing with crisis situations	2.21	4
Experiencing negative attitudes toward the organization	2.17	6
Making critical on-the-spot decisions	2.10	9
Personal insult from customer/consumer/colleague	2.27	2

Frequent interruptions	1.93	12
Excessive paperwork	2.03	11
Meeting deadlines	2.10	9
Covering work for another employee	2.13	7
Conflicts with other departments	2.18	5
Too much supervision	2.25	3
A fellow officer killed in the line of duty	2.30	1

The above table shows that above variables are creating stress due to lack of resources, in that “Lack of opportunity for advancement” is the first ranked stress activity with the mean value of 2.29, “Shortages of staff members” is the second ranked stressful activity with the mean value of 2.28. “Poor or inadequate supervision and Fellow workers not doing their job” are the least ranked stressful activities created due to lack of resources.

Results

Findings of Demographic Characteristics

- It was found that 326 constables forming 54.3per cent of the total constables were male gender and the rest of 274 constables forming 45.7per cent of the total constables were female gender.
- It was shows that 299 constables forming 49.8per cent of the total constables were in ages 20-29 years, 191 constables forming 31.8per cent of the total constables were in ages 30-39 years, 94 constables forming 15.7per cent of the total constables were in ages 40-49 years, and 16 constables forming 2.7per cent of the total constables were in ages 50-59 years.
- It was identify that 97 constables forming 16.2per cent of the total constables were having school level education, 417 constables forming 69.5per cent of the total constables were having under graduate level education, 78 constables forming 13per cent of the total constables were having post graduate level education, and the rest of 8 constables forming 1.3per cent of the total constables were having professional education.
- It was found that 462 constables forming 77per cent of the total constables were following Hinduism religion, 100 constables forming 16.7per cent of the total constables were following Islam religion, and 38 constables forming 6.3per cent of the total constables were following Christianity religion.
- It was depicts that 280 constables forming 46.7per cent of the total constables were belonging to other castes, 143 constables forming 23.8per cent of the total constables were belonging to backward castes, 48 constables forming 8per cent of the total constables were belonging to most backward castes, and 129 constables forming 21.5per cent of the total constables were belonging to scheduled castes.

- It was designates that 433 constables forming 72.2per cent of the total constables were belonging to rural areas, and 167 constables forming 27.8per cent of the total constables were belonging to urban areas.
- It was specifies that 276 constables forming 46per cent of the total constables were married, 284 constables forming 47.3per cent of the total constables were unmarried, 18 constables forming 3per cent of the total constables were divorced, and 22 constables forming 3.7per cent of the total constables were separated.
- It was found that 73 constables forming 12.2per cent of the total constables were having one dependent member in their family, 359 constables forming 59.8per cent of the total constables were having two dependent members in their family, 148 constables forming 24.7per cent of the total constables were having three dependent members in their family, 17 constables forming 2.8per cent of the total constables were having four dependent members in their family, 2 constables forming 0.3per cent of the total constables were having five dependent members in their family, and 1 constable forming 0.2per cent of the total constables were having six dependent members in their family.

Job profile

- It was shows that out of the total 600 police constables of the study, 250 police constables forming 41.7per cent were grade II, 200 police constables forming 33.3per cent were grade I, and the rest of the 150 police constables forming 25per cent were grade III (HC).
- It was depicts that 169 constables forming 28.2per cent of the total constables were having a service less than 5 years, 184 constables forming 30.7per cent of the total constables were having a service of 6 years to 10 years, 141 constables forming 23.5per cent of the total constables were having a service of 11 years to 15 years, 73 constables forming 12.2per cent of the total constables were having a service of 16 years to 20 years, and 33 constables forming 5.5per cent of the total constables were having a service more than 20 years.
- It was identify that table shows that out of the total 600 police constables of the study, 250 police constables forming 41.7per cent were grade Ii and had a salary slab of rs.5000-20000 plus grade pay Rs.1900, 200 police constables forming 33.3per cent were grade I and had a salary slab of Rs.5200-20200 plus grade pay Rs.2400, and the rest of the 150 police constables forming 25per cent were grade III (HC) and had a salary slab of Rs.5200-20200 plus grade pay Rs.2800.

Perception About Occupation

It was shows that “Seeing criminals going free because of lack of evidence and court leniency” is the top ranked stressful activity with the mean value of 2.34. “Killing someone in line of duty” is the second ranked stressful activity with the mean value of 2.33. “Handling hard situations” is the third ranked stressful activity with the mean

value of 2.27. "Assignment of new or unfamiliar duties and Assignment of disagreeable duties" are the least ranked stressful activity with the mean value of 1.93 and 1.94.

- It was shows that above variables are creating stress due to lack of recourses, in that "Lack of opportunity for advancement" is the first ranked stress activity with the mean value of 2.29, "Shortages of staff members" is the second ranked stressful activity with the mean value of 2.28. "Poor or inadequate supervision and Fellow workers not doing their job" are the least ranked stressful activities created due to lack of resources.
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Discussion

With regards to the sources of stress among police constables, this research reveals that "seeing criminals going free because of lack of evidence and court leniency", killing someone in line of duty and handling hard situations created the most stress for police constables. And also Lack of opportunity for advancement, Shortages of staff members, Lack of opportunity for advancement, Shortages of staff members job description are the most common sources of stress in their job.

This study explores the most sources of stress basically divided in to Stress due to Job Demand, Stress due to Lack of Resources and Stress due to police Occupation. It is a right time to do the job is the most used coping method, because most of the police constables are having more than 6-10 years of experience (30%), second most used coping strategies is think how best he can handle the problems, because most of them are having UG level qualifications and very good experience in handling crisis situations. In this study it shows that poor organizational policy is the major stressor for police constables. Because they are all well experienced and they can able to handles hard situations. But they are still finding difficult with poor of organization policies like legal leniency, unspecified job profile, lack of recognition, lack of advancement and career development. There is an association between seeing criminals going free (most stressful event) and I force myself to wait for the right time to do something (awareness about coping strategy). Taking alcohol or drink drugs and admits to myself that I can't deal with it, and quit trying are the low used stress coping strategies. Rational conflict and period of inactivity are the low stressful event faced by the police constables.

Conclusion

Police officers are having considerable powers and are often supported by higher authorities. Work place stress might carry out many criminal acts for the ruling

command with impunity. In some cases they carried out some misconduct. Their level of performance also reduced due to work related stress. This study concludes that grade II, I, III police constables are having good knowledge about the stressful events and because of their experience; they are following positive stress coping strategies. Still police department must carry out some future research on these sources of stress and coping strategies. That must be documented properly. These documents can be used at the time of training for the new comers, to understand the stressful events and useful coping strategies.

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