IJCRT.ORG **ISSN : 2320-2882**

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

JOB STRESS AMONG POLICE PERSONNEL IN HIMACHAL PRADESH (INDIA)

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Introduction

Job stress is a universal phenomenon which is part of mankind's working environment. It is widely viewed as anoutcome of mismatch between the individual and his/her physical or social environment (Beehr and Newman, 1978; Harrison, 1978). However, Selye was probably the first to use the term stress in psycho-physiological context. Selye (1974) defined stress as a "non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it". It was reported that for every activity (task), there is an optimal level of stress that is required to perform that activity; both before and beyond this point, the level of stress is either too little or too great. This is most often illustrated using Yerkes and Dodson's (1908) inverted "U" curve. When the level of stress exceeds the optimal level, it has the potential to be harmful and damaging to the individual. According to Thoits (1996), stress is experienced when people are faced with undesirable life demands that disrupt their ability to engage in everyday activities. Stress is presumed to arise when this appraisal produces the judgment that demands are about to tax or exceed the individual's resources for dealing with them, thus threatening well-being (Holroyal and Lazarus, 1992). According to Pestonjee (1987), stress occurs in a person when he/she is faced with demands that tax his/her adaptive resources.

The modern day, life style has created severe stress which is increasing every day. The police personnel are one of the most stressed groups of people in the society. In fact, stress has led to many problems in both personal and professional life. In today's fast-paced world, police personnel are experiencing more stress at every stage of their life than ever before. Law enforcement tends to impose a higher degree of stress and a multiplicity of stress situation on the police personnel than other professions (Violanti and Marshall, 1983; Colwell, 1988; Raiser, 1974; Kroes, Margolis & Hurrell, 1974, 1976; Selye, 1978; Somodevilla, 1978; Reilly and DiAngelo, 1990; Horn, 1991; Violanti,

1992; Brown & Campbell, 1994). Although the presence of stress among policemen is always felt, it is not recognized as the major enemy (Mathur, 1994). Stress appears to be the inevitable price of a career in police force (Barry, 1978; Colwell, 1988), in which high incidences of stress related illness, mortality, divorce and suicide, as compared with other occupations, have been observed (Capland, 1984; Mayers, 1982). Social change, economic conditions, police organizations, total criminal justice system, the demands made on policeman's time with their families all contribute towards high stress level (Grencik, 1975). In particular, insufficient time for the family has been the top ranking stressor (Kumar, 1995; Kroes *et al*., 1974), while work overload has been observed as the second highest ranking job related stressor (Mathur 1993). Meanwhile, the highest job related stress to structure and climate, co-worker relationship and their managerial role has been observed among police personnel, whereby boredom and monotonous duties have been reported to be the stressful aspects for police officers (Alexander, 1991; Brown et al., 1996).

Over the years, many researchers, administrators, and clinicians have issued ominous statements concerning stress in policing, for example, one psychologist has asserted, "it is an accepted fact that a police officer is under stress and pressure unequaled by any other profession" (Somodevilla, 1978.).Several factors like 24 hours availability, administration problem make this job as the most stressful job. A number of studies were carried out in different parts of the world for understanding nature of stress among police personnel.The reasons for stress are negative working environment plenty, long working hours, lack of time for family, irregular eating habits, need to take tough decisions, sleepless nights, poor living conditions, torture by seniors, disturbed personal life and the dwindling public confidence in the police force (Water and Ussery, 2007; Malach-Pines and Keinan, 2007, McCarty, Zhao and Garland, 2007). On the other hand Gibbons and Gibbons (2007), He *et al*. (2002 and Malach-Pines and Keinan (2007) argue that job stress involving police officers indicates that police officers are exposed to various stressful situations which impact negatively on the health and performance of the individual officer. In addition to above, stress may occur due to organizational factors like management style, poor communication, lack of support, inadequate resources and work overload (Kop, Euwema, and Schaufeli, 1999).

In India, several studies have been conducted by researchers on stress among the police personnel. Dangwal and Gangopadhyaya (1982) studied on a sample including three states and subordinate police personnel only. They suggested a more representative sample including more states and inclusion of all the level of police hierarchy. Bhaskar (1982) suggested exploring the relationship between behavioural, psychological, health effects and experience of job stress among the police. Pillai's (1987) study suggested exploring the need for periodical diagnosis of stress and related symptoms to reinforce improved functioning of system and enhancing the health and job satisfaction among the police personnel. Ramchandaran (1989) suggested the need for a more intensive study which would depict insights into behavioral patterns at other level of hierarchy. Suresh (1992) found the need of research for extending the findings of the study to police officers in divergent regional and culture context. Tripathi, Naidu, Thapa, and Biswas (1993) gave a scope for a larger and more representative sample in future studies in police. His study was based on four districts of UP state. Channabasavanna, Chandra, Gururaj, Chaturvedi and Subbakrishna (1996), highlighted the stressors of police personnel as too much responsibility, lack of time, less time for family,

behaviour of senior officers, less salary and perks, less leave facilities and lack of facilities for family and the police personnel himself as well as to his family members. Mathur (1999) suggested that longitudinal studies would be very better to identify the impact of police work on individual's behaviour. He also suggested that the family members of police personnel can also be included in future studies. Dhaliwal (2003) pointed out that most of the policemen remained overburdened worked and have to stay away from their families and kids for long periods which often lead to family problems and disputes. Inability to handle domestic tension and job related stress may result in rude behaviour on duty. It has also been observed that officers treat their subordinates in a shabby and insulting manner. There are officers who habitually abuse their subordinates. Rarely the subordinates are offered chairs by senior in their offices. Need for holding extensive programmes have been demanded by the senior police officers in order to put police personnel in the normal mode of functioning.The review of the literature indicates that the Indian studies on various dimensions of stress among police personnel are too few. Therefore, a large research gap exists. More particularly in Himachal Pradesh, no information is available even on the level and content of stress among the police personnel. In the view of this, a paucity of such endeavors in Himachal Pradesh has provided the research base for present effort and a modest attempt in this direction with the following objective.

Objective

The broad objective of the study was to explore to what extent all the four ranks of police personnel differ in terms of job stress.

Methodology

Data were collected from 280 police personnel, i.e. Constables, Head Constables, Assistant Sub-Inspectors and Inspectors in Himachal Pradesh. Multistage random sampling method was used to select police personnel at all level. A structured questionnaire with relevant questions related to stress was administered to selected police personnel. Mean standard deviation and one way analysis of variance was carried out on all self-report measures to see the extent of difference between the total sample (280) police personnel from the four ranks were included in the present study. Tukey Multiple Comparison Test was carried out for the post hoc comparisons between the means of all four ranks of police personnel after one way analysis of variance.

Experimental Design

To meet the objective, one way analysis of variance was carried out to see if any between group differences existed among the police personnel of different ranks with regard to all the dependent variables of the study.

Tool

Police Stress Questionnaire: The scale was developed by Ranta (2004) for the purpose of the present study. A pilot study was conducted to identify the type of stressful events that police personnel experience on their job. A sample of 280 police personnel from different categories were asked to list the most stressful events they had experienced during the work. The questionnaire originally included 90 items, which was rated by 10 senior police officers. Finally, a 45 items questionnaire was developed to assess job related stressor for police personnel.

Results

Inter Rank Comparison in Police Personnel on Job Stress:

Vide Table 1.1, it can be seen that through one way ANOVA, significant between group differences, emerged among the police personnel of different ranks in terms of job stress (p <.001).

It is evident from Table 1.2 that the constables appeared to report significantly higher (p < .01) job stress scores (mean = 95.24) than their head constables (mean = 89.04) and assistant sub-inspectors (mean = 80.90) counterparts. Whereas, the job stress scores of head constables are significantly higher (p < .01) than their assistant sub-inspector counterparts. Further, while inspectors did not appear to differ significantly in terms of their job stress from constables as well as head constables, their job stress scores (mean = 92.67) were lower than constables but were higher than head constables. However, the job stress scores of this group were significantly higher than their assistant sub-inspector counterparts (p < .01). However, here it may be mentioned that job stress scores of all police personnel are towards the higher side only (Highest score being 135), while the job stress scores of inspectors are quite close to those of constables.

Table – 1.1

Showing comparison of F Value of one way analysis of variance on job stress scores of all dependent variables for all the police personnel of four different ranks

Variables		Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig
JOB STRESS	Between Group Within Group Total	6332.113 57698.46 64030.57	3 276 279	2110.704 209.052	10.097	.000

Table – 1.2

Multiple comparisons of all the mean on job stress scores of all the dependent variables for I Constables, II Head Constables, III Assistant Sub Inspectors and IV Inspectors.

Variable	Rank	Sample Size	Mean of Variable	SD	I	II	III
JOB STRESS	I	100	95.24	14.31			
	II	100	89.04	14.45	.013**		
	III	40	80.90	13.45	.000**	.014**	
	IV	40	92.67	15.74	.779	.535	.002**

*   = .05 level of significance on Tukey's Multiple Comparison Test.
**   = .01 level of significance on Tukey's Multiple Comparison Test.

With regard to job stress scores perusal of Table 1.2 shows that police personnel at the ranks of constables reported significantly high job stress scores than those at the rank of head constables and assistant sub inspectors. Head constables report significantly higher job stress than their assistant sub-inspector counterparts and inspectors report

significantly higher job stress scores than their assistant sub-inspector counterparts. Thus, job stress scores of constables were highest followed by inspectors, head constables and assistant sub-inspectors, head constables and assistant sub-inspectors, while constables and inspectors are quite close to each other on the job stress scores. These significant differences among the different ranks of police personnel support the conclusion of many studies reported earlier that psychological, emotional or physical stress experienced by police officers may vary by career stage and by ability to handle stress (Bhaskar, 1986; Dangwal and Gangopadhyaya, 1982; Gudjonsoon and Adlam 1985; Mathur, 1999; Suresh, 1992; Yadav, 1994). All these studies highlight the stress experienced by subordinate officers. Cooper *et al.* (1982) reinforced the view that the senior officers too are a stressed lot (Siwach 2001). The source and level of stress differ from the subordinate rank (Gudjonsson, 1983). There are many studies which have also highlighted that Deputy Superintendent of police and Gazetted Officers were least stressed group. However, in the present study police personnel of higher rank were not included. Therefore, no assumption can be made with regard to the level of stress experienced by the high rank officers. This suggests the need for further research, comparing the job stress levels of senior and junior police officers.

Conclusion

However, one thing that is clearly reflected in present study is that police personnel of all four ranks experience a high level of job stress. This clearly highlights that job stress is a phenomenon which is distinctly a part of work environment and even the police personnel's work environment cannot escape from these realities.

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