

A Study on Frequency of Occupational Stress among Grade I Police Constables

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ABSTRACT

Stress is an inevitable part of police personnel. The purpose of this research is to identify causes of stress and also empirically investigate the socio-demographic factors affecting stress level among police personnel. Convenience sampling method was employed to select a sample 200 police constables Grade I in Tuticorin District (Tamil Nadu). Findings revealed that political pressure, lack of time for family, negative public image and low salary were the primary causes of stress among police personnel. 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 supplement existing body of knowledge and contribute to the understanding of causes of stress and role of socio-demographic factors in affecting stress level among police personnel.

KEY WORDS: Police, Political, Socio-demographic, Stress.

INTRODUCTION

Policing is one of the most stressful occupations. The work of police is to protect life and property. It undertakes investigation of crimes. Its role involves many challenges such as encounter with dreaded elements while handling crimes. These roles expose police officers to different work situations which require different physical and mental ability (Anshel, 2000; Rollinson, 2005; Morash et al., 2006) to deal with situations firmly and effectively. 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 Kienan, 2007, McCarthy et. al, 2007). 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 et. al, 1999). Stress among policemen would manifest in the form of fatigue, depression, inability to concentrate, irritability and impulsive behavior. These danger signals are quite common among the policemen. Policemen are often viewed as rude and highhanded. However, outsiders may not appreciate the extreme conditions under which they lead their lives. Stress also has a negative effect on the health of the policemen. It makes them more susceptible to physical ailments. Both physical and mental illness renders the employee unfit for work. It impacts job satisfaction and reduces job performance.

In India, several studies have been conducted by researchers on 'stress' among police personnel in the country.

- (1) Dangwal et al. (1982) - He studied on a sample including three states and subordinate police personnel only. They suggested a more representative sample including more states and also inclusion of all the level of police hierarchy.
- (2) Bhaskar (1982) - He also suggested to explore the relationship between behavioral, psychological and health effects and experience of job stress among police.
- (3) Pillai (1987)- His study suggested to explore the need for periodical diagnosis of stress and related symptoms to reinforce improved functioning of system and enhance the health and job satisfaction among police personnel.

- (4) Ramchandaran (1989) - He suggested to need of a more intensive study which would depict insights into behavioral patterns at other level of hierarchy.
- (5) Tripathi et al. (1993) - They gave a scope for a larger and more representative sample in future studies in police. His study was based on four districts to UP state.
- (6) Suresh(1992)- He also found the need of research for extending the findings of his study to police officers in divergent regional and culture context.
- (7) Mathur (1999)-He suggested that longitudinal studies would be very good to identify the impact of police work on individual. He also suggested that the family members of police personnel can also include in future studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The nature of police work is acknowledged as highly stressful and particularly hazardous (Selye 1978; Alexander, 1999; Anshel, 2000; Paton & Violanti, 1999). According to Mostert and Joubert (2005), the negative effects of job stress on employees and their work are such that it is necessary to explore the processes involved when job stress is studied. According to Spielberger, Vagg & Wasala (2003), stress is recognised as a complex process that consist of three major mechanisms: sources of stress that are encountered in the work environment, the perception and appraisal of a particular stressor by an employee, and the emotional reactions that are a response to perceiving a stressor as threatening. Spielberger's State-Trait (ST) model of occupational stress focuses on the perceived severity and frequency of occurrence of two major categories of stressors, i.e. job pressures and lack of support (Spielberger et al., 2003). Stress resulting from work is described as the mind-body arousal resulting from physical and/or psychological job demands. If a stressor is perceived as threatening then the person may react with anger and anxiety and this leads to the activation of autonomic nervous system. If the reaction continues to be severe, the resulting physical and psychological strain may cause adverse behavioural consequences (Spielberger et al., 2003).

According to Patterson (2001), there is a link between various demographic variables and law enforcement work stress including age, education, gender, race, rank, section-assignment, and years of police experience. Violanti and Aron (1995) have also found that race, ethnicity, and gender are not associated with experiences of law enforcement work stress while Ayres and Flanagan (1992) found that having a college education resulted in greater dissatisfaction with the bureaucratic organisation of law enforcement agencies. However Worden (1990) did not find any empirical support for the latter and the effects of college education remain inconclusive. Brown and Campbell (1990) found that sergeants reported a higher number of work events compared with other ranks and experienced greater perceptions of stress than did patrol officers (Savery, Soutar & Weaver, 1993). The perception of work stress seemed to decrease with an increase in years of police experience (Violanti, 1983) and officers who had more years of experience reported lower levels of perceived work stress (Patterson, 1992).

According to Alexander (1999), in addition to the stressful work events and situations experienced in law enforcement such as traumatic incidents, some officers experienced additional environmental factors as a result of their gender or race, which in turn influenced cultural differences in coping and social support. Studies which have been conducted among non-police samples indicate that gender differences are associated with the number and types of traumatic incidents as well as psychological reactions to such incidents (Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes & Nelson, 1995; Violanti & Lauterbach, 1994).

Organisational factors which contribute to burnout are lack of social support, rotating shifts, work overload, role conflict, and role ambiguity and lack of feedback (Alexander, 1999; Biggam, Power, MacDonald, Carcary & Moodie, 1997; McCafferty, McCafferty & McCafferty, 1992). These factors represent "demands" on employees (also referred to as job stressors), that are included in most models of burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). It has also been found that burnout is related to organisational stressors including low levels of perceived control and a lack of resources.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Four or five stressed-out policemen commit suicide every year. Stress-related ailments have killed more serving policemen in the past three years. Several inspectors and constables have died of heart attacks while on duty. Constables are feeling that they work under great pressure and their job is demanding and uncertain, also, public expectations from the police are high. During festivals timings, constables often work for more than 36 hours at a stretch. This may take a heavy charge on their health. Stress can cause hypertension, joint pains, high blood pressure, diabetes as well as paralytic strokes and heart attacks. They also experience lack of concentration, resulting in their making errors while passing orders or taking important decisions. Besides the routine work, constables often face stressful situations because of harassment from superiors.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of this study:

1. The study the socio-demographic factors of the respondents;
2. Identify the frequency of most stressful job activities of police constables;
3. To study the relationship between demographic factors and level of stress among the grade I police constables;

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 200 samples from grade I 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 percentage analysis, descriptive analysis, and chi-square test.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Table 1: Percentage analysis

Factors	Frequency	Percent
Age		
20-29 years	65	32.5
30-39 years	121	60.5
40-49 years	14	7.0
Total	200	100
Gender		
Male	103	51.5
Female	97	48.5
Total	200	100
Marital status		
Married	126	63.0
Unmarried	63	31.5
Divorced	9	4.5
Separated	2	1.0
Total	200	100
Year of service		
Less than 5 years	37	18.5
6-10 years	57	28.5
11-15 years	96	48.0
16-20 years	10	5.0
Total	200	100
Monthly income		
Rs.5200-20200 plus grade pay Rs.2400	95	47.5
Rs.5200-20000 plus grade pay Rs.1900	97	48.5
Rs.5200-20200 plus grade pay Rs.2800	8	4.0
Total	200	100

Table 1 infers that most of the police constables (121) are belong to 30-39 years old, 103 police constables are male, 126 respondents are married, 96 respondents are having 11 to 15 years experience as a police constables, and 97 police constables are getting Rs.5200-20000 plus grade pay Rs.1900.

Table 2: Reliability test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.930	44

Table 2 shows that **Cronbach's alpha** is **0.930**, which indicates a high level of internal consistency for scale with this specific sample.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

This table shows that descriptive statistics for 44 job related stress activities that are faced by the grade I police constables for the last six months.

Descriptive Statistics		Mean	SD
1.	Seeing criminals go free	5.0750	2.53406
2.	Having to deal with the media	5.0600	2.46307
3.	Insufficient personal time (e.g., coffee breaks, lunch)	5.0000	2.49220
4.	Dealing with crisis situations	4.9600	2.15211
5.	Lack of recognition for good work	4.9500	2.38663
6.	Experiencing negative attitudes toward the organization	4.9400	2.19556
7.	Assignment of increased responsibility	4.9300	2.28280
8.	Personal insult from customer/consumer/colleague	4.9100	2.41476
9.	Frequent interruptions	4.8800	2.28950
10.	Covering work for another employee	4.8750	2.32301
11.	Poorly motivated co-workers	4.8550	2.30446
12.	Poor or inadequate supervision	4.8550	2.32400
13.	Having to go to court	4.8200	2.28335
14.	Conflicts with other departments	4.8100	2.19728
15.	Meeting deadlines	4.7950	2.33887
16.	Noisy work area	4.7850	2.38900
17.	Inadequate salary	4.7800	2.59911
18.	Fellow workers not doing their job	4.7700	2.40959
19.	Lack of participation in policy-making decisions	4.7700	2.29640
20.	Difficulty getting along with supervisor	4.7600	2.26452
21.	Assignment of new or unfamiliar duties	4.7500	2.48766
22.	Attending to incidences of domestic violence	4.7200	2.21044
23.	Competition for advancement	4.7150	2.26926
24.	Shift work	4.7150	2.16035
25.	Having to handle a large crowd/mass demonstration	4.7150	2.47069
26.	Reorganization and transformation within the organization	4.6800	2.30525
27.	Frequent changes from boring to demanding activities	4.6750	2.11465
28.	Performing tasks not in job description	4.6300	2.26023
29.	A forced arrest or being physically attacked	4.6050	2.48189
30.	Inadequate support by supervisor	4.5850	2.36447
31.	Racial conflict	4.5750	2.80602
32.	Working overtime	4.5750	2.18822
33.	Excessive paperwork	4.5700	2.25177
34.	Inadequate or poor quality equipment	4.5450	2.23898
35.	Lack of opportunity for advancement	4.5350	2.21661
36.	A fellow officer killed in the line of duty	4.4350	2.72450
37.	Killing someone in the line of duty	4.4250	2.71685
38.	Making critical on-the-spot decisions	4.4250	2.29581
39.	Delivering a death message or bad news to someone	4.3650	2.40221
40.	Periods of inactivity	4.3550	2.49602
41.	Insufficient personnel to handle an assignment	4.3350	2.21978
42.	Staff shortages	4.2050	2.61864
43.	Too much supervision Stressful Job-Related Events	3.9950	2.35002
44.	Assignment of disagreeable duties	3.6300	2.14150

Table 3 shows that, the first ranked stressful job activity is “**seeing criminals going free because of lack of evidence and court leniency**” with the mean stress value of **5.0750** and the standard deviation is **2.53406**. Second ranked stressful activity is “**Having to deal with the media**” with the mean stress value of **5.060** and the standard deviation is **2.46307**. Third ranked stressful activity is “**Insufficient personal time (e.g., coffee breaks, lunch)**” with the mean stress value of **5.000** and the standard deviation is **2.4922**.

Least ranked job stress activities are “**Too much supervision Stressful Job-Related Events**” and “**Assignment of disagreeable duties**”, with the mean stress value of **3.995** and **3.63**.

Table 4: Chi square test**Chi square between Gender and top ranked stressful activities.****H₀:** There is no significant relation between Gender and top ranked stressful activities.

Chi square test	Value	Df	Sig	Conclusion
Seeing criminals go free	17.086 ^a	9	0.05**	Association
Having to deal with the media	10.339 ^a	9	0.32	No Association
Insufficient personal time (e.g., coffee breaks, lunch)	29.095 ^a	9	0.00**	Association
Dealing with crisis situations	7.652 ^a	9	0.57	No Association
Lack of recognition for good work	26.464 ^a	9	0.00**	Association
Experiencing negative attitudes toward the organization	12.927 ^a	9	0.17	No Association
Assignment of increased responsibility	13.593 ^a	9	0.14	No Association
Personal insult from customer/consumer/colleague	15.797 ^a	9	0.07**	Association
Frequent interruptions	16.904 ^a	9	0.05**	Association
Covering work for another employee	17.144 ^a	9	0.05**	Association

**** H₀ is rejected at 5%.**

Table 4 shows that significant of chi square value is less than 0.05 for “**Seeing criminal going free, Insufficient personal time, Lack of recognition for good work, Personal insult, Frequent interruptions and covering work for another employee**”. Hence H₀ is rejected, so there is a significant relation between Gender of the respondents and Seeing criminal going free, Insufficient personal time, Lack of recognition for good work, Personal insult, Frequent interruptions and covering work for another employee.

Table 4.1: Chi square test**Chi square between Age and top ranked stressful activities.****H₀:** There is no significant relation between Age and top ranked stressful activities.

Chi Square Test	Value	df	Sig	Conclusion
Seeing criminals go free	25.815 ^a	18	0.10	No Association
Having to deal with the media	14.163 ^a	18	0.72	No Association
Insufficient personal time (e.g., coffee breaks, lunch)	14.132 ^a	18	0.72	No Association
Dealing with crisis situations	28.663 ^a	18	0.05**	Association
Lack of recognition for good work	36.419 ^a	18	0.01**	Association
Experiencing negative attitudes toward the organization	18.040 ^a	18	0.45	No Association
Assignment of increased responsibility	25.065 ^a	18	0.12	No Association
Personal insult from customer/consumer/colleague	36.108 ^a	18	0.01**	Association
Frequent interruptions	30.214 ^a	18	0.04**	Association
Covering work for another employee	36.174 ^a	18	0.01**	Association

**** H₀ is rejected at 5%.**

Table 4.1 shows that significant of chi square value is less than 0.05 for “**Dealing with crisis situations, Lack of recognition for good work, Personal insult, frequent interruptions and covering work for another employee**”. Hence H₀ is rejected, so there is a significant relation between Ages of the respondents and Dealing with crisis situations, Lack of recognition for good work, Personal insult, Frequent interruptions and covering work for another employee.

Table 4.2: Chi square test**Chi square between Experience and top ranked stressful activities.****H₀:** There is no significant relation between experience and top ranked stressful activities.

Chi Square Test	Value	df	Sig	Conclusion
Seeing criminals go free	56.702 ^a	27	0.00**	Association
Having to deal with the media	30.402 ^a	27	0.30	No Association
Insufficient personal time (e.g., coffee breaks, lunch)	25.808 ^a	27	0.53	No Association
Dealing with crisis situations	37.965 ^a	27	0.08**	Association
Lack of recognition for good work	57.822 ^a	27	0.00**	Association
Experiencing negative attitudes toward the organization	29.482 ^a	27	0.34	No Association
Assignment of increased responsibility	37.170 ^a	27	0.09	No Association
Personal insult from customer/consumer/colleague	25.866 ^a	27	0.53	No Association
Frequent interruptions	41.200 ^a	27	0.04**	Association
Covering work for another employee	43.501 ^a	27	0.02**	Association

**** H₀ is rejected at 5%.**

Table 4.2 shows that significant of chi square value is less than 0.05 for “**Seeing criminals go free, Dealing with crisis situations, Lack of recognition for good work, Frequent interruptions and covering work for another employee**”. Hence H_0 is rejected, so there is a significant relation between experiences of the respondents and Seeing criminals go free, Dealing with crisis situations, Lack of recognition for good work, Frequent interruptions and covering work for another employee.

Table 4.3: Chi square test

Chi square between Monthly income and top ranked stressful activities.

H_0 : There is no significant relation between monthly income and top ranked stressful activities.

Chi Square Test	Value	df	Sig	Conclusion
Seeing criminals go free	29.859 ^a	18	0.039**	Association
Having to deal with the media	34.083 ^a	18	0.012**	Association
Insufficient personal time (e.g., coffee breaks, lunch)	25.707 ^a	18	0.107	No Association
Dealing with crisis situations	20.345 ^a	18	0.314	No Association
Lack of recognition for good work	29.593 ^a	18	0.042**	Association
Experiencing negative attitudes toward the organization	11.329 ^a	18	0.880	No Association
Assignment of increased responsibility	29.099 ^a	18	0.047**	Association
Personal insult from customer/consumer/colleague	23.278 ^a	18	0.180	No Association
Frequent interruptions	23.984 ^a	18	0.156	No Association
Covering work for another employee	23.597 ^a	18	0.169	No Association

**** H_0 is rejected at 5%.**

Table 4.3 shows that significant of chi square value is less than 0.05 for “**Seeing criminals go free, Dealing with crisis situations, Lack of recognition for good work and assignment of increased responsibility**”. Hence H_0 is rejected, so there is a significant relation between monthly incomes of the respondents and Seeing criminals go free, Dealing with crisis situations, Lack of recognition for good work and assignment of increased responsibility.

Table 4.4: Chi square test

Chi square between Marital status and top ranked stressful activities.

H_0 : There is no significant relation between marital status and top ranked stressful activities.

Chi Square Test	Value	df	Sig	Conclusion
Seeing criminals go free	25.689 ^a	27	0.536	No Association
Having to deal with the media	24.539 ^a	27	0.600	No Association
Insufficient personal time (e.g., coffee breaks, lunch)	22.612 ^a	27	0.706	No Association
Dealing with crisis situations	31.102 ^a	27	0.267	No Association
Lack of recognition for good work	33.865 ^a	27	0.170	No Association
Experiencing negative attitudes toward the organization	29.187 ^a	27	0.352	No Association
Assignment of increased responsibility	45.231 ^a	27	0.015**	Association
Personal insult from customer/consumer/colleague	40.606 ^a	27	0.045**	Association
Frequent interruptions	44.358 ^a	27	0.019**	Association
Covering work for another employee	46.757 ^a	27	0.011**	Association

**** H_0 is rejected at 5%.**

Table 4.4 shows that significant of chi square value is less than 0.05 for “**covering work for another employee, frequent interruptions, personal insult and assignment of increased responsibility**”. Hence H_0 is rejected, so there is a significant relation between marital statuses of the respondents and covering work for another employee, frequent interruptions, personal insult and assignment of increased responsibility.

FINDINGS

- It was found that most of the police constables (121) are belong to 30-39 years old, 103 police constables are male, 126 respondents are married, 96 respondents are having 11 to 15 years experience as a police constables, and 97 police constables are getting Rs.5200-20000 plus grade pay Rs.1900.
- It shows that, the first ranked stressful job activity is “**seeing criminals going free because of lack of evidence and court leniency**” with the mean stress value of **5.0750** and the standard deviation is **2.53406**. Second ranked stressful activity is “**Having to deal with the media**” with the mean stress value of **5.060** and

the standard deviation is **2.46307**. Third ranked stressful activity is ***“Insufficient personal time (e.g., coffee breaks, lunch)”*** with the mean stress value of **5.000** and the standard deviation is **2.4922**. Least ranked job stress activities are ***“Too much supervision Stressful Job-Related Events”*** and ***“Assignment of disagreeable duties”***, with the mean stress value of **3.995** and **3.63**.

- It shows that significant of chi square value is less than 0.05 for ***“Seeing criminal going free, insufficient personal time, Lack of recognition for good work, Personal insult, and frequent interruptions and covering work for another employee”***. Hence H_0 is rejected, so there is a significant relation between Gender of the respondents and Seeing criminal going free, Insufficient personal time, Lack of recognition for good work, Personal insult, Frequent interruptions and covering work for another employee.
- It was found that significant of chi square value is less than 0.05 for ***“Dealing with crisis situations, Lack of recognition for good work, Personal insult, Frequent interruptions and covering work for another employee”***. Hence H_0 is rejected, so there is a significant relation between Ages of the respondents and Dealing with crisis situations, Lack of recognition for good work, Personal insult, Frequent interruptions and covering work for another employee.
- It shows that significant of chi square value is less than 0.05 for ***“Seeing criminals go free, Dealing with crisis situations, Lack of recognition for good work, Frequent interruptions and covering work for another employee”***. Hence H_0 is rejected, so there is a significant relation between experiences of the respondents and Seeing criminals go free, Dealing with crisis situations, Lack of recognition for good work, Frequent interruptions and covering work for another employee.
- It was found that significant of chi square value is less than 0.05 for ***“Seeing criminals go free, Dealing with crisis situations, Lack of recognition for good work and assignment of increased responsibility”***. Hence H_0 is rejected, so there is a significant relation between monthly incomes of the respondents and seeing criminals go free, Dealing with crisis situations, Lack of recognition for good work and assignment of increased responsibility.
- It shows that significant of chi square value is less than 0.05 for ***“covering work for another employee, frequent interruptions, personal insult and assignment of increased responsibility”***. Hence H_0 is rejected, so there is a significant relation between marital statuses of the respondents and covering work for another employee, frequent interruptions, personal insult and assignment of increased responsibility.

DISCUSSIONS

This study set out to examine following hypothesis. The first was various factor extracted from Stressful Job Related Events do not vary with the demographic factors of the respondents. Findings from this study shows that grade 1 constable's stressful job related events like Stress do seeing criminals going free because of lack of evidence and court leniency, Having to deal with the media, Insufficient personal time (e.g., coffee breaks, lunch) and least job related stressful events like Too much supervision Stressful Job-Related Events, Assignment of disagreeable duties vary with demographic factors like age, gender, religion, service of the years, marital status, income and the place of residence. This present study also suggested that perception about the work and practice must be changed by providing good work climate and developed departmental policy that will reduce the stress level. And police department must offer counseling for the police constables and giving chance to them for future scope. The researcher suggested that during the recruitment personality dimensions also examined. Decreasing working hours, role overload and work load, flexi working time will lead to maintain their personal time. Responsibility of the police constables must considered based on their capacity, because Tamil Nadu has a Police population ratio of 1: 632, Police departments, with their tense organizational structures, offer both opportunities and challenges for stress prevention programs. Although it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs, we believe that these programs may be effective if started early during police training and delivered regularly throughout a police's career to keep the rate of stress among police as low as possible.

CONCLUSION

The study explained Stress due to doing disagreeable duties, Stress due to increased responsibility and Stress due to lack of admin policy are the primary causes of stress among police constables. Further, it empirically investigated that age, gender, religion, service of the years, marital status, income and the place of residence in the same field has significant association with stress level among police constables. The study suggests to regularly organizing the training programs, counseling and medical checkups for stress management of police constables.

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