

IDENTIFYING THE FACTORS CAUSING ORGANISATIONAL STRESS IN POLICE OFFICERS

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Abstract

The policemen happen to be the most noticeable representatives of the government, as they are the most pervasive associations of the general public. The police headquarters and a policeman are the most fitting and agreeable unit in an hour of need, peril and emergency, when a common man does not know what to do. The police is relied upon to be the most open, intuitive and dynamic organization of the society. The typical duties of a police officer are to keep the peace, law enforcement, security of individuals and property and investigations of crimes. Apart from these duties, there are many other social duties of a police officer.

Stress in police has been an important area to research since decades. Police work is highly stressful, as it is one of the very few occupations where employees are asked continually to face physical dangers and to put their lives on the line at any time. There are many factors that may act as stressors, but the most common are; the shiftwork, and the roles and functions of a policeman. According to a few reports, there is a shortage of police force; due to this shortage, there is a lot of work load on existing police officers which acts up as a stressor. The levels of stress in policemen becomes an important area of research looking at the gap in the number of sanctioned/ required police force and the number of existing police force; the shift works; risk involved in the job; roles that disturb personal life and include staying away from family.

The primary objective of the study was to determine the levels of organizational stress in the police officers. The sample size for the study was 90 which included 55 male respondents and 35 female respondents. The data was gathered from various police stations of Ahmedabad city; there was no age limit. The research was conducted through self-report questionnaire, Role Stress: Organizational Role Stress (ORS) Scale by Pareek (1993) and evaluated accordingly using the manual. Organizational role stress scale is used to measure 10 role stresses; inter-role distance, role stagnation, role expectation conflict, role erosion, role overload, role isolation, personal inadequacy, self-role distance, role ambiguity and resource inadequacy.

Results showed that there is a significant level of organizational stress in police officers. The factors that contributed as stressors were found to be inadequate police force, high work load, irregular working hours, inadequate resources and low pay scale.

Keywords: police officers, police force, stress, organizational stress

1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Police Force in India

The policemen happen to be the most visible representatives of the government, as they are the most ubiquitous organizations of the society. The police station and a policeman are the most appropriate and

approachable unit in an hour of need, danger and crisis, when a citizen does not know what to do. The police is expected to be the most accessible, interactive and dynamic organization of any society.

Duties of a police officer are fluctuated, and may contrast significantly from inside one political setting to another. Typical duties relate to keeping the peace, law enforcement, security of individuals and property and investigations of crimes. Officers are required to react to an assortment of circumstances that may emerge while they are on duty.

According to a data submitted in 2017 by the Bureau of Police Research and Development, there are 19,89,295 Civil Police personnel and 4,75,189 Armed Police personnel in India. [1]

Every state and union territory of India has its own police force.

1.2 Stress

Stress is an inseparable part of our daily lives. Stress is an internal state, it can be caused by disease conditions, exercise, differences in temperature, etc. It can also be caused by potentially harmful and uncontrollable environmental and social situations, or the situations an individual cannot cope up with. Stress is an unpleasant emotion and feeling. It could also be defined as a feeling of strain and/or pressure. The causes of the stress state, i.e. environmental, physical or social factors are known as the *stressors*. The internal stress state can lead to various responses if induced by a stressor. Due to stress, there are a number of responses in the body. Stress can lead to psychological responses such as anxiety, hopelessness, depression, irritability, and a difficulty in coping with the world.

1.2.1 Sources of Stress

There are many sources of stress in an individual's everyday life, some of them are:

- **Environmental factors:** The uncertainty in the environment at workplace can lead to stress among the employees in an organization. Economic uncertainties such as change in business cycle; technological uncertainties such as new innovations, use of new technology; and political uncertainties may lead to stress.
- **Individual factors:** The factors such as family issues, broken families, failed marriages, personal economic problems, and inherent personality characteristics play a role in leading to stress. These factors also affect job performance. Poor financial conditions can also create financial strain and eventually, stress. A person's basic nature is also responsible for creating stress in him.
- **Individual Differences:** Individual difference variables which are responsible for creating the relationship between potential stressors and experienced stress are: perception, job experience, social support, locus of control, self-efficacy, and hostility (Robbins, 2004: 581). Perception is responsible for creating a relationship between a potential stress condition and an individual's response towards it. An individual's interpretation of those conditions is also responsible for causing stress. Negative job experience may also cause stress in an individual. Social support from the colleagues and family helps lessen the impact of stress in an individual. Individuals with a high internal locus of control are less likely to succumb into stress situation. Self-efficacy helps to enhance confidence in an individual and decrease stress.
- **Occupational factors:** The occupational factors which are responsible for stress are: occupational demands, role-space conflicts and role-set conflicts. The various factors that play a role in causing stress in an individual are: making decisions, performing boring and repetitive tasks, repeatedly exchanging information with others, working in unpleasant physical conditions, and performing unstructured rather than structured tasks. The higher level of stress is experienced by individuals when their job requires these activities on regular basis. Pareek (2011) concluded that role stress can occur from two sources; role-space conflicts and role-set conflicts. Role-space conflicts are the conflicts which arise when an individual is required to play a number of roles in organizational context. Role-space conflicts lead to problems such as, self-role distance, intra-role conflict, role stagnation and inter-role distance. The incompatibility among the expectations of the significant or important roles and the individual himself are referred to as role-set conflicts. They may lead to role ambiguity, role expectation conflict, role overload, role erosion, resource inadequacy, person inadequacy and role isolation.

1.3 Stresses in Police

Stress in police has been an important area to research since decades. Police work is highly stressful, as it is one of the very few occupations where employees are asked continually to face physical dangers and to put their lives on the line at any time. There are many factors that may act as stressors, but the most common are; the shiftwork, and the roles and functions of a policeman. According to a report, the sanctioned strength

of Police Force is 2,124,596 but the existing strength of Police Force is 1,585,117. [2]

Due to the shortage of force, the workload on police officers increases which acts up as a stressor. There are roles of a police officer that disturb personal life; where an officer has to stay away from family for days. All this roles may also add up as stressors in policemen.

1.4 Rationale of the Study

Looking at the gap in the number of sanctioned/ required police force and the number of existing police force; the shift works; risk involved in the job; roles that disturb personal life and include staying away from family, the levels of stress in policemen becomes an important area of research.

1.5 Research Gap

Many studies have been done in the area of occupational stress. A very few studies have been done on the occupational stress in the police officers in urban settings in India. The differences in the levels of stress in male and female police officers in urban settings in India have very less evidence in the past studies.

1.6 Objective of the Study

To identify the factors that cause stress in police officers.

1.7 Hypothesis of the Study

There is a significant level of stress among the police officers.

2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

A study done by Travis D. Hill (2018) focused mainly on the factors that induce stress among the police and correctional officers in East Tennessee. The study further analyzed stressors each professional experienced. The coping strategies used by the officers were also studied. Correctional officers were higher on stress associated with organizational aspects of the job. The study concluded that correctional officers and police officers have similar rates of operational stress, overall stress; and they used similar coping strategies. [3]

An exploratory study was undertaken by Eric Lambert, Hanif Qureshi, James Frank, Linda Keena and Nancy Hogan (2016) to examine how the different dimensions of work–family conflict are related to job stress among Indian police officers. There are four major dimensions of work–family conflict: strain-based, behavior-based, time-based, and family-based. Bivariate results showed that if there is an increase in any one of the dimensions of work–family conflict, it is associated with increases in stress from work. But through multivariate analysis, it was found that only three of the four dimensions of work–family conflict had a significant association with job stress. [4]

M. Kathrine Abdollahi PhD (2001) conducted a study in which few different types of stressors and their consequences for police work force were found. Further, the study compartmentalized the data into four main categories which provided researchers, practitioners, managers, and policy makers a clear analysis of the police stress literature. These categories included: (i) intra-interpersonal (i.e., personality-related stressors), (ii) occupational (i.e., job-related stressors), (iii) organizational (i.e., organizationally related stressors), and (4) health consequences of police stress. [5]

A study was conducted by Fiona H. Biggam , Kevin G. Power , Ranald R. Macdonald , William B. Carcary & Eleanor Moodie (1997) on occupation stress among the Scottish police force. The self-perceived stress was associated with a variety of organizational and operational stressors, and studied along with the associated distress in the police officers in terms of symptoms of anxiety, somatic complaint, severe depression and social dysfunction. The results showed that in spite of the potential that police work offers for exposure to adverse operational situations such as violence or death, the highest levels of associated stress lie in relation to organizational factors such as officers' perceptions of staff shortages, inadequate resources, time pressures, lack of communication and work overload. Differential rates of perceived stress were analyzed according to gender, rank and working location. The paper further validated previous research on stress in British police and addressed the situation from a Scottish perspective. [6]

3 - RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Demographics

The sample size for the study was 90, which included both males and females. The research was conducted keeping in mind the external as well as internal environment of all the participants, their age, gender, work experience as well as their positions in respective police stations. The research was conducted in various

police stations of Ahmedabad on a sample of 90 police officers. There was no age limit. Out of these 90 samples, 55 (61%) were males and 35 (39%) were females.

3.2 Role Stress: Organizational Role Stress (ORS) Scale by Udai Pareek (1993)

The research was conducted through self-report questionnaire, Role Stress: Organizational Role Stress (ORS) Scale by Pareek (1993) and evaluated accordingly using the manual. Organizational role stress scale is used to measure 10 role stresses, i.e.

1. inter-role distance
2. role stagnation
3. role expectation conflict
4. role erosion
5. role overload
6. role isolation
7. personal inadequacy
8. self-role distance
9. role ambiguity
10. resource inadequacy

Organizational Role Stress (ORS) Scale is a 5-point scale (0 to 4), containing five items for each role stress and a total of 50 statements. Thus the total scores on each role stress range from 0 to 20.

3.2.1 Scoring

The answer sheet is used for scoring. The total scores on each role stress range from 0 to 20. To get the total scores for each role stress, the ratings given are totaled horizontally (for five items). The ratings given are further normalized and totaled, and average for each factor is found.

4 - RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Results

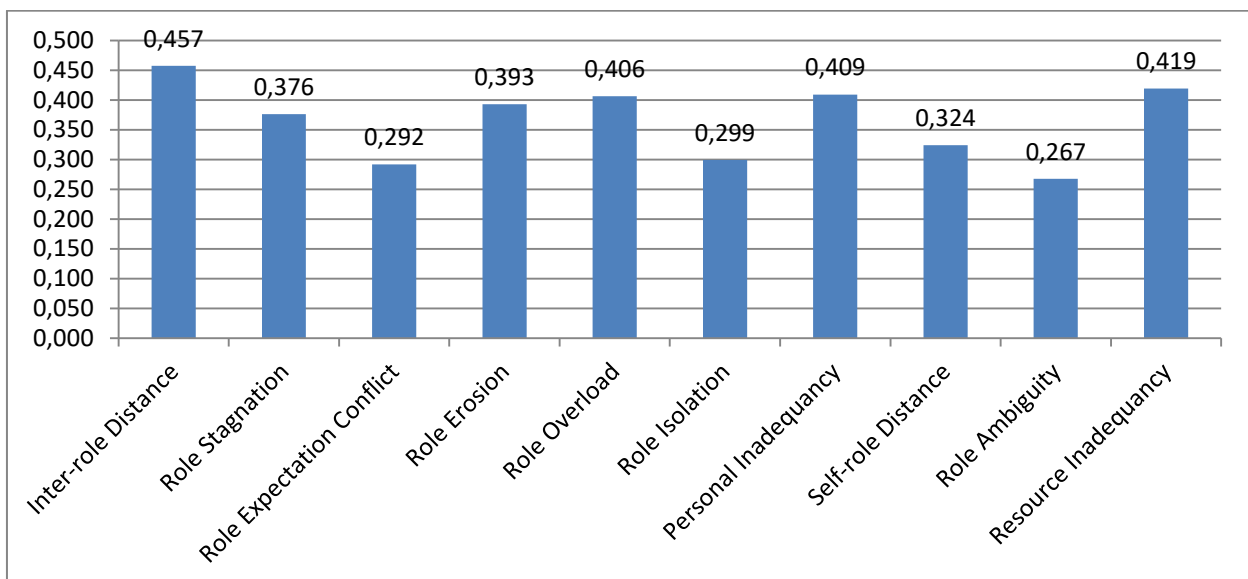


Fig. 1 Mean of each Role Stress (n=90)

Of the total sample size of 90, it was found that the Inter-role Distance was the highest, followed by Resource Inadequacy. Role Ambiguity was found to be the lowest among all other factors. Fig.1 shows the graph of mean of each role stress. The mean of each role stress are mentioned below in Table 1:

Table 1: Mean of Role Stress

Inter-role Distance	0.457
Role Stagnation	0.376
Role Expectation Conflict	0.292
Role Erosion	0.393
Role Overload	0.406
Role Isolation	0.299
Personal Inadequacy	0.409
Self-role Distance	0.324
Role Ambiguity	0.267
Resource Inadequacy	0.419

4.2 Discussion

As indicated by the results of the study, the Inter-role Distance was found to be the highest, which means that the roles possessed by the police officers are in a conflict as the police officers have to play several different roles during their job. Inter-role distance is likely to cause negative stress in individuals. Role Ambiguity was found to be the lowest among all other factors of Organizational Role Stress, which means that the police officers understood what was expected out of them at their job.

4.3 Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted on the police officers of only a few police stations in Ahmedabad, and does not cover any other police stations of other cities.

The sample size of this study was 90, comprising of 55 males and 35 females and thus, the result may not be generalizable to all.

This study was conducted using Organizational Role Stress (ORS) Scale, and there are chances that the result of the study might change if the questionnaire used is changed.

Also, since this is a self-report questionnaire, there are chances that some subjects might not have been completely honest with their responses, which can affect the overall result.

5 - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Through personal interviews, it was found that the existing police force was much lesser than the required police force. Due to shortage of police force, there's a lot of work load on the police personnel. There is also an unequal distribution of work among the police personnel; there is more work load on the lower ranked officers than on the higher ranked officers.

In an interview with a Police Inspector, he told one of his experiences, he had a function at his house, but his leave got cancelled due to a VIP movement, and so the function went on without his presence. Because of the shortage of man force, not many leaves/holidays are sanctioned to the police personnel. Police has to work even on weekends and also on public holidays.

As per the norms decided by the Government of India, the working hours of police personnel are 8 hours per day. When the personal interviews were taken, it was found that police personnel work for more than 10-11 hours. In an interview, a police constable revealed that there are days when he has to work for more than 15 hours. Due to such irregular working hours, the eating patterns and sleep cycles are disturbed which acts up as stressors.

Police officers do not get enough recognition for the work they do. The pay scale of police officers is much lower than what is expected by them. Another issue faced by the police officers is the lack of adequate

resources. The resources provided by the government to the police officers are inadequate; police stations are constructed mainly using the funds given by the social workers and public. There is a lack of the use of technology for the work of a police officer, which increases the burden on him/her. There is severe shortage of weaponry and vehicles. Many police officers are facing organizational stress due to these reasons as these are given higher importance in an average person's life. Not enough steps are being taken by the government regarding the issue of organizational stress among the police officers.

5.2 Recommendations

There is a need for police reforms in India. There is a large difference between the number of required police force and the existing police force; a need for recruitment is suggested. A lot of problems related to infrastructure and stationary are faced by the police; a need for reforms is suggested.

A need to introduce basic stress management strategies is suggested. Individual strategies are suggested. Individual strategies are the strategies which an individual irrespective of the organizational strategies to manage stress can adopt to reduce the stress level. Some of such techniques are: becoming aware of the problem, effective time, seeking social support, relaxation techniques, maintaining healthy Diet and fitness, meditation as a technique and enough sleep. [7]

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