

Factors Affecting Stress-Health Relationship: A Case Study Of Mumbai Police

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ABSTRACT

The most crucial factor in the success of an organization is the productivity of its work force which in turn is dependent on the psychological as well as social well being of its employees. And today's rapidly moving lives of the common man is filled with stress as an outcome of the role-conflicts, enhanced expectations and desires etc.

Stress has an adverse affect one's health, work performance, social life and even the relationship with family members. The stress, factors leading to it and consequences of stress are to be understood at individual and organizational level. The changed working conditions, multiple and overlapping roles have increased stress to a greater extent at workplace.

KEYWORDS:

Stress, Health, Police

INTRODUCTION

Stress has emerged as a major issue for the businesses and has reached alarming proportions due to its negative impacts. Organizations must develop stress prevention as well as stress reduction techniques.

Today people are stressed from overburden of work, job insecurity, information overload, conflicting roles and the increasing pace of life. Stress deteriorates the performance of employee which results in low turnover rates of the company. Stress, is the body's physical and psychological response to anything that's perceived as irresistible.

Police personnel of different ranks may or may not differ both quantitatively and qualitatively in their experience of stress. The aim of this study is to understand and analyse the specific stressors experienced by the police personnel of different ranks.

The police department is characterized by a well-defined hierarchy. As one descends on this hierarchy ladder, the strength of the cadre increases in number. Absolute confidence and obedience of lawful orders are necessary from each member of the force if the force has to function efficiently. A weak coupling in the chain of command would tend to degenerate the competency of the force. Hence it is essential to overcome this lacuna. One important aspect is to identify the sources of stress and related symptoms which may prove hazardous to the competency of the police personnel. The findings of the proposed study can act as pointers to the causes of stress as well as the

symptoms of stress. Factors causing maximum amount of stress can be tapped so also the severe manifestations of it through the symptoms. These findings may prove to be helpful in providing a direction in adopting remedial measures for the benefit of the Mumbai police personnel.

The police shoulder a very significant responsibility of maintaining law and order in the society. Hence the contribution of police personnel in the process of social stability cannot be undermined. This mammoth responsibility necessitates effective group behaviour strategies such as team-work, cooperation, coordination, communication channels, delegation of power and authority among others. Every single individual in the group becomes accountable for his/her actions. This relates to the social behavior.

However it is important to note that every single policeman brings to the job, his/her own individuality and mental makeup which play a very important role in dealing with stressful situations and managing them. This brings to fore the psychological perspective.

The concept of the police as the strong arm of the administration, charged with the duty of keeping a political party in power, is not contemplated in the laws. But it has become so in practice in some places. The entire police concept of a people's police gets distorted when the police start acting as the private army of a select set of people, operating at their behest and in their interest.

The police personnel are subjected to the grim reality of occupational stress in addition to the life events stress. This does not depict a good omen for the nation and society because physical and psychological health of police personnel is an important prerequisite for country's march ahead.

The police personnel at the middle level expressed the opinion that they faced a lot of stress. They have to follow the orders of the superiors and extract good work from the subordinates who may not have the necessary expertise to perform certain tasks. However they were not only sandwiched between the superiors and the subordinates. An important source of stress was being caught between the departmental orders and the demands of the public. The respondents emphasized the difficulties of being in this situation almost on a regular basis.

Even today, not much has really changed. Policing has become stressful due to the system that is rigidly enforced and maintained. This system does not give much scope of career advancement to the middle and lower levels. Climbing up the hierarchy becomes a long-drawn process. Delayed promotions bring in stagnation.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Mumbai for administrative purpose has been divided into three parts, namely, city, eastern suburb, and western suburb, which has been further divided into 12 zones. Each zone further divided into three to four divisions and each division has two to three police stations in it.

To adequately represent samples from each part we applied multiage sampling. In each part we randomly selected one division and at divisional level we randomly selected one police station. After finalizing police station we included 20% of them in our study as per systematic random sampling so total 276 policemen (Class II and III) were included out of 1406. Prior permission from commissioner of Mumbai as well as informed consent from study participants was taken.

The scale measures all the factors present in the work environment responsible for stress and use workers as the source of information by using questionnaire and interview technique and hence has been selected for the study.

The items relate the relative components of job, which results in stress such as role over load, role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group, political pressure, powerless, poor peer relationship, intrinsic improvement, low status, strenuous working condition, and unprofitability.

Table 1
Classification of level of stress index

Category	Score
Low	46-122
Moderate	123-155
High	156-230

RESULTS

The present epidemiologic study focuses on socio demographic profile of Mumbai police with special references to their job-related stress.

Maximum policemen, that is, 136 (49%) were in the age group 40-50 years in our study.

In the present study, 36.2% respondents were educated up to secondary. A 48.6% were educated up to higher secondary and 15.2% graduation and above.

Almost 76% of the respondents have nuclear family. Fifty-three percent of policemen were from lower middle class family as per classification and other studies also suggested similar findings.

A majority, that is, 130 (47%) policemen were in service for 25-25 years. Most of the respondents (44%) worked for more than 12 h a day, whereas Class II. Forty-one percent of Class III respondents worked for more than 16 h.

Table 2

Distribution of sociodemographic factors of Mumbai police personnel

Sociodemographic factor	Category	Frequency <i>N</i> =276 (100%)
Age (years)	≤30	17 (6.1)
	31-40	66 (23.9)
	41-50	136 (49)
	50-58	57 (21)
Gender	Male	262 (96)
	Female	12 (4)
Religion	Hindu	203 (74)
	Muslim	9 (3)
	Buddha	51 (19)
	Others	13 (5)
Educational status	Secondary	100 (36)
	Higher secondary	134 (49)
	Graduate and above	42 (15)
Marital status	Unmarried	22 (8)
	Married	252 (91)
	Divorced	2 (1)
Type of family	Nuclear	209 (76)
	Joint/extended	67 (24)
Socioeconomic status	Upper class	39 (14)
	Upper middle	91 (33)
	Lower middle	146 (53)
Duration of service in years	5-15	43 (16)
	15-25	130 (47)
	25-35	92 (33)
	>35	11 (4)
Hours of duty	8-12	76 (28)

It was observed that a majority 202 (73%) of police personnel had moderate level stress, whereas 50 (18%) of police personnel had high level of stress. High OSI was found among 25 (44%) in the age group 50–58 years. This association of OSI and age found to be statistically significant. This can be because as age advances, the responsibilities for work also increase.

Table 3

Distribution of sociodemographic factors of Mumbai police personal and occupational stress index

Sociodemographic variable	Occupational stress index (%)			P
	Mild (24)	Moderate (202)	High (50)	
Age group (years)				
<30	6 (35)	6 (35)	5 (30)	<0.001
30-40	7 (11)	51 (77)	8 (12)	
40-50	6 (4)	118 (87)	12 (9)	
50-58	5 (9)	27 (47)	25 (44)	
Educational status				
Secondary	10 (10)	73 (73)	17 (17)	>0.05
Higher secondary	12 (9)	95 (71)	27 (20)	
Graduation and above	2 (5)	34 (81)	6 (14)	
Socioeconomic status				
Upper class	5 (13)	28 (72)	6 (15)	>0.05
Upper middle	7 (8)	68 (75)	16 (17)	
Lower middle	12 (8)	106 (73)	28 (19)	
Duration of service in years				
5-15	5 (12)	28 (65)	10 (23)	<0.05
15-25	13 (10)	104 (80)	13 (10)	
25 and above	6 (6)	70 (68)	27 (26)	
Duration of duty hours per day				
8-12	12 (16)	46 (61)	18 (23)	<0.001
12-16	7 (4)	137 (89)	11 (7)	
>16	5 (11)	19 (42)	21 (47)	
Addiction habits				
Present	14 (7)	136 (70)	45 (23)	<0.05
Absent	10 (12)	66 (82)	5 (6)	

Out of total 195 respondents who were addicted to one or other form of substance, 23% had high OSI. This association of OSI and addiction habit was found to be statistically significant.

In high OSI role ambiguity (73%), under participation (49%), role overload (42%), strenuous working condition (34%), and unprofitability (28%) were predominant scales.

CONCLUSION

It was an observational study done on Mumbai police personnel with the aim of exploring few triggers associated with occupational stress in them. Total 276 police personnel (Class II and Class III) were screened for the OSI and we found that 73% were moderately stressed, whereas 18% were highly stressed. We studied the socio demographic factors that are highly associated with it: Age group (50-58 years), duration of service in years (>25 years), duration of duty hours (>16 h/day), addiction habits, and number of monthly holidays (no holidays).

So to reduce their stress we recommend the following:

At organizational level: Stress factors should be identified. The department should develop a co-operative culture instead of confrontational one. Duty hours as well as number of holidays are fixed. Regular screening by medical team should be carried out.

At individual level: Person should develop hobbies as well as organization skills to reduce stress. Regular exercise as well as relaxing techniques such as yoga significantly reduce stress. Most important is right attitude toward job should be developed.

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