

## A Review of Literature on Stress in Police Personnel

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**Abstract:** Every human being encounters stress in one or other way, sometimes it reinforces people to achieve their goals and for some people it makes them to damage their life. Hence, stress is quite unavoidable in nature for every individual for some time or the other. Now a day's most of the organization's major concern is to manage the stress level of their employees in order to run their business efficiently. Most of the service sectors are people centric. Stress level will be more in this sector as it deals with services to the diverse people, one such department is law enforcement department, i.e., police department.

Policing has long been considered as one of the most stressful occupations (Gershon, Lin & Li, 2002; Marmar et al., 2006). The main aim of the present study is to examine the stress related issues to the police personnel, viz., sources of stress, symptoms and coping strategies available to reduce the stress levels based on the earlier research studies. The concept of stress has been discussed comprehensively, highlighting the major definitions, basic concepts, stress among police and its impact in general .and internal and external sources of stress.

**Key words:** Police Stress, Symptoms of Stress, Stressors, Coping Strategies, Enforcement.

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### I. Introduction

As Richard Carlson says that, "Stress is nothing more than a socially acceptable form of mental illness". Stress has been defined in different ways over the years. It was conceived of as pressure from the environment, then as strain within the person. The generally accepted definition today is one of interaction between the situation and the individual. It is the psychological and physical state of mind that results when the resources of the individual are not sufficient to cope with the demands and pressures the situation. Thus, stress is more likely in some than others and in some individuals than others. Stress can situations undermine the achievement of goals, both for individuals and for organizations.

Acute responses to stress may be in the areas of feelings (anxiety, depression, irritability, fatigue), behavior (being withdrawn, aggressive, tearful, unmotivated) thinking (difficulties of concentration and problem solving) or physical symptoms (palpitations, nausea, headaches). Stress is the way human beings react both physically and mentally to changes, events, and situations in their lives. People experience stress in different ways and for different reasons. The reaction is based on your perception of an event or situation. If you view a situation negatively, you will likely feel distressed, i.e., overwhelmed, oppressed, or out of control. Distress is the more familiar form of stress. The other form, eustress results from a "positive" view of an event or situation, thus stress is one's body's response to change.

Against this background, now an attempt is made to review the studies conducted on stress and the level of stress in police department.

### II. Theoretical Framework

#### Concept of Police:

The police are a constituted body of persons empowered by the State to enforce the law, protect property and limit civil disorder. Their powers include the legitimized use of force. It is most commonly associated with police services of a State that are authorized to exercise the police power of that State within a defined legal or territorial area of responsibility. Policing has included an array of activities in different situations, but the predominant ones are concerned with the preservation of law and order. Police forces are usually organized and funded by some level of government. The level of government responsible for policing varies from place to place, and may be at the national, regional or local level. In some places there may be multiple police forces operating in the same area, with

each one having jurisdiction according to the type of crime or other circumstances. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in some societies, these developed within the context of maintaining the class system and the protection of private property.

The members in the police may be referred to as police officers, troopers, sheriffs, constables, rangers, peace officers or civic/civil guards. Police of the Soviet-era, Eastern Europe were (like the Russian Federation) called the Militsiya. The Irish police are called the Garda Síochána ("guardians of the peace"). The first, evidence of the word police in English (c.1530), come from Middle French police, in turn from Latin politia, which is the Latinization of the Greek πολιτεία (politeia), "citizenship, administration, civil polity" and that from πόλις (polis), "city". In ancient Greece the term πολιτσοός (polissoos), referred to a person, who was "guarding a city". This term comes from polis + the verb σζω (sōizō), "I save, I keep".

### **Responsibilities of the Police:**

Besides the general responsibilities of maintaining peace and order, the police are entrusted with the task of implementing the Protection of Civil Right Act, the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act and the Children's Act. Upholding the dignity of the individual citizens of India by implementing the general and special laws falls within the purview of the police. Gambling, excise offences and public nuisance are sought to be curbed by giving wide powers to the police for ensuring orderly and decent conduct on the part of the members of society. All this is because of the special social responsibilities that the police as a profession are expected to discharge, about which there is tacit recognition but no formal definition.

Besides these, the police have been given wide powers to check white collar crimes. The position of the police in this respect is unique. No other machinery at the disposal of the government has the potential, infrastructure and powers as the police have. The Indian Penal Code and the Prevention of Corruption Act make the police the watchdog for keeping the public life of public servants clean and above board. A heavy responsibility rests on the police on this score. The failure of the police to discharge this task is manifest in the stinking corruption to be met with in all walks of life. The police have not been able to prove equal to the job because of the absence of a reasonable functional autonomy for them, promoted by the distrust in them. As it has noticed, the spectrum of police activities is almost all pervading; but unfortunately, the distrust in the police pervades even beyond that. The principle of the special and unique role of the police in the matter of probity in public life is undisputed and given vent to in the concerned legislation.

### **Police Stress:**

Perhaps one of the most important findings in police stress research is that stress in law enforcement is difficult to measure and cannot be attributed to just one factor. In essence, police stress is a complex phenomenon that has many different contributory factors. Symonds (1970) was one of the first researchers to recognize that the causes of police stress could be divided into different types, which he described as:

- (i) The stress experienced due to the nature of police work (i.e., occupational stressors), and
  - (ii) Stress, which is the result of the nature of the police agency (i.e., organizational stressors).
- With the addition of intra-interpersonal and health consequences, these four categories serve as landmarks for the researcher's journey through the considerable amount of literature that has amassed over the past several decades on this topic (e.g., Anshel, 2000; Brown & Campbell, 1994; Crank & Caldero, 1991; Gersons, Carlier, Lamberts, & Kolk, 2000; Kroes et al., 1974; Martelli, Waters, & Martelli, 1989; Storch & Panzarella, 1996; Symonds, 1970).

### **III. Literature Review**

**Hans Selye's Classic "The Stress of Life"** describes the effect of long-term environmental threats he calls "stressors." Selye maintains that the unrelieved effort to cope with stressors can lead to heart disease, high blood pressure, ulcers, digestive disorders, and headaches. Stressors in police work fall into four categories:

- Stresses inherent in police work.
- Stresses arising internally from police department practices and policies.
- External stresses stemming from the criminal justice system and the society at large.
- Internal stresses confronting individual officers.

**Gail Goolkasian and Others**, research shows that they are affected by their daily exposure to human indecency and pain; that dealing with a suspicious and sometimes hostile public takes its toll on them;

and that the shift changes, the long periods of boredom and the ever-present danger that are part of police work do cause serious job stress.

**John M. Violanti**, in his attempt preferred as the Buffalo Cardio-Metabolic Occupational Police Stress (BCOPS) study, wherein more than 400 police officers have participated in the study. The clinical examination involves questionnaires on lifestyle and psychological factors, such as depression and PTSD, in addition to measures of bone density and body composition, ultrasounds of brachial and carotid arteries, salivary cortisol samples and blood samples. The officers also wear a small electronic device to measure the quantity and quality of sleep throughout a typical police shift cycle. The results from Violanti's pilot studies have shown, among other findings, that officers over age 40 had a higher 10-year risk of a coronary event compared to average national standards; 72 percent of female officers and 43 percent of male officers, had higher-than-recommended cholesterol levels; and police officers as a group had higher-than-average pulse rates and diastolic blood pressure.

**Jarrold Sadulski** in his article "Managing police stress to strengthen relationships at home" concluded that the police profession is inherently stressful and can have an adverse effect on police marriages and family relationships. The officers must be deliberate about taking steps to address their stress, so it doesn't impact their relationship with loved ones.

**Wiese L., Rothmann S. And Storm K., (2003)** in their study showed that stress associated with a lack of resources is relatively more severe than other stressors in the SAPS in Kwazulu-Natal. In this regard, inadequate salary, staff shortages and other officers not doing their job caused stress. Stressful job demands included having to deal with crisis situations, excessive paperwork, having to perform tasks not in the job description and having to do someone else's work. Also, seeing criminals go free was a relatively severe stressor for policemen.

**Kirkcaldy Bruce et al (1998)** in their study highlighted the role of demographics in the stress-strain relationships, variables which are often forgotten or minimized in this field (Cooper and Payne, 1988). It appears qualitative as well as quantitative aspects of stress exposure and coping adaptations can be modified by job and demographic characteristics. Taking parenthood, age, type of job experiences into account can heighten understanding of the stress process, and how stress affects individuals differentially.

**J.E. Agolla** conducted a study in Botswana, among the police to find out work stress symptoms and coping strategies among the police service. This study reveals that the police work stressors are: getting injured, while on duty and the use of force when the job demands to do so, etc. The coping strategies were identified as exercising, socializing, healthy eating or diets, career planning and employee training.

In a survey of "stress in police personnel", by **Pragya Mathur (1993)** reported that work overload is the second highest ranking job-related stressor. Among the job-related stressors identified by the Psychological Services Unit of the Dallas Police Department, job overload was one. In India, the strength of police personnel per unit population of 1000 was observed to be 1.4 according to the NCRB (1994). The National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (Bangalore) submitted a report (1996) to the BPR & D on mental health problems among police personnel. Almost 3/4<sup>th</sup> of the policemen pointed out that dependence on alcohol and intoxicating substance abuse is a necessary evil for them since they must toil for more than 12 hours daily, without any weekly offs.

**Stratton (1978)** also mentioned in his research work that the excessive paper work found within the law enforcement agencies as internal stressor. The excessive amount of paper work, the disproportionate number of cases handled per police station and the quantitative overload is too well known in India to deserve lengthy discussion here.

**Kroeset. al., (1974)** in their survey of 81 married police officers found that 79 of them felt police work that had an adverse effect on their home life.

**A British Study by Cain (1973)** reported that police wives from both rural and urban areas felt that their children suffered from constantly changing shifts as they rarely saw their fathers. The changing work schedules, emotional exhaustion, negative public image, overprotecting the spouse and family, hardening of emotions, identity problems and problems with the children are inherent in the law enforcement career (**Territo and Vetter, 1981**).

A study (**Kumar, 1995**) reported insufficient time for the family as the top-ranking stressor mentioned by 55 policemen of Hyderabad city. It is important to recognize that the spouse

and family are significant contributors to the success or failure in a law enforcement career. The marital and family strife, discord and unresolved emotional problems can negatively influence the police officers' development, motivation, productivity and effectiveness. The problems and frustrations encountered on the job may be brought home to the family. Conversely, an unsatisfactory home life can adversely affect the job performance and dealings with the public. A study on police by **Channabasavanna, et. al., (1996)** reported in their attempt that 52 per cent of personnel in Delhi do not stay with their families.

According to a study conducted by **Central Road Research Institute and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (1990)**, traffic policemen exposed for long hours to auto exhaust gases suffer from lung disorders, reduced breathing capacity, excessive carbon monoxide in blood and several other ailments. It was found that traffic policemen were subjected to as much as 200 to 500 percent larger quantities of individual noise pollution than the allowable normal level in a 24-hour day. The experts commented that those policemen working constantly in adverse and extreme environmental conditions suffer damage to health and efficiency in the short as well as long run (Hindustan Times, 13.12.90). Policemen are a high-risk group exposed to a physical working environment, which also deserves greater attention than it has received so far.

A "hazard allowance" maybe an innovative idea given the harmful effects on health and well-being. Out of a total of 585 police personnel killed on duty during 1994, 24 were killed in dacoit operations or other raids, 16 by riotous mobs, 161 by other criminals, 17 on border duties and 367 in accidents. It is surprising that researchers in India have overlooked this important aspect of the police job environment as a potential stressor.

**Research Gap:**

From the above review of literature, there was an extensive research done on police job stress in other countries when compared to India particularly in Andhra Pradesh. Further, there was an increase in no of suicides of police personnel during the last 10 years period as given in the following table-1. From the data in table-1, it can be viewed that Andhra Pradesh stood 5<sup>th</sup> place in India in this line of suicidal deaths. Thus, the data gave a clear understanding that in our state compared to other states, it is quite an alarming size of deaths reported during the last decade period

States	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	Total
Maharashtra	27	30	23	36	39	45	200
Tamil Nadu	31	19	17	12	16	32	127
Haryana	21	28	17	1	2	4	73
Kerala	4	9	10	14	18	16	71
Andhra Pradesh	14	7	8	10	24	5	68
West Bengal	12	11	9	8	8	9	57

More specifically, these are taken place at the officer cadres, so there is much scope to do further research on different cadres of police personnel and also on level of stress, stressors along with awareness of coping strategies to overcome stress.

**IV. Conclusion**

Stress in law enforcement is difficult to measure and cannot be attributed to just one factor. In essence, police stress is a complex formula that has many different contributory factors. Most of the stressors are categorized into intra-personal, inter personal, work-related, family and if stress is neglected it effects on their mental and physical health and their family relations also adversely affected. The positive attitude and meditation will be helpful for coping the stress. Thinking in a broader perspective of life will change stress. There are many ways for managing stress, such as meditation, yoga, etc. The negative stress or distress kills the employees' positive attitude and it turns to absent, turnover, immoral, anxiety, depression, aggressive and so on. Hence, it will be successful if it makes distress into 'eu-stress', the healthy lifestyle as well as organizational well-being will be changed.

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