

POLICE TRAINEES & STRESS: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KERALA ARMED POLICE IVTH BATTALION, KERALA, INDIA

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Abstract

Stress is an integral part of Police personnel. This paper focuses on stress among Police Trainees and identifies the factors causing stress along with the strategies adopted to reduce the stress. Descriptive research with judgmental sampling technique was employed to select a sample of 65 Police Trainees in Kerala Armed Police IVth battalion, Kerala, India. Findings revealed that 'Pressure from the instructor' ($\beta = .786$), was the prime cause of stress. It was also found that 'Low salary' ($\beta = -.144$), was insignificant as a cause of stress. Regardless of the source of stress, most Police Trainees used variety of sensory pursuits to manage stress. The positive sensory pursuit followed by the trainees was exercise (63%), followed by outings (37%) on weekend days and then TV/ music. Multiple regression analysis, ANOVA, t test etc were used to interpret the results.

Keywords: Stress, Police, Trainees

1. INTRODUCTION

The seventeenth century has been called the age of enlightenment; the eighteenth century, the age of reason; the nineteenth century the age of progress; and the twentieth; the age of anxiety. It is not surprising that interest in 'stress' has been raising with advancement in the present century. Stress is becoming a global phenomenon affecting every country, professions and all categories of workers. Technological and information revolution, fast materialistic life, innovation and growing competition have generated in man a feeling of powerlessness, helplessness, meaninglessness and in turn a source of consequent stress. As a result, today man experiences unprecedented turmoil's, traumas and psychological conflicts.

Toffler (1970) in his famous book 'Future Shock' explained shattering stress and disorientation subjecting people to too much of change in too little time. Toffler exclaimed that change will be

continuous and that the pace will even accelerate in future. Employees constantly complain of conflicting goals, work overload, difficult bosses/colleagues/ subordinates, and lack of adequate participation in decision making which dampen their spirit in work and thus reduce them to glorified industrial mannequins.

In India, the law enforcement personnel's are exposed to high levels of stress in their professional years. Personnel who belong to uniformed services, who are allotted field responsibilities are even more prone to stress and its adverse effects. The job performed by a typical Police personnel, who is delegated field duties involves day to day physical dangers and psychological discomforts which results into a range of attitudinal, behavioral and relationships problems. The task performed by personnel who are in Indian Police Service range from detection, control and monitoring the anti social elements, so that the members of the society feel protected, safe, and secure. The Police personnel act as the white blood corpuscles to wage their defenses against anti social elements whose primary task is to disrupt the day to day functioning and social fabric of the civilization.

Armed Police Battalions are formed to assist the local Police in emergency situations like communal disputes, elections, natural calamities and law and order problems. In case of crisis the force is also deployed outside the state. Armed Police Battalions are the feeder units for the district Police force. The Armed Police Battalion is the sole entry point for personnel recruited into the Kerala Police, India. These battalions had their origin even at the evolutionary stage of the Kerala Police, India. Kerala Police has eight Battalions functioning under the Director General of Police, Kerala State, India.

Kerala Armed Police (KAP) IVth Battalion was formed with headquarters originally at Aluva, Kerala, India. The camp was subsequently handed over to Superintendent of Police, Kannur District, Kerala State, India, for the use of the armed reserve sub camp of Kannur District. Temporary contingents of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Madhya Pradesh Special Armed Force (MPSAF) etc were also accommodated here during the period of their deployment in the District. The battalion headquarters was later shifted to the present location, Mangattuparamba, Kannur District in 1983. The total area of the camp is about 87.78 Acres

The job expected to be performed by Police personnel are sometimes dangerous wherein the situations often becomes unpredictable, unique and demanding. Exposed to myriad range of occupational stressors, the cognitive mechanism which is an innate property of human mind is very often thrown into turmoil, resulting into unpleasant consequences on health and well-being. However, an equally compelling body of research provides sufficient evidence that occupational stress is not always awful in fact, reasonable level of stress, sedentary life styles and physical work out contributes to facilitate the

efficiency of cardiovascular system and performance. The present paper focused on stress among the Police Trainees and identified the factors causing stress along with strategies adopted to reduce the stress.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Research studies on stress and health have grown in voluminous proportion and comprehensive review are available in the literature (Nagar & Sharma, 2005; Dalal & Ray 2005). A review of literature of Indian Police specific studies indicated that Police personnel are faced with the grim reality of occupational stressors, which consists of job and role related stressors. For example, a latest study conducted by Siwach (2001) attempted to explore the impact of police specific stress and burnout stress syndrome on the well being of Police personnel. The researchers empathetically argued that particular attention should be given to stress in policing because its potential negative consequences affect their well-being in more direct and critical ways relative to stress in other professions. Pillai (1987) in his study suggested exploring the need for periodical diagnosis of stress and related symptoms to strengthen the improved functioning of system and enhance the health and job satisfaction among police personnel. Mathur & Pragya (1993) opined that longitudinal studies would give better insights to identify the impact of Police work on individual. They also suggested that the family members of police personnel must also be included in future studies.

Police personnel operating under severe and chronic stress and burnout syndrome are at great risk of errors. Accident and over-reaction can bring hindrance to their well-being, performance jeopardize, public safety and pose significant liability to organization. Maria (2005) investigated the stress profiles of Police personnel posted in the Police station in Hyderabad, India. The major stressors affecting the life of the Police personnel were related to inadequate time for family, work surplus, accommodation problem, lack of confidence of superiors, no time for cerebral development and recreation, to keep everyone satisfied, unsafe situations, problem of job harmonization, lack of clarity in expectation and coping with superiors. A number of scholars have focused their studies on stress, coping tolerance and health of personnel who are performing duties in uniform services like Police and military (Paulus, Nagar, Larry & Camacho, 1996; Alam, 2006 & Swanson, 1998). The study of Swanson (1998) had focused on various steps related to reducing the adverse effects of stress. The researchers had noted that rigorous physical exercise that last for 20 to 30 minutes at least three times per week, maintain a proper diet, getting adequate rests, avoiding caffeine within five hours of going to bed, developing leisure interest such as hobbies, gardening etc, meditating praying establishing support system using

relaxing techniques and so forth as potent factors that tend to reduce the adverse effects of stress and promote wellness. It is evident from scanning the literature that very few studies were conducted to explore the stress of Police Trainees. Based on the review of relevant literature, the present study identified the following objectives.

- To identify most important factors causing stress amidst the Police Trainees.
- To identify the various strategies adopted by the Police Trainees to reduce the stress.

3. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the research objective, a cross sectional survey was conducted amidst the Trainees of the Kerala Armed Police – IVth Battalion. A well structured questionnaire was designed to understand the demographic variables, factors causing stress, and the methods adopted by the Trainees to manage the stress individually. A five point Likert's scale was developed to measure the level of stress among the Police Trainees. With the population of 650 police trainees, a batch was taken as sample for study. 10% of the batch size was taken as sample. Secondary data were collected from various articles and journals.

Multiple regressions are statistical techniques that allow predicting someone's score on one variable on the basis of their scores on several other variables. It includes many techniques for modeling and analyzing several variables, when the focus is on the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. A multiple regression analysis was carried out on four critical identified factors /variables (predictor variables) causing stress namely 'Long training hours', 'Pressure from instructor', 'Low salary' and 'Competition'. 'Factors causing stress' was designated as the criterion variable. ANOVA, t tests were also used to predict the results. SPSS version 12 was used as the software to carry out the analysis. Results were interpreted at 95% confidence interval.

4. FINDINGS

The average age of Police Trainee was 26 years and 80% of the trainees fell in the age group of 18-24 years. Of the difference levels of education, 34 % of Police Trainees had completed Higher Secondary (12 years of schooling) followed by 30% of Degree holders. 93% of the Police personnel trainees were not married.

Being aware of the factors causing stress is an important step in managing and mitigating its negative effects. To ascertain this, a multiple regression analysis was performed and yielded the following result. The model summary indicated the following result as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1 - MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.923(a)	.852	.838	9.63770

a. Predictors: (Constant), Long training hours, Pressure from instructor, Low salary and Competition

The Adjusted R Square value (.838) from Table 1 indicated that the model accounted for 83.8% of variance. ANOVA result from Table 2 indicated an overall significance ($p < 0.05$) for the model.

TABLE 2 - ANOVA (B)

Model		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	22447.277	5611.819	60.417	.000(a)
	Residual	3901.149	92.884		
	Total	26348.426			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Long training hours, Pressure from instructor, Low salary and Competition

b. Dependent Variable: Factors causing stress

Standardized beta coefficients which give a measure of contribution of each variable to the model (Table 3), indicated that the variable named 'Pressure from instructor' had the highest beta coefficient. This clearly dictated that a unit change in this predictor variable had a large effect on the criterion variable. Variable named 'Competition' between the Trainees to excel well above one another in training had second largest beta coefficient followed by variable named 'Long training hours'. The t and Sig (p) values which gives an indication of the impact of each predictor variable indicated significance for all the variables ($p < .005$) except 'Low salary' ($p > .005$).

TABLE 3 - COEFFICIENTS (A)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-232.079	30.500		-7.609	.000
	Competition	1.298	.252	.406	5.159	.000
	Low salary	-.162	.110	-.144	-1.469	.149
	Long training hours	.530	.156	.394	3.393	.002
	Pressure from instructor	1.254	.165	.786	7.584	.000

Regardless of the source of stress, most trainees used variety of sensory pursuits to manage stress. Sensory pursuits are described as an activity that produces physical stimulation. The positive sensory

pursuit followed by the Trainees was exercise (63%), followed by outings (37%) on weekend days and then TV/ music.

While individuals took responsibility for managing their own stress, they also expected support from their organization. The survey asked the Police Trainees to rate the ways how their organization helped them to combat Stress. 63% responded that 'Games' organized by the organization was the most important way to manage stress.

5. CONCLUSION

Work occupies a major portion of one's life, in terms of both time spent and importance. It contains the potential for many forms of gratification and challenge and harm. It is not surprising that many people find work life stressful. Indeed, stress at work is so common place that one tends to accept it as part of the necessary frustration of daily living. It is often assumed that police personnel because of the typical nature of their work are more vulnerable to the ravages of stress.

Findings revealed that 'Pressure from the instructor' ($\beta = .786$), was the prime cause of stress. It was also found that 'Low salary' ($\beta = -.144$), was insignificant as a cause of stress. Regardless of the source of stress, most Police Trainees used variety of sensory pursuits to manage stress. The positive sensory pursuit followed by the trainees was exercise (63%), followed by outings (37%) on weekend days and then TV/ music. 'Games' organized by the organization was the most important way to manage stress.

This study focused on factors causing stress amidst the Police Trainees and also identified the various strategies adopted by the Police Trainees to reduce the stress. The central purpose of the study was to evaluate the mean dimensions of stress and its role in balancing work life. The study supported the existed body of literature that Police Trainees too had a similar pattern towards the cause of stress and strategies to combat the stress like 'Police Men' who had completed the training and deployed in their duties.

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