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MEASURING STRESS AMONG THE POLICE OFFICERS: A MICRO STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Policing is an occupation that come with lots of responsibility, order, commitment and stress. Though no occupation in this world can escape stress, policing has no excuse to keep way stress which impacts their life style. The stress can have a major negative impact on the lives of police (Beshears, 2017). People have different ways of reacting to stress, a situation that feels stressful to one person may be motivating to other. It is complex concept especially with occupation. Many of the life's demands can cause stresses, particularly work, relationships and financial problems. Stress affects the life of individual as well as the society. Police wing is one of the vital organ in the Criminal Justice System and considered guardian of the public. Due to the nature of work, their life is more sacrificial and stressful. Due to stress, police officers are losing their attitude, nature, character and sometime their life. This paper reports the results of the in-depth study carried out with police personnel housed at the police station in the city of Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu. The very purpose of this was understood the level of stress among the police officer and control level of stress among them.

KEYWORDS : *Police Stress, Stress Control, Job satisfaction, Work place, Police life.*

INTRODUCTION

The term stress have been used frequently by everybody mostly with a negative quotation. Stress is a part of everyone lives that is inevitable. Stress is the feeling of being under too much mental, situational or emotional pressure. Pressure turns into stress when anyone is unable to cope it. Every profession has its own stress, but for police officers, who are in positions of authority, making life safe for public and taking deadly decisions on a regular basis it is tedious. In this competitive world stress is an important health issue in view of increasing trend of non-communicable diseases at a global level (Saya and Venkata, 2014).

Stress can simply be understood as our body's way of responding to additional demands. It can be caused by both good and bad experiences, events, and situation, named eustress and distress, respectively. Eustress is positive or good stress, hence most of us do not worry about it. Whereas distress is the negative reactions towards stress, or vice versa. When people feel stressed by or about something going on around them, their body respond to situation releasing chemicals into the blood stream causing damage to functional metabolism of the body resulting in dissatisfaction, fatigue, tension, depression (Lakshminarayanan, 2017); anxiety, problem in concentration, stress disorder, aggression, substance abuse, and memory loss. Hence, the stress is interdependent on ones biological, psychological, environmental and social factors (Hunnur, Bagali, and Sudarshan, 2014).

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Research on police stress has been in abundance since work in this area began in mid-1970's (Aaron, 2000). Policing in India is an absolute task that comes with order of stress. It is one of the most appreciable jobs, while over few decades it has taken an unusual twist in opinion of the people. In addition to the nature of job, there are numerous other issues like long and unpredictable working hours, constant pressure to perform, accountability, work overload and noxious physical environment (Geldenhuys, 2003; Van Zyl, 2003).

Mere 24/7 duty alone is enough to dissent the police job, still it has pious and sanctity in it. Alterations in body rhythms from monthly shift rotation can reduce productivity at time which stale the officer. One of the biggest problems for police officers is that stress can go unrecognized and unacknowledged unless a severe damage is caused. Stress among higher order police is different from that of a constable. Understanding the level of stress among police officers is inevitable with existing policing and related issues. Hence, this study is an attempt to understand the level of stress among police officers in Tirunelveli city and will recommend some remedial measures to prevent stress. Police stress arises from several features of police work that remains as stressors (Abdollahi, 2008). According to Selye (1936), father of modern stress studies, maintains that the unrelieved effort to cope with stressors can lead to heart disease, high blood pressure, ulcers, digestive disorders, and headaches (Hunnur, Bagali, and Sudarshan, 2014; Lakshminarayanan, 2017). Further he classifies, stressors in police work 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.

Though stress among police is well spoken and researched area for several decades still no concrete solution is made available. No police is a super human, every officer has a family; after work they should address their family needs and assist them in life. With stress most of them fail, thereby invite a new stressor in them called family stressor that adds fuel to fire. Thus stress remain unattended by the officers, spell continues. In order to understand the issues in police stress among the officer an empirical study was convened, with the following objectives.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY
- *To study the socio-economic variables of the police officers (respondents).*
- *To the measure the stress among respondents in Tirunelveli city and*
- *To understand the control level of stress among respondents.*

METHOD OF STUDY
Research Design and Approach: The current study is of quantitative approach with descriptive design. **Universe:** The area of study was police stations under the jurisdiction of Tirunelveli city, Tamil Nadu (Total 13 station that includes 12 police stations and 1 All women police station). **Sample:** The samples for the study were the police officer housed in the Tirunelveli city police stations. **Sampling Technique:** Sampling methods was purposive techniques of Non- probability method was adopted to choose the sample. **Sample Size:** Initially the researchers wanted to collect at least 80 samples however commissioner of police permitted researchers with only 10 days' time to collect data hence the sample size was restricted to 35 on consensus. **Tool:** Data for the study was collected; using a personal distribution questionnaire that was exclusive prepared for study with **Part I** that dealt with Socio-economic variable of the respondents and supporting factors and **Part II** that dealt with Measuring Stress (tool standardised by Dr. Latha, Psychologist, 1988). The part II of the tool had 52 items (List of situations / Events / Problems) that measured 3 categories of stresses- mild, moderate and severe stress. Also, the tool measured control over stress by the individual in 3

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categories of stress complete control, partial control and no control. The tool was finalized after the pilot study with the opinion and comments of the experts in the field of job stress studies. The results of the study are presented in the forms of table with percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Socio-Demographic Variables of the Respondents (n=35)

Options	n	%	Options	n	%
Age in years			**Marital status of the respondents**		
25to35 years	5	14.3	Single	-	-
36to45years	14	40	Married	35	100
45to55 years	13	37.1	Divorces	-	-
>56years	3	8.6	**Designation of the respondents**		
Sex of the respondents			Inspector of police	4	11.4
Male	24	68.6	Sub Inspector Of police	13	37.2
Female	11	31.4	Special Sub Inspector of police	14	40
Educational Qualification of the respondents			Station House Officer	4	11.4
Up to 10thStd	2	5.7	**Jobs satisfaction of the respondents**		
10th - 12thStd	10	28.6	Yes	34	97.1
Graduates & Above	23	65.7	No	1	2.9

Source: Collection of Primary Data

Table 1 infers the socio-demographic variables of the Police Officer (respondents), just less than half of the respondents (40 per cent) were from the age group of above 36 below 45 years, 37.1 per cent of the respondents were from the age group of above 46 below 55 years, 14.3 per cent of the respondents were from age group of above 25 below 35 years and 8.6 per cent of the respondents were from age group of above 56 years. Among the respondents, (68.6 per cent) were male and 31.4 per cent were female. Majority of the respondents (65.7 per cent) were graduates, 28.6 per cent of the respondents have attended higher secondary level of school education and 5.7 per cent of the respondents have attended until class 10. All respondents were married. The occupational status of the respondents, 40 per cent of the respondents were Special Sub Inspector of Police, 37.2 per cent of the respondents were Sub Inspector of Police and 11.4 per cent of the each respondents were Inspector of Police and station house officer. Followed by the details on the job satisfaction of the respondents. Among the respondents, majority of the respondents (97.1 per cent) were satisfied with their job and 2.9 per cent were not satisfied with their job. While this was untrue with results as most of the respondents, most of them were stressed during the study.

Table 2 Respondents Family Support and their educational support

Options	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	Social Life		**Financial**		**Psychological**		**Education**	
GOOD support	23	65.7	5	14.3	15	42.9	17	48.6
MODERATE support	8	22.9	20	57.1	11	31.4	8	22.8
POOR support	2	5.7	6	17.1	3	8.6	3	8.6

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NO support	2	5.7	4	11.5	6	17.1	7	20

Source: Collection of Primary Data

The table 2 details the description of the family supports to the respondents in their life including education. With reference to social life, to majority of the respondents (65.7 per cent) family support was good, 22.9 per cent respondents had moderate support, 5.7 per cent each were supported poor and to some of the respondents no support was given to them in social life. It is worth noting that social life of the police are well supported by their family hence it will not create any stress to the respondents. This is one area where every police officer should concentrate for better life style. Poor family co-operation is one of the major stress to police (Hunnur, Bagali, and Sudarshan, 2014). With reference to financial support, 57.1 per cent of the respondents had moderate support mighty be their spouses were working or generating some income, 17.1 per cent of the respondents had poor support, 14.3 per cent had good support and 11.5 per cent had no support. One way this finding is positive as police will not have any other income other than salary as well they will not find time to make money through any other source legally. Psychological support was good for 42.9 per cent of the respondents, while 31.4 per cent had moderate, 17.1 per cent had no support and 8.6 per cent of the respondents felt they were poorly supported. This is one area where family members should concentrate for better life of the family as whole. Among the respondents 48.6 per cent felt education supported them, for others 22.8 per cent felt they had moderate support from their education while 20 per cent felt education did not support them and 8.6 per cent felt poor support. Education is one of the most important variable is appreciating a stress, unless individual understands, it is difficult to realize the problem of stress. In India, police is opted mostly by the average and poor student's rather good performers join the industry that fetch them huge fatty salary.

Measuring stress and control level of stress

According to Deb, Chakraborty, Chatterjee and Srivastava (2008), stress is common among the police because of the nature of their job. Measuring it using a standardized tool is must.

Table 3 Measuring stress among the respondents and control over stress

Measuring Stress Levels						
Options	Ins	SI	SSI	SHO	n	%
Mild stress	1	4	3	0	**8**	22.9
Moderate stress	1	8	11	3	**23**	65.7
Severe stress	2	1	0	1	**4**	11.4
Total	**4**	**13**	**14**	**4**	**35**	100
Measuring Control Over Stress						
Complete control over stress	1	8	10	3	**22**	62.9
Partial control over stress	2	3	3	1	**9**	25.7
No control over stress	1	2	1	0	**4**	11.4
Total	**4**	**13**	**14**	**4**	**35**	100
Ins - INSPECTOR, SI-SUB INSPECTOR, SSI – SPECIAL SUB INSPECTOR and SHO - STATION HOUSE OFFICER						

Source: Collection of Primary Data

The table 3 details on results of measuring stress and the control level. Tool keys buffeted of measuring stress among the respondents, 65.1 per cent of the respondents had moderate stress (Ins 01, SI 04 and SSI 03) which was replication of the results of the study conducted by Saya and Venkata, 2014;

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Ragesh, Tharayil, Raj, Philip, and Hamza, 2017. While 22.9 per cent of the respondents had mild (Ins 01, SI 08, SSI 11 and SHO 03) stress and 11.4 per cent of the respondent had severe stress (Ins 02, SI 01, and SHO 01). It is interesting to note that majority of the respondents had moderate stress which is manageable and outburst is less. Over the period of time police learn to manage stress however, at times they slip, and this outburst is negatively taken by the public at large. Measuring stress among the working personnel can deliberately give an uncertain results; to this study it is not so. The respondents were taken consensus before administrating the questionnaire in order to make the research more quantify. In early table 2 the positive responses of family support has influenced the stress among the respondents. Therefore respondents stress level was at bay. The stress related to occupation is continuum in nature until the service, in police at least 80 % of the police have procrastinating attitude, impatient, irritability that are symptom of stress (Hunnur, Bagali, and Sudarshan, 2014). The control over human behavior shows the success of the individual in defending their understanding of their problems. With reference to measuring control over stress by the respondents (62.9 per cent) of the them had complete control over stress (Ins 01, SI 08, SSI 10 and SHO 03), majority of them may be from the group who had moderate stress, that is manageable. While 25.7 per cent of the respondents had partial control over stress (Ins 02, SI 03, SSI 03 and SHO 01) and 11.4 per cent of the respondents had no control over stress (Ins 01, SI 02 and SSI 01). Here it important to note the age group of the respondents, most of them are well matured with family support they are least concerned on the stress. During the period of the study Tirunelveli city was politically stable and good conditioned prevailed hence, police officers in the station would have less stress, as stress is dynamic and situation prone. Control over stress is important in this junction, because majority of the respondents had complete control over the stress which shows their maturity. In a study Bano (2011) indicated that political pressure, lack of time for family, negative public image and low salary were the primary causes of stress among police personnel, the same was advocated by (Paramasivan and Umarhathab, 2012). It is worth noting that though study had heterogeneous group still results were non-contradictory.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
- *The study has not compared Men and Women police officers.*
- *The study has not compared police officers with similar rank.*
- *The results of the study is concerned with respondents who are willing to be part of the study.*

SUGGESTIONS
- Police duty hours should be reduced or allotted on a standard shift basis. It will help them in scheduling their resting hours.
- The counselling should be given to the police official in frequent intervals to all police officer in variable of their rank.
- The family should understand the role and responsibilities of police. So that, they will understand the problems of police.
- The counselling should be given to the families of the police official in frequent intervals.
- Yearly holidays in 2 shift (each 10 days at least in a year) should provide to the police officials for keeping away the duties and regular routines.
- Yoga and meditation classes should be arranged to them with special coaches/ masters especially during duty hours.
- The promotion should be given to the police officers on time which shall reduce their stress.
- Medical camp should be arranged for police officials and their families. It should check their physical and mental health. It can help to understand their problems.
- Due to continuation of their work, they are not able to concentrate on the family and their needs. Hence, it burdens them. No prolonging the duty hours.

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- Discrimination is one among the cause of stress. It should be eradicated at all levels such as religion, caste and community.

CONCLUSION

The executives of law are one of the vital organ of the democracy. Many times officers deny the stress they are experiencing for fear of being viewed as weak or not being able to handle their job (Abdollahi, 2008). Policing is negative force by nature of job hence, there are several misconception about them at large. It is an orderly post to a citizen and should be viewed as part of the society. Every school and college students should visit the police station compulsorily during their studentship to understand the problems of the police, this exercise will promote the image of the police in years to come. Police stress should be studied periodically in order to better their life style which will enhance their concentration in routine duty (Kumar, and Kamalanabhan, 2014). Timey appreciation and break will enhance their performance which should be understood as matter of radical process. Police stress is not a common problem as other profession it is more than a surgical experience. Work pressure and duty allotment should be regulated so that stress of executive of law will reduce and enhance their performance at large. The stress at work make them more towards a mechanical life rather enjoy policing. The safety of public can be ensured with reducing the stress among the police officer.

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