

A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF JOB STRESS AMONG OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS SERVING IN CAPITAL CITY POLICE IN PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT

Job stress is a performance affecting element regarding health and social life of police officers all over the world. Police officers of the Punjab province particularly serving in District Lahore are no exception to undergo job stress and this phenomenon needs instant consideration to help determining causes and effects of job stress among police officers. The present research was conducted in Lahore District Police. Police stations, Organized Crime Unit (formerly CIA), Traffic Police and other units of Capital City Police of Lahore were selected as the universe of the study. Police officers and officials were selected population of the present research. Data were collected from 407 respondents who were conveniently available by designing a structured questionnaire. Data was analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The statistical techniques were also used for analysis.

KEYWORDS: *Job Stress, Police Stations, Officials, CIA*

INTRODUCTION

Job stress is a phenomenon considered undesirable as it badly affects health and performance of individuals and organizations both in private and public sector. Stress is a fact of life. It has been defined in different terms. Maclean (1985) remarks that “the word is sometimes used to denote stressful events, sometimes to denote the effect of these events on work performance, and sometimes to denote an individual’s reaction in terms of disordered health.” Stress was a “characteristic of the environment, an experience felt by the person, or a transactional phenomenon created by the process of the person interacting with the environment” (Schuler and Jackson 1986).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined stress as “a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being.” Cummings and Cooper (1979) maintain that stress is “any force that puts a psychological or physical factor beyond its range of stability producing a strain within the individual.” Job stress also known as occupational stress is the outcome of factors experienced in relation to work which affect both psychosocial and physiological state of the worker. It is a universal phenomenon which is a part of working environment and generally viewed as a product of mismatch between the individual and his or her physical or social environment (Beehr & Newman, 1978). “Stress arises when individuals perceive that they cannot adequately cope with the demands being made on them or with threats to their well-being (Lazarus, 1966, 1976; Cox, 1990). High level of stress can lead to serious symptoms both physiological and psychological (Stinchcomb, 2004). It affects officers’ job performance, personal lives and relationships (Burke, 1993, et al).

Individuals respond to stress in different ways. According to the General Adaptation Syndrome “each individual will react to a stressful situation in a certain way. It fails to take into account the individual’s ability to interpret a threat as a source of pressure and to act to change his situation.” (Williams 1994). Stress can be categorized as constructive stress and destructive stress. Constructive stress brings feelings of satisfaction, self-respect and creative ability whereas latter decreases performance and efficiency of the individual and organization and thus brings negative results. In other words, some individuals view stressful situations beneficial for their growth and self-actualization while others are afraid of such situations. The experience of stress is partly dependent on the individual’s ability to cope with the demands placed on them by their work and on the way in which they subsequently cope with those demands, and related issues of control and support. (Dewe, 2000) Police work is considered as one of the highly stressful and psychologically dangerous occupation all over the world (Axel & Valle, 1979). Among the human services occupation, police work is found to be the most stressful (Burke, 1993). Police officers face various traumatic situations ranging from threats to themselves and their colleagues, to witness riots, injuries or death of citizens, bombing, shootings, criminal activities and often fatal shootings of perpetrators (McCafferty, Godofredo, Domingo & McCafferty, 1990). They must also deal with feelings of fear and hatred from a non-supportive often hostile public and must respond to provocations with self-control, patience and compassion.

Police officers are duty bound to operate in situations of conflict, apprehend violent criminals, and face hostile members of the public and deal with the inevitable political pressure of public life. Various stressors of police work are associated with psychological distress, depression anxiety, burnout, cardiac disorders, suicide, family and marital problems. Besides inherent dangers of police work, law enforcement officers are influenced by a myriad of organization stressors resulting from the administrative and professional requirements of the job. These include rigid departmental policies, inadequate equipment, frequent changes in work shifts, and competition for advancement, ineffectiveness of the judicial system and court leniency, family pressure, and numerous other stressors. In fact, psychologists agree that a police officer is under stress and pressure unequalled by any other profession (Somodevilla, 1978).

Police officers both on duty and off duty confront with unrelenting pressures. The intense, persistent stress is placed on the police officer resulting in feelings of anger, anxiety, alienation and depression. Prohibited from expressing these feelings, which are normal response to frustration, many officers develop emotional withdrawal, cynicism, and authoritarianism (Reiser, 1974). The home often becomes the only place for a police officer to release the tensions that build up on the job. The stress of police work may disrupt family life.

Work related stressors pertaining to police officers include the extent of their workload and associated time pressure, poor and unsupportive work relationship with colleagues and/or supervisors, aggressive management style, lack of job security and job changes, work-life imbalance affecting personal and home life, lack of appropriate training, equipment and resources, divergent financial emoluments, etc. Some of the stressors that represented the nature of the job were violent arrests, gruesome crime scenes (Violanti & Aron, 1993) and unpredictable incidents in police work (He, Zhao & Archbold, 2002). Physical threats involved in the police job include use of force, dealing with unclear & unpredictable situations and shift work. Organizational aspects have been given considerable importance in the current literature and have been found to be a better predictor of police stress than the factors that represented the nature of police work (Morash et al., 2006). Organizational issues are salient causes of police stress in Turkish National Police. Supervisor was found to be the strongest predictor of the job stress (Bucker & Weicko, 2007). Among others, excessive workload, inadequate staff,

inadequate specific policies and excess of “red tape”, lack of supervision, unfair practices are causes of job stress among police officers and officials (Ayres & Flanagan, 1994).

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

- To determine various factors that influence job stress among police officers
- To study the nature of work and associated problems faced by police officers
- To find out various job stressors affecting psychological and physiological condition of police officers
- To know about the effects of job stress on the family life of police officers
- To suggest some valuable measures to cope with stress among police officers

MATERIALS & METHODS

The present research was conducted in Lahore District Police. Police stations, Organized Crime Unit (formerly CIA), Traffic Police and other units of Capital City Police of Lahore were selected as the universe of the study. Police officers and officials were selected population of the present research. Data were collected from 407 respondents who were conveniently available by designing a structured questionnaire. Data was analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The statistical techniques were also used for analysis.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data analysis is an essential part of research process. It is a process of examining, cleansing, transforming and exhibiting data with the aim of discovering valuable information, presenting conclusion and supporting the process of decision-making. Moreover, in the process of data analysis, a researcher systematically applies statistical and/or logical techniques to explain, illustrate, condense, recap and evaluate data.

Below the table demonstrates that excessive administrative duties have caused stress over the past 6 months. Majority of respondents about 34.2 % were agree on it that excessive duties cause stress. About 24.3 % of people were neutral on it, about 17.7 % respondents were strongly agreed and 14.7 % people were disagreed. 9.1 % respondents were strongly disagreed on that statement.

Table 2 describes that favoritism causes the stress. Majority of the respondents 37.8 % were agree about the statement but 20.1 % respondents were strongly agree about stress in favoritism. 14.3 % respondents are disagreed and 9.8 % respondents were strongly disagreed.

Table 3 shows that how do you find your job? Majority of respondents 42.5 % says that their job was very successful. 20.4 % say their job going extremely successful & 10.6 % respondent says that their job is going mildly stressful.

Table 1: Response of Respondents Regarding excessive Administrative Duties have Caused Stress

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	72	17.7 %
Agree	139	34.2 %
Neutral	99	24.3 %
Disagree	60	14.7 %
Strongly Disagree	37	9.1 %
Total	407	100.0

Table 2: The Feeling That Different Rules Apply to Different People (I.E Favoritism) has Caused Stress Over the Past 6 Months

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	82	20.1
Agree	154	37.8
Neutral	73	17.9
Disagree	58	14.3
Strongly Disagree	40	9.8
Total	407	100.0

Table 3: Opinion of the Respondents Regarding in General, How do They Find Their Job

	Frequency	Percent
Very Stressful	173	42.5
Moderately Stressful	77	18.9
Mildly Stressful	43	10.6
Not at All Stressful	31	7.6
Total	407	100.0

CONCLUSIONS

It was concluded that job stress was a common phenomenon among police officers and they were facing many psychological problems especially stress, frustration, and tension due to tough duty schedules in Police Department. Families of the police officers are facing economic, health and education problems. In this regard there is no facility for the children of police officers. It is need of the hour that the workload and duty timings must be reduced and leaves must be increased on weekly basis. Monthly duty roaster must be issued as per recommendation of psychiatrist. Stress management courses must be conducted for officials. Sufficient pay package should be announced by the Government. Special hospitals and educational institutions must be established for officials as well as for the families of Police Officers. New vehicles and uniform articles may be given to officers according to weather condition. Community policing and public dealing subjects should be added in training subjects. Exercise must be carried out daily basis by police officials.

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