

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AMONG POLICE OFFICER



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Abstract

Police organization is one of the largest organizations in India. The major functions of Police are to protect the life and property of citizens, to maintain peace and harmony in the society and to help the justice system in controlling crime. It is only possible when a police officer is mentally healthy but the fact is that the police officers tackle various dangerous situations that can negatively affect their mental health. By keeping in mind, the aim of the present study is to find out the relation of family and economic status and the mental health of the Police officers. Mental health is an important component of the total positive health and it is closely related to the physiological and physical dynamics of the human body and that is why WHO has rightly pointed out that there is no health without mental health. According to WHO, mental health shapes the well-being of an individual even help them to realize his /her own potentialities and help to cope up with the normal stresses of life. For the present study 50 police officers of Kishanganj, Bihar was selected randomly and a mental health questionnaire was administered. Descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation were used to analyse data. Results revealed that police officers have a statistically significant negative correlation of mental health with family type and statistically significant positive correlation of mental health with salary. It means that the police officer needs proper care and psychological intervention like counselling and therapy for better mental health.

Key Words: Police Officers, Mental Health, Stress, Harmony

Police work is one of the largest stressful works as there are no defined working hours. They always encounter events such as social evils, murders, rapes, robbery, criminals, pressure from political people, workload and less time with family. There are some research studies that suggest that a police officer is killed by more mental health issues than they are by criminals. These duties of police officers are only possible when a police officer is mentally healthy. The working conditions of the policemen are crawling in many aspects. The social life, human, training deficient, lack of modern sources, task pressures, and behaviour of public towards them bad enough to affect their frustration and surrounding environment which is degraded and pervert.

The major functions of the police are to the maintenance of law and order of the society, prevention and detection of crimes in the country. They protect the life, freedom, and property of the people. The police personnel encounters physical dangers anytime and, if necessary, they risk their lives in protecting our society at any cost, due to which they face stress, depression worry,

and anxiety in many aspects. Even television shows familiarized situations to viewers in which police officers may encounter situations in protecting society from criminals, stop and face situations, and handle domestic violence calls. It all may cause mental health problems such as negative surrounding environment, undefined working hours, lesser time for family, improper healthy diet, need to take strong decisions in short span of time, sleepless nights, poor standard of living and working conditions, problems with senior or peers, difficulties in management of personal life, etc.

There are some major problems of a police officer and one of the reasons for these problems is their police and public ratio. According to the BPR&D report, (2011) standard ratio between police and public is 220-280 per lac i.e. 0.25%. In India, the average Police public ratio is 130 per lac i.e. only 0.13%. In Bihar and UP 65-75 police personnel are deputed in Bihar and UP per 1 lac public i.e. 0.07%. Even 15000 VVIPs are in India and 47000 well-trained police personnel have been deputed for their protection. So now we can imagine how much pressure on our police officer in India. These work overload problems cause mental health among police personnel.

As per the report of National Crime Record Bureau (2011) statistics, Uttar Pradesh reports 12.9% of total crimes which is the highest by any state in India. Similarly, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar also report the highest number of violent crimes (Murder, attempted, rape, kidnapping, and abduction) in India and the second-highest number of robbery cases in the country. A psychological study conducted in Uttar Pradesh reported that with a decline in stress the mental health improved with higher levels of work motivation among police personnel.

Police, is the primary law enforcement agency, is expected to be more dynamic and responsive to the changing nature of the society. This is only possible when a police officer is mentally healthy and doesn't face any mental health problems. Mental health is just like our physical health, everybody owns it and we need to take proper solicitude of it. Mental health issues should be given special attention to the people working in the police department as their negative issues can affect society. Consequences affect society in a direct and indirect way and also critically affect the physiological and psychological health of police officers. Dhailiwal (2003) concluded that most police officers in India remained overload with work and have to stay away from their families and children for a long duration which often leads to family problems and disputes.

Mental Health issues are very common, but it still remains taboo and myth in our society. In this modern age, almost every normal person is suffering from mental health issues. WHO says "There is no health without mental health". Hence, we overlook and ignore our mental health problems, but police officers are very essential to maintain mental health as they work in a tense situation. Good mental health is characterized by a person's abilities to feel and express that we need and desire in our life. But if we go through a phase of mental health problems, we are unable to find the right path in making proper decisions and it affects our frequently thinking, feeling and even reacting become more difficult, or even impossible to cope with daily life situations. This can feel just as worst as a physical problem, or even worse. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social state. Hence, it is essential at every developmental stage to be mentally

stable in life.

Mental health is the efficiency of the individual, the group and the environment to interact with one another in ways that enhance the well-being, and development of a person. WHO predicts that 20% of the Indian population will suffer from mental health illness by the year 2020. In India, 1-2% of the health budget is announced to mental health in comparison to 10-12% in other countries (Fortis, 2013). In India, the data on mental issues ranges from 10 to 370 per 1000 population in different areas of the country. The rates are higher in females by approximately 20-25%. Mental health problems usually perplex and dismay. Even if people fall sick or have some mental issues they think that they have this because of physical health or problems. They do not accept that they can have some psychological problems as well. Hence, they do not consult any counsellor and it has become a taboo in society. It is often confusing and frightening especially at first. Even if we are unwell, we may feel that it's a sign of weakness, or that we are losing your mind due to physical problems. Many people suffering from mental disorders never take help from a counsellor. Stigma, discrimination, taboo, and neglect prevent care and treatment from reaching people with mental disorders is one of the reasons people unable to take proper treatment for mental issues. In a report entitled "New Understanding, New Hope" by the United Nations stated that health agency urges governments to spread awareness about the remedies related to mental health.

It is very difficult to identify mental health problems in our day to day life. Experiencing one or more of the feelings and behaviour can be early warning signs of problems –problems with family members, feeling of a mood swing, feeling of hopeless, helpless, having low energy, eating and sleeping disorders, increase alcohol, consumption, smoking, regular body pain and indigestion. Mental Health issues among police personnel may present in the forms of anxiety, fatigue, depression, lack of concentration, irritability, aggression impulsive behaviour, etc. It has a negative repercussion on physical health, and both physical and mental illness make the police officer unfit for work, and it backlash job satisfaction and reduces work performance. In India, the police officers' suicide rate is 597 from 2009-2015. Madhya Pradesh recorded the second-highest figure. In 2016 64 police personnel were a homicide in Kashmir. In India, we were approximately 600,000 short of policemen with vacant posts in the armed police almost 13.8 percent and civil police 9.8 percent and in cities, Mumbai: 42,000 cops for 1.4 crore people; Delhi: 61,000 cops for crore people; Kolkata: 26,000 cops for 45 lakh people; Chennai: 14,000 cops for 86 lakh people; and Bangalore: 13,000 cops for 50 lakh people (Bureau of Police Research and Development Report, 2008).

Review of Literature

Kroes and Gould (1979) in an empirical study of job stress in policemen found that a major stressor on officers is that of emotional injury. Pillai (1987) studied that stress produces not only physical and mental disorders but also affects the normal functioning of the police officers. Spileberger et al. (1981) urged that officers who do get hurt suffer emotional injury as a result. Exposure to human pain and death may cause an extreme negative aspect of life. Brown & Campbell (1994) studied that most of the studies concluded that a police job is very stressful.

Physical threats involved in the job, use of force, dealing with dangerous situations and undefined shift hours were also concerned in the police stress circular. For instance, Vinayak (2001) found higher rank police officers to have higher stress than the lower rank police officers. Selokar (2011) occupational stress among police personnel can reduce productivity, increase absenteeism, lower morale, cause conflict with colleagues, cause physical and emotional problems, and poor satisfaction with life. Selokar et al. (2011) stated the reasons for mental stress amongst the people of the police department were such as criticism by superiors, excess work, lack of rewards, inadequate value given to abilities and no satisfaction from work in Wardha, Maharashtra.

Suresh et al. (2013) studied to determine job events that were important sources of stress among Chennai police officers. Srinivasan & Ilango (2013) revealed that a lack of superiors' support to their subordinates, irregular office work hours, heavy workload and dealing with criminals were caused stress among constables in the Northern part of Tamil Nadu. Ragesh (2016) police personnel face occupational stress and this stress is more among younger age groups, lower level rank police personnel, and in females. Rao (2017) found out that a person when under some stress related to the job, it focuses upon the problem and further goes for logic as to overcome it, enhances his well-being and shows better output and it means that those individuals who maximally for problem-focused coping experience high well-being and global positive mental health. It is fortunate that no attention is to be paid to the psychological problems of police personnel in India. More importance is always given to their work and not to their mental health. Since the impact of mental health problems can be affecting psychologically and physiologically among police officers.

Objectives of the present study

- 1) To compare people staying in a joint family and people staying in a nuclear family in their level of mental health.
- 2) To compare between people in inspector rank and people in sub-inspector rank in their level of mental health.
- 3) To find out the relation between type of family, occupational rank and the mental health of the Police officers

Hypotheses

- Ho₁ : There is no significant difference between joint family and nuclear family type on the mental health of police officers.
- Ho₂ : There is no significant difference between the ranks of police officers on the mental health of police officers.
- Ho₃ : There is no significant relationship between the type of family, occupational rank and the mental health of the Police officers

METHOD

Sample: The study consists of 50 police officers who were nominated to attend two days mental health workshop of Kishanganj, Bihar. They were given a brief introduction class on physical and mental health-related issues. Those who agreed to participate in the study were given questionnaires. The age of police officers ranged from 26 to 50 years with an average salary of 39900.

This data reflects various basic details of police officers working in Kishanganj, Bihar. The age composition of the sample shows a normal distribution with age ranging from 26 to 50 years. The educational profile of the sample shows that all respondents are well educated and experienced in their field. Even almost 38 respondents are post graduated. The survey shows that 33 respondents are married and settled. Over 29 respondents out of 50 belong to a joint family.

Table -2: Mean SD and t-value of mental health in two groups of family types (N=50)

Variable	Family type	N	M	SD	t-value	P-value
Mental Health	Joint family	29	9.55	4.120	2.38*	0.021
	Nuclear family	21	12.29	3.84		

*P<0.05 Statistically Significant

The above results show the level of mental health variable in group joint family and nuclear family (TS = $t_{48} = 2.38$; p-value < 0.05). The P-value is less than 0.05 level it is considered as a significant in mean difference. Therefore, the groups of joint family nuclear family people have a significant difference in mental health. Mean and Standard Deviation of joint family is 9.55 and 4.12 respectively. While the mean and Standard Deviation of the nuclear family system is 12.29 and 3.84 respectively. Thus, our first hypothesis which stated that there will be no significant difference between a joint and nuclear system of police officers in the level of mental health was rejected. It is clearly indicated that those police officers who have a joint family feel depressed, dejected, anxious and worried. And the reason may be work overload, pressure, unable to spend time with family and improper lifestyle.

Table -3: Mean SD and t-value of mental health in two rank of police officers (N=50)

Variable	Rank	N	M	SD value	t-value	P-value
Mental Health	Inspector	18	12.56	4.34	2.64*	0.017
	Sub Inspector	32	9.66	3.79		

*P<0.05 Statistically Significant

The above results show the level of mental health variable of inspector rank and sub-inspector rank (TS = $t_{48} = 2.64$; p-value < 0.05).The P-value is less than 0.05 level it is considered as a significant in mean difference. Therefore, the groups of inspectors and sub-inspector people have a significant difference in mental health. Mean and Standard Deviation of the inspector is 12.56 and 4.34 respectively. While the mean and Standard Deviation of the nuclear family system is 9.66 and 3.79 respectively. Thus, our second hypothesis which stated that there will be no significant difference between ranks of police officers affecting mental health was rejected. A perusal of the results reveals a higher mean score for the Inspector (12.56) as compared to the Sub inspectors (9.66) which clearly indicates that police officer who is higher authority get more salary and others working benefits while sub-inspector face various issues like undefined working hours, death threats, fewer salaries, and other problems. These make police officers more depressed, dejected, anxious and worried.

Table-4: Correlation between mental health, family type and rank among the total sample.

	Mental Health	Family Type	Ranks
Mental Health	1	.325*	.335*
Family Type	-	1	.037
Rank	-	-	1

*Correlation significant at 0.05 level

Table 4 shows the result of Pearson correlation analysis which was carried out in order to investigate the effect of mental health on police officers in relation to family type and monthly income for predicting positive mental health among police officers. The third hypothesis is that there is no significant correlation between the variables was rejected. There was a positive and significant correlation between mental health and family type, which means the higher the score on mental health, the better will be the quality of life of police officers.

Discussion

As police officers, it is very difficult to manage mental health problems. As they are facing the most dangerous consequences in the name of duty. In Table 2 and table-3 shows that the t-test of mental health among police officers. As from previous studies and this study we can conclude that police officers are discharging their duties in anxiety and stress and the reason may be work overload and pressure. However, there are very few studies available regarding mental health problems among police personnel. In the current study, some respondents reported that they are unable to mingle with their family due to work overload and even didn't feel energetic which is the basic need of duty. My findings are in the line of earlier research findings such as Finn (2000) and Bruke (1994) that family situations also affect the psychological well-being besides stress and organizational factors.

Siwach (2001) conducted a study on 300 police personnel of different ranks from the North Indian States. He concluded that the higher officers scored more than lower rank officers and they are more satisfied and better psychological well-being than the lower rank officers. As per the above result of present research work that those police officer who has a joint family feel depressed, dejected, anxious and worried. In brief, police officers didn't feel that they are in a good mental health state. The present finding supports the findings of Siwach. Due to which mental health problems were found in police officers as they were unable to manage their joint family with a low salary. This problem makes a worse impact on their psychological and physiological well-being. The unrealistic expectations imposed on them and their working environment discourage police from admitting to suffering mental health problems and from openly expressing negative emotions. This is one of the reasons this study has less sample size. The mental health problem may, directly and indirectly, affect their physical and psychological mental health which may result in poor functioning. However, there are some limitations of the study such as the study is limited in terms of respondents. Only 50 could be arranged for the responses such as the research study was limited to one area, the busy schedule and taboo in the eye of respondents also makes the collection of information a difficult one, the hesitation of

respondents affects the analysis of the research in a significant manner.

Conclusion

The pressure of law prosecution put police officers at risk which cause High BP, insomnia, heart problem, PTSD and suicide. Thus, police receive ample training in terms of knowledge and technical skills to fulfil their tasks but in the future, if proper care is not taken of the above issues these problems will prevail among police officers. It is clear from our study that police personnel need stress management therapy and counselling sessions so that it will not only help police officers remain more balanced during and after the acute stresses of their jobs but also to take rapid actions to better manage and seek fast solutions like managing time with their family, organizational and family issues.

Physical and mental health issues are higher not only lower rank officers but also in higher rank officers, which needs swift attention from the government. Structural changes are essential and gender stress reduction therapy should also take place. Anger management programs, health checkups at the workplace, administrative solutions to reduce stress in jobs, special arrangements for females as well as young police officers are few recommendations to address this serious issue. Moreover, the Police Act (1861) must be modified, if needed change as per the demand of various commissions and committees constituted by the government of India. There is an urgent need to bring overall positive structural changes in the police department which will help in maintaining positive mental health.



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