Sources of Stress among Police Officials: A Qualitative Investigation

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Abstract

This paper reports the results of 25 semi-structured in-depth interviews carried out with police personnel housed at the police station in the state of Delhi, India. The purpose of the research was to identify factors that resulted in subjective experience of stress among police personnel. The results of the in-depth interview with the Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors at the police station revealed several factors that could be treated as sources of stress. As guided by thematic analysis, several categories of possible stressors were observed. These categories were found to be associated with the work, organisation and community. This paper concludes with the findings, discussions and future implications.

Key Words: Police, stress, potential stressors, workplace problems, Delhi police.

1. Introduction

With the winds of change, altering work roles, procedures, policies and expectations; jobs have become more complex and highly demanding. In such a competitive work environment, one of the most common side effects of work life is stress. Stress has been defined differently by several academicians over several decades. Modern definitions of stress recognise that it is a personal experience caused by pressure or demands on an individual, and impacts upon the individual's ability to cope or rather, his/her perception of that ability (Blaug et al., 2007). Several professions, especially those related to human services such as nurses, psychiatrists, counsellors, police etc. have been found to be prone to stress and strain (Webster, 2012). Among the human services occupations, police work has been found to be the most stressful (Burke, 1993; Anshel, 2000). In fact, psychologists agree that a police officer is under stress and pressure unequalled by any other profession (Somodevilla, 1978).

Policemen can be viewed as social surgeons who make interventions in social situations to preserve law and order of the state. The job of a policeman has been said to be unique as one deliberately engages himself for which he is feared, hated and at times reviled or even assaulted in the ordinary performance of their duties (Symonds, 1970). To carry out their job of maintaining law and order and engaging in investigations, they are required to be detached, unemotional, scientific and cautious (Mathur, 1995). Considering the nature and demands of their work, police personnel are certainly prone to experiencing stress.

Stress in such a profession can be debilitating not only to the individual but also to the police organisation and the community at large. At an individual level, studies have indicated that police officers experiencing stress reported poor physical and subjective health (Berg, Hem, Lau, & Ekeberg, 2005; Kirkcaldy, Cooper & Ruffalo, 1995), burnout (Brown, Cooper & Kirkcaldy, 1996), showed symptoms of depression, anxiety and drug use. Cases of suicide attempts have also been observed as an outcome of pressure and stress in the police occupation (Anshel, 2000). Work related consequences of police stress included absenteeism from work (Wright & Saylor, 1991), job dissatisfaction (Norvell, Belles & Hills, 1998) and retirement at an early age (Kop, Euwema & Schaufeli, 1999). Apart from the loss faced by the organisation, it is the society at large which suffers. As a result of the job, police personnel turn out to be cynical and engage in misconduct especially with the public (Vadackumchery, 1998; Niederhoffer, 1967). A stressed police force may indirectly manifest an increased turbulence in law and order and elevated crime rates. Police stress has been identified with destructive outcomes such as use of force towards the public (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2005) and immoral and callous behaviour towards civilians and victims. This section of the paper elaborated on the consequences of police stress and how

it impairs the personnel, organisation and the society. The following section, based on prior literature will examine the stressors in the police context.

2. Review Literature

Research on police stress has been in abundance since work in this area began in mid 1970's (Aaron, 2000). There exists a plethora of research that has focussed on what causes police stress. 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 job, use of force, dealing with ambiguous situations and shift work were also highlighted in the police stress literature (Brown & Campbell, 1994; Hart, Wearing & Headey, 1995). Organisational factors have been given adequate importance in recent 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). A study by Buker & Weicko (2007) which aimed at assessing the effects of commonly examined police stressors on Turkish National Police revealed that organisational issues were the most important causes of stress in policing. Of all the several variables studied, job satisfaction especially with supervisor was found to be the strongest predictor of stress. Other stressors identified in the study were excessive workload, inadequate staff, inadequate specific policies and excess of "red tape". In addition, lack of supervision, unfair practices at work (Ayres & Flanagan, 1994), lack of participation in decision making (Morash et al., 2006; Slate, Johnson & Colbert, 2007) were also found to be possible stressors in the context of police. Similarly, lack of recognition and insufficient administrative support led to stress (Ayres & Flanagon, 1994). Morash & Harr (1995) highlighted the significance of workplace problems as distinct stressors, which included negative interactions with officers, feelings about status, opportunities and physical abilities and practice of bias and harassment. Furthermore, Morash et al. (2006) empirically tested and revealed that bias among co-workers highly predicted stress followed by a feeling of lack of influence on how police work is accomplished. When police officers perceived themselves

as having a strong work related peer support system, stress perceived was found to be relatively less (Ellison & Genz, 1983; Graf, 1986).

Research in India on police stress acquired scientific importance in late 1980s. Early work in this area concluded that long and unpredictable working hours, dealing with violators of law and anti-social elements, threats of being injured or killed, bureaucratic structure, rigidly allocated work pattern, high disciplinary procedures and regimentation, lack of respect from public and work shifts were sources of stress among police personnel (Bhaskar, 1986; Mathur, 1995). Another study by 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 in Uttar Pradesh. Similarly, Selokar et al. (2011) in an attempt to identify the stressors among police personnel in Wardha, Maharashtra, found that majority of the personnel were under stress due to varied reasons such as criticism by superiors, excess work, lack of rewards, inadequate value given to abilities and commitments and no satisfaction from work. Suresh et al. (2013) made an attempt to determine job events that were significant sources of stress among Chennai police. The study revealed that stress was due to organisational factors rather than physical hazards involved in the police work. The factors included round-clock duty, no time for family, inadequate salaries / facilities, negative interaction with other police staff, poor equipment, no recognition, too many cases, insufficient staff and harassment. Another study by Srinivasan & Ilango (2013) revealed that lack of superiors interest in their subordinates, irregular office work, heavy workload and dealing with criminals were stressors faced by constables in Northern part of Tamil Nadu.

The available literature on police stress in India indicates wide range of job and organisational stressors faced by police personnel. These stressors were observed to vary across cities, designations and over time. Research on police stress in India extensively relied on quantitative methodology, using Likert rating scales. Qualitative technique, which employs an open ended approach, paves way for better and an in-depth understanding of

nature of stress and stressors have been rarely used to study police stress. This necessitates a qualitative study of police stress in the Indian context to identify the current potential stressors in police. The rationale to carry out the study may be supported by the statistics of recorded suicide rates of police personnel and the complaints/cases registered against police personnel. The statistics of 2001 (National Crime Records Bureau) revealed that there were a total of 114 cases of police suicide across different states in India while the 2013 record disclosed 214 suicide cases. This escalation in suicide cases may be attributed to the levels of stress among police personnel (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2007). Complaints against police personnel by civilians about their cynical behavior have also considerably increased over the years. The complaints reported in 2001 was 12, 345 while those in 2013 were 51,120 (National Crime Record Bureau) which may be a result of chronic stress experienced by the personnel. The past literature and current statistics demands a study to identify and focus on what causes stress among police workforce. With these issues in mind, this paper attempts to explore the sources of stress for police personnel.

3.   Methodology

Since stress and its experience is a subjective concern, any investigation into stress is best treated qualitatively through narratives, enabling an understanding of the lived experiences of the participants (Bryman, 2004). Thus, to meet the objective of the study, the authors devised a semi-structured interview schedule. The questions in the interview schedule were guided by factors identified as stressors in the past literature.

A total of 25 police personnel were interviewed, out of which 15 were Inspectors and 10 Sub-Inspectors working in 8 different police stations for Delhi Police. Sampling technique employed for the study was purposive sampling as the inclusion criteria for the study was police personnel with minimum 2 years of experience in police station/district police unit. The age range of the sample varied from 25 to 45 years. The sample had a good balance for sex, 12 female and 13 male personnel. An elaborate representation of the sample demographics is provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographics of the respondents (n=25)

Respon-dent	Age (yrs)	Experience (yrs)	Designation	Gender
1	27	4.3	Sub Inspector	M
2	32	8.1	Sub Inspector	F
3	33	10.1	Sub Inspector	M
4	42	19.8	Inspector	F
5	44	20	Inspector	M
6	25	3	Sub Inspector	F
7	28	4	Sub Inspector	F
8	29	5	Sub Inspector	M
9	33	10	Sub Inspector	F
10	36	12	Inspector	M
11	34	11.4	Inspector	M
12	38	13.2	Inspector	F
13	26	3.1	Sub Inspector	M
14	41	17.1	Inspector	F
15	28	4.2	Sub Inspector	M
16	43	20.4	Inspector	F
17	35	12.8	Inspector	M
18	37	13.6	Inspector	M
19	44	20.4	Inspector	F
20	40	16	Inspector	F
21	38	14.8	Inspector	M
22	39	15.2	Inspector	M
23	37	14.3	Inspector	M
24	42	19.1	Inspector	F
25	34	10	Sub Inspector	F

Interviews with each of the participant ranged from 45 to 65 minutes. Recorded interview responses were summarized and transcribed verbatim. The 8 paged transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method used for 'identifying, analysing and

reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). On analysis of each of the interview, a coding framework was devised. Transcripts were read repeatedly to identify the key themes and categories for coding. Themes were generated and identified through an iterative process. The transcripts were further shared with seven subject matter experts for validation of the themes.

4. Findings

The results of the semi-structured interviews with the Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors at the police stations revealed several factors that could be treated as sources of stress. As guided by thematic analysis, several themes of possible stressors were observed. These factors were found to be associated with the nature of work/job, organisational and community factors. The identified themes and their respective narratives and verbatims are elaborated in the following section.

4.1 Work Overload

The most common potential stressor noted during the interview was work overload. Both Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors described about the amount of work they had to perform all through the day which included tasks like investigation, maintaining law and order, court duty and emergency situations. They stated that too much work in too less time was extremely demanding. They unanimously stated that juggling these competing tasks were a source of stress. They asserted that there was a lack of division of work among personnel and lack of man power led to work overload and over piling of work. The following verbatim from an interview corroborates the work overload as a stressor.

"We end up doing unexpected things. The work that is allocated is at random due to which work is never ending and we feel loaded with work. There have been several days when, while dealing with criminal cases, investigation and interrogation, we have been called for other tasks such as VIP security or dealing with public, etc. This way we are overloaded with several tasks with too less time due to which there happens a delay in the work, leaving us stressed."

[Respondent 2]

The participants unanimously agreed that prioritising work was stressful for them, since they worked according to deadlines. Excess work and the need to meet the deadlines lead participants to a state of distress. The following example helps understand this better.

"When to do what is always a concern for me. There are too many tasks to accomplish. Due to overload of work, I am unable to prioritise work and eventually become helpless and give up. When performing one task, I often think about the pending tasks. Since the time I have joined, I have been over burdened with work. It is impossible to meet deadlines."

[Respondent 17]

4.2 Long Working Hours

The second potential source of stress, that was highlighted in the analysis of the interview was long hours of work. The participants complained that there was no limit on the working hours and experienced great suffering due to unfixed timings. Participants agreed that there were days when they did not sleep. They described that the police job with respect to time was too demanding and imposed significant pressure, leaving them stressed. This is evidenced in the respondent comment given below.

"There are days when we don't get enough sleep. We are actually required to work for limited hours, but that is only on papers. I suffer from a sense of guilt that I am unable to give time to my family. I barely get to see my family. We just go on and on and on. This has impacted me mentally and physically too. And despite this, our job is a thankless job."

[Respondent 10]

The participants attributed long working hours as taxing their mental, emotional, physical and intellectual abilities. Most agreed that they were distressed since the working schedule did not permit them to spend time with their family. The following verbatim reflects and supports long hours of work as stressful.

"I don't remember the last time I spent quality time with my children, husband and parents. My life revolves around police station since I dedicate most of the time of my life at work. I don't have time for myself too. Limitless working

hours have made my life meaningless and challenge my mental, emotional, and intellectual competence."

[Respondent 25]

4.3 Job Insecurity

The third potential source of stress among participants was an intense feeling of job insecurity. This was observed despite the police job being a government job where job insecurity issues are relatively less. They felt threatened and feared loss of job and hence when probed by the authors on whether they were proactively looking for an alternate job, most of them agreed. One of the common reasons attributed to this feeling was lack of trust in the police system. The following quote is testament to the above mentioned research finding.

"This is a government job but I am always under threat that I may be suspended any time. The internal politics and blame game makes me feel that my job is at risk."

[Respondent 5]

The participants emphasised on the misuse of power by senior officials which led them to believe that their stability in job was uncertain, consequently leading to a feeling of job insecurity. This is seen in the quote below by one of the participants.

"I am not sure what is going to happen to my job tomorrow. I am always under tension about my job. Although it's not easy to remove a government official, yet I suffer from uncertainty. This is especially because power in this profession plays a predominant role and if power can take away lives, then what is job? I plan to quit this job soon and apply for other government jobs, before I turn thirty!"

[Respondent 1]

4.4 Lack of Participation in Decision Making

The Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors reported that lack of participation and involvement in decision making contributed to work stress. They asserted that they were not heard; they were not asked or consulted on trivial issues related to their own work at the police station. Interviewees stated that there was no scope for them to express and question the process of decision making. They speculated that it was the bureaucratic structure of the police organisation that did not allow them to participate in the decision making affairs. An example of this finding is characterized in the following comment.

"I feel undervalued in this place. We are just given orders and we have to blindly obey them (seniors). There is no freedom of speech in this environment. We are not considered in the decision making process. We are here only to nod our heads. They (police organisation) must know that we are not in the Army!"

[Respondent 7]

Interviewees further shared that they felt underestimated about their competence to be involved in the decision making process and perceived themselves as worthless. The following quote from an interview describes it well.

"I have never been asked to take decisions at work. In fact, whenever I have taken decisions, I have been embarrassed and humiliated (by seniors/supervisor). My words hold no value to this system. Only those sitting at higher positions are valued and we end up following their decisions, irrespective of whether right or wrong. I feel worthless because I have never been involved in any decision making process. Maybe we are not considered capable enough to make decisions."

[Respondent 18]

4.5 Lack of Fairness at Workplace

Lack of fairness in the organisation was found to be associated with work stress. The interviewees emphasized that the most observable partial practice was unequal distribution of work. Another frequent manifestation of bias at work was granting opportunities to only a few. They expressed that transfers and promotions were based on favouritism and nepotism. The practice of bias at work led the participants to believe that there was injustice and discrimination prevalent in the system. They also commonly agreed that this practice was conscious and rampant and it had no solution. However, coping in such an unfavourable environment was arduous for the respondents eventually leading to experience of stress. The following verbatim illustrates the findings and supports lack of fairness as a stressor.

"There is no transparency at all in this system. I have been

transferred from one station to the other without any justification. Also there is favouritism that persists. I have seen some of my peers sitting without any work while some overloaded with work. Some are granted leaves, while some are not. I have never been recognised for my work in my fifteen years of service while those who have not made significant contribution have been constantly pushed into limelight. It is caste, religion, gender and other reasons that introduce bias."

[Respondent 24]

The sample narrated their personal episodes of how unfair treatment was evident in their daily lives at work. They confessed that police system is vulnerable to inequitable and discriminatory traditions. The following comment reflects the above viewpoint.

"The police system as an institution is driven by prejudice and discrimination. I have struggled and still struggling with the unfair practices that prevail in this system. I have been denied promotions twice, because my colleague was favoured as he belonged to a particular section of the society. I have worked day and night, while those who are favoured have spent nights at home. There is preferential treatment practiced outright and experiencing these unjust instances everyday is distressing."

[Respondent 3]

4.6 Poor Compensation & Benefits

Lack of appropriate pay, perks and allowances was a concern and plausible source of stress for all participants. Respondents unanimously agreed that they were devoid of sufficient pay and allowances especially, the travel allowance. They further reported that while patrolling and investigating, they had to bear the expenses of the fuel for the official vehicles. They commonly felt that police is a profession which involves risk of life and for this reason they demanded better pay and benefits. They also emphasised on the poor housing facilities provided to them. The comments by the personnel interviewed confirm the existence above mentioned source of stress.

"The pay that we get is inadequate. We are devoid of basic benefits. Army personnel get so many monetary benefits, why

not us? We do not have police schools, canteen or anything special. Travel allowance is also very less. When I have to travel for investigation or court or any other official work, I take my bike and use my money for petrol. We should also have risk allowance since our occupation is risky."

[Respondent 15]

"We all work for food and shelter, but this job gives only tension and headache. Financially, we might be perceived as more than sufficient but the truth is that we spend from our personal finances to complete our official tasks and are left with less than half our monthly salary to spend on our family. When we have to travel to other states for case investigation purpose, we book our own railway ticket which most times are not reimbursed. Although there are police quarters available for us, but they are insufficient and the condition of the quarters are not habitable. We are not privileged like other government employees to have our police dispensaries/hospitals and schools. One month extra salary every year does not compensate for the expenses that we bear to complete tasks."

[Respondent 22]

4.7 Lack of Resources for Investigation

Another likely stressor that was highlighted in the interviews was inadequate, insufficient and inappropriate tools and techniques for investigation. They attributed the conventional methods and techniques used for examination for the delay in investigation, and reasoned it as a cause for piled up work. As an example, a common response observed was unavailability of breath analyser in the police station. The following excerpts from the interviews describe poor resources as a source of stress.

"We are still using old methods of investigation. There is immense technological advancement yet we are not provided with such tools. Even basic computer facility is not offered. Using computers and newer technologies for tracking lost property, or for interrogation would have made our tasks efficient and effective."

[Respondent 20]

"Our police is very far from development as compared to other state police. We lack basic resources to carry out investigation.

Equipments are not provided on time and are very scarce. The only tool that is available throughout the day and across all police stations is the wireless communication equipment. However equipments required at the crime scene, or at the time of investigation are rarely available. Sometimes we go to other police stations to borrow such equipments. A small example includes unavailability of torch light for a crime scene at night."

[Respondent 13]

4.8 Poor Relations with the Public

Participants of the study described public's negative perception towards police as a source of stress. There was a wide agreement on the ill status of the police in the eyes of the public. They felt themselves to be hated by the society and instead wanted to be perceived as friendly protectors. The following verbatim reflects the above mentioned stressor.

"Although we work for the citizens and protect them, but we are loathed by the society. They (public) perceive us as their enemies. When not in uniform, I am greeted well. But when I am in my uniform, I am stared at and abused. This brings down my morale and motivation to work for the public. My child is teased in school because I am in police. My family has not been accepted by the society yet. I don't have friends beyond police circle. Why are we treated this way?"

[Respondent 21]

Another issue that appeared prominent in the interviews public was the unrealistic demands of the public such as completion of investigations within a week. This seemed impractical and inordinately demanding to the interviewed personnel. This is supported by the below mentioned verbatim.

"Public has very high expectations from us. They think that we should solve their problems in no time. They are unaware of the work load that we have. They also lack awareness on what issues they should bring to us. Sometimes even marital or property issues are brought to us. But such issues are actually dealt by civil courts. When we try to educate the complainant on this, they call us 'kaamchor' (somebody who tries to run away from their responsibility) and unprofessional. While walking on the road, they (public) view us with hatred

and sometimes with fear. We do not share friendly relations with community rather they (public) do not want to maintain cordial relations with us."

[Respondent 8]

4.9 Poor relations with Media

Media (print and audio-visual) was also found to be a constant stressor for the participants. They were of the opinion that media published and highlighted negative views about the police personnel and the police organisation. Media reports of alleged police wrongdoing affected their status in the society. Media, according to the interviewees, highlighted what police 'could not' achieve. They further shared that journalists encounter them with questions, the answers to which are highly confidential and restrictive. This consequently creates a rift between media and police. The narratives below stands testimony to the above mentioned viewpoint.

"Media highlights only what we have not achieved. If criminal cases are on a rise, are we to be blamed? We do our work from our end. It is sad see that no one is concerned about our accomplishments. Public loses faith in us because of what media publishes."

[Respondent 4]

"Media has been chasing us since time immemorial and has been adulterating our status in the society. What they publish and talk on television affects our mental health because we are viewed in negative lights. Thanks to media for pulling down my motivation and pride."

[Respondent 19]

The following section presents the discussion of the current findings in light with the previous literature and current state of Delhi Police.

Discussion

Keeping in view the widespread belief that police is one of the most stressful occupations (Kappeler et al., 2000), the present study aimed to explore and identify the sources of stress at work among two specific ranks, Inspectors & Sub-Inspectors housed at various police stations, using in-depth interviews. The 25 narratives

showed high levels agreement with International and Indian literature.

Work overload was a major stressor for the participants, as indicated in the findings section. This factor not only impacted their work life in terms of prioritising work but also affected their family life. Similarly, findings also revealed that exceedingly long working hours was a major stressor for the participants. Long and unfixed working hours as a source of stress may be attributed to the nature of the job which mandates the police personnel to be alert and available throughout the day. Especially, this might hold true in case of Delhi, the capital city. Apart from Delhi's historic relevance, it is one of the VIP cities where The President resides, parliament session proceeds and a shed for several political parties. This makes the city further vulnerable and sensitive, imposing and urging the police department to be alert and vigilant. In the current context, long working hours may also be a result of work overload as mentioned by the participants earlier. Further, the escalation in crime rates in the city may be attributed to the increase in the workload and long hours of work. Within policing, there is limited support for this finding (Webster, 2012). Deschamps et al. (2003) found that excessive work load was related to symptoms of job stress in police officers. A study by Davey et al. (2001) found that working long hours and working overtime were also highly predictive of job stress. In fact, they found that, more number of hours the officers worked, the higher were the level of job stress. The above findings can be supported by recent empirical quantitative research conducted in India which stated that long working hours and work overload were root causes of stress among police personnel (Naik, 2012; Tyagi & Dhar, 2014). Water & Ussery (2007) explained police stress as a result of inherent occupational reasons which requires police personnel to be highly vigilant even when off duty, eventually taking a toll on their level of resilience. Another reason contributing to these stressors may be shortage of manpower in the police station. This holds true for a Delhi Police, as evidence reports that there is a discrepancy in police-population ratio. As per 2013, Police-population ratio was 391.33 per one lakh persons as against the sanctioned strength

of 420.49 (National Crime Record Bureau). This may indicate shortage of manpower in the police station which may have led to work overload and long hours of working eventually contributing to work stress.

This study explored that job insecurity was a stressor for police. The feeling that they may be removed from the system is a constant worrisome issue. Job insecurity in general has been cited as a stressor by several researchers (Cox et al., 2000). As few participants during the interview revealed that fear of loss of job was a result of lack of trust and faith in the system, and organisational politics thus, feelings of job insecurity may have resulted due to unfair practices at work. However, this finding is not consistent with previous literature related police stress in India. Job insecurity as a stressor in police has been rarely observed. This unique finding may be attributed to the in-depth interviews that the authors of the present study carried out which allowed participants to express their concerns overtly.

Studies on police stress have also demonstrated that organizational factors such as participation in decision-making can reduce stress (Morash & Haarr 1995; Morash et al. 2006) justifying the current findings of the study which indicates that lack of involvement in the process of decision making is a contributor to stress among the interviewees. Lack of participation as a stressor may be explained by the bureaucratic structure that the Police organisation follows. Studies have shown that a rigid communication system characterised by a bureaucratic structure has significantly affected police personnel's level of stress (He et al. 2002; Violanti & Aron, 1993). In fact, a bureaucratic structure has been found to be responsible for several workplace factors such as work overload, red tapism, man power shortage, and poor supervision/leadership ensuing stress among police officers (Buker & Weiko, 2007).

In the present study, lack of fairness and prevalence of bias at the workplace has been found as a stressor. There is a small but growing body of research which suggests perceptions of fairness make a unique contribution to perceived job stress among police community (Morash et al., 2006; Abdollahi, 2002). A study by Noblet, Rodwell & Allisey (2009) on Australian police force also revealed

that perceived lack of fairness significantly explained job stress which supports the current finding, that fairness at work may predict the levels of stress among police personnel. In line with the above finding, Siegrist (2002) too professed that perceived imbalance of effort and rewards will lead to higher risk of impaired heath and well being linking unfair practices and experience of stress.

There is plethora of literature on poor pay and allowances, lack of housing facilities and lack of adequate resources for investigation contributing to police work stress (Ayres & Flanagan, 1994; Joseph & Nagarajamurthy, 2014; Srinivasan & Ilango, 2013; Suresh et al., 2013). However, it has been observed by authors that compensation and allowances as sources of stress have widely echoed in Indian police stress studies than in International literature on police stress. This finding may be analysed as a representation of poor organisational support which has been fund to be a source of stress in previous literature (Davey et al., 2001). Organisational support has been often defined as a global belief that the organisation recognises and values employee contribution as reflected in tangible resources such as pay, rewards or other forms of compensation and benefits (Eisenberger et al., 1986). This may explain the present finding that stress may be a consequence of lack of organisational support. Similarly, inadequate and poor equipments, characterised as lack of resources has been a likely source of stress and negative health & organisational outcomes (Cox et al., 2000).

The sole reason for existence of Police force is society. However, this study found that relations with society which includes public and media are a key source of stress for police. Lack of support from community, poor relations and criticisms from public and media further decimates the police-community relations. The respect that a policeman deserves for protecting the citizens remains discontented, which lowers police morale and eventually leaves them stressed. Figley (1999) stated that lack of appreciation by public and media causes police personnel to become cynical towards the community. The above findings are consistent with previous literature (Garcia et al., 2004; Mathur, 1995; Suresh et al., 2013).

This study greatly contributes to the literature on sources of police stress. When viewed from managerial lens, this study gives insight into the policies, its renewal and implementation. The findings of this study are suggestive of introducing reforms as a primary intervention to deal with stressed officials.

Conclusion

The outcomes of stress can be deleterious as chronic stress may lead to development of burnout and lower the engagement levels of police personnel. This may further cause work impairment which may be a heavy toll on the police organisation and the State and Central government. This study has usefully generated knowledge on sources of stress (among Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors) prevalent in Delhi Police. These stressors namely work overload, long working hours, job insecurity, lack of participation in decision making, unfair practices, poor compensation, improper tools and techniques for investigation, poor public image of police and criticizing role of media warrants immediate attention and consideration to improve the well being of the police, police organisation and the society at large.

Future Implications

The present qualitative study paves way for and warrants an empirical research. The stressors that are discussed in this paper can be quantitatively tested in a model to determine the stressors. An extensive study based on the present results can be fruitful to the police organisations as the findings will aid in developing interventions for mitigating distress among Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors at the Police station. The results of the study will guide the practitioners and academicians to further empirically test the stressors and further devise a plan of action to combat stress.

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