Occupational Stress in Himachal Pradesh Police Constabulary

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ABSTRACT

Constabulary forms the foundation of the police organization in India. They are also known as field personnel who act as the facilitators of all the directions issued by the decision-makers at the ground level. Various researches have acknowledged that policing is a stressful occupation. Owing to differing work patterns of each rank, the stressors can be different for the constabulary. The study aims to investigate the level of stress and stressors in Himachal Pradesh police constabulary in general and demographic analysis in particular. The results revealed that the constabulary is facing a high level of stress. It was also found that males, married, postgraduates, younger age groups and those with less experience were more stressed. To manage stress, it has been suggested to ensure effective workforce planning, implementation of the shift system, recruiting personnel as per the sanctioned strength, outsourcing non-core activities and organizing need-based training.

KEYWORDS: Constabulary, Police Constables, Stress, Occupational Stress, Stressors, India

Introduction

Indian police organization has a structure analogous to a pyramid, wherein the constabulary forms the base of it. The constabulary, also known as the lower subordinates includes the officers in the position of Constables and Head Constables. The total strength of police in our country is approximately 20, 67, 270. Out of this, the constabulary accounts for a total population of 17, 45,136. This means that the constabulary (Head constables and constables) comprises of about 84% of the state police force (BPR&D, 2019). Constables are also known as field personnel; working on the ground level and assisting their supervisors. Constabulary is usually the first point of contact between the department and the general public. Head Constables have three primary roles -police station duty, maintaining records at the police station and in charge of outposts. Constables are involved in assistance, surveillance, escorting and performing tasks assigned to them. The constables are recruited directly subject to the eligibility criteria laid down by their respective states. In the case of Himachal Pradesh, the eligibility is between 18-23 years, with a height of 5'6" and chest between 31-32 inches. The

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selection process comprises of a written test, personality test and physical examination test. The training imparted to them includes both indoor and outdoor training (Joshi, 2015).

Being the direct interface between the police department and the general public, constables can significantly impact the image of police in the eyes of the general public. So the key to efficient policing lies in the hand of motivated Constables. Long working hours, inadequate pay, duty in extreme conditions, the limited scope of promotion puts a strain on Constables. There is a need to improve their working conditions to keep them motivated (Urmanikar 2009; Singh, 2009). Constabulary, being the subordinates in the department, also face the work pressure from their supervisors. Low salaries, little incentives, ill-treatment from senior officer are some of the common issues faced by them. Kumar (2014) highlighted that the lower subordinates, which included Constables and Head Constables, were often called back on duty during off-hours. The adverse impact of irregular working hours had a more significant impact on their health in comparison to the upper subordinate officers. Also, there are limited opportunities for growth and promotion in the constabulary. It is noted that in Himachal Pradesh Police, a Constable can apply for promotion to Head Constable after completion of 5 years of service and required to qualify the B1 test, now conducted in online mode. Those who qualify the test are selected for being promoted to Head Constable after successful completion of a training program. Importantly, any Constable who does not qualify the test remains Constables throughout their life. After 16 years of service as a Constable, they are designated as Honourable Head Constable. However, this position draws monetary benefits lesser than a Head Constable. Thus, such factors may result in frustration.

Since the constabulary constitutes a vital element of the police department, it is essential to pay attention to the stressors prevalent in them. Sundaram & Kumaran (2012) investigated the sources of stress in police Constables of Tamil Nadu. The leading causes of stress that emerged were political pressure, low salary, and insufficient time for family and negative public image. Sekar, Subburaj & Sundaram (2013) probed the sources of occupational stress in Tamil Nadu Head Constables. The stressors found in the study were racial conflict, inadequate supervision, assignment of new or unfamiliar duties etc. Kar & Singh (2015) undertook a quantitative and qualitative analysis to explore the sources of stress amongst Constables, Inspectors and Officers. The Constables were found to be most stressed due to workload, environmental stressors and commuting long distances. The working space lacked basic amenities like drinking water, clean toilets and refreshments for the constabulary. The constables were also exposed to a high level of air and noise pollution, found their work to be monotonous, lacking new challenges and also faced unsupportive and abusive behaviour of their supervisors. Sundaram & Sekar (2015) examined the sources of stress in 600 Police Constables. The study revealed that leniency of the court; limited advancement opportunities and staff shortage were the primary sources of stress. Naik & Kacker (2019) examined psychological stress in the constabulary of Goa police. The data was collected from 100 Constables & 100 Head Constables and found 56% of the respondents were suffering from psychological stress.

The literature review highlights the various problems such as staff shortage, high workload, subordination, discrimination, long-distance travelling, poor infrastructure, V.I.P. and emergent duties faced by the constabulary. It has negative consequences on the individual, organization and society. But yes, size, geography, urbanization, politicization and governance style has a direct impact on policing. The present study has been undertaken to identify the stressors and suggest strategies to deal with occupational stress in Himachal Pradesh Police constabulary. Himachal Pradesh (H.P.) is a hill state in northern India having about 17000 police personnel for the state population of approx. 68 lakhs. Himachal Pradesh has been considered to be a peaceful state. Still, the increasing trend in IPC crimes like thefts, rape and abduction and other

local and particular laws offences under Forest, ND&PS Act, Excise Act, and IT Act etc. have resulted in increased job strain (State Crime Records Bureau, 2013-19). Further, maintain order during coronavirus pandemic, natural calamities and road accidents are critical emergent duties for policing in Himachal Pradesh. So it becomes imperative to survey the role stress level of H.P. Constabulary in general and demographic analysis in particular.

Objectives of the Study
- To examine the level of stress in the constabulary of Himachal Pradesh
- To identify the difference in stress levels in police constabulary based on their demographic profile

Research Methodology
In the study, both primary and secondary sources have been used for data collection. Primary data was collected with the help of a structured questionnaire. The responses were collected from police constabulary of Himachal Pradesh. 250 police personnel from the constabulary were chosen for the study by the method of purposive sampling. Secondary data has been collected from journals, books, websites and publications of BPR&D (Bureau of Police Research & Development). Occupational Stress was measured with the Organizational Role stress Scale (ORS) developed by Pareek (1983). It measures occupational stress on ten dimensions which include- Inter Role Distance, Role Stagnation, Role Expectation conflict, Role Erosion, Role Overload, Role Isolation, Personal Inadequacy, Self-role distance, Role Ambiguity and Resource Inadequacy. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-test and ANOVA etc.

Results
250 police personnel from the constabulary (187 Constables and 63 Head Constables) participated in the study. In this, 180 respondents were males, and 70 were females. Most of the respondents were married (65.6%). Majorly, the respondents were from the younger age group, i.e. 21-34 years. Also, most of the respondents (47.6%) had job experience of 02-07 years. Furthermore, 56.4% of the respondents were graduates.

Figure 1 presents the stress level of the respondents. It can be seen that nearly half (48.8%) of the respondents were facing *High* stress. 36% of the respondents were found to be facing *Very High* stress. It was interesting to note that none of the respondents fell in the category of *Very Low* stress. Only 1.6% of the respondents were facing *Low* stress. The findings coincide with Deb et al. (2008), wherein 79.4% of the Constables in their study were stressed.
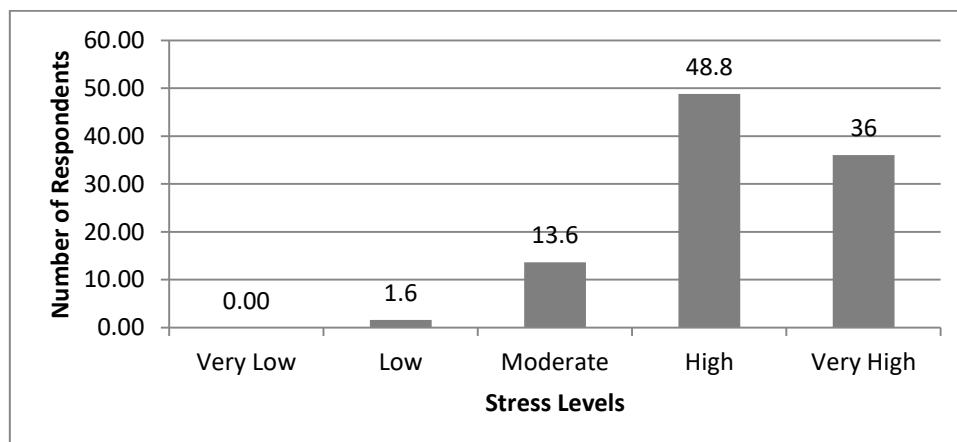

Figure 1: Stress Levels in H.P. Constabulary

Further, descriptive statistics were used to identify the major stressor that resulted in occupational stress in Himachal Pradesh Police constabulary (see Table 1). It was found that Inter Role Distance (M= 4.57, SD= 0.56) emerged as the major stressor, followed by Resource Inadequacy (M= 4.47, SD= 0.53), Role Overload (M= 4.38, SD=0.65) and Personal Inadequacy (M=4.02. SD=0.74). The results coincide with the findings of Parsekar, Singh & Bhumika (2015) that reported staff shortage, inadequate time for family, and overtime demands as sources of stress in the constabulary of Tamil Nadu.

Table 1: Mean Difference Analysis of Occupational Stress in H.P. Police Constabulary

ORS Variables	**Mean**	**SD**
Inter Role Distance	4.57	0.56
Role Stagnation	3.83	0.80
Role Expectation Conflict	3.94	0.73
Role Erosion	3.86	0.80
Role Overload	4.38	0.65
Role Isolation	3.65	0.88
Personal Inadequacy	4.02	0.74
Self Role Distance	3.83	0.76
Role Ambiguity	3.73	0.72
Resource Inadequacy	4.47	0.53

Further, demographic analysis was conducted to examine the difference in stress level of the respondents especially on the basis of gender, marital status, educational qualification, age and job experience. It was done with the use of Independent sample t test and one way ANOVA. Descriptive statistics helps to identify which group was more stressed in comparison to others.
In terms of gender, it was revealed that male constabulary were more stressed than the female constabulary (see Table 2). Also, significant difference was found on six (out of ten) dimensions of occupational stress. This finding coincides with the results of a study conducted by Rashtreeya Sikhshana Samithi Trust (2016). Herein, males were found to be more stressed than female officers. This was attributed to females being relaxed from overtime demands and night shifts.

Table 2: Gender Wise Mean Difference Analysis of Occupational Stress in H.P. Police Constabulary (Independent sample t- test)

ORS Dimensions	Male (N=180)		Female (N=70)		T value	P Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Inter Role Distance	4.60	0.56	4.48	0.55	1.498	0.135
Role Stagnation	3.92	0.82	3.59	0.68	2.951	**0.003**
Role Expectation Conflict	4.00	0.76	3.77	0.63	2.406	0.017
Role Erosion	3.94	0.84	3.66	0.65	2.768	**0.006**

Role Overload	4.49	0.60	4.10	0.70	4.410	**0.000**
Role Isolation	3.78	0.88	3.31	0.79	3.884	**0.000**
Personal Inadequacy	4.08	0.76	3.85	0.68	2.251	**0.025**
Self Role Distance	3.88	0.79	3.72	0.69	1.447	0.149
Role Ambiguity	3.78	0.74	3.60	0.65	1.776	0.077
Resource Inadequacy	4.52	0.51	4.32	0.54	2.791	**0.006**

Note: p values<0.05 have been marked in bold

With regard to marital status, it was found that married respondents were more stressed in comparison to their counterparts (see Table 3). However, statistical significance was found only on one dimension of occupational stress, i.e. Role Overload (p= 0.007). In this case, married respondents were more stressed. Jaiswal et al. (2015) also reported that police officials who were married or staying with their family were more stressed in comparison to the unmarried officers.

Table 3: Marital Status Wise Mean Difference Analysis of Occupational Stress in H.P. Police Constabulary (Independent sample t- test)

ORS Dimensions	Married (N= 164)		Unmarried (N=86)		T value	P Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Inter Role Distance	4.59	0.59	4.53	0.50	0.715	0.475
Role Stagnation	3.81	0.82	3.85	0.77	-0.341	0.734
Role Expectation Conflict	3.95	0.75	3.91	0.72	0.436	0.663
Role Erosion	3.80	0.83	3.97	0.73	-1.554	0.121
Role Overload	4.47	0.62	4.23	0.68	2.719	**0.007**
Role Isolation	3.64	0.89	3.66	0.87	-0.117	0.907
Personal Inadequacy	4.00	0.77	4.04	0.69	-0.439	0.661
Self Role Distance	3.86	0.74	3.79	0.81	0.679	0.498
Role Ambiguity	3.68	0.74	3.81	0.67	-1.283	0.201
Resource Inadequacy	4.49	0.55	4.42	0.47	0.881	0.379

Note: p values<0.05 have been marked in bold

In context of educational qualifications, post graduates were the most stressed of all. It is also interesting to note that the level of stress increased with higher educational attainment (see Table 4). Consequently, those having matriculation was the least stressed amongst all. The results are similar to the findings of Bano (2011) who found that those who were more educated were more stressed.

Table 4: Educational Qualifications Wise Mean Difference Analysis of Occupational Stress in H.P. Police Constabulary (One Way ANOVA)

ORS Dim.	Post Graduate (N=46)		Graduate (N=141)		Inter (N=50)		Matric (N=13)		F	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
IRD	4.69	0.36	4.62	0.50	4.50	0.59	3.65	1.12	13.80	**0.000**
RS	3.93	0.74	3.84	0.78	3.74	0.87	3.62	0.94	0.815	0.487
REC	3.92	0.70	3.95	0.74	3.98	0.79	3.54	0.57	1.335	0.263
RE	4.09	0.74	3.86	0.75	3.71	0.91	3.56	0.97	2.518	0.059

	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	Sig.
RO	4.46	0.58	4.43	0.63	4.35	0.63	3.65	0.86	6.218	**0.000**
RI	3.80	0.97	3.64	0.81	3.59	0.98	3.40	0.90	0.858	0.464
PI	4.11	0.76	4.03	0.70	3.98	0.83	3.54	0.87	2.070	0.105
SRD	3.85	0.85	3.87	0.73	3.73	0.82	3.65	0.62	0.661	0.577
RA	3.81	0.78	3.71	0.68	3.79	0.72	3.23	0.90	2.425	0.066
RIn	4.51	0.46	4.50	0.49	4.44	0.52	3.94	0.94	4.686	**0.003**

Note: p values<0.05 have been marked in bold

Table 5 presents the difference in stress levels when the respondents were grouped on the basis of age. The younger age groups, i.e. respondents in the category of 21-27 years and 28-34 years were the most stressed amongst all. Also, this difference was found to be statistically significant. Further, statistical significant difference was found on five dimensions of occupational stress. Ragesh et al. (2017) also found that police officers in the younger age group (21-35) were more stressed.

Table 5: Age Wise Mean Difference Analysis of Occupational Stress in H.P. Police Constabulary (One Way ANOVA)

ORS Dim.	21-27 (N=93)		28-34 (N=89)		35-41 (N=39)		42-48 (N=15)		49-55 (N=11)		56-62 (N=03)		F	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
IRD	4.59	0.44	4.67	0.44	4.62	0.56	4.40	0.74	3.70	1.16	4.33	0.29	7.011	**0.000**
RS	3.90	0.74	3.79	0.82	3.94	0.82	3.55	0.96	3.48	0.79	4.00	1.00	1.137	0.342
REC	3.99	0.67	3.97	0.78	3.94	0.76	3.78	0.85	3.41	0.44	3.75	0.66	1.460	0.204
RE	3.98	0.71	3.88	0.78	3.76	0.82	3.65	0.81	3.09	1.12	4.67	0.29	3.597	**0.004**
RO	4.27	0.65	4.56	0.49	4.49	0.62	4.17	0.88	3.84	0.99	4.25	0.66	4.354	**0.001**
RI	3.74	0.88	3.58	0.82	3.67	0.94	3.68	0.96	3.02	0.77	4.58	0.52	2.194	0.056
PI	4.08	0.67	4.04	0.75	4.08	0.77	3.70	0.86	3.45	0.92	3.92	0.63	2.072	0.070
SRD	3.87	0.76	3.89	0.76	3.80	0.79	3.43	0.83	3.68	0.57	4.00	0.50	1.097	0.362
RA	3.88	0.67	3.73	0.69	3.66	0.73	3.30	0.80	3.23	0.83	3.58	0.95	3.163	**0.009**
RIn	4.44	0.46	4.57	0.47	4.48	0.52	4.23	0.82	4.05	0.84	4.67	0.29	2.991	**0.012**

Note: p values<0.05 have been marked in bold

Lastly, the difference in stress levels was examined on the basis of job experience. It was revealed that respondents having experience of 8-13 years were the most stressed. Also, this difference was found to be statistically significant. This was followed by the respondents having experience of 02-07 years (see Table 6). Hence, it can be concluded that those having lesser experience were more stressed in comparison to their counterparts. The findings are similar to the results of Sundaram & Sekar (2015) who reported that police personnel with less years of experience were more stressed.

Table 6: Job Experience (in years) Wise Mean Difference Analysis of Occupational Stress in H.P. Police Constabulary (One Way ANOVA)

ORS Dim.	02-07 (N=119)		08-13 (N=79)		14-19 (N=23)		20-25 (N=17)		26-31 (N=05)		32-37 (N=07)		F	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
IRD	4.58	0.43	4.65	0.52	4.65	0.42	4.51	0.73	3.95	1.25	3.68	1.13	5.70	**0.000**
RS	3.90	0.74	3.86	0.81	3.72	0.75	3.51	1.07	3.65	0.78	3.32	0.92	1.465	0.202
REC	3.97	0.71	3.98	0.75	3.86	0.74	3.88	0.92	3.60	0.65	3.43	0.31	1.060	0.383
RE	4.00	0.70	3.90	0.77	3.67	0.81	3.57	0.89	3.10	1.17	2.96	1.19	4.360	**0.001**
RO	4.32	0.63	4.55	0.57	4.50	0.46	4.34	0.89	4.15	0.65	3.46	0.89	4.616	**0.000**
RI	3.73	0.89	3.63	0.80	3.62	0.89	3.59	1.03	3.15	1.04	3.07	1.01	1.153	0.333
PI	4.06	0.69	4.08	0.75	3.87	0.82	3.85	0.87	3.70	1.10	3.61	0.75	1.147	0.336
SRD	3.87	0.78	3.93	0.71	3.78	0.68	3.41	0.94	3.25	0.31	3.64	0.63	2.104	0.066
RA	3.84	0.66	3.79	0.70	3.52	0.65	3.34	0.85	3.05	0.21	3.07	0.99	4.484	**0.001**
RIn	4.47	0.46	4.54	0.47	4.60	0.36	4.26	0.86	4.20	0.87	3.82	0.80	3.638	**0.003**

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The study endeavours to examine the level of stress in the constabulary of Himachal Pradesh Police. It was found that maximum respondents were either facing *High* or *Very High stress.* Stress has been found to have negative consequences for an individual as well as an organization. So a strong need has been felt to develop a stress-busting mechanism. Further, the major stressors were identified that was causing high occupational stress in police Constabulary. It was noted as Inter Role Distance, Resource Inadequacy; Role Overload & Personal Inadequacy.

Inter Role Distance depicts the stress caused by the inability to strike a balance between multiple roles an individual plays. The job of policing requires utmost dedication wherein they dispense multiple roles towards the department and society. The nature of the work hinders them from spending adequate time with their family and friends. However, an individual also has social needs, which they cannot be deprived of for their wellbeing. Implementation of the shift system would facilitate the policemen to maintain a balance between work and family life. Also, the constabulary is dependent on their superiors for sanctioning of their leaves. Hence, it needs to be seen that the leaves may be granted with effective workforce planning.

Resource Inadequacy refers to a lack of sufficient resources to perform their duties. Staff deficiency, poor infrastructure, outdated equipment poses challenges to their efficiency. In the case of Himachal Pradesh, actual police population is lower than the sanctioned community, depicting deficiency of staff in the department. There is a vacancy of 1979 positions in the state police out of which 1091 positions are vacant in the constabulary of Himachal Pradesh Police (Human Resources Report, 2019). Hence, 55% vacancy in the department is due to the shortfall

in the constabulary of state police. Human resource has been identified as the most vital resource for an organization. There is a need to fill the vacant positions to deal with the staff shortage. In the wake of smart policing the country, the department also needs to pay attention to the modernization initiatives in the department. The police modernization budget sanctioned to the state for the year 2017-2018 was Rs. 811.914 crores. It was reported that only nearly half of this allowed amount (Rs. 497.03 crores) was spent by the state police (BPR&D, 2019). Hence, measures need to be taken for effective utilization of the budget for infrastructure development in police stations and technological up-gradation in the department.

Role overload refers to excessive work to be done in a limited period. The constabulary is engaged in many activities that are not the core functions of policing. They are performing activities such as managing reception at police stations, address verification, guard duty at examination centres/ government offices, managing canteen in police stations, maintenance of police stations, delivering letters, family counselling, passport applications etc. Various committees set up for police reforms have suggested that these activities can be outsourced to a third party at a lesser cost. This will enable the policemen to focus on the core operations of policing and increase their efficiency.

Personal Inadequacy refers to the stress caused when an individual feels that he lacks the requisite skills to perform his duties. This can be attributed to a lack of adequate training process. The training module should stress more on real-life incidents and practical situations. The training sessions followed by the organization lacks effective practical aspects of policing. In the Model Police Manual drafted by BPR&D, it was suggested for adding a practical training module to acquaint the Constables with processes, challenges and problems faced in the actual scenario of policing (Joshi, 2015). Constabulary is often the first point of contact between the department and the general public. They should be sensitized not only on their skills and knowledge but also on attitude shaping towards the public. Initiatives need to be taken to change the traditional rude policing image to humane face in the eyes of the general public, which will also enhance their motivation and self-image.

Further, the demographic analysis revealed that the male constabulary was more stressed in comparison to their counterparts. Although the list of duties and responsibilities is not gender-based, it was observed that the females were relaxed from night shifts and overtime demands. Married respondents were more stressed owing to their added, enhanced and dual responsibilities. Irregular working hours and sudden shift duty hinder them from paying adequate attention to their family life. Recreational activities can be organized, which will help the policemen to spend quality time with their family. Also, spouses can be mentored for how they can offer support to the stressed police personnel. It is noteworthy that the level of stress increased with increased educational attainment. Thus, postgraduate were the most stressed. In Himachal Pradesh, the eligibility criterion concerning educational qualification is Intermediate for the Constables. However, it was seen that majority of the constabulary was either graduates or postgraduates. The more educated might be forced to opt for a policing career due to declining other employment opportunities. The inability to utilize their higher education for having the edge over others might be causing frustration amongst them. The state police can explore the areas where their educational qualification can be utilized for the improved efficiency of the department with a little incentive. Lastly, individuals in younger age group and less experience were found to be more stressed. New entrants come into the profession with a set of expectations. The conflict between the expectation and reality results in stress amongst them. Effective training techniques, counselling sessions for the entrants can be organized frequently to understand their level of adaptability in the department. Henceforth, corrective

actions can be taken to help the police personnel adjust to the environment and avoid the occurrence of stress in them.

CONCLUSION

The present study found that there were brawny symptoms of high stress in the constabulary of Himachal Pradesh Police. So a strong need has been felt to develop an effective stress-busting mechanism in the police. The major stressors identified were Inter Role Distance, Resource Inadequacy & Role Overload. To control the stress, it is imperative for the organization to addresses the social needs of its employees, facilitating work-life balance. The authorities need to formulate work policies which are family-friendly and can enhance their productivity as well. There is a need to augment the staff strength and technology duly supplemented with skill updating. The existing resources and infrastructure needs to be enhanced for improved efficiency. Because of re-engineering and restructuring, the non-core functions can be outsourced gradually to reduce unnecessary workload. It will help constabulary to focus on critical duties like maintaining public order and safety, enforcing the law, detecting, preventing and investigating criminal activities on one side and also stay ready for emergent and abrupt developments like Corona Virus pandemic. Constabulary is the first point of contact between the department and the general public. Hence, initiatives to control their stress will keep them motivated, which will help to develop a positive and humane image of police in the eyes of common people.

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