

Management of Stress and Burnout of Police Personnel

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Police personnel as an occupation group endure particularly high levels of stress and burnout. The physiological, psychological and behavioural effects of stress and burnout in police can be severe which is a matter of great concern. The manifestation of stress and burnout in the form, of suicide and killings highlight the urgent need that these must be tackled. There are hundreds of exercises and techniques available to manage stress and burnout of the type experienced by police personnel. But not much effort has been made to enable the police personnel to deal with these problems. In the present study a multidimensional intervention was given to the volunteers from different ranks of police personnel (e.g. constables, head constables, assistant sub inspectors and inspectors). The control group was only exposed to physical relaxation training. Further, to assess the efficacy of these interventions, scores on all the dependent variables, taken prior to and after the intervention, have been compared. Repeated measure analysis of variance was applied. However, because of the lack of availability of this sample in future follow-up score have not been taken. RPMANOVA revealed the efficacy of multidimensional intervention in reducing job stress, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization score from pre to post assessment trials, regardless of the ranks of police personnel. All these findings have been interpreted and suggestions for future research have also been put forth.

Every human being has to deal with stress and there is considerable evidence suggesting that law enforcement officers are killed by more job-related stress than they are by criminals. For every police officer slain by an assailant in the line of duty, hundreds perhaps thousands succumb to the insidious, long-range effects of job-induced pressures. The stress imposed by the physical hazards of policing is well known. Few occupations require employees to face the kind of dangerous situations that police officers may encounter as part of their daily routines. Television shows have familiarized viewers with the more obvious dangers police officers encounter in protecting society from the law breakers, namely hot pursuits, stop-and-search situations, and domestic disturbance calls. These situations impose on officers a unique type of stress precipitated by the often-

violent nature of the risk involved. This constant exposure of police officers to physical danger puts them in a state of continual conflict between their instinctual tendency to avoid hazard and their obligation to face up to the risk. Their continuous observation of incidents of injury and death only serves to reinforce this conflict (Siwach, 2001a). The working conditions of the policeman are dismal in many aspects including social and human. His training is deficient in equipping him to meet the task pressures and public condemnation is bad enough to add to his unresolved frustration and overall work environment which is dehumanizing and deintellectualizing, resulting in stress, anger, burnout and anxiety and the process goes on (Siwach, 2001b). Hans Selye, the 'Father of Stress Research', suggested that police is a uniquely high stress

occupation group. The highly paradoxical nature of the policeman's job makes it like tightrope walking and deserves a closer scrutiny than is accorded to so far.

Police officers typically suffer a variety of physiological, psychological and behavioural stress effects. It has been suggested that particular attention should be given to occupational stress in policing, as its potential negative consequences affect society in more direct and critical ways than those stressed in most other occupations. Officers operating under severe and chronic stress may well be at greater risk of error, accidents and over-reaction that can compromise their performance, jeopardize public safety and pose significant liability costs to the organization (Institute of Heart Math, 1999; Colwell, 1988; Violanti, 1992; Mathur, 1999; Marshall, 1986).

In India, the policeman's work environment also does not escape from this reality. The presence of stress among policemen is felt but not recognized as the major enemy (Mathur, 1995). The media reports of police brutality, indiscipline and the mismanagement are harbinger to the job (Times of India 1993 Jan, The Tribune on Saturday, 2003 August).

Dhaliwal (2003), pointed out that most of the policemen in India remained overburdened with work and have to stay away from their families and children for long periods which often leads to family problems and disputes. Inability to handle domestic tension and job related stress may translate into rude behaviour on duty. It has also been observed that officers treat their subordinates in a shabby and insulting manner.

Further, job burnout has also emerged as a psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors in the job (Bakkar & Shaufeli, 2000; Burke, Greenglass, Schwarzer, 1996; Carlson & Thompson, 1995). Freudenberg (1974) first used the

term burnout to describe a syndrome consisting of a combination of long-lasting emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, absence of job involvement, dehumanization of recipients of one's service, and lowered job accomplishment. Constant exposure to society's interpersonal violence, negative or confrontational interactions with individuals, a sense of personal endangerment, fear of revenge from criminals, and subservience to an ambivalent, watchful public produce negative emotional repercussion that can affect police officers on a chronic basis (Burke, 1994; Sewell, 1983).

Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and has 3 key dimensions of overwhelming emotional exhaustion; feeling of cynicism (depersonalization) and detachment from the job; and a sense of ineffectiveness and failure (personal accomplishment) Maslach 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1986; Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

It is a sad commentary that as of now scant attention has been paid to the policemen and their well-being in India with the focus always on the job to be done. People have to last a lifetime and strenuous task such as policing eventually becomes too arduous and exacting. While emphasizing performance, organizations must keep in view the physical and mental health of the employees also.

Hence in view of the above, need for stress management for police personnel is highly apparent. Since the impact of stress and burnout can be cognitive, emotional, psychological and behavioural, a multidimensional programme perhaps the use of multidimensional intervention for the police personnel of the present study can be regarded as a first positive step in this direction.

Objective of the present study is to know the efficacy of a multidimensional intervention over only physical relaxation intervention for the reduction of job stress and burnout among the four ranks of police personnel. It was expected that Multidimensional intervention will be more effective than only relaxation training, in reducing the job related stress and the burnout potential of the police personnel.

Design:

A three factor mixed design 4x2x2 (AxBxC) with repeated measure on the third factor trials (C) has been used in this study. In this design factor A consists of four different ranks of police personnel taken from the ranks of Constables (A_1) Head Constables (A_2) Assistant Sub Inspectors (A_3) and Inspectors (A_4). Factor B type of intervention consists of two levels, multidimensional intervention (B_1) and only relaxation intervention (B_2). The group receiving only relaxation intervention was regarded as control group. Factor C, (trials of assessment) consists of two levels (C_1 – pre intervention trials and C_2 – post intervention trials) taken immediately after the completion of each intervention.

Multidimensional Intervention

A multidimensional intervention prepared for the present purpose comprised of 3 sessions of one hour each with at least one day gap between each session for homework assignments. Since emotional states are often expressed in terms of bodily reactions the phase-1 consisted of the stress management session including relaxation training plan, phase-II self management and mood management techniques and phase-III was the rehearsal of all the phases before a formal termination of this multidimensional programme. The police personnel were also asked to apply the coping skill they had learned in an imaginary situation during meditation stage of relaxation training plan.

The relaxation training programme which formed the first phase of multidimensional strategy was also given to control group for one day in the same way as done in the 1st phase of multidimensional intervention, so that they did not feel left out.

Method

Sample:

Only volunteer police personnel were selected for the present purpose. A notice was circulated in the various police stations in order to inform them about the upcoming stress management workshop. Those interested in attending the same were requested to give their names to the researcher on the date mentioned in the notice. Out of these volunteers, 20 from each of the following lower ranks (e.g. constables, head constables, assistant sub inspectors and inspectors) were selected and 10 police personnel from each of the four ranks were assigned randomly to treatment as well as control groups.

Tools:

Police Stress Questionnaire: The scale was developed by Ranta (2004) for the purpose of the present study. A pilot study was conducted to identify the type of stressful events that police personnel experience on the job, a sample of 280 police personnel from different categories were asked to list the most stressful events they had experienced at work. The questionnaire originally included 90 items, which was rated by 10 senior police officers. Finally, a 45-item questionnaire was developed to assess job related stressor for police personnel.

Maslach Burnout Inventory: It was prepared by Maslach and Jackson (1981); Maslach and Pines (1980) consists of 22 items that are divided into three sub scales (Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment). Each item is rated on both intensity and a frequency dimensions.

On a 7-point rating scale ranging from never to every day. Scores on each subscale appear to be very reliable, Alpha coefficients ranging from .71 to .90 for these subscales has been observed (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Procedure:

Police personnel were called in a small group for the workshop. Before starting the workshop they were asked to report their level of job stress and burnout on the various instruments given in this order. Then they were exposed to the Multidimensional intervention that included strategies for dealing with stress and burnout along with group discussions and brief home assignments. Before the commencement of the next phase, intervention of previous phase was rehearsed. After the completion of all phases again all the questionnaire were given. During each phase, effort was made to make sure that police personnel were clear about the procedures to be able to apply the strategies on their own. The relaxation training programme was given to control group for one day, and pre-post measures on dependent variables were taken, prior to and after the intervention.

Results

The t-test performed on the pre-treatment scores of the two intervention groups on all the dependent variables revealed no significant between- group differences among the police personnel of different ranks prior to the treatment. For the present purpose the scores was analyzed by three factor repeated measure analysis of variance mixed design 4x2x2 i.e. four ranks of police X two type of intervention X two assessment trials with repeated measure on one factor (trials). All the post hoc comparison among means was made by Newman Keul's Multiple Range Test (Bruning & Kintz, 1987).

Job Stress Scores

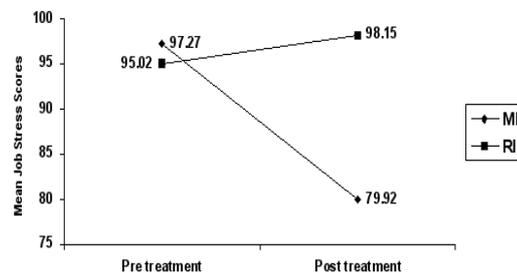
With regard to between group differences, the main effect of treatment has turned out to be significant $F(1,72) = 8.046$; $p < .001$. Post hoc comparison reveals the efficacy of multidimensional intervention (mean=79.92) over relaxation intervention (mean=98.15), to be significant ($p < .01$) levels, which is independent of the ranks of police personnel.

Table 1: Mean Stress Scores under Two Treatments and Two Assessment Trials

	Trials	MI	RI
Stress	Pre Treatment	97.27	95.02
	Post Treatment	79.92	98.15
Emotional Exhaustion	Pre Treatment	19.62	23.32
	Post Treatment	12.15	23.15

$p < .01$

Fig 1: Interaction of Assessment Trials x Treatment in Job Stress.



With regard to within group changes the main effect of trials has turned out to be significant $F(1,72) = 38.436$; $p < .001$, this was further qualified with a significant trial x treatment interaction $F(1,72)=79.630$; $p < .001$. Perusal of Table 1 as well as Fig.1 reveals that while the pre treatment job stress scores multidimensional intervention (MI) group as well as only relaxation intervention (RI) differs significantly from each other. At post treatment trials, the mean job stress scores of multidimensional intervention group are significantly lower ($p < .01$) than their only relaxation counterparts. Rather non significant

increase in job stress scores is evident for relaxation intervention group.

Burnout Scores

The scores of three aspects of burnout were separately analyzed and the significant results were perceived only for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

(a) Emotional–Exhaustion

With regard to between group differences, the main effect of treatment (T) has been turned out to be significant $F(1,72) = 15.667$; $p < .001$. Post hoc comparison reveals the efficacy of multidimensional intervention (mean = 12.15) over relaxation intervention (mean = 23.15), to be significant at ($p < .01$). Which is independent of the ranks of police personnel.

With regard to within group change, the main effect of assessment trials (TR) has turned out to be significant, $F(1,72) = 11.912$; $p < .001$. Which is also further qualified with a significant trials x treatment (TR x T), $F(1,72) = 10.847$; $p < .001$.

Table 2: Mean Emotional Exhaustion Scores under Treatment and Trials

Trials	Multidimensional Intervention	Relaxation Intervention
Pre Treatment	19.62	23.32
Post Treatment	12.15	23.15

Fig 2: Interaction of Trials x Treatment (TR x T) in Emotional Exhaustion Scores.

Perusal of table 2 and fig. 2 reveals that at pre treatment and post treatment trials, the emotional exhaustion scores of police personnel under relaxation intervention are significantly higher ($p < .01$) than their counterparts exposed to multidimensional intervention. A significant decrease in emotional exhaustion scores only evident for Multidimensional intervention group.

(b) Depersonalization

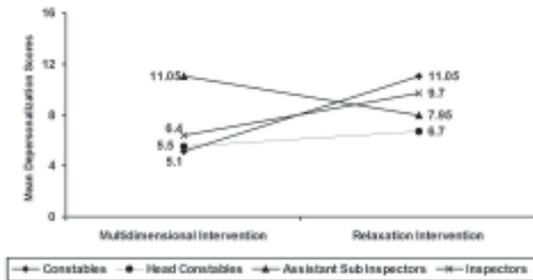
With regard to between groups difference the main effect of Rank has turned out to be significant $F(3,72) = 3.001$; $p < .05$ where the mean depersonalization scores of constables, head constables, assistant sub inspectors and inspectors are 8.02, 5.05, 9.50 and 8.27 respectively. The post hoc comparison of means reveal that while the mean depersonalization scores of constables, assistant sub inspectors and inspectors are higher than head constables. Only assistant sub inspectors are reporting significantly higher ($p < .05$) depersonalization scores than their head constable counterparts, none of the other differences have turned out to be significant.

Further, the main effect of treatment conditions has also turned out to be significant $F(1,72) = 5.139$; $p < .05$ which is further qualified with a significant rank x treatment interaction effect $F(3,72) = 3.72$; $p < .05$ The post hoc comparison of mean of depersonalization scores under two treatment conditions for all the four ranks of police personnel is reported in Table 3 and Fig.3.

Table 3: Mean Depersonalization Score under Rank and Treatment

	Cons	HC	ASI	Inspector
Multidimensional Intervention	5.10	5.5	11.05	6.40
Relaxation Intervention	11.05	6.70	7.95	9.70

Fig. 3 Intervention of Rank x Treatment in depersonalization scores.



It is evident that while the mean depersonalization scores of constables, head constables and inspectors under multidimensional intervention are lower than their relaxation intervention counterparts, except for constables none of these difference have turned to be significant ($p < .05$). Further, with regard to assistant sub inspectors it can be seen that while the depersonalization scores of those under multidimensional intervention are higher than their relaxation intervention counterparts. This difference is not significant.

Also Under Multidimensional intervention mean depersonalization scores of assistant sub inspectors are significantly higher ($p < .05$) than those of only constables and not for the police personnel of other ranks. Under relaxation intervention while depersonalization scores of constables are higher than head constables, assistant sub inspectors and inspectors but none of these difference have approached significance level.

With regard to within group changes the main effect of trials has not turned out to be significant. However, rank x trial interaction has turned out to be significant $F(3,72) = 3.61$; $p < .02$. The mean depersonalization scores at two assessment trials and four types of ranks vide Table 4 and Fig.4 reveals that at pre assessment trials not only depersonalization mean scores of assistant sub inspectors are significantly higher ($p < .05$)

than their constable and head constable counterparts. A significant ($p < .05$) pre to post treatment decrease in depersonalization scores is only evident for assistant sub inspectors. None of the other differences have turned out to be significant. However, at post assessment trials the depersonalization scores of police personnel of all four ranks do not differ significantly from each other.

Table 4: Mean Depersonalization Scores under Four Type of Ranks and Two Assessment Trials

Trials	Cons	HC	ASI	Inspector
Pre Treatment	6.65	4.00	12.10	8.30
Post Treatment	9.50	6.10	6.90	8.25

$p < .01$

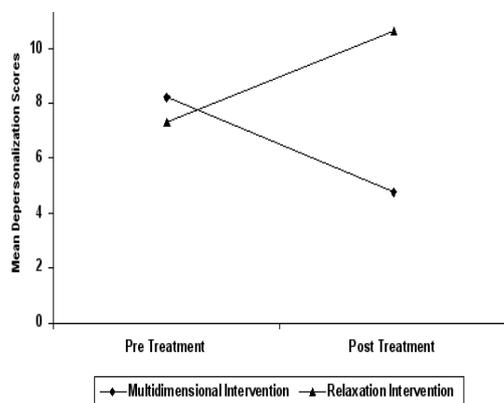
Fig 4: Interaction of Rank x Trials in Depersonalization Scores.

Further, a trial x treatment (TR x T) interaction has also turned out to be significant $F(1,72) 12.663$; $p < .001$. Post hoc comparison for two treatment conditions are vide Table 5 and Fig. 5 reveals that while the pre treatment mean depersonalization scores of police personnel in both the intervention are not significantly different from each other. A significant pre to post decrease is evident only for the group under Multidimensional intervention.

Table 5: Mean Depersonalization Scores under Two Treatment and Two Assessment Trials

Trials	Multidimensional Intervention	Relaxation Intervention
Pre Treatment	8.22	7.30
Post Treatment	4.75	10.62

Fig 5: Interaction of Two Assessment Trials x Two Treatment (TR x T) in Depersonalization Scores.



Further, while at post treatment trials the mean depersonalization scores of police personnel under relaxation interaction are significantly higher ($p < .01$) than their counterparts exposed to multidimensional intervention. The pre to post increase in depersonalization scores of this group is not significant. None of the between or within group differences have turned out to be significant on Personal accomplishment scores.

Discussion

For police personnel, inability to effectively manage stress has its most dangerous consequences in the line of duty. Police work often places officers in situations where reaction, speed, coordination and the capacity to make rapid decisions and accurate, judgements under pressure is

critical, and inefficient mental and emotional responses to stress can significantly impair these abilities (Arnsten, 1998). In the extreme, stress can cause officers to lose balance and composure to the degree that they employ inappropriate or excessive force in dealing with subjects (Moore & Donohue, 1976). At the psychological level, the stress of police work may result in chronic negative emotions such as anger, anxiety or depression, which can eventually lead to psychological burnout or emotional exhaustion (Gaines & Jermier, 1983; Vena, Violanti, Marshall & Fiedler, 1986; Burke, Shearer & Deszca, 1984).

Police officers operating under severe and chronic stress may well be at greater risk of error and over-reaction that can compromise their performance and public safety. The unrealistic expectations imposed by this occupational culture discourage officers from admitting to feeling stress and from openly expressing negative emotions. Thus, while police receive ample training in the theoretical knowledge and technical skills required to perform their jobs and take effective action in an emergency situation, most receive little if any training in the self-management skills to help them quickly regain psychological and physiological equilibrium after the intense challenges of their work. The unusually stringent demands for self control, compounded by the unavailability of effective strategies for inner self-management becomes an added stressor in its own right for police (Abernathy, 1995; Ganster, Pagon & Duffy, 1996). It is clear that practical stress management techniques are needed not only to help officers remain more balanced during and after the acute stresses of their jobs, but also to take action to better manage and seek real solutions to the chronic stress related to organizational and family issues.

The multidimensional intervention of the present study was prepared by keeping all these aspects in mind, which dealt with the

symptoms of stress and burnout. The efficacy multidimensional intervention as a coping strategy for the management of job related stress is clearly evident for police personnel of all ranks. However, as expected relaxation intervention did not turnout to be effective in the reduction of job stress scores, for any of police personnel under any rank.

In the present study relaxation technique was given only for about an hour and no further follow up was given on this intervention. In many similar studies when relaxation technique has been used singly or for a short period of time, it has failed to show it's efficacy (Sud & Prabha, 1996; Ranta, 2004).

Thus while selecting this intervention no results were expected. The intervention was given to group of police officers who were regarded as control group, so that they do not feel left out in the workshop. The lack of efficacy of relaxation training procedure supports the proposal by Goldfried and Trier (1974). That learning and transfer of relaxation as general coping skill perhaps take greater time (see also Synder & Deffenbacher, 1976). Thus the result of the present study with regard to relaxation intervention is not unexpected.

Emotional exhaustion refers to feeling of being emotionally overextended and depleted of one's emotional resources. The major sources of this exhaustion are work overload and personal conflict at work. Workers feel drained and used up, without any source of replenishment. They lack enough energy to face another day or another person in need. The emotional exhaustion component represents the basic individual stress dimensions of burnout. The police officer is often exposed to shift schedules that disrupt the normal sleep pattern and social life. They are also exposed to authoritarian management style having poor personal relationship with supervisor. Further lack of adequate planning and resources, lack of

autonomy in performing duties and lack of recognition for work accomplishment and excessive paper work are enough to make them emotionally exhausted (Brown & Campbell, 1983; Cooper, Davidson & Robinson, 1982). The significant reduction in the emotional exhaustion scores of police personnel regardless of their rank from pre to post treatment trials clearly highlights the efficacy of multidimensional intervention for police personnel of present sample. However as pointed out earlier lack of efficacy of relaxation intervention is in the expected direction. Person's frame of reference, motives, competency or stress tolerance plays a dominant role in determining coping strategies (Kobasa, 1979). When an individual objectively appraises the situation, works out a solution and decides on an appropriate strategy, takes an action and evaluates feed back, person can experience enhanced perceived coping and cognitive control and decreased perceived vulnerability to assault, and reduction in the incidence of intrusive negative thinking and anxiety arousal. This highlights the need for such training.

Depersonalization refers to a negative, cynical or excessively detached response to other people, which often includes a loss of idealism. It usually develops in response to the over-load or emotional exhaustion and is self-protective at first-an emotional buffer of 'detached concern.' But the risk is that the detachment can turn into dehumanization. The depersonalization component represents the interpersonal dimension of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1997), which could attempt to put distance between oneself and service recipients by actively ignoring the qualities that makes them unique and engaging people (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Distancing is such an immediate reaction to exhaustion that a strong relationship from exhaustion to cynicism (depersonalization) across a wide range of organizational and occupational settings is evident. The police

force is perhaps one of the organizations within which the stress experienced by employees receives the least acknowledgment. Some have suggested that police personnel work in a professional environment that encourages emotional detachment from others as well as from their own feelings. (Blackmore, 1978; Coman, 1990; Sewell, 1981). Lee and Ashforth (1990) argued that depersonalization constitutes one form of defensive behaviour defined as reactive and protective actions intended to avoid an unwanted demand or reducing a perceived threat. Thus depersonalization has been predicted to be associated with psychological strain and with escape as a method of coping. (Huby, Gerry, McKinstry, Porter, Shaw & Wrate, 2002) Multi dimensional intervention has turned out to be effective in the significant reduction of depersonalization scores from pre treatment to post treatment trials. The depersonalization scores of police personnel under relaxation intervention increase from pre treatment to post treatment trials, regardless of ranks. But this increase is not significant.

The police personnel under stress continue to deteriorate until they reach the final stage of burnout i.e. feeling hopeless, think continually of escape routes, are often late for work, and are forgetful, withdrawn and drained and lose all interest in others. Perhaps all this has been responsible for slight increase in the depersonalization scores for those exposed to relaxation intervention. The one day exposure to this kind of training is perhaps deteriorating for a person, if a person is unable to use the tactics, in the time of need. Perhaps the realization that "had he known it fully, he could have used them in the present situation" can be very frustrating for the officer.

Reduced personal accomplishment refers to a decline in feelings of competence and productivity at work. Lee and Ashforth (1996) and Maslach et al. (2001) pointed out

that the work situation with chronic overwhelming demands that contribute to exhaustion and cynicism is likely to erode one's sense of effectiveness. Generally inefficacy appears to develop in parallel than sequentially (Leiter, 1993). If it is so than significant decrease in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization should have also resulted in increase in personal accomplishment. However, positive result of Multidimensional intervention was not perceived for personal accomplishment scores of burnout. Perhaps, as observed by Maslach et al. (2001), reduced personal accomplishment (decline in feeling of competence) is more related to lack of relevant resources. The lowered sense of self-efficacy has been linked to inability to cope with demands of the job and it can be exacerbated by lack of opportunity to develop professionally. Also, persons with reduced personal accomplishment are unhappy and dissatisfied workers and they have tendency to evaluate themselves negatively (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Since personal accomplishment component represents the self-evaluation dimension of burnout, it is not possible to come to correct self-evaluation immediately after the intervention perhaps an opportunity of further exposure to their job was required for better conclusion. A follow-up assessment would have thrown better light on this aspect of burnout thus much future research is recommended.

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IAAP- PPA Best Psychologist Award: A certificate will be given every year for the outstanding Psychologist of the year

Best Educationist Award: A certificate and cash award will be given every year with the PPA specific guidelines.

Prof. A. Gnanam Best Teacher Award: A certificate will be given every year for the outstanding teacher of the year

Best Teacher Award: A certificate will be given every year for the best teacher of the year. This award was instituted by Prof. Mamota Das