

“Police Investigators” Stress Study

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Keywords

Police, Investigators, Stress, Study.

Abstract

Stress is inherent in uniform services. There have been several studies conducted on officers in different parts of the world and some in India, which reveal that the present working conditions and several other factors have lead to increased level of stress among officers.

Introduction

STRESS at the work place is quite common these days and it has become a fact of life inevitable in this age of intense competition. However, stress is inherent in uniform services. There have been several studies conducted on officers in different parts of the world and some in India, which reveal that the present working conditions and several other factors have lead to increased level of stress among officers. A study by Rakesh Kumar Singh (2007) conducted on Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) found that the situation becomes worse because of environmental factors like poor living conditions, odd and prolonged duty hours, toxic leadership and negative image in society and media.

There are several reasons attributed to Stress among officers. For example, the finding of study at Waghodiya police station in Gujarat by Kalpesh Naik in 2012, suggests that there is a significant difference in the level of stress among police personnel and the sources of stress vary as per their nature of profile, shifts, designation, role and responsibilities. Another study conducted by Sibnath Deb and others (2005)

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on West Bengal police officers found that powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions, un-profitability and political pressures are main causes of stress.

In 2005, S.R. Mehta and others conducted a study for The Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D), on Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF). They reported that the causes of dissatisfaction among officers are excessive workload, prolonged duty hours, denial of leave, bad treatment by superiors/peers, poor living conditions.

The above studies show that there is substantial awareness of stress and its related problems affecting their personnel. But the fact remains that the in-house stress coping mechanisms in different CAPFs is either inadequate or failed to operate effectively at field level.

Police Radio Training School (PRTS) Indore therefore took the initiative to devise effective strategy for Madhya Pradesh Police to cope with Stress. The research team from International Institute of Professional Studies, Devi Ahilya University, Indore conducted this research for PRTS. A survey was designed and conducted for studying “factors that cause stress” among officers (Sub- Inspectors, Inspectors, DSPs/CSPs), of Madhya Pradesh Police, working in the field as well as reserve force. The following sections of the study describe the Objectives, Methodology, Findings and recommendations of the study.

Objectives

As mentioned, this study was undertaken jointly by PRTS, Indore and from International Institute of Professional Studies, Devi Ahilya University, Indore. PRTS conducts training sessions for the officers of different ranks and profiles on several topics. Officers attending these training sessions are from all over Indore Range. Thus, it provided a good opportunity to interact with many officers on a common platform. Further, during such training sessions, the environment in general is calm and learning oriented, and it differs from the daily complex routine of officers. Thus, it seemed to be a suitable opportunity to study their perception about their job and assess their perception of the factors which cause stress. At the same time, the study intended to find out feasible solutions to reduce stress levels. The specific objectives of the study were as follows:-

- To study the perception of Police officers towards their duty.
- To study the stress level among police officers

- To study the major factors causing stress among police officers.
- To identify the effective stress relieving techniques for police officers.

Methodology

This study was descriptive in nature. The population for study comprised of all Police officers in Indore Range. The sample for the study was selected purposively. All the trainees that attended training programs at PRTS during the period May, 2012 to September, 2012 were considered for responses.

The Questionnaire

A specially designed questionnaire was used to seek response. The questionnaire includes some factors, which are likely to cause stress among police officers. These factors were identified on the basis of literature review, personal interviews with various officers and other published and unpublished sources of information. These factors broadly classified in two aspects: Individual stressors and System based stressors. The questionnaire was designed in four parts which are described as follows:

- The first part was to gather the basic demographic information of the respondents
- The second part included open-ended items for seeking the likes and dislikes of respondents towards Police Duty.
- The third part was focused on measuring the “Perception” of officers towards their duty. This was close ended and had more than 40 questions which reflected both positive and negative aspects of Police Duty. The response was sought on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”.
- The fourth and the last part tried to identify the techniques adopted by officers to fight the stress that they experience.

Sample Size

In all 238 respondents participated in the study. The data thus collected was coded and computerized for further analysis.

Data Analysis

The data thus collected was analyzed using various statistical tools. The SPSS software was used for performing the analysis.

Findings and Discussions

The present study focused on measuring the stress level of police officers, studying their perception towards their duty, identifying the factors that affect their stress level. The study also tried to analyze these three things for different levels of officers.

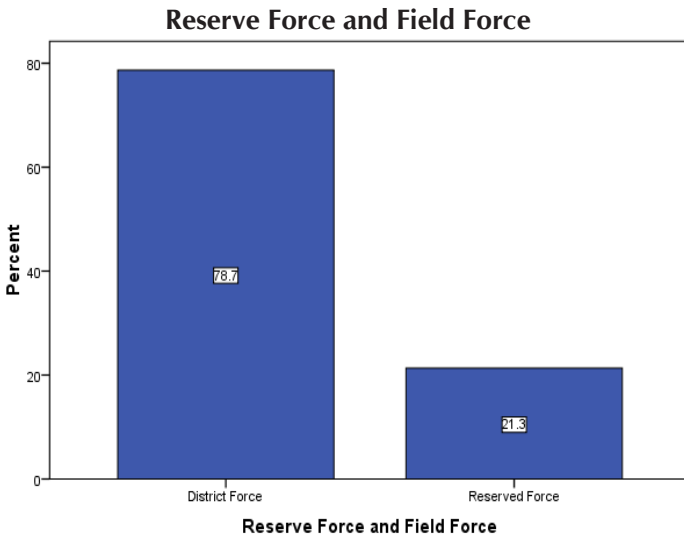
Descriptive

The following charts show the distribution of respondents across various demographic variables.

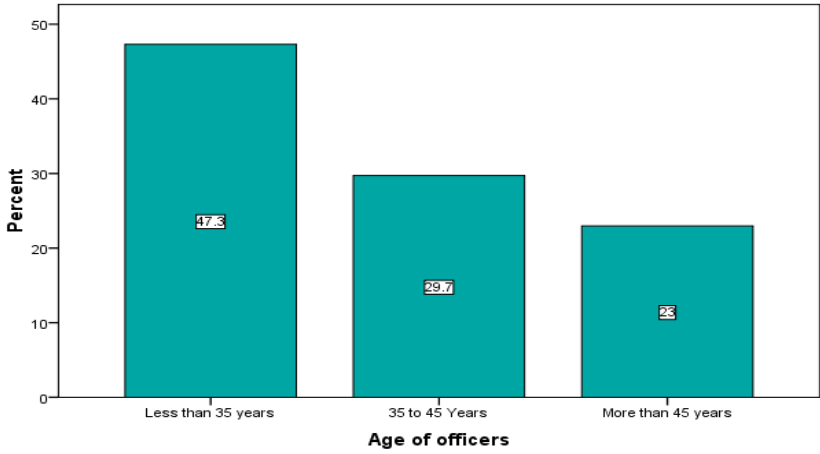
The cross sections of respondents were created on the basis of

- Their Duty – Reserved Force or Field Force
- Age of the Officers
- Years of service in Police
- Number of Postings
- Gender

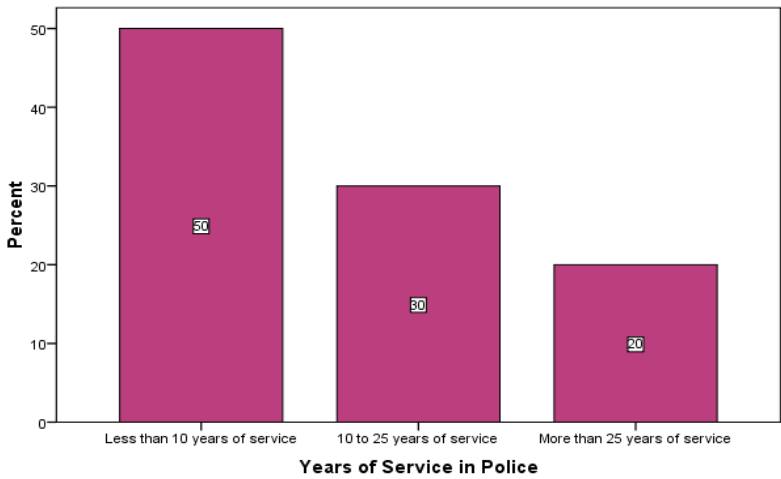
The following five charts show the distribution of respondents across these variables.



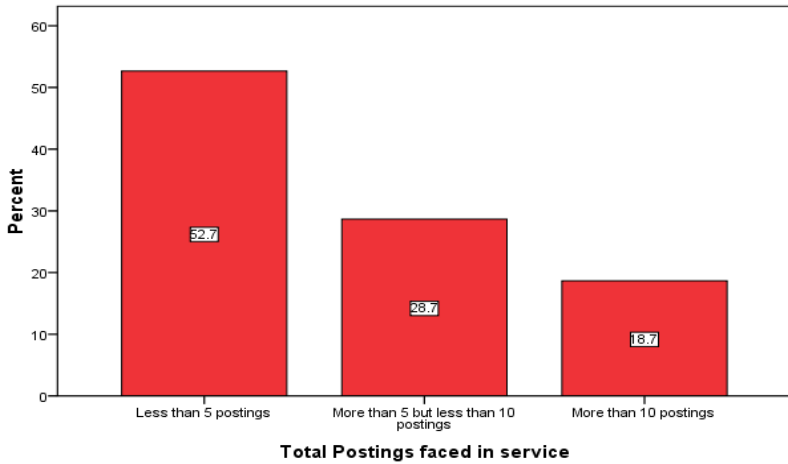
Age of officers



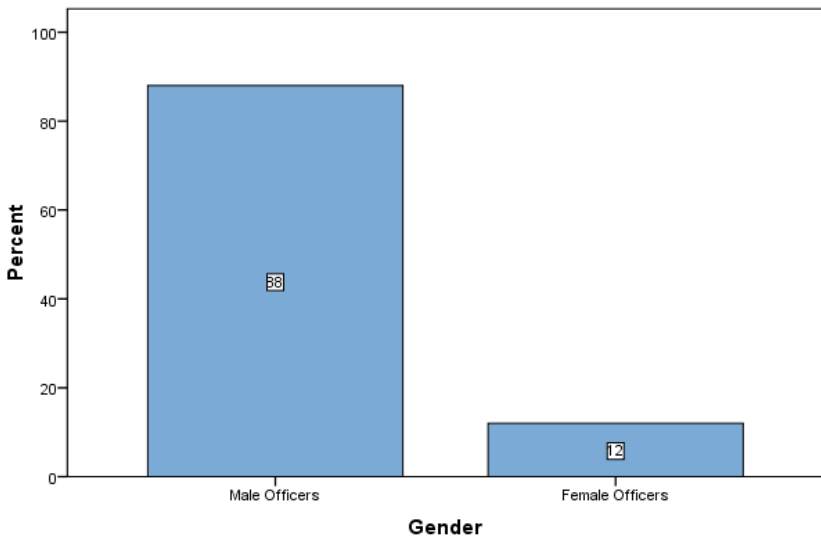
Years of Service in Police



Total Postings faced in service

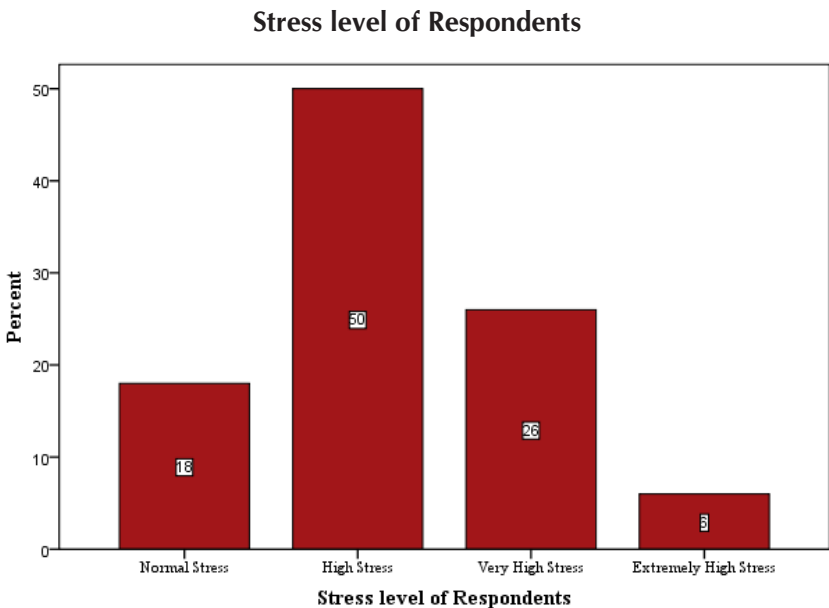


Gender



Measurement of Stress Levels

The Stress Level of respondents was measured using a 12 questions scale of "Perceived Stress". The scoring of the responses was done on the basis of stress experienced by respondents in the past one month. The analysis of stress levels of respondents revealed that more than 80% of the respondents have experienced "High Stress" in the past one month. This is a seriously alarming situation. Further, 26 % respondents faced "Very High Stress" while 6 % respondents faced "Extremely High Stress". The following figure shows the percentage of respondents in category of stress levels.



Factor Analysis for Perception of Police Officers towards Police Duty

The next step in the analysis was to find out the "Perception" of Police officers towards their duty. The questions that were asked to them included positive as well as negative statements. Their response was taken on a 5 point Likert scale. The data thus obtained was subjected to factor analysis.

The reliability of the scale used to measure perception was measured through “Chronbach’s Alpha”. A alpha value of 0.75 % indicated high reliability of the measure.

The factor analysis explained 46% of total variance and on the basis of eigen values total 6 factors were generated. Out of these two factors revealed positive perception while four factors revealed negative perception. These six factors were:-

Positive Perception

- Sensitivity & Concern shown by the Department
- Pride of being a Police Man

Negative Perception

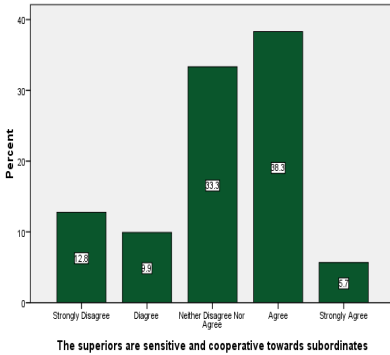
- Challenges of the Job
- System Generated Challenges
- External Pressures Personal and Behavioral Challenges of the Job

The following two tables describe the factors and elements in each factor.

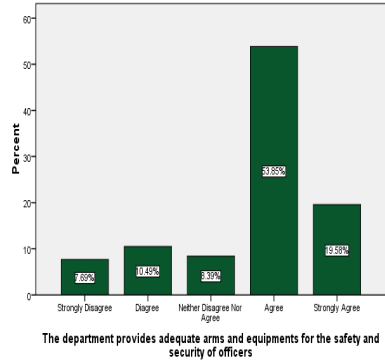
Factors which reveal Positive Perception towards Police Duty		
Factor and Items	Percentage of variance Explained	Cumulative Percent
Sensitivity & Concern shown by the Department		
Sensitivity and cooperativeness of superiors	6.459	40.567
Adequacy of arms and equipments provided by department		
Supportive work environment in the department		
Sufficiency of perks and other facilities provided by the department		
Image of Police in the eyes of common man		
Sufficiency of training provided by the department		
Pride of being a Police Man		
Pride and influence in being an officer.	6.064	46.631
Satisfaction of protecting and serving the society		
Power vested in the post		
High esteem associated with being an officer		
Special attention received as an officer in uniform		
Facilities given by police department		
Increase in efficiency of officers as a result of training imparted		

The above positive factors were further elaborated to explain each single variable in that factor. The first factor, which creates positive perception of Police, is Sensitivity & Concern shown by the Department. The following graphs elaborate these variables.

The superiors are sensitive and cooperative towards subordinates



The department provides adequate arms and equipments for the safety and security of officers

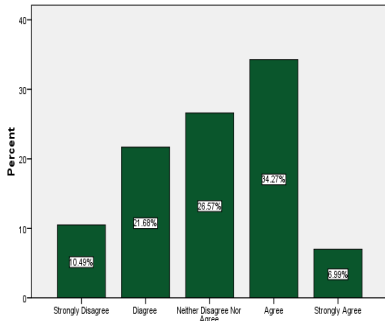


Highest positive perception of police is built among the subordinates if the superiors are sensitive and cooperative towards subordinates.

Sensitivity & Concern shown by the Department
Percentage of response to each of the elements

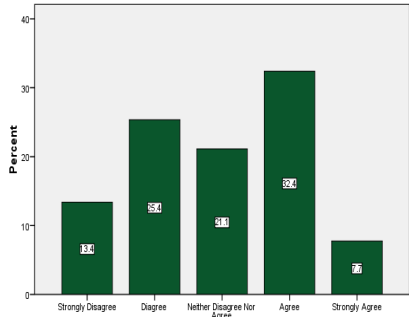
Perception	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The superiors are sensitive and cooperative towards subordinates	12.0	9.3	31.3	36.0	5.3
The department provides adequate arms and equipments for the safety and security of officers	7.3	10.0	8.0	51.3	18.7
There is supportive work environment in the department	10.0	20.7	25.3	32.7	6.7
The perks and other facilities provided by the department are good	12.7	24.0	20.0	30.7	7.3
The image of Police in the eyes of common man is satisfactory	5.3	32.7	17.3	35.3	4.7
The training provided by the department is sufficient to meet all the needs of officers	8.7	32.0	14.0	33.3	6.7

There is supportive work environment in the department



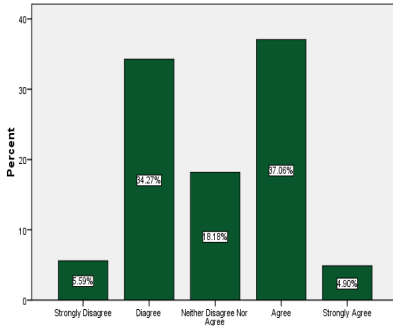
There is supportive work environment in the department

The perks and other facilities provided by the department are good



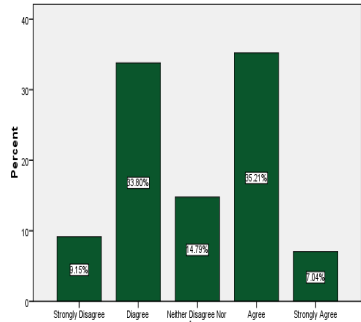
The perks and other facilities provided by the department are good

The image of Police in the eyes of common man is satisfactory



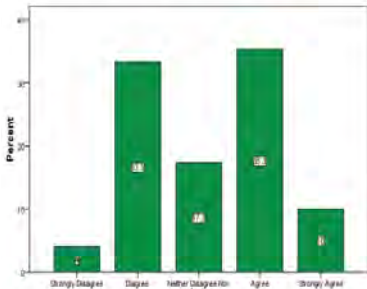
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The training provided by the department is sufficient to meet all the needs of officers



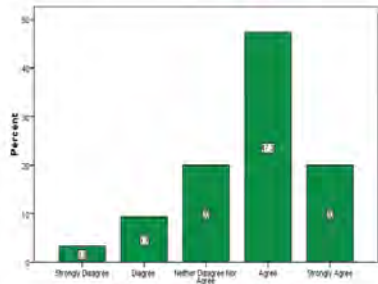
The training provided by the department is sufficient to meet all the needs of officers

There are facilities given by police department



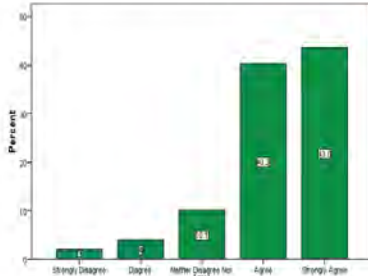
There are facilities given by police department

There is immense power vested in the post



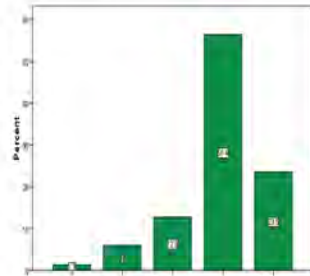
There is immense power vested in the post

There is immense satisfaction of protecting and serving the society



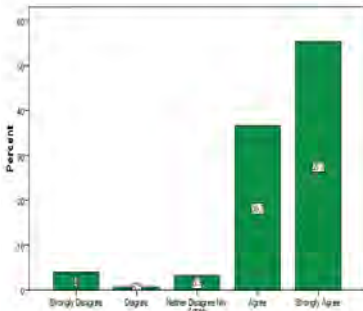
There is immense satisfaction of protecting and serving the society

There is enough pride and influence in being an officer.



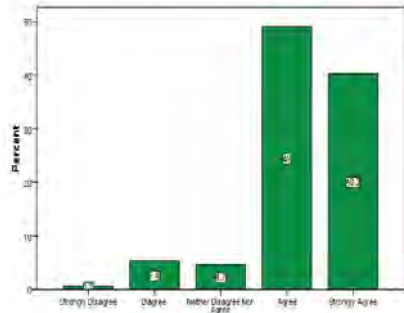
There is enough pride and influence in being an officer.

There is high esteem associated with being an officer



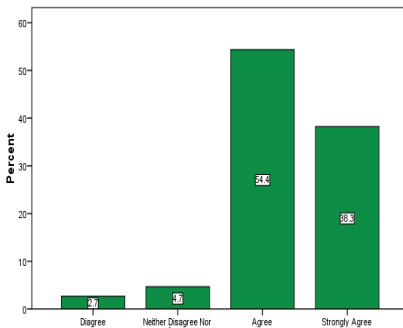
There is high esteem associated with being an officer

As an officer in uniform, I get special attention when I go for any work.



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The efficiency of officers increases as a result of training imparted



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Pride of being a Police Man

Percentage of response to each of the elements

Perception	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
There are facilities given by police department	4.0	33.3	17.3	35.3	10.0
There is high esteem associated with being an officer	4.0	0.7	3.3	36.7	55.3
There is immense satisfaction of protecting and serving the society	2.0	4.0	10.0	40.0	43.3
There is immense power vested in the post	3.3	9.3	20.0	47.3	20.0
As an officer in uniform, I get special attention when I go for any work	0.7	5.3	4.7	48.7	40.0
There is enough pride and influence in being an officer.	1.3	6.0	12.7	56.0	23.3
The efficiency of officers increases as a result of training imparted	0.0	2.7	4.7	54.0	38.0

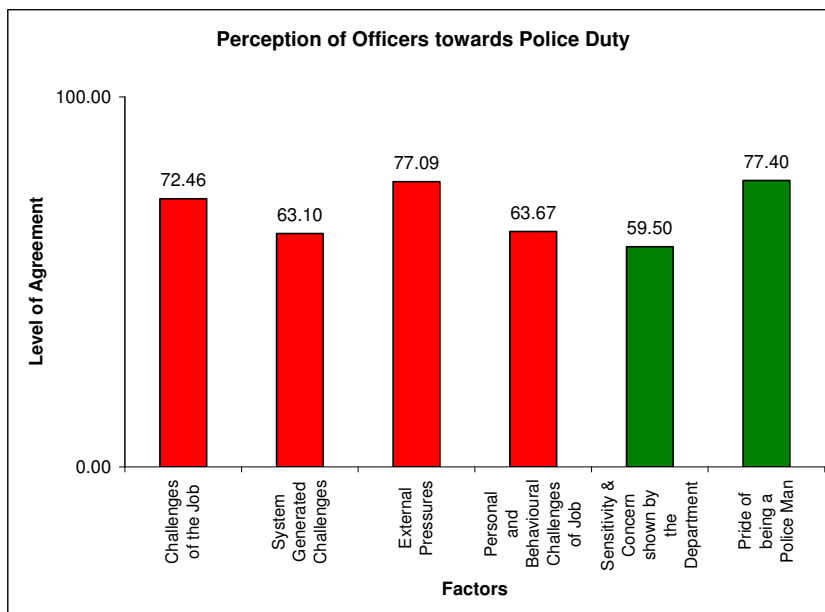
Factors which reveal Positive Perception towards Police Duty		
Factor and Items	Percentage of variance Explained	Cumulative Percent
Challenges of the Job		
Bureaucratic hassles in day to day working	9.208	9.208
Long and stretching VVIP duties		
Difficulty in maintaining social life in this duty		
Lack of time for family		
Excess negativity to be handled in terms of crimes and criminals		
Lack of consideration shown by courts to police officers.		
Cross-examination of officers by court		
Working on festivals		
Difficulties in Interaction and coordination with other departments like Court, Goerettinsigc ,a leotcn g with the team and working together is a big challenge		

System Generated Challenges		
Lack of relevant and suitable training provided by department	8.67	17.878
Negative perception of common man for Police.		
Leniency of courts toward the criminals		
Insensitive peers in department		
Anger generated by overall working condition of department		
Problems in scheduling appearances in court		
External Pressures		
Challenges to learn new technology like ICT etc.	8.473	26.351
Political pressures affecting normal working in the department		
Pressure of being transferred to unfavorable location		
Pressure of possible delay in the promotions		
Excessive workload on most of the days		
Long work timings		
Salary insufficient to meet basic expenses		
Lack of proper infrastructure in the department		
Pear pressure to perform good / bad		
Personal and Behavioral Challenges of the Job		
Direct and indirect privileges for being an officer.	7.757	34.108
Physical problems affecting efficiency at duty		
Difficulty in coping with attitude of co-officers		
Family problems affecting concentration on work		
Inability to maintain a healthy and harmonic work environment		
Efforts to remain cooperative and sensitive towards subordinates		

The mean scores of each factor were further evaluated. Following table shows the scores. A high score indicates strong agreement towards that factor, whereas, a low score indicates "Disagreement" towards that factor. Thus, it can be seen that among positive factors, the "Pride of Being a Police Man" has highest agreement with 77.4%, while, the agreement for "Sensitivity and Concern shown by department" has lower agreement with 59.5%. Among the negative factors,

“External Pressures” and “Challenges of Job” were found to be highly affecting factors with scores above 70%. All the four negative factors had high scores above 60%.

Descriptive Statistics for entire sample		
	Mean Score	Percent Score
Positive Factors		
Pride of being a Police Man	19.35	77.40
Sensitivity & Concern shown by the Department	17.85	59.50
Negative Factors		
External Pressures	34.69	77.09
Challenges of the Job	36.23	72.46
Personal and Behavioral Challenges of the Job	19.1	63.67
System Generated Challenges	18.93	63.10
A high score indicates strong agreement to the factor		



Relationship Between Stress Level And Perception Towards Police Duty

Regression results for "Perception Factors" and "Stress Level"		
	Beta	Significance level
Positive Factors		
Sensitivity & Concern shown by the Department	-0.455	0.000
Pride of being a Police Man	-0.273	0.009
Negative Factors		
Challenges of the Job	0.206	0.109
System Generated Challenges	-0.066	0.538
External Pressures	-0.056	0.623
Personal & Behavioral Challenges of the Job	0.374	0.001
Dependent Variable: Stress level of Respondents		

The next and the very important step in the analysis was to explore a relationship if any between the factors affecting "Perception" and the "Stress level" of the respondents. For this, a regression was run with the six "perception variables" as independent variable and "Stress Level" as dependent variable.

The above table shows the result for regression. A look at the beta value yields interesting results which are summarized as follows:-

- **Positive Factors:** "Sensitivity & Concern shown by the Department", "Pride of being a Police Man" have a **negative and significant beta value**. This means, that higher the "Sensitivity & Concern shown by the Department", lower will be the "Stress Level" and Higher the "Pride of being a Police Man", lower will be the "Stress Level"
- **Negative Factors:**
 - o "Challenges of the Job" and "Personal & Behavioral Challenges of the Job" are **positively and significantly related** to "Stress Level". This means that higher challenges and higher personal and behavioral issues cause increased stress levels.
 - o "System Generated Challenges" and "External Pressures" are negatively related to "Stress Level". But these two factors were not found to be significant in the result.

The third part of the study was to identify actual stress coping techniques adopted by police respondents. For this, the respondents were first asked to write the five biggest stressors. This was an open-ended question.

The open-ended responses given by the respondents for five biggest stressors were studied and a content analysis was done. Following is a summary of responses. The responses received for the biggest stress creating things were categorized in to 7 broad actions. These were:-

- Lack of time for family
- Lack of financial Resources
- Disturbance in family life due to frequent transfers
- Attitude of fellow policemen
- Behavior of Senior Officers
- Political interference in their work
- Delay in Promotions and other due rewards

The above categories were found to be reflecting the similar factors, which were identified in the "Perception" study in the previous section of the study. A look at these factors reveals that out of seven, two factors i.e., Attitude of fellow policemen and Behavior of senior police officers relate to the work culture prevailing in Police department. And this problem was found to be common among officers at all levels. This also indicates that if the Police organisation reworks upon its leadership model, the benefits can be percolated to the lowest

Strategies Adopted by Policemen to cope up with stress

And in the last but very important part of the questionnaire, they were asked to choose their strategy to cope up with stress. They were given 5 options for "stress management techniques" and were asked to choose any one.

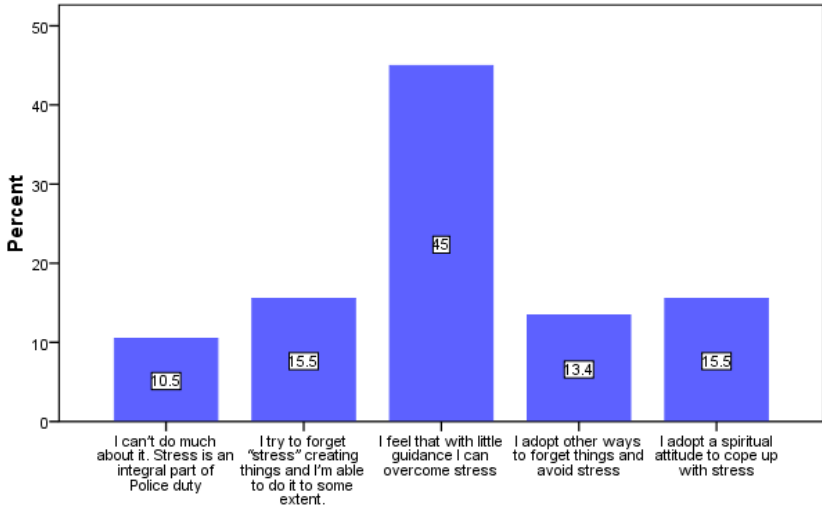
The options given for "Stress management techniques were as follows:-

- I can't do much about it. Stress is an integral part of Police duty
- I try to forget "stress" creating things and I'm able to do it to some extent.

- I feel that with little guidance I can overcome stress.
- I adopt other ways to forget things and avoid stress
- I adopt a spiritual attitude to cope up with stress.

The above responses were analyzed on the basis of percentage analysis.

Strategies Adopted by Respondents for coping up with Stress



Strategies Adopted by Respondents for coping up with Stress

Revisiting "Leadership Model" for reducing 'Stress Level' among Police

The study revealed two very important aspects, which can go a long way in reducing stress level among police officials. The first point that needs to be noted is that 45% of the Police men felt that with a little guidance and support, it is possible for them to overcome stress. This indicates a ray of hope for the police department. There is need to explore ways and means to provide support to their men.

All the positive variables were further explored for a "cause and effect relationship" with "stress level". As mentioned in the previous section, there were 13 variables falling into two broad categories as follows:-

- **Sensitivity & Concern shown by the Department**
 - Sensitivity and cooperativeness of superiors

- o Adequacy of arms and equipments provided by department
- o Supportive work environment in the department
- o Sufficiency of perks and other facilities provided by the department
- o Image of Police in the eyes of common man
- o Sufficiency of training provided by the department
- **Pride of being a Police Man**
 - o Pride and influence in being an officer.
 - o Satisfaction of protecting and serving the society
 - o Power vested in the post
 - o High esteem associated with being an officer
 - o Special attention received as an officer in uniform
 - o Facilities given by police department
 - o Increase in efficiency of officers as a result of training imparted

A look at the above 13 variables which have a positive effect on reducing Stress Level of Police officers, shows that, there are 4 variables which connect to the Leadership and Work Culture in the Police Department. These are:-

- o Sensitivity and cooperativeness of superiors
- o Supportive work environment in the department
- o Sufficiency of training provided by the department
- o Increase in efficiency of officers as a result of training imparted

The remaining variables were also found to have some positive association but they pertain to Policy matters and external image of the Police.

These four variables are unique in terms of feasibility for immediate adoption by Senior Police Officers as they play leadership role in the department. These four variables were regressed with "Stress Level" of respondents to see if there is any cause and effect relationship between them. Out of these four variables, only one variable "**Sensitivity and**

cooperative attitude of Superiors towards subordinates”, was found to be significantly, negatively related to “Stress Level”. This indicates that, higher the sensitivity and cooperative attitude of Seniors towards their subordinates, lower will be the “stress levels”.

Cause and Effect Relationship between Stress Level and Superiors Behavior and Work Environment in the department		
	Beta Coefficient	Sig.
(Constant)		
The superiors are sensitive and cooperative towards subordinates	-.262	.004

This is quite a significant finding. The police department follows an imperial, authoritative style of leadership to a very large extent. The superiors are seen to be autocratic in their work style. While this is felt to be justified owing to the high level of discipline expected from the police force, but, it reduces the basic human sensitivity expected towards fellow human beings. The study revealed that this autocratic behavior, many times, leads to insensitivity and non-cooperation by superiors causing high stress among the subordinates.

The study found that a positive behavior by superiors, in terms of exhibiting sensitivity and cooperation towards subordinates, can help in reducing the stress level of subordinates. This was found to be true at the all levels of the police hierarchy.

Conclusion

This study tried to explore the factors causing stress among police officers of Madhya Pradesh. The survey was conducted among 238 police officers that attended several training programs at PRTS. The findings of the study are being concluded as follows:-

- Majority of the police officers are under high stress. More than 80% of the officers were found to be under “High Stress”. Some of them are even extremely stressed.
- The officers have certain perception about their job. They see some positive things and some negative things in their job.
- These Positive and negative factors are found to affect the stress levels of officers. While positive factors reduce their stress levels, the negative factors increase their stress levels.

- The Positive factors about their job, which can help reduce their stress levels, are related to concern shown by their seniors during day-to-day working and the satisfaction derived out of the fact that they are serving the society.
- The Negative factors about their job, which can help reduce their stress levels, are related to several challenges they face. The challenges are related to performance of duty, personal and behavioral issues.
- There is a need to revisit the autocratic leadership style largely existing in the police department. The sensitivity and co-operation shown by superiors can help in reducing the stress levels among police officers.

Recommendations and Policy Implications

This study offers the following recommendations to Madhya Pradesh Police for helping their officers to address the issue of high stress levels:-

- **Enhancing the “Positive Factors”**
 - o The department, if inculcates a culture of sensitivity exhibiting concern towards officers will help improve lower the stress levels and subsequently increase their efficiency.
 - o There is inherent pride in being an officer. The department should take steps to enhance this feeling and motivate the officers.
- **Controlling the “Negative Factors”**
 - o The department may consider addressing the behavioral and attitudinal challenges of officers through training programs. Several skill building programs on issues like team work, positive attitude, stress management, co-operation, etc. may be planned and implemented for officers.
 - o Other issues for which the department may evolve feasible solutions for, are :-
 - ◆ Difficulty in maintaining social life, lack of time for family, excess negativity to be handled in terms of crimes and criminals, working on festivals

- ◆ Difficulties in Interaction and coordination with other departments like Court, forensic, etc, lack of consideration shown by courts to police officers, cross-examination of officers by court.

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