

IMPACT OF COUNSELING ON STRESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AMONG THE WOMEN POLICE PERSONNEL



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Abstract

Police officers/personnel deal with variety of events which are negative and distressing. It has been strongly argues that the job performance of a police officer is affected when they undergo chronic stress. Since police officers, especially women are subjected to high levels of stress on everyday basis, it is important their stressors are handled efficiently. The aim of the present study was to develop and determine a counseling program by evaluating its impact on occupational stress and psychological well-being. A sample of 50 women officers was collected from Gurugram (Haryana, India) through snowball sampling. The women officers' ages ranged between 30 to 45 years. The Occupational Stress Index (Srivastava and Singh, 1981) and Psychological General Well-Being Index (Dupuy, 1984) were used to collect the data. The participants were measured using the tools and then they were given counseling sessions for 8 weeks (once a week), and they were again measured on the two variables. The results revealed that counseling was effective in enhancing psychological well-being of female police officers and in reducing occupational stress. Implications of the study for the police personnel are discussed. Based on these results various recommendations have thus been suggested in the paper.

Key words: Counseling, Occupational Stress, Psychological Well-being

Introduction

A police officer's job is more stressful in comparison with other occupations (Goodman, 1990). With the advent of globalisation, the opportunities of coming together for committing organised crimes have increased, along with international implications of crimes involving drugs, trafficking, intellectual frauds and cyber-crimes like phishing.

National Police Commission (1980) highlighted the importance of women in the police and suggested that they should be assigned investigations more often. Women have been able to present an image of themselves as being intelligent, sympathetic and finding non-coercive solutions to crimes (Pope & Pope, 1986). Women police officers make use of the styles that rely more on communication and less on physical force. They have been found to use a community-oriented style of policing and have been proved to be better at handling incidents and cases related to domestic violence (Schuck & Rabe-Hemp, 2005). Women officers with their style of policing, can fulfill the requirement of the job which is related to not only dealing with the criminals, but also providing a touch of healing to the victims of the violence and crimes.

However, it has been strongly argues that the job performance of a police officer is affected when they undergo chronic stress. (McGreedy, 1974). "Police stress" refers to the negative pressure related to police work. Women police officers face more stress as compared to their male counterparts. They face stress not only due to lack of perceived support and negative attitudes from

the society, but also because they face disapproval from their friends and family and their ability to work in this field is questioned by supervisors, peers and public. There is a constant need to “prove themselves”.

Since police officers, especially women are subjected to high levels of stress on everyday basis, it is important their stressors are handled efficiently. Therefore, it is important for them to use positive coping strategies and focus on improving their overall wellbeing.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Onkari and Itagi (2018) did a study to investigate the occupational stress of women police and to understand its relation with the demographic variables in the year 2014-15, in Karnataka. 60 women police officers were selected who aged between 21 to 60 years. To measure occupational stress, scale developed by Srivastava and Singh (1984) was used, and a self structured questionnaire was used to collect demographic information. They found out that 60% of women police had moderate levels of occupational stress, 36.67% had high level of occupational stress, and only 3.33% had low level. Occupational stress was also positively and directly related to duty period and distance from home. Also, a significantly negative relationship exists between family size and occupational stress.

Vinayak and Judge (2018) studied the “Psychological Well-Being among Police Personnel” in 2018. They studied the empathy and forgiveness are correlated of psychological well being, along with gender and rank differences. Assistant Sub Inspector and Sub Inspector rank police officers who aged between 30 to 45 years, and had a minimum of three years of experiences were selected from Jalandhar (Punjab Police). Ryff’s psychological well-being scale (Ryff& Keyes, 1995), Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Thompson, Snyder & Hoffman, 2005) and Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar & Levine, 2009) were used to collect the data. It was concluded that empathy and psychological well being were positively correlated among the police personnel, significant gender differences exists on the variable of forgiveness and significant rank differences exist on both empathy and psychological well being.

Jaegers et al. (2020) conducted a cross-sectional survey with jail officers and used descriptive analyses, prevalence and regression models to predict depression. They concluded that the prevalence of depression among the jail officers was high and was strongly influenced by the job burnout and other indicators of health. It was also concluded that mitigation workplace stressors and identifying the interventions to help them could be used to reduce depression among them.

Objectives

1. To assess the relationship between occupational stress and psychological well-being among women police officers.
2. To assess the effect of counseling on occupational stress and psychological well-being of women police officers.
3. To suggest recommendations based on results.

Hypotheses

Ho1: There will be no relationship between occupational stress and psychological well being of the women police officers

Ho2: There will be no impact of counseling on the levels of occupational stress and psychological well-being of the women police officers

METHOD

SAMPLE-

A sample of 50 women officers was collected from Gurugram (Haryana, India) through snowball sampling. The women officers’ ages ranged between 30 to 45 years, and had at least 7 years of experience. They were introduced to the study objectives and those who agreed were selected as a part sample.

TOOLS-

1.The Occupational Stress Index (Srivastava and Singh, 1981)

Developed & Standardized by Srivastava and Singh (1981) which measures 12 dimensions namely: Role overload, Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, Unreasonable group and political Pressure, Responsibility for persons, Under Participation, Powerlessness, Poor peer relationship, Intrinsic impoverishment, Low status, Strenuous working conditions and Unprofitability.

2.The Psychological General Well-Being Index (Dupuy, 1984)

It is a global measure and is specifically designed to assess psychological distress rather than physical incapacitation. The PGWBI targets peoples’ self-representations of an aspect of their general well-being. The 22 item instrument includes six dimensions: Anxiety, Depressed Mood, Positive Well-being, Self-Control, General Health and Vitality. The 22 items are frequently used to generate an overall index or total score for general well-being.

PROCEDURE-

The selected women police officers were introduced to the objectives of the study and the two tools were administered on them. Then they were given counseling sessions for 8 weeks (once a week), and they were again measured on the two variables using the tools. The data was then analyzed using the SPSS. The women officers were also debriefed and they were given an option to continue individual sessions after the study as well.

STATISTICALANALYSIS-

Pearson’s Correlation and t-test were used to find out the results using SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Pearson’s Correlation between occupational stress and Psychological well being

<i>Correlations</i>			
		Occ. Stress	Psych. Well being
<i>Occ. Stress</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.31*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	50	50
<i>Psych. Well being</i>	Pearson Correlation	-0.31*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	50	50

**Significant at the 0.05 level, **Significant at 0.01 level*

The correlation coefficient is significant at 0.05 levels, which means that the relationship between occupational stress and psychological well being is significant, and negative (which depicts only the direction of relationship). Higher the stress faced by the women officers, lesser is the psychological well being and vice versa.

Table 2.1 Scores of the women police officers on the Occupational Stress Index before and after the counselling sessions

<i>Sr.No.</i>	Particular	N	Mean	SD	t¹
<i>1</i>	Before	50	123.45	3.2	13.639**
<i>2</i>	After	50	115.12	2.9	

Table 2.2 Scores of the women police officers on the PGWBI before and after the counseling sessions

<i>Sr.No.</i>	Particular	N	Mean	SD	t¹
<i>1</i>	Before	50	71.34	2.4	13.380**
<i>2</i>	After	50	76.58	2.2	

Therefore, social workers, psychologists, personnel psychologists and other mental health professional should develop and focus on intervention strategies for improving the self-efficacy, active problem solving, coping and their social networks of the police personnel.

The implications also present a platform upon which organizational commitment of the police personnel could be understood and managed.

Sequel to the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Women police officers should be given regular counseling sessions irrespective of the current mental health status.
2. Training programs should be designed to enhance the self-efficacy, coping strategies and social networks of the police so that they can cope with their stress and issues more effectively. It is also important that the working hours of the police be reduced in order to reduce the daily hassles that lead to work stress.
3. The government should look out for improving the psychological attributes of their employees. They can focus on the attributes like- self-efficacy, motivation, emotional labor, stress and psychological well-being among others. Improvement of all these attributes is important because this will enhance the organizational commitment as well. This can be achieved by the establishment of behavioral clinics in all the police stations

throughout Haryana. This will aid the diagnosis and treatment of behavioral problems among the police personnel.

4. In order to reduce work related stress, and enhance their performance and productivity, a conducive environment should be created.
5. Finally, one of the most important things would be training of the police personnel on the dangers and hazards related to their job, so that their safety can be enhanced.

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