

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND ITS ASSOCIATED FACTORS AMONG TRAFFIC POLICE IN SUNSARI, NEPAL

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ABSTRACT

Background: Occupational stress is a term used to define ongoing stress that is related to workplace. All occupation involves a certain degree of stress which in fact is a normal aspect. However there are certain occupations which prove to be more stressful. One occupation which qualifies for these determinants and essentially is stressful in nature is that of police personnel. The study aimed to assess occupational stress and its associated factors among traffic police in Sunsari, Nepal.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted in Dharan, Itahari and Inaruwa of Sunsari and samples were selected using the non-probability total enumerative sampling technique. A total of 77 samples were screened by using modified likert scale. A score up to 50 is considered as mild stress, score 51-79 is considered as moderate stress and score 80 and above is considered as severe stress. List of possible influencing factors were used to determine associated factors. Mean, median, standard deviation, percent, and frequency were used to describe demographic data. Independent sample T-test and one way ANOVA were adopted to find out the association between dependent and independent variables.

Results: The majority of the subjects were male (87%), married (84.4%), and between the age group of (30-40) years. Regarding designation non-gazetted 4th class was highest among all level (50.6%). Majority (81.9%) of traffic polices working in Sunsari, Nepal have moderate level of occupational stress. One-way ANOVA depicts a significant association of occupational stress with age and education of respondents with the p-value (0.008) and (0.044) respectively.

Conclusions: This study concludes that traffic police working in Sunsari, Nepal have moderate level of occupational stress. Major associated factors are shift work, job pressure, delayed promotions, inadequate salary, frequent transfers and disruption of family time.

Key Words: Occupational stress, traffic police, influencing factors.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is common problem of daily life. It is considered that some amount of stress is beneficial as it acts as a motivator to tackle or cope with an unfavourable situation. At its best, the presence of stress can be positive that urges the individual to strive for excellence. However excess amount proves to be hazardous as it acts as an obstacle in dealing with the stressful situation. It can blur an individual's judgement and coping abilities. Excess stress can cause significant physical, emotional, social implications which are unhealthy and unpleasant.¹ Work is an important aspect of human life. It can be economically productive or non-productive. Occupation

is generally understood as economically productive work which plays an important role in an individual's life. Occupation is not just a mode of survival. But in many cases, it is through occupation that an individual gets his social standing and his identity. Occupation is responsible for creating a sense of achievement as well as satisfaction.

Occupational stress is a term used to define ongoing stress that is related to workplace. All occupations involve a certain degree of stress which in fact is a natural/normal aspect. However there are certain occupations which prove to be more stressful. The profile of the job, the expectations, the social attitudes play an important role

in determining stress. One occupation which qualifies for these determinants and essentially is stressful in nature is that of police personnel.²

The traffic police play a significant role to keep the traffic moving where the population density is very high. The traffic police's physical and psychological well-being is a crucial factor for enhancing their work efficiency. The job of traffic police is physically demanding as well as mentally challenging. If somebody works out of compulsion, then the output is not expected to be very high in terms of quality and resulting into stress. It's a tough job, which has direct influence on the traffic police's life as it is found that many traffic polices suffer from critical respiratory problems, partial deafness, high blood pressure and gastric problems due to irregular food habits are also frequently reported.³

Numerous studies have identified police work as one of the most psychologically stressful and critical profession in the world.⁴ Due to the inherent nature of police work, this profession was likely to be one of the most stressful occupations in the world.⁵ Police department being a service provider and a public sector organization have to fulfil all the expectations of the public. Police department acts not only as a law enforcing agency but also as an instrument of social service, an agent of social change and the protector of the rights and duties of the people.⁶

There are various organizational and personal factors influences the occupational satisfaction of police personnel particularly working conditions, promotion policy in the department and job characteristics are key factors. Age, years of service, autonomy and rank predicts the occupational satisfaction of police. Police officers who are in high stress feel less satisfied towards their job and workload.⁷

The police work has been identified as very stressful in comparison with many other occupations. Negative aspects of the job are too many. To name a few, long hours of work, unpredictable working hours, dealing with violators of law and antisocial elements of the society, threats of being injured or killed, the militaristic nature of the bureaucratic structure with decreased communication, rigidly allocated work pattern, high disciplinary procedures and regimentation, lack of respect from public, shift work etc. These problems lead to decreased work performance. They cause negative psychological states like emotional burnout, frustration, depression, anger and psychosomatic condition.⁸

Occupational stress results in disruption of the psychological as well as physiological homeostasis of an individual leading to deviant functioning in the working environment. Police personnel play a pivotal role in maintaining the disciplinary and legislative

homeostasis of the society. To provide safety and security to public and to minimize accidents and injuries it's necessary for traffic police to be healthy physically as well as mentally. Regarding traffic police, many studies related to health problems like musculoskeletal problem, respiratory problems etc. have been conducted in Kathmandu Nepal but regarding occupational stress studies are least in number and more often in eastern part of Nepal studies on traffic police are minimal. Thus the researcher was interested to conduct the study on occupational stress among traffic police.

METHODS

A descriptive cross sectional research design was used to find out the occupational stress and its associated factors among traffic police in Sunsari, Nepal. Study was conducted in areas of Sunsari district where traffic flow is high i.e. Dharan, Itahari and Inaruwa. Total enumerative sampling technique was used and there were total 86 traffic police & sample size for the study meeting inclusion criteria was 77. The study was conducted after the ethical clearance from Institution Review Committee (IRC) of BPKIHS (IRC number: IRC/1829/020). Permission was taken from Koshi Province Traffic Police Office, Itahari and informed written consent was taken from the participant. Information is used for the study purpose and publication only. A modified Job stress scale developed was used. Likert scale was developed in English as well as in Nepali language for convenience and was divided into 3 distinct parts; Part-I: Demographic Performa of traffic police, Part-II: Questions related to occupational stress & Part-III: Associated factors of stress.

The maximum score was 114 and the minimum score was 22.

With z formula cut off score has been calculated

$X = \text{General mean} + 1.96 \times \text{SD}$ i.e. 1.28

So in each question, score up to 2.28 is considered as mild stress

score 2.29- 3.57 is considered as moderate stress

score 3.58 and above is considered as severe stress

As a whole having 22 questions in total score of 114, occupational stress is classified as;

Score up to 50: Mild stress

Score 51- 79: Moderate stress

Score 80 and above: Severe stress

At first, collected data was checked for accuracy, completeness and duplication. Then data was edited, coded, organized, categorized, entered and analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16. Data was analyzed by using simple descriptive test for frequency and percentage and inferential statistical to measure the association between level of occupational stress and selected variables.

RESULTS

Table 1. Socio- demographic Characteristics of the respondents

n=77

Characteristics	Categories	Number	Percent
Age group	(20- 30) years	26	33.8
	(30- 40) years	42	54.5
	(40- 50) years	9	11.7
(Mean± SD)= (33.9± 6.2),Range= 20- 50 Years			
Sex	Male	67	87.0
	Female	10	13.0
Educational qualifications	Secondary	30	39.0
	Higher secondary	33	42.8
	Bachelor	12	15.6
	Master	2	2.6
Marital status	Married	65	84.4
	Unmarried	12	15.6
	Primary	5	7.7
Spouse educational qualifications	Secondary	28	43.1
	Higher secondary	18	27.7
	Bachelor	12	18.4
	Master	2	3.1
Spouse working status	Yes	27	41.5
	No	38	58.5
Position in family	Head of the family	21	27.3
	Partially involve in decision making	27	35.1
	Fully depend on family	29	37.6
Type of family	Nuclear	16	20.8
	Joint	61	79.2
Number of earning members	1	25	32.5
	2	36	46.7
	3 or more	16	20.8
Designation	Non- gazzeted 1 st class	5	6.5
	Non- gazzeted 2 nd class	8	10.4
	Non- gazzeted 3 rd class	25	32.5
	Non- gazzeted 4 th class	39	50.6
Job experience	(1-10) years	27	35.1
	(10- 20) years	40	51.9
	(20- 30) years	10	13.0
Timely promotions	Yes	12	15.6
	No	65	84.4
Leave on time	Yes	39	50.6
	No	38	49.4
Training	Yes	62	80.5
	No	15	19.5
Monthly income	Rs.(20,000- 25,000)	41	53.2
	Rs (25,000- 30,000)	31	40.3
	Rs (30,000- 35,000)	5	6.5

Table 1 depicts that more than 50% of traffic police working in Sunsari were of the age group (30- 40) years followed by the age group (20- 30) years and the least were of age group (40- 50) years. The mean age was 33.92 with standard deviation 6.22. Majority of the traffic police (87%) were male. Regarding educational qualification, more than 1/3rd subjects (42.9%) have completed higher secondary, 79.2 % live in joint family and 46.7% have at least two earning members in the family. Half (50.6%) of the subjects belong to non- gazzeted fourth class and half (51.9%) have experience of (10- 20) years. Maximum number (84.4%) of subjects had complaint of no timely promotion but maximum (80.5%) subjects had the opportunity of training. More than 50% of subjects earn between NRS 20,000- 25,000.

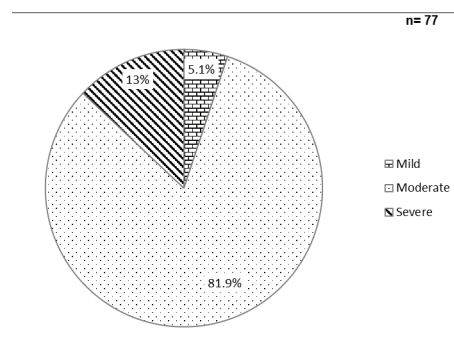


Fig.1. Level of occupational stress among traffic police in Sunsari, Nepal

Figure 1 illustrates that majority (81.9%) of traffic police working in Sunsari, Nepal have moderate level of occupational stress followed by severe stress and mild stress.

Table 2. Association of occupational stress with the selected demographic variables

n= 77

Characteristics	Categories	Number	Mean (SD)	P value
Age	(20- 30) years	26	71.1± 11.1	0.008##
	(30- 40) years	42	64.5± 8.7	
	(40- 50) years	9	59.0± 17.7	
Sex	Male	67	65.2± 11.2	0.079#
	Female	10	72.0± 11.7	
Education	Secondary	30	64.3± 11.7	0.044##
	Higher secondary	33	64.4± 10.7	
	Undergraduate	12	74.2± 10.0	
	Postgraduate	2	71.0± 12.7	
Marital status	Married	65	65.4± 11.1	0.240#
	Unmarried	12	69.7± 12.8	
Type of family	Nuclear	16	62.7± 9.2	0.182#
	Joint	61	66.9± 11.8	
Designation	Non-gazzeted 1 st class	5	70.0± 10.1	0.055##
	Non-gazzeted 2 nd class	8	62.4± 10.1	
	Non-gazzeted 3 rd class	25	61.9± 13.5	
	Non- gazzeted 4 th class	39	69.1± 9.5	
Timely promotion	Yes	12	65.8± 11.6	0.933#
	No	65	66.1± 11.4	
Leave on time	Yes	39	66.1± 11.4	0.991#
	No	38	66.1± 11.5	
Training	Yes	62	65.6± 10.6	0.745#
	No	15	68.1± 14.3	

Independent t test

One way ANOVA

Table 2 shows that there is significant association of age and educational level of traffic police with occupational stress i.e. according to age group and level of educational qualification occupational stress experienced by traffic

police was different but there is no any significant association between occupational stress and other demographic variables.

For the inferential statistics, One Way ANOVA and Independent t- test have been used to find out association of occupational stress with selected demographic variables and influencing factors.

Table 3. Influencing factors leading to occupational stress among traffic police (Occupational factors) n= 77

Influencing factors	Yes (%)	No (%)
Delayed promotions	65(84.4)	12 (15.6)
Inadequate salary	65 (84.4)	12 (15.6)
Non- grant of leave on time	55 (71.4)	22 (28.6)
Long working hours	53 (68.8)	24 (31.2)
Lack of support and negative attitudes by the society	53 (68.8)	24 (31.2)
Frequent transfers	52 (67.5)	25 (32.5)
Shift work	50 (64.9)	27 (35.1)
Informing relatives of sudden deaths/ fatal accidents	50 (64.9)	27 (35.1)
Lack of support by department/ Superiors	41 (53.2)	36 (46.8)
Job pressures	40 (51.9)	37 (48.1)
Organizational and management pressures	38 (49.1)	39 (50.6)
Less personal control over work environment	36 (46.8)	41 (53.2)
Responsibility of protecting the lives of others	31 (40.3)	46 (59.7)
Excessive paper work	31 (40.3)	46 (59.7)
Training	27 (35.1)	50 (64.9)
Department enquiries	23 (29.9)	54 (70.1)

Table 3 illustrates that delayed promotions (84.4%), Lack of support and negative attitudes by the society (68.8%) seems to influence the occupational stress more. inadequate salary (84.4%), non- grant of leave on time (71.4%) followed by long working hours (68.8%) and

Table 4. Influencing factors leading to occupational stress among traffic police (Personal factors) n= 77

Influencing factors	Yes (%)	No (%)
Physical danger to self	45 (58.4)	32 (41.6)
Disruption of family time	44 (57.1)	33 (42.9)
Needs to control emotions when provoked	37 (48.1)	40 (51.9)
Relationship with colleagues	14 (18.2)	63 (81.8)

Table 4 depicts that more than fifty of respondents are of family time related to personal individual relational influenced by physical danger to self and disruption factors.

Table 5. Association of occupational stress and its influencing factors (Occupational factors) n= 77

Influencing factors	Response	No. (%)	Mean± SD	P value
Delayed promotions	Yes	65 (84.4)	67.4±11.1	0.014
	No	12 (15.6)	58.7±10.1	
Inadequate salary	Yes	65 (84.4)	67.4±11.2	0.013
	No	12 (15.6)	58.6±9.7	
Non- grant of leave on time	Yes	55 (71.4)	65.7±11.6	0.677
	No	22 (28.6)	66.9±11.0	
Long working hours	Yes	53 (68.8)	67.1±12.3	0.212
	No	24 (31.2)	63.6±8.6	
Lack of support and negative attitudes by the society	Yes	53 (68.8)	67.8±13.1	0.143
	No	24 (31.2)	64.0±8.7	

Influencing factors	Response	No. (%)	Mean± SD	P value
Frequent transfers	Yes	52 (67.5)	63.9±8.7	0.017
	No	25 (32.5)	70.5±14.7	
Shift work	Yes	50 (64.9)	68.0±12.5	0.038
	No	27 (35.1)	62.4±7.9	
Informing relatives of sudden deaths/ fatal accidents	Yes	50 (64.9)	67.9±11.6	0.058
	No	27 (35.1)	62.7±10.2	
Lack of support by department/ Superiors	Yes	41 (53.2)	65.3±9.7	0.382
	No	36 (46.8)	67.7±14.5	
Job pressures	Yes	40 (51.9)	68.8±13.3	0.029
	No	37 (48.1)	63.1±7.9	
Organizational and management pressures	Yes	38 (49.1)	66.7±13.1	0.627
	No	39 (50.6)	65.4±9.4	
Less personal control over work environment	Yes	36 (46.8)	66.5±10.8	0.725
	No	41 (53.2)	65.6±12.0	
Responsibility of protecting the lives of others	Yes	31 (40.3)	64.4±11.3	0.304
	No	46 (59.7)	67.1±11.4	
Excessive paper work	Yes	31 (40.3)	66.4±12.1	0.837
	No	46 (59.7)	65.8±10.9	
Training	Yes	27 (35.1)	64.1±10.0	0.284
	No	50 (64.9)	67.1±12.0	
Department enquiries	Yes	23 (29.9)	65.9±11.2	0.947
	No	54 (70.1)	68.1±11.5	

Table 5 depicts that delayed promotions, inadequate salary, frequent transfers, shift work and job pressure have significant difference with occupational stress experienced by traffic police working in Sunsari, Nepal.

Table 6. Association of occupational stress and its influencing factors (Personal factors) n= 77

Influencing factors	Response	No. (%)	Mean± SD	P value
Physical danger to self	Yes	45 (58.4)	65.6±12.1	0.687
	No	32 (41.6)	66.7±10.3	
Disruption of family time	Yes	44 (57.1)	68.6±12.8	0.024
	No	33 (42.9)	62.7±8.1	
Needs to control emotions when provoked	Yes	37 (48.1)	64.4±10.2	0.230
	No	40 (51.9)	67.6±12.2	
Relationship with colleagues	Yes	14 (18.2)	69.2±19.7	0.249
	No	63 (81.8)	65.3±8.6	

Table 6 depicts that disruption of family have significant difference with occupational stress experienced by traffic police working in Sunsari, Nepal.

DISCUSSION

This study revealed that majority (81.9%) of traffic police working in Sunsari, Nepal have moderate level of occupational stress followed by severe stress and mild

stress. A study conducted among 68 traffic constables under Kolkata Police support this study which disclose that 79.4% of the traffic constables were stressed (76.5% moderately and 2.9% highly).¹⁵ In a study conducted among the West Bengal Police Officers revealed that 42% and 12% of the West Bengal Police Officers were suffering from moderate and high psychological stress respectively.¹⁷

From the above finding it is obvious that every person experiences some amount of stress though severity or scores varies from person to person based on various factors such as long duty hours, inadequate leave, political pressure, excessive number of vehicles on the road, hot weather, noncooperation from public, lack of coordination among colleagues, seeing too many accidents on the road, problems at home and so on.

Regarding influencing factors delayed promotions (84.4%), inadequate salary (84.4%), non- grant of leave on time (71.4%) followed by long working hours (68.8%), frequent transfers (67.5%) shift work (64.9%), disruption of family time (57.1%) and job pressure (51.9%) seems to influence the occupational stress more. And the factors that were perceived as less stressful were relationship with colleagues (18.2%), department enquiries (29.9%) and training (35.1%). This finding was similar with research study conducted in China by Y Rong & et al.¹⁸ where major stressors were marriage, real monthly income level, education, work experience, and average weekly hours. Also it was concurrent with the findings of study carried out in Kolkata Traffic Police Officers, where the main causes of stress were inadequate rest, no leave, abstaining from social occasions and excessive work pressure.¹⁵

This study revealed that there was significant association between occupational stress and socio- demographic variables like age and education. But there was no significant association between occupational stress and other socio- demographic variables.

This study showed that there is significant association between age and occupational stress ($p = 0.008$). According to age group, (20- 30) years of respondents had higher stress (mean $71.1 \pm SD 11.1$) compared to other age groups which is supported by the study conducted in India by Chitre Samir.²¹

This study concluded that there is significant association between education level of the respondent and occupational stress ($p = 0.044$). In this study, respondents who were undergraduate (mean 74.25, SD 9.99) had higher stress compared to other level of education which is consistent with the study conducted in India by Abraham Joshy, Mundodan.³¹

CONCLUSIONS

This study finding conclude that shift work, job pressure, delayed promotions, inadequate salary, frequent transfers and disruption of family time have significant difference

with occupational stress experienced by traffic police working in Sunsari, Nepal. Majority (81.9%) of traffic polices working in Sunsari, Nepal have moderate level of occupational. There is significant association of age and educational level of traffic police with occupational stress with a p- value 0.008 and 0.044 respectively but has no significant association between occupational stress and other demographic variables.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

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