

Stress Impacts On Law Enforcement

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I. Problem Statement

The men and women who take on a career as police officers go into the job with excitement and vigor, feeling like they will save the world one arrest at a time. As their careers advance, officers will experience several stressful incidents, but the real stress is outside of work. This profession is a stressful job. They consistently put their lives at risk to preserve anodyne areas. Although stress is an element of life, its casual acquaintance marks the health of the officers both emotionally and physiologically. The impact of a career in law enforcement has on a person leads to more personal problems than professional problems if not managed properly. This study is going to scrutinize the association between law enforcement work-related stressors and health issues. This will mainly discuss the stress-producing factors in detail. Each factor will be studied discretely. This will help police agencies to train officers for stoppage and administration of stress in the workstations.

To ordinary people or the public, this profession is very attractive regarding enthusiasm and passion. They want to enter this because of its thrilling nature. But the reality is different. This is no doubt a rewarding profession, but the character of the job makes it a difficult one. Police officers perform a very nerve-racking duty. They daily face dangerous criminals. As they daily get uncovered to diverse situations demanding psychological and corporeal capabilities. With the use of their abilities, they have to perform their duties professionally and effectively. There are limited professions that also have the same situation.

II. Factors

There are many different types of factors or stressors that affect their health. These are both internal and external factors. Peripheral factors include all the dangers and intimidations while performing the duty, and the low esteem in the society. Internal factors are labeled as negative insolences toward higher management and health and behavior-related issues. These are manifested in their absenteeism, physical illness, and emotional impartiality from many pieces of daily life and even suicide in extreme cases.

Each factor is a problem officers may experience during their career. For example, vigorous activities at work, shift alteration, and apparent hazards related to police work. There are also physiological health-concerned matters stated by the police officers. Due to the tense environment, they suffer from high blood pressure, headaches and even back pain issues. As their lives remain no more reasonable, they also have psychosocial behavior problems. Included in the list are the intake of alcohol, cigarette, etc. Drug and alcohol abuse among officers is very common, especially since their

careers have developed. The effects of these factors vary from person to person.

“Typically, they are classified into four main groups, namely organizational stressors, operational stressors, external stressors, and personal stressors” (Dempsey & Forst, 2013). “Among the most serious stressors are operational stressors, e.g., experiencing tragedy in the line of duty” (Violanti & Aron, 1994). “The second group of equally serious stressors is organizational stressors, e.g., shift change, quasi-military style, lack of departmental support for officers when in need, etc.” (Shane, 2010; Violanti & Aron, 1994). Work-related stressors, irrespective of their kind, are recognized to be the root of an adverse effect on employee health. These factors have a negative effect in the form of producing physiological problems in the workers. These problems are “heart attacks, joint pains, headaches, high blood pressure, backaches, diabetes, as well as paralytic stroke.” The research related to this profession demonstrates that police officers are more likely to have health-related issues, for example, “cardiovascular problems, back pain, anxiety problems, depression, and sleep disorders compared to the general public.”

Police officers are at higher menace for health-connected glitches. This is due to the nature of their job. Numerous police officers sense that they labor under countless degrees of pressure, and their job is difficult and indeterminate, which additionally subsidizes destructively to health-connected issues. “Along these lines, research shows that officers on alternating work schedules suffer greatly from health-related issues (e.g., metabolic syndrome, which includes excess body fat, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, etc.) because they are more fatigued at work and at home” (Violanti et al., 2009). Police officers experience miserable physical health as their careers progress. “Officers transitioning from day shift to night shift are also likely to experience insomnia” (Vila & Kenney, 2002). Insomnia is a method of wakefulness which clues to work fatigue. “Work fatigue, on the other hand, is a manifested symptom of stress” (Fulle, Pietrangelo, Mancinelli, Saggini, & Fano, 2008) “and is detrimental to an officer’s health. “In addition to physiological effects, work-related stressors have a negative effect on psychosocial behavior. Research shows that stress increases the likelihood of alcohol consumption” (Brady & Pharm, 1999; Keyes, Hatzenbuehler, & Hasin, 2011; Siegrist & Rodell, 2006) “and tobacco use among police officers” (Smith, Devine, Leggat, & Ishitake, 2005).

Many officers chose drinking at the close of their period as a technique of surviving their stress. Moreover, when officers hook up, the discussion is habitually work-related. “Thus, the officers revisit the same stressful work issues (e.g., exposure to violence at work, exposure to people in pain or distress, etc.) that they were hoping the alcohol would take away” (Leino, Eskelinen, Summala, & Virtanen, 2011). Alcohol consumption is considered one of the most prominent manifestations of stress by police duty performers. Employees in this occupation are more vulnerable than any other profession. They tend to go for more intakes as compared to the general public. Various cross-sectional studies have supported this result also. They not only drink the alcohol but also show its use and abuse in their daily lives. Their family life gets disturbed by this, causing domestic violence. Bar fights by them are also common in the United States. Even some police officers are found dead in accidents due to the reason of drinking. This is also the reason that their image has been tarnished. This is usually also the situation with smoking. But it’s not too violent, also. Many officers burn

cigarettes as a method of managing their stress. "Smoking as a way of coping with stress is an issue for the general population as well" (Battig, 1993; Khurshid & Ansari, 2012). "A change in an officer's work schedule has also been shown to increase an officer's smoking rate in addition to other physiological health issues "(Smith et al., 2005).

Stress caused by a career in law enforcement can lead to PTSD and depression. Job stress in a law enforcement career places a drain on family and marital affairs, often leading to divorce. Due to the busy and stressful routine, they get their lifestyle frenzied. Their wives used to perform different roles on behalf of them also. They play the role of both partners. They have to accommodate their husband's great duty schedules. If they easily do this, they enjoy a happy life. But the incapability of doing all these leads to lots of communication gaps and domestic quarrels. Wives get the feeling of isolation and frustration. They and their families do not get the time to participate in the day to day activities. They get no options except to decline the invitations to parties that the employees of other professions can enjoy. These officers, thus, cannot fulfill their social obligations. Even on the Christmas days, they have no time for their families and children. Divorce rates as high as 65% are reliably specified in assessments of police officers. These are currently comparable to other high-stress professions.

Although same in tresses senses, female and minority officers get different practices in the place of work as compared to the rest of the workers. Police officers feel that they are not getting sufficient support from management as compared to their jobs, which is extremely demanding. They also have a feeling that their job descriptions are not clear. These officers who lack both administrative and family support are likely to burn out easily. Police officers' ranking in the departments determines the ratio of stress they have and their level in the management position. For instance, the officers at the higher posts have a higher ratio of stress than the officers at the small posts.

Though the numerous indices of stress instigated by occupation in law enforcement can form a miserable situation, there are resolutions accessible for all these. Along with the formal training, there are also several workouts that can lead to lessening the stress. They should have a higher degree of emotional stability while performing their duties. There is a need for avoidance strategies. More religious activities or views lead to fewer stressors. If they ever get into a stress-related situation, they should seek the emotional stability exercise at the very early stage of their career or the stress-related situation. Because stress affects not only the officers but also their families get entangled in these situations. The way of performing the job also has a crucial role in limiting stress. Police officers with service-related duties experience less stress, and those related to dealing with criminals face more pressure. Internal solvencies of the officers related to the higher management can be addressed by designing policies and procedures. This practice will remove the internal causes. Their stress can be relieved with the support from their families and folks. They should go for some useful hobbies also for the relieve of the stress. They can also do some exercises for this purpose. "Two of the best methods of handling stress are exercise and hobbies" (Enter, 2006). Training will provide physical benefits and also the advantage of relieving stress. Many psychologists relate weight management with the practice of training as the workouts cut down the release of stress hormones like cortisol.

These also, at the same time, cumulate endorphins in the bodies. These hormones make the body feel excellent. The exercises get the mood boosts with the workouts.

Also, physical activity forwards their thoughts from the dilemmas in life to the action at hand. And if they do the exercise with their families and friends, they also get the double advantage of the time. They make the best use of their time while doing this. Exercise also has an advantage that the people who get used to the exercise, tend to have less stress cumulate in their lives. Their mind gets high enough to manage to reject the stress factors and ignore them easily. Hobbies as a way to relieve stress are strange for some people. But with the research, it is clear that it also does well in this respect. Hobbies are commonly measured goings-on for individuals who lead silent, hassle-free breathes. But this is not the reality. People with full, hard, even tense lives may have prerequisite hobbies. They require them even more than the average person. When they spend some time in this useful and pleasant work, that they enjoy, they get their stress relieved.

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