

Occupational Stress And Health Consequences Among Women Police In Chennai City

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ABSTRACT

This study examines occupational stress and its health consequences among women police officers in Chennai City. Using a descriptive-analytical design, a structured Likert-scale questionnaire was administered to 400 women police personnel selected through stratified random sampling across ranks. The survey measured major work-related stressors, physical health problems, psychological health issues, and coping/support mechanisms.

Findings show that workload emerged as the top stressor (mean = 6.25), followed by shift duties (6.19), long and irregular working hours (6.18), and staff shortages (6.13). Lack of support from higher authorities was also important (5.97). Physical health impacts were prominent: physical exhaustion scored highest (mean = 6.22), with frequent headaches (6.05) and sleep problems (5.98) also reported. Psychologically, respondents reported high levels of mental fatigue (6.18), anxiety (6.02), and emotional disturbance after sensitive cases (5.95), indicating notable burnout and stress-related mental health concerns.

The study concludes that operational demands, organizational constraints, and work-family conflicts strongly influence the health and well-being of women officers. Recommendations include better manpower planning, regulated shift schedules, improved leave and female-friendly facilities, stronger supervisory support, and regular stress-management and counseling services. Implementing these measures can reduce stress, improve health outcomes, and enhance job performance among women police in Chennai

Keywords: Women Police ,physical health problems, psychological health issues.

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INTRODUCTION

Women police officers experience a high degree of occupational stress due to the combined impact of operational demands, organizational constraints, and gender-specific challenges inherent in policing. One of the major sources of stress is the difficulty in balancing professional responsibilities with family and social obligations. The rigid work structure, long and irregular working hours, night duties, and emergency deployments make it difficult for women officers to fulfill household and caregiving roles, resulting in physical exhaustion, emotional strain, and reduced personal well-being. This dual responsibility, often referred to as the “double burden,” places continuous pressure on women police personnel and affects their work-life balance. In addition to work-family conflict, gender-based discrimination and bias significantly contribute to occupational stress among women police officers. Many female officers report experiencing workplace harassment, negative attitudes from male colleagues, limited acceptance in male-dominated environments, and unequal opportunities for promotion and career advancement. Such experiences undermine their confidence, job satisfaction, and sense of belonging within the organization. The prevailing masculine culture in

policing often overlooks the specific needs and contributions of women officers, further intensifying their stress. Organizational factors also play a crucial role in increasing stress levels. Staff shortages, excessive administrative duties, lack of adequate facilities, and insufficient institutional support add to the workload and pressure faced by women police personnel. The absence of properly designed uniforms and equipment suitable for women creates physical discomfort and operational difficulties. Moreover, difficulties in availing leave, limited access to counseling services, and inadequate supervisory support further aggravate occupational stress. Alongside organizational stressors, women police officers are exposed to significant operational stress. They frequently encounter violent incidents, life-threatening situations, and emotionally demanding cases such as domestic violence, child abuse, and victim support. Continuous exposure to trauma and human suffering takes a serious emotional toll and increases the risk of psychological distress. Prolonged occupational stress has adverse effects on both physical and mental health, leading to problems such as anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, chronic fatigue, burnout, and other stress-related health disorders. To cope with these challenges, women police officers adopt various stress

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management strategies. At the individual level, they engage in physical exercise, yoga, meditation, relaxation techniques, and leisure activities to reduce stress and maintain emotional balance. Social support from family members, friends, and peer networks plays a vital role in helping them manage work-related pressures. Additionally, professional interventions such as counselling services, psychological support programs, and stress management training have been found to be effective in improving mental health, enhancing coping abilities, and reducing occupational stress among women police officers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study by Patel et al. (2022) analyzed the mental health challenges faced by women in law enforcement. The research highlights that exposure to traumatic incidents, societal stigma, and inadequate stress management resources lead to psychological strain. The authors advocate for the introduction of regular mental health assessments and stress-relief programs in police departments.

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.

Padma and Reddy, (2013) found the impact of family support on work life balance among female personnel in Andhra Pradesh state police department revealed that women with the responsibility of elder parents' health need to be given a helping hand to balance their personal and professional works.

According to department of Justice and Attorney-General (2012) occupational stressor or work – related stress is better described as the physical, mental and emotional reactions of workers for whom the work demands exceed their abilities or their resources (such as time, help/support) to do the work. Basically, workers perceive that they are unable to cope up with the situation which demands importance.

Naik (2012) found the levels of stress among police personnel at Waghodiya police station in Vadodara city. He suggested that the sources of stress vary as per their nature of profile, shifts, designation, role and responsibilities.

Nair and Joseph, (2013) examined the correlations between job stress and strains in a sample of 500 police personnel. The results revealed significant correlations between job stress and the various job related and affective strains. The magnitude of the obtained correlations was greater in the case of the women police. Moreover, the sources of stress having significant correlations with the various strains were also more in the case of the women personnel.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Policing is a highly demanding and stressful occupation, and women police officers are particularly vulnerable to occupational stress due to the combined effects of operational responsibilities, organizational pressures, and gender-specific challenges. In metropolitan cities like Chennai, women police personnel are required to perform multiple roles involving law enforcement duties, public interaction, administrative responsibilities, and emergency services, often under conditions of long working hours, shift duties, staff shortages, and exposure to traumatic incidents. Alongside these professional demands, women police officers also face difficulties in balancing work and family responsibilities, which further intensifies their stress levels.

Moreover, women police officers frequently encounter gender-based discrimination, workplace harassment, lack of institutional support, and limited opportunities for career advancement within a predominantly male-oriented organizational culture. Inadequate facilities, lack of women-friendly uniforms and equipment, irregular leave patterns, and insufficient psychological support mechanisms further contribute to occupational stress. Prolonged exposure to such stressors has serious consequences on the physical and mental health of women police officers, leading to anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, fatigue, burnout, and other stress-related health problems. Despite the growing participation of women in policing, there is a lack of comprehensive and systematic research focusing on occupational stress and its health consequences among women police officers in Chennai City. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the sources of occupational stress and their impact on the health and well-being of women police personnel, with the aim of providing insights for policy formulation, organizational reforms, and effective stress management interventions.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To identify the main causes of occupational stress among women police officers in Chennai City.
- To study the relationship between occupational stress and health problems among women police officers.
- To examine the physical and mental health problems faced by women police officers due to occupational stress.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design: This present study adopts a descriptive study. **Sampling method :** The population of the study comprises women police officers working in various divisions of Chennai City Police. A stratified random sampling technique is used to ensure adequate

representation of women police personnel across different ranks such as Police Constables, Head Constables, Sub-Inspectors, and Inspectors.

Sample size: Respondents was collected from the 400 participant is considered appropriate for meaningful statistical analysis.

Sampling design: The study is primarily Quantitative in nature and is based on the survey method, which enables the systematic collection of data from respondents. The well-structured questionnaire was sent through Google Forms, WhatsApp, and email. Both primary and secondary data are used in the study. Primary data are collected through a structured questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale, covering aspects related to demographic details, sources of occupational stress, physical health problems, psychological health issues, and coping strategies. Secondary data are collected from books, research journals, government reports, police department publications, and online sources to support the study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

S. No.	Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	Below 30 years	80	20.0
		31–40 years	150	37.5
		41–50 years	120	30.0
		Above 50 years	50	12.5
		Total	400	100.0
2	Marital Status	Married	280	70.0
		Unmarried	90	22.5
		Widowed / Separated	30	7.5
		Total	400	100.0
3	Rank	Police Constable	190	47.5
		Head Constable	110	27.5

		Sub-Inspector	70	17.5
		Inspector	30	7.5
		Total	400	100.0
4	Years of Service	Below 5 years	85	21.3
		6–10 years	120	30.0
		11–20 years	130	32.5
		Above 20 years	65	16.2
		Total	400	100.0
5	Nature of Duty	Field Duty	160	40.0
		Office Duty	100	25.0
		Both Field & Office Duty	140	35.0
		Total	400	100.0

The table shows the basic details of the 400 women police officers who took part in the study. Most of the respondents (37.5%) are in the age group of 31–40 years, followed by 30% in the 41–50 years group. This means that a large number of women police officers are in their most active working years. About 20% are below 30 years of age, while only a small number (12.5%) are above 50 years.

Regarding marital status, most of the respondents (70%) are married. This suggests that many women police officers have to manage both work and family responsibilities at the same time, which can increase stress. About 22.5% are unmarried, and 7.5% are widowed or separated.

When looking at rank, nearly half of the respondents (47.5%) are police constables. This shows that many women officers are working at lower levels where work pressure and field duties are usually high. Head constables make up 27.5%, sub-inspectors 17.5%, and inspectors only 7.5%. In terms of experience, most of the respondents have between 6 and 20 years of service, showing that they have good work experience.

With respect to the nature of duty, 40% of the women police officers are involved in field duty, and 35% handle both field and office work. Only 25% are assigned to office duties alone. This indicates that many women police

officers are exposed to demanding and stressful work conditions.

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS FACTORS AMONG WOMEN POLICE OFFICERS

S. No.	Statements	Mean	SD	Priority Ranking
1	My workload is excessive and stressful.	6.25	1.251	1
2	Long and irregular working hours cause stress in my job.	6.18	1.313	3
3	Shift duties and night work disturb my personal life.	6.19	1.246	2
4	Staff shortage increases work pressure.	6.13	1.284	4
5	Administrative and paperwork duties increase my stress.	5.48	1.581	8
6	I face difficulty in balancing work and family responsibilities.	5.49	1.550	7
7	I experience stress due to lack of leave or holidays.	5.61	1.554	6
8	I feel stress due to lack of support from higher authorities.	5.97	1.596	5
9	Gender discrimination at the workplace increases my stress.	4.78	1.592	9
10	I feel stressed due to lack of proper facilities and equipment for women.	4.70	1.495	10

The results show that workload is the most stressful factor for women police officers, with the highest mean score of 6.25, indicating that most respondents strongly feel that their workload is excessive and stressful. This suggests that women police officers are burdened with heavy duties and responsibilities on a regular basis.

Shift duties and night work have a high mean value of 6.19, showing that irregular shifts and night duties seriously disturb their personal and family life. Similarly, long and irregular working hours, with a mean score of 6.18, are also a major source of stress, as extended working hours reduce rest time and affect health and well-being.

Staff shortage, which has a mean score of 6.13, is another important stress factor. This indicates that insufficient manpower increases work pressure and forces women police officers to handle additional duties. Lack of support from higher authorities records a mean value of 5.97, showing that inadequate guidance and support from superiors add to their stress.

Stress due to lack of leave or holidays has a mean score of 5.61, suggesting that limited opportunities for rest and recovery contribute to mental and physical exhaustion. Difficulty in balancing work and family responsibilities, with a mean value of 5.49, highlights the challenge faced by women police officers in managing professional duties along with family obligations.

Administrative and paperwork duties show a mean score of 5.48, indicating that non-operational tasks also increase stress levels. Gender discrimination at the workplace, with a mean value of 4.78, though comparatively lower, still affects women police officers and contributes to workplace stress. Finally, lack of proper facilities and equipment for women has the lowest mean score of 4.70, but it remains a significant concern that impacts comfort, efficiency, and overall job satisfaction.

PHYSICAL HEALTH PROBLEMS DUE TO OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

S. No.	Statements	Mean	SD	Priority Ranking
1	I often feel physically exhausted after work.	6.22	1.214	1
2	I suffer from frequent headaches or migraines.	6.05	1.287	2
3	I suffer from sleep problems due to work stress.	5.98	1.332	3
4	I experience gastric problems or digestion issues due to stress.	5.84	1.401	4
5	I have body pain or muscle-related problems because of my job.	5.76	1.365	5

6	My health has worsened due to continuous job pressure.	5.69	1.428	6
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The results related to physical health problems show that physical exhaustion after work is the most serious health issue faced by women police officers, with the highest mean value of 6.22. This indicates that continuous work pressure and long working hours leave them feeling extremely tired. Frequent headaches or migraines, with a mean score of 6.05, are the next major problem, showing the impact of stress on their physical well-being. Sleep problems due to work stress also rank high with a mean value of 5.98, suggesting that stress affects their rest and recovery. Gastric and digestion-related problems have a mean score of 5.84, indicating that stress negatively affects eating habits and digestion. Body pain and muscle-related problems, with a mean value of 5.76, reflect the physical strain of prolonged standing, patrolling, and other demanding duties. Finally, overall worsening of health due to continuous job pressure, with a mean score of 5.69, shows that long-term stress has a serious impact on general health.

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH PROBLEMS DUE TO OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

S. NO	STATEMENT	MEAN	SD	PRIORITY RANKING
1	I feel mentally tired due to my job.	6.18	1.256	1
2	I often feel anxious because of work-related stress.	6.02	1.318	2
3	I feel emotionally disturbed after handling sensitive cases.	5.95	1.342	3
4	I feel burnt out because of continuous work stress.	5.89	1.376	4
5	I feel depressed due to work pressure.	5.71	1.401	5
6	I experience mood swings because of job stress.	5.64	1.425	6

In terms of psychological health problems, the findings reveal that mental tiredness is the most common issue

among women police officers, with the highest mean value of 6.18. This suggests that constant work pressure affects their mental strength and concentration. Anxiety due to work-related stress, with a mean score of 6.02, indicates that many women police officers frequently feel worried and tense about their job. Emotional disturbance after handling sensitive cases, with a mean value of 5.95, highlights the emotional impact of dealing with traumatic incidents. Burnout due to continuous work stress, which has a mean score of 5.89, shows prolonged stress leading to loss of energy and motivation. Depression due to work pressure, with a mean value of 5.71, indicates emotional strain over time, while mood swings caused by job stress, with the lowest mean score of 5.64, still reflect noticeable psychological discomfort. Overall, the results clearly indicate that occupational stress has a strong negative effect on both the physical and psychological health of women police officers.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study on occupational stress and health consequences among women police officers in Chennai City, the following recommendations are suggested to reduce stress and improve their physical and psychological well-being. The police department should take steps to reduce excessive workload by improving manpower planning, filling vacant positions, and distributing duties more evenly among personnel.

Long and irregular working hours should be minimized. Proper shift scheduling, rotation of night duties, and mandatory rest periods should be ensured to help women police officers maintain better work-life balance. Senior officers should provide greater emotional and professional support. Open communication, fair supervision, and recognition of work can significantly reduce stress levels. Strict measures should be implemented to prevent gender discrimination and workplace harassment. Equal opportunities for promotion, training, and leadership roles should be ensured for women police officers. The department should provide women-friendly uniforms, safety equipment, restrooms, and basic facilities to improve comfort and work efficiency. Regular stress management programs, yoga sessions, meditation, and access to professional counseling services should be introduced to help women police officers cope with occupational stress. Periodic health check-ups, mental health screening, and wellness programs should be conducted to identify stress-related health problems at an early stage. Flexible duty arrangements, child-care support, and family-friendly policies should be considered to help women police officers balance work and family responsibilities. Training programs on stress management, emotional resilience, and coping strategies should be organized regularly to enhance the overall well-being and job satisfaction of women police officers.

CONCLUSION

The study on occupational stress and health consequences among women police officers in Chennai City highlights

that women in law enforcement face significant work-related pressures that affect both their physical and psychological well-being. The findings indicate that excessive workload, long and irregular working hours, shift duties, and staff shortages are the major sources of occupational stress. Organizational factors such as lack of support from higher authorities, administrative duties, and limited facilities for women also contribute to their stress levels. The impact of these stressors is clearly reflected in the physical health of women police officers, with exhaustion, headaches, sleep disturbances, body pain, and gastric problems being common. Psychologically, they experience mental fatigue, anxiety, emotional disturbances, burnout, depression, and mood swings due to continuous job pressure. The results suggest that both operational and organizational factors, along with work-family challenges, play a significant role in causing stress and health problems. Overall, the study concludes that occupational stress among women police officers is a serious concern that can affect their efficiency, well-being, and job satisfaction. Addressing these stressors through proper workload management, supportive organizational policies, gender-sensitive practices, health monitoring, and stress management programs is essential. Implementing these measures can help improve the physical and psychological health of women police officers, enhance their job performance, and create a more supportive and productive working environment in the Chennai Police Department..

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