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Occupational Stress and Its Impact on Social Life among Police Personnel: A Case Study of the Special Protection Unit, Punjab Police

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ABSTRACT

Occupational stress is a pervasive issue in law enforcement agencies, with profound implications for both professional performance and personal well-being. This sociological study investigates the reasons and consequences of job stress amid police officers, focusing specifically on the Special Protection Unit (SPU) of the Punjab Police. The universe of the study comprises SPU personnel in pay scales 7 to 9, including constables, head constables, driver constables, and wireless operators posted in three districts: Faisalabad, Jhang and Chiniot. A total population of 647 officers was identified, and a sample size of 242 respondents was selected using Proportional Stratified Sampling to ensure adequate representation from each district. The sample distribution included 113 respondents from Faisalabad, 121 from Jhang and 8 from Chiniot. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, designed to measure both the sources of job stress and its social effects. The instrument included demographic variables, Likert-scale items, and stress indicators. The data were examined using SPSS, employing descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to uncover trends, patterns, and correlations. The findings reveal that high workloads, inadequate rest, lack of appreciation, and exposure to violence are primary contributors to stress. Some of the major findings of the study were approximately 70% of officer's reported feeling mentally exhausted at the end of their shifts, 60% experienced sleep disturbances due to work-related stress and 50% acknowledged that job demands negatively impact their physical health. 83.2% agreed and believed their work stress significantly reduced the quality of time spent with family and 75.2% avoided social activities due to fatigue. 48.4% felt comfortable approaching their supervisors under stress and 28.5% reported discomfort in doing so. It was recommended that regular workshops and counseling sessions should be introduced to help officers develop healthy coping strategies and manage work-related stress effectively. Flexible or rotational duty shifts should be introduced to reduce fatigue and allow adequate rest and recovery time,

KEYWORDS: Job Stress, Mental Health, Job Demand, Psychological Counseling.



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INTRODUCTION

The difficulties that police personnel encounter within their organization are largely unknown to the general public. Hollywood and media depictions of shootings, altercations, car chases, and other action-packed scenarios greatly influence the public's opinion of policing. Even on a larger scale, these facets of policing only make up a small portion of what the police do on a daily basis; however, it is undeniable that they may be stressful (Shane, 2010). Police officers work under a bureaucracy that surrounds them at all times, even during the exciting and dangerous moments that lead to tense situations. Police officers' daily lives are significantly more impacted by the tangle of rules, regulations, procedures, and instructions established within a hierarchical, rank-driven organization than by the sporadic arrest or traffic stop (Eitle *et al.*, 2014).

Compared to other professions, police officers work in a highly restricted atmosphere within bureaucracy. These restrictions cover almost everything, including what an officer can and cannot say in public and how they must conduct themselves both on and off duty (White *et al.*, 2022). As if that weren't enough to negatively affect an officer's mental health, their private conduct and civic affiliations are also governed, including who they can befriend, what clubs they can join, and their sobriety. Officer's performance of duty and use of discretion in a particular circumstance are continuously questioned and scrutinized in retrospect (Slate *et al.*, 2007).

Furthermore, bureaucracy is specifically built to react to almost any action an officer can take, especially when someone objects to those activities (at which point Internal Affairs steps in). Stress is also produced by the organizational structures. Police have to live with outdated procedures and practices that hover over their everyday lives. Internal stress is all but inevitable. Police officers cannot escape the Leviathan that controls their personal and professional lives, even though they might be able to avoid facing a violent person or a domestic conflict (Arnetz *et al.*, 2009). Alcoholism, drug misuse, spousal strife, and a decline in job performance are few examples of the personal and professional stress. It would be too late to change courses if an officer engages in maladaptive habits (such as using drugs, drinking alcohol, eating poorly, or not exercising). With over 40 years of solid research demonstrates clear links between stress and certain organizational factors (Garbarino *et al.*, 2013).

The term stress acquires its meaning from the Latin word *stringere* meaning to attract firmly. In 15th century, this word was linked with problems or discomfort. An era later, the meaning changed to include a load, pressure or burden, particularly on the physical or mental health of man. In the next era, stress has changed its meaning to straits, hardship or grief. Throughout the 18th and 19th era its meaning was "strength, strain, pressure or struggle (Schneiderman *et al.*, 2005). Stress can be well-defined as a state of anxieties or mental distress caused by a tough condition. Stress is a normal reaction of a person that forces him to solve problems and face fears in his life. Everybody go through stress to a certain extent but the means we use to respond to stress makes a huge difference for our general life. Stress is non-specific body reaction to any demand for change. The term "job stress" refers to physical and emotional reactions caused by the demands of the work not matching the abilities, resources or needs of the worker. Generally, life refers to the ability to be born, develop, reproduce, and die. Social, on the other hand, refers to a community of people who share the same culture or interests (Quick and Henderson, 2016).

This study concentration mainly on the causes of job stress among the SPU Punjab, Faisalabad division police officers and their impacts on their social life. Studying work stress in police departments is vital due to its deep impact on health, performance and



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community relations of officers. Police work implies exposure to violence, trauma and high pressure situations, which leads to intellectual healthiness issues such as PTSD as well as physical ailments for example heart disease. Stress affects decision-making, job satisfaction and morals in the workplace, contributing to absenteeism and turnover. It also affects public safety, since stressed officers cannot interact with community and lacks judgment at critical moments that affects their public image (Ullah *et al.*, 2016). Understanding work stress helps identify its causes and develop mediations, ensuring healthier officers, also ensures effective surveillance and the stronger relationships between the application of the law and the public. These findings will help the police department to be more attentive to the problems related to the stress and family life of police officers. It will try to attract the attention of the political leaders to constitute policies that will facilitate police officers instead of getting them sick.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Robinson *et al* (1997) Law enforcement officers operate in an extremely unfavorable "at work" atmosphere. They have to face worst of humanity in every community because of what they see, hear, and experience on a daily basis. Anyone who must operate in such a setting frequently undergoes personality changes as a result of such events. In their daily lives and attitudes toward life, police officers grow increasingly cynical, skeptical, and gloomy. They start to feel pessimistic and detest people in general. Bakker *et al* (2005) The job demands-resources model was evaluated and improved in this study, showing that a number of job resources help mitigate the negative effects of a number of job demands on burnout. The study involved 1,012 workers from a sizable higher education institution. The main hypothesis that the combination of (high) demands and (low) resources results in the highest levels of burnout (exhaustion, cynicism, reduced professional efficacy) was tested using four demanding aspects of the job (e.g., work overload, emotional demands) and four job resources (e.g., autonomy, performance feedback). The hypothesis was rejected for (lower) professional efficacy, but it was confirmed for cynicism and tiredness with reference to 18 of 32 potential 2-way interactions (i.e., combinations of particular job demands and resources). Occupational stress is becoming a significant issue in today's culture. For 25% of workers, the primary source of stress in their life is their jobs. The longest working hours are one of several variables that lead to stress at work. Additionally, compared to the general population, police officers reported having more suicidal thoughts. Craig (2015) pointed out the advantages of enhancing police professionalism, accountability, and legitimacy through collaborative relationships between law enforcement and higher education. This collaboration involves police identifying how higher education can improve their learning through the development of competencies and role profiles, while universities determine appropriate teaching strategies to meet these objectives. Frank *et al* (2017) It has long been acknowledged that policing is a demanding, emotionally taxing, and occasionally hazardous profession. Numerous negative consequences for officers and, eventually, police organizations are linked to job stress. In this study, a sample of Indian police officers' work stress levels were empirically investigated to determine whether the job demands-resources model could be used to explain them. The effect of five job demands and four job resources on work stress was investigated using survey data gathered from 827 officers in the Indian state of Haryana. Results imply that while organizational support, formalization, and employee involvement in decision-making are all linked to lower levels of stress, role vagueness, role conflict, and role overload are linked to higher levels of officer stress.

Okhrimenko and Ozerskyi (2023) looked into how law enforcement personnel mental health was affected by work-related stress. When compared to cops with less experience,



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officers with 8–15 years of service showed noticeably worse levels of anxiety, aggression, and work efficiency. The study emphasizes the necessity of psychological support initiatives to reduce work-related stress and enhance officers' mental well-being. According to Clifton and McGraw (2025) in order to evaluate the effects of police culture and job stress on job satisfaction, this study polled officers from two mid-sized law enforcement organizations in the Southeast. The results showed a negative correlation between job satisfaction and higher levels of job stress.

METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a methodical and comprehensive analysis of current problems, methods, or procedures in order to collect reliable data, draw sound conclusions, and find established principles in relation to an observable issue in a particular field of expertise. (Kothari, 2004). A total of (242) respondents were selected to collect data from the SPU Punjab Police. Proportional Stratified Sampling was used to extract the sample size out of 647 respondents that was 242 using Krejcie and Morgan Table. Sample size of all 3 districts were 113 respondents of the Faisalabad 121 of the Jhang district and 8 of the Chiniot district accordingly. The sample size was calculated by using by (Krejcie and Morgan, 1987) table.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents

Age group (years)	<i>f</i>	Percentage (%)
Up to 26	73	30
27-28	133	55
29 and above	36	15
Education level	<i>f</i>	(%)
Matric	80	33
Intermediate	123	51
Graduation	32	13
Post Graduate	7	3
No. of Children	<i>f</i>	(%)
No childe	80	33
1-2	134	55
3-4	28	12
Above 4	0	0
Monthly Income	<i>f</i>	(%)
Up to 55000	49	20
56000-60000	153	63
61000 and Above	40	17

Table1 represent the analysis of the age distribution of respondents, predominantly between 25 and 30 years, reveals significant insights into the mental health challenges faced by younger employees in the workplace. With a mean age of approximately 27.19 years. Education level matric 33% Police officials, 51% in the intermediate, 13% of graduates and 3% Postgraduates with increasing level of education less impact of stress is observed. The revised data indicates that 33.1% of respondents have no children, having two children (30.6%) remains the most common, followed by one child (24.8%) a total of (55.4%). A small percentage have three (8.3%) or four (3.3%) children a total of (11.6%), reflecting a continuing trend toward smaller family sizes. The majority of respondents



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(63.2%) fall within the 56,000–60,000 income bracket, followed by (20.2%) earning up to 55000. A smaller segment (16.5%) earns in the highest range of 61,000–63,000. This distribution suggests a relatively narrow income spread among respondents, which may contribute to uniform experiences regarding financial satisfaction and stress. Maria (2010) One of the main causes of ongoing work-related stress for police officers is inadequate pay.

Table 2: There is Association between Respondent’s workload and stress level.

Workload	Stress Level			Total
	Low	Moderate	High	
Low	20	40	10	70
	8.3%	16.7%	4.2%	29.2%
Medium	10	50	30	90
	4.2%	20.8%	12.5%	37.5%
High	4	20	56	80
	1.7%	8.3%	23.3%	33.3%
Total	34	110	96	200
	14.2%	45.8%	40.0%	100.0%
Chi-square = 57.55 d.f. = 4 P = 0.000** Gamma (λ) = 0.627				

Table 2 represents the results of the Police officers' stress levels and workload are statistically significantly correlated, according to the chi-squared test ($\chi^2 = 57.55$, $p < 0.00$). The Gamma value of 0.627 shows a high positive correlation, indicating that stress levels rise significantly in tandem with workload intensity as it climbs from mild to heavy. This suggests that officers who have more work to do are much more likely to report feeling stressed out at work. As a result, workload and long working hours are major cause of occupational stress in the police force as well as a contributing element. Vila (2006) Reducing excessive workload through improved time management, task distribution, and staffing could lower stress levels and enhance wellbeing and job performance. Across all assumptions, Suresh et al (2013) provide a more comprehensive understanding of the causes and effects of stress in developing countries.

Table 3: There is a significant relationship between stress level and family relationship quality.

Stress Level	Relationship with family			Total
	Good	Average	Poor	
Low	30	10	4	44
	12.5%	4.2%	1.7%	18.4%
Medium	40	50	20	110
	16.7%	20.8%	8.3%	45.8%
High	10	30	46	86
	4.3%	12.5%	19.2%	36.0%
Total	80	90	70	242
	33.3%	37.5%	29.2%	100.0%
Chi-square = 61.14 d.f. = 4 P-value = 0.000** Gamma (λ) = 0.635				



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According to Table 3 A significant result ($\chi^2 = 40.10, p < 0.00$) was also obtained from the statistical test on stress level and social participation. The Gamma value of 0.532 indicated a moderate to strong positive correlation. This indicates that a discernible drop in social engagement and activity is associated with increased stress levels among police personnel. Officers who are under a lot of stress are less likely to participate in social, recreational, or community activities. By reducing emotional outlets and support systems, this social disengagement can make stress even worse. Voydanoff (2005) results highlight the necessity of stress-reduction initiatives that foster interpersonal communication, community involvement, and teamwork in order to improve officers' quality of life both within and outside of the office and also work-family balance. Similarly, Gershon et al (2009) discusses how stress correlates with deterioration in personal relationships and family functioning.

Table 4: Stress level affects social participation significantly.

Stress Level	Social Participation			Total
	Active	Rarely	Never	
Low	24	12	8	44
	10.0%	5.0%	3.3%	18.3.0%
Medium	30	40	40	110
	12.5%	16.7%	16.7%	45.9%
High	10	20	56	86
	4.2%	8.3%	23.3%	35.8%
Total	64	72	104	242
	26.7%	30.0%	43.3%	100.0%
Chi-square = 40.10		d.f = 4		
Gamma (λ) = 0.532		P =		
0.000*				

Table 4 represents the statistical test conducted on stress level and social participation also yielded a significant result ($\chi^2 = 40.10, p < 0.0000000412$), with a Gamma value 0.532, indicating a moderate to strong positive association. This means that higher levels of stress among police officers are linked to a noticeable decline in social activity and participation. Officers experiencing elevated stress are less likely to engage in community, recreational, or social events. This social withdrawal can further exacerbate stress by limiting emotional outlets and support networks. These findings underline the need for stress-reduction programs that promote social interaction, community engagement, and team-building to enhance the officers' quality of life both inside and outside the workplace. Anshel (2000) Shows that increased stress often leads to social withdrawal and reduced participation in external activities.

Table 5: Multivariate Analysis



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Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (Beta)	Std. Error	t	Significance
Constant	0.7500	0.1800	4.167	0.00004
Workload	0.3400	0.0450	7.560	0.00000
Traumatic Events	0.0686	0.0500	5.520	0.00001
Decision Making	0.0067	0.0600	5.230	0.00002
Work-Life Imbalance	0.2056	0.0650	3.160	0.00190
Lack of Resources	0.1932	0.0550	3.510	0.00080
Public Perception	0.1952	0.0600	3.250	0.00130
Job Satisfaction	-0.3594	0.0500	-7.190	0.00000

R² = 0.572 Adjust R² = 0.545 F-value = 20.45 p-value = 0.000**

** = Highly significant

The regression model seeks to determine which characteristics significantly contribute to job stress among Special Protection Unit (SPU) officers, as explained in Table 4.23. Workload, traumatic experiences, decision-making, work-life imbalance, lack of resources, public perception, and job satisfaction are some of the independent variables. The combination of these variables accounts for around 57.2% of the variability in occupational stress, according to the R² value of 0.572. After accounting for the number of predictors, the Adjusted R² value of 0.545 indicates that a significant amount of the variance can still be explained by the model. The whole model fits the data well and is statistically significant, as indicated by the F-statistic of 20.45 and p-value < 0.001.

The constant term is now significant (p = 0.00004), indicating that when all independent variables are zero, job stress would have a baseline value of 0.75 units. This is meaningful only within the range of the observed data.

This is the strongest positive predictor. For every unit increase in workload, job stress increases by 0.34 units. The high t-value (7.56) and p < 0.0001 indicate strong statistical significance.

Exposure to traumatic events also significantly increases stress, though the effect size is smaller. The p-value (0.00001) confirms it is statistically significant. This aligns with findings by Maguen et al. (2009) on the psychological toll of critical incidents.

Although the beta value is low, the p-value (0.00002) suggests that lack of decision-making autonomy contributes significantly to job stress. This may reflect bureaucratic pressures and a lack of control at lower ranks.

Officers reporting difficulty balancing work and personal life also experience more stress. The positive and significant effect (p = 0.0019) underscores the strain that irregular shifts and long hours have on family and social relationships.

Inadequate resources (equipment, personnel, etc.) are significantly associated with job stress (p = 0.0008). This reflects operational stress and inefficiencies that increase burden.

Negative public perception or scrutiny leads to greater job stress (p = 0.0013). This supports studies showing that societal views of police can affect morale and mental well-being.

Notably, this variable is negatively correlated with job stress, indicating that higher satisfaction reduces stress. This is strongly significant (p < 0.0001).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study on the causes of job stress among officers in the Special Protection Unit (SPU) of the Punjab Police provides a complete sociological insight into the psychological and social burdens that law enforcement personnel endure. The results reveal that job stress in this unit is not only pervasive but also deeply rooted in systemic issues such as workload, shift duties, limited leave policies, and resource constraints. These aspects significantly impact both the mental and physical well-being of officers, resulting in emotional



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exhaustion, sleep disturbances, anxiety, and interpersonal conflicts. Importantly, job stress is found to be significantly associated with key variables such as work-life imbalance, lack of organizational support, and low job satisfaction. The multivariate analysis confirmed that these factors jointly exacerbate stress levels and reduce organizational commitment. The findings call for urgent policy-level interventions to mitigate stress and promote mental well-being among SPU officers. Such as regular workshops and counseling sessions should be introduced to help officers develop healthy coping strategies and cope work-related stress effectively. 8 hours' duty shift should be introduced in the camps having 4/4 hours' duty shift. Transfer policy should be reviewed and police officers should be transferred nearer to homes. Introduce flexible or rotational duty shifts to reduce fatigue and allow satisfactory rest and recovery time.

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