ABSTRACT

For the past several decades, police departments, researchers and policy makers have been interested in identifying the cause behind police work being a high stress occupation. Inspite of the wide ranging research conducted to identify the sources of police stress, still the problem of police stress has not been solved and damages caused due to maladaptive coping strategies have not been addressed properly. One of the outcomes of accumulated stress is burnout. The cumulative impact of individual-level stress and burnout carries the potential to generate organizational dysfunction. Police officers have to use discernment while taking action in their day to day activities. There is scanty research on how the element of moral reasoning relates within the conceptual framework of police stress, coping and burnout. This present study investigated the relationship between police stress and coping mechanisms, moral reasoning and burnout among police officers primarily in North Zone of Tamil Nadu police. The subject for this study were 296 full time police officers of which 102 where direct recruits and 194 were special sub inspectors. A demographic questionnaire followed by the Police Stress Survey, Coping Response Inventory, Defining Issues Test (DIT2) and MBI were utilized to find out the relationship between police stress and coping, moral reasoning and burnout. The majority of officers were moderately stressed. There is a significant relationship between police stress and coping mechanisms. However there is no relationship between police stress and moral reasoning. Coping mechanism is acting as partial mediator between police stress and burnout. Increase in police stress leads to almost triple time increase in burnout.
Police officers differed in burnout levels and use of coping styles based on gender. Police officers coming under different age group showed significant difference in burnout, coping style and moral reasoning. Educational qualification of officers showed significant differences existing for burn out and coping style. Police stress and moral reasoning were not related to educational qualification and years of service. Similarly designation was related to burnout and coping style, but not with police stress and moral reasoning. More empirical research is warranted to clarify the relationship between police stress, coping, moral reasoning and burnout.