CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH DESIGN

1.1 Introduction

Stress is an important factor influencing individual efficacy and satisfaction in modern day occupational settings. Job stress is one of the most common afflictions among police personnel. Perhaps one of the most stress prone occupations is that of police profession. This is because the 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. Police personnel are often involved in dealing with criminals, VIP’s security duties and collapse of other agencies of criminal justice system. Thus, it can be commented that police work is a human-service profession often regarded as physically and emotionally demanding. The evidence, however, is mixed regarding the nature of police work as inherently stressful. Researchers, police practitioners, health-care professionals, psychologists, as well as the lay community agree to the fact that police work is inherently stressful. It can be rightly stated that the entire life of police officers is full of tension and stresses.

The job profile of a police officer includes witnessing a fellow officer killed in the line of duty, killing someone in the line of duty, recovering bodies from motor vehicle accidents, witnessing domestic or community violence, and responding to cases involving child battery. Stress and burnout are usually considered to be by-products of police work. In and of itself, the nature of police work is regarded to be highly stressful and can even be described as hazardous. The
daily psychological stresses that police officers experience in their work put them at significantly higher risk than the general population for a long term physical and mental health effects. The police culture does not look favorably on people who have problems. Job stress is dilemma that all of us work outside the home deal with on a daily traffic, fog, rain, bad drivers of the normal traffic and weather predictions will affect their attitude on the entire day will change roles from father, mother, wife or husband to boss, co-worker and employee.

Two major categories of potential stressors in police work emerge in the literature. First, “inherent police stressors” refers to events that generally occur in police work, and that have the potential to be psychologically or physically harmful, e.g. physical threat, violence, exposure to danger, crime and facing the unknown. Secondly, stress can be the result of the nature of the police organization and includes stressors such as management style, poor equipment, excessive paperwork, poor training and inadequate salary.

In short it could be stated that police occupational stress is a widespread problem because of its numerous negative effects on individuals and on police organization. Officers who experience high levels of occupational stress report a high incidence of physical ailments and psychological problems that affect their work performance. Specifically, they commonly have poor health, are frequently absent from work, experience burnout, are dissatisfied with their jobs and because of weak organizational commitment, they may not fully invest themselves in their work or they may retire prematurely. When individuals are overwhelmed by occupational stress they suffer from increased chronic stress, depression, heart disease, stomach disorders, alcohol and drug use and abuse, divorce, and even suicide attempts. It is therefore critical to understand the sources of police occupational stress (i.e., the stressors) and to implement strategies for reducing
stressors or, if they cannot be reduced, for assisting officers in coping effectively with them. The current study aims to analyze the occupational stress and the coping styles among the police constables in Thoothukudi District of Tamilnadu.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Occupational stress research has an impressive history with more than three decades of sound studies that show clear correlations between certain organizational factors and stress. However, as best as can be determined, there are very few quantitative studies that measure the impact those stressors may have on police performance in Indian context. Occupational stress among police personnel can reduce productivity, encourage absenteeism, lower morale, and increase conflict with others, cause physical and emotional problems and poor satisfaction in life. Part of the problems may be that defining performance has been a challenge for many years and there is no consensus among scholars how to operationalize the concept. Compounding the problem is the definition of stress and the instruments used to measure it in police work. This has led researchers to move away from generic stress scales and into domain-specific scales that measure the unique characteristics of policing. The present study represents a focused interest in stress research in that it seeks to isolate specific self-reported organizational stressors that may negatively impact police performance, as well as analyze the extent to which the coping techniques have been adopted by the policemen. The researcher believes that of all occupations police work could be considered, highly stressful. Establishing the levels of stress police personnel experience and the coping strategies they apply would benefit intervention effort to address the problem i.e., stress management or say, reducing stress levels.
1.3 Conceptual Framework

Everyone today experiences a fair share of stress, irrespective of personal characteristics, environment and social conditions. The nature of police work is acknowledged as highly stressful and particularly hazardous. According to Mostert and Joubert (2005), the negative effects of job stress on employees and their work are such that it is necessary to explore the processes involved when job stress is studied.

The concept of stress was first introduced in the life sciences by Hans Selye (1956). The term “stress” is applied to the total transaction between the stressor and coping resources in the interaction together, over time, so that one may speak of system being “under stress” or a particular situation being stressful. Hans Selye defined stress as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand”. The presence of stress among policemen is felt, but not recognized as the major enemy. Media reports of police brutality, indiscipline and mismanagement are a harbinger of the job. Social change, economic conditions, the total criminal justice system and the demands made on policemen’s time with their families, all contribute towards the stress.

The policies and procedures of the police administration department in India are directly controlled by the state head (Chief Minister) and it is autocratic in nature. It has been a known fact that local government systems existing in a particular state may cause discontent and dissatisfaction among police personnel along with frequent transfer, suspension / suppression, delayed promotions, non-grant of leave on time and departmental inquiries.
Various meaning for police
“Polite obedient loyal intelligent courageous and encouraging”
“Protection of life in civil establishment”
“Police officers lobbying in common effort”
“Protectors of law in community economy”
“Protection of life and investigating criminal’s establishments”
“Protection of law in case of emergency”

Police personnel of different ranks differ both quantitatively and qualitatively in their experience of stress. The subordinate officers had the highest scores on stressors such as job boredom, over load of work and lack of praise and relatively high scores on noxious physical environment, communication quality, and decision latitude and role ambiguity. Based on these understanding the current study aims to focus on the nature, causes and stress coping styles of subordinate (i.e., low rank) police officers - constables.

“Job stress” refers to a situation wherein job-related factors interact with a worker to change (i.e., disrupt or enhance) his or her psychological or physiological condition such that the person (i.e., mind and body) is forced to deviate from normal functioning. Stress among policemen would manifest in the form of fatigue, depression, inability o concentrate, irritability and impulsive behavior. These danger signals are quite common among the policemen. And these policemen are often viewed as rude and highhanded. However, outsiders may not appreciate the extreme conditions under which they lead their lives. Stress also has a negative effect on the health of the policemen. It makes them more susceptible to physical ailments. Both physical and mental illness renders the employee unfit for work. It has an adverse effect on job satisfaction and reduces job performance.
Kop and Euwema (2001) found that organizational factors are the most salient stressors in police organizations. According to Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) organizational stressors are divided into two groups: job demands and lack of resources. Job demands refer “to the required sustained physical or mental effort aspects of the job” and can, therefore, be associated with certain physiological and psychological costs, e.g. meeting deadlines, attending work in shifts, working overtime, excessive paperwork and handling crisis situations. Job resources are aspects of the job that may be functional in achieving work goals, reducing job demands and the expected physiological and psychological costs, and stimulating personal development, e.g. adequate equipment, good supervision, adequate salary, recognition and sufficient personnel.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) occupational stress takes place when job demands exceed the person’s adaptive resources. Therefore stress refers to the temporary adaptation process that is accompanied by mental and physical symptoms, and is caused by a disturbance in the equilibrium between job demands and the ability of the worker to respond to the demands. When job demands are too high to cope with, stress reactions are likely to occur. The term “coping” is used reference to perceptual, cognitive or behavioral responses that are used in managing, avoiding or controlling situations that could be regarded as difficult and coping as a term could be used to refer to the strategies or results. As a strategy, “coping” refers to the different methods that a person may use in managing his/her circumstances. Moreover, “coping “also refers to the eventual outcome of this strategy on the person. “Non-coping” is defined as efforts that have failed to cope, accompanied by various physical and psychosocial disturbances, which result in increased stress. Non-coping also results in higher levels of depression and anxiety.
Police job demands that he should leave the personal issues of his life behind before entering his work environment. The policemen have to be able to give his 100% job attention to be a successful part of the team. This alone can be stressful because it can sometimes be very difficult when his personal life is complex or especially difficult at any given time. Bringing personal problems or attitudes to the coworkers can be detrimental to the attitudes of all those around them.

The coping type that a person uses is in part dependent on the person’s appraisal of the situations which are amenable to change. Some studies have suggested that cognitive appraisal of a situation can be associated with coping strategies. This suggests that coping strategies will change according to context and can be important in determining health outcomes. Discussion of the previous studies has highlighted the nature of occupation stress that affected the police officers at lower ranks. Based on this understanding, the concept of the current study is framed.
EXHIBIT: 1.1
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Police Constable → Cause of Stress → Frequency of Occurrences of Stress → Coping Style

- Job Demand – Bureaucratic
- Organizational Capacity - Staffing & Equipment
- Work Schedule & Characteristics

Coping Style

Problem -Focused
- Positive reinterpretation and growth
- Acceptance of Fact
- Focusing on and ventilating emotions

Emotional -Focused
- Seeking social support for emotional reasons
- Denial Behaviour
- Tuning to Religion
- Behavioral Disengagement
- Mental Disengagement

Understanding on

Source: Developed for the study
1.4 Scope of the Study

The overall goal of the study is to explore the major personal and cognitive factors with occupational stress, and to identifying the relationship between amount of stress, causes and stress coping strategies. The current study will be useful to a wide spectrum of police officials, policy makers and authorities in understanding the nature and causes of occupational stress faced by the police constables and it may help to frame strategic visions to overcome their stress.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

Based on the concept discussed above the following objectives were constructed for the effective conduct of the study.

- To study the socio-economic status and job profile of the police officers in the study area.

- To evaluate the police officers’ perception about the nature of occupational stress faced by them.

- To measure the frequency of occurrence of occupational stress among the police officers.

- To analyze the gap between police officers’ perception about their occupational stress and its occurrence frequencies.

- To study the stress coping styles adhered by the police officers and suggest suitable techniques to reduce their stress levels.
1.6 Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses are framed to justify the objectives constructed.

- There exists no association between job profile of the police officers’ and their perception about their occupational stress.
- There exist no similarities in the police officers’ perception about their occupational stress.
- There exist no similarities in the police officers’ perception about occupational stress occurrence frequency.
- There exists wide gap between the police officers’ perception about their occupation stress and its occurrence frequencies.
- Stress coping styles adhered to by the police officers differ from one to another, based on their designation grade and work experiences.

1.7 Research Methodology

The research methodology of the study consists of two stages. First stage of the research is exploratory by nature and the second stage is descriptive in nature. This study is based on the police constables in Thoothu kudi district. For this study, a multistage random sampling technique was used for the selection of sample. The researcher has adopted Cluster based random Sampling Procedure (Probability) for defining the entire population area i.e., police stations and furthermore the researcher has adopted convenience sampling techniques for the collection of primary data. The respondents are approached with the support of the affluent and
reference group’s support and only voluntary respondents’ were included in the survey and no monetary benefits were paid as remuneration to the sample subjects.

From the base data collected about the Tamilnadu Police statistics with reference to Thoothukudi district, it has been observed that there are 1467 police constables at present working in Thoothukudi of whom 1169 are men and the rest, 298, are female constables and further it has been observed that 35.11 per cent of them are group under. Grade III officials, 47.92 per cent grade II and the remaining 16.79 per cent Grade II police constables. These 1467 police personnel are taken as the research subjects. The two police out posts were not included for the study. A pilot survey was conducted with a sample of five police stations and thirty sample subjects with the support of well-structured questionnaire based on the responses collected and necessary changes were made in the for the large sample collection. A sample of 660 police personnel were targeted for the pilot survey. Out of the 660 questionnaire distributed to the sample police personnel based on the recommendation of affluent and references groups referral. Only 600 questionnaires were collected at the end of the data period. Thus the sample was restricted to 600 police personnel who are in the position of “constable” were considered a sample population for the study. Chapter III provides an elaborate discussion on the research methodology adopted in the current study.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

The researcher takes all possible care to avoid shortcomings and errors in the collection of data. All possible care and skill have been exercised to derive fair conclusions based on the findings of the study. In spite of all the efforts taken by the researcher in this regard, the present study is subject to the following limitations.
1. One of the primary limitations of the present study is that the data are to be collected only from the respondents of Thoothukudi district. Thus, the results are location specific and therefore the conclusions drawn may not be applicable to a different district having different stressor factors.

2. Since the researcher had collected primary data through self-administered questionnaire, the results may be biased on the respondents' honesty and how they perceived their attitudes towards the variables used in this study.

3. Thirdly, since this study was based on a cross-sectional research design as it covers three different grades of police constables, caution about causality must be taken into account when drawing conclusions about associations. Also the male predominance in the study population made it difficult to study gender-related patterns.

1.9 Chapterisation Schemes

The framework of this research exercise has been structured to gain insights into the above purpose and thus includes five chapters, namely, the Introduction, Literature Review, Research Methodology, Theoretical Overview of Study Subject, Analysis and Discussion, Summary, Findings, Suggestion, Conclusion, and Future Research. The thesis of the study is organized into six major chapters. A brief outline of each of them is given below:

**Chapter 1:** The introductory chapter I deal with the introduction of the study. It includes the introduction, statement of the problem, significance of the study, objective, hypotheses, and limitations of the study and organization of chapters.
Chapter II: Second chapter focuses on the reviews of the relevant literature in this field carried out by various researchers in the past.

Chapter III: Third chapter provided a detailed discussion of the research methodology adopted by the researcher for the effective conduct of the study. It contains information on the research design, data collection tools and analysis techniques.

Chapter IV: Fourth chapter titled “Overview of Police Force in India and the Causes for Stress among Police Officials” contains discussion about the nature of police force function in India and the reasons and causes for the stress among police personnel.

Chapter V: Fifth chapter deals with analysis and Interpretation of data collected from the study region.

Chapter VI: Sixth chapter summarizes the findings of the study, suggestions and conclusions of the study.