

# Gender Differences in Stress Symptoms and Burnout among Police Constables

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## ABSTRACT

Police plays an important role in maintaining laws, rules and regulation in the society. In doing so, their nature of duty put them in different kind of mental health issues like stress and anxiety. The effort is made in this piece of work to study gender differences in the variables under study. The data was collected from 300 police constables (an equal number of male and female) in the age range of 25 to 40 years utilizing random sampling technique. Stress Symptoms Rating Scale and Burnout Inventory were administered to collect the data. Results were obtained on applying t-test which revealed that male and female police constables are significantly different in stress symptoms, burnout and its dimensions. Male Police Constables were found to have higher mean scores on the variables, Reduced Personal Accomplishment and Total burnout than female police constables, where female police constable scores higher in stress symptoms.

**Keywords:** Police; Stress Symptoms; Burnout.

## INTRODUCTION

There is a growing preoccupation with stress as a problem in almost every workplace. [1, 2] Policing is a psychologically stressful occupation owing to the nature of its work and the pressures that result from the way in which the work is organized [3]. Police force is a very important factor in keeping law and order in any state. Police officers encounter numerous stressors as part of their professional duties. Chandigarh police has always been the focus of public attention in various forms. Like any other organization, policemen also face various types of problems and stressors. Society has cynical attitude towards police.

Before explaining the concept of ways of coping and mental health, it is important here to consider the definition of the concept 'police constable', their role and responsibilities along with empirical finding. The concept of Police originated from Latin word 'politia' which stands for the condition of a 'polis' or 'state' reported by Oxford Dictionary defines Police as a system of regulation for the preservation of order and enforcement of law. It also means the internal government of a state. In police service, the hierarchy is made from higher level officers to lower

level constables to facilitate and enforce rules and regulations in the society. Constable can be understood as the person holding a particular office, most commonly in law enforcement department.

Occupational Stress is very important when we talk about the Police Personnel role and responsibility. According to occupational stress in police is a widespread problem because of its numerous negative effects on individuals and on police organizations.

Officers who experience high levels of occupational stress report a high incidence of physical ailments and psychological problems that affect their work performance.

They have poor health, are frequently absent from work, experience burnout and are dissatisfied with their jobs, they have weak organizational commitment and may not fully invest themselves in their work or may retire prematurely. Occupational stress may lead to chronic health problems like depression, heart disease, stomach disorders, and alcohol and drug abuse [4].

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## BURNOUT

According to Burnout can be defined as “a syndrome of reduced personal accomplishment, increased emotional exhaustion and increased depersonalization experienced by individuals that work closely with people” [2, 5]. Emotional exhaustion is characterized by a number of negative feelings. These are expressed as feeling frustrated, hopeless, trapped, helpless, depressed, sad and apathetic towards work. De-personalization is a feeling of impersonal response towards recipients of one’s service, care, treatment or instruction. Reduced Personal Accomplishment is a feeling of competence and successful achievement in one’s work with people.

Various studies have focused on the gender difference on occupation stress. In a study, investigated the gender variations of stress within the police force and found female officers had higher level of stress than males. The Police Federation of England & Wales Police (2009) found that the stress levels were so high in many cases that police officers of both sexes were prone to serious diseases. He also pointed out that female officers were more likely to suffer stress than their male colleagues. It has also been posited on the basis of a research conducted among 115 randomly selected officers who showed that female officers were more likely to be stressed, including having suicidal thoughts.

Stress and burnout among police officers is leading to host of psychosomatic problems and substance abuse. Stress leads to lowering of mental health and wellbeing [6]. According to a number of researches have postulated that psychosocial and psycho-behavioral factors such as life events and change, life satisfaction and dissatisfaction, marital status, occupation, education level, emotional loss, social class and status and deprivation play a causal role in increasing the immutable link between emotions and cardiovascular health [7]. Police work has been described as long periods of devastating boredom that are punctuated by sporadic periods of complete terror. This makes the character of police work one of the most stressful, physically and emotionally demanding in the contemporary professional world. Isolating the sources of stress and burnout in police work and gaining an understanding of its potential for individual self-destruction is frequently listed as being of primary concern by individual officers, organizational administrators and others. Occupational Stress has been found to occur when there has been a discrepancy between the demands of the environment/workplace and an individual’s ability to carry out and complete these demands. Frequently, stressors cause the body to have a psychological reaction which can strain a person physically as well as mentally. A variety of factors contributed to workplace stress such as unbalanced workload, isolation, extensive working hours, toxic work environments, lack of autonomy, difficult relationships and management, management bullying, harassment and lack of opportunities or motivation to advance in one’s skill level [7].

According to Occupational Stress is described as physical, mental and emotional wear and tear brought about by incongruence between the requirement of the job and the capabilities, resources and needs of the employee to cope with

job demands [8]. Occupational Stress is pervasive and invasive. Stress in the workplace has assumed increased importance in recent times. Over 70% of employees world-wide describe their jobs as stressful with more than one in five reporting high levels of stress at work on a daily basis [9]. Opined that Occupational Stress has been recognized as a significant occupational hazard that can impair physical health, psychological well-being and work experience. Further, in a study, claimed that women tended to leave their paid job as a police officer to go home to do a second shift of family care and domestic chores, whereas most men went home to be ‘cared for’ by a wife [10]. This may contribute to men being able to cope better with the stresses of shift work. This study identified that strong family support is an important mediator of the effects of stress. Similarly, opined that female employees have significantly higher stress than male employees [11]. The explanation may be that female employee carries various responsibilities at home and at work place. Due to gender role, female employee has to fulfill the demands of social environment i.e. family, society and culture. There is extra burden of work place. Hence, it leads to significantly higher stress in female employees than male employees conducted a study on police constables in Thoothukudi district, South Tamilnadu [12]. The study examined the relationship between demographical profiles like age, gender, marital status and occupational stress among police constables. Results revealed that female police constables were facing high stress as compared to male police constables. Examined the relationship between gender and occupational stress among police constables in Kisumu County, Kenya [13]. Findings revealed that there was a positive relationship between the gender of the police constable and levels of stress. The female police officers were experiencing more stress compared to the male police constables. This could be attributed to the fact that, police work environment was an exceeding masculinized organization where male police are expected to be tough and to suppress their emotions especially fear, vulnerability and injury. Previous research has demonstrated that levels of mental toughness are significantly related to levels of perceived stress in police officers [14] revealed that the stress and its consequences (burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and compassion fatigue), along with compassion satisfaction, were predicted by mental toughness, aspects of personality and self-care behaviors. This suggests that high conscientiousness, low neuroticism, high mental toughness and engaging in self-care behaviors can be considered as important protective factors when it comes to dealing with stress. According to [15] a total of 784 police officers were surveyed with the POS Scale, the Job Burnout Questionnaire, the RES Scale, and the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire. This study indicates the combined effect of POS, job satisfaction, and RES on job burnout and has certain guiding significance for alleviating police job burnout. Regression analysis showed a significant negative correlation between POS and burnout ( $r = -0.42, p < 0.01$ ), and the former had a significant negative predictive effect on job burnout ( $\beta = -0.42, p < 0.001$ ).

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The aim of the present research was to study the gender differences in Stress Symptoms and Burn out among UT Police Constables.

## HYPOTHESES

Based on the review of literature, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

- Female Police Constables were expected to score higher on Stress Symptoms in comparison to Male Police Constables.
- Male Police Constables were expected to score higher on Burnout in comparison to Female Police Constables.

## METHOD

The present study was conducted with the permission from the Inspector General of Police, Police Head Quarter Sec-9, Chandigarh. The present study was conducted on 300 Police Constables (150 males, 150 females). For the present study two groups were taken male and female sample will be considered from Chandigarh. Their age range was from 25 to 40 years.

## FOLLOWING TOOLS WERE USED

### Stress symptoms rating scale

The Stress Symptoms Rating Scale is an inquiry in to the amount of stress one experiences. They selected 25 symptoms of stress from a list that [16] identified as readily detectable by the individual. The subject is required to rate the frequency of each of the Stress Symptoms (for the previous year) on a six point rating scale ranging from “ Not at all” to “More than once per day ” (i.e. ranging from 0 to 5). The stress score is the summation of scores obtained over all the ratings.

The alpha reliability for the scale was found to be .93 by [1]. Evidence for validity has come from different elevations of stress found in groups otherwise identified as more stressful. It has been successfully used in India by [8, 29, 30, and 26]

### Maslach burnout inventory

The present test measure Burnout that is a syndrome of Emotional Exhaustion, De-personalization and Reduced Personal Accomplishment. There are 22 items, which are divided into three subscales of Emotional Exhaustion, De-personalization and Reduced Personal Accomplishment. Emotional Exhaustion pertains to the feeling when an individual loses his/her emotional forces and is no longer able to maintain emotional relations with others. The second dimension of Burnout is De-personalization. This parameter of attrition pertains to non-sentimental and rude responses to visitors and co-workers. Individual's suffering from attrition syndrome has negative and reproachful feelings and outlook towards others. Reduced Personal Accomplishment refers to individual's negative understanding of their vocational effort, and the feeling that there is no progress in the work and their

efforts do not yield positive results. The items are answered in terms of the frequency with which the respondent experienced these feelings on Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (0) to strongly agree (5). The reliability index measured by Cronbach's alpha was .90 for Emotional Exhaustion, .70 for Depersonalization and .71 for Reduced Personal Accomplishment. Many researchers have used this test in India successfully viz. [17, 18]

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Descriptive Statistics i.e. Means, Standard Deviations (SD's) were calculated. T-test was calculated to compare male and female police constables on the dimensions of occupational Stress.

## RESULTS

The aim of the present investigation was to study the gender differences in Stress Symptoms and burnout among UT Police Constables. The raw scores were analyzed using appropriate statistical analyses viz. Descriptive Statistics; and t-test to find out the differences between means on the measured variables. Results are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation & t-ratios comparing Male and Female Police Constables

S. No.	Variable <sup>s</sup>	Male Constables (N=150)		Female Constables (N=150)		t-ratios
		Mean	SD	Mean	S.D	
1	Stress Symptoms	48.1	8.84	109.94	5.84	71.46**
2	Emotional Exhaustion	25.56	5.96	24.51	7.03	1.41
3	De-personalization	19.24	5.33	19.93	5.94	0.94
4	Reduced Personal Accomplishment	10.74	7.86	7.95	3.02	3.75**
5	Total Burnout	34.03	8.29	36.62	10.08	2.80**

\*t-value significant at 0.05 level = 1.97

\*\* T-value significant at .01 level= 2.60

Table shows means, standard deviations and t-ratios comparing male and female police constables. The comparison revealed the following t-ratios to be significant. Female police constables scored significantly higher on Stress Symptoms ( $t=71.46$ ,  $p<.01$ ) than male constables. Male Police Constables scored higher than Female Police Constables on Reduced Personal Accomplishment ( $t=3.75$ ,  $P<.01$ ) and Total Burnout ( $t=2.80$ ,  $p<.01$ ); This shows that the hypotheses stating that female police constables would score higher on Stress Symptoms and male police constables scored high in burnout have been upheld. Thus, hypothesis 1 regarding the Female Police Constables were expected to score higher on Stress Symptoms in comparison to Male Police Constables is accepted here. In a study conducted by [18] it was found that policewomen perceived and experienced work-related stress more severely than policemen in all factors measured. This finding is supported by the work [19]. Who found that female police experienced significantly higher levels of stress and poorer health outcomes than their male counterparts? In a study conducted by it was found that there is a positive relationship between the gender of police officers and levels of stress [20]. The female police officers were found to be experiencing more stress compared to the male police officers.

The present study finds gender difference on burnout among male and female Police Constables hence hypothesis 2 relating to the Male Police Constables were expected to score higher on Burnout in comparison to Female Police Constables is accepted here. Earlier finding revealed that gender policies and the position of women in the police force in four European countries and concluded that the most important existing barrier to gender equality is the culture within the organization [21-32]. A glimpse at all the above previous researches shows that the results of the present study are in accordance with the previous researches.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study found that female police constables were high on Occupational Stress Symptoms and Operational Stress in comparison to male police constables. The study established that gender of the police constables influenced occupational stress and Burnout. The study recommends that: Police Service Commission should develop a policy on stress management to guide the induction, operations and counselling of Police Constables in their day to day duties.

Apart from the training and counselling intervention related implications of this study there are some other implications like higher authorities in the police department might gain an insight to assign task or duties to the constable police keeping gender differences in ways of coping and mental health in mind. Policy makers of Indian police services can have better idea from this piece of study to formulate policies related to police personnel's duties, role and responsibilities and also for their training purposes.

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