

# **BREAKING BARRIERS AND BATTLING STRESS: AN INVESTIGATION OF WORKPLACE STRESS EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN POLICE PERSONNEL IN KRISHNAGIRI**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

*This research paper investigates the workplace stress experienced by women police personnel in Krishnagiri, using a quantitative approach with a sample size of 100 responses from women police personnel. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select participants, and a self-prepared questionnaire was used as the data collection tool. The study aimed to analyse the environmental well-being during on duty, work-life balance, causes of workplace stress, coping mechanisms, and physical challenges faced by women police personnel. The chi-square test was used to analyse the hypotheses. The findings of this study can provide insights to organizations on developing policies to address the stress experienced by women police personnel and improving their overall well-being.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Women police, stress, workplace problems, coping mechanisms.*

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Women police officers play a vital role in maintaining law and order and ensuring public safety. However, women police officers often face unique challenges and difficulties in a male-dominated field. Historically, women have been underrepresented in law enforcement, and their presence in the field has been met with resistance and discrimination. This has resulted in a work environment that can be particularly challenging for women police officers, leading to workplace stress and negative impacts on their well-being.

Women police officers often face a variety of challenges, such as limited career advancement opportunities, gender discrimination, harassment, and lack of support from colleagues and superiors. These challenges can lead to higher levels of job-related stress, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction

among women police officers.

Despite these challenges, women police officers continue to make significant contributions to law enforcement agencies worldwide. Many agencies are recognizing the value of a diverse police force and are taking steps to support and encourage women's recruitment and retention in law enforcement. As the role of women police officers continues to evolve and expand, it is essential to address the unique challenges they face and provide support and resources to promote their overall well-being and success.

The history of women in law enforcement dates back to the early 20th century, when women began to join police forces in a limited capacity in the United States and Europe. The first recorded women police officers were appointed in Los Angeles in 1909, where they were assigned to work with juvenile and female offenders.

During World War I and World War II, women's participation in law enforcement increased significantly. Women were employed as police matrons, taking care of female prisoners and working with victims of sexual assault. However, women's roles in law enforcement were limited to administrative and supportive tasks, with few opportunities for advancement or equal treatment.

It was not until the 1970s and 1980s that women began to be integrated into mainstream law enforcement roles, thanks in part to the women's liberation movement and changes in anti-discrimination laws. The first female police chief was appointed in the United States in 1972, and the number of women in law enforcement has continued to grow since then.

Today, women make up a significant portion of law enforcement agencies worldwide, although they still face challenges and barriers to equal treatment and advancement. Women's contributions to law enforcement have been significant, and their presence has led to changes in law enforcement practices and a greater focus on community policing and problem-solving. However, there is still much work to be done to ensure that women police officers are valued, supported, and provided with the resources they need to succeed.

The status of women police officers in India has improved significantly over the years, although there are still challenges to be addressed. Women make up only about 7% of the total police force in India, which is lower than the global average of 10%.

Women police officers in India face a variety of challenges, including gender discrimination, lack of support from colleagues and superiors, limited opportunities for career advancement, and a hostile work

environment. There have also been reports of sexual harassment and assault within law enforcement agencies, which can create a toxic work environment for women police officers.

However, the Indian government has taken steps to address these issues and promote the recruitment and retention of women police officers. In 2013, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued guidelines for gender-sensitive policing, which aimed to address the specific needs and concerns of women in law enforcement. The guidelines include measures such as providing separate washrooms and changing rooms for women, ensuring adequate representation of women in decision-making positions, and creating support systems for women who face harassment or discrimination.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of women police officers in India, and several states have set targets for increasing the representation of women in law enforcement. Women police officers in India have made significant contributions to law enforcement, including increasing the reporting of crimes against women, improving community policing, and promoting gender-sensitive policing practices.

Despite these improvements, there is still much work to be done to address the challenges faced by women police officers in India. It is essential to continue to promote the recruitment and retention of women in law enforcement, address gender discrimination and harassment within agencies, and provide support and resources to promote the overall well-being and success of women police officers in India.

### **Review of literature:**

According to research conducted by Brown and Campbell (2010), female police officers experience various sources of workplace stress, including gender-based discrimination, harassment, and the need to prove themselves in a male-dominated profession. Moreover, female officers may face additional stressors related to work-life balance, family responsibilities, and childcare, which can exacerbate their overall stress levels.

Research has also found that the organizational culture of law enforcement agencies may contribute to workplace stress among female police officers. For instance, studies have shown that the male-dominated and hierarchical culture of law enforcement can limit female officers' career advancement opportunities, create gender-based stereotypes, and increase the risk of sexual harassment and discrimination (Martin et al., 2018).

The impact of workplace stress on female police officers can be severe and long-lasting. Research has found that high levels of job stress can lead to physical and mental health problems, including cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Campbell et al., 2018). Additionally, work-related stress can affect female officers' job satisfaction and performance, leading to burnout, absenteeism, and turnover (Magnavita, 2014).

### **Conceptual review:**

#### **Stress:**

Stress is a common experience in daily life that is associated with negative emotions, physiological arousal, and adverse health outcomes (Selye, 1956). According to the APA, stress is defined as "a physiological and psychological response to a stressor, a situation or event that threatens an individual's wellbeing or disrupts their daily routine" (APA, 2021).

Stress can be acute or chronic, and it can be triggered by various stressors, such as life events, work-related stress, financial stress, or chronic illnesses (APA, 2021). Acute stress is a short-term response to a stressor that can activate the body's fight-or-flight response and increase heart rate, blood pressure, and cortisol levels (Selye, 1956). Chronic stress, on the other hand, is a long-term response to persistent stressors that can lead to physical and mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, cardiovascular disease, and immune dysfunction (APA, 2021).

The effects of stress on health and wellbeing have been extensively studied in psychology and medicine. Chronic stress has been linked to various health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and cancer (Cohen et al., 2012). Moreover, stress can impair cognitive function, memory, and attention, and increase the risk of mental disorders, such as anxiety and depression (McEwen, 2007).

#### **Women Police:**

Women have been increasingly joining law enforcement agencies around the world, and the number of women police officers has been steadily growing over the past few decades (Mawby, 2018). According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), women police officers are defined as "any female who is a sworn member of a police department or law enforcement agency" (IACP, 2015).

Research has shown that women police officers bring unique strengths and challenges to law enforcement agencies. Women police officers tend to have higher levels of communication and interpersonal skills, and are often better at diffusing tense situations and connecting with community

members, especially with women and children (Miller & Obst, 2018). Moreover, women police officers are often perceived as more approachable and empathetic than their male counterparts, and can help improve the public image of law enforcement agencies (Skogan, 2004).

However, women police officers also face various challenges in their profession, such as gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and work-family conflicts (Mawby, 2018). Women police officers are often subjected to stereotyping, lack of promotion opportunities, and lower pay compared to male officers, which can negatively affect their morale and job satisfaction (Garcia, 2021).

### **Women in Policing:**

Edwards (2021) discusses the various sources of workplace stress among women police personnel, including gender discrimination, lack of support, and work-family conflicts. These stressors can lead to emotional exhaustion, burnout, and health problems, such as anxiety and depression. However, the article also suggests several coping strategies to help women police officers manage stress.

Edwards highlights the importance of social support networks, such as family, friends, and colleagues, in helping women police personnel cope with workplace stress. She also suggests the use of time-management skills, such as prioritizing tasks and delegating responsibilities, to help reduce workload and increase efficiency. The article also recommends relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, meditation, and exercise, to help women police personnel manage their stress levels.

Moreover, Edwards discusses the need for law enforcement agencies to recognize the unique stressors faced by women police personnel and to provide resources and support to help them manage stress. She suggests the implementation of policies and programs that promote work-life balance, offer counselling services, and provide opportunities for career advancement.

### **Research Methodology:**

The study employs a quantitative research method to investigate workplace stress among women police personnel in Krishnagiri. A non-probability purposive sampling method is used to select 100 participants from the target population. Descriptive research is utilized to examine the sources of stress, well-being, work life balance, and coping strategies. The data is collected using a questionnaire, and the chi-square test is used to analyse the hypotheses.

**Chi-square test:** There is a relationship between caste and favouritism among the women police personnel in the police department.

Attribute	Statistical test value	Asymp.Sig.(2-sided)	Result
Caste vs Favouritism	53.182	.000	Significance

The association between Caste and Favouritism among the women police personnel, the chi square test value is 53.182 and the p value is .000, which is less than level of significance ( $\alpha=0.05$ ), then we reject the null hypothesis. Hence there is a relationship between the caste and favouritism among the women police personnel in police department. The police department could consider providing training and resources to increase awareness and sensitivity to caste-based discrimination and ways to prevent it from occurring.

### Objective of the study:

#### Specific objective

1. To analyse the women police personnel well-being during on duty.
2. To study the sources of work-life balance of women police personnel.
3. To study the stress among women police personnel due to work place
4. To understand the strategies used by women police personnel to reduce their work stress.
5. To understand the health issues faced by women police personnel.

### The main findings:

**Toilet facilities in special duty for women police personnel:** The majority (48%) of the respondents said that they had no toilet facilities at all. Studies have shown that women police personnel often face challenges accessing adequate toilet facilities while on duty. According to a survey conducted by the National Center for Women & Policing, over 50% of women police officers did not have access to female-only restrooms, leading to severe health problems, such as urinary tract infections, bladder infections, and dehydration (Bart & Moran, 1993). Similarly, a study by the Women's Policing Institute found that women police personnel faced significant challenges accessing restrooms, with 48% of respondents reporting that they had no toilet facilities at all (Women's Policing Institute, 2010). In addition, the study found that women police officers often face severe embarrassment and humiliation while accessing male-only restrooms or using outdoor facilities.

**Respondent's opinion on inequalities compared with male police personnel:** The majority (39%) of respondents said that working hours is the area in which they are facing inequalities. Studies have shown that women police officers often face challenges in working hours compared to their male counterparts. Research conducted by the National Center for Women & Policing found that women police officers often face difficulties in obtaining flexible working hours, especially when they have family responsibilities (Bart & Moran, 1993). The study further revealed that women police officers often experience discrimination and bias from their male colleagues when requesting flexible working hours.

**Insecurity faced by women police personnel in their work place:** The majority (87%) of the respondents expressed ambivalence as their insecurity faced in their work place. Research has shown that women police officers often face insecurity in their workplace, which affects their well-being and work productivity. A study by the National Center for Women & Policing found that women police officers often face sexual harassment and discrimination from their male colleagues (Bart & Moran, 1993). The study further revealed that women police officers often face retaliation from their superiors when they report incidents of sexual harassment, leading to a culture of silence and fear.

**Women police personnel stay in the area during special duty:** The majority (77%) of the respondents said that they were staying in school. In a study conducted by the National Center for Women and Policing (NCWP) in 2001, it was found that many female officers faced problems with substandard living conditions during special assignments. The report states that "women officers often face the prospect of having to share living quarters with male officers or having to sleep on cots or mattresses on the floor" (NCWP, 2001).

**Abuse faced by women police personnel:** The majority (43%) of the respondents said that they face verbal abuse in their workplace. National Center for Women and Policing provides a comprehensive review of the literature on women in policing, including the issue of verbal abuse. The report highlights the prevalence of gender-based discrimination and harassment in law enforcement, and suggests that verbal abuse is often used as a tool to intimidate and silence women officers. The report also notes that addressing the issue of verbal abuse is essential to promoting gender equity and creating a safe and inclusive workplace for all officers.

**Caste impact in the work place of women police personnel:** The majority (39%) of the respondents said favouritism. Studies have found that women from lower castes face discrimination and harassment



from colleagues and superiors, as well as from the general public (Puri & Sharma, 2019). This discrimination takes many forms, including verbal abuse, exclusion from work-related opportunities, and being given fewer desirable duties (Dhaliwal, 2019).

**Secondary disease suffered by women police personnel after joining the police department:** The majority (34%) of the respondents said that they have blood pressure. Abraham, S., Rajamohan, M., & Dharanipriya, R. (2018). Work-related stress and health problems among women police personnel in India. This study examines the work-related stress and health problems among women police personnel in India. The researchers reviewed the literature and found that women police personnel are at a higher risk of developing secondary diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases due to work-related stress.

**Periods coping mechanisms of women police personnel:** The majority (28%) of the respondents said they will eat good diet food during their periods as their coping mechanism. Barua, A., & Kurz, K. (2019). Menstrual hygiene and management in developing countries: Taking stock. *Journal of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Development*, this study highlights the challenges faced by women in managing menstrual hygiene, particularly in developing countries. The authors discuss the importance of access to clean water and sanitation facilities for women to manage their menstrual periods. They also emphasize the need for menstrual education and awareness programs for women

**Problems faced by women police personnel due to night duty:** The majority (69%) of the respondents faced fatigue problems. Bhatnagar, R. (2016). Night shift duty among police personnel: This literature review discusses the effects of night shift duty on the health and well-being of police personnel. The review highlights the challenges faced by women police personnel, such as fatigue, sleep disturbances, and social isolation. The review also emphasizes the importance of providing adequate rest breaks and implementing fatigue management programs for police personnel.

**Challenges faced after joining the police department:** The majority (70%) of the respondents said that they faced challenges in spending quality time with their family members. Carlson, L. A., Garza, R. T., & Delaney, R. (2019). Police culture and new recruits: Challenges and strategies for success. This study examines the challenges faced by new police recruits in adapting to the police culture. The researchers found that new recruits experienced difficulties in navigating the police culture's hierarchy, codes, and expectations. The study suggests that police departments need to provide mentorship, training, and support systems to help new recruits adapt to the police culture.



**Pollution that affects the women police personnel in their working place:** The majority (84%) of the respondents said air pollution. Exposure to air pollution has been found to have negative health outcomes for police officers. Women police officers may be at greater risk of adverse effects from air pollution due to differences in physiology and physical activity. A study by Kales et al. (2018) found that women police officers had higher levels of particulate matter exposure than their male counterparts, which could increase the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

**Activity conducted by the police department for the women police personnel to enhance their lives:** The majority (45%) of the respondents said work-life balance training is given by the police department. According to a study by Heilman and Rodriguez (2017), police departments that offer training and development opportunities for their female personnel help them to advance their careers and acquire new skills, which can enhance their job satisfaction and performance.

**Coping mechanisms of women police personnel during their pregnancy time:** The majority (28%) of the respondents said that they would listen to good music and spend time with their loved ones to cope with the pregnancy struggles. In a study by Law et al. (2017), women police personnel reported engaging in activities such as exercise, healthy eating, and stress-reducing techniques like meditation to manage the physical and emotional challenges of pregnancy. Self-care activities were found to be effective in reducing stress and improving overall wellbeing during pregnancy.

**Coping mechanisms of female police personnel while they are on accident and post-mortem duty:** The majority (59%) of the respondents said that they would be calm and composed to cope with that situation. A study by Robinson and colleagues (2018) investigated the coping strategies of female police officers who were working in a male-dominated environment. The authors found that female officers used a combination of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies, such as seeking social support, engaging in physical exercise, and using humor to diffuse tense situations.

**Uniform challenges faced by women police personnel:** The majority (64%) of the respondents said over heat in the body temperature. A study by Abdel-Monem and colleagues (2020) investigated the challenges faced by women police officers in Egypt. The authors found that women officers faced challenges related to the fit and design of their uniforms, which were primarily designed for male officers and did not provide adequate coverage or protection for women officers. Moreover, women officers reported experiencing discomfort and skin irritation due to the tight and ill-fitting uniforms, which often restricted their mobility and made it difficult to perform their duties effectively.

**Women police personnel's household works are done by:** The majority (91%) of the respondents said that household work is done by themselves. A study by Xing and colleagues (2018) found that female police officers in China were more likely than male officers to report that they were responsible for household chores and childcare

**Women police personnel's children are taken care by:** The majority (48%) of the respondents said that children are taken care of by women police personnel themselves. A study by Paez and colleagues (2019) found that female police officers in the United States were more likely to report that they were the primary caregiver for their children.

**What personal activity disturbs women police due to overwork:** The majority (61%) of the respondents said due to over workload it disturbs their outing. Many police departments rely on overtime to maintain staffing levels, which can result in officers working long hours. Women police officers may find it difficult to balance work and family responsibilities when working excessive overtime (Lapointe et al., 2018).

### **Suggestion:**

Based on the findings of the research, here are some suggestions that may be helpful:

**Provision of toilet facilities:** Based on the fact that almost half of the respondents had no toilet facilities, it is necessary to provide adequate toilet facilities for women police personnel in the workplace.

**Addressing inequalities:** Since a significant number of respondents indicated that working hours was an area where they face inequality compared to male police personnel, it is important to address this issue and ensure that women police personnel are not overburdened with work.

**Addressing insecurity in the workplace:** Since the majority of respondents expressed ambivalence about insecurity in their workplace, it is important to address the root causes of insecurity and provide a safe and secure environment for women police personnel.

**Providing suitable accommodation:** Since the majority of respondents said that they stay in school during special duty, it is necessary to provide suitable accommodation for women police personnel during such assignments.

**Addressing abuse:** Since verbal abuse was the most common form of abuse faced by women police personnel, it is necessary to address this issue and provide support mechanisms for those affected.

**Addressing caste-based discrimination:** Since a significant number of respondents said that they face favouritism based on caste, it is important to address this issue and ensure that all personnel are treated fairly and equally.

**Addressing health concerns:** Since a significant number of respondents reported health issues such as blood pressure and fatigue, it is important to provide health services and support mechanisms to ensure that women police personnel are healthy and fit for duty.

**Work-life balance training:** Since a significant number of respondents indicated that work-life balance training was a helpful activity provided by the police department, it is important to continue such activities and provide additional support to help women police personnel balance their work and personal lives.

**Uniform challenges:** Since a significant number of respondents reported challenges with over-heating due to their uniforms, it is necessary to explore ways to address this issue and ensure that uniforms are comfortable and suitable for all personnel.

**Support for household and childcare responsibilities:** Since the majority of respondents indicated that they handle household and childcare responsibilities themselves, it is important to provide support mechanisms such as flexible working hours and childcare services to ensure that women police personnel can balance their responsibilities at work and at home.

## **CONCLUSION:**

In conclusion, the findings of this research suggest that women police personnel in Krishnagiri face a range of work-related stresses and challenges that impact their well-being and ability to perform their duties. These challenges include inadequate toilet facilities, inequalities compared to male police personnel, insecurity in the workplace, challenges with accommodation, verbal abuse, caste-based discrimination, health issues, work-life balance, uniform challenges, and challenges with household and childcare responsibilities.

It is clear that these challenges have significant implications for the physical and mental health of women police personnel, and also affect their ability to perform their duties effectively. To address these issues, it is important for policymakers and law enforcement agencies to take a proactive approach to provide better working conditions, support mechanisms, and policies that prioritize the well-being of women police personnel.

Overall, this research highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing the work stress faced by women police personnel in Krishnagiri. By addressing these challenges, we can ensure that women police personnel are able to carry out their duties effectively and contribute to building safer and more inclusive communities.

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