

# Occupational Stress And Individual Well Being Of Nepal Police Officials

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Stress at workplace is one of the emerging issues in various profession. The perceived level of stress has an adverse effect in job performance and well-being of employees. The policing is considered as very stressful occupation. The present study entitled, 'occupational stress and individual well-being of Nepal police official' was undertaken to examine the effect of perceived stress on individual well-being of Nepal Police Officials. The survey was done through administration of the structured questionnaire to different categories and levels of police working in Kathmandu valley. Descriptive statistics, correlation and hierarchical regression were used to analyze the collected data. The study results significant influence of perceived occupational stress on individual well-being. The findings suggests that organization, management, and employees should emphasis on stress management approaches for increasing effectiveness and efficiency of organization as the individual well-being is foremost requirements.*

**Keywords:** occupational stress, police officials, individual well-being, psychological health, family satisfaction.

## **Introduction**

Stress at working place has been increasing due to changing job demands, job restructuring, globalization, and technological advancements. Stress occurs, as people have to work excellently against time, within the restriction of numerous rules and regulation. Police work has been recognized as one of the most stressful occupations (Agolla, 2008 and Kumar & Mohan, 2009) as it is associated with the

unique work, such as violent arrests, law enforcement, gruesome scenes of murder and accidents along with exposed to critical or traumatic events as a part of their professional duty. They deal with all manner of human conflict and catastrophes that pose serious threats to the psychological well-being and adverse effect to health and work performance (Agolla, 2008).

The police are responsible for maintaining law and order and prevention of crime in any nation. Nepal is passing through an aftermath of conflict where the annual transaction on illegal drugs about US\$ 442,857,143 is almost the double of the government allocation to the security agencies about US\$ 228,571,429 (Ghimire & Upreti, n.d). It seems that the resources allocated for the law enforcement sector is inadequate as the budget is about 50% low than the illegal transactions. Further the country is accelerating in post-conflict where the security challenges are emerging as well as memories of numerous bloody crimes, barbaric atrocities, and blistering attacks in the past years which are not erased yet (Ghimire & Upreti, n.d). Furthermore, the researchers also argued that at present Nepalese face almost 39 reported crimes per day. These scenarios of present conditions create the stress to the police as there is high demand of the task and low resources to perform their duty. Police personnel spends most of their life at their work before retirement that create a kind of mental exhaustion as they have very few hours to spend with their family members in a week or even a month (Pandey, 2016). This study focuses on studying effect of occupational stress on individual well-being of Nepal Police.

Few studies have explored the impact of these stressors on both physical and emotional well-being of police officials. Wang, Repetti, and Belinda (2011) have argued that those who experience more occupational stress are more reactive to stressful situations, have more negative moods, and are less satisfied in their lives and relationship and are less equipped with the personal qualities that could help shield the family from the negative impact of the job stress. The well-being of employees is essential at the working place as it is associated with employee's loyalty, higher profitability, higher productivity and lower rates of turnover that indicates organizational efficiency. It can be achieved through the indicators of perceiving the quality of their relationship, positive emotions, his/her mental health, realization of their potential and overall satisfaction of their life.

Most of the previous research focus on the effect of work-related stress on organizational performance such as organizational outcomes, job satisfaction or work-related well-being (for e.g. Kula, 2011; Jhonston, 2015). Policing job is vital to the society as it is responsible for maintaining peace and security in nation and the well-being of the police officers should be a great concern to the society as well. The job of police profession is strenuous, and the nature of their work changes so fast compared to other formal jobs. Policing is one the most stressful occupation that create the problem in well-being of police which ultimately harms to the police organization, community,

and nation. So, it is important to study on the stress of police work as it is fast paced. There seems to be insufficient research conducted on effect upon individual well-being due to the occupational stress. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the effects of organizational and operational stress to participants' individual well-being.

### **Literature Review**

The literature on occupational stress indicates that it has been evolved from simple stressors-strain models to more sophisticated frameworks incorporating mediating or moderating variables (Lu, 1999). This study was done based on Karasek's and Thorell's Demand-Control- Support (DCS) model that proposes stress at work are directly related to the relationship between work demand placed on an employee and the sources available to fulfill those demands (Jhonston, 2015). Agolla (2008) revealed that the police work stressors are getting injured while on duty and the use of force when the job demands to do so, inadequate resources and work overload, low salary; dealing with suicide scene; high responsibility and dealing with horrible sights. The study was conducted with sample size of 229 police officers in Gaborone and its surrounding adopting survey approach using quantitative method. The researcher has concluded that stress is known to have both psychological and physical effects on a Peron's health that result in depersonalization and withdrawals where an individual lead solitude life-style. Similarly, Kula (2011) has found that organizational stress negatively influenced employee's job satisfaction and positively associated with work-related burnouts. A total of 538 Turkish National Police were surveyed to examine whether, and to what degree, organizational and operational stresses in law enforcement are associated with job satisfaction, work related burnout, and supervisor support. The influence of organizational and operational stresses on the work-related well-being of TNP employees was measured by job satisfaction and work-related burnout.

Another study conducted by Jhonston (2011) has found the consistent result that organizational stress has a negative relationship with both general well-being and job satisfaction. The study also revealed for both moderating and major effect of the role social support in the stressors-strain relationship. However, the reverse buffering effect of supervisor communication was found that the greater frequency of communication about the certain topics with people become harmful instead of helpful. Collins and Gibbs (2003) found in a study focused on stress-related symptoms and mental ill-health, with a sample of 1206 police officers, also revealed the consistent finding of organizational culture and workload as the key issues in officer stress. Mental ill-health was appeared to have worsened rather than to improved due to high level of stress.

The previous researchers have found the consistent results regarding the occupational stress and impact on well-being of police officers. However, Lu (1999) has found the inconsistent result than that of previous researchers. The study was conducted with the objectives to investigate the relationship between occupational stressors and strain including job satisfaction and mental health. Similarly, the study conducted by

Hammad et al (2012) also found the result in contrary to many studies that show stress negatively affects employee's performance but revealed that low to moderate levels of stress is good for the performance. The study was conducted on traffic police wardens and indicate that the presence of stress among the traffic wardens have a positive effect on their performance when coping mechanisms acting as moderator is introduced. It seems that the literature of occupational stress and its impact upon well-being, and performance is contradictory.

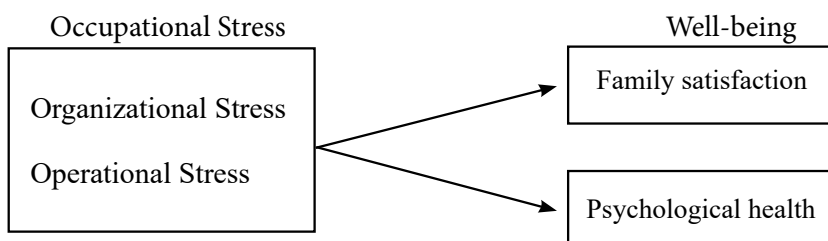
The importance of study on occupational stress is important as it is the contemporary issues in this 21st century and every workforce are feeling stresses due to the rapid change in world economy. The study on occupational stress is necessary to further exploration of its influences in different factors, especially in personal and family well-being along with psychological health. there are very few studies that explore and measure the effect of different stressors on individual well-being of police, especially in Nepali context. this study was undertaken to examine the effect of stress on police personnel's well-being.

There are very few studies conducted on occupational stress and its impact on different aspects in Nepal. Kayastha, Adhikary, and Krishnamurthy, (2012) has reveal that age is significantly different in occupational stress of executive officers working in University and College, Information system, Industries and Bank and financial institutions. The executive officers of different type of organization are experiencing higher level stress but in higher secondary school teachers no executive officers experience different type of stress in terms of job, potential psychological and situational conditions or job factors (Kayastha, Adhikary, & Krishnamurthy, 2012). There is the positive relationship between job stress and psychological strain such as anxiety, turnover intentions, and depression (Shrestha, 2012). There is no study carried on police profession regarding the occupational stress in terms of organizational and operational stress.

### Research objectives

The main purpose of this study was to identify the effect of occupational stress to individual well-being of Nepal Police officials. For this purpose, organizational stress and operational stress are used as dimension of occupational stress. Family satisfaction and psychological health are used as dimensions well-being.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework



### **Research Hypothesis**

H1: Organizational stress is negatively correlated with family satisfaction of Nepal Police Officials.

H2: Operational stress is negatively correlated with family satisfaction of Nepal Police Officials.

H3: Organizational stress is positively correlated with psychological health of Nepal Police Officials.

H4: Operational stress is positively correlated with psychological health of Nepal Police Officials.

### **Research Methodology**

This study was conducted using descriptive and correlational research design. The survey technique was used for collecting required data. Occupational stress was assessed through Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org), and Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op), which was developed and validated by McGreary and Thompson (2006) that limit the number of questions to 20 was used in this study which was measured on 5-point likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagreed) to 5 (strongly agreed). Similarly, for measuring well-being previously developed questionnaire and used earlier by Kluczyk (2013) were used in this study. Before administration of the questionnaire, reliability and validity of the questionnaire was checked. A total number of 260 questionnaires were distributed to different police office of Kathmandu valley, out of which 229 were returned with a response rate of 88%. Frequency distributions were calculated to describe the demographic variables of the participants. Mean, Standard deviations, correlations and regression analysis were used to analyze the data.

## Results and Discussion

### Respondent Characteristics

**Table 1**

*Respondent Characteristics*

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	53	23.1
	Male	176	76.9
Marital Status	Single	68	29.7
	Married	161	70.3
Qualification	Literate	23	10
	SLC	83	36.2
	Intermediate	90	39.3
	Bachelor's degree	24	10.5
	Master's degree or above	9	3.9
Tenure	5 years or less	52	22.7
	6-10	60	26.2
	11-15	66	28.8
	16-20	42	18.3
	21 or above	9	3.9
Unit	Operational units	16	7
	Administrative units	87	38
	Police station	86	37.6
	Anti-Riot	10	4.4
	Traffic	25	10.9
	Others	5	2.2
Rank	Senior officers	27	11.8
	Junior officers	52	22.7
	Constable	63	27.5
	Others	87	38

*Note:* Developed by the authors using data from questionnaire survey.

The table 1 shows the respondent characteristics. There were more male than female in police profession. Most of the respondents were married. The respondents' profile has shown that most of the polices are having intermediate and SLC level qualification. Many of them were working in constable and others junior levels.

**Reliability**

The reliability analysis for each variable was conducted through Cronbach alpha which was above 0.7 of all the variables that is shown in table 2. Similarly the table shows that data are normally distributed as skewness and kurtosis value are within the range of  $\pm 3$  as rule of thumb.

**Table 2**

*Reliability and Normality Test*

Dimension	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha	Skewness	Kurtosis
Organizational Stress	10	0.839	-.385	-.321
Operational Stress	10	0.869	-.232	-.510
Family Satisfaction	5	0.703	-.398	-.290
Psychological Health	12	0.832	1.006	1.112

*Note:* Developed by the author using data from questionnaire

Pearson's correlations were used to assess the relationship between variables and to test the proposed hypotheses. Results in Table 3 reveal that independent variables of organizational stress and operational stress are significantly related to psychological health that is  $p < 0.01$ . The results show that both independent variables organizational and operational stress have found an insignificant relationship with Family satisfaction. It indicates that occupational stress has significant effect on psychological health of individual rather than their family life.

**Table 3**

*Correlations of Occupational Stress and Individual Well Being*

Dimensions	Organizational Stress	Operational Stress
Family Satisfaction	.024	.70
Psychological health	.360**	.421**
<i>Note:</i> ** Correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$ level (2 – tailed), and *Correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$ level (2 – tailed).		

For the further investigation of effect of occupational stress on individual well-being regression was applied. Gender and Marital Status were used as control var-

ables based on demographic factors. The regression results (Table 4) indicated that occupational stress has significant effect on the psychological health (well-being) of employees after controlling the gender and marital status. The coefficient of organizational stress and occupational stress are statistically significant at ( $F= 48.56, p<0.01, \Delta R^2 = 0.183$ ). The  $R^2$  explain to what extent the variance of dependent variables is explained by independent variables.

**Table 4.**

*Direct Effect of Predictor Variables*

	$\beta$ (Standardized Coefficients)	
	Step 1	Step 2
Gender	.039	.033
Marital status	.078	.073
Organizational Stress		.357**
Occupational stress		.420
$\Delta R^2$	.007	.176**
F	.815	48.56**
Total R2		0.183

Note: \*  $p<0.01$ , \*\* $p< 0.05$ .

## Discussion

The results of the study revealed that perceived occupational stress has significant relationship with individual well-being of police officials. The studies show that there is significant effect of occupational stress on psychological health however no significant effect on Family satisfaction. The results of the study are inconsistent and contrary to the results of many previous studies that empirically show occupational stress negatively affects family life (Wang, Repetti, & Belinda, 2011; Kula, 2011). the results of the study somewhat can be attributed to the sample of the study, which included maximum number of police working in administrative units especially from research department of police Headquarter. Since they participate less in operation unit such as Anti- terror, Anti-Riot, Intelligence, Public order, crime etc., they have less likelihood to expose with the traumatic events, critical incidents and enforcing laws which are the most stressful factors.

The family life and work life are overlapping in Nepali culture. so, the employees might perceive that having a separate family life which is far apart from work life is not so necessary. one of the possible explanations of the findings regarding having no significant negative relationship of occupational stress and family satisfaction might be the organizational culture of disclosing personal matters with coworkers. The results of the study revealed that organizational stress and operational stress both have the significant negative relationship with psychological health. The results are consistent



with the findings of previous studies (Violanti and Aron, 1994; Schaufeli and Enzmann, 1998 as cited in Kula, 2011 and Collins & Gibbs, 2003). This result indicates that the more work-related stress perceived by employees the more psychological distress will be observed.

In fact, the organizational factors such as bureaucratic management system, poor communication system, work overload, lack of support from public and family, biasness in opportunity to transfer and promotion, lack of resources and unequal sharing of responsibility are putting the pressure to police that create stress and affecting negatively to their well-being. The operational factors such as shift work, overtime duty, risk of being injured, exposure to traumatic events, and health issues are the critical factors that results the occupational stress consequently negative effect on mental health which is the fundamental of well-being.

Organizations, managers, and business owners should take consideration the negative consequences of occupational stress, as they impact overall organizational performance. this study helps them to recognize the importance of employee's well-being in terms of psychological distress that discourage the creativity and innovation of employees which ultimately provide adverse effect in organizational performance. The well-being in terms of psychological health of employees is the great source of innovation and ideas to every organization as every organization must come up with organizational changes for their survival and success.

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