

Stress Management in Preventive Police of the Islamic Republic of Iran

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Abstract

Challenges like employees' psychological strain and organisational changes have forced governments and organisations to define new major procedures in governmental section. These changes should be reviewed especially for police employees who are under the pressures and stresses from their policing job. The present study is intended to identify the occupational stresses and their intra-organisational and inter-organisational effects in preventive police of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). This is a descriptive heuristic study based on an applied goal and a statistical population consisting of senior officers (Senior Management) of preventive police of IRI. A total of 230 people of the population were randomly selected from all over the country. After interviewing the seniors and commanders and completing the questionnaires, the results were analysed by PLS and SPSS software packages. The findings showed that the variables were a combination of internal and external factors and R^2 was equal to 0.821, so the value of R^2 is correct and therefore the constructed model is validated. According to the results, the hypothesis that the two intra-organisational and inter-organisational factors can impact the stress level of the police employees is confirmed and after ranking, intra-organisational factors showed greater impacts on the stress levels as compared to the inter-organisational factors.

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Introduction

Nowadays, almost all of the human resources in governmental organisations and departments who are the main assets in any organisation, directly or indirectly, confirm that they are under pressure from different sources and often they say: “I’m frustrated, I’m gloomy, I’m under the weather, I’m not up for work etc.” Stress topic in today’s world is investigated by almost all of the science disciplines so that the media (radios, TVs, papers, internet, publishers etc.) discusses stress and stress control behaviours. The governmental management specifically focus on occupational stress with regard to human resources. Thus, it can be briefly concluded that today’s occupational life style creates a number of factors that are effective in the creation of most of the visible and invisible psychological pressures.

Human resources’ stress management in the organisation is identified by the type of occupation and importance of which formed the basis of this research to understand the stresses in the working environment of governmental organisations and particularly the prevention police. Regardless of the numerous studies carried out on this subject, there are still many questions remaining unanswered. Answering these questions can be a great motivation for carrying out a scientific and field research.

Now, considering the variety of police departments and facing various problems and stresses in relation to preventive police employees’ mental health during the work and observing the impact of them on the human resources behaviours and collecting the opinions of their commanders, masters and employees, Some of the mentioned pressures will be identified and with relevant applied and scientific work a few subjects will be discussed which need special facilities and education. However there are some shortages as follows:

- Lack of enough educational centres for stress confrontation to help the police employees with stress reduction.
- Lack of enough attention to the employees’ psychological problems during their missions.

- Lack of enough contribution in scientific societies in relation to human resources stress management.

Many of the factors that are contributing to the police employees' motivation and lessening their mental problems create a series of questions like:

How much is the effect of Intra-organisational factors on preventing police managers' stress level?

How much is the effect of Inter-organisational factors on preventing police managers' stress level?

The number of such questions is really high in police as a governmental organisation, but only some of them can be answered through each scientific study; therefore, it seems necessary to pay enough attention to every single question; moreover, some assumptions should be made for each question. These assumptions should be in tune with the main subject of the research. Therefore, according to the above, the questions studied in this research are as follows:

1. First Major Question:

Is there a meaningful relation between Intra-organisational factors (environmental, individual) and managers' stress level at preventive police?

Minor Questions:

1.1. Is there a meaningful relation between individual factors and managers' stress level at preventive police?

1.2. Is there a meaningful relation between family factors and managers' stress level at preventive police?

1.3. Is there a meaningful relation between social factors and managers' stress level at preventive police?

1.4. Is there a meaningful relation between economic factors and managers' stress level at preventive police?

2. Second Major Question:

Is there a meaningful relation between Inter-organisational factors and managers' stress level at preventive police?

Minor Questions:

2.1. Is there a meaningful relation between organisational environment and managers' stress level at preventive police?

2.2. Is there a meaningful relation between organisational leadership and managers' stress level at preventive police?

2.3. Is there a meaningful relation between organisational hierarchy and managers' stress level at preventive police?

2.4. Is there a meaningful relation between job's nature and managers' stress level at preventive police?

Stress has indispensably existed in human life since his emergence on earth. Human being has always been under life pressures and stresses even when inhabiting in caves. This has been so basically because of the existence of such stressful situations as wild animals' attacks, heat, cold, storm etc. Therefore there has never been a time limit defined for stress. However, the type of stress and pressure changes depending on the time and age. Nowadays, the word stress is tied up with the concept of pressure and compulsion.

In 1704, this word was used for describing hardship and adversity (Martin Scheffer, Trans. Bolourchi, 1367: 19). Moreover, some people used it to refer to deeper concepts such as disaster and calamity. In the late 17th century and, especially in 18th century, the word has been used in ironmongery for defining deformation and then its meaning changed to employ it as to describe the pressure on human. In 19th century, it underwent a thorough change of concept so that it became more than a negative experience. It got tied up with concepts in lines with a force, pressure, strain or man's struggle with other persons or their own mental and physical powers.

Scientists defined stress as a type of force before Hans Selye, a Canadian researcher, raised a new definition for stress in science in 1936, one which is very close to today's definition.

The concept of stress can also be found in Iranian traditional medicine from Abu-Ali-Sina and Jorjani. Pioneers of Iranian traditional medicine refer to stress as a cause for other diseases. Although there is no doubt that in kings' palaces there have been lots of stresses and pressures, the researcher could not find any evidence to prove this, so they relied on the past quotes. However, what is known, in fact, is that during 5th and 6th centuries, which were a period of maximum prosperity of Islamic scientists, neural and mental pressures and other relevant syndromes were studied by Abu-Ali-Sina and Jorjani (Afrouz et al, 1378).

Different Stress Concepts:

Mental pressure or stress is a force which, if applied to an organ in body, can interfere with the performance of that organ. In general, if a person faces a situation, coping with which is beyond his abilities, then he feels stressed.

The Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychology defines stress as human body's response to the factors affecting it. In fact, the word stress in Farsi is interpreted as mental pressure, neural pressure and sometimes strain, which in fact is what interferes with organisms and creates conditions organisms naturally avoid.

Mental pressure or stress is a dynamic condition in which human faces an opportunity, limit or request which is related to what is important or interesting to him while there may elements of uncertainty in it (Rezaeian, 1383: 8).

Medicine dictionary defines stress as results of the sever reaction of an organism to the forces interfering with stability (Afrouz, 1387).

Webster dictionary defines it as pressure or strain.

Behaviour science dictionary (1973) defines stress as a mental or physiological strain that makes some changes in the independent neural system.

Stress is body's physical, mental and chemical reaction to the happenings that cause fear, excitement, embarrassment, danger or anger.

Stress Models:

Human has always paid attention to the environmental factors affecting diseases since the old ages. However, the hypothesis of relation between environmental stimulators and diseases was seriously initiated in the 21st century.

In 1913, Jasper insisted on this relation in his book, general mental pathology, and defined the reaction as an emotional response to the incident. Also in 1913, Adolf Mayer provided a hypothesis regarding the direct relation between environmental stimulators and diseases.

In fact, a radical etymological transformation in in the concept of stress and its effective role in diseases was made by Dr Hans Selye's researches who believed that stimulators are causes of stress. He believed, when stressed, the same reaction, which is an "non-specific response", starts to exist and then the organism make itself compatible with the new condition. This compatibility is harmful for the living and its aim to reach fundamental stability. Selye refers 3 stages of stress as follows: Warning, Resistance and Distress.

Walter Cannon, the American physiologist, in 1932 introduced a new concept called Homeostasis. Also in 1934, a French scientist called Reiuu described the non-specific responses as “stimulation syndrome”.

Wolf and Hinckel (1957 and 1958) focused on the role of cultural and social changes and realised that important transformations can affect person’s health. They defined two main factors in this regard: A. the sever effects of an incident on a person. B. the person’s predisposition to special diseases. From these two researchers' point of view, the effects of an incident are not only dependant on the incident diminutions, but also the physiological and psychological characteristics of the person have fundamental roles.

Sara San (1980) studied a person’s responses to the mental pressures from different angles of the situation and also the required capacity of the person in facing the situation. She believes that the most effective way to deal with a psychological pressure is to solve the problem. Emotional reaction to a problem will not reduce the stress level.

Police Stress:

Police occupations are stressful because they respond to others’ needs and requirements and have minimal control on their environment incidents. Police occupation, as one of the most stressful occupations, has shown that police organisations can be the main sources of police officers’ psychological disorders.

The researches, in this respect, show that between 25 to 30 percent of police employees are significantly stressed out. Being off sick, disability, and early retirement because of health conditions are very common in police employees. The most common health conditions are alimentary diseases, cardiovascular diseases, neural disorders, backache and heart attacks (Rezaei Rad, 1383).

Stress sources in police organisations include: external stresses, organisational stresses, justice courts, types of sentences and procedures, decision making processes, lack of support, organisational procedures, bureaucracy, equipment and their effectiveness, maintenance processes, dangerous working environment, personal lives, public view on police, revolting situations (fatal accidents, death scenes), working shift pattern, inappropriate behaviour of supervisors, non-policing responsibilities and duties, lack of trust between co-workers, work environment paradoxes, work politics, external politics

that affects the organisation, boredom and seclusion, occupational opportunities and pay rate, professional advancement opportunities, bullying from public and lack of appreciation. The stresses can be categorised in two groups: A. Non mission related (organisational) B. Mission related (operational).

Researches revealed that police organisational relationship factors can also be a source of stress for the employees. Therefore stress is an unavoidable part of the police occupation and if the employees cannot effectively deal with that then it might have adverse effects on their health (Nejad Mehri et al, 1386).

Police forces work in a unique environment and face potential harmful incidents that can affect their mental and physical health. The complicated nature of police work and the changes of the police role in the society have made new professional obligations for them, all of which can be causes for stress. The main reason for this stress is confronting physical and social-psychological requirements and understanding that the available facilities and sources are not sufficient to satisfy those requirements. The prolonged and continuous stress that affects police employees can have a negative impact on their performance (Mohammadzadeh et al, 1388).

External factors

Occupational stress reminds us of stressful problems outside work. It should be noted that an employee in a work environment carries external stressful foregrounds with him while he/she does not possibly know about it. This is also true for a person who works in a police organisation. The most important external stress factors between police employees generally include individual factors, family factors, social factors and economic factors.

a. Individual factors:

The factors that are related to the personality and character of the person including: physical health, mental health, visible and invisible discipline, showing interest in the work, generosity and dedication, the use of professional knowledge, being knowledgeable and competent and willingness to consult with others. Researchers believe that the general public will consider a higher social level for police if (Doustar and Kalaki):

- They believe that police and military work is valuable and important,

- They have a positive view about police,
- They evaluate police as “effective” and “competent”.

A police day to day job involves missions including: drug enforcement, arresting fugitives and penetrating into criminal gangs; all of which are quite stressful. The level of stress in each mission can be different depending on the type of the mission, location of the mission or the working shift. All of these individual factors together put the police employee under stress. (Rezaei, 1383)

b. Family factors:

Family environment with a low level stress has important characteristics including: unity, encouragement, excitement, independence and control opportunities. To put it in a nutshell, one of the most important factors in preparation for accepting stress is the family. In fact, family has an important influence on increase or the decrease of the stress levels of a police employee. The unique characteristics of police profession make it very difficult to balance work and private life which is a potential cause of stress for them. (Mohammadzadeh et al, 1388).

c. Social factors:

Regardless of social and professional level, every person worries about others' perception of him and this can be a stressful factor as the person is always worrying about people judgment on him or his job security and how people think about him if he loses his job. In addition, types of the social relationships of a person working environment, can impact the level of stress that he can tolerate. In general, how the society views the people and vice versa and the relationship between people working outside affects the stress tolerability of police employees. (Zahrakar, 1387).

d. Economic factors:

Researches revealed that pay rate and job opportunities in police profession can be a cause for stress. Income level has always been a life concern for police forces. Shariati and Rafati studied stress by looking at an interesting research by Vim Got and concluded that between male workers, not only the wages are different for stressful and non-stressful jobs, but also it affects the decisions made regarding job opportunities (Pourasadi, 1392).

Internal factors

According to the researcher experiments and the heuristic research that was carried out, the inter-organisational factors include: organisation environment, organisational leadership, organisational hierarchy and the job nature.

Method

A) The above research is a descriptive heuristic study based on an applied goal. The data is collected in field and library. In this research, with careful consideration of mental and psychological pressures on senior officers from preventive police, the occupational stress management model will be introduced.

B) The research population includes senior officers (senior management) of preventive police of IRI. According to the data collected, the number of responders was 230 people.

C) The tools used in this research to collect the data included 1. Deep interview for accurate identification of the dimensions and factors for the main characteristics of inter-organisational and intra-organisational occupational stress and 2. Questionnaires.

D) In the research execution method, two questionnaires were used. The first questionnaire studied the validity and reliability of the suggested aspects and factors which used Delphi method. It was distributed among 40 members of commanders, managers; preventive police deputies, sheriffs, relevant university professors and experts who were asked to approve or reject the questions. Also they were asked to add any other factor that they think it should be included in the questionnaire. After completing the questionnaires, the factors in each group that had more than 70% approval were chosen as the final factors to be included in the questionnaire. Then the final version was distributed among the research population and was taken back after completion.

Results

Using the data collected, an analysis in two parts of descriptive and conclusive started. The quantity of the data, percentage of quantity and their charts were used to analyse the descriptive statistics. Then nine questions of demography of the main questionnaire were answered. Then, considering the fact that the type of the model was constructive equations, the relation between the research variables

were identified using the PLS method. Then the questions were answered and the following results were achieved.

The results of assumptions test (questions):

In this research, two major questions and eight minor questions which were the assumptions of the research were asked. During the research a new assumption (minor question) as a new inter-organisational factor was added to the questionnaire.

The First Major Assumption Test:

The first major assumption or question of the research is that “there is a meaningful relation between Intra-organisational factors and stress level at preventive police”. After the tests and data analysis, this relation was confirmed with 95% of reliability. This means that the responders believe that the intra-organisational factors cause the preventive police managers’ stress level to increase.

The test for the minor assumptions for the intra-organisational factors:

The minor intra-organisational assumptions or from question number one to four of the research were that “there is a meaningful relation between individual, family, social and economic factors and stress level at preventive police”. After the tests and data analysis, this relation was accepted with 95% of reliability. This means that the responders believe the above factors could possibly cause the preventive police managers’ stress level to increase.

The Second Major Assumption Test:

The second major assumption or question of the research is that “there is a meaningful relation between Inter-organisational factors and stress level at preventive police”. After the tests and data analysis, this relation was accepted with 95% of reliability. This means that the responders believe the inter-organisational factors could possibly cause the preventive police managers’ stress level to increase.

The test for the minor assumptions for the inter-organisational factors:

The five minor inter-organisational assumptions or questions for the inter-organisational factors were that “environment, management, hierarchy, job nature and non-organisational rules have a meaningful relationship with the stress level at preventive police”. After the tests and data analysis, this relation was accepted with 95% of reliability. This means that the responders believe that the above factors could possibly cause the preventive police managers’ stress level to increase.

Discussion and conclusion

According to the results and as shown in the table below, the relationship between the variables can be interpreted as follows:

Inter-organisational and intra-organisational factors are confirmed to be factors which influence on the stress level of police because with reliability of 95%, the T-statistic between these variables and the police stress level variable are equal to 7.40 and 8.38, respectively, and the absolute value of these are greater than the critical value of T-statistic at 95%, which is 1.96. In addition, based on the results, the correlation coefficient of the inter-organisational variable and the stress level is 0.375 whereas this coefficient for the intra-organisational variable is 0.419. This means the intra-organisational factors are more influential on police stress level as compared to the inter-organisational factors.

According to the model introduced, the intra-organisational factors that affect police stress level include economic, social, family and individual factors. According to the model, the influence of each one of these four factors on police stress level confirmed as the T-statistic of all of them at 95% of reliability are greater than 1.96. Also, influential levels of intra-organisational factors are ranked as follows:

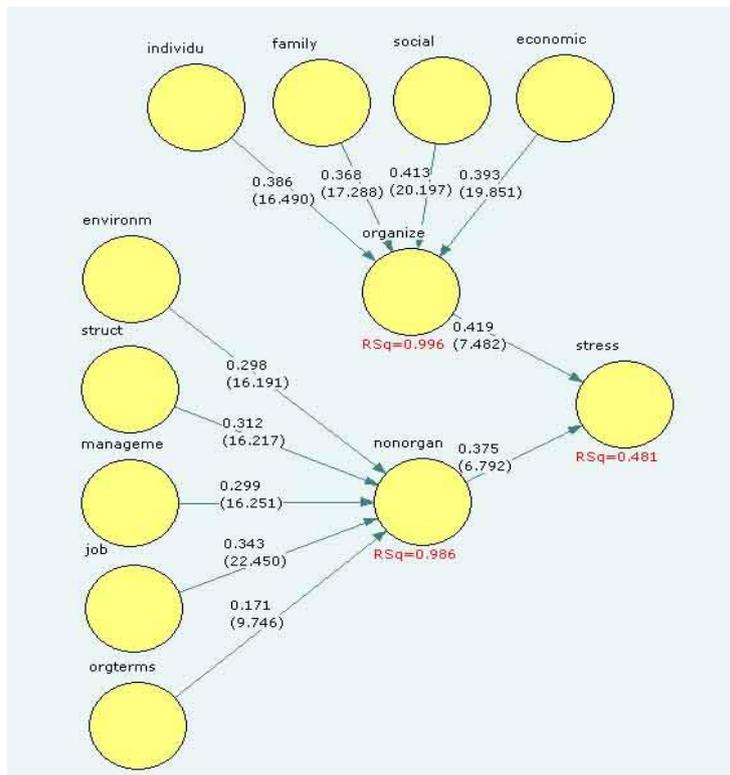
- Social factors with a correlation factor of 0.413
- Economic factors with a correlation factor of 0.393
- Individual factors with a correlation factor of 0.386
- Family factors with a correlation factor of 0.368.

According to the introduced model, the inter-organisational factors that affect police stress level include environmental, hierarchy, leadership, job nature and non-organisational procedures. According to the model, the influence of each one of these four factors on police stress level confirmed as the T-statistic of all of them at 95% of reliability are greater than 1.96. Also, influential levels of intra-organisational factors are ranked as follows:

- Job nature factor with a correlation factor of 0.343
- Hierarchy factor with a correlation factor of 0.312
- Leadership factor with a correlation factor of 0.299
- Environmental factors with a correlation factor of 0.298
- Non-organisational procedures factor with a correlation factor of 0.171

No.	T-Statistic	Standard Deviation	Mean of Data	Correlation Coefficient	Result
1	7/40	0/056	0/420	0/419	Inter-Organisational ↔ Stress
2	8/38	0/055	0/374	0/375	Intra-Organisational ↔ Stress
3	14/85	0/023	0/384	0/386	individual Factors ↔ Stress
4	15/94	0/021	0/364	0/368	Family Fact ↔ Stress
5	19/11	0/020	0/412	0/413	Social Factors ↔ Stress
6	17/40	0/020	0/394	0/393	Economic Factors ↔ Stress
7	16/48	0/018	0/297	0/298	Environmental Factors ↔ Stress
8	14/51	0/019	0/311	0/312	Hierarchy Factors ↔ Stress
9	18/74	0/018	0/297	0/299	Managerial Factors ↔ Stress
10	19/20	0/015	0/340	0/343	Job Factors ↔ Stress
11	10/68	0/017	0/170	0/171	Non-organisational procedures ↔ Stress

Output table from T-test on the research assumptions



Research findings based on the model

According to the results, R^2 is equal to 0.821 and is greater than 0.67. Since R^2 is greater than its critical value, the validity of the structured model is consequently confirmed.

The mean of Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.704 and since this is greater than 0.7, the consistency of the model is consequently confirmed.

Based on the results, the mean of composite reliability of the model is 0.834 and since this is greater than 0.6, the overall composite reliability of the model is consequently confirmed.

According to the PLS model, convergent validity of the model was studied using AVE9 factor. Since the mean of this factor is 0.66, which is greater than 0.5, the convergent validity of the model is consequently confirmed.

According to the PLS model, divergent validity of the model was studied using cross loading factor. Since the correlation of the data (observed variable) and its latent variable is greater than the correlation of that data with other latent variables, divergent validity of the model was consequently confirmed.

Applicable and Experimental Recommendations:

1. Developing a strategy for preventive police mental health.
2. Founding a consultation centre for preventive police with compulsory attendance by preventive police employees to learn resistive behaviours.
3. Providing absolute legal support and making new supportive rules for stressful missions.
4. Continuing intellectual relationship and improving the quality of “insight” and “brotherhood” trainings.
5. Forming a committee for dealing with preventive police mental and psychological problems.
6. Investigating the problems arising from police occupations and providing education for dealing with those problems.
7. Carrying out periodical mental health surveys and sending the identified employees to the consultation centres.
8. Providing the employees with wellbeing, hygiene and health facilities, managers and their families.

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