

Original Article

Psychological Wellbeing of Police as Frontline Warriors During the Peak of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Gujarat: An Observational Survey Study

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Abstract - The public realized the crucial role of police as frontline warriors in controlling the spread of the pandemic by restricting the movement of the public during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a way, the dedicated duty deliverance of police, without paying attention to their own self, helped regulate the spread of COVID-19 to a large extent. Naturally, this affected the psychological well-being of the police. In this regard, the present correlational study aimed at understanding the impact of public support, Self-regulated, work environment, family, and spiritual aspects on the psychological well-being of police. A Survey was conducted on adult police personnel (N=100; 35.3±7.7 years) from Dahod, Gujarat, India. Police on fieldwork, age: 20-50 years, both genders and working in the police for more than 5 years, and willing to participate were included. Police engaged in office work, on night shift work and not consenting were excluded. Data was collected using a screening form. Principal component analysis denoted the spiritual factors among the police personnel, irrespective of gender (Male: n=43; 50%; Female: n=7; 50%), resulting in higher psychological well-being ($X^2= 22.8$; $p<0.001$). Public support was found to be the second most contributing factor ($X^2= 23.1$; $p <0.001$), although it was better among females (n=8; 57%) than males (n=39; 45%). Summing up, the psychological well-being among police is directly connected to spiritual wellbeing and public support. In addition, self-regulatory measures, family support, and workplace harmony were also found to contribute to the psychological well-being among police during the pandemic's peak.

Keywords - Frontline warriors, Police, Psychological wellbeing, COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Introduction

In India, COVID-19 was first detected in February 2020, and the scenario turned out of control by the month of May when the number of cases increased to close to a lakh. Being a country with the second largest population, India faced many difficulties in controlling the transmission of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-COVID-19) among the population. [1] Multiple strategies were adopted by the Government, which were highly necessary to get the situation under control, to prevent and to control the spread.

Many steps were taken by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of India to spread awareness about the situation and control the spread of COVID-19.[2] The central and state governments contributed to controlling the spread of this virus by periodically motivating and inspiring the frontline warriors of the nation, like police, nurses, caregivers and doctors. [3], [4]). Frankly, the fear of COVID-

19 was a bit low among Indians after the second lockdown. But the second wave proved to be more destructive than the first one. [5]

A key strategy for managing COVID-19 was mitigating community transmission via awareness programs and preventive methods [5], for which it was critical to strengthen Frontline Warrior's (FWs) preparedness. Frontline warriors or healthcare workers are health workers who play a crucial role in providing care to infected individuals. Working plays a crucial role in handling the risk of contracting the infection, and are at an increased risk of mental health problems. In general, through the embeddedness of FWs in the community during the outbreak of communicable diseases, the healthcare system generates more awareness, thereby implementing prevention strategies. Similarly, during the outbreak of COVID-19, the FWs adopted necessary strategies for enhancing contact tracing and isolation of



potential cases to control the spread of COVID-19, which could extensively enable gaining control over the spread of the pandemic.[6] Undoubtedly, the unprecedented pattern of the spread of COVID-19 has led to several mental health problems among the FWs, resulting in anxiety, depression, burnout, insomnia and stress-related disorders[7]. Biopsychological vulnerabilities of the individuals; socio-environmental factors such as the fear of risk for exposure to infection to self and family members, ineffective risk identification, and unavailability of personal protective measures contributed much to triggering mental disharmony. [8] In addition to this, job-related stress, perceived stigma [9], worry about isolation/quarantine [10] once infected, and inability to spend enough time with family have impacted the quality of life and well-being of the FWs during the peak of the pandemic.

In this regard, surveys estimate the incidence and prevalence of mental health issues and related factors among FWs. [7] Even if not many studies on frontline warriors are found in Google searches, not any on psychological wellbeing among police personnel. Hence, the current study is unique. There were many countries where herd immunity was also waiting to overcome public concern in case of unavailability of medical infrastructure of medical concerns. Some cases of infection have been reported in this, but it is unreliable. Herd immunity requires safe and effective vaccines and robust vaccination implementation.[11]

Further, this study aimed at understanding the status of psychological wellbeing among the study population as that would help researchers plan for interventional studies to improve the mental health among the population battling for betterment in their wellbeing. The current observational study also assessed the extent to which public support and other factors like the work environment and spiritual aspects affected or regulated the psychological wellbeing of police personnel actively involved in fieldwork during the pandemic's peak. The second objective was to estimate whether female or male police had better psychological wellbeing and how related that is to public support.

2. Materials and Methods

This observational study was conducted among adult police personnel (N=100; 35.3±7.7 years) from Dahod, Gujarat, India. Male (n= 54) and Female (n= 46) police on fieldwork of age range 20 to 50 years, and working in the police for more than 5 years, with no known history of physical or psychological problems, and willing to participate in the study were included. Police engaged in office work, not in communication with the public, hesitant to consent, and on night shift work were excluded from the study. Data was collected using a screening form, reviewed and approved by the field experts and circulated for data collection after seeking approval from the Institutional Ethical Committee of S-VYASA.

2.1. Assessment Tool

The screening form comprised 21 questions related to different contributing factors to the psychological wellbeing of the police, like self-regulated, work, family, public support and spiritual wellbeing.

Items 1 to 7, 9, 16 and 21 were related to self-regulated psychological wellbeing, items 10, 12 and 13 were related to public support, and items 8 and 14 were related to family support. Whereas Items 11, 15,17,18,19 were related to the work environment and support from colleagues, item 20 was related to spiritual wellbeing inducted psychological wellbeing among police personnel.

3. Results and Discussion

Of the total subjects of Indian origin from Gujarat who had taken part in this study (N= 100), more than half of the participants were male (n= 54), and the remaining were female (n= 46). Moreover, they all were police constables engaged in traffic duty (Table 1) with service police for more than 5 years.

Table 1. Demographic details

Item	Number of subjects (N=100)
Gender	
Male	54
Female	46
Profession	
Constable on traffic duty	100
Home guards	-
PSI	-

Independent sample t-test showed a statistically significant contribution of gender over spiritual factors (p <0.001) and public support (p= 0.008). Whereas other factors like self-regulated measures (p=0.055), workplace cooperation and harmony (p= 0.422) and family support (p= 0.191) (Table 2) depicted no statistical significance, indicating that the psychological wellbeing of police is much related to public support and spiritual beliefs.

Principal component analysis conducted on the study data showed that police personnel, irrespective of gender (Male: n= 43; 50%; Female: n= 7; 50%), were more spiritual, and that resulted in considerable psychological wellbeing (X² =22.8; p <0.001) (Table 2).

Where on the other hand, the second factor that is found to have contributed much towards psychological wellbeing is public support (X²= 23.1; p <0.001) (Table 2), which was found more among female police (n= 8; 57%) than male (n= 39; 45%).

Table 2. T-test and principal component chi-square (X²) distribution generated the result

Parameters related to Psychological Wellbeing	Independent t-Test Significance value (p-value)	Chi-Square Value	Chi-Square Significance Value (p-value)
Self-regulated	0.055	18.8	0.004
Workplace harmony and cooperation from colleagues	0.422	11.5	0.08
Public support	0.008	23.1	<0.001
Family support	0.191	20.1	0.011
Spiritual aspects	<0.001	22.8	<0.001

Self-regulated psychological wellbeing was found more among females (n= 7; 50%) than males (n= 40; 46.5%) with a significant chi-square value (X²= 18.8; p= 0.004). Family support as an essential factor of importance for psychological wellbeing was found equally important among police personnel irrespective of gender (male: n= 43; 50% and female: n= 7; 50%) with a significant chi-square value (X²= 20.1; p= 0.011). On the other hand, even though hard to accept, work environment harmony and support from coworkers were found to negligibly contribute towards the psychological wellbeing among police personnel of Gujarat during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic (X²= 11.5, p= 0.08) (Table 2). However, the percentage estimation using a pi-chart showed more males (n= 43; 50%) getting support from the work environment than females (n= 6; 42.8%).

In all, female police of the study were found to have better psychological wellbeing when compared to males; the overall psychological wellbeing among the whole study population was around 50%, only indicating the impact of the pandemic on declining mental wellbeing among the study population. Nonetheless, the current study result summarizes that all the factors have considerable contributions towards the psychological well-being of police, but domains like spiritual wellbeing, public support, family support and measures taken to keep oneself going denoted by the self-regulatory measures impacted much on the psychological wellbeing among the police personals during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The current study results denote that the pandemic and overtime duty deliverance also impacted the psychological well-being of both male and female police adversely. However, certain sets of self-regulated measures and worry-relieving practices adopted by them, like prayer and other spiritual practices, had helped them keep going with their highly stressful nature of work with utmost dedication towards helping the public from getting into close contact and thus getting infected with the COVID-19. Interestingly, public support was found to have a highly significant role in getting the work deliverance of the police proper, not only towards the public but also towards the nation's liability to handle the pandemic with care, reducing the spread and

overcoming the shortcomings that were imparted by the situation. The study results also showed that family support has a considerable role in the psychological wellbeing of police, equally across the genders.

Likewise, as known, workplace harmony and interaction of colleagues and higher officials are unavoidable factors which, by default, affect the psychological wellbeing of police personnel [8]. However, the study results were statistically insignificant to highlight this factor. Nevertheless, the current study results showed less support gained by female police from coworkers and higher officers than males. Hence, the same might have downregulated their psychological wellbeing of them. Adding on, the literature search resulted in finding no such studies to compare with the current study's objectives, rationale and findings. However, few review studies report doctors and nurses as frontline warriors and the need to retain their mindful duty during the pandemic to gain control over the spread.[7] But, studies reporting the percentage of impact caused by the pandemic on different aspects of health are also unfound in search.

Even if the pandemic outburst in 95% of states of India is seeing a drop in the morbidity rate, a few states are still witnessing a rise in the incidence on an average of 1500-5000 cases a day. [12] Viewing this aspect, the current study outcomes are of high social relevance as the frontline warriors like doctors, nurses, paramedics, health care workers and police are taking charge of the safety and security of the public with high care and dedication with no hesitation to do overtime and to work day night.[13] But, their health, which matters for the dedication and sincerity of their work output, is dependent on the public, family and coworkers, in addition to the efforts on adopting self-care measures like proper diet, sleep, rest, prayer and other aspects which help them control stress, worry, anxiety and depression that hampers their mental health and wellbeing.[14] Considering this matter, the current study projects the need for encouraging yoga and counselling-based interventional approaches in self-lifting and promoting mental health and psychological wellbeing among the key role players of the country's health sector, like the police.[15] In the current scenario, health emergencies are completely unpredictable, and coping with and facing such difficult situations is challenging. The teamwork spirit is very

essential to dealing with health professionals. It has proven to bring challenges in control and normalcy states the whole team of health care professionals is required. In many instances, the team effort has proven to bring out the best outcomes. [16]

4. Strength of the Study

This is the first-ever study conducted on the psychological wellbeing of the police of Gujarat during the peak of the pandemic. The study reports that public support contributes much towards their psychological wellbeing. Researchers could obtain the permission of the Higher authorities police to get the data collected from the field staff even during the pandemic's peak.

5. Limitations of the Study

Not many female police consented to take part in this study. No standard questionnaires were used. Even if the

questions in the screening form were approved by the experts and panel members of IEC of S-VYASA, the content and construct validity of the screening form were not checked.

6. Conclusion

Psychological wellbeing among this study's subjects was much influenced by spiritual wellbeing and public support. However, self-regulated measures were also found to have a non-negligible impact. In addition to that, various other supporting factors like family support and workplace harmony were also found to considerably contribute towards the psychological wellbeing of police personnel.

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