12 Workplace Spirituality and Policing

Introduction

Workplace spirituality as a phenomenon in the field of management has been a revelation. Scholars and practitioners have indicated that spirituality at the workplace has produced positive outcomes both for the organization and for the employee. Research suggests that such firms have greater efficiencies, generate a better rate of returns (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Fry, 2003), and can solve human resource challenges (Garg, 2017).

From an employee standpoint, empirical studies suggest that workplace spirituality (WS) can result in the following positive outcomes:

- intrinsic job satisfaction (Moore & Casper, 2006)
- enhanced employee engagement and grit (Singh & Chopra, 2016)
- improved employee well-being and an increase in positive attitude amongst employees (Kolodinsky et al., 2008)
- development of employees' inner life at the workplace (Sheep, 2004)
- more interconnectedness and a sense of purpose to create a more meaningful world (Karakas, 2010; Milliman et al., 1999)
- enhanced creativity (Freshman, 1999; Shinde & Fleck, 2015), which is the cornerstone for innovation and which paves the way for holistic organizational growth (Wong, 2003).

Apart from the various positive outcomes, spirituality is recognized as a prominent means to manage stress (Behera & Dash, 2015). Work-related stress has had a severe impact on the modern workforce due to hyper-competition, high aspirations, and societal pressures (Mujtaba et al., 2020). The unfortunate black swan event – the Covid-19 pandemic – has also exacerbated stress levels, with many people who work from home feeling claustrophobic and mentally drained (NUHS, 2020). In fact, work-related stress is one of the most common causes of mental illness and withdrawal of organizational support by the employee. As Stinchcomb says, “Illnesses related to stress have now replaced infectious diseases as the leading cause of death (2004, p. 259).”

If there is one occupation that is more susceptible and vulnerable to job-related stress and burnout, it is policing (Farr-Wharton et al., 2016). Occupational stress is intrinsic to police work, given that the police often encounter stressful situations on a daily basis (Campbell & Nobel, 2009). Women officers seem to be more susceptible to workplace stress than their male counterparts (Violanti et al., 2016).

There are various reasons attributable to the innate presence of stress in the police force, including a demanding work schedule and the constant threat of being

attacked (S. G. Brown & Daus, 2016). Policing is regarded as a thankless profession as the police face constant verbal abuse and public scrutiny (Chopko et al., 2015; Kumar & Kamalanabhan, 2014).

Apart from the occupational stress, there is also the inevitable organizational stress common to any organization. Police culture inculcates a militaristic and monolithic structure as part of the behavioural norms for police officers, which leads to a certain amount of cynicism and hostility amongst them. Stress accumulates especially as police officers lack a platform to vent their frustration (Braithwaite & Gohar, 2014).

The handling of stress in the police organization is imperative and of the utmost significance, as a law enforcement agency is pivotal to a state's peaceful existence. People's high expectations of police officers to maintain peace and to ensure that the community is crime-free also add more job pressure and stress. Therefore, the impact of work-related stress on police officers has a deleterious impact not only on the police organization and the employee, but also on society (Collins & Gibbs, 2003).

As Kuo puts it, the success of a law enforcement agency like the police, is dependent on how inherent stress is handled (2015). Many scholars have analyzed the impact of spirituality as a stress-prevention mechanism. Having seen the positive impact of WS on employee well-being and job performance in non-police organizations, the practice of WS in police organizations has been the subject of keen interest of various management scholars.

In the next sections, the literature has been surveyed in the context of the following themes:- 1. Policing 2. Stress and fatigue amongst the police 3. Outcomes of WS on the police. The chapter ends with a discussion section.

Policing: Functions and Features

One of the major responsibilities of a government is law enforcement. Failure of law enforcement is tantamount to failure of a state, and the corollary is that effective law enforcement is a hallmark of a well-functioning state (Kelkar & Shah, 2019). The law enforcement agency's core objective in a state is to prevent persons from inflicting harm on others and to provide overall security to its people (Sullivan, 2004).

One of the major protagonists in law enforcement is the police force. The police force as a law enforcement agency is instrumental in ensuring peace and harmony in the state through effective implementation of law and order. Therefore, police officers act as 'peace officers' in ensuring the state remains crime and violence-free (Elliott, 2003). The policing process has evolved significantly with more autonomous status given to police organizations to function independently without any

political interference, and that too with more sophisticated training and rigorous selection processes (Mawby, 2008).

While policing is meant to embrace societal welfare responsibilities with community policing at its essence, over time through different policing models, the welfare responsibilities of a ‘peace officer’ have shifted towards more militaristic control-based processes. The militaristic police, euphemistically known as the ‘New Police’ has met severe criticism for meting out high-handed treatment, brought to the fore in recent times with the brutality exhibited in the George Floyd case, further intensifying the Black Lives Matter movement. Cases of high-handedness and excessive force by police officers has led to the public losing trust and respect for police officers. When asked about the police, Sir Robert Peel said that *“the police are the people and the people are the police”* (Hurd, 2007). This seems far removed from the reality of the police force today.

In this backdrop, modern-day policing in the 21st century has a myriad of challenges. From maintaining peace to managing modern, sophisticated crimes, there is an increasing need for more community policing with softer approaches (Millie & Das, 2008). To add to the stress, due to the proliferation of the internet in recent times, there is constant public scrutiny of policing processes. The traditional militaristic approach will not work in the social media era. As such, the constant scrutiny by the general public, as well as activists questioning the actions of police officers has significant adverse effects in the discharge of ‘peace officer’ duties (Schultz, 2019).

Policing: Fatigue & Stress

Amidst this evolution and the challenges that the police fraternity has witnessed, there is a noticeably higher level of stress and job burnout. Stress in the police force has become an occupational status symbol (Stinchcomb, 1987), and it is considered to be an inheritance in the occupation (Anshel, 2000). In other words, stress for police officers is inevitable.

Stress in the workplace is often due to handling demands beyond an individual’s capacity or bandwidth, especially when it is not possible to avoid, alter, or control these demands (Stinchcomb, 1987). Fatigue, which results from stress, is widely prevalent, and the police profession is no exception. In professions where welfare activity is a major ingredient – like in the police force – stress is more palpable than in other professions (Stinchcomb, 2004). Various studies have indicated the significant amount of stress that the police force encounters (Chopko et al., 2016; Karunanidhi & Chitra, 2015). The severe stress and fatigue that police officers encounter at work has even led down the path of suicide. The National Police Suicide Foundation said that almost 98 per cent of the officers they surveyed had contemplated committing suicide on

account of stress (Smith & Charles, 2010). The policing profession is rated as one of the top jobs in the context of illness and on-the-job injuries (Pearsall, 2012).

Causes of Stress

Stress for police officers is majorly on account of the profession's intrinsic nature and on account of organizational stress in handling administrative hassles (Pandya, 2017). The innate nature of the work, which requires police officers to be on their toes and be vigilant, requiring utmost commitment, is also a cause of concern leading to stress at work. The constant threat to lives is an indicator of inherent stress (Sigler & Wilson, 1988). As the former President of the USA, Barack Obama (Obama, 2021) puts it, "Understand, our police officers put their lives on the line for us every day. They've got a tough job to do to maintain public safety and hold accountable those who break the law." The intrinsic nature of the work, or in other words, the sociological stress on account of the nature of responsibilities that the police officer is entrusted with, also leads to episodic stress due to certain gruesome events and incidents (J. M. Brown & Campbell, 1994).

While organizational stress is common to any organization, it is more prevalent in the police organization due to the criminal justice system that is provoked by autocratic bureaucrats and politicians (Hart et al., 1994). Organizational stress has been more common and pervasive than sociological stress for police personnel (Ayres & Flanagan, 1990). Apart from the long working hours, the police organization, similar to other organizations, succumbs to hierarchical pitfalls. The top-down hierarchy and the pleasing of senior officers to get a promotion is a regular feature even for police professionals (Webster, 2014). Independent decision making is curtailed in the administrative process leading to an organizational dilemma. Lack of employee engagement and guidance, lack of interpersonal relationships within the organization, archaic management philosophies etc., are some of the other pitfalls that police officers fall into, leading to organizational stress.

A study by the Bureau of Police Research and Development, New Delhi (2015) identifies the causes of fatigue for India's police officers, which are indicated in Table 12.1. Even though the study is of Indian police officers, one can reasonably assume that this is fairly generalizable to other police officers too.

Outcomes of Fatigue and Stress

One wonders how much stress impacts police officers, given that stress is an inevitable part of their work. Furthermore, as part of their rigorous police academy training, trainees undergo training in a stressful environment to combat the anticipated stress and fatigue (Patterson, 2016). Police officers get trained in a highly intense,

Table 12.1: Major causes of fatigue and stress amongst police officers.

Intrinsic – Sociological Stress	Organizational Stress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Life threat & violence – Anytime emergency – High expectations from the public – Dramatic events (episodic stress) – Work away from family & friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Erratic duty hours, lack of family time – Lack of proper/good sleep – Poor and untimely food – Work environment lacking adequate facilities – Hostile behaviour of superiors & colleagues – Frequent court attendance – Centralized management with top to bottom hierarchy causing friction and internal politics

Source: Authors' own.

military-style environment to create a perception of being strong physically and mentally. This ensures that police officers will never be made to look fragile and vulnerable (Rose & Unnithan, 2015). Despite this, various studies indicate significant impact is caused on account of stress on police officers (see Table 12.2).

The efforts to counter stress in academy training are concentrated more on the physical element, i.e., in making police officers physically strong with little to no emphasis on the mental fitness element (DeNysschen et al., 2018), leading police officers to succumb to fatigue and stress. Police officers are prone to anxiety and depression at twice the rate of the general population (Mumford et al., 2015). Chronic stress eventually separates and dents the zeal/passion towards policing (Stinchcomb, 2004).

Table 12.2: Outcomes of job-related stress.

Theme	Outcomes of stress	Citations
Organizational Impact	Loss of morale to perform at work	Leitner, Posner, & Lester (1983)
	Premature retirement and increase in sickness-related absence	Frank, Lambert, & Qureshi, (2017); Brown & Campbell (1994)
	Organizational alienation and cynical attitude	Buck (1972); Graves (1996)
	Emotional fluctuation leading to job-related violence	Kop, Euwema, & Schaufeli (1999)
	Frustrated cop syndrome – leading to anger, victimization, and feeling helpless to render effective criminal justice, especially on account of organizational stress.	Cebulak (2001)
	Committing suicide	Mumford, Taylor, & Kubu (2015)

Table 12.2 (continued)

Theme	Outcomes of stress	Citations
Personal impact	Emotional burnout, frustration, anxiety disorders	NIMHANS (1996)
	Domestic violence and increase in divorce rate amongst police officers	Waters & Ussery (2007)
	Deterioration in health and well-being of police officers	Paoli & Merllie (2001)
	Drug abuse; addiction to alcohol and smoking	Terry (1981); Violanti et al. (2016)
	Increased risk of illness and other health issues, including coronary heart diseases, diabetes, cancers and cardiovascular diseases	Guralnick (1963); Milham (1983)
	Premature death	Richard & Fell (1976)
	Post-traumatic stress disorders leading to demoralization and brutalization	Spragg (1992)

Source: Authors' own

As seen in Table 12.2, the deleterious consequences of stress are hindrances to the effective functioning of law enforcement. It is imperative that the well-being of the police force is considered for the effective functioning of the state, with prevention being better than cure. Stress prevention enables police officers to thrive in the system for a longer period, the benefits of which can percolate to the people (Frank et al., 2017).

Outcomes of Workplace Spirituality on Policing

The relevance of spirituality in real life as well as from a research perspective has increased immensely, more so during the uncertain times of the pandemic, where people took recourse to spirituality as an immunity measure (Roman et al., 2020). Many scholars have defined spirituality, but there does not seem to be any identifiable common definition.

Spirituality represents a perennial search for life's purpose and meaning in the various definitions (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). Also, as Piedmont (Piedmont, 1999) puts it, spirituality views life holistically in interconnection with others. With increasing relevance and the positive impact that spirituality has fostered on personal life, it was introduced into the workplace to improve employees' well-being. Workplace spirituality is the process of applying spirituality through labour (Baldacchino, 2017). The increased interest in workplace spirituality has been described as a spiritual movement (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000), with more firms embracing WS.

In terms of outcome variables, several studies have identified a positive influence of workplace spirituality (WS) on both organizations and the people working in them. Spirituality in the workplace promotes employee motivation, enhances positive behaviour, and increases productivity (Olufemi-Ayoola & Ogunyemi, 2018). Furthermore, WS is said to lead to greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Pawar, 2014). Kinjerski and Skrypnek use the term ‘spirit at work’ to describe WS (2004). In another study of long-term caregivers, it was found that a spirit at work program at the workplace is a cost-effective way to improve employee job satisfaction, boost employee organizational commitment, and reduce attrition, ultimately leading to better patient care (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2008).

Further, firms incorporating WS have greater efficiencies, generate a better rate of returns (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Fry, 2003), and can solve human resource challenges (Garg, 2017). Workplace spirituality enhances morale, resulting in fewer absences at work (Gupta & Singh, 2016). Therefore, a considerable number of studies have shown the positive impact that WS can have on organizations and their workforce. On the other hand, some scholars say that WS is a mere management fad or just a tool to control employees (Fernando, 2005). Others, such as Gibbons (2000), say that WS is another failed management concept, such as Total Quality Management. Still others have criticized the use of spirituality for organizational gains, arguing that spirituality is intimate and personal to one’s own life and cannot be a doctrine for mass consumption.

With stress being inherent and rife in the policing profession, an effective prevention tool is imperative for all the stakeholders concerned, including the general public. Various organizational remedies, including clinical intervention, can alleviate stress and fatigue amongst police officers. Despite some policing agencies offering chaplains volunteering to support police officers with spiritual care to combat stress and mental trauma (Gouse, 2016), they have not been effective due to a lack of knowledge amongst the police officers in recognizing stress and mental illness (Donnelly et al., 2015).

Further, these facilities are more in the form of cure and not as prevention. It is similar to the way in which vaccination is essential when the possibility of infection from a virus is high. In these situations, the primary focus should be on prevention. Therefore, implementing workplace spirituality as a prevention tool can be an option, especially for police officers. Dåderman and Colli (2014) stressed the need for spirituality in police officers and the police organization, considering the holistic impact spirituality has on mental well-being in order to combat acute stress (Dåderman & Colli, 2014). See Table 12.3 for the summary of positive outcomes of WS in the police force.

The key themes that emerge from these positive outcomes are:

- Meaningful existence
- Positive commitment towards work
- Increase in faith
- Mindfulness

- Virtuous leadership
- Compassionate worldview
- Happiness
- Calmness and resilience
- Values and ethics-based living
- Integrity
- Stress relief

Table 12.3: Positive outcomes of WS on police.

Citations	Findings
Charles, Travis & Smith (2014); Hesketh, Ivy, & Smith (2014)	Spirituality fosters lower stress levels, well-being and optimism. Spirituality also builds resilience.
Waters & Ussery (2007)	Spirituality builds resilience and offers a generous worldview imperative for police officers while dealing with criminal justice.
Pandya (2017)	Spiritual programmes for police officers provide a more social constructivist view of crime. Criminals are seen in a more compassionate manner with potential to reform. Spiritual training provides an option for the restitution of criminals over punishment.
Feemster (2009)	Spirituality assists in the effective management of emotional intelligence, ethics and stress in law enforcement.
Carlier (1999)	Spiritual awareness influences police officers' vitality and longevity.
Charles (2009)	Prayer and meditation practices increase the quality of work performed and commitment.
Iyer & Deshmukh (2018); Shinde & Fleck (2015)	Spirituality diminishes stress and improves performance at work.
Willetts (2009)	Faith-based spirituality makes inner life reflective, thereby enabling people to recognize good and evil, justice and injustice, hope and peace
Naidoo (2014)	WS drives values-based virtuous leadership and assists in effective leadership through integrity.
Reave (2005)	Spiritual leadership fosters trust, integrity and respect amongst co-workers. Virtuous leadership leads to a positive work environment with strong ethics.
Daniel (2015)	Meaningful activities by police officers will reduce occupational stress

Source: Authors' own

Furthermore, in a recent study by Robinson (2019), the participating police officers found peace and calmness while practicing spirituality. The study also revealed the necessity of incorporating spiritual training in the police academies by police tutors to influence better health, well-being and job satisfaction among the police officers.

In another study by Pandya (2017) on the impact of spirituality on police officers from 15 different countries, two sets of officers were studied, with one set receiving spiritual training. This study suggests that the police officers provided with spiritual treatment and training indicated more humane qualities such as a compassionate outlook, constructivist and transformative approach towards prisoners, etc.

In light of the overall positive impact that WS harnesses at the ground level, there are various workplace spirituality programmes being conducted that are targeted at police officers. For instance in India, the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), a premier public institute for mental health and neuroscience has tied up with the state of Tamil Nadu in the southern part of India for the *Police Wellbeing Programme (PWB)*, wherein NIMHANS will train around 500 police officers on mental well-being and handling stress. The programme includes amongst other things, training on meditation, yoga, mental counselling, etc. These trained officers will in turn act as trainers; the programme objective is to improve the mental health and efficiency of the workforce, from top-level officers to the last rung in the hierarchy. The PWB also focuses on capacity building and frequent follow-up with police officers to gauge the efficiency and success of the programme (NIMHANS, 2019).

Dr Nataraj, a prominent retired Indian senior police officer, who is currently an active politician, in an interview conducted by the authors, said that “spirituality which is beyond caste, community and religion is a major driving force for police officers to render their tasks in a calm equipoise state of mind, amidst severe work pressure & stress”. Attributing spirituality as a strong force in his decision making, Dr. Nataraj has been instrumental in initiating many social outreach programmes while in the police force, including prisoner rehabilitation, and environmental protection.

Dr Nataraj also shared from his experiences that the spiritual training for police officers also removed the gender disparity between men and women police officers, resulting in male officers acknowledging that women are often more balanced when it came to solving disputes and maintaining peace in society. This has led to the setting up of numerous all-woman police stations across the state of Tamil Nadu in South India, and this in turn has been emulated by other South Asian countries.

Similarly, one can also see such well-being programmes in other parts of the world. For instance, in the UK, as part of its National Police Wellbeing Programme, the Blue Light Wellbeing Framework was devised to collate a database of best practices and areas of improvement in the wellbeing of police officers (College of Policing, 2017). Also, as a common trend, one can notice the incorporation of yoga and

mindful training to police officers for mitigating the impact of mental stress, for instance, the Yoga and Mindful Program by the City of Falls Church Police Department in the USA (Elliot & Luttamus, 2014).

Discussion

Despite the positive impact that WS brings for the police, there has been resistance by police organizations to embrace this and to inculcate spirituality in police officers (Moran, 2017). For a long period, police culture reflected a militaristic attitude, where cynicism, criticism, and hostility were handled resolutely. Displaying an act of weakness was a strict no-no, as police officers often tried to conceal their stress and trauma (Bent-Goodley & Smith, 2017). Another factor for resisting WS in police organizations is the lack of understanding of the concept of spirituality. Many police officers related spirituality with religion, and therefore spirituality was not entertained at a very basic level.

To sum up, policing is one of the most stressful professions, with the stress being noticeable not just in terms of physical tiredness and injuries, but also in terms of mental well-being and balance. Literature, specifically with regard to the police, indicates that WS has a positive impact on stress alleviation, apart from other positive outcomes, and yet there are several barriers to WS to be fully imbibed in the police force.

We would encourage future research on WS and policing to delve into the impact of WS in ensuring police officers continue as peace officers, relegating unfortunate incidents like that of George Floyd as exceptions rather than the rule. Furthermore, insightful research can be conducted on how young police officers – millennials and generation Z – understand WS, and whether baby boomers can mentor them in workplace spirituality.

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