

Moderating Role of Work Support in Stressor–Burnout Relationship: An Empirical Investigation Among Police Personnel in India

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Abstract Policing has been contended as one of the most stressful occupations around the globe. With increasing police suicide cases and an upsurge in misconduct toward civilians by the police in India, a study on police stress and burnout was necessitated. The present study aimed at identifying the antecedents of burnout among police personnel. It further investigated the role of work support as a protective factor moderating the stressor and burnout relationship. A survey was conducted in the capital state of India. A total of 491 police personnel at inspector and sub-inspector rank from 128 police stations participated in this study. Multiple and hierarchical regression analyses were performed to examine the antecedents of burnout and to assess the buffering role of work support. The findings of the study revealed that among the several stressors, organizational and work–home interface positively significantly contributed to the development of burnout. The evidence for work support as a moderator was also observed. The findings of this study offer several practical implications to combat police stress and burnout. This study contributes to the growing literature on police burnout in the Indian context and highlights the role of work support in the policing context.

Keywords Stress · Burnout · Work support · Police

Introduction

In today's competitive and dynamic world, professional life has become more important for existence than personal life. The demands, pressures and idealistic expectations at work pose a threat to employee's mental health (Bickford, 2005). Stress, commonly recognized as an experience caused by pressure or demands on an individual (Blaug, Kenyon, & Lekhi, 2007), is considered as an epidemic. Among the myriad occupations, the job of police personnel has been stated to be one of the most stressful (Johnson et al., 2005). Apart from being hazardous, this profession demands endless attention and vigilance to maintain law and order in the society (Paton & Violanti, 1996). The occupation of a policeman has been said to be unique as one deliberately engages himself for which he is feared, often hated and at times reviled and assaulted in the due course of performing their duties (Symonds, 1970). In fact, Ranta and Sud (2008) suggested that police personnel are killed more often by job-related stress than by crime.

It is imperative to address the issue of stress among police personnel as research indicates that stress leads to deleterious consequences such as burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Burnout, defined as a response to chronic or prolonged stress has been associated with reduced motivation and poor performance, increased turnover, job dissatisfaction and lower organizational commitment among police (Martinussen, Richardsen, & Burke, 2007; Waters & Ussery, 2007). It has been observed by researchers that a burnt-out police officer indulges in drinking and drug abuse problems and suffers from psychosomatic complaints and mental health issues such as depression and suicide ideation (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2007). The implications of police burnout are grave, as it has been found to affect the quality of service provided to citizens (Hawkins, 2001) and proven to be a

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threat to society as they are found to exhibit a positive attitude toward the use of violence (Kop, Euwema, & Schaufeli, 1999). In India, burnout among police personnel has received inadequate attention (Suresh, Anantharaman, Angusamy, & Ganesan, 2013). The focus on police stress research in India was limited to identifying the stressors and determining stress levels among police personnel (Mathur, 1995). In fact, recent years has witnessed a shift from identifying stressors to understanding the impact of stressors on police personnel such as job satisfaction (Mohanraj & Natesan, 2015), psychological well-being (Rani, Garg, & Rastogi, 2012) and employee health (Tyagi & Dhar, 2014).

In the West, diverse sources of stress and burnout in policing have been well recognized and established in the literature (Lauferweiler-Dwyer & Dwyer, 2000). How one effectively deals with stressful situations at work is an integral issue that merits research attention (Stinchcomb, 2004). Frequently encountering stressors may prove to be fatal to the individual. This may eventually result in burnout. In such a case, the role of protective factors emerges as a significant means to deal with stressors. Protective factors are often described as resources that may prevent the development of burnout and its outcomes (Pearlin, 1999). They include situational influences such as social support and individual factors such as self-efficacy (Chan, 2002). These factors play a pivotal role in the process of stressor–burnout as they guard an individual against myriad ill effects of burnout.

The alarming escalation in crime rate, startling rise in police suicide cases and ever-increasing complaints against police misconduct toward civilians, makes Indian police no different to the experience of stress (National Crime Record Bureau, 2014). So far, scant scholarly attention has been paid to the policemen and their well-being in India with the focus always on the job to be done (Ranta & Sud, 2008). Further, learning the pernicious effects of burnout among police and paucity of research on burnout among Indian police personnel, the present study aims to identify the determinants of burnout among police. Additionally, the study highlights the role of work support as a protective factor, moderating the relationship between stress and burnout. The following sections review the extant literature on police burnout and illustrate the conceptual model of the study, followed by the research method, findings and implications.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Stressors in Policing

Research on police stress began in mid-1970s (Aaron, 2000). The stressors in policing in the literature have been

classified broadly as operational (nature of work factors) and organizational stressors (Abdollahi, 2002). The operational stressors defined as stressors unique to the operation of policing (Webster, 2013) included violent arrests, gruesome crime scenes (Violanti & Aron, 1993), unpredictable incidents (He, Zhao, & Archbold, 2002), physical threats, use of force and dealing with ambiguous situations (Brown & Campbell, 1994; Hart, Wearing, & Headey, 1995). Organizational stressors in policing refer to the work environment and are found in a variety of organizations (Webster, 2013). The literature advocates that organizational stressors in policing are a better predictor of stress and burnout than the factors that represented the nature of police work (Morash, Haarr, & Kwak, 2006). Some of the organizational stressors include job dissatisfaction especially with the supervisor, excessive workload, inadequate staff, an excess of “red tape” and unfair practices, negative interactions with officers, lack of opportunities and practice of harassment (Morash & Harr, 1995; Slate, Johnson, & Colbert, 2007). Webster (2013) in a meta-analytic study on police stress identified community factors as a source of stress which included factors associated with criminal justice system, public and media relations.

Burnout

Burnout is conceptualized as a psychological syndrome that occurs in response to chronic work-related stressors (Maslach et al., 2001). One of the most recognized conceptualizations of burnout, widely followed even today, came from Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1997). They defined burnout as a multi-dimensional construct, which included three distinct components, namely *emotional exhaustion*, a clear signal of fatigue; *depersonalization*, a distant attitude toward work; and *personal accomplishment*, which includes satisfaction with the past and present work accomplishments. The conceptual model for the present study is based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). According to this theory, all job characteristics can be modeled using two different categories, namely job demands and job resources. This theory posits that job demands and resources trigger two fairly independent processes, namely a health impairment process and a motivational process. The focus of the present study is on the health impairment process which postulates that job demands cost effort and consume energetic resources, eventually leading to strain, in this case, burnout. Based on the JD-R theory, this study hypothesizes that job demands (stressors), defined as any physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that requires sustained physical or mental efforts, are associated with psychological costs.

The study also draws upon the assumption of the JD-R theory which states that resources, defined as those physical, psychological, social and organizational aspects of the job that reduces job demands at the associated physiological or psychological costs, will buffer the relationship between demands and burnout, weakening the stress–burnout relationship (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007).

Organizational Stressors and Burnout

The contribution of organizational stressors in police burnout has been consistently observed in the literature (Wiese, Rothmann, & Storm, 2003). Four organizational stressors are of relevance to the present study. There is a rapidly growing body of research focusing on “injustice as stressor” in the policing literature (Kop et al., 1999). Maslach et al.’s (2001) burnout theory signifying the six areas of work life also suggests that lack of fairness is a key contributor to burnout. They explained that perceived fairness communicates respect and confirms people’s self-worth. They further stated that experience of unfair treatment is emotionally upsetting and fuels a deep sense of cynicism eventually resulting in burnout. Another most cited stressor in policing is work overload, especially as reported in the Indian context (Bano, 2011). When a person is overloaded with tasks, it may produce a sense of emotional strain and fatigue, thereby paving the way to burnout. Shift work (Brown & Campbell, 1994), another stressor considered in the present study, has been reported to influence burnout (Pines & Keinan, 2005). The job of police personnel is to safeguard the society which requires them to be at service all the time. This demands their presence at the police station, where they spend long working hours which has been positively linked to alcohol consumption (Shields, 1999) signifying dysfunctional coping strategy, resulting in burnout. Finally, role ambiguity, the effects of which are evidenced in both anecdotal and empirical law enforcement studies, has been conceived as a source of burnout in policing (Abdollahi, 2002). Police officers who were observed to perceive role clarity in their job felt meaningful at work and role clarity negatively influenced burnout (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2007). Thus, it is hypothesized that organizational stressors (perceived unfairness, work overload, inflexible work hours and role ambiguity) will significantly influence burnout.

H1 Organizational stressors (perceived unfairness, inflexible work hours, work overload and role ambiguity) will significantly influence burnout components.

Community Stressors and Burnout

Police officers often report that when the community has negative impressions of them, it results in poor relations making their work difficult (Kroes, 1985). Negative relations with the public (Garcia, Nesbary, & Gu, 2004) and lack of acceptance from citizens have been documented as a source of stress for police (Kroes, Margolis, & Hurrell, 1974). Lack of appreciation displayed by the public toward police officers causes them to become cynical toward the community. Figley (1999) explained this process through a phenomenon called “compassion fatigue” which is the emotional toll that policing takes on the officer, which eventually leads to burnout.

Another community-level factor that contributes to police strain is political interference (Webster, 2014). In his book on Indian, Vadackumchery (1999) mentioned political interference as one of the major work stressors. Political pressures may impede police personnel from performing tasks the way they want to, which may further hinder and delay their work, consequently leading to a state of burnout. Similar findings were observed among Indian police personnel (Singh & Kar, 2015). Thus, it is proposed that public’s negative attitude toward police and political interference as community factors (Webster, 2013) will influence burnout among police.

H2 Community stressors (public’s negative attitude toward police and political interference) will significantly influence burnout components.

Work–Home Interface and Burnout

Work–home interface, an established stressor, refers to conflicting demands at home, low support at home and dual-career problems (Cox, 1993). Studies have found work–family pressures to influence police officer burnout (Burke, 1998; Martinussen et al., 2007). The conflict between work and personal life has proven to result in a negative attitude toward work among police officers (Mikkelsen & Burke, 2004). In a study by Anantharaman (2014), the Indian police officers themselves ranked variables related to work–family conflict above operational and organizational stressors. Lambert, Qureshi, Frank, Keena, and Hogan (2017) have called for researchers to address work–family conflict as a stressor that may have an impact on police burnout, especially in non-western countries. The exploration of work–home interface and its association to police burnout may be deemed as a research gap, and thus, it is hypothesized that work–home interface may significantly contribute to burnout.

H3 Work–home interface (work–family conflict and family–work conflict) will have a significant positive impact on burnout components.

Work Support as a Moderator

The importance of social support in buffering the stressor–burnout relationship has been documented well in theoretical and empirical work (Thoits, 2011). Support at work has been considered as a protective factor, a resource that prevents an individual from entering the state of severe mental health such as depression and burnout (Kleiman & Liu, 2013). From an organizational health perspective, support has consistently been one of the primary remedies to buffer the relationship between stress and health. Prior research on occupational stress and burnout among police has revealed the importance of a climate of peer support and trust in mitigating burnout (Morris, Shinn, & DuMont, 1999). Support at work may be associated with high levels of camaraderie, eventually reducing burnout. Seeking and receiving emotional support at work has often been cited as a coping mechanism in stressor–burnout relationship, indicating the relevance of support in managing stressful situations and preventing the development of burnout (Wiese et al., 2003). Most studies positioned and reported work support as a direct stressor where lack of supervisory and co-worker support contributed to burnout (Martinussen et al., 2007). However, this study asserts that when high work support is perceived, the influence of stressors on burnout may be reduced; thus, the buffering effect of work support in mitigating the negative effects of stressors on burnout is examined.

H4.1 Work support will ameliorate the effects of police stressors on emotional exhaustion.

H4.2 Work support will ameliorate the effects of police stressors on depersonalization.

H4.3 Work support will ameliorate the effects of police stressors on reduced personal accomplishment.

The figure below exhibits the conceptual model for the study (Fig. 1).

Methods

Sample

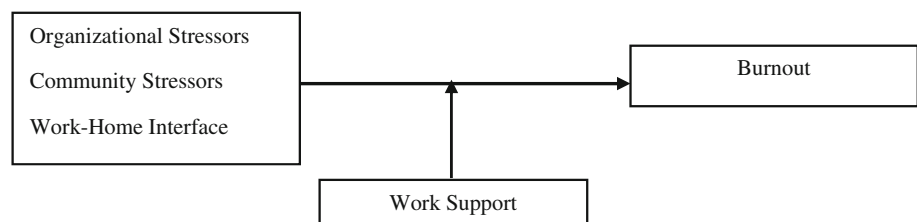
The current investigation was based on the responses obtained from inspectors and sub-inspectors working in police stations in Delhi, the capital of India. Purposive sampling was employed and participants who had completed 2 years of service in the police station unit participated in the study. Six hundred and forty-three survey questionnaires were distributed across 128 police stations. Four hundred and ninety-one participants returned the completed questionnaire (response rate of 76%). The demographic characteristics of the sample indicated that most of the respondents were male (81.7%) and aged between 31 and 39 years (43%). A majority of the sample constituted sub-inspectors (54.7%).

Measures

Dependent Variable

Burnout was measured using Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach et al., 1997). MBI contains 22 items, 9 items measuring emotional exhaustion (e.g., “*I feel emotionally drained from work*”), 5 items of depersonalization (e.g., “*I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally*”) and 8 items of reduced personal accomplishment (e.g., “*I feel I am positively influencing other people’s lives through my work*”). The scale was based on a 7-point Likert scale with anchors ranging from “almost never” to “almost always.” The factor structure of the burnout construct was tested using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Principal component analysis with promax rotation resulted in a 3-factor structure, indicating the distinctiveness of the sub-dimensions. The total variance explained by the 3-factor structure was found to be 63%. The first factor consisted of 9 items representing the emotional exhaustion dimension (23.2% of variance), the second factor consisted of 8 items of reduced personal accomplishment (21.7% of variance), and the third factor extracted represented all 5 items of depersonalization (18.1% of variance).

Fig. 1 Conceptual model for the study



Independent Variable(s)

The eight independent variables were measured either through an already existing scale, or items were generated to make it context specific. The items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 as “strongly disagree” and 5 as “strongly agree.” Following are the details of the scales employed to gauge police stressors. The first four variables represent the organizational stressors (perceived unfairness, work overload, inflexible work hours and role ambiguity) followed by two community stressors (public’s negative attitude toward police and political interference) and finally the last two variables representing work–home interface (work–family conflict and family–work conflict).

Perceived Unfairness

It refers to the prevalence of unfair assignment of working conditions and tasks and disrespectful interpersonal treatment (Ford, 2014). This scale was measured using 4 items adapted from organizational justice scale (Colquitt, 2001) and interpersonal justice scale (Bies & Moag, 1986). It included items such as “*I am watched more closely than others at work.*”

Work Overload

It refers to police personnel’s perception that one has too much to do with limited resources (Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996). To measure this factor, 4 items from perceived workload scale (Kirmeyer & Dougherty, 1988) were adapted (e.g., “*I feel the number of requests, problems, or complaints I deal with is more than expected*”).

Inflexible Work Hours

It refers to long working hours, beyond the given work timings. This factor comprised of 4 items which were developed by us to suit the study context (e.g., “*I work beyond the given working hours*”).

Role Ambiguity

It refers to the lack of clarity in personnel’s role expectations, role requirements and methods employed to complete their tasks (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Four items from role ambiguity scale (Rizzo et al., 1970) were used for the present study. It included items such as “*I know exactly what is expected of me.*”

Public’s Negative Attitude Toward Police

It refers to police personnel’s perception about public’s unrealistic expectation from them and disrespect from the public. A 3-item scale to measure this variable was developed (e.g., “*I receive negative comments from public*”).

Political Interference

It refers to the extent to which involvement and interference of political bodies prevail in policing. A 3-item scale for the purpose of this study was developed (e.g., “*Political involvement hinders the police work*”).

Work–Family Conflict

Work–family conflict (WFC) and family–work conflict (FWC) refer to a form of inter-role conflict occurring as a result of general demands and strain created by the job, thereby interfering with one’s ability to perform family-related responsibilities and vice versa, respectively. A 10-item scale to measure work–family conflict (5 item) and family–work conflict (5 item) developed by Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian (1996) was employed (e.g., “*The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life*” represents WFC and “*I have to put off doing things at work because of demands on my time at home*” represents FWC).

Moderator Variable

Work support refers to the overall level of socio-emotional and instrumental help available on the job from the supervisors and co-worker (Karasek et al., 1998). Total of 8 items were included in the survey, 4 items measured supervisor support such as “*My supervisor pays attention*” and the rest 4 items measured co-worker support such as “*My co-workers are helpful.*” The items were adapted from Karasek’s job content questionnaire (1998) and were gauged on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating “strongly disagree” and 5 “strongly agree.”

The psychometric properties of the scale were established. For the 8 independent variables, the items were first validated by experts and factor analyzed using principal components analysis with promax rotation which yielded an 8-factor structure explaining 69% of the total variance. Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (0.889) and Bartlett’s Test of sphericity (18626, $p < 0.01$) indicated that the factor model is appropriate. Further, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to test the model fit. The absolute fit indices and relative fit indices were found to be within the acceptable range. Reliability of the constructs was within the acceptable range as Cronbach α coefficient

was found to be above 0.70 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). To test for construct validity, convergent and discriminant validity were performed. Convergent validity was established with the help of construct reliability (CR) and average variance explained (AVE). AVE of all individual constructs was found to be greater than 0.50. Further, in the case of all individual constructs, the CR statistic was observed to be significantly greater than their respective AVE statistic. Thus, all individual constructs satisfied all pre-requisites of convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010). Discriminant validity was tested and established by AVE and maximum shared variance (MSV). Criteria for ensuring discriminant validity were met (MSV < AVE and ASV < AVE). To deal with common method bias, methodological and statistical measures were considered for the present study (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Methodologically, respondents' anonymity was protected, and the order of the items in the questionnaire was counterbalanced. Statistically, Harman's single-factor test was performed, where all constructs were subjected to EFA with an unrotated factor solution to determine the number of factors necessary to account for the variance. The results revealed a total variance of 22% indicating an absence of common method bias.

Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, i.e., mean and standard deviation for all study variables. It also presents the inter-correlations and Cronbach α coefficients as a measure of internal consistency of the scales. The findings of the inter-correlations provide support for most of the hypothesized relationships between the predictors and the criterion variables in this study. However, more rigorous test such as multiple regression analysis was performed to arrive at the conclusion. Before performing the regression analysis, the data were tested for regression assumptions.

Table 2 exhibits the influence of stressors on burnout components using multiple regression. The first regression indicates that stressors collectively explained 14% of total variance in emotional exhaustion (adjusted $R^2 = 0.14$, $F(11, 480) = 8.65$, $p < 0.001$). Results indicate that organizational and work-home interface factors significantly contributed to emotional exhaustion. Among the organizational factors, inflexible work hours contributed the most ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$) followed by perceived unfairness ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = 0.003$) and work overload ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = 0.004$), while role ambiguity contributed the least ($\beta = 0.08$, $p = 0.03$). Work-home interference was also found to significantly influence emotional exhaustion, work-family conflict contributing slightly more than ($\beta = 0.18$, $p = 0.007$) family-work conflict

Table 1 Mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha and inter-correlations among the studied constructs

	M	SD	Cronbach's α	DP	RPA	EE	RA	POL	WS	PC	WO	IWS	PU	WFC	FWC
DP	4.08	1.28	0.89	1											
RPA	2.84	1.01	0.89	0.52**	1										
EE	3.52	1.24	0.88	0.94**	0.44**	1									
RA	3.82	0.93	0.90	0.12**	0.23**	0.12**	1								
POL	2.15	0.99	0.89	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.28**	1							
WS	2.06	0.94	0.92	-0.25**	-0.38**	-0.24**	-0.12**	-0.11*	1						
PC	3.24	0.60	0.75	0.04	0.03	0.01	0.12**	0.00	0.10*	1					
WO	2.60	0.87	0.76	0.12**	0.25**	0.09*	0.26**	0.14**	-0.88**	0.29**	1				
IWH	3.99	0.77	0.88	0.19**	0.11**	0.25**	0.01	0.25**	-0.03	0.58**	0.26**	1			
PU	2.81	0.72	0.83	0.12**	0.23**	0.13**	0.28**	0.33**	-0.10*	0.15**	0.12**	0.01	1		
WFC	2.58	1.03	0.93	0.17**	0.11**	0.13**	0.29**	0.34**	-0.14**	0.37**	0.58**	0.66**	0.14*	1	
FWC	1.97	0.90	0.87	0.15**	0.28**	0.18**	0.42**	0.15**	-0.06	0.48**	0.11*	0.45**	0.27*	0.17*	1

DP depersonalization, RPA reduced personal accomplishment, EE emotional exhaustion, RA role ambiguity, POL political interference, WS work support, PC public, WO work overload, IWH inflexible working hours, PU perceived unfairness, WFC work-family conflict, FWC family-work conflict
 $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table 2 Regression analysis for variables predicting burnout among police personnel

Predictors	Emotional exhaustion		Depersonalization		Reduced personal accomplishment	
	β	<i>t</i> value	β	<i>t</i> value	β	<i>t</i> value
Organizational factors						
Perceived unfairness	0.10	1.86**	0.14	2.67**	0.17	3.83**
Inflexible work hours	0.35	6.47***	0.29	2.98***	0.19	3.62***
Role ambiguity	0.08	1.60*	0.09	1.97 [†]	0.12	2.30*
Work overload	0.10	2.29**	0.12	2.29*	0.12	2.78*
Community factors						
Political interference	0.04	0.77	0.06	1.10	0.07	1.31
Public's negative attitude toward police	0.04	0.78	0.06	1.15	0.00	0.11
Work–home interface						
Work–family conflict	0.18	3.05	0.25	3.67**	0.16	2.75**
Family–work conflict	0.14	2.44	0.04	0.78	0.18	3.26**
R^2	0.16		0.14		0.18	
Adjusted R^2	0.14		0.12		0.16	
F statistic	8.65		6.47		10.01	

[†] $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

($\beta = 0.14$, $p = 0.005$). Contrary to the proposition, community factors did not show any significant influence on emotional exhaustion.

In the second regression, police stressors collectively explained 12% of variance in depersonalization with an adjusted $R^2 = 0.12$, $F(11, 480) = 6.47$ ($p < 0.001$). As can be seen, only organizational stressors, i.e., inflexible work hours ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$), perceived unfairness ($\beta = 0.14$, $p = 0.004$), work overload ($\beta = 0.12$, $p = 0.03$), role ambiguity ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = 0.10$) and work–family conflict ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.001$) explained variance in depersonalization. Community factors, i.e., public's negative attitude toward police and political interference, did not statistically predict depersonalization.

Police stressors collectively explained 16% of the variance in reduced personal accomplishment, adjusted $R^2 = 0.16$, $F(11, 480) = 10.01$, $p < 0.001$. Organizational factors and work–home interface explained unique variance in reduced personal accomplishment. The factor that most contributed was observed to be inflexible work hours ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$), followed by family–work conflict ($\beta = 0.18$, $p = 0.003$), perceived unfairness ($\beta = 0.17$, $p = 0.002$), work–family conflict ($\beta = 0.16$, $p = 0.003$), role ambiguity ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = 0.02$) and work overload ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = 0.03$). Community factors failed to show any significant influence on reduced personal accomplishment.

Therefore, hypothesis 1 ($H1$) and hypothesis 3 ($H3$) are supported, while hypothesis 2 ($H2$) is not accepted due to lack of sufficient statistical evidence.

Table 3 exhibits the moderation effect of work support. This paper explores the role of work support in buffering the relationship between stressors and burnout. Baron and Kenny (1986) approach for moderation analyses was followed for the study. To test the interaction effects, multiplicative terms were created for the standardized independent variables. The standardized independent variables were then introduced into the equation in three successive steps (Aiken & West, 1991). In the first step, the independent variables representing police stressors and the moderator variable, work support, were introduced followed by the two-way interactions in step 2 (each independent variable \times moderator variable).

As shown in Table 3, work support significantly and negatively influenced the three components of burnout. Stressors along with the moderator explained 54% of the variance in emotional exhaustion. The interaction terms entered in step 2, explained an additional of 2% variance in emotional exhaustion, $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$, $F(23, 468) = 26.52$, $p < 0.001$. The cross product of perceived unfairness and work support ($\beta = -0.09$, $p = 0.04$) and inflexible work hours and work support ($\beta = -0.08$, $p = 0.03$) was found to be significant. As the interaction was significant, a follow-up split group analyses by taking a median split on work support was performed (Aiken & West, 1991). Perceived unfairness and inflexible work hours were regressed on emotional exhaustion independently in different equations at high and low levels of work support. The results revealed that perceived unfairness was significantly related to emotional exhaustion at low levels of work support

Table 3 Multiple hierarchical regression analyses of stressors and work support on burnout dimensions

Predictors	Emotional exhaustion			Depersonalization			Reduced personal accomplishment		
	β	R^2	ΔR^2	β	R^2	ΔR^2	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1		0.54			0.28			0.23	
Perceived unfairness	0.10**			0.16**			0.15***		
Inflexible work hours	0.22***			0.19***			0.15***		
Role ambiguity	0.06			0.11**			0.13***		
Work overload	0.12***			0.05			0.09 [†]		
Political interference	0.04			0.09			0.05		
Public's negative attitude toward police	0.03			0.00			0.01		
Work–family conflict	0.12***			0.02			0.12**		
Family–work conflict	0.17***			0.15**			0.19***		
Work support	−0.63***			−0.31***			−0.24***		
Step 2		0.56	0.02*		0.31	0.03*		0.26	0.03*
Perceived unfairness × WS	−0.09*			−0.10*			−0.12**		
Inflexible work hours × WS	−0.08*			−0.16***			−0.06*		
Role ambiguity × WS	−0.02			−0.02			−0.12**		
Work overload × WS	−0.05			−0.07			−0.16***		
Political interference × WS	−0.01			−0.04			−0.01		
Public's negative attitude toward police × WS	0.06			0.01			−0.02		
work–family conflict × WS	−0.02			−0.02			−0.04		
Family–work conflict × WS	−0.01			−0.03			−0.02		

[†] $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 0.19$). Similarly, inflexible work hours was found to be significantly influencing emotional exhaustion under low levels of perceived work support ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 0.16$).

For depersonalization, step 1 shows that stressors together with work support contributed 28% of total variance in the outcome variable. When the interaction terms were introduced in the regression equation, in step 2, an additional 3% of variance was observed in depersonalization ($\Delta R^2 = 0.03$, $F(23, 468) = 25.31$, $p < 0.001$), but only cross products of inflexible work hours and work support ($\beta = -0.16$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived unfairness and work support ($\beta = -0.10$, $p = 0.04$) were observed to be significant. A median split for the high and low perception of work support was performed. Further, the influence of the two variables on depersonalization under the two conditions revealed that those with a low perception of work support had a significant influence of perceived unfairness on depersonalization ($\beta = 0.13$, $p = 0.05$; $R^2 = 0.12$) and inflexible work hours on depersonalization ($\beta = 0.12$, $p = 0.05$; $R^2 = 0.12$). This indicates that when personnel perceive lower levels of work support, the relationship between the stressors (perceived unfairness and inflexible work hours) and burnout becomes stronger.

For reduced personal accomplishment as an outcome variable, the total variance explained by the model that included stressors and work support was observed to be 23%. Step 2 which presents the interaction effect showed a significant incremental change with 3% of the additional variance in explaining reduced personal accomplishment ($\Delta R^2 = 0.03$, $F(23, 468) = 7.41$, $p < 0.001$). The cross product of all four organizational stressors (perceived unfairness, $\beta = -0.12$, $p = 0.004$; inflexible work hours, $\beta = -0.06$, $p = 0.02$; work overload, $\beta = -0.16$, $p < 0.001$; role ambiguity, $\beta = -0.12$, $p = 0.007$) with work support was observed to be significant. Because the interactions were significant, a mean split on work support was performed yielding a high and a low group. Regressing reduced personal accomplishment on the organizational stressors at low and high levels of perceived work support revealed that the organizational stressors namely perceived unfairness ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 0.29$), inflexible work hours ($\beta = 0.11$, $p = 0.02$; $R^2 = 0.14$), work overload ($\beta = 0.16$, $p = 0.004$; $R^2 = 0.21$) and role ambiguity ($\beta = 0.17$, $p = 0.01$; $R^2 = 0.20$) were significantly related to the outcome variable at low levels of work support but not at high levels of work support. Based on the results, it may be concluded that hypotheses 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 are partially accepted as work support has shown a significant

interaction effect only with few of the stressors resulting in lower emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment.

Discussion

This paper attempted to identify the determinants of police burnout. The findings reveal that organizational stressors, namely perceived unfairness, inflexible work hours, role ambiguity and work overload significantly, contributed to burnout. The results of this study are in line with previous studies on police burnout where organizational stressors were found to have a strong association with burnout (Wiese et al., 2003). In this study, perceived unfairness has been found to influence emotional exhaustion, as reported in earlier studies (Adebayo, Sunmola, & Udegbe, 2008). Based on the findings of the present study, it may be inferred that when police personnel experience inequitable treatment at work, they may lose faith in the system and socially withdraw themselves. Buunk and Schaufeli (1999) pointed that investing in social exchange relationships without receiving appropriate outcomes is frustrating and will increase failures, deteriorate work performance and thus foster a sense of diminished personal accomplishment.

Studies on long working hours suggest that employees who work for extended hours report signs of emotional exhaustion (Jamal, 2004) which supports the findings of the present study. Police personnel working in police stations are required to be on duty to protect the citizens all through the day and even at nights. An article in a leading newspaper (Economic Times, 2015) mentions that more than 68% of the inspectors and over 76% supervisory officers in the police station worked for more than 11 h a day, and they were not able to avail weekly offs even once a month. The article also revealed that most (over 80%) of the staff were commonly recalled to duty during their off time to deal with emergencies of law and order or VIP security. Working for long hours may deplete their emotional and psychological resources required to perform one's professional role, eventually leading to psychological fatigue and emotional strain (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Xiaoming, Ma, Lisa Chang, and Shieh (2014) found that time load led to high levels of depersonalization which is in line with the findings of the present study. Long working hours and workload may not provide ample time to be with others, which may eventually leave a personnel socially withdrawn, the result of which may be alienation. Similarly, working for hours may threaten their capability to perform tasks, eventually lowering their morale (Hanna, 2005) and may lead to a feeling of being incompetent.

The present study affirms work overload as a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion. Too much work in limited time may cause an emotional strain and create a sense of anxiety, which may lead to a state of emotional exhaustion. The prevalence of work overload may be attributed to manpower shortage in the police stations. Reports on Delhi Police reveal the issue of manpower shortage, especially, among the sub-inspector rank, which may have led to work overload (Mathur, 2015). Delhi, the administrative capital, is on high alert most times of the year which may place an extra pressure on the police personnel resulting in workload. A study among Australian police officers echoed a similar finding, revealing that work overload had a significant impact on emotional exhaustion (Hall, Dollard, Tuckey, Winefield, & Thompson, 2010). The present study found evidence for role ambiguity as a predictor of burnout. This indicates that perception of ambiguity about work and roles leads to (Babakus, Yavas, & Karatepe, 2008) lack of energy and depletion of emotional resources as it creates excessive psychological demands (Boles, Dean, Ricks, Short, & Wang, 2000). A negative association between role ambiguity and job performance has been established which may explain why police personnel exhibit inefficacy at work (Celik, 2013). Role ambiguity is likely to occur because there are often discrepancies between the job descriptions and the realities of police jobs which may be due to supervisors' failure to communicate what they expect from police officers (Ellison, 2004). The police personnel may not know what is expected of him, what behavior will bring reward or punishment, in such a case the personnel may suffer from elevated levels of burnout.

In the present study, community factors did not show any association with burnout. Perhaps, police personnel might feel that public and political interference are stressors that are difficult to be managed and controlled by the organization as they are external factors. These factors may differ from district to district. Thus, the influence of location of police stations may have led to spurious results. Although community factors did not show any influence on burnout, they may have some relevance to other work-related outcomes such as lowered job satisfaction, commitment and disengagement, which may be further explored.

Work–home interface factors (work–family conflict and family–work conflict) in the current study have been found to significantly influence burnout dimensions. The findings of this study are in line with prior work in the realm of policing (Queiros, Pereira, & Martins, 2012). Work–family conflict may be attributed to long working hours and work overload, which may lead to an intra-conflict in prioritizing work and family responsibilities. It is explained that work–family conflict leads to burnout as the conflicts between

work and family roles take a toll on employees and become a source of work-related strain (Montgomery, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Den Ouden, 2003). Borrowing an argument from conservation of resources (COR) theory, it may be explained that repeated demands on work and family in policing, when occurs at a pace that cannot be replenished fast enough, one may suffer from burnout (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000).

The findings of the study indicate that work support ameliorated the effects of stressors on burnout. The findings revealed that work support in interaction with organizational stressors significantly reduced the experience of burnout dimensions. The results are in line with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model's "buffering hypothesis" which states that high job resources may offset the negative impact of job demands on burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Louw and Viviers (2010) in a study among police in South Africa revealed that social support buffered the relationship between stressors and burnout. Support from supervisor and co-worker among police plays a significant role as most of their time is spent at the police station. Seeking support from supervisor and co-worker may help them deal with the stressors in an effective way. Chamberlain and Hodson (2010) argued that co-workers provide emotional and instrumental aid through the provision of useful insider information about how to survive and prosper in the workplace. The support, especially from peers in policing, has been found to have a mitigating effect on burnout (Gershon, Barocas, Canton, Li, & Vlahov, 2009). Shared work experiences allow officers to develop a mutual understanding of work stressors that can serve as a protective factor. Supervisor support has been found to be the most potent in reducing the job-related stressors and strain (Beehr, King, & King, 1990). Although previous studies highlighted that lack of supervisor, peer and organizational support results in burnout, reduced motivation, and poor performance (Anshel, 2000), studies have scarcely considered work support as a moderator and mostly studied it a source of burnout (Gyamfi, 2014; Kula & Guler, 2014). As in the present case, work support has not shown evidence of significant moderation with many of the stressors and burnout relationship. Perhaps, other sources of social support such as from family and friends outside of work may have played a buffering role. This study evaluated the role emotional and instrumental support which may have exhibited a limited type of support. Studies have shown that informational support has also buffered the stressor-strain relationship (Greenglass, Fiksenbaum, & Burke, 1996). Hence, varying sources and type of support may have resulted in spurious findings.

Implications and Conclusion

With an aim to identify predictors of burnout among police personnel, this study affirmed that organizational factors are of critical significance to police management and administration. The findings also highlighted the role of a supportive climate as a contextual protective factor in mitigating burnout. Findings of the study necessitate a periodic mental health assessment plan for police. This may help identify police personnel prone to burnout, who can further be referred to counselors and therapists. Providing counseling services at jurisdiction level may aid in prevention and treatment of burnout. Apart from employing external counseling services, peer counseling may provide promising results. Police personnel are provided with stress management training programs as a part of the training curriculum; however, the effectiveness of such programs remains inconclusive. Perhaps, an assessment of such programs may provide a measure of training effectiveness. Besides introducing stress management programs at an individual level such as yoga, meditation and biofeedback training (Ranta & Sud, 2008), a primary intervention approach must be adopted. This implies that police organization must consider modifying the current organizational policies and practices. So far, long working hours has been a negligible issue; thus, a shift system with stipulated working hours must be initiated. Alternatively, incentives (monetary and non-monetary) may help deal with long working hours, as it gives a sense of value and assures the personnel that their effort is being recognized. Interventions designed to improve the relationship between personnel and the organization may help reduce and prevent violation of fairness. This demands serious efforts from supervisors. The consistency in supervisor's decision making may improve employees' insight in the way decisions are made, introducing a sense of parity and an equitable treatment. The police organization must encourage supportive climate and promote openness in the department that will foster trust among police personnel. Such a culture may allow personnel to seek and provide support. Specific training on multitasking competencies may be imparted to deal with the quantitative workload. A clear job description and communication of the prescribed roles can help to deal with role ambiguity. Likewise, introducing participative goal setting may help deal with role ambiguity (Quick, 1979).

The caveats of this study include the sample distribution regarding gender, male police personnel dominated the sample. Second, the sample represented the police station unit and hence the results cannot be generalized to other units of police. Third, the self-report measures may have introduced bias as the questionnaires were filled in the

presence of others which may have influenced the responses. Future researchers may study a balanced sample and validate the results among other units of police. Different types and sources of support at work may be explored in the process of stressor–burnout (strain) relationship. Future studies can adopt a longitudinal approach to better establish the findings. The finding of the present study compels an ongoing and a systematic inquiry to investigate the antecedents and consequences of police stress for a healthy and balanced society.

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