The Effect of Stress and Coping among Different Ranks of Para-millitary Personnels

Jyotsna Singh* Khurshid Alam**

Abstract

Stress is what keeps you on your toes during a presentation at work, sharpens your concentration when you're attempting the game-winning free throw, or drives you to study for an exam when you'd rather be watching TV. But beyond a certain point, stress stops being helpful and starts causing major damage to your health, your mood, your productivity, your relationships, and your quality of life. The Paramilitary forces in India are showing clear signs of work related stress experiencing its negative impact on mental and physical health. Various segments of the Paramilitary forces hierarchy differ in their experience of work stress. This study is directed at recognition of stress and coping strategies and the diagnosis of the phenomenon by studying the pattern of stress in the paramilitary force sample. Sample of 60 paramilitary forces from different ranks of BSF is used for the purpose of data collection in this study. The data is collected informally from the respective employees. The results suggested that on recognizing stress that can take a heavy toll in terms of health and job-related outcomes, we can make necessary adjustments and combat its effects. With this information in hand and the knowledge that Border security forces are a high stress occupation, it appears most logical to study the phenomenon of Paramilitary forces stress systematically.

Keywords- stress, paramilitary forces, coping strategies, rank, area of posting.

About Authors: *Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Delhi **Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Zakir Hussain Delhi College, University of Delhi

Introduction

Stress is a normal physical response to events that make you feel threatened or upset your balance in some way. In recent years, BSF has the highest rate of suicide and the reasons for increasing case of suicides are stress and frustration, domestic problems, denial of leave and separation from families. In some cases, humiliation by senior officers or colleagues triggers the violent behaviour.

The body doesn't distinguish between physical and psychological threats. The more your body's stress system is activated, the harder it is to shut off. Long-term exposure to stress can lead to serious health problems. Chronic stress disrupts nearly every system in your body. It can raise blood pressure, suppress the immune

system, increase the risk of heart attack and stroke, contribute to infertility, and speed up the aging process. Long-term stress can even rewire the brain, leaving you more vulnerable to anxiety and depression.

Police in India are showing clear signs of work related stress experiencing its negative impact on mental and physical health. Various segments of the police hierarchy differ in their experience of work stress. In India the presence of stress among persons of Paramilitary forces is felt but still not recognizes as a major enemy of law enforcement professionals as yet. Media reports of Paramilitary forces brutality and indiscipline can be perceived as working signals of job stress, emphatically painting to the mismanagement of this crucial problem so far.

Society views the Paramilitary forces not only as a law enforcing agency but also as an instrument of social service, an agent of social change and the protector of rights and duties of the people. The numerous incidents of Paramilitary forces brutality and high handedness, excessiveness use of physical violence and inefficient prompt a curious observer to look beyond the surface and discover the underlying strain that exists(Mathur, Pragya 1994). Job stress is a phenomenon which is unmistakeably part of mankind's work environment. The Paramilitary forces man's work environment also does not escape from this reality.

Mathur (1994) observed that the glamorous exterior image of the Paramilitary forces overshadows to challenges encountered in role enactment which are often life threatening and endanger the personnel in uniform not only on duty but even off duty to play the varied roles with equal élan. Then as a law enforcer he makes an arrest or use force to enforce the rule of law. This roller coaster ride is a process difficult to understand functionally incomprehensible emotionally (Bratz, 1979).

The help or hinder syndrome defeat an officer's emotions daily. Added to this the job makes great demand on the mental, emotional and physical capabilities of the officer demand that rare all too often so stressful that they begin to destroy the individual (Depue, 1979).

Law enforcement tends to impose a higher degree of stress and a multiplicity for stressful situations on the individual than do most other professions (Colwell 1988). (Kunce and Anderson 1998) have outlined five non-pathological attributes necessary for successful performance as a Paramilitary forces officer: emotional restraint, emotional expressiveness, group cohesiveness, independent style and realistic orientation.

With the growing incidence of crime and widening role expectations, the mental and

physical health of paramilitary forces personnel assumes social change, economic conditions Paramilitary forces organization, the total criminal justice system, the demands made on Paramilitary force men's time and of their families who are also experiencing stress, the job of Paramilitary force men in general and form emulative and interactive effects of these stress (Griencil 1975). It is surprising to note that so far only two papers relating to Paramilitary forces stress have been included in the All India Paramilitary Forces Science Congress held annually in India these two papers (Pillai 1987 and Mathur, Pragya 1995) appeared after a gape of more the sense years. Given a chance, the psychologist can make meaningful contributions to selections, training, placement, career development, research, management consultation and direct services such as personnel counselling, diagnosis and evaluation to department personnel. It is a sad commentary that as of now scant attention has been paid to the Paramilitary forces men and their wellbeing in India with the faces always on the job to be done. The unique patterns of job related stress within a variety of occupations must be understood. With this perspective in view, a chapter on the structure and functions of Paramilitary forces have been found extremely suitable for studying occupational stress because law enforcement combines a high degree of stress and intense involvement in the work.

Stress implies a disturbed personenvironment relationship that coping is meant to change. Four important principles have been supported by(Folk man and Lazarus 1985) they are- stress encounter is a dynamic unfolding process not a static, unitary event, at any given phase of an encounter people are likely to experience seemingly contradictory states of mend and emotions, e.g., a threat and challenge, people cope in compel ways, at any given phase of a stress encounter there are substantial

differences in coping and cognitive appraised. Person is using to manage the demand of a particular person environment transaction that has relevance to his or her being. There are basically following types of models-response based where stress is seen as an independent variable, a property of the environment.(Leivi and Kagan, 1971; McGrath 1971; Selye, 1986), stimulus based is where stress is seen as an independent variable- a property of the external environment (Symonds, 1947; Weitz, 1970), psychological model of stress with antecedent causes and behavioural consequences(Lazarus, 1976), transactional models are where stress is viewed as an individual phenomenon, the result of a transaction between the person and his environment, i.e., a misfit. (Vann Harrison, 1976; Freach, 1974).

Unfortunately, the subject of Paramilitary forces stress has been neglected for long in India. Now the grave consequences of Paramilitary forces malfunction for society are beginning to surface, reports of Paramilitary forces misbehaviour are drawing the attention of researchers. Despite a large body of literature on different facts of this problem being available, the death of such information in the Indian context makes studies such as this are vitally necessary. Before highlighting the relevance and purpose of the present study, it would be worthies to review suggestion for further research made by earlier studies of Paramilitary forces stress in India which would reveal the research gaps. Dangwal et al 1982 studied a sample including

Bhasker 1986 and further research was suggested to explore the relationship between behavioural, psychological and health effects and experience of job stress among Paramilitary forces. He concluded that the unique patterns of job stress within a variety of occupations must be understood. Stresses experienced by Paramilitary forces men have their roots in the

imbalance between demands which society places on them and the resources at their disposal. According to Common and Evans 1991, the Paramilitary forces organization with its rules and rules procedures and communication patterns, bureaucratic hierarchy and management style is the greatest source of stress for the Paramilitary forces.

As employees age are exposed over time to more emotional and physiological trauma, consequences for mental and physical health increase (Caplan, 1985), Schwart and Schwaty 1975 noted that among older Paramilitary forces officers suicide is more common and may be related to alcoholism, physical illness or impending retirement. Age difference has been reported to exits in context of stress vulnerability to disease and burnout by several researches in the study Indian Paramilitary forces too (Bhaskder, 1986; Dangwaletal 1982; Pillai, 1987; Suresh, 1992). The hypothesis regarding educational difference formulated in this study is really a leap in the dark. The finding of some investigators suggests that in the preliminary stage of service below 5 years job stress is experienced Beutler Larry E. Nussbaum, P Jaul D, and Meredith, Keith E. 1988. According to me social science knowledge should not be fudged.

Coping is expending conscious effort to solve personal and interpersonal problems, and seeking to master, tolerate or minimise stress/conflict. The effectiveness of the coping efforts depends on the type of stressor/conflict, the particular individual, and the circumstances. Psychological coping mechanisms are commonly termed coping strategies or coping skills. Unconscious or non -conscious strategies like defense mechanism are generally excluded. The term coping generally refers to adaptive or constructive coping strategies, i.e. the strategies reduce stress levels. However, some coping

strategies can be considered maladaptive, i.e. stress levels increase. Maladaptive coping can thus be described, in effect, as non-coping. Furthermore, the term coping generally refers to reactive coping, i.e. the coping response follows the stressor. This contrasts with proactive coping, in which a coping response aims to head off a future stressor. Coping responses are partly controlled by personality (habitual traits), but also partly by the social context, particularly the nature of the stressful environment. Hundreds of coping strategies have been identified. The psychology textbook by Weiten has provided a useful summary of three broad types of coping strategies:

Appraisal-focused strategies occur when the person modifies the way they think, for example: employing denial or distancing oneself from the problem. People may alter the way they think about a problem by altering their values and goals, such as by seeing the funny side in a situation: "some have suggested that lighter way of handling situation may play a greater role as a stress moderator among women than men".

People using problem-focused strategies try to deal with the cause of their problem. They do this by finding out important information on the problem and learning new skills to manage the problem. Problem-focused coping is aimed at changing or eliminating the source of the stress. The three problem-focused coping strategies identified by Folkman and Lazarus are taking control, information seeking, and evaluating the pros and cons.

Emotion-focused strategies involve releasing pent-up emotions, distracting oneself, managing hostile feelings, meditating or using systematic relaxation procedures. Emotion-focused coping "is oriented toward managing the emotions that accompany the perception of stress". The five emotion-focused coping strategies identified by Folkman and Lazarus are disclaiming, escape-avoidance, accepting

responsibility or blame, exercising self-control, and positive reappraisal. Emotion-focused coping is a mechanism to alleviate distress by minimizing, reducing, or preventing, the emotional components of a stressor. This mechanism can be applied through a variety of ways, such as seeking social support, reappraising the stressor in a positive light, accepting responsibility, using avoidance, exercising self-control, and distancing. The focus of this coping mechanism is to change the meaning of the stressor or transfer attention away from it. Positive emotion-focused mechanisms, such as seeking social support, and positive re-appraisal, are associated with beneficial outcomes.

Typically, people use a mixture of all three types of coping strategies, and coping skills will usually change over time. All these methods can prove useful, but some claim that those using problem-focused coping strategies will adjust better to life. Problem-focused coping mechanisms may allow an individual greater perceived control over their problem, whereas emotion-focused coping may sometimes lead to a reduction in perceived control (maladaptive coping). By following these simple strategies, one will have an easier time responding to stresses in one's life.

The present study is conducted on Border security force. The reason behind the choice of this particular organization is that it is small among all Paramilitary forces organizations. It has been found that is small organization group cohesiveness is more. So, the perception of stress is less. These concepts theoretically are correct but most of the studies on Paramilitary forces stress are based on the ill stern model, which does not work in Indian context. In past studied have been conducted to identify stress level among different state police forces but rarely among the personnel of BSF.

The focus of the present study is to investigate stress and coping strategies of Paramilitary forces personal in relation to their rank and area of placement, i.e., there would be differences in stress level among different levels of hierarchy. The finding of some researcher suggests that low ranker has more stress then the high ranker (Pendleton, Michoel, Statland, Ezaa, Edward 1989). However, some investigators reveal that high rank persons feel more occupational stress than low rank persons. Vialati, Jon M and Aron, Fred 1994. On the basis of these studies we cannot say clearly which trend is fit in Indian context? In case of coping strategies some investigators reveal that there is difference in coping strategies among different ranks and some investigators reveal that there is no variation in coping strategies along the hierarchy of Paramilitary forces personnel.

There has been very little work that is important area of Paramilitary forces stress, the sooner people start recognizing stress as a reality that it can take a heavy toll in terms of healthy and job-related outcomes, the sooner people can make necessary adjustments and combat its effects. With this information in hand and with the knowledge that Paramilitary forces is a high stress occupation it appears most logical to study the phenomenon of Paramilitary forces stress systematically.

The objectives of present study are-

- 1. To study stress level among Paramilitary forces personnel posted in different area of settings.
- 2. To study stress across hierarchy among BSF personnel.
- 3. To study interaction effect of area of posting and different hierarchy on stress level.
- 4. To study coping strategies of police personnel working in different area of settings.

- 5. To study coping strategies of Paramilitary forces personnel along different hierarchy level.
- 6. To study interaction effect of area of posting and different hierarchy on coping strategies.

Hypotheses

- 1. There is no significant difference in stress level of Paramilitary forces personnel working in different area of setting.
- 2. There is no significant difference in stress level across different ranks of hierarchy Paramilitary forces personnel.
- 3. There is no significant interaction effect of area of setting and different ranks of hierarchy on stress level.
- 4. There is no significant difference in coping strategies of Paramilitary forces personnel working in different area of settings.
- 5. There is no significant difference in coping strategies of Paramilitary forces personnel across different ranks of hierarchy.
- 6. There is no significant interaction effect of area of posting and ranks of hierarchy on coping strategies.

Method Sample

Sample of 60 serving Paramilitary forces personnel from different ranks of Border Security Forces organisation is used for the purpose of data collection in this study. All the participants were males. A sample is collected from two different areas of settings (sample of 30 Paramilitary forces from terrorist area and sample of 30 from non-terrorist area). Purposive sampling was done in order to obtain a representative sample from three different hands for Paramilitary forces hierarchy. From two samples include 20 constables, 20 J.C.O's (junior commanding officers), 20 G.O's

(gazetted officers, i.e., company commander, assist commandant, deputy commandant and commandant). The sample was considered to be representative of the population relevant to the present study. Data was collected informally after official hours.

Tools:

- 1. Measures of stress- For measuring stress Paramilitary forces specific stress questionnaire is used for the purpose of present study. This is a standardized questionnaire and developed by (Savery, Souta& Weaver 1993). This questionnaire consists of 13 items. The items were responded on a five point scale ranging from- strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (U), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD).
- 2. Measures of coping strategies- For measures of coping strategies inventory by (Moss, 1992) are used. This is also a standardized inventory. This coping inventory consists of 19 items. The items were responded to on a four point rating scale ranging from (not, not at all), yes once or twice yes some time, yes family often.

Design

Data was collected from responses of 60 male of B.S.F Paramilitary forces personnel who are grouped in the following way to facilitate statistically analysis. The design of the present study is 2 x 3 factorial with N=60.

- Independent Variables (I.V) Stress, Coping
- Dependent Variable (D.V) Ranks (constables, JCO's, officers).

Procedure

Prior permission was taken for data collection through paper channels. While administering questionnaire precautious were observed such as the respondents were assured complete secrecy, purpose of the study was explained to convince them realize the relevance and benefits of investigations being made with an aim to elicit unbiased responses, respondents were encouraged to remove their doubt and difficulties if any about the questionnaires. Instructions were given in detail for each particular measure. There were no right or wrong answer. Their identity and response were used only for research purpose. This information is required for research purpose only."

Statistical Tools

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance).

Results and Discussion

The data for the present study was collected from 60 Border Security Force personnel of Paramilitary forces organisation. The results were analysed with the help of ANOVA (Analysis of Variance).

Table 1 : Summary of analysis of variance for 2 x 3 design with n= 60

SS	df	MS	F
2653.35	1	2653.35	49.35
2873.73	2	1436.87	26.72
230.80	2	115.40	2.14
29003.10	54	53.76	
8660.98	59	146.79	
	2653.35 2873.73 230.80 29003.10	2653.35 1 2873.73 2 230.80 2 29003.10 54	2653.35 1 2653.35 2873.73 2 1436.87 230.80 2 115.40 29003.10 54 53.76

**F = 7.12, **F = 5.01, (P < .01)

Impact Factor: 6.696 IJPS 048

By seeing the summary of ANOVA table 1, we can find out that there is a significant difference between experience of stress of Paramilitary forces personnel posted at terrorist area and non-terrorist area (F = 5.01, P < .01). So

Null hypothesis can easily be rejected. We can also find out that there is no significant interaction effect between hierarchy of ranks and different area of posting (F=5.01, P>.01).

Table 2: Area of posting

S.no.	Hierarchy of Ranks factor (B)	Terrorist area (a 1)	Non- terrorist area (a 2)
1	Constable (b 1)	364	283
2	JCO'S	572	406
3	Officers	470	321
4	Total	1406	1010
5	Mean X	46.8	33.6

By seeing the mean table, we can find out the experience of stress among Paramilitary forces personnel posted at terrorist area (mean = 46.8) is higher than the Paramilitary Forces personnel posted at non-terrorist area (mean = 33.6).

Table 3: Summary of Analysis of Variance for 2 x 3 design with n= 60

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F
Area of setting	1216.02	1	1316.01	28.94
Rank (B)	3095.43	2	1547.71	34.03
(A x B) interaction	123.43	2	61.00	1.35
Residual error	2455.30	54	45.46	
Total	6990.18	59	118.47	

^{**}F = 7.12, **F = 5.01, (p<.01)

By seeing the summary of ANOVA table 3, we can find out that there is significant difference between coping strategies used by Paramilitary forces personnel posted at terrorist area (F = 7.12, F = 5.01, P < .001). The results

from table 3 also depicts that there is no significant interaction effect of hierarchy of ranks and different area of posting on coping strategies. (F = 5.01, P < .01), so we accept our Null hypothesis.

Table 4: For coping strategies

S.no.	Hierarchy of Ranks factor	Terrorist area (a 1)	Non-terrorist area (a 2)
	(B)		
1	Constable (b 1)	328	265
2	JCO'S	535	431
3	Officers	461	329
4	Total	1324	1025
5	Mean X	44.1	34.1

By seeing the mean table 4, we can say that we can use more coping strategies then those posted in non-terrorist area.

The models that have gained prominence in the area of stress and coping behaviour would include the following over- the ROLE episode model (Kahn et al, 1964), PERSON environment model (French, Rogers and Cobb, 1974) and Transitional model (Cox, 1978). Our findings regarding the effect of area of posting on stress clearly reveal that there is significant difference between experience of stress by Paramilitary forces personnel posted at terrorist area and non-terrorist area. These findings are in agreement with the results obtained by Mathur, K.M (1994) that stress to B.S.F personnel deployed in Delhi Cantt found that working environment has its effect on stress. This difference in two can also be explained on the basis of person- environment fit model proposed by French, Rogers and Cobb (1974). According to this model stress is the condition of poor person- environment fit. In other words, job situations are found to be unable to fulfil the needs and values of Paramilitary forces personnel, on ground situation it seems clearly that the Paramilitary forces persons working in terrorist area are not equipped with modern weaponry system and other logistics. Even they are not getting special training to deal with terrorist operations. In terrorist area Paramilitary forces personnel are suffering from a fear of "death anxiety", they also are not getting special privilege as given during the Kargil war. They are also suffering from the fear of uncertainty.In regard to this factor our finding is clean that there is a significant difference in stress across the different levels of Rank Hierarchy. The present study trend is supported by the results obtained by Violanti, Jon M. and Aron, Fred (1994). On the contrary this finding is not in agreement with the finding of mainly researchers (Pennoleton, Michal, Stotland and Ezra Spires, Phillip and Mrich, Edward (1989). These researchers concluded that low ranker feel more stress than high ranker Paramilitary forces personnel. But the present study is conducted in India and the results of this study are supported by many Indian researchers (Bhaskar, 1986; Dangual et al, 1982; Suresh, 1992; Yadav, 1993). British researcher (Gudjousson and Adlam, 1983) found evidence that officers of different ranks both quantitatively and qualitatively in their experience of stress. The subordinated officer's (JCO's) appear to experience greater level of stress as compare to Gazetted officer's (GO's)

and constables. People in mediating positions are very vulnerable. For such a person, the prime frame of reference is his own group and he want to belong to his group in the first place. However, the other ranks the fractions on an official basis. Sengupta (1995) also found significant difference in the experiences of stress perceived by Gazetted and non- gazetted Paramilitary forces officers. There is no significant interaction effect between area of posting and hierarchy of rank on stress. The results of the present study do not support the results of the previous research done by Mathur (1993). This is because the sample size used for the present study i.e. N=60, is small. But in Indian situation for Paramilitary forces personnel posted in areas like Jammu and Kashmir and North eastern region there will be significant interaction effect regions, there will be significant interaction effect between hierarchy of rank and area of posting on their stress level will often expect his solidarity in many difficult situations. He must have to stand up for the man at the lower level, this forces him to compromise results in both parties mistrusting him (Winnubst, 1984). The subordinate officer is a victim of the sandwich syndrome being squeezed on both sides by often conflicting expectations of seniors and subordinates (J.C.O's, facing pressure from above and below. The lack of personal control, the lack of participation in decision making lack of opportunity to communicate, lack of recreation and promotion prospects contribute to subordinated (J.C.O's) officer stress. Another contributing factor may be termed as the trickle down effect. Being in treated like punching bags by the noses. The subordinate officers(J.C.O's) being directly responsible to the community and the senior officers for his actions. Results of the present study are also explained with the help of transactional model of stress that is imbalance or misfit takes place between demands of job and needs of individual. Due to this imbalance

subordinate officers (J.C.O's) are found to suffer from conflicting situation and they feel more stress. The gazetted officers (G.O's) were next most stressed group.

As been proved by the present study that there is a significant difference in the coping strategies used by Paramilitary forces personnel posted in terrorist and non- terrorist areas. The present study results are supported by the previous studies. A study done by Maslack and Jackson also reveals the excessive use of alcohol and drugs by Paramilitary forces personnel in order to cake unity stress. In terrorist areas, Paramilitary forces personnel use multiple coping strategies in order to combat stress. In terrorist areas it has been recorded that consumption of alcohol is twice. Other coping strategies are cigarette making and high intake of drugs more than that in non-terrorist areas this is because there are no other native healthy avenues of recreation in terrorist area as compared to non-terrorist area, which are well equipped with recreational facilities like frequent social gatherings, inter battalions tournaments, the excessive use of coping strategies by Paramilitary forces personnel posted in terrorist area is also due to the high rates of uncertainty of life in those areas. There is a constant threat of death with which they have to live it is said that the weapon is their best friend and their only source of security.

With regard to this factor, the present result shows that there is a significant difference in coping strategies across the different levels of rank hierarchy. The present study trends are supported by results obtained by Roth and Cohen (1986). According to them, the lack of control over the stressful events felt by subordinate officers may be the reason far higher score on coping strategies. According to the present study, subordinate JCO'S as they are available to the senior officers. The increased use of coping strategies by JCO's is due to higher

levels of stress. This finding is in consonance with the theory that with the increase in stress levels, the use of coping strategies also increases. Sengupta (1995) examined the coping strategies among gazetted and non-gazetted Paramilitary forces officers. There is no significant interaction effect between area of posting and rank on coping strategies since no research has been done on this factor, thus the findings cannot be supported. It is interesting to note that in the present Paramilitary forces sample, the high stress group reported significantly higher mean score on coping strategies as compared to the low stress group. As Moos (1992) found, severe stressors may initially mobilize more approach and more avoidance coping response. When the severe stressors persist, however, individuals may gradually lessen their use of problem solving coping and increase their reliance on avoidance strategies.

This study proposed to study occupational stress in Paramilitary forces in Delhi with a view to awareness among Paramilitary forces men, administrator public by identifying areas in terms of stress and strain as symptom of distress. On recognizing stress that can take a heavy toll in terms of health and job-related outcomes, we can make necessary adjustments and combat its effects. Stress is one of the most serious threats to health and well-being in modern times. With this information in hand and the knowledge that Border security forces are a high stress occupation, it appears most logical to study the phenomenon of Paramilitary forces stress systematically.

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