

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mental Health Screening among Police Employees: Using SRQ 20

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Abstract:

Aim: To screen mental health among Police employees using SRQ. **Material and Methods:** Cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among police employees. Data was collected anonymously only on the SRQ questionnaire in given format and other details of information regarding police employees were not asked to avoid social desirable bias. **Result:** In present study 23 (27.38%) of participants gave positive response to ≥ 6 questions. Maximum participants showed positive response to question that they are "Unable to play a useful part in life" i.e. 32 (38.10%). **Conclusion:** For early detection of mental disorder regular screening and periodical compulsory health examination among the police personnel is necessary.

Keywords: *Mental health Screening, SRQ20*

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is an important component of the total positive health, and it is interwoven closely with the physical and physiological dynamics of the human body. Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.(1)

Police services have always been one of the most challenging and stressful services in India and with changing times it is becoming even more so. They have to deal with angry mobs, counter insurgency operations, traffic control, VIP security, political rallies, religious festival crowd control, and various other law and order duties without losing their composure and sensitivity. They have to face potentially hazardous situations

that can result in physical or mental trauma or even death in the line of duty.(2)

Policing is amongst the top three occupations most commonly reported by both occupational physicians and psychiatrists in the Occupational Disease Intelligence Network (ODIN) system for Surveillance of Occupational Stress and Mental Illness (SOSMI). In other countries, levels of suicide several times higher than in age-matched populations are being reported among police officers. When measured in terms of individual morbidity and mortality, the cost of stress-related illness in police officers would therefore appear to be high and financially this translates into an increasing burden in the form of reduced productivity, sickness absence and early retirement.(3)

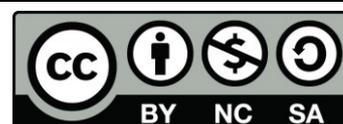
Therefore, apart from physical fitness, they have to be

mentally fit to do full justice to their duties so the present study is conducted for screening of mental health among police employees for early intervention to avoid further complications by using SRQ.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among police employees working at Ambajogai city police station in Marthawada region. Total 84 employees were participated in study. Data was collected in health Camp conducted for assessment of health problems among on occasion of World Heart Day on 29 September 2013. For the screening of mental illness, the self-reporting questionnaire of 20 items (SRQ20) developed by WHO was administered. The questionnaire was translated in

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Annals of Community Health. 2016;4(4):5



Local Marathi language and validated. It has acceptable levels of reliability and validity in developing countries and is recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a screening tool. (4) SRQ comprises questions related to cognitive symptoms, anxiety, and depression and its manifestation as somatic symptoms. The questions of the instrument are written in a simple, easy to understand language which encompassed many important areas of psychopathology. Information or Response filled by unanimously by all participants to SRQ-20 was kept confidential. Data collected only on the SRQ questionnaire in given format and other details of information regarding police employees were not asked to avoid social desirable bias. Results were expressed in descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

In present study total 84 police employees participated, out of which 76 (90.48%) are male and 8 (9.52) are females. In present study we observed that 23 (27.38%) of participants gave positive response to ≥ 6 questions. Frequency of responses to SRQ-20 is as shown in Table no. 1

Maximum participants showed positive response to question that they are "Unable to play a useful part in life" i.e. 32 (38.10%) and number of participant who says they are "Feeling nervous (tense or worried)" are 31 (36.90%). While 24 (28.57%) participants feel easy tiredness and 22 (26.19%) participants feel tired all the time. Few participants are complaining of Hand shake (tremors) i.e. 07 (08.33%) and only 03 (03.57%) participants complained of

thought of ending their life been on their mind.

DISCUSSION

Study was carried out with aim of screening of police employees for mental health problems by using reliable and valid screening instrument. WHO has developed a self-reported questionnaire (SRQ-20) which has been used in the WHO multi-country study on psychiatric disturbances.(4) The same questionnaire was made use of in the present study so that standardization of results could be achieved. In present study we observed that 23(27.38 %) participants gave positive response to ≥ 6 questions so that they required further evaluation for mental disorder by an expert for an early intervention.

A study done in Maharashtra found that majority of police personnel were under stress at

Table 1: Frequencies in response to different variables

Sr. No.	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Do you often have Headaches?	17	20.00
2	Is your appetite poor?	16	19.00
3	Do you sleep badly?	21	25.00
4	Are you easily frightened?	20	23.81
5	Do your hands shake?	07	08.33
6	Do you feel nervous, tense or worried?	31	36.90
7	Is your digestion poor?	15	17.86
8	Do you have trouble thinking clearly?	14	17.86
9	Do you feel unhappy?	10	13.10
10	Do you cry more than usual?	00	00.00
11	Do you find it difficult to enjoy your daily activities?	20	23.81
12	Do you find it difficult make decision?	17	20.24
13	Is your daily work suffering?	14	16.67
14	Are you unable to play a useful part in life?	32	38.10
15	Have you lost interest in things?	13	15.47
16	Do you feel that your a worthless person?	12	14.29
17	Has the thought of ending your life been on your mind?	03	03.57
18	Do you feel tired all the time?	22	26.19
19	Do you have uncomfortable feeling in your stomach?	11	13.09
20	Are you easily tired?	24	28.57

their workplace due to a variety of stressors. Occupational stress among police personnel can reduce productivity, encourage absenteeism, lower morale, increase conflict with others, cause physical and emotional problems and poor satisfaction with life.(5) Zukauskas *et al.* identified in their study on police officers that consequences of stress included depression, alcoholism, physical illness, and suicide.(6) R Kaur *et al* found that police personnel with high neuroticism or psychoticism traits were more likely to suffer from high psychological stress. Individuals using maladaptive coping methods like denial/blame and negative

distraction were also more vulnerable to developing psychological stress when faced with rigors of the job.(2)

In police employees mental health is one of the key aspects; appears to be worsening, so prompt action is required to find out early warning sign for mental health. This would help for early intervention and to reduce further consequences. Further research is indicated within the police population into a possible increased susceptibility having high score in SRQ. So there is a need for regular screening to detect any morbidity developing or existing by introduction of periodical compulsory health examination among the police personnel.

Limitation to study includes that a small sample of the police employee so that caution while the application of the findings and other is the use of self-administered questionnaires as the results are thus based entirely on the respondents' perception towards SRQ questions in the study.

CONCLUSION

About one third of police employees having SRQ 20 score ≥ 6 warned for further diagnosis of mental health problem. For early detection of mental disorder regular screening and periodical compulsory health examination among the police personnel is necessary.

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