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Extra hours put city cops under stress: study

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Almost half of the police personnel in Bengaluru suffer from moderate to severe stress owing to a variety of reasons from prolonged working hours to irregular food habits, a government-sponsored study has said.

The study 'Stress Levels and Associated Diseases in Bangalore City Police Personnel' also said

male personnel were at a higher risk for an increase in cholesterol levels, obesity, gastritis, heart diseases as early onset of cardiovascular diseases (CVD) in comparison to women personnel.

Using responses from 605 personnel in 12 divisions of the city police, the study said both operational and organisational issues are contributing to the stress levels of personnel.

According to the study conducted by Dr B G Sudarshan, Associate Professor and Medical Officer of Bengaluru-based R V College of Engineering, overtime demands and irregular food habits are causing operational stresses while prolonged working hours, inadequate pay scales and promotional policies are causing heartburns on organisational front.

"More than 47% of the respondents suffered from stress levels of above 44%, suggesting that close to 50% of the personnel are under the influence of moderate to severe stress. This calls for a serious mitigation process to overcome the same," the study conducted by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) said.

While 15.5% of the respondents had a stress level of 44-50%, which is considered moderate, 31.2% had a score of more than 50% indicating that they suffer from severe stress.

Inadequate pay scales, problems related to coping with superiors and prolonged working hours are of "greater concern" in male personal police compared to their female counterparts. "As these are the stressors for organisational stresses, it calls for behavioural corrections," the study conducted over a period of three years recommended.

Stress related to operational issues were lower in female personnel than that in male, which is mainly because of fewer overtime demands from the women.

"Comparative picture of organisation stresses between male and female police suggest that while promotional policies equally caused stresses in both, inadequate pay scales, problems related to coping with superiors and prolonged working hours are of greater concern in men police than that in women police," the study said.

On the health front, the study noted that women personnel are more prone to CVD when heart rate variability was considered as an independent risk factor for CVD. "Around 57% of unarmed police were found to be at high risk of CVD as compared to 6.8% in armed police," it added.