

Relationship between Supportive Leadership, Mental Health Status and Job Satisfaction of Civil Police Constables

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The purpose of the study was to investigate the patterns of relationships between supportive leadership, mental health status and job satisfaction among male and female civil police. The study was conducted on 203 civil police employees (144 male and 59 female) in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India. Participants' responses were obtained on questionnaires, which measured supportive leadership, psychological well-being and psychological distress (PD) and job satisfaction. Data was statistically analyzed for examining the hypothesized relationships between the variables among the male and female police constables. Results indicated that experience, salary and psychological wellbeing were significantly different among the male and female civil police personnel. Supportive leadership was significantly and positively correlated with job satisfaction of male participants only. Psychological wellbeing of male and female participants was significantly and positively correlated with job satisfaction. However, psychological distress was significantly and negatively correlated with job satisfaction of male police constables only. Results also showed that psychological distress failed to mediate or suppress the prediction of job satisfaction of male and female police constables by perception of supportive leadership.

Keywords: Supportive Leadership, Psychological Wellbeing, Psychological Distress, Job Satisfaction.

Leadership style is a very important factor, which influences the work environment of police organizations. Most police departments have adopted the quasi-military organization model characterized by a rigid rank hierarchy of authority, impersonality, and an authoritarian command system. This model is intended to foster strict and unquestioned discipline for rapid mobilization in emergency and crisis situations (Sandier & Mintz, 1974). This encourages compliance and obedience. It involved taking a closer look at the military ideology, which has shaped police organizations and guided administrative behaviours by assessing the validity of the leader as a commander image. This image implies that police prefer an impersonal, highly directive, authoritative leader and routine tasks.

While the role of the police officer is usually specified by legislatures, courts, and relatively inflexible operating policies, the discretionary nature of police work (especially

at the lowest levels in the hierarchy) is well known. Supportive leadership is characterized by friendly and approachable behaviour, which is considerate of subordinates' needs (House & Dessler, 1974). Leader participation attempts to involve subordinates consultatively in decisions regarding work-related issues. According to House and Mitchell (1974), supportive leadership will be most effective when tasks are stressful, frustrating, or dissatisfying. The greatest need for leader-provided coordination and support should arise when the task is highly variable and coupled with intricate interdependencies.

Levenson and Dwyer (2003) reported that peer support component of law enforcement and other emergency services agencies has contributed to an increase in professional mental health referrals and a decrease in on-the job suicides, sick days, and poor work performance. Furthermore, peer participation in debriefing following a traumatic event, and peer support during a crisis facilitates the

process of psychological closure and mourning enables emergency services workers to cope more effectively with tragedy so that they can continue to perform their jobs efficiently and with satisfaction.

Mental health status of police personnel

The world health organization (2001, Fact sheet no. 220) defines the concept of mental health as, "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

Incidents of aggressive, undisciplined, indifferent, insensitive and unresponsive behaviour and conduct by policemen are attributed to the stressful situations and working conditions, which inevitably cause unwarranted stress to the police people working on various positions. Occurrences of suicides, attempted suicides, and attack on seniors, juniors and colleagues coupled with unfortunate incidents of firing and senseless use of weapons are manifestations of stress on police. Women in police service experience tremendous stress. In a survey conducted on police personnel serving in Gujarat by Patel (2006) it was found that around 65 percent of women working in police were under tremendous work pressures and stress, which was badly affecting their family life. Erratic and long working hours were the main reason of stress resulting in manifestation of anger on their spouses and children. The sample under study consisted of group of constables, ASI's PSI's. The reason for joining the police force for majority of the women was unemployment, financial needs and getting a government job. Only 2 percent of the surveyed women wished to serve the masses. According to the researcher the motivating factor behind joining the police force had an impact on the stress experienced by the women.

Poteyeva and Sun (2009) reviewed thirty-three articles where gender was used either as an independent or control variable in multivariate regression analysis. A general finding was that officer gender has only a weak effect on officers' attitudes toward community policing, the community and neighbourhood residents,

job satisfaction, and domestic violence. There was some limited evidence showing that male and female officers differ in their attitudes toward the police role and stress.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a combination of employee feelings towards the different facets of job such as the nature of the work itself, level of pay, promotion opportunities, and satisfaction with co-workers. In this context feeling implies a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job experiences. Job satisfaction is associated with increased productivity and organizational commitment, lower absenteeism and turnover, and ultimately, with increased organizational effectiveness (Ellickson & Logsdon, 2001). According to Wright and Davis (2003), the benefits that employees receive from their organizations influence the effort, skill, creativity and productivity that they are willing to give in return. Lack of job satisfaction has been found to lead to lethargy and reduced organizational commitment (Moser, 1997). Lack of job satisfaction has emerged as a predictor of quitting a job (Alexander, Lichtenstein & Hellmann, 1997). Sometimes workers may quit from public to the private sector and vice versa. Sometimes movement is from one profession to another. Poor condition of service and late payment of salaries is responsible for quitting a job and decreasing job satisfaction. Availability of power and status, promotion opportunities, pay satisfaction and task clarity strengthen job satisfaction (Gemenxhenandez, Max, Paradiso & Robinson, 1997). If a person is dissatisfied with his job it will affect the productivity of the organization.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine the differences in the perceived levels of supportive leadership, mental health status and job satisfaction of male and female police constables, considering the differences in the nature of the duties of the two groups of police personnel.
2. To investigate the nature of the relationship between the supportive

leadership and mental health of police personnel with their job satisfaction.

3. To examine the potential mediating effects of mental health dimensions on the relationship between supportive leadership and job satisfaction of police personnel.

Hypotheses:

1. Considering the fact that female employees are in a minority in the police organizations in the country, it was expected that:
 - a. There would be significant differences in the age, experience and salary of the male and female civil police personnel. It was expected that age, experience and salary is likely to be higher in male employees in comparison to female personnel.
 - b. There would be significant differences in the perceived levels of supportive leadership by the male and female civil police personnel. Female police employees are likely to report higher levels of supportive leadership as compared to their male counterparts.
 - c. There would be significant differences in the mental health status in terms of psychological well being and psychological distress (Heubeck & Neill, 2000) among the male and female civil police personnel. Psychological well-being among female personnel is likely to be higher than among their male counterparts and conversely, psychological distress is likely to be lower among the female personnel than among their male counterparts.
 - d. There would be significant differences in the job satisfaction of the male and female civil police personnel. Job satisfaction is likely to be higher among male police employees than among the female counterparts.
2. It was hypothesized that perception of supportive leadership would positively

correlate with job satisfaction of both male and female police personnel.

3. Regarding the dimensions of mental health status it was hypothesized that the psychological well-being of male and female police personnel would positively be correlated with job satisfaction among the two groups while psychological distress would negatively correlate with job satisfaction in both the groups.
4. Regarding the mediating effects of mental health dimensions on the prediction of job satisfaction by supportive leadership, it was hypothesized that:
 - a. Mental health status in terms of psychological well-being is likely to significantly mediate the nature of the relationship between perception of the supportive leadership and job satisfaction of both male and female employees.
 - b. Mental health status in terms of psychological distress is less likely to significantly mediate the nature of the relationship between perception of the supportive leadership and job satisfaction of both male and female employees.

Method

Sample:

The final study was conducted on a sample of civil police employees (N=203), 144 male and 59 female police employees. The data has been collected from the police organization in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India from four districts namely Allahabad, Varanasi, Mirzapur, and Lucknow. Mean age of the sample in the civil police organization was 37.49 years, mean experience of the participants is 14.81 years and mean salary of the participants is Rs.20726.01. The minimum age of participants in the sample in the civil police organization was 21 years and the maximum age was 60 years. The experience of the participants ranged from one year to 40 years. The salary drawn by the civil police ranged from Rs.12,000 per month to Rs.40,000 per month.

Measuring Instruments:

1. *Demographic variables:* Four items were used for getting information about the participants' age, gender, number of years served in the police force and salary.
2. *Supportive Leadership:* The measure of leader support in the police organization was based on the scale measuring supportive leadership reported by McGilton (2003). The scale contained six items, which assessed subordinates' perception of the support they received from the unit manager. Responses to each item was measured on Likert-type five point scales, ranging from (1) totally disagree to (5) totally agree. The response score range is from 6-30. The reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.74. The original scale, which was in English was modified to suit the leadership styles prevailing in the police organizations in India and then it was translated in Hindi.
3. *Mental Health Status:* Among the mental health status dimensions, the general well-being was assessed on the dimensions of psychological distress (PD) and psychological wellbeing (PWB) (Heubeck & Neill, 2000). This scale is known as 'General Well-being 20'. It contains 10 items for psychological distress and 10 for psychological wellbeing. The items are written in a Likert-style format using a scale of one (1) to (5), where 1 = not at all and 5 = very great extent. The reliability coefficient of the scale for psychological wellbeing and psychological distress scale was .89 and .85 respectively. The reliability coefficient of the total scale was 0.88.
4. *Job Satisfaction:* Dantzker's (1993) job satisfaction scale (JSS) was used for measuring job satisfaction. The scale consisted of twenty three items commonly referenced in the job satisfaction literature, including

supervision, pay, benefits, equipment, assignment, and recognition. The items are written in a Likert-style format using a scale of one (1) to (5), where 1 = extremely dissatisfied and 5 = extremely satisfied. Here, respondents are asked, "How satisfied are you with ...". On the basis of item total correlation analysis in the pilot study, 22 items were retained for the final study. The scores ranged from 22 to 110. The reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.91.

Procedure:

Male and Female civil police constable participants were approached by the researcher after obtaining permission from the authorities. Participants were allowed to complete the survey privately and were instructed to return their results to the researcher. All 203 subjects voluntarily completed and returned the survey while the researcher maintained confidentiality. A non-probability sampling method was used because it is inexpensive and convenient for the only available population; however, its disadvantages are that it may involve bias and representativeness and unable to estimate sampling error.

Results

Data was analyzed for examining the differences in the reported levels of demographic variables (age, experience and salary); antecedent variable, namely, supportive leadership; the mental health status in terms of psychological wellbeing and psychological distress; and the consequent variable, job satisfaction through computation of 't' test performed on the scores of participants by gender i.e. male and female police constables. Secondly, the nature of the relationship between the variables was analyzed through computation of correlation between antecedent variable, with job satisfaction of the male and female police constables. Thirdly, the mediating effects of psychological wellbeing and psychological distress on the prediction by job satisfaction of the male and female police constables by the antecedent variables were analyzed through a series of hierarchical

Table 1. Mean, SD, t-Value for Demographic Variables, Supportive Leadership, Psychological Wellbeing, Psychological Distress and Job Satisfaction.

Variable	Male(N=144)		Female(N=59)		t values
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Demographic Variables					
Age	37.92	10.87	36.44	9.24	.92
Experience	15.97	11.45	11.98	8.99	2.39*
Salary (in Rs.)	21496	6758.31	18847	5610.38	2.66**
Supportive Leadership					
Supportive Leadership	18.02	6.35	19.56	5.79	1.60
Mental Health					
Psychological Wellbeing	26.34	10.80	31.05	9.77	2.89**
Psychological Distress	26.50	10.25	26.24	9.53	.174
Job Satisfaction					
Job Satisfaction	59.38	16.92	63.32	18.99	1.45

***p< .001 level, **p< .01 level, *p<.05 level (2-tailed test)

regression analysis. The effects of the mediator variable on the proposed model were analyzed separately in the two groups which are male and female police constables. The results have been presented in tables 1, 2, 3 & 4.

Demographic variables: Results (from Table 1) showed that among the demographic variables, while there was no significant difference between the male and female constables with regards to age, there were significant differences in the years of experience ($t=2.39$; $p<.05$) and salary ($t=2.66$; $p<.01$) received by male and female police personnel. It was also observed that male police employees are higher in age, experience and salary in comparison to female personnel. Hence, the results of t-test by gender of employees supported the hypothesis 1 (a).

Supportive leadership: Results (in Table 1) show that for perception of supportive leadership there was no significant difference between the male and female participants. The mean score of perceived supportive leadership by male and female police personnel participants was 18.02 and 19.56 respectively. It was

also observed that perception of supportive leadership was marginally higher among female police employees in comparison to male police personnel. Hence, the results of t-test by gender of police employees partially supported the hypothesis 1 (b).

Mental Health Status: Table 1 indicates that while among the mental health dimension there was no significant difference between the male and female with regards to psychological distress, there were significant differences in the psychological wellbeing ($t=2.89$; $p<.01$) of the male and female police employees. Psychological well-being was reported to be significantly higher by female constables. Hence, the results of t-test by gender of police employees partially supported the hypothesis 1 (c).

Job Satisfaction: Table 1 indicates that there was no significant difference between the job satisfaction of male and female civil police personnel. Hence, the results of t-test by gender of police employees did not support the hypothesis 1 (d).

Table 2. Correlation between the antecedent variables and job satisfaction of male (N=144) and female (N=59) police constables.

Antecedent Variables	Pearson correlation Job Satisfaction	
	Male (144)	Female (59)
Demographic Variables		
Age	.04	.19
Experience	-.002	.10
Salary	.13	-.02
Supportive Leadership		
Supportive Leadership	.52***	.26
Mental Health		
Psychological Wellbeing	.45**	.28*
Psychological Distress	-.18*	.11
Job Satisfaction	1.00	1.00

***p< .001 level, **p< .01 level, *p<.05 level (2-tailed test)

Table 2 shows that supportive leadership was positively correlated with job satisfaction

of male participants only. Hence, the results partially supported the hypothesis 2. Results also show that the psychological wellbeing of male and female participants was positively correlated with job satisfaction. However, psychological distress was negatively correlated with job satisfaction of male police constables only. Hence, the results largely supported the hypothesis 3.

Results (in Table 3) show that supportive leadership significantly predicted job satisfaction of both male and female police constables with a beta coefficient of .52 (p<.001: Step2) and .31 (p<.05: step 2), but supportive leadership became an insignificant predictor of job satisfaction of the female police constables with a beta coefficient of .21 (step-3) when psychological wellbeing entered into the equation. Thus, psychological wellbeing exercised mediator effects on the prediction of job satisfaction of female police constables by the factor 'supportive leadership'. Hence, the results partially supported the hypothesis 4 (a).

Table 3. Hierarchical regression analysis for mediating effects of psychological wellbeing on prediction of job satisfaction by supportive leadership in male (N=144) and female (N=59) police constables.

Model	Male (N=144) Job satisfaction			Female (N=59) Job satisfaction		
	Standardized beta coefficient			Standardized beta coefficient		
	Stage-1	Stage-2	Stage-3	Stage-1	Stage-2	Stage-3
Age	.68	.63	.68*	.35	.22	.19
Experience	-.69	-.61	-.58	-.18	.03	.09
Salary	.06	.07	.004	-.04	-.06	-.10
Supportive leadership		.52***	.41***		.31*	.21
Psychological wellbeing			.294***			.235
R	.19	.55	.61	.21	.35	.40
R Square	.03	.31	.37	.04	.12	.16
R Square Change	.03	.27	.06	.04	.08	.04
df	(3,140)	(1,139)	(1,138)	(3,55)	(1,54)	(1,53)
F ratio	1.91	15.69***	16.78***	.91	1.97	2.13

***p< .001 level, **p< .01 level, *p<.05 level (1-tailed test)

Table 4. Hierarchical regression analysis for mediating effects of psychological distress on prediction of job satisfaction by supportive leadership in male (N=144) and female (N=59) police constables.

Model	Male (N=144) Job satisfaction			Female (N=59) Job satisfaction		
	Standardized beta coefficient			Standardized beta coefficient		
	Stage-1	Stage-2	Stage-3	Stage-1	Stage-2	Stage-3
Age	.68	.63	.63	.35	.22	.23
Experience	-.69	-.61	-.60	-.18	.03	.02
Salary	.06	.07	.05	-.04	-.06	-.04
Supportive leadership		.52***	.51***		.31*	.30*
Psychological wellbeing			-.09			.08
R	.19	.55	.56	.21	.35	.36
R Square	.03	.31	.32	.04	.12	.13
R Square Change	.03	.27	.009	.04	.08	.008
df	(3,140)	(1,139)	(1,138)	(3,55)	(1,54)	(1,53)
F ratio	1.91	15.69***	12.99***	.91	1.97	1.66

***p< .001 level, **p< .01 level, *p<.05 level (1-tailed test)

Results (from Table 4) show that supportive leadership significantly predicted job satisfaction of both male and female police constables with a beta coefficient of .52 ($p<.001$: step 2) and .31 ($p<.05$: step 2). Results also showed that psychological distress failed to mediate or suppress the prediction of job satisfaction of male and female police constables by perception of supportive leadership. Hence, the results largely supported the hypothesis 4 (b).

Discussion

Available data related to the distribution of women in the police force has revealed that large-scale female entry into the police department, and mainly in India, is a current development. The present study was conducted on police organizations in India with the aim of examining the role of gender in determining the nature of the relationship between perceptions of supportive leadership, mental health status and job satisfaction of employees in police organizations.

Findings indicated that among the demographic variables male police employees reported significantly higher levels of experience

and salary in comparison to female personnel. It has been already mentioned that female entry into the police organizations is a fairly recent phenomenon, which could be a valid reason for lower levels of female constables' experience and salary in the police department in comparison to the male police constables.

Findings of the present study indicate that there was no significant difference between the male and female participants with regard to perceived levels of supportive leadership. It was also observed that supportive leadership was perceived to be marginally higher by female police employees in comparison to male police personnel. This trend is encouraging as it indicates that superiors are becoming more sensitive to the specific problems of female police personnel and are supporting them in their endeavours to participate actively in police activities.

Among the mental health dimensions while there was no significant difference between the male and female constables with regard to reported levels of psychological distress, there were significant differences in the reported levels of psychological wellbeing of the male and female

police employees. Psychological well-being was reported to be higher by the female participants. These findings are again very encouraging as they indicate that the women personnel in police organizations are experiencing favourable working conditions to a greater extent as compared to their male counterparts and such a trend in the police workforce should be maintained by the authorities. However, as against the findings of the present study, most stress studies using clinically developed survey instruments consistently show that female police employees report significantly higher level of stress than their male counterparts (Ni He, Zhao, & Archbold, 2002; Violante, Charles & Hartley, 2008; McCarty, Zhao & Garland, 2007). Moreover, these studies have revealed that male and female employees possess different conceptualizations and adaptations to stress. First, male and female workers often have different views on what is stressful - the source of the stress. Second, male and female workers usually adopt different coping strategies when they are under stress.

Findings however, showed that there was no significant difference in the levels of job satisfaction of male and female civil police personnel.

The second objective of the study was to examine the role of gender in determining (a) the nature of the relationship between supportive leadership, mental health status and the job satisfaction of male and female employees in police organization, and (b) the mediating effects of mental health status on the nature of the relationship between supportive leadership and job satisfaction of male and female employees in police organization.

Supportive leadership, as an antecedent variable, was significantly and positively correlated to job satisfaction of male police constables, but significantly predicted job satisfaction in both male and female police personnel. Findings revealed that psychological wellbeing of both male and female police personnel was positively correlated and significantly predicted their job satisfaction, but psychological distress was negatively correlated with the job satisfaction of male

police personnel only. However, psychological wellbeing exercised mediator effects on the prediction of job satisfaction by the factor 'supportive leadership' among the female police personnel only. Hence, the mediating role of mental health status in terms of psychological well being has been observed to a greater extent on the nature of the relationship between the supportive leadership and job satisfaction only among the female police personnel.

These findings indicate the relative importance of the supportive leadership for both the male and female police constables. Male police personnel are more likely to be satisfied in their jobs if they perceive their leaders attempts and enthusiasm in performing their leader functions as contributing to their own psychological well-being while female constables are more likely to be satisfied when they perceive their leaders' supportiveness towards them in performing their duties as contributing to their psychological well-being.

Implications of the findings

The findings have significant implications for police organizations, which are trying to increase the recruitment of female police employees.

Findings indicate that the police department should concentrate on removing discrepancies in the job conditions of the male and female personnel as significant differences have been reported in the experience and salary received by male and female police personnel.

The police department should also pay attention to the manner in which supportive leadership is reported to be marginally higher by female police employees in comparison to male police personnel.

However, similarities in the levels of the mental health dimensions, and levels of job satisfaction of male and female civil police personnel imply that the police department has to make efforts to increase the attractiveness of police services for both men and women if the lower ranking police personnel have to be motivated to perform their duties in a satisfactory manner.

Findings also highlight the differential mediating role of psychological well being

on the nature of the relationship between perception of supportive leadership and job satisfaction of the male and female police constables. It appears that positive perceptions increase the psychological well being, which in turns increases job satisfaction of both male and female police constables. Hence, police organizations should address these issues, which have consequences for female police constables too.

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