



Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Police Operational Stress: A Pilot Study

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Abstract

The present study examined the relationship between police operational stress and emotional intelligence. The study also observed the difference in operational stress and emotional intelligence concerning gender, rank, education, and marital status. The sample included 80 police officers from Bangalore, India. The operational police stress questionnaire developed by McCreary and Thompson (2006) and emotional intelligence scale developed by Hyde et al. (2002) were used to measure police operational stress and emotional intelligence, respectively. Independent sample *t*-test and Cohen's *d* indicated that differences in gender, rank, education, and marital status had no significant effect on police operational stress. Gender differences had a significant effect on the emotional intelligence factors, empathy, and self-motivation. Differences in rank had a significant effect on empathy, self-motivation, emotional stability, managing relationships, integrity, value orientation, and commitment. Differences in marital status had a significant effect on value orientation. Correlation analysis showed that operational stress had a significant negative relationship with emotional intelligence and its factors such as self-motivation, emotional stability, value orientation, and altruistic behavior. Regression analysis showed emotional intelligence and its factor, emotional stability, as significant predictors of police operational stress.

Keywords Police operational stress · Emotional intelligence · Self-motivation · Emotional stability · Value orientation · Altruistic behavior

Police operational stress can be defined as a consequence of the interaction between the exposure to the incidents and the officer's perception of control over the incidents (Lazarus and Folkman 1984; Folkman 2008; Goh et al. 2010). Officers perceive more control over the routine incidents but face dilemma and ambiguity in low frequency-high impact stressors and vicarious stressors (Brown et al. 1999). Perception of control and the ability to overcome stress depend upon the

officer's emotional intelligence (Ramesar et al. 2009; Yaseen et al. 2020; Matthews and Zeidner 2000). Emotional intelligence contributes to the officers' competencies in handling stress in novel situations (Matthews and Zeidner 2000). Little research have examined the relationship of police operational stress with emotional intelligence and its factors.

Police operational stress can be classified into three based on the exposure to stressors—high frequency-low impact stressors, low frequency-high impact stressors, and vicarious stressors (Brown et al. 1999). High-frequency stressors are routine incidents that will result in low levels of psychological distress. Low frequency-high impact stressors include death and disaster such as shooting someone or attending the scene of a major accident resulting in various stress disorders. In the case of vicarious stressors, officers do not have direct exposure to the traumatic event. Instead, they are exposed to the traumatized individuals (Figley, 1995). This secondary victimization has adverse impacts similar to direct exposure (Brown et al. 1999).

The impact of such vicarious stressors was more among women officers, who were assigned to the duties associated

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with sexual offenses and detached beats. According to Brown et al. (1999), officers experience secondary trauma here, as they identify themselves in victims' positions. Other factors that could enhance the operational stress among women officers include empathy towards victims, feeling isolated and lonely, lack of social support (Brown et al. 1999), work location, violent arrests, court duty, and minor injury to self or others (Biggam et al. 1997). Women officers who were not exposed to risky roles and potentially violent cases may not experience severe operational stress (Brown and Fielding 1993). The findings from a study of Narvekar and D'Cunha (2020) in a sample of 130 police personnel from Goa, India, contradicted this idea on the difference between men and women officers' operational stress. Possibly, cultural differences have a role in the effect of gender difference in operational stress.

Various studies in police stress have informed the sociodemographic status such as gender, rank, education, and marital status (Biggam et al. 1997; Brown et al. 1999; Brown and Campbell 1990; Chikwem 2017). However, studies that observed an influence of these factors specifically on operational stress are rare. Biggam et al. (1997), in their research on a sample of 699 Scottish police officers, noted the chances of lower rank officers experiencing higher operational stress. Officers in the lower ranks were usually assigned to sexual offense cases and detached beats. Such assignments could let them feel undervalued in front of the public and the police colleagues (Brown et al. 1999). Brown et al. (1999) observed that being a sergeant reduced the likelihood of stress only in men but had no significant effect in women. If the officers had opportunities for continual education, it could inversely influence stress (Chikwem 2017). Marital harmony can reduce operational stress (Dixit 2019), but marital discord can enhance it. More studies are necessary to have an absolute conclusion regarding the influence of these factors on operational stress.

Literature indicates the scope of emotional intelligence as a solution to stress (Chhabra and Chhabra 2013; Onkari and Itagi 2016; Queirós et al. 2020). Speculatively, it can resolve police operational stress also. Studies of stress with emotional intelligence factors (Hyde et al. 2002), including self-awareness, empathy, self-motivation, emotional stability, managing relations, integrity, self-development, value orientation, commitment, and altruistic behavior, support this speculation (Yamani et al. 2014; Lea et al. 2019; Por et al. 2011). For instance, Yamani et al. (2014) and Hayati et al. (2016) reported the positive impact of self-awareness on stress. There are instances regarding the negative relationship (Brown et al. 1999; Park et al. 2015) and no or negligible relationship (Wahjudi et al. 2019) between empathy and stress. Self-motivated officers were good at accepting and overcoming the stressors that could even challenge professional growth (Ncube and Zondo 2018). Self-motivation can

be represented through the officers' work values (Basinska and Daderman 2019). Circumstances that impact the work values could increase the operational stress of the officers. Brown et al. (1999), in a study on 601 British police officers, observed that officers who felt their work undervalued by their colleagues and the public experienced intense operational stress. Altruism, an intrinsic value enhanced by another value—public service motivation (Crewson 1997)—showed a negative relationship with role stressors (Jex et al. 2003).

Studies on neuroticism in police decipher information on the relationship between emotional stability and operational stress (Nash 2007; Widiger and Oltmanns 2017; Kaur et al. 2013; Purba and Demou 2019). According to Narvekar and D'Cunha (2020), officers with high neuroticism behave maladaptive to operational stressors. Emotionally stable officers will never get hardened in their behavior. They will be good at managing relationships and gaining social support (Li et al. 2010; Li and Ahistrom 2016). Officers who received an optimal level of social support experienced lower operational stress (Brown et al. 1999). Social support is an assurance of public belief in the officer's integrity. A lack of this assurance can enhance stress (Violanti et al. 2017). Another emotional intelligence factor that could prevent stress is self-development through continual education (Chikwem 2017).

Literature thus implies the relationship between emotional intelligence factors and operational stress. Operational stress, even though not as severe as organizational stress, could lead officers to life-threatening situations. The sources of operational stress may be various such as duration of the investigation, lack of resourcefulness for valid consultation, shortage of supportive human resources, lack of cohesion between the colleagues, deficiency in technical aids, criticisms by the media, recurrent transfers, and disapproval of the public. Such circumstances could be emotionally taxing, demanding an optimal level of emotional intelligence. A lack of emotional intelligence may lead to significant adverse emotional and behavioral outcomes, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), high rate of alcohol use, suicidal ideations, poor interpersonal relationships, marital disruption, and divorce. Officers with higher emotional intelligence would have the capacity to learn about the dimensions of the stressors, use more approach goals to overcome the stress, and plan the subsequent action with prosocial intentions. This pilot study's prime focus was to understand the role of emotional intelligence, and its factors in helping police officers maintain resilience despite operational stress. The study also observed if the sociodemographic factors such as gender, rank, education, and marital status could influence operational stress and emotional intelligence.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The study was initiated after obtaining permission from Bangalore City Police Commissioner, Karnataka, India. The participants considered for the study were uniformed police officers (Law and Order) under the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP)—Inspector of Police, Sub-Inspector of Police, and Constables. The sample comprised 80 police officers, with an equal number of men and women currently serving at Bangalore City Police. Among them, 48.8% ($n = 39$) served in higher official ranks (Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors), and 51.3% ($n = 41$) were constables, having more than 10 years of experience. A majority in the sample had received university/college education ($n = 55$, 68.8%) and the rest (31.3%, $n = 25$) were below senior secondary. About 56.3% ($n = 45$) were married, and the remaining 43.8% ($n = 35$) were single or unmarried.

The data collection started with a face-to-face meeting with each participant, briefing about the study and its implications. One of the investigators informed about the participants' rights to withdraw from the research whenever she/he felt to do so and requested them to approve a written informed consent. After attaining a written informed consent from each participant, the investigators distributed operational stress and emotional intelligence measures and orally gave necessary instructions. Participation was entirely voluntary. After the data collection, the participant's name or initials in the response sheets were replaced with a code. The investigators entered the item-wise responses in an excel sheet and stored them in a password-protected computer.

Measures

Operational stress was measured using the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op) developed by McCreary and Thompson (2006). The PSQ-Op is a short, psychometrically sound 20-item measure, with a 7-point Likert type response category, ranging from 1 (no stress at all) to 7 (a lot of stress). According to the authors, the measure is highly reliable (alphas > 0.90 ; corrected item-total correlations between 0.40 and 0.60) and positively correlated ($r = 0.50$ or less) with the other general stress measures. The scale showed adequate internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87) in the current sample.

Emotional intelligence was measured using Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) developed by Hyde et al. (2002). EIS contains 34 items that measure the factors of emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, empathy,

self-motivation, emotional stability, managing relations, integrity, self-development, value orientation, commitment, and altruistic behavior. Each item had to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). According to the authors, the scale had a high content validity, and its split-half reliability was 0.88. In the present sample, the scale showed adequate internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.85).

A sociodemographic response sheet was created and used to collect information about gender, qualification, ranks, and marital status.

Statistical Analysis

Shapiro Wilk Statistics (W) indicated that the data of operational stress ($M = 94.20$, $SD = 18.10$, $W = 0.94$, $p < 0.01$), and the factors of emotional intelligence such as self-awareness ($M = 17.00$, $SD = 1.78$, $W = 0.93$, $p < 0.01$), empathy ($M = 18.50$, $SD = 2.59$, $W = 0.96$, $p < 0.05$), emotional stability ($M = 15.30$, $SD = 2.06$, $W = 0.97$, $p < 0.05$), managing relations ($M = 16.70$, $SD = 1.82$, $W = 0.96$, $p < 0.05$), integrity ($M = 12.40$, $SD = 1.42$, $W = 0.94$, $p < 0.01$), self-development ($M = 7.99$, $SD = 1.10$, $W = 0.91$, $p < 0.01$), value orientation ($M = 8.25$, $SD = 1.24$, $W = 0.91$, $p < 0.01$), commitment ($M = 7.20$, $SD = 1.69$, $W = 0.90$, $p < 0.01$), and altruistic behavior ($M = 8.07$, $SD = 1.13$, $W = 0.91$, $p < 0.01$) were not normally distributed. We used the two-step approach (Templeton 2011) to transform the data normal. Independent sample t -test was used to determine the difference in operational stress and emotional intelligence based on gender, qualification, ranks, and marital status. Correlation analysis was used to assess the relationship between operational stress and emotional intelligence. The probable predictors among the emotional intelligence and its factors were identified using regression analysis.

Results

Difference in gender did not have a significant effect in operational stress or emotional intelligence (Table 1). In emotional intelligence factors, gender difference showed an effect on empathy ($t = 2.14$, $p < 0.05$), and self-motivation ($t = 2.54$, $p < 0.05$). Men ($M = 19.18$, $SD = 2.93$) were higher in empathy than women officers (17.98, $SD = 1.97$) with a medium effect size ($d = 0.48$). In self-motivation also, men ($M = 24.71$, $SD = 2.86$) were higher than women officers ($M = 23.23$, $SD = 2.36$) with a medium effect size ($d = 0.57$).

There was no significant difference in operational stress and emotional intelligence concerning the education of the participants (Tables 2).

Table 1 Difference between men ($n = 40$) and women ($n = 40$) in operational stress and emotional intelligence ($df = 78$)

Variables	Men <i>M (SD)</i>	Women <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	
Operational stress	98.96 (21.07)	91.92 (15.51)	1.90	0.42	
Emotional intelligence	Self-awareness	17.10 (1.77)	17.02 (1.59)	0.22	0.05
	Empathy	19.18 (2.93)	17.98 (1.97)	2.14*	0.48
	Self-motivation	24.71 (2.86)	23.23 (2.36)	2.54*	0.57
	Emotional stability	15.52 (2.22)	15.12 (1.72)	0.90	0.20
	Managing relationships	16.78 (2.16)	16.68 (1.25)	0.25	0.06
	Integrity	12.61 (1.47)	12.20 (1.15)	1.39	0.31
	Self-development	8.10 (1.08)	7.94 (0.92)	0.69	0.15
	Value orientation	8.32 (1.16)	8.21 (1.13)	0.42	0.09
	Commitment	7.43 (1.60)	7.10 (1.46)	0.96	0.22
	Altruistic behavior	8.29 (1.15)	7.91 (0.90)	1.65	0.37
	Total	137 (13.60)	133 (9.31)	1.74	0.38

* $p < .05$

Difference in ranks did not have a significant effect in operational stress. It influenced emotional intelligence ($t = 3.91, p < 0.01$) with a large effect ($d = 0.87$). Officers in higher rank ($M = 140, SD = 12.80$) excelled in emotional intelligence when compared to the constables ($M = 131, SD = 8.61$). Among the factors of emotional intelligence, difference in ranks had an effect on empathy ($t = 2.82, p < 0.01$), self-motivation ($t = 3.60, p < 0.01$), emotional stability ($t = 4.71, p < 0.01$), managing relationships ($t = 2.11, p < 0.05$), integrity ($t = 2.30, p < 0.05$), value orientation ($t = 3.57, p < 0.01$), and commitment ($t = 2.52, p < 0.05$). Officers in higher ranks ($M = 19.37, SD = 2.79$) were more in empathy than constables ($M = 17.83, SD = 2.07$) with a medium effect size ($d = 0.63$). In self-motivation, officers in higher ranks ($M = 25.01, SD = 2.88$) were more than constables ($M = 22.98, SD = 2.13$) with a large effect size

($d = 0.80$). Higher rank officials ($16.27, SD = 1.83$) were more in emotional stability than constables ($M = 14.42, SD = 1.68$) with a large effect size ($d = 1.05$). Higher rank officials ($M = 17.14, SD = 1.90$) were better than constables ($16.33, SD = 1.52$) in managing relationships, with a medium effect size ($d = 0.47$). Integrity was higher, with a medium effect size ($d = 0.51$), for higher rank officials ($M = 12.75, SD = 1.45$) compared to constables ($M = 12.08, SD = 1.13$). Officers in higher rank ($M = 8.70, SD = 1.05$) were more in value orientation than constables ($M = 7.86, SD = 1.07$) with a large effect size ($d = 0.80$). In commitment also, officers in higher rank ($M = 7.69, SD = 1.44$) were more than constables ($M = 6.86, SD = 1.52$) with a medium effect size ($d = 0.36$) (Table 3).

Marital status of the participants does not have an influence on the operational stress. Married participants

Table 2 Difference in operational stress and emotional intelligence based on the education of the participants ($df = 78$)

Variables	Higher education <i>M (SD)</i>	Senior secondary and below <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>	
Operational stress	93.82 (17.01)	97.74 (22.39)	0.87	
Emotional intelligence	Self-awareness	17.12 (1.66)	16.94 (1.74)	0.43
	Empathy	18.65 (2.39)	18.42 (2.92)	0.37
	Self-motivation	24.03 (2.61)	23.84 (2.97)	0.29
	Emotional stability	15.42 (1.86)	15.11 (2.25)	0.64
	Managing relationships	16.70 (1.75)	16.80 (1.79)	0.24
	Integrity	12.47 (1.31)	12.26 (1.38)	0.65
	Self-development	8.12 (0.94)	7.80 (1.11)	1.32
	Value orientation	8.24 (1.14)	8.33 (1.15)	0.33
	Commitment	7.13 (1.42)	7.56 (1.76)	1.17
	Altruistic behavior	8.08 (1.01)	8.15 (1.13)	0.26
	Total	135.00 (10.90)	135.00 (13.70)	0.27

Not significant

Table 3 Difference in operational stress and emotional intelligence based on the rank of the participants ($df = 78$)

Variables	Constable <i>M (SD)</i>	Higher ranks <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	
Operational stress	95.40 (17.73)	94.66 (20.08)	0.18	-0.04	
Emotional intelligence	Self-awareness	17.07 (1.59)	17.05 (1.79)	0.04	-0.01
	Empathy	17.83 (2.07)	19.37 (2.79)	2.82**	0.63
	Self-motivation	22.98 (2.13)	25.01 (2.88)	3.60**	0.80
	Emotional stability	14.42 (1.68)	16.27 (1.83)	4.71**	1.05
	Managing relationships	16.33 (1.52)	17.14 (1.90)	2.11*	0.47
	Integrity	12.08 (1.13)	12.75 (1.45)	2.30*	0.51
	Self-development	7.93 (0.94)	8.12 (1.06)	0.87	0.20
	Value orientation	7.86 (1.07)	8.70 (1.05)	3.57**	0.80
	Commitment	6.86 (1.52)	7.69 (1.44)	2.52*	0.56
	Altruistic behavior	7.92 (1.00)	8.29 (1.06)	1.61	0.36
	Total	131.00 (8.61)	140.00 (12.80)	3.91**	0.87

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

($M = 8.51$, $SD = 1.09$) showed a significantly higher value orientation ($t = 2.21$, $p < 0.05$) than single ($M = 7.96$, $SD = 1.13$) with a medium effect size ($d = 0.50$). They did not show a significant difference in other emotional intelligence factors (Table 4).

Correlation analysis showed that operational stress has a significant negative relationship with self-motivation ($r = -0.22$, $p < 0.05$), emotional stability ($r = -0.35$, $p < 0.01$), value orientation ($r = -0.31$, $p < 0.01$), and altruistic behavior ($r = -0.26$, $p < 0.05$) (Table 5).

Stepwise regression with the factors of emotional intelligence as the independent variable and operational stress as the dependent variable showed emotional stability as a significant inverse predictor ($\beta = -0.346$, $p < 0.01$) of operational stress, with a 12% variance ($r^2 = 0.12$). Figure 1 is the graphical representation of the regression trend. The model

is adequately fit ($F = 10.06$, $p < 0.01$). Emotional intelligence (total) also showed a trend of inversely predicting operational stress ($\beta = -0.354$, $p < 0.01$; $r^2 = 0.12$; $F = 11.2$, $p < 0.01$) (Fig. 2).

Discussion

As per the literature, police operational stressors are not so toxic as occupational and organizational stressors. The high frequency of exposure to the daily hassles related to the investigations might have made the officers resilient to the routine stressors (Brown et al. 1999). Nevertheless, operational stress is ignorable because low frequency, high impact stressors, including death and disaster such as witnessing a major accident or shooting someone, can cause

Table 4 Difference in operational stress and emotional intelligence based on the marital status of the participants ($df = 78$)

Variables	Single <i>M (SD)</i>	Married <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	
Operational stress	92.48 (17.10)	97.03 (19.98)	1.08	0.24	
Emotional intelligence	Self-awareness	17.05 (1.51)	17.07 (1.91)	0.05	0.01
	Empathy	18.51 (2.48)	18.64 (2.63)	0.22	0.05
	Self-motivation	23.69 (2.22)	24.19 (3.04)	0.83	0.19
	Emotional stability	15.12 (1.80)	15.48 (2.12)	0.79	0.18
	Managing Relationships	16.89 (1.61)	16.60 (1.86)	0.73	-0.16
	Integrity	12.47 (1.37)	12.36 (1.31)	0.38	-0.09
	Self-development	8.08 (1.01)	7.97 (1.00)	0.48	-0.11
	Value orientation	7.96 (1.13)	8.51 (1.09)	2.21*	0.50
	Commitment	7.31 (1.51)	7.23 (1.57)	0.25	-0.06
	Altruistic behavior	8.15 (0.97)	8.07 (1.11)	0.35	-0.08
	Total	135.00 (10.70)	135 (12.70)	0.24	-0.05

* $p < .05$

Table 5 Correlation between operational stress and emotional intelligence

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Emotional intelligence	—											
Self-awareness (1)		0.40**										
Empathy (2)		0.43**	0.58**									
Self-motivation (3)		0.20	0.41**	0.55**								
Emotional stability (4)		0.39**	0.42**	0.37**	0.33**							
Managing relationships (5)		0.29**	0.54**	0.45**	0.19	0.35**						
Integrity (6)		0.30**	0.39**	0.51**	0.25*	0.35**	0.45**					
Self-development (7)		0.11	0.38**	0.40**	0.29**	0.25*	0.19	0.19				
Value orientation (8)		0.29**	0.58**	0.48**	0.30**	0.27*	0.35**	0.29**	—			
Commitment (9)		0.26*	0.50**	0.43**	0.29**	0.34**	0.39**	0.10	0.46**	—		
Altruistic behaviour (10)		0.57**	0.81**	0.82**	0.64**	0.65**	0.59**	0.52**	0.68**	0.60**	—	
Total (11)		-0.07	-0.21	-0.22*	-0.35**	-0.16	-0.19	-0.31**	-0.03	-0.26*	-0.31**	—
Operational stress (12)												

***p* < .01, **p* < .05

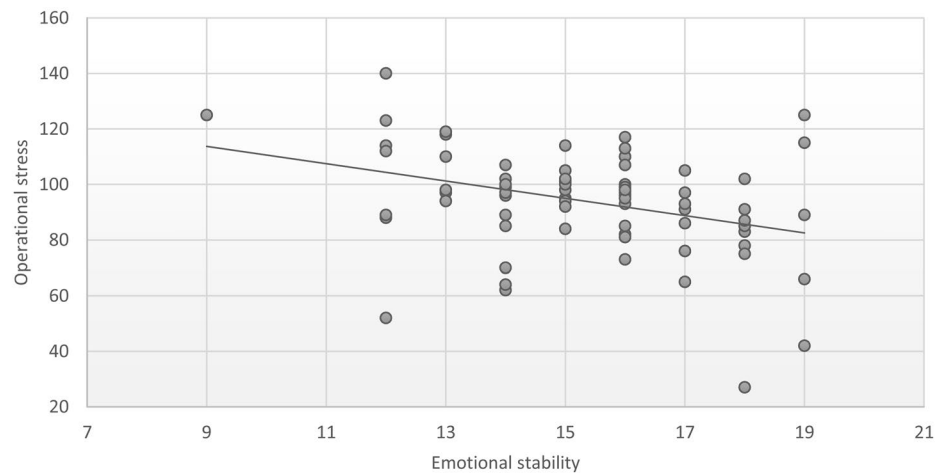
severe adverse stress reactions and posttraumatic stress disorder. Also, operational stress could be extreme in vicarious exposure to stressors while dealing with the traumatized individuals (Johnson and Hunter 1997). Findings of the present study imply that severity in the effect of such stressors may vary based on the emotional intelligence of the officers, despite their gender, education, or marital status. The rank of the officers could influence their emotional intelligence. Certain emotional intelligence factors, including self-motivation, emotional stability, value orientation, and altruistic behavior, can help officers maintain emotional equilibrium against operational stress. Emotional intelligence and its factor emotional stability are significant inverse predictors of operational stress.

The scope of emotional intelligence as a solution to stress, specifically occupational and organizational stress, has already been theoretically and empirically established (Chhabra and Chhabra 2013; Onkari and Itagi 2016; Queirós et al. 2020). The present study adds to the literature showing that emotional intelligence is also a solution to police operational stress. Findings imply that the enhancement of emotional intelligence in the police force is of utmost priority. Recurrent and intense emotional intelligence training could enhance the officers’ capacity to be emotionally stable and increase self-motivation, value orientation, and altruistic behavior. Emotional intelligence interventions will also strengthen a range of factors, including performance, commitment, and leadership (Chhabra and Chhabra 2013; Li and Ahistrom 2016).

Emotional stability is the most important emotional intelligence factor that can help officers be less affected by operational stress. Emotional stability reflects an individual’s disposition to adapt to stressors (Li and Ahistrom 2016). It is an indicator of the efficiency of the emotional system in maintaining its equilibrium efficiently (Li et al. 2010). An individual with higher emotional stability would react functionally to external and internal events but would have a higher threshold to be disturbed and for a quick recovery (Li and Ahistrom 2016). Higher emotional stability is a well-established indicator of lower neuroticism (Nash 2007; Widiger and Oltmanns 2017). Persons with elevated levels of neuroticism would react inadequately to situational stressors (Widiger and Oltmanns 2017). They would experience even minor frustrations as hopelessly overwhelming. Emotional stability as organizational behavior is an essential positive trait that influences job satisfaction, job self-efficacy, and organizational commitment. Interventions on emotional stability would enable the officers to recover the near-equilibrium emotions from the chaotic emotions during stressful situations (Li and Ahistrom 2016).

Self-motivation is an internal protective factor that could help officers accept the assigned responsibilities and identify solutions to overcome the stressors that inhibit professional growth (Ncube and Zondo 2018). Self-motivated

Fig. 1 Regression trend showing the relationship between emotional stability and operational stress



$$\beta = -.346, p < .01; r^2 = 0.12; F = 10.06, p < .01$$

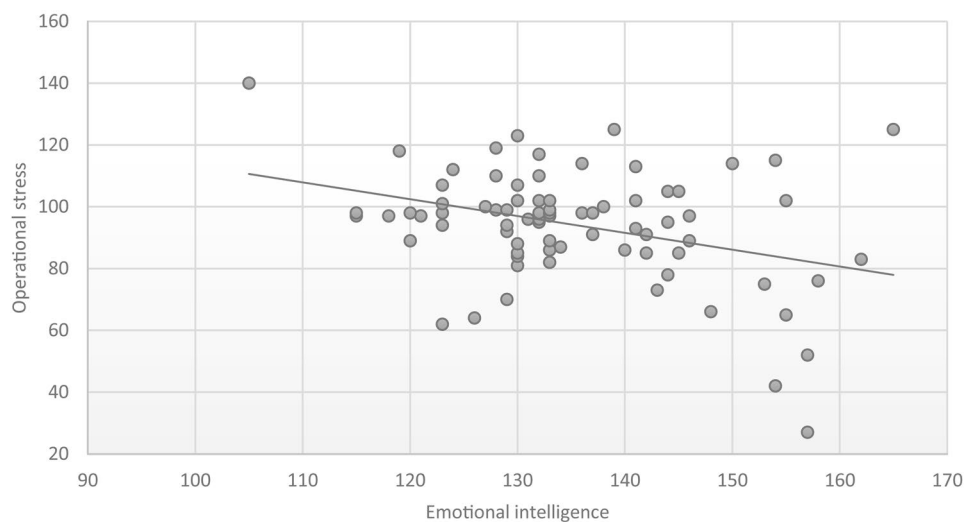
officers may experience better job satisfaction and high performance and achievement (Aloysius and Christy 2012). Self-motivation may also help officers be open to new and unexpected experiences (Nurwendah and Suyanto 2019), as their goal will be a higher cause. Probably, they accept such experiences as opportunities to learn in the process of working for a just world. As per the observation of Brown et al. (1999), stronger beliefs in a just world can shield operational stressors.

Work values are the cognitive representation of self-motivation (Basinska and Daderman 2019). Work values help officers prioritize their goals and achievements. However, value orientation among police may change from time to time (He et al. 2002; Zhao et al. 1999). As per the observation of Basinska and Daderman (2019), officers have the highest priority to extrinsic work values, including prestige and co-worker support. Speculatively, along with the external

stressors, the circumstances that undervalue the roles and efforts could contribute to operational stress. For instance, operational stress was intense among the officers who felt their role undervalued by the police colleagues and public. Officers who had opportunities to consult professional matters and receive social support experienced reduced operational stress (Brown et al. 1999).

Intrinsic value orientation depends on the meaningfulness of the work, the officer's accountability, and the work outcomes (Deci and Ryan 2008). Intrinsic values, including variety, creativity, achievement, challenge, and altruism, reflect inherent psychological satisfaction with work. In the observation of Basinska and Daderman (2019), these values are sensitive to different levels of stress. Among these intrinsic values, altruism is a factor of emotional intelligence that showed a negative relationship with operational stress. Public service motivation is a type of intrinsic value orientation

Fig. 2 Regression trend showing the relationship between emotional intelligence and operational stress



$$\beta = -.354, p < .01; r^2 = 0.12; F = 11.2, p < .01$$

(Crewson 1997) that enhances altruism (Schott et al. 2019). Speculatively, altruistic impulses contribute to their self-motivation to serve the public and to work for a larger cause, the just world. These instances from the literature can be considered supportive evidence of the negative association of operational stress with emotional intelligence factors.

Findings showed no significant difference between men and women officers in operational stress. Previously, Narvekar and D’Cunha (2020) also had reported a lack of difference between men and women police officers in operational stress. However, many reports contradict this. According to Brown et al. (1999), women officers were more likely to report stress-related symptoms when incorporated in duties associated with sexual offenses and detached beats. In the case of sexual offenses, women officer’s empathy towards the victim could lead them to the process of secondary traumatization. During detached beats, they felt isolated and lonely. Their perception that the public and the police colleagues undervalue their role could also contribute to their stress (Brown et al. 1999). Other reported factors that led women officers more stressed than men include changes in work location or work-enforced removal, violent arrests, court duty, and minor injury to self or others (Biggam et al. 1997). Probably, women officers in the present study are less exposed to such risky roles. The police force structure in India must be enabling the officers to be confident, as the public, in general, holds fear and respect. Officers always enjoy their differences from the public, despite their gender. Hence, there are lesser chances to undervalue their role. Moreover, as Brown and Fielding (1993) noted, less exposure of the women officers to potentially violent cases could have contributed to a lack of difference between men and women in operational stress. If exposed, they would have reported more severe adverse reactions than men officers (Brown and Fielding 1993).

Considering emotional intelligence factors, as previously observed by Olugbemi and Bolaji (2016), men were more in empathy and self-motivation than women officers. However, empathy being higher among men contrasts with the common trend in the literature (Kobach and Weaver 2012; Rueckert et al. 2011; Rueckert and Naybar 2008; Toussaint and Webb 2005). A detailed search in the literature indicated that gender differences in empathy tend to occur in specific conditions (Rueckert et al. 2011). Women and men are equal in empathy in the conditions such as gender normativity and economic policy views (Clarke et al. 2016; Kamas and Preston 2019). In the conditions related to policing, men could be more empathetic than women officers. Literature related to self-motivation is limited. Alecu and Fekjær (2020) indicated that women officers are less self-motivated, and hence, attrition is a global trend among them. In India, women are just 7.28% of the force, despite reservations (Common Cause and Lokniti 2019).

Education, as identified by Toch (2002), is not a factor that could influence the operational stress of police officers. The difference in education did not show a significant effect on emotional intelligence also. Findings contradict the theoretical comments on the positive association between education and emotional intelligence (Pūraitė and Prokofjeva 2019). Maybe, as Chikwem (2017) noted, opportunities for continuous education could reduce the effect of stressors.

Senior ranks were significantly higher than constables in empathy, self-motivation, emotional stability, managing relationships, integrity, value orientation, and commitment. However, this difference did not reflect in the operational stress. Previously, Narvekar and D’Cunha (2020) also observed from their study conducted in India that senior rank officials and constables were equal in operational stress. Findings contradict the studies that reported higher operational stress among junior rank officers, including constables, than senior rank officials (Biggam et al. 1997; Brown and Campbell 1990). According to Brown et al. (1999), being a sergeant reduced the likelihood of psychological distress for men by half but had no significant effect on women sergeants.

Literature has negligible reports on the influence of marital status on emotional intelligence (Onkari and Itagi 2016; Mohanraj and Natesan 2014; Aremu and Tejumola 2008). The present study showed that married officers are better in value orientation than single. However, this difference did not reflect in their operational stress. As observed by Brown et al. (1999) and Patel et al. (2019), marital status was not an influencing factor of operational stress. However, marital problems may lead to alcoholism, job suspension, and police suicides (Roy 2019). Shabin and Priyamvada (2019) mentioned the possible association between police stress and marital discord. Improvement of marital harmony may reduce stress (Dixit 2019).

Conclusion

The present study showed that emotional intelligence could reduce operational stress among the police. Emotional intelligence and its factor, emotional stability, are significant inverse predictors of operational stress. Other emotional intelligence factors that showed a negative relationship with operational stress included self-motivation, value orientation, and altruistic behavior. Sociodemographic factors such as gender, rank, and marital status could influence the emotional intelligence of the officers. Men were significantly higher in empathy and self-motivation than women officers. Higher ranks could enhance empathy, self-motivation, emotional stability, managing relationship, integrity, value orientation, and commitment. Being married could increase the value orientation. However, these differences in emotional intelligence factors concerning

sociodemographic factors did not reflect their association with operational stress.

While interpreting the results, one should not forget that the sample size is limited as this is a pilot study. The participants were from Bangalore City, Karnataka, India, where a majority looks at police with fear and respect rather than considering them safety officers. As noted by Baker and Ibrahim (2017), policing in India is an emotionally challenging profession. There are situations that they would fail to identify their emotion as they consistently try to suppress it (Kanesan 2019). Junior rank police officers, including constables, are expected to detach their emotions while dealing with the public (Martin 1999; Kanesan 2019). Hence, culturally, officers in India do not endorse overt emotional expression.

Higher expectations by the public, without considering the human vulnerabilities develop negative stereotypes among the officers. Emotional intelligence is a crucial attribute that could help police overcome the stereotypes and effectively disseminate duty. Regardless of their rank, officers need formal training opportunities related to integrity (Democratic Control of Armed Forces 2015). An increase in emotional intelligence factors such as self-motivation, value orientation, emotional stability, and altruistic behavior could control the adverse emotional and behavioral outcomes related to operational stress.

Data Availability The datasets generated during and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request. All the authors have read and approved the version to be published.

Declarations

Ethics Approval The study was approved by Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru City, Bangalore, Karnataka 560029. We certify that the study was performed in accordance with the ethical standards as laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Consent to Participate All the participants provided informed consent to participate before data collection in each stage in each study. In the current data, no identifying characteristics of the participants are involved.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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