PREVALENCE AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS OF DEPRESSION IN POLICING: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY

W.A.N.D.Wickramasinghe

Postgraduate Institute of Science, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Allied Sciences,
Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka

Policing is regarded as a high-risk profession for the development of mental health disturbances owing to various critical incidents and potential traumatic events they encounter. However, thus far, no studies have been conducted to explore the presence of depression in policing in Sri Lanka. Hence, the present study was conducted with the aim of determining the prevalence and associated factors of depression among police officers in the Kandy police division.

A cross sectional study was conducted using a simple random sample of 750 police officers employed in the Kandy police division. A self administered questionnaire, including "Peradeniya Depression Scale" to assess depression, was used to collect data. The prevalence of depression was calculated as point prevalence with 95% Confidence Intervals. Multivariable logistic regression was carried out using backward elimination method to quantify the association between depression and selected predictors identified at bivariate analysis at $p < 0.10$.

The response rate was 94.5% (n=709). The mean age of the police officers in the sample was 39.6 years (SD 9.2 years). Majority of police officers (n=591, 83.4%) were males. The estimated prevalence of depression in the study sample was 22.8 % (95% CI 19.9% -26.1%). However, the adjusted prevalence of depression was 10.7% (95%CI 6.6%-15.1%). In the multivariable analysis, of the postulated occupational factors, satisfactory welfare facilities at work place was negatively associated with depression (adjusted OR=0.5; 95%CI=0.3-0.7; p=0.001). Satisfaction of the opportunity to serve the public (adjusted OR=0.2; 95% CI=0.1-0.6; p=0.003) and satisfaction related to social status gained in policing (adjusted OR=0.5; 95% CI=0.3-0.8; p=0.04) were identified as significant occupational factors that lowered the likelihood of being categorized as having depression.

In conclusion, the prevalence of depression among police officers was found to be higher in comparison to other study findings in Sri Lanka. Given the modifiable nature of the significant predictors it is recommended to design a package of interventions and implement adaptive measures to rectify the problems related to depression among police officers.