

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND BURNOUTS AS PREDICTORS OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONGST LAWYERS IN DISTRICT SANGLI

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ABSTRACT

Background: The practice of law is a high prestige, high skill, high income and high stress profession. The present study was conducted to find out the role of stressors on mental well being of the lawyers.

Objectives: To study the occupational stress amongst the lawyers and to examine the correlates of job satisfaction in them, and to study the gender difference (if any) of stress and job satisfaction. Also to study the association between levels of stress and substance abuse disorders.

Methodology: A cross sectional study was conducted in Dist. Court Sangli, which involved collection of data using predesigned proforma. By using Systematic Random sampling technique, out of total 240 lawyers 120(76 males and 44 females) were interviewed. Presumptive Stress Life Event Scale (PSLES) was used as a validated screening tool to calculate their Mental Stress Score. The level of Job Satisfaction was scored by 3 point scaling system taking 10 independent variables as the predictors of job satisfaction. Data was analyzed using appropriate statistical tests.

Results: 88.3% lawyers had experienced stress. The female lawyers had high Mean Mental Stress Score. 81.8% female lawyers had high Job satisfaction Score i.e. low Job satisfaction. 52.8% of the male lawyers having stress reported substance abuse disorders.

Conclusion: The female lawyers experience significantly greater stress and burnouts as compared to males. Job satisfaction is significantly and negatively correlated with stress. The need of the hour is to make an effort in coping with stress amongst lawyers.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, burnout and stress.

INTRODUCTION

Today an increasing number of lawyers are experiencing burnouts, insomnia, low productivity and stress related illness¹ due to lack of balance in personal and professional lives. A psychosocial interplay between personality, power, status and service and intellectual challenge forms the career dilemma of lawyer's conflicts.

Job-satisfaction has been defined as the positive orientation of an individual towards the work role which he is presently occupying and the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating one's values. It is basically an individual matter and refers to what one expects from his or her job and when there is mismatch between

what is expected and what is received then dissatisfaction occurs.

Due to high Job demands (overload) there is significant impact of stress on their mental and physical health, which in turn leads to Job strains. There are varieties of factors that can influence a person's level of job satisfaction like pay, promotion system, working conditions, leadership, social relationships and the job itself.²

The happier the people with the jobs, the more satisfied they are said to be. It is an integral part of natural fabrics of life. It is an "underload or overload of matter, energy or information input to or output from a living system." Some degree of stress is the normal part of life and provides the stimulus to learn and grow, without an

adverse effect on health.³ But when stress is intense, continuous or repeated –as is often the case with occupational stress, ill health can result. It can destroy Quality of life and also affect family life.

It can lead to Emotional reactions like depression, irritability, anxiety, fatigue withdrawal, low self esteem. Physiological (heartburn, eating disorders) muscle pain and Behavioral reactions like (increased smoking, drinking).⁴

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional study was conducted in a Dist. Court Sangli from October- December 2010, covering a total of 120 lawyers consisting of 76 males and 44 females. The total lawyers working in the court were 240 and systematic random sampling technique was used.

A predesigned proforma was prepared for the collection of data. Presumptive Stress Life Events Scale (PSLES) ³ framed by Gurmeet Singh was used as a validated screening tool, to calculate the Mental Stress Score. It gives the quantitative estimate of presumptive stress (weighted score) as experienced by Indian adult population on each specified life events in past one year. It is further divided according to desirability, into Desirable Events and Undesirable Events. The events which could not be classified as either were put as ambiguous, however their number was less.

Mean score was assigned to each individual item varying from 0-100 and then ranked them according to decrease in the severity of perceived stress. Total score was graded according to No stress (<40), Less stress (40-200) and More stress (>200). The scale is simple to administer to literate as well as illiterate adults.⁵

The level of Job Satisfaction was scored by 3 point scaling system taking into 10 independent variables² as the predictors of Job satisfaction (dependent variable). Total score was graded as High satisfaction (0-9), Intermediate satisfaction (12-21) and Low satisfaction (24-30).² Regression analysis was also computed to find out the best predictor of Job satisfaction.

Data was analyzed using SPSS Software. The test applied were Mean, Standard Deviation, Chi square test, Standard error of difference between two proportions & regression analysis.

RESULTS

Total number of lawyers interviewed were 120 consisting of 76 males and 44 females. They represented upper Socio economic Class according to Modified Kuppuswami scale. 60 (78.9%), out of 76 males and 38(86.3%), out of 44 females were married. No significant difference was found in the level of stress between the married and unmarried subjects.

88.3% lawyers had experienced stress (Table 1). About 90.2% females experienced stress as compared to

82.8% male counterparts and the difference was found to be statistically significant(P<0.5)(Table 2).

Table: 1 Genderwise Mental Stress scores

Sex	Mental Stress Score			Total
	No stress	Less stress	More stress	
Male	10 (71.4)	38 (65.5)	28 (58.3)	76 (63.3)
Female	4 (28.6)	20 (34.5)	20 (41.7)	44 (36.7)
Total	14 (11.6)	58 (48.3)	48 (40.1)	120 (100.0)

The maximum possible Mental Stress Score calculated from PSLES was 2504 and minimum was 20. In the present sample, females and males had maximum score of 488 and 449 respectively. And minimum score was 20 in females and 0 in males. Calculated Mean Stress Score for the total sample was 172.18±124.45. The mean stress score for female lawyers was 206.3±141.49 and for male it was 152±109.6.

Table: 2 Association of gender with stress levels

Sex	Stress		Total
	Present	Absent	
Male	66 (62.2)	10 (71.4)	76 (63.3)
Female	40 (37.8)	4 (22.6)	44 (36.7)
Total	106 (88.3)	14 (11.7)	120 (100.0)

SE (p1-p2) = 9.14, Z=8.3, P<0.5, Significant

The level of Job satisfaction was low in 51.6%, Intermediate in 40% and High in 8.4% of the total lawyers. Out of the total lawyers having Low Job satisfaction i.e. High Job Satisfaction Score, 36 (58.0%) were females and amongst the total High Job satisfaction score subjects all were males.

81.8% of the female lawyers had low job satisfaction as compared to 34.2% males (Table 3).

Table: 3 Genderwise Job satisfaction Scores

Sex	Job Satisfaction Score			Total
	Low	Intermediate	High	
Male	26 (41.9)	40 (83.3)	10 (100.0)	76 (63.3)
Female	36 (58.1)	08 (16.7)	0 (0)	44 (36.7)
Total	62 (51.7)	48 (40.0)	10 (8.3)	120 (100.0)

Maximum possible Job Satisfaction score was 30 and minimum was 0. In the present sample, females and males had maximum score of 30 and 30 respectively. But the minimum was only 12 in females and 0 in males.

Calculated Mean Job satisfaction Score was 20.15±8.3 for the total sample. It was found to be 26.04±3.37 in females and 16.73±8.13 in males.

The main contributing predicting factors in job satisfaction were computed through regression analysis

and it revealed job satisfaction is significantly and negatively correlated to emotional exhaustion($r=-.53$, $p<.01$), stress ($r=-.52$, $p<.01$), work overload ($r=-.48$, $p<.05$), depersonalization($r=-.39$, $p<.05$), reduced personal accomplishment($r=-.35$, $p<.01$), strained interpersonal relationship ($r=-.28$, $p<.01$), over expectation ($r=-.25$, $p<.01$), jealousy ($r=-.25$, $p<.01$), poor social position ($r= -.24$, $p<.01$),competition($r=-.23$, $p<.01$) in males (Table 4).

Table: 4 Regression Analysis: Predictors of Job Satisfaction in male lawyers.

Variables	r value	p- value
Emotional exhaustion	-0.53	<0.01
Stress due to clients	-0.52	<0.01
Work Overload	-0.48	<0.05
Depersonalisation	-0.39	<0.05
Reduced personal accomplishment	-0.35	<0.01
Strained interpersonal relationship	-0.28	<0.01
Over expectation	-0.25	<0.01
Jealousy	-0.25	<0.01
Poor social position	-0.24	<0.01
Competition	-0.23	<0.01

Table: 5 Regression Analysis: Predictors of Job Satisfaction in female lawyers.

Variables	r value	P- value
Emotional exhaustion	-0.59	<0.05
Work Overload	-0.55	<0.05
Reduced Personal accomplishment	-0.51	<0.01
Stress	-0.51	<0.05
Jealousy	-0.38	<0.01
Over expectation	-0.31	<0.05
Depersonalization	-0.28	<0.05
Strained interpersonal relationship	-0.24	<0.05
Poor social position	-0.24	<0.05
Competition	-0.23	<0.05

Whereas, in female lawyers, job satisfaction has been found to be significantly and negatively related to emotional exhaustion ($r=-.59$, $p<.05$), workload($r=-.55$, $p<.05$), reduced personal accomplishment ($r=-.51$, $p<.01$), stress($r=-.51$, $p<.05$), jealousy($r= -.38$, $p<.01$), over expectation($r=-.31$, $p<.05$), depersonalization($r=-.28$, $p<.05$), strained interpersonal relationship ($r=-.24$, $p<.05$), poor social position ($r=-.24$, $p<.05$), competition ($r=-.23$, $p<.05$) (Table 5).

DISCUSSION

The study of occupational stress is hindered by lack of compact and comprehensive standardized measurement tools. In the present study, it is clear from Regression analysis that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and work overload are the common predictors of job satisfaction for male as well as female lawyers. The law profession is the one where a good

social position and economic reward brings in more satisfaction. Moreover, it has been found that increasing competition results in stress and low levels of satisfactions.⁶

The working women have more stress because of stereotypical discrimination, social isolation and work home conflicts. All the above studies support the obtained results.

CONCLUSION

The productivity of the lawyers is the most decisive factor for the success of the practice, which is in turn dependent on psychosocial well being of the lawyers in the age of highly dynamic and competitive world. The study shows there are no differences on the PSLES for age, marital status, education and occupation. However marked sex differences were found in the perceived stress levels. Female lawyers experience more burnouts and stress as compared to males.⁷ Mean Mental Stress Score and Mean Job satisfaction score was also found to be high in female lawyers suggestive of low job satisfaction. It is significantly and negatively correlated with stress. A positive association between levels of stress and substance abuse was also explored.^{8,9}

Although certain limitations were met with the study, every effort has been made to make it much comprehensive. Nothing can isolate stress from human being. It can be managed but not simply done away with. A balance between work and family, a support network of friends and co-workers ,and a relaxed and a positive outlook are the necessary preventive strategies in coping from the stress.^{10,11} The research expects to draw attention of the administrators, researchers and academicians in related fields to resume further research.^{12,13}

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