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OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG PUBLIC PROSECUTORS IN KERALA

Smitha Sathish

Research Scholar

School Of Humanities, Social Science & Fine Arts,
Nirwan University, Jaipur, India

Abstract:

Background of Study:

Occupational stress is stress that is caused by one's occupation. Unexpected duties and pressures that do not fit with a person's knowledge, skills, or expectations cause occupational stress, limiting one's ability to cope.

Research Methodology:

The aim of this study is to understand the occupational stress among prosecutors.

Objective:

To understand the difference between male and female prosecutors in occupational stress and the occupational stress among prosecutors in different age groups.

Samples:

The study consists of 50 prosecutors. Among that 26 were female prosecutors and 24 were male prosecutors. The sampling technique used here was purposive sampling.

Tools and Procedure:

The occupational stress scale was used. The data was collected from a seminar conducted for the deputy director of prosecution and assistant public prosecutors. After collecting data the questionnaire was scored according to the instructions given in the manual.

Results and Conclusion:

By comparing the mean value women have more occupational stress than males, and the mean value of the individuals between 35-45 years old reported more stress in the occupation than individuals above 45 years old.

Index Terms - Occupational Stress, Psychology, Prosecutors, Job Satisfaction, Stress in Workplace

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I. INTRODUCTION

Occupational stress is stress that is caused by one's occupation. Unexpected duties and pressures that do not fit with a person's knowledge, skills, or expectations cause occupational stress, limiting one's ability to cope. When employees do not feel supported by their bosses or co-workers, or when they believe they have little control over work procedures, occupational stress can rise. Occupational stress is defined as a feeling of tension that happens when a person perceives a disconnect between the challenges of the workplace and their ability to cope.

A reasonable level of work stress can be motivating and inspiring, but if the stress is excessive or long-term, and there are few coping options, the scenario becomes dangerous. The human body releases the adaptation or stress reaction in unfamiliar or tense situations, as well as in highly stressful ones. This is a neurochemical mechanism that accelerates the cardiac rate, quickens respiration, and sharpens a person's sensation of their surroundings, among other things. In a circumstance where there are only two options for coping: fighting or fleeing, these are critical reactions. Long-term stress, which is widespread in today's workplace, does not justify adaptation — the body tires, and mental and physical health concerns emerge.

Occupational stress and workplace health have become major concerns both internationally and nationally in the previous decade. Given the societal value of work, the amount of time spent at work, and the current changes altering the nature of work, it's no surprise that workplace stress is on the rise (Szymanski, 1999). Organizations increasingly function under cultures of enhanced speed, efficiency, and competition, for example, as a result of the fast-changing global economy. As a result of economic imperatives and the desire to maintain competitive advantage, restructuring and uncertainty have occurred.

For example, workforces are always shrinking, small businesses are merging or being swallowed up by larger, more competitive businesses, and change is the only constant. These changes in the nature of work, together with legislative definitional modifications, have set the way for an alarming increase in claims related to chronic workplace stress. In earlier years, stress claims were primarily linked to a traumatic and/or life-threatening event, such as violence, injury, or a critical situation.

II. THE VALUE OF WORK

Any discussion of work stress should avoid giving the sense that work is a psychologically "hazardous" activity because it is not always stressful. Indeed, the intrinsic importance of employment to a worker's health and happiness is well understood (Probert, 1990). Work, according to early philosophers like Freud and Adler, is an essential aspect of human existence. Erikson (1950) recognized the importance of employment to an individual's sense of selfhood in his widely accepted theory of development.

Work, according to motivational theorists such as Maslow (1968), not only satisfies basic wants such as security, food, and shelter, but also satisfies higher-level needs such as competence, purpose, and social involvement. Recent research suggests that work plays an essential role in the advancement of identity and self-esteem (see Winefield, Winefield, Tiggemann & Goldney, 1993).

III. DEFINITIONS OF WORK STRESS

It's wise to note that not all stress is bad. For example, in his early work on stress, Selye (1976) distinguished between two types of stress: good or desired stress (eustress) and bad or undesirable stress (stress) (distress). Eustress is enjoyable or at least difficult, and it can have beneficial impacts such as increased output and creativity. Ironically, life can become stressful without these good inputs.

Distress, on the other hand, is evident when a person believes he or she has no control over a stressful experience. Distress is likely to lead to decreased productivity and a decrease in overall happiness. Although everyone reacts to stress in some way, reactions differ greatly amongst people. When presented with a big stressor, some persons suffer a quick increase in heart rate, while others experience stomach tightness event knotting, as well as tension headaches (Johansson, Cavalini & Pettersson, 1996).

Stress is a natural aspect of life that cannot be avoided. People have been exposed to stressful stimuli on a daily basis in their personal and social lives, as well as at work, which is an integral component of human existence.

Work stress is defined as an incompatibility between an individual and his or her work environment, according to the 'stress-process' definition (Humphrey, 1998). A more specific definition was provided by The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) (1999), which defined work stress as being harmful physical and emotional. That occurs when a worker's capabilities, resources, or needs do not match the job's requirements.

a. Acute Stress

The term 'acute' refers to sudden onset. This form of stress usually involves a fast response to a single, easily identifiable reason that will usually respond well to some form of intervention (Guyton, 1981; Schuler, 1980). In an acute stress response, a person's arousal state (anxiety) will fluctuate greatly. A person may experience acute stress in response to a negative scenario such as abuse, an unexpected bereavement, workplace conflict (i.e., getting involved in an argument with a client or co-worker), starting a new job, introducing new processes, or waiting for a contract renewal. There is an elevated sense of arousal in this acute phase, which might cause physiological responses such as dry mouth, diarrhoea, heart palpitations, or cognitive issues (Guyton, 1981). The majority of people who have an acute stress response expect to return to 'normal' living in a short amount of time.

b. Post-Traumatic Stress

When workplace events are life-threatening (as in the instance of military troops, police, firefighters, paramedics, service workers who have also been subjected to armed robberies, or workers who have been involved in large-scale disasters and accidents), a more ongoing form of the stress response can develop, namely post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Anshel, 2000; Humphrey, 1998; Paton, 1999; Pflanz, 1999). A delayed and/or deferred response to an acute stressful incident or scenario causes post-traumatic

stress disorder (either short or long-lasting). This event usually has a particularly threatening or catastrophic nature, with the potential to cause pervasive distress in almost anyone (World Health Organization - WHO, 1992). This stress response is usually unremitting

c. Chronic Stress

Chronic stress, contrary to the significant events that are thought to trigger acute stress or post-traumatic stress disorder, is a long-term reaction to a build-up of stresses. This type of response usually starts gently and develops over time. Chronic stress is best defined as an ongoing internal reaction to external circumstances when the ability to cope with those circumstances is impeded (Evoy, 1998).

Unlike acute stress where a return to normality is expected within a fairly short period of time, chronic stress usually manifests itself in various ongoing physical and/or psychological symptoms hypertension, insomnia, coronary heart disease, stroke, poor focus, withdrawal, and depression, to name a few (Cooper & Payne, 1988; Minter, 1999). Moreover, prolonged stress can cause the immune system to weaken over time. It's not uncommon for someone to have long-term symptoms of sickness without understanding that chronic stress is to blame (Guyton, 1981).

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study was conducted by N. Hasnain, Iram Naz, and Samina Bano on the topic of stress and well-being of lawyers in 2010. The main objective of this study aimed to see if there was a difference in stress and well-being between ten-year-experienced civil and criminal lawyers and lawyers who had been doing an internship. Each group consisted of 20 lawyers, for a total of 40 civil and criminal lawyers. The result shows that significant effect of practice experience on stress and criminal lawyers experienced higher stress.

Stress and coping among public prosecutors a study conducted by Gintautas Valickas, Kristina Vanagaitė in 2010. The article analyses work-related stress amongst Lithuanian prosecutors (n = 349), as well as the relationship between stress, coping techniques, and prosecutors' socio-demographic factors. The findings revealed that prosecutors faced significant stress as a result of various work-related issues.

The prosecutors' experience of stress is related to the size of the city or town where they were working, the division of the service (regional, district, and Prosecutor General's Office), as well as the dependence on different district services. Prosecutors are more likely to use the problem-solving coping technique after being challenged with stress, and less likely to use the emotional discharge coping approach. The coping mechanisms are linked to their gender, family status, the size of the city or town where they worked, and their dependency on various district services.

The causes and consequences of job-related stress among prosecutors was a study conducted by Chongmin Na, Tae Choo, and Jeffrey A. Klingfuss in 2017. Drawing on a sample of prosecutors in a southern state in the U.S. On the basis of different analyses, this study provides a scientifically-based perspective regarding which working conditions should be addressed to maintain healthy and productive working environments among prosecutors.

The results show that job demands and organizational support play the most important roles in explaining the work stress of prosecutors, they do not have a direct impact on the prosecutor's commitment to the job. Psychological and emotional stresses are revealed to play little significance in the study. With the exception of the public/media stressor, job-related stressors do not directly cause turnover intention, but instead indirectly through work stress and job satisfaction.

Occupational stress and burnout of judges and procurators was a study conducted by Feng Jen Tsai and Chang Chuan Chan in 2009. The study aims to examine the associations between occupational stress and burnout among judges and procurators. The sample consists of 211 judicial officers, comprising 87 judges and 98 procurators, in Taiwan. The result shows that the high psychological demand, effort, and over-commitment were significantly associated with both personal and work-related burnout, while the low workplace social support was significantly associated with client-related burnout among the judicial officers.

Judges were much more likely than procurators to experience client-related fatigue. Judges and judicial officers with low social support were more likely to experience client-related burnout. For both judges and prosecutors, occupational stress was linked to personal and work-related burnout. Judges and judicial officers with low social support were more likely to experience client-related burnout.

Sources of Occupational Pressure among Lawyers and Legal Professionals was a study conducted by Mare Teichmann, Kaja Kattel, Mart Murdvee, and Tanel Kerikmäe in 2015. Home and work imbalance, administrative functions, and insufficient recognition were the most prominent drivers of occupational stress among lawyers and legal professionals. They found that the relationship between job satisfaction and sources of occupational pressure was negative and significantly valid among five pressures on lawyers and legal professionals. A problem-solving-centred coping approach was adopted by the majority of lawyers and legal professionals. As a result, social support from a peer, a friend, or a family member is essential. Therefore, social support from peers, friends, family members, etc. was also a widely used coping strategy by lawyers and legal professionals. Their findings well demonstrate that awareness of occupational stress in the legal industry has been raised.

Edward Sri Yashodha Samarasekara, Sharmini Perera, and Binushi Narangoda conducted a study on Occupational Stress and Burnout among Lawyers in Sri Lanka in 2015. The aim of this study was to explore the associations between occupational stress measured through job demand-control (JDC), and burnout among lawyers in Sri Lanka.

This study included 290 respondent lawyers Regression analysis was used to determine the association between occupational stress and burnout among lawyers. Job control and psychological job demand were assessed to be relatively high among lawyers. They also reported high social support. There were also reports of high levels of personal burnout and client-related burnout. Burnout, both personal and work-related, has been linked to psychological job demand.

Occupational stress and burnouts as predictors of job satisfaction amongst lawyers in district Sangli was a study conducted by Patel Kriti A, Rajderkar Shekhar S, and Naik Jayashree D in 2012. They focused to study the occupational stress amongst the lawyers, to examine the correlates of job satisfaction in them, and studying the gender difference (if any) between stress and job satisfaction. Also to study the association between levels of stress and substance abuse disorders.

By using the Systematic Random sampling technique, out of a total of 240 lawyers 120 (76 males and 44 females) were interviewed. The result shows that the female lawyers experience significantly greater stress and burnout as compared to males. Stress has a considerable and detrimental relationship with job satisfaction. The requirement of the hour is for lawyers to make an effort to cope with stress.

Maria de Fátima Antunes Alves Costa and Maria Cristina Ferreira did a study in 2014 called Sources and Reactions to Stress among Brazilian Lawyers. The goal of this study was to see how well seven stressors (decision latitude, psychological demands at work, physical demands at work, social support from colleagues, ergonomic stressors, client relationships, job insecurity) predicted job dissatisfaction, depression, and psychosomatic problems in a group of 702 Brazilian lawyers. Decision latitude and social support were shown to be the main negative predictors of stress, while psychological demands and job uncertainty were found to be the key positive predictors. The demand-support-control model, which served as the report's framework, is used to explain these findings.

V. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research was to identify occupational stress among prosecutors. The objective of the study was to understand the difference between male and female prosecutors in occupational stress.

a. Hypotheses

There is no significant difference in occupational stress among male prosecutors and female prosecutors.

b. Samples

The study consists of 50 prosecutors. Among that 26 were female prosecutors and 24 were male prosecutors. In the total population, 28 samples were in the age group of 35-45 and 22 were above 45. The sampling technique used here was purposive sampling.

c. Inclusion Criteria

- Both males and females were included.
- Both assistant public prosecutors and director of public prosecutors were included.

d. Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals who are working in the private sector were excluded.
- Individuals below the age of 35 were excluded.

e. Tools

The tool used was the Occupational Stress Scale.

f. Procedure

The data were collected from a seminar conducted for the deputy director of prosecution and assistant public prosecutors. The permission was taken from the director of prosecution. The participants were selected randomly. Rapport was established with the participant. Informed consent was taken from the participant and was assured about their confidentiality. Adequate information about the study was given to the participant. With their permission questionnaire was given and requested to complete the same. They were requested to read the questions and respond per the instructions. Participants were given the opportunity to clear all doubts. After collecting data the questionnaire was scored according to the instructions given in the manual. In the current study, t-test was employed. SPSS was used.

VI. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to understand the occupational stress among prosecutors. The current study was conducted by using an occupational stress scale. The study consists of 50 prosecutors. Among that 26 were female prosecutors and 24 were male prosecutors. In the total population, 28 samples were in the age group of 35-45 and 22 were above 45.

Most of the participants reported that they could not get vacations and leisure time. So it is difficult for them to feel relaxed while working. This is the main reason that they feel stressed both in work and personal life. Almost all of the participants are from nuclear families. They report that they have to work more than 8 hours a day; this also makes them feel stressed. The participants in the study were married. They report a good relationship with their spouse. Some of the participants and their spouses both are employed. And almost every participant reported that they do not have any membership or participation in any club or kind of association where they can have a good time and get some relaxation from their busy schedule.

Table 1: mean, SD, and t value of male and female prosecutors in occupational stress.

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS	MALE (n=24)		FEMALE (n=26)		t value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
	99.54	7.587	103.92	10.020	0.090

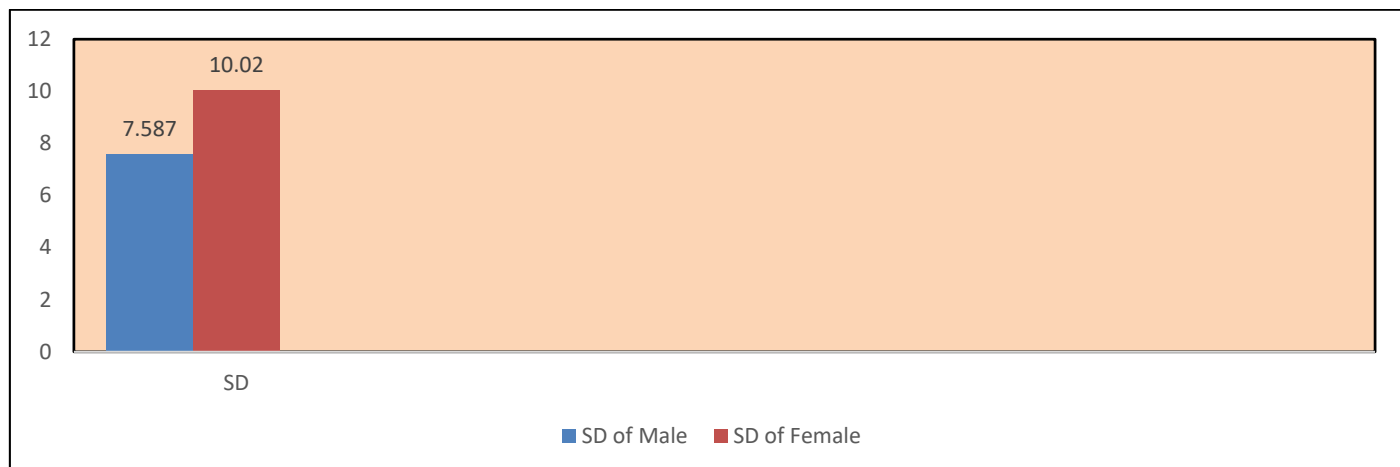


Figure 1: SD value of male and female prosecutors in occupational stress.

The table shows the mean, SD, and t value of male and female prosecutors in occupational stress. The mean of males and females are 99.54 and 103.92 respectively. The standard deviation of males and females are 7.587 and 10.020 respectively. The t value is 0.090 which is not significant at the 0.05 significance level.

By comparing the mean value women have more occupational stress than males. But that is not so statistically significant. Women have to do work at home as well as in the sector. That may lead to feeling stressed. Both men and women report the stress in their occupation. All of the participants were working in the public sector. So they may have more workload in job place itself. This may also cause to feel stressed. They also report that they couldn't find much time to spend with their family as they have to work more than 8 hours a day and continues. So this all can lead to feeling more stressed.

VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Occupational stress is prevalent among all sections of prosecutors, though compared with male and female prosecutors, females have more occupational stress than males.

a. Limitations

The present study was conducted using only one scale. The majority of the total samples included patients from a middle-class families. Patients of high and low socio-economic status were not incorporated into the study. The number of studies conducted on this area was less. Hence the number of reviews of literature was not adequate.

b. Future Suggestions

The current study only considers one variable, so in the future, more variables could be incorporated. The samples could be collected from both the public and private sectors to increase the possibility of generalization. A large number of samples would give wider scope for generalizing the result. In future studies, data could be collected from different geographical areas. Data could be collected from different cultures. So that it is useful to learn about the influence of culture. In the current study, data were collected from Kerala only. In the future data could be collected from across the country. Prosecution is very difficult and at the same time an energy-consuming job. The study was conducted to understand the occupational stress among the prosecutors.

An in-depth understanding of psychological variables which affect these job holders can help them to prevent some serious mental breakdown. There are not many psychological studies conducted on this population. And this study lightens the path to the importance of conducting the study in these areas. Studies in this area will help to deal with their mental health and to plan psychological help. Giving incentives and appraisals will help to less job stress. Planning family gatherings would help them to cope with stress. Teaching relaxation techniques, breathing, etc. would help to deal with stress.

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