



The Interplay Between Work Stress, Work-Life Balance, And Organisational Citizenship Behaviour: A Mediation Analysis Within The Madhya Pradesh Police Force

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Abstract

This study investigates the mediating role of Work-Life Balance (WLB) in the relationship between Work Stress (WS) and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) among police personnel in Madhya Pradesh, India. Utilizing a quantitative, cross-sectional design with a sample of $N=178$ officers, the research employed established scales for all three constructs. Data analysis using Pearson correlation and hierarchical multiple regression indicated that Work Stress significantly and negatively predicted OCB ($\beta=-0.25$, $p=0.003$). Crucially, when WLB (operationalized as high Work-Family Conflict, WFC) was introduced, the direct effect of WS on OCB became statistically non-significant ($\beta=-0.10$, $p=0.211$), while WLB itself demonstrated a strong negative relationship with OCB ($\beta=-0.31$, $p=0.000$). This provides strong evidence for **full mediation**, confirming that the destructive pathway from high occupational strain to reduced discretionary performance is channelled entirely through the erosion of the officers' personal resources (WLB/WFC). The consistently high self-reported OCB alongside severe stress further suggests the presence of Compulsory Citizenship Behaviour (CCB), an unsustainable reliance on employee goodwill to compensate for chronic organizational resource deficits, such as high vacancies and excessive working hours. The findings mandate structural reforms aimed at protecting personal time as a primary strategy for enhancing genuine OCB and overall workforce sustainability.

Introduction

The Relevance of Organizational Psychology in Policing

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) denotes discretionary actions by employees that extend beyond mandatory job requirements, ultimately promoting the overall effectiveness of the organization. In contemporary human resource management, OCB is essential because these extra-role behaviors, such as voluntarily helping colleagues or consistently maintaining a positive attitude, diminish the need for intensive managerial oversight, improve collective morale, and contribute to institutional efficiency. The consistent exhibition of OCB signals that employees possess a robust sense of commitment and affective attachment to their organization's mission.

However, the maintenance of OCB is contingent upon a supportive environment that sustains employee well-being and personal resources. The law enforcement profession, globally recognized as a high-demand, high-stress occupation, frequently presents formidable structural demands that actively undermine this requirement. Police personnel are regularly exposed to traumatic events, emotionally taxing confrontations, and intense public scrutiny. These intrinsic stressors challenge the psychological and energetic reserves of officers, making the relationship between high occupational demands and discretionary contributions particularly critical to examine within this sector.

The Context of the Madhya Pradesh Police Force

Within the framework of Indian public service, state police forces contend with endemic operational constraints, notably chronic staff shortages and pervasive workloads. The consensus across national reports indicates that police personnel in India are highly vulnerable to work-induced mental health afflictions precipitated by severely disrupted Work-Life Balance (WLB). The Madhya Pradesh Police force serves as a quintessential example of this high-demand environment, where institutional expectations routinely necessitate performance that supersedes, and often disregards, personal and family life.

Empirical data collected from police personnel within MP revealed critical markers of chronic over-commitment. A demographic and operational analysis indicated that a vast majority of the personnel report working **Above 50 hours** on average per week. Moreover, nearly all respondents stated they "Yes, Mostly" or "Sometimes" work on holidays or festivals, demonstrating that mandatory time off is not guaranteed or institutionally protected.

The perceived stressors reported are highly endorsed by the respondents, encompassing both organizational and operational domains. These structural demands include critical issues such as "Staff shortages on duties creates stress," "Excessive administrative duties," and "Constant changes in policy/legislation," running parallel to acute operational risks like "Traumatic events throughout the job creates stress" and the "Risk of being injured on the job". The cumulative effect of these factors establishes a resource-depleted professional landscape where maintaining external social and familial resources becomes exceptionally challenging. This background establishes the present investigation's central focus: clarifying the precise mechanism by which endemic work stress impacts discretionary organizational contributions (OCB) in this demanding public service setting, explicitly investigating the mediating role of WLB.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Foundation: The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model and Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

This research is anchored in the **Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model** (Demerouti et al., 2001, as cited in) and is further interpreted through the lens of the **Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory** (Hobfoll, 2001, as cited in).

The JD-R model classifies job characteristics into two primary categories: job demands (e.g., physical, social, or organizational aspects requiring effort and associated with psychological costs) and job resources (aspects that assist in achieving goals, mitigating demands, or promoting personal growth). Within the context of the MP Police, the identified factors such as unpredictable shift patterns, excessive workload, and policy ambiguities represent profound and persistent job demands.

The accompanying COR theory posits that individuals are driven to acquire, maintain, and protect valuable resources (e.g., energetic, personal, social, and material). Psychological stress is understood to arise from the threat of resource loss, the actual loss of resources, or the failure to acquire resources following substantial investment.

The guiding principle for this investigation, framed by COR theory, is the **Strain Hypothesis**. This hypothesis suggests that continuous exposure to non-negotiable and excessive job demands—such as routinely exceeding 50 hours of work per week and surrendering rest days—results in an unrelenting drain on the officer's energetic reserves. This severe, chronic strain depletes the essential resources required for discretionary engagement. Consequently, the capacity or willingness of personnel to exert extra effort beyond their formal role (OCB) is expected to decline significantly. This decline occurs because OCB requires an investment of emotional, temporal, and physical resources that the core demands of the job

have already consumed, thereby establishing the hypothesized negative relationship between Work Stress and OCB (Hypothesis 1).

Defining Constructs and Dimensions

Work Stress (WS). Work Stress is conceptualized as the aggregate psychological and physiological strain resulting from the 15 specific job demands measured in the survey. These demands align predominantly with recognized categories in policing research: *Operational Demands* (e.g., exposure to traumatic events, risk of injury) and *Organizational/Administrative Demands* (e.g., poor staffing, bureaucratic processes, administrative overload). The overwhelming endorsement of these measures reinforces that the stress experienced by MP Police personnel is deeply embedded in systemic and structural deficiencies, corroborating international literature suggesting that structural workload factors often overshadow the efficacy of leadership interventions in predicting public service stress outcomes.

Work-Life Balance (WLB). WLB is defined here as the subjective perception of satisfaction and effective functioning across both the work and non-work domains. A failure to maintain this equilibrium results in Work-Family Conflict (WFC), where demands from one domain interfere negatively with responsibilities in the other. For the police officers in this study, pervasive job demands substantially spill over into their personal lives, impairing their ability to engage in social life, devote time to family, and manage the social stigma associated with their role. The WLB measure, consisting of 13 items, effectively gauges this high degree of WFC. In this context, WLB functions as a critical psychological resource: when preserved, it enhances coping mechanisms; when degraded, the resulting WFC depletes personal resources, accelerating the path toward burnout and compromised behavior. The WLB score was subsequently inverted for modeling purposes to represent Poor Balance/High WFC.

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). OCB encompasses voluntary employee actions beneficial to the organization. In policing, OCB measurement must incorporate dimensions directly relevant to law enforcement, traditionally focusing on civic virtue, sportsmanship, altruism, conscientiousness, courtesy, service delivery, compliance, and organizational loyalty. The survey items reflect standard OCB facets, such as Conscientiousness ("Punctual and meet deadlines consistently") and Altruism ("Often help colleagues with their work"). The presence of OCB is crucial for police agencies striving to improve service delivery, effectiveness, and the maintenance of security and public order.

Inter-Variable Relationships and Research Hypotheses

Existing literature consistently reports a negative association between Work Stress and OCB, primarily because stressed employees lack the motivational or energetic capacity for engagement in extra-role behaviors. Conversely, a positive WLB fosters higher job satisfaction and affective commitment, which employees reciprocate through increased OCB.

The critical theoretical relationship under investigation involves the mediating role of WLB. In high-demand public service occupations, excessive demands directly erode WLB by consuming personal time and energy, thereby generating high WFC. This subsequent loss of personal and familial resources is hypothesized to be the *proximal cause* for the reduction in discretionary organizational effort. If WLB functions as a mediating variable, the initially established direct relationship between Work Stress and OCB should significantly weaken or become non-significant upon the introduction of WLB into the predictive model.

Hypothesis Formulation

Based on the synthesis of the JD-R Model and COR theory, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- **H1:** Work Stress (WS) is negatively related to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).
- **H2:** Work Stress (WS) is positively related to Poor Work-Life Balance/High Work-Family Conflict (WLB/WFC).
- **H3:** Poor Work-Life Balance/High Work-Family Conflict (WLB/WFC) is negatively related to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).
- **H4:** Poor Work-Life Balance/High Work-Family Conflict (WLB/WFC) significantly mediates the negative relationship between Work Stress (WS) and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).

Method

Research Design, Population, and Sample

The study utilized a quantitative, cross-sectional design to analyze perceptions regarding occupational stressors, work-life equilibrium, and extra-role work performance among Madhya Pradesh police personnel. The target population included officers serving across various regions of Madhya Pradesh, India. The sample size derived from the raw data sheet totaled N=178 individual responses. The sample demographics are crucial, reflecting a workforce subjected to substantial operational duties and chronic stress in a high-demand setting.

Respondent Demographic Profile

The demographic profile reflects the typical characteristics of the Indian policing workforce, demonstrating high exposure to potential Work-Family Conflict (WFC).

Table 1

Profile of Madhya Pradesh Police Respondents (N=178)

Demographic Factor	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	168	94.4%
	Female	10	5.6%
Position	Constable	148	83.1%
	ASI/DSP/SP/Inspector/Other	30	16.9%
Average Weekly Hours	Less than 40 hours	9	5.1%
	40-50 hours	57	32.0%
	Above 50 hours	112	62.9%
Service Tenure	Less than 5 years	5	2.8%
	5-10 years	60	33.7%
	11-15 years	25	14.0%
	Above 15 years	88	49.4%
Marital Status	Married	167	93.8%
	Single/Divorced	11	6.2%
Family Type	Joint/Extended	157	88.2%
	Nuclear	21	11.8%

The overwhelming majority of the sample is male (94.4%), married (93.8%), and integrated into traditional joint or extended family structures (88.2%). Critically, nearly two-thirds (62.9%) report working **Above 50 hours per week**. This demographic context amplifies the severity of WLB findings, as chronic and excessive working hours (nationally reported as 11 to 18 hours per day) directly obstruct personal life management and social obligations, resulting in acute WFC. This severe strain depletes the essential social resources necessary for maintaining psychological resilience at work.

Measures and Scaling

The research instrument consisted of empirically established scales adapted for the Indian public service context. Responses were captured using a 5-point Likert scale format (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

1. *Work Stress (WS)*. Measured using 15 items detailing occupational demands (e.g., administrative burden, traumatic exposure, workload). A higher score indicates greater perceived stress.
2. *Work-Life Balance (WLB)*. Measured using 13 items. To ensure alignment in the mediation model (where high stress predicts poor balance, and poor balance predicts low OCB), the WLB score was inverted to reflect **Poor Balance/High WFC**. Items indicating positive balance were reverse-scored, meaning a higher composite score denotes a greater degree of perceived Work-Family Conflict.
3. *Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)*. Measured using 11 items assessing discretionary behaviors (e.g., helpfulness, conscientiousness). A higher score signifies higher reported OCB.

Data Analysis Techniques

The methodology employed utilized descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation) and internal consistency checks (Cronbach's Alpha, α). Inferential analysis commenced with Pearson correlational analysis to establish the nature, direction, and strength of the linear relationships between the measured constructs. The central hypothesis (H4) was tested using hierarchical multiple regression analysis, following established guidelines for mediation modeling in organizational research.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis confirmed high internal consistency for all measurement scales, with Cronbach's Alpha (α) exceeding the conventional threshold of 0.70 for research instruments.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Key Constructs (N=178)

Construct	Items	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Work Stress (WS)	15	4.21	0.65	0.91
Poor Work-Life Balance/WFC*	13	3.98	0.72	0.88
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)	11	4.05	0.58	0.93
*Note: The WLB score reflects Poor Balance/High Work-Family Conflict (High Score = High Conflict).				

The descriptive results demonstrate a critical **High Strain/High Contribution Paradox**. Respondents reported overwhelming perceived Work Stress ($M=4.21$) and severe Work-Life Conflict ($M=3.98$). Simultaneously, the reported Organisational Citizenship Behaviour remains remarkably high ($M=4.05$).

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis confirmed the preliminary linear relationships between the three constructs.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation Matrix

Construct	Work Stress (WS)	WLB (Poor Balance/WFC)	OCB
Work Stress (WS)	1	0.62**	0.25*
WLB (Poor Balance/WFC)		1	0.35**
OCB			1
* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$			

The correlations provide strong support for the relational hypotheses:

- H2:** Work Stress and Poor WLB/High WFC exhibited a strong, positive correlation ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$).
- H3:** Poor WLB/High WFC showed a moderately strong, negative correlation with OCB ($r = -0.35$, $p < 0.01$).
- H1:** A significant, negative correlation was found between Work Stress and OCB ($r = -0.25$, $p < 0.05$).

Mediation Analysis (Multiple Regression)

Hierarchical Multiple Regression was performed to test Hypothesis 4, assessing the mediating role of Poor Work-Life Balance (High WFC) on the relationship between Work Stress (WS) and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).

Table 4

Regression Analysis of Work Stress and Work-Life Balance on OCB (N=178)

Independent Variables	Model	Standardized β	t-value	p-value
Work Stress (WS)	Model 1 (Direct Effect)	-0.25	-2.81	0.003
Work Stress (WS)	Model 2 (WLB Included)	-0.10	-1.25	0.211
WLB (Poor Balance/WFC)	Model 2 (WLB Included)	-0.31	-3.89	0.000
Model Fit	R ²	0.165 (Model 2)		
	F-statistic	17.34		0.000

Model 1 confirmed a significant direct negative relationship between the predictor (WS) and the outcome (OCB) ($\beta=-0.25$, $p=0.003$). Model 2 demonstrated that the inclusion of the mediator (Poor WLB/WFC) significantly increased the overall predictive power, accounting for a total variance of 16.5% in OCB. Most importantly, the inclusion of WLB resulted in the effect of WS on OCB decreasing significantly and becoming statistically non-significant ($\beta=-0.10$, $p=0.211$). This pattern of results, coupled with a significant indirect effect, fully supports Hypothesis 4 for **full mediation**. The findings confirm that Poor Work-Life Balance acts as the primary conduit through which high occupational stress negatively impacts Organisational Citizenship Behaviour among the Madhya Pradesh police personnel.

Discussion

Interpretation of Primary Findings

The empirical evidence rigorously validates the proposition that Work Stress profoundly degrades Organisational Citizenship Behaviour among the Madhya Pradesh police force. This detrimental relationship, however, is not direct but fully mediated by the severe erosion of the officer's Work-Life Balance (WLB), resulting in high Work-Family Conflict (WFC). This critical mechanism is entirely consistent with the **Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory**.

The study highlights that pervasive and non-stop job demands—driven by structural issues like staff shortages and chronic working hours —act as an unrelenting energy tax on the officer. The continuous expenditure of time and energy prevents the replenishment of essential personal and familial resources. The collapse of WLB serves as the direct precursor to diminished OCB because officers lack the fundamental reserves (time, emotion, energy) necessary to commit to discretionary, extra-role behaviors like altruism and conscientiousness. This clearly signals that any organizational or policy intervention aimed solely at reducing stress symptoms (e.g., individual coping mechanisms) without addressing the underlying structural deficits leading to WLB failure will be ineffective.

The Paradox of High OCB: The Compulsory Citizenship Behaviour Hypothesis

The central paradox in the results lies in the simultaneous reporting of extremely high stress/WFC ($M=4.21$, $M=3.98$ respectively) alongside a high level of claimed OCB ($M=4.05$). Traditional organizational theory, grounded in the COR model, predicts resource-conserving behavior—a retreat from discretionary effort—when resources are this severely depleted. The observed finding challenges the assumption of genuine, voluntary citizenship.

In a highly hierarchical, mission-critical, and under-resourced organization like the police force, institutional loyalty and pervasive cultural norms often compel compliance and the maintenance of a professional façade. When staff shortages are endemic , performing "extra tasks" or covering for colleagues ceases to be voluntary (OCB) and functionally becomes a required part of the job, a phenomenon termed **Compulsory Citizenship Behaviour (CCB)**. Personnel, particularly those with extensive tenure (nearly half the sample reporting >15 years) , may be motivated by an ingrained sense of duty, fear of negative

consequences, or the perception that these extra duties are implicitly mandated to prevent mission failure. Consequently, the high reported OCB score should not be interpreted as a sign of organizational health, but rather as evidence that the system is operating unsustainably by over-leveraging the non-renewable commitment and goodwill of its personnel, thereby masking severe underlying burnout.

Theoretical Contribution

This research provides crucial empirical validation of the JD-R and COR mediation frameworks within the context of Indian public sector policing. By confirming that the link between occupational strain and extra-role performance is fully transmitted through the deterioration of Work-Life Balance (WLB), the study underscores the unique vulnerability of paramilitary organizations to resource depletion. Specifically, it establishes that in highly demanding, resource-constrained environments, WLB functions as the single most critical personal resource. Its degradation directly translates into transactional behavioral costs (reduced OCB or involuntary CCB), overriding other positive motivational factors that might otherwise drive discretionary performance.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

Summary of Key Findings

The study of N=178 Madhya Pradesh Police personnel demonstrates unequivocally that occupational Work Stress (WS) negatively impacts Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). This detrimental relationship is fully mediated by Poor Work-Life Balance (WLB), manifest as high Work-Family Conflict (WFC). Structural demands, such as chronic overtime and manpower shortages, destabilize the personal lives of officers, thereby consuming the resources required for voluntary professional contributions. The observed high level of reported OCB is likely an unstable and high-cost form of Compulsory Citizenship Behaviour (CCB) driven by organizational mandate and endemic resource deficits.

Limitations and Future Research

As a cross-sectional study, definitive causality remains inferred rather than proven. Future research should utilize longitudinal designs to track changes in OCB, WS, and WLB following institutional interventions, providing stronger evidence for the causal pathway identified. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for common method variance. Future work could incorporate supervisory ratings of OCB or objective measures of operational efficiency to complement self-report measures. Exploratory research into the moderating effects of rank, tenure, and gender on the manifestation of CCB and perceived strain is also recommended.

Humanized Policy Recommendations for the Madhya Pradesh Police Administration

The evidence mandates a strategic shift from individual-focused wellness initiatives (e.g., meditation) to comprehensive, structural, and organizational reforms that prioritize restoring the human equilibrium of the police workforce. The administration must recognize that police officers are human beings, not organizational machines, and must protect their right to a balanced personal life.

Structural Re-engineering of Workload and Duty Hours. The immediate priority must be addressing the excessive work demands that fuel WFC.

1. **Address Staff Shortages:** Accelerated recruitment is urgently needed to fill chronic vacancies and distribute the workload to manageable, sustainable levels. The current dependence on excessive duty hours is functionally outsourcing systemic failure to individual officers.
2. **Mandatory Weekly Rest:** The absence of protected personal time is severely eroding WLB. Compulsory, non-negotiable weekly offs must be institutionalized for all personnel to facilitate rejuvenation and the fulfillment of essential civic and familial obligations.
3. **Insulation of Duties:** Following recommendations made by judicial and research bodies, the administrative duties pertaining to law and order should be structurally separated from criminal investigation functions. This will substantially reduce the workload entanglement, prevent "shoddy investigation," and provide officers with concentrated time for specific duties, thereby enhancing efficiency and reducing stress caused by diffuse responsibility.

Enhancing Work-Life Resources. Policies should actively rebuild the personal resources depleted by high demands.

1. **Guaranteed Predictable Scheduling:** Subjectivity in duty rosters often breeds resentment and anxiety. Administrators should move towards standardized, predictable rotating shifts or fixed duty hours with minimal ad-hoc changes, allowing officers and their families to plan personal time effectively.
2. **Support for Family Cohesion:** Given the highly married and joint-family demographic profile, the administration must facilitate opportunities for officers to spend quality time with loved ones. This includes organizing shared meals, social events, or picnics in collaboration with associations like the Police Wives Welfare Association, and crucially, ensuring accessible counseling and family therapy for officers struggling with marital discord or WFC.

Cultivating Authentic Organizational Citizenship Behaviour. To successfully transition from compulsory (CCB) to genuinely voluntary OCB, the organization must invest in officer empowerment and recognition.

1. **Increase Participation and Feedback:** Organizational commitment and job satisfaction improve when employees feel valued and heard. The administration should implement structural mechanisms that ensure officers can provide anonymous feedback and participate in welfare and operational decision-making processes, particularly concerning their working conditions, without fear of reprisal.
2. **Reward and Recognition:** While OCB is non-contractual, consistent recognition of efforts beyond duty is essential to prevent demotivation and job creep. Effective systems for merit-based promotion and improvements in pay should be reviewed and communicated transparently to enhance morale and commitment.

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