

## ANALYZING THE INFLUENCE OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS ON THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF JURISDICTIONAL PROFESSIONALS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*The days are gone when there was a reasonably clear boundary between work and home. Nowadays, the gap between personal and professional life is missing. This qualitative investigation highlights the work stress problem among jurisdictional professionals. Further, this research examines the issues generated in jurisdictional professionals' work-life balance due to work stress. A qualitative analysis has been done using a thematic approach to accomplish the study's goal. A sample of 15 jurisdictional professionals has been taken. One-on-one face interview has been conducted to take jurisdictional professionals' responses to 10 questions related to work stress and work-life balance. This investigation, through thematic analysis, identified four themes under work stress: nature of work, working conditions, economic aspect, and social pressure. Family responsibilities & gathering avoidance, personal discomfort, health issues, and behavioural issues are identified under work-life balance. Implications of this qualitative research with future research direction have also been discussed.*

**Keywords:** Work stress; Work-life balance; Qualitative analysis; Thematic Approach; Jurisdictional professionals.

### INTRODUCTION

When establishing workplace solutions, the conceptualization of work stress is essential. Workplace stress is characterized as a "dangerous reaction" when employees have high demands and expectations. Work stress results in physical sickness, psychological distress, and mental illness (Eskelinen et al. 1991, Nieuwenhuijsen et al. 2010). Recent increases in work stress have been connected to worldwide recessions, job insecurity, and increased work intensity (Cooper (2011; Collier, 2009, Evans et al., 2013), all of which result in heavy workloads along with interpersonal conflicts that can harm children's psychological growth through interrupted parenting (Solantaus et al. 2010). Workplace stress may consequence from contact with a multiplicity of work stressors and appears to occur when individuals try to handle their job-related obligations, tasks, or other types of work pressure and face difficulties, strain, anxiety, or worry in the process (Stranks, 2015). Work stresses can take various forms, depending on the workplace's features, and may be unique to a particular organization or industry (Karasek, 1990). Work stress is generated by either undesired life events, the individual's response to physiological and psychological stressors, or the individual's 'transactional' relationship with the environment (Cahill 1996, Florio et al. 1998; Cox 1993; Cox et al. 2000; Cooper et al. 2001). At the same time, conceptualized models highlighted stress as a product of an imbalance between the desired outcome and supplied resources. A little agreement was noticed between academic models and lay conceptions of stress at various places. The general public and academicians define stress in a variety of ways. For instance, Kinman and Jones (2015) found that there was no consensus regarding the conceptualizations of stress, and that different psychological, social, environmental, and work-related aspects were used to explain and transmit stress. Although concepts such as power or control in relation to gender and class are thought to be connected with stress, Brooker and Eakin (2001) contend that stress models do not unambiguously contain these concepts. For example, Page et al. (2013) found that participants viewed stress as a womanly attribute related with weakness. This perception may explain why so few people acknowledge to having experienced stress in their lives. Cahil

(1996) and Marine et al. (2014) define stress management techniques as being directed either at individuals or organisations. These stress management strategies can then be further categorised as primary, secondary, or tertiary preventive interventions (De Jonge, 2002).. Primary therapies are directed to avoid the major causes of stress; secondary interventions focus on lightening symptoms' harshness or duration, and tertiary or reactive interventions try to provide rehabilitation and maximize functioning in individuals with persistent health disorders (Whitehead, 2007).

Psychological and emotional stress therapies may embrace stress awareness training and cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT). Organizational interventions affect groups of people at work and may involve workplace modifications or approaches to dispute resolution inside a particular organization. Specific interventions are directed at individuals and organizations, such as promoting a healthier work-life balance and peer support groups.

According to Bhui et al. (2012) methodical review, interventions directed at individuals significantly influence individual outcomes such as depression and anxiety levels more than organizational interventions. On the other hand, individual treatments did not enhance organizational outcomes such as absenteeism, the primary measure of lost organizational productivity. The evidence gaps identified in this review included studies comparing different types of organizations (e.g., public, private, and nongovernmental organizations (NGO), as well as studies examining whether they employ and benefit from similar interventions, given that different sectors employ vastly different business processes, resource levels and consistency, profit orientation.

## **WORK-RELATED BURNOUT**

Built by Freudenberger (1974) and produced by Maslach (1982), the burnout associated with work refers to a physical and emotional stress process caused by several elements connected to the workplace, such as an excess of responsibility or inequity at work (Salston & Figley, 2003). An overload of responsibility, perceptions of inequality, and inappropriate awards might result from the following factors: labour dispute (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Furthermore, repeated exposure to trauma has impacted people's burnout levels (Aguilera, 1995). Because judges are often exposed to painful substances (for example, terrible evidence), burnouts due to secondary trauma are likely. Research has indicated that people suffering from burnout typically hold idealistic attitudes about helping others (Pines & Aronson, 1988). Judges with an idealistic perspective of justice (i.e., always achievable) may be more likely to feel burnout in employment.

Often physical and emotional symptoms of burnout include headaches, high blood pressure, sadness, insomnia, and disappointment (Farber, 1983; Prosser et al., 1996). Burnout can also lead to a negative self-concept and bad attitudes to work and other people (Pines & Aronson, 1988). As discussed, judges are regularly given (e.g., to decide a case) responsibilities, which have significant repercussions and are frequently traumatic to others. Working conflicts are also a major component of the justice system because of the adverse system's nature and the risks many judges face (Harris et al., 2001). Judges may also share a feeling of work unfairness since the work takes long hours and a deep emotional investment with possibly uneven rewards. Finally, judges can have unrealistic opinions about aiding others who probably want better results for the participating parties. These variables show that the judges are highly prone to burnout and physical and emotional repercussions.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Support by colleagues and superiors and the impact of instrumental and sociopathic assistance are also called social support (Theorell & Karasek, 1996). The social support communication process is directed towards

improving handling, appreciation, affiliation, and skill through actual or perceived physical and psychosocial exchanges (Gottlieb, 2000).

The support provided by the supervisor refers to the care of the supervisor for the well-being of followers and to what is stated and to help get the task done. On the other side, coworker assistance is the skills and sociability of coworkers in accomplishing their duties (Theorell & Karasek, 1996). According to Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen, and Christensen (2005), there are three different types of burnout that should be considered: work burnout, personal burnout, and customer burnout. Personal burnout is the long-term fatigue of physics and psychology. Work-based burnout is long-term tiredness linked with the person's work. Finally, the burnout associated with customers is a state of chronic physical and emotional tiredness seen in connection with customer jobs (Kristensen et al. 2005). The dominant belief is that human services such as social work, healthcare, and teaching probably have burnout (Kristensen et al. 2005). Burnout can be contractualized by those who do not like work and even love working; numerous work hours are a daily occurrence of high burnout (Carter, 2006).

Carter (2006) noted that dealing with customers in family law results in severe burnout associated with customers. This is particularly true if consumers have psychiatric diseases and disorders. It is worth highlighting that lawyers' values may collide with actions taken by their clients, leading to friction in the evaluation of familial cases. However, they are legally and ethically required to protect their customer's rights according to ethical values.

Past research has demonstrated that demand for jobs and job controls can be found in the workplace and stressors that could contribute to burnout (Buunk et al. 1998; Kahn & Byosiore, 1992). Emotional exhaustion is part of personal burnout and closely resembles common stress reactions, including tiredness, job depression, psychosomatic distress, and anxiety (Buunk, de Jonge, Ybema, & de Wolff, 1998; Kahn & Byosiore, 1992; Warr, 1987). This overlap has also been seen (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Personal burnout was linked to work stress, resulting in heavy workloads and delays at workplace psychological demands (Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

## **JOB/ WORK STRESS**

Professional life is linked to several variables, two of which are essential in occupational stress, namely organizational needs and the ability of employees to provide or produce services or goods. Stress emerges when an employee realizes that the stresses (organizations) demand far surpasses the person's capacity to respond (Aswathappa, 2008). Stressors include the working environment involving the nature of the workload, work culture, peer groups, conditions of employment, allocated duties and responsibilities, and the managers' attitude toward an employee. The discrepancy between the perception and ability of employees is known as work stress. Therefore, work stress is the interaction between the nature of the working environment and the worker's qualities so that work demands exceed the person's ability to meet them (Rose and Altmaier, 2000).

## **WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

Work-life balance is a concept of positive organisational changes to decrease the pressure between an individual's work and personal life. Such alternative techniques help improve the effectiveness of individuals in both fields.

Rao (2010) has described the word balancing work/life in four quadrants, i.e., work, family, friends, and self, as significant dailies. According to Goyal (2012), the work/life balance between one activity and one person's key activities is a sense of fulfilment.

## WORK/LIFE BALANCE COMPONENTS

The components must be identified when understanding the balance between work and life. In general, we can find several significant components: if we evaluate the concept of work/life balance. A person's health is a vital part of the balance between work and life. The absence of a healthy mind and body prevents a person from entirely realizing his talents and abilities. This is a significant obstacle to work/life balance. (Demerouti et al., 2005)

The conducive and supportive working and working environment is another characteristic of a good work/life balance approach. In the event of crises like spouse/parents/health, children's husband-wife misunderstandings, unsupportive colleagues, and dominant supervisors, a person may not be able to attain their professional goals or enjoy life outside the office (Dalton and Mesch, 1990).

Love and religion are two of life's most essential components. Without these two, a person cannot focus on professional and personal tasks and responsibilities. A healthier relationship with friends and peer groups is crucial for balancing work/life (Rao, 2010; Goyal, 2012).

## CHALLENGES IN THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE DUE TO WORK STRESS

Many investigations have linked the working-life balance to the stress management of the individual. Different psychological investigations have provided established truths that tie the terms to one another. Despite these results, however, most academics fail to understand the technique for achieving work-life balance even after realizing the relevance and usefulness of this balance (Kossek et al., 2014).

Chiang et al. (2010) have described how stress relating to work increases when you lose control over the workplace. However, work-life balance also promotes the stretch under challenging tasks and subsequent stress. Nowadays, firms are actively going forward to include rules on work balance which see it as a significant responsibility to increase employee loyalty and commitment to preventing turnover (Dalton and Mesch, 1990). Even though academics are investigating the endpoints of work-life balance, practical research still have not shown exactly how stress is related to job stress. The vast majority of study has also been confined to western countries (Perrewe et al., 2002), which means that its findings cannot be generalised to the Asian context, where the phrase is accepted but not supported (Luk and Shaffer, 2005).

In three critical ways, work-life balance methods are closely tied to work stress. At first, employment balance and implementation rules can help employees manage their working field in alliance with their personal lives as a helping resource.

Demerouti et al. (2005) explained the emotional trench and physical drain repercussions of imbalance in work and personal life. Such problems occur with demanding employment and its final interference with home life, leading to conflict.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the significant causes of work stress among jurisdictional professionals.
2. To study the issues in the work-life balance due to work stress among jurisdictional professionals.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher has adopted a qualitative analysis approach to attain the study goals. Qualitative research conducted methodologically and rigorously gives significant and valuable results (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Primary data was collected from the fifteen jurisdictional professionals of India's National Capital Region for qualitative analysis. The sample size in qualitative research is usually less than in quantitative research (Vasileiou et al., 2018). As per Onwuegbuzie and Leech's (2007) recommendation, a 5-10 employees sample size is appropriate for collecting data using the interview method. Out of the fifteen sampled jurisdictional professionals, 9 were male, and 6 were female working as a lawyer (4 participants); Public prosecutor (3 participants); notary public (4 participants); administrative staff (4 participants). The interview was conducted only after assuring the participant that their name and work addresses would be kept entirely confidential. The jurisdiction professionals were approached using the convenience sampling technique. One-on-one face interview of 20-30 minutes long was conducted at the participant's workplace. Firstly, the purpose of the interview was clearly defined to the interviewees, and then their responses were recorded through pen and paper. A semi-structured format questionnaire having 10 questions concerned about work stress and work-life balance was used. For the qualitative analysis of data widely used thematic approach was applied (King, 2004; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Qualitative analysis is a technique through which the researchers interpret the experiences and perceptions of people and gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). This study aimed to identify the key aspects that cause work stress among jurisdiction professionals and how they affect their work-life balance. The thematic approach of qualitative analysis was used for analyzing the data. Thematic analysis is a well-structured approach to summarise the key features of extensive data set and provide a clear and organized report (King, 2004). The primary motive behind thematic analysis was to get deeper insights into the concepts. The six-step process of thematic analysis recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) has been adopted for qualitative analysis. The first step is directed toward becoming familiar with the collected qualitative data. For this reading and rereading method was followed. In the second stage, initial coding was given the transcript based on repeating words, phrases, and lines. Themes were searched out at the third step based on similarities and associations of codes. These themes were reviewed, and themes denoting the same meaning were clubbed under the fourth step. In the fifth step, the researcher defined themes identified under thematic analysis. In the final step, results were written in themes and sub-themes.

## STRESS AT THE WORKPLACE:

The current investigation identified four themes of work stress causes by following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach. The narrative data of participants' viewpoints about the job aspect that generates stress revolve around the nature of the job, working conditions, economic aspects, and social pressure (table 1). The first themes identified were the nature of work that becomes a cause of stress for jurisdictional professionals. This job has high responsibilities, client dealing, mental efforts, and continuous exposure to traumatic cases related to murder, divorce, child custody, kidnapping, etc. All participants found the nature of the job itself stressful caused of the judiciary system.

*"My nature of the job itself is stressful to me. It involves high job responsibilities with lots of mental efforts. Sometimes, certain cases of clients make me unstable."* (Female participant, Public prosecutor)

*"Judges' decisions greatly impact my job. Prolonged orders and decisions make my job stressful. Also, I feel stressful by hearing my clients' problems."* (Male participant, Lawyer)

Fourteen participants narrated that the working conditions in the judiciary department cause stress. The participants found their work environment very suffocated, small cabins with huge files, noisy, and understaffed. They also feel burnout due to heavy workloads.

*"I feel dissatisfied with my workplace work environment that is very suffocated and noisy."* (Male participant, Administrative staff)

*"Daily I have to do lots of paperwork. Sometimes I feel I am doing two persons' work."* (Female participant, Notary public)

Twelve participants were also notified that the economic aspect of their job was stressful. They found their salary is not equitable to their work responsibilities and performance. They also notified inequity based on the salary of their peer group.

*"I found a financial imbalance in this job. I feel my job earning is less as compared to my mental efforts and performance."* (Male participant, Lawyer)

Another aspect found stressful for jurisdiction professionals was social pressure, as this profession related to public dealing requires patience & judgmental skills. Also, they are continuously observed by the public and media. High-profile cases always attract the attention of the media. The jurisdiction professionals found themselves always working under social pressure. Eleven participants accepted this aspect as a cause of stress.

*"Before joining this profession, I thought there used to be no social pressure in this field. But after entering this field, reality strikes me, and I feel the pressure to fulfil the expectations of clients, society, and media."* (Male participant, Public prosecutor)

**Table1: Causes of work stress among jurisdictional professionals**

| Themes             | Sub-themes                                                                                                                                                                                    | Frequency (N= 15) |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Nature of job      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High responsibilities,</li> <li>• Client dealing,</li> <li>• High mental efforts</li> <li>• Continuous exposure to traumatic cases</li> </ul>        | 15                |
| Working conditions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suffocated work environment,</li> <li>• Small cabins with huge files,</li> <li>• Noisy environment,</li> <li>• Understaffed</li> </ul>               | 14                |
| Economic aspect    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less pay with huge work responsibilities</li> <li>• Unfair performance-based pay</li> <li>• Inequitable remuneration as compared to peers</li> </ul> | 12                |
| Social pressure    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pressure of public</li> <li>• pressure of clients</li> <li>• Pressure of media</li> </ul>                                                            | 11                |

**Source:** Author's Compilation

### ISSUES IN THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE DUE TO WORK STRESS:

The jurisdiction professionals accepted the presence of work-life balance issues. Their narration related to Work-life balance, family responsibilities, avoidance of social gatherings, personal discomfort, health problems, and behavioural issues are common concerns were uncovered (Table 2).

Almost all participants showed concern about their inability to fulfil family responsibilities. They reported that work stress discourages them from attending family get-togethers, they feel less energetic during festival celebrations, and they show less interest in fulfilling family responsibilities like child care, decisions for family betterment, etc.

*"sometimes am more involved in my clients' matter than my matters."* (Female participant, Lawyer)

*"I feel short of time with my family due to office work stress. Many times, I missed various family celebrations and got together."* (Male participant, Administrative staff)

Participants were also informed about their dissatisfaction and discomfort because of work stress. Participants claimed they hardly get time for leisure activities and fulfilling their hobbies. They also complained about the lack of quality time with the family.

*"After returning home from work, I do not have enough time and energy to think about fulfilling my hobbies and having fun with the family."* (Female participant, Administrative staff)

All participants were notified of mild to severe health issues due to work stress. Participants reported the problem with burnout and headache due to heavy work pressure and traumatic cases. They also identified the problem of restlessness and compassion fatigue because of exposure to traumatic material.

*"When I come to exposure of some traumatic case, then at times, I become restlessness. I keep on thinking on the same case and feel headache."* (Male participant, Notary public)

*"I feel my health is impacted adversely due to work stress. I am unable to leave my work issues at the workplace."* (Female participant, Lawyer)

Thirteen participants stated that they noticed behavioural changes because of the jurisdiction profession, like facing insecurity; minor incidents make them aggressive and always doubt everyone. The participants were notified that such behavioural issues arose because of their work nature.

*"Sometimes, by hearing the traumatic case in the courtroom, I do not want to talk to anyone. At that time, I just feel it is ubiquitous to commit a crime."* (Male participant, Lawyer)

*Yes, I am noticing specific behavioural changes in me. I felt insecure and aggressive when I saw some crime near me."* (Female participant, Public prosecutor)

**Table 2: Issues in the work-life balance due to work stress among jurisdictional professionals**

| Themes                                           | Sub-themes                                                                                                                                                                 | Frequency (N= 15) |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Family responsibilities and gatherings avoidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family get-together</li> <li>Festival celebration</li> <li>Child care responsibilities</li> <li>Role in family decisions</li> </ul> | 15                |
| Personal discomfort                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less time for leisure activities</li> <li>Less time for fulfilling hobbies</li> <li>Less quality time for family</li> </ul>         | 14                |
| Health issues                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Burnout</li> <li>Headache</li> <li>Restlessness</li> <li>Compassion fatigue</li> </ul>                                              | 15                |
| Behavioral issues                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling of insecurity</li> <li>Aggressive behavior</li> <li>Suspicious behavior</li> </ul>                                          | 13                |

**Source:** Author's Compilation

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study accepted the work-related stress among jurisdictional professionals based on qualitative analysis. Schrever et al. (2019); Eells and Showalter (1994), through empirical investigation, highlighted that professional jurisdictional experiences elevated occupational stress. The significant stressors highlighted under the current investigation were the nature of work, working conditions, economic aspects, and social pressure. Chamberlain and Miller (2008) accepted that jurisdiction officers feel stress due to substantial workloads, traumatic cases, and the pressure of making significant decisions. NCSC's (2002) survey highlighted jurisdiction work as very stressful because of gruesome evidence. Eells and Showalter (1994) found that highly publicized

and emotional cases also create social pressure and generate work-related stress. Tsai and Chan (2010) also supported that low workplace social support causes burnout among judges and prosecutors.

Furthermore, current research focused on work-life balance issues raised due to work stress among jurisdictional professionals. The research found that family gatherings & responsibilities avoidance, personal discomfort, health issues, and behavioral issues were the key challenges in balancing work and personal life. Previous research by Anleu and Mack (2013) also highlighted dissatisfaction among judiciary members on work-life balance. Research by Schreiver et al. (2019) also reported that persons involved in the jurisdiction profession frequently face burnout, secondary trauma, and emotional depletion issues due to work stress. Chamberlain and Miller (2008) also point out health and behavioural issues like compassion fatigue, burnout, indirect traumatization, and insecurity.

As the jurisdiction, professionals have a significant role in the judicial system. Any stress occupied at work will affect their efficiency and maintain law and order in the country. Then there is a need to identify the potential sources of work stress among jurisdictional professionals and frame coping strategies to control their occupational stress. The stress generated at the workplace harms their efficiency and causes disturbance in their personal life.

## IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There is an abundance of literature on work stress and its effect on work-life balance, but there is a paucity of literature pertaining to jurisdictional professionals. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to expand the body of literature concerning work-related tension and the work-life balance of administrative professionals. In addition, this investigation identified potential stressors among jurisdictional professionals, enabling authorities to take corrective measures in this direction. Therefore, there will be harmony between the personal and professional lives of members of the jurisdiction.

This investigation is grounded in qualitative analysis. Using quantitative data analysis methods, further research can be conducted in this direction. In addition, a comparison can be made between judges, prosecutors, and other members of the judiciary system in terms of their work stress and its influence on their work-life balance.

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