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Occupational Stress, General Mental Health, and Emotional Intelligence among Professional and Early-Career Lawyers

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Abstract

The present study examined occupational stress, general mental health, and emotional intelligence among professional and early-career lawyers in India. The objectives were to compare these psychological variables between experienced and amateur lawyers and to examine the relationships among them. A quantitative descriptive-comparative and correlational research design was employed. Thirty participants were selected using purposive sampling, comprising 15 professional lawyers with ten or more years of legal experience and 15 amateur lawyers who were law students or had up to one year of professional experience. Data were collected using the General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28), Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS-10), and Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, independent samples *t*-tests, and Pearson's correlation. The findings revealed no significant differences between professional and amateur lawyers in general mental health, perceived stress, or emotional intelligence. Correlation analysis indicated no significant relationship between general mental health and perceived stress or emotional intelligence. However, a significant moderate positive correlation was observed between perceived stress and emotional intelligence ($r = .457, p < .05$). The findings suggest that occupational stress and psychological well-being remain relevant concerns across different stages of legal careers, highlighting the need for mental health awareness, emotional intelligence development, and organizational support within the legal profession.

Keywords: Occupational Stress, Mental Health, Lawyers, Legal Education, Emotional Intelligence

Introduction

People who work in fields that are generally hailed as heroes and rock-solid members of our society are suffering from a terrible epidemic known as chronic stress. As peacemakers in contentious cases and defenders of individual liberties, lawyers are essential to the health and prosperity of our society. They carry out their assigned duties while people rely on them emotionally. However, despite playing an integral and active role in our lives, legal warriors confront an existential crisis as a result of circumstances including daily exposure to intense disputes, financial targets based on billable hours, and fast-paced

deadlines. The mental health of attorneys is significantly jeopardized by these factors. How do some lawyers thrive in the face of professional upheaval while others suffer from chronic emotional and mental stress? This is the fundamental question this brings to light. Examining the interplay between lawyers' emotional intelligence, general mental health, and occupational stress will help us better understand what it takes to be healthy and successful in the legal profession, one of the most physically and mentally taxing in the world.

The requirement to maintain a 24/7 professional culture is quickly growing in today's fast-paced society. Anxieties over not living up to expectations are caused by a myriad of variables, including but not limited to: rising levels of peer competition, technical developments (such as AI), and globalization. Because workers are required to be available at all times, chase deadlines continually, put in extra hours, and do harmful jobs, these factors produce a great deal of stress and disruptions to the work cycle. Because this work-life cycle has a profound impact on both the individual and those close to them, it could be said that this is a psychologically hazardous workplace. A person's mental health suffers greatly as a result of the increasing complexity of their work responsibilities and the fast escalation of this unhealthy arrangement; they just cannot meet the demands placed upon them. This research will primarily focus on the mental health concerns that arise as a result.

This perspective expands the definition of mental health beyond the mere absence of disease. A positive outlook on life allows people to deal with the challenges they face, develop their skills to their fullest potential, enjoy life to the fullest, and make a positive impact on the world around them. According to the World Health Organization, mental health is defined as a positive state of well-being, not just the absence of mental disease. Having a healthy body is just one part of it; mental and social health are also essential. The capability to meet one's daily needs, strong interpersonal relationships, intellectual competence, and inner harmony are all components of mental health, according to this multi-dimensional definition. Anxiety, despair, persistent poor mood, disrupted sleep, lack of interest in social events, and impaired vocational functioning are all symptoms of a brain impaired by mental health issues. Impairment of mental health can have subtle but noticeable effects on an individual's productivity at work. Consistency with ethical decision-making, interpersonal connections with coworkers, and productivity can all take a hit.

The field of mental health is expansive, touching on many different areas, and stress is a key component of this field. When one's internal resources are inadequate in comparison to one's perceived external needs, a state of stress is experienced. When a person's weight increases as a result of emotional demands, heavy workloads, or other obligations, a stress reaction is initiated. The capacity of an individual to manage, both in the near and distant future, is crucial. People can benefit from temporary stress by becoming more alert, focused, and motivated. On occasion, it may also be adjustable. Nevertheless, there are instances when it can reach dangerously high levels, be intense by nature, or persist over an extended period of time. As a result, people may experience a decline in their quality of life, burnout, health problems, anxiety disorders, and depression.

The ability to recognize, name, label, and manage one's own and other people's emotions is a key component of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is crucial for psychological well-being in stressful occupations like law, where professionals often deal with heavy workloads, tight deadlines, emotionally charged circumstances, and complicated interpersonal relationships. People who score higher on the emotional intelligence test tend to have greater mental health and psychological well-being in general because they are more adept at recognizing emotional responses, using adaptive coping mechanisms, and effectively managing stress. On the flip side, those with lower EQ may find it more challenging to control their emotions, leaving them more susceptible to mental health issues like worry and

stress. Thus, to have a better knowledge of the aspects linked to mental health in the legal profession, it is beneficial to look at emotional intelligence in conjunction with perceived stress and overall mental health.

Mental health has emerged as a critical component of high-pressure performance in the modern work-life balance. When people think about the most taxing and difficult jobs out there, the legal profession usually comes to mind. Due to their complex case material, lengthy and unpredictable work hours, short deadlines, and enormous workloads, lawyers frequently become targets in this stressful workplace. The client's rights, costs, and freedom are all profoundly impacted by consequential variables. Due to their constant exposure to contentious conflicts and disputes, legal professionals frequently experience high levels of psychological stress.

“Another major contributor to an emotionally taxing workplace is dealing with clients who are both emotionally distraught and demanding. As a result of these negative factors, lawyers are more likely to experience high levels of stress, depressive symptoms, nervous breakdowns, and, worst of all, chemical and drug dependence. These factors have a domino effect on a professional's competence, ethics, and principles, which in turn impact their own and others' quality of life. At present, there is a great deal of diversity within the legal profession, with people working at different levels that allow for both professional and personal growth. They learn the ropes and get a feel for the weight of duty that comes with being a lawyer. Professional Lawyers and Amateur Lawyers are the two categories of lawyers covered in this study.

A professional lawyer is someone who has been practicing law for at least ten years, has their license, and does legal research, prepares cases, and interacts with clients. Working in such an environment may also increase the pressure to perform because of the high expectations placed on them.

Amateur Lawyers is another term for people who are either interning or studying law. They are likely to be doing entry-level legal work and have approximately one year of experience. Due to the stress of their workloads, classes, internships, and future plans, people may have different ideas of what it means to be stressed. Despite working under supervision, they are exhausted by the pressure to prove themselves.

They may be more or less mentally healthy depending on their unique combination of education, job experience, and working hours. Various stress and resilience patterns could be symbolized by it. This finding has substantial theoretical and practical implications.

Consequently, this study compares the emotional intelligence, overall mental health, and stress levels of practising attorneys and law school students. One major indicator of the high-pressure setting in which lawyers work is the prevalence of stress in their daily lives. We use general mental health as our outcome variable; this includes both subjective measures of happiness and objective measures of psychological distress. We look at emotional intelligence as a possible link between these factors. In the long run, the study hopes to help shape evidence-based support interventions for lawyers at different points in their careers by expanding our knowledge of the dynamics of mental health in the legal profession.”

Review of Literature

1. The research study titled "Occupational Stress and Burnout of Lawyers" was "conducted by Tsai et al. and published in the *Journal of Occupational Health* (2009). The study aimed to examine the relationship between occupational stress and burnout among lawyers. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 180 lawyers from 26 law firms in Taipei, Taiwan. The findings showed that higher occupational stress was significantly associated with greater personal and work-related burnout, while litigious lawyers experienced higher client-related burnout than non-litigious lawyers. The researchers concluded that reducing workplace stress and improving working conditions are essential to preventing burnout and promoting lawyers' mental well-being."
2. Douglas (2015), in the study "Incorporating Emotional Intelligence in Legal Education: A Theoretical Perspective," examined the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in legal education and practice. "The study reviewed existing research on the psychological well-being of law students and legal professionals. It proposed integrating emotional intelligence into legal education to address emotional distress and enhance professional competence. The findings suggested that traditional legal education, which emphasizes analytical thinking and adversarial approaches, contributes to psychological distress, whereas incorporating emotional intelligence—particularly Goleman's model of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—can enhance students' well-being, communication, reflective practice, client relationships, and overall effectiveness as future lawyers."
3. Kelton (2015), in the study "Clients Want Results, Lawyers Need Emotional Intelligence," examined the importance of emotional intelligence in legal practice. The study explained how emotionally intelligent lawyers are better able to understand clients' emotions, communicate effectively, make sound decisions, and build stronger professional relationships. Drawing on the emotional intelligence models of Salovey, Mayer, Caruso, Goleman, and Bar-On, the author concluded that emotional intelligence is an essential skill for lawyers because it enhances client satisfaction, improves decision-making, and contributes to more effective legal representation and overall professional success.
4. The study titled "The law is not as blind as it seems: Relative rates of vicarious trauma among lawyers and mental health professionals" was conducted by Maguire and Byrne (2017). The researchers compared the levels of vicarious trauma experienced by 36 lawyers and 30 mental health professionals who regularly worked with traumatized individuals. The findings showed that lawyers experienced significantly higher levels of vicarious trauma, depression, anxiety, and stress than mental health professionals. The study also found that individuals with lower emotional stability were more vulnerable to vicarious trauma. The authors concluded that lawyers need greater organizational support, trauma-specific training, and supervision to help reduce the mind-related impact of exposure to traumatic cases.
5. In "The Status–Health Paradox: Higher Status, Worse Health?", authored by Koltai et al. (2018) examined whether higher-status lawyers enjoy better health outcomes than their lower-status peers. "Using large datasets of lawyers from the United States and Canada, they found a status-health paradox: lawyers in prestigious, high-paying large law firms reported higher levels of depression and no better overall health than lawyers in the public sector. Although higher income was generally associated with better health, these benefits were offset by chronic workplace stressors, particularly overwork and work–life conflict, which increased with firm size and income. The study concludes that the health disadvantages experienced by high-status lawyers are largely driven by demanding work environments rather than income itself, highlighting the importance of reducing excessive workloads and improving work-life balance to promote lawyer well-being."
6. Pierson et al. (2018), in their study "Stress Hardiness and Lawyers," examined stress hardiness among 530 law students and lawyers through surveys conducted between 2013 and 2016, along with 106 in-depth interviews with lawyers. The study found that some lawyers are more resilient to stress than others, and identified a sense of control, a sense of purpose, and cognitive flexibility as the three key factors associated with lower stress levels. The researchers also concluded that these stress-hardiness traits can be learned and developed. Additionally, the study revealed that while the sources of stress differ across areas of legal practice, overall stress levels remain consistent throughout law school and legal careers. Healthy coping strategies such as exercise, social connectedness, planning, perspective,

and gratitude were associated with better stress management, whereas reliance on alcohol and drugs was linked to higher stress levels.

7. In *"The Unseen Cost of Justice: Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms in Canadian Lawyers"* (2019), authored by Leclerc et al., the researchers examined the psychological impact of trauma "exposure among 476 Canadian lawyers. The study found that lawyers who frequently handle traumatic cases, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, homicide, child abuse, and serious accidents, experience significantly higher levels of PTSD symptoms, psychological distress, and reduced quality of life than lawyers with little or no trauma exposure. Approximately 9% of participants met the criteria for probable PTSD, while 23% showed clinically significant psychological distress. Lawyers with high trauma exposure were 2.62 times more likely to develop PTSD symptoms than their unexposed peers. The authors conclude that indirect exposure to traumatic material is a serious occupational risk in the legal profession and recommend increased trauma-awareness training, mental health support, and preventive interventions for lawyers."
8. "An examination of the association between lawyers' difficulties, perceived stress, and occupational burnout: According to Azeem et al. (2020), a study was conducted on attorneys who practice both civil and criminal law". In a cross-sectional correlational study involving 535 civil and criminal lawyers, the researchers sought to understand the role that occupational difficulties play in the development of stress and burnout. The results showed that higher levels of burnout and perceived stress were substantially linked to issues in the workplace. Stress and burnout were more common among criminal lawyers compared to civil lawyers, while attorneys with more years of practice reported less of both. The study found that lawyers' mental health is significantly impacted by issues connected to money, security, and the employment. Stress and burnout can be mitigated with the use of psychological and organizational resources.
9. The research paper "When the Lawyer Becomes Traumatized: A Scoping Review" (2020) by Léonard et al. reviewed nine studies on the effects of trauma exposure among lawyers. The study examined PTSD, secondary traumatic stress, and vicarious trauma in lawyers who work with traumatic cases such as abuse, violence, and refugee claims. Researchers used scales like the IES-R, PCL-5, STSS, VTS, and TABS to measure symptoms. The findings showed that lawyers exposed to traumatic material can experience intrusive thoughts, avoidance, hyperarousal, and negative cognitive changes, with 9–15% meeting criteria for probable PTSD. Major risk factors included heavy trauma-related caseloads, long working hours, and previous personal trauma. The authors concluded that lawyers are at risk of work-related trauma and need greater mental health support and awareness.
10. The research paper "People, professionals, and profit centers: The connection between lawyer well-being and employer values" (2022) by Krill et al. examined how lawyers' perceptions of their employer's values affect their well-being. The study surveyed 1,959 lawyers from California and Washington, D.C., and grouped them according to whether they felt valued for their professional skills and human worth, financial productivity and availability, or not valued/lacking feedback. The researchers used the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), SF-12 Health Survey, Effort-Reward Imbalance Questionnaire (Work Over commitment Scale), and Your Workplace Questionnaire. Results showed a clear health hierarchy: lawyers who felt valued for their professionalism and personal worth had the best mental health, lowest stress, and least work over commitment, while those who felt undervalued or received little feedback had the highest stress and poorest mental health. Lawyers who felt valued mainly for productivity and revenue generation also reported worse well-being than those valued for their skills and humanity. The authors concluded that employer values and meaningful feedback play a significant role in lawyer well-being, and that workplaces emphasizing human worth and professional skills promote better mental health than those focused primarily on profits and productivity.
11. The research paper, "Development and validation of psychosocial stressors scale for lawyers (PSSL)" (2023) by Hussain et al. aimed to develop an "indigenous scale to measure psychosocial stressors among Pakistani lawyers. The study began with interviews of 20 lawyers to generate items, followed by expert validation and pilot testing. The final Psychosocial Stressors Scale for Lawyers (PSSL) consisted of 36 items and was administered to 227 lawyers from district courts in Punjab, Pakistan. Using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the researchers identified five dimensions of stressors: Work-related Stressors, Social Stressors, Financial Stressors, Familial Stressors, and Health & Mood-

related Stressors. The scale demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .78 to .92 and test-retest reliability of .86. The authors concluded that the PSSSL is a reliable and valid multidimensional tool for assessing psychosocial stressors among lawyers and can be used in future research, counseling, and intervention programs to improve lawyers' well-being."

12. The article titled "Introduction to the Special Issue on Judicial and Lawyer Well-Being and Stress" was written by Diesfeld et al. (2024). The article provides an overview of research on the mental health and well-being of judges and lawyers, highlighting common issues such as occupational stress, burnout, vicarious trauma, workplace bullying, and barriers to seeking help. It emphasizes the importance of organizational support, trauma-informed workplaces, manageable workloads, supervision, and mental health initiatives to improve the well-being of legal professionals. The authors conclude that evidence-based preventive strategies and systemic reforms are essential for promoting healthier legal work environments and reducing stress among lawyers and judicial officers.
13. The research paper, "Work Demands, Self-Care, and Mental Health in Lawyers" by Chlap and Murray (2025) examined how workplace demands affect the mental health of lawyers and whether mindful self-care helps reduce these effects. The study surveyed 189 lawyers and used scales including the Distress Questionnaire-5 (DQ5), Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), Mindful Self-Care Scale (MSCS), Passion Scale, and measures of burnout and work demands. Results showed that lawyers experienced moderate to high workplace demands, high psychological distress, and significant burnout, with over 55% reporting high distress and more than 30% reporting problematic alcohol use. Higher work demands were associated with greater distress and burnout, while lower levels of mindful self-care partially explained this relationship. However, work demands were not significantly related to alcohol, and harmonious or obsessive passion for work did not significantly influence these relationships. The authors concluded that reducing workplace demands and promoting mindful self-care may help improve lawyers' mental health and reduce burnout.
14. The research paper "Perceived Stress, Mental Health, and Job Satisfaction among Lawyers Working in Public versus Private Sector" (2025) by Malhotra et al. compared the mental health status, stress levels, and job satisfaction of 30 public-sector and 30 private-sector lawyers in Chandigarh, India. The study used the General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12) to assess mental health, Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) to measure stress, and the Generic Job Satisfaction Scale (GJSS) to evaluate job satisfaction. Results showed that 73% of public-sector lawyers and 60% of private-sector lawyers had mental health concerns, while 90% of public-sector lawyers and 63% of private-sector lawyers reported high stress levels. The study also found a significant negative correlation between stress and job satisfaction, meaning that as stress increased, job satisfaction decreased. The authors concluded that lawyers experience high levels of stress and mental health problems, with stress being more common among public-sector lawyers, highlighting the need for better occupational mental health support.
15. Noel (2025) conducted a study titled "The Relationship Between Stress and Burnout Among Lawyers" to "investigate how stress influences burnout in legal professionals and whether spirituality plays a moderating role in this relationship. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from practicing lawyers and analyzed to examine the association between perceived stress and burnout. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between stress and burnout, showing that lawyers with higher stress levels were more likely to experience burnout. Although spirituality was explored as a protective factor, the study emphasized that addressing workplace stress is essential for improving lawyers' mental health, job satisfaction, and overall well-being."
16. The research paper "Measuring Lawyer Mental Illness" by Pyle and Rosky (2025) "examines the prevalence of mental health problems, substance misuse, and psychological distress among lawyers using data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). The study analyzed responses from approximately 2,200 lawyers drawn from a national sample of about 368,000 individuals between 2006 and 2013. The researchers primarily used the Kessler-6 (K6) Psychological Distress Scale to measure serious and moderate psychological distress. Results showed that about 1 in 10 lawyers experienced serious psychological distress, while around 40% experienced moderate or serious psychological distress, rates higher than those of many similarly educated professionals. The study also found that 19% of lawyers received mental health treatment, 9.3% met criteria for alcohol abuse or dependence, 24.7% reported driving while intoxicated, and 4.6% had seriously considered suicide in

the past year. Younger lawyers and female lawyers reported higher levels of psychological distress. The authors concluded that lawyers experience substantial mental health challenges and psychological distress, although some commonly repeated claims about lawyers having exceptionally high rates of mental illness may be exaggerated.

17. Wainwright et al.” (2025) conducted a research study titled, “Examining the Role of Mental Health Lived Experience Advocacy in Shaping the Personal Outcomes of Youth Advocates: A Scoping Review”. They reviewed 30 studies to examine the impact of community-based lived experience advocacy on youth advocates. “The findings showed that advocacy improved mental health literacy, confidence, resilience, communication skills, social connections, and career development, while also highlighting challenges such as emotional stress and burnout. The study concluded that lived experience advocacy programs support both youth mental health and the personal growth of advocates.
18. The study by Listokin and Noonan (2020) challenges the common belief that lawyers are uniquely unhappy by analyzing nationally representative data from the U.S. National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) instead of voluntary lawyer surveys. Using data from nearly 1,000 lawyers between 2010–2017, the authors found that lawyers have significantly lower rates of mental illness than the general population and mental health outcomes similar to other highly educated professionals such as doctors and dentists. However, lawyers show notably higher levels of excessive alcohol consumption, with rates more than double those of similarly educated professionals, and this problem has worsened over the past 15 years, especially among younger lawyers and those working in private or large law firms. The study argues that previous claims about widespread lawyer misery were likely overstated due to survey-response bias and concludes that while mental health issues among lawyers are not unusually severe, alcohol abuse remains a significant and growing concern that deserves targeted attention.”
19. In “*Juror Stress and Mental Health: The Role of Prior Trauma and Mental Health Difficulties*” (2024), authored by Brooks et al. examined how prior trauma and mental health difficulties affect jurors exposed to distressing trial evidence. Using 180 jury-eligible participants in a mock murder trial, the study found that exposure to graphic case materials significantly increased stress and PTSD-related symptoms, with probable PTSD rates rising from 10.6% at baseline to 44.7% one week later. Participants with pre-existing mental health difficulties, medical fears, and stronger early stress reactions experienced greater emotional distress and were more vulnerable to lasting psychological effects. The authors conclude that jury service can worsen existing trauma symptoms and recommend trauma-informed courtroom practices, psychological preparedness training, and accessible post-trial mental health support to protect juror wellbeing.
20. In “Towards a Context-Specific Approach to Understanding Lawyers’ Well-Being: A Synthesis Review and Future Research Agenda” (2024), authored by Soon et al. the researchers reviewed 145 scholarly and industry publications from 1970 onward to examine how lawyers’ well-being is conceptualized and shaped by work context. The review found that most research focuses on negative outcomes such as stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, trauma, substance use, and suicidal ideation, while positive aspects of well-being receive far less attention. Using Bourdieu’s concepts of field and habitus together with Hobfoll’s Conservation of Resources theory, the authors argue that different legal practice settings create distinct pressures and resource losses. Large commercial law firms are characterized by heavy workloads, billable-hour targets, competition, low autonomy, and weak collegial support, while legal aid and public service lawyers face funding cuts, emotional labor, traumatic client work, and threats to purpose and meaning. These contexts can trigger “loss cycles” in which depleted resources lead to worsening well-being over time. The authors conclude that lawyer well-being cannot be understood through a one-size-fits-all lens and call for more context-specific, theory-driven research, alongside practical reforms focused on job design, supportive management, and organizational cultures that protect and promote lawyer well-being.

Research Gap

“Existing research (e.g., Tsai et al., 2009; Azeem et al., 2020; Leclerc et al., 2020) clearly shows that legal professionals are subjected to high levels of occupational stress, psychological discomfort, burnout, and traumatic case material. Unfortunately, there are still a number of significant holes. First, most studies have focused on Western contexts, such as the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia. Studies from South Asian or Indian contexts, where different sociocultural, systemic, and economic factors influence the legal work environment, have been underrepresented. Second, although many research have looked at mental health and stress separately, very few have looked at how emotional intelligence, general mental health, and perceived stress interact with one another within the same sample. Furthermore, there is a lack of study comparing lawyers in their early and late careers in India's legal system. Because of its hierarchical and apprenticeship-based structure, Indian legal education may create unique patterns of psychological vulnerability at various points in a lawyer's career, which are hard to explain using Western models. Contributing context-specific empirical evidence to this underrepresented area of inquiry, the present study examines perceived stress, general mental health, and emotional intelligence across two clearly defined career stages — professional lawyers and amateur lawyers — within an Indian sample. This study directly addresses these gaps.

Significance of the Present Study

Consistently ranked among the most stressful careers, the legal profession is among the most psychologically demanding fields. Regardless, studies on mental health in this group are underfunded and oversimplified, leaving us in the dark about how stress and psychological functioning vary across different phases of a person's career. In light of the concerning global trends in psychological exhaustion and substance dependency among lawyers, this study fills that knowledge gap by comparing and contrasting experienced and early-career lawyers with respect to occupational stress, general mental health, and emotional intelligence.

Culturally specific psychological constraints among legal professionals have only recently started gaining academic attention, making this study particularly significant in the Indian legal environment. The emphasis has shifted from categorization alone to the advancement of evidence-based wellness therapies, thanks to the examination of emotional intelligence as a concept linked with psychological health.

In addition, it is commonly believed that having legal experience might help mitigate psychological anguish. However, this study challenges that notion by providing comparative empirical evidence. The results should help change the way lawyers think about and provide psychological support to their clients at various points in their careers.

Objectives

- ❖ To examine the levels of general mental health, perceived stress, and emotional intelligence among professional and amateur lawyers.
- ❖ To compare general mental health, perceived stress, and emotional intelligence between professional and amateur lawyers.
- ❖ To investigate the relationship between perceived stress, general mental health, and emotional intelligence among lawyers.

Hypotheses

- ❖ There is a significant difference in general mental health, perceived stress, and emotional intelligence between professional and amateur lawyers.
- ❖ There is a significant negative correlation between perceived stress and general mental health among lawyers.
- ❖ There is a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and general mental health among lawyers.
- ❖ There will be a significant relationship between perceived stress and emotional intelligence among lawyers.

Methodology

Design of the Study. Using a quantitative approach, this study draws from a descriptive-comparative and correlational framework. The study's overarching goal is to compare the emotional intelligence, overall mental health, and occupational stress levels of practising and non-practising lawyers. To find 30 people who could take part in the study, researchers used a purposive sampling strategy. Separated into two groups of 15, the participants were classified according to their level of professional experience: those with 10 years or more of active legal practice were considered professional lawyers, while those with 1 year or less of experience were considered amateur lawyers.

Population of the Study. Individuals with and without legal experience make up the study's population. Two distinct categories of lawyers have been identified: those practicing at an intermediate level and those conducting more complex cases. A correlation analysis and variable comparison between the two groups will be conducted using this sample set.

Inclusion Criteria

The following criteria were applied for including participants in the study:

- ❖ Individuals actively practicing law or currently enrolled in a formal law program in India.
- ❖ Professional lawyers: a minimum of ten years of active, registered legal practice.
- ❖ Amateur lawyers: currently enrolled in a law program or possessing a maximum of one year of professional legal experience.
- ❖ Willingness to participate voluntarily and ability to provide written informed consent.
- ❖ Sufficient proficiency in English to complete the psychological assessment instruments.

Exclusion Criteria

The following criteria were applied for excluding participants from the study:

- ❖ Individuals currently receiving pharmacological or psychotherapeutic treatment for a diagnosed psychiatric disorder, as this may confound psychological assessment outcomes.
- ❖ Those unwilling or unable to provide informed consent.
- ❖ Individuals not actively involved in legal practice or legal education at the time of data collection.
- ❖ Retired or otherwise inactive legal practitioners.

Psychological Tools. The following psychological tools were used in the present study:

1. The General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28) was used to assess the general mental health of the participants. It was developed by Goldberg and Williams (1988). The GHQ-28 comprises 28 items organized across four subscales: Somatic Symptoms (items 1–7), Anxiety and Insomnia (items 8–14), Social Dysfunction (items 15–21), and Severe Depression (items 22–28). Each item is rated on a four-point scale. Bimodal scoring (0-0-1-1) is typically employed, yielding a total score ranging from 0 to 28, with higher scores indicating greater psychological distress. A threshold score of four or above is considered indicative of probable psychological caseness. The GHQ-28 demonstrates strong psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.85 to 0.92 across diverse populations, and has well-established concurrent and construct validity, making it widely employed in occupational health research.
2. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), developed by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983), is a widely used self-report instrument designed to measure the degree to which individuals appraise situations in their lives as stressful. The 10-item version (PSS-10) was employed in the present study. Participants respond on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (very often), yielding a total score range of 0 to 40. Scores of 0–13 indicate low perceived stress, 14–26 indicate moderate perceived stress, and 27–40 indicate high perceived stress. Negatively worded items (items 4, 5, 7, and 8) are reverse-scored prior to summation. The PSS-10 demonstrates strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values typically ranging from 0.84 to 0.86, and has established convergent validity with measures of depression, anxiety, and physical health symptoms.
3. The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), developed by Schutte et al. (1998), is a 33-item self-report measure designed to assess emotional intelligence. Items reflect four dimensions: perception of emotion in oneself and others, management of emotion in oneself, management of the emotion in others, and utilization of emotion to facilitate performance. Participants respond on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), yielding total scores between 33 and 165. Higher scores reflect greater emotional intelligence. The SSEIT demonstrates strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values typically ranging from 0.87 to 0.90, and has established convergent validity with related constructs including empathy, optimism, and subjective well-being.

Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) were computed. Independent samples t-tests were performed to compare professional and amateur lawyers. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine relationships among perceived stress, general mental health, and emotional intelligence. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Results

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for GHQ, PSS, and Emotional Intelligence

Statistics

	GHQ	PSS	Emotional Intelligence
N Valid	30	30	30
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	4.77	19.10	118.57
Median	3.00	20.00	123.50
Mode	1 ^a	21 ^a	125
Std. Deviation	4.636	5.307	21.090
Variance	21.495	28.162	444.806
Skewness	1.185	-.819	-1.574
Std. Error of Skewness	.427	.427	.427
Kurtosis	.528	.717	3.988
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.833	.833	.833
Range	16	21	101
Minimum	0	7	45
Maximum	16	28	146
Sum	143	573	3557

For the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ), the valid sample size was 30, with 0 missing values. The mean, median, and mode were 4.77, 3.00, and 1 respectively. The value for standard deviation was 4.636, with a variance of 21.495. The skewness was 1.185, with 0.427 as the standard error of skewness. The kurtosis came out to be 0.528 with standard error of kurtosis as 0.833. The range of 16 had a minimum and maximum value of 0 and 16, with a sum value of 143.

For the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), the valid sample size was 30, with 0 missing values. The mean, median, and mode came out to be 19.10, 20.00, and 21 respectively. The standard deviation was 5.307, with a variance of 28.162. The value of skewness came out to be (-0.819), with value of 0.427 as standard error of skewness. The kurtosis came out to be 0.717 with a standard error of kurtosis of 0.833. The range of 21 had a minimum and maximum value of 7 and 28, with a sum value of 573.

For Emotional Intelligence, the valid sample size was 30, with 0 missing values. The mean, median, and mode came were 118.57, 123.50, and 125 respectively. The value for standard deviation was 21.090, with a variance of 444.806. The value of skewness came out to be (-1.574), with a value of 0.427 as the standard error of skewness. The kurtosis was 3.988, with a standard error of kurtosis as 0.833. The range of 101 had a minimum value of 45 and a maximum value of 146 with a sum of 3557.”

Figure 1

“Frequency Distribution of GHQ Scores With a Normal Curve

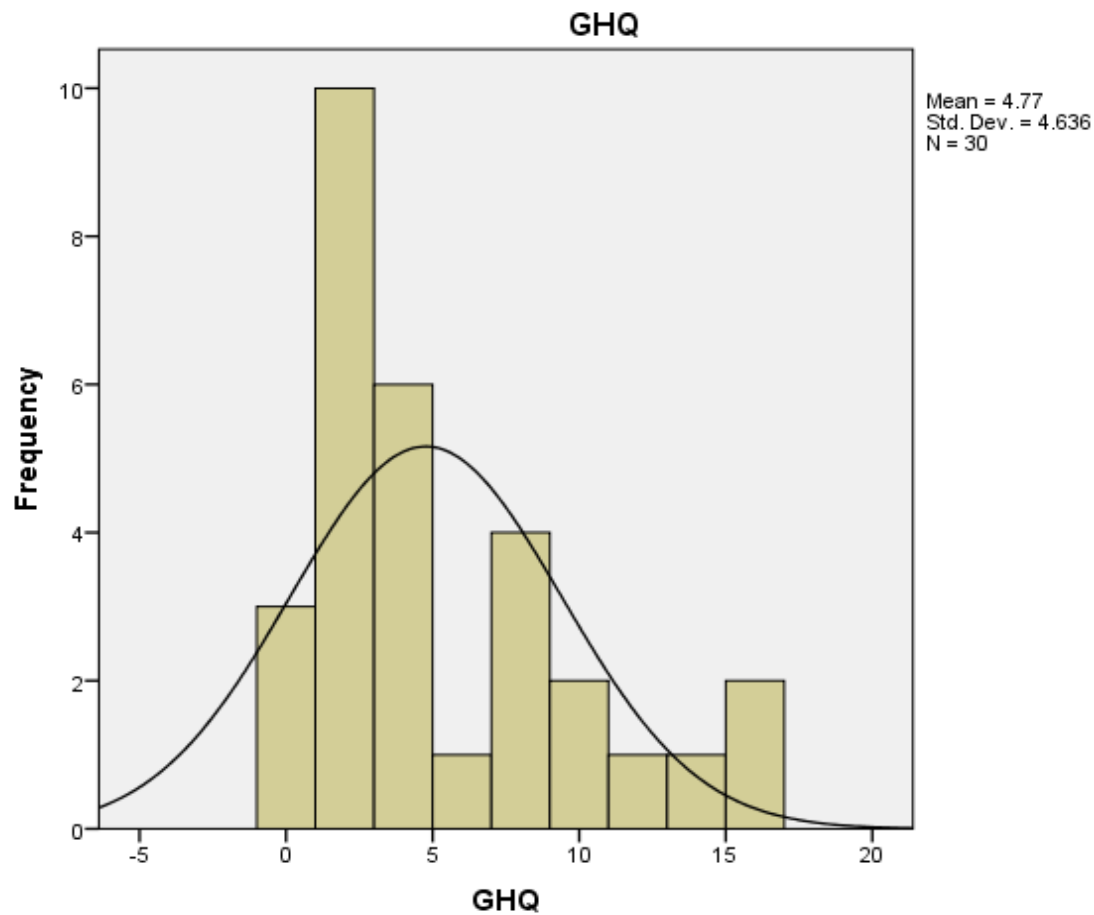


Figure 2

Frequency Distribution of PSS Scores With a Normal Curve

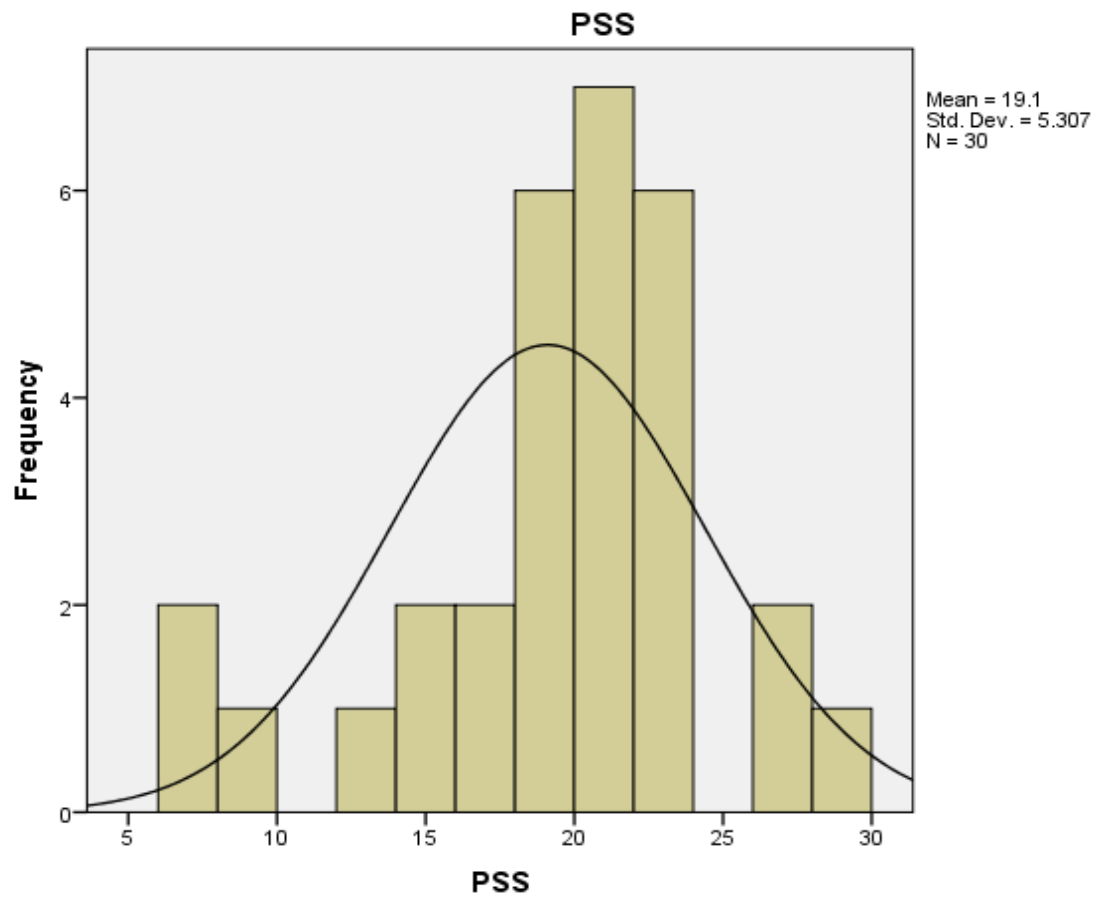
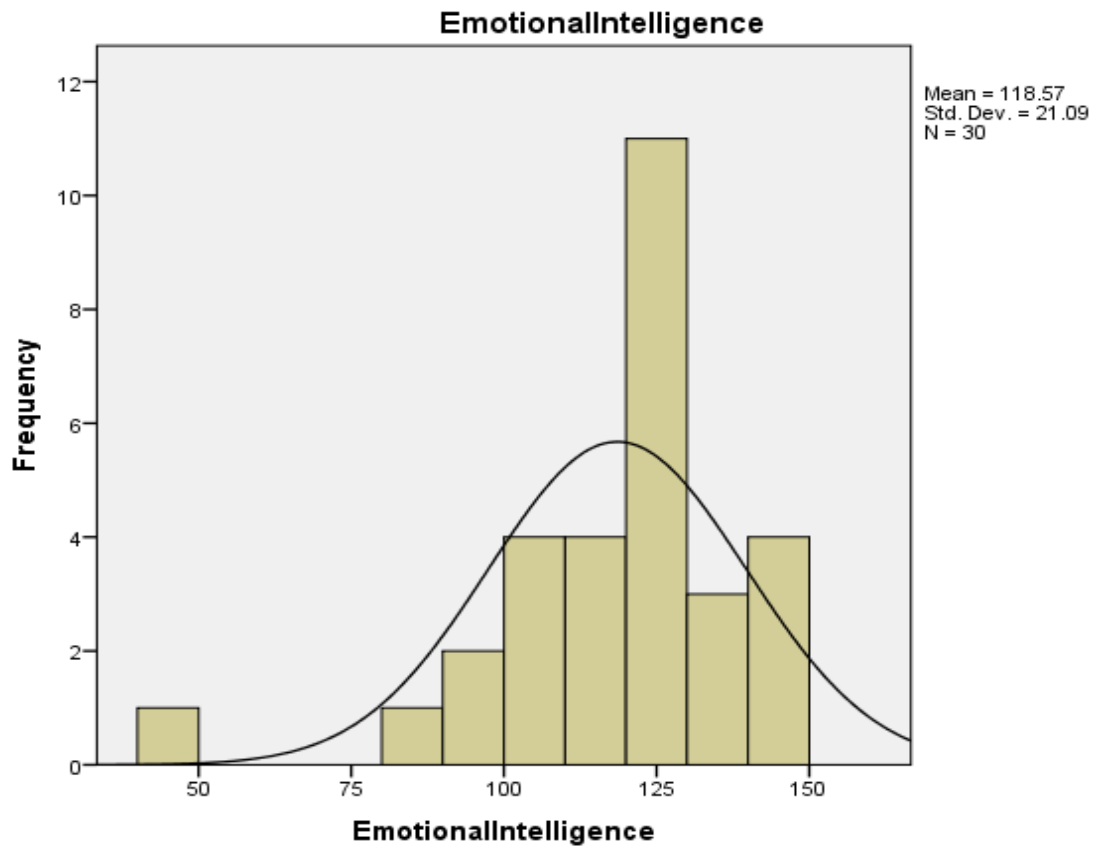


Figure 3

Frequency Distribution of Emotional Intelligence Scores With a Normal Curve

**Table 2**

Independent Samples t Test Results for GHQ, PSS, and Emotional Intelligence

		t-test for Equality of Means				
		T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)		
GHQ	Equal variances assumed	.196	28	.846		
PSS	Equal variances assumed	-.918	28	.366		
Emotional Intelligence	Equal variances assumed	-.474	28	.639		

The *t*-test analysis of GHQ had a *t*-value of 0.196 with *df* = 28 and significance of .846. The PSS score had a *t*-value of -0.918 , *df* = 28 and .366 as the significance value. The *t*-value of emotional intelligence was -0.474 , *df* = 28 and *p* = .639.

Table 3
Correlations Among GHQ, PSS, and Emotional Intelligence

			GHQ	PSS	Emotional Intelligence
	GHQ	Pearson Correlation	1	.058	-.012
	PSS	Pearson Correlation		1	.457*
	Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation			1
	*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).				

The correlation of GHQ with PSS and Emotional Intelligence came out to be 0.058 and (-0.12). Value of correlation of PSS and Emotional Intelligence came out to be 0.457.

Discussion

This study set out to explore the relationships between general mental health, perceived stress, and emotional intelligence as they pertain to lawyers with ten years of experience or more and lawyers with less than a year of experience, as well as to compare and contrast these groups. The results of the t-test showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups on any of the three variables — emotional intelligence ($t = -0.474$, $p = .639$), perceived stress ($t = -0.918$, $p = .366$), or general mental health ($t = 0.196$, $p = .846$) — therefore, dismissing H_1 . Instead of being concentrated among less experienced practitioners, this study implies that psychological demands within the legal profession are prevalent across career stages. Although seasoned attorneys may have developed strategies for dealing with stress from years of practice, they still face increased client demands, more complicated legal obligations, and heavier caseloads, all of which can put mental strain on even the most seasoned attorneys. It is in line with the status-health paradox proposed by Koltai et al. (2018), who discovered that lawyers' mental health did not improve as their status did, mostly due to the increased stress that comes with a greater position in the legal profession.

Previous research by Tsai et al. (2009), Chlap and Murray (2025), and Azeem et al. (2020) shown that lawyers experience significant levels of professional stress and burnout as a result of emotionally taxing cases, long work hours, and large workloads. There were no statistically significant changes between the two groups, contrary to previous research which indicated that seasoned attorneys report reduced stress levels. Possible explanations for this disparity include the dynamic nature of legal workplaces and the limited sample size.

There is a moderately favorable link between emotional intelligence and felt stress, as shown by the correlational analysis ($r = .457$, $p < .05$). This result goes against the grain of popular theory, which holds that people with greater emotional intelligence should be better able to control their emotions and hence experience less stress. Emotionally savvy lawyers might not always be able to completely avoid stress, but they might be more attuned to the emotional demands of their work and better able to identify and assess potential sources of emotional distress. This view is in line with the research on emotional contagion, which posits that people who are more attuned to their own emotions may be more susceptible to taking on the problems of those around them (Soon et al., 2024). H_2 was not supported since there was no significant association between perceived stress and overall mental health ($r = .058$, $p > .05$). This finding contradicts

the well-documented inverse link between these dimensions in other studies (Malhotra et al., 2025). The small sample size of 30 and the restricted variety of scores in the present sample may explain this null outcome. A GHQ-28 mean score of 4.77 indicates comparatively low caseness rates.

Neither emotional intelligence nor perceived stress were shown to be significantly related to general mental health in the study. This would suggest that lawyers' mental health is affected by more than just stress and emotional intelligence; additional aspects include social support, coping mechanisms, work environment, job satisfaction, and organizational culture.

Mental health and occupational stress are major concerns for lawyers at any level in their careers, according to the results. The findings highlight the need of initiatives to raise awareness about mental health, provide stress management skills, teach emotional intelligence, and establish policies that support lawyers in the workplace, whether they are just starting out or have years of experience under their belts.

The cross-sectional methodology and small sample size of the study make it impossible to draw any firm conclusions about cause and effect. To gain a better understanding of mental health among legal professionals, future studies should use bigger and more diverse samples and look at extra protective factors such resilience, coping mechanisms, support at work, and work satisfaction.

Conclusion

Professional and amateur lawyers' emotional intelligence, overall mental health, and occupational stress were all studied in this study, along with their connections with one another. When comparing lawyers' levels of emotional intelligence, perceived stress, and overall mental health, the results showed no statistically significant differences between the two groups. According to these findings, mental health issues are not exclusive to more seasoned lawyers but affect those at all levels of expertise.

In addition, the study found a positive and statistically significant correlation between emotional intelligence and perceived stress, but no such correlation between emotional intelligence and general mental health. This finding contradicts a lot of prior research on the topic, but it does raise the possibility that lawyers with high EQ are more attuned to the emotional demands of their work and hence more sensitive to the signs of stress on the job. Keeping one's mental health in good shape should be a top priority for lawyers, according to the results. All lawyers, regardless of experience, can benefit from workplace mental health programs, stress management classes, and emotional intelligence training, according to the study."

Drawbacks

The present study has several limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings.

1. The study was conducted on a relatively small sample of only 30 participants, which limits the statistical power and generalizability of the findings.
2. Participants were selected through purposive sampling; therefore, the sample may not adequately represent the wider population of lawyers in India.
3. The cross-sectional research design restricts the ability to establish causal relationships among occupational stress, general mental health, and emotional intelligence.
4. The study relied entirely on self-report questionnaires, making the findings susceptible to response bias, recall bias, and social desirability bias.
5. Only three psychological variables were examined. Other important factors such as burnout, resilience, coping strategies, job satisfaction, organizational support, workload, personality traits, and work-life balance were not included.

6. The study compared lawyers based only on career stage and did not examine differences across legal specialization, gender, workplace setting (public vs. private), or geographical region, which may influence psychological well-being.
7. Since the study was limited to an Indian sample, the findings may not be directly applicable to legal professionals working in different cultural or organizational contexts.

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