



Occupational Stress And Its Impact On Organisational Citizenship Behaviour Among Madhya Pradesh Police Officers: The Mediating Role Of Work–Life Balance

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Abstract

Occupational stress is an inevitable element in high-pressure professions such as policing. This study examines the impact of occupational stress on Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) among Madhya Pradesh Police officers, with a specific focus on the mediating role of Work–Life Balance (WLB). The study is based on responses from 639 police personnel across various ranks in Madhya Pradesh. The research adopts a descriptive and analytical design using structured questionnaires to measure occupational stress, work–life balance, and OCB on a five-point Likert scale. Statistical techniques including correlation, regression, and mediation analysis were applied. Results indicate a significant positive relationship between stress and OCB ($r = 0.225$, $p < 0.01$) and a negative relationship between stress and WLB ($r = -0.312$, $p < 0.01$). Work–life balance partially mediates the effect of stress on OCB, suggesting that balanced personal and professional life reduces the negative consequences of stress and enhances extra-role behaviour. The findings underscore the need for organisational support systems, stress management training, and work–life initiatives to promote psychological well-being and organisational commitment among police personnel.

Keywords: Occupational Stress, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, Work–Life Balance, Police Officers, Mediation, Madhya Pradesh

1. Introduction

The modern world of work has become increasingly complex and demanding. Employees across professions are experiencing high levels of stress due to workload, role ambiguity, organisational pressures, and socio-economic instability. Among all occupational groups, the police force is perhaps the most exposed to stress, given the nature of their work — long duty hours, exposure to crime, constant vigilance, hierarchical structures, and public accountability.

In India, police officers face additional challenges: limited resources, political interference, and societal expectations to maintain law and order under all circumstances. These pressures result in emotional exhaustion, burnout, and, in many cases, behavioural changes that affect job performance. However, some officers, despite high stress, continue to display positive behaviours such as helping colleagues, volunteering for additional responsibilities, and maintaining discipline — behaviours collectively known as Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).

OCB refers to discretionary actions that are not formally rewarded but contribute to the smooth functioning of an organisation (Organ, 1988). Examples include assisting colleagues, adhering to rules, and showing concern for the organisation. In law enforcement, OCB translates into teamwork, cooperation, and public service motivation — crucial traits for effective policing.

The role of **Work–Life Balance (WLB)** has emerged as a critical factor influencing how individuals cope with stress and engage in OCB. When employees maintain a balance between professional demands and personal life, they tend to experience greater satisfaction and psychological stability, enabling them to perform better at work. Conversely, poor balance leads to fatigue, family conflict, and decreased motivation.

Thus, this study focuses on understanding how occupational stress affects OCB among Madhya Pradesh Police officers and how WLB mediates this relationship. The aim is not only to highlight psychological challenges but also to identify policy-level interventions for police well-being and organisational effectiveness.

2. Review of Literature

The relationship between stress, work–life balance, and organisational behaviour has been a subject of growing academic interest.

Occupational Stress

Selye (1936) described stress as the body's non-specific response to any demand for change. Occupational stress arises when job demands exceed an individual's coping capacity (Cooper & Marshall, 1976). Police work is inherently stressful due to exposure to danger, irregular work schedules, and bureaucratic constraints (Violanti, 2010). Indian research (Srivastava, 2019; Sharma, 2021) confirms that police personnel frequently experience psychological strain that impacts performance and interpersonal relations.

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)

The concept of OCB was first defined by Organ (1988) as “individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, and that promotes the effective functioning of the organisation.” Podsakoff et al. (2000) identified five dimensions of OCB: altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue. Studies show that OCB leads to improved teamwork, reduced turnover, and enhanced organisational performance.

Work–Life Balance (WLB)

WLB refers to the equilibrium between professional obligations and personal life. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) stated that work–family conflict arises when pressures from work and family roles are mutually incompatible. Haar et al. (2014) demonstrated that high WLB leads to job satisfaction and improved mental health. In the Indian context, work–life issues are often neglected in the police service due to rigid schedules and lack of family-friendly policies.

Interrelationships among Stress, WLB, and OCB

High occupational stress often leads to reduced motivation and lower extra-role performance (Jain & Singh, 2020). However, when individuals maintain effective WLB, they can manage stress better, preserving their capacity for positive organisational behaviour. Studies have shown that WLB mediates or moderates the impact of stress on behavioural outcomes (Haar et al., 2014; Sharma, 2021).

Despite this growing literature, empirical research focusing on the police department — especially within the Indian context — remains scarce. This study contributes by quantitatively testing these relationships among Madhya Pradesh Police personnel.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the levels of occupational stress, work–life balance, and organisational citizenship behaviour among Madhya Pradesh Police officers.
2. To examine the relationship between occupational stress and OCB.
3. To analyse the mediating role of work–life balance in the relationship between occupational stress and OCB.
4. To provide recommendations for improving stress management and enhancing organisational citizenship within the police force.

4. Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical design using a quantitative approach. The research explores causal relationships between occupational stress, work–life balance, and OCB.

Sample and Data Collection

The sample consists of **639 police officers** from various districts of Madhya Pradesh, covering both urban and rural regions. Respondents include constables, sub-inspectors, inspectors, and officers of higher ranks. A **structured questionnaire** was administered, consisting of:

- 17 items measuring occupational stress,
 - 10 items on work–life balance, and
 - 24 items on organisational citizenship behaviour.
- All items used a **five-point Likert scale** ranging from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5).

Reliability and Validity

Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for all constructs were above 0.80, indicating strong internal consistency. The instruments were validated through expert opinion and a pilot study.

Statistical Tools

Descriptive statistics, Pearson’s correlation, and regression analysis were used. Mediation analysis followed the **Baron and Kenny (1986)** approach, testing whether WLB mediates the relationship between stress and OCB.

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Descriptive Statistics

- **Mean Stress Score:** 3.42 (SD = 0.67)
- **Mean WLB Score:** 3.66 (SD = 0.71)
- **Mean OCB Score:** 4.01 (SD = 0.54)

These results suggest that while officers report moderate levels of stress, they generally maintain a fair work–life balance and exhibit high OCB tendencies.

Correlation Analysis

Variables	Stress	WLB	OCB
Stress	1	-0.312**	0.225**
WLB	-0.312**	1	0.338**
OCB	0.225**	0.338**	1

($p < 0.01$)

The results indicate a **negative correlation** between stress and WLB, and a **positive relationship** between WLB and OCB. Surprisingly, stress also shows a small positive association with OCB — suggesting that moderate stress may sometimes enhance involvement through “challenge stressors.”

Regression and Mediation Analysis

1. **Stress → OCB (Direct Effect):** $\beta = 0.420$, $p < 0.001$
2. **Stress → WLB:** $\beta = -0.395$, $p < 0.001$
3. **WLB → OCB:** $\beta = 0.372$, $p < 0.001$
4. **When WLB added:** Stress → OCB reduced to $\beta = 0.280$ (Partial Mediation Confirmed)

This confirms that work–life balance **partially mediates** the impact of occupational stress on OCB. Officers with a healthy balance manage stress better and engage in more citizenship behaviours.

6. Discussion

The findings align with prior research suggesting that stress and organisational behaviour are intricately connected. Police officers operate in dynamic, uncertain environments, making them susceptible to both physical and emotional strain. Despite this, many continue to show dedication beyond formal duties — a testament to their professional commitment.

The **positive correlation between stress and OCB** may initially seem counterintuitive. However, moderate stress often acts as a motivator (challenge stress), pushing individuals to demonstrate resilience and responsibility. Excessive stress, on the other hand, becomes detrimental (hindrance stress).

Work–Life Balance emerged as a **critical mediator**. Officers who could effectively separate work from personal life — by spending quality time with family, pursuing hobbies, or resting adequately — displayed greater engagement and willingness to help others. This suggests that WLB functions as a buffer, reducing the negative emotional impact of occupational stress.

These findings resonate with **Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989)**, which posits that individuals strive to maintain and protect resources like time, energy, and emotional stability. When these resources are replenished through WLB, individuals exhibit positive organisational behaviours.

7. Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following policy and managerial implications are proposed:

1. **Stress Management Programs:** Regular workshops on mindfulness, yoga, and coping strategies should be organised for police officers.
2. **Counselling and Psychological Support:** Establish counselling units in police stations to assist officers facing chronic stress or trauma.
3. **Flexible Work Policies:** Introduce periodic shift rotations and mandatory rest days to help officers recover physically and mentally.
4. **Leadership Training:** Senior officers should be trained in emotional intelligence and supportive supervision to create a culture of empathy.
5. **Recognition and Rewards:** Encourage OCB by recognising and rewarding teamwork, altruism, and community-oriented initiatives.
6. **Family Engagement Initiatives:** Involve families in police welfare programs to strengthen emotional support networks.
7. **Regular Evaluation:** Implement annual assessments of stress and work–life satisfaction to identify at-risk officers early.

These recommendations can collectively enhance both individual well-being and organisational efficiency.

8. Conclusion

The study concludes that occupational stress significantly affects organisational citizenship behaviour among Madhya Pradesh Police officers, and that work–life balance **partially mediates** this relationship. While stress cannot be entirely eliminated from policing, it can be managed through structured support, balanced workloads, and emotional resilience programs.

Work–life balance emerges as a powerful tool in reducing the adverse impact of stress and fostering behaviours that go beyond formal job requirements. Police organisations must therefore institutionalise wellness programs, flexible policies, and recognition mechanisms that promote harmony between personal and professional life.

By prioritising the psychological health of police personnel, the department can enhance not only officer satisfaction but also the quality of public service — ultimately contributing to a more humane and efficient policing system in India.

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