



Impact of Gender & Status of Employment on Perceived Stress, Interpersonal Relationship and Depression of Criminal Advocates

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Abstract

The present study deals with level of perceived stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression among would be and practicing criminal advocates. Attempts were also made to see whether gender has any impact on the mentioned psychosocial aspects. The sample size was 201 (male would be criminal advocates- 64, female would be criminal advocates- 48 and male practicing criminal advocates- 48, female practicing criminal advocates- 41). Each group consisted respondents of different age ranging between 21-30 and 31-40 years for would be and practicing criminal advocates respectively. Data were collected from practicing criminal advocates (a minimum of 2 years experience in criminal advocacy was considered for practicing lawyers) and law students (those who are interested in pursuing their career only in the field of criminal advocacy). Perceived stress scale, Interpersonal Relationship Inventory and Beck Depression Inventory were administered to assess level of stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression among criminal advocates. The statistics used in the study were descriptive (Mean and SD), inferential (2X2 factorial ANOVA) and correlational (Pearson's product moment correlation). Results revealed that there is no significant impact of gender (male and female) and status of employment (would be and practicing criminal advocates) were found on perceived stress, interpersonal relationship and depression of criminal advocate. The present study also delineated that there is a significant correlation between stress and depression among both genders' would be and practicing criminal advocates. The result of the present study can pave light for further research studies.

Keywords: Employment status (would be; practicing criminal advocates), gender, stress, quality of interpersonal relationship, depression

1. Introduction

Stress and depression had remained as an inevitable by-product of the day to day hectic court schedule of the Criminal Advocates especially for the defence council. An Advocate will encounter many stressful situations that will trigger the fight or flight mechanism of the brain. As an Advocate's success will often depend on managing that mechanism and dealing with a situation with different strategies.

The word "**Stress**" has been derived from the Latin word '*strictus*' meaning to draw tight. Stress may be defined as an external pressure or strain which causes psychological distress. Stress was defined by Selye (1956 a) as the "Non-specific response of the body to any demand, made upon it [1]." Perceived stress is the degree of stress experienced by one and feelings about the lack of control and unpredictability of the actual stressors. Research around the globe show that criminal advocates are significantly more stressed than other professionals. In 2018, a survey done by the Am Law 200 leaders indicated that work stress of criminal lawyers is causing widespread addiction and mental health issues (Michael D. Harries & S. Won Kim, 2016).^[2]

Several studies conducted across the world, in various jurisdictions, have followed and affirmed the findings that criminal advocates face a strain in maintaining a good interpersonal relationship (Richard C., 2013) ^[3]. An interpersonal relationship is an association between two or more people which ranges from short duration to an everlasting one. This association may be based on some social, cultural and other influences ^[4]. Types of interpersonal relationships can be friendships, family, romantic or profession. Qualities of good Interpersonal Relationship are rapport, empathy, trust, respect, mental expectations, flexibility,

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uniqueness, interdependence, self-disclosure, honesty and accountability.

According to the survey conducted by the Canadian Bar Association (CAB), 2012 about 58% of criminal lawyers and law students experienced stress burnouts, whereas 25% of the lawyers were suffering from depression.

The word “**Depression**” has been derived from the Latin term “*deprimere*” meaning press down. Depression is a mood disorder that involves a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest and prevalent symptoms which lasts for at least 2 weeks and can stay for several weeks, months, or years^[5]. A person who is depressed experiences feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or pessimism; lowered self-esteem and heightened self-depreciation; a decrease or loss of ability to take pleasure in ordinary activities; reduced energy and vitality; slowness of thought or action; loss of appetite; and disturbed sleep or insomnia. Depression can occur from various reasons like major sad life events, genetic causes, physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

A National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health study—based on data from 1984-1998 concluded that, white male criminal lawyers are more likely to turn to suicide than non-criminal lawyer professionals. An Australian study by Jerome Doraisamy suggested that one out of three young lawyers or law students are battling depression, which is often triggered by excessive stress (Doraisamy, 2020) ^[6].

It has been seen that criminal advocacy is full of stress mainly chronic and unremitting that has negative effects on the areas of the brain associated with depression (Bergin, & Jimmieson, 2014) ^[7]. The landmark 2016 American Bar Association and Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation study found that 28 percent of licensed, employed lawyers suffer with depression. In a study by National Mental Health Association, 2016 it was found that of more than 100 occupations, criminal lawyers had the highest rate of depression (Anxiety and Depression Association of India, July 9, 2019). Criminal lawyers are almost four times more likely to experience depression than the general population. Especially among criminal advocates, depression can be life-threatening.

Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, in an article spoke about the study conducted by Delhi high court that the Indian criminal lawyers experience stress in a serious note. In the last few years, several criminal lawyers have spoken out about depression, mental

health and excessive work stress that criminal lawyers have to face every day. He spoke out about this issue and highlighted the urgency of the situation (Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, 2020) ^[8].

B.A. University of North Carolina, 2001 research has shown that mental health problems are common in the legal profession. Criminal Lawyers are prone to stress-related illnesses, including burnout, insomnia, clinical depression, gambling addiction, and substance abuse (Richard G. Netemeyer, James S Boles & Robert Mc. Murrian, 2013) ^[9].

Imparato (2000) commented that women criminal advocate’s marriages can suffer because of the billable hour requirements, frequent travel, and the need to counter the perception that they are less committed due to their domestic responsibilities (such as care of children or elderly parents). The toll of these sacrifices can lead to substance abuse or depression^[10].

It has been found from different studies that gender do play a major role in professional lives of advocates. The female advocates are biased against male counterparts. According to a study conducted by Women in Law Committee of the State Bar of California stated that almost 85% i.e., 2/3rd of the female advocates are not accepted as equals by their male peers. Women minority lawyers are also subjected to ethnic bias; they are accepted as only housework officials.

Objectives of the Study-

1. To find out is there any significant impact of gender (male and female criminal advocates) on stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression.
2. To find out is there any significant impact of status of employees (would be criminal advocates and practicing criminal advocates) in terms of stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression.
3. To find out is there any significant interaction effect of status of employment and gender on stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression among criminal advocates.
4. To find out is there any significant correlation between stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression among would be criminal advocates.

5. To find out is there any significant correlation between stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression among practicing criminal advocates.
6. To find out is there any significant correlation between stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression among male criminal advocates.
7. To find out is there any significant correlation between stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression among female criminal advocates.

Hypotheses-

1. There will be significant impact of status of employment on stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression among criminal advocates.
2. There will be significant impact of gender on stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression among criminal advocates.
3. There will be a significant interaction effect of status of employment and gender on stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression among criminal advocates.
4. There will be a significant correlation between stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression among would be criminal advocates.
5. There will be a significant correlation between stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression among practicing criminal advocates.
6. There will be a significant correlation between stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression among male criminal advocates.
7. There will be a significant correlation between stress, quality of interpersonal relationship and depression among female criminal advocates.

1. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample - The present study was conducted with male and female criminal advocates (either would be or practicing). The sample was selected for the study categories on the basis of gender and status of employment having a minimum experience of 2 years in the field of advocacy. Simple purposive sampling and snowball sampling method were used to collect data in the present study^[11]. From the total sample of 232 individuals, 201 individuals were

finally retained (male would be criminal advocates- 64, female would be criminal advocates- 48 and male practicing criminal advocates- 48, female practicing criminal advocates- 41). Age of the subjects was between 21-40 years (21-30 years → would be criminal advocates & 31-40 years → established criminal advocates). Advocates having any other side profession except criminal advocacy and with history of psychiatric illness were excluded.

Ethical Consideration - Since this study was conducted on professionals of criminal law background and also the students those who want to practice criminal law later in their lives, it was checked that the personal information completely remains confidential including anonymity and privacy. The data were collected from the participants by taking proper the consent from them.

Tools Used-

Information Schedule: Certain demographic information regarding the personal identity (like name, age, biological sex, educational qualification, city/town, nature of employment, category of practice as advocates, working hours, experience in years, involved in any other profession or not, monthly income, family type, marital status, any history of past psychiatric illness etc.), were collected. These information helps while discussion and interpretation of results.

Perceived Stress: Perceived Stress scale (PSS) authorised by Sheldon Cohen, T. Kamarck and R. Mermelstein, 1983 consists of 10 items that measure perception of stress. 6 items directly scored and 4 items reverse scored with no subscale^[12]. The items are scored according to 5 categories such as, Never, Almost Never, Sometimes, Fairly Often and Very Often. For direct items the score is given as 0, 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively and reverse items scored as 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0. Cohen and Williamson 1988 reported that scores on the PSS demonstrated adequate internal consistency reliability to be 0.78 and moderate concurrent criterion validity with the amount of stress experienced during an average week $r = 0.39$.

Quality of Interpersonal Relationship: Interpersonal relationship inventory (IPRI) authored by Tilden, Nelson and May in 1990a, 1990b^[13]. It consists of 39 items. Items are divided into three sub-scales- Social-Support, Reciprocity and Conflict where each sub-scale consisted of 13 items each. The items are scored according to 5

categories such as, Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree. For direct items the score is given as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively and for reverse item it is scored as 5, 4, 3, 2 & 1. The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency reliability coefficient is 0.92 for social support, 0.83 for reciprocity and 0.91 for conflict. Two week test-retest reliability for social support is 0.91, reciprocity is 0.84 and of conflict is 0.81.

Depression: Beck Depression Inventory - II (BDI-II) was developed by Aaron T. Beck, Steer & Brown, 1996). It is a 21-item self-report rating inventory measuring affective, cognitive and somatic symptoms of depression (Beck et. al 1996) as listed in the American Psychiatric Association DSM- IV^[14-15], 1994 in normal and psychiatric populations (Priotrowski et al., 1985). The total score ranges from 0 to 63. There is no reverse scored items. Each of the 21 items corresponding to a symptom of depression summed to give a single score for the BDI-II. 21 items range from 0-3 scored as 0,1,2 and 3 for options as a,b,c and d; 0 indicating symptom absent and 3 indicating severe symptoms. Internal consistency of BDI ranges from 0.73-0.92 with a mean of 0.86 (Beck, Steer and Garbin 1988).

Statistical Analyses -

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), inferential statistics – 2X2 factorial ANOVA and Correlational statistics – Pearson's product moment correlation was used to analyse the data and results. Probability value accepted for the test significance was 0.05 and 0.01 level. SPSS version 16.0 was used to do all statistical analysis.

2. RESULTS

Table 1 depicts that female criminal advocates are slightly more vulnerable towards stress and depression. Conflict is also observed to be higher among female criminal advocates. Male criminal advocates hold better interpersonal relationships compare to female counterpart. Though stress is more among would be criminal advocates, Reciprocity, conflict and depression are more for practicing ones. To find out the significant difference between male and female and status of employment or to find out gender and employment status' main and interaction effect two ways ANOVA was applied later.

Table 1: Mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of the selected variables (Perceived stress, Quality of Interpersonal relationship and Depression) among male,

female, would be and practicing criminal advocates

Variables	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)
PS	18.40	(7.83)	18.99	(6.95)
SS	43.86	(11.95)	43.86	(10.36)
R	45.46	(11.30)	45.75	(7.60)
C	39.68	(11.40)	40.39	(13.83)
IPR	129.25	(24.97)	128.34	(20.44)
D	11.37	(12.76)	11.54	(10.76)

Variables	Employment Status of Advocates			
	Would Be		Practicing	
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)
PS	19.39	(6.49)	17.88	(8.42)
SS	44.85	(11.88)	42.41	(10.51)
R	44.81	(10.86)	46.14	(8.99)
C	39.51	(13.88)	40.49	(10.55)
IPR	127.73	(25.90)	129.54	(20.19)
D	10.07	(9.92)	13.14	(13.73)

(PS-Perceived Stress, SS- Social Support, R-Reciprocity, C-Conflict, IPR-Overall Interpersonal relationship and D-Depression)

Table 2 illustrates that the F values as depicted were not significant at either 0.05 or 0.01 level of significance for any of the variables (Perceived stress, Quality of Interpersonal relationship and its dimensions and Depression). The main effect and interaction effect both for gender, status of employment of criminal advocates were also not found significant at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence, the hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 stand rejected.

Table 2: 2x2 way analysis of variance (ANOVA) (main effect and interaction effect) of gender and status of employment of criminal advocates on selected variables (Perceived stress, Quality of Interpersonal relationship and Depression)

DV 1: Perceived Stress				
Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Gender	7.76	1	7.76	0.141
Status of employment of criminal advocates	134.3	1	134.3	2.433

<i>Gender * Status of employment of criminal advocates</i>	63.8	1	63.8	1.158
DV 2: Social Support				
Source	SS	DF	MS	F
<i>Gender</i>	4.1	1	4.1	0.031
<i>Status of employment of criminal advocates</i>	275.59	1	275.59	2.142
<i>Gender * Status of employment of criminal advocates</i>	12.3	1	12.3	0.096
DV 3: Reciprocity				
Source	SS	DF	MS	F
<i>Gender</i>	17.1	1	17.1	0.168
<i>Status of employment of criminal advocates</i>	89.2	1	89.2	0.871
<i>Gender X Status of employment of criminal advocates</i>	2.5	1	2.5	0.025
DV 4: Conflict				
Source	SS	DF	MS	F
<i>Gender</i>	13.2	1	13.2	0.085
<i>Status of employment of criminal advocates</i>	20.5	1	20.5	0.131
<i>Gender X Status of employment of criminal advocates</i>	279	1	279	1.785
DV 5: Depression				
Source	SS	DF	MS	F
<i>Gender</i>	0.06	1	0.06	0
<i>Status of employment of criminal advocates</i>	409.3	1	409.3	2.93
<i>Gender X Status of employment of criminal advocates</i>	88.9	1	88.9	0.64

** = significant at both 0.01 & 0.05 level
 * = significant at only 0.05 level

Table 3 and 4 signifies that perceived stress and depression holds a positive correlation for both male and female criminal advocates. Social support is negatively correlated with perceived stress and depression for males. Reciprocity is correlated with conflict among both male and female criminal advocates. Social support has been found to be positively correlated with reciprocity for would be

criminal advocates. Practicing criminal advocates holds a positive correlation between conflict and social support. Hence, hypotheses 4, 5, 6 and 7 stand partially accepted.

Table 3: Product moment correlation coefficient (r) between the selected variables (Perceived stress, Quality of Interpersonal relationship and Depression) among male and female criminal advocates

Male					
	1	2	3	4	5
PS	—				
SS	-0.3**	—			
R	-0.16	0.72**	—		
C	0.20*	0.04	0.19*	—	
D	0.61**	-0.200	-0.01	0.24*	—
Female					
	1	2	3	4	5
PS	—				
SS	-0.04	—			
R	-0.12	0.49**	—		
C	0.18	-0.06	0.15	—	
D	0.38**	-0.24*	0.04	0.14	—

** = significant at both 0.01 level
 * = significant at only 0.05 level

Table 4: Product moment correlation coefficient (r) between the selected variables (Perceived stress, Quality of Interpersonal relationship and Depression) among male and female criminal advocates

Would Be Criminal Advocates					
	1	2	3	4	5
PS	—				
SS	-0.2**	—			
R	-0.13	0.70**	—		
C	0.07	0.04	0.02*	—	
D	0.49**	-0.15	0.09	0.24*	—
Practicing Criminal Advocates					
	1	2	3	4	5
PS	—				
SS	-0.3**	—			
R	0.36**	-0.05	—		
C	-0.19	0.60**	0.07	—	
D	0.58**	0.27**	0.15	-0.13	—

** = significant at both 0.01 & 0.05 level
 * = significant at only 0.05 level

4. DISCUSSION

The present research findings illustrate that there is not any significant impact of gender and status of employment were observed on level of stress,

quality of life and depression among criminal advocates but when researcher see the descriptive table (table 1 for Mean and SD) it is observed that male and practicing criminal advocates are better on interpersonal relationship as criminal advocates to be good in interpersonal relationships, since, they have to maintain a good public relation to proceed in the profession. Though work pressure and stress welcomes conflict among the criminal advocates providing social support to the needy is an essential component^[10]. Social support is more among would be criminal advocates because after passing out from law schools they tend to have a friendly relation with everyone in the court. The findings regarding conflict may be due to professionalism. The counter attitudinal nature of established criminal advocates may make them engaged in conflicts. Higher perceived stress among the female criminal advocates is likely due to high levels of work-family conflict. Balancing professional life and family life become tough, more for a mother. The pressure for establishment in later life and financial threat makes would be criminal advocates vulnerable to perceive stress ^[4] ^[5].

Free lancing profession always has an innate quality of financial threat and everyday risk. Due to unavailability of new incoming cases and losing cases consecutively may lead to the result. The isolation with family for heavy work pressure can also lead to depression among the established criminal advocates^{[2][8][9]}. Depression seen higher among female criminal advocates than in male may be due to high emotional attachments and expectations. Non accomplishment or non-fulfilment of any goal in professional life tend to affect females more than males. Results illustrate that social support is negatively correlated with perceived stress and depression for both advocates. Social support increases the reciprocity level. The more amount of social support in a person reduces the perceived stress as he gets the warmth, understanding and love from social relations similarly social support reduces the depression level in an individual for the same cause ^[16]. Law students and criminal lawyers have much higher rates of depression than those found in the general population^[4]. From the previous sections of discussion it is clearly evident that depression is a major cause of poor mental health condition of criminal advocates.

There is no impact of gender on perceived stress and depression as stress is inevitable for the

profession of advocates and the court cases, trial room contradictions and financial threat also lead to depression. The findings are supported by the studies mentioned above ^{[2][8][9]}. The present study failed to establish a significant difference in terms of conflict, perceived stress and depression among would be and practicing criminal advocates as both of them are highly stressed for their work life pressure. There has been no interaction effect of gender and status of employment of criminal advocates on variables like perceived stress, social support, reciprocity, conflict and depression due to commonality of professionalism.

5. CONCLUSION

As per the result and discussion covered it can be concluded that gender and status of employment of criminal advocates has no impact on the psychosocial variables selected in the study, though it has been seen that social support and reciprocity are high among male criminal advocates but conflict higher among female criminal advocates. Furthermore, in the context of relationship between all possible psychosocial variables in would be and practicing criminal advocates, it has been found that perceived stress is related with depression. Same has been established for male and female criminal advocates. Social support is positively correlated with reciprocity for all the groups. For reciprocity the correlation is seen with conflict. A negative correlation has been seen between social support and perceived stress, social support and depression among male-female and practicing criminal advocates.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

A criminal advocate dealing with a client's issues needs much of mental support and has to provide mental stability and strength to clients also to adhere to him. Apart from practicing professionals amateurs and their hardships to become an established can't be ignored. Mental health of criminal advocates whether established or not needs attention. Their well being is something society misses upon. The study among gender difference and status of employment of criminal advocates can become an open source for directly addressing the mental health issues of them and providing counselling sessions to provide them mental piece. Relaxation therapy can also be worked on to make the criminal advocates stress free. Proper catharsis training to remove out anxiety and aggression can also be framed.

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