

Sources of Occupational Pressure among Lawyers and Legal Professionals

Mare Teichmann, Kaja Kattel, Mart Murdvee, Tanel Kerikmäe

Publisher: Peer-reviewed legal journal **International and Comparative Law Review**, Palacky University Olomouc, Czech Republic.

The article will be published in the volume 15, issue no. 1 which will be issued in June/July 2015.

Abstract

Current paper focuses the occupational stress in legal industry. Two similar empirical studies were carried out in 2006 and 2012. A web-based survey of occupational stress was conducted by employing an international questionnaire Occupational Stress Inventory (OSI-2). Some important trends in the Estonian lawyers' occupational stress were found. The basic sources of occupational pressure in lawyers and legal professionals were identified. Most relevant sources of occupational pressure among lawyers and legal professional were home and work imbalance, managerial roles, and insufficient recognition, managerial roles, and hassles. We found that the relationship between job satisfaction and sources of occupational pressure was negative and significantly valid among five pressures of lawyers and legal professionals. Majority of lawyers and legal professional were adapted problem solving oriented coping strategy. Therefore, the social support from peer, friend, family member etc. was also widely used coping strategy by lawyers and legal professionals. Our findings well demonstrate that awareness of occupational stress in law industry has been raised.

It is well documented that the legal field is stressful for lawyers and legal professionals, statistics show that a legal career is one of the most stressful occupations. On the other hand, there are many high stress professions, but lawyers are the most frequently depressed occupational group¹.

Occupational stress, depression and anxiety among lawyers and legal professionals are well-known public evidence in modern mass media². Several earlier studies suggested that signs of stress of students have had begun already in law school³. Therefore, it is still evidence that there is some role of legal education in producing occupational stress to lawyers and legal professionals⁴.

¹ J. C. Anthony, W. W. Eaton, R. Garrison, Occupations and the Prevalence of Major Depressive Disorder. *Journal of Occupational Medicine*, 32 (11), Nov 1990, pp 1079-1087

² Why are Lawyers Killing Themselves? - CNN.com, 20 Jan 2014
www.cnn.com/2014/01/19/us/lawyer-suicides/; Richard Simmons, Present Tense: Stress in the Workplace. *The Lawyer*, 2014,
<http://www.thelawyer.com/analysis/present-tense-stress-in-theworkplace/3021002.article>; Elliot Sim, It's a Stressful Profession. *New Zealand Law*, 2014,
<https://www.lawsociety.org.nz/lawtalk/issue-855/its-a-stressful-profession>

³ James B. Taylor, Law School Stress and the "Déformation Professionnelle". *Journal of Legal Education*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 1975, pp 251-267; Phyllis W. Beck and David Burns, Anxiety Depression in Law Students: Cognitive Intervention. *Journal of Legal Education*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 1979, pp 270-290; Marilyn Heins, Shirley Nickols Fahey and Roger C. Henderson, Law Students and Medical Students: A Comparison of Perceived Stress. *Journal of Legal Education*, Vol. 33, No. 3, Sept. 1983, pp 511-525; Stephen B. Shanfield and G. Andrew H. Benjamin, Psychiatric Distress in Law Students. *Journal of Legal Education*, Vol. 35, No. 1, March 1985, pp 65-75; Faith Dickerson, Psychological Counseling for Law Students: One Law School's Experience. *Journal of Legal Education*, Vol. 37, No. 1, March 1987, pp 82-90.

Despite the evidence described above, surprisingly, the sources of occupational pressure in lawyers and legal professionals have received undeservedly little empirical attention. In earlier occupational stress literature with the focus on lawyers' stress there are not many comprehensive studies. With some notable exceptions⁵ in survey after survey researchers had demonstrated different response to stress effects to lawyers' behavior, for example, such maladaptive coping with stress behaviors as alcoholism, substance abuse, suicidal behavior, depression, and anxiety. In recent years, the main focus of lawyers' occupational stress research has been changed as it turned toward the sources of occupational pressure in lawyers and legal professionals. Unfortunately, this volume of research have not been fully integrated into an appropriate theoretical framework of occupational stress. It is not too surprising because the degree of theoretical fragmentation permeate much of different professionals' occupational stress literature, such as occupational stress of engineers⁶ as well as university academics⁷.

In legal literature, the depressive side of lawyers work has rather been related to the profession itself, not so much of the individual lawyers based inquires.

Keywords: occupational stress, stressors, sources of occupational pressure, lawyers and legal professionals

⁴ R. Collier, The Changing University and the (Legal) Academic Career - Rethinking the Relationship Between Women, Men and the 'Private Life' of the Law School . *Legal Studies*, Vol. 22, Issue 1, March 2002, pp 1-32; Debra S. Austin, Killing Them Softly: Neuroscience Reveals How Brain Cells Die from Law School Stress and How Neural Self-Hacking Can Optimize Cognitive Performance. *LOY. L. REV.*, Vol. 59, March 8, 2014, pp 791-858; Wendy Larcombe, Letty Tumbaga, Ian Malkin, Penelope Nicholson, Orania Tokatlidis, Does an Improved Experience of Law School Protect Students Against Depression, Anxiety and Stress? An Empirical Study of Wellbeing and the Law School Experience of LLB and JD Students , *Sydney Law Review*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2013 Melbourne Legal Studies Research Paper No. 603.

⁵ F. J. Tsai, W. L. Huang, C. C. Chan, Occupational Stress and Burnout of Lawyers. *Journal of Occupational Health*, Vol. 51, No. 5, 2009, pp 443-50. Epub 2009 Jul 10.

⁶ M. Teichmann, J. Jr. Ilvest, Engineers' Occupational Stress and Stress Prevention System: Epsycho-diagnostics and E-learning. In: Iskander, M. (Ed). *Innovations in E-learning, Instruction Technology, Assessment and Engineering Education*, Springer, 2007, pp 249-253.

⁷ M. Teichmann, Ph. Dondon, Sources of Stress in Bordeaux University Academics . In: *Recent Researches in Educational Technology: Proceedings of the 8th WSEAS International Conference on Engineering Education (EDUCATION '11)*, Greece, July 14-16, 2011, (Ed) Mastorakis, N. et al., WSEAS Press, pp 98 – 105; M. Teichmann, J. Jr. Ilvest, Sources of Occupational Stress in Technical University. In: *Latest Trends on Engineering Education: 7th WSEAS International Conference on Engineering Education (Education '10)*, Greece July 22-24, 2010, Dondon, P., Martin, O. (Eds), WSEAS Press, pp 448 - 453.