

# OCCUPATIONAL STRESS, PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING, AND TURNOVER PROPENSITY IN UNIFORMED SERVICES: A QUALITATIVE SYNTHESIS OF LITERATURE

**Neetu Chaudhary**

Research Scholar  
School of Management Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab

**Shavina Goyal**

Assistant Professor  
School of Management Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab

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## ABSTRACT

Uniformed services, such as the military, police, and armed medical professionals, work in dangerous and stressful situations that have a big effect on their mental health. The current study offers a qualitative synthesis of existing literature to ascertain the principal determinants of occupational stress, burnout, psychological health, and turnover propensity among uniformed personnel. The review classifies stressors into organizational, role-related, familial, and individual categories. The results show that stress and poor health are caused by a heavy workload, unclear roles, a lack of autonomy, not enough resources, being away from family, not getting enough recognition, and pressures from higher-ups. Social support, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and resilience serve as protective factors. The synthesis indicates that occupational stress within uniformed services is multifaceted and structurally ingrained.

**Keywords:** Occupational stress, military personnel, police stress, psychological well-being, turnover intention, social support.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The military, police, and armed medical forces are all examples of uniformed services. They all have strict hierarchies, long hours, and a lot of physical and mental danger. People who work in these fields often have to deal with a lot of stress at work, being away from their families, unpredictable working conditions, and not having much freedom. These factors render occupational stress and psychological strain paramount concerns within these institutions.

Initial studies emphasized empathy and personality traits among military medical officers (Roopa & Joseph, 2008), suggesting differences in emotional functioning within military environments. Later studies turned their attention to job stress, burnout, and the likelihood of leaving a job. This paper integrates these findings to formulate a conceptual framework regarding occupational stress and psychological well-being among uniformed personnel.

## 2. ORGANIZATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL STRESSORS

A prevalent theme in the literature is the influence of organizational structure on stress levels. Research conducted on Indian Navy personnel indicated that junior sailors and those serving at sea exhibited elevated stress levels in comparison to officers and shore-based staff (Pawar et al., 2012). Also, lower-ranking police officers were found to be much more stressed than higher-ranking officers (Bano, 2013; Samantray, 2015). These results demonstrate that hierarchical placement within uniformed services significantly influences stress exposure.

Insufficient resources, excessive role demands, and role ambiguity were consistently recognized as principal stressors (Gulab & Mehta, 2015; Sharma, 2015). Insufficient control at work, poor leadership

style, job overload, and role conflict were significant contributors to occupational stress among Indian Army soldiers (Sharma, 2015).

### 3. ROLE-RELATED AND INTERPERSONAL FACTORS

Role conflict and role stagnation significantly contribute to occupational stress (Bano, 2013). Employees frequently encounter inter-role distance, especially when reconciling professional and personal obligations. Singh and Nayak (2015) showed that work–family conflict is a strong predictor of job stress, which in turn makes police officers less happy with their jobs.

Relationships between superiors and subordinates also affect well-being. Arora (2017) discovered that uncomfortable superior-subordinate relationships adversely impacted organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Likewise, perceived military support had a substantial impact on turnover propensity among military officers (Jaiswal et al., 2016).

These results indicate that hierarchical dynamics and interpersonal relationships are essential factors influencing psychological outcomes in uniformed services.

### 4. FAMILY SEPARATION AND WORK–LIFE IMBALANCE

Family-related stress consistently surfaced as a prominent theme across various studies. Being away from family, especially in the military, was found to greatly increase stress and hurt marriages (Sivasubramanian & Rajandran, 2017). There was a strong link between job satisfaction and family satisfaction among military officers (Jaiswal et al., 2016).

Marital satisfaction and work–family conflict were significant predictors of psychological well-being and emotional health among military personnel (Skomorovsky et al., 2015). These results indicate that occupational stress transcends workplace confines and significantly impacts family dynamics.

### 5. BURNOUT, MENTAL HEALTH, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Military doctors and other healthcare workers reported a lot of burnout and mental health problems. Pakistani military physicians demonstrated elevated burnout levels compared to similar populations (Chaudhry et al., 2015). For oncology nurses and doctors in the armed forces, stress was linked to unhappiness because they didn't feel appreciated or rewarded (Sharma et al., 2018). Consequently, psychological well-being is affected by occupational demands and demographic variables. Studies also indicate that social support functions as a buffering mechanism. Pawar et al. (2012) and Singh and Nayak (2015) discovered that organizational and social support alleviated the adverse effects of stress.

### 6. TURNOVER PROPENSITY AND RETENTION CONCERNS

Numerous studies looked at what influences military officers' intentions to leave their jobs. Officers' inclination to quit was strongly influenced by job autonomy, promotional concerns, person-organization fit, and family separation (Jaiswal et al., 2016). Stress had a negative correlation with organizational commitment (Arora, 2017). These results show that stress has an impact on psychological health as well as workforce sustainability and retention.

### 7. CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS

The reviewed literature suggests a multidimensional framework of occupational stress in uniformed services:

- **Structural Factors:** Hierarchy, workload, insufficient resources, lack of autonomy
- **Interpersonal Factors:** Superior–subordinate relationships, peer support
- **Family Factors:** Separation, marital satisfaction, work–family conflict
- **Individual Factors:** Personality traits, resilience, coping mechanisms

Emotional strain is increased by high job demands, a lack of organizational support, and family separation, which lowers wellbeing and increases the likelihood of turnover. On the other hand, resilience and organizational commitment are strengthened by social support, job satisfaction, autonomy, and recognition.

## 8. LIMITATIONS

Empirical testing of relationships is not included in this study, which is based on a qualitative synthesis of the body of existing literature. The methodology, sample size, and geographic focus of the reviewed studies differ, which could restrict their generalizability. Furthermore, the majority of research is cross-sectional, which limits the interpretation of causality.

## 9. FUTURE SCOPE

Future studies should use longitudinal designs to create integrative empirical models that look at stress, wellbeing, and turnover in uniformed services. Gender-inclusive samples and comparative studies involving the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Police would yield more comprehensive insights. To better understand protective mechanisms, it is advised to include additional variables like emotional intelligence, coping strategies, and resilience.

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