

## Exploring the Interplay between Occupational Stress, Social Support, and Work-Life Balance in CRPF Jawans

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The occupation of defense personnel is highly demanding and strenuous, characterized by long working hours, challenging working conditions, and hierarchical environments that may cause role conflict. Lack of social support can further worsen their work-life balance. **Objectives:** This study aimed to examine the relationship between occupational stress, social support, and work-life balance of Non-Gazetted Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Jawans. **Significance/Relevance:** Maintaining work-life balance is crucial for the well-being of defense personnel, where occupational stress and lack of social support can impede this balance. However, there is a dearth of literature on the relationship between these factors in defense forces. This study fills this gap in research. **Methodology:** This cross-sectional study involved 354 Non-Gazetted CRPF Jawans of the 148th battalion in Chandauli, Uttar Pradesh, India. Stratified random sampling was used, with each company as an individual stratum. A pretested structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Descriptive statistics, chi-square test, and logistic regression were used to analyze the data. **Major Findings:** The study found that majority of CRPF Jawans had moderate occupational stress and nearly two-fifth of them faced difficulty in balancing work and personal life. There was a significant association between occupational stress, work-life balance, and social support in Non-Gazetted CRPF Jawans. **Conclusions:** The study highlights the need for the government to provide better working conditions and social policies to support CRPF Jawans in managing the competing demands of work and family life, and improve their overall well-being.

**Keywords:** Job stress, CRPF, Defence service, social support, work-life balance.

### Introduction

Social health is a dimension of health included in the WHO's constitutional definition of health. It reflects an individual's capacity to navigate and respond effectively to various social situations. Social health is not just the prevention of mental illness and social problems. Being socially healthy means an increased degree of happiness with a sense of belonging and concern for others.

As we grow, social ties become increasingly significant in our lives. These relationships help us build a support system which makes us healthier. Social Support might seem ignorable and difficult to address, still, it stands as one of the pillars of health. It has been proven with relevant incidence that those who are well integrated in the society have longer and healthier life<sup>1</sup>.

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The job stress, burnout, and increased demands can be counterproductive to building and sustaining social relationships. However, communicating about expectations, personal insights, ways of balancing personal and professional obligations, and strategies for adapting increased demands may help people to build and sustain healthy social relationships. Social support facilitates communication about these and therefore may be therapeutic, developing empathy, trust, honesty, validation, and caring<sup>2</sup>.

A good work life balance is a situation in which one feels capable of balancing their work and non-work commitments, or for the most part, does so<sup>3</sup>. It basically deals with an employee's ability to properly balance between work and lifestyle, social life, health, family etc. If there is a proper balance between work and life, employees usually give their best at work and enjoy happy family life<sup>4</sup>. However, maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life can be challenging, particularly in professions that demand long hours and high levels of commitment.

Moreover, social support plays a crucial role in promoting the mental health and well-being of employees. Social support networks provide emotional, informational and instrumental assistance that can help individuals cope with stressors and enhance their resilience. Social support can come from various sources, including family, friends, colleagues, and supervisors. Research suggests that social support can buffer the negative impact of Occupational stress on mental health and job satisfaction.

The CRPF is one of the largest Central Armed Police Forces in India, and Jawans serve as the first line of defense in various challenging environments, including conflict zones and disaster-affected areas. The Jawans often face challenges in balancing their work and personal life due to the nature of their job.

However, despite the importance of the issue, there are limited studies exploring the relationship between Occupational stress, work-life balance, and social support variables among defense forces. In this context, the present study aims to determine the relationship between Occupational stress, work-life balance, and social support among Non-Gazetted Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Jawans. This study can provide insights into the role of social support and work-life balance in reducing Occupational stress among Jawans and can assess the need of development of interventions to enhance social support networks for CRPF.

## **Methodology**

The present study is a cross-sectional study based on primary data collected from Non-Gazetted officers of 148<sup>th</sup> battalion in Chandauli district of Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. There were seven companies in 148<sup>th</sup> Battalion of CRPF.

In each company there were one Gazetted officer and remaining Non-Gazetted Jawans. The Gazetted Officers are Cadre A officers while Non-Gazetted officers belong to Cadre B and Cadre C. The Gazetted officers have more administrative role than Non-Gazetted officers. Considering each of the company as individual stratum, 353 Non-Gazetted officers were selected randomly through stratified random sampling opting proportional allocation. The non-gazetted officers who had at least 3 years of working experience in CRPF, who were available at the time of data collection and gave the consent to participate, were included in the study while those who were physically unfit, posted in Chandauli but presently posted to other places or states at the time of data collection were excluded.

The data collection took place from June to November 2019. Data from the participants were collected by using pre-designed and pre tested bilingual questionnaire after obtaining their informed consent. Privacy and confidentiality of respondents were maintained. Occupational stress was measured using Occupational stress Scale developed by Srivastava & Singh<sup>5</sup>, Work-life Balance was assessed through question "Do you feel you are able to balance your work & personal life?", and social support was assessed through questions related to relationships with peers, superiors, and family.

Data entry and analysis was done in SPSS software trial version 20. Descriptive statistics (like proportions, mean, standard deviation), chi-square test of association and bivariate logistic regression were used to analyze the data and meet the objectives.

**Results**

Table 1 shows Socio-demographic characteristics of the CRPF Jawans. Majority of the Jawans were 30-40 years of age, were undergraduate, married, had more than 12 years of work experience, belonged to Cadre C, and had monthly salary between Rs. 30000-50000.

**Table -1:** Socio-demographic characteristics of the CRPF Jawans

Socio-demographic variables		No.	%
Age	20-30	31	8.8
	30-40	220	62.3
	40-50	76	21.5
	50-60	26	7.4
Education	Undergraduate	184	52.1
	Graduate	164	46.5
	Post graduate	1	0.3
	Other	4	1.1
Marital Status	Unmarried	18	5.1
	Married	335	94.9
Work Experience	3 Years	1	0.3
	3 To 8 Years	29	8.2
	8 To 12 Years	58	16.4
	More Than 12 Years	265	75.1
Rank/Designation	B group	18	5.1
	C group	335	94.9
Present Salary	30001-50000	277	78.5
	50001-100000	76	21.5

**Occupational stress:** The mean occupational stress among the CRPF Jawans was found to be 128.81 ± 10.64 (range 46-230). Only 1.7% of CRPF Jawans had high occupational stress, while majority (72.2%) had moderate occupational stress and 26.1% had low occupational stress.

**Table- 2:** Level of Occupational stress in the CRPF Jawans

Level of Occupational stress	No.	%
Low Occupational Stress	92	26.1
Moderate Occupational Stress	255	72.2
High Occupational Stress	6	1.7

**Work-Life Balance of the CRPF Officers:** Majority of CRPF Jawans (62%) felt that they were able to maintain work-life balance but nearly one-third of CRPF Jawans (38%) felt that they were unable to maintain work-life balance which is important to be addressed well.

**Table- 3:** Work-Life Balance in the CRPF Jawans

Feel able to balance work-life	No.	%
No	134	38.0
Yes	219	62.0

**Social Support Measures:** Majority of CRPF Jawans (95.2%) reported that they do not get enough time for their family after their working hour; majority (95.6%) said that their work affects their marital relationship; nearly three-fourth of the CRPF Jawans said that they regularly met their children's teacher to know their progress; Two-third of the CRPF Jawans (64%) reported that they always interact with their immediate officers; More than half of the CRPF Jawans (60.9%) reported that they receive useful suggestion from their colleagues regarding their work; 66.9% of the CRPF Jawans found it easy to talk to colleagues about work related problems and nearly 42% said that they never find much time for their hobbies.

**Table- 4:** Social Support Measures for the CRPF Jawans

Social Support Measures		No.	%
Do you get enough time for your family after your working hour?	No	336	95.2
	Yes	17	4.8
Does your work affect your marital relationship?	No	15	4.4
	Yes	319	95.6
Do you regular meet your child's/children's teacher to know their progress?	No	91	28.0
	Yes	234	72.0
Do you freely interact with your immediate officers?	Never	2	0.6
	Sometime	125	35.4
	Always	226	64.0
I receive useful suggestion from my colleagues regarding my work.	Never	0	0.0
	Sometime	138	39.1
	Always	215	60.9
It is easy for me to talk to my colleagues about work related problems.	Never	3	0.8
	Sometime	114	32.3
	Always	236	66.9
I don't find much time for my hobbies.	Never	148	41.9
	Sometime	191	54.1
	Always	14	4.0

**Association between Occupational stress and Work-Life Balance:** Significant association was found between Occupational Stress and Work-Life Balance of CRPF Jawans. Majority of the CRPF Jawans who were not able to maintain their work-life balance reported moderate and higher occupational stress (Table- 5).

**Table- 5:** Chi-square Test of Association between Occupational Stress and Work-Life Balance

		Occupational Stress			χ <sup>2</sup> and "P" value
		Low	Moderate	High	
Feel able to work-life balance	No	11.9	84.3	3.7	χ <sup>2</sup> = 28.071 P= 0.000*
	Yes	34.7	64.8	0.5	

“\*\*” means significant at 5% level of significance

**Association between Social Support Measures and Occupational Stress:** Significant association was found between Occupational Stress and time spent with family. Majority of the CRPF Jawans who said that they do not get enough time for their family after your working hour reported moderate and higher occupational stress. Apart from this, significant association was also found between occupational stress and meeting children's teacher to know their progress. The occupational stress was also found to be associated with talking to colleagues about work related problems. Those who reported that they never shared their work related problems with their colleagues had higher level of occupational stress. The occupational stress was also found to be associated with giving time for hobbies. Those who reported that they never get time for their hobby had comparatively higher occupational stress (Table- 6).

**Table-6:** Chi-square test of association between Occupational Stress and Social Support

		Occupational Stress			χ <sup>2</sup> and “P” value
		Low	Moderate	High	
Do you get enough time for your family after your working hour?	No	24.7	73.5	1.8	χ <sup>2</sup> =6.231 P=0.044*
	Yes	52.9	47.1	0	
Does your work effects your marital relationship?	No	30.3	69.7	0	χ <sup>2</sup> =1.443 P=0.486
	Yes	25.7	72.4	1.9	
Do you regular meet your child's/children's teacher to know their progress?	No	29.7	65.9	4.4	χ <sup>2</sup> =10.956 P=0.004*
	Yes	26.5	73.5	0	
Do you freely interact with your immediate officers?	Never	50.0	50.0	0	χ <sup>2</sup> =5.341 P=0.254
	Sometime	20.8	76.0	3.2	
	Always	28.8	70.4	0.9	
I receive useful suggestion from my colleagues regarding my work.	Never	23.2	75.4	1.4	χ <sup>2</sup> =1.119 P=0.572
	Sometime	27.9	70.2	1.9	
	Always	23.2	75.4	1.4	
It is easy for me to talk to my colleagues about work related problems.	Never	0	66.7	33.3	χ <sup>2</sup> =10.448 P=0.034*
	Sometime	20.2	77.2	2.6	
	Always	29.2	69.9	0.8	
I don't find much time for my hobbies.	Never	16.2	82.4	1.4	χ <sup>2</sup> =20.239 P=0.000*
	Sometime	30.9	67.0	2.1	
	Always	64.3	35.7	0	

“\*\*” means significant at 5% level of significance

**Association between Social Support Measures and Work-Life Balance:** Table 7 reveals significant association between work affecting marital relationship and Work-Life Balance of the CRPF Jawans. Apart from this, not getting time for hobby was also significantly associated with the Work-Life Balance of the CRPF Jawans.

**Table -7:** Chi-square test of association between Social Support and Work-Life Balance

		Feel able to work-life balance		χ <sup>2</sup> and P-value
		No	Yes	
Do you get enough time for your family after your working hour?	No	39.0	61.0	χ <sup>2</sup> =0.122 P=0.061
	Yes	17.6	82.4	
Does your work effects your marital relationship?	No	21.2	78.8	χ <sup>2</sup> =0.039 P=0.025*
	Yes	39.8	60.2	
Do you regular meet your child's/children's teacher to know their progress?	No	37.4	62.6	χ <sup>2</sup> =0.616 P=0.342
	Yes	40.6	59.4	
Do you freely interact with your immediate officers?	Never	50.0	50.0	χ <sup>2</sup> =1.787 P=0.409
	Sometime	42.4	57.6	
	Always	35.4	64.6	
I receive useful suggestion from my colleagues regarding my work.	Never	0	0	χ <sup>2</sup> =0.145 P=0.085
	Sometime	42.8	57.2	
	Always	34.9	65.1	
It is easy for me to talk to my colleagues about work related problems.	Never	66.7	33.3	χ <sup>2</sup> =3.001 P=0.223
	Sometime	43.0	57.0	
	Always	35.2	64.8	
I don't find much time for my hobbies.	Never	47.3	52.7	χ <sup>2</sup> =11.698 P=0.003*
	Sometime	32.5	67.5	
	Always	14.3	85.7	

“\*\*” means significant at 5% level of significance

**Logistic regression for effect of Occupational stress and Social Support measures on Work-Life balance:** We included the variables that were found significantly associated with work-life balance in the logistic regression model and found that only having low occupational stress [OR = 20.965; P-value = 0.007] and work affecting marital relationship

[OR = 2.543; P-value = 0.041] were affecting work-life balance of CRPF Jawans after adjusting effect of remaining variables.

The CRPF Jawans who has low occupational stress had 21 times more odds of being able to maintain work-life balance as compared to CRPF Jawans having high occupational stress. The CRPF Jawans who reported that their work doesn't affect their marital relationship had nearly 3 times more odds of being able to maintain work-life balance as compared to CRPF Jawans who reported that their work affects their marital relationship.

**Table- 8:** Logistic Regression Output

			Estimate	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Threshold	Occupational stress	Low	1.422	0.041	0.058	2.786
		Moderate	7.081	0.000	5.423	8.739
Location	Work Life Balance	No	1.131	0.000	0.529	1.734
		Yes	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	I don't find much time for my hobbies	Never	1.635	0.012	0.361	2.910
		Sometime	1.417	0.025	0.181	2.653
		Always	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	It is difficult for me to get sufficient time for myself, family, relatives and friends	Never	1.299	0.009	0.328	2.269
		Sometime	0.411	0.367	-0.483	1.305
		Always	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	Does your work effects your marital relationship	No	-0.625	0.273	-1.743	0.493
		Yes	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.

Last category was the reference category; “\*” means significant at 5% level of significance.

**Discussion**

The deterioration of the balance between work and family has been one of the most prominent issues in the literature in recent years because it negatively impacts both individual’s life and organizations.

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between Occupational stress, social support, and work-life balance among Non-Gazetted Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Jawans, a group for which there is limited research on the topic. The study's findings confirmed that these variables have a significant interplay with each other. Due to lack of studies on defense force, we have compared the results of our study with occupational stress, social support and work-life balance of other occupations too.

The first important finding of the study was that there is a significant relationship between the Occupational stress and work-life balance, i.e, it becomes easier to achieve work–life balance if they have low level of occupational stress. This result is consistent with previous studies by Zaheer et al<sup>6</sup> conducted among female faculties of University, and Aruldoss A et al<sup>7</sup> which found relationship between occupational stress and the work-life balance.

Secondly, the study found a significant relationship between the Occupational stress and social support; i.e., those who lacked social support had higher level of occupational stress. This result aligns with the findings of Ray E.B et al.<sup>8</sup> who found that different sources of social support worked in unique ways to relieve the strain of home/Occupational stress and with the study by Greenglass E.R et al<sup>9</sup> which also found significant correlation between occupational stress and social support.

Finally, present study found a significant relationship between the social support and work-life balance which was similar to the finding of the studies by Marcinkus et al<sup>10</sup> and Sharma et al<sup>11</sup>. These findings suggest that interventions

aimed at enhancing social support networks within the CRPF could help reduce occupational stress and improve work-life balance for Jawans. Overall, our study can provide a base for future research on this topic within the defense force in India.

Despite the strengths, study had a few limitations too. First, due to time constraints, the sample was restricted to only those Jawans who were available in the camp at the time of data collection. Thus, the sample may not be representative of all the non-gazetted CRPF Jawans. Secondly, the research relied solely on a quantitative approach, which limits the in-depth examination of the variables under study. Lastly, there were no female CRPF officers at the time of data collection; hence, gender-related patterns could not be taken into account. Despite these limitations, the study contributes to future research by providing evidence for the relationship between Occupational stress, work-life balance and social support. Future studies can employ mixed method researches and on a large population for more robust findings.

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