

Occupational Stress and Support: A Forensic Examiner Perspective

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Introduction

Forensic examiners' decision-making has been suggested to be influenced by organizational culture. Time constraints and achieving goals are examples of organizational factors, as are implicit pressures on examiners to support one legal side over another, or to draw particular inferences. As a result, forensic examiners' judgments can be influenced in such pressured working conditions (where "quality" includes not only the accuracy of decisions but also the confidence levels of judgments and the capacity to document and interpret the conclusions relied upon by investigators, judges, and other stakeholders). According to Cullen et al., positive relationships and adequate support are the primary factors that contribute to stress in criminal justice workers in general. Forensic examiners interact and develop relationships with a variety of stakeholders, some of whom are internal to their workplace. Examiners communicate with upper-level management and immediate supervisors for a variety of reasons, including case management, case review, conclusion verification, and resolving disputed conclusions [1].

These interactions can be stressful, but they can also be helpful and help reduce stress. For instance, Holt et al. found that lower levels of workplace stress were associated with higher levels of perceived management and supervisory support. Examiners' perceptions of stress in the workplace, as well as their perceptions of whether they received support from management and whether the stress they experienced affected their judgment, were the focus of this study. The field of forensic science, the examiner's sex, and the examiner's years of experience were all taken into consideration when determining workplace stress [2].

Description

Forensic examiners reported varying levels of stress and support. In general work, examiners reported feeling moderate levels of stress on average. According to published research, a person's well-being and performance improve with moderate stress levels, while they decline with high or low stress levels. It is important to note that the word "often" was used in which refers to the frequency of stress, but responses can also reflect the level of stress. According to Almazrouei et al., it is therefore reasonable to assume that examiners who are stressed more frequently also experience higher stress levels. Personal and work-related stresses were significant predictors of forensic examiners' reported general stress. The main relapse model, containing these two factors alone, represents 73.2% of the changeability in the general pressure of analysts [1].

Additionally, as a predictor of general stress, workplace stress was 2.5 times more prevalent than personal stress. This finding suggests that the culture and environment of the workplace where forensic examiners work is a significant factor in their overall health. Female analysts announced feeling more anxious than male inspectors from both general pressure and work environment stress. According to previous research, women may experience higher levels of stress at work than men do due to factors such as having additional family responsibilities outside of work, as well as variations in coping strategies. However, the results of this study did not reveal the specific sources of stress that have a different impact on female examiners than male examiners. Therefore, the varying causes of perceived stress could be the subject of future research [3].

A second regression was carried out because it is crucial to comprehend the factors that contribute to stress in the workplace. Management and case backlog were found to be significant predictors of perceived stress in Model 2, accounting for 52.3 percent of the variation in perceived stress in the workplace. In addition, it was discovered that these two factors contributed more to the forensic examiners' high levels of stress than personal factors. This is not surprising considering that case backlogs and stress caused by managers and supervisors are common organizational-level stressors that have been documented in other fields other than forensic science [4].

Performance at work can be negatively impacted by stress that comes from outside the workplace, such as from personal issues. Crime scene examiners reported higher levels of stress from personal reasons (albeit, approaching significance) than analytical examiners in this study. Perceived stress as a result of personal factors (such as financial and family issues) was a significant predictor of feelings of general stress. According to previous research, shift work is a major cause of stress for crime scene examiners because it makes it difficult for them to make plans and stick to commitments in their personal lives. In addition, the personal causes of stress varied over time; however, it should be emphasized that a forensic examiner's age can also be correlated with the number of years of experience they have, which also correlates with other variables. As a result, the findings cannot be attributed solely to experience because they may be the result of a correlation with other factors rather than causation [5].

According to the low mean scores neither the nature of the cases nor working on high-profile cases were cited as major sources of stress. Field-explicit contrasts were tracked down in revealed degrees of stress from the idea of cases, like working at murder scenes, where crime location analysts felt more worried than scientific analysts. Analytical examiners rarely encounter stressors at a crime scene, such as bloody scenes or the pressure of making crucial decisions under pressure. Why crime scene examiners reported feeling more stressed than analytical examiners working on the same type of case may be explained by these differences in work environment and tasks. In a similar vein, work-related stress, such as being under pressure from prosecutors or investigators or competing with co-workers, was relatively low. Differences between the groups based on years of experience were found through post hoc analysis. Examiners with 11 to 15 years of experience reported experiencing more pressure at work than those with 7 to 10 years of experience. This could be because examiners with more experience have different roles and responsibilities, or it could be related to other correlated factors like age [3].

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According to Cullen et al., workplace relationships, including support from managers and supervisors, can be significant contributors to stress. In this study, forensic examiners reported, on average, that they received moderate support from management and that management was moderately concerned about their well-being. The forensic examiners' reports of general stress and workplace stress were not significantly influenced by management support. Likewise, the connection between the discoveries from these four inquiries were irrelevant. In contrast, management and supervisory support were found to be significant predictors of decreased stress and increased job satisfaction in a previous study. The different results may be the result of different working conditions in different labs [5].

Conclusion

Forensic examiners working in a variety of forensic expertise fields and with varying levels of experience were surveyed regarding their experiences with workplace support and stress. Examiners reported experiencing moderate levels of stress on average. Work environment and individual pressure factors were critical indicators of general pressure. Case backlogs and stress from management or supervisors were significant predictors of workplace stress. Support from management was not associated with general or workplace stress, and it was not a significant predictor. Personal reasons and the nature of the cases they were involved in caused crime scene examiners to report feeling more stressed than analytical examiners. Both from general stressors and workplace stressors, male examiners reported feeling less stressed than female examiners. Examiners with seven to ten years of experience reported experiencing less stress at work than those with eleven to fifteen years of experience.

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