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Original article

Occupational stress and social support in naval personnel

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ABSTRACT

Background: Data show that naval personnel have a high incidence of stress related disorders. A high prevalence of occupational stress was seen in a previous survey carried out on Indian Naval personnel. However, the role of social support in reducing occupational stress was not studied. To study occupational stress in Indian Naval personnel and to study the effect of social support on occupational stress.

Methods: 5077 naval personnel were surveyed using study questionnaires which included Occupational Stress Inventory, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)-12 item version as a measure of psychological health. The data was statistically analysed using chi square test and other non-parametric tests. **Results:** High occupational stress was seen in personnel serving afloat (66.47%) as compared to those serving ashore (51.55%) and on submarines (53.72%). Among personnel serving afloat, occupational stress was highest among Junior Sailors as compared to Senior Sailors and Officers. Occupational stress was linked to poor psychological health as measured by the GHQ and younger age. Perceived social support was effective in reducing occupational stress in Officers and Senior Sailors but not in Junior Sailors where paradoxically it seemed to lead to greater occupational stress.

Conclusions: High occupational stress was seen in more than half the service personnel studied. Occupational stress is mitigated by social support in Officers and Senior Sailors but not in Junior Sailors.

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