

Perceived Workload Stress on Defense Attorneys' Work Engagement

Canlas, Moniza., Cesar, Shanyne Joyce., Delos Santos, Princess Chariss., Encarnacion, Ayeisha Nicole T., Nudas, Maria Cristi L., Pellerin, Loise Gem Marie C., Perez, Aldred., Urot, Kate Chanrica

Cor Jesu College, Inc

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90400440>

Received: 28 April 2025; Accepted: 02 May 2025; Published: 21 May 2025

ABSTRACT

As rates of cases continue to rise, the performance of legal practitioners creates a critical evaluation for fairness, adjustability, and involvement in regard to their workload stress and engagement. This study investigated the correlation between the perceived workload stress and work engagement of defense attorneys in Davao Del Sur. Employing quota sampling techniques in the gathering of data, it examined the level of perceived workload stress and work engagement of fifty (50) defense attorneys as its respondents in Davao Del Sur through the means of an online form and survey questionnaires. Findings reveal a mild result in terms of workload stress among defense attorneys, with mean scores ranging from 2.00 to 3.44 across two indicators, including job stress and work overload. Respondents, when it comes to work engagement, have an extreme and positive rate towards work engagement, with the mean score ranging from 3.92 to 4.50. In conclusion, there is no significance in the correlation between perceived workload stress and work engagement. This quantitative correlational design emphasizes the stature of understanding workload rates within local areas to propagate the engagement of legal professionals and address societal issues within our justice system.

Keywords: perceived workload stress, work engagement, defense attorney, quantitative research

INTRODUCTION

In the legal profession, particularly defense attorneys, workload stress plays a pivotal role in their ability to uphold equality and justice. Due to their demanding caseloads, they often experience high levels of responsibility, which can significantly impact their work engagement. Defense lawyers have a crucial function within the legal defense, guaranteeing that those accused of crimes receive a fair trial and have their rights upheld. Nevertheless, research suggests that numerous defense attorneys, especially public defenders, deal with an excessive caseload that significantly hinders their capacity to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

Defense attorneys in private and public sectors attend to many cases within their area; the higher the workload, the more they are close to stress and inability to provide quality work. In the United States, defense attorneys are stressed in managing their work because of handling too many cases with strict deadlines, including handling emotional different clients. Pace (2023) similarly states that this stress affects the quality of their work since they need more time and attention for their different client's needs. Thus, it reduces the quality of their representation, violating some ethical standards that lead to delays and potentially unfair outcomes. In New York City, 217 public defenders were surveyed, and found out that the seven key occupational stressors were working late hours, handling tasks without proper training, advocating positions they disagree with, interacting with clients' families, and managing tedious administrative work (Welch, 2018).

As Dotson et al. (2020) stated, high workloads, poor salaries, and lack of recognition in an attorney's job can cause severe physical and mental troubles. These potential stressors can have a substantial impact on their job performance. In the study of Brody et al. (2020), it was stated that attorneys who specialize in defense, particularly those employed in public defender's offices, frequently encounter elevated levels of occupational

stress and secondary traumatic stress. Moreover, according to Pace et al. (2023) highlight that public defenders with overwhelming caseloads cannot dedicate sufficient time and attention to each client.

In the ASEAN context, with the heavy caseloads and the lack of qualified lawyers, defense lawyers endure a great deal of stress. Due to the pressure to perform in-depth investigations and construct compelling legal arguments, many defense attorneys experience constant pressure due to workloads. The major opponent of defense attorneys has been their workloads, which can affect how cases are handled and may be a contributing factor to the stress that defense attorneys endure in their profession. Only half of lawyers are happy in their jobs, and others are looking for other opportunities (Pham, 2020). This unhappiness is mirrored in Indonesia, where legal staff members experience stress and perform worse due to heavy workloads and strict time constraints in their field (Damayanti et al., 2022). In addition to diminishing the standard of legal representation, these workloads of defense attorneys cause burnout. A high workload has a negative impact on interactions between attorneys and clients as well as the general efficacy of the local legal system (Sholihah & Tjaraka, 2024). Improving the quality of legal services and the well-being of attorneys throughout ASEAN requires addressing these problems. Handling and juggling multiple and intricate cases requires time. However, in Asian countries where cases have an increased totality of numbers, the level of workload can cause deteriorating effects in their engagement. The excessive workloads, as well as the intrinsic moral obligation of a lawyer to properly represent their clients morally and professionally, cause ineffective presentation (Lu & Brody, 2019). Moreover, a study by Herawati (2023) concluded that employee work engagement is impacted by workload, with three out of five attorneys experiencing adverse effects in their workplaces.

In the Philippine context, there is a massive shortage of defense attorneys who practice criminal law cases in the Department of Justice (DOJ), making this a crucial factor that considerably diminishes the quality of work of defense attorneys. Workload and lack of resources could negatively affect their capability to build a good case for their clients (Duenas, 2014). RA 9406 mandates one defense attorney per courtroom, but due to the increasing number of cases, courts have adjusted trial schedules, leading attorneys to handle multiple cases simultaneously (Santos, 2023). Despite the heavy caseloads, defense attorneys in the Philippines work diligently to provide robust representation for those accused of crimes (Araja, 2022). Fatigue and burnout lead to poor work engagement, substance misuse and other self-medication, poor relationships, and other chronic illnesses that further affect their engagement (Norton et al., 2015). Performing a successful ploy in their jobs requires tons of responsibility and focus. According to Sumarsid et al. (2023), work achieved by a person in carrying out a task or job based on the responsibilities appointed to them is the performance of an individual. It can be measured based on the quality and quantity of work fulfilled, which several stressor factors can negatively affect.

In the local context, a diverse workforce can significantly enhance employee engagement, increasing productivity and job satisfaction. According to Suteu and Sy (2024), workforce diversity positively influences employee engagement, resulting in higher output levels and job satisfaction. They highlight that as diversity within the workforce grows, so do engagement levels, which ultimately boosts productivity and satisfaction. Furthermore, work engagement is crucial for law firms, driving higher productivity and better client satisfaction. According to Baragiola (2024), a diverse workforce contributes to a more motivated and engaged work environment, enhancing output and client satisfaction and pivotal in reducing turnover. This emphasis on work engagement highlights the importance of diversity in creating a dynamic and compelling workplace, ultimately supporting the firm's overall success—most research studies workload and job satisfaction in other professions, also within different law sectors. However, in Davao Del Sur, several attorneys from public offices recount low engagement rates in their cases and work settings due to heavy workloads and responsibilities. Moreover, in several private sectors where the amount of cases is controlled, there is already a demand that is recognizably increasing.

Most research studies cover the stress workload and work engagement in other professions, as well as within different sectors of law. However, there remains a noticeable gap in research that explicitly examines defense attorneys, who also face pressure due to the high demands of criminal defense and client demands. Locally, studies that focus on workload conflicts in job satisfaction and the performance of defense attorneys are almost

nonexistent. The lack of local research further adds to the need to investigate how these problems contribute to the challenges faced by defense attorneys in this province.

This study is anchored by the Job Demands Resources by Bakker and Demerouti (2006) and the Work Engagement Theory by Kahn (1990). Job Demands Resources (JDR) explains that every job has job demand stressors like workload and emotional strain, as well as job resources such as support, autonomy, and development opportunities. When the demands are above average than what should be, and the resources remain insufficient to support the increasing input required, burnout occurs. However, with the right resources, employees will become motivated and engaged in their jobs. This theory is highly interrelated to legal and justice professions, where high job demands such as emotional stress, ethical dilemmas, and heavy caseloads can lead to exhaustion. Furthermore, resources like peer support, professional autonomy, and skill development can enhance resilience and engagement. By applying the JD-R model, this research examines the balance between workload stress and available resources, providing insights into how work engagement can be maintained or improved despite high job demands.

Work Engagement Theory by Kahn (1990) highlights the individual's psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability as key to engagement. Employees are more likely to be engaged in their work when they attain positive aspects like motivation, challenge, and inspiration. Moreover, there is cognitive engagement in levels of focus, engrossment, and intensity when it comes to their job. Both theories build upon these foundations, showing how resources counteract the strain of high demands to maintain motivation and well-being in high-stakes fields like law and justice. Through both of these solid theories that can further define the accuracy of an attorney's perceived workload stress and work engagement, this study can enhance the understanding of what may or may not develop their well-being and daily activity to make the justice system fairer and remain to the service of the people. It also connects to our study by explaining how their demanding caseloads, emotional strain, and high-stakes responsibilities contribute to stress and potential burnout, affecting physical, cognitive, and emotional engagement. Since defense attorneys often face intense workloads and ethical dilemmas, understanding the balance between demands and resources helps in identifying ways to sustain motivation, prevent burnout, and improve overall job performance.

Statement of the Problem

The main objective of this study was to determine the relationship between perceived workload stress and the work engagement of defense attorneys. Specifically, the study sought to find out the following:

1. What is the level of perceived workload stress among defense attorneys?
2. What is the level of work engagement among defense attorneys?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the perceived workload stress and work engagement among defense attorneys?

Hypotheses

To objectively answer the problems listed in the preceding section, the given null hypothesis was formulated:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between perceived workload stress and the work engagement of defense attorneys.

Significance of the Study

This study aims to see if there is a relationship between the perceived workload stress and work engagement of defense attorneys. Conducting a study investigating this topic could add to the existing literature about how stress from defense attorneys' workloads affects their performance. The results of the study are beneficial to the society, precisely the following:

Public Attorney's Office Personnel. This will help them identify their workload stressors, improve workload management, and enhance attorney engagement, leading to better job satisfaction and staff performance.

Private Law Firm Managers. This study will benefit private law firm managers by identifying their workload stressors and improving work-life balance. This can enhance engagement, job satisfaction, and retention, leading to higher productivity and better client service.

Defense Attorneys. Defense attorneys will benefit from this study as it will reveal the underlying cause of their job dissatisfaction. This study could also lead to an action for better workload management, more support resources, and a better work-life balance.

Law Students. This research study would provide law students insights into the reality of legal practice. This would give them a clear understanding of the challenges attorneys face, which can help law students make more informed career choices and prepare them for the demands of this profession.

Future Researchers. Future researchers in the same research study will have a rich data source. This would also provide a strong foundation for further exploration of this topic. The findings of this study could help future researchers identify gaps and contribute to a broader understanding of how workload influences not only legal professionals but also the overall efficiency of legal institutions.

Scope and Delimitation

This quantitative research studies the connection between perceived workload stress and work engagement of defense attorneys, further analyzing stressors and their impact on physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement. The study aims to analyze fifty (50) defense attorneys' experience in the justice system using descriptive-correlational research design. Data was gathered through online forms and survey questionnaires, taking place in Davao del Sur, Philippines, from September to November during the first semester of the academic year 2024-2025. The research will specifically explore how perceived workload stress influences defense attorneys' work engagement.

However, the study has certain limitations. It focuses solely on defense attorneys within Davao del Sur, limiting the generalizability of findings to other regions. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data through online forms may introduce response biases. The study does not account for external factors such as legal policies, institutional support, or personal coping mechanisms that may influence defense attorneys' workload stress and work engagement. Moreover, there is a limitation in the sampling technique, employing quota sampling and excluding other participants from being part of the chosen group to be surveyed.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined operationally to make the presented terms within the study more accessible to comprehend:

Defense Attorney. A Defense Attorney is an attorney who specializes in defending individuals, organizations, and entities charged with crimes (Wex, 2021). In this study, defense attorneys were the main subjects, and their perceived workload stress and work engagement were studied.

Stress. Stress can be defined as any type of change that causes physical, emotional, or mental strain (Scott, 2024). In this study, stress refers to a factor that leads defense attorneys to be either positively or negatively engaged in their tasks.

Work Engagement. Work engagement is the process of carrying out or accomplishing an action, task, or function without any hassle (Rabha, 2024). This refers to the effectiveness and efficiency with which an individual completes their job duties and responsibilities. In this study, work engagement refers to the involvement of defense attorneys in their jobs.

Workload. A broad definition is that it is an all-encompassing term that includes any variable reflecting the amount or difficulty of one's work (Bowling & Kirkendall, 2012). It refers to the amount of work to be done by defense attorneys in their fields that determines the heightening or shortening of their job satisfaction and performance. In this study, it is the factor that contributes to defense attorneys' work engagement.

METHODS

This chapter discusses this study's research design, specifically the respondents, sampling procedure, measures, data collection procedure, and data analysis methods. Moreover, it comprehensively explains the relevant methodology and the measures used to interpret the results of this study.

Research Design

This study used quantitative research methods to explore the link between defense attorneys' workload stress and their work engagement. According to Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2014), quantitative research is a primary strategy in social sciences that looks at psychological, social, and economic issues by analyzing numerical data. This study utilized a descriptive-correlational method. Brodowicz (2024) explains that this method helps to find relationships between two variables in a single group. Researchers can use various approaches, strategies, and techniques to achieve accurate and reliable results (Canonizado, 2023).

These method designs are suitable for conducting this research and tackle this study's primary objective, which is to investigate the correlation between defense attorneys' workload and their work engagement. Accordingly, this research used this research design to identify the relationship between defense attorneys' perceived workload stress in relation to their work engagement in Davao del Sur.

Respondents

To guarantee that the information gathered is pertinent to answering the research questions and objectives, study respondents must meet the requirements outlined in the study's scope (Omachinski, 2017). This study targets fifty (50) defense attorneys in any part of the province of Davao del Sur, Mindanao, Philippines, who are currently in service, regardless of their gender. To be exact, the researchers chose those who were in service for a minimum of one year before participating in this survey. This is to ensure that the selected respondents have already gained sufficient work experience and can also provide valuable insights into the challenges they face in their workplace. By focusing on this population, it aims to provide localized and targeted solutions to improve workplace conditions.

Some particular requirements are determined in terms of disqualifying someone from participating. This is to ensure that we collect the most pertinent data for our study, keeping us focused and giving us the best possible image of our target group's experiences. Hence, individuals who are not currently working as defense attorneys in Davao del Sur or who have been working in this role for less than a year will not be included in the study. This is mainly to give the assurance that everyone participating has the right kind of experience to help us understand the specific challenges faced by established defense attorneys in the area.

Sampling Technique

This study employed a non-probability sampling technique called the quota sampling procedure, a non-probability sampling technique. According to Nikopoulou (2023), the quota sampling procedure is based on the non-random selection of a predefined number or proportion of units, known as a quota. The sample derived from a quota sampling technique has comparable proportions of observations to the entire population with certain known traits or characteristics. This made it easier for the researcher to collect data that represent the diversity of a population, which will assist the researcher in better comprehending and analyzing different points of view within the research setting. In such a procedure, the researcher ensured that the final sample must satisfy the quota criteria, which include the entire sample having the same distribution of traits that were supposed to be present in the population of concern (Gordon, 2024).

This sampling procedure focuses on fifty (50) defense attorneys residing in Davao del Sur, which might be beneficial for the research and yield more insightful findings. According to Bukhari (2021), one-twenty (120) or fewer respondents are still able to yield helpful insight into how demographics engage with their work. Therefore, fifty (50) respondents could help explore and yield more insight from defense attorneys. Lawyers were categorized into subgroups based on a predetermined subgroup. This is a systematic sampling method to

ensure appropriate representation and statistical sampling of population diversity. The procedure involves email and phone solicitation to determine response rates and in-person solicitation to determine how many attorneys within each quota are obtained. As for the sample validation, the findings demonstrated whether or not quotas were met relative to expectations. It will be adjusted if the expectation is not yet met. The findings project the sampling technique because it demonstrates how good of a job and how much a job researcher is doing to meet their quotas.

Data Gathering Procedure

To conduct this study, the following procedures were followed:

1. The researchers asked the principal's permission to conduct this research and upcoming interviews
2. The researchers adapted valid survey questionnaires for this study.
3. The questionnaires were subjected to validation by professionals to determine their reliability.
4. The number of research participants was finalized following the statistician's suggested method.
5. The research proponents informed the finalized respondents about the necessary information when they chose to participate in this study. They were oriented about the ethical considerations, including their right to accept or decline the researchers' inquiry.
6. The research proponents gave the respondents who agreed to participate in the study a link to a Google form questionnaire, which they answered within the allotted time of 20 minutes only (depending on the participant's availability).
7. The questionnaires were collected, compiled, and kept safe in a place only the researchers could access. This prevented any breach of the ethical considerations that the researchers aimed to follow.
8. The collected questionnaires were analyzed, calculated, and interpreted using an objectified statistical method to obtain the appropriate results for this research study.

Measures

The research tools were utilized in the study, using two questionnaires to determine the workload and work engagement of defense attorneys. The first questionnaire was adapted into a fourteen (14) item questionnaire with two (2) indicators: job stress and workload overload from job stress, workload, environment, and employee turnover Intentions: destiny or choice (Qureshi et al., 2012).

The reliability of the adapted questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. The results indicate that both subscales demonstrated acceptable internal consistency. The Job Stressors factor, comprising 8 items, yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.71, indicating a reliable measure. The Workload factor, composed of 6 items, exhibited a higher reliability score of 0.84, also interpreted as reliable. These findings suggest that the instrument is suitable for measuring the perceived workload and stress levels among defense attorneys, providing a solid foundation for further analysis and interpretation of how these variables may impact work engagement and turnover intentions.

Table 1. Results and Interpretation of Reliability Test of Questionnaire One

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items	Interpretation
Job Stressors	0.71	8	Reliable
Workload	0.84	6	Reliable

The five-point rating system of the survey consists of low, mild, moderate, high, and extreme. To complete the questionnaire, the respondents encircled the number that complemented their selected scale. Table 2 below served as a foundation for analyzing the findings. With the diverse responses brought by the respondents, this five-point rating scale will determine the overall interpretation of their answer.

Analyzing the fifteen (15) numbered questionnaire items, the interpretation scale will determine the perceived workload stress of the respondents. With the five descriptors, extreme, high, moderate, mild, and low, these will classify a valuable interpretation of the respondents' response.

Table 2. Interpretation of Perceived Workload Stress among Respondents

Mean Score	Description	Interpretation
4.21 - 5.00	Extreme	The defense attorneys experienced extreme job stress and heavy workloads.
3.41 - 4.20	High	The defense attorneys experienced high job stress levels and work overload.
2.61 - 3.40	Moderate	The defense attorneys experienced moderate job stress and workload overload.
1.81 - 2.60	Mild	The defense attorneys experienced mild stress from the job and workload overload.
1.00 - 1.80	Low	The defense attorneys experienced low job stress and workload overload.

Another questionnaire is from The Job Engagement Scale: Development and Validation of a Short Form in English and French (Houle et al., 2022). It is an eighteen (18) item with three (3) indicators: physical, Emotional, and Cognitive engagement. This questionnaire helped the researchers assess the work engagement of defense attorneys.

Table 3. Results and Interpretation of Reliability Test of Questionnaire Two

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items	Interpretation
Physical Engagement	0.92	6	Reliable
Emotional Engagement	0.94	6	Reliable
Cognitive Engagement	0.93	6	Reliable

This survey instrument included a five-point scale ranging from low, mild, moderate, high, and extreme, reflecting defense attorneys' work engagement. Determined by the mean score reflected on the statistical report, this five-point scale will be used to analyze the interpretation of their responses.

Table 4. Interpretation of Work Engagement among Respondents

Mean Score	Description	Interpretation
4.21 - 5.00	Extreme	The defense attorneys demonstrated extreme physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement in their profession.
3.41 - 4.20	High	The defense attorneys demonstrated high physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement in their profession.
2.61 - 3.40	Moderate	The defense attorneys demonstrated moderate physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement in their profession.
1.81 - 2.60	Mild	The defense attorneys demonstrated mild physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement in their profession.
1.00 - 1.80	Low	The defense attorneys demonstrated low physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement in their profession.

By using these questionnaires, assessed and verified by their Cronbach alphas, these will provide valuable insights that are reliable for future research. The responses which will be interpreted based on either low, mild, moderate, high, or extreme category will serve as a basis for the outcome of the relationship between the perceived workload stress and work engagement of defense attorneys.

Ethical Considerations

In quantitative research, ethical considerations are one of the most important in conducting a study in different fields since they convey respect for respondents and guarantee their honest involvement. According to Mondragón Batiin et al. (2017), the dignity, rights, safety, and well-being of respondents should always come first in quantitative research involving defense lawyers. During the survey, the researchers are in charge of making sure the participants are taken care of (Barrow et al., 2022). Making sure the responses are taken care of while keeping ethical considerations in mind. To meet our obligation to safeguard respondents' privacy and ensure that they were not harmed or exploited before, during, or after the survey, the researchers will abide by these ethical principles.

Informed Consent. Respondents were informed about the benefits, drawbacks, and other aspects of being an informant in the study prior to their participation. Respondents should have the right to withdraw from the study before, during, or after the survey as part of their informed consent (Leguizamo, 2023). Researchers ensured that the respondents understood the purpose of the research, the procedure involved, and potential risks or benefits and informed them about their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Before answering the survey questionnaire, the researchers informed the participants about all the information pertaining to legal documents and consent forms that they needed to know.

Anonymity. One of our primary responsibilities as researchers is to protect the privacy of the respondents who are involved in our study. According to Saunders et al. (2015), ensuring respondents' privacy is necessary, and personal information should never be disclosed to anyone. The researcher must maintain participant confidentiality and anonymity during the study, putting their privacy first at all times. In the survey forms and questionnaires, the option to put their name or any sort of identification is optional.

Confidentiality. Confidentiality involves rules that restrict access to specific information, ensuring it remains secure and private. To protect the confidentiality of respondents and any information that could reveal their identities, researchers limited the disclosure of sensitive data to only what is relevant to the study. The researchers must safeguard respondents' confidentiality (Surmiak, 2018). Additionally, the researchers ensured that all data is stored securely and is accessible only to authorized personnel. The responses were kept confidential and made sure that it was only accessible to the researchers during the inputting of required data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data. The first part describes the levels of perceived workload stress; the second part presents the level of work engagement. In contrast, the third part presents the significance of the relationship between workload stress and work engagement among defense attorneys.

Level of Workload Stress of Defense Attorneys

Table 5 presents the level of workload stress among the respondents in terms of job stress and work overload. Based on these two factors, the respondents reported a mild level of stress, with average ratings of 2.55 for perceived job stress and 2.51 for work overload, accompanied by standard deviations of 1.11 and 0.94, respectively. These results suggest that while some respondents experience some degree of stress related to their job and workload, it is on the temperate side.

The overall level of workload stress of defense attorneys is around 2.53. This means that the defense attorneys in Davao del Sur have a mild level of workload stress. The overall standard deviation is 0.98, which indicates a negligible variation in the variable as perceived by the respondents.

Table 5. Level of Perceived Workload Stress of Defense Attorneys

	Mean	SD	Description
Job Stress			
1. I often feel stress at work	3.44	1.16	High
2. The job difficulty usually brings me sleeplessness	2.74	1.31	Moderate
3. My job makes me nervous	2.70	1.30	Moderate
4. I feel exhausted after daily work	3.24	1.33	Moderate
5. It is helpful for my health if I change my job	2.46	1.43	Mild
6. I feel weak and dispirited at work	2.24	1.35	Mild
7. I feel more hot-tempered at work	2.40	1.48	Mild
8. I feel depressed and unhappy at work	2.04	1.38	Mild
Category Mean	2.55	1.11	Mild
Work Overload			
1. I experience excessive work pressure	3.08	1.35	Moderate

2. I work for long hours, on overtime and even on holidays	3.10	1.37	Moderate
3. I am unable to meet out the demands of my job	2.00	1.18	Mild
4. I spend so long at work that my relationships are suffering	2.02	1.04	Mild
5. I'm so busy I find it increasingly difficult to concentrate on the job in front of me	2.30	1.22	Mild
6. I feel tired during the day due to excessive workload	2.58	1.33	Mild
Category Mean	2.51	0.94	Mild
Overall Mean	2.53	0.98	Mild

Table 5 presents information regarding the workload stress levels of Davao del Sur defense attorneys. Based on two variable components, the indicator with the highest mean, "often feel stressed at work," for defense attorneys, has a mean score of 3.44, which is associated with job stress. According to this, defense attorneys in Davao del Sur frequently encounter stressful situations in their line of work. On the other hand, work overload, which suggests "I am unable to meet the demands of my job," has an indicator with a mild mean score of 2.00. In their work, the defense attorneys in Davao del Sur are able to satisfy their expectations and make the most of their time.

The mean scores for various dimensions of work overload and job stress, such as stress at work, nervousness, exhaustion after the workday, and increased irritability, range from 2.00 to 3.44, all indicating a low level and high level of related concerns. This collectively suggests that the workload stress experienced by defense attorneys in Davao del Sur is relatively low.

The overall mean workload stress score of 2.53 supports the observation, indicating the mild level of occupational strain on defense attorneys in Davao Del Sur. This means that although the defense attorneys can manage their workload overall, they are still subject to considerable stressors, most notably in terms of frequent job-related stress (mean = 3.44), nervousness (mean = 2.70), and daily exhaustion (mean = 3.24). These factors contribute to a low level of stress for defense attorneys in Davao del Sur. Their ability to effectively manage their responsibilities in handling client cases, coupled with a strong awareness of their capabilities, significantly minimizes job and workload stress.

The results of the analysis of the level of workload stress among defense lawyers in Davao Del Sur indicate that, although the general average stress is moderate (mean = 2.53), certain areas indicate higher degrees of stress. For instance, the lawyers indicated high degrees of stress in feeling stressed at work (mean = 3.44), feeling nervous (mean = 2.70), and feeling tired (mean = 3.24). These mild mean scores reveal that these particular issues are milder issues for the lawyers than other items in the table. This reveals that although their overall stress is mild, these specific areas are not giving them extreme trouble. Similarly, work overload is also a cause of their little stress, with mild scores being near moderate, such as experiencing work pressure (mean= 3.08) and working long hours (mean= 3.10). These factors suggest that while the stress from workload is not extreme, it remains a consistent source of pressure on the defense attorney. The findings support Leafcourt (2015) that defense attorneys must understand their responsibilities, restrict the number of cases they accept to prevent situations in which they are under pressure and accept the natural demands of their profession, even if it creates mild personal stress. As a result of recognizing the defense attorney's obligations and bounds, the defense attorney who follows these elements is more likely to experience mild stress on the job and the workloads they handle. While the overall stress level is not alarming, these findings highlight the importance of targeted interventions to address the emotional and physical toll of the profession, ensuring that defense attorneys can perform effectively without affecting their well-being and while dealing with mild problems that they experienced in their fields.

The highest mean score in the analysis pertains to Often Feel Stress at Work, indicating that attorneys of Davao del Sur experienced high levels of stress at work. This finding resonates with previous research in the study of Brody et al. (2020), which stated that attorneys who specialize in defense frequently encounter elevated levels of occupational stress and secondary traumatic stress. Such stress can significantly affect the job performance of defense attorneys.

The defense attorney's inability to fulfill the demands of their employment is linked to the lowest mean score of 2.00. The statement, "I am unable to meet the demands of my job," indicates that the defense attorney from Davao del Sur has not had enough exposure to or experience with workload cases and poor service. This finding correlates with the study of Watanabe (2019), which stated that defense lawyers' performance cannot keep up with the demands of their employment if they lack sufficient case-handling experience or poor service. Nonetheless, the results demonstrate that defense lawyers are confident in their ability to satisfy their client's needs or their work.

Level of Work Engagement of Defense Attorneys

Table 6 shows the level of work engagement of the defense attorneys in terms of physical engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement. Based on these factors, the respondents rated an extreme level of work engagement in physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Physical engagement acquired an average rating of 4.34 and a standard deviation of 0.66. With it having the highest ratings in the result it indicates that Davao del Sur's defense attorneys are extremely engaged in their jobs physically rather than in terms of cognitive and emotional involvement. This suggests that the respondents exhibit an extreme involvement in their work, both physically and cognitively. Meanwhile, the emotional engagement acquired a high rating of 4.17 with a standard deviation of 0.93. This average indicates an extreme level of work engagement among defense attorneys in their respective jobs. Therefore, this implies that defense attorneys in Davao del Sur are highly engaged in their work, indicating that they exert full effort to meet the demands of their work.

Meanwhile, physical engagement, which suggests "I work with intensity on my job," has the indicator with the lowest mean score of 3.92. Therefore, defense attorneys in Davao del Sur perform their role to the best of their ability, equipped with dedication to fulfill their responsibilities. On the other hand, the emotional engagement component shows a mean score of 4.04, specifically on the "I am enthusiastic about my job" and "I feel energetic on my job." This explains that defense attorneys are highly enthusiastic and energetic when on duty. Furthermore, the cognitive engagement of defense attorneys results in "I am absorbed by my job" as the one with the lowest mean score of 4.02. That outcome implies that defense attorneys are passionate and are therefore taken up by their job.

The defense attorneys in Davao del Sur have an extreme level of work engagement, gaining an overall mean score of 4.28 and an overall standard deviation of 0.65, indicating a negligible variation on the variable as perceived by the respondents.

Table 6. Level of Work Engagement of Defense Attorneys in Davao Del Sur

	Mean	SD	Description
Physical Engagement			
1. I work with intensity on my job	3.92	1.01	High
2. I exert my full effort on my job	4.40	0.88	Extreme
3. I devote a lot of energy on my job	4.34	0.69	Extreme
4. I try my hardest to perform well on my job	4.58	0.76	Extreme
5. I strive as hard as I can to complete my job	4.44	0.86	Extreme
6. I exert a lot of energy on my job	4.34	0.72	Extreme
Category Mean	4.34	0.66	Extreme
Emotional Engagement			
1. I am enthusiastic about my job	4.04	1.19	High
2. I feel energetic on my job	4.04	1.11	High
3. I am interested on my job	4.26	0.99	Extreme
4. I am proud of my job	4.38	0.95	Extreme
5. I am positive about my job	4.20	1.03	High
6. I am excited about my job	4.12	1.12	High
Category Mean	4.17	0.93	High

Cognitive Engagement			
1. At work, my mind is focused on my job	4.28	0.78	Extreme
2. At work, I pay a lot of my attention to my job	4.50	0.65	Extreme
3. At work, I focus on a great deal of attention on my job	4.44	0.73	Extreme
4. At work, I am absorbed by my job	4.02	1.02	High
5. At work, I concentrate on my job	4.34	0.85	Extreme
6. At work, I devote a lot of attention to my job	4.32	0.84	Extreme
Category Mean	4.32	0.68	Extreme
Overall Mean	4.28	0.65	Extreme

Table 6 presents data regarding the work engagement of defense attorneys in Davao del Sur, focusing on three components: Physical, Emotional, and Cognitive engagement. Among these, the indicator with the highest mean score, "I try my hardest to perform well on my job," achieved a mean of 4.58, reflecting an extreme level of Physical Engagement. This suggests that defense attorneys in Davao del Sur consistently exert significant effort to engage in their work physically. However, the Physical Engagement item "I work with intensity on my job" recorded a high mean score of 3.92, indicating that despite the intensity of their work, defense attorneys are able to maintain a high level of engagement.

The mean scores for various dimensions of Physical, Emotional, and Cognitive engagement, such as working despite the intensity of the job, mood, and focus, ranged from 3.92 to 4.58, all of which suggest a high to extreme level of work engagement. These findings collectively indicate that defense attorneys in Davao del Sur experience an extreme level of work engagement.

The overall mean work engagement score of 4.28 further supports this observation, confirming that defense attorneys in the region are extremely engaged and dedicated to their work. Despite the challenges they face, they consistently strive to perform at their best (mean = 4.58), demonstrate enthusiasm (mean = 4.04), and remain absorbed in their jobs (mean = 4.02). These factors contribute to extreme work engagement, as defense attorneys effectively manage their responsibilities and exhibit a strong emotional connection to their work.

The results also indicate that, while the overall work engagement score is extreme (mean = 4.28), certain areas reveal just high levels of engagement. Specifically, the exertion of effort to perform well (mean = 3.92), enthusiasm (mean = 4.04), and absorption in their work (mean = 4.02) were rated slightly lower compared to other indicators in the table. These findings suggest that while the overall work engagement is extreme, certain aspects of engagement, particularly those related to effort, enthusiasm, and absorption, are of a high degree, reflecting the defense attorneys' focused and committed approach to their work despite the stress they encounter. This study backs up Baragiola's (2024) assertion that employee engagement is a crucial component of any successful company, including law firms. In law companies, extreme employee engagement levels result in higher output, happier clients, and less turnover. Furthermore, Dorion (2018) stated that employee engagement is crucial to both productivity and employee involvement. Lack of participation can cause a person to feel disoriented, undervalued, or just excluded from the company's culture, which can lower motivation and job satisfaction in general. Being physically present is only one aspect of employee engagement; another is the emotional commitment and investment that staff members have in their jobs and the company. In contrast, Williams (2018) stated that excessive work involvement or overworking is frequently interpreted as an indication of dedication, responsiveness, and a positive outlook. However, it becomes impossible to contribute significantly or do your best work when the mounting strain results in burnout. Moreover, the Gartner (2021) survey found that 54% of corporate lawyers report feeling somewhat weary, with 20% reporting being really exhausted. The legal department, the personnel themselves, and the firm as a whole suffer significantly as a result of this tiredness. This study indicates that excessive work engagement can lead to burnout and fatigue, but it is also crucial to increase engagement for more significant outcomes and productivity. Overall, the findings indicate that the defense attorneys showed interest in their work and made a determination to please their clients and maintain a calm workplace.

Relationship between Perceived Workload Stress and Work Engagement of Defense Attorneys

Table 7 shows the results of the correlation analysis between workload stress experienced by attorneys in Davao del Sur and their work engagement. It can be noted that the Pearson correlation coefficient is -0.203,

indicating a negative correlation between the two variables. Additionally, the p-value is 0.157, which is greater than the level of significance set at 0.05, meaning that the correlation between the variables is not statistically significant. This suggests that, despite the negative correlation observed, the relationship between workload stress and work engagement is not strong enough to be considered significant.

Table 7. Significance of the Relationship between Workload Stress and Work Engagement among Defense Attorneys

Variables Reviewed	p-value	Pearson's r value	Decision	Interpretation
Workload Stress and Work Engagement	0.157	-0.203	Failed to Reject H_0	Negative Correlation (Not Significant)

Furthermore, Table 7 presents the results examining the relationship between workload stress and work engagement. The p-value of 0.157 indicates no significant relationship between workload stress and work engagement, meaning this study has failed to reject the null hypothesis. These results contradict the common assumption that higher workload stress affects the work engagement of defense attorneys. This finding is inconsistent with the study of Lee and Kim (2020), which states that excessive job stress reduces an employee's ability to engage meaningfully with work due to emotional exhaustion and burnout. However, the results align with the findings of Briones (2023), who studied workload stress and engagement in a manufacturing setting and found that stress had no significant effect on employee motivation or productivity.

Similarly, Sawir (2021) found that job stress did not significantly affect work engagement or performance, emphasizing that external factors such as organizational support and work-life balance play a more important role in sustaining engagement. These findings suggest that defense attorneys in Davao del Sur may have coping mechanisms or workplace support that allow them to remain engaged despite their workload stress.

Additionally, this finding aligns with the Job-Demands-Resources (JD-R) model in 2006, which explains how the balance between job demands and available resources influences defense attorneys' work engagement. A high workload and emotional strain can deplete engagement, while supportive resources, such as institutional support and autonomy, can sustain motivation. This model is crucial in understanding how defense attorneys navigate stress and maintain their commitment to legal service.

Overall, the findings indicate no statistically significant relationship between workload stress and work engagement, as evidenced by a p-value of 0.157 and a Pearson's r-value of -0.203. Since the p-value exceeds the standard significance threshold, the null hypothesis is not rejected, suggesting that workload stress does not have a meaningful impact on defense attorneys' work engagement. These results imply that other factors, such as personal resilience, job resources, or external support systems, may play a more influential role in maintaining engagement despite workload stress.

Summary

This study aimed to analyze how defense attorneys' perceived workload stress impacts their work engagement, providing insight into how legal practitioners handle wearisome responsibilities in the law field of Davao Del Sur. This study employed a quota sampling technique to investigate the perceptions of fifty (50) attorneys as respondents. The study evaluated various indicators of perceived workload stress, such as job stress and work overload. Furthermore, this study assessed work engagement, namely physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement, using quota sampling. It adopted questionnaires to further reliability in testing insights into workload stress and its effect on engagement.

Results showed complex responses from attorneys around Davao del Sur, indicating that defense attorneys have affinity despite engaging in different levels of workload. In conclusion, the mild level of perceived workload stress and the extreme level of work engagement play beneficial aspects in related studies. These findings insinuate that perceived workload stress does not significantly impact the work engagement of defense attorneys, suggesting that workload levels and the underlying stressors have no relationship to their involvement in their work engagement.

CONCLUSION

After a thorough investigation of the variable in this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Defense attorneys have a mild level of perceived workload stress. This indicates that there is a lenient amount of stress coming from workload despite the high rise of cases in particular areas.
2. The work engagement of defense attorneys in Davao del Sur was extreme. This suggests that the physical, emotional, and cognitive involvement of defense attorneys in their jobs extracts maximum results.
3. The perceived workload stress of defense attorneys in Davao Del Sur does not significantly impact their work engagement. This signifies that work engagement does not rely on personal predicaments, nor is the amount of obligation distributed or chosen by each attorney.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the study's findings on the perceived workload stress and work engagement of defense attorneys in Davao Del Sur, the following recommendations are made to address key insights and guide future research on these topics.

1. PAO (Public Attorneys Office) Personnel should consider the well-being of their employees, given that cases are handed out to them without having to choose what or how many cases to represent. This might increase work engagement and job satisfaction, as well as work-life balance between their professional background and social communications within their community.
2. Private Law Firm managers who are advanced in an organized and balanced setting should assess and improve their prospects, evaluate comparability to other law firms, and instigate the high rise of cases within their area. This can promote stability in legal professions and a productive and healthy environment.
3. Defense Attorneys should design and practice clear objectives in decision-making, stressors, and engagement influence. Moreover, they should analyze and suggest practical interventions to lessen stress that might affect their work and representation. This is crucial to ensuring that the justice system remains fair and well-thought-of, as well as providing quality work to their clients and the society they partake in.
4. Law students should consider their approaches to their future profession and the underlying factors that come with it. They should apply logical decision-making strategies when facing future problems and ensure practical ways to stay engaged in their workplace. This might increase the engrossment of other students and surge their drive to be a part of these legal professions.
5. Future researchers should expand the scope of this study and specifically target and dissect several factors that will lead to a thorough understanding and investigation of the relationship between these two variables.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researchers would like to express their heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to all the people who have supported them throughout this journey of conducting and writing this research.

First and foremost, the researchers would like to praise and give thanks to the Almighty God for His divine presence, unending blessings, spiritual guidance, and wisdom, which enabled them to navigate the process of conducting this research.

To our research adviser, Dr. Chenie T. Gonzales, for her expertise, constant motivation, guidance, patience, and understanding throughout this research journey. Her commitment to excellence and the researcher's academic growth have made a significant contribution to the completion of the study.

The researcher would also like to express their sincere gratitude to the esteemed panel members, Mdm. Almira A. Batulanon, Mr. Michael Llagas and Mr. Michael Aquino. Their insightful feedback and critical evaluation

have played an essential role in refining the quality of this research.

To our statistician, Sir Clefford Jay Bacan, for his help and knowledge, which helped us attain great success with this research. To our grammarian, who provided extensive service for the quality and approach of this study.

Finally, to our participants, without them, this study would not have been possible. Their unique views and responses have provided us with everything that we need for this study.

REFERENCES

1. Attorney engagement: a growing concern in the legal profession. (2023, September 10). Legal.io. <https://10.33167/2184-0644.CPP2019.VVN1/pp.231-245>
2. Baragiola, E. (2024, June 10). Enhancing employee engagement in law firms: A comprehensive guide. LinkedIn. <https://103316/2184-0644.CPP2019.VVN1/pp.231-245>
3. Bowling, N. A., & Kirkendall, C. (2012). Workload: A review of causes, consequences, and potential interventions. In J. Houdmont, S. Lena, & R. R. Sinclair (Eds.), *Contemporary occupational health psychology: Global perspective on research and practice*, Vol. 2, pp. 221–238). Wiley Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119942849.ch13>
4. Brody, et al. (2020). An exploratory study of occupational and secondary traumatic stress among a mid-sized public defenders' office. <https://doi.org/10.21428/b6e95092.bd0b6f19>
5. Damayanti, D. D., Fadilla, T., Alamanda, K. P., & Mseps, P. (2022). Effect workload on work stress to district attorney employee in Samarinda. *Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Manajemen*, 16(2), 96 – 102. <https://doi.org/10.30650/jem.v16i2.3622>
6. Dotson et al. (2020). An exploratory study of occupation and secondary traumatic stress among a mid-sized public defenders' office. <https://tinyurl.com/25j8w8zn>
7. Herawati, H., Setyadi, D., Michael, M., & Hikayatin, T. (2023). The effect of workloads, supervisor, and coworkers supports on job performing through job satisfaction. *International Journal of Finance, Economics and Business*, 2(1), 13–33. <https://doi.org/10.56225/ijfeb.v2i1.168>
8. Lu, R., & Brody, D. (2019). The impact of serious occupational stress on indigent defense attorneys. *Criminal Law Bulletin* 55, 30-49. <https://tinyurl.com/yc8kx529>
9. Lu & Brody (2019). The impact of serious occupational stress on indigent defense attorneys. <https://tinyurl.com/yer3fr5r>
10. Norton et al., (2015). Burnout and compassion fatigue: What lawyers need to know. <https://tinyurl.com/3458hpse>
11. Pace et al., (2023). National public defense workload study. <https://tinyurl.com/2754ba45> Pace, N. M., Brink, M. N., Lee, C. G., & Hanlon, S. F. (2023, July 27). National public defense workload study. <https://tinyurl.com/hp9pxkvx>
12. Phan, M. T. (2020). Factors influencing job satisfaction and performance of the lawyers in Vietnam. *Management Science Letters*, 1981-1992. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2020.2.014>
13. Saunders, B., Kitzinger, J., & Kitzinger, C. (2015). Anonymizing interview data: Challenges and compromise in practice. *Qualitative Research*, 15(5), 616-632. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794114550439>
14. Sholilah, M. H., Tjaraka, H. (2024). The influence of recruitment policy, psychological support, and job say on civil servant retention at the attorney general's office. *EKOMBIS REVIEW: Journal Ilmiah Ekonomi Dan Bisnis*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.37676/ekombis.v12i2>
15. Sumarsid, et al. (2023). Factors affecting work quality and work motivation on employee performance. <https://www.ije2.esc-id.org/index.php/home/article/download/146/152>
16. Surmiak, A. D. (2018). Confidentiality in qualitative research involving vulnerable participants: Researchers' perspectives. *Forum qualitative sozialforschung forum: qualitative social research*, 19(3). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-19.3.3099>
17. Super, D. & Sy, M. (2024). Structural equation model on work engagement of cooperative employees in Davao Region, 8(1), 836-849. art traumatic stress. Such stress can greatly affect the job performance of defense attorneys. <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.801063>

-
18. Watanabe, E. (2019). The impact of the importance of lawyers on judicial proceedings: a literature review. <https://10.33167/2184-0644.CPP2019.VVN1/po.231-245>
 19. Teichmann, M., Mattel, K., Murder, M., & Kerimmäe, T. (2015). Source of occupational pressure among lawyers and legal professionals. *Mezinárodní a Srovnávací Právní revue/International and comparative law review*, 15(1), 87–107. <https://doi.org/10.1515/iclr-2016-0029>