

**MODERATING ROLE OF SOCIAL ISOLATION ON THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND MENTAL WELLBEING AMONG
FISHERMEN IN WENNAPPUWA, SRI LANKA**

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ABSTRACT

This study is crucial as it sheds light on the unique challenges faced by fishermen in Wennappuwa, Sri Lanka, a community in which occupational stress is deeply intertwined with the demands of their livelihoods. The primary objective was to assess how different stressors, such as work overload, safety concerns, career development issues, and workplace conflicts, affect the mental well-being of this population. Prior research has focused primarily on occupational stress and mental well-being in various professional contexts, such as medical and police services, with limited attention paid to fishermen. Studies have examined moderator variables, such as COVID-19-related trauma, but have not specifically investigated social isolation. Internationally, research on these topics has been conducted; however, there is a gap in studies addressing occupational stress and mental well-being among fishermen in Sri Lanka. This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between occupational stress and mental well-being among fishermen in Wennappuwa, Sri Lanka. Data collection was conducted via structured questionnaires, ensuring reliable measurement of variables. A stratified random sample of 183 fishermen was selected from a population of 350 based on the Morgan table. This study tested eight hypotheses on how occupational stress impacts fishermen's mental well-being in Wennappuwa, Sri Lanka, including the moderating role of social isolation. Data were analyzed using the Pearson product-moment correlation, multiple regression, and moderation analyses. The results revealed a significant negative correlation between occupational stress and mental wellbeing. Specific dimensions of occupational stress, including safety concerns, work overload, career issues, job control, hazards, and conflict were also significantly related to mental well-being. However, social isolation did not significantly moderate the relationship between occupational stress and mental wellbeing. In conclusion, this study revealed a significant negative relationship between occupational stress and mental well-being among fishermen in Wennappuwa and Sri Lanka. While various dimensions of occupational stress were found to impact mental well-being, social isolation did not moderate this relationship, as hypothesized. These findings underscore the importance of addressing occupational stressors in fishing communities to improve their mental health outcomes. Further research and targeted interventions are needed to support the well-being of this vital yet vulnerable workforce.

Keywords: Career, conflict, fisherman, job control, hazards, occupational stress, overload, safety, social isolation, mental wellbeing