Impact of Technology, Job Complexity, and Mental Health in High-Stress Organizations: A Narrative Review on Security Services

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Abstract

Background

Mental health results in high-stress organizational environments for security services personnel who work in military roles and paramilitary units and cyber-defense positions and correctional sectors. Digital transformation increases operational efficiency yet produces technostress and role ambiguity and cognitive overload.

Method

The literature review synthesized research between 2015 and 2025 through automated and manual academic database searches that followed PRISMA 2020 flowchart methodology. The research analyzed multiple eligible studies about technostress and job complexity effects on mental health in security service personnel.

Results

The findings demonstrate that technology serves a dual purpose to enhance situational awareness and decision-making but simultaneously creates burnout through techno-overload techno-invasion and techno-uncertainty. Poor supervisory support and excessive administrative duties create additional stressors which intensify the existing organizational strain. The protective factors for stress reduction include adaptive leadership alongside positive digital climates together with job control and individual resources consisting of autonomy and optimism and self-efficacy.

Discussion

The review demonstrates that technostress and job complexity together with organizational stressors create mental health problems in security personnel. The Job Demands–Resources model helps explain these organizational dynamics by showing how specific role stressors can be reduced through targeted organizational resources.

Conclusion

The psychological health of security personnel faces both helpful and harmful effects because of technological systems and job-related

complexities. The success of high-stress security operations depends on specific interventions which protect job satisfaction and resilience and ensure sustainable performance.

Keywords: Technostress; Security Services; Job Complexity; Coping; Psychological Well-Being

Introduction

Security Services do not primarily constitute military personnel or those from the law enforcement agencies, but many other job profiles can be referred to those who work as Security Services like Correctional Officers who handle administration and rehabilitation in correctional facilities (Finney et al., 2013). They go beyond VIP protector, Cash-in-transit security staff, Private security personnel, Security guards, etc., all are included within this broad field of security service personnel, a field characterized by working in high-stress organizations (Sayed et al., 2019).

But there limits to who is referred to as a 'security service personnel' and what kind of stressful environment they must work in has blurred over time with the prevalent usage of technology, increasing levels of job complexity and the nature of security service responsibilities (Rodrigues & Guest, 2010). Armed forces, police officers and emergency services had to devote an inordinate amount of time to categorize and dispatch officers to sites, provide local protection and then do paperwork of crimes or law enforcement tasks for future reference, which had become increasingly overwhelming. This mandated the development of a system with a call-taker at its core that connects to the caller, to perform all those administrable tasks. This system being referred to is the '911 system' of the United States to handle and ease logistics tasks for emergency services to avoid chaotic handling of tasks (Neusteter et al., 2019, p. 1)

Being a Security Service Personnel working in a high-stress environment where not just the everyday complexity of the situation might influence the well-being of the individual but also their roles and responsibilities performed. Job satisfaction plays a major role in ensuring well-being, adding the element of choice in such cases can provide individuals with higher sense of career control (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017; Zhuang et al., 2021) thereby improving their well-being in a high-stress environment. Hales (2024) reported that security service is an on-site job requiring if not 24/7 service, but for majority period of the day, this got completely hindered during the COVID-19 pandemic. Working remotely in a job that demanded physical attention & labour, now with the stress of the COVID & the pandemic created a stressful scenario for them (Horeh & Brown, 2020).

Technostress refers as the stress that stems from inability to cope with the information and communication technology (ICT) use (Brod, 1984, p. 16; Ertiö et al., 2024). Bhatt & Kothari (2022) in their systematic literature review reported the individual level impact of technostress, which included negative self-evaluations, decreased organizational commitments, headaches, back pain and eye strain due to excessive use of technology to cope up. Personnel in digitally-ever-changing security services job settings like cybersecurity may continually upskill themselves to keep up with the pacing changes, increasing technostress (Rodríguez et al., 2023).

Security services, whether law enforcement, cybersecurity or other fields of security services, technostress is increased (consistent with Rodríguez et al., 2023) and line of work-life boundaries becoming significantly blurred by the evident penetration of technology within our lives, but it simultaneously may even induce feelings of missing out (FOMO) important work-related tasks (Ertiö et al., 2024, p. 401).

Rationale

There have been many research that addresses the issue of technostress in different fields of work and domains of duties but almost no research has been done to understand the levels of technostress experienced by personnel working in security services. This research gap made it extremely difficult to collate research articles on the impact of technology-driven stress experienced by individuals working in this sector of the industry. This prompted the need to collate information on the universal impact of technostress on individuals, to understand and predict the same for security forces while acknowledging and incorporating other factors.

The job of security and law enforcement isn't easy and has been considered as one of the most demanding jobs in the world, needing consistent attention to detail and maintenance of one's feelings and cognitive functioning to ensure the security of the security detail, and any changes in one's abilities would mean the question of one's own safety. Research gaps have even been identified in researches that discussed the nature of security service jobs. Most research papers discussed the complexity of environment in which they worked, but the complexities of the job were not discussed in relation to the security services.

Methodology

Aim: The aim of the present study is to synthesize existing literature on the interplay between technology intensity, job complexity and mental health outcomes within the context of security services.

Objectives : The following objectives have been aimed to be fulfilled –

- To synthesize literature on the interplay between technology, job complexity and mental health within context of security services.
- To evaluate the association between increased levels of digitization and stress experienced by the security services to keep up with it.
- To understand the impact of working in high-stress organization, technostress and job complexity on mental health of security service personnel.

Research Questions: The current study seeks to provide empirical answers to the following –

- How does increasing digitization in a job impact the well-being of security service personnel?
- How is job complexity and mental health of security service personnel associated with each other?
- What kind of relationship exists between working in a high-stress organization and the mental-health outcome of the security service personnel?
- How is well-being of the security service personnel impacted by the interaction of job complexity, high-stress organization and technostress?
- What recommendations could be made to aid the members of security service in dealing with the negative outcomes of such interactions?

Eligibility Criteria: The study required a specific number of research papers which were identified through automated and manual search results that followed established inclusion and exclusion criteria during screening and assessment to produce the final results.

Research Design: The research methodology chosen for the present study is a 'Narrative Review'. The methodology was chosen identifying the niche characteristics of the study found out during the preliminary research for the topic, as explained in the rationale section of the study. Narrative Review was chosen as a methodology to synthesize a singular body of knowledge around the chosen topic, or variable chosen to understand its impact on the security service personnel due to the limited number of studies that researched around the topic.

Database Selection: The topic chosen for the study involves synthesis of present literature, for this several research papers were required for analysis and utilization in the present study, done via following software across Google Scholar that was available for open access -

Harzing's Publish or Perish 8:

The software enables automatic research result generation through a single command which searches across databases including Google Scholar and Springer and Elsevier and Semantics Scholar and CrossRef and PubMed. Summary counts retrieved from the openly accessible research platforms are enumerated within Table 1.

Zotero:

The research findings obtained from various databases through Harzing were transferred to Zotero using an RIS file for free reference management. The software enabled us to evaluate the first set of research findings to determine which results would enter the study.

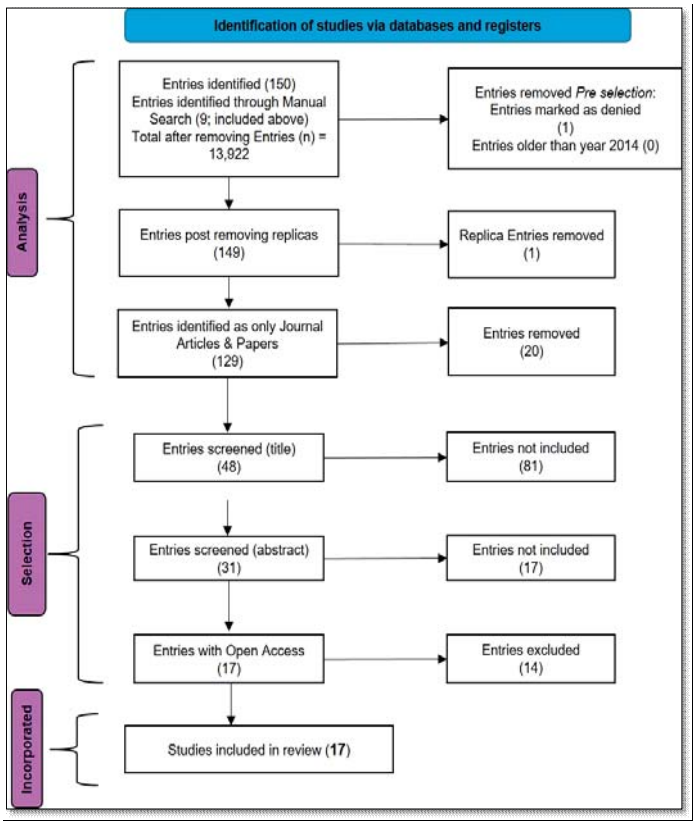
Table 1. : Results post performing an automated search strategy in Harzing's Publish

	Number of Results obtained (N)
Database	
Google Scholar	142
Automated Total	142
Search Method	
Automated Search	142
Manual Search	9
Combined Total	151
Included Total	149

The keywords utilized to conduct an automated search on Harzing for research results included – "technology"; "job complexity"; "well-being"; "security personnel"; "technostress." Out of 151 research results that were obtained, only 149 research results were included due to removal of 2 research results, 1 that was retracted by author and 1 which was a duplicate.

Using the PRISMA 2020 Flowchart: The research employed the updated PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram to transform the draft database of research outputs into a definitive corpus for inclusion in this study. The PRISMA 2020 aids in removing research material that did not fulfill PRISMA 2020 conditions or inclusion criteria of the study, unrelated source of information, and any possible duplicity of research results. It was done to ensure that the final list retains a high proportion of research results and low numbers of extraneous researches. Figure 1 illustrates the PRISMA 2020 Flowchart that was followed for the present study.

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Chart - narrative



Results & Discussion

Researchers Ricciardelli et al. (2023) focus on the well-being of police officers, arguing how they are both reactive and proactive members of the security service, being able to do much to deal with and change their job environment to ensure well-being (Parker et al., 2019, as cited in Sonnentag et al., 2023). But, the well-being of officers is at significant risk due to the high level of administrative engagement accompanied with each case. While improvement of technology has eased a lot of the process by making the process paperless, yet documentations required for each case is increasing (Brodeur and Dupont, 2005; Chan, 2007; Lum and Koper, 2013; Malm et al., 2005; Ricciardelli et al., 2020) a time-consuming and resource-exhaustive process, from where the resources may be better to be distributed to policing but hasn't been due to poor management (Queirós et al., 2020).

Organizational stressors are what impacts the officers and individuals the most (Ricciardelli et al., 2020), fulfilling a responsibility that is not directly impacting the main duty and is not enjoyable, reducing their job satisfaction levels. Over 88% of the sample in Queirós et al. (2020) showcased burnout and cognitive overload besides high stress levels due to operational and organizational stressors or job demands (consistent with the burnout-job demand association proposed by Lesener et al., 2019). Individuals were characterized in this study (see Queirós et al., 2020) with low resilience (53.8%), psychological exhaustion (12.2%), indolence (10.2%) and guilt (low guilt, high burnout – 103% and high guilt, high burnout – 9.5%).

The psychological impact on the security service personnel, like the case of police officers above, are wide-ranging, the burnout related to the insurmountable amount of paperwork, feelings of hopelessness, no break from paperwork even when away on leave, and the feeling of doing unnecessary tasks (Ricciardelli et al., 2023, p. 523). Officers recount that at times the paperwork weighs them down so much that performing key policing tasks becomes difficult, this has contributed to the feelings of discouragement and not fulfilling their true potential in the job. Officers recount the direct impact of the paperwork and other organizational issues like maintaining paperwork to ensure clean audits, avoid supervisor's reproach on any paperwork-related issues, and technological-redundancies to be key component of frustration in their job. An officer expressed how the paperwork as largely changed the officer's attitude –

"pessimistic and being in a rotten mood, but a lot of the time we feel like some of the resources are just nagging us and ah we feel like okay 'what is the point of this?' We feel like they're … they're hounding us for certain information, and we're having to fill out a form and send it to them so they can justify their job" (Ricciardelli et al., 2023, as cited in International Journal of Police Science & Management, p. 523)

Baeriswyl et al. (2016) demonstrated similar issues in case of airport security officers (or screeners), where workload, job complexity and supervisor support (equivalent to management in case of Ricciardelli et al., 2023) played antecedent roles in ensuring job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion of personnel (consistent with recommendations of Sonnentag et al., 2023). The researchers adopt the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) to elaborate upon the results consistent with Sonnentag et al. (2010) and Van Ruysseveldt et al. (2011). The analysis indicates that the perceived support of supervisors functions as a significant forerunner of job satisfaction among screeners; this influence acts as a substantive human need within the motivational framework. These results can also be understood in broad case of the security services, where increasing job complexity levels may require emotional support and mental health aids that can be easily provided by emotionally intelligent or supportive supervisors (Ertiö et al., 2024; Nielsen et al., 2017; Rohwer et al., 2022; Sonnentag et al., 2023). Technostress manifest in certain personnel as fatigue, irritability, intolerance, distress, despair, and even depression (Brod, 1984; Salanova et al., 2013) all that could be mitigated by effective leadership (Ertiö et al., 2024).

Ertiö et al. (2024) argues that digital leadership is important in mitigating technostress experienced by personnel in a negative digital climate, effective leadership that engages all personnel, by being communicative on the information

related to technology, being transparent to ensure emotional investment and motivation of the personnel, showcasing trust by being personnel-focused and building supportive team-networks to deal with the changing scenarios of the job environment. These interventions support building positive digital climate where well-being of personnel are prioritized leading to better performance, higher engagement and positive organizational outcomes (Avtalion et al., 2025, p. 78993). The results can systematically be used to understand the situation for security services who experience similar conditions and may be mitigated using the recommendations suggested.

Bakker & Demerouti (2018) help us understand the impact of technostress and the role of high-stress organizations or supervisors in dealing with the mental health outcomes of the security service personnel working in highly complex job settings, the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014; 2017) seems to best explain the interaction and methods of mitigation. The model explains how working conditions influence employees and vice versa, subsequently the impact this exchange has on the well-being of the personnel. The theory divides job characteristics such as job demands (which are costing to the individual as workload, conflicts or complex tasks like technostress; LePine et al., 2005) and job resources (aspects of work that aid in dealing with the demands and achieving their goals). Deci and Ryan (1985) studied the needs of individuals and how their subjective well-being is thereby impacted due to obstruction in meeting their goals or dealing with hindrances, here competence, relatedness and autonomy in job constitute the needs of the personnel meant to be fulfilled.

Overexposure to job demands, here technostress, could initiate health-impairment process which may transform to chronic overload and emotional exhaustion leading to possible cardiovascular diseases (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018, p. 2). It is recommended by authors that job resources mean to help in tackling job demands must be job-specific and be tailored according to the needs of the job complexities (De Jonge & Dormann, 2006). In case of security services where the job complexities and dangers of the job may cause workload or emotional fatigue, it is suggested that skills of autonomy, optimism, self-efficacy, and sense of pro-social impact to deal with the job demands may be considered to cope up and ensure positive mental health outcomes for the individual (Sonnentag et al., 2023; consistent with Hobfoll, 2001, as cited in Bakker & Demerouti, 2018, p. 3). Perception of control over job or its environment provides a great deal of psychological security to an individual helping them utilize their personal resources and molding their environment to best suit their resources and deal with job demands, also called Job Crafting (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Sonnentag et al., 2023), as mentioned above to handle job complexities and uncertainties (as experienced by federal officers in Sayed et al., 2019).

Individuals experience several stressors that hamper their well-being consistently, from paperwork to scheduling tasks and digitalization of documents make the officers overwhelmed and overloaded, never experiencing reprieve from menial administrative tasks with no value for police officers (consistent with findings of Rodríguez et al., 2023). They label themselves as having made "walking statistics" and "paperboys" by the law enforcement leaving them feeling "jaded", "disgruntled", "angry", and "stupid" (Ricciardelli et al., 2023, p. 525). Similar research conducted by Sayed et al. (2019), evaluates well-being of federal officers that gets impacted due to the ever-increasing workplace stress experienced by them. Federal Officers in the study explored more organizational issues experienced by officers who work in a different nature of job and environment, compared to the police officers in the study by Ricciardelli et al. (2023). The researchers identified five main problems which included unsupportive supervisors and conflicting information and shifting priorities and unequal case distribution and time management between tasks and occupational hazards as separate from organizational issues (Sayed et al., 2019, p. 416).

Job Complexity of those working in the security services get overarching when their job becomes uncertain or monotonous. Recounting the statements of police officers from the study of Ricciardelli et al. (2023), where one was buried in paperwork, if one imagines an dystopian situation

where one neither has any paperwork, nor any policing to do, due to the inappropriate assignment of cases or acceptance of menial cases like minor domestic disputes or an individual leaving a minor scratch on someone's car, one's job responsibilities may feel ill-compensated due to the monotonous nature of the tasks assigned. Federal Officers recount similar accounts, where both police chiefs and officers are absorbed in menial tasks like paperwork, filing reports, and meetings, which made upto 70% of their total worktime (Korre et al., 2014, as cited in Sayed et al., 2019).

The cyclic shifts from sudden 'burst stress' to overloaded work is a prominent cause of stress as having negative psychological and physiological impacts (Kerley, 2005; Roberts & Levenson, 2001). Technostress prevention strategies could help tackle these issues progressively, these strategies are universal and could be utilized by anyone belonging to any field (Hajam & Ahmed, 2023; Berger et al., 2024). For example, being mindful about one's interaction with technology and associated stress and practicing mindfulness practices would help tackle burnout (Ioannou, 2023; Luken & Sammons, 2016).

The growing digitalization in society produces both positive and negative aspects. The introduction of technology into the workplace has resulted in administrative process streamlining but also created technostress which includes work overload and blurred boundaries and constant upskilling demands (Brod, 1984; Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008; Bhatt & Kothari, 2022; Rodríguez et al., 2023). Security service employees in cybersecurity and law enforcement sectors reveal that digitalization results in extended work hours while diminishing their independence and increasing their mental pressures rather than enhancing their well-being (Ertiö et al., 2024; Avtalion et al., 2025).

High job complexity has a direct link to psychological exhaustion while also affecting resilience and emotional labor (Queirós et al., 2020; Ricciardelli et al., 2023). Federal and police personnel report enduring overwhelming documentation requirements while handling conflicting responsibilities and emotionally intense situations which result in burnout (Sayed et al., 2019). Research indicated that gender-based differences emerged through emotional exhaustion affecting women more while men demonstrated higher depersonalization (Dowler & Arai, 2008; McCarty, 2013; Queirós et al., 2020).

The JD-R Model delivers valuable insight because personnel experience exhaustion and reduced psychological well-being when demands exceed their available resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2018). Organizational support combined with positive digital climates and preventive measures helps reduce these risks which results in better resilience along with higher engagement and job satisfaction (Sonnentag et al., 2023; Ertiö et al., 2024; Avtalion et al., 2025).

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model provides the most effective explanation of this relationship. A health-impairment process leading to burnout and depression and physical illness starts when high demands (workload and techno-overload and organizational pressures) exceed available resources (supervisor support and autonomy and optimism and training) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). When job resources are strong (digital support, positive leadership, peer support), personnel report higher motivation and resilience despite high demands (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017; Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Conclusion

To summarize, technostress has contributed towards severe job complexities for personnel working in the security services field but simultaneously those working in this field also continually experience stress from organizational stress while working in high-stress organizations laden with job complexities like security services. Researchers have shown the negative consequences of technostress and how they have impacted the mental health of those working in this field. An important theme that emerged besides psychological outcomes due to technostress, working in high-stress organizations and job complexities, were the existence of organizational stressors that concurrently act along with technostress to impact well-being of the personnel.

Researchers have acknowledged security services to be one of the most stressful fields currently in the industry, with mental health outcomes ranging from feelings of guilt and shame due to failure at ensuring job productivity to feelings of hopelessness and indolence due to poor social and work support systems.

Recommendations for future researchers include conducting primary research on the relation between job complexity, technology and the mental health outcomes of security service personnel working in high-stress organizations. By conducting primary research, many research gaps that emerged during this study could be addressed, ensuring betterment of those studying industrial and organization practices to improve security services settings and addressing mental health concerns of security service personnel from different studies that emerged during this review.

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