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Ethics in Law and the Effects on Mental Health: An Interview Study

by

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Abstract

On August 2, 1983, The American Bar Association Model Rules of Professional Conduct were adopted by the House of Delegates. This set of rules provides legal professionals with the guidance needed to uphold the rule of law and to preserve justice. In this set of rules, lawyers learn the duties of confidentiality, client relations, diligence, and the overall conduct owed to the courts. Furthermore, these duties can be demanding and oftentimes challenging. Therefore, this study examined the different ethical rules as they apply to lawyers and how these demands can impact their mental health. Interviews were conducted with six lawyers in Nebraska to help provide a first-person point of view. This study concluded that rather than the demands that follow the ethical standards of lawyers, it is the heavy workload and stressful environment that has the greatest potential to lead to mental health concerns.

Ethics in Law and the Effects on Mental Health: An Interview Study

As a legal professional, it is important to uphold ethical standards to ensure fair practices are conducted and justice is properly served. When legal professionals uphold the rule of law, public trust can be built. This trust can lead to greater respect toward legal professionals and overall respect to the criminal justice system (Ankita, 2023). Due to the constant changing of the legal system and laws, legal professionals in Nebraska must complete 10 hours of continuing legal education annually, with two of those hours dedicated to ethics in law. This training helps legal professionals stay apprised of the current code of ethics.

The code of ethics can raise many concerns for the mental health of lawyers. Due to the lack of reporting, “it is difficult to determine how many ethical violations involve attorney distress” (Reed et al., 2016). The ethical code provides lawyers with a list of demanding responsibilities that may be difficult to maintain. It follows that ethical conflicts may result from difficulties in maintaining these responsibilities. “Ethical conflicts occur when there is a divergence between an employee’s own beliefs and the employer’s beliefs” or in this case, the Model Rules of Professional Conduct (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2012). This divergence can lead to individuals feeling less energized and may cause them to experience the physiological and psychological symptoms of emotional exhaustion (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2012). Furthermore, if the code of ethics is not followed by lawyers, they may face disciplinary actions. These disciplinary actions may lead to negative effects on lawyers’ mental health. It was reported that at least 25% of disciplinary proceedings are associated with a lawyer’s alcoholism or other mental illness (Robinson, 2010).

Although there is not enough support to determine the root cause for the development of mental health issues in lawyers, evidence suggests that their issues start as early as law school. A

survey of 320 law students and alumni from the University of Arizona Law School was conducted by Benjamin et al. (2018). In this study, it was reported that 3% to 9% of law students suffered from high levels of distress. By the end of their third year of law school, 40% of students reported having higher levels of depression (Benjamin et al., 2018). When looking only at alumni, the results revealed that the occurrence of depression does not decrease during the first two years of being a lawyer (Benjamin et al., 2018).

Law school brings a great amount of stress to lawyers due to the demanding workload and personal and professional transitions. As law students make personal and professional transitions, their role becomes competitive as they “compete for grades, honors, clerkships, and jobs after graduation” (Stevens, 1973). Benjamin et al. (2018) found that this distress usually follows law students into their careers as lawyers. Being a lawyer is an important job that our society needs. If evidence suggests that following the ethical rules of a lawyer is inherently detrimental to their mental health, it is important to examine this relationship more closely.

Method

For this study, a total of six interviews with legal professionals were conducted. These legal professionals included prosecutors and public defenders from varying backgrounds. The interviews included a series of background questions, ethical dilemma questions, and mental health questions about their profession to examine the potential cause for mental health issues in lawyers (see Appendix A for list of interview questions).

Lawyer Backgrounds

Mr. Bob Cryne is a retired career prosecutor. Mr. Cryne started practicing law immediately after he graduated from law school in 1978. During his career, Mr. Cryne was an Army Judge Advocate in the Cold War, Deputy County Attorney, United States Attorney in

Nebraska, and an Attorney Advisor for the U.S. Special Operations in Washington, D.C. Mr. Cryne has practiced law in the United States, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. One of Mr. Cryne's most rewarding and biggest accomplishments was serving as an Attorney Advisor to the Iraqi High Tribunal for the trial of Saddam Hussein.

Ms. Desirae Solomon is a defense attorney who typically deals with criminal defense matters or family matters. She also has experience in municipal law and estate planning. During her undergraduate studies, she attended Midland University in Fremont, Nebraska, and graduated from Creighton University with her law degree. After graduating from law school, she became the first female attorney to work at the Douglas County Public Defender's office. She has now been a practicing lawyer for 20 years. Ms. Soloman claims the most rewarding thing about her job is that she can help individuals in desperate positions who are afraid of the uncertainty of their futures.

Mr. Benjamin Perlman is a state prosecutor for Sarpy County in Nebraska. As a state prosecutor, Mr. Perlman deals with all types of cases the state throws at him. He claims that 50% of his cases are simple drug possession charges such as meth, while the other 50% of his cases deal with sexual assault and fraud. Mr. Perlman also has experience in family law and has been practicing law for 15 years. Mr. Perlman claims that the most rewarding thing about his job is that he gets to hold individuals accountable for doing wrong to others.

Mr. John Hascall is a public defense attorney who has practiced all types of law. He has experience in probate, evictions, divorce, custody modification, personal injury, and contract disputes, but now focuses on criminal defense. John has been a practicing lawyer for 21 years and claims that the most rewarding thing about his job is knowing that he can help people who cannot help themselves.

Ms. Rachel Bolton is a prosecutor for Sarpy County in Nebraska. Ms. Bolton typically deals with domestic violence or misdemeanor cases. She also has knowledge in insurance defense and title defense. She has been practicing law for two years. Ms. Bolton claims the most rewarding thing about her job is going to trial because it is a big moment. This is because all your hard work leading up to trial is finally broadcasted in a courtroom in front of the judge. She enjoys helping people to make a change and to prevent those individuals from committing crimes in the future.

Mr. Todd West is a public defender who has been practicing law since 2009. He typically deals with criminal defense, felonies, and more serious crimes. Before becoming a public defender, Mr. West practiced employment discrimination for 10 years and handled cases dealing with wrongful termination, brutalization, and compensation. The most rewarding thing for Mr. West is being able to appear in court and be one of the contributors that makes the legal system work.

Model Rules of Professional Conduct

In 1983, the American Bar Association created the Model Rules of Professional Conduct. This set of ethical rules was created to address client development endeavors undertaken by lawyers (*American Bar Association*, 1998). There are eight separate categories of ethical rules stated in the Model Rules of Professional Conduct: client-lawyer relationship, counselor, advocate, transactions with persons other than clients, law firms and associations, public service, information about legal services, and maintaining the integrity of the profession (*American Bar Association*, 2019). Within these categories there are up to 18 individual rules. It is important to note that not all states agreed with the Model Rules of Professional Conduct and therefore have created their own set of rules.

This study focuses on the first category, client-lawyer relationship. The rules that are the focus of this study are: duty of competence, confidentiality of client information, and conflicts of interests. This study also focuses on the third category, advocate. The rule focused on from this section is duty of candor in communications with a court. These topics were chosen as the focus of the study because they were hypothesized to be the most likely to cause lawyers distress.

Competence

Rule 1.1 of the American Bar Association deals with competency of a lawyer. To define competency means to have the legal knowledge, skills, thoroughness, and preparation needed for the representation (*American Bar Association*, 2019). In order to protect the innocent, every accused person deserves effective representation, which helps to ensure that justice is properly served (Broden & Mickelsen, 2021).

One aspect of providing effective representation is ensuring that lawyers are able to communicate clearly with their clients. Throughout a lawyer's career, they will face a variety of different clients, some will be difficult, and some will not. In addition, some may suffer from a mental illness. It is reported that 64% of individuals in jail, 54% in state prisons, and 45% in federal prisons suffer from a mental illness (Taylor, 2022). Ms. Solomon explained that in a situation where a lawyer finds it is hard to communicate with a mentally ill client, they can contact a mental health provider to aid them in how to properly represent that individual.

As lawyers, it is their responsibility to provide competent representation to all clients despite their background or crime committed. This means that a lawyer cannot be biased toward a client who stole a candy bar from the gas station when compared to a person who committed murder. Although you take an oath to your client, you cannot break the law for them or cross any boundaries for them. As stated by Ms. Solomon, "Clients are not your children." More

specifically, despite wanting the best outcome for the client, lawyers may not be able to fulfill all of their promises like they would for one of their own children.

Regardless of whether lawyers believe their clients are guilty or innocent, they have a duty to provide competent representation and to defend them to the best of their abilities. In the interviews, I asked each lawyer how they can morally justify defending someone they knew was guilty, because I felt it would be more difficult than representing an innocent person. Despite this, Broden and Mickelsen (2021) claimed that this question was equivalent to asking how someone felt while defending a client they knew was innocent but found guilty. This statement was supported by Ms. Solomon's response to the interview questions. Ms. Solomon explained that it was harder for her to represent someone who was innocent. This is because she may not be able to prevent the client from receiving a sentence. If an innocent person walks into her office, it was because the police officers made a mistake when presenting the charges. When police officers make an arrest, they need to have probable cause for the arrest. This is to ensure that law enforcement does not continue to make mistakes and put innocent people in her office.

Similarly, Mr. Cryne explained that it was harder to take an innocent person to trial. The reason for this is because it made him feel like the law was not being fair and was too harsh. If he had the choice, he would refuse to take an innocent person to trial. As said by Mr. Cryne, "we don't catch them, we just fry them." What he meant is that instead of focusing on whether the individual is guilty or innocent, the courts are more concerned with putting a face to the crime. These punishments are often harsh and undeserving. In comparison, Mr. Hascall claimed that it does not go against his morals to defend a guilty person, because it is not his job to prove a guilty person innocent. The burden of proof is on the prosecution to prove that the person was guilty,

whereas in Mr. Hascall's case, it is his job to put up the best defense, not necessarily prove that the person was innocent.

As said by Mr. West, "morals don't affect the positions you have to take because it is the law. It is not necessarily your morals that make you feel bad after a conclusion has been made in court, but it is the law. Lawyers' morals guide their day-to-day accusations toward opposing counsel and people involved in the case." Overall, it is not about whether the client is guilty or innocent when providing effective representation. Mr. Cryne stated that "the rule of law is that no one is above the law. There are no kings or queens. The legal system is a process, and it is this process that allows justice to be served." In the end, all parties must be respectful of the judge's decision.

Confidentiality

Rule 1.6 of the American Bar Association discusses confidentiality. According to the American Bar Association, confidentiality can be defined as "the disclosure by a lawyer of information relating to the representation of a client" (*American Bar Association*, 2020). The rule of confidentiality is critical to the legal system, without it clients would not fully disclose information to their lawyer and would not get the best representation. In other words, confidentiality allows clients to openly share information with their lawyers that may become helpful in upcoming legal proceedings. In addition, a lawyer must never reveal information to others regarding the representation of a client. This aspect of client-confidentiality helps to build trust with the client. The better trust that is built between the client and lawyer, the more likely they are to receive effective representation.

In terms of confidentiality, there are specific exceptions to the rule that require the lawyer to disclose information to others. For instance, if the lawyer believes the client to be

harmful or a threat in the future, the lawyer must take the necessary actions and inform authorities. In addition, disclosure may be required if another lawyer must know the facts of the case. In this situation, lawyers must inform the client of their duty to disclose their case to the other lawyer (*American Bar Association, 2020*).

In some cases, Rule 1.6 states that if lawyers wish to discuss their case with other individuals, they can use hypothetical situations where it is impossible to identify the client based on the details discussed. Ms. Solomon explained how this aspect has greatly helped her mental health by not making her feel alone. Ms. Solomon can bounce her ideas off of other lawyers and can find comfort in the possibility of sharing difficulties with her therapist without violating confidentiality.

Although lawyers have the opportunity to discuss cases using hypothetical situations, some choose to refrain from talking about their work with others to reduce the risk of confidential information reaching the public or simply because they feel others would not understand. According to Mr. Perlman, “remaining confidential has affected my mental health. It is weird not being able to talk about my work with my family.” Research suggests that it is important to discuss work with your family because it helps to create a supportive and fulfilling home environment (Travers, 2023). When family members talk about their work, members are able to know how to properly support one another. Unlike Mr. Perlman, Mr. Cryne is able to receive an immense amount of support from his family because his wife and children are also lawyers. More specifically, they are able to discuss legal matters with one another and understand hypothetical situations. Mr. Cryne explained how this has allowed him to never have to apologize to his family for the work he does.

Remaining confidential is a crucial skill a lawyer must possess because it leads to a positive relationship with the client. Although, confidentiality is needed to ensure trust with the client and a smooth trial, lawyers may encounter feelings of loneliness when dealing with difficult situations on their own. Mr. Hascall and Ms. Bolton were the only lawyers that claimed remaining confidential did not have a negative impact on their work. Overall, as a lawyer it is important to understand when, where, and with whom it would be appropriate to discuss the case.

Conflicts of Interest

Rule 1.7 of the American Bar Association covers how to handle conflicts of interest as a lawyer. Conflicts of interest occur when the lawyer feels they cannot perform effective representation due to being involved with the client. Conflicts of interest arise when an individuals' interests, whether it is family, friendships, relationships, financial, or social factors, compromise their judgment, decisions, or actions in the workplace (University of Central Florida, 2016). This could occur either during the period of representation or prior (*American Bar Association*, 2019). In a situation as such, it is up to the lawyer to use their best judgment as to whether they will be able to provide effective representation. Typically, if the lawyer has a conflict of interest prior to representation, the representation must be declined, or the lawyer must obtain informed consent from each of the clients to allow representation to progress. This is to ensure lawyers' loyalty to their current client. If lawyers were to represent a client that had any form of connection to another client they were representing, it would create a conflict of interest. For example, in divorce cases, representing both parties may interfere with the way a lawyer can provide effective representation to either party. In addition, this may cause the current client to lose trust in the lawyer, which can jeopardize the effectiveness of the duty to represent

effectively. Mr. Hascall claims that when a situation is personal it can be hard to be objective or impartial. In the situation where the lawyer is already representing a client and a conflict arises, they must withdraw from the case to prevent further implications (*American Bar Association*, 2019).

Furthermore, lawyers may not let their own interest determine whether they represent a client or the effectiveness of the representation. Mr. Cryne explained that withdrawing from a case where his morals did not align with the actions of his client was simply not an option. The most he could do was refuse to present charges. Under unique circumstances, Mr. West withdrew from the case due to an interpersonal relationship. This is because he had witnessed the client commit the crime. Along with the American Bar Association rules for conflicts of interest, specific firms may have their own set of rules. For example, Mr. Perlman explained that he will not and cannot represent cases dealing with his personal divorce lawyer, which is a rule specifically governed by the office policy at his law firm. Law firms or offices will hold their own set of rules to avoid being disqualified from representation or malpractice claims (Gardiner, 2021). If Mr. Perlman were to represent his divorce lawyer, his wife can claim malpractice against the divorce lawyer for having an additional relationship with Mr. Perlman.

Client Perjury

Rule 3.3 of the American Bar Association discusses client perjury. Client perjury occurs when the counsel has actual knowledge that the client intends to lie (Lefstein, 1988). In the situation where the counsel is aware their client or a witness is lying in court, the lawyer must decide the best course of action. For example, at this point, lawyers may choose to refuse to offer evidence that is known to be false or withdraw from the case (*American Bar Association*, 2019). If a lawyer chooses to ignore their clients' false testimony or engage in fraudulent matters, they

may be sanctioned. As a public defender, Mr. West has had a client lie in the courtroom. His understanding of client perjury is that they have the right to be on the stand, but as a lawyer, he cannot ask them questions to help illustrate their lie. According to him, you have to let them talk but tell the other key players in the courtroom that you do not have a role in what he is saying. Ms. Solomon had a similar response. In her interview, she said “as my client you better not lie, for I cannot be a part of your perjury.” The prosecution side of law had a different approach. Prosecutor Mr. Perlman claimed you must be honest upfront and go from there. Additionally, Mr. Cryne mentioned if he was aware of a client committing perjury, he would present those charges to the client.

If an individual is charged with client perjury in the state of Nebraska, the client may face up to four years in prison, two years of post-release supervision, and a \$25,000 fine (*Berry Law*, 1965). Client perjury can also significantly alter the trial process. For instance, if a client were to lie on the stand, it may lead to a mistrial and obstruction of evidence. When a mistrial occurs, any evidence or information presented during the trial is considered void or in other words, no longer valid (Munson, 2023). After a mistrial, lawyers must start preparing for a new trial with a new jury. In some cases, clients will intentionally commit perjury and cause a mistrial to avoid prosecution. In any situation involving client perjury, it is the lawyers’ duty not to engage. If they choose to engage, they must take reasonable remedial measures (*American Bar Association*, 2019).

Demands of a Lawyer

Although only a selection of the ethical rules was discussed, they reveal that the job of a lawyer is demanding. Not only do lawyers have the obligation to protect their clients, but they must also protect the legal system and their own interest in remaining an ethical person. This

obligation can lead to a stressful environment and high pressure. Every day, attorneys have to manage challenging deadlines, work long hours, deal with complex situations, and properly communicate with their emotional clients without showing any emotion (*Clio*, 2021b).

Working with clients as a lawyer is an emotional roller coaster. If lawyers show emotion toward their client, the client may perceive their lawyer as unstable and unfit to put on a successful trial. A term called emotional labor refers to the process of managing feelings and expressions to fulfill the emotional requirements of a job (Switzer, 2018). In other words, lawyers have to “wear an invisible shield and detach” (Switzer, 2018). In addition, lawyers deal with difficult situations every day. Although these interactions can be troubling and disturbing, lawyers must remain professional (Switzer, 2018). When communicating with clients, it can become very emotional. This is often because it is their future you are discussing. As a lawyer, it can be difficult to know when to step in and advise a client when they are emotional. The best thing to do as a lawyer is to listen with empathy (Allison, 2017). Although lawyers are not therapists, ignoring a client’s feelings will not make the lawyer’s representation successful (Allison, 2017). Ms. Solomon explained that having an open communication system with your client is extremely important as it helps strengthen the relationship. Overall, since lawyers are taught to turn off their emotions when dealing with clients, this trait often continues into their personal lives, which may have negative results later in life.

To ensure lawyers meet their deadlines, they often work long hours. It was reported that 86% of lawyers work outside the typical 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., with 11% claiming to work past 10:00 in the evening (*Clio*, 2021a). Additionally, lawyers will also work on the weekends to meet the full demands of their clients. The hours of a lawyer are very unpredictable due to court hearings during the day and meeting the client’s needs. This causes lawyers to get behind on other tasks

that they were unable to complete during normal business hours. The 2018 Legal Trends Report claimed that 77% worked outside normal hours to catch up on their work (*Clio*, 2019). The 2022 Legal Trends reports revealed that 74% of lawyers will make themselves available on the weekends and 69% offer to communicate in the evening (*Clio*, 2021a). Working overtime can impact lawyers' career paths and health.

Based on the interviews, I learned that a lawyer's schedule is ultimately up to the lawyer and is likely to change on a day-to-day basis. For example, Ms. Solomon explained that she works long hours. She typically tries to get to her office early in the morning to answer all of her emails and to organize her day. Then, she starts tending to her clients as early as 7:30 in the morning and ends her day at 5:00 in the evening. Although this is her typical workday, she also confessed that she sometimes finds herself working until midnight. Her hours range anywhere from 60 hours to 80 hours per week. Mr. Hascall has a similar mindset when it comes to his work style. He likes to get into the office early to get work done before the calls start coming in. He also does not like to draw out cases and tries to get trial dates as soon as possible to overcome hard deadlines.

Mr. Perlman claims that to be a successful lawyer, you must be able to devote a couple of hours here and there to a task to allow yourself not to become distracted. To do so, he makes sure to tune everything out that is not related to his work. On the other hand, Mr. West has a more flexible schedule since he is transitioning from a public defender to private practice. He says that when he was working under the government's control, he had to always remain available when the court asked. Additionally, he could not turn down a case when working as a public defender. Since working in private practice, he claims his schedule is very flexible and open due to having fewer clients.

Based on the descriptions above, a lawyer's work schedule often reflects the type of cases they are working on. For more difficult cases, lawyers are more likely to be looking at an 80-hour week to ensure they are meeting hard deadlines. According to the lawyers interviewed, the most difficult cases include those that involve children. Others claimed that cases involving sexual assault, drugs/alcohol, and divorce were also difficult to handle. There were some lawyers that claimed they devote the same amount of time to all their cases and that all cases are treated with the same difficulty (see Figure 1).

Risks

Due to working in a stressful environment and dealing with high pressure, many lawyers develop mental illnesses and other physical symptoms. A nationwide study of 13,000 lawyers found that 28% developed depression, 19% suffered anxiety, 21% had alcohol use problems, and 11% had problems abusing drugs. These issues are causing lawyers to have one of the highest suicide rates (Krill et al., 2023). During the interviews, when I asked if their mental health had degraded over the years of practicing law, many of them responded with "yes". Mr. West even explained how the stress and process to become a lawyer was where he found his mental health the worst. Reed et al. (2016) confirmed that 20.4% of law students have been diagnosed with a mental health-related illness.

Depression and anxiety in lawyers is often caused from burnout. Burnout is caused by the long and stressful working hours of a lawyer (*Clio*, 2020). In addition, lawyers must present themselves professionally at all times even in extremely stressful situations. Overtime, this can become physically and emotionally exhausting.

To keep up with the demands of being a lawyer, lawyers will turn to prescription drugs to try to stay up later to complete their work or to relieve stress (Henson, 2024). This becomes an

even bigger issue with no end in sight when lawyers are afraid to admit their substance abuse issue. In some cases, lawyers are afraid to admit their problem because they do not want to face any occupational consequences or they fear their reputation as a lawyer will be devalued (Greene & Greene, 2021). There is no provision requiring a lawyer to self-report their addiction or any potential unethical conduct stemming from the addiction, which reduces chances of reporting (*American Bar Association*, 2024). The most unfortunate part about this is that since a lawyer is not required to disclose their addiction problem, it is often too late before they receive proper treatment and support from others.

Preventing Mental Illnesses

As a legal professional, lawyers have to make a variety of sacrifices. In some cases, lawyers have to sacrifice their marriage, children, or other aspect of family life to meet their occupational demands (Mitchell, 2007.). Before deciding to become a lawyer, it is important that individuals understand their personal goals. Then they must decide if their career plan allows them to achieve those goals. It is also important that these goals are announced to their spouse and other family members. This allows everyone to be on the same page and figure out a system that works for everyone.

Additionally, it is important to not isolate yourself. It can become extremely easy for lawyers to get lost in their work due to the heavy workload. Therefore, to prevent mental health problems, lawyers should have reliable interpersonal relationships with friends, spouses, and family (Mitchell, 2007). Within these interpersonal relationships, it is also important to listen to their loved ones' advice. It is likely that the other person offering advice has noticed the individual display odd behaviors or signs of isolation and is sharing their concern.

Lastly, it is important that lawyers avoid relying on alcohol or drugs. If lawyers turn to alcohol or drugs in difficult situations, they may become dependent on them and depending on the type of drugs, may raise additional issues. According to the American Bar Association, as many as one in five lawyers is dependent on alcohol, which is twice the national rate (“Alcohol Use Disorders”, 2021). This dependency can disrupt relationships and lead to poor job performance (“Alcohol Abuse Among Lawyers and Legal Professionals”, n.d.). Ms. Solomon explains in her interview that it is very easy to go down that hole and as a lawyer you do not need to make matters worse. She has seen alcohol destroy lives and careers, which has given her a new stand on consuming alcohol when stressed.

Maintaining Mental Health

After conducting the interviews, I learned that every lawyer I interviewed claims their mental health has decreased since becoming a lawyer. According to them, the best way a lawyer can maintain their mental health is by finding interests outside of work. For example, Mr. West recommended exercising. It is commonly accepted that exercising releases chemicals like endorphins and serotonin that help elevate an individual’s mood. In addition, exercising often allows individuals to relieve their minds of any negative thoughts (*Health Direct*, 2023). Furthermore, Mr. Cryne claims that the best way to maintain positive mental health is by reflecting the actions of a boy scout. More specifically, “be truthful and find interests outside of work.” Ms. Solomon finds interest in doing things with her children and husband. She recommends leaving work back at the office, so she can focus on her family without any added stress.

Conclusion

The goal of this interview-based study was to gain a better understanding of the code of ethics lawyers are required to follow and how these demands can negatively affect their mental health. Although there is not enough evidence to conclude that abiding by the ethical rules is a substantial cause of negative mental health in lawyers as hypothesized, this study did show that maintaining confidentiality caused some distress among the lawyers interviewed. However, the multiple demands that come with the profession are the most likely leading cause. These demands included working long hours, dealing with difficult situations, and learning how to properly communicate with emotional clients. Due to the high demands and a stressful work environment, lawyers may turn to alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism. To avoid unhealthy strategies, lawyers should hold goals for themselves, ensure they have a support system, and abstain from relying on alcohol and drugs.

Limitations

A single interview schedule was created to interview both prosecutors and defense attorneys. A limitation to this study was that the questions did not properly align with both types of attorneys. This is because a majority of the questions involved representing clients, but since prosecutors represent the state, they do not have clients. Another limitation to this study was the sample size. The small sample size made it difficult to compare answers and is too small to be considered representative. In addition, the answers lacked diversity since four of the lawyers were from the same county office.

Implications

In the future, it would be beneficial to conduct a longitudinal study and look at law school students specifically. I would like to compare their answers from while they are in law school to when they start practicing law. This will allow me to see how overtime, the demands of

being a lawyer affect mental health. Since my study only examined currently practicing lawyers, I was unable to pinpoint the starting cause of their mental health issues. By examining law students as soon as they enter school, researchers will hopefully be able to discover the exact root cause for mental illnesses in lawyers. If the root cause is discovered, lawyers can start taking preventative measures earlier in their legal career.

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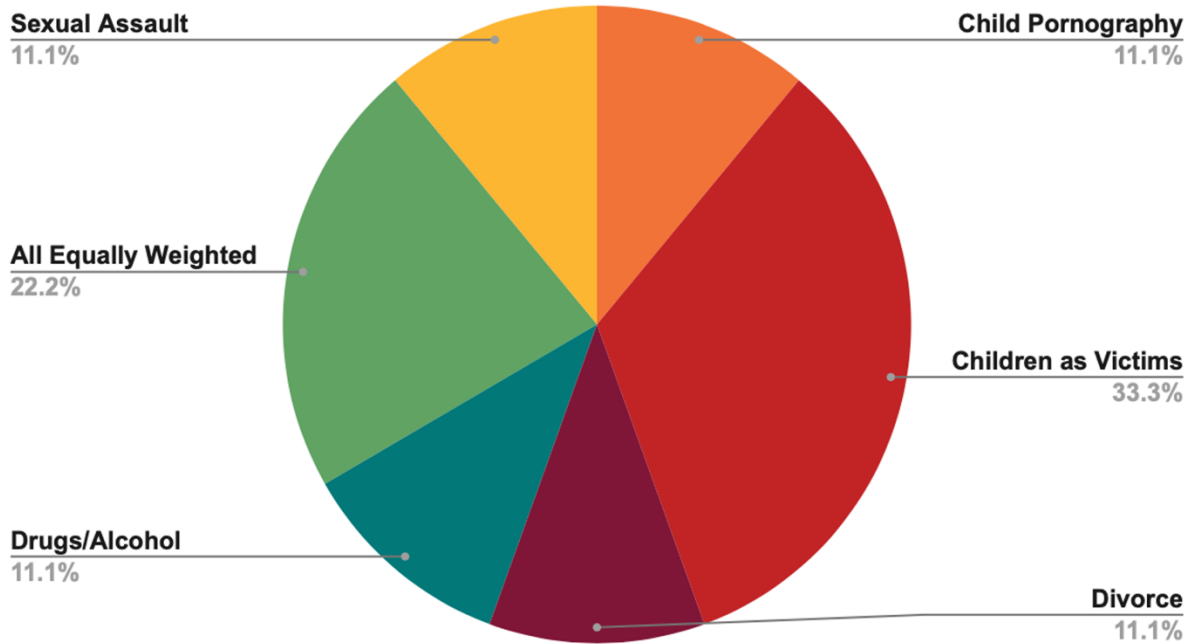
Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What is your title as a legal professional?
2. How long have you been working in your position?
3. What is the most rewarding thing about your job?
4. Who is your typical client, what kind of cases do you work with?
5. Do you have other legal knowledge in other areas?
6. How would you describe your work style?
7. What does it mean to have morals?
8. What is the biggest code of ethics you believe to be of a lawyer?
9. Can you explain a time when you felt it was difficult for you to defend a client?
10. Are there certain crimes that are more difficult for you to defend than others?
11. Does it go against your morals to represent someone you know is guilty?
12. What do you do if you know your client is lying on the stand?
13. Have you ever had to withdraw from a case because your morals did not align with the actions of your client?
14. What do you do when there are equally compelling reasons for and against your client?
15. What are some moral dilemmas you face every day as a lawyer?
16. What actions do you take to maintain your mental health?
17. Does remaining confidential affect your emotions in any way?
18. What emotions do you feel when you are representing a guilty client?
19. Has your mental health degraded over the years since you started practicing law?

Figure 1

What is the most difficult type of case you work with?



Note. This pie chart represents the percentages of the cases deemed the most difficult.