

# A Qualitative Exploration of the Psychological Well-Being of Retired Indian Police Service Officers

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## KEYWORDS

Indian Police Service, retirement, mental health and well-being

## ABSTRACT

Retirement marks a significant transition for Indian Police Service (IPS) officers, often impacting their sense of identity, purpose, and daily structure. This study aimed to explore the unique experiences of retired IPS officers, focusing on the impact of mental health and coping strategies they employed in the transition. Six retired IPS officers participated in in-depth interviews to provide insights into their post-retirement journeys. Thematic analysis revealed key themes, including identity transition, purpose in post-retirement life, challenges in retirement, relationship, coping strategies, fulfillment and reflection, advice for future retirees. The findings revealed the importance of planning for a fulfilling retirement and suggested tailored support systems for retiring officers to ensure a smooth transition and sustained well-being. Notably, recently retired officers experience greater challenges in navigating the transition, while those retired longer may have forgotten the difficulties they once faced.

## A Qualitative Exploration of the Psychological Well-Being of Retired Indian Police Service Officers

### Importance

Retirement is a critical life transition that brings both opportunities and challenges, particularly for individuals in high-stress professions like law enforcement (Alavi et al., 2023). Indian Police Service (IPS) officers, who dedicate their careers to maintaining law and order, face unique psychological challenges after retirement due to the demanding nature of their work. This research is vital because it sheds light on the mental health needs of retired IPS officers, a group often overlooked in psychological studies. It contributes to a broader understanding of the long-term impact of high-pressure careers and the support systems necessary for a fulfilling post-service life (Savarimalai et al., 2023).

### Background

Studies on law enforcement professionals have predominantly focused on active-duty challenges, such as job stress, trauma exposure, and mental health management (Violanti et al., 2017). Research into retirement psychology has highlighted the difficulties of identity shifts and lifestyle changes but tends to generalize findings across professions (Yemiscigil et al., 2021). For IPS officers, the transition is compounded by the abrupt loss of authority, changes in social roles, and residual occupational stress (Kar & Singh, 2015). Existing literature offers limited insights into how these factors specifically affect retired law enforcement personnel in India. This study aims to fill that void, focusing on the psychological well-being of retired IPS officers.

### Problem Statement

Retirement can trigger psychological challenges, including a sense of purposelessness, isolation, and difficulty adapting to a slower-paced life (Yemiscigil et al., 2021). For IPS officers, these issues are magnified due to their career's high-stress nature and societal expectations (Savarimalai et al., 2023).

#### Research Gap

Although substantial research has been conducted on stress and coping mechanisms among active police personnel, there is little focus on their post-retirement phase (Kar & Singh, 2015; Savarimalai et al., 2023). The specific needs and challenges of retired IPS officers, particularly in the Indian context, remain largely unexamined. This gap leaves an incomplete understanding of how professional experiences shape their mental health during retirement and highlights the need for targeted research in this area.

#### Evidence

Global studies have established that retirees from high-stress professions face elevated risks of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and adjustment difficulties (Schneiderman et al., 2004; World Health Organization: WHO, 2023). Research on police retirees in other countries indicates that unresolved occupational stress and identity shifts are common during retirement. In India, where societal dynamics and cultural expectations differ, the need for localized studies is particularly pressing to develop culturally relevant interventions.

#### Local Context

The transition to retirement for IPS officers in India is shaped by unique factors, including cultural values, public perceptions, and familial roles. The expectation of continued societal engagement can create additional stress, while the lack of accessible mental health resources may hinder adaptation. By focusing on retired IPS officers in this context, the study aims to provide actionable insights for local communities and policymakers. This paper aims to explore the psychological well-being of retired government officials, focusing on how they navigate the transition to retirement and redefine their sense of identity and purpose. By examining their experiences, the research seeks to understand how they cope with the loss of professional identity, the challenges they face in adjusting to a life without structured work, and the strategies they use to maintain meaning and fulfillment. The study will be guided by the PERMAH model, looking at aspects such as positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, and health.

#### Study Objectives and Paper Aim

This research aims to explore the psychological well-being of retired IPS officers, focusing on their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. The objectives include:

1. Identifying the key psychological challenges faced during the transition to retirement.
2. Investigating the coping mechanisms and support systems they rely on.

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the predominant psychological stressors for retired IPS officers?
- How do they perceive their transition and redefine their identities post-retirement?
- What systemic changes are required to better support their psychological well-being?

By addressing these questions, this paper aims to contribute to the development of tailored mental health resources and policies for retired IPS officers, fostering a smoother transition into retirement and improved overall well-being.

#### Review of Literature

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2023) highlights the rapid aging of the global population, with the number of individuals aged 60 and over expected to rise from 1 billion in

2020 to 2.1 billion by 2050. Despite their significant societal contributions, older adults face an increased risk of mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety, with around 14% affected. These conditions account for 10.6% of total disability among older adults, yet they are often underdiagnosed and stigmatized, limiting access to care. Furthermore, older adults account for over a quarter of global suicide deaths.

Key factors contributing to mental health challenges in older age include bereavement, financial strain, declining functional abilities, and loss of purpose after retirement. Social isolation and loneliness, which affect approximately a quarter of older individuals, along with abuse (experienced by one in six), are major contributors to psychological distress. Many older adults also take on caregiving roles, which can exacerbate emotional strain. Those with chronic health issues or in disadvantaged situations are particularly vulnerable, emphasizing the need for comprehensive support to safeguard their mental well-being (WHO, 2023).

Alavi, Momtaz, and Alipour (2023) conducted a qualitative study to identify facilitators and barriers to successful retirement. The study involved 22 participants, including 13 retirees, 4 individuals nearing retirement, and 5 experts in retirement and social sciences, selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using content analysis.

The study found that key facilitators included social support, personal characteristics, and social participation, while barriers were categorized as deteriorating health, lack of planning, socioeconomic challenges, and insufficient support systems. The retirees' average age was 63.15 years, and those nearing retirement had 29 years of job experience. The study concluded that retirement presents both challenges and opportunities for growth, suggesting that future retirement programs should address these factors to support successful adaptation.

Savarimalai, Christy, Binu, and Sekar (2023) explored the stress and coping strategies of police personnel through a qualitative study. Police personnel experience significant stress due to the nature of their work, yet most studies on this topic have been quantitative, with a notable gap in qualitative research, particularly in India. The study involved in-depth interviews with 10 police officers and three focus group discussions with 22 participants.

The thematic analysis identified five key themes: family stressors, personal stressors, work stressors, and both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. Factors contributing to stress included the inability to take leave, multi-tasking, excessive unscheduled work hours, lack of time with family, and insufficient amenities for personal hygiene. The study concluded that addressing police stress requires the implementation of positive coping strategies and social support, which can be facilitated through capacity building and mental health programs (Savarimalai et al., 2023).

Yemiscigil, Powdthavee, and Whillans (2021) examined whether retirement leads to an existential crisis or offers an opportunity for a renewed sense of purpose in life. While previous research has suggested that retirement can result in feelings of aimlessness, the authors used a quasi experimental approach to assess the causal impact of retirement on life purpose. Analyzing data from a nationally representative panel of 8,113 American adults, they applied an instrumental-variable analysis based on Social Security retirement incentives to explore differences in retirement likelihood. The results revealed a significant increase in life purpose following retirement, particularly among individuals with lower socioeconomic status and those leaving

unsatisfying jobs. This study suggests that retirement may provide an opportunity for a renewed sense of purpose, especially for socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals (Yemiscigil et al., 2021).

Singh and Kar (2021) explored the sources of occupational stress among police personnel in North India, focusing on how these stressors negatively affect their mental health and work performance. The study involved 300 participants, including 100 constables, 100 inspectors, and 100 police officers from Uttar Pradesh. These individuals were evaluated using the occupational stress questionnaire, and both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted. The results revealed that occupational stress was a common experience across all groups, though the specific sources of stress varied among constables, inspectors, and officers.

Hence, the literature reviewed highlights the significant impact of both retirement and occupational stress on the psychological well-being of individuals, particularly within the context of police personnel and retirees. The studies emphasize the multifaceted nature of these experiences, with factors such as health issues, lack of planning, and social isolation contributing to stress in police personnel (Savarimalai et al., 2023), while retirement can present both challenges and opportunities for growth (Alavi et al., 2023; Yemiscigil et al., 2021). A common theme across the studies is the importance of supportive systems—whether through social connections, coping strategies, or retirement preparation programs—as critical elements in promoting mental health and a sense of purpose. The need for comprehensive support systems and tailored interventions is evident, as they can significantly mitigate stress and enhance the well-being of individuals in these life stages.

## **Methods**

### ***Research Design***

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the psychological well-being of retired Indian Police Service (IPS) officers. A semi-structured interview approach was used to gather in-depth data about their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies post-retirement. Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was applied to analyze the data and identify recurring themes.

### ***Participants***

The study involved six retired IPS officers selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance and richness of data. Participants were retired for at least five years to capture their reflections on the transition and adaptation to retirement. Efforts were made to ensure diversity in terms of geographical location, years of service, and rank held prior to retirement to gain a comprehensive understanding of their experiences.

### ***Data Collection***

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted either in person or via phone calls, depending on the participant's convenience. The interviews were designed to elicit detailed narratives about the psychological challenges faced, coping mechanisms adopted, and perceptions of retirement. An interview guide was developed based on existing literature, covering key topics such as:

- Emotional and mental health post-retirement.
- Identity transition and role changes.
- Coping strategies and sources of support.
- Reflections on career and its long-term impact on psychological well-being.

- PERMAH model, looking at aspects such as positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, and health

Each interview lasted 30–60 minutes, was audio-recorded with the participant's consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was conducted following the six-phase framework by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. Familiarization with Data: Transcripts were read multiple times to immerse in the data.
2. Generating Initial Codes: Key phrases and segments relevant to the research objectives were systematically coded.
3. Searching for Themes: Codes were organized into potential themes that captured patterns across the dataset.
4. Reviewing Themes: Themes were refined by checking against the data to ensure accuracy and coherence.
5. Defining and Naming Themes: Each theme was clearly defined and given an appropriate label that reflected its essence.
6. Producing the Report: Themes were integrated into a narrative to provide insights into the psychological well-being of retired IPS officers.

### **Rigor and Trustworthiness**

To ensure rigor, member checking was employed, where participants reviewed their interview summaries to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations. Triangulation was achieved by comparing emerging themes with existing literature. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the analysis process to minimize researcher bias.

## **Results**

### **Theme 1: Identity Transition**

**Maintaining Identity.** For many retirees, the core of their identity remains unchanged despite the shift in daily responsibilities. Some individuals emphasized that their essential roles, such as being part of committees or continuing to hold a position as a professor, allowed them to maintain a connection to their previous identities. For instance, one participant noted, "I am still part of a lot of committees, and I am a professor at a university," which highlights how their professional life remained significant even after retirement. Furthermore, some retirees reflected on a deeper sense of self that transcended career roles. One individual stated, "My identity is humankind. The primary identity is the devotee of God," suggesting that for them, spiritual and human aspects of their identity remained at the forefront, irrespective of their retirement status.

**Change in Identity.** Retirement undeniably brings changes to one's sense of self. A common theme was the difficulty in letting go of the professional status and recognition that defined one's identity for so long. One participant shared, "The hardest to let go of was being treated as number one," illustrating the emotional struggle tied to the loss of power and respect that was once readily afforded to them. Despite these challenges, many participants noted how their new status, such as being recognized as a retired senior officer, continued to influence their interactions. For example, another individual shared, "People still see me with respect as I am a retired senior police officer," indicating that even in retirement, their past accomplishments continue to shape their public identity.

### **Theme 2: Purpose in Post-Retirement Life**

**Spiritual Growth.** Retirement offers an opportunity to reassess one's sense of purpose, and for many retirees, this shift has been toward spiritual growth. Many participants discussed how

dedicating time to spiritual practices has provided them with new meaning in life. One individual shared, "Spirituality makes you a better human being," highlighting the belief that nurturing the soul is an essential part of post-retirement life. Meditation, in particular, was frequently mentioned as a powerful tool for inner peace. As another participant noted, "Meditation really helped me," it became a valuable practice for managing stress and finding purpose after retirement. Ultimately, retirees emphasized that their post-retirement purpose was not solely about material accomplishments but about pursuing happiness and spiritual fulfillment.

**Family and Community.** In addition to spiritual growth, many retirees found new purpose in strengthening their relationships with family and contributing to their communities. One participant reflected, "Taking care of the family gives me a sense of satisfaction," revealing how family became a central source of purpose and fulfillment. The role of mentorship was also highlighted, with retirees feeling motivated to share their knowledge and experiences with the younger generation. As one person noted, "I share my experiences with the younger generation," reflecting a desire to pass down wisdom. Moreover, spending quality time with a spouse was often cited as a key source of joy and fulfillment in post-retirement life. One participant shared, "All the time with my wife is fulfilling," emphasizing how deepened relationships bring ongoing satisfaction.

**Continued Learning.** For some retirees, the pursuit of intellectual stimulation and continued learning became a vital part of their post-retirement life. Two of the participants are still visiting professors at Universities. One participant shared, "I enrolled as a Ph.D. before retirement and completed it after retirement," illustrating their commitment to intellectual growth beyond their professional career. The opportunity to study further and engage in courses allowed retirees to expand their knowledge and keep their minds active. Another participant added, "I started to study after retirement by joining courses," reflecting a proactive approach to staying intellectually engaged. Continual learning was not just about gaining credentials but also about the personal satisfaction that comes from mastering new skills and remaining mentally active.

### **Theme 3: Challenges of Retirement**

**Loss of Perks and Status.** One of the most significant challenges highlighted by retirees was the loss of status, recognition, and perks that came with their professional roles. Many retirees struggled with the transition from a position of authority to a more ordinary status. One individual expressed, "It was slightly hard to let go of comfort and perks," emphasizing how retirement often involves a loss of the privileges associated with one's professional life. For others, the hardest part was the loss of respect and admiration from colleagues and society. As one retiree shared, "The hardest part was being treated as normal after being number one," illustrating how difficult it can be to adapt to a more humble role in society once retirement sets in.

**Social Perception.** The perception of retirees by others can drastically change after retirement, as many of their former colleagues and associates no longer view them through the same lens of authority. One retiree mentioned, "Perception of others towards me varied because I am retired now," reflecting the shift in how others treat them once they step away from their professional role. For some, this shift resulted in a sense of being devalued, as social interactions were no longer based on previous professional hierarchies. As one person shared, "I was treated as a normal person after retirement, and people didn't know me," revealing the emotional impact of this change. These social shifts contributed to a sense of isolation for some retirees, as only personal rapport remained in their relationships.

**Adaptation.** Adapting to retirement often requires significant emotional and psychological adjustment. One retiree shared, "In the beginning, I was not happy when I had to move from my

place of work to my hometown," reflecting the emotional difficulty many face in transitioning to a new lifestyle. However, many retirees found ways to cope by focusing on meaningful activities. One person spoke about how renovating their ancestral work helped them manage the transition: "I shifted to my ancestral work and renovated it, which helped me cope." Over time, many retirees learned to accept the reality of their new life, as one individual shared, "My expectations shifted, and I accepted the reality," indicating that with time, the emotional challenges of retirement became easier to navigate.

#### **Theme 4: Relationships**

**Family Relationships.** Retirement often leads to a strengthening of family relationships as retirees have more time to spend with loved ones. Many retirees reported that their relationships with family members improved once they were no longer tied to the demands of their professional lives. One participant noted, "My relationship with my family has improved after retirement," reflecting how the newfound time allowed for deeper connections. Spending time with a spouse was particularly fulfilling for some retirees. As one individual shared, "Spending time with my wife gives me a sense of satisfaction," highlighting how these relationships became central to their post-retirement well-being.

**Work Relationships.** While family relationships often grew stronger, work relationships tended to weaken after retirement. Many retirees reflected that the professional bonds they once shared with colleagues were no longer as strong or relevant. One participant noted, "Work relationships are not that strong after retirement," suggesting that the absence of a shared professional environment can lead to diminished connections. Even though some individuals maintained personal rapport with former colleagues, the professional ties that once defined their relationships were no longer present. As one retiree said, "Service relationships are lower now," indicating that the relationships grounded in work roles no longer held the same weight.

**Friendships.** Friendships, however, were a source of stability for many retirees, providing a strong psychological support network. One individual shared, "Friends are a psychological backup even after retirement," emphasizing the importance of maintaining long-term friendships. Many retirees found comfort in staying connected with friends, whether through clubs or social gatherings. One participant mentioned, "I was already part of a club with friends, which is my coping strategy," indicating how social connections with friends played a pivotal role in coping with retirement. Overall, retirees appreciated the continuity of these friendships, noting that their connections with friends remained constant and consistent even after retirement.

#### **Theme 5: Coping Strategies**

**Pre-planning.** Pre-retirement planning was highlighted as a crucial element in ensuring a smooth transition to post-retirement life. Many retirees emphasized the importance of preparing for the financial and emotional aspects of retirement well in advance. One individual shared, "I thought finance would be my challenge and started planning early," demonstrating a proactive approach to managing the financial uncertainties that often come with retirement. Another retiree noted, "I moved to my hometown before retirement, so the shift was smoother," indicating that early logistical planning also contributed to an easier transition. Furthermore, retirees who planned hobbies and activities beforehand were able to fill their time productively, as one individual said, "I planned my hobbies and activities before retirement."

**Structured Activities.** Maintaining a structured daily routine was another key strategy for retirees to stay engaged and productive. Many retirees found that keeping a regular schedule helped them stay focused and avoid feelings of aimlessness. One participant shared, "I meet people in a structured manner now," reflecting how a planned approach to socializing helped maintain social

connections. Others mentioned how being absorbed in activities such as the stock market or pursuing hobbies provided both structure and enjoyment. As one retiree noted, "I am fully absorbed in anything I do, like stock markets or hobbies," indicating that structured activities serve as both a source of engagement and fulfillment. For many, maintaining a schedule was an effective strategy for coping with the challenges of retirement.

**Community Engagement.** For many retirees, staying connected to the community through volunteerism or continued professional engagement provided a sense of purpose. One retiree noted, "I am still a part of committees," indicating how staying active in the community can offer both social connection and personal fulfillment. Additionally, some retirees found that staying involved in professional organizations or teaching roles helped them feel connected to their professional roots. As one participant shared, "I am still a part of a teaching community," demonstrating how ongoing professional involvement can offer a sense of purpose and help retirees stay connected to their former identities.

### ***Theme 6: Fulfillment and Reflection***

**Professional Pride.** Retirees often reflected with pride on their successful professional journeys, particularly those who held significant positions or roles during their careers. One participant shared, "I had a very successful professional journey," reflecting a strong sense of accomplishment in their life's work. For individuals in prestigious professions, such as law enforcement, there was a marked satisfaction in looking back on their careers. A retiree stated, "It was a satisfying experience to be an IPS officer," highlighting the respect and pride that came with the role. Many shared a sense of achievement in having navigated challenges and made impactful decisions, with one individual emphasizing, "I am proud of my hard work and foresight," suggesting that they were not only satisfied with their career successes but also with the strategic decisions they made during their professional life.

**Personal Fulfillment.** As retirees transitioned into their new phase of life, many found fulfillment in personal aspects of their lives, including family, hobbies, and personal growth. One retiree expressed, "My life is fulfilling with whatever I have right now," signifying contentment with the present moment and a deep appreciation for what they had achieved and experienced. For others, personal fulfillment was closely tied to relationships, particularly with their spouses. One participant shared, "All the time spent with my wife is fulfilling," underscoring how quality time with loved ones became an essential source of joy after retirement. Additionally, many retirees found fulfillment in nature, with one stating, "I loved the hills and mountains that stood for me in my life," which suggests a deep, reflective connection to places that had supported them through challenges and changes over the years. This connection to the natural world often provided a sense of peace and personal satisfaction as they looked back on their life.

**Life Reflection.** Looking back on their lives, many retirees expressed a sense of fulfillment and contentment, even in the face of challenges. One retiree reflected, "I would live the same life again," showing that, despite any difficulties they may have encountered, they felt grateful for the experiences that shaped their journey. The challenges faced during their careers and personal lives were often seen as important milestones that contributed to their growth. As one participant shared, "The challenges offered by my life stand out," it was clear that these struggles were integral to the sense of satisfaction they felt in their retirement years. Reflecting on their professional lives, many felt a sense of closure and satisfaction, as one retiree stated, "I had a very satisfied professional life," indicating that they found meaning not only in their professional achievements but also in the lessons learned along the way.

### ***Theme 7: Advice for Future Retirees***

**Preparation.** Retirees emphasized the importance of preparation, both financial and mental, for a smooth transition into retirement. One individual shared, "Plan for finances and start early," stressing the need for financial security and the peace of mind it provides in the years after retirement. Another added, "Mentally prepare for the huge change," acknowledging that the emotional and psychological aspects of retirement can be just as significant as the practical preparations. This sentiment was echoed by a retiree who stated, "The advice is to plan for retirement, both financially and mentally," highlighting that a balanced approach to both financial and emotional readiness is crucial for a fulfilling retirement experience. Planning ahead allowed retirees to feel more in control of their future and less anxious about the unknown aspects of this major life transition.

**Engagement.** Retirees also highlighted the importance of staying active and engaged in meaningful activities. One participant shared, "Identify activities that give you the most excitement," suggesting that engaging in passions and hobbies is vital to a fulfilling retirement. Another advised, "Keep busy in something you like," reflecting how important it is to continue pursuing interests that bring joy and satisfaction. Many retirees felt strongly that maintaining an active lifestyle was key to avoiding boredom and maintaining a sense of purpose. As one retiree stated, "Hobbies are mandatory after retirement," emphasizing the need to fill time with activities that keep the mind and body engaged. This sentiment underscores how retirement is not the end of activity but a chance to explore new avenues of interest and personal growth.

**Relationships.** Maintaining strong, supportive relationships was another key piece of advice shared by retirees. One retiree remarked, "Don't be diplomatic in your closer relationships," suggesting that authenticity in personal relationships is crucial for emotional well-being. Another participant emphasized, "Take care of health, regular exercise, diet, and relationships," highlighting the importance of self-care and maintaining strong interpersonal connections. As retirees experience more free time, they often find themselves deepening relationships with family and friends, and one individual offered, "Maintain quality interactions with family and friends," underscoring the significance of meaningful and intentional connections with loved ones. These insights reflect how retirees valued the time spent with others and the emotional support that solid relationships provide in their later years.

## **Discussion**

Retirement, especially from a prestigious career such as the Indian Police Service (IPS), brings with it significant challenges in terms of psychological well-being. The shift from a high-status, structured professional role to a more unstructured post-retirement life can lead to a variety of stressors. This research aims to explore the psychological well-being of retired IPS officers by examining their experiences during the transition to retirement, identifying key challenges, and investigating the coping mechanisms they employ. This study will be guided by the PERMAH model, which emphasizes positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, and health, to understand the overall well-being of retirees in this unique context.

### ***Identity Transition***

The transition from a high-responsibility job to retirement can disrupt the identity of retirees, especially those with long careers in prestigious roles like the IPS. Many retirees report feeling a loss of professional identity as they leave behind roles that were central to their sense of self. A retiree shared, "I am still part of committees and a professor, and I don't see myself as retired," reflecting an ongoing attachment to their professional identity (Participant 1, 2024). However, for others, the loss of status can be more challenging. One participant noted, "The

hardest part was being treated as normal after being number one," illustrating the emotional difficulty of losing power and recognition (Participant 2, 2024).

This shift often requires retirees to redefine themselves, not just by their professional achievements but through other aspects of their lives. Spirituality emerged as a significant factor for many, with one retiree saying, "My primary identity is as a devotee of God," suggesting a move towards spiritual fulfillment (Participant 3, 2024). Studies have shown that retirees often find purpose in new areas like spirituality, family, and personal growth, which helps them adjust to their new role in society (AshaRani et al., 2022).

### ***Coping Mechanisms***

The psychological adjustment to retirement can be managed through various coping strategies, with many retirees focusing on emotional regulation and engagement in meaningful activities. One of the most cited coping mechanisms was continued involvement in academic or professional settings, where retirees stayed connected to their identity as experts. "I enrolled in a Ph.D. before retirement and completed it afterward," one retiree shared, demonstrating the ongoing pursuit of intellectual engagement (Participant 4, 2024).

Additionally, family and community play significant roles in retirees' lives, offering emotional support and a renewed sense of purpose. Many retirees highlighted the value of spending time with family, with one participant stating, "Spending time with my wife gives me a sense of satisfaction," showcasing how personal relationships provide emotional fulfillment in post-retirement life (Participant 5, 2024). Previous studies have similarly found that social support and strong family ties are essential for retirees' well-being (Patterson & Margolis, 2023).

### ***Psychological Stressors***

While some retirees report finding new meaning in post-retirement life, others face significant psychological challenges. These include feelings of isolation, loss of status, and a lack of structure. One participant revealed, "Perception of others towards me varied because I am retired now," indicating the social shifts that often accompany retirement (Participant 6, 2024). The loss of the respect and authority once afforded to them can lead to emotional struggles, a phenomenon supported by previous studies which highlight that retired individuals often experience a sense of devaluation and diminished social status (Kubicek et al., 2011). Moreover, retirees who have been removed from their professional lives for an extended period may not experience these pressures as acutely. As one retiree noted, "The mental pressure fades after a long time," suggesting that the impact of these stressors decreases over time (Participant 6, 2024).

The findings from this study, when analyzed through the lens of the PERMAH model, stresses the multifaceted nature of psychological well-being in retirement. The model's components—positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, and health—are all reflected in the experiences of retirees. Positive emotions emerge as retirees find meaning in spiritual practices and spending time with family. Engagement is maintained through continued intellectual pursuits or involvement in community activities. Relationships, especially with family and friends, are vital for emotional support and fulfillment. The search for meaning often transitions from career-based achievements to personal growth and spirituality. Accomplishments in post-retirement life, such as completing a Ph.D. or mentoring younger generations, provide a sense of purpose. Finally, health, both mental and physical, is a central concern, as the loss of professional routine and structure can lead to emotional and physical challenges.

The study also highlights the evolving nature of these challenges. Those who have retired recently face more acute psychological pressures, such as the loss of status and the challenge of

identity adjustment. However, retirees who have been out of the workforce for a longer period often report a fading of these pressures, which is consistent with previous research suggesting that the emotional impact of retirement may lessen over time (Dang et al., 2022).

The study's limitations include a small sample size of only six retired IPS officers, which may not fully represent the diverse experiences of all retired individuals. Additionally, the data is based on self-reported narratives, which may be subject to biases such as recall or social desirability. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights into the coping strategies and fulfillment of retired IPS officers, suggesting areas for further research on the retirement experience of other professionals and the importance of mental health support. These insights could help in formulating better mental health policies and creating strategies or opportunities for retired individuals to seek mental health services and support.

### **Conclusion**

The study emphasizes the importance of mental preparation for retirement and the need for systemic changes to better support retired professionals, particularly in helping them navigate identity changes and emotional adjustment. By considering the individual's transition, coping strategies, and long-term adaptation, this research aims to inform policies that can enhance the psychological well-being of retirees, ensuring that they maintain a fulfilling and balanced post-retirement life.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

*Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative studies (COREQ): 32-item checklist. (Table developed from: Tong, A.; Sainsbury, P.; Craig, J., Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): a 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. Int J Qual Health Care 2007, 19, (6), 349-57) [39]).*

S. No	Item	Guide question/description	Content Reported
<b>Domain 1: Research team and reflexivity</b>			
<b>Personal Characteristics</b>			
1	Interviewer/facilitator or	Which author/s conducted the interview?	Tanu Choksi
2	Credentials	What were the researcher's credentials? e. g. PhD, MD	M. A. in Psychology
3	Occupation	What was their occupation at the time of the study?	Psychologist
4	Gender	Was the researcher male or female?	Female

5	Experience and Training	What experience or training did the researcher have?	A trained psychologist who has over 10 years of experience in practice and research
<b>Relationship with participants</b>			
6	Relationship established	Was a relationship established prior to study commencement?	None of the interviewees was prior known to the researcher. Participants responded to recruitment themselves. Then a date, place, and time were arranged individually.
7	Participant knowledge of the interviewer	What did the participants know about the researcher? e. g. personal goals, reasons for doing the research	Participants were aware of the purpose of the study.
8	Interviewer characteristics	What characteristics were reported about the interviewer/facilitator? e. g. bias, assumptions, reasons, and interests in the research topic	The researcher presented as a researcher and psychologist interested in knowing the public servant's mental health in India
<b>Domain 2: study design</b>			
<b>Theoretical framework</b>			
9	Methodological orientation and Theory	What methodological orientation was stated to underpin the study? e. g. grounded theory, discourse analysis, ethnography, phenomenology, content analysis	A thematic analysis with an orientation towards reflexive thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke with an inductive approach was applied.
<b>Participant selection</b>			
10	Sampling	How were participants selected? e. g. purposive, convenience, consecutive, snowball	Purposive sample
11	Method of approach	How were participants approached? e.	The participants were

		g. face-to-face, telephone, mail, email	approached via mail and WhatsApp.
12	Sample size	How many participants were in the study?	6
13	Non-participation	How many people refused to participate or dropped out? Reasons?	Nil
<b>Setting</b>			
14	Setting of data collection	Where was the data collected? e. g. home, clinic, workplace	Interviews were conducted via in-person and phone calls.
15	Presence of non-participants	Was anyone else present besides the participants and researchers?	No one else was present.
16	Description of sample	What are the important characteristics of the sample? e. g. demographic data, date	Inclusion criteria are presented in the methods section. Interviews took place in the month of November, 2024
<b>Data collection</b>			
17	Interview guide	Were questions, prompts, guides provided by the authors? Was it pilot tested?	The interview guide is described in the paper.
18	Repeat interviews	Were repeat interviews carried out? If yes, how many?	No repeated interviews.
19	Audio/visual recording	Did the research use audio or visual recording to collect the data?	Interviews were digitally audio-recorded.
20	Field notes	Were field notes made during and/or after the interview or focus group?	Field notes were made after the interviews, including observations and ideas.
21	Duration	What was the duration of the interviews or focus group?	Interviews' duration ranged between 45 to 60 minutes with an average duration of 35 minutes.
22	Data saturation	Was data saturation discussed?	Data saturation is discussed within the methods and

			limitations section
23	Transcripts returned	Were transcripts returned to participants for comment and/or correction?	Transcripts were not returned.
<b>Domain 3: Analysis and findings</b>			
<b>Data analysis</b>			
24	Number of data coders	How many data coders coded the data?	The data were coded by TC, CB
25	Description of the coding tree	Did authors provide a description of the coding tree?	No
26	Derivation of themes	Were themes identified in advance or derived from the data?	Themes were identified inductively from the data.
27	Software	What software, if applicable, was used to manage the data?	No software used
28	Participant checking	Did participants provide feedback on the findings?	The paper was sent to participants prior to publishing to enable providing feedback on the findings. One participant provided positive feedback.
<b>Reporting</b>			
29	Quotations presented	Were participant quotations presented to illustrate the themes/findings? Was each quotation identified? e. g. participant number	Participant quotations are presented to illustrate the findings.
30	Data and findings consistent	Was there consistency between the data presented and the findings?	Results are supported by data with direct quotations of participants
31	Clarity of major themes	Were major themes clearly presented in the findings?	Major themes are presented, explained, and illustrated by direct quotations of participants in the results

32	Clarity of minor themes	Is there a description of diverse cases or discussion of minor themes?	Diverse cases and opinions are described throughout the results section.
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## Appendix B

### *Thematic Analysis on the data*

<p><b>Theme 1: Identity Transition</b>  <b>Subtheme 1: Maintaining Identity</b>          "My sense of identity did not change. The roles and responsibilities have changed."          "I am still part of a lot of committees and I am a professor at a university."          "My identity is humankind. The primary identity is the devotee of God."  <b>Subtheme 2: Change in Identity</b>          "Yes, my sense of identity has changed after retirement."          "The hardest to let go of was being treated as number one."          "People still see me with respect as I am a retired senior police officer."          Spiritual and Human Identity          "My sense of purpose after retirement is to grow spiritually."          "Spiritual practice is the key."          "My primary identity is a devotee of God; any other classification is material."</p>	<p><b>Theme 2: Purpose in Post-Retirement Life</b>  <b>Subtheme 1: Spiritual Growth</b>          "Spirituality makes you a better human being."          "Meditation really helped me."          "My sense of purpose now is to pursue happiness and grow spiritually."  <b>Subtheme 2: Family and Community</b>          "Taking care of the family gives me a sense of satisfaction."          "I share my experiences with the younger generation."          "All the time with my wife is fulfilling."  <b>Subtheme 3: Continued Learning</b>          "I enrolled as a Ph.D. before retirement and completed it after retirement."          "I started to study after retirement by joining courses."          "I am always updating my knowledge."</p>	<p><b>Theme 3: Challenges of Retirement</b>  <b>Subtheme 1: Loss of Perks and Status</b>          "It was slightly hard to let go of comfort and perks."          "The hardest part was being treated as normal after being number one."          "I know people interact with me differently now because I don't have the same power."  <b>Subtheme 2: Social Perception</b>          "Perception of others towards me has varied because I am retired now."          "I was treated as a normal person after retirement, and people didn't know me."          "Service relationships are lower now; only personal rapport sustains."  <b>Subtheme 3: Adaptation</b>          "In the beginning, I was not happy when I had to be separated from my family."          "I shifted to my ancestral work and renovated it, which helped me cope."          "My expectations shifted, and I accepted the reality."</p>
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<p><b>Theme 4: Relationships</b>  <b>Subtheme 1: Family Relationships</b>          "My relationship with my family has improved after retirement."          "Spending time with my wife gives me a sense of satisfaction."          "With family, my relationships are excellent."  <b>Subtheme 2: Work Relationships</b>          "Work relationships are not that strong after retirement."          "Relationships before retirement were strong, but now only personal rapport sustains."          "Service relationships are lower now."  <b>Subtheme 3: Friendships</b>          "Friends are a psychological backup even after retirement."          "I was already part of a club with friends, which is my coping strategy."          "My connections with friends have been constant and consistent."</p>	<p><b>Theme 5: Coping Strategies</b>  <b>Subtheme 1: Pre-planning</b>          "I thought finance would be my challenge and started planning early."          "I moved to my hometown before retirement, so the shift was smoother."          "I planned my hobbies and activities before retirement."  <b>Subtheme 2: Structured Activities</b>          "I meet people in a structured manner now."          "I am fully absorbed in anything I do, like stock markets or hobbies."          "I am always on schedule."  <b>Subtheme 3: Community Engagement</b>          "I am engaging in serving the public."          "I practice law and teach."          "I was already part of a club to play with friends before retirement."</p>	<p><b>Theme 6: Fulfillment and Reflection</b>  <b>Subtheme 1: Professional Pride</b>          "I had a very successful professional journey."          "It was a satisfying experience to be an IPS officer."          "I am proud of my hard work and foresight."  <b>Subtheme 2: Personal Fulfillment</b>          "My life is fulfilling with whatever I have right now."          "All the time spent with my wife is fulfilling."          "I loved the hills and mountains that stood for me in my life."  <b>Subtheme 3: Life Reflection</b>          "I would live the same life again."          "The challenges offered by my life stand out."          "I had a very satisfying professional life."</p>
<p><b>Theme 7: Advice for Future Retirees</b>  <b>Subtheme 1: Preparation</b>          "Plan for finances and start early."          "Mentally prepare for the huge change."          "The advice is to plan for retirement, both financially and mentally."  <b>Subtheme 2: Engagement</b>          "Identify activities that give you the most excitement."          "Keep busy with something you like."          "Hobbies are mandatory after retirement."  <b>Subtheme 3: Relationships</b>          "Don't be diplomatic in your closer relationships."          "Take care of health, regular exercise, diet, and relationships."          "Maintain quality interactions with family and friends."</p>		

## **Appendix C**

### *Interview Questions*

- Tell me a little about your professional life, how/when you got into IPS, where you served, how the experience was...
- How did your sense of Identity change after you retired from your role?
- What aspects of your professional identity do you find difficult to let go of?
- What strategies have you found helpful in building a new sense of purpose or identity in retirement?"
- How would you describe your sense of purpose since retiring from the police force?
- Can you share a time recently when you felt fully absorbed in an activity? How did it make you feel?
- How would you describe your relationships with others after retirement?
- What role do these relationships play in your life now?
- How do you feel about your interactions and connections with friends and family at this point in your life?
- Have you noticed any changes in how people interact with or perceive you since you retired?
- In what ways, if any, do you feel your abilities or experiences are valued now compared to before?
- What challenges have you encountered in your retirement, and how have you responded to them?
- How do you spend your time now, and what aspects of your life do you find most fulfilling?
- When you look back on your life, what stands out to you?
- What advice, if any, would you give to others approaching retirement?
- How do you approach maintaining or improving your physical health now? Are there any changes you've made to your daily habits?

### **Exploring Identity Confusion in Retired Government Officials**

- How did your sense of identity change after you retired from your role?
- What aspects of your professional identity do you find difficult to let go of?
- How do you define yourself now, outside of your previous position?
- Have you felt any changes in how others perceive or interact with you since retirement?
- What strategies have you found helpful in building a new sense of purpose or identity in retirement?

#### **PERMAH Model:**

**Positive emotions:** Feeling pleasure and other positive emotions

**Engagement:** Being interested, involved, and absorbed in an activity or world

**Relationships:** Feeling supported, loved, and valued by others

**Meaning:** Having a sense of purpose, feeling that life is valuable, and knowing the direction in which life is going

**Accomplishment:** Feeling a sense of mastery and achievement, working towards and reaching goals, and being able to perform tasks

**Health:** Keeping good physical condition

**Positive Emotions:**

- Can you share a recent moment or experience that brought you unexpected joy or satisfaction in retirement?
- Can you describe a recent experience where you felt a sense of lightness or happiness in your daily routine?

**Engagement:**

- Can you describe a situation where you felt re-engaged with something new or different after retirement?

**Relationships:**

- How do you maintain your social connections after retirement? Are there any relationships you've developed or deepened in this phase of your life?
- What have you found most rewarding about the time you now have for family and friends?

**Meaning:**

- What do you believe has been your most important contribution to society or your community since you retired?
- How do you define what makes life meaningful to you now compared to when you were working?

**Accomplishment**

- How do you approach setting new goals or challenges in retirement? What motivates you to keep striving for accomplishments at this stage?
- Can you reflect on a moment after retirement when you achieved something that made you feel proud?

**Health:**

- How do you approach maintaining or improving your physical health now? Are there any changes you've made to your daily habits?