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## Avinash Kumar



*Avinash Kumar has completed his Ph.D. in International Investment Law from the Dept. of Law & Governance, Central University of South Bihar. His research work is on "International Investment Agreement and State's right to regulate Foreign Investment." He qualified UGC-NET and has been selected for the prestigious ICSSR Doctoral Fellowship. He is an alumnus of the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi. Formerly he has been elected as Students Union President of Law Centre-1, University of Delhi. Moreover, he completed his LL.M. from the University of Delhi (2014-16), dissertation on "Cross-border Merger & Acquisition"; LL.B. from the University of Delhi (2011-14), and B.A. (Hons.) from Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. He has also obtained P.G. Diploma in IPR from the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi. He has qualified UGC – NET examination and has been awarded ICSSR – Doctoral Fellowship. He has published six-plus articles and presented 9 plus papers in national and international seminars/conferences. He participated in several workshops on research methodology and teaching and learning.*

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# **CHALLENGES IN LAWYER-CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS: EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

AUTHORED BY - MALLELA SRIDIVYA

Year: 4<sup>th</sup> Year (BBA LL.B.)

College: Narsee Monjee Institute of  
Management Studies, Bengaluru

## **Abstract**

Effective practice of law is based on lawyer-client relationships, usually marred with professional behavior and boundary issues. The existence of tension between professionalism and empathy as attorneys are faced with emotionally fragile clients, particularly in matters concerning family dispute, criminal charges, or personal injury, presents tension. The main research query for the project is: How does professional behavior and emotional boundaries work against the effectiveness of lawyer-client relations, and what do attorneys do to safeguard against this balance? The research adopts an *empirical method* and is based on data gathered from practicing attorneys with varying specializations via Google Forms.

Counsels observed that it was hard telling how Lawyers' experiences with emotionally dependent clients, difficulties in maintaining professional detachment, boundary-setting strategies, and ethical dilemma stances were all surveyed. As a way to aid and contextualize the main findings, secondary sources including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, professional standards, and bar association guidelines were also surveyed. As per initial studies, excessive emotional investment often leads to burnout, blurring of boundaries, and even ethical violations, despite increased client trust through empathy, professional accountability from personal care, particularly in emotionally charged situations.

Yet it is emphasized that boundary-related stress is significantly alleviated by structured communication, transparent professional arrangements, and insight into ethical paradigms. Strangely, the research has evoked types of practice specialties and age differences: older attorneys did more with mentoring and scripted values to manage emotional enmeshment, while younger attorneys were more apprehensive about it.

This study is valuable insofar as it closes the gap between theoretical understanding of professional ethics and the daily lives of lawyers. This study emphasizes the need for greater emotional intelligence education, conscious boundary establishment practices, and organizational safeguards for mental health in practicing law by empowering attorneys' own voices. It also argues for the addition of psychological support services to the practice of law and calls particular attention to professional codes, such as those endorsed by bar councils.

Lastly, the research demonstrates that healthy emotional boundaries are indispensable in providing morally fair, efficient, and understanding legal practice and not in conflict with professionalism. There are indications from the study concerning customer satisfaction, belief in the legal apparatus, and overall quality of conduct of justice and legal practitioners' professionalism.

*Keywords: lawyer professionalism, boundary setting, mental health, emotional boundaries, encounters between lawyer and client, and empirical research.*

## **Introduction**

As clients come to attorneys in moments of dire need, lawyer-client relationships are professionally and personally very intimate. Representation is not possible without empathy and trust, while attorneys are challenged daily with the dilemma of being able to remain professional without being over-intrusive on an emotional level. Those attorneys who become over-intrusive with their clients' personal concerns are at risk for unethical situations, poor judgment, and emotional burnout. Conversely, extreme detachment would be counterproductive in obtaining client satisfaction and trust. The core issue with which the study tries to contend is the conflict between objectivity and empathy.

### The aims of the study

All research goals are as follows:

1. To examine how difficult it is for lawyers to achieve a balance between professional duties and emotional boundaries.
2. In an effort to identify how decision making, ethical obligations, and professionalism are formed with emotional involvements.
3. In considering the treatment of emotionally fragile clients by lawyers in upholding professional considerations.

4. In a bid to encourage healthier lawyer-client relationships, suggest prudent next steps and institutional support systems.

### Relevance of the Study

This piece is worthwhile because it pays heed to the emotional price of the practice of law, a topic that is overlooked. Codes of professional behavior place enormous focus on morality yet are frequently practically mum over the multidimensional emotional dimensions of work.

This research reveals the lived experience of the legal practice through an empirical method and open remarks from practicing attorneys. Apart from contributing to intellectual research, the findings will be helpful to bar councils, legal chambers, and academies in crafting tools that will allow attorneys to establish and retain emotional and professional boundaries.

### Context and Background

Historically, the lawyer-client relationship was largely described in contract and fiduciary duties, with an accent on loyalty, competence, and confidentiality. Conduct rules of yesteryear did not allow for consideration of the psychological and emotional dimensions of advocacy but instead assumed attorneys as objective counselors. There has been, however, an enormous shift in the legal practice scenario. Lawyers today are increasingly called upon to work with traumatized clients whose emotional vulnerability is inexorable, for example, survivors of domestic abuse, felony defendants, or divorce participants. The American Bar Association (2023) and the Law Gazette (2022) practice guidelines and other writings reflect the growing recognition of the value of emotional boundaries in upholding professionalism.

### Research hypothesis of the study

The research hypothesis is that "lawyers who exercise ethical practice, trust with clients, and private wellness are better able to maintain clear emotional boundaries and yet simultaneously work with norms of professionalism than are lawyers who practice with excessive emotional engagement or extreme detachment."

## **Research methodology**

### Why this Topic

The topic, "Difficulties in Lawyer-Client Relations: Emotional Boundaries and Professionalism," was selected as it recognizes that the practice of law is a field of work

involving so much emotional commitment as much as technical competence. Solicitors usually have clients at moments of greatest vulnerability in their lives, such as when accused of serious crimes, embroiled in a breakdown of the family, or engulfed in a conflict at work. Whereas rules of professionalism and juris school training strongly focus on ethical theory and rules of law education, very little consideration is given to what is done about the emotional demands of practicing with clients. This research gap and the growing sensitivity about lawyer psychological and professional wellness motivated the present research study. Without considering emotional boundaries and practice alone, the study will fill the research gap and provide valuable guidance for practicing attorneys.

### Design of Research

The study utilizes a mixed-method, empirical research methodology combining both qualitative and quantitative research. The study is based on actual, realistic practicing work as opposed to theoretical alone study based on the empirical nature, allowing for direct exposure to practicing lawyer opinion. To the extent qualitative data affords an understanding of difficult individualistic strategies attorneys utilize in handling such issues, quantitative data affords quantifiable trends in attorneys' understanding of emotional investment and moral issues.

The research is exploratory as it is concerned with the neglected area of systematic scholarly research, especially in India, even as there is prevalence of professional opinion and occasional writings.

### Techniques for Information Gathering

Google Forms was applied while collecting responses from practicing attorneys with differing fields of specialization, including criminal law, civil litigation, business law, and family law. There were two sections in the questionnaire:

The quantitative measure tackled issues of client perceived emotional dependency, one's personal level of pressure, and the extent to which clients communicated about ethical matters of boundaries. It consisted of closed-ended Likert-scale items (i.e., "strongly agree" through "strongly disagree").

Qualitative Component: Participants were asked personal experiences, coping skills, and sentiments about maintaining professional boundaries in response to open-ended questions.

Professional bars, networks of attorneys, and personal networks were used to distribute the survey. To ensure that responses were indeed professional analysis and not self-motivated bias,

voluntary response and non-remuneration was permitted.

The secondary data was taken from the professional writings about ethics, research writings, and regulations of the bar councils (e.g., Flood, 2010; Law Gazette, 2022; ABA Report, 2023) and primary data. The empirical evidence was placed in broader professional and theoretical frames using these materials.

### Moral Points to Consider

The study design was highly geared towards moral issues based on the sensitive theme under investigation that edged into individual stress among attorneys, exposure of their clients, and potential ethical challenges. The following caution was taken:

1. **Informed Consent:** At the start of the Google Form, participants are read an informed statement of consent detailing study purposes, what their rights would remain while responding, and that their response was volunteered.
2. **Anonymity & Confidentiality:** Names of the respondents, workplaces, and client information were not requested. Anonymization of all data gathered ensured privacy and respect for professional reputations.
3. **Non-Maleficence:** In an effort not to do psychological damage, the interviewers asked with caution. Attorneys were also made aware that if they preferred not to answer a question, they might refrain from it.
4. **Use of Data:** The gathered data was maintained confidential and was made available for intellectual research purposes.
5. **Preventing Bias:** The survey's design purposefully avoided leading questions and allowed respondents to express a range of viewpoints.

Quantitative data was reviewed using descriptive stats for trends and correlation, for example, the proportion of attorneys who encountered difficulty in marking out boundaries between varying practice situations. "Burnout," "dependency with clients," and "structured communication" were among the common themes that emerged as required categories of the qualitative answers based on thematic analysis.

### Methodology Summary

The research's reflection of quantifiable trends and realistic intricacies of attorney-client relationships is ensured through this research framework. The research is richer and more

significant with the addition of secondary sources and actual data, and making feasible recommendations to institutions and legal practitioners.

## Literature Review

### 1. Books

- a) Daniel I. Shuman, *Personal Risk: The Lawyer's Role in Client Relationships* (2017). Literature Review 1. The risk—that of dependence, emotional investment, and professional impropriety—which is faced by lawyers when their own boundaries with clients are transgressed is what is tackled in the book. Shuman highlights that even as empathy is required for closeness, it may also dilute objectivity and trigger violations of ethics if it is not controlled. His criticism sharply underscores creating circumscribed boundaries in attorneys' practice.<sup>1</sup>
- b) Richard Abel: *The Changing Lawyer-Client Relationship* (Oxford University Press, 2018). Abel describes the recent shift in legal labor from transactional, advice-providing interactions with clients to relational interactions in which clients are looking for emotional as much as legal expertise. In this article, emotional boundaries are posited as part of a bigger trend in professional exigency, wondering what, in fact, lawyers would need do differently in order to continue satisfying professional norms.<sup>2</sup>
- c) Leslie C. Levin and Lynn Mather, *Lawyers in Practice: Ethical Decision-Making in Context* (Oxford University Press, 2012). This work positions professional ethics within the "daily realities" of practice and describes ways in which attorneys internalize and convey ethical norms variably depending on client dynamics and circumstance. Authors argue emotional boundary conflict is structural, as with training, workload, and culture.<sup>3</sup>

### 2. Articles

- a) Emotional Intelligence in the Legal Profession: A Crucial Aspect of Successful Attorneying (Bhagwat Mahajan, 2023). According to Mahajan, having emotional intelligence helps attorneys empathize with their clients while maintaining appropriate professional limits. The study argues, from the standpoint of Indian practice, that attorneys who are emotionally

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel I. Shuman, *Personal Risk: The Lawyer's Role in Client Relationships* (Norton, 2017) <https://www.amazon.com/Personal-Risk-Violations-Professional-Client-Relationships/dp/0393710521> accessed 15 September 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Abel, *The Changing Lawyer-Client Relationship* (Oxford University Press, 2018) <https://academic.oup.com/book/1615/chapter/141133587> accessed 15 September 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Leslie C Levin and Lynn Mather, *Lawyers in Practice: Ethical Decision-Making in Context* (Oxford University Press, 2012) [https://books.google.co.in/books?id=hB\\_cSy\\_LSoYC&pg=PA156](https://books.google.co.in/books?id=hB_cSy_LSoYC&pg=PA156) accessed 15 September 2025.

unstable are more likely to experience stress, make bad decisions, and have unhappy clients.<sup>4</sup>

b) ABA: Establishing Healthy Boundaries with Clients (2023) It is an informative brochure issued by the American Bar Association outlining proactive steps including limiting availability, audio-recording conversations, and work scope delineation. It is the attorney's opinion that boundary establishment is an ethic necessity as well as a preventer of burnout.<sup>5</sup>

c) Methods and Guidance on How to Handle Emotionally Fragile Clients (Law Gazette, 2023). The piece details ways in which solicitors may work with troubled or angered clients while not compromising their ethics. It emphasizes that inaction on the work front may jeopardize the health of solicitors and client outcomes, and it promotes empathy via referral systems (to psychotherapists or support networks).<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Research Papers

a) Collins and Fryer, Lawyers and Emotion: An Empirical Analysis. (ScienceDirect, 2010). It is an empirical study of the application of emotional labor in law and concludes that lawyers apply surface and deep acting in order to balance professionalism and empathy. It cautions that poorly controlled emotional labor may lead to stress and ethical breakdown. It highlights as crucial the worldwide significance of emotional boundaries in the law.<sup>7</sup>

b) Sommerlad, Corporate Lawyer-Client Relations: Bankers, Lawyers, Clients, and Lasting Relationships (ResearchGate, 2016). The work of Sommerlad is corporate-led and illustrates how even transactional relationships are subjected to affect and relational considerations in forming trust and client loyalty. The study substantiates that professionalism is not just subject to code of ethics rules, but is instead subject as well to lawyers' affect management of clients.<sup>8</sup>

c) Touro Law Review. The Lawyer-Client Relationship: Ethical Tensions and Boundaries (2019). In the discursive paper on disciplinary issues relating to boundary crossing and grievances against attorneys, it is noted that notwithstanding as clear-cut codes of ethics as ours, boundary crossing is seen as a product of lack of training in emotional intelligence as

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<sup>4</sup> Bhagwat Mahajan, *Emotional Intelligence in Legal Profession: A Key to Effective Lawyering* (JLRJS, 2023) <https://jlrjs.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/20.-BHAGWAT-MAHAJAN.pdf> accessed 15 September 2025.

<sup>5</sup> ABA, *Creating Healthy Boundaries with Clients* (2023) <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/gpsolo/resources/ereport/2023-april/creating-healthy-boundaries-clients/> accessed 15 September 2025.

<sup>6</sup> *Working with Emotionally Vulnerable Clients: Tips and Strategies* (Law Gazette, 2023) <https://lawgazette.com.sg/practice/practice-support/working-with-emotionally-vulnerable-clients-tips-and-strategies/> accessed 15 September 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Hugh Collins, *Lawyers and Emotion: An Empirical Analysis* (ScienceDirect, 2010) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0160252710000877> accessed 15 September 2025.

<sup>8</sup> Hilary Sommerlad, *Corporate Lawyer-Client Relationships: Bankers, Lawyers, Clients and Enduring Connections* (ResearchGate, 2016) [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304032651\\_Corporate\\_lawyer-client\\_relationships\\_Bankers\\_lawyers\\_clients\\_and\\_enduring\\_connections](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304032651_Corporate_lawyer-client_relationships_Bankers_lawyers_clients_and_enduring_connections) accessed 15 September 2025.

much as institutional monitoring.<sup>9</sup>

### Synthesis and Gaps Observed

Literature reviewed herein—books, journals, and empirical pieces—envision emotional boundaries as crucial to the lawyer-client relationship. Empathy is imagined by scholars as indispensable to trust but lethal without restriction. Practitioner materials (ABA and Law Gazette) provide boundary-establishing materials, and research journals (Mahajan, Collins, & Fryer) attest empirically to boundary management and correspondence with client satisfaction and lawyer well-being. Gaps remain. To begin with, there is an overabundance of studies conducted in Western cultures, while there is an absence of empirical studies on lawyer-client boundaries in India. Next, clients' voices are not quoted enough, and an excessive preference appears to be placed toward an inundation of legal narratives. Thirdly, while there are ethical guidelines, there is no empirical work on how ethics operate in practice. Fourthly, there are emotional intelligence trainings and the like, which are available, but have hardly emerged from adequate testing.

This study returns these deficits with empirical contextual research from Indian clients and lawyers and reviews the negotiation of the boundaries of feeling in practice, and offers recommendations for education and regulation.

## **Research and Discussion**

### Demographics and Incidence of Emotional Attachment

#### 1. Area of Practice and Demographics

The survey was done on various lawyers, with varying levels of experience, from 0–2 years to over 10 years. The proportions are approximately:

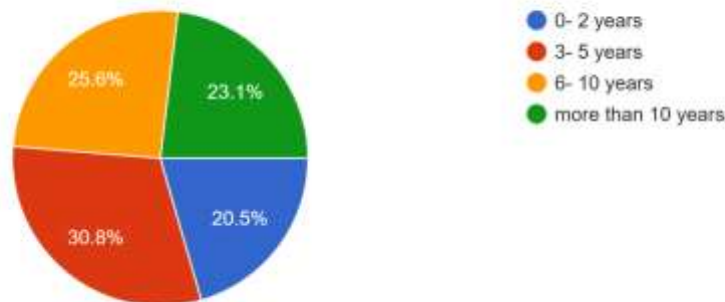
- 0–2 Years: 20.5%
- 3–5 Years: 30.8%
- 6–10 Years: 25.6%
- Over 10 Years: 23.1%

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<sup>9</sup> *The Lawyer–Client Relationship: Ethical Tensions and Boundaries* (Touro Law Review, 2019) <https://digitalcommons.tourolaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1584&context=lawreview> accessed 15 September 2025

How many years have you been practicing law?

39 responses



The practice fields were Criminal Law, Civil Law, Family Law, Arbitration, Mediation, Patent & Trademark, Company Law, Banking & Insurance, and M.A.C.T. cases. The majority were in Criminal Law, Civil Law, and Family Law (~50%), which are all matters of extreme emotional exposure.

#### Critical Analysis:

The questionnaire shows that all the attorneys at all levels report some emotional demands from their clients. Attorneys who are new (0-5 years) will most likely not have any systematic way of dealing with the emotional demands. Attorneys who are more senior must have ways of managing their demands, but still report some emotional demands that occur in serious matters. This is consistent to that which Bhagwat Mahajan (2023) indicates, that the emotional matters are long-term matters no matter the exposure, but as attorneys improve their skills will be combined with boundary setting, thus improving somewhat in the emotional matters.

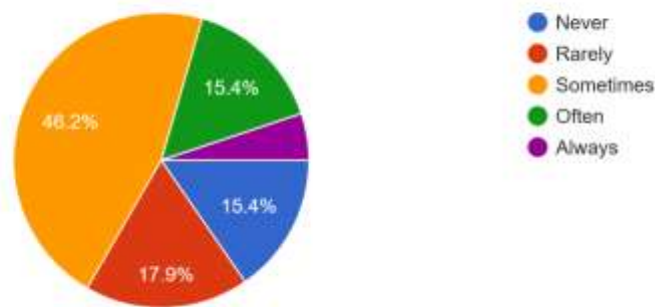
#### 2. Emotional Involvement frequency

Questionnaire answers about emotional investment in client work were:

- Rarely: 17.9%
- Sometimes: 46.2%
- Often: 15.4%
- Always: 5.1%

How often do you feel emotionally involved in a client's personal struggles?

39 responses



### Interpretation

1. Prevalence: A vast majority of lawyers responded affirmative to the emotional involvement inquiry at least some of the time, indicating that emotional work is a common part of legal work. This is consistent with the literature noting that lawyer-client interactions invariably entail emotional participation (Collins, 2010; ABA, 2023).
2. Variability through Experience: Attorneys within the 0–5 years of experience range indicated greater difficulty managing emotional involvement than their more senior peers. Their results suggest that experience mediates the ability to maintain those attorney identity boundaries. Even senior attorneys indicated frequent emotional involvement suggesting experience alone is not enough to safeguard against emotional challenges and difficulties.
3. Practice area influence: Emotional involvement was higher among Criminal Law, Family Law, and M.A.C.T. practice areas. These are specialty areas in which lawyers are working with clients in stressful conditions or when the stakes are high, therefore relational and ethical pressures are increased. Arbitration and corporate lawyers indicated lower "always" rates; however, the occasional involvement rate was still significant in size which indicated emotional involvement is not limited to traditionally high emotional charged areas. Emotional involvement is occurring in all areas of practice.

### Critical Analysis:

The survey describes the essential tension in the relationship between lawyer and client: advocating on the behalf of others necessitates empathy but threatens professional distance. Practitioners work to resolve the tension while striving to comply with ethical responsibilities, make reasonable choices, and protect themselves from experiencing vicarious trauma. The

research supports the Law Gazette (2022) and LCLMA (2020) conjecture that too much emotional involvement impairs judgment and increases professional vulnerability.

### Implications

- It is an ordinary characteristic, not an anomaly.
- Training programs must include emotional intelligence and boundary-setting practices.
- Institutional support (mentoring, peer supervision, counseling services, etc.) must be in place in order to prevent long-term impact of emotional distress.

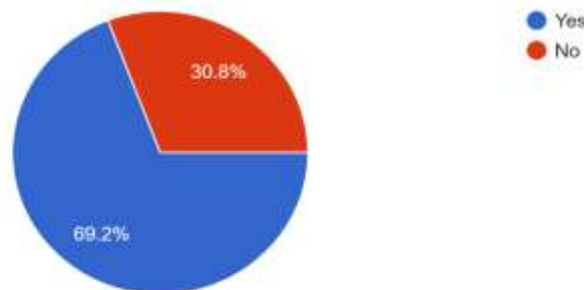
### 3. Relationship with Professional Conduct and Boundaries

The survey shows that attorneys are familiar with the emotional nature of emotional engagement:

- 69.2% of participants affirmed that over-involvement emotionally will hamper one's judgment.
- Boundary ethics knowledge was uneven: Very familiar (41%), Somewhat familiar (38.5%), Not very familiar (17.9%).

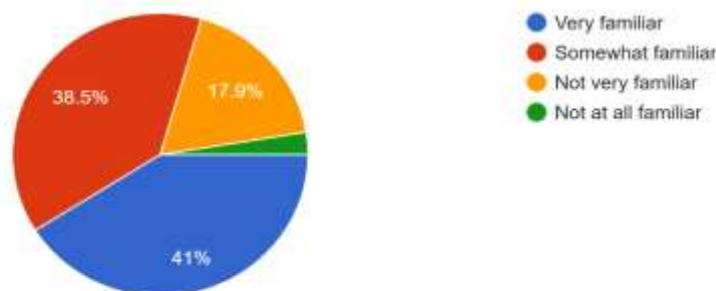
Do you think emotional involvement can cloud a lawyer's professional judgment?

39 responses



How familiar are you with the ethical guidelines regarding lawyer-client boundaries?

39 responses



Discussion:

This indicates a gap between awareness of the ethical requirements and regular exercise of boundary management. Even theory-informed lawyers are occasionally at a loss as to apply such guidelines in the heat of the client interaction. It corroborates Bhagwat Mahajan (2023) that professional norms are not enough without practical instruments and institutional backing.

Critical Observation:

The dilemma is double:

1. Maintaining emotional neutrality to ensure objective advice.
2. Balancing clients' need for comprehension and reassurances that might be at odds with professional boundaries.

Out-of-balance attorneys run the risk of unethical violations, dissatisfied clients, and personal burnout, as with the significance of covering emotional management in professional rules of conduct (ABA, 2023; Law Gazette, 2022).

#### 4. Summary

- Affect participation is common throughout practice settings and levels of experience.
- Legal cases that involve crime, family, and high-stake litigation saw an increase.
- Ethical awareness is present, yet inconsistent practical boundary-setting follows.
- The less he knows, the less he is impeded.
- Training and institutional interventions are required for professional behaviour with empathy.

### Investigative and Discussion

#### Clients Expectations and Boundaries as Controls

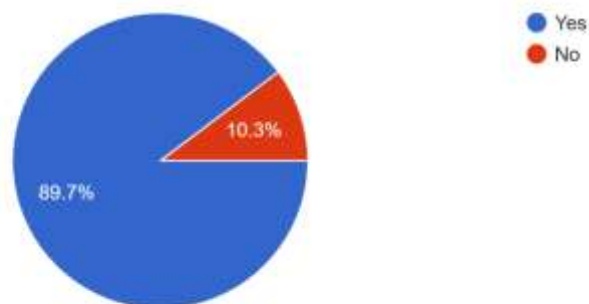
##### 1. Client Expectations

From the survey:

- A significant majority of lawyers, 89.7%, stated that clients expect emotional support as much as legal advice.
- Only 10.3% indicated that clients are only interested in legal advice and do not expect an emotional connection.

Do you believe clients sometimes expect emotional support beyond legal services?

39 responses



### Critical Exploration:

The lawyer-client relationship is primarily devoid of emotional engagement. While emotional responsiveness builds trust, solicitors would consider their professional boundaries eroded if clients sought to elicit emotional support unless that was part of their legal engagement. Academic literature further notes that clients in distress (offence victims, family work, personal injury) may well find themselves expecting emotional containment, leaving the solicitor faced with the dilemma of the dual role of advisor and emotional support (Law Gazette, 2022; LCLMA, 2020).

The survey deals with a systemic issue: a professional practice where even highly experienced members of the profession have placed themselves in a situation which is beyond acceptable professional or acceptable ethical boundaries. This is analogous to Bhagwat Mahajan's (2023) study in which lawyers must navigate relational complexity at the expense of objectivity and compliance with ethical standards.

### Implications

- The level of client expectation highlights the need for formal structures of engagement, such as a consultation agreement, that establish the parameters of care.
- In particular, client expectation management training for junior barristers that are most susceptible to the challenge of staying professionally distant by virtue of their developing expertise and limited experience is needed.

## 2. Judgement and Ethics Awareness Perceived Risks

### Survey recaps:

- 75% agreed that emotional investment can interfere with judgement.
- Ethics familiarity was variable: Very Familiar (40%), Somewhat Familiar (35%), Not

Very Familiar (25%).

#### Explanation

The study indicates that even though legal practitioners understand the risks of emotional entanglement, they have a variable understanding and then apply the rules of ethics. This is consistent with the paper: boundary violations have about the same probability of happening not because legal practitioners are not aware of what is wrong, but rather it is difficult to manage when passions are strong (ABA, 2023; Collins, 2010).

#### Important Point of Emphasis:

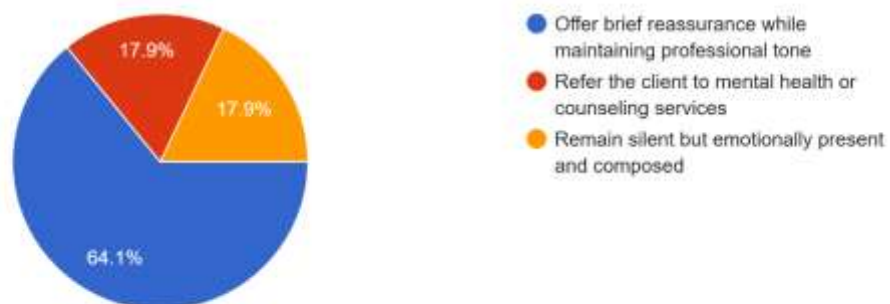
- Emotional involvement that lacks self-regulation make people more likely to experience conflicts of interest, breach their confidentiality obligation, and base their decisions on personal bias.
- Attorneys and professionals who work in high-stakes, confidential contexts are especially vulnerable and are at risk of needing practical practical ethical reinforcement rather than knowledge of abstract ethical theory.

### 3. Strategies for Boundary Maintenance

Data collected from the survey disclosed the following strategies employed by attorneys:

- Offer a prompt boost of confidence, while remaining professional: 64.1%
- Refer the client to therapy or a mental health provider: 17.9%
- Stay calm and emotionally attuned, while remaining silent: 17.9%

How do you maintain professional boundaries when the client becomes emotionally vulnerable?  
39 responses



#### Assessment of techniques:

##### 1. Prompt reassurance

- The most utilized technique, particularly by attorneys in the early portion of their career.

- Positive - Establishes rapport and bolsters client confidence.
- Negatives - Overuse can produce emotional strain, and blurring of boundaries.

## 2. Referral to mental health professionals:

- Socially and academically /professional strong (ABA, 2023).
- Rarely utilized, either due to lack of resources that are accessible or because of social hesitance.

## 3. Present but silent

- Even rarer than number 2 and more common with seasoned lawyers.
- Allows for containment of emotions, without losing objectivity.
- Provides definition of what is acceptable and/or not acceptable.

### Critical perspective:

The range of strategies is reflective of effective, experienced based judgment of emotional labour coping methods, based on experience, the clients' demands, and their own comfortability of being the skill. Scholarly work (Collins, 2010; Sommerlad, 2016) confirms that lawyers need to draw a balance between concern and neutrality. The survey suggests a quick reassurance is a default strategy, arguably due to social expectations -even in situations where it might not ethically or professionally be the best choice.

## 4. Giving Bad News

Question from survey: "Difficulty in providing unfavorable outcomes"

- Not difficult at all: 23.1%
- Difficult: 33.3%
- Depends on the case: 43.6%

Have you ever struggled to deliver emotionally difficult news (e.g., losing custody, conviction, bail denial) to a client?

39 responses



## Explanation

Reporting unfavourable outcomes is one of the principal pressure points in testing professional and emotional boundaries. Moderate and high difficulty reporting lawyers are at risk for:

- Over-identification with client distress
- Delaying necessary communication
- use of coping skills that may blur professional boundaries

This is consistent with research hypothesizing emotionally taxing work, e.g., disclosing bad news, as raising boundary activity and emotional work (LCLMA, 2020; ABA, 2023).

## 5. Encountering and Managing Emotions

The cross tab between the experience and management of emotions suggests:

- There are fewer new lawyers (0-5 years) who report difficulty in asserting them.
- More experienced lawyers (>10 years) appear more likely to use silent/referral strategies, but still sometimes experience the distress of emotions.

### Critical Evaluation:

Encountering situations connects to the development of cognitive and emotional coping strategies; however, emotional investment is at the heart of encountering clients. The study confirms the finding that emotional labour is an organizational component of lawyering and not an individual shortcoming. Organizational coaching and mentoring are still valuable for "filling gaps in awareness and application," along boundary strategies (Bhagwat Mahajan, 2023; ABA, 2023).

## 6. Coping Methods and Resiliency in the Workplace

The survey highlights informal coping methods:

- Colleague discussions or mentorship
- Self-reflection and emotional regulation
- Short, concise encouragement free from biased views

Note: While informal coping is important, formalized structures for coping such as short-term counselling for direct students, formal working supervision and training on emotional intelligence are not available. Writing (Sommerlad, 2016) indicates the importance of embarking on institutional initiatives to support resiliency from burnout caused by regular ethical practice (Collins, 2010).

## 7. Combining the Findings with Literature

1. Emotional work is the norm: Survey responses suggested almost all lawyers engaged in emotional work on a regular basis, which is consistent with comparable surveys in other countries (Collins, 2010; ABA, 2023).
2. Boundary issues remain - regardless of experience: Boundary upholding is at worst difficult, and even for experienced lawyers, balancing job boundaries, client needs, and empathetic support is challenging.
3. Each technique has different levels of usefulness: Reassurance is a go-to technique that is simultaneously useful in a relationship and unethical to rely upon. Both referrals and reassurances have their uses.
4. Being conscious of your ethics is not enough: Border policing is not the same as knowledge about what ethical guidelines for the profession are. There is a need for systems of concrete support.
5. High-stakes situations increase the level of stress: Emotionally and morally heightened-stakes situations are family disputes, legal case disputes, and conversations about undesirable outcomes.

## Conclusion

Challenges in legal-Client Relationships: Emotional Boundaries and Professional Conduct research finds that, as necessary as empathy and compassion are for developing trust in clients, over-involvement with emotions often blurs professional objectivity and leads to legal burnout. The research shows that lawyers often walk a thin line between ethical obligation and the human urge to help distressed clients. Information collected through Google Forms indicates that most lawyers, especially those working in emotionally intense fields like family and criminal law, have difficulty sustaining professional detachment when clients become overly dependent.

The research explores a number of challenges, including the lack of systematic training for lawyers in managing emotional boundaries; second, the Indian cultural expectation of lawyers as being advisors and emotional anchors; third, ethical dilemmas when the blurred boundaries create conflicts of interest; and lastly, the mental health cost of lawyers, which is often not addressed in professional literature.

In spite of these difficulties, the study insists that emotional boundaries are not obstacles to

professionalism, but instead a basis for successful and ethical lobbying. Lawyers who set clear communication guidelines, create professional boundaries, and live by ethical standards are better able to guard both their clients' trust and their own well-being.

This research closes the gap between practice and theory by amplifying lawyers' own voices and highlighting the call for reforms in training, institutional backing, and professional consciousness. Lastly, effective lawyer-client relationships require an assertive balance of empathy and ethical acumen, securing justice to be done in an efficacious and humane form.

### Suggestions

Emotional Intelligence Training: Law schools and bar councils must incorporate seminars on emotional boundary management and client expectation management.

1. Effective Communication Protocols: Lawyers can employ structured communication protocols, like fixed consultation hours and written contracts, to minimize dependency.
2. Peer and Mentorship Guidance: Senior lawyers and professional associations must provide mentorship programs for young lawyers who are having difficulty setting boundaries.
3. Institutional Mental Health Care: Bar associations and law firms should establish confidential counselling and wellness initiatives for legal practitioners.
4. Fortifying Ethical Standards: Bar Council rules should specifically regulate boundary-setting processes in order to offer additional assistance on navigating emotional and professional challenges.

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