



Tactful Management



JOB STRESS AMONG THE EMPLOYEES OF SELECTED NATIONALISED BANKS IN THANJAVUR DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU – A STUDY



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ABSTRACT

Stress is an inevitable consequence of changing business complexity. Stress can have both positive and negative effects. Fear of things that pose realistic threats motivate the employees to deal with them or avoid them. Stress also motivates employees to achieve and fuels creativity. An optimum amount of stress acts as an energiser or motivator and an excess stress creates serious threats to personality traits of the employees and cause both mind and body problems in the long run.

Modern banking is full of stress due to the application of technology in all stages of the banking business that has drastically changed the conventional patterns in nationalized banks. The use of computers and marketing of varieties of products / services have changed the traditional systems in banking business. The necessity to adopt the changes causes stress among the employees when they fail to cope with the changes. The cultural and social changes affect the personal life of the employees and these add stressful situations. Thus, in today's competitive banking atmosphere, stress level increases in the work place. As a result of their job-stress, the employees get chronic fatigue and depression. Therefore, stress management is getting more attention, particularly in banking sector. Through the effects of stress remain unchanged (causing stress to both mind and body), the causes are changing. As bank employees mostly interact with different types of customers, the chances of falling prey to the ill-effects (tension, irritation, etc) are more for them.

The problem identified by the researcher is that a large number of employees of nationalized

banks are facing high level of stress at their workplace, inspite of various measures taken by the bank managements, through training, HR practices, etc., to alleviate stress. The researcher has collected first-hand information from the bank employees contacting them in person. The data have been analysed to identify the vital causes of job-stress, its serious effects and to find out ways to overcome stress. The causes of job-stress include work overload, long working hours, lack of team work, absence of aptitude to perform, etc. Those who fall prey to job-stress, suffer from both psychological and physiological problems. Besides stress management programmes conducted for them, the employees expect more organisational and administrative changes from the bank managements. It is expected that the banks must take steps to ensure congenial atmosphere at the workplace to protect the welfare of the employees.

KEYWORDS : Job Stress , Modern banking ,application of technology .

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Banks are organisations having corporate level identity under companies Act. Though they are basically joint-stock companies, they are, like any other establishments, made up of a team of people. The success of the team of the people is the success of the banks. Thus a bank or any organisation is an enterprise of effective people. Therefore, the important or vital or crucial role of Human Resources (HR) in a bank / organisation is acknowledged in a number of theories and research studies. The effective functioning of the banks, thus, is strongly twined with their HR policies and practices.

Banks, today, are facing stiff competition due to the emergence of new banks in private sector and the entry of foreign banks with sophisticated service modules. The advent and permeation of information technology in banks bring in fast changes in the banking business operations. Therefore, it has become imperative for any bank to work towards building employee capabilities to match their knowledge and skills with the changing requirements. The Human Resource (HR) policies and practices of any bank have to be congruent with the demands of the market and help its employees bring out their best, thereby improving the bank's competitiveness. With suitable Human Resource (HR) strategies and practices, a bank can stand in good stead.

The application of computer has been taking big strides in banking industry. But, at the same time, many banks in old private sector and in nationalised banking sector are continued to be people intensive. They focus mostly on personalised service deliveries, in spite of their large net work of ATMs and other innovative net-banking services. The main reason for this is that a large percentage of their customers prefer personalised banking services, as they are not fully acquainted with the advanced e - delivery channels of the modern banking. This situation highlights the significance of the HR functions in banks.

STRESS MANAGEMENT IN NATIONALISED BANKS

Human Resource Department of the Banks can facilitate a sustainable competitive advantage by evolving appropriate transformation plan that is consistent with the various needs of the business. But, while doing so, HR is exposed to various psychological and physiological pressures. Managing these crucial and indispensable stressful situations is very important for the employees and for the bank as a whole.

Modern banking is full of stress. As banking business becomes more complex, the potential for stress increases. Technology adoption, computerisation and increase of new products and services are some of the reasons for the rise in job-stress in banks. But, stress is an inevitable consequence of changing business complexity and to some extent serves as a stimulant as well. Employees experience

stress, as they can no longer have complete control over what happens in their work environment. The increase in the workload, inadequate support from the colleagues, lack of appreciation, denial of promotion, etc., are some of the work–place incidences where an employee feels frustrated and turns stressed. Further, increase in the prices of essential commodities, sick parents, inadequate housing comforts, schooling of children, traffic hazards, family problems, etc., are certain unpleasant personal experiences of the employee that turn him more stressed at his work-place.

1.2 DEFINITIONS OF STRESS

Stress is defined as, “a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important.” Stress may also be defined as, “a state of psychological and / or physiological imbalance resulting from the disparity between situational demand and the individual's ability and / or motivation to meet those demands.”

“Job stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker. Job stress can lead to poor health and injury.” (United States National Institute of Occupational safety and Health)

According to Ivancevich and Matterson, “Stress is the interaction of the individual with the environment. It is an adaptive response, mediated by individual differences and/or psychological process; that is a consequence of any external (environmental) action, situation or event that places excessive psychological and / or physical demands upon a person”

1.8 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1.To understand the various models and theories of occupational stress.
- 2.To assess the level of stress among the employees of nationalized banks on various dimensions including 12 dimensions of their role, namely, over-load, role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, responsibility for persons, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions and unprofitability.
- 3.To examine the effects of stress on work factors (physical and psychological) when people are under high stress.

10 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a method that can be used to solve the research problem. It provides various steps that can be adopted by the researcher in studying and analysing the identified problems. The type of research design used in this research is descriptive in nature. The descriptive research is carried out with specific objectives. This research design includes surveys and fact finding enquiries of different kinds. The major purpose of descriptive research is description of state of affairs as it exists at the time of conducting the survey.

1.10.1 Sampling Design and Determination of Sample Size

In this study probability sampling or random sampling or chance sampling design is used to determine the sample size to collect the primary data. Under this sampling design, every item of the universe has an equal chance if included in the sample. It is a lottery method in which individual unit is picked up from the whole group not deliberately but by some mechanical process. Random sampling ensures the law of statistical regularity, which states that if on an average the sample chosen is a random one, the sample will have the same composition and characteristics as the universe. This is the reason why random sampling is considered as best technique of selecting a representative sample.

1.11 HYPOTHESES

Hypotheses – Relationship between twelve identified variables and levels of occupational (job) stress among the bank employees.

H₀: Common null hypothesis for all the twelve variables.

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant relationship between the identified 12 independent variables associated with the nature of job causing job - stress and levels of occupational stress among the employees of nationalized banks in Thanjavur district.

H₁, H₂, etc – Alternative Hypotheses for the 12 independent variables.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): There is a significant relationship between Role overload, Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, Unreasonable Group And Political Pressure, Responsibility For Persons, Under-Participation, Powerlessness, Poor-Peer Relations, Intrinsic Impoverishment, Low Status Strenuous Working Condition,, Unprofitability. and levels of occupational stress among the employees of nationalized banks in Thanjavur district.

TABLE 5.2

Twelve independent variables associated with the nature of job causing job – stress versus level of occupational stress among the bank employees.

Model	Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.249	.385		11.039	.000
Role Overload	-.083	.051	-.115	-.620	.107
Role Ambiguity	-.025	.049	-.037	-.515	.607
Role Conflict	-.006	.053	-.008	-.113	.910
Unreasonable Group And Political Pressure	.018	.050	.024	.365	.715
Responsibility For Persons	-.058	.057	-.069	-1.018	.310
Under-Participation	.042	.055	.052	.773	.440
Powerlessness	-.027	.046	-.039	-.572	.568
Poor-Peer Relations	-.014	.049	-.019	-.283	.777
Intrinsic Impoverishment	-.012	.052	-.017	-.241	.810
Low Status	.115	.050	.155	2.322	.021
Strenuous Working Condition	.011	.047	.016	.243	.808
Unprofitability	-.002	.049	-.002	-.031	.975

Dependent Variable: level of occupational stress among the employees of nationalized banks in Thanjavur district.

Source: Data through Questionnaire

Package Used: SPSS 16

INFERENCE

Among the 12 independent variables, for the variable, low status (H_{10}) arrived multiple regression significant table value is 0.021. It is less than 0.05. So accept the alternative hypothesis (H_{10}) and reject the null hypothesis (H_0). There is a significant relationship between Low Status and levels of occupational stress among the employees of nationalized banks in Thanjavur district.

For the other 11 variables, namely, role overload (H_1), roles ambiguity (H_2), role conflict (H_3) unreasonable group and political pressure (H_4) responsibility for persons (H_5), under participation (H_6), powerlessness (H_7), poor – peer relations(H_8), intrinsic impoverishment (H_9), strenuous working condition (H_{11}) and unprofitability (H_{12}), the arrived multiple regression significant table value is greater than 0.05 respectively . Therefore, there is no significant relationship between these 11 factors (variables) and levels of occupational stress among the bank employees.

Thus, barring the factor low status (H_{10}), all the other eleven factors / variables do not have impact on levels of occupational stress among the bank employees.

5.4 ANALYSIS & EXAMINATION ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF JOB-STRESS

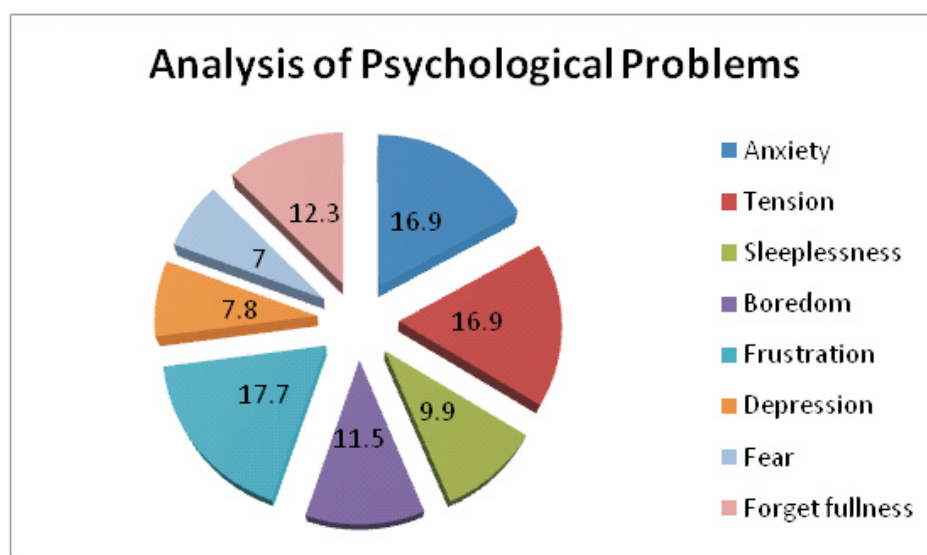
Analysis of 8 identified factors related to the psychological problems developed by job-stress among the bank employees.

During the survey conducted with the help of a schedule of structured questionnaire, the primary data has been collected from the sample of 243 employees of nationalized banks in Thanjavur district. For each factor, the frequency is calculated based on the responses and the same is incorporated in the table. With reference to the size of the sample (243), the percentage of the frequency for each factor has been calculated and provided in the table. Thus, the table contains the frequency and percentage related to the psychological factors, namely, anxiety, tension, sleeplessness, boredom, frustration, depression, fear and forgetfulness, which are the effects of job–stress, affecting the bank employees. Employing the simple percentage, the data provided in the following table 5.5 has been analysed and the inferences are given below the table.

TABLE 5.5
Analysis of Psychological Problems

Analysis of Psychological Problems	Frequency	Percent
Anxiety	41	16.9
Tension	41	16.9
Sleeplessness	24	9.9
Boredom	28	11.5
Frustration	43	17.7
Depression	19	7.8
Fear	17	7.0
Forgetfulness	30	12.3
Total	243	100.0

Figure 5.1



INFERENCE

Analysis of Psychological Problems

From the analysis of the data provided in this table, it is inferred that about 17.7 percent of the respondents have frustration as the problem due to job-stress. The psychological problems of anxiety and tension are experienced each by 16.9 percent of the respondents. Forgetfulness in the problem faced by about 12.3 percent and boredom is caused to about 11.5 percent of the sample of bank employees contacted during the survey. Further, due to job-stress, problems like, sleeplessness, depression and fear are faced by about 9.9 percent, 7.8 percent and 7.0 percent of the respondents respectively. It may be derived from the percentages and respective problems, that, more than 50 percent (51.5%) of the bank employees are experiencing the problems of frustration, anxiety and tension due to job-stress. These psychological problems are to be addressed early by the employees concerned and the management of the banks, failing which, the physical health of the employees may be affected severely.

RESEARCH FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The major findings of the analysis and offers few suggestions for managing the job-stress. The findings are obtained from the statistical tests performed on the hypotheses and from the analysis of certain identified factors.

- + The factors like, role ambiguity, powerlessness, working condition, etc., do not have significant impact on the level of occupational stress among the bank employees.
- + Lack of ability and skills in the bank employees has significant relationship with the occupational stress among them
- + Poor infrastructure, communication gap, unhealthy environment, economic status, etc., have no significant relationship with the occupational stress among the bank employees.
- + Transfer, tax relief, salary, union membership, advanced technology, etc., have no significant influence in creating any job-stress among the bank employees.
- + More than 50 percent of the bank employees are experiencing the psychological problems of frustration, anxiety and tension in the work place due to job-stress.
- + More than 50 percent of the bank employees suffer from three major physical problems, namely,

diabetes, backache and cold due to occupational stress..

- + The conduct of various stress management programmes by the bank management has direct impact on the employees concerned in managing their job-stress.
- + Good environment, recognition, job training, communication skills meditation, etc., do not have significant relationship with the ways to overcome occupational stress among the bank employees.

6.2 SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions based on the causes of job stress

From the study and analysis of the primary data collected from the employees of nationalised banks, a number of causes for job stress have been gathered. On application of statistical tools, certain prime and vital causes have been identified. The following suggestions are based on the prime causes for the development of job stress:

Supervisor-subordinate relationship has an impact on the levels of occupational stress. In general, supervisor-subordinate relationship may not be congenial in branches of nationalized banks and prevalence of strained industrial relations is more in nationalised banks than in other banks. Age, seniority, qualification, union affiliation, length of service in the branch, etc., hinder the existence of smooth relationship in the branch. Therefore, the bank management has to take careful decisions while posting supervisory staff for a branch. The clerical /counter staff must be tamed through suitable training to behave with their colleagues. On-the-spot training will help to inculcate the team spirit to perform well and the sense of belongingness to the institution, forgetting the cadre difference. Such efforts of the banks will reduce the friction among the staff and will help to mitigate the causes of job-stress.

SUGGESTIONS BASED ON THE EFFECTS OF JOB-STRESS:

The analysis of the primary data has brought to light certain important psychological and physical problems experienced by the bank employees due to job- stress. The following suggestions are made based on the important effects of the occupational stress.

Psychological problems like anxiety, tension, frustration and boredom are identified as paramount effects among various effects or consequences of job-stress. Banks have to gather information about the functioning of problematic branches and identify the causes for pandemonium scenes in the branches, customer complaints, staff grievances, slow or negative growth in the business, decline in profits, etc. Mostly such scenarios develop the psychological problems of anxiety, tension, etc. among the employees. Banks have to take early steps to alleviate these causes. Training in customer service, profitability, business growth, etc. must be imparted to the staff. Simultaneously, supervisory staff has to be trained in conflict management, grievance handling, effective HR management, etc.

SUGGESTIONS TO PREVENT STRESS IN WORK PLACE:

- + It is recommended that the stress management programme of the banks should include the proactive identification of stress as well as evaluation of stressors in terms of severity and impact.
- + Banks have the vital role to counter the threats of stress. They should adopt appropriate strategies to harmonise the organizational and personal needs. Necessary improvements have to be made by banks in the process of recruitment, selection, performance appraisal, etc. related to HRM. The support system like counselling services should be made available to the employees of all cadres and to their family members, if needed.

- + Modified management system involving employees in decision making would help nationalized banks to prevent problems of stress. Participative management in banks will enhance the feeling of belongingness and induce the sense of coherence in the minds of the employees.
- + To prevent occupational stress, banks have to encourage inter-personal relationship irrespective of the cadre. Banks may implement certain reward systems for best CRM (Customer Relationship Management) and HRM (Human Resource Management) besides business/performance based rewards.
- + The bank managements should conduct stress prevention programmes which include creating awareness about stress (causes, cost and control). Commitment and support of top management is essential to conduct such programmes. Bringing the supervisory staff and subordinate staff together for such stress prevention programmes will yield good results.

SUGGESTION TO MANAGE STRESS AT WORK PLACE:

- + The banks should provide facilities for gymnastics, meditation, yoga, etc., for helping the employees to combat / manage stress.
- + The banks should mitigate the job dissatisfaction by transferring discontented employees to another job matching their tastes and preferences. Such transfers achieve a better fit between individuals and job characteristics. Also the job satisfaction to promoted and stress is managed.
- + Banks may recruit young personnel in the age group of 18 to 25 having adequate qualification (not more qualified). Such personnel may be trained suitably to fit in the work environment.
- + In the computerized environment of the banks, the role of managers (supervisory staff) is growing. Therefore, banks may have more supervisory staff to match the requirements.
- + The banks have to take immediate steps to restrict the working hours to 8 and in exceptional cases up to 10 hours. In banks, the manager and other supervisory staff work for 14 to 15 hours a day. This stressed situation must be attended to and should be changed.
- + The employees of the banks must reduce their commuting (travel) distance and time. Residing near the work place will reduce stress to a great extent.

6.3 CONCLUSION

Stress is a common phenomenon in everyone's life in this world. The level of job stress may vary according to the incidents, work place, persons concerned and situations. The incidence of stress is more in the place of work and so the workmen or employees succumb to stress more. Thus, everyone is exposed to tension and anxiety while they do the duties assigned to them. The nature of work in banks is risk tuined and it involves the direct customers interaction in all levels. Adequate level of stress adds to the competency and productivity of the employees. However, excess stress causes injury to both mind and body of the employees, if not managed properly. Therefore, stress management is receiving more attention now-a-days, particularly in the banking sector. The researcher has rightly chosen the topic of job- stress among the employees of nationalized banks and analysed the causes, effects and ways to manage the stress related to the work-place.

Stress, if not noticed and attended to in early stage, may cause serious health problems among the employees of the banks, such as, depression, heart problem, diabetes, etc. High job-stress affects the health and personal life of the bank employees. Due to job pressure, many employees are unable to spend time at home and with family. Frequent changes in the baking operations, systems, products and procedures drive the employees to adjust themselves with the changing situations. Many of the bank employees are unable to cope with the changes due to their age, size of the family, commitments, lack of ability and skill and so on. However, with the help of proper management technique, the banks prepare

their employees to overcome the ill-effects of occupational stress.

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