



Impact of stress on employees of banks: Indian context

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Abstract

The study of HRM is one of the major criteria in the corporate sector. Stress has become part and parcel of human life and is more pronounced in corporate life. Globalization and liberalization has brought a rapid change in the banking sector and as a result of it, the employees in this sector have been facing many challenges due to sizeable increase in the volume of banking business. Since the employees have to work under strict time deadlines, it is essential that physical and mental comfort at work is ensured. Nobody can deny that employee's attitude and performance have an immense bearing on productivity, hence the banking sector should pay attention to the physical and mental well-being of their employees by providing a stress-free-work environment. The paper attempts to pinpoint the impact of stress on employees of Banks in India.

Keywords: banking, bank employees, stress, stressors, workplace

Introduction

Stress is derived from the Latin work 'stringere'. Which means to be drawn tight. It is the way we react physically mentally and emotionally to the various conditions, changes and demands of life. The events or conditions in our environment that trigger stress are called 'stressor'. Stressors are of two types namely- proactive stressors and systematic stressors. Proactive stressors represent immediate reactions to sudden threat, challenge or fear. In such situations,

The main factors of stress of bank employees are

- **Role overload:** Challenge of high workload is beyond expertise limit it creates stress.
- **Role conflict:** A mismatch between nature of work and competency of employees.
- **Role ambiguity:** Higher the inadequate work information, higher is the level of stress.
- **Lack of support:** If there is lower level of support from other employees.
- **New technology:** Like computerization telephone banking online banking, mobile banking, have affected low skilled workers has raised the stress level.

Effect of stress on organization

Increased absenteeism/ staff turnover/ unsafe working practices / complaints from client and Decreased commitment to work, Unrelated performance and work, adverse effects on staff recruitment. Damaged workers image both among their co workers and on others.

Effects of stress on the individual include:

1. **Physical effects:** - headache, backache, loss of appetite, restlessness, nausea, diabetes etc.
2. **Psychological effects:** tension, anxiety, fear, forgetfulness, anger, loss of concentration.
3. **Behavioural effect:** arguing-crying-exhaustion-over eating carelessness-frequent mistakes.

Impact of Stress on Employees of Banks in India

For banking employees around the globe, stress on the job can be a challenge; stress can be sometimes positive and sometimes negative. Positive stress leads to productivity and negative stress leads to loss for the organization. There is already a certain level of stress in Banking employees work life and then encounter even more stress arising from the work pressure that Banking employees face on the job. Many employees cannot cope with such rapid changes taking place in the jobs. Role conflict, Service for customer, contribution, rapid technological change, lack of customer response is the great transaction of stress for the banking workers. The aim of this research is to understand roots and outcomes of job stress on the employee performance in banking sector. Major findings of the study includes:

- The main stressors in banking sectors are the inability of the employees to combine the demands of organizational life with the demand of family life, and a sense of isolation from the rest of the organization or alienation syndrome resulting in a feeling of powerlessness. Immense merger and acquisition activities in banking industry that led to extensive restructuring not only threatened job security of workers but also led to high level of work related stress. In the last decade of the 20th century, the most important changes affecting banking industry were job cutbacks, increasing the burdens of the surviving members of the staff by forcing them to work overtime leading to stress.
- Stress affects all categories of workers irrespective of their gender and occupational status but effects are moderated by workers' self-concept which has an impact on occupational stress. Stress effects are greatest among service staff at the bottom of the hierarchy, with least participation in decision-making.
- Occupational stress variables such as role over load, role authority, role conflict and lack of senior level support contribute more to the occupational stress. Further, it is also revealed that the size of working area, lighting intensity and noise level are important factors

of stress. The occupational stress is higher among the employees of non-nationalised banks compared to that of nationalized banks. Occupational stress is significantly higher among officers than among clerks. Moreover, field independent officers were found to experience more occupational stress than field dependent clerks whereas field independent clerks experienced more occupational stress as compared to field dependent officers.

- There is no relationship between the age of the employees and the stress of the employees.
- The principle determinants influencing the level of stress and , therefore, health are-the rhythm of work of employee activity, the importance of psychological pressure while carrying out tasks, satisfaction towards the work done, support of solidarity among colleagues and superiors, the limit of the levels of uncertainty and insecurity regarding the maintenance of the job and harassment at the workplace.
- In determining the levels of occupational stress; educational background, limited time, work-related problems, strength of the employees' family support and drinking habits (alcohol) etc. were found to play a significant role. Work demands, decision latitude and social support are three dimensions that make it possible to predict mental strain.
- The work demand variables (the volume of work, the speed of work, the lack of time, and the conflicts involved in having to do different types of work at the same time) carries a positive sign indicating that heavy work demands increase the odds an employee will report often or sometimes feeling some symptoms of stress. Decision latitude encompasses decision authority, which refers to the worker's authority to make decisions involving how the work is done, and skill discretion, which refers to his or her opportunity to use a variety of skills on the job. Further, it reveals that employees who are given more control over their jobs experience less stress, regardless or work demands. Social support refers to the positive social interaction available on the job from both co-workers and supervisors.
- Employee experience of stress reflects both individual characteristics as well as more collective qualities that are shaped by contextual factors that too much emphasis is placed on individual-based programmes for managing stress and that more attention needs to be given to broader contextual issues is managing the conditions in which workplace stress is experienced.
- In this study male employees are more than to female employees. Most of the employees come under 30 to 40 years age and large number of employees has bachelor and master's degree.
- In HDFC Bank majority of the employees have 2 to 5 years work experience.
- In HDFC Bank almost employees including male and female agreed that workload, technical problem, working environment lack of motivation and cooperation with superior and long working hours are the main causes of stress.
- Most of the employees agree that they completed their work on time and did not take their work in home and avoid staying late at the office to finish their work.
- Majority of employees think that training programs are

better for the employee's performance as well se banks performance.

- Some employees are not satisfied with their work. Large number of employees suffers high level of stress in their organizations less number of employees suffer low stress.
- In HDFC Bank most of the employees have physical and mental stress both.
- High percentage of respondents suffers headache, tiredness, mood swings and frustration and sleep difficulties.
- Most of the employees agree with EAP (Employees Assistance Program) also very helpful to solve employee's personal issue and try to help to give them stress free life. So, there is a need to more focus on EAP.
- There is significant positive relationship between stress and performance of employees. In correlation of stress and employees' performance most of the dimensions have positive relationship.
- It has been found that lack of proper and healthy working conditions leads work stress among bank executives. Inadequate resources, nature of work itself, insufficient information and lack of career prospects at work place also causes low satisfaction and motivation. And low satisfaction and motivation leads to poor performance and productivity.
- Stressors associated with the job role i.e. overload role and over expectations (personal/subordinates/organizational) leads to stress among employees.
- Interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts are also the major reason of stress amongst employees.
- Employees who are overloaded and facing over expectations (personal/ subordinates/ organizational) find difficult to maintain congenial relationship with subordinates and that leads conflicts and stress at work place.
- Stress largely increases the level of fear, anger, anxiety and nervousness. And simultaneously reduces the level of satisfaction and confidence among employees which causes behavioural consequences and physiological consequences.
- It has been observed that occupational/ work stress affects the performance of employees in terms of efficiency and productivity.

Suggestions

Banks are amongst the top ten stressed workplaces in India. To increase the productivity and efficiency of the banks, banks have come forward with a number of solutions. Banks are employing Human Resource practitioners to solve these issues. Human Resource Department has become an integral part of Bank. Human Resource Practitioners are beings involved in planning decisions. Banks are implementing various strategies at all the levels so that workplace stress can be eliminated.

Thus, professional help and Stress Management Programmes if implemented carefully can help in minimizing workplace stress and overcoming all the obstacles in the growth of banking industry. If psychological well-being and health of the employees is enhanced, the banking industry would make more revenue as well as improve employee retention in the coming future.

The below mentioned remedial measures can be taken to

cope with stress among employees:

- Job roles need to be identified to eliminate role ambiguity.
- Employees grievances must be handled carefully so that they can mingle up in the working culture of the organization. It is important from the point of view of organizational objectives as we all know that only a satisfied employee is capable of satisfying the customer and customer's satisfaction is the priority of any organisation.
- Psychiatrists should be employed so that stress audit can be conducted at all levels in the organisation and stress prone areas can be identified. Thus, improving conditions of job and alleviating job stress
- Organization should manage people at work differently, treating them with respect and valuing their contribution thus, effective stress management and professional help can improve the performance of employees.
- Training specifically related to type of work in which an individual is involved and policy implementation is a key priority at this stage when banking activities have become complex. If an employee is well informed about his /her work, the less will be the stress and the more efficient the employee will become.
- Stress Management Programs focusing on different leave categories of Employees at all hierarchical level should be introduced so that employees can get a time off from their busy schedule.
- Jobs oriented training programs should be introduced which improve employee's skill and their confidence to work effectively.
- 'Pranayam' and other meditation tools should be used as holistic managerial strategy to deal with workplace stress.
- The stress can be different among different employees; so , the management has to identify their problems and it will help to reduce stress.
- The employees are to be given enough time to complete their work which would reduce work overload.

Conclusion

The study shows that employees in the banking sector score higher levels of stress and insecurity and show evidence of significantly worse health indicators with respect to those of employees working in other sectors. Stress has become a corporate buzzword. It affects individuals as well the organizations. If taken positively, results are positive and if taken negatively, the results are negative. Recent research reveals that low to moderate level of stress enable an employee to perform better. However, a high level of stress spread over a long period eventually takes its toll and the performance declines. Hence, it is the need of the hour that the management of banks should take corrective measure to overcome the dysfunctional effects of stress. In recent days, managements are adopting stress management techniques such as employee's assistance programs, proper selection and training, wellness programmes, stress audit, recreation facilities, participative management, equitable performance appraisal and reward system and the like.

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