A SURVEY ON OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF BANK EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

Occupational stress has become one of the global issues in the current working environment. Though the modern day organisations have succeeded in coping up with changing industry structures, their success in tackling their employees’ stress level is still a question mark. Unless employers do not try to lower their employees stress level, it will affect their organisations indirectly by various means such as increase in absenteeism, high employee turnover etc. Especially it is not good for organisations such as financial institutions where lump sum money is involved in day to day activities. Also the modernisation of the industry led to various changes in the working environment thereby challenging the ability of employees to cope up with it. Due to these reasons, employees working in financial sector particularly bank employees are more prone to stress. Hence it is mandatory to study their stress levels in order to avoid negative consequences. So this paper attempts to review such studies that have been carried out in the recent past in finding out bank employees stress level. The similar studies such as study on stressors, study on how occupational stress vary with demographic factors, nature of banks, job cadres, job satisfaction and job performance etc are grouped under same captions for our easier understanding. The paper also throws light on the scope of future research work in this area and adds definitely to the existing literature. We have furthermore addressed limitations of the previous studies and have presented about our ongoing research work focus.

KEYWORDS: Bank Employees; Banking Sector; Job Stress; Occupational Stress; Stress; Work Stress.

1. INTRODUCTION

Occupational stress has become almost globalized and has the tendency to affect all professions and workers irrespective of their categories (Ahmad and Ahmad, 1992). Though it
cannot be confined to any specific occupation, the data such as longitudinal national statistics from studies of different occupation groups showed that financial sector employees are more prone to stress (Paola and Merlline, 2001).

The economic growth of a country mainly depends on its financial system. As rightly said, they are the back-bone of economy. Over the last few decades, the Indian financial system underwent some major changes in terms of structures, management techniques and the regulatory environment. These changes are more pronounced in the banking sub-sector than any other sub-sectors (Tella & Akingunola, 1998). Thus the modernization of the finance industry led to severe concerns such as excessive work demands, increased time pressure, role conflict and increased incidents of stress (International Labour Organisation ILO, 2003) & minor psychiatric disorders among its workers (Silva L.S et al., 2007).

Due to liberalization in policies of licensing procedures by Reserve Bank of India (Central Banking Authority of India), a lot of new banks have entered in to the sector and hence making the environment very competitive (Ouyang, 2009). In order to compete in the current environment, banks are in a position of making huge profits so that they can survive. This led to increased working hours and so on. Moreover, banking business in the recent times has transformed tremendously due to various factors such as technological innovations in terms of communication and information processing and increase in number of frauds which ultimately results in change in the stress level of bank employees every time. Also, studies regarding occupational stress are very limited with reference to banking sector. Hence the main motive here is to explore studies regarding stress relating to banking sector in particular.

We have used “Bank Employees Occupational Stress” as a keyword and the search has yield positive results related not only to banking sector but also to other services sector as well. From that, studies in relation to other services sector such as teaching and nursing were omitted. After doing thematic analysis of contents present in articles, the final sample consisting of about 65 studies (36 Indian and 29 International) regarding bank employees’ stress were chosen for the review purpose.

The following tabular column consists of details of year wise papers published on bank employees’ stress so far.

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<th>S.No</th>
<th>Years</th>
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<td>1.</td>
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<td>2011-Till Now</td>
<td>29</td>
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The paper proceeds with definitions of stress in Section 2 and that of occupational stress in Section 3. Section 4 focuses on discussion in relation to studies about bank employees’ stress. Section 5 narrates about limitations of previous studies. Finally, Section 6 offers future research scope and concludes.

2. STRESS

Though stress can be defined in numerous ways, let us shift our focus towards some important and notable definitions. McGrath (1970) rightfully pointed out that stress is a substantial

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1980), stress will generate among human beings where a particular relationship between a person and the environment, that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his/her resources and endangering his/her well being. Though an individual was given with major responsibilities, he/she tends to develop stress if there is an absence of proper delegation of power and authority (Vansell et al., 1981).

Baum (1999) defines stress as a negative experience, which is mostly accompanied by behavioural, cognitive, emotional and physiological changes. According to Robbins and Sanghi (2006), stress usually results from a lack of fit between a person and his environment when he/she cannot cope up with the encountered demands. Stress usually occurs when an individual’s physical and emotional ability do not match their job demands (Ugoji and Isele, 2009).

Most of us think that stress is always harmful. But it is not as we think. Stress may be either good (eustress) or bad (distress) (Fevre et al., 2003). Eustress usually refers to a stress that motivates a person to achieve something new or the one that helps a person in achieving some greater heights e.g. working towards one’s goal or success. Distress is a state where a person is unable to cope up with stressors that leads to dysfunctional behaviour.

Positive pressure is proved to be one of the most important factors in improving the productivity of the organisation (Spielberger, 1980). If the same pressure becomes excessive, it may lead to distress which will negatively affect the attitude and behaviour of employees in the workplace (Seaward, 2005).

3. OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Though stress may be of various types, it is referred to as job stress when it is traceable to a particular job or occupation. According to Beehr and Newman (1978), job stress usually arises when the interaction between people and their jobs went wrong that ultimately drives them towards some abnormal functioning. Thus stress is an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, psychological and behavioural deviations for organisational participants.

Luthans (1995) defines job stress as a workplace chronic disease that has a negative impact on individual’s performance. According to Malta (2004), occupational stress is any discomfort which is felt and perceived at a personal level which is mainly triggered by events and instances that are too frequent and strong so as to exceed people coping capabilities. Irene (2005) defines job stress as a set of reactions that occur when the skill sets and abilities of employees are unable to cope up with demands placed on them. Thus it is a new phenomena of modern day living and it has become a malaise.

Whether occupational stress and job stress are different? Most of us will say yes. But in an organisational context, occupational stress is also referred to as job stress or work stress. These terms are often used interchangeably in organisations, but its meaning refer to the same thing (AbuAlRub, 2004; Larson 2004).

4. DISCUSSION OF THE PREVIOUS STUDIES

Since contributions made by the previous authors are enormous, it is impossible to discuss all of them in a detailed manner. So, we have shifted our focus mainly towards their important findings.

Studies made by Md. Mosharaff Hossain (1997) and by Bharati Roy and Anita Arora (2012) showed that bank employees are more prone to stress i.e. banking jobs are highly stressful. The
existence of a casual relationship between role stress and employee outcome is revealed by Parkington and Schneider (1979).

A. Stressors


b. Occupational Stress Vs Demographic Factors

Most studies have concluded that stress is negatively related to experience i.e. higher the experience (number of years of service), lower is the stress and vice-versa (T.R.Rajeshwari, 1992; Neelameghan and Asrafali, 2010; Yasin Bez and Abdurrahim Emhan, 2010; Davinder Sharma, 2011; Yasir Arafat and Elahi Mishra Apoorva, 2012).

The study by T.R.Rajeshwari (1992) illustrated that stress is independent of position whereas the study by Nazira Paruk and Anesh Maniraj Singh (2012) revealed that stress mainly depends on employees’ roles and responsibilities. T.R.Rajeshwari’s (1992) study also demonstrated that stress level is mainly dependent on income and independent of sex whereas studies by Nazira Paruk and Anesh Maniraj Singh (2012), Showkat Kalil Wani and Weerasinghe T.D and Batagoda proved that female employees feel higher stress.

Stress varies based on educational qualification (Michailidis and Georgiou, 2005; Neelameghhan and Asrafali, 2010).

c. Occupational Stress Vs Nature of Banks

Aminabhavi and Triveni (2000) study showed that nationalized bank employees have higher stress when compared to their non-nationalized counterparts while the study by S. Katyal et al., (2011) found that non-nationalized bank employees have higher job stress which is analogous to studies conducted by Swarnalatha & Gopalakrishnan (2012) and Sudha Katyal & Ronica Katyal (2013).

Weerasinghe T.D and Batagoda, Nadeem Malik (2011) and Shilpa Sankpal et al., (2010) suggested that there exist higher stress among private bank employees when compared to their public bank counterparts which was confirmed again by Yasin Bez and Abdurrahim Emhan (2010) on their study on occupational stress of women bank employees. In contradiction, studies conducted by Sunita.G.Rao and Sunita Borkar (2012) and M.Sakthi Vadivel and Ayyappan (2013) showed that the level of stress is higher among public sector bank employees.

The study by Shah Ala & Kainat Rizvi (2012) illustrated that psychological well-being is higher among public sector bank employees. Harajyoti Mazumdar et al., (2011) study demonstrated that job stress was found to be higher among rural bank employees.
**d. Occupational Stress Vs Job Cadres**

Farooq A.Shah (2003) found that employees belonging to clerical cadre face higher stress which was similar to the result of studies conducted by Sen (1981), T.R.Rajeshwari (1992), Pandey and Srivastava (2000) and Farooq A.Shah (2003).

The occupational stress was quite higher among managerial bank employees when compared to non-managerial bank employees such as clerks (Showkat Hussain Gani, 2012) while the study by Akingunola Richard Oreoluwa and Adigun Abel Oludele (2010) found that the level of stress is higher among executive employees.

**e. Occupational Stress Vs Job Satisfaction and Job Performance**

Majority of study confirmed that the correlation between job satisfaction and job stress is negative (Achmamba and Gopikumar, 1990; Md. Mosharaff Hossain, 2000; Srivastava, 2008; Samuel, 2009; Yasir Arafat and Elahi Mishra Apoorva, 2012; Quarat-ul-ain et al., 2013; Showkat Kalil Wani; Weerasinghe T.D & Batagoda).

Job stress leads to job dissatisfaction which has been proved by Neelameghan and Asrafali (2010) in their study.

Job Stress is negatively related to employees’ performance (Gnanaraj, 2001; Mohamed Irfan Ismail and Tan Teck-Hong, 2011; Nikolaos Kakkos and Panagiotis Trivellas, 2011; Muhammad Naeem Shahid et al.).

Studies by Mariam Imran et al., (2010) and Vimal K. Bhatt et al., (2012) confirmed the above i.e. job stress leads to job dissatisfaction and also it is negatively related to employees’ performance.

**f. Effects of Occupational Stress**

Occupational stress leads to high employees turn-over which-in-turn has a significant relationship with intention to quit (Cha Xin Yi, 2012) and there exist positive relationship between stress level & psychological effects such as anger & nervousness (R. G. Phadatare and Pisal Sucheta, 2013).

### 5. LIMITATIONS OF THE PREVIOUS STUDIES

Though all the above studies have succeeded in attaining their objectives; the common limitations with most of them include,

- The sample size chosen for the above studies was not a true sample of the population which results in failure to generalize the results. Therefore their results may not be applicable to the banking sector as a whole.
- Some of the important stressors such as role boundary, responsibility etc were not included in their studies.
- Modernization of the banking sector has resulted in increased use of information and communication technology. Even though, stress due to information technology was not considered.
- Not all the job cadres (i.e. executive, officer, clerk and sub staff) have been considered viz. most studies were confined to one or two job cadres only.
- Though focus was mainly towards studying stress level in public sector and private sector banks, the same with respect to foreign banks are very narrow.
- The above studies have dealt either with occupational stress or stress management (coping with stress) alone without dealing with both.
6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

Studies regarding bank employees’ occupational stress are on a constant rise for the past few years (refer: table 1) thereby explaining us why the study is the need of the hour. Though more studies have been conducted in this field, only meagre number of studies has laid both strong empirical as well as theoretical foundations. So the main focus must not only be on empirical research but also on theoretical research as well.

Currently we are studying bank employees’ stress by fulfilling all the above addressed limitations in an elaborate manner. In addition, we are also studying stress due to information technology apart from studying psychological strain and coping with stress. The future studies can focus more towards studying bank employees’ stress by addressing the above listed limitations.

REFERENCES


