IMPACT OF ORGANISATIONAL STRESS ON EMPLOYEE MORALE: A STUDY OF BANK OFFICERS IN UTTAR PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Employees face numerous problems in their personal as well as work life, which tend to lower their morale. The work-life stress hampers employees' capabilities and lowers their productivity. Being service-oriented human organisations, banks need a workforce which is capable, efficient, and happy for their smooth working. In the present study, entry-level and middle-level officers of public-sector and private-sector banks in Uttarakhand were surveyed to measure the level of their organisational stress. The impact of stress on their morale was also assessed. Through statistical analysis of stress and morale scores obtained from the respondents, the study seeks to ascertain the difference in the level of stress of entry-level and middle-level officers of public- and private-sector bank, and to examine the impact of the stress on their morale. The study has revealed significant differences existing among the bank officers of different levels.

INTRODUCTION

Banks are basically human organisations; they need human expertise, time, and effort for achieving their objectives of maximizing profits and wealth through customer satisfaction. For providing better customer service, the employees should possess positive work attitudes, strong commitment, and high morale. In fact, a happy worker is a productive worker and it is the responsibility and necessity of an organisation to satisfy its employee’s needs and to provide them a work-conducive environment.

There are certain factors in an individual’s personal and work life which give rise to stress and have an adverse effect on his physical and mental health, morale, his personal relationship, and professional capabilities. These factors have to be identified and understood so that their creation and effect can be better controlled for the benefit of the employees as well as the organisation.

In the banks, human resources serve as the main competition tool. The stiff competition in the banking sector and the revolutionary impact of information technology require skilled and motivated
One of the most important tasks for a bank, like any other business organisation, is to retain them. This can be achieved only by creating an atmosphere of recognition of their talent, to encourage them, and to reward the talented employee energized to cope up with the increasing work load and responsibilities and rendering qualitative service to the customer.

CONCEPTS OF STRESS AND ORGANISATIONAL STRESS

The term, ‘stress’, was first used in the biological context by the endocrinologist, Selye (1956), in his book, The Stress of Life. He later broadened and popularized the concept of stress to include an inappropriate physiological response to any demand. According to Oxford Dictionary, stress is a state of affair involving demand on physical or mental energy. Stress, in general, can be defined as the reaction of an individual to the demands (stressor) imposed upon him. It refers to the situation where the well-being of an individual is detrimentally affected by his failure to cope with the demands of his environment (Erkuthu and Chafra, 2006). Occupational stress, in particular, is the inability to cope with the pressures in a job, because of a poor fit between someone’s abilities and his/her work requirements and conditions (Holmlund- Rytkonen and Strandvik, 2005). The conditions that tend to cause stress are referred to as ‘stressors’. The stressors are of four types: individual stressors, group stressors, organisational stressors and extra- organisational stressors. In simple terms, stress can be categorized as personal-life stress and work- life stress.

An organisation consists of individuals and groups, and, therefore, individual and group stressors may also exist in an organisation. Unfavourable and ambiguous policies of an organisation may affect the functioning of an individual adversely and thereby subject him to stress. The organisational structure provides formal relationship among individuals in an organisation. Any defect in the structure, like the lack of opportunity for advancement, a high degree of specialization, and line-and-staff conflict, works as a stressors. Organisational processes also affect an individual’s behavior at work. Any faulty process, like poor communication, poor and inadequate feedback on work performance, unfair control systems, and inadequate information flow also cause employees stress.

Based on the above definitions, the major features of stress are as given below:

1. Stress may result in any kind of deviation- physical, psychological, or behavioural- in a person.
2. Stress may be the result of an individual’s interaction with environmental stimuli.
3. Stress is an inevitable part of life and it cannot always be avoided altogether.
4. Stress can either be temporary or long term, mild or severe, depending on how long its causes continue, how powerful they are, and how strong an individual’ is for tolerating the Stress.
5. Stress is not always dysfunctional.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies on Organisational Stress

Bank employees have often participated in studies on work stress, including cross-cultural studies, multi-occupational designs, and service-organisations studies (Bettencourt and Brown, 2003). The National Survey of Quality of work- life and the data from another research project show that the financial sector employees present moderate levels of satisfaction and medium levels of strain (Kahn, 2002).

According to Christo and Pienaar (2006), the causes of occupational stress include: perceived loss of job and security, long work hours or heavy lifting, lack of safety, complexity of
repetitiveness, and lack of autonomy in the job. In addition, while occupational stress can be caused by lack of resources and equipment, work schedules and organisational climate can contribute to employee stress. Organisational stress often causes high job mobility, burnout, poor work performance, low morale, and less effective inter-personal relations at work (Manshore, Rodrigue, and Chong, 2003).

Johnson (2001) argued for interventions, such as identifying and determining the signs of stress, identifying the possible causes for the signs, and developing the possible solution for each sign. Topper (2007) noted that stress was a person’s psychological and physiological response to his perception of demand and challenge.

Nelson and Quick (1994) posited that stress was one of the most creatively ambiguous words. Ornelas and Kleiner (2003) argued that stress was the by-product of the modern life that resulted from employees’ efforts of trying to balance the demands of work place and family life. Beehr (1998) observed that job stress was particularly an area of research with a potential to be plagued by the confusion because of the general, non-technical, and popular usage of the word ‘stress’. Selye (1987) classified stress as ‘eustress’ and ‘distress’, eustress being ‘good stress’, and distress being ‘bad stress’. For avoiding the confusion over its meaning, most researchers have preferred to interpret the word ‘stress’ in relation to their work. For instance, Hausman (2001) defined stress as the uncertainty and even fear in connection with the implementation of new technology and systems between organizations. Varca (1999) defined stressful environment as a gap between environmental demands and personal resources to meet those demands.

Organizational stress can have grave consequences. The negative effects of organizational stress include: reduced efficiency, decreased capacity to perform, dampened initiative and reduced interest in working, increased rigidity of thought, lack of concern for the organization and colleagues, low morale, and a loss of responsibility (Greenberg and Baron, 2000; Ivancevich, Matterson, Freedman, and Philips, 1990).

In their study on workplace-stress and students’ learning experience, Stevenson and Harper (2006) reported that the effects of stress on academic staff include: teaching below par, absence from work, conflict with students, and seeking employment elsewhere. These have direct detrimental effect on the students’ learning experience. In addition, the negative effects were undeniably significant, though there are some positive effects of stress, such as the enforcement of deadlines and improved performance. Occupational stress contributes to low motivation and morale, decrease in performance, high turnover, sick leave, accidents, low job satisfaction, low quality products and services, poor internal communication, and conflicts (Schabracq and Cooper, 2000; Murphy, 1995).

Stress is widely accepted to have both types of effects on individuals-positive and negative. While an acceptable level of stress helps in improving the individuals’ performance, an excessive amount of stress can lead to his decreased performance (Stevenson and Harper, 2006). Occupational stress has an increased risk of work-related diseases and accidents in both the developed and developing countries that have experienced rapid industrialization (Manshore, Rodrigue, and Chong, 2003). Sapountzi-Kreopia (2003) found that stress was a major health hazard of the contemporary century and created diverse conditions, such as psychosomatic diseases and behavioural changes, and a major contributor to the disturbances in one’s emotional, social, and family life. If not managed properly, occupational stress can lead to an increase in absentee rates, internal conflicts, and low employee morale (Christo and Pienaar, 2006). Occupational stress is ubiquitous and increasingly costly (Katherine, George, Mary, and Linda, 2008). Randolfi (1997) found that about 70 percent of the workers reported that stress caused health problems that led to decreased productivity. In the U.S., companies spend US $69 billion annually on stress-related problems (Manning and Jackson, 1996). Occupational stress is a big threat to the quality of workforce in organisations. Good performers in organisations tend to quit when they notice symptoms of occupational stress. Such
turnover affects the organisation adversely by increasing the recruitment and selection costs (Ongori, 2007).

Studies on Employee Morale

Morale refers to the possession of a feeling, on the part of the employee, of being accepted by, and belonging to, a group through adherence to common goals and confidence in the desirability of such goals. McKnight, Ahmad, and Schroeder (2001) defined morale, in the context of the workplace, as “the degree to which an employee feels good about his work and work environment.” Morale is important because low morale affects the productivity of employees and causes them to lose interest in their work. High morale is represented by the use of such terms as team spirit, zest, enthusiasm, loyalty, dependability, and resistance to frustration. Low morale is described by words, such as apathy, jealously, pessimism, and disloyalty to the organisation. It is reflected in the employees’ dissatisfaction towards their work and work environment, lack of cooperation, and willingness with which they perform the organisational activities.

Some researchers have defined morale as an individual characteristic. Guion (1958) considered it as a personal phenomenon. He noted that morale defined a range within which all personal needs were satisfied and the person perceive that this satisfied need resulted from his job status. According to Kanter (1977), morale is an attitudinal and relational response of people to job status, which affected their behaviour inside the organisation. Child (1941) considered morale as a state of mental health which enabled the person to act effectively and hopefully and performed his duties enthusiastically and eagerly. Some of the researchers have emphasized the concept of morale in group expressions. According to Glimer, 1961, morale is a group concept and common description of staff’s attitude in an organisation. He noted that morale in an organisation or what was called ‘organisational morale’ was a morale which resulted from group interactions. Viteles (1953) defined morale as an attitude towards satisfaction of objectives, tendency to maintain with objectives and decision-making for satisfying the objectives of the group or special organisation. Smith and Westen (1951) considered morale as satisfaction resulting from the tendency and interest to achieve the objectives of a special group. Theoretical works on morale show that it has been considered as a multi-dimensional construct. In order to demonstrate the complexity of this theory, Johnsrud (1996) concluded that morale was an umbrella notion, which included satisfaction of job environment and some characteristics as excitement and emotion, commitment and loyalty to the organisation, tendency towards the job, and loyalty to the group goals and objectives.

Researchers on employees’ morale include the effects of stress and work climate (Schaefer and Moos, 1996), management behaviour and situational factors (Wofford, 1971), collaboration in decision-making, work type and its relation with management (McFadzean and Mcfadzean, 2005), administrative skill (Hunter, 1982), compassion in work environment (Gautam, 2008), positive attitude to work and work evaluation (Linz, Good, and huddleston, 20060, downsizing (Makawatsakul and Kliner, 2003), and organisational structure (Worthy, 1950).

Morale is one of the major dimensions of a healthy organisation. Most of the theorists have emphasized on the theoretical and practical significance of the organisational morale as a precise and delicate variable, and as the most effective factor on job performance (Analoui, 20000. High morale compensates the weakness in other required resources for increasing the productivity. While the high morale is associated with job satisfaction, creativeness and innovation, job respectability, commitment to organisation, eagerness to satisfy group objectives, instead of individual objectives, and improvement in the organisational performance, low morale results in the increase in costs, absence from job, refusal to provide services, strike and murmur, lack of inter- organisational collaborations, preventing the satisfaction of organisational objectives, and finally reducing the efficiency (Read, 2009).
A work environment where management supports professional growth makes employees feel that the company is committed to them. Scott (2001) claims that employees are less focused on their immediate pay-cheque if they feel they work in the organisation that encourages growth and provides opportunities for training and education and skill improvement. He urges managers not to follow the current trend of many companies drastically reducing their education budget and creating workplace that produces overworked employees who have no time for learning and reflection. The providing of ample staff development and training opportunities will not only boost their morale, but will also allow them to stay current in the ever-changing information field.

Based on the data collected from two groups of teachers and executives, Mackenzie (2007) concluded that workload status of teaching and a limited access to quality professional development had an effect on employees’ morale. Buvaneswari (2008) noted that corporate culture, as a management programme, had a positive impact on employees’ morale and motivates them to improve their own and the organisation’s performance. Based on the data collected from 100 teachers, Naong (2007) found that there was a direct correlation between the teachers’ morale and the learners’ discipline at the school.

Studies on Impact of Stress on Employee Morale

Stress is perhaps the most common cause of low employee morale. The factors that increase employees’ stress and decrease their morale include: low control over job, job insecurity, relationship with the manager, absence of the sense of belongingness with the organisation, unfair treatment, and unhygienic conditions. Bragg (2002) noted that managers can boost the employees’ morale by encouraging their involvement and communication, keeping the employees informed of the major business decisions, offering extensive training, and encouraging a balance between the work and home life. It has been seen that when workers facing high demands had more control, their stress was lower and morale was higher. Riley (2004) found that employees, who felt overwhelmed, overworked, and underappreciated, showed low morale and productivity.

In a survey on mega-mergers, Chambers and Honeycutt (2009) examined the impact of the mega-merger between two Southeastern U.S.-based telecommunication conglomerates on employee morale and turnover intention. The survey revealed that the merger impacted morale in a negative way. It was found that low morale was caused by insecurity about the job, changes in the processes, management, anew pay structure, and, most importantly, the labour contract.

Behm, Veltri, and Kleinsorge (2004) examined the relationship between occupational safety, health performance, and employee morale. They supported the view that workplaces with active, visible safety leadership, had fewer injuries and had more productive employees. Safety and health management programmes improve a company’s bottom line, including productivity and employee morale.

A review of literature has revealed that through the researchers have been conducted on organisational stress and morale, there has been no study on the employees of public- and private-sector banks. There has been a significant gap in the research studies conducted for determining the relationship between stress and morale. The present study seeks to bridge the gap in this important area of business.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The present study had the following major objectives:

1. To measure the level of stress experienced by lower- and middle-level public-sector and private-sector bank officers;
2. To determine the relationship between stress and morale in public-sector and private-sector bank officers; and
3. To assess the effect of stress on morale of public-sector and private-sector bank officers.

In accordance with the objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated for testing:

\[ H_{01}: \text{Bank officers with low stress have high morale.} \]
\[ H_{02}: \text{Public-sector bank officers have lower stress as compared to their counterpart in the private-sector banks.} \]
\[ H_{03}: \text{Middle-level bank officers have lower stress as compared to the entry-level officers.} \]

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Population for the Study

The population for the present study comprised the entry-level and middle-level officers employed in the public- and private-sector banks, functioning in Uttar Pradesh. Only July 1, 2013, there were seventy districts in Uttar Pradesh, which are organized into two divisions - the Meerut division and the Agra division. The Meerut division included 6 districts, whereas Agra division had districts. Since it was not possible to include all the elements of the population in the investigation, the study was conducted on a representative sample, having the salient features of the population.

The Sample

When we select some of the elements with the intention of finding out something about the population, we refer to such group of elements as a sample. The respondents for the survey belonged to public- and private-sector banks located in the main cities of the 70 districts of Uttar Pradesh. A sample of 300 respondents, 75 each from amongst the entry-level and middle-level officers from public-sector and private-sector banks, was taken. The age of the respondents ranged from 30 to 40 years and the level of education varied from graduation to post-graduation.

Sampling Method

The stratified random sampling was used for selecting the sample for the study. The division of the sample into distinct and independent strata enabled us to draw inferences about the specific sub-groups. The four strata chosen for the purpose were the entry- and middle-level officers from the public-sector banks, and the entry- and middle-level officers from the private-sector banks.

The Tools Used

Stress Inventory

The questionnaire intended to measure the stress level of the respondents consisted of 51 items, covering two dimensions (personal-life stress and work-life stress). The reliability of stress inventory was determined with the use of Cronbach’s alpha. Nunnally (1978) recommended that Cronbach’s alpha level of 0.8 or greater was an indication of good internal consistency. The value of Cronbach’s alpha for these responses was calculated to be 0.958, for the whole scale, and 0.92 and 0.96 for the two sub-scales, respectively.

Morale Survey

The questionnaire designed to measure the respondents’ morale consisted of 20 items. The value of Cronbach’s alpha for the responses was calculated to be 0.917.
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Morale of Low- and high- Stress officers

In order to assess the effect of stress on morale, the respondents were categorized into high- and low- stress groups on the basis of their median scores. The t- value was also calculated to test the significance. The significant differences existing between the mean scores of the two groups are presented in Table 1.

As shown in the table, the high- stress group has a lower-level of morale, whereas the low-stress group has a high level of morale. The mean value of morale of low-stress group was comparatively higher than the mean values of morale of the high-stress group, implying that the officers with lower stress had higher morale.

The difference between the low-stress group and the high-stress group was found to be significant at 0.01 levels.

Hence, the first hypothesis was accepted.

DIMENSIONS OF STRESS

We compared the four groups (entry- and middle- level officers from the private- sector banks and entry- and middle-level officers from public-sector banks) on the basis of dimensions of stress. The significant differences found are presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Differences between Mean Scores on Morale of Low- and High-stress Groups
(N=300)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Low-stress Group</th>
<th>High-stress Group</th>
<th>t-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morale</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>89.57</td>
<td>20.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: NS- Not Significant,*- Significant at 0.05 level, **- Significant at 0.01 level

Table 2: Dimensions of Employee Stress using Duncan’s Mean Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of stress</th>
<th>G1(N=75)</th>
<th>G2(N=75)</th>
<th>G3(N=75)</th>
<th>G4(N=75)</th>
<th>Significant Pairs(*)</th>
<th>F-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDIM 1</td>
<td>67.83</td>
<td>10.49</td>
<td>80.67</td>
<td>11.69</td>
<td>76.20</td>
<td>11.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDIM 2</td>
<td>117.27</td>
<td>19.43</td>
<td>136.73</td>
<td>20.04</td>
<td>131.73</td>
<td>18.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1. G1=PvtE, G2=PvtM, G3=PubE, G4=PubM,
2. NS-- Not Significant,*- Significant at 0.05 level, **- Significant at 0.01 level

From the table, we note that the middle- level officers of the public-sector banks scored the highest mean value for personal-life stress (SDIM1) and work- life stress (SDIM2),followed by
middle-level officers of the public-sector banks, and entry-level officers of the private-sector banks, in decreasing order of mean scores.

It is also noted that the different mean scores of the Groups G1, G2, G3 and G4, on SDIM1 and SDIM2, have F-values of 10.76 and 14.66, respectively, which were significant relation with groups G1 and G3, Groups G1 and G3, Group G4 had a significant relation with Groups G1 and G3. Groups G3 and G1 had a significant relation.

Hence, the second hypothesis was also accepted.

**DIMENSIONS OF MORALE**

We also compared the four groups of officers (entry-level and middle-level officers from the public- and private-sector banks) on the various dimensions of morale. The significant differences found are shown in Table 3.

The table presents the comparison among the Group G1 (private bank entry-level officers), Group G2 (private bank middle-level officers), Group G3 (public bank entry-level officers), and Group G4 (public bank middle-level officers) on the basis of morale. Public bank middle-level officers scored the highest mean values for morale, followed by private bank middle-level officers, public bank entry-level officers in the decreasing order. These differences have an F-value of 9.41, which was significant at the 0.001 level. While, Group G2 had a significant relation with Group G1 and Group G3, Group G4 had a significant relation with Group G1 and Group G3. Moreover, Group G3 and Group G1 also had a significant relationship.

**Stress and Morale of Bank officers**

It is noted that stress is related with morale of public- and private-sector bank officers. The correlation coefficients are presented in Table 4.

**Table 3: Morale among Different Employee Groups, Using Duncan’s Mean Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Morale</th>
<th>Group G1 (N=75)</th>
<th>Group G2 (N=75)</th>
<th>Group G3 (N=75)</th>
<th>Group G4 (N=75)</th>
<th>Significant Pairs (*)</th>
<th>F-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDIM</td>
<td>73.15</td>
<td>16.18</td>
<td>86.47</td>
<td>17.60</td>
<td>82.00</td>
<td>15.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1. G1= PvtE, G2= PvtM, G3= PubE, G4= PubM,
2. NS- Not significant, * ➔ Significant at 0.05 level, **➔ Significant at 0.01 level

**Table 4: Correlation Coefficients between Dimensions of Stress and Morale of Banks Officers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morale</th>
<th>Dimensions of Stress</th>
<th>Private- sector Banks (N=150)</th>
<th>Public- sector Banks (N=150)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SDIM 1</td>
<td>SDIM 2</td>
<td>SDIM 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDIM</td>
<td>0.4140**</td>
<td>0.7954**</td>
<td>0.4679**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: NS- Not Significant, * ➔ Significant at 0.05 Level, **➔ Significant at 0.001 Level

The table presents the inter-correlation values between the two dimensions of stress and morale of the officers of private and public banks. As shown in the table, morale has a significant correlation with the work-life stress (DDIM2) of private-bank officers. The correlation of morale with work-life stress of public-bank officers is significant. Moreover, morale has a significant
correlation with personal-life stress (SDIM1) of officers of both the private-sector and public-sector banks.

**Stress and Morale of Private Bank Officers**

The relationship between stress and morale has been found to be significant for the entry- and middle-level officers of the private-sector banks. Table 5 presents the values of correlation coefficients.

The table depicts the inter-correlation values of the two dimensions of stress and morale with respect to the entry-level and the middle-level officers of the private-sector banks. We note that while, morale is significantly correlated with personal-life stress (SDIM1) of entry-level and middle-level officers of the private-sector banks, the correlation of morale with work-life stress (SDIM2) of entry-level and middle-level officers of the private-sector banks is significant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morale</th>
<th>Dimensions of Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entry- level Officers (N=75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SDIM1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDIM</td>
<td>0.3935**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: NS- Not Significant,*- Significant at 0.05 level, **- Significant at 0.01 level

**Table 5: Correlation Coefficients between Dimensions of Stress and Morale of Entry- and Middle- level Officers of Private–sector Banks**

**Stress and Morale of Public Bank Officers**

Stress has been found to be significantly correlated with morale of entry- and middle-level officers of the public-sector banks. Table 6 presents the values of correlation coefficient.

The table shows the inter-correlation values of two dimensions of stress and morale with respect to entry-level and middle-level officers of the public-sector banks. While morale is significantly correlated with personal-life stress (SDIM1) of entry-level and middle-level officers of the public-sector banks, the correlation of morale with work-life stress (SDIM2) of entry-level and middle-level officers of the public-sector banks is insignificant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morale</th>
<th>Dimensions of Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entry- level Officers (N=75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SDIM1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDIM</td>
<td>0.3665**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: NS- Not Significant,*- Significant at 0.05 level, **- Significant at 0.01 level

**DISCUSSION**

We sought to determine the level of organizational stress among the entry-level and middle-level officers of the private-sector banks, and entry-level and middle-level officers of the public-sector banks. The relationship between stress and morale was also examined. Stress can occur in a bank officer owing to a multitude of reasons, ranging from personal problems, like sickness, strained relations with family and friends, less leisure time, and weak financial position; and work problems, like unclearly defined role, not keeping up with technological innovations, heavy workload, absence of senior and / or peer support, office politics, lack of autonomy , unfair salary, benefits and services, lack of proper training and development programmes, weak performance appraisal, lack of career management , and unhygienic work place conditions. The private-sector bank officers cited high
targets and the pressure to achieve them, harmful office politics, and job insecurity as the main reasons of stress alongside personal problems. Public-sector bank officers indicated lengthy time-bound promotions, disparity in salaries of private and public bank officers, lack of open-door policy, an inadequate maintenance of hygiene in small branches as the causes of stress along with personal problems.

The results show that high stress had adverse effect on the employee morale. The total sample of bank officers was broken into two groups on the basis of low stress and high stress. The mean score of morale for the low-stress group was seen to be higher than the mean score of morale of the high-stress group, thus, establishing our first null hypothesis.

The mean scores presented in Table 2 show that public-bank officers had a lower stress (shown by higher stress mean scores) than their counterpart in private banks, and that the stress level of middle-level officers was less than that among the entry-level officers in both the bank sectors. This data support Hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 3.

The better condition of public-sector banks, as compared to private-bank officers, in the context of stress and morale, has found support in some past researches (Lehal, 2007; Kumar, 2006). Srivastav (2004) found service conditions (security, promotion, and welfare) to be responsible for the overall low degree of job satisfaction and the leading cause of stress in private banks. Kumar (2006) found that the non-nationalised bank employees had a high stress as compared to the nationalized-bank employees. Among the occupational stress variables, role overload, role authority, and lack of senior-level support was found to contribute more to stress among the employees of the non-nationalised banks. It was also found that the middle-level officers were less stressed than the entry-level officers, both in the public-sector and the private-sector banks.

Sager (1990) found that the ability to handle stress associated with the job and the organization increased with age (length of experience). Dua (1994) noted that the younger staff members reported more job stress than their older colleagues. Rajendran (2004) found that the employees of lower age-group perceived both the personal-life and the work-stress, differently. The research by Vokic (2007) did not match the results of this study. He found that the hierarchical level was significantly related with the middle-level managers experiencing higher stress than the entry-level managers.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

On the basis of the above results and discussion, we can conclude that middle-level officers in public-sector banks have the lowest level of the personal-life stress as well as work-life stress in all the four categories of bank officers. Middle-level officers of the public-sector bank enjoy more job security, greater autonomy, and better pay and benefits, due to which they have less stress. They are also found to have the high level of morale. The middle-level bank officers are seen to have lower stress and higher morale in comparison to the entry-level bank officers. Personal-life stress has been seen to have significant inverse relation with morale among the bank officers, and work-life stress was seen to have a highly significant inverse relationship with morale among bank officers. Low-stress group of bank officers has been seen to have a higher level of morale.

The success of the organization depends on the performance of the employees in the organizations. Organizational stress and employee morale are considered as important moderators of performance. Hence, the banks ought to seriously think of adopting the appropriate coping strategies for managing organizational stress, which would result in improved performance and high morale of bank employees. It has hoped that the findings of this study would be of interest to managers of both the public- and private-sector banks. This study will also help the banks in assessing the stress level and its impact in their employees’ morale, and provide impetus to researches to explore other
correlates of these variables for minimizing the negative impact of the organizational stress and improving their employees’ morale.

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