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"A Study on Usage of Stress Measurement Tools in Banking Sector of Central Gujarat"

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Abstract

Stress is common in today's era and banking employees are facing extensive stress due to lot of targets to be achieved and most important is dealing directly with customers' needs lot of patience. There are many stressors like role ambiguity, organization structure, work overload, role conflict, job recognition; etc which affects the employees performance. The study is based on 61 valid responses received through a structured questionnaire and personal interviews. Through this study researchers found that, there is no formal mechanism to check the stress of bank employees which creates further stress in the organization. Banks in these days should use proper mechanism to measure the stress level of their employees and also should do various activities to mitigate this stress after checking the stress points.

Key words: Stress, Stress Management, Stressors, Bank Employees, Stress Measurement Tools.

1. Introduction

Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances. Stress Management is a broad area of study and lot of work has already been done in this. This study is extending the research by adding more dynamics to the existing work. Different tools are used by organizations to test the stress like HR Audit, Stress audit, Effort-Reward Imbalance and so on, but here the study is emphasized on understanding that is there any stress measurement tool for testing the stress level among employees, what are the causes of stress and what can be done to reduce the same. Currently it has been restricted to Banking Industry.

1.1 Sector Studied - Banking

Bank employees don't have a stress is a myth. Due to globalization, privatization & liberalization and now in these days of demonetization banking system has undergone a rapid change due to introduction of new technologies, fast competition & downsizing so bank employees face a high level of stress. Now if stressed employee is not able to deliver the proper service to the customers it will affect banks reputation in no time.

Santhi & Reddy (2015), says that Stress is very common in all walks of life among individuals. Banking plays an important role in country's development. Employees stress will affect the country's economic condition as it can cost to the company leading to country's loss. This paper identified that there are many causes to stress like lack of communication, poor management, tough task, and many more which can be reduced by giving proper rewards to employees.

2. Literature Review

A critical review of literature is carried out on the Articles, research papers which are studying the stress, its causes, and tools being used to asses it, strategies to be followed for coping up or reducing stress level. Review comprises of papers from general domain, Banking sector and other industries too. Organizations needs to be aware that apart from checking on its financial performance every year, their employees' performance in qualitative terms also needs to be evaluated and thought upon so employees are satisfied & find it a successful place to work.

2.1 General/Generic Review

The seventeenth century has been called the 'Age of Enlightenment', the eighteenth, the 'Age of Reason', the nineteenth, the 'Age of Progress' and the twentieth, the 'Age of Anxiety and Stress' (Coleman, 1976). As per Pestonjee & Munchreji (1992), an individual is facing stress in almost every step of their life. In many economies of the world, it has been found that people, especially business executives, die of disorders created by stress. Stress is therefore considered a major killer and the consequent loss to organizations if not seriously dealt with.

Parker and Decotiis (1983), proposed six specific causes of work stress which included job characteristics, organizational structure, climate and information flow, role, relationship, career development and external commitments and responsibilities.Yu (2009) tested that did organizational change has an effect on employee trust and job involvement. In a way organizational change sometimes is a stress creating situation in public sector employees worrying about work overload & job security. Results came that organization change do have a negative effect on employees stress and work, so organization should provide strategies for stress relief by conducting stress management workshops which will improve employees performance and job involvement. Hussey (1995) contradicts the above studies by saying that organizations these days are depriving themselves of using most effective tools for the achievement of strategic change. Apart from training and retaining HR strategy goes much wider and there should be separation of administrative aspects from strategic one which is organization specific. One step ahead can be strategic audit of HR activity and no organization has done this in a systematic way but if it is implemented it can make a great deal of difference.

Taris. T, Schaufeli. W, Verhoeven L. (2005) observed that workaholic employee – who work more compared to others are more likely to have high stress, strain and ill-health. They are more stressed compared to others and it has an impact on their work effectiveness, quality of life and relations at workplace.

2.2 Other Industries Review

Haskins, Baglioni & Cooper (1990), identified the major sources of stress for ***audit seniors*** and modeled the fundamental relationships among these job stressors, different personality types, coping behaviors and psychological symptoms. After studying different stress models it was concluded that seniors showing signs of lack of mental well being are likely to be males who are Type A personality in their life style and those seniors who are not problem focused or use denial focused coping strategies are least effective in dealing with stress. So some training sessions should be conducted to relieve employees stress.

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Devi. P, Sellapan R., Gopalkrishnan G (August 2010) in their paper of Role stress of employees ***in Life Insurance*** has identified 3 major stressors at work place that affects the employees stress levels. They were Role ambiguity, Role conflict and Role overload, whose effect also differs as per employee's educational background and experience too.

Bowen. P, Edwards. P, Lingard. H, & Cattel. K in their paper on Predictive Modeling of Workplace Stress among ***Construction Professionals*** states that for high workplace stress the strongest factor is perceived presence of work life imbalance.

2.3 Banking Industry Review

According to Sharma and Devi (2011), banks are among the top ten high stress workplaces in India. Banking is one of the very important sectors in the Indian economy. With many studies already done in line with effect of stress on employee output their study is more on factors causing stress and its effect on Public Sector Bank employees. The findings indicate that due to several changes happening in the external environment PSBs need to add lot more services in their bucket, focus more on customers need, bring changes in working condition and culture of bank etc. and employees by default need to adapt to these changes which creates stress among them.

In line with this previous study, Sen (2012), founded that post liberalization Public sectors bank employees are facing lot of stress as they need to do many other things like attracting large pool of customers for various schemes. Ineffective supervision & poor teamwork are most important factors that create employee stress leading to low productivity, absenteeism, poor quality of work, high turnover, etc. Few stressors were tested liked Inter role distance, role stagnation, role expectations conflict, role erosion, role overload, role isolation, personal inadequacy, role ambiguity, self role distance & resource inadequacy and in all this it was found that Inter role distance (IRD) was the main stressor followed by role erosion. To reduce IRD & Role erosion, right people should be acquired, retained and motivated well enough and also this feedback needs to be fed back to the Ministry Of Finance and RBI so through coordinated effort strong professional work culture will be promoted so they can deal with current as well as future market forces.

Sharma & Parihar (2014) defined Stress as a change in the behavior of people that forces them to behave differently from normal course of action. After comparing causes of stress among public and private sector bank employees it was found that employees in both the public and private sectors face moderate levels of stress, of which they are subject to role erosion the most and resource inadequacy the least. In addition to the above study the study by Balraj (2016) adds that when motivated staff is employed without sufficient pay package they tend to make mistakes in their work and don't serve better creating service deficiency in serving the customers. Providing the opportunities to learn and grow, enough resources at work and designing a job in a way which interests the employees can help in reducing the role of stress at work. Rashid, Bajwa & Batool (2016) stated that emotional intelligence is having a profound effect on job stress, satisfaction and high commitment of bank employees, so it must be a part of employees training process which can relieve some stress among them and develop a successful performance within the organization.

Devi (2012), conducted a research on coping strategies used to manage the role of stress at commercial banks. Different coping dimensions like submissive coping, functional coping, diversion coping, relaxation coping etc and coping strategies like having tea and coffee, indulging in meditation, using entertaining sources like TV & Music were studied. The results indicate that the most important coping dimension is submissive coping and the strategies that group on this include interventions like day dreaming, smoking, complaining, quitting the job and

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many more which relates to passive behavior towards stress causing problem. The results indicate that there is no significant difference between public and private sector banks on stress coping dimension. In addition to this Pandla. K, identified that every individual is having their own reasons of stress if it is private sector or public sector organization. So each individual should focus on their stress and ways of coping it too.

2.4 Stress measurement tools review

Kanji G. and Chopra P. (2009) developed a model named (Kanji Chopra work stress model –KCWSM) to measure the work stress and learned that unhealthy stress leads to destruction of an individual's work well being. Psychological work conditions are responsible for work stress. Result came out to be higher work well being will indicate lower work stress within the given psychological work condition. Role of leadership plays important role to keep all four workings conditions like Job support, Job demand, Job control and environment in line and create a proper work environment so employees achieve high work well being.

Rao & Borkar (2012) developed a measurement scale to measure the stress and performance status of public and private sector bank employees of Nagpur and Bhilai city. After identifying 6 major stressors from literature study, researchers designed a questionnaire which was reliable as results came to be same when applied to the same sample later and valid as it was validated by banking expert's opinion. Designed scale proved that Public sector bank employees experience higher level of stress compared to private sector bank employees which ends up affecting their performance.

Ormond, Keown-Gerrard & Kline (2003), in their paper had described that stress audits process can be effectively linked with the stress management workshops development & delivery and their reactions and outputs are valuable tool for the trainers. Konczak. J (1987) had reviewed the book on Controlling work stress and says that in one of the chapter it's clearly mentioned that it is better to remove stressors from the organizations than to depend on strategies that focus on the outcomes of stress.

3. Research Methodology

Following table describes the research methodology of the study

Parameters	Study
Research Design	Descriptive Method
Sampling Technique	Convenient Sampling
Sample Size	61
Data Collection	5 Months
Sampling Area	Gujarat
Sampling Unit	Stratified - Employees of Public, Private and Co-operative Banks
Sample cities	Ahmedabad, Vadodara & Anand
Data collection tool & and Contact Method	Personal/Telephonic Interview

(Source: Author's Compilation)

3.1 Objectives of the Research Study

1. To study which are the current practises in banking industry to assess the stress level of their employees.
2. To identify the stressors and its impact on banking sector employees.

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4. Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Data Collection

The data for fulfilling the objectives of the study was collected from both primary and secondary sources as outlined below:

4.1.1 Primary Data Collection

Personnel and Group Interviews were carried out considering objectives of the research study through questionnaire.

4.1.2 Secondary Data Collection

The secondary data for understanding the origin of stress, stress management strategies used for reducing stress in employees, some tools being used to assess the stress that too with particular reference to the Banking have been collected from various sources such as books, journals, research reports of previously conducted studies in this direction and the internet. These sources have been listed in the bibliography at the end of the research proposal. The APA style of referencing has been used in the research.

4.2 Research Samples

Below listed 8 Banks were approached and 3 branches geography wise were selected to cater the population of different cities of central Gujarat (Ahmedabad, Vadodara & Anand)

Table 1. Cities & Banks catered

Cities	Banks
Ahmedabad/Vadodara/Anand	ICICI Bank, Kotak Bank, HDFC Bank & IDBI Bank
Vadodara/Ahmedabad	SBI Bank & Axis Bank
Ahmedabad	Kankaria Maninagar Nagrik Sahakari Bank Ltd & The Kalupur Commercial Co-operative Bank Ltd

(Source: Author's Compilation)

4.3 Results - Statistical Analysis & Interpretation

Statements	**Results interpreted through SPSS**
Substantial amount of stress across all the sectors of bank (Private, public and Co-operative)	64% agree that there is a substantial amount of stress
Transfer to other branch or city/village also create stress	More than 70% employees agree that transfer to other branch or city actually creates stress which affects their professional and personal life both.
Customer pressure bring stress to the employees	More than 90% of the employees feel that customers bring stress through their n number of queries raised and their less patience level creates more stress in the employees.

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Frequently bring work at home	Around 50% of them brings work at home that shows work load is maximum and completions on time is playing major role, which brings stress to employee and their family too.
Backache in a week	50% of them regularly face this problem and 21% of them sometimes only suffer from backache. This is due to extreme work stress.
Poor relations with others in staff creates stress	80% of them feel that poor relations create stress to them.
Technology change/Up gradation create stress among employees	88% of the employees feel that technology up gradation do creates stress among the employees and some are techno savvy and some are not this creates stress in the employees.
Demonetization time created substantial amount of stress	93% of them felt that during demonetization there was a substantial amount of stress this may be due to long working hours, customer pressure, etc.
Not able to give time to family because of work	Employees unanimously agreed that they are not able to give time to family because of work. (Mean < 3 & Std Deviation <1)
Providing some free time for relaxation in a day	More than 50% of the banks employees get some free time for their relaxation in a day.
Sometimes Giving free breakfast, meals and high tea for whole staff	63% of them are not receiving any free breakfast, meal or high tea at work, 16% get it sometimes and 19% are able to avail these benefits based on banks culture.
Providing free movie tickets to employees and their family	61% of the banks employee doesn't receive free movie tickets for them or their family, 29% receive it sometimes and 5% receive it regularly.

(Source: Compiled from primary data collected through structured Questionnaire)

5. Discussion

I. As per the interview with various bank's HR head/Branch head it was realized that maximum no. of banks are not using exclusive stress measuring tool to measure the stress levels of their employees.

II. Few banks like HDFC, IDBI, Axis, SBI and ICICI Banks they only use the stress coping strategies like taking employees and their families on picnic/tour once in a year, get together in some Festival, movie tickets for family, Live in concerts, sharing their views on stress on the company blog created by bank itself and the like which are being used randomly without measuring a stress level.

III. They have the outside consultants/experts who come on a yearly basis and take the feedback from the employees. Those having high level of stress will be personally called at the consultant's office and that feedback will be shared with Bankers so that they can take immediate action to relieve the stress of the employee interviewed.

IV. Formal feedback every year is being taken from all the employees, and the data is fed in to the system. If there is extreme level of stress visible then only some action is taken.

V. In future if the tool is developed like measuring the stress and that too work stress they will be more than happy to welcome the tool developed from the researcher.

6. Conclusion

Usage of stress measuring tools is not much explored by banks. But if these are conducting on regular basis it will sure shot promise the effective output among Bank employees and stress free staff all together. These days along with customers, employees should also be treated as a king,reason behind is because of them only the whole Banking sector is able to perform well so to keep them stress free should also be one of the major objective of banks.

Conflict of Interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest to declare for this publication.

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