

A Study on Stress among Employees of Public Sector Banks in Asansol, West Bengal

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Abstract: *Stress Management is getting more and more attention now-a-days, particularly in the banking sectors. There is no such thing like stress-free job. Everyone in their work is exposed to tension and anxiety as they get through the duties assigned to them. Banking industry which is the backbone of the country's economy is not an exceptional one. Employees of banks are supposed to be proactive, proficient enough to bear responsibility and to perform under very stiff competitive environment. The purpose of this study was to determine factors of work stress among the Bank employees. This study aims to determine whether there were any statistically significant differences in the respondents' level of work stress by demographic factors (gender, age, education qualification, job pessimism, work experience, frequency of anger, difficulty to concentrate and sleeping etc.) The findings of this study showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the level of work stress by demographic factors (age, gender, status, education qualification, job pessimism). However, the findings showed that only organizational factors have significant relationship with work stress level. Findings of this study also resulted in the overall level of work stress among respondent is moderate.*

Keywords: *Banking Sector, Bank Employee, Occupational Stress, Causes of Stress, Attributes, Initiatives, Employees.*

1. Introduction

Banking sector is reckoned as a hub and barometer of the financial system. As a pillar of the economy, this sector plays a predominant role in the economic development of the country. Over the last ten years the banking industry has gone through some sweeping changes. Transformation, Consolidation, Outsourcing are just some of the most prominent buzzwords that are used to describe major trends afflicting the banking industry. Moreover, expanding business activities of the private banks, re-entry of foreign banks, strict regulatory and disclosure requirements and increased minimum paid up capital requirements, modernization of Core Banking Systems, increased automation and up gradation of IT and development of new products shall have a significant impact on the banks employees. Workload beyond ones capacity, ambiguity in defining duties & responsibilities, lack of support from superiors, lack of authority to control resources, absence of autonomy in taking decisions, work life imbalance etc. are some of the sources of stress in organizations which in turn affect the mental and physical wellbeing of employees.

Stress is the "wear and tear" of our bodies experience as we adjust to our continually changing environment; it has physical and emotional effects on us and can create positive or negative feelings. As positive influences, stress can help compel us to action; it can result in a new awareness and an exciting new perspective. As a negative influence it can result in feelings of destruct, rejection, anger and depression, which in turn can lead to health problem such as headache, upset stomach, rashes, insomnia, ulcers, high blood pressure, heart diseases and stroke. The study is conducted to assess the level of stress among the select public sector banks (PSBs) namely, United Commercial Bank (UCO), Allahabad Bank, Bank of India (BOI) and United Bank of India (UBI).

The word stress is derived from a Latin word "stringere", meaning to draw tight. From the view point of physical sciences, the phenomena of stress are evident in all materials when they are subjected to "force, pressure, strain or strong-front". Every material steel, rock or wood has its own limit up to which it can withstand stress without being damaged. Similarly human beings can tolerate certain level of stress. Stress is highly individualistic in nature. Some people have high levels of stress tolerance for stress and thrive very well in the face of several stressors in the environment. In fact, some individuals will not perform well unless they experience a level of stress which activates and energizes them to put forth their best results.

Remedies To Reduce Stress:

There are two major approaches to reduce stress. They are:

- Individual Approaches
- Organizational Approaches

Individual Approaches:

An employee can take individual responsibility to reduce his/her stress level. Individual strategies that have proven effective include, implementing time management techniques, increasing physical exercise, relaxation training, and expanding the social support network.

- Time Management
- Physical Exercise
- Relaxation Training
- Social Support

Organisational Approaches:

Several of the factors that cause stress particularly task and role demands and organizations structure are controlled by management. As such they can be modified or changed. Some of the strategies that management want to consider include improved personal self section and job placement, use of realistic goal setting, redesigning of jobs, improved

Volume 4 Issue 7, July 2015

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organizational communication and establishment of corporate wellness programmes.

Types of Stresses

a) Mechanical:

- Stress (physics), the average amount of force exerted per unit area.
- Yield stress, the stress at which a material begins to deform plastically.
- Compressive stress, the stress applied to materials resulting in their compaction.

b) Biological:

- Stress (biological), physiological or psychological stress; some types include.
- Chronic stress, persistent stress which can lead to illness and mental disorder.
- Eustress, positive stress that can lead to improved long-term functioning.
- Workplace stress, stress caused by employment.

Stress in Mechanical Terms

Stress is a measure of the average amount of force exerted per unit area. It is a measure of the intensity of the total internal forces acting within a body across imaginary internal surfaces, as a reaction to external applied forces and body forces. It was introduced into the theory of elasticity by Cauchy around 1822.

$$\sigma = \frac{F}{A}$$

Where, σ is the average stress, also called engineering or nominal stress, and F is the force acting over the area A.

Chronic Stress

Stress that lasts a long time or occurs frequently. Chronic stress is potentially damaging. Symptoms of chronic stress can be: upset stomach, headache, backache, insomnia, anxiety, depression, anger.

Stress In Biological Terms

Stress is a biological term which refers to the consequences of the failure of a human or animal body to respond appropriately to emotional or physical threats to the organism, whether actual or imagined. It includes a state of alarm and adrenaline production, short-term resistance as a coping mechanism, and exhaustion.

Stress Management

Stress management is the need of the hour. However hard we try to go beyond a stress situation, life seems to find new ways of stressing us out and plaguing us with anxiety attacks. Moreover, be it our anxiety, mind-body exhaustion or our erring attitudes, we tend to overlook causes of stress and the conditions triggered by those. In such unsettling moments we often forget that stressors, if not escapable, are fairly manageable and treatable.

Stress, either quick or constant, can induce risky body-mind disorders. Immediate disorders such as dizzy spells, anxiety attacks, tension, sleeplessness, nervousness and muscle cramps can all result in chronic health problems. They may also affect our immune, cardiovascular and nervous systems

and lead individuals to habitual addictions, which are inter-linked with stress.

Like "stress reactions", "relaxation responses" and stress management techniques are some of the body's important built-in response systems. As a relaxation response the body tries to get back balance in its homeostasis. Some hormones released during the 'fight or flight' situation prompt the body to replace the lost carbohydrates and fats, and restore the energy level. The knotted nerves, tightened muscles and an exhausted mind crave for looseness. Unfortunately, today, we don't get relaxing and soothing situations without asking. To be relaxed we have to strive to create such situations.

2. Scope of the Study

The study enables to arrive at the factors responsible for job stress among employees working in select public sector banks. This study provides valid suggestions and measures to be taken to improve Job stress of the employees and the study is also useful in the area where the employees face job stress can be ascertained.

3. Review of Literature

Stress is a combination of physical and psychological reactions to events that challenge or threaten us. Most researchers have defined occupational stress only in terms of negative characteristics of the individual organizational interface, using stressors such as overload, role conflict, and role ambiguity. Job stress is usually conceptualized as a condition where in job related factors interact with the individual to change his or her psychological or physiological conditions such that the person is forced to deviate from normal functioning (Beehr and Newman, 1978).

Stress, in general, can be defined as the reaction of individuals to demands (stressors) imposed upon them (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006, 287). It refers to situations where the well-being of individuals is detrimentally affected by their failure to cope with the demands of their environment (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006, 287). Occupational stress, in particular, is the inability to cope with the pressures in a job (Rees, 1997), because of a poor fit between someone's abilities and his/her work requirements and conditions (Holmlund- Rytönen & Strandvik, 2005).

Occupational stress is currently one of the most costly occupational health issues (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994; Cooper, Luikkonen & Cartwright, 1996; Cotton & Fisher, 1995; Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Kottage, 1992).

Occupational stress is defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when job requirements do not match the worker's capabilities, resources, and needs (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health 1999). It is recognized world-wide as a major challenge to individual mental and physical health, and organizational health (ILO 1986). Stressed workers are also more likely to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive and less safe at work. And their organizations are less likely to succeed in a competitive market. By some estimates workrelated stress

costs the national economy a staggering amount in sick pay, lost productivity, health care and litigation costs (Palmer et al. 2004).

4. Research Problem

Job stress is a real phenomenon and it is associated with job satisfaction level of employees in any place. In this case the employees of public sector banks in Asansol are taken as samples and there are many factors taken into consideration leading them to stressful situations. Some important factors associated with their stress are over work load, working condition, role conflict, role ambiguity, relationship between superiors and colleagues, relationship with family members, lack of experience in understanding and executing procedures, lack of sense of belonging in the Bank.

5. Research Objectives

- To identify the factors causing stress among the employees.
- To find out the level of stress among the employees of different age groups.
- To study about the effects of stress on employees in Banking Industry.
- To identify the coping strategies to manage stress.

6. Research Methodology

Primary data was used for the present study. The primary data was collected from 100 sample respondents from various banks of Asansol City. For collecting the first-hand information from the respondents, sample respondents were chosen by convenience sampling method. Questionnaire was the main tool used to collect the pertinent data from the selected sample respondents. For this purpose, a well structured questionnaire was framed. Field survey method was employed to collect the primary data from the selected sample respondents. Secondary information was collected from sources like website, articles from magazines, news papers and journals. The statistical tools used for the study are Percentage and frequency, Chi-square test and ANOVA .

Profile of the Respondents: The employees of banks in Asansol of designations from clerks to special assistants, officers and managers were interviewed separately and were marked for different sources of work stress at the work place. United Commercial Bank (UCO), Allahabad Bank, Bank of India (BOI) and UBI bank employees were taken for the study.

Demographic: It is observed from the table that the respondents categorized based on their demographics such as age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, designation, experience, and monthly income of the employees of the select PSBs.

Table 1: Demographics of the Respondents working in select Public Sector Banks in Asansol

SL. No.	Demographics	Respondents	Percentage (%)
01.	Age		
	25 to 40	105	49.53
	40-55	66	31.13

	Above 55	41	19.34
02.	Gender		
	Male	160	75.47
	Female	52	24.53
03.	Educational Qualification		
	UG/PG	41	19.34
	Professional (ICWAI, ACS, CA)	82	38.98
04.	Experience		
	Less than 5 yrs	98	46.23
	5 to 10 years	59	27.83
	Above 10 yrs	55	25.94
05.	Monthly Income		
	Below Rs 20000	56	26.42
	Rs 20000-30000	129	60.85
	Above Rs. 30000	27	12.74

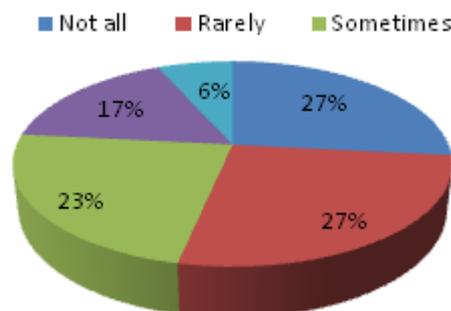
Source: Primary Data

1. Respondents With Difficulty In Sleeping

Table 2

Respondents With Difficulty In Sleeping			
Valid		Frequency	Percentage (%)
	NOT AT ALL	8	26.7
	RARELY	8	26.7
	SOMETIMES	7	23.3
	OFTEN	5	16.7
	VERY OFTEN	2	6.7
	Total	30	100.0

Respondents With Difficulty In Sleeping



Inference:

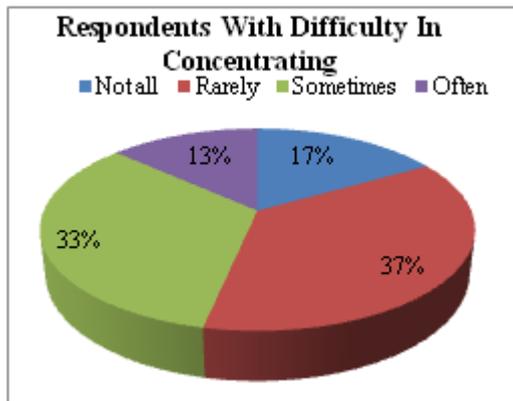
From the above table, it is clear that 26.7% of the employees rarely have any trouble in sleeping, 23.3% find it difficult sometimes, whereas 16.7% face the problem very often and 6.7% of the employees find extreme difficulty in sleeping. Therefore, it is observed that for most parts, the employees do not have any problems with sleeping.

2. Respondents With Difficulty In Concentrating

Table 3

Respondents With Difficulty In Concentrating			
Valid		Frequency	Percentage (%)
	NOT AT ALL	5	16.7
	RARELY	11	36.7

SOMETIMES	10	33.3
OFTEN	4	13.3
Total	30	100.0



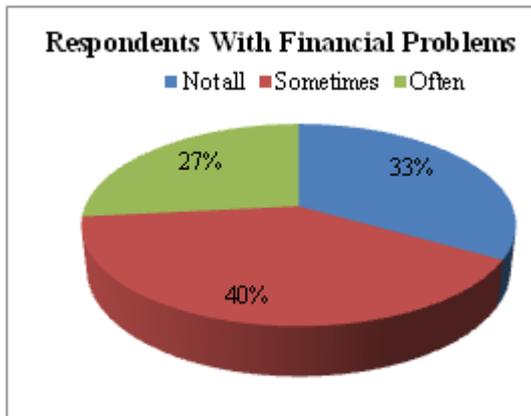
Inference:

It is clear that 16.7% of the employees have absolutely no difficulty in concentrating, 36.7% of them rarely have a problem, whereas 33.3% sometimes and only a small group of 13.3% find it difficult to concentrate at work. Therefore, it can be said that mostly the employees have no trouble in concentrating at work.

3. Respondents With Financial Problems

Table 4

Respondents With Financial Problems			
Valid		Frequency	Percentage (%)
	NOT AT ALL	10	33.3
	SOMETIMES	12	40.0
	OFTEN	8	26.7
	Total	30	100.0



Inference:

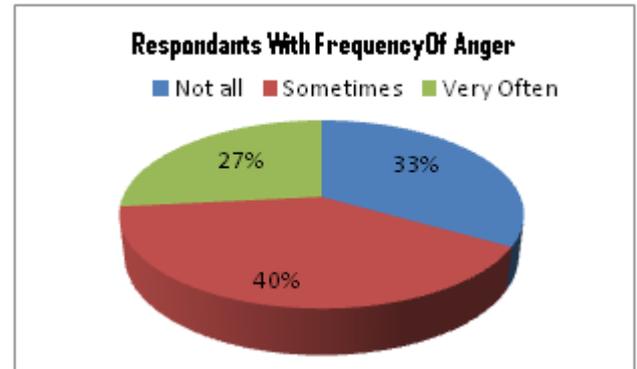
From the data in the above table, it is understood that, 40% of the employees feel that financial problems put them down sometimes, 30% felt that it did not affect them at all and 26.7% of them felt that very often it caused them problems. Therefore, it is identified that financial trouble does put down people sometimes.

4. Respondents Who Get Angry Quickly

Table 5

Respondents With Anger			
Valid		Frequency	Percentage (%)

Not At All	10	33.3
Sometimes	12	40.0
Very Often	8	26.7
Total	30	100.0



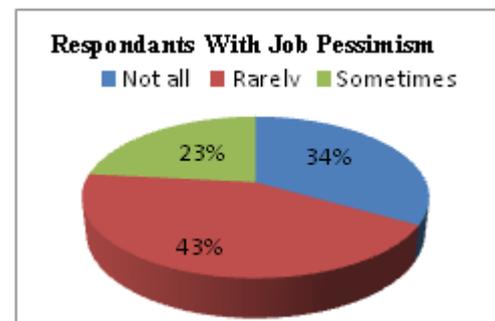
Inference:

From the above data it is clear that 40% of the employees claim that they sometimes get angry often while 33.3% feel that they do not get angry very often. Also 26.7% of them say that they get very angry most of the time. Therefore, it is inferred that most of the employees are relatively calm and get angry only sometimes.

5. Respondents With Job Pessimism

Table 6

Respondents With Job Pessimism			
Valid		Frequency	Percentage (%)
	NOT AT ALL	10	33.3
	RARELY	13	43.3
	SOMETIMES	7	23.3
	TOTAL	30	100.0



Inference:

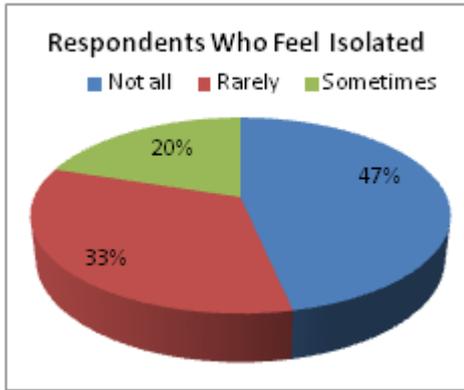
The table clearly shows that the employees have no negative thoughts about their job since 40% of them feel that it happens only rarely and 33.3% say that it never happens. Therefore, the rate of job pessimism or negative thinking about one's job is very low.

6. Respondents Who Feel Isolated

Table 7

Respondents Who Feel Isolated			
Valid		Frequency	Percentage (%)
	NOT AT ALL	14	46.7
	RARELY	10	33.3
	SOMETIMES	6	20.0

	TOTAL	30	100.0
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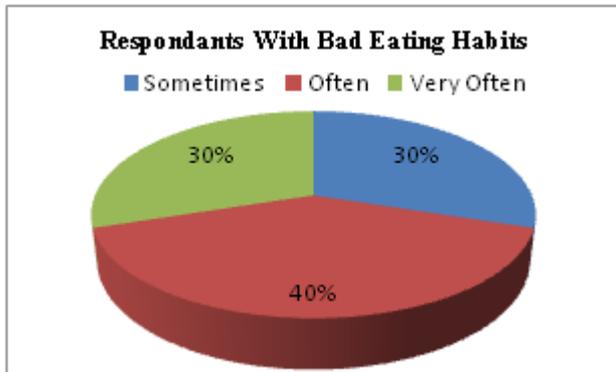
Inference:

This table shows that majority of the people do not feel isolated or lonely. 46.7% of them do not feel any isolation while 33.3% say it happens rarely. Therefore, it is seen that most of the employees have someone to talk to and relate with and are not isolated or alone.

7. Respondents With Bad Eating Habits

Table 8

Respondents With Bad Eating Habits				
Valid			Frequency	Percentage (%)
	SOMETIMES		9	30.0
	OFTEN		12	40.0
	VERY OFTEN		9	30.0
	TOTAL		30	100.0



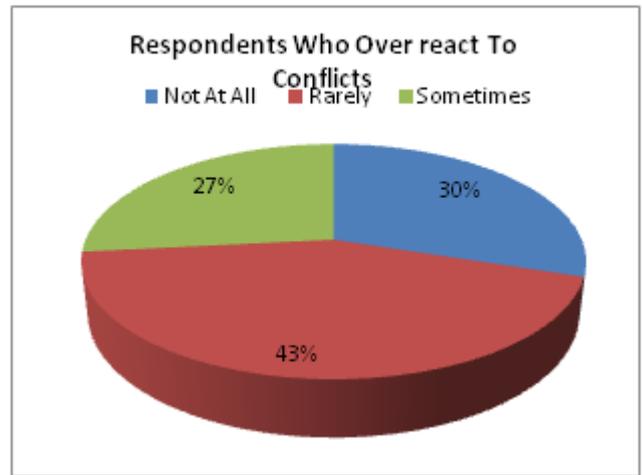
Inference:

The values in the table clearly indicate that all the employees indulge in snacking rather than in consumption of wholesome nutritious meals due heavy work pressure, time constraints and job demands.

8. Respondents Who Over React To Conflicts

Table 9

Respondents Who Over React To Conflicts				
Valid			Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Not At All		9	30.0
	Rarely		13	43.3
	Sometimes		8	26.7
	Total		30	100.0



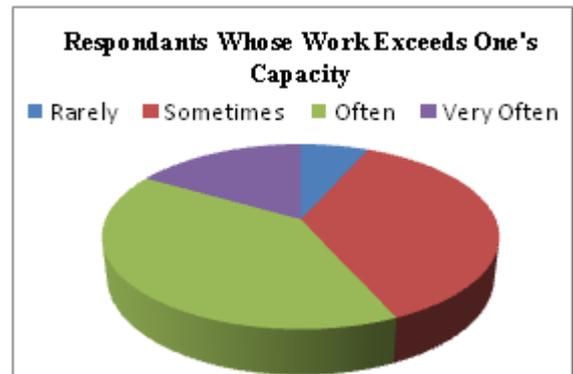
Inference:

It is seen that most people do not over react to conflicts either at home or at work. Only 26.7% of them tend to over react in some situations.

9. Respondents With Work Load

Table 10

Respondents Whose Work Exceeds One's Capacity				
Valid			Frequency	Percentage (%)
	NOT AT ALL		9	30.0
	RARELY		13	43.3
	SOMETIMES		8	26.7
	TOTAL		30	100.0



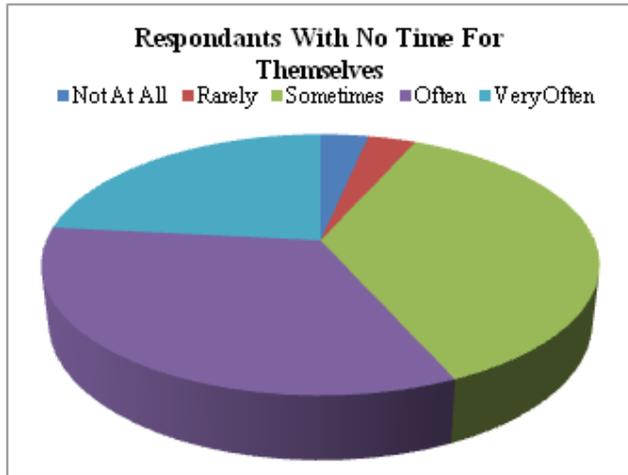
Inference:

The table shows that most of the employees feel that their job demands and requires more than what they are actually capable of doing. In most cases, their workload exceeds their capacity. Only a small group (6.7%) felt that it was not so.

10. Respondents Who Do Not Have Time For Themselves

Table 11

Respondents Who Do Not Have Time For Themselves				
Valid			Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Not At All		1	3.3
	Rarely		1	3.3
	Sometimes		11	36.7
	Often		10	33.3
	Very Often		7	23.3
	Total		30	100.0



Inference:

The pie chart and table values clearly indicate that most of the employees are so busy and caught up with work pressure that they barely have any time for themselves. They have almost no time for their hobbies and self interests.

7. Conclusion

Organization must begin to manage people at work differently, improve physical work environment, treat them with respect and value their contribution. If we enhance the psychological well being and health of the employees, the organizational revenue will increase and there will be employee retention as well. Because it is said that, “A Healthy Employee is a Productive Employee”.

It is concluded that the level of stress among the select public sector banks are found to be limited and if the recommendations / suggestions are considered and necessary action taken by the management that will help to relieve the stress of the employees and also help to impact more productive employees that will help the banks to achieve greater heights.

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