

Work related Stress among Women Employees in Banking Sector A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

In India, Women are still striving to make their identity as an integral part of the society and are unable to play an active role in the development of society. Working women have a whole set of problems involving both family and professional lives. Women have to play their role as a wife, a mother and an earner. They have to manage their career while maintaining traditional roles. This paper attempts to explore the critical factors creating stress among working women in banks. Based on literature review, the key stressors were identified to be as work life balance, gender discrimination, peers behavior, lack of promotional opportunities. These factors were found to be creating physiological, behavioral and psychological problems. The results revealed that peers behavior and lack of promotional opportunities were the most dominant stressors.

Keywords: Working women, Stress, Work Life Balance, Gender Discrimination, Peers Behavior etc.

Introduction

The changing and competitive work environment has compelled organizations to be more innovative and employ a diverse workforce. Organizations providing more opportunities to women create a pool of talented employees that leads them to retain a competitive workforce. Women have the ability of handling multiple tasks concurrently. This ability enables them to be a valuable asset for the organization. The dynamic working environment, technological advancements and increased competition has increased the stress among women workers. This stress also caused psychological and behavioural problems among the people.

Stress is present in all occupations. The privatization and globalization steps of the government have increased the intensity of occupational stress in different sectors. The entry of foreign banks and new generation banks has increased competition in the banking sector. The working environment in banks totally changed. The need of higher targets achievement; increased working hours, strict supervision etc. have increased the stress level of employees in banks, especially women employees.

Stress creates an environment that helps breed the common mental disorders such as depression. This shows a number of job related factors affecting the employee's behavior which may cause disturbance in routine life of the women employees. The factors like work overload, role ambiguity, role conflict and poor working conditions, associated with a particular job, causes work related stress among the women. The work-life balance is a major concern for the working women especially for the married ones. Sometimes it becomes difficult to mark a clear distinction between work and home. The interinvasion of home and work cannot be easily prohibited.

Literature Review

There is a growing interest among researchers to study about working women. Especially the factors, creating stress among women. It has been identified that stress among bank employees are high. Considering the importance a number of studies covering different aspects of stress have been undertaken by researchers.

1. Biron, Cooper & Burke (2014) Work life imbalance can affect the organization with low levels of productivity, low employee engagement. Several consequences to work life imbalance include work family conflict, job stress and depression. Job stress can be treated by introducing time management and organizing skills.
2. Fernandes, et al. (2012) reported that females experienced more stress than males and attributed this to domestic pressures and increasing demands in the workplace.
3. Stephen Palmer and Kristina Gyllensten (2005) observed, multiple roles, lack of career progress, discrimination and stereotyping are the factors that create stress among the women. They confirmed that women reported higher levels of stress compared to men.
4. Preshita, et al(2014) researched stress among male and female respondents both private and in public sector banks Moderate to high stress levels were felt, and the most powerful role stressor in either sector was role stagnation, inter-role distance and role erosion.
5. Devi and Sharma (2013) examine how role stressors affected frontline bank employees in India, The study made clear the need for customized approaches to role stress management.

6. Kan and Yu (2016) studies Employees in Chinese banks suffer from high levels of depressive symptoms because of Occupational stress, conflicting demands of family and work.
7. Rajasekhar and Sasikala (2013) concluded that employed women face stress due to family responsibilities, job insecurity, workplace culture and high demand of job performance.
8. Essien and Stephen (2014) observed that annual leave and getting assistance from colleagues as the most widely used organizational and personal stress coping strategies by female employees of commercial banks in Nigeria.
9. Pell, et al. (2014) Lack of Promotional Opportunities, the gender equality is being reinforced in the organizations with the help of different regulations but women are still discriminated in various dimensions like occupational and economic gains.
10. Snorradóttir et al. (2013) examination of psychological trauma among surviving bank employees in restructuring and downsizing processes showed that such environment factors as high job demand and low job control were fingered to a limited degree in perceptions of psychological distress.

Objectives of the Paper

To know the major causes of work related stress experienced by women employees and know the practices adopted by banking industry to reduce work place stress.

Research methodology

A qualitative research approach was chosen for gathering data. The literature review was used to identify the different theory around the topic of work related stress among working women in banks. Secondary data was gathered from Books, periodicals, articles, journal, magazines and online sources such as websites.

Stress

The concept of stress was first introduced in the life sciences by Selye Hans in 1936. It was derived from the Latin word 'stringere'; it meant the experience of physical hardship, starvation, torture and pain.

- Stress is defined as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it”.
- It is defined as “any external event or internal drive which threatens to upset the organismic equilibrium”.

In recent decades, researchers have studied the relationship between job stress and physical illness. Examples include sleep disturbances, upset stomach and headache, as well as compromised relationships with family and friends. Other symptoms include: Headaches, High blood pressure, Indigestion, Insomnia, Irritability, Depression, Short attention span, Loss of appetite, Procrastination, Increased use of alcohol and drugs; and Poor job performance.

Causes of stress

- i. Individual stressors: Job concerns, Career changes due to promotion or transfer, Economic problems due to low earnings, Changes in life structure, Increase in responsibility, and Personality
- ii. Group stressors: Lack of group cohesiveness, Lack of social support, Inter personal and inter group conflicts, and Unfriendly organizational climate
- iii. Organizational stressors: Job related factors like routine, morally conflicting individuals, difficult duties and responsibilities, disturbed working conditions, interdependence in work, lack of security and too much work load. Role related factors like role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload. Inter personal and group related factors like conflicts, poor communication, unpleasant relationship and lack of proper recognition. Organizational structural factors like excessive rules and regulations, lack of participation in decisions and hostile attitude of superiors. Organizational leadership factors like unrealistic standard to perform, imposing excessively tight controls and routinely fire employees who fail to turn up. Organizational life cycle like layoffs, retrenchment, reduction in production, etc.

Effect of work stress

Low performance and productivity, High rate of absenteeism and turn over, Loss of customers due to poor attitudes of workers, increased alienation of workers from the job, Destructive and aggressive behavior.

Initiatives in the Banking Industry to Reduce Stress

In today's competitive work environment stress level is increasing at a faster rate and women are showing signs of chronic fatigue and burn out. They are required to work overtime even to complete the routine work and so they are experiencing a high level of stress at work place and at home. So stress management is greatly felt in the industry.

Hence, the Banking industry needs to improve, attract new talent and enhance satisfaction level by controlling the stressfulness of work among women employees.

The initiatives required are: Stress control workshop and employee assistance programmes for women should be organized. Women Employees should be given adequate power to act. Banks must enrich roles, enable employees with leadership training, and engage the entire cadres to take up this change. The quality of work life of employees needs to be improved so as to ensure adequate support to achieve organizational goals. Remuneration package should be commensurate with the burden of work and risk in it. Career planning and counseling should be introduced exclusively for women. Physical and psychological fitness of women employees should be ensured. The organizational climate should be made conducive for growth so as to increase productivity of women employees. The number of holidays should be increased to boost morale of employees; and Relationship should be strengthened so as to feel easiness and security among women employees in the bank.

Conclusion

Work related stress among women employees has become a significant cause of ill health and is a serious risk factor for bank workers psychological and social well-being. The study has demonstrated an increasing diffusion of adverse health outcomes from work-related stress in this sector. Majority of the women employees are sticking on to this job due to status, pay, job security and passion. Thus, the growing importance of interventional strategies is highly felt at the organizational level to reduce the stress level of employees in order to maximize their performance through ensuring better quality of work life.

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