

IDENTIFICATION OF SOURCES OF JOB STRESS: A STUDY OF BANK MARKETING EXECUTIVES

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Abstract *The present study identified the sources of job stress among marketing executives working in private banking sector of Punjab. A self-administered questionnaire consisting of personal information and items related to respondents' job stress was used to collect the data from 600 marketing executives. The factors having potential to produce job stress identified through factor analysis are 'lack of clarity and growth', 'work-life imbalance', 'work overload', 'lack of autonomy', 'unachievable targets', 'poor communication system' and 'poor interpersonal relations'. The detailed findings and managerial implications for private banks are discussed.*

Keywords: *JobStress, Sources, Stressors, Banking, Marketing Executives*

INTRODUCTION

Job stress is a growing concern today in comparison to three decades ago. It has become a key problem not only for individuals working within an organization but also for the organization itself. Beehr and Newman (1978) defined job stress as a condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning. A healthy work environment ensures that work pressures on employees are in harmony with their abilities and the resources provided to them, the amount of autonomy at work and the support they receive from people they work with. Health doesn't merely mean the absence of disease, but a positive condition of overall physical, mental and social well-being (*Contemporary Health Studies*, 2012). Therefore, a healthy working environment is one where there is not only absence of harmful conditions but a plenty of health promoting conditions too. In this context, the term 'stress' refers to a stress with significant negative consequences, that is, 'distress' rather than stress where consequences are helpful or otherwise positive, termed as 'eustress' (Fevre et al., 2003). Stress produces numerous health effects which vary according to persons, situations, and severity. These effects include physical and mental health decline experienced in the form of insomnia, ulcers, hypertension, nervousness, depression and anxiety (Chang and Lu, 2007).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Rapid changes of the modern work-life are associated with increasing demands of learning new skills, needs of adopting new types of work, pressures of higher

productivity and quality of work, time pressures and hectic jobs (Kulkarni, 2006). Ivancevich et al. (1982) said that stress is often developed when an individual is assigned a major responsibility without proper authority and delegation of power. Pestonjee and Mishra (1999) explained that optimum level at which stress is functional is different for different persons and is dependent on a variety of factors like the personality of an individual, self-esteem, his educational background, authority to make decisions, control over organizational and environmental variables.

Howard (1980) indicated four general characteristics of management jobs that are most stress producing, i.e., feeling of helplessness, too much work, urgency, ambiguity and uncertainty. Parasuraman and Alutto (1981) divided antecedents of work stress in a food processing firm into three categories, namely, contextual variables (subsystem, shift), role variables (job level), and task variables (autonomy, complexity, interdependence, reutilization and closeness of supervision). Seven work stressors were found in the study, i.e., inter-unit conflict, technical problems, efficiency problems, role frustration, staff shortages, short lead times and too many meetings. The results indicated that both job level (low, medium, high) and subsystem (administration, production limited variety, production wide variety, technical support and boundary) were significantly related to levels of work stressors.

Manshor et al. (2003) found that workload, working conditions, and relationships at work were the main concerns of the managers that lead to stress at the work place. Burke (1976) investigated the relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction and found that the most stressful situations were: not being able to get needed information,

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too slow job progress, and too heavy workload, while the least stressful situations reported were: not feeling qualified to handle the jobs, concern that someone else might get the higher position sought and too much responsibility. Cluskey and Vaux (1997) carried out a survey on management accountants and found that the main causes of stress were reporting to more than one boss, heavy workload under time constraints, work relations in the organization, perceived lack of career progress, and a mismatch between personality and the task demands of the job.

Akinnusi (1994) opined that the responsibility load created severe stress among workers and marketing executives. Abel and Sewell (1999) investigated differences in the sources of stress between rural and urban school teachers. Significantly greater stress was found for urban schools than rural schools from factors like, poor working conditions, including inadequate resources; lack of recognition and advancement prospects; and poor staff relations, including an unfriendly atmosphere and lack of support from both colleagues and school administrators. Kang and Singh (2004) revealed that organizational structure and climate, interpersonal relations, nature of superior, role ambiguity and work inhibitions emerged as major sources of stress for employees in electronics industry, than work overload, unmet financial needs and job insecurity, right rules and monotonous job.

McGrath (1976) clarified that role ambiguity is a most common source of job related stress. He further added that role ambiguity occurs when people are uncertain about the scope of their responsibilities, what is expected of them at work and how to distribute time between various tasks assigned to them. Randall (1988) stated that having something to do which is unethical or illegal, or distasteful (for instance, sacking a close friend) creates person-role conflict which results in stressful conditions. Satyanarayana (1995) revealed that role erosion, personal inadequacy, resource inadequacy and role stagnation are prime contributors to role stress among executives and supervisors. Chand and Sethi (1997) conducted a study to examine the organizational factors as predictors of job related strain and found role conflict, strenuous working conditions and role overload to be the most significant factors. Upadhyay and Singh (1999) found that executives experienced more stress than teachers and differed from one another in factors like role overload, intrinsic impoverishment and status.

Work life is the most important part of every working person which tends to be root of stress. Chan (2002) stated that due to the advent of competition at every phase in job environment, most of the individuals around the world spend their additional time at workplace for job related work purposes which influences their work and life. Usually, individuals are more worried about aftermath of their performance which affects their behavior and communication with peers and

other persons in contact (Brannon et al., 2013). At workplace, stress related to the tasks performed by the employee in the organization is one of the important determinants of performance of an employee. The stress prompted due to roles performed by individuals as employees is a potent occupational stressor (Srivastava, 2007) as its results have been found to be very expensive to the organization (Fisher and Gitelson, 1983). In such circumstances, efforts to sustain a high level of work performance over time can be a deadly task for organizations as well as employees.

The review of literature infers that numerous studies have identified the sources of stress among employees of various sectors (managers, academics, accountants, executives, etc.). But only a few studies are available on marketing executives of the banking sector. Therefore, the objectives of the present study are:

- To identify the factors producing stress among marketing executives working in private banking sector
- To suggest various strategies for reducing stress caused at workplace.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted on 600 private bank marketing executives selected through stratified random sampling technique, covering three private banks (strata) i.e. HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank Ltd. and Axis Bank Ltd. in the state of Punjab, India. Out of the sample, 58% are males and 42% are females; 55 percent possess a postgraduate degree, 42 percent are having a bachelor's degree and remaining three percent of the respondents have qualified in other academic streams and technical qualifications; 88 percent of the respondents earn upto Rs. 20,000 per month while 12 percent earn up to Rs. 40,000 per month; 76 percent of the respondents possess 0-5 years of experience, 19 percent have 5-10 years of experience and five percent with 10-15 years of experience; 67 percent of the respondents are in the age group of 20 to 25 years, 27 percent in 25-30 years and 6 per cent in 30-35 years. The data were collected through self-administered questionnaire having 30 items of job stress (Cronbach's alpha=0.88) obtained from Sharma and Devi (2011); Ahsan et al. (2009) and NUT Survey (2007). Each item was measured on a 5 point Likert type scale responses. The statistical analysis was done with the help of SPSS (Version 20.0).

RESULTS

In order to identify the job factors which have potential to produce stress among employees, factor analysis has been applied which examines the relationships among various interrelated variables and represents them in terms of a few underlying factors. It was performed with Principal

Component Analysis (PCA) followed by Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalization, which allowed the resulting factors to correlate and converged them in six rotations. The decision for arriving at the number of factors to be retained has been made on the basis of Latent Root Criterion, i.e. variables having eigen values greater than 1, which reveals that there are seven factors. Moreover, factors having loadings greater than or equal to 0.50 have been considered.

A total number of 30 items were initially present in the scale, out of which twenty items were retained. The value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy statistics came to be 0.639 which is adequately fine (Field, 2009). Varimax rotated factor analytic results for all the respondents are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1: Factor Loadings of Job Stressors Resulting from Factor Analysis

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Factor Loading	Variance Explained	Cronbach's Alpha
Lack of Clarity and Growth	4.91			16.22	0.692
I am not clear on the scope and responsibilities of my job	4.96	0.627	.855		
There is no scope for personal growth in my job	4.92	0.726	.707		
My job requires me to work in several equally important areas at same time	4.89	0.706	.581		
I am not clear about what is expected of me at work	4.88	0.678	.516		
Work-Life Imbalance	4.83			13.69	0.764
My working hours are not restricted from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.	4.89	0.768	.794		
The balance between work and home life is not right	4.86	0.747	.735		
There are too many after work-hour meetings	4.78	0.724	.592		
My job doesn't allow me to spend enough time with my family	4.77	0.743	.558		
Work Overload	4.42			7.81	0.774
I am not allotted with required time to discharge my duties	4.68	0.743	.710		
My family and friends complain that I do not spend time with them due to the heavy demands of my work	4.23	0.782	.698		
I have to work on weekends and holidays	4.34	0.771	.690		
Lack of Autonomy	4.50			7.45	0.71
I am not permitted to make my work related decisions on my own	4.65	0.740	.629		
I don't enjoy a reasonable degree of autonomy due to excessive monitoring	4.19	0.791	.614		
I have to do things, in my role, that are against my best judgments	4.65	0.573	.569		
Unachievable Targets	4.12			6.68	0.721
My boss always sets unachievable targets for me	4.11	0.797	.817		
I am too preoccupied with my present role responsibility to be able to prepare for taking up higher/more responsibilities	4.12	0.824	.797		
Poor Communication System	4.06			5.34	0.609
I don't get the information needed to carry out responsibilities assigned to me	4.02	0.704	.768		
I don't have opportunities to express my ideas and points of view	4.11	0.690	.624		
Poor Interpersonal Relations	3.93			4.93	0.696
I don't have a good relationship with my line managers and other seniors	3.99	0.73	.746		
Other role occupants don't give enough attention and time to my work problems	3.87	0.572	.697		

Seven components were extracted after analysis, named as 'lack of clarity and growth', 'work-life imbalance', 'work overload', 'lack of autonomy', 'unachievable targets', 'poor communication system' and 'poor interpersonal relations'. As depicted by the mean scores of these factors, all the seven factors extracted through factor analysis produce moderate to severe stress among the marketing executives. However, lack of clarity and growth (4.91) was found to be the strongest stress producing factor, followed by work-life imbalance (4.83), lack of autonomy (4.50), work overload (4.42), unachievable targets (4.12), poor communication system (4.06) and poor interpersonal relations (3.93). Coefficient alpha reliability estimates for the factors were suitable, that is for values more than or equal to 0.60 (Field, 2009).

DISCUSSION

The present study is focused on identification of the antecedents of stress among marketing executives working in private banking sector. Based on our findings, there are seven factors which have potential to produce stress among marketing executives. It was found that 'lack of clarity and growth' has a potential to produce stress among marketing executives since they feel unclear about their role expectations, responsibilities and scope at work. Moreover, they feel that they are always required to work in several important areas of work at the same time and still they don't see their growth in job. In a study on university employees, Katuwal (2011) identified that female employees were facing the problem of job stress due to role ambiguity and dual role carrier at the same time. The stressors identified by Savery and Detiuk (1985) are role ambiguity, autonomy, decision making, role overload and role conflict. Another factor producing stress is 'work-life imbalance' which means that individuals are unable to create a balance amidst their work and personal lives. It occurs when the working hours are not restricted to minimum and maximum hours, a lot of after work-hour meetings are scheduled and employees are unable to spare time for their families and friends. In a study on public sector banks, majority of the employees complained that they were unable to balance both their personal and professional life successfully due to extra work pressures and demands from work environment which lead to neglect at their personal front (Jayashree, 2010).

'Work overload' is another factor cited which produces stress. Work overload is felt when employees are not allotted ample amount of time to discharge their duties, and when they have to work during weekends and hence are unable to spend quality time with their loved ones. In this regard, Lehal (2007) suggested a reduction in workload and improvement in role clarity in order to reduce stress level in private sector executives since they were more stressful due to their long working hours. Manshor et al. (2003) noted that

workloads, working conditions, and relationship at work were the main concern of the managers that made their jobs stressful. Pressure of qualitative and quantitative overload requires working for excessive hours, while working under time pressure in order to meet deadlines increases the stress levels as and when difficult deadlines draw near (French and Caplan, 1972). 'Lack of autonomy' is the next factor producing stress among marketing executives that exists when employees are not permitted to make work-related decisions on their own, they don't enjoy a reasonable degree of autonomy and they have to do things, in their role, that are against their best judgment. The higher job autonomy and lower closeness of supervision was found to help the employees of a food processing firm cope better with various stresses caused at workplace (Parasuraman & Alutto, 1981).

Another stressor having capability to produce stress is 'unachievable targets'. It occurs when supervisor always sets unachievable targets and employees feel that they are too preoccupied with the present role and responsibility and unable to prepare for taking up higher/more responsibilities. Malik (2001) urged that the private sector bank employees are required to work under pressure to compete with other private banks and therefore, employees with different work skills and expertise have to tune their work in accordance with the demand. 'Poor communication system' came out to be another potent stressor, which subsists when employees don't get the information needed to carry out responsibilities assigned to them and they don't have opportunities to express ideas and points of view of their own when needed. Lack of participation in decision-making process, lack of effective consultation and communication, unjustified restrictions on behavior, office politics and no sense of belonging were identified as potential sources of stress in a study by Caplan and Jones (1975). 'Poor interpersonal relations' is yet another stressor that occurs when less attention is given to an employee by other role occupants and they don't share a good relationship with their line managers and other seniors. Handling interpersonal relationship is the most common source of stress (Brimm, 1983) since stress arises from management of time, administrative tasks and interpersonal relationships (Galloway et al., 1986).

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Since the marketing executives are that component of the workforce which is directly associated with getting more and more business, the current study is going to be very helpful to the human resource managers working in private banking industry as they deal with all the aspects related to the workforce. The persons who are into the work of enhancement of business are required to be kept in such a work environment where they work freely. But in the present competitive era, employees have become stressful and their productivity is affected. This study will also prove

useful in providing information to banking companies in identifying the dimensions of job stress and subsequent job dissatisfaction and burnout experienced by its employees. If the seven factors identified in the study are taken care of by the management, then the situation of the marketing executives can be improved and will be beneficial to the overall prosperity of the private banks. The results of this study can act as a tool for reducing job stress among bank employees, because management of job stressors will have a great impact on the employees' productivity at work and a healthy and happy employee will last with the company forever. Therefore, a clear understanding of job stress, work and non-work causes and their implications is a pre-requisite for any healthy organization.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Few limitations are present in the study which need to be discussed. Firstly, it was a cross-sectional study. Secondly, the measures were self-report which might have resulted in a possible variation due to biasness of respondents. Thirdly, only one state of India was chosen as a sample, a large number of sample needs to be collected throughout the nation in order to make this study more generalized. Fourthly, the present study focused only on identification of potent stressors causing job stress and no further impact of these factors upon behavior or lives of employees is discussed. Further research into this area can take into consideration the above-mentioned limitations.

CONCLUSION

Stress is an inevitable part of work settings, especially when it comes to private sector. Banking sector is also affected by this problem. In this study, seven factors generating job stress were identified, i.e., lack of clarity and growth, work-life imbalance, work overload, lack of autonomy, unachievable targets, poor communication system and poor interpersonal relations. The job stress experienced by the employees may be reduced by using positive coping strategies like, going for a walk, calling a good friend, joining social groups, social networking through internet, spending time with family, and so on.

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