

Strained for success: workplace stress and employee performance in the private banking sector in kerala

Dr.t.revathi¹, Divya krishnan²

¹Research supervisor,
Cms institute of management studies,
affiliated to bharathiar university, coimbatore-641049.

²Research scholar,
cms institute of management studies,
affiliated to bharathiar university, coimbatore-641049.

Abstract

Today, employees in private banking experience a lot of pressure due to increased standards, strong rivalry and higher customer expectations. Here, we explore the impact that stress at work has on private banking employees in Kerala state. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 120 employees in the region's private banks. The research focused on identifying top stressors such as the pressure of many jobs, insufficient direction in work, conflicting demands between job and personal life and pressure in the workplace. From the statistics, it was found that occupational stress negatively influences employee performance. Stress at work was linked to having less motivation, being less productive, taking more absence days and burning out. The study showed that young employees and those on the front line often face stress-related difficulties with their performance. There is also a lack of meaningful tools for handling stress within many banks. Supporting staff against occupational stress benefits their health and is necessary for the business to do well in the future. It adds to the research on workplace well-being and helps HR professionals and leaders in Kerala's private banking sector find ways to improve the well-being of workers.

Keywords: Occupational Stress, Employee Performance, Private Banks, Kerala, Workplace Well-being

INTRODUCTION

The banking sector is now considered one of the most lively and active industries. For many banks in the private sector, it is important to meet financial goals, keep customers satisfied, adapt to new technology and comply with tough regulations. Even though meeting these demands leads to the growth and success of a company, it is very stressful for employees. Therefore, occupational stress is now seen as a major problem affecting workers' health and their work quality. This term describes what happens to a person's mind and body when the job is too demanding for their resources. This is a trouble for both the employee and the employer, because if stress goes on for too long, it can lead to less work done, more employees absent from work, more staff turnover and workplace dissatisfaction. If a financial institution's employees are stressed, it can lead to unhappy customers and reduced productivity.

People in private banking in India, including Kerala, face strong competition, have to work long hours, meet high targets and very little work-life balance. In general, employees on the front lines such as with clients, process a lot of day-to-day transactions, work with challenging customers, face sales targets and manage various complicated financial offers. Tasks or responsibilities that are stressful often lead to impaired thinking, less motivation and poor performance for both an individual and the company. Kerala and other regional areas in India lack comprehensive attention and studies on stress management in banking. While research has taken place nationally and globally, a closer look is required to see how social and cultural influences, office policies and the makeup of staff impact stress and the level of productivity. This study is designed to look into how stress at work affects the performance of employees in private banks serving Kerala. The aim is to help bank managers and HR experts understand and address the

major causes of stress to benefit employees. Overall, the purpose is to make the workplace better for employees and maintain the organization's productivity for years to come.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

With rapid advancements and more competitors, the market for private banking in Kerala has increased the requirements and demands on employees. While banking has seen better financial results, this progress has increased the stress levels of professionals working in the sector. Meeting tight deadlines, selling a large number of items and managing customers under observation can lead to mental stress and cause workers to feel exhausted emotionally. Despite the fact that good employee performance is essential for serves and organizational workflow, the influence of stress at work on productivity is not studied enough in Asia Pacific. To determine this, the study investigates how work stress influences the results and well-being of workers in Kerala's private banks.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To determine main sources of stress are experienced by workers in private sector banks in Kerala.
2. To Know stress from work affects the productivity and performance of employee in banks.
3. To provide guidance on steps and strategies to reduce stress in the workplace and help employees feel and work better.

NEED OF THE STUDY

The service sector, like private banking, is experiencing a surge in occupational stress as a main concern today. In this field, workers are expected to achieve tough targets, deal with new technologies, face difficult customer issues and meet deadlines which results in additional stress. Sometimes, short-term stress can give us drive, but if it lingers, it can lead to tiredness, less efficient work, less effective decisions and issues with our health. Since the private banking industry is major in Kerala's economy, there is a clear need to discover how work stress influences staff performance. The workplace's awareness of mental health is rising, but very few studies have taken place in this area. Therefore, this study will help by allowing managers to act on findings and information that can improve the well-being of employees and company productivity.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study examine how occupational stress influences the performance of employees in private sector banks in Kerala. It reviews aspects of stress such as workload, pressure from deadlines, unsure duties, disputes with others and the environment at work, to understand their role in influencing employees' work output, motivation and contentment with their job. To understand how stress affects everyone, the study involves staff, middle managers and senior executives. Questionnaires are used to collect data and analyse those data to find relationships between stress and how employees perform. We expect these findings to influence private banking institutions in Kerala to stress management methods and offer suitable environments to their employees. No analysis was made of public sector banks or other communities and the findings in this paper relate only to Kerala's private banking.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It has been shown through recent studies that injuries at work often lead to reduced productivity among employees, especially in the banking sector. Their study concluded that dealing with too much work pressure and unclear job roles leads to an increase in stress which negatively impacts private bank employees' work performance. According to Patel et al., tasks such as counselling and having flexible work options help employees become healthier and more efficient. In their paper, Kumar and Rao (2021)

pointed out that having a supportive manager helps reduce employee stress and inspire them to be more motivated. Moreover, Das and Mukherjee found that a person's age and work experience play a role in handling work stress which means stress management should be adjusted based on individual needs. All these studies demonstrate that paying attention to workplace stress is key to maintaining high productivity within the sector.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: A descriptive study design was chosen to study the relationship between stress at work and productivity among employees of private sector banks in Kerala. Descriptive design suits the purpose of explaining variables and their comparisons without changing anything about the environment.

Population and Sample Design: The target population for the study consisted of workers in several private banks in Kerala. To guarantee equal representation among people of all ages, genders, job roles, working hours and experience, a convenient selection of 120 participants was used. The study objectives were used to design a questionnaire that gathered primary data for the study. The questionnaire consisted of questions about demographics and other questions that explored sources of stress at work, its effect on productivity and ways people thought stress could be reduced. Respondents' opinions were gathered by providing them with Likert scale options.

Data Collection Procedure: People were invited to take the questionnaire online and in person over a period of four weeks. Survey participants were promised that all their answers would be kept private and anonymous. SPSS was used to analyse the information gathered which was first evaluated using several data coding methods. Descriptive statistics summarized the respondent profile and key variables. Relationships between occupational stress and employee productivity and the influence of demographic factors, were looked at through the use of inferential statistics, ANOVA and regression analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Age Group	Below 25 years	18	15.0%
	25 – 34 years	42	35.0%
	35 – 44 years	29	24.2%
	45 – 54 years	19	15.8%
	55 years and above	12	10.0%
	Total	120	100
Gender	Male	65	54.2%
	Female	52	43.3%
	Prefer not to say/Other	3	2.5%
	Total	120	100
Job Position	Frontline Staff	33	27.5%
	Officer/Executive	28	23.3%
	Assistant Manager	25	20.8%
	Manager	22	18.3%
	Senior Management	12	10.0%
	Total	120	100
Work Experience	Less than 1 year	9	7.5%
	1 – 3 years	21	17.5%
	4 – 6 years	32	26.7%
	7 – 10 years	28	23.3%
	More than 10 years	30	25.0%
	Total	120	100

Weekly Working Hours	Less than 40 hours	8	6.7%
	40 – 45 hours	26	21.7%
	46 – 50 hours	37	30.8%
	51 – 55 hours	29	24.2%
	More than 55 hours	20	16.6%
	Total	120	100

Interpretation:

Most 35% of respondents are in the 25–34 age group which suggests the private banking sector is mainly populated by young staff. Fifty-four percent of the people who participated in the survey were males.

Particulars	Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Experience work pressure due to unrealistic deadlines	Never	7	5.8%
	Rarely	15	12.5%
	Sometimes	34	28.3%
	Often	39	32.5%
	Always	25	20.9%
	Total	120	100
lack of role clarity contribute to your stress at work	Not at all	10	8.3%
	Slightly	18	15.0%
	Moderately	36	30.0%
	Significantly	31	25.8%
	Extremely	25	20.9%
	Total	120	100
Stressful is dealing with difficult customers or clients	Not stressful	6	5.0%
	Slightly stressful	12	10.0%
	Moderately stressful	33	27.5%
	Very stressful	40	33.3%
	Extremely stressful	29	24.2%
	Total	120	100
feel that long working hours affect your well-being	Not at all	5	4.2%
	To a small extent	13	10.8%
	To some extent	27	22.5%
	To a great extent	38	31.7%
	Very greatly	37	30.8%
	Total	120	100
Frequency of internal conflicts/poor communication cause stress	Never	9	7.5%
	Rarely	17	14.2%
	Sometimes	35	29.2%
	Often	36	30.0%
	Always	23	19.1%
	Total	120	100

Virtually all participants handle customer service and meet sales expectations, both of which add to the stress they experience at work. Around a quarter of the workforce (25%) have more than a decade of experience and an equivalent amount (26.7%) have experience ranging from 4 to 6 years. Thirty percent and forty-one percent of those surveyed reported either working 46–50 hours weekly or putting in more time than that which could be a source of stress. This makes it easier to examine how stress at work impacts employee performance in the private banking sector of Kerala.

Table: 2 Responses to Sources of Occupational Stress

Interpretation:

According to the information, unattainable deadlines, long work days and tough interactions with customers are the primary causes of stress for staff in private banks. Often or always, 53% of our respondents felt the burden of deadlines at work. It was also found that 62.5% of employees believed that extended work hours significantly or very greatly affected their well-being. It was found that more than half of those surveyed regarded working with customers as a big stress factor. Bad communication and internal struggles within the workplace led to stress in 49.1% of employees. Finally, most of the participants reported that having an unclear job role led to at least moderate stress. The conclusions reveal that clearer job functions, better communication and better arrangement of work are needed to ease stress at work in the industry.

Table: 3 Impact of Occupational Stress on Employee Performance

Particulars	Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Difficult to concentrate on tasks when under stress	Never	6	5.0%
	Rarely	14	11.7%
	Sometimes	33	27.5%
	Often	38	31.7%
	Always	29	24.2%
	Total	120	100
Workplace stress affect your ability to meet performance targets	No effect	9	7.5%
	Slight effect	17	14.2%
	Moderate effect	32	26.7%
	High effect	34	28.3%
	Severe effect	28	23.3%
	Total	120	100
Stress lead you to make errors or overlook details	Never	5	4.2%
	Rarely	11	9.2%
	Sometimes	38	31.7%
	Often	41	34.2%
	Always	25	20.8%
	Total	120	100
Feel less motivated to perform during high stress periods	Not at all	7	5.8%
	Slightly	16	13.3%
	Moderately	29	24.2%
	Significantly	36	30.0%
	Extremely	32	26.7%
	Total	120	100
Stress ever affected your attendance or punctuality at work	Never	10	8.3%
	Rarely	15	12.5%
	Occasionally	31	25.8%
	Frequently	38	31.7%
	Always	26	21.7%
	Total	120	100

Interpretation:

Research has proven that high stress at work impairs a banker's attention, accuracy and motivation in private banking. More than half of employees or 55.9%, said that stress often or very often interferes with their ability to pay attention. It was similarly reported that 51.6% believe that a high or severe amount of stress impacts an organization's ability to meet their objectives. Many reported that they make mistakes or miss important details as a result of being under pressure much or most of the time. Under stress, 56.7% of people felt their motivation dropped considerably or even a great deal. There are problems with being present and on time because over half the participants claimed that stress sometimes, often or always affected them. The outcome confirms that stress in the workplace affects how well workers perform, so measures must be put in place right away to minimize such stress.

Table: 4 Practical Measures for Reducing Workplace Stress

Particulars	Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Effective are regular breaks and time-off in managing stress	Not effective	6	5.0%
	Slightly effective	11	9.2%
	Moderately effective	28	23.3%
	Very effective	42	35.0%
	Extremely effective	33	27.5%
	Total	120	100
Benefit from counselling or mental health support at work	Not at all	5	4.2%
	Slightly	12	10.0%
	Moderately	27	22.5%
	Greatly	36	30.0%
	Very greatly	40	33.3%
	Total	120	100
Flexible working hours be in reducing stress	Not helpful	4	3.3%
	Slightly helpful	9	7.5%
	Moderately helpful	26	21.7%
	Very helpful	38	31.7%
	Extremely helpful	43	35.8%
	Total	120	100
Supportive management reduce your stress	Not at all	7	5.8%
	To a small extent	10	8.3%
	To some extent	25	20.8%
	To a great extent	39	32.5%
	Very greatly	39	32.5%
	Total	120	100
Likely to recommend stress management workshops	Very unlikely	3	2.5%
	Unlikely	7	5.8%
	Neutral	18	15.0%
	Likely	40	33.3%
	Very likely	52	43.3%
	Total	120	100

They reflect that there is a clear need for actions that help reduce stress in private banking. The majority (62.5%) feel that having regular pauses and time off is either very or extremely effective. 63.3% of the respondents also feel that having a professional mental health specialist would really help them. The option to work flexible hours was found very useful by 67.5% of the participants. Most employees felt that having supportive leaders can greatly reduce their levels of stress. Many recommended stress management training, with most respondents feeling three-quarters likely to agree with it. Based on these findings, banks should ensure that employees manage their work and personal lives well and are offered the right support.

Table no: 5 One Way ANOVA

Impact of Stress Reduction Strategies with Demographic Profile of the Respondents

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
age	Between Groups	90.965	4	22.741	32.761	.000
	Within Groups	79.827	115	.694		
	Total	170.792	119			
gender	Between Groups	23.167	4	5.792	52.035	.000
	Within Groups	12.800	115	.111		
	Total	35.967	119			
Job position	Between Groups	83.381	4	20.845	18.814	.000
	Within Groups	127.419	115	1.108		
	Total	210.800	119			
Work experience	Between Groups	87.503	4	21.876	25.001	.000
	Within Groups	100.622	115	.875		
	Total	188.125	119			
Weekly working hours	Between Groups	110.765	4	27.691	63.486	.000
	Within Groups	50.160	115	.436		
	Total	160.925	119			

According to the ANOVA, stress reduction strategies have statistically significant varying effects based on age, gender, position, work experience and the number of weekly working hours (for all, $p < 0.001$). This implies that how efficient people believe stress management to be varies a lot based on their background. The very high F-values indicate that the groups are more spread out than the scores within each group. As a result, what employees experience when trying stress reduction strategies is influenced by their demographic background.

Table no: 6 Regression

To examine the predictive relationship between occupational stress (independent variable) and employee productivity or well-being (dependent variables).

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.777 ^a	.604	.600	.71270
a. Predictors: (Constant), affectabilityto meet performance targets				

Results from the regression show that there is a strong positive link between occupational stress and employee well-being or productivity. R Square is 0.604, demonstrating that around 60.4% of employee productivity or well-being changes depend on their occupational stress levels. Since the adjusted R Square is 0.600, the study results are not likely influenced by the complexity of the model. The moderate results of prediction are shown by the standard error of estimate (0.7127).

FINDINGS

- Many bank employees working in the private sector, it seems, face frequent difficulties focusing and making mistakes when dealing with occupational stress. Half of the respondents declared that stress impedes their work performance and makes them feel less motivated.
- Employees reported that regular breaks, support from counsellors, flexible timings and friendly managers helped them calm their work-related stress. There was a positive attitude among employees toward the organization running stress management programs.
- The findings from the one-way ANOVA revealed that people of various age groups, genders, job positions, levels of experience and weekly working hours differed in how they perceive stress reduction strategies. Thus, the way people perceive different stress management practices is influenced by their individual qualities.
- Because of this finding, it is vital for the private banking sector to provide effective stress management interventions that help workers perform well and remain healthy.

SUGGESTIONS

- There should be stress management workshops, counselling and support for mental health offered regularly to aid bank staff in dealing with work stress.
- If private banking workers have flexible hours and are motivated to take breaks regularly, it can substantially reduce their stress, make them more attentive and raise their productivity.
- Managers should aim to provide a supportive environment for their team by speaking openly, defining everyone's duties and addressing conflicts which will encourage team members to reach better results.

CONCLUSION

According to the study, occupational stress affects both the productivity and the well-being of employees in the private banking sector in Kerala. Evidently, stress decreases concentration, motivation and work accuracy, so we need to introduce effective strategies to reduce stress. In addition, since stress and its control are seen differently by different groups, it's crucial to have custom strategies. If banks develop robust support systems, offer flexible schedules and support managers in being friendly, workers can work efficiently, leading to greater success as a company. When our workers experience lower stress levels, both their health and the success of the workplace increase.

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