

WORKPLACE STRESS AMONG WOMEN EXECUTIVES

IN BANKS

Introduction:

Mumbai is the largest metropolis as well as the financial, industrial and celluloid capital of India. Mumbai serves as an important economic hub of the country. In the present scenario of globalization and liberalization of the economy, the demographics of employment have been changing in India and Mumbai is not an exception. Women are represented in workforce in greater numbers than ever before. They are holding higher percentage of managerial and executive jobs than in the past. But these roles demand a fat slice of time of women executives. Hence, balancing personal and professional lives has been a challenging issue for women executives today. It may be seen that due to problems at workplace, personal life may get affected and vice-versa. However, one who is able to balance the two is the winner.

More and more women are joining banking sector and making their mark. Banking has provided new areas of opportunity for women, and nationalization has been a key factor in countering some aspects of gender discrimination. Despite this increase, many women still are concentrated at the clerical level; very few women employees are at managerial level. Women managers, officers, and clerical groups in their banking career face some common problems. These include the burden of dual role, sexual harassment in the workplace, the refusal of men to accept women as colleagues or seniors, the need to work twice as much as men to gain recognition, and the lack of solidarity among women. All these problems contribute to increasing stress among women executives in the banks.

Therefore, with the given background, an urgent need was felt by the researcher to study about stress among corporate women at managerial level, particularly in banking sector in the city of Mumbai.

Objectives of the Research Paper:

The objectives of the study are stated as follows:

- 1.To discover the workplace stressors among the women executives in the banks.
- 2.To study the effects of stress among the women executives in the banks.
- 3.To identify the degree of stress among the women executives in the banks.

Significance of the Study:

As we witness an increasing number of women workforce in the banking sector, the research paper focuses on women executives in the banking sector in the city of Mumbai.

An attempt has been made in this research paper to highlight workplace stress among women executives in the banking sector. The women executives experience a lot of stress due to various problems faced by them. The women executives face organizational problems like glass ceiling, lack of training and development opportunities, sexual harassment at workplace and so on. They also face familial problems like work-family conflict, hostile environment at home, children and elderly care, etc. Thus, women in management face a number of problems on the personal as well as the professional front. Due to these problems, women executives in the banks experience a lot of stress. Some experts argue that stress is required for a normal and healthy growth. The problem arises when stress is not managed properly.

Excessive workplace stress will affect the motivation and health of the women executives leading to lack of interest in job, reduced productivity, more incidences of sickness, frequent absenteeism, and poor morale.

Research Methodology:

In order to determine the degree of stress faced by women executives in the banking sector in the city of Mumbai, the researcher had used primary data collection method. The data relating to the women executives were collected from public sector banks, private sector banks and foreign banks. The researcher randomly selected 100 women executives from the banks and the details are shown in the table below:

Table 1: Sample Size of Women Executives from the Banks

Sr. No.	Type of Banks	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Public sector banks	39	39.00
2	Private sector banks	40	40.00
3	Foreign Banks	21	21.00
	Total	100	100

Source: Compiled from primary data

The above table states that 39 percent women executives were selected from public sector banks, 40 percent women executives were selected from private sector banks, and 21 percent women executives were selected from foreign banks. The researcher also collected data from secondary sources, such as books and magazines.

Stressors faced by the Women Executives:

The presence of workplace stress is almost inevitable. Stress may be defined as a state of imbalance arising due to excessive psychological and/ or physiological demands on a person. The main causes of stress among women executives in the banks are explained as follows:

1. Poor Working Conditions:

Poor working conditions contribute to stress among employees. Women executives may face the problem of poor working conditions in the banks,

such as poor lighting and ventilation, unhygienic sanitation facilities, excessive noise and dust. Long working hours also bring strain to women executives, which may lead to stress. Inadequate facilities provided to women executives also develop stress among them.

2. Rotating Shifts:

Stress may occur to those women executives who may have to work in different shifts in banks, especially in the foreign banks. The women employees may be expected to work in day shift for some days/ weeks and then in night shifts. This creates problem in adjusting shift timings for the women employees with their family lives. Especially married women executives face a lot of stress in adjusting their work life with the upbringing of their children and taking care of the house.

3. Work Overload:

Quite often, women executives are asked to do many tasks in very little time. Hence, they experience stressful situation. Work overload can be of two types: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative overload involves performing more number of activities in the prescribed time. Qualitative overload implies performing a complicated task, which may be beyond the employee's capacity.

4. Role Ambiguity:

Sometimes, the women executives do not know what they are supposed to do; their tasks and responsibilities are not clear. This creates confusion and may lead to stress.

5. Lack of Participation in Decision-making:

Participation in decision-making involves invitation for important meetings, consultation, invitation for membership for important committees, etc. Many of the experienced women executives feel that they are not consulted in important decision-making matters affecting their jobs and careers. Thus,

the women executives develop a feeling of being neglected, which may lead to stress.

6. Inappropriate Leadership Style:

There is a major difference in leadership styles of male managers and female managers. The male managers generally adopt autocratic leadership style, where he does not consult the subordinates and believes that he is always right. On the other hand, women managers adopt transformational leadership style. Transformation leadership is positively related to organizational commitment and job satisfaction among employees of banks and financial sector in India. Women employees may not like the leadership style of their superiors, which may create a feeling of tension and anxiety.

7. Lack of Social Support:

Women executives are greatly affected by the support of one or more members of a cohesive group. By sharing their joys and problems with other members, they feel contented. In the absence of such social support, the women executives feel stressful.

8. Transfers:

Transfers refer to movement of employee from one department to another, or from one branch to another without any increase in job responsibilities. Women executives resist transfers especially outstation transfers as it disturbs their family lives. Such problem of transfer is widely experienced by women executives in public sector banks. Sometimes their postings may be in rural areas which also results in the problem of dealing with rural customers.

9. Poor Working Relationships:

Women executives may have strained relationships with the members in the banks. They may have extremely formal relations with their superiors and/or negative vibes may be exchanged with their peers. Especially the men

executives may not have a positive attitude towards their women colleagues. Hence, the environment becomes hostile and unhealthy to work in the banking organization. Hence, such conflict creates stress in the minds of the women executives.

10. Technological Changes:

Changes in the technological field can be source of stress among employees, including women executives. Introduction of Core Banking Solution (CBS) and other technological changes taking place in the banking sector brings constant stress to the women executives for the fear of losing their jobs, or the need to adjust to the new technologies.

Effects of Stress on the Women Executives:

Prolonged exposure to stressful situation produces serious physical, psychological and behavioural effects. The effects of stress on women executives are briefly explained as follows:

1. Physical Health:

Medical evidence suggests and supports a link between stress and physical health. For instance, there is a direct link between stress and heart disease. Stress also gives rise to negative effects like high blood pressure, ulcers, arthritis, headache, constipation and skin diseases (Vaz Michael, 2006). The managers and professionals experience extreme fatigue: bodily disturbances including hypertension, peptic ulcers, migraine headache, fevers, etc. However, despite these disorders executives fare better than employees at the bottom of the organization with respect to their mental health (Sahni Ashok, 2006).

2. Psychological Health:

High level of stress is followed by anger, anxiety, depression, nervousness, tension and boredom. The change in employee behaviour affects his job

performance. It affects his self-confidence, lowers self-esteem, lack in concentration and reduces job satisfaction.

3. Behavioural Effects:

Reactions to stress result in development of defensive behaviour such as denial, illusion, and xenophobia. The women executives experiencing stress may preoccupy themselves with routine work and pretend to be busy. Some of them opt for early retirement or due to their inefficiency, the management may ask the executive to leave. Some people resort to alcoholism and drugs to escape from the ill-effects of high levels of stress. It is bound to have an adverse effect on employees' performance. It may lead to increased absenteeism, work accidents, and loss of production. Further, it is likely to affect career prospects – promotions of an addicted employee (Vaz Michael, 2006).

In a study conducted on stress (Sahni Ashok, 2006) the following results were found:

- Executives with high stress tend to be lower in their commitment towards their job.
- They experience more anxiety, indecisiveness and worries on the job as compared to executives with low stress.
- They also derive very little satisfaction from their work. They perceive the organizational policies to be unfair, working environment inadequate, salaries and job security also inadequate.
- They do not have very good relations with their peers, subordinates and superiors.
- They are also low with respect to growth on the job and are less competent with respect to utilization of their time. They are less flexible in their attitudes and values.

- They are low on self-esteem.

Thus, the organizations must ensure regular health check-ups so that employees maintain a stress level, which could be manageable.

Stress is said to be positive when the situation offers an opportunity to women executives to gain something. Eustress is the term used to describe positive stress (Vaz Michael, 2006). Eustress results in innovation, motivation, reduction in absenteeism, higher efficiency and better organizational relations.

Analysis of Stress Levels among the Women Executives in the Banks:

The ‘Organizational Role Stress’ Scale was used by the researcher for data collection, which consisted of 10 broad parameters. The scale was given to the women executives in the banks to identify their stress levels with respect to their work environment. The table below presents the 10 broad parameters resulting in identifying stress among the women executives in the banks:

Table 2: Analysis of Stress Parameters among Women Executives in the Banks

Sr. No.	Parameters	F	df	P-value	Level of Significance
1	Lack of group cohesiveness	3.420	2	0.037	Significant
2	Role conflict	0.009	2	0.991	Insignificant
3	Feeling of inequality	0.586	2	0.560	Insignificant
4	Role ambiguity	5.278	2	0.007	Significant
5	Role overload	8.335	2	0.000	Significant
6	Lack of supervisory support	4.767	2	0.011	Significant
7	Constraints of change	0.019	2	0.981	Insignificant
8	Level of job difficulty	2.731	2	0.070	Significant
9	Job requirement-capability mismatch	3.611	2	0.031	Significant
10	Inadequacy of role authority	1.604	2	0.206	Insignificant

Source: Compiled from the primary survey.

The researcher had used F-test for analyzing the Scale, which included the above 10 parameters. The table states that except the four parameters: role conflict, feeling of inequality, constraints of change and inadequacy of role authority, the other parameters significantly contribute to stress among women executives in the banking sector in the city of Mumbai.

Testing of Hypothesis:

In this research paper, the hypothesis tested is as follows:

(H₁): “Women executives experience stress in the banking sector”.

In order to test the above hypothesis, the level of stress among women executives in the different types of banks was found out.

Table 3: Level of Stress among Women Executives in the Banks

Sr. No.	Type of Bank	Mean (Stress Level)	Std. Deviation	No. of Responses
1	Public sector bank	84.03	10.335	39
2	Private Sector bank	91.80	11.813	40
3	Foreign Bank	79.10	16.121	21
	Total	86.10	13.180	100

Source: Compiled from the primary survey.

The above table explains that stress among women executives in private sector banks is the greatest followed by public sector banks and the least in foreign banks.

ANOVA table is presented to find out stress levels among women executives in the banks.

Table 4: ANOVA Table: Level of Stress among Women Executives by Banks

Sr. No.	Stress Level	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P value
1	Between Groups	2497.816	2	1248.908	8.242	.000
2	Within Groups	14699.184	97	151.538		
	Total	17197.000	99			

Source: Compiled from the primary survey.

The table shows that there is a very significant relationship between stress among women executives and the type of banks as P value is 0.00.

For testing H_1 , the researcher has used F-test and the hypothesis “**Women executives experience stress in the banking sector**” stands accepted.

The researcher has tested H_1 again by using Chi-square test.

For measuring the degree of stress among the women executives in the banks, the researcher has divided degree scores into four categories, which are shown below:

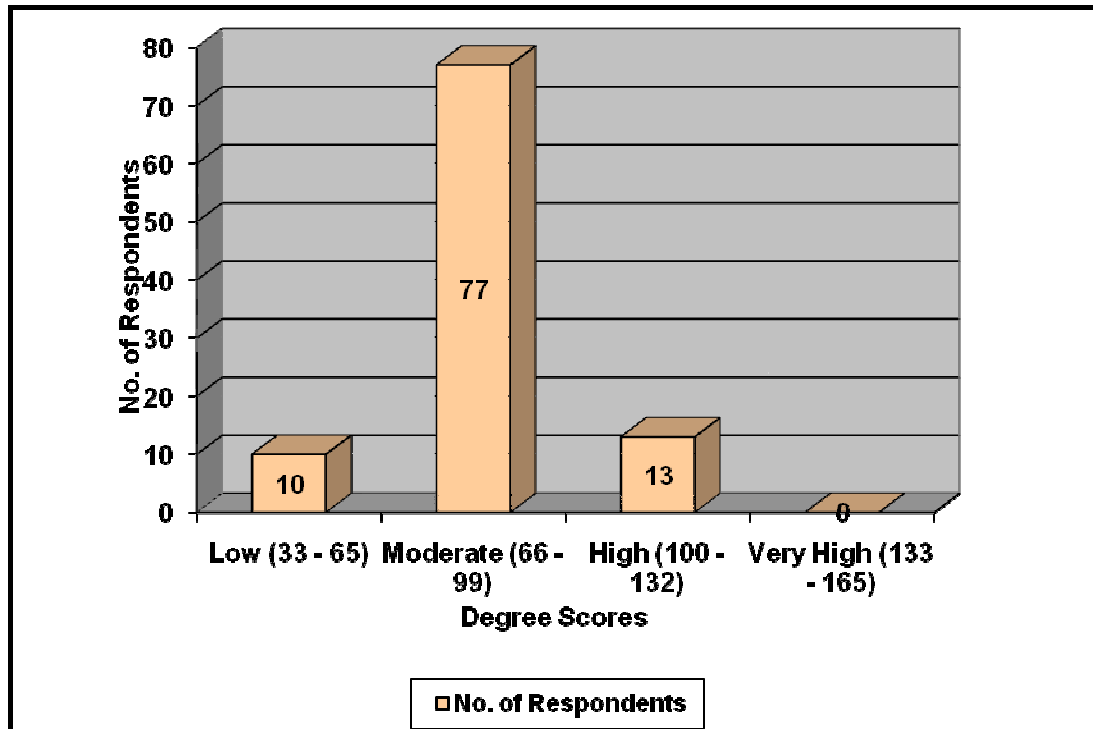
Table 5: Degree of Stress among Women Executives in the Banks

Sr. No.	Degree Scores	No. of Respondents	Percent
1	Low (33 – 65)	10	10.0
2	Moderate (66 – 99)	77	77.0
3	High (100 – 132)	13	13.0
4	Very High (133 – 165)	0	0.0
	Total	100	100.0

Source: Compiled from the primary survey.

The graphical representation is shown as under:

Graph 1: Degree of Stress among Women Executives in the Banks



The above table and graph shows that women executives experience stress in the banks. The level of stress is significantly moderate as $\chi^2 = 21.902$, $df = 3$, $P < 0.001$.

Therefore, the hypothesis “**Women executives experience stress in the banking sector**” stands accepted.

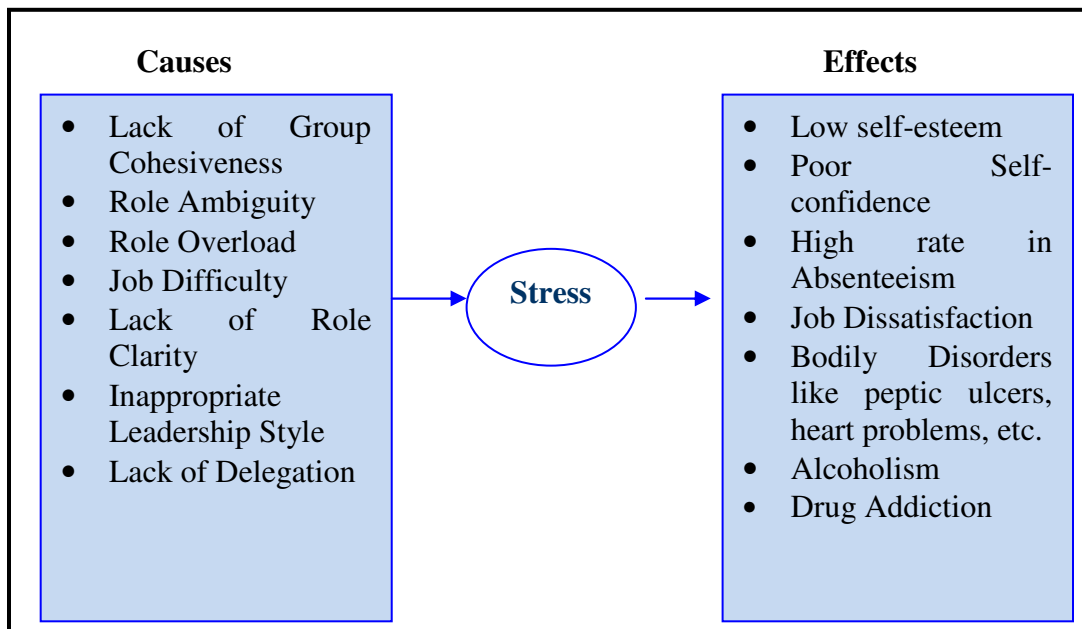
This hypothesis is tested against null hypothesis that the women executives are distributed equally in all the three categories of degree of stress scores. Since women are dominating in the middle categories (showing moderate stress), it can be concluded that women executives experience moderate level stress in the banks.

Development of Cause- Effect- Stress Model:

With the help of primary data and secondary data, the researcher has developed a '*Cause-Effect Stress Model*'.

This model is shown as under:

Chart 1: Cause-Effect Stress Model



The above model explicitly explains that the employees including women employees are at a disadvantage when experienced with prolonged stress. There are various reasons due to which women executives experience stressful situation. As per primary data, women executives in the banks have experienced stress due to lack of group cohesiveness, role ambiguity, role overload and job difficulty. Also, stressful environment is influenced by the authoritarian styles of top executives, lack of clear identity, traditional authoritarian ethos, lack of delegation and inexperience in new organizations (Sahni Ashok, 2006). All these factors definitely give way to stressful environment. The effects of such unmanageable

stress situation results in low self-esteem, increase in absenteeism, reduced job satisfaction and bodily disorders such as heart diseases, headaches, fever, etc.

Findings of the Study:

The researcher identified ten broad parameters for assessing the stress levels among women executives in the banks. The findings on the basis of the parameters are discussed as follows:

- 1) There is greater problem of group cohesiveness among women executives in private sector banks (mean=11.38), followed by public sector banks (mean=9.74) and then in foreign banks (mean=9.29). The researcher found out that there is a significant relationship between lack of group cohesiveness and the types of banks as P value is 0.037.
- 2) The role conflict among women employees in private sector banks is the greatest (mean = 11.88), greater in foreign banks (mean = 11.81), and great in public sector banks (mean = 11.74). It was found out that there is no significant relationship between role conflict and the types of banks as P value is 0.991.
- 3) The feeling of inequality is maximum among women executives in private sector banks (mean = 10.48), followed by public sector banks (mean = 9.90), and then foreign banks (mean = 9.76). Also, P value was found to be 0.560 and hence can be said that there is no significant relationship between feeling of inequality and the types of banks.
- 4) The role ambiguity is the most among women executives in private sector banks (mean = 11.58), followed by public sector banks (mean = 9.46), and then foreign banks (mean = 9.19). P value is 0.007 and hence has a significant relationship exists between role ambiguity and the types of banks.
- 5) The women executives experience the most role overload in public sector banks (mean = 14.15), more in private sector banks (mean = 14.02) and least

in foreign banks (mean = 11.33). P value is 0.000 and hence a very significant relationship exists between role overload and the types of banks.

- 6) There is a maximum problem of supervisory support among women executives in private sector banks (mean = 9.45) and minimum in foreign banks (mean = 7.48). P value is 0.011 and hence it can be stated that there is a significant relationship between lack of supervisory support and the types of banks.
- 7) The women executives face constraints of change the most in public sector banks (mean = 5.15), and the least in private sector banks (mean = 5.08). P value is 0.981 and so we can conclude that there is no significant relationship between constraints of change for women executives in the banks and the types of banks.
- 8) Women executives experience greater job difficulty in private sector banks (mean = 4.53), followed by public sector banks (mean = 3.97), and then foreign banks (mean = 3.48). There exists significant relationship between level of job difficulty for the women executives and the types of banks as P value is 0.070.
- 9) The job requirement-capability mismatch is mostly found in private sector banks (mean = 7.10), followed by foreign banks (mean = 6.24) and the least is found in public sector banks (mean = 5.69). The relationship between job requirement-capability mismatch for the women executives and the types of banks is significant as the P value is 0.031.
- 10) The women executives in the private sector banks face the maximum problem of role authority (mean = 6.33) and the minimum is in foreign banks (mean = 5.43). P value is 0.206 and hence there is no significant relationship between inadequacy of role authority to women executives and the types of banks.

- 11) The stress levels in the private sector banks is the greatest (mean = 91.80) followed by the public sector banks (mean = 84.03) and the least amount of stress in the foreign banks (mean = 79.10). Also, there is a very significant relationship between stress among women executives and the type of banks as P value is 0.00.
- 12) The level of stress is significantly moderate as $\chi^2 = 21.902$, $df = 3$, $P < 0.001$.

Conclusions of the Study:

- 1) The researcher concludes that there are various stressors among women executives in the banks, such as: poor working conditions, rotating work shifts, work overload, role ambiguity, lack of participation in decision-making, inappropriate leadership style, lack of social support, transfers, poor working relationships and technological changes in the organization.
- 2) Excessive stress may result in bodily disturbances like peptic ulcers, migraine headache, fever, etc. High level of stress may affect self-confidence, lower self-esteem, lack in concentration and reduce job satisfaction.
- 3) By testing the hypothesis, the researcher concludes that moderate level of stress is experienced by the women executives due to factors like lack of group cohesiveness, role ambiguity, role overload, lack of supervisory support, job difficulty and job requirement- capability mismatch.
- 4) From the analysis of primary data, the researcher concluded that the problems of group cohesiveness, role ambiguity, level of job difficulty and job requirement- capability mismatch is greatest in private sector banks and least in foreign banks.
- 5) The organizational stressors such as role conflict, feeling of inequality and inadequacy of role authority were found to be insignificant with respect to the public sector banks, the private sector banks and the foreign banks.

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