

Psychological Well-Being and Coping Strategies Among Indian Private Bank Employees: A Thematic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The burnout level of bank employees is not a recently emerging phenomena rather a long-standing debatable concern. The cases of poor mental health, compromised work-life balance and regular pressure of achieving highest targets are leading to diminished psychological well-being. The objective of present study was to understand the factors associated with psychological well-being and coping strategies of Indian Bank Employees. The elaborated interviews from 8 bank employees were collected based on a semi structured questionnaire. These transcriptions were coded, themes and sub-themes were analysed after through understanding. The frequency analysis was done using an online software. The result findings reveal a total of 5 themes and 10 sub-themes, which give a broader picture of factors contributing to psychological well-being and coping strategies of Indian Bank Employees. The findings are suggestive of an urgent need to work towards enhancing overall well-being and help them get equipped with healthy coping strategies.

Introduction:

Long workdays, low pay, a lack of professional independence, organizational values, role conflict, and a lack of managerial support are some of the aspects that might cause stress in the banking sector. Examining the various factors that influence an individual's health and well-being was the aim of the study. According to Singh and Agarwal (2024), he recommended that management implement stress management programs to reduce tension at banks.

To avoid economic crises, the Indian banking sector is essential. Stress, a dynamic state with significant and unclear repercussions, is becoming a bigger issue in businesses and can have a detrimental effect on performance. Since stress has an impact on feelings, mental processes, and physical health, it is a crucial subject for organizational behavior research. While a lack of stress might result in mortality, occupational stress is not necessarily bad or detrimental. Therefore, averting economic disasters and enhancing job performance need an understanding of stress (Kishori, B., & Vinothini, B., 2016).

The "workaholic" condition is a result of the blurring of the lines between work and personal life brought about by the rise of digital technologies. Tension, a loss of personal time, and increased stress levels can result from this continual demand to be available. Bank employees may experience burnout, which can negatively impact their mental and physical well-being, if their personal and professional lives are not kept apart. Burnout and other health issues may arise from the continual blending of work and personal life.

Methods: A semi structured interview was designed and verified by experts who were not part of this study. The suggested changes were incorporated and the semi structured interview was finalized. A sample of 16 Indian Bank Employees were taken through purposive sampling. The consent form was circulated and 10 participants gave consent to be the part of study. After which the data was collected between 10.10.2024 to 28.10.2024 and transcribed, followed by thematic analysis, using a free software available online.

Results:

Table 1: Showing themes, codes, description of codes and frequency analysis.

Themes	Code	Description	Cases	% Cases
Effects of Work Pressure	Burnout	Long-term, excessive stress, emotional weariness, affecting work and other areas of life	4	40.0%
	Emotional Exhaustion	The sensation of being emotionally spent and exhausted is known as emotional fatigue	6	60.0%
	Poor Work Life Balance	Not able to maintain an equilibrium between personal and work area	7	70.0%
	Turnover	People leaving an organization due to lack of satisfaction from norms or salary etc.	4	40.0%
Nature of Job Role	Stress and High Demand	Excessive expectations arising from job obligations which are unrealistic	7	70.0%
	Uncertainty	Not knowing about the future task or job role	4	40.0%
Coping Strategies	Distraction	Trying to engage in activities which temporarily helps in diverting mind from stress	7	70.0%
	Social Support	Sharing emotions and thoughts with friends and family	8	80.0%
	Psychological Techniques	Practicing meditation, yoga or deep breathing exercising	4	40.0%
	Altruism	Having selfless compassion for other people.	1	10.0%
Strategies for Improvement	Flexibility	Reducing fixed hours system and creating job role flexibility	4	40.0%
Causes of Work Pressure	Toxicity	Experiencing non-supportive attitude from colleagues or in workplace environment	1	10.0%

Theme 1: Effects of Work Pressure

Workers who were under stress reported missing work frequently due to sickness. Workers who have more work experience and higher levels of emotional commitment are better able to effectively transform their stress into increased sales performance. Mental health conditions, such as exhaustion, burnout, and other psychiatric illnesses, are important factors that contribute to prolonged absences from work (Kaur & Singh, 2023). Job burnout is linked to employee dissatisfaction, absenteeism, reduced productivity, and increased staff turnover. Thus, stress and job burnout are important problems for bank employees. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that among bank workers, stress and burnout are linked to chronic diseases. Bank

workers are unable to relax because of the variety of work, bias, partiality, delegation, and competing duties they must do (Vinod and Ambatipudi, 2024).

Excerpts (Burnout)

“I’ve been doing alright health wise, but the emotional ups and downs from work pressure can be challenging.”

“To deal with targets. Unrealistic targets. Achieving them is such a pain”

“There’s a lot of pressure to make accurate and timely recommendations, and sometimes the data isn’t clear-cut. These periods require intense focus and can be mentally draining”

Excerpts (Emotional Exhaustion)

“While my physical health has been relatively stable, I’ve noticed that the emotional and psychological impact of work pressure has become more pronounced. The constant flux of emotions—ranging from stress during high-demand periods to relief when tasks are completed—can sometimes feel overwhelming”

“Work life is the only I have now. It is very exhaustive. Emotionally and mentally draining”

“the long hours make it hard to maintain a consistent routine. Emotionally, I’m generally balanced, but managing multiple large accounts simultaneously can create moments of stress”

Excerpts (Poor Work Life Balance)

“Maintaining a work-life balance can be difficult at times, especially during peak banking hours or end-of-quarter targets”

“work-life balance can be difficult to achieve. The job often demands long hours, especially when deadlines are tight or when a major deal is closing. It’s important to be disciplined about taking breaks and setting boundaries when possible, but the nature of the job makes it tough.”

Excerpts (Turnover)

“I wouldn’t rule out the possibility of moving into a more strategic role within banking, where I could focus on developing new products or overseeing larger projects”

“I’ve thought about switching to a role in private equity or venture capital”

“Honestly I would like to change my job.”

Theme 2: Nature of Job Role

Job burnout is linked to employee dissatisfaction, absenteeism, reduced productivity, and increased staff turnover. Thus, stress and job burnout are important problems for bank employees. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that among bank workers, stress and burnout are linked to chronic diseases. Bank workers are unable to relax because of the variety of work, bias, partiality, delegation, and competing duties they must do (Kaplan, 1993).

Excerpts (Stress and High Demand)

“These are definitely the moments when the job feels most intense and stressful, as the stakes are high and the room for error is minimal.”

“It’s not for everyone, and it requires resilience and the ability to handle high levels of stress. But if you can navigate the pressure, the rewards—both personal and career-related—are certainly worth it.”

Excerpts (Uncertainty)

“The unpredictability during these times adds immense pressure, as it becomes increasingly difficult to make accurate forecasts or provide the reassurances clients seek”

“..after joining branches we are forced to follow unethical practices and that's becoming a regular culture in bank. Along with it, work is increasing in the bank day by day. But staff in not available in that proportion so it's very tiring”

Theme 3: Coping Strategy

Bank workers use a variety of coping strategies to deal with stress, according to the study. These strategies include time management, physical relaxation, entertainment, optimism, getting enough sleep, temporary relaxation, distraction, and decentralization. The two sectors'

coping strategies, however, differ greatly from one another. Employees in the private sector are more interested in time management, whereas those in the public sector favour enough sleep, entertainment, and physical relaxation (Priya, 2017).

Excerpts (Distraction)

“Taking short breaks and stepping away from my desk helps me manage stress”

“When stress starts to build up, I find that stepping away for a short walk or listening to music helps clear my mind”

Excerpts (Social Support)

“When I’m feeling particularly stressed or anxious, talking it out with a colleague who understands the demands of the job helps a lot”

“Talking with colleagues who are in the same boat also provides reassurance, as we share similar challenges. I also remind myself of the bigger picture every deal is a learning experience, and setbacks are part of the job”

Excerpts (Psychological Techniques)

“To manage stress and improve my health, I engage in physical activities like jogging and yoga. I also prioritize mental wellness through meditation and mindfulness practices”

“I also practice mindfulness exercises, such as meditation, to stay mentally sharp and manage stress better.”

“Even just a few moments of mindfulness can make a significant difference in how I approach the rest of my day”

Excerpts (Altruism)

“We have the opportunity to help those who are poor and needy by guiding them through the various schemes and programs provided by the government. These schemes can make a real difference in their lives, offering them support and resources that they may not otherwise have access to.”

Theme 4: Strategies for Improvement

When it comes to adaptability, proper ability, adjustability, hedging, and shock tolerance, the commercial banking industry, which is on the verge of accomplishing its objectives, should adapt its tactics to the rapidly changing and extremely complicated external environment. As a result, these institutions require strategic adaptability to formulate their plans in dynamic settings. The fundamental rule in banking is that work systems must change, and innovations and technologies are becoming more common and the fastest way to conduct banking work in terms of cost, quality, speed of accomplishment and advantage gaining potential (Mohsin et al., 2022).

Excerpts (Flexibility)

“I would like to have more flexibility in my schedule, especially during non-peak periods. Having more control over my work hours would help me maintain better balance. I’d also appreciate more opportunities to work on socially responsible investments, which is an area I find increasingly important”

“I would like more flexibility in terms of working hours. Corporate banking often requires long hours and quick turnarounds, so more flexibility would help in maintaining a better balance between professional and personal life”

Theme 5 (Causes of Work Pressure)

They were also most affected by the work variety, favouritism, delegation and conflicting task variables. The study also showed that, when those issues reached a high level, they tended to

reduce the time employees had for themselves (Giorgi, G., Arcangeli, G. & Perminiene, M., 2017).

Excerpts (Toxicity)

“And when we don't then we receive a good amount of abuse from our controllers everyday. Everyday because we cannot achieve all the targets. There are so many targets from so many people that it becomes next to impossible to complete it. So, we are scolded everyday. They make us feel we are not worth it.”

“Problem in short is mental torture for me by our controllers”

Discussion:

The aim of the present study was to understand the factors associated with psychological well-being and coping strategies of Indian Bank Employees. The interviews of eight Indian bank employees working in private sector was recorded and transcribed followed by the thematic analysis using an online free version software to calculate the frequency of each sub-theme. The result findings revealed that poor work life balance and work stress due to high demand had highest frequency of 70% (7), followed by emotional exhaustion 60% (6), burnout 40% (4), turnover 40% (4) and toxicity 10% (1). The coping strategies used by most of the participants was depending upon the social support by colleagues and family (80%), distraction (70%), practicing psychological techniques (40%). Most participants were found to be stressed due to nature of job such the uncertainty (40%) and toxicity (10%). The above findings give an overview of the multitasking and uncertain nature of bank employees leading to burnout (40%), emotional exhaustion (60%), poor work life balance (70%), turnover and emerging need for enhanced flexibility in terms of working hours (40%). The Indian banking field is a highly target based job but the increased competitive environment, work place toxicity and complexities about the job role leaves an individual in a state of dilemma and make them question about their professional identity. The findings were suggestive of a need to work on increasing the flexibility and work on re-defining the job roles within banking sector, specifically for private sector bank employees.

Conclusion: The above study gives a direction to work towards the mental health and well-being of Indian private bank employees to extend support in developing flexible and certain job roles and reduce work place stress arising due to nature of job.

Future Implications: The policies of private sector banks must promote flexibility and fixed boundaries of job role, review mental health status of employees once in a while and provide psychological support as and when required.

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