

Stress Levels Among Employees: A Study of Selected Banks in Kerala

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Area/Section: Business Management.

Type of the Paper: Empirical Study.

Number of Peer Reviews: Two.

Type of Review: Peer Reviewed as per [C|O|P|E](#) guidance.

Indexed in: OpenAIRE.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13853470>

Google Scholar Citation: [PIJMESS](#)

How to Cite this Paper:

Iype, R. & Aithal, P. S. (2024). Stress Levels Among Employees: A Study of Selected Banks in Kerala. *Poornaprajna International Journal of Management, Education & Social Science (PIJMESS)*, 1(1), 236-250. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13853470>

Poornaprajna International Journal of Management, Education & Social Science (PIJMESS)

A Refereed International Journal of Poornaprajna Publication, India.

Received on: 06/08/2024

Published on: 30/09/2024

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *The purpose of this study is to examine and compare the stress levels experienced by employees in public versus private sector banks in Kerala. It aims to identify the key factors contributing to stress in both sectors and evaluate the impact of these factors on employees' stress levels.*

Methodology: *The study employs a comparative research design and samples employees from five selected banks, utilizing structured questionnaires for data collection. The analysis incorporates both descriptive and inferential statistical methods, including Chi-square tests, T-tests, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), to assess stress levels and identify significant stressors.*

Results/Analysis: *The findings indicate that employees in both public and private sector banks experience moderate stress, with an average stress level of 48.33%. Major stressors identified include workload, bureaucratic processes, and competitive targets. The analysis reveals that current stress levels exceed expectations, highlighting the need for effective stress management strategies.*

Originality/Value: *This research offers valuable insights by providing a comparative perspective on stress levels in different banking sectors and exploring the impact of organizational culture and support systems. The study contributes to the development of tailored stress management interventions for the banking sector.*

Type of Paper: *Empirical Research Paper.*

Keywords: Stress levels, Banking sector, Public banks, Private banks, Employee well-being, Stress management, Kerala.

1. INTRODUCTION :

The banking sector, a pivotal component of any economy, is characterized by its dynamic and high-pressure environment. Employees within this sector often grapple with significant stress arising from demanding work conditions, tight deadlines, and the ongoing responsibility of meeting stringent financial targets (Goyal & Joshi, 2012) [1]. This persistent pressure has the potential to adversely affect both mental and physical health, leading to diminished productivity and heightened job dissatisfaction (Leka et al., 2004). In regions like Kerala, where the banking sector faces intensifying competition, the challenge of effectively managing employee stress has become increasingly critical. Banks must navigate the delicate balance between enhancing employee well-being and achieving business objectives (Vyas & Shrivastava, 2017) [2].

In Kerala, the stress experiences of employees vary markedly between public and private sector banks, despite both operating within the same financial landscape. Public sector banks, with their traditional management structures and relatively stable job security, often expose employees to stressors such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, heavy workloads, and constrained career advancement opportunities (Rao & Kumar, 2017) [3]. Conversely, private sector banks, known for their performance-oriented culture, present a different set of challenges. Employees in these institutions frequently face higher stress levels due to competitive sales targets, rigorous performance reviews, and the rapid pace of technological change and shifting customer expectations (Chandrasekar, 2011) [4]. These divergent organizational cultures significantly influence the stress levels experienced by employees in each sector.

Unchecked workplace stress can lead to a range of detrimental outcomes, not only for employees but also for organizational performance. Chronic stress can contribute to burnout, reduced job performance, and increased turnover rates, all of which can compromise the operational efficiency of banks (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001) [5]. Therefore, it is imperative to develop and implement effective stress management strategies to foster a supportive work environment where employees can excel. These elements are crucial for building resilience among employees, enabling them to manage stress more effectively while maintaining productivity.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

Stress in the banking sector has garnered significant attention due to its impact on employee well-being and organizational performance. As financial institutions evolve and face increasing demands, understanding the nature and implications of stress becomes crucial. This review explores various studies that investigate stress among bank employees, highlighting factors such as managerial decision-making, work conditions, personal and family issues, and coping strategies. By examining literature, the review aims to synthesize findings on how stress manifests across different banking sectors and the effectiveness of various stress management techniques. Through this comprehensive overview, we aim to provide insights into the prevalent stressors in banking environments and potential strategies for mitigating their adverse effects.

Viswanathan A. (2002) [6] found high stress among private bank employees. More stress was due to managerial decision-making policies and low stress on the job contents and role conflict. Also found that job satisfaction is uninfluenced by job stressors. A significant difference was seen in coping strategies between different sectors of the respondents; 'passive attempts' and 'relief strategies' were the strategies adopted by most of the respondents. However, homogeneity was seen within the sector. Further, no relationship was observed between stressors and coping strategies. He argued that a certain amount of stress is good and positive and hence it should be taken to the optimum level by giving special attention to stressors, managerial decision policies, and job contents.

Gianfranco Domenighetti et al. (2004) [7] measured the prevalence of 18 work condition factors that might have an influence on the levels of stress and insecurity among bank employees. The comparative analysis carried out on a representative sample of employees in other economic sectors (N=859) revealed that employees in the banking sector showed higher levels of stress and insecurity. The study also revealed that there exist poor health indicators in banking sector, compared to other sectors.

S. Suresh (2006) [8] explored the causes of stress with regard to personal, family and official factors. The study found that there is no significant gender difference with regard to stress. It is seen that their family problems had significantly contributed to stress. The author could establish a close relationship between age of the respondents and stress; consequently the middle aged people had more stress. Five major causes of stress were identified from the study namely family problems, psychological, official, personal and social factors. Finally, three stress management practices namely a) Employee Assistance Programmes b) Stress Management Training and c) Stress reduction were suggested.

Santosh V. Savdekar (2011) [9] studied the job satisfaction, stress and anxiety of the nationalized and co-operative bank employees of the Aurangabad region. The study found that the employees of nationalised banks had more job satisfaction and hence they had low level of stress. However, no gender difference was found in terms of stress. Coming to the element of anxiety, employees of the co-operative bank had more anxiety as compared to employees of the nationalized bank. In this case also, no gender difference was found. The researcher made it clear that there was a strong but negative association between job satisfaction and stress, that is, high job satisfaction reduced stress. However, the study is silent about why there was a difference in job satisfaction and why the level of anxiety was different between the respondents.

M. Sadiya Sarvath (2016) [10] made a comparative study of occupational stress among sector bank employees. The researcher opined that stress can be easily avoided or managed through proper management techniques like time management, workflow management etc. The study revealed that employees of both the banking sectors experienced medium level of occupational stress and varied based on the differences in their demographic variables. Job stress resulted in both positive and negative effects on individuals and banks. Among the employees of public sector and private sector banks, the factors namely "Work Overload" and "Time Mismanagement" were found to be the most important causes which caused stress. The study also highlighted the circumstances which made the job

stressful and stated that 'high responsibility' was found to be the most significant factor among both kinds of employees.

Deepanshi and Mini Amit Arrawatia (2018) [11] examined the organizational role stress and the role of demographic variable on the stress level of sector bank employees. It was found that both sector employees experienced moderate level of stress. However, compared to public sector bank employees, private sector bank employees experienced more stress. The impact of demographic factors on stress level revealed that employee's age, education and qualification and work experience had no significant influence in total role stress.

Suresh and M. Hema Nalini (2018) [12] described the causes and coping strategies for stress among bank employees in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu. According to them, since banking industry is the most service-oriented industry, they have to be highly responsive and adoptive to the exact demands of the customers so as to survive in the industry. The best remedial action to control stress had been categorized by the researcher; time management, developing sense of humour, dieting, exercising, drinking more water, pet therapy, meditation, yoga, sound sleep, etc were the most important among them. Though the problem of stress could not be completely eradicated, its negative impact could be minimized or at least reduced.

Viswanathan, A. (2002) [13] found that private bank employees experienced significant stress primarily due to managerial decision-making policies, while job content and role conflict contributed less to stress levels. Interestingly, job satisfaction was reported to be largely unaffected by stressors. The study indicated that while employees adopted passive and relief strategies, these were not significantly different across banking sectors. Viswanathan suggested that a certain level of stress could be beneficial, emphasizing the need for targeted attention to stressors and managerial practices to optimize stress levels.

Gianfranco Domenighetti et al. (2004) [14] conducted a comparative analysis revealing that bank employees reported higher levels of stress and insecurity compared to employees in other sectors. The study assessed 18 work condition factors, indicating poor health indicators among banking staff, which underscores the need for improved work environments to mitigate stress.

S. Suresh (2006) [15] identified personal, family, and official factors as key contributors to stress among bank employees. The study highlighted that family issues significantly influenced stress levels, with no significant gender differences noted. Notably, a strong relationship was established between the age of respondents and stress levels, indicating that middle-aged employees experienced the highest stress. Suresh recommended employee assistance programs and stress management training as effective interventions.

Santosh V. Savdekar (2011) [16] focused on the relationship between job satisfaction, stress, and anxiety among nationalized and cooperative bank employees. The findings suggested that employees of nationalized banks enjoyed higher job satisfaction and lower stress levels. While no gender differences in stress were identified, the study found a strong negative correlation between job satisfaction and stress levels. However, it did not explore the reasons behind differing job satisfaction across bank types.

M. Sadiya Sarvath (2016) [17] conducted a comparative study on occupational stress in sector bank employees, indicating that stress could be effectively managed through time and workflow management. The study reported medium levels of occupational stress across both public and private sector employees, with work overload and time mismanagement identified as significant stressors.

Deepanshi and Mini Amit Arrawatia (2018) [18] analyzed the impact of demographic variables on organizational role stress among sector bank employees. They found that private sector employees experienced higher levels of stress compared to their public sector counterparts, though demographic factors such as age, education, and experience did not significantly affect total role stress.

Suresh and M. Hema Nalini (2018) [19] explored causes and coping strategies for stress among bank employees in Coimbatore. The study emphasized the service-oriented nature of banking, which demands high responsiveness to customer needs. Suggested coping strategies included time management, humour, exercise, and mindfulness practices, indicating that while stress cannot be completely eradicated, its negative impact can be minimized.

Krishnan, R. (2020) [20] examined the correlation between workplace culture and stress levels among banking employees in Kerala, identifying a strong link between supportive management practices and

lower stress levels. The study suggested that enhancing workplace culture could significantly alleviate stress among employees, promoting better mental health and job performance.

Table 1: Review of Literature - Stress Management in Banking

S. No	Area	Focus/Outcome	Reference
1.	Stress Among Bank Employees	High stress due to managerial policies; job satisfaction uninfluenced by stressors; coping strategies varied by sector.	Viswanathan A. (2002). [6]
2.	Work Condition Factors	Higher stress and insecurity in the banking sector; poor health indicators compared to other sectors.	Gianfranco Domenighetti et al. (2004). [7]
3.	Causes of Stress	Family problems and age-related stress; no significant gender difference; suggested stress management practices.	S. Suresh (2006). [8]
4.	Job Satisfaction and Anxiety	Nationalized bank employees had more job satisfaction and less stress; co-operative bank employees had more anxiety.	Santosh V. Savdekar (2011). [9]
5.	Occupational Stress Comparison	Medium level of stress in both sectors; significant factors: work overload and time mismanagement; high responsibility noted.	M. Sadiya Sarvath (2016). [10]
6.	Organizational Role Stress	Moderate stress in both sectors; private sector employees experienced more stress; demographic factors had no significant impact.	Deepanshi and Mini Amit Arrawatia (2018). [11]
7.	Causes and Coping Strategies	Stress can be managed with various strategies; important practices include time management, humor, diet, and exercise.	Suresh and M. Hema Nalini (2018). [12]
8.	Stress in the Banking Sector	Comparative study of stress levels across different banking sectors.	Viswanathan, A. (2002). [13]
9.	Occupational Stress in Banking	Analysis of stress factors and their impact on bank employees.	Domenighetti, G., et al. (2004). [14]
10.	Stress Factors Among Bank Employees	Study on various factors contributing to stress in banking professionals.	Suresh, S. (2006). [15]
11.	Job Satisfaction and Stress in Banking	Examination of the relationship between job satisfaction and stress levels.	Savdekar, S. V. (2011) [16]
12.	Comparative Analysis of Occupational Stress	Study comparing stress levels between public and private sector banks.	Sarvath, M. S. (2016). [17]
13.	Demographic Factors and Stress	Investigation of how demographic variables influence stress in banking.	Arrawatia, D. & Amit, M. (2018). [18]
14.	Coping Strategies for Bank Employees	Empirical study on stress management techniques in the banking sector.	Suresh, S. & Hema Nalini, M. (2018). [19]
15.	Workplace Culture and Stress	Strong link between supportive management practices and lower stress levels; enhancing workplace culture could alleviate stress.	Krishnan, R. (2020). [20]

The review of existing literature reveals that employees in both public and private sector banks in Kerala experience significant levels of stress due to various factors, including high workloads, stringent performance targets, and the pressure to meet organizational goals. In public sector banks, which are characterized by traditional management structures and job security, stress often arises from bureaucratic processes, limited career advancement opportunities, and operational inefficiencies. In contrast, employees in private sector banks face higher stress levels due to a performance-driven culture,

competitive targets, rapid technological changes, and demanding customer expectations. Despite the distinct stressors in each sector, there is a common trend of declining employee well-being, which negatively impacts job satisfaction, productivity, and overall organizational efficiency. Current stress management practices are often reactive rather than proactive, addressing symptoms rather than underlying causes of stress.

The desired status involves creating a more balanced work environment in both public and private sector banks in Kerala, where employee well-being is prioritized alongside business objectives. This entails implementing comprehensive and proactive stress management strategies tailored to the unique challenges of each sector. In public sector banks, there is a need to streamline bureaucratic processes, clarify career development paths, and foster a more supportive management structure. For private sector banks, strategies should focus on managing competitive pressures, enhancing job security, and supporting employees through technological transitions. The ultimate goal is to reduce chronic stress levels, improve job satisfaction, and enhance overall productivity and organizational effectiveness. Banks should strive to cultivate a culture of resilience, equipping employees with the tools and support needed to manage stress effectively and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Although existing studies have thoroughly documented stress factors within the banking sector, there is a noticeable research gap regarding the effectiveness of current stress management interventions specific to the Kerala region. Additionally, there is limited comparative analysis of the stress experiences of employees in public versus private sector banks within this context. Few studies have explored the long-term impacts of these stressors on employee turnover, mental health, and organizational outcomes in Kerala's banking industry. Furthermore, there is a lack of research focused on developing and implementing tailored stress management programs that address the unique challenges faced by employees in both types of banks. This research gap underscores the need for empirical studies that identify specific stressors in each sector and evaluate the effectiveness of targeted interventions aimed at improving employee well-being and organizational performance.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER :

The primary objectives of this research are:

(1) To Conduct a Comprehensive Review of Literature on Stress in the Banking Sector:

- Review studies on stressors such as workload, job demands, organizational culture, and support systems. Summarize findings on the role of leadership and peer support in stress management, and highlight gaps in the current literature.

(2) To Develop a Conceptual Model of Stress in Banking Sector Employees:

- Define key variables influencing stress, such as workload, bureaucratic processes, competitive targets, leadership styles, and peer support. Illustrate the hypothesized relationships between these variables and employee stress levels, establishing a framework for empirical testing.

(3) To Empirically Test the Conceptual Model Using Structured Methodologies:

- Design and administer structured questionnaires to collect data from employees in selected banks. Apply statistical techniques such as Chi-square tests, T-tests, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the hypotheses derived from the conceptual model. Assess the validity and reliability of the model based on the collected data.

(4) To Analyze the Model Using the ABCD Analysis Framework:

- Assess the Advantages, Benefits, Constraints, and Disadvantages of different stress management practices within the banking sector. Analyze how well leadership and peer support contribute to managing stress and their overall impact on employee well-being.

4. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH :

This study utilizes a comprehensive methodology to assess stress levels among employees in selected banks in Kerala, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches for a thorough analysis of stress factors and their management. The methodology is outlined as follows:

(1) Literature Review: The study begins with an extensive review of existing literature to establish a theoretical foundation. By synthesizing insights from diverse sources, the review provides a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge, identifies research gaps, and formulates the theoretical framework for the study.

(2) **Data Collection:** Data is collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 464 employees across five banks in Kerala. The sample includes both public sector banks (State Bank of India and Canara Bank) and private sector banks (Federal Bank, South Indian Bank, and HDFC Bank). The questionnaire is designed to capture employees' perceptions of stress, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree.'

(3) **Data Analysis:** The analysis of collected data involves both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics summarize the data, including mean scores and standard deviations. Inferential statistics, such as Chi-square tests, T-tests, Z-tests, and one-way ANOVA, examine relationships between variables and test hypotheses. Factor analysis, including Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), is utilized to validate measurement models. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) assesses the impact on stress management.

(4) **Comparative and Evaluative Frameworks:** The study incorporates comparative and evaluative frameworks to interpret the findings. This involves comparing stress levels and contributing factors across public and private sector banks and evaluating the results in the context of established theories and frameworks. The aim is to understand how different organizational contexts influence stress and to provide insights into effective stress management practices.

By integrating these methodologies, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of stress levels among bank employees in Kerala. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights into managing stress, thereby enhancing employee well-being and organizational performance.

5. RESEARCH MODEL :

Independent Variables:

(1) **Workload:** The amount and complexity of tasks assigned to employees. High workloads can increase stress levels as employees may feel overwhelmed by the volume and difficulty of their tasks.

(2) **Bureaucratic Processes:** The formal procedures and administrative rules within the organization. Complex or inefficient bureaucratic processes can contribute to stress by creating obstacles and frustrations in employees' daily activities.

(3) **Competitive Targets:** Performance goals and targets set by the organization that employees are expected to meet. Pressure to achieve these targets can lead to increased stress levels.

(4) **Leadership Styles:** The approaches and behaviours of leaders in managing their teams. Supportive leadership can reduce stress, whereas authoritarian or unsupportive leadership styles can exacerbate it.

(5) **Peer Support:** The level of support and camaraderie among colleagues. Strong peer support can mitigate stress, while a lack of support can increase feelings of isolation and stress.

Dependent Variable:

(1) **Stress Level (Employee Stress):** The overall level of stress experienced by employees, which is influenced by the independent variables mentioned above. This variable captures how the combination of workload, bureaucratic processes, competitive targets, leadership styles, and peer support affects employee stress.

Factors Affecting the Research Model:

(1) **Work Environment:** The physical and social conditions in which employees work. A positive work environment can reduce stress, while a negative or hostile environment can increase it.

(2) **Organizational Culture:** The shared values, beliefs, and practices within the organization. A supportive culture can help manage stress, while a toxic culture can contribute to higher stress levels.

(3) **Individual Differences:** Personal characteristics and coping mechanisms of employees, such as resilience and stress tolerance, which can influence how they perceive and manage stress.

(4) **Job Satisfaction:** The degree to which employees feel satisfied with their job. Low job satisfaction can be both a consequence and a cause of high stress levels.

(5) **Work-Life Balance:** The ability of employees to balance their work responsibilities with their personal life. Poor work-life balance can lead to higher stress levels.

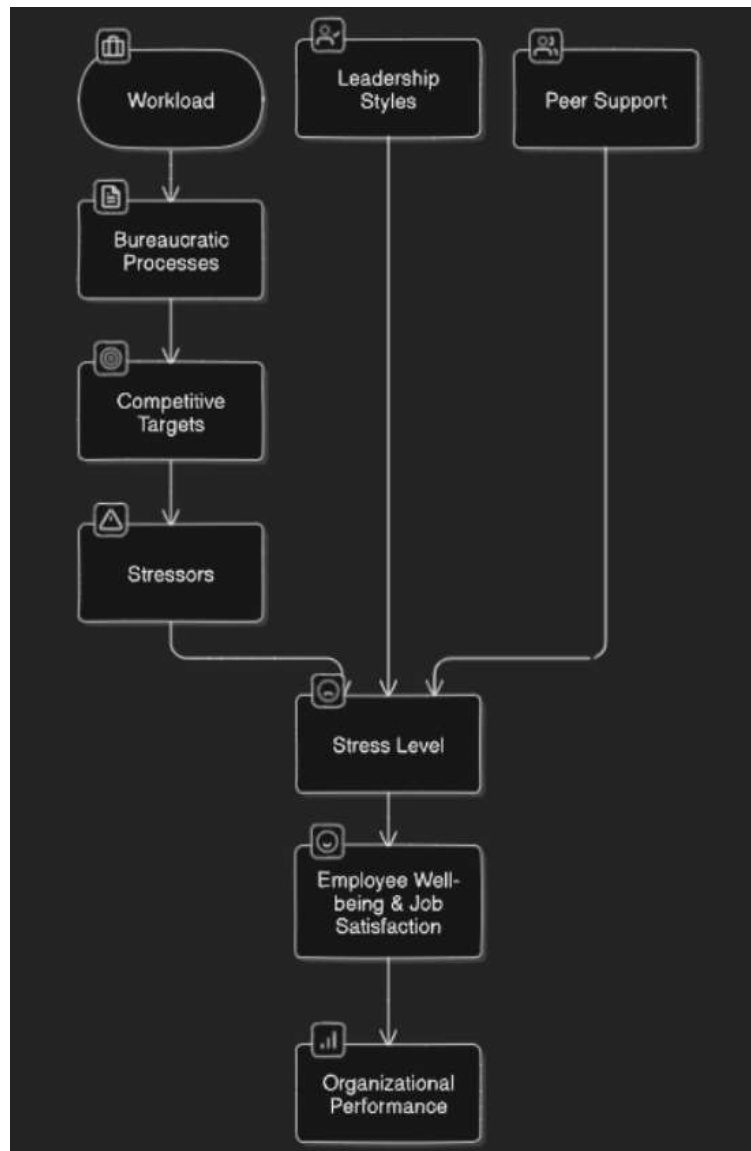


Fig. 1: Conceptual Model of Employee Stress and Organizational Performance

The block diagram illustrates the relationships between various factors contributing to stress among banking sector employees and their subsequent effects on employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational performance. Here is a detailed explanation of each component and its interactions:

(1) Workload:

- **Description:** Represents the volume and complexity of tasks assigned to employees. Heavy or excessive workloads can be a primary source of stress.
- **Impact:** Increased workload often leads to higher stress levels as employees struggle to manage their responsibilities effectively.

(2) Bureaucratic Processes:

- **Description:** Refers to the formal procedures and administrative requirements within the organization. Inefficient or overly complex bureaucratic processes can contribute to stress.
- **Impact:** Complicated bureaucratic processes can create obstacles and frustrations, exacerbating stress levels among employees.

(3) Competitive Targets:

- **Description:** Includes performance goals and targets set by the organization that employees are expected to achieve. High-pressure targets can contribute to stress.
- **Impact:** Pressure to meet competitive targets can result in increased stress, particularly if targets are perceived as unrealistic or excessively demanding.

(4) Stressors:

- **Description:** Represents the cumulative effect of workload, bureaucratic processes, and competitive targets. These combined stressors influence overall employee stress levels.
- **Impact:** The aggregate impact of various stressors leads to higher stress levels, which is the central dependent variable in the model.

(5) Leadership Styles:

- **Description:** The approach and behavior of leaders in managing their teams. Leadership styles can either mitigate or exacerbate stress.
- **Impact:** Supportive leadership can reduce stress by providing guidance and support, while authoritarian or unsupportive leadership can increase stress levels.

(6) Peer Support:

- **Description:** The level of support and camaraderie among colleagues. Strong peer support can buffer against stress.
- **Impact:** High levels of peer support can help employees manage stress better, whereas lack of support can increase feelings of isolation and stress.

(7) Stress Level:

- **Description:** The central dependent variable representing the overall level of stress experienced by employees. This is influenced by the stressors, leadership styles, and peer support.
- **Impact:** Higher stress levels negatively affect employee well-being and job satisfaction. Conversely, effective stress management can reduce stress levels.

(8) Employee Well-being & Job Satisfaction:

- **Description:** Reflects the impact of stress levels on employees' overall health, happiness, and job satisfaction.
- **Impact:** High stress levels typically lead to lower employee well-being and job satisfaction, while lower stress levels generally improve these aspects.

(9) Organizational Performance:

- **Description:** Represents the overall effectiveness and productivity of the organization. It is influenced by employee well-being and job satisfaction.
- **Impact:** Improved employee well-being and job satisfaction enhance organizational performance, leading to better productivity and effectiveness. Conversely, poor well-being and low job satisfaction can hinder organizational performance.

Workload, Bureaucratic Processes, and Competitive Targets feed into the *Stressors* block, indicating that these factors collectively contribute to overall stress levels. *Stressors* influence the *Stress Level*, representing how the combined impact of these stress factors affects employees' stress. *Leadership Styles* and *Peer Support* both interact with *Stress Level*, indicating that leadership and support systems can either mitigate or exacerbate stress. The *Stress Level* directly affects *Employee Well-being & Job Satisfaction*, showing that higher stress leads to lower well-being and satisfaction, while lower stress contributes to better outcomes in these areas. Finally, *Employee Well-being & Job Satisfaction* impact *Organizational Performance*, reflecting that healthier, more satisfied employees contribute to better organizational outcomes.

6. HYPOTHESES :

H0: There is no significant difference in the level of stress among employees in the selected banks

H1: There is a significant difference in the level of stress among employees in the selected banks

7. INSTRUMENTATION :

To gather data for this study, a questionnaire was administered to employees of five banks, encompassing public, private, and new-generation banks. The selected banks included State Bank of India, Canara Bank, Federal Bank, South Indian Bank, and HDFC Bank. State Bank of India and Canara Bank represent the public sector, while Federal Bank, South Indian Bank, and HDFC Bank are from the private and new-generation sectors.

The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale with the options: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. This scale was designed to assess the factors influencing stress management among the employees.

8. SAMPLE SIZE :

The power analysis for this study on stress management in the banking sector of Kerala determined that a sample size of 464 or more is adequate. This sample size ensures that the study possesses sufficient statistical power to detect meaningful differences and relationships within the data. By achieving this sample size, the research aims to provide robust and reliable insights into the impact of stress management among bank employees. This approach will enhance the validity and generalizability of the findings across the banking sector in Kerala.

9. TOOLS USED FOR DATA ANALYSIS :

The collected data are processed and analyzed using a range of statistical and mathematical techniques. IBM SPSS 20.0 software was employed for data analysis, while models were evaluated using AMOS software. The techniques applied include mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, percentages, indices, Chi-square test of independence, T-test, Z-test, one-way ANOVA with post hoc tests, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

10. ANALYSIS :

Objective

To measure the level of stress among the employees in selected banks:

To find the level of level of stress among the employees in selected banks, the respondents are asked questions under various heads on five-point Likert scale. The responses are scored as 1 for 'Strongly disagree', 2 for 'Disagree', 3 for 'Neutral', 4 for 'Agree' and 5 for 'Strongly agree'.

The total score of the 24 questions for all 482 respondents is found out, based on which we calculate the mean % score of level of stress among the employees in selected banks
$$MPS = \frac{MeanScore \times 100}{Maximumpossiblescore}$$

This score is classified into one of the four groups as poor or low if the mean % score is less than 35%, average if the mean % score is between 35 to 50 per cent, good or medium if the mean % score lies in the interval 50 to 75% and excellent or high if the mean % score is above 75%. A one sample Z test is carried out to test the significance. The following table gives the Mean, SD, Mean % Score and Z value of the variable considered. (Loyd, B. H., & R. R. Abidin. R. R. (1985)) [21]

Table 2: Mean, Standard deviation and z value for level of stress among the employees in selected banks

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean % score	CV	z	p value
Stress level	482	58.00	11.02	48.33	18.99	31.889	<0.001

The mean percentage score of level of stress among the employees in selected banks is 48.33% which indicate that level of stress is average. The CV indicates that this score is stable as the value is less than 20%. To test whether the sample information that we observe exists in the population or to verify that the level of stress is average or not, we formulate the hypothesis.

H_0 : The level of stress among the employees in selected banks is equal to 35 percent of total score (H_0 : MPS=35%)

H_1 : The level of stress among the employees in selected banks is more than 35 percent of total score (H_1 : MPS>35%)

To test the above hypothesis, we use one sample Z test and the result is exhibited in Table 15. From the table the p value is less than 0.05 and Z value is positive, which indicates that the test is significant. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the level of stress among the employees in selected banks is more than 35% i.e. average.

10.1 ABCD ANALYSIS OF EFFECTIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG EMPLOYEES IN THE BANKING SECTOR :

ABCD analysis is a systematic framework used to evaluate any issue by examining its Advantages, Benefits, Constraints, and Disadvantages [22]. This approach provides a holistic view, enabling decision-makers to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a particular issue, strategy, or model. The Advantages focus on the inherent strengths and positive attributes that improve the likelihood of success. Benefits highlight the specific outcomes or value that stakeholders gain. On the other hand, Constraints involve the limitations, challenges, or risks that may hinder implementation or effectiveness. Lastly, the Disadvantages section explores the potential downsides or negative impacts that might arise. ABCD analysis is widely used in business, education, technology, and other fields for comprehensive evaluation and strategic decision-making [23]. ABCD analysis is used in four formats namely: ABCD listing [24-26], ABCD stakeholder analysis [27-28], ABCD factors and elemental analysis [29-30], and ABCD quantitative empirical analysis [31]. Here we have used ABCD listing of Effective Stress Management and Stress Levels Among Employees in the Banking Sector:

(A) Advantages of Effective Stress Management and Stress Levels Among Employees in the Banking Sector:

- (1) **Reduced Absenteeism:** Effective stress management helps employees cope with their stress, leading to fewer days off due to health issues or burnout. Lower absenteeism improves operational continuity and reduces the strain on remaining staff.
- (2) **Enhanced Job Performance:** Employees who effectively manage their stress are more likely to perform better in their roles. Improved performance boosts overall productivity and supports the achievement of organizational goals.
- (3) **Stronger Employee Morale:** Stress management programs create a supportive work environment, which can increase morale. Higher morale leads to a more engaged and motivated workforce, contributing positively to the organizational culture.
- (4) **Improved Employee Relationships:** Managing stress effectively can improve interpersonal relationships among employees. Better relationships foster teamwork and collaboration, enhancing overall workplace dynamics.

(B) Benefits of Effective Stress Management and Stress Levels Among Employees in the Banking Sector:

- (1) **Increased Employee Retention:** Effective stress management contributes to higher job satisfaction and reduces turnover rates. Retaining experienced employees minimizes recruitment and training costs, maintaining organizational stability.
- (2) **Better Health Outcomes:** Reducing stress can lead to fewer health problems, such as heart disease and depression, among employees. Improved health outcomes reduce healthcare costs and improve overall quality of life for employees.
- (3) **Enhanced Organizational Reputation:** commitment to stress management reflects positively on the organization's reputation as a good employer. This can attract top talent and improve the company's standing in the industry.
- (4) **Increased Creativity and Innovation:** Employees who manage stress effectively are more likely to think creatively and contribute innovative ideas. Increased creativity and innovation can lead to new products, services, and improved processes, enhancing competitive advantage.

(C) Constraints of Effective Stress Management and Stress Levels Among Employees in the Banking Sector:

- (1) **High Implementation Costs:** and maintaining effective stress management programs can be costly. High costs may limit the scope and frequency of programs, especially for smaller institutions with tight budgets.
- (2) **Employee Resistance:** Some employees may resist participating in stress management programs or view them as unnecessary. Resistance can undermine the effectiveness of the programs and hinder widespread adoption.

- (3) **Difficulty in Measuring Impact:** Quantifying the effectiveness of stress management initiatives can be challenging. Without clear metrics, it can be difficult to justify the investment in these programs and make data-driven improvements.
- (4) **Need for Customized Solutions:** Different employees may require different approaches to manage stress effectively. Creating customized solutions can be complex and resource-intensive, requiring a nuanced understanding of individual needs.

(D) Disadvantages of Effective Stress Management and Stress Levels Among Employees in the Banking Sector:

- (1) **Potential Short-Term Relief:** Some stress management strategies may provide only temporary relief rather than addressing underlying causes. Short-term solutions might not lead to lasting improvements in stress levels, necessitating ongoing adjustments.
- (2) **Possible Misalignment with Organizational Culture:** Stress management programs that do not align with the organization's culture may be ineffective. Misalignment can result in poor program adoption and failure to address specific organizational stressors.
- (3) **Overemphasis on Stress Management:** Focusing too much on stress management might divert attention from other critical areas needing improvement. This could lead to an imbalance in organizational priorities and neglect of other important aspects of employee welfare and performance.
- (4) **Privacy Concerns:** Some stress management practices, such as personal assessments or counselling, may raise privacy issues among employees. Concerns about confidentiality can affect participation rates and trust in the programs, limiting their effectiveness.

11. FINDINGS :

From the analysis of the stress levels among employees in selected banks, the following key findings have emerged:

- (1) **Moderate Levels of Stress:** The mean percentage score for the level of stress among employees is 48.33%, which indicates that, on average, employees in the selected banks experience moderate levels of stress. This suggests that while employees are managing their work, there are still significant stressors present in their environment.
- (2) **Consistency of Stress Levels:** The coefficient of variation (CV) for the stress level score is 18.99%, which is below 20%, indicating a stable and consistent level of stress across the employee sample. This low CV value suggests that the reported stress levels are relatively uniform among employees, without wide fluctuations across individuals.
- (3) **Statistical Significance:** A one-sample Z-test was conducted to verify whether the level of stress among employees was significantly different from a baseline of 35%. The result showed a Z-value of 31.889 with a p-value of less than 0.001, indicating that the test is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which proposed that stress levels were at or below 35%, was rejected. This confirms that the stress levels among bank employees are above the threshold, meaning that the average stress level is higher than expected.

The findings demonstrate that stress levels among employees in the banking sector in Kerala are moderate but not insignificant. This raises concerns about the well-being of the workforce, as sustained moderate levels of stress, if not managed, can lead to long-term health issues and reduced productivity. The need for stress management interventions and supportive work environments becomes evident from these results.

12. SUGGESTIONS BASED ON ANALYSIS :

- (1) **Implement Comprehensive Stress Management Programs:** Develop and implement organization-wide stress management programs that address the identified stressors such as workload, bureaucratic processes, and competitive targets. These programs should be tailored to the specific needs of banking employees and include techniques for time management, relaxation, and coping with high-pressure situations.
- (2) **Promote Supportive Leadership Styles:** Train and encourage managers to adopt supportive leadership styles that can help mitigate employee stress. This could involve leadership development programs focusing on emotional intelligence, effective communication, and employee well-being.

- (3) **Enhance Peer Support Systems:** Foster a culture of peer support within the organization by creating opportunities for team-building activities, mentoring programs, and collaborative work environments. This can help employees build strong support networks to better manage stress.
- (4) **Streamline Bureaucratic Processes:** Review and simplify bureaucratic processes to reduce unnecessary complexity and frustration among employees. This could involve process reengineering, automation of routine tasks, and empowering employees to make decisions at appropriate levels.
- (5) **Balance Competitive Targets with Employee Well-being:** Reassess the approach to setting performance targets, ensuring they are challenging yet achievable. Implement a balanced scorecard approach that considers employee well-being alongside financial and operational metrics.
- (6) **Regular Stress Assessments and Interventions:** Conduct periodic stress assessments to monitor stress levels among employees. Use this data to design targeted interventions and measure the effectiveness of stress management initiatives. This approach will allow for continuous improvement in stress management strategies.

13. CONCLUSION :

The study on stress levels among employees in selected banks in Kerala reveals several critical insights into the workplace stress environment within this sector. The findings indicate that employees experience a moderate level of stress, with an average stress level score of 48.33%. This suggests that while employees manage their workloads reasonably well, significant stressors remain prevalent within their work environment.

The consistency in stress levels across the sample, as indicated by the coefficient of variation, underscores that stress is a widespread issue rather than being confined to a few individuals. This stability points to systemic stress factors affecting employees uniformly across the selected banks. The statistical analysis further confirms that stress levels exceed the baseline threshold of 35%, emphasizing that the observed stress levels are substantial and warrant attention.

Given these findings, it is evident that both public and private sector banks in Kerala face challenges related to employee stress management. For public sector banks, issues such as bureaucratic inefficiencies and limited career advancement opportunities contribute to stress. In contrast, private sector banks are characterized by high-performance expectations, competitive targets, and rapid technological changes, which are significant stressors for employees in these institutions.

To address these challenges, it is crucial for banks to implement targeted stress management strategies. These strategies should focus on alleviating the specific stressors identified in each sector. Public sector banks could benefit from streamlining bureaucratic processes and providing clearer career development paths. Private sector banks may need to focus on managing competitive pressures and supporting employees through technological transitions.

Overall, the study highlights the need for proactive and tailored stress management interventions. By addressing the unique stressors faced by employees in both public and private sector banks, organizations can enhance employee well-being, improve job satisfaction, and boost overall productivity. Implementing effective stress management programs will not only benefit employees but also contribute to the long-term success and efficiency of the banking sector in Kerala.

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