PREFACE

“Stress, like Einstein’s theory of relativity, is a scientific concept which has suffered from the mixed blessing of being too well known and too little understood.” - Hans Selye

Stress management is drawing more and more attention nowadays, predominantly in the changing business environment. Stress is nothing but a biological term that refers to the consequences of the failure of a human or animal to respond appropriately to emotional or physical threats to the organism, whether actual or imagined. It is “the autonomic response to environmental stimulus.” It comprises a state of alarm and adrenaline production, short-term resistance as a coping mechanism, and exhaustion. The word “stress” was first used by the endocrinologist Hans Selye in the 1930s to identify physiological response in laboratory animals. He later widened and popularized the concept to include the perceptions and response of humans trying to adapt to the challenges of ordinary life. In Selye’s vocabulary, “stress” refers to the reaction of the organism, and “stressor” to the perceived threat.

Communal stress symptoms comprise irritability, muscular tension, inability to concentrate and a variety of physical reactions, such as headaches and elevated heart rate. Stress in some environments may be experienced positively. Eustress, for instance, can be adaptive response prompting the activation of internal resources to meet challenges and goals.
Nonetheless, in recent arena by the term stress we simply mean distress. Stress is everyone’s delinquent. We live in times where there is much pain and suffering. We work in a very high pressure, intense environment, with a great deal of changing demands. Workplace stress or job stress costs businesses billions of rupees every year in absenteeism, staff turnover, errors, accidents, and corporate frauds. Stress is not limited to workplace-place issues. Violent world events, the fear of terrorism and a faltering economy, and personal stressors, such as family and financial problems, can also negatively affect one’s physical and mental health and work performance.

The Indian managers, today, operate in an environment where there is full of uncertainties, turmoil and even hostility. Competition has amplified manifold with its attending consequences - both good as well as bad. It is logical to surmise that stress levels have gone up and no one can refuse the evil effect of stress. Occupational stress is flattering gradually globalized and affects all countries, all professions and all categories of workers, as well as families and society in general (Ahmad and Ahmad, 1992). Employers must provide a stress-free work environment, recognise where stress is becoming a problem for staff, and take action to reduce stress. It is proved that, stress in the workplace reduces productivity, increases management pressures, and makes people ill in many ways, evidence of which is still increasing. Workplace stress affects the performance of the brain, including functions of work, performance; memory, concentration, and learning. Thus, Stress management is the need of the hour.

Banking professionals are no exemption from this. In today’s fast ever changing competitive environment, every bank is restructuring itself through technology.
adaptation and retrenchment of employees leading to more stress of the employees in one hand and on the other every bank competes with one another for survival and growth and tries to satisfy the customers better than other. According to a study conducted by Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM, 2007), it has been found that banks rank top 10 high stress workplaces in recent times. During the past decade, the banking sector had undergone rapid and striking changes like policy changes due to globalisation and liberalisation, increased competition due to the entrance of more private (corporate) sector banks, downsizing, introduction of new technologies, etc. Due to these changes, the employees in the banking sector are experiencing a high level of stress. Evidence from existing literature states that more than 60% of the bank employees have one or other problem directly or indirectly related to these drastic changes (Nair, 2008).

Under the backdrop, the present study entitled, “Job Stress of Employees in Scheduled Commercial Banks: A Study in the Context of Barak Valley in Assam” has been undertaken with a view to explore the job stress of employees of scheduled commercial banks of Barak Valley.

The entire research work has been presented in the following seven chapters:

Chapter 1: The first introductory chapter describes the statement of the problem; review of literature; research gap; objectives of the study; research questions; research methodology adopted for the study; chapterization; importance of the study, scope, and limitation of the study.
Chapter II: The second chapter is solely devoted to portray the theoretical framework of the research study. This chapter presents the historical background of stress; definition of stress; features of stress; meaning of stress and related terms; models of stress; parameters for measuring stress; job stress and task performance; factors of stress; consequences of stress; effects of stress; and practices of management of stress. This chapter also describes the present banking scenario in India (which included the origin of the term; development of banking sector in India; definition of banks; scheduled commercial banks; types of scheduled commercial banks; function of scheduled commercial banks; different banking channels and importance of scheduled commercial banks); and emerging study areas of stress (which included the information technology (IT) sector, educational sector, transportation sector, BPO sector, oil sector, manufacturing and other sectors).

Chapter III: The third chapter presents the findings related to the level of job stress of bank employees. The first part presents the overall level of job stress in banking sector of Barak Valley. The second part makes a comparative presentation of the stress level of employees among different genders, educational qualifications, designations, districts, and public and private sectors banks.

Chapter IV: The fourth chapter delve the relative importance of factors leading to job stress of bank employees of Barak Valley. Further, it made the factors causing significant different level of stress between different genders, among different educational qualifications, between different designations, among different districts and between public and private sectors.
Chapter V: This chapter describes the detail findings related to the impact of job stress on employees. The first part of this chapter presents affect of stress on employees in terms of the actions taken by the bank employees, whenever they have stress at work place. Then each action taken is analysed with reference to different categories of employees in banking sector of Barak Valley. The second part of the chapter deals with the areas most often affected by stress on bank employees and then the areas of activities which are most negatively affected are analysed with reference to gender, educational qualification, designation-wise, district-wise and sector-wise.

Chapter VI: The sixth chapter presents the detail description of present practices of management of stress in all Scheduled Commercial Banks of Barak Valley. The first part presents the stress management practices adopted in scheduled commercial banks and second part presents the individual level strategies adopted by the individual bank employees to mitigate the problem of job stress.

Chapter VII: The final chapter summarizes the major findings of the study. Appropriate recommendations emanating from the study were forwarded to minimize the job stress of employees.

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