CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

Banking sector in India has a wide mix, comprising of joint sector, nationalized sector, specialized corporate financial institutions, co-operative sector and foreign sector. It is expected to be a financial one stop shop giving advice to customers, managing their wealth, looking after needs of corporates, looking at various delivery channels and adopting what the customers want, undertake fee-based services and provide the best possible services.

Family and career are two important domains for a woman. Due to rapid changes in the lifestyle, social and economic environment, most of the women take up a job in order to support their family. As women are equally sharing the financial responsibility for the betterment of the family, study of the work life balance of women employees has gained prime importance.

In India, banks provide more job opportunities for the young graduates and professionals. Women are getting into jobs and they continue to work even after marriage. A married woman has more responsibility than her spouse in taking care of young children and family. With basic commitment and perseverance, the working woman efficiently tries to manage such situations. To a greater extent, a woman lends her hands to satisfy her family’s financial needs. Work life balance means the competence of an individual to schedule the hours between professional and personal life so as to lead a contended life. It focuses on the values, attitudes and beliefs of women in organizing and balancing their work and personal life.
STRESS

Stress is defined as “a state of psychological and physiological imbalance resulting from the disparity between situational demand and the individual's ability and motivation to meet those needs.”

Stress is the reality of our everyday life. Stress is very much individualistic in nature. Some people have high stress tolerance levels and thrive well in the face of several stressors in the environment. Stress at work place is a common aspect and majority of people undergo it due to different reasons. Some jobs are more related to stress and some are inherently stressful.

Stress is the reality of our everyday life. People deal with stress due to situations prevailing at home or because of friends. It may also result from other non-work situations. In fact, some individuals will not carry out tasks well unless they experience a certain level of stress which activates and energizes them to put in their best efforts. In contrast, some people have very low stress tolerance levels and they get paralyzed when they have to face routine daily factors that seem undesirable to them.

The efforts on performance are inversely proportional to the amount of stress that a person faces. If a person faces intense stress he will put in very less efforts. Errors will intensify, ruthless decisions will be taken and the individual will undergo sleep deprivation, insomnia, stomach complications and psychosomatic ailments. The individual’s perspective of stress is the physical, mental and chemical reactions that occur inside the body in response to situations that increase risk or cause anger. If controlled, it transforms into an enemy that can be the root cause of diseases such as high blood pressure, ulcer, asthma and thyroid.
Personality of an individual is the most dominant factor that influences the manner in which a person responds to occasions and circumstances. Personality includes values, attitudes and behavioural patterns that collectively form the individuality of personal character and finally determine the way he succumbs to stress. Today, the nature of job is varying at a swift speed. Work stress has become a common occurrence with many people, and a subject of apprehension with various organizations. The number of people affected by work-related stress is increasing progressively in almost every single industry.

Stress at workplace is now the most cited reason of absence from work. The need of today is to circumvent stress or deal with it before it starts to have adverse effect on people. Another imperative apprehension is that the sub-standard performance of many employees due to the undesirable effects of stress at work place represents a considerable monetary loss to the organizations and to the overall economy.

**TYPES OF STRESS**

**ACUTE STRESS**

Acute stress is the most experienced and common stress that afflicts humans around the world. Acute stress deals with the anticipated pressures of the near future or the lingering effects of the pressure experienced in the recent past. It is also good to have some acute stress in life. Running or any other procedure of exercise is considered to be an acute stressor. Some thrilling or exciting experiences such as riding a roller coaster is an acute stress but is usually very fun. Acute stress is a stress that results from a short term and in result, does not have enough time to do the damage that long term stress causes.
CHRONIC STRESS

It is the complete contrast of acute stress. It has a tiresome effect on people that can pose to be an extremely serious health condition if it endures over a long period of time. Chronic stress can also be the cause of memory loss, damage recognition of spatiality and decrease the appetite and drive of eating. The ill effects vary from one person to another and also gender difference can be a fundamental factor. Women are capable of handling long durations of stress as compared to men without exhibiting similar maladaptive changes. Men can handle shorter durations of stress better than women but once the stress duration of male attains a certain threshold, the greater are the odds of them developing mental issues.

CAUSES OF STRESS

Causes of stress depend, on a person’s perception of it to an extent. A stressful factor for one may not affect someone else. The situations and pressures that cause stress are called as stressors. Stressors may be negative, like a tiring work schedule or unsteady relationships. Any factor that creates high demands to regulate can be stressful. This can encompass positive events like getting married, buying a house, going to college or getting a promotion.
CAUSES OF WORK STRESS

- Being in a job that causes unhappiness
- Substantial workload or too much responsibility
- Working long hours
- Having poor management, unclear expectations of work, or no say in the decision making process
- Being insecure about chance for advancement or risk of termination
- Giving speeches in front of colleagues
- Facing discrimination or harassment at work, especially if management is not supportive

CAUSES OF STRESS OF EMPLOYEES IN BANKING SECTOR

During the past decades the banking sector had gone under swift and striking amendments like policy changes due to globalization and liberalization, growing competition due to the entry of more private banks, downsizing, introduction of new and innovative technologies, etc. Owing to these changes, the banking sector employees are experiencing a high level of pressure and stress. The advent of new technological revolution spread through all walks of life coupled with globalization, privatization policies has drastically changed the conventional patterns in all fields. The banking sector is of no exemption. Occupational stress is becoming progressively more globalized and affects all countries, all professions and all categories of employees, as well as families and society.

Globalization and privatization compelled the banking sector to reform and adjust to develop a competitive edge and cope with multinationals led environment. The advent of new technological changes, especially the extensive use
of computers in banking sector has changed the work patterns of the bank employees and it has made it inevitable to downsize the work force in the concerned sector. The implications and transformations have affected the social, economical and psychological domains of the banking sector employees and their relations. All the above factors are potential attributes to occupational stress and its related disorders among the bank employees.

**COPING STRATEGIES OF STRESS**

One way to alleviate work-family conflict is by having the inherent capability to efficiently handle the demands that are stressful. Seeking help and direct action coping that are used at home were linked to lesser interference of family with levels of work conflict. Avoidance/resignation handling was associated with higher levels of conflict pertaining to all types. The results advocate that individuals might have a larger control and prospect for a positive change in the family as compared to the job environment.

There may be innumerable reasons for banks to implement initiatives for stress management. It may be due to illness related to stress, absenteeism, and desire on humanitarian grounds to improve conditions at work. Regulations regarding the assessment of workplace hazards including the mental health and levels of physiological stress should be done so as to ensure a working environment that is safe. There might also be an added incentive for the banks when it projects that it cares for all of its employees so that the morale of the employees increase and the overall image of the banks get enhanced.

Stress at the workplace can no longer be ignored and hence it is necessary to make such changes where there are unhealthy working environments. This arouses the need of strategies for stress intervention and management. A wide
range of interventions can be utilized so as to manage the workplace stress. These stress interventions encompass the techniques that change the individual and the individual’s relationship with the organization.

**COPING STRATEGIES AT INDIVIDUAL LEVEL**

Individuals should create a balanced schedule by analysing schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. All work and no play is a recipe for burnout. They should try to find a balance between work and family life, social activities and solitary pursuits, daily responsibilities and downtime. Avoid over-commitment. Avoid scheduling things back-to-back or trying to fit too much into one day. Try to leave early in the morning. Even 10-15 minutes can make the difference between frantically rushing to your desk and having time to ease into your day. Take short breaks throughout the day i.e. to take a walk or sit back to clear the mind. Also try to get away from desk or work station for lunch. Stepping away from work to briefly relax and recharge will help one to be more productive. When job and workplace stress threatens to overwhelm, there are simple steps that can be taken to regain control over oneself and the situation. This newfound ability to maintain a sense of self-control in stressful situations will often be well-received by co-workers, managers, and subordinates alike, which can lead to better relationships at work.

**COPING STRATEGIES AT THE BANKS LEVEL**

Prioritise tasks. Prepare a list of tasks to be done and tackle them in order of importance. Break projects into small steps. If a large project seems overwhelming, make a step-by-step plan. Managers should delegate responsibility. They should avoid the desire to control everything and delegation will relieve unnecessary stress in the process. Managers should be willing to compromise. When delegating a task, make them to contribute differently, revise a deadline, or change
their behavior at work and be willing to do the same. A happy work environment reduces the stress levels for everyone.

**STRESS MANAGEMENT**

Stress management denotes a comprehensive range of methods and psychotherapies that are targeted at regulating a person's stress levels, particularly chronic stress, that is commonly used for enhancing functioning on an everyday basis. The term 'stress' is always associated with activities that cause considerable negative consequences or distress and Eustress is a stress that gives rewards that are helpful and positive.

Many useful stress management practices are available; some are used by medical practitioners and also for self-help, that may help a person to lessen stress, offer constructive feelings of being in charge of one's life and promote overall well-being. Stress management is a process that can be termed as one of the ways to a lead a life that is not just filled with happiness but is also characterized by success. Though there are innumerable demands that life provides, stress management serves as an effective solution to handle the anxieties and maintain a holistic life. Some are commonly accepted as effective treatments for use in psychotherapy while other treatments are deliberated as alternative therapies. Stress management is a vital concept that is essential to lead a happy life blessed with longevity. There are innumerable ways to cope with stress spanning from directly dealing with the stress causing factors to simply tackling the effects.

**WORK LIFE BALANCE**

Work life balance is a method which helps employees of an organization to balance their personal and professional lives. Work life balance encourages
employees to divide their time on the basis on priorities and maintain a balance by devoting time to family, health, vacations etc along with making a career, business travel etc. It is an important concept in the world of business as it helps to motivate the employees and increases their loyalty towards the company.

It is a concept that supports the efforts of employees to split their time and energy between work and the other important aspects of their lives. Work-life balance is a daily effort to make time for family, friends, community participation, spirituality, personal growth, self-care, and other personal activities, in addition to the demands of the workplace. Work-life balance is assisted by employers who institute policies, procedures, actions, and expectations that enable employees to easily pursue more balanced lives. The pursuit of work-life balance reduces the stress employee’s experience. When they spend the majority of their days on work-related activities and feel as if they are neglecting the other important components of their lives, stress and unhappiness result. An employee who doesn't make time for self-care eventually damages the output and productivity. Work-life balance enables employees to feel as if they are paying attention to all of the important aspects of their lives. It occurs when employees experience the flexibility of a workplace that allows them to pursue all components of a healthy life.

Figure 3.2 Work life balance
FACTORS AFFECTING WORK LIFE BALANCE

Work life balance occurs when individual with finite amount of mental, physical and emotional resources allocate those resources in the way that correspond to their personal or professional goals. Reasons for imbalance could be due to the following factors

- Competition
- Individual career ambitions
- Longer working hours
- Global economy
- International business

Figure 3.3  Factors affecting work life balance

CAUSES OF WORK LIFE IMBALANCE

Family and career are the two important domains for a woman. Due to rapid changes in the lifestyle, social and economic environment women take up jobs in order to support their family. When a woman employee is unable to focus on the two major domains, work and family, her physical and mental health are affected and there lies an imbalance between work and family.

Poor work life balance is due to family interference in work that may be due to family related factors, namely lack of support from the spouse and family members, child care problems, elder dependency and other domestic responsibilities that create imbalance. It is also due to work interference in family like work pressure, job commitments, doing office work at home, working during holidays and weekends are the various work related factors that cause work life imbalance. It is
also due to time based conflict i.e the inability to fulfil the tasks in a given role within the due date to the needs of another role. Basically, when a woman fails to devote an equal time family, it disturbs her marital and family life.

IMPACT OF WORK LIFE BALANCE

Work life balance is a term used to describe the balance between an individual’s personal life and professional life. A healthy work-life balance assumes great significance for working women particularly in the current context in which both, the family and the workplace have posed several challenges and problems for women. Majority of the working women experience job spill over into the home as they have to put in longer hours. Major consequences of poor work-life balance are high levels of stress and anxiety, disharmony at home, experiencing job burnout and inability to realize full potential. They feel irritable and resentful often due to their inability to balance work and family life. Effects of poor work life balance can be witnessed in the three major areas

- Work
- Family
- Personal Health

Figure 3.4 Impact of work life balance

Impact on the work may be due to lack of job satisfaction i.e when the women employees are unable to complete their work on time; it affects their level of job satisfaction. It may be due to lack of job commitment that results in reduction in job satisfaction, it affects their commitment in job which has a direct bearing on the
individual productivity. It leads to frequent absenteeism that is due to the household commitments and responsibilities and other personal health related issues and it forces them to behave aggressively in the work spot which finally paves way for frequent absenteeism to work.

In the banking sector working beyond business hours and not availing leave not only make the women employees workaholic but it also disturbs their marital and family life. Extended working hours of the women employees creates hindrances in accomplishing the task of a mother.

Poor work life balance has a direct impact on the personal health of the women employees in public sector banks. It affects their physical health as they get severe back pain; it affects their digestive health as they suffer from stomach related disorders. Their gynec health is also affected as they get hormonal imbalances and their psychological health is affected which may lead to mood swings, short tempered nature etc

**BENEFITS OF WORK LIFE BALANCE**

A good work life balance can enable employees to feel more in control of their working life and lead to: increased productivity, lower absenteeism, a happier and less stressed work force. When a woman employee is able to handle both her family, work and her health efficiently, then probability to take leave from work is reduced. A satisfied and motivated employee is a real asset to any organization. The commitment of the employee towards the bank is increased, which is reflected in individual’s productivity. When the productivity of an individual employee is increased, it increases the overall productivity of the banks and it is directly proportional to the Bank’s image. When the bank has good reputation the employees prefer to stay and become loyal. Every bank aims to retain the efficient talent. As
banks make a huge investment in training their employees, Retention of talent is the most challenging task. A satisfied and loyal employee will be retained in the bank, especially women employees.

A state of good work life balance enables the women employees to concentrate on her work and it enables her to accomplish the given tasks within the stipulated time. This increases her level of job satisfaction. A satisfied employee is regular to work and frequent absenteeism is avoided. When a woman is able to balance her personal and career life efficiently, she gains autonomy in her work place. She is motivated to take up new tasks and additional responsibilities. Stress is the first indicator for work life imbalance. It affects both their career and family. A good work life balance reduces stress. Health indicates physical, mental and emotional well being. A good work life balance ensures good health to the women employees.

Figure 3.5 Benefits of work life balance
WORK LIFE BALANCE POLICIES AND PRACTICES STIMULATING EMPLOYEES IN THE BANKING SECTOR

The last decade has witnessed a growth in the volume and strength of businesses that have resulted from work-life balance policies. This includes benefits such as enhanced recruitment, retention rates that are correlated to cost cutting, lesser absenteeism citing sickness, reduced work stress, better satisfaction for the employees that paves way for loyalty, more flexibility in the operating hours as well as an enhanced image on the corporate front. There is mixed confirmation pertaining to the cost-saving power of the work-life balance as well as other policies that are family friendly. There are certain policies that would reduce employee turnover but give greater employee satisfaction, improving productivity while ensuring a decrease in the physical and emotional disorders that are associated with conflicts in work-life.

EFFECTIVENESS OF WORK LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS

Women employees who are not able to maintain a balance between the work and family roles, tend to set a bad example to other colleagues and it reduces the standard of the work scenario by upsetting the otherwise friendly ambience. Women employees regard the monthly salary or pay as the highest monetary satisfaction. Women employees tend to accrue stress on interpersonal relationships within the office premises especially with other female colleagues; it may involve relationships with bosses, subordinates and colleagues. Experiencing better relationships with others working in the bank will give a boost to the morale and give job satisfaction which will ultimately lead to greater productivity. An increase in the cases of job absenteeism and in extreme cases exiting the job might happen if
satisfaction is not ensured. The working conditions and the physical facilities are both important for ensuring job satisfaction among women employees. The bank management plays a key role in ensuring job satisfaction. These are the factors that must be kept in mind while framing HR policies that would safeguard the needs and desires of the women employees in banks. They are:

Figure 3. 6 Factors to be considered while framing HR policies

The impact of work life balance on stress management is illustrated below
CONCLUSION

Bank Management is perhaps the toughest job i.e provide maximum services to customers at the same time ensure cost-effective operations and employee satisfaction while being compliant with all regulations and standards. It is this situation the banking industry faces every single day. Hence Human Resource Department in Banks should act as an important instrument in effectively improving the work life balance of women employees in banks and encourage employees to show creativity, to reach for excellence and finally to render better customer service.