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EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT EFFECT ON REDUCING JOB STRESS

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Abstract

This study has adopted the quantitative research approach for collecting data from different branches of the Bank of Khyber that are operating in the vicinity of the Saddar region, Peshawar city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The sample size consists of 60 employees. A total of 18 questions were asked based on the 5-point Likert scale responses. In order to perform numerous procedures, SPSS is used to analyse statistical tests in this study. Regression analysis is employed to test the hypothesis. Employee participation in the organization improves the overall productivity and contributes to organizational improvement. Job stress has a negative influence on the employee job performance. The results indicate that there is a negative and significant relationship between the employee's involvement and employee job stress. Although job stress is a negative phenomenon and may have a positive impact on the performance of the employees and eventually the organization.

Keywords: *employee involvement, job stress, employee performance, employee empowerment, stress at work.*

JEL codes: *J11, J24, J28*

1. Introduction

The business organization seeks to achieve justified by its activities and existence certain aims and objectives such as to enjoy above average profits, to grow in size and magnitude, to boost revenues, market share and the advantage of moving into new markets. All these objectives may be accomplished if the employees of the organization deliver better and improved performance. Over time, the human resource management has developed different theories that aim to enable organizations to develop and implement strategies that keep the employees motivated, so that they can help the organization in the achievement of its cherished goals and objectives.

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However, often some organizations come across certain disputes, issues, and problems that prevent the achievement of the required results.

According to Bhatti, and Qureshi (2007), one of the issues, which employees face difficulty in handling is job stress. Human resource management has developed certain tools within the organizations, so that job stress amongst the employees is identified and the organizations should eliminate or at least reduce the negative impacts of job stress on the employees' performance. Moreover, Bhatti and Qureshi (2007) also argued that the need for developing strategies to cope with the problem of job stress has become highly important, since the business environment has been exposed to intense competitive force and in such a competitive environment, motivated, skilled and competent employees are a vital source of competitive advantage for the organizations. Thus, the responsibilities of the human resource management function to develop strategies to overcome job stress has immensely increased.

It is hardly imaginable that any organization operating in Pakistan is not exposed to such problems. Bashir and Ramay (2008) pointed out that the problem of job stress amongst the employees working in public-sector organizations is relatively high and commonplace. When employees feel happy in their work environment, it is the encouragement that they feel motivated to work. When the employees are saddled with the increased workload and at the same time, the management is not interested in motivating and encouraging the employees to happily bear the excessive workload. Such behaviour increases the job stress amongst the employees in the underlying organizations and the performance of employees is adversely affected. Coggburn and Battaglio (2017) consider that if organizations encourage employees' involvement, that would promote positive organizational outcomes.

As argued by Bhatti and Qureshi (2007), the Government of Pakistan has taken certain steps to make necessary changes to the organizations being operated in the public sector, because new investors could be attracted to the organizations. As a result, the overall economy can greatly benefit. Such actions have in fact helped in improving partial results of some public-sector organizations, such as the banking sector, the oil and gas sector and the telecom sector in particular.

The aim of this research is to evaluate how HR practices at BoK impact the performance of its employees. The study will be of assistance in improving the HR practices in the workplace at the bank and in identifying effective organizational practices for the benefit of its employees.

2. Literature review

2.1. Employee involvement

Employee involvement is a relatively broader term and has extensively been defined in various ways. Cotton (1993) stated that employee involvement refers to the process of employees' participation in organizational activities, processes or procedures that lead to the motivation of employees, so that the organization can effectively benefit from the skills and abilities of the employees.

Apostolou (2000) identified the employee involvement and empowerment, as the

process that gives employees of an organization the power to get involved in the decision-making process of the organization, as well as to participate in the activities that lead to organizational improvement.

In 1990, employee involvement was defined, and according to the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPM) it is associated with the designing of a range of processes that result in supporting, improving the understanding, and optimum contribution of all the employees of an organization. The widespread use of employee involvement practices dramatically increased during the 1990s, “aggregate measures of employee welfare do not show commensurate gains” (Osterman, 2000).

Locke and Schweiger (1979) and Wagner (1994) stated that employee involvement is an important organizational process that aims to motivate and encourage employees of the organization, particularly those who have not been given any position by the organization. The purpose is to make these employees feel that they are the valuable component of the organization. Whilst employee participation is common in most organizations, employee involvement that gives employees the additional power to be part of organizational decision-making is not common in organizations.

Marchington et al. (2005) found in their study that organizations that consider employees as their valuable asset get the benefit in the form of a very smooth flow of new and better ideas and valuable information throughout the organization. This also leads to the creation of a workplace that is ideal for all employees.

Describing the fundamental purpose of employee involvement, the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) has referred to the set of processes that aim to get support and contribution from the employees of the organization (working at all levels), as well as secures the commitment from the employees towards the attainment of their goals and objectives.

There are two main types of employee involvement, i.e. direct involvement and indirect involvement. In the direct involvement, merely one single and a particular employee is allowed to participate in the decision-making process, while in the indirect involvement, representatives from the department functions or departments of the organization are allowed to be part of the decision-making process (Bratton et al., 2003).

Wagner (1994) argued that employee involvement is one of the best and most important HR practices in all the organizations throughout the world. This practice indeed has its own individual importance, which cannot be replaced by any other alternative practice.

Apostolou (2000) stated that organizations need to take a number of steps in order to promote employee involvement practices, such as organizations need to allocate specific roles and responsibilities to their employees; organizations need to provide adequate training to their employees; organizations need to develop proper communication channels and feedback between their management and employees; organizations also need to develop and implement proper recognition and rewarding systems; organizations also need to adopt some measures, so as to be able to achieve employee involvement. Such measures include the power sharing, rewards, sharing of information and knowledge.

Employee involvement has various advantages, such as it helps in increasing the level of authority of employees working in the organization. Cotton (1993) stated that the successful implementation of employee involvement in an organization helps in developing a better organizational structure. Lawler (1994) also agreed with Cotton (1993) and further stated that employee involvement helps organizations to save costs and results in reducing job stress. Moreover, employee involvement improves the communication between the organization's management and the employees, which helps in reducing employees' job stress.

Ichniowski et al. (1997) and Kato and Morishima (1998) emphasized that it had been proved by research studies that if organizations promoted employee involvement and allowed employees to be part of decision making, there would be a much better sharing of information between the organization and the employees, it would help in improving the overall productivity of employees which is eventually beneficial to their organization.

When employee involvement is promoted, employees not only provide better results on an individual basis, but they also work in a better way in the form of teams (Harris, 1992).

The study conducted by Newman and Grigg (2009) resulted in findings that employee involvement always results in improving the performance of employees, since it boosts employee motivation and reduces their stress. Moreover, it helps in improving the performance of the organization as a whole.

Although promoting employee involvement is beneficial to organizations, many organizations are not always willing to promote this practice, as this results in making the decision-making process slow. The valuable time and treasure of human resources of the organization are critically wasted.

Sang-Woo Nam (2003) finds in the study that employee involvement practice means managers in organizations have to wait for the approval of a decision or action, which they take, the course of action normally is not undertaken by the organizations. In addition, employee involvement also results in the creation of many conflicts and disagreements between the management of an organization and its employees. Apostolou (2000) states that the employee involvement practice should be used only to let employees feel they are the indispensable asset of the organization and that employee involvement is not about bestowing authority to employees, it is conferring the power in the form of responsibility that creates conflicts between management and employees.

Organizations need to ensure employee involvement is properly organized within the organization as they should be allowed to participate in the organization's decision-making process; effective teams should be developed within the organization and effective leaders should be chosen to lead these teams and there should be smooth and effective communication channels in place between the leader and the organization's employees. Leaders promote communication channels and can utilize a variety of communication channels in useful ways (Yukl, 2008).

Employee involvement can also be encouraged by promoting certain practices within the organization, such as involving employees in organizational processes, providing

on time feedback to employees and taking into consideration the opinions and suggestions of employees (Newman and Grigg, 2009).

Employee involvement can be invigorated if managers in an organization ensure that every employee is given leadership right, roles and responsibilities as well as training; and there should be sharing of information with the employees (Murrell and Meredith, 2000).

Research findings suggest that the low employee involvement practice is being followed in organizations. Schuster (1998) identified the reasons that may result in managers opposing employee involvement practice, such as that the managers are afraid that they may lose their power and authority; they do not consider it to have any particular importance for the organization; they consider it a threat to their current status and position.

According to the study conducted by Richmond et al. (1983), the findings disclosed that if managers in an organization want to promote employee involvement, they should use a leadership style that helps in creating harmony and reduces stress amongst the employees, by using effective communication channels.

2.2. Job Stress

Job stress can affect the health of the employee in some ways. The body reacts to the changes with physical, mental, and emotional responses that occur when the necessities of the job do not equal the skills and requirements of the staff (NIOSH, 1999). It can be a huge challenge for intellectual and staff body fitness. The stressed staff is less creative, insecure and provoked than others, which otherwise affects their association. As a result, the typical employee gives a huge loss to the nation (Palmer & Stephen, 2004).

There are a variety of sources of job stress, which affect the personnel in different ways (Dollard, Maurean, & Jacquee, 1999). One main reason for work stress is that the work suffers mainly due to the connections between mental damage and choice autonomy. Other sources contain bodily action and work uncertainty. Job satisfaction and self-supposed labour pressure are the features of job stress (Karasek & Robert, 1979).

In the 20th century, the word job stress has been a significant word for researchers working in different fields (Cooper, Dewe, & Driscall, 2001). Various studies show that job stress has an unenthusiastic shock on the job performance, bodily and emotional well-being of staff. This is an expected part of an association (Wright, 2007).

Job stress also affects the operational competence of staff, such as raise turnover and reduces the satisfaction of staff (Ongori & Agolla, 2008).

According to Lazarus (1990), stress is a mismatch between the supposed demand of circumstances and supposed capabilities and possessions of staff for meeting those demands. Various studies where coaching has been performed indicate stress and risk in coaches.

Stress is a major challenge for the health of staff in several parts of the world. The stressed staff is harmful, badly irritated, less creative and less safe at their work. There are various causes of stress, both at home and at work. Stress at work is a great problem for the organization, as well as for the workers. Best organizations try to supervise workers' stress and have procedures for their avoidance. Various countries have stress associated regulations which protect workers. Job stress is the reaction of the staff when workload and pressures are not properly matched with their understanding, expertise, and capability. It occurs in the broad array of areas. A vigorous work matters a lot where the staff feels equilibrium nervousness relative to their skills and possessions. WHO defined that health is not the lack of a sickness, but it shows the total bodily, public and intellectual well-being of staff (Leka, Griffiths, & Cox, 2003).

Unfortunate labour association, uncontrollable nervousness and demands are the causes of work stress. There are various vulnerabilities associated with stress, such as work content, workload, working hours, control and career development, position in the organization, interpersonal dealings and the traditions of an organization. Job stress influences the staff through a variety of ways, such as being irritable, incapable of calming down, having complexity in building judgment, feeling less pleasurable, dedicated and feeling tired, depressed, having complexity in sleeping which causes serious bodily problems. Job stress also affects the overall association through various ways, such as increasing absentees, staff turnover, unsafe working practices, criticism from customers, declining assurance to labour, upsetting personnel and damaging the organization's image. Job stress may be prohibited through primary avoidance, such as concentrated through work design and administration growth, secondary avoidance, such as workers' learning and training and tertiary avoidance, such as mounting responsive organization system and improved work-related health condition (International Labour Organization (ILO) psychosocial factors at work: Recognition and control occupational safety and health series no:56, 1986).

Various studies demonstrate that females are excessively engaged in the workplace, which is extremely harassed, and they are less likely to react to disagreement and stress (Borling, Dupre, & Kelloway, 2009). Stress in hospitals in the shape of inter-professional and intra-professional disagreement happened due to poor communication between team members (Xyrichis & Lowton, 2008).

Almost every individual faces stress in some form and every individual normally deals with stress in his/her own way. Although stress is harmful from the very start, it damages the employee, as well as the organization if it reaches particularly to a high level, because it adversely affects the performance of employees, which directly affects the organization in the same way. Empirical studies have also concluded that the type and nature of stress changes with the type and nature of the job, which means that certain jobs such as police, have a higher level of associated stress, due to the highly dangerous nature of the job.

According to McEwen and Stellar (1993), stress causes a number of diseases in the human being, such as those related to the cardiovascular system and immune systems. The research study by DeLongis et al., (1988) identified that even a slight increase in stress level results in causing illness in individuals and adversely affects the mood of the individual. Moberg (1999) argues that stress causes many diseases in individuals and these diseases sometimes result in the death of the individual.

Psychological effects of stress include pressure, deficiency, threat, and dissatisfaction amongst the individuals. Other psychological effects of stress include depression, anxiety, loss of interest in day-to-day activities, loss of power and control, for example. According to the findings of the study Terry et al., (1993) disclosed that stress has a negative relation with the well-being and job satisfaction of an individual.

Stress also affects the behaviour of an individual employee. Some very common problems that are caused by job stress include tension, depression, aggression, anxiety, and loss of memory amongst the employees. These problems directly affect the performance of employees.

2.3. The relation between employee involvement and job stress

Researchers have reported that the presence of job stress amongst the employees results in reducing their level of commitment towards their job and the organization, as well and also adversely affects the involvement of employees and reduces the overall performance of employees.

According to the findings of the study by Reshef et al. (1999), employee involvement plays an important role in any organization; however, employee involvement is negatively influenced by job stress. A higher level of employee involvement results in the reduction of all kinds of stress and improves the performance and productivity of employees.

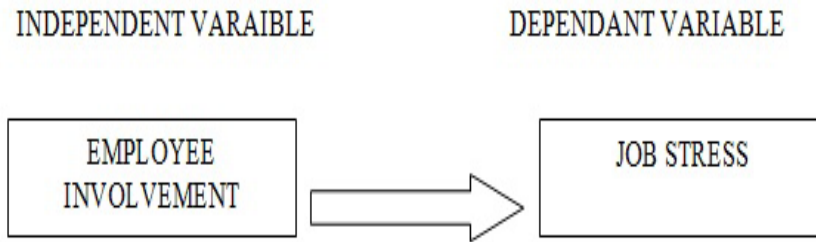
DeFrank and Ivancevich (1998) and Sparks and Cooper, (1999) manifested that stress amongst the employees is caused by extra workload on the employees. Job stress is also caused by lack of power, lack of role and position by employees in the organization.

The findings of the study conducted by Greenberg and Baron (1995) revealed that stress of any kind is very harmful to the employees of an organization as there are many negative effects associated with it. In order to reduce stress, organizations need to allocate proper and specific roles and responsibilities to employees to increase their level of interest in their jobs.

The research findings conducted by Ouyang (2009) supported the views that organizations can increase employee involvement and thereby reduce their stress by organizing various types of training programmes for them. Such programmes will help employees to cope with job stress.

3. Research Framework

In light of the previous studies and the existing literature review relating to employee involvement, a framework that will provide an appropriate basis for fulfilling the objectives of this research was designed. The framework is depicted below and it relates the independent variable of this study (employee involvement) with the dependent variable of this study (Job stress).

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

3.1. Research Hypotheses

H1: There is an effect of employee involvement on the reduction of job stress

H0: There is no effect of employee involvement on the reduction of job stress

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Instrument

The questionnaire is used for the collection of data. During this study, the work is compiled using the work of two researchers, namely:

“Enough Stress at Workplace: Organizing People for Change by Canadian Union of Public Employees”

The Essential Guide to Think and Work Smarter by Gerard Hargreaves.

There is a total of 18 questions that form part of the questionnaire. The scale is based on the 5-points Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

4.2. Sample and Data Collection

The sample is taken from various branches of Bank of Khyber Limited located in the Saddar region of the Peshawar city. This study is aimed to identify whether employee involvement has a positive impact on job stress or the relation is negative. The data was collected with the help of a pre-developed questionnaire. Simple random sampling technique was used for data collection and analysing the results. Since the study is quantitative in nature, probably sampling is highly appropriate for the purpose. The simple random sampling technique is, therefore, considered appropriate, as it will enable the researcher to collect data from as many respondents (the employees of the bank in this case) as possible. For the purpose of this study, a sample of 60 employees was selected. Overall, 60 questionnaires were distributed among the employees of different branches of Khyber Bank Limited in the Saddar region in Peshawar city. Therefore, for the sake of present research, the size of the sample constitutes 60 employees for conducting the hypotheses testing.

4.3 Data Analysis

In order to process data entry and to find out the results of the study as output, SPSS statistical package version 16.0 was used as a tool for collating, analysing and summarizing the data.

5. Results and discussion

Table 1. Model Summary

Model I	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.240	0.48	0.027	0.037

Source: Own calculation

- a) Predictors: (Constant), Employee involvement
- b) Dependent Variable: Job Stress

The above table shows the relationship between Employee Involvement and Job Stress. This table demonstrates that 1unit increase in Employee Involvement causes 48 units to increase in Job Stress.

Table 2. ANOVA Table

Model1	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sign.
1 Regression	0.486	1	0.798	3.500	0.000
Residual	15.524	98	0.165		
Total	16.000	99			

Source: Own calculation

- a) Predictor: (Constant), Employee Involvement
- b) Dependent Variable: Job Stress

This ANOVA Table discloses the fitness of the model. In the table, the regression sum of square value is less than the residual sum of the square, but the value of F is 3.500, which shows the validity, and the value obtained is near or almost 4 indicating that it is more valid.

Table 3. Coefficients Table

Model	Un-standardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sing.
	B		Beta		
1 (Constant)	0.939	0.123		7.621	0.000
Employee Involvement	0.176	0.079	-0.220	2.234	0.000

Source: Own calculation

Dependent Variable: Job Stress

B is the regression coefficient. It indicates the change brought in the direct variable (DV) when one unit of the indirect variable is changed. As per the table above, the value of **B** is -0.22, which means the relationship is direct but negative, which means an increase in Employee Involvement will bring a decrease in Job Stress. The relationship is also significant as the significance value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05.

6. Descriptive statistic

Table 4. Descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employment Involvement	60	2.50	5.00	3.9617	.49259
Job Stress	60	2.00	5.00	4.1227	.61384
Valid N (list wise)	60				

Source: Own calculation

Descriptive statistics for all variables and dimensions is demonstrated in the above table. The study findings have shown that most of the variables have a statistical mean of more than 4. It means that all of the respondents have agreed to the phenomena that employee involvement has an impact on job stress. The mean values of employee involvement and job stress were 3.96 and 4.12.

7. Conclusion

Employees in any organization are indispensable as the backbone for the successful operation and survival of the organization. Therefore, improvement in employee satisfaction is the key element and happy employees are essential for the success of the organization. In addition, it is also imperative that employees are provided with a working environment that is significantly free from stress, so that their focus remains on the attainment of goals and objectives of the organization and solution to organizational problems, issues, and challenges.

In light of the analysis made above, the conclusion made interpreting the results of the study that employees of BoK are largely under job stress. Although the reason for the stress varies from employee to employee, the stress has adverse impacts on the performance of their work. The Management of the BoK needs to identify the main and real causes of the stress that exists amongst its employees and once the reasons are identified, the management needs to find ways and means to reduce the underlying stress. This is understandable since the long-term success, growth, and survival of the organization is severely affected if employee job stress is not sufficiently managed. In addition, the organizations need to keep employees interested in their work by assigning them tasks that are demanding, as well as challenging, so that employees' involvement in the workplace can be strengthened. More specifically, the performance of employees can significantly be improved by reducing their job stress.

The analysis made above also reveals that a negative relationship exists between employees' involvement and employee job stress. With the increase in employee involvement by one unit, job stress reduced by 0.351. It can also be seen from the results that the independent variable of this research (employee involvement) has 9.8% impact on the dependent variable of the research, which is, of course, job stress. This demonstrates that the relation between these two variables is not only negative, but also significant. The current study confirms the results derived from the previous literature on the relevant topic. This study concludes and proves successfully the hypothesis established in prior studies. As a result, it can safely be stated that employee involvement in an organization has a positive impact on employees' job stress in the organization.

8. Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been envisaged:

- The management of BoK needs to focus on the root causes of job stress, which affected the performance of their employees.
- The bank management should positively involve its employees in the decision-making process.
- Any idea, proposal, and suggestion put forward by the employee should be given proper consideration, as this will make the job stimulating and will lead to a reduction of job stress of the employees.
- The bank management should not threaten the employees or make them fearful, as this is one of the main reasons for creating job stress.
- The bank management needs to minimize job stress amongst the employees by monitoring through diverse modes of training, seminars, and other arrangements.
- The management of the BoK needs to use a feedback mechanism, in order to help improve the job performance of their employees.
- The bank also requires establishing and utilizing proper and effective reward and compensation systems.

9. Limitations

The study discusses the following major limitations:

- Using the working hours of the bank employees for collecting data.
- Limited time allocated for collating the information.
- The bank employees were unwilling to complete the questionnaire for the conduct of the study.

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