

Workload, stress and performance level of board members

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Abstract

This research focuses on the workload and stress of executive managers and how it affects their performance level. The objective of the study is to identify and analyze the significance and implications of work-related stress experienced by board member in a bank utilizing the contemporary management thoughts to provide an insight to the said management problem.

Keywords: Workload, Power and Politics, Stress, Consumerism, Performance, and Work-Family Conflicts

Introduction

The objective of the study is to identify and analyze the significance and implications of work-related stress experienced by a board member in the bank utilizing the contemporary management thoughts and provide an insight to the said management problem.

At present most of the women are engaged in working. The role of women in the modern world is different than earlier in the past. They have taken new roles along with the role they used to play earlier. Women earlier had the role of house wife only. But nowadays they are also an income earner and house wife together. Women's representation in the workforce has been increasing owing to the rapid change in the today's global environment. Further women's representation in managerial and executive positions has also been improved. Managerial and executive roles require more time, commitment and effort. Thus balancing jobs, children, homes and own life is a huge challenge for most of the women executives in nowadays.

Number of women executives in the banking sector workforce has also increased. So this study is focused on executive women who work in public sector banks and work place stress among them. Special attention has been given to the work stress related issues experienced by Ms. X who works in the ABC Bank.

The Issue

ABC Bank is a public sector bank which has a long history with a strong assets base and customer base. The Bank has a wide network of branches all over the Sri Lanka. According to the annual report 2014 published by the Bank, females represent 58% of the total permanent staff and 55% of the Manager Grade and above cadre (corporate management, executive management and managers grade 3 – I, II, III).

Ms. X is an Assistant Manager (Grade 3 – III) and currently works in a main branch located in an urban area. She joined the ABC Bank in year 2011 and she was first appointed to a small branch in a rural area and then transferred to the main branch of the same district. She is a finance graduate and a qualified member of CIMA and IBSL. She is married and her

spouse works as an Accountant in a leading FMCG firm situated at Colombo. She has a one child.

According to her, she has been experiencing high work-related stress in her job at the said branch. This is because of the long working hours, work overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, autocratic leadership style of the branch manager, verbal harassments, etc. experienced by her in her job.

She works long working hours as the bank services are open to the public from 8.00 am to 6.00 p.m. As the officer in charge, most of the time she leaves the office around 8.30 pm to 9.00 p.m. after all cash counters are balanced by the tellers and cash safes are locked. She has to spend late nights, holidays and weekends at work to cover up their workloads and to meet urgent work obligations. This has reduced the time she spends with her family. As a married woman she faces a lot of stress in adjusting time for her family, upbringing of her child and taking care of the house. Sometime it requires arranging for child care and elderly care at the weekends and holidays. This has created a hostile environment at her home. There fore as a result of her job stress she faces work and family life conflict situation.

According to her, not only she, other women executives of the branch is also experiencing the same circumstances.

Executives, including Ms. X in this branch have assigned many tasks in a little time. They have to perform more activities during a day. As an example Ms. X acts as a credit officer in charge, cash officer in charge and also some time in busy banking hours she also has to act as the saving officer in charge. So she is facing the difficulty of balancing all tasks as her responsibilities are not clear and also beyond her capacity. Hence, she experiences very stressful situation in busy hours.

also autocratic leadership style of the Branch Manager has also caused to a more stressful working environment. The Branch Manager always believes that he is right and does not consult his subordinates in making decisions relating to branch (e.g achieving branch targets, delegating responsibilities, etc.). He achieves the branch targets by pressurising all the staff. He does not consider his subordinates' capacity and roles and somehow wants to get the job done. As an Example, even though Ms. X has assigned

multi tasks, all the officers, including Ms. X, were assigned a target of collecting Rs. XX Mn fixed deposits within a short time period. So she does not like the branch manager's leadership style and it has created a feeling of tension and anxiety in her mind.

Moreover, there is strained relationship with the staff members. There is a lack of support from others and everyone attempts to bypass the works. Some members try to create good rapport with the branch manager and obtain benefits by creating negative feelings about their peers. The men executives do not have supportive attitudes towards their women colleagues. Always everyone try to grab an existing customer who visits the bank as a potential customer and achieve their assigned targets. Branch targets are not considered as a collective effort as a consequence of the pressure received from the Branch Manager. So this aggressive working environment has also increased her stress level.

High work-related stress situation she faced has led to poor morale, lack in concentration and lack of interest in her job reducing her job satisfaction. so her productivity and work efficiency has also come down. Few executive women worked in the recent past have left the Bank due to this high job stress they faced at the branch level. But Ms. X does not want to leave the Bank due to the job stability and lifetime security receives from working in a Bank than working in a private company or any other government organization. Therefore Ms. X is facing the challenge of balancing her family and work life.

Analysing the issue utilizing the contemporary management knowledge

The above management problem has been analyzed and evaluated in the ensuing section utilizing knowledge of contemporary management thinking.

Consumerism

Today the consumer is called as the king of the market and most of the business organizations operate in order to satisfy their customers best. According to Velasquez, M. G., (2011)^[13] the influence of the general public, as end users of products and services, on the way companies manufactures and sells their goods. Consumers exert considerable power over companies as organizations become more consumer focused. This is also common scenario in banking sector and therefore banks introduce various types of facilities to keep their customers happy. They have introduced modern facilities such as anywhere banking facility, trade services, phone banking facility, internet banking facility, credit card, debit/ATM card, and mobile banking and Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS). Not only that, most of the banks provide 365 day service with extending transaction time for customers. also doorstep banking facilities are being offered by some of these banks to cater to convenience lifestyle of its customers.

There fore the whole society has become victims of the consumerism and all are in the same rat race where there is no ending. As an organization banks has to keep consumerism alive in order to survive in the business, otherwise someone else will grab the chance and acquire more resources than them. To keep the consumerism alive, they should provide

efficient service to the customers and hence banks require labour force. This is where the problem begins. According to Holt, D.B., (2005)^[2] consumerism is a serious social problem because what it means is that we have an economy in which it is becoming increasingly difficult to deliver free time to people. Without adequate free time, you suffer the erosion of the social fabric and difficulties reproducing the non-market economy and also an everyday reality of community. We think there's a way in which the market is cannibalizing.

As stated in the issue female represent in the banking sector has 58% and among them 55% is represent in the executive carder. Earlier time most of women have stronger preference for short hours jobs such as teaching, because of their household responsibilities. But today people wants to earn more money to have luxurious life, there's no matter whether male or female. Normally working in a bank provides recognition in the society and also higher salary, but less free time. So why people are more willing to accept them, simply according to Holt, D. B., (2005)^[2] less leisure means more income. Less income means more leisure. This common social phenomenon is reflecting by the Ms. X works in ABC Bank.

Implications of Consumerism

With the globalization, the needs and the requirements of the human have become more complex and complicated. In the present scenario, money is the crucial factor in obtaining such needs most of which are beyond the biological and social needs required for survival. Therefore, Ms. X is compelled to carry out her employment in order to ensure the satisfactorily income level of her family. It is obvious that the women's contribution towards the income of the family has become more important in the current context, which is common to the family of Ms.X. Hence she has to play an important role in order to upgrade the economic strength of her family, which is a deviation of the traditional role of the women in our society. Perhaps, Ms.X might receive a higher monthly remuneration than her husband by engaging in overtime/holiday works, being the main income provider of the family.

It is noted that, though Ms.X is experiencing a stress over her job, she is not willing to leave the bank at this stage. This is due to fact that job security/stability and also the satisfactorily remuneration she receives from the employment, which cannot be expected from any other private or government organization. Hence, Ms. X is aware that she will not be able to lead a good lifestyle if she leaves the job.

The employees of the bank have been used to perform the duties individually and lack of team works. Some employees have been maintaining a good rapport with the Manager for sake of their own benefits in terms of promotions, salary increments for which the recommendation of the Manager is required. The ultimate purpose of such events is to receive enhanced benefits, especially in terms of money, which needs to satisfy the needs of the people who are under the influence of consumerism.

At present, there is a highly competitive environment in banking sector and all are strive to become the market leader. This situation is common to the bank where Ms. X works. In order to keep the consumerism alive the bank has to be more productive. To achieve this, Ms. X is assigned to perform multi tasks during the day by the Manager. The Manager's

intention is to provide an efficient customer service by deploying the employees in multiple tasks and long working hours.

Feminism

In early 19th century, women protest and campaign against feminism to obtain equal rights in social, political, educational and economic backgrounds. As a result, they attempted to bring about social change in each of these areas in today context and it is expressed by the percentage of women representation in political, educational and economic sectors. Liberal feminism movement in UK provided an opportunity for the equal rights, equal pay at work, healthcare, childcare, maternity leave, flexible working hours, reproductive rights, abortion access, anti-sexual harassment, educational equality, fair compensation for work and sexual and domestic violence against women. This eventually spread around the world ensuring women position in today context.

Gendering has been particularly productive in organizational theory. Work place is to be identified as gender-neutral place. Gender issue arise along with people's attitudes to such gender related matters, workplace structure, discourses, cultures, practices, policies, interactions and procedures rather than their individual traits. Gender neutrality is measured by the way that job, pay, hierarchies and powers of organization. The analytical point of "gender and gendering" as opposed to women in management can shift the focus on women individuals, or a social group, to examining management or organizational process and practices.

In our case study, we have identified issues related to the feminist inequalities as work family conflict and gender different in tasks and expected duties.

Work-family conflict

In the issue discussed Ms. X is an Assistant Manager in ABC bank and as a representative employee in managerial position her job role requires more time, commitment and effort. As a manager working in main branch of the bank she is being experiencing high work related stress, in which she generally work more than 12 hours a day (8.30 a.m. to 9.00 p.m.) and sometimes stay overnight, holidays and weekend to cover up urgent work obligation.

As a result she spends less time with her family and finds that her duties and responsibilities to her husband and children are not met. Even though she spent more hours at work her mind is juggling here and there and not focused fully on the job tasks. There fore she may not contribute at her full potential. She find it difficult in handling and balancing both work and family responsibilities and duties at the same time and even find complicatedness in upbringing her child, taking care of the child and household work and finding time for family.

In the above said issue there is no discrimination state among male and female executives. In a given autocratic working environment (when tasks are equally assigned to both men and women) women experience more stress compared to men. When both husband and wife work full-time outside home, wife carries considerably greater household activities compared to the husband. Eventually, overload work and stress at work place sometimes may result in family life conflicts and divorce (Robbins *et al.*, 2013)^[11].

However, understanding women's rights and ethical beliefs are important in this aspect, in which understanding of liberal feminism for a productive management in working environment is important. As a result, the ABC bank should have looked at the healthcare, childcare, and flexibility of working hours for women and fair compensation at work. Given that work-life balance opportunities may results in restraining employees leaving their job and they may collaborate effectively to their work.

Balancing work-life demands now surpass job security as an employee priority. Today many organizations are trying to help people achieve work-life balance in order to attract and retain the most capable and motivated employees.

Power and Politics

The prototypal manager is male with male traits: aggressive, competitive and rational, while the female traits are emotional and indecisiveness. The emotional and feminine are not seen as business material, yet this is the message given by the wearing of feminine clothes. Women can lose out in organizational politics then, because they do not have the same access to power within the organization. But there is another way that women can lose out in organizational politics. They can deny the value of politicking and power mongering.

In encouraging women managers to be politically skilled, Arroba and James advocate using "wise" behaviour which encompasses the two dimensions that make up political competence. Unfortunately, organizations that bias sources of power in favour of men often hook women into using unwise behaviour. Organizational power balances towards men, encouraging many women to use "innocent" behaviour. The innocent politician is blind to power and organizational issues, placing emphasis on rationality and the formal organization. Sandi Mann, (1995)^[4].

As this is the situation with the female Assistant Manager Ms. X. She sees politics as unpleasant. She assumes that she can mobilize resources through formal channels and believes that promotion is gained by working hard without the need to influence others. And she forgets that if she stands aside from politics, it won't be long she might lose that her executive position. The male manager is very much aware of her non-involvement in politics that is why he keeps on shifting more files to her table, since she believes that it is only through such hard work she will get her promotion. The truth is that this fact does not truly hold water in a Contemporary Management Organization such as bank where changes take place every now and then. Of which if one is not well schooled in politics will end up seeing himself/ herself not working in the organization anymore because of the power and politics that goes hand-in-hand with such changes. The innocent politician believes that politics simply interfere with the processes of getting the job done.

A sufficient justification is that according to the Assistant Manager, she has been experiencing high work-related stress in her job at the said branch. This is because of the long working hours, work overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, autocratic leadership style of the branch manager, verbal harassments, etc. experienced by her in her job. And funny enough this is a political tactics used by the manager to push

her out of the organization. So that she will no longer be a threat to him and his managerial position. But on the other hand she sees the workload as evidence that she is effective and working efficiently at the same time, which is a guarantee for her promotion. This is her ideology because she don't believe in organizational politics and she don't want to participate in one if at all any exist in the organization.

The truth behind Ms. X who doesn't believe and doesn't participate in organizational politics, but rather believes in hard work to earn promotion for herself is that when the above mentioned stress and frustration sets in, she will be demoralized and demotivated, which will eventually makes her ineffective and inefficient. And when all these negative traits are at work in her, she will finally lose the job, because no organization wants to retain anyone who is not productive.

According to her, not only she, other women executives of the branch is also experiencing the same circumstances. This is true because women always lose out in organizational politics. Until women change their orientation towards organizational politics, they will continue to lose out in it.

In organizational politics, there are two types of people. They are: the powerful people, and the powerless people.

The powerful people are those people who use power to play organizational politics. In our scenario, the branch manager is seen as the powerful person who uses his positional powers as the manager to play organizational politics on his assistant who is Ms. X. In targets of power, the powerless are always the targets of the powerful in an organization. The manager being the powerful person saw that Ms. X is intelligent, he now directed all files even the ones that concerns him to her desk.

The male manager also made use of gender as his target power to frustrate the female assistant manager who is Ms. X. This is clearly seen by the way he loads it over her by acting as the boss and leaving her to do the bulk of the work.

Since Ms. X so much believes in her hard work than playing politics, she has no other option but to use her knowledge power which is her expert power to be productive in the organization. This is the more reason more files are always kept on her desk by her manager.

On the other hand, her male manager being a powerful person in the organization is using coercive power to punish her indirectly by pushing so many files to her desk, even to the extent that she no longer have pleasurable time with her family. And even her only child is now being taken care of by a nanny who might eventually bring harm to her only child, either presently or in the near future.

This branch manager engaged himself in politics at his work place because politics is individual, i.e. getting things done from others in your own way. Here, the manager uses the assistant manager, Ms. X to get things done in his own way, whether it is conducive for Ms. X or not. In conclusion, when the workload and stress is not well managed, it affects the performance level of the board of directors precisely and the company's performance level as a whole, see (Nwokwu, Dharmadasa, & Rathnasingha, 2018; Nwokwu, Atapattu, & Azeez, 2019; Nwokwu, 2018; Nwokwu, Rathnasingha & Pradeep, 2019) ^[9, 7, 8, 6].

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