

A study on Occupational Stress and the Method of Coping Strategies adopted by Bank Executives in State Banks in Sri Lanka

By

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1. Abstract

Stress is simply a reaction to a stimulus that disturbs our physical or mental equilibrium. In other words, it is an omnipresent part of life. A stressful event can trigger the “fight-or flight” response, causing hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol to surge through the body. This paper gives overview about occupational stress along with the concept of coping strategies. The objective of this study is to study the method of coping strategies adopted by bank executives when they have different levels of occupational stress. This study comes under the category of description study as the researcher is interested in determining the relationship between different variables. The strength of survey research is the wide scope to collect detailed information from a sample of executives attached to state banks in Sri Lanka.

2. Coping Strategies

Coping: ‘Coping’ refers to any attempt to deal with a stressful situation in which a person feels that he must do something, but which exceeds his existing adaptation response patterns. It is the behaviour by which an individual attempts to deal effectively or contend successfully with a person or a task, and successfully manage the situation or problem.

Coping refers to the thoughts and actions people use to deal with stress. Coping strategies are defined as "conscious, rational ways for dealing with the anxieties of life" and are often categorized into active (or approach) and passive (or avoidance) strategies.

1. Active strategies include confronted coping, seeking social support, planned problem solving and positive reappraisal.

2. Passive strategies include distancing, self-control, accepting responsibility, and escape/avoidance.

In large part, feeling stressed or not depends on whether we believe we have the coping resources to deal with the challenges facing us. Most coping strategies fall into one of two broad categories: Problem-focused and Emotion-focused. Problem-focused coping strategies are used to tackle the problem directly. Emotion-focused coping strategies are used to handle feelings of distress, rather than the actual problem. In general, research has shown that problem-focused coping strategies are the most effective way for dealing with stress.

3. Types of Coping Strategies

The first approach focuses on positive coping strategies that usually involve gaining family and social support in an attempt to reduce stress. A few examples of positive coping strategies include support group meetings, sharing

stressful experiences with others (including family members) and religious-based support groups. The second approach used to cope with stress includes negative coping strategies. Generally negative coping strategies involve self-destructive methods to reduce stress including increased cigarette smoking and avoidance of friends and family members.

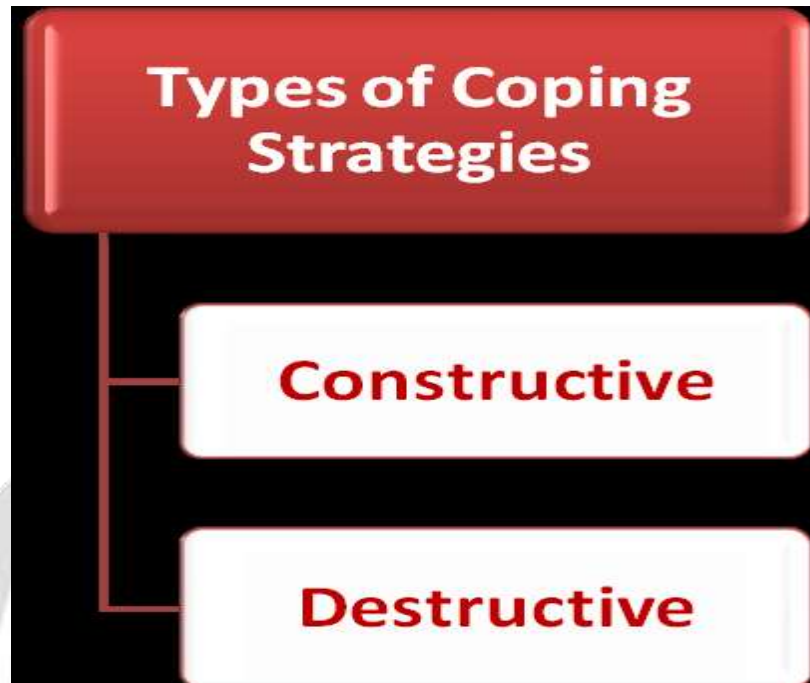


Figure 1 : Types of Coping Strategies

4. Objectives and Hypothesis

Objective : To study the method of coping strategies adopted by bank executives when they have different levels of occupational stress.

Null Hypothesis (H0): Coping strategies of the bank executives do not differ with respect to gender and designation when they have low occupational stress and high occupational stress.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Coping strategies of the bank executives significantly differ with respect to gender and designation when they have low occupational stress and high occupational stress.

Table 1.1: t-Test for Coping Strategies and Gender with respect to Low Level Occupational Stress

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Talk with my spouse, relative or friend about problem.	Male	86	4.42	.563	8.874	.000
	Female	71	3.31	.980		
Pray for guidance and strength.	Male	86	4.13	.878	1.202	.000
	Female	71	3.90	1.456		
Make a plan of action and follow it.	Male	86	3.87	2.272	-3.091	.000
	Female	71	3.90	1.456		

	Female	71	4.37	.485		
Exercise regularly to reduce tension.	Male	86	4.71	.528	34.20	.041
	Female	71	1.44	.670		
Rely on my faith in God to see me through this rough time.	Male	86	2.07	.809	-27.92	.000
	Female	71	4.96	.365		
Stay away from everyone, I want to be alone.	Male	86	3.35	1.166	3.667	.000
	Female	71	2.44	1.918		
Smoke more to help me relax.	Male	86	2.13	1.272	3091	.000
	Female	71	1.63	.485		
Shout at my spouse, family members or a professional.	Male	86	1.58	.913	-.435	.000
	Female	71	1.63	.485		
Let your feelings out by smashing things.	Male	86	2.03	.323	-53.83	.786
	Female	71	4.96	.356		
Hang out more with my fellow officer at a bar.	Male	86	2.65	1.607	-1.706	.538
	Female	71	3.07	1.437		
Gamble.	Male	86	2.35	1.166	-2.055	.265
	Female	71	2.70	.962		
Increase my sexual activity.	Male	86	4.12	.913	19.02	.000
	Female	71	1.69	.623		
Try to act as if nothing is bothering me.	Male	86	3.16	.852	-12.04	.000
	Female	71	4.59	.575		

Table 1.1 shows the t-test between coping strategies and gender of the respondents with respect to their low occupational stress. While experience low occupational stress, the respondents choose constructive coping strategies rather than destructive coping strategies. Constructive coping strategies are adopted by the majority of bank executives, while they are experiencing occupational stress. They adequately make a plan to reduce it. The male respondents adopt the constructive coping strategies to reduce occupational stress doing exercise regularly, Talk with spouse, relative or friend about problem and pray for guidance and strength when their job produces more strain which gives difficulty in work performance. To avoid job related stress they are practicing some regular exercise. And also it could be identified the female respondents to rely on faith in god and make a plan of action and follow it.

Destructive coping strategies are the occasional choice for the bank executives to cope with low occupational stress. By probing into the table, it could be recognized that bank executives differ significantly in destructive coping strategies such as, smoke more, Shout at spouse, increase in sexual activities, and try to act as if nothing is bothering with respect to their gender. Male executives differ significantly over female in most of the above mentioned destructive coping strategies.

Table 1.2 shows the t-test between coping strategies and gender of the respondents with respect to their high occupational stress.

While experience high occupational stress, the respondents choose constructive coping strategies rather than destructive coping strategies. Constructive coping strategies are adopted by the majority of bank executives, while they are experiencing occupational stress. They adequately make a plan to reduce it. The male respondents adopt the constructive coping strategies to reduce occupational stress doing exercise regularly, Talk with spouse, relative or friend about problem and pray for guidance and strength when their job produces more strain which gives difficulty in work performance. Results of this study support the findings reported by Zhang, et al., (2009) that, Constructive coping strategies are adopted by the majority of bank executives, while they are experiencing occupational stress. To avoid the job related stress they are practicing some regular exercise. And also it could be identified that the female respondents to adopt rely on faith in god and make a plan of action and follow it.

Table 1.2: t-Test for Coping Strategies and Gender with Respect to High Level Occupational Stress

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Talk with my spouse, relative or friend about problem.	Male	192	3.38	.487	-16.177	.000
	Female	38	4.82	.563		
Pray for guidance and strength.	Male	192	3.82	.573	14.893	.279
	Female	38	2.24	.714		
Make a plan of action and follow it.	Male	192	3.24	.973	11.205	.000
	Female	38	1.32	.933		
Exercise regularly to reduce tension.	Male	192	2.85	1.125	-9.685	.000
	Female	38	4.74	.921		
Rely on my faith in God to see me through this rough time.	Male	192	3.16	1.115	-4.793	.000
	Female	38	4.03	.162		
Stay away from everyone, I want to be alone.	Male	192	1.73	.511	-21.958	.242
	Female	38	3.84	.679		
Smoke more to help me relax.	Male	192	1.95	1.127	5.051	.000
	Female	38	1.03	.162		
Shout at my spouse, family members or a professional.	Male	192	2.14	1.455	.903	.000
	Female	38	1.92	.273		
Let your feelings out by smashing things.	Male	192	3.24	.973	10.89	.000
	Female	38	1.34	1.021		
Gamble	Male	192	1.29	.896	-16.15	.301
	Female	38	3.79	.741		
Hang out more with my fellow officer at a bar.	Male	192	1.19	.605	-26.38	.001
	Female	38	4.61	1.175		
Increase my sexual activity.	Male	192	1.66	.485	-4.49	.000
	Female	38	2.05	.517		
Try to act as if nothing is bothering me.	Male	192	2.95	1.366	3.144	.000
	Female	38	2.24	.714		

Destructive coping strategies are the occasional choice for the bank executives to cope with low occupational stress. By probing into the table, it could be recognized that bank executives differ significantly in destructive coping strategies such as, smoke more, Shout at spouse, increase in sexual activities, and try to act as if nothing is bothering with respect to their gender. Male executives differ significantly over female in most of the above mentioned destructive coping strategies.

Table 1.3: t-Test for Coping Strategies and Designation with Respect to Low Level Occupational Stress

S.No	Coping Strategies	Designation	N	Mean	SD	t	p
1.	Talk with my spouse, relative or friend about problem.	B.M	118	3.89	1.11	.390	.533
		S.O	39	4.00	.615		
		Total	157	3.92	1.02		
2.	Pray for guidance and strength. Branch	B.M	118	3.77	.779	25.71	.000
		S.O	39	4.79	.307		
		Total	157	4.03	.749		
3.	Make a plan of action and follow it.	B.M	118	4.19	1.387	4.577	.034
		S.O	39	3.79	.922		
		Total	157	4.10	1.49		
4.	Exercise regularly to reduce tension.	B.M	118	3.83	1.66	88.69	.000
		S.O	39	1.41	.922		
		Total	157	3.23	1.54		
5.	Rely on my faith in God to see me through this rough time.	B.M	118	2.91	1.191	56.96	.000
		S.O	39	4.79	.615		
		Total	157	3.38	1.090		
6.	Stay away from everyone, I want to be alone.	B.M	118	3.44	1.546	65.83	.000
		S.O	39	1.41	.307		
		Total	157	2.94	1.448		
7.	Smoke more to help me relax	B.M	118	1.81	1.11	4.577	.034
		S.O	39	2.21	.615		
		Total	157	1.90	1.02		
8.	Shout at my spouse, family members or a professional	B.M	118	1.44	.779	26.65	.000
		S.O	39	2.10	.307		
		Total	157	1.61	55.72		
9.	Let your feelings out by smashing things.	B.M	118	2.92	1.387	55.72	.000
		S.O	39	4.69	.922		
		Total	157	3.36	1.49		
10.	Hang out more with my fellow officer at a bar.	B.M	118	3.02	1.66	6.415	.012
		S.O	39	2.31	.922		
		Total	157	2.84	1.54		
11.	Gamble	B.M	118	2.61	1.191	4.131	.044
		S.O	39	2.21	.615		
		Total	157	2.51	1.090		

12.	Increase my sexual activity.	B.M S.O Total	118 39 157	3.32 2.10 3.02	1.546 .307 1.448	23.84	.000
13.	Try to act as if nothing is bothering me	B.M S.O Total	118 39 157	3.52 4.69 3.81	1.11 .615 1.02	50.71	.000

Table 1.3 shows the t-test between coping strategies and designation of the respondents with respect to their low occupational stress.

While experience low occupational stress, the respondents choose constructive coping strategies rather than destructive coping strategies. Constructive coping strategies are adopted by the majority of bank executives, while they are experiencing occupational stress. They adequately make a plan to reduce it. The senior officer adopts the constructive coping strategies to reduce occupational stress talk with spouse, pray for guidance, make plan of action and rely on faith in god.

To avoid job related stress they talk with spouse. And also it could be identified that the branch manager makes a plan of action and follow it. Destructive coping strategies are the occasional choice for the bank executives to cope with low occupational stress. By probing into the table, it could be recognized that bank executives differ significantly in destructive coping strategies such as, feelings out by smashing and try to act as if nothing is bothering with respect to their designation. Senior officer differs significantly over branch manager in most of the above mentioned destructive coping strategies.

Table 1.4: F-Test for Coping Strategies and Designation with Respect to Low Level Occupational Stress

S.No	Coping Strategies	Designation	Mean	SD	F	p
1	Talk with my spouse, relative or friend about problem.	B.M A.M S.O Total	4.15 3.65 3.00 3.62	.967 .591 .000 .731	40.65	.000
2.	Pray for guidance and strength.	B.M A.M S.O Total	2.88 3.64 4.00 3.56	1.024 .772 .000 .838	29.13	.000
3.	Make a plan of action and follow it.	B.M A.M S.O Total	2.29 2.75 4.00 2.92	1.473 1.062 .000 1.202	36.15	.000
4.	Exercise regularly to reduce tension.	B.M A.M S.O Total	3.79 3.37 2.00 3.17	1.515 1.190 .000 1.298	34.97	.000
5.	Rely on my faith in God to see me through this rough time.	B.M A.M S.O Total	3.94 2.81 4.00 3.30	.480 1.156 .000 1.070	45.60	.000

6.	Stay away from everyone, I want to be alone.	B.M A.M S.O Total	3.19 1.71 2.00 2.08	1.085 .757 .000 .954	67.39	.000
7.	Smoke more to help me relax	B.M A.M S.O Total	1.90 1.34 2.96 1.80	1.057 .953 .286 1.087	60.96	.000
8.	Shout at my spouse, family members or a professional	B.M A.M S.O Total	1.67 2.66 1.00 2.10	.630 1.456 .000 1.336	41.93	.000
9.	Let your feelings out by smashing things.	B.M A.M S.O Total	2.31 2.75 4.00 2.93	1.504 1.062 .000 1.207	34.97	.000
10.	Hang out more with my fellow officer at a bar.	B.M A.M S.O Total	2.85 1.54 1.00 1.70	1.487 1.158 .0000 1.275	36.87	.000
11.	11 Gamble	B.M A.M S.O Total	3.29 1.48 1.00 1.76	1.946 1.105 .000 1.463	50.62	.000
12.	Increase my sexual activity.	B.M A.M S.O Total	1.71 2.00 1.00 1.73	.713 .000 .000 .511	170.0	.000
13.	Try to act as if nothing is bothering me	B.M A.M S.O Total	2.85 2.40 4.00 2.83	1.031 1.376 .000 1.308	34.77	.000

Table 1.4 shows the F-test between coping strategies and designation of the respondents with respect to their high occupational stress. While experience high occupational stress, the respondents choose constructive coping strategies rather than destructive coping strategies. Constructive coping strategies are adopted by the majority of bank executives, while they are experiencing occupational stress. They adequately make a plan to reduce it. The branch managers adopt the constructive coping strategies to reduce occupational stress talk with spouse and doing exercise regularly. The senior officers adopt the constructive coping strategies to reduce occupational pray for guidance, make plan of action and relay on faith in god. Destructive coping strategies are the occasional choice for the bank executives to cope with low occupational stress. By probing into the table, it could be recognized that bank executives differ significantly in destructive coping strategies such as, feelings out by smashing and try to act as if nothing is bothering with respect to their designation. Senior officer differs significantly over branch manager most of the above mentioned destructive coping strategies. And also it could be identified that the assistant manager to do not adopt coping strategies.

5. Conclusion

The proposed null hypothesis (H0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted (H1) which means that the coping strategies of the bank executives differ significantly when they have low occupational and high occupational stress. Most of the

male executives adopt different coping strategies like talking with their spouse, pray for guidance, doing regular exercise, rely on the faith of the god, staying away for others, and involving in sexual activities, when they have low occupational stress. However, for high occupational stress, they adopt coping strategies like praying for guidance and strength, making a plan of action to follow, smashing things, and acting that if nothing has happened. On the other side, for low occupational stress, female executives adopt coping strategies like, making a plan of action, rely of the faith of the God, and try acting that if nothing has happened. For high occupational stress, they talk with their spouse, relatives and friends about the problem, do regular exercise, rely on the faith of God, and do gamble for some time. Therefore, it is concluded that the bank executives of different levels of stress adopt different methods of coping strategies.

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