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Impact of somatic complaints on the mental health of bank sector employees: An empirical study

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Abstract

Somatic complaints refer to bodily symptoms that people encounter that don't have obvious biological origins, such as headaches, digestive issues, and musculoskeletal discomfort. There is a scarcity of research explicitly concentrating on the banking industry, despite prior studies looking at the connection between somatic symptoms and mental health in a variety of professional circumstances. This study explores somatic symptoms' impact on banking sector employees' mental health. The research initiative intends to collect quantitative data through questionnaires using a mixed methods approach to determine the incidence and severity of somatic symptoms experienced by bank personnel. Questionnaires (n=196) were distributed amongst different public and private banks of Southern Punjab. The data was analyzed using a reliability test, linear regression model, and correlation to find the relation between somatic complaints and mental health issues. The results show that there is a positive relationship between somatic complaints and mental health issues, *i.e.*, a person having somatic complaints will also suffer from mental health issues, hence, satisfies the research hypothesis. Moreover, according to the study, greater levels of somatic complaints among workers in the banking industry are correlated with higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. The association between somatic symptoms and mental health was also examined with respect to potential moderating factors such as company culture, workload, and job satisfaction. In a nutshell, enhancing an employee's psychological health may benefit their work happiness, productivity, and overall organizational performance.

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SCAN ME



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Introduction

In the modern age, somatic symptom disorder or somatic complaints are the physical symptoms experienced by individuals with no medical origin. These symptoms cause bodily discomfort and affect the daily functioning of the individual. The symptoms include headache, fatigue, heart palpitation, gastrointestinal issues, muscle tension, etc. Somatic symptom disorder (SSD) is a type of mental disease that produces one or more physical symptoms, including pain, previously called "somatization disorder" or "somatoform disorder" [1]. Somatic complaints are vigorously associated with depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and stress. Depression and anxiety disorders are common in people with somatic disorders [2]. According to several earlier studies, patients in non-Western nations are more likely than patients in Western nations to report somatic complaints [3]. Stress-related mental health issues have become more prevalent in the banking industry as workplace stress is undeniably a major contributor to poor health and a substantial risk factor for the psychological and social well-being of bank employees [4]. In Pakistan, the banking sector is under immense stress due to economic challenges, and political and security issues therefore, workers facing several somatic complaints and other mental health issues. Based on the organizational climate of Nigerian bank employees, work pressure as a characteristic observed to link with somatic symptoms appears unavoidable [5]. When psychological symptoms are present, depression is typically suspected [6]. Stress management at the individual and organizational level should be implemented for physiological well-being.

This research study keeps in view the symptoms of somatic complaints and depression encountered by bank workers, its effects on workers' daily lives, and identifies the factors responsible for somatic complaints. Moreover, giving possible suggestions for coping with somatic complaints and mental health issues among bank workers.

Materials and Methods

Research design

Survey design was used to get qualitative data across banks within the target population of four cities i. e., Bahawalpur, Bahawal Nagar, Chishtian, and Minchinabad, to focus on the somatic complaints and

depression symptoms among employees of the banking industry and to address specific issues related to mental health caused by somatic effects that affect bank personnel. Moreover, a face-to-face survey-based questionnaire was used in the study.

Data collection

The data collection process was performed via questionnaire distributions. The questionnaire was created by modifying some questionnaires used in earlier studies [7]; [8] for the somatic subscale, depression subscale components, and occupational stress. The information about somatic subscale (headache, tightness in the chest, muscle tension, back pain, dizziness, chest pain, neck or shoulder pain, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, soreness in more than half of the body's muscles, palpitation or increased heart rate) and Depression Subscale (loss of interest in daily or leisure activities, insomnia, irritable mood, unable to feel happy or decreased ability to feel happy, depressed mood or tearful, feelings of self-reproach or guilt, loss of interest in sexual desire, anxious or nervous, unable to concentrate, thoughts of death or suicidal ideas, fatigue or loss of energy, decreased appetite or loss of appetite) was collected from bank employees. A total of 196 questionnaires were distributed among the bank personnel from different bank departments to investigate stress levels at different positions. Both male and female employees were included in the research.

Statistical analysis

A statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. The regression model (ANOVA test), reliability test, and correlation were applied to find an association between somatic complaints and mental health issues.

Results

The current study focuses on the somatic complaints and health issues being experienced by bank workers. Out of 196 questioners 52 were filled by Bahawalpur, 47 by Bahawal Nagar, 56 by Minchinabad, and 41 by Chishtian, Pakistan (**Fig. 1**).

A total of 196 bank employees fills the questioner along with 151(77%) males and 45(23%) females. It shows that female's participation in banking or finance sector is low due to different barriers.

The study surveyed a total of 196 employees, with a majority being male. The age distribution shows that the largest group of employees (103) falls within the 18-30 age range indicating the majority of the respondents belong to youth, including 72 males and 31 females. The 31-40 age group consists of 78 employees, with 63 males and 15 females. The 41-50 age group is smaller, comprising 14 males and no females, while only one male employee is over 50 years old (Fig. 2).

Different private and government banks were included in the research to get the data (Fig. 3). Most of the respondents belonged to the banks HBL (16.3%) and Bank Alfalah (11.7%).

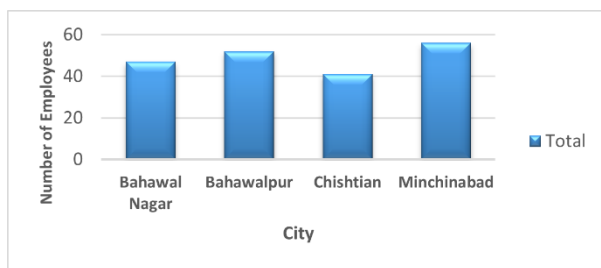


Fig. 1: City-wise employees’ distribution

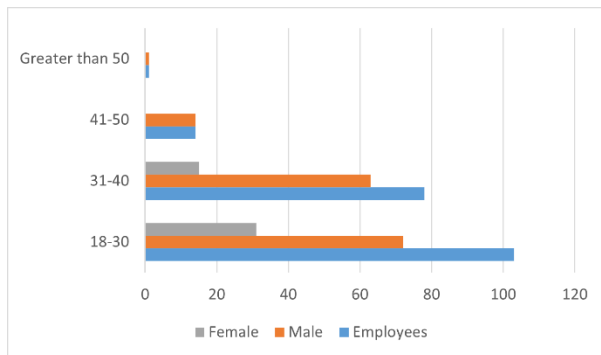


Fig. 2: Age and gender distribution of employees

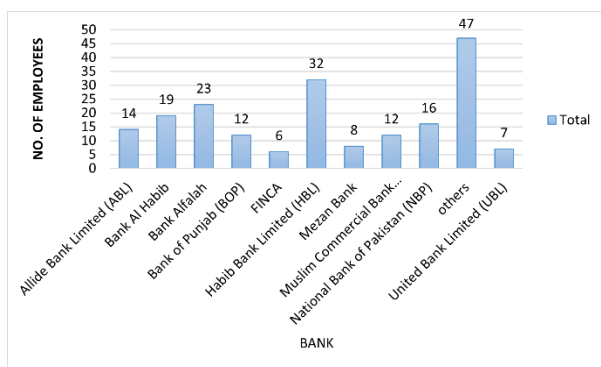


Fig. 3: Distribution of employees across various banks

The data from a Somatic subscale, which evaluates the intensity of different bodily symptoms among

participants, can be reviewed in Table 1. This subscale is probably from a psychological or medical assessment. A distinct symptom, such as headaches, tense muscles, or chest pain, is represented by each row. On a scale of "Not at all" (0) to "Very Much/Severe" (3), the symptoms are ranked. The number in each column indicates how many people at that severity level reported having the symptom.

For example, Headache: 11 employees among 196 reported no headache, 129 experienced it "a little bit," 47 experienced it "almost," and 9 experienced it "very much/severe."

Table 2 displays details regarding a range of depression-related symptoms, which are grouped according to a "Depression Subscale." It's arranged according to how often each symptom is felt, with possibilities ranging from "Very Much/severe" (3) to "Not at all" (0).

Maximum workers go through mental health issues due to hectic working routine. The workers who had somatic complaints also deal with depression and anxiety, it shows that there is a positive correlation between somatic complaints and mental health issues as shown in Table 1 and it was our hypotheses as well that has been proved successfully.

Table 3 shows the positive correlation between somatic complaints and mental health issues with a correlation of .9776. Thus, the hypothesis which stated that "there is a positive relationship between somatic complaints and mental health issues" has been accepted.

A measurement is considered to be reliable if it generates consistently accurate findings with the same values [9]. In other words, the consistency with which the research tool yields the same conclusions when applied again under the same circumstances [10]. Table 4 shows that both the variables somatic complaints and mental health issues have a Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.6. This demonstrates that the measuring instrument is reliable.

The results concluded that most of the bank employees are male (77%) and 23% are female because in Pakistan social norms and cultural practices have had an impact on the low proportion of women working in the banking industry. Traditional gender stereotypes, less educational options, societal limitations, and parental obligations are a few examples of these influences. These obstacles could be a factor in the underrepresentation of women in particular fields or occupations. The current study analyzed that youth under the age of 18-30 years have more somatic complaints and mental health issues

Table 1: Somatic symptom frequency and severity in a surveyed population

Somatic Subscale	Not at all (0)	A little bit (1)	almost (2)	Very much/severe (3)
Headache	11	129	47	9
Tightness in the chest	93	88	13	2
Muscle tension	31	115	42	8
Back pain	22	102	49	23
Dizziness	102	68	19	7
Chest pain	59	99	27	11
Neck or shoulder pain	29	96	47	24
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	132	43	18	3
Soreness in more than half of the body's muscles	67	88	30	11
Palpitation or increased heart rate	122	40	21	13

Table 2: Distribution of symptoms across severity levels for depression

Depression subscale	Not at all (0)	A little bit (1)	Almost (2)	Very much/severe (3)
1 Loss of interest in daily or leisure activities	54	80	55	7
2 Insomnia	37	99	31	29
3 Irritable mood	29	121	29	17
4 Unable to feel happy or decreased ability to feel happy	88	92	13	3
5 Depressed mood or tearful	38	83	64	11
6 Feelings of self-reproach or guilt	52	77	48	19
7 Loss of interest in sexual desire	77	76	31	12
8 Anxious or nervous	43	106	41	6
9 Unable to concentrate	45	106	33	12
10 Thoughts of death or suicidal ideas	104	78	12	2
11 Fatigue or loss of energy	13	123	33	27

Table 3: Descriptive analysis and correlation between somatic complaints and mental health issues

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Somatic Complaints	.9776	.56515	196
Mental Health	.9009	.54831	196

Table 4: Reliability statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
.819	2

because of emotional challenges, lack of awareness and support, social factors, lifestyle factors, traumatic experiences, stress, and pressure. Most of the respondents belong to the bank Habib Bank Limited (HBL) (16.3%) and Bank Al-Falah (11.7%). BSO (Branch Service Officer) post employees are more stressed than others because of various factors including customer demand and expectations, time-sensitive tasks and deadlines, operational challenges, sales targets, and performance pressure. The current findings further concluded that there is a positive and direct relationship between somatic complaints and mental health issues it means that the person having somatic complaints will also face mental health issues i. e., depression, anxiety, stress, etc.

Discussion

The study analyzed the impact of somatic complaints on the mental health of bank sector employees in

Southern Punjab i.e., Bahawalpur, Bahawal Nagar, Chishtian, and Minchinabad, Pakistan. The object of the research was to identify the stress levels and somatic issues among the workers and to give suggestions for coping with somatic complaints and mental health issues. Our results showed that the youth between the ages 21-30 years suffer the most from somatic and mental health issues. Li et al carried out a comprehensive cross-sectional survey to investigate the relationship between Chinese working women's somatic complaints and work stress. He came to the conclusion that there is a considerable correlation between the two. Furthermore, in order to comprehend and enhance women's psychosocial work environments and psychosomatic health in China and other countries, more longitudinal research as well as intervention studies are required [11]. K.M.M.et al probed about work-pressure and somatic complaints among Nigeria Bank Workers rightly stated that role conflict, customer service, contribution, rapid technological change, and a lack of responsiveness from customers are the top sources of stress for banking employees [12]. The current study found a positive relationship between somatic complaints and mental health issues, the employees suffering from somatic complaints are also having mental health issues that are affecting their daily work life. Likewise, Mgbenkemdi researched about stress level among banking employees and stated that based on the organizational climate of Nigerian bank

employees, work pressure as a characteristic observed to link with somatic symptoms appears unavoidable. According to the investigation of stress among employees of public and private banks, job overload, role authority, role conflict, and a lack of senior-level assistance are the main stressors in both sectors [5]. Malik conducted a study about occupational stress among the private and public bank sector employees in Quetta and concluded that compared to public banking workers, private employees have a heavier burden. The assigned work, in the employees' opinion, is demanding and outside the scope of their training and abilities [13]. The further findings indicate that there is a positive association between somatic complaints and mental health issues, and it also fulfills the hypothesis of the current research. Yadav declared that the majority of workers in the banking industry are stressed out, employees are under pressure to work longer than their regular hours in 84.5% of cases, and 86% of employees feel work pressure most of the time [14]. Van Dyk et al searched about the prevalence of somatic and pain complaints and correlations with sleep disturbance and their results suggest that Parent-reported somatic/pain symptoms are common in teenagers seeking therapy for behavioral insomnia (> 50%). Despite the fact that complaints are linked to more acute insomnia at intake, they do not appear to impact how well a treatment works [15]. Sillis et al carried out a study on the relationship between somatic complaints and grief in bereaved university and college students. The findings showed that there was a positive correlation between somatic complaints and bereaved students' reports of a variety of complaints, as well as a positive association between degree of grief, and type of relationship [16].

Suggestions

The ability to manage somatic complaints and mental health problems is essential for the well-being of workers in the banking industry. The recommendations of our study are

- It is important to allocate tasks properly.
- Realistic goals should be defined.
- Employees should be given the necessary time and power to meet the goals.
- It is necessary to hire and assign workers in sufficient numbers.
- Employee motivation, appropriate training, and effective communication are needed to boost their morale and productivity.
- Appreciate the staff for achieving and exceeding their goals.
- A policy for employee-friendly transfers needs to be developed.

Promote work-life balance and provide stress management programs [14].

Limitations and future directions

This study only focuses on the banking sector of 4 cities due to a shortage of time and resources. Research on somatic complaints among all the banks of Pakistan should be done. Due to the short time, we only collected 196 samples. More samples can be collected to study a broader spectrum. The current research only focuses on a few banks while the research can be done including all the banks although that will require a lot of time. It is also possible to conduct longitudinal studies to monitor changes over time in the frequency of somatic complaints and mental health problems among workers in the banking industry. The effect of technology on the mental health of employees should be studied. To better understand the effects of environment and culture on somatic complaints and mental health, compare the experiences of workers in the banking industry across various nations. Somatic complaints and mental health issues can also be investigated other than bank sector employees as educational institutes also suffer a lot in this regard.

Conclusion

In conclusion, empirical research has demonstrated that somatic complaints have a significant negative impact on the mental health of banking industry employees. These problems contribute to increased levels of stress and anxiety as well as reduced productivity at work. The ongoing relationship between somatic complaints and mental health exacerbates these issues. Employers in the banking sector should be aware of these findings and put supportive initiatives in place to improve employees' mental health. By treating somatic complaints and providing the appropriate support, banks may also help their workers become more intellectually fit overall and create a better work environment.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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