

Psychological Aspects of Bank Robberies: Prevention and Management Strategies

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Abstract

The European banking sector is going through an important phase of reorganization. National banking systems tend to be merged into larger companies to become globally competitive. This process forces more responsibility and pressure on bank employees who increasingly experience a psycho-physical discomfort related to work. The International Labor Organization (ILO) has collected the most frequent health and social problems of the worker in the banking sector: occupational stress, ergonomics problems, conflicting roles, excessive workload and an increasing number of cases of violence. In this analysis of increasing phenomena of violence in the banking sector, robberies are crucial as they represent a "predatory" act that may have consequences on both physical and psychological integrity of the worker. After a robbery, the victim may present several reactions: spontaneous resolution of trauma, acute stress disorder (ADS) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The literature found a strong association between PTSD and peri-traumatic risk factors (duration, intensity and nature of the trauma), as well as with the perceived helplessness of the traumatized worker. Based on these data, banks' stakeholders must implement policies to prevent and protect workers from robberies and subsequent psychological consequences. It would also be important to create best practices for bank personnel on how to deal with robbery and how to deal with the post-traumatic period.

Keywords: banking; robbery; organizational psychology; workplace violence; management.

1. Introduction

The banking sector is experiencing a difficult time for changes in work organizations and the global economic crisis (Anayiotos et al., 2010; Giorgi et al., 2017; Mari et al., 2017). Several surveys, including the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), have shown that stress is one of the main professional issues in the banking sector (Anderson et al., 2009). For many years the International Labor Organization (ILO) has highlighted some problems relating to workers in the credit sector: more pressure on time, ergonomics problems, conflicting roles, excessive workload, complex relationships with customers and a growing number of cases of stress and violence (Giga and Hoel, 2003).

In the banking sector as in other contexts, job demands are increasingly pressing and cause psycho-physical discomfort in the worker. This condition implies negative effects on health as well as on the functionality and effectiveness of the worker.

In Europe, the main reason for the reorganization of the credit sector lies in the significant number of mergers and acquisitions (Giorgi et al., 2018; Kunte et al., 2018). The growing integration of each national banking system in the European Union has encouraged the creation of new large companies, able to compete with the main continental banking groups (Giorgi et al.,

2017; Pohl and Tortella, 2017). This reorganization has led to the appearance of new professional risks, as well as the re-emergence of old ones, in the banking sector (Arcangeli et al., 2018; Hanley and Hoberg, 2018).

The economic crisis had two types of effects in the banking sector: the reduction in the investment capacity of customers and the greater frequency of unexpected events in the global economic market (Dom et al., 2016; Fasquillo et al., 2016; Mennini et al., 2018; Van Hal, 2015).

In European companies, younger workers often have little awareness of their roles and responsibilities (Arcangeli and Mucci, 2009; Mucci et al., 2014; Shi et al., 2018). To solve this problem, corporate policies should promote, especially in the credit sector, an active and proactive role for older workers in training younger colleagues.

The Italian National Institute for Insurance against Workplace Accidents and Occupational Diseases (INAIL) and the Independent Federation of Italian Bank Workers (FABI) carried out a survey on health and safety issues among 2,100 employees, with a focus on training and involvement in health and safety practices. The results showed that only one in three respondents felt involved in the health and safety policies implemented by the organization. Over two thirds of the participants reported mental fatigue as an indicator of stress at