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HARDINESS PERSONALITY AND STRESS FACTORS AMONG IT PROFESSIONALS IN CHENNAI, TAMILNADU

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Abstract

Preoccupation with tight work schedules, offering time bound business solutions to varied and complex problems within deadlines etc., are a typical work life which is characteristic of IT Professionals. Enhancing the strength of individuals' internal resource, especially hardiness personality, is assumed to act as a shield while encountering stressful events in occupational life. In Tamil Nadu, most of the IT companies are situated in Chennai. Among top 10 IT Companies, 378 IT Professionals were selected for the study and in this paper, an attempt has been made to study the relationship between hardiness personality and stress factors of the IT Professionals in Chennai. It is found that the IT Professionals have hardiness personality on the dimensions, 'Commitment', 'Control' and 'Challenge'. Further, the sources of stress, namely 'Work Demands', 'Career Concerns', 'Systems Maintenance', 'Role Ambiguity' and 'Job Induced Tension' are significantly related to hardiness personality of IT Professionals. 'Administrative Tasks' and 'Job Dissatisfaction' are negatively correlated to hardiness personality. 'Relationship with others' and 'Intention to quit' are not significantly related to hardiness personality.

Key words: Stress, Hardiness Personality, Hardiness Personality Dimensions, Commitment, Control, Challenge, Stress factors, Sources of Stress.

Introduction

Preoccupation with tight work schedule, offering time bound business solutions to varied and complex problems within deadline are a typical work life which is characteristic of the IT Professionals. Enhancing the strength of individual's internal resource, 'Hardiness', is assumed to act as a buffer while encountering any stressful event in occupational life. In this

paper, an attempt has been made to relate hardiness personality with occupational stress factors of the IT Professionals.

Statement of the Problem

Indian IT Professionals represent a dynamic workforce in a new and growth industry of the future. The Indian Software Industry has a remarkable success story. Hence, IT Professionals constitute an important

component of the workforce that can aid companies and government in leveraging IT to improve efficiency and compete effectively in the global markets. Thus, it is important for the organizations to understand the different types of stressors experienced by the IT Professionals. There are various sources of stress. Among them, the important sources are 'Work Demands', 'Relationship with Others', 'Career Concerns', 'Systems Maintenance', 'Role Ambiguity', 'Administrative Tasks', 'Job Dissatisfaction', 'Job Induced Tension' and 'Intention to Quit'. In recent times, focus is on harnessing the internal stressors and capacity of individuals to face demands of the work environment. Some of the key internal factors such as hardiness, self esteem, efficacy, optimism etc., are found to have positive impact on protecting psychological health by withstanding occupational stress. They may protect people from stress and lead to better adaptation. Hence, the Researchers propose to relate hardiness with stress factors. Tamil Nadu occupies the second position in India in promoting software industry. At present, Chennai, which is the Capital City of Tamil Nadu, is the second largest exporter of IT and IT enabled services next to the Silicon Valley. Hence, the study was confined to Chennai.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are,

1. To measure the hardiness among the IT Professionals
2. To find out the extent to which hardiness personality is related to various factors of occupational stress

Review of Literature

Substantial amount of research have been conducted to study the hardiness personality of various professionals. Brief reviews of related studies are furnished hereunder.

Suzanne C. Kobasa, Salvatore R. Maddi and Mark C. Puccetti (1982) examined exercise and personality-based hardiness as independent buffers of the stressful event – illness relationship. Hardiness and Exercise each interact with stressful events in decreasing illness.

S. Subramanian and M. Vinothkumar (2009) found that hardiness and self esteem tend to have negative and significant correlations with role overload, role ambiguity, low status and strenuous working conditions.

Paula G. Williams, Deborah J. Wiebe and Timothy W. Smith (1992) found hardiness to be positively related to adaptive coping variables and negatively related to maladaptive coping variables. Problem-focused, support-seeking, and avoidant coping were found to mediate the hardiness-illness relationship.

Methodology

1. Collection of Data

The study was based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected directly from the IT Professionals, with the help of a structured questionnaire. Secondary data were collected from books, journals and websites.

2. Construction of Questionnaire

Fifty item hardiness questionnaire, developed by Maddi & Kobassa (1984), was used to measure the Hardiness Personality

(ability of individuals to turn stressful circumstance into growth inducing experiences). All the items were rated on a five point scale.

3. Sampling Size

Ten top most companies in Chennai, which are serving both domestic and foreign countries, were selected for the study. As per the records of 2009 – 2010, it is found that a total of 42,800 employees were working in all the 10 companies. It was decided to select 1% of the employees as sample in each of the companies. Thus, 428 employees were selected at random by adopting the Lottery Method. Of the four hundred and twenty eight packages distributed to the *IT* professionals through the HR Managers of the companies concerned, 381 were returned. Three questionnaires were not usable due to the incomplete responses. Thus a total of 378 surveys were included in the final analysis, thus constituting a usable response rate of about 88%.

4. Tools for Analysis

The data collected, with the help of questionnaire, were analysed with the help of mean, standard deviation, co-efficient of variance, 't' value and Pearson's product moment correlation. The field work for the study was conducted from February 2011 to April 2011.

5. Hypothesis Framed

The hypothesis framed was, "There is no significant relationship between the hardiness personality and occupational stress factors of the *IT* professionals".

Analysis of the Study

Analysis of the study is summarized as follows.

- A. Measuring the hardiness and
- B. Relating the hardiness personality dimensions with occupational stress factors.

A. Measurement of Hardiness

Hardiness Personality consists of three dimensions, namely, 'Commitment', 'Control' and 'Challenge'. An attempt has been made to measure these Hardiness Personality Dimensions.

i) Commitment

Commitment measures the extent to which individuals seek involvement rather than withdrawal. Commitment contains a vital motivational quality that compels the individual to persist in pursuing a goal even in the face of repeated obstacles like 'Eager to take up life', 'Look forward to work' etc. To measure the 'Commitment', mean, standard deviation, co-efficient of variance and 't' values were calculated and it is presented in **Table-1**. It is clear that the item, 'Exciting to learn about self,' is ranked in the first place as it influences the dimension, 'Commitment', to the greatest extent, followed by 'Look forward to work', 'Eager to take up life', 'Bosses manipulate work people', 'Bosses profit by worker's hard work'. But the level of difference in the co-efficient of variance was not much in the other 11 items and therefore, all the sixteen items were taken for further analysis.

In order to measure the Hardiness Personality of the *IT* Professionals on the dimension, 'Commitment', the mean value,

standard deviation, co-efficient of variance and 't' value were calculated and they are presented in **Table-2**. There are sixteen variables in the measurement of Hardiness Personality Dimension, 'Commitment', with the score on any item ranging between 1 and 5 and the total score on the instrument could range between 16 and 80, with the neutral point at 48. A mean score above the neutral point indicates that the IT Professionals enjoyed Hardiness Personality on the dimension, 'Commitment'. From Table 2, it is found that the mean score is 60.17, which is above the neutral point. Further, 't' value shows that it is significant at or above 0.01 level. Hence it is concluded that the IT Professionals have Hardiness Personality Dimension, namely, 'Commitment'.

ii) Control

Control deals with the extent to which individual strives to exert over their circumstances rather than feeling powerless. Perception of Control or the degree to which a stressor is seen as under an individual's control, is important in the appraisal of threat. To measure the Control, mean, standard deviation, co-efficient of variance and 't' values were calculated and it is presented in **Table-3**. The Table reveals that, the item 'Seek help for difficult task' is ranked in the first place as it influences the dimension, 'Control', to the greatest extent, followed by 'Plan ahead', 'Can change what might happen', 'Unjustified reprimand at work' and 'Make plans that work'. But the level of difference in the co-efficient of variance was not much in the other 12 items and therefore, all the seventeen items were taken for further analysis.

With a view to measuring the Hardiness Personality of the IT Professionals on the dimension, 'Control', the mean value, standard deviation, co-efficient of variance and 't' value were calculated and they are presented in **Table-4**.

There are seventeen variables in the measurement of Hardiness Personality Dimension, 'Control', with the score on any item ranging between 1 and 5 and the total score on the instrument could range between 17 and 85, with the neutral point at 51. A mean score above the neutral point indicates that the IT Professionals have Hardiness Personality on the dimension, 'Control'. From Table 4, it is found that the mean score is 59.77, which is above the neutral point. Further, 't' value shows that it is significant at or above 0.01 level. Hence it is found that the IT Professionals possessed Hardiness Personality Dimension, namely, 'Control'.

iii) Challenge

Challenge measures the extent to which individuals strive to learn from experiences rather than feeling threatened. To measure the Hardiness Personality Dimension, 'Challenge', mean, standard deviation, co-efficient of variance and 't' values were calculated and it is presented in **Table-5**. It is clear that the item, 'Enjoyed being with people' is ranked in the first place as it influences the dimension, 'Challenge', to the greatest extent, followed by 'Tried and true ways are best', 'Don't like conversing with the confused', 'Financial support for people doing their best', 'Uncomfortable about daily schedule changes' and 'Respect rules that guide'. But

the level of difference in the co-efficient of variance is not much in the other 11 items and therefore, all the seventeen items were taken for further analysis.

In order to measure the Hardiness Personality of the IT Professionals on the Dimension, 'Challenge', the mean value, standard deviation, co-efficient of variance and 't' value were calculated and they are shown in **Table-6**.

There are seventeen variables in the measurement of Hardiness Personality Dimension, 'Challenge', with the score on any item ranging between 1 and 5 and the total score on the instrument could range between 17 and 85, with the neutral point at 51. A mean score above the neutral point indicates that the IT Professionals have Hardiness Personality on the dimension, 'Challenge'. From **Table-6**, it is found that the mean score is 64.46 which is above the neutral point. Further, 't' value shows that it is significant at or above 0.01 level. Hence it is found that the IT Professionals have Hardiness Personality Dimension, namely, 'Challenge'.

B. Hardiness Personality Dimensions and Occupational Stress Factors

The presence of job stress in the workplace is a major concern for both employees and organizational managers. Stress has taken an immense toll on the physical and emotional health of individuals as well as the bottom lines of organizations. Indeed, stress can lead to such negative consequences as depression, burnout, physiological and psychosomatic illness and low job satisfaction. Moreover, certain psychological and behavioural specialties of employees also

become consistent sources of stress. Some of the common work stressors included in this study are 'Work demands', 'Relationship with others', 'Career concerns', 'Systems maintenance', 'Role ambiguity', 'Administrative tasks', 'Job dissatisfaction', 'Job induced tension' and 'Intention to quit'. Now in this section, these occupational stress factors are related with the Hardiness Personality Dimensions, namely, Commitment, Control and Challenge. The relationship is presented in **Table-7**. It clearly shows that the inter-correlation among measures of occupational stress factors is generally low to high and positive. The correlation among the overall Hardiness Personality and the perceived occupational stress factors are significantly correlated in positive direction at 1% level with 'Work demands', 'Career concerns' and 'Systems maintenance'. But the overall Hardiness Personality and the occupational stress factors are significantly correlated in negative direction with 'Administrative tasks' and 'Job dissatisfaction' at 1% and 5% levels respectively. Besides, the occupational stress factor, 'Role ambiguity', is significantly correlated with overall hardiness in positive direction at 5% level of significance.

Suggestions

Based on the findings, the following suggestions are submitted for consideration.

1. A series of HRD Interventions, addressing stress alleviation activities, can be organized at periodical intervals, particularly providing regular counseling sessions to those who are weak in internal strength on work related or personal related issues and this

may help the IT Professionals cope with work related stress.

2. Adequate role clarification and role adjustment process can be resorted to for eliminating role ambiguity which is one of the major occupational stress factors. This clarification would help the IT Professionals to cope with their expanding work roles and alleviating work stress.
3. Developing human relations skills for harnessing and enriching their internal strengths and capacities, may help people to regulate emotions in the positive direction and try to establish intimacy with people around. Such behaviour may lead to closer relationship and yield greater social support which would be of psychological benefits in terms of stress and crisis in workplace.

Conclusion

From the study it is observed that Hardy Personalities have the ability to cope in a way that is adaptive, once occupational stress is perceived or encountered. It is found that the IT Professionals have Hardiness Personality on the dimensions of Commitment, Control and Challenge. Further, the sources of stress, namely, 'Work demands', 'Career concerns', 'Systems maintenance', 'Role ambiguity' and 'Job induced tension' are significantly related to Hardiness Personality of IT professionals. 'Administrative tasks' and 'Job dissatisfaction' are negatively correlated to Hardiness Personality. 'Relationship with others' and 'Intention to quit' are not significantly related to

hardiness personality. Further, in this study, some suggestions are made. If the suggestions are carried out, this would result in the improvement of performance, physical and psychological health and family life of the IT Professionals. The professionals should be convinced by the organization to accept the fact that stress is an inevitable part of their lives and they can most conveniently manage it at their cognitive and behavioural levels by themselves. This would help the IT Professionals to improve their productivity ratio.

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Table-1: Commitment

S.No.	Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of variance	't' value	Rank
1	Eager to take up life	4.399	0.733	16.66	37.11	III
2	Not excited about working	3.899	0.927	23.78	18.85	VIII
3	Bosses manipulate work people	3.854	0.779	20.21	21.31	IV
4	Goals unreached despite working hard	3.733	0.999	26.76	14.27	X
5	Bosses profit by workers' hard work	4.048	0.829	20.48	24.58	V
6	Excited by own fantasies	3.783	0.843	22.28	18.06	VI
7	Look forward to work	4.193	0.653	15.57	35.52	II
8	Excited to learn about self	4.302	0.573	13.32	44.18	I
9	Frustrated to think of being free	3.759	0.86	22.88	17.16	VII
10	No need to try best at work	3.415	1.179	34.52	6.84	XV
11	Life wasted for doing meaningless things	3.569	1.117	31.30	9.90	XII
12	Not knowing one's mind	3.873	0.974	25.15	17.43	IX
13	Ordinary work too boring	3.59	1.172	32.65	9.79	XIV
14	Disbelief in work value	3.444	1.067	30.98	8.09	XI
15	Individuality belief to impress	3.55	1.156	32.56	9.25	XIII
16	Politician's control	2.754	1.297	47.10	-3.69	XVI

Table-2: Mean, Standard Deviation, Co-efficient of Variance of the Respondents on the Hardiness Personality Dimension 'Commitment'

Mean	60.17
Standard deviation	5.95
Co-efficient of variance	9.89
't' value	186.84

Table-3: Control

S.No.	Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of variance	't' value	Rank
1	Bosses will listen	3.272	1.32	40.34	4.01	XVI
2	Plan ahead	4.108	0.711	17.31	30.30	II
3	Can change what might happen	3.698	0.817	22.09	16.61	III
4	Nothing accomplished despite efforts	3.659	0.989	27.03	12.95	VI
5	Impossible to change spouse's mind	3.299	1.16	35.16	5.01	XI
6	Loss of freedom from marriage/ family	3.19	1.299	40.72	2.84	XVII
7	Life happenings are determined	3.45	1.251	36.26	6.99	XIII
8	Useless to try hard	3.183	1.232	38.71	2.89	XIV
9	Make plans that work	3.997	0.976	24.42	19.86	V
10	Seek help for difficult task	4.265	0.717	16.81	34.30	I
11	Hard to change a friend's mind	3.079	1.21	39.30	1.27	XV
12	Cannot rectify mistakes	3.405	1.13	33.19	6.97	X
13	Handle problems by not thinking	3.468	1.028	29.64	8.85	VIII
14	Team member are born to be	3.349	1.027	30.67	6.61	IX
15	Angered at for no good reason	3.317	1.177	35.48	5.24	XII
16	Cannot help being hurt	3.474	0.994	28.61	9.27	VII
17	Unjustified reprimand at work	3.553	0.855	24.06	12.57	IV

Table-4: Mean, Standard Deviation, Co-efficient of Variance of the Respondents on the Hardiness Personality Dimension ‘Control’

Mean	59.77
Standard deviation	6.26
Co-efficient of variance	10.48
‘t’ value	176.20

Table -5: Challenge

S.No.	Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of variance	‘t’ value	Rank
1	Like work variety	4.026	0.955	23.72	20.89	IX
2	Uncomfortable about daily schedule changes	3.762	0.747	19.86	19.83	V
3	“Tried and true” ways are best	4.069	0.652	16.02	31.88	II
4	No new laws that hurt income	3.492	1.031	29.52	9.28	XIII
5	Reliable judgment from unchanged mind	3.659	0.762	20.83	16.81	VIII
6	Don’t like conversing with the confused	4.003	0.727	18.16	26.82	III
7	Won’t answer unclear questions	3.828	0.963	25.16	16.72	XII
8	Not bothered by doing something else	3.005	1.124	37.40	0.09	XVII
9	Enjoyed being with people	4.32	0.652	15.09	39.36	I
10	Bothered by unexpected interruption	3.749	0.929	24.78	15.68	XI
11	Respect rules that guide	4.071	0.819	20.12	25.42	VI
12	Dislike uncertainties	3.87	0.934	24.13	18.11	X
13	Financial support for people doing their best	4.098	0.756	18.45	28.24	IV
14	No use for theories not based on facts	3.444	1.275	37.02	6.77	XVI
15	Bothered by changes in routine	3.918	0.805	20.55	22.17	VII
16	Unexciting life	3.479	1.028	29.55	9.06	XIV
17	Ensure being cared for at old age	3.669	1.28	34.89	10.16	XV

Table-6: Mean, Standard Deviation, Co-efficient of Variance of the Respondents on the Hardiness Personality Dimension ‘Challenge’

Mean	64.46
Standard deviation	5.184
Co-efficient of variance	8.04
‘t’ value	230.50

Table-7: Overall Correlation Among Occupational Stress Factors and Hardiness Personality Dimensions

Pearson's Correlation	Work Demands	Relationship with others	Career concerns	Systems maintenance	Role ambiguity	Administrative tasks	Job dissatisfaction	Job induced tension	Intention to quit	Commitment	Control	Challenge	Overall Hardy
Work Demands	1	0.369**	0.355**	0.658**	0.662**	-0.145**	0.270**	0.502**	0.328**	0.233**	0.076	0.136**	0.186**
Relationship with others		1	-0.066	0.157**	0.338**	-0.175**	0.228**	0.096	-0.139**	0.087	-0.070	0.199**	0.081
Career concerns			1	0.284**	0.538**	-0.161**	-0.182**	0.455**	0.308**	0.427**	0.465**	0.269**	0.496**
Systems maintenance				1	0.439**	-0.108*	0.209**	0.549**	0.241**	0.337**	0.198**	0.134**	0.286**
Role ambiguity					1	-0.327**	0.097	0.503**	0.143**	0.243**	0.240**	0.318**	0.333*
Administrative tasks						1	0.263**	-0.100	0.183**	-0.175**	-0.036	-0.077	-0.121*
Job dissatisfaction							1	-0.040	0.069	-0.231**	-0.193**	-0.219**	-0.269**
Job induced tension								1	0.466**	0.397**	0.371**	0.208**	0.418**
Intention to quit									1	0.110*	-0.094	0.035	0.018
Commitment										1	0.496**	0.480**	0.836**
Control											1	0.345**	0.797**
Challenge												1	0.739**
Overall Hardy													1

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels