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RESEARCH ARTICLE

PERSONALITY TYPE AND STRESS OF IT PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

IT careers are often characterized by hard work, long hours and tight deadlines. Coupled with these high stressed careers, personality traits like high ambition, a strong sense of time urgency, hostility, distrust and anger could play havoc on the physical and psychological well-being of the professionals. Managing stress by mobilizing and enhancing internal coping strategies and learning and employing appropriate methods of responding to stressful situations are assumed solutions to the ever increasing demands of IT field. Present study was conducted to assess personality types and stress levels of the selected IT professionals and to examine the relation between their personality types and stress levels. Data were collected from 60 IT professionals employed in four computer software organizations at Bangalore. The results showed that half of the selected IT professionals had stress prone Type A personality and on the whole they had moderate stress. It was found that personality type and stress showed a positive and a significant correlation which indicated Type A personality as more prone to stress. Recommendations and suggestions to improve the coping strategies were discussed to enable the IT professionals manage their stress.

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INTRODUCTION

Personality is the sum total of characteristics that differentiate people or the stability in a person's behaviour across different situations (Feldman, 1997). Personality encompasses the relatively enduring characteristics that differentiate people. It is also personality that makes individuals act in a consistent and a predictable manner both in different situations and over extended periods of time. In the late 1950's, Friedman and Rosenman, two California based cardiologists observed that there are two types of basic personalities- Type A and Type B. Type A behaviour pattern is characterized by excessive competitiveness, hard drive, impatience and hostility. The Type A person's body is in a chronic state of stress (Raikkonen *et al.*, 1999). Type B typifies a personality pattern that is characterized by calmness, patience, little competitiveness and no hostility. WHO (1996) has identified Type A behaviour syndrome as one of the causes of CHD and various psychosomatic disorders. IT careers are often characterized by hard work, long hours and tight deadlines. In a study of more than 1,300 men and women, having a "high pressure deadline at work" made both men and woman 6 times more likely to have a heart attack within the next 24 hours. Women were also 3 times more likely to experience a heart attack if they had recently taken on more responsibilities at work, particularly if they were unhappy about these new responsibilities (Moller, Theorell, de Faire, Ahlbom and Hallqvist, 2005). Researchers have proved the physical and psychological effects of stress in IT professionals to be debilitating. Often, despite recognizing that there is stress, IT

professionals are oblivious to its effects or wish that it would vanish like magic. Changes in metabolism and appetite, migraine, spondylitis, low back pain, dizzy spells, allergies and blocked sinuses are all viewed as mere discomforts "nothing that a pill can't handle". The short term effects of stress might be handled well by them as their youth and energy are by their side. But the long term effects of stress have to be watched out. Stress is fatal when accumulated regularly and continuously (Ravikant, 2002). In a study conducted to examine relation among hardiness personality, self-esteem and occupational stress index among IT professionals, data were collected from 140 IT professionals employed in four computer software organizations. The results of correlation showed that hardiness and self esteem tend to have negative and significant correlations with role overload, role ambiguity, low status and strenuous working conditions (Subramanian and Vinothkumar, 2009). The present study attempted to assess the personality types and the stress levels of the selected IT professionals and to examine the relation between their personality types and stress levels.

Objectives

- To find out the personality type of the sample, who are the selected IT Professionals
- To assess the level of stress in the sample
- To ascertain the relationship between the personality type and stress level in the sample

Sample

From four IT companies in Bangalore, 60 professionals (30 male and 30 female) were selected by Purposive Sampling method. The age range of the sample was 23-36 years. With

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regard to education, nearly 85% of the sample had post graduation in computer science or computer application. Majority of the male sample were unmarried and half of the female sample were married. Almost all the subjects were from nuclear families all were from urban areas.

Tools

- Case Study Schedule
- Stress Questionnaire (Latha Satish, 1984)
- Glazer Stress Control Life Style Questionnaire (Glazer, 2000)

METHODS

Initially, rapport was established with the IT professionals who were the respondents, after which they completed the Case Study Schedule, Stress Questionnaire and Glazer Stress Control Life Style Questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1- Personality Type of the Sample

Personality Type	Number	Percentage
A	33	55
AB	27	45
B	-	-

Table I draws a threatening picture that cautions of the disease prone condition of the IT professionals. To our great surprise, we find that none of the subjects of the study had Type B personality, which enables them cope well with stress and guards them against the development of any stress-related illness. More than half of the sample (55%) had Type A personality and the rest had Type A/B personality. Type A/B personality is a mixture of both types, which is almost healthy. But they can, however, fall into Type A behaviour at times, when the stressors are too strong.

Table 2 -Mean Stress of the Sample

Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
60	26.43	11.6

Table 2 clearly reveals that the group as a whole had moderate stress according to the norms provided by the author of the questionnaire.

Table 3 -Correlation between Personality Type and Stress

	Stress	Personality Type
C	0.75	1.22
sigma	0.81	1.22
r		0.51*

*Significant at 0.01 level

Correlation between personality type and stress of the sample was calculated by Pearson's Product Moment Correlation method. Table 3 indicates that the co-efficient of correlation is 0.51, which is significant at 0.01 level. This shows that there is a positive correlation between Type A and stress. In other words, individuals with Type A personality are more prone to stress.

Empirical Findings

The findings of the study revealed that half of the sample had Type A personality and the rest had Type A/B personality; all the subjects of this study, namely, Information Technology (IT) professionals had stress an on the whole the sample had moderate stress; there is a high positive correlation between personality type and stress of the sample.

Implications, Recommendations and Suggestions

Psychologists and counselors could be appointed in IT companies to regularly assess the problems of personnel, provide counseling where needed and as a preventive measure, conduct Stress Management Programme for all the employees on a regular basis. All IT companies should follow Extreme Programming (XP) and Rational Unified Process (RUP) which would solve problems such as over working (XP and RUP stress on a maximum of 40 hours /week).

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