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## PERCEIVED LEVELS OF STRESS AMONG IT AND NON IT PROFESSIONALS

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**Abstract:-**The demands of life, relationships and work result in stress and the nature of work can be a great stressor affecting the levels of stress. The IT field being very demanding can contribute to a greater extent of stress. The aim of the study was to measure the perceived levels of stress of the IT and Non IT professionals. A total of 100 adults, 50 from IT field and 50 from Non IT field formed the sample. A self developed stress scale was used to measure the perceived levels of stress on the five selected areas -Body and Mind, Work, Home Life, Personality and Circumstance. The study revealed that the IT and Non IT respondents did not differ significantly in the selected areas of stress and both the groups perceived "Moderate" levels of stress in the areas Work, Home Life, Personality and Circumstance. However 'Personality' factors were found to be responsible for higher levels of stress among the two respondent groups. The study clearly showed that although one's own circumstance, work environment, home life and physical conditions are the influencing factors for stress, "Personality" of an individual has a greater influence on stress levels. The common consideration that IT professionals are more prone to stress because of long working hours, strict deadlines and other demands of the job was not supported by the study. The findings of the study suggest that effective stress management programs could help in alleviating the stress levels of individuals and also is the need of the hour.

**Keywords:** Perceived levels of Stress, IT and Non IT, Body and mind, Home life, Personality.

### INTRODUCTION

The modern technology, inventions and gadgets have made life simpler, quicker and easier. The tasks performed manually earlier have been taken over by advanced technology and machineries reducing human effort. Ideally, the advancement should have eased out the modern day lifestyle and credited human beings with greater amount of free hours, more time for self and reduced levels of stress and worries. However, it is noted that modern lifestyle is contributing to increased stress levels. Santrock (2005) defines stress as a response of individuals to stressors which include environment, social factors and work related stress. Stress can have varied effects on individuals, groups and society. The events that cause or lead to stress are called stressors and one's work, family problems, health concerns, circumstances could be the possible stressors. Stress affects the body and mind in multiple ways and can cause short term effects like increased heart beat, head ache, upset stomach, nausea, diarrhea to long term effects like weak heart, weak muscles and immune system, panic and anxiety disorders and chronic illnesses. Stress can be highly disruptive for one's functioning (Lupien 2009). Present society, with its radical changes has transformed in multiple ways and the demands of the workplace also have changed in several ways. Of the various fields of work and career, the Information Technology (IT) area is one of the fields which has witnessed sudden shifts and increasing demands, making the individuals working in this field more vulnerable to stress. Information technology (IT) is the area of managing technology and covers wide variety of areas such as computers, processes, software, information system computer hardware, programming and others. Birch and Kamali (2001) opined that work related stress and anxiety has a profound effect on an individual's wellbeing. Boyles (2009) showed that work time has multiple spillover effects on stress emphasizing the need to study the nature of work and

stress.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS:**

**AIM:** To study the perceived levels of stress among IT and non IT professionals.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- To study and compare the perceived levels of stress among IT and non IT professionals.
- To study and compare the perceived levels of stress of the two groups in the five different areas of stress - Body and Mind, Work, Family life, Personality and Circumstance.

**Procedure:** A total sample of 100 subjects in the age group of 23yrs to 40 yrs with 50 subjects from IT field and 50 from Non IT fields, spread across the country formed the sample and the sample was selected using purposive random sampling method . A self structured Stress scale was used to measure stress under the five areas/aspects: Body and Mind, Work, Family life, Personality and circumstance. The data was collected by personally visiting the IT and non IT companies and administering the questionnaire. Questionnaires were also sent through Electronic media via E-mailing and was also posted on social networking sites like Orkut and Face book.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:**

**TABLE-1**  
**Classification of Respondents by Personal Characteristics**

Characteristics	Category	Professionals				Value
		IT (n=50)		Non IT (n=50)		
		N	%	N	%	
Sex	Male	36	72.0	31	62.0	1.13 NS
	Female	14	28.0	19	38.0	
Age Group (years)	21-25	18	36.0	19	38.0	3.12 NS
	26-30	26	52.0	19	38.0	
	31-40	6	12.0	12	24.0	
Marital Status	Married	19	38.0	17	34.0	0.17 NS
	Single	31	62.0	33	66.0	

NS : Non-Significant,

Table-1 depicts the classification of IT and non IT respondents by age, Sex and Marital Status. From the data it is evident that in both IT and Non IT professional categories, the maximum number of respondents were males (72% and 62% respectively). Percentage of female employees were slightly higher in the Non IT group respondent category (38%) when compared to the IT category (28%). Higher percentage of respondents from IT group (52%) and Non IT group (38%) were in the age group of 26-30 years. Also majority of the respondents in both the sample groups were Single

**TABLE –2**  
**[Perceived levels of stress among IT and Non IT respondents**

Stress Level	Category	Respondents				Value
		IT Professionals		Non IT Professionals		
		N	%	N	%	
Low	< 23	24	48.0	23	46.0	0.04 NS
Moderate	24-47	26	52.0	27	54.0	
High	48-80	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Total		50	100.0	50	100.0	

NS : Non-significant,

$\chi^2 (0.05, 2df) = 5.991$

Table 2 reveals no significant association between the perceived stress levels of respondents from IT and Non IT fields. The results further indicate that majority of both the respondents from IT and Non IT fields have moderate levels of stress.

**TABLE –3**  
**Aspect wise perceived levels of stress among IT and Non IT respondents**

No.	Stress Aspects	Statements	Max. Score	Respondents Stress Scores				't' Test
				IT Professionals		Non IT Professionals		
				Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
I	Body and Mind	10	20	30.90	14.8	32.70	16.3	0.58 <sup>NS</sup>
II	Personality	10	10	34.60	21.7	43.10	21.3	1.98 <sup>*</sup>
III	Circumstance	10	10	27.40	16.5	30.60	15.6	1.00 <sup>NS</sup>
IV	Work	10	20	34.50	15.7	33.60	18.1	0.27 <sup>NS</sup>
V	Home life	10	20	18.60	15.9	18.60	18.0	0.00 <sup>NS</sup>
	Overall	50	80	28.75	11.4	30.43	13.1	0.68 <sup>NS</sup>

\*Significant at 5% Level,

NS : Non-significant,

$t (0.05, 98df) = 1.96$

Aspect wise distribution of perceived mean stress scores of the respondents of both IT and Non IT group is given in table 3. The higher mean stress scores for the aspect personality among both IT professionals and Non IT professionals (34.6 and 43.1 respectively) reveals that personality, as a stressor has a greater influence on the stress levels of the respondents of both the groups. Further it is seen that 'work' followed by one's 'body and mind' and 'circumstances' are the next influencing factors affecting the perceived levels of stress of the respondents. It is further observed that the perceived mean stress scores of Non IT professionals are slightly higher than that of the IT professionals on the aspects- Personality, body and mind and circumstances. However the difference is statistically non significant, except for the aspect personality ( $t=1.98^*$ ). With respect to Home Life a non significant difference is seen between the IT and Non IT professionals, and home environment as a stressor was found to be least stress inducing (18.6 mean stress scores) on the selected sample..

The above findings reveal certain facts with respect to causative factors of stress with respect to IT and Non IT professionals. The findings clearly state that although one's own circumstance, work environment, home life and physical conditions are the influencing factors for stress, it is the "Personality" of an individual which ultimately decides how stressed an individual is and how he perceives stress.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Although it is commonly considered that IT professionals are more prone to stress because of long working hours, meeting deadlines and other demands of the job, the study revealed that the IT and Non IT respondents did not differ significantly in the selected areas of stress. Both the groups perceived "Moderate" levels of stress in the areas of Work, Home Life, Personality and Circumstance. The stress scores revealed that the stress affected the physical and mental health of the respondents. The findings clearly showed that although one's own circumstance, work

environment, home life and physical conditions are the influencing factors for stress , 'Personality' factors are the most influencing factors influencing the levels of stress.

Despite stressful working conditions and home environment one can still not be stressed, if the person has the right personality characteristics to combat stress. Hence personality of an individual his temperament, his ability to handle issues and his perceptions towards life are the factors that influence one's stress levels. As stress is a perceived notion influenced by one's personality trait, it is also amenable for change and management. Stress management programs which help an individual to understand stress, identify stress, handle stress and work through it by adequate managerial techniques can convert distress to eustress. Therefore any stress management program should concentrate on improving individual's personality and promoting better self development.

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