

## AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS AND ROLE STRESS

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**Abstract:** Extant literature has examined the relationship between personality dimensions and role stress. However, the findings are diverse and diffuse. This study is an attempt to collate and evaluate the research to come up with some common refrains. Personality dimensions of Type A Behavior Pattern (TABP), Negative Affectivity (NA), Locus of Control (LOC) and Positive Affectivity (PA) were examined through an extensive review of the literature for their relationship with stressors and strain. It was found that TABP had a moderate positive co-relation with the level of stress. NA had an impact on the relation between stressors and strain. However, owing to the divergent viewpoints which emerged it was not conclusively established if this effect was inflationary or not. It was, however, established that NA was positively co-related with stress levels. Individuals with an external LOC were found to exhibit higher level of stress, while PA was found to have a positive relationship with affective commitment as an outcome. Implications for research and practice are discussed and future research areas are identified.

**Key Words:** Personality dimensions, role stress, Type A Behavior Pattern, Negative Affectivity, Locus of Control Positive Affectivity

### INTRODUCTION

Work stress is an important organizational context, and has been the focus of several research studies since the mid-80s. Stress manifests itself in physiological (headaches, cramps, sweating, stomach upsets, Coronary Heart Diseases), psychological (burnout, low sense of accomplishment, depersonalization, isolation), behavioral (escapism) and attitudinal (work performance) responses at the work place. Researchers have also classified the outcomes as affective (job satisfaction), somatic (headaches) and disease (heart problems) (Spector, Dwyer, & Jex, 1988). Stress has been studied with reference to, the causes or stressors, the outcomes of strain and the feeling of strain or stress. Studies on stress have gained significance because stress has become one of the primary health concerns in the last decade. Matteson and Ivancevich (1987) state that stress has several negative outcomes

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including absenteeism, turnover, loss of productivity and reduced performance. Recent studies have shown role stress to have outcomes like incivility and workplace aggression (Taylor & Klumper, 2012).

Personality has been variously defined as an individuals' cognitive, affective and behavioral response to a situation. Personality variables have also been the subject of research studies for quite a while now. The impact of personality variables on work and job related outcomes have led to many theorizations. The classical Big 5 model (Extroversion, Neuroticism, Openness, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness) (Barrick & Mount, 1991) was a tool used to study the effect of various personality traits on organizationally relevant outcomes. There has been a school of thought, which did not consider dispositions as being significant in organizational contexts (e.g. Davis-Blake & Pfeffer, 1989). However, studies also went on to establish that personality variables cannot be discounted and have the potential to impact organizationally relevant outcomes (e.g., House & Scott, 1996). The reason for limited interest in personality variables has been the dependence of personality-related theories on cross-sectional examinations, which could have led to inflation of results owing to methodological constraints. There have been, since then studies which adopted a method which controlled for these limitations, by use of longitudinal designs (e.g., Spector & O'Connell, 1994), i.e. where personality variables were measured nearly one year prior to the measurement of the dependent variables. Personality was reviewed with renewed interest since the mid-90s, after having been all but written off. Since then, the impact of personality on various work place outcomes like performance, job satisfaction and stress has been examined by various researchers.

Since the turn of the century a vast set of research has emphasized the relationship between personality dimensions and affective behavior states (e.g., Judge, Heller & Mount, 2002; Oginska-Bulik, 2006). Role stress, primarily being an affective state in the work context, has been studied in conjunction with personality variables. The relationship between personality variables and stress was studied, making use of various stressors like role conflict and role ambiguity and strains like physiological disease, dissatisfaction and worsened job performance. There have been several subsequent studies that researched the direct and indirect impact of personality variables like negative affectivity, Type A personality, Locus of control, Hardiness and extroversion on role stress. A related line of research looked at the impact of psychological factors on heart diseases (e.g., Booth-Kewley & Friedman, 1987) in an attempt to identify the various parameters including dispositional variables which led to CHD (Coronary Heart Disease). Studies in these directions have been constrained by lack of specific constructs and being correlative research. However, research in this domain definitely has the potential

to explain the impact of several personality variables, like Type A behavior, on organizational role stress. Moreover, the research on personality variables and stress is diffuse since each of these variables has been conceptualized in a variety of ways as clarified earlier. Hence, it was felt necessary to undertake a study that integrated existing research on personality and role stress and identified the road ahead. The current study is an attempt to analyze and integrate the available findings linking various dimensions of personality on organizational role stress. This being a review study attempts to understand existing research in the area and draws inferences from the same. An extensive review of the literature was undertaken to understand the present status of conceptualization followed by inferences and conclusions drawn in light of these theoretical perspectives. Various axioms and definitions already available in existing literature were studied to establish plausible linkages between role stress and personality dimensions.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Studies on stress have generally pointed towards the work environment as a cause of reactions leading to stress. It was argued that that work environment would affect stress levels because of the assumption that job conditions and work-place outcomes were the result of the work environment and situation (e.g. Spector *et al.*, 1988). However, there are other explanations of relationships between stressors and outcomes. One body of research indicates that affective and behavioral responses to the outcomes lead to formation of perceptions. This basically meant that rather than the work environment affecting stress levels and hence outcomes, it is the dissatisfactory outcomes, which lead the environment to be perceived as stressful (Spector *et al.*, 1988). There is yet another school of thought, which proposes that individuals may have dispositional tendencies, which leads to perceptions of stressful conditions and subsequently to feelings of stress as well affecting coping strategies (e.g., DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005). Several studies have established that employee self-reports of a stressful job condition (stressors) co-relate with employee health outcomes (strain), and it has been suggested that such relations based on self-reports may be caused by affective tendencies and various personality dimensions. It is this line of thinking which this paper tries to study. Research linking role stress with personality dimensions has also taken specific direction, like the meta-analysis by Booth-Kewley and Friedman (1987) which studied the impact of several personality dimensions on CHD (Coronary Heart Disease). Given the fact that CHD accounts for large number of fatalities (Booth-Kewley & Friedman, 1987), the need for research in this direction is inescapable. The research on dispositions focuses on the relatively stable nature of dispositions. This means that if individuals are faced with varying situations they will react and behave in a manner governed by these sets of relatively stable traits. If this is the case, stressors

and stains will also tend to get affected by this stable nature of dispositions and subsequent affect organizationally significant outcomes like satisfaction and performance. It hence becomes, important to understand the moderating effects of the personality variables on role stress, satisfaction and performance.

Since, personality as a global construct could not have been related to a single outcome of job stress, it was necessary to break down personality into various individual variables and the study the impact of each of these on job stress. It has also been established that different personality variables have varying outcomes. In such a scenario, it becomes important to study the effect of different personality variables like Type A Behavior Pattern (TABP), Locus of Control (LOC) and Negative (NA) and Positive Affectivity (PA) on role stress.

### **Definitions**

As a first step, it seemed logical to define the various personality dimensions separately, because the aim of the study was to establish the relationship between individual personality dimensions on job stress.

#### ***Type A Behavior pattern (TABP)***

TABP is characterized by competitive achievement striving, a sense of time urgency and impatience, aggressiveness and easily aroused hostility. It is also important to note that "TABP differs from coronary-prone behavior in that coronary-prone behavior by definition leads to CHD while the CHD-TABP relation needs support of empirical evidence" (Booth-Kewley & Friedman, 1987: 373). The widely accepted definition of TABP summarizes the personality characteristic quite aptly.

#### ***Positive affectivity (PA)***

Individuals who are high on PA are generally believed to have high efficacy and overall sense of well-being (George, 1992). Individuals who have a high PA are more likely experience positive affective states across time, place and situations. Evidence has been provided by several studies that PA is significantly related to a positive mood at work (Brief, Burke, & George, 1988; George, 1991). PA corresponds to the extroversion dimension of the Big 5 personality model (Brief, Burke, & George, 1993). Studies have defined PA in terms of a positive mood, and indicated the people high on PA tend to have a positive outlook towards situations (e.g., Watson, Clark & Tellegen 1988; Watson, Clark & Carey, 1988).

#### ***Negative Affectivity (NA)***

Converse to PA, individuals high on NA are believed to have a negative view of themselves and are distressed by their own thoughts and behaviors as well as the

attitudes and behaviors of others. They tend to behave in ways that manifest negative outcomes and thoughts (George, 1992). NA maps the neuroticism dimension on the Big 5 model of personality (Brief *et al.*, 1993). NA as expected has a high degree of co-relation with negative moods at the work place. Some of the characteristics of NA include the feeling of nervousness, tension and worry and affective states like guilt and anger. NA has been operationalized as the affective construct of neuroticism. The definition can be extrapolated to suggest that it could be general trait of somatopsychic distress, because it can be used to explain many physical complaints as well. It needs to be noted here that PA and NA are considered independent dimensions of personality and address the positive and negative affective states respectively. Several literature also cite NA to be a more reliable and consistent measure than PA (Brief *et al.*, 1993; Judge, 1993; Levin and Stokes 1989)

#### ***Locus of control (LOC)***

Locus of control is defined as the belief of an individual about the extent to which s/he can control the situation and the outcomes, which are relevant to him / her. People who have an external locus of control tend to believe that external factors like luck are responsible for what happens to them, while internal LOC people believe that they themselves are responsible for their state. Spector and O' Connell (1994) have defined "externals" as those who hold expectancies that outside forces control reinforcements.

### **INTEGRATING THE RESEARCH ON PERSONALITY AND ROLE STRESS**

There exists a vast body of literature linking the various personality dimensions separately with role stress, self-reported stressors and strains (e.g., Holliday Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004). Studies have also looked at this relationship in different types of vocations (e.g., Saksvik, & Hetland, 2011). However, in this study we attempt to provide an integrated view of this relationship. For the purpose of this study it was decided to take a broad overview of the four personality dimensions of Type A Behavior (TABP), Negative Affectivity (NA), Positive Affectivity (PA) and Locus of Control (LOC) and try and establish how each of these dimensions relates to role stress. There was no attempt to link personality as a global dimension with role stress, simply because each of the individual dimensions was expected to have a different effect on role stress, stressors and strain, and hence could not be treated as a single exogenous variable. Within each of these dimensions, several of the existing studies have been examined critically to try and identify some pattern of co-relations. Thus, for the purpose of this research TABP, NA, PA and LOC became the independent variables and stressors (role conflict, role ambiguity, job

dissatisfaction, motivation), and strain (physiological disease symptoms, CHD, psychological disease symptoms, turnover intent) became the criterion variables.

### **Type A behavior and Role stress**

The meta-analysis by Booth-Kewley and Friedman (1987) collated and analyzed results from several studies in an effort to establish linkages between several personality variables and Coronary Heart Disease. Personality variables included in the study were Type A behavior pattern (TABP), extroversion, anger, hostility, aggression, depression and anxiety. The study mainly focused on the effect of TABP on CHD, but also took into account the effect of the other personality variables. Booth-Kewley and Friedman (1987) measured TABP using both the Structured Interview (SI) and the Jenkins Activity Survey (JAS), primarily because both these scales are not highly inter-related. The SI offers better measures of response to provocation and desire to exert social control while the JAS appears to offer a more reliable measure of time urgency and drive. It is pertinent to note that the JAS was a self-reported scale. The study provided evidence that TABP is strongly associated with occurrence of CHD. It also showed that TABP measured through the SI was a much better predictor of CHD than as measured by the JAS. It is reasoned that since SI measures affective characteristics, it is possible that could have contributed to the better predictability. The results of the study also indicate that Hard-driving competitiveness has the strongest co-relation with CHD ( $r = 0.153$ ), which is even stronger than co-relation of TABP (all measures,  $r = 0.136$ ) with CHD. It is apparent that aggressive, competitive behavior has a significant effect on true coronary-prone behavior pattern. Being a meta-analysis the paper also studied the predictability of CHD by TABP in cross-sectional studies as against prospective studies and also in studies that were more recent to those which were a little older. The results showed that TABP-CHD relation was not as strong in prospective and recent studies. These are important findings, not just because they establish the predictability of CHD (a physiological outcome of stress) by TABP but also because they indicate a weakening in the relationship across studies, as the finding in prospective studies indicate. It can be suggested that cross-sectional studies are subject to inflationary effects of methodology and this could explain the large difference in predictability patterns across cross-sectional and prospective studies. The above analysis surely indicates a modest but reliable co-relation between TABP and CHD. The relationship is better observed for the hard-driving and competitive aspects of TABP.

In her meta-analysis George (1992) reviews considerable literature linking stress with Type A behavior, including studies by Rosenman *et al.* (1975) who linked TABP with CHD and the earlier mentioned study by Booth-Kewley and Friedman

(1988), where TABP was moderately linked with stress. George, however contends that different measures of Type A behavior show varying levels of co-relation with stress, a finding which is based on a critique of the work by Booth-Kewley and Friedman. George, reviewed the study by Watson, Pennebaker and Folger (1987), who proposed and proved that Type A behavior is significantly related with NA and PA and also a counter argument to this by Ganster and Schaubroeck (1991) which critiqued the self-reported measures of TABP used by Watson et. al. (1987), and stated that Type A behavior assessed by SI is associated with role stress. These findings clearly indicate the effect of personality dimensions TABP on organizational role stress.

Spector and O'Connell (1994) studied TABP, not as a global construct but as being composed of several independent dimensions. They cited several studies (Booth-Kewley and Friedman, 1987; Ganster and Schaubroeck, 1991) to show that various dimensions of TABP have varying outcomes, for instance the dimension of Impatience-Irritability (II) co-related with somatic symptoms while Achievement-Striving (AS) co-related with performance. The current study has evaluated similar findings reported by Barling and Charbonneau (1992). Spector and O'Connell (1994) reported complex findings for TABP, wherein higher levels of Impatience-Irritability predicted higher levels of stressors and strains and Achievement Striving was not found to be co-related to stress levels. Type A dimension of Impatience-Irritability co-related significantly with role ambiguity, role conflict and overload (Stressors). Barling and Charbonneau (1992) also sought to treat TABP personality as multi-dimensional by using the constructs of Impatience-Irritability (II) and Achievement-Striving (AS). They found that achievement-striving predicted performance but not health and also predicted headaches and sleep habits but had no effect on respiratory and digestive problems. The effects of impatience-irritability was partialled out while controlling for age. Barling and Charbonneau (1992), have stated that Global Type A behavior can be classified as Impatience-Irritability (II) and Achievement Striving (AS), and stress should be related separately to these two dimensions rather than trying to co-relate Global Type A behavior with role stress.

In a separate study Burke and Greenglass (1995) established the co-relation between Type A behavior, job stressors and psychological burnout. Burke and Greenglass (1995) classified psychological burnout into three different constructs of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Lack of personal accomplishment. Burke and Greenglass (1995) gave evidence that TABP and stressors were co-related to each of these three constructs, though the strength of co-relation was relatively weak. A similar study carried out by Jamal and Baba (2001), supported the findings of Burke and Greenglass (1995). Jamal and Baba (2001) studied a sample of 420

college teachers and established that Global Type A behavior was positively correlated with burnout and turnover motivation. Their study also tried to establish whether the role of gender moderated the relationship between Type A behavior and well-being of the individual, however, this result could not be established conclusively. However, unlike the study by Burke and Greenglass (1995), the study by Jamal and Baba (2001) reported a significantly strong co-relation between Global type A behavior and burnout (0.43,  $p < 0.05$ ). This can be explained by the fact that Jamal and Baba (2001) studied global type A behavior measured with the Framingham scale instead of the JAS or SI, as done in various other research studies. In one of the earlier studies on the impact of TABP on organizationally relevant outcomes Baron (1989) tried to establish a linkage of TABP with organizational conflict. The study predicted that TABP individuals experienced a higher degree of conflict within the organization and also displayed a lower tendency to cooperate with co-workers. The study provided partial evidence for the above hypothesis. Baron (1989) also provided partial evidence for the hypothesized impact of gender as a moderator of the relationship between conflict and TABP.

By and large these findings give evidence that Type A behavior individuals are more prone to role stress and that TABP (Type A behavior pattern) is linked with both stressors and strain.

### **Negative Affectivity and Role Stress**

Pandey (1998) established that people at different levels of the hierarchy differed in Neuroticism (Negative affectivity) and role overload. While individuals lower down the hierarchy were found to exhibit the highest neuroticism, role overload was highest for the middle management group and supervisors were highest on the psychoticism dimension. The study also gave evidence that the greater the degree of psychoticism the greater was the perceived role stress. Individuals who displayed higher degree of neuroticism also exhibited higher levels of stress, while those high on extroversion were found to have lower levels of stress. Pandey (1998) states that the positive relationship between neuroticism and role stress, substantiated earlier findings (e.g., Hills & Norvell, 1991), while the negative co-relation between extroversion and role stress supported an earlier finding by Schaubroeck, Ganster and Fox (1992), which reported a negative co-relation between extroversion and role ambiguity. It should be noted, however, that this study by Pandey (1998), used the terms 'psychoticism' and 'neuroticism' to mean 'tough-minded personality' and 'highly emotional personality' respectively. The meta-analysis by George (1992) sought, among other objectives, to link work-related distress (used inter-changeably with role stress or organizational role stress) with Negative affectivity and TABP. The paper suggests that by definition, individuals



high on NA experience more distress than individuals who display a lower level of NA. This is explained by the fact that NA is primarily the existence of a negative outlook towards most situations and outcomes. McCrae and Costa (1990; 1991) note that NA makes an individual vulnerable to negative stimuli (such as role ambiguity and role conflict) and it also leads the individual to create situations, which result in stress. The former mechanism is cited, as the temperamental view while the latter is the instrumental perspective. Larsen and Ketelaar (1991), gave evidence that extroversion lead to a higher level of response to positive mood induction procedure, while neuroticism leads to higher response to negative mood induction procedure. Quite clearly these results suggest that individuals who are high on negative affectivity are more likely to suffer the consequences of stressors.

Brief *et al.* (1993) studied the relation of NA with self-reported stressors and self-reported strains (negative affective states as outcomes), and also tried to establish that the relation between self-reported stressors and self-reported strain was inflated owing to NA. The study confronts several research viewpoints, which state that NA does not influence the magnitude of relationship between self-reported stressors and strains. The contention is that the studies which stated so, could have been limited by an attempt to de-link methodology and theorizations. The paper supports the hypothesis that NA influences the magnitude of the relationship between self-reported stressors and self-reported strain. Similarly, Brief *et al.* (1988) provided a cogent argument against Chen and Spector (1991) who stated that NA did not account for much of the co-relation between self-reported stressors and affective strains. They did however, say that NA accounted for a large part of the variance between self-reported stressors and physical strain. Chen and Spector (1991) cite the findings of Brief *et al.* (1988) as being contrary to theirs, stating that one explanation for the difference could be the use of different measures of NA. Brief *et al.* (1988) used the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale (TMAS) which displayed considerable item overlap, and hence could have led to stronger results. Chen and Spector (1991), proved that there was little evidence that NA moderated the relationship between self-reported stressors and strain, as stated by Brief *et al.* (1988). They did however, state that in the case of physical strains (like physical symptoms) the relationship between self-reported stressors and strains could be attributed to NA. This can be explained because high NA individuals could be expected to experience higher levels of physical symptoms and so their actual states might get reported. Moreover, the items in the TMAS and physical symptoms scale are similar and hence can be expected to give similar results. The study however, does not negate the impact of NA on stressors and strains, and agrees that dispositional variables could have a significant impact on organizational role stress.

Schaubroeck *et al.* (1992) also studied the inflationary effects of NA on the relationship between self-reported stressors and strain. They concluded that variation of NA within a research sample indicates that it does indeed have an inflationary effect on the co-relation between self-reported stressors and strain. Schaubroeck, Judge and Taylor (1998) studied the impact of stressors and work place attitude across different organizations in an attempt to understand whether the trait NA, accounted for any variance in the relationship between stressors and work place attitude. The findings indicated that though stressors and work place attitudes were co-related, these co-relations could not be accounted for by NA. Spector and O'Connell (1994) have reported that respondents high on NA have shown greater level of stressors and strains while those with an external Locus of control were also predicted to have higher levels of stressors and strains. The results gave evidence that NA co-related significantly with role conflict, role ambiguity, interpersonal conflicts (Stressors) and work anxiety symptoms (Strains). The paper however, also partially negated the stand that only NA contributed substantially to stress, because out of the 10 stressors and strains studied 6 had shown at least one other personality variable to have a stronger co-relation than NA. This suggests that personality variables like LOC also merit attention, and the focus should not be only on NA while trying to establish a linkage between personality and role stress.

Levin and Stokes (1989) also contributed to the literature that reviewed the effect of NA. They however studied it from the perspective of the impact on job satisfaction. Levin and Stokes (1989) conducted two independent studies, the first of which reported that NA and job design influenced satisfaction, with job design having a stronger relationship with task satisfaction. The second study, however, gave evidence that NA was a very significant predictor of job satisfaction. Both studies, reported task characteristics as having a stronger influence on task satisfaction than NA. However, these findings can be integrated with the findings of Kemery, Mossholder and Touliatos (1985) who suggested that job satisfaction could be related to tension. This would seem to suggest that job satisfaction could be a common outcome variable of both NA and job-related tension (role stress).

There have been studies which indicated that affective disposition moderated the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intent (e.g., Judge, 1993). In his study Judge (1993) demonstrated that job satisfaction was a better predictor of turnover intent when it was studied in conjunction with the individual's viewpoint of life, i.e. the more positive-oriented the person, the stronger was the relationship between job dissatisfaction and turnover intent. One implication of this study could have been the effect of role stress in the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intent, and it could be an area of research that could be explored further.

### **Locus of control (LOC) and role stress**

There have been studies which contributed to furthering research linking personality dimensions and role stress, by over-coming the limitations of cross-sectional research designs. One of these was a study by Spector and O'Connell (1994) that used longitudinal data to assess the relationship between personality and role stress. The study suggested that cross-sectional examination was limited because it tended to inflate measures owing to biases of priming and consistency. This means that administering all the measures simultaneously could have inflated the results. Cross-sectional examination also failed to factor for the effect of job experience on the personality. Spector and O'Connell (1994) used longitudinal data to overcome these shortcomings. Personality variables were measured one year prior to the stressors and strains. This controlled the effects of priming and consistency, and also ensured that job experience did not have an effect on the personality (because personality was measured before the subjects began their jobs - the sample was selected from a set of students). Spector and O'Connell (1994) studied the dimension of Locus of Control in addition to the other dimensions of NA and TABP. They reported the effect of LOC on both job stressors (role conflict and role ambiguity) and strains (job satisfaction, symptoms of physical and emotional distress). Spector and O'Connell (1994) have reported that respondents high on NA have shown greater level of stressors and strains while those with an external Locus of control were also predicted to have higher levels of stressors and strains. The results gave evidence that LOC co-related strongly with autonomy, role conflict, role ambiguity (Stressors) and work-place anxiety (Strains). This study also established the significance of other personality variables like LOC and Type A behavior in predicting stress levels. Recent studies have corroborated the effect of LOC on role stress (e.g., Hsieh & Wang, 2012).

### **Positive affectivity and Role stress**

Cropanzano, James and Konovsky (1993) examined the impact of NA and PA on another organizationally relevant outcome viz., organizational - commitment. They reported a significant positive co-relation between affective commitment and PA ( $\beta=0.27$ ). However, NA was not found to be co-related with affective commitment and neither PA nor NA were found to be related to continuance commitment. This can be explained, by the fact that continuance commitment is more of a bondage arising out of the situation (high side-bets, high cost of leaving and low alternatives) and hence cannot be explained by a dispositional variable like PA or NA. Conversely affective commitment is a result of emotional attachment to the organization and is the positive residual of all other commitment types, and hence can be expected to show a positive relationship with PA. The evaluation of this

study assumes relevance to the current review paper because Cropanzano et. al. (1993), further established a negative co-relation between commitment with performance and turnover intent and since this is a measure of strains, it has significance in establishing a negative co-relation between PA and role stress.

## RESULTS

The above review provides fairly conclusive evidence of the role of personality variables like TABP, NA, PA and LOC in role stressors and its outcomes. The above analysis can be summarized to present the results in a tabular form, as given in Table 1 hereunder,

**Table 1**  
**Summary of results, establishing the relationship between various dimensions of personality and role stress**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Results and inferences</i>
Type A behavior	[1] Exhibits a moderate positive co-relation with stressors and strains [2] Individual dimensions of Type A behavior, Impatience-Irritability (II) shows a positive relation with stressors and strain, dimension of Achievement striving co-related with performance.
Negative Affectivity	[1] NA / neuroticism has a positive co-relation with role stress [2] NA as an inflator of the relationship between stressors and strain Has not been conclusively established, [3] NA is not related directly to task satisfaction [4] NA unrelated to continuance commitment
Locus of Control	[1] External exhibit a higher degree of stress
Positive affectivity	[1] Extroversion is negatively related with role stress [2] PA found co-related to affective commitment but not continuance
Generalizability	[1] Relationship between personality dimensions and role stress found To hold across cultures, but further research necessary
Social support	[1] Those with high Striver-Achiever trait and external LOC reacted To the buffering effect of social support
Motivation	[1] Ensuring personality-role match reduces stress

Over and above the relation between the 4 personality dimensions (TABP, NA, LOC and PA), the relationship between role stress and personality can be

studied with respect a few other perspectives. The following analysis aims to establish this linkage between personality and role stress in the context of

- (1) Generalizability across nations, thus accounting for cross-cultural differences
- (2) Factoring the buffering effect of social support on the relationship between personality and role stress
- (3) Co-relation between personality and stress from the perspective of motivation

### **Generalizability across nations, thus accounting for cross-cultural differences**

Chiu and Kosinski (1997) studied the effect of disposition on role stress in the Chinese context and this paper adds to the generalizability of the construct across cultures. Chiu and Kosinski (1997) suggest that since most of the previous research on the relationship between personality dimensions and role stress were conducted in North American settings, they may not be totally valid in the Asian work context, where employees tend to report less dissatisfaction and stress owing to factors like higher power distance in organizations and work ethics which emphasize endurance and tolerance. Chiu and Kosinski build on the study of Watson et. al. (1987) who have concluded that individuals with high NA report higher degrees of psychosomatic and stress symptoms and experience more stress than positively-oriented people. Chiu and Kosinski (1997) in their study with employees of two different teaching hospitals and 15 high schools in Hong Kong, came up with findings which proved that individuals who were higher on positive dispositions tended to report lower levels of distress and higher degree of job satisfaction, while individuals with higher NA showed higher levels of distress. An ANOVA analysis showed that people with lower PA showed lower job satisfaction (15.85) and higher distress (25.59) than those with higher PA (20.48 on job satisfaction and 21.96 in distress). These results were reported at F values of 17.53 and 6.82 with 2 and 663 degrees of freedom respectively. The identification of a common pattern of findings across all subject groups validated the hypothesis that people higher on PA reported lower levels of stress and higher satisfaction with the job. This study also enabled to some extent, the generalization of the relationship between stress and personality dimensions of PA and NA across work cultures. One important conclusion reported by Chiu and Kosinski (1997) was further support to the literature that the relationship between PA and job satisfaction and distress was evident but not overwhelmingly strong. The reasoning could be that since people with high PA are anyway more likely to experience positive affective states they have better control over both favorable and unfavorable work place situations and hence the moderating effect of dispositions are not so obvious and strong. Conversely the

strong effects of NA are evident from their findings, thus validating earlier arguments that NA has better predictability of role stress than PA. It is hence evident that the relationship between personality variables and role stress holds across cultures, however this is a notion which merits more attention and can be an area for prospective research in the future.

### **Factoring the buffering effect of social support on the relationship between personality and role stress**

A study by Dolan, Ameringen and Arsenault (1992) takes another view at the relationship between personality and role stress, by introducing the added dimension of social support. The study provided evidence that the effect of social support varied significantly depending on the personality dimension of the individual. People were classified on the basis of two dimensions of striver-achiever (S-A) trait (which is an approximation of the Type A Behavior pattern) and LOC. The classifications were as indicated by figure 1, below

	<i>External LOC</i>	<i>Internal LOC</i>
<b>High S-A</b>	Hot-DOG	Hot-CAT
<b>Low S-A</b>	Cool-DOG	Cool-CAT

**Figure 1: Classification of personality on the dimensions of LOC and S-A**

Dolan *et al.* (1992) reported that Hot-DOGs seemed to be the one set which sought the buffering effect of social support systems to face role related stress. Although this does not directly impact our study on the relationship between personality and role stress, it is useful in understanding reactions to role stress exhibited by individuals with different personality dimensions. This surely seems an area that merits further examination.

### **Co-relation between personality and stress from the perspective of motivation**

Lou Lu (1999) studied the relationship of role stress and personality from the perspective of work motivation. In a study with Taiwanese workers, Lou Lu (1999) showed that assigning work that matched the personality of the worker tended to promote employee well-being and subsequently reduced stress. This is also an important finding because it suggests mechanisms to reduce the effects of personality on role stress.

## **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

While a large body of literature concentrated on the relationship between TABP and role stress, indicators are that other dimensions of personality like extroversion,

and neuroticism are also being explored in context of their impact on role stress. Results of the study clearly indicate a possible role for personality as a predictor of role stress. However, the causality has not been established, as the evaluation of various studies does not indicate clearly why personality relates to stressors and strains. The conclusion can be that while several personality dimensions explain the reason for co-relation, due to the complex nature of findings, it seems more likely that no single mechanism can explain this aspect totally. For the interest of the practitioners it would be necessary to state that the understanding the relationship between personality variables and role stress can be useful to design and adopt a person-focused approach to OB practice in organizations.

That personality variables have a definite co-relation with organizational role stress is amply proved through several research studies. However, intricate and inter-relationships between personality and psychological variables could be an area of future research. Various attributes like hostility do not figure explicitly in the personality dimensions but have strong relationship with stress dimensions like CHD, and so deserve more attention. Studies indicate the need for more research, to incorporate the concept of coronary-prone personality also seems appropriate. (Booth-Kewley and Friedman, 1987). There seems to be a general disagreement over the use of self-reported measures of stressors and strains especially in the context of NA as a moderator. It is suggested that future research could adopt a multi-dimensional approach with cross-sectional and prospective studies being conducted. George (1991) provided evidence that positive mood at work was positively related with pro-social and extra-role behavior. It was also proved that positive mood had an effect on pro-social behavior even when perceptions of fairness were absent. It is noteworthy that PA here is meant as a positive work mood as an affective state and not as a trait (i.e. PA). George (1991) suggested that PA (i.e. the trait of Positive affectivity) was unrelated to forms of pro-social and extra-role behaviors. These findings do not relate directly to the linkage of role stress and personality dimensions, but since George (1991) also goes on to positively relate pro-social behavior with performance in cases of customer-directed behavior, it can be suggested that the study could lend direction to the linkage of positive mood with PA and role stress by using performance measures as moderators.

In a very interesting study, Benzera (1996) studied the case of 5 individuals who had survived stress without the aid of professional counselors. These cases related to people who had undergone Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and the study aimed to identify common personality traits among these individuals. This points towards a likely area of research in the future and researchers can try to establish certain global traits likely to have a greater capability not just to resist

stress but also to overcome it. A study of this sort can have far-reaching implications to the practitioners and has the potential to be very useful in Human Resource Applications.

Clearly, results indicate that understanding the impact of personality types on stressors and strain can enable organizations to identify the right people for jobs based on the expected role stress likely to be experienced. The study is a modest attempt at collating the vast and diverse research on personality and role stress. Personality and Stress are in themselves large enough subjects, which demand more in-depth and exhaustive research, and while our approach has been inferential, based on previously published research we still hope to have made a reasonable contribution to the theoretical understanding of this domain. We also hope that this review will help practicing managers grappling with the problem of stressed out employees by providing some pointers toward stress alleviation and social support requirements.

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