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A Study on Personality Types and their Level of Resilience During the New Normal

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates different personality types and their resilience capability during the 'New Normal'. Along with their coping abilities, how happy can these different personality types be along with how anxious and stressed they can get was also an area of focus. Brief Resilience Coping Scale (BRCS), the Oxford Happiness Scale, Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-4) and the Triguna Scale were used to gauge the personality types and the levels of resilience, happiness, stress and anxiety of individuals with sample size of $N = 103$. Online questionnaires were administered to individuals of various age groups. Responses received from the study show that the respondents who had a dominant sattva guna were happier, more resilient and better at dealing with stress and anxiety compared to those who had other dominant gunas such as Rajas and Tamas. The respondents who portrayed a dominant Tamas guna were likely to be more anxious and stressed and showed lower levels of resilience.

Keywords: *personality types, anxiety, stress, happiness, resilience, new normal*

INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 saw many things including a global shut down which led to new terminologies coming into existence one of them being "the New Normal". New Normal had quite a few meanings world-wide. For a few it meant an entirely new way of life, some places it meant rise of local

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enterprises, for some it meant home schooling their children, for some it was a year that highlighted their mental health. The thought that arises from the new normal is, if it could change the meaning of life to such a great magnitude, how successful have people with different personalities been in coping with the stress or anxiety brought out by this global pandemic.

Personality traits are considered to be powerful interpreters of possible outcomes in various spheres be it individual performance in organizations, relationships, mental well-being and health. One's mental temperament dictates their strengths, areas of improvement and their reaction to setbacks and success witnessed by them.

Personality traits can give out a lot of information on how a person would react or what one can expect from them in a particular situation. It showcases one's coping abilities to various stressors or how people deal with situations that they come across in their daily life. This impacts various dominions related to the individual when it comes to their career, the decisions they take. It also affects how happy they generally are regardless of the obstacles that they face.

The primary purpose of this study is to understand various mental temperaments and the level of resilience that each temperament holds. It also focuses on understanding how happy, anxious and stressed individuals with different mental temperaments can be. Another facet of the study focuses on how levels of resilience varies between different generations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Personality has always garnered the attention of psychologists in the past. This tradition has an influence on Indian psychology too. Personality is said to be studied and understood with reference to two systems in Indian traditions. One of which is the biological system and the other being the

psychological system. The biological system is proposed and understood by the medical texts and scriptures like Ayurveda, which have very explicit ways of understanding health and ill-health and how it is to be treated. These texts are very expressive and extensive, where Ayurveda is considered to be a part of the Atharva Veda. These depend almost entirely on the Pancha Mahabhutas, their combinations leading to Tridoshas which includes Vata, Pitta, and Kapha and their psychological correlates of Trigunas—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas (SRT)—to explain the body, the mind, their constituents, and the equivalent behavior patterns including the spiritual aspect involved (Shilpa S. & Murthy, C. G. V., 2012).

The Indian thought system, more specifically the theory of the trigunas, can help in understanding how people respond to their environment including life situations that they face. In the philosophy of Yoga, all matter in the universe ascends from the vital substrate called Prakriti (nature). From this ethereal Prakriti the three primary gunas which are nothing else but a quality of energy, are said to emerge. These gunas create the essential aspects of all nature which includes energy, matter and consciousness.

The theory of gunas is based on the psycho-philosophical system of the Samkhya School which differentiates between the physical and mental reality. The Samakhya system along with the *Vedantic* School assumes that every phenomenon, every atom, every human being and his/her actions are a play of prakriti The dynamism of prakriti is due to the continuous pull of the three gunas, namely, sattva which speaks about being balanced, rajas stands for passionate, and tamas stands for resistance to change or inertia. These gunas are called attributes, constituents, elements, qualities, or principles, which underlie every first-hand phenomenon (Innes-Brown and Chatterjee 1999; Suneetha and Srikrishna 2009).

Each human being, at any point in time, represents an amalgam of these three attributes in certain proportions. He/she may have the predominance of one of them 6 S. Modhor the other at different times. These three gunas can be explained by some similar meaning words as well as by describing

the qualities, nature of knowledge, work, and the agent in these classifications.

Sattva or Balanced

Quality: Purity, serenity, poise, calmness, judgement, transparency, compassion, clarity, goodness, altruism, dispassion, serenity, etc., or in sum balanced.
Nature of Knowledge: Believes in cohesion of everything.
Work: Action, which is rightly controlled, done without any want of fruit for himself/herself.
Agent: Freedom from attachment and conceit, full of a fixed impersonal determination, and a calm rectitude of zeal, unelated, or undepressed by success or failure.

Rajas or Passionate

Quality: A love of fame, passion, lust, trouble, impatience, envy, pride, display of power, etc., or in sum passionate.
Nature of Knowledge: Seeing variety of things only in their separation and variety.
Work: Action performed under the territory of desire, with an egoistic sense of own personality, done with extravagant effort.
Agent: Devoted to work, passionately wishing for of the fruit of his hard work, impure, often violent, cruel, and brutal in the means used, full of joy and grief in success or failure.

Tamas or Inertia (Resistance to Change)

Quality: Aggression, greed, ignorance, silliness, offering resistance, lethargy, forgetfulness, confusion, darkness, ruthlessness, etc., or in sum resistance to change.
Nature of Knowledge: Small and narrow way of looking at things, which has no eye for the real nature of the world.

<u>Work</u>: Action accepted from delusion, in mechanical obedience to instincts, without being concerned with the strength or capacity, or its outcomes, involving a waste of efforts or injury to others.

<u>Agent</u>: Works with a motorized mind, are stupid, stubborn, cunning, insolent, lazy, and procrastinating.

The tri-guna model suggests that the psyche is influenced by three energies that operate in dependence on one another and each strive for dominance, pushing the other two aside when they gain strength. These three energies are termed sattva, rajas and tamas. In short, when sattva guna is dominant in an individual, the said individual has strong well-being, is calm, happy, motivated and persevering. Dominant rajas leads to stress, over-activity and restlessness. When tamas becomes dominant, it makes a person negative, depressed and leads to a lack of motivation. The inference of the tri-guna model is that sattva should be the dominant guna in order for a person to experience higher level of well-being. Sattva can be secured by a number of interventions such as meditation, increasing spiritual consciousness, self-regulation and developing virtues. Studies investigating the tri-guna model have demonstrated that many of the theorized relations are supported by empirical data (Puta, M., 2016).

The Oxford Happiness Inventory as a comprehensive measure of personal happiness, was framed mainly for in-house use in the Department of Experimental Psychology of the University of Oxford in the late 1980s (OHI, Argyle, Martin, & Crossland, 1989). The formulation of the scale and some of its properties were appraised by Argyle, Martin, and Lu (1995). The scale has always been found to act steadily, and other workers have reported its use both in the UK (Furnham & Brewin, 1990, Joseph & Lewis, 1998), in Spain (Sanchez, 1994) and the USA (Valiant, 1993). The OHI has also been used cross-culturally to have a comparison between students in Australia, Canada, the UK and USA (Francis, Brown, Lester, & Philipchalk, 1998). The OHI follows the outline and format of the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI, Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Hock, & Erbaugh, 1961) which provided, when reversed, a set of 20 multiple-choice items relevant to subjective well-being. Furthermore additional items were added

to cover different areas of happiness which were originally not included and 29 items were retained in the final scale.

Research from the past has established relationships between the OHI and a variety of trait and cognitive variables that are associated with psychological well-being. A strong positive association was found with extraversion, which was confirmed by Furnham and Brewin (1990) Considerable positive associations have also been reported between the self-esteem and OHI, the life regard Index and the life orientation test (Hills & Argyle, 2001a), and fulfilment of life (Hills & Argyle, 2001b). Joseph and Lewis (1998) found a strong positive link between the OHI and the depression–happiness Scale.

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a self-report questionnaire developed in 1983 to quantify a person's assessment of stressful situations in the previous 1 month of his or her life. It is a universal measure of stress that is simple to use, and there is no shortage of studies authorizing its authenticity and validity in a variety of situations and in multiple languages. The tool contains 14 items, which measure how unpredictable, uncontrollable and overloaded respondents feel their lives are. The respondents therefore rate how often they experience events that are stressful on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'never' to 'very often'. The higher the score, the greater the respondent feels that their demands exceed their ability to cope. There are no cut-off scores. Instead, an individual's score is equated to a normative value.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

This study aims to investigate the level of resilience that different personality types exhibit along with their levels of happiness, anxiety and stress during the 'New Normal'.

HYPOTHESIS

$H0_1$- Sattva personality type does not correlate with Resilience.

$H0_2$- Sattva personality type does not correlate with Happiness.

H0$_3$- Sattva personality type does not correlate with Anxiety.

H0$_4$- Tamas personality type does not correlate with Stress.

H0$_5$- Resilience does not vary between Gen X and Gen Y.

SAMPLE AND SETTING

The study respondents were a convenience sample of 103 individuals. The sample comprised of 45 males (44%) and 58 females (56%), with the median age group being between 25 and 40 years.

MEASURES

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Argyle, M., & Hills, P., 2002) was administered to determine the level of happiness of the respondents. Responses were scored on a 5-point scale using anchors of Strongly Disagree and Strongly Agree. Scores were totalled to produce scores ranging from 5 to 25. Higher scores indicated higher level of happiness.

The 4-item Brief Resilience Coping Scale (Sinclair, V. G., & Wallston, K.A., 2004), was used to measure the degree of resilience individuals of different mental temperaments had to the drastic change in lifestyle caused due to the New Normal. Responses were scored on a 5-point scale using anchors of Strongly Disagree and Strongly Agree. Scores were totalled to produce scores ranging from 4 to 20. Higher scores indicated greater resilience coping.

The 4 item Perceived Stress Scale 4 (Cohen et al., 1983) was administered to determine the level of stress of the respondents. Responses were scored on a 5-point scale using anchors of Strongly Disagree and Strongly Agree. Scores were totalled to produce scores ranging from 4 to 20. Higher scores indicated higher level of stress.

The Triguna Scale (Modh, S., 2020) was administered to find out types of Personality of the respondents which included 3 sub scales Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas each consisting of 6 items. Responses were scored on a 5-point scale using anchors of Strongly Disagree and Strongly Agree. Scores were

totalled to produce scores ranging from 6 to 30 for each sub scale. Sub scale with the highest scores indicated the dominant personality type.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The responses were subjected to internal consistency analysis using Cronbach's Alpha as the metric, and a value of 0.681 was obtained (Table 1). $H0_1$ states that Sattva personality type does not correlate with Resilience. Data collected from responses show a significantly positive correlation between sattva and resilience (Table 2). This suggests that it is more likely that individuals with higher level of Sattva guna in their nature also have higher level of resilience compared to the other gunas/ personality types. The null hypothesis can thus be rejected, and the alternate hypothesis: *Sattva personality type positively correlates with the Resilience* can be accepted.

$H0_2$ states Sattva personality type does not correlate with Happiness, data collected from the responses indicate significant positive correlation between sattva guna and happiness (Table 2). The positive correlation suggests that individuals with a dominant sattva guna in their nature are happier in comparison to other gunas/ personality types. The null hypothesis is thus rejected, and the alternate hypothesis: *Sattva personality type positively correlates with Happiness* can be accepted.

$H0_3$ states that Sattva personality type does not correlate with Anxiety, data collected from the responses indicate significant negative correlation between sattva guna and anxiety (Table 2). The negative correlation suggests that individuals with a dominant sattva guna in their nature are less likely to be anxious in comparison to other gunas/ personality types. The null hypothesis is thus rejected, and the alternate hypothesis: *Sattva personality type negatively correlates with Anxiety* can be accepted.

$H0_4$ states that Tamas personality type does not correlate with Stress, data collected from the responses indicate significant positive correlation between tamas and stress (Table 2). The positive correlation suggests that individuals with a dominant tamas guna in their nature are more likely to

be stressed in comparison to other gunas/ personality types. The null hypothesis is thus rejected, and the alternate hypothesis: *Tamas personality type positively correlates with Stress* can be accepted.

$H0_5$ states that Resilience does not vary between Gen X and Gen Y, data collected from the responses indicate no significant differences between mean scores of Resilience, Happiness, Stress, Anxiety, Tamas, Sattva and Rajas. The null hypothesis is thus accepted.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of the study suggest that the respondents who have a dominant sattva guna in their nature are better at coping and not that stressed and anxious and can be said to be better at dealing with the changes brought about by the new normal. A possible reason could be the traits of the Sattva guna that has made it easier for the respondents to have accepted the new norm and have acclimatized to the changes in lifestyle. The study was also focussed on different age groups. Happiness stress and anxiety were explored keeping the current changes in lifestyle in mind. Following are suggestions for further studies:

a. The sample size and demographics can be widened to include a more diverse sample.

b. A survey can be targeted for individuals with different personality traits with a deeper focus on the effect it could have on their well-being and mental health.

c. Parameters which are relevant for a wider demographic can be utilized to better understand the personality types of the sample.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic undoubtedly left an after effect on the lives of people. It lead to a change in the way people lived their lives, their daily routine came to a halt. They had to continue working and act as if things were

normal even when they weren't because life still goes on. The 'New normal' phenomenon has been accepted easily by some, but some have had to accept it with a pinch of salt.

Responses received from the study show that only 19% of the entire lot of respondents were happy. 42% of the respondents had a good level of resilience, however 8% of them were stressed and 4% were anxious. These scores point out to the undeniable effect that the change in lifestyles of many due to the 'New Normal' has had on the emotional well-being of people.

Surprisingly, the responses also highlighted a dominant Sattva Guna in the respondents which was around 10% in comparison to Tamas guna which was 8% and Rajas guna being 4%. These scores indicate that even when the times get tough with the help of a dominant Sattva guna people will be able to cope with difficult situations to a great extent. However, the Tamas guna being on a higher side can also lead to them getting stressed and anxious easily. The higher Tamas guna could be a possible explanation to the respondents not being happy.

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ANNEXURE

Table 1: Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	**N of Items**
.689	48

Table 2: Correlations between variables							
	OXHS	**BRCSC**	**STRS**	**ANXT**	**RJSK**	**STVK**	**TMSK**
OXHS	1						
BRCSC	.667**	1					
STRS	-.507**	-.457**	1				
ANXT	-.368**	-.403**	.520**	1			
RJSK	.106	.107	-.024	-.050	1		
STVK	.441**	.551**	-.310**	-.372**	.073	1	
TMSK	-.071	-.047	.356**	.375**	.128	-.053	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
OXHS- Happiness, BRCSC- Resilience, STRS- Stress, ANXT- Anxiety, RJSK- Rajas,
STVK- Sattva, TMSK- Tamas

Table 3: ANOVA for variance between age groups						
		Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
OXHS	Between Groups	.030	2	.015	.044	.957
	Within Groups	34.500	100	.345		
	Total	34.531	102			
BRCSC	Between Groups	3.654	2	1.827	2.946	.057
	Within Groups	62.025	100	.620		
	Total	65.680	102			
STRS	Between Groups	.743	2	.372	.547	.580
	Within Groups	67.940	100	.679		
	Total	68.683	102			
ANXT	Between Groups	1.628	2	.814	1.825	.167
	Within Groups	44.614	100	.446		
	Total	46.242	102			
RJSK	Between Groups	2.616	2	1.308	3.238	.043
	Within Groups	40.405	100	.404		

	Total	43.021	102			
STVK	Between Groups	4.258	2	2.129	4.538	.013
	Within Groups	46.920	100	.469		
	Total	51.178	102			
TMSK	Between Groups	.695	2	.347	.996	.373
	Within Groups	34.882	100	.349		
	Total	35.577	102			

OXHS- Happiness, BRCSC- Resilience, STRS- Stress, ANXT- Anxiety, RJSK- Rajas, STVK- Sattva, TMSK- Tamas

Table 3.1: Post hoc test for Significant variable					
Dependent Variable			**Mean Difference (I-J)**	**Std. Error**	**Sig.**
RJSK	16 - 25	25 - 40	.395[*]	.157	.014
		40 above	.137	.151	.364
	25 - 40	16 - 25	-.395[*]	.157	.014
		40 above	-.257	.152	.095
	40 above	16 - 25	-.137	.151	.364
		25 - 40	.257	.152	.095
STVK	16 - 25	25 - 40	-.171	.169	.316
		40 above	-.481[*]	.162	.004
	25 - 40	16 - 25	.171	.169	.316
		40 above	-.310	.164	.062
	40 above	16 - 25	.481[*]	.162	.004
		25 - 40	.310	.164	.062
RJSK- Rajas, STVK- Sattva					