EVALUATION OF CHALLENGE STRESSORS: EVIDENCE FROM ISLAMIC AZAD UNIVERSITY

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Abstract
The main purpose of this study is evaluation the challenge stressors: evidence from Islamic Azad University in Ardabil. The population of this study are faculty members of this university branches. We determined the amount of the sample size with the used of Cochran sampling method which the statistical sample is 203, which have been selected through the stratified random sampling method. To gathering of data, we used questionnaire according to Colquitt, Lepine, Wesson, (2010). Questionnaires reliability was estimated by calculating Cronbach’s Alpha that is 0.862. In order to analyze the data resulted from collected questionnaires deductive and descriptive statistical methods are used, and to display some statistical data we used column diagram and in deductive level to test the hypothesis of the research we used One-Sample T Test. Findings show that Task Complexity, Time Pressure and Responsibility the factors of challenge stressors has located in good condition at Islamic Azad Universities in Ardabil.

Key words: Task Complexity, Time Pressure and Responsibility, challenge stressors

INTRODUCTION
When something happens to us, we automatically evaluate the situation mentally. We decide if it is threatening to us, how we need to deal with the situation, and what skills we can use. If we decide that the demands of the situation outweigh the skills we have, then we label the situation as “stressful” and react with the classic “stress response.” If we decide that our coping skills outweigh the demands of the situation, then we don’t see it as “stressful” (Davis, Robbins, Eschelman, McKay, 1995).

Stress is the way human beings react both physically and mentally to changes, events, and situations in their lives. People experience stress in different ways and for different reasons. The reaction is based on your perception of an event or situation. If you view a situation negatively, you will likely feel distressed—overwhelmed, oppressed, or out of control. Distress is the more
familiar form of stress. The other form, *eustress*, results from a “positive” view of an event or situation, which is why it is also called “good stress.”

*Eustress* helps you rise to a challenge and can be an antidote to boredom because it engages focused energy. That energy can easily turn to *distress*, however, if something causes you to view the situation as unmanageable or out of control. Many people regard public speaking or airplane flights as very stressful—causing physical reactions such as an increased heart rate and a loss of appetite—while others look forward to the event. It’s often a question of perception: A positive stressor for one person can be a negative stressor for another (Ayala, 2002).

Stress can come from any situation or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or anxious. Everyone sees situations differently and has different coping skills. For this reason, no two people will respond exactly the same way to a given situation. Situations that are considered stress provoking are known as stressors. Stress is not always a bad thing. Stress is simply the body’s response to changes that create taxing demands. Many professionals suggest that there is a difference between what we perceive as positive stress, and distress, which refers to negative stress. In daily life, we often use the term “stress” to describe negative situations. This leads many people to believe that all stress is bad for you, which is not true.

**Positive stress** has the following characteristics:

- Motivates, focuses energy
- Is short-term
- Is perceived as within our coping abilities
- Feels exciting
- Improves performance

In contrast, **negative stress** has the following characteristics:

- Causes anxiety or concern
- Can be short or long-term
- Is perceived as outside of our coping abilities
- Feels unpleasant
- Decreases performance
- Can lead to mental and physical problems (Greenberger and Padeshy, 1995).

Selye (1976, 1982), the originator of the distinction between "eustress" (good stress) and distress (bad stress), did not conceptualize stress this way. Rather, Selye suggested that distinctions among types of stress should be based on the type of demand (i.e., the type of Stressor), not on the level of demand. Moreover, Selye focused his attention on the physiological effects of distress. He never examined relationships with job performance, and he discussed eustress briefly in his work to account for stressors that appeared to be healthful and to cause positive emotions. Finally, although the possibility that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between stress and performance is intuitively appealing, tests have not been supportive (Westman & Eden, 1996). Although the good stress/bad stress idea remains popular today, theories that account for the distinction have not been developed, and only recently have scholars begun to consider relationships between good stress and work criteria.

One such study, Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roe ling, and Boudreau (2000) found two factors underlying scores on items from several popular measures of stress. One factor included demands such as high workload, time pressure, job scope, and high responsibility. This factor was labeled
"challenge stressors" because it included stressful demands viewed by managers as obstacles to be overcome in order to learn and achieve. The other factor included demands such as organizational politics, red tape, role ambiguity, and concerns about job security. This factor was labeled "hindrance stressors" because it included stressful demands viewed by managers as unnecessarily thwarting personal growth and goal attainment. Importantly, regression analysis results indicated that whereas challenge stressors were positively associated with job satisfaction and negatively associated with job search, hindrance stressors were negatively associated with job satisfaction and positively associated with job search. Boswell, Olson-Buchanan, and LePine (2004) replicated the underlying two-dimensional factor structure of the stressor items in the context of lower-level employees, and they also found that the two types of stressors had differing relationships with several retention criteria. Although this research demonstrated that people distinguish challenge stressors from hindrance stressors and that the two types of stressors have differing relationships with important occupational criteria, this research did not provide a theoretical explanation for the dimensions or examine relationships with performance.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) posited that people appraise stressful situations as either potentially threatening or potentially promoting mastery, personal growth, or future gains. This distinction among stressors is similar to the distinction that Cavanaugh and colleagues (2000) made, albeit Lazarus and Folkman used the labels "threats" and "challenges." The outcome of this initial appraisal process influences emotions, which in turn influence how a person copes with stressors. Challenge stressors, because they are appraised as having the potential to promote personal gain or growth, trigger positive emotions and an active or problem-solving style of coping (e.g., increasing effort). Threatening or hindering stressors, because they are appraised as having the potential to harm personal growth or gain, trigger negative emotions and a passive or emotional style of coping (e.g., withdrawing from the situation, ration).

**METHODOLOGY**

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the challenge stressors: evidence from Islamic Azad University in Ardabil. The population of this study are faculty members of this university branches. We determined the amount of the sample size with the used of Cochran sampling method which the statistical sample is 203, which have been selected through the stratified random sampling method. Table 1 shows the characteristic and classes of Islamic Azad University in Ardabil.

**Table 1: The population and sample characteristic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Islamic Azad University branches</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ardabil</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalkhal</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsabad</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meshkinshahr</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germi</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To gathering of data, we used questionnaire according to Colquitt, Lepine, Wesson, (2010). Questionnaires reliability was estimated by calculating Cronbach’s Alpha that is 0.862.

In order to analyze the data resulted from collected questionnaires deductive and descriptive statistical methods are used, and to display some statistical data we used column diagram and in deductive level to test the hypothesis of the research we used One-Sample T Test.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

The One-Sample T Test compares the mean score of a sample to a known value. Usually, the known value is a population mean. Also, a one sample t-test allows us to test whether a sample mean (of a normally distributed interval variable) significantly differs from a hypothesized value.

**Hypothesis 1:** Time Pressure factor has located in good condition at Islamic Azad University in Ardabil.

\[ H_1: \text{Time Pressure factor has located in good condition at Islamic Azad University in Ardabil.} \]

\[ H_0: \text{Time Pressure factor don’t has located in good condition at Islamic Azad University in Ardabil.} \]

Table 2 shows sample output of a one-sample T test for above Hypothesis. We compared the mean level of Time Pressure for our sample to a known population value of 3.

Table 2. The results of one-sample T test for Time Pressure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One-Sample Statistics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>----</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time Pressure</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One-Sample Test</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test Value = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Pressure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The mean of Time Pressure is 3.1675, which is bigger than population mean of 3. And T value is 2.011 in 202 degrees of freedom. The significance value is 0.05. The estimated significance (0.046) is little than .05. Also, the both Lower and upper confidence interval of the difference is positive, so, we can reject H₀ and confirm H₁. And say that Time Pressure factor has located in good condition at Islamic Azad Universities in Ardabil.

\textbf{Hypothesis 2:} Task Complexity factor has located in good condition at Islamic Azad University in Ardabil.

\begin{align*}
H₁ & : \text{Task Complexity factor has located in good condition at Islamic Azad University in Ardabil.} \\
H₀ & : \text{Task Complexity factor don’t has located in good condition at Islamic Azad University in Ardabil.}
\end{align*}

Table 3 shows sample output of a one-sample T test for above Hypothesis. We compared the mean level of Task Complexity for our sample to a known population value of 3.

Table 3. The results of one-sample T test for Time Pressure

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & N & Mean & Std. Deviation & Std. Error Mean \\
\hline
Task Complexity & 201 & 4.0597 & .93617 & .06603 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & t & df & Sig. (2-tailed) & Mean Difference & 95\% Confidence Interval of the Difference \\
\hline
Task Complexity & 16.048 & 200 & .000 & 1.05970 & .9295 - 1.1899 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

The mean of Task Complexity is 4.0597, which is bigger than population mean of 3. And T value is 16.048 in 203 degrees of freedom. The significance value is 0.05. The estimated significance (0.000) is little than .05. Also, the both Lower and upper confidence interval of the difference is positive, so, we can reject H₀ and confirm H₁. And say that Task Complexity factor has located in good condition at Islamic Azad Universities in Ardabil.
**Hypothesis 3:** Responsibility factor has located in good condition at Islamic Azad University in Ardabil.

- **H1:** Responsibility factor has located in good condition at Islamic Azad University in Ardabil.
- **H0:** Responsibility factor don’t has located in good condition at Islamic Azad University in Ardabil.

Table 4 shows sample output of a one-sample T test for above Hypothesis. We compared the mean level of Responsibility for our sample to a known population value of 3.

Table 4: The results of one-sample T test for Time Pressure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One-Sample Statistics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<td>---</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One-Sample Test</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test Value = 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>t</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean of Responsibility is 4.1330, which is bigger than population mean of 3. And T value is 18.059 in 203 degrees of freedom. The significance value is 0.05. The estimated significance (0.000) is little than .05. Also, the both Lower and upper confidence interval of the difference is positive, so, we can reject H₀ and confirm H₁. And say that Responsibility factor has located in good condition at Islamic Azad Universities in Ardabil.

Findings show that Task Complexity, Time Pressure and Responsibility the factors of challenge stressors has located in good condition at Islamic Azad Universities in Ardabil.

**References**


