

Measures of Modifiers of the Response to Stress

As pointed out in Chapter 3 in *Preventive Stress Management in Organizations, Second Edition*, there are several factors which act to determine the manner in which the generalized stress response will be manifested in a particular individual. In the case of the Achilles heel phenomenon, there are few good measures or indicators of the individual's differential responsiveness, or Achilles heel weakness. In the case of other characteristics, such as Hardiness and the Type A behavior pattern, there are measures available. This section will review a small number of the better known or more directly applicable measurement techniques.

Hardiness

Hardiness is a personality construct which reflects an optimistic orientation comprised of commitment, challenge, and control. The study of hardiness is especially interested in people who stay well, despite high levels of stress. The goal is to identify and isolate the traits of those who thrive under stress, in order to help develop those characteristics in those who don't. The five-scale composite described in the original prospective test of hardiness (Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982) and the 36-item and 26-item abridged versions (Allred & Smith, 1989; Rhodewalt & Zone, 1989) are the instruments originally used most frequently to assess the construct. However, The HardiSurvey III-R is the most recent and widely used measure currently (Maddi, Khoshaba, & the Hardiness Institute, 2001). The test is now a 65 item questionnaire with considerable reliability and validity that measures the attitudes, coping strategies, and interaction patterns of hardiness (Maddi, 2005).

Available from [The Hardiness Institute](#).

Approximate completion time: 20 min

Type A Behavior Pattern

The original research on the Type A behavior pattern is based on assessment of Type A behavior using a *structured interview* (SI) developed by Rosenman and colleagues (1964). Audiovisual recordings of the interviews are rated by judges who, despite the apparent subjectivity of the assessment, have an interrater reliability of 0.64 to 0.84. In an attempt to reduce the subjectivity and avoid the cost of the SI, self-report questionnaires have been developed for making the Type A/B classification. The Jenkins Activity Survey (JAS), developed by Jenkins in conjunction with Rosenman and Friedman (Jenkins, Rosenman, & Friedman, 1967), has been the subject of the greatest amount of research and the most careful validation. Sample items from the JAS are as follows:

- Frequently hurries speaker to the point
- Tends to get irritated easily
- Frequently brings work home at night
- Gives much more effort than the average worker

Attempts to develop alternative, usually briefer, Type A scales include the 10-item Framingham Type A Scale (FTAS) (Haynes, Levine, Scotch, ., Feinleib, & Kannel, 1978), and the 14-item Bortner scale (Bortner, 1969).

Evidence for all types of validity seem to be greatest for the SI. Comparisons across the JAS, FTAS, and Bortner reveal relative strengths and weaknesses in certain areas, but none of these measures clearly dominates the others (Edwards & Baglioni, 1991). Spence, Helmreich, and Pred's (1987) adaptation of the Jenkin's Activity Scale provides for separate assessments of the Achievement Strivings and Impatience-Irritability factors. This measure, as well as other type A behavior measures presented are still being used to measuring Type A Behaviors (Thorton, Ryckman, & Gold, 2011).

Social Support

Another indicator of an individual's vulnerability is found in examining or profiling his social support network. House has conducted several studies in this area using a brief questionnaire as the primary measure of social support. The three central questions asked (House & Wells, 1978) were:

1. How much can each of the following people be relied on when *things get tough at work*?
(immediate supervisor or boss; other people at work; spouse; friends and relatives)
2. How much is each of the following people *willing to listen to your work-related problems*?
(immediate supervisor or boss; other people at work; spouse; friends and relatives)
3. How much is each of the following people *helpful to you in getting your job done*?
(immediate supervisor; other people at work)

For each potential support person mentioned, respondents were asked to indicate whether the individual was a source of support by answering, "not at all, a little, somewhat, or very much." In addition, respondents were asked about their supervisors' competence, concern, and tendency to give praise.

This questionnaire and minor modifications of it have been used in numerous studies of organizational stress and social support. It has clear face validity and is easy to administer.

Found in House, J. S. (1981). *Work Stress and Social Support* (p. 71). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Approximate completion time: 10–15 min

Coping Mechanisms Assessment

A number of questionnaires have been developed to assess stress coping styles and strategies. The most widely used description of coping is offered by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) who distinguish between problem and emotion-focused options and strategies. The former are concerned with directly attacking the problem while the latter attack the emotional response to it. The authors have developed a questionnaire to assess of such strategies called the Ways of Coping Questionnaire (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988) which has become widely used by stress researchers. This questionnaire asks respondents to identify a specific stressful situation and rate on four-point scales their reliance on sixty-six specific coping responses. The questionnaire contains eight subscales measuring various varieties of types of problem and emotion focused coping. This instrument has been repeatedly shown to be reliable.

The Coping Responses Inventory (CRI, Moos, 1992) is composed of eight subscales that assess four types of coping processes: cognitive approach coping, behavioral approach coping, cognitive avoidance coping, and behavioral avoidance coping. This questionnaire contains 48 items with four-point response scales. Moos and his colleagues have also developed a version of the CRI that focuses on how health care staff cope with work-related stressors (Schaefer & Moos, 1991). The scale's internal reliability was found to be strong, with a Coefficient alphas of .79 (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002).

Ways of Coping Questionnaire available from [Mind Garden](#).

Approximate completion time: 10 min

Coping Responses Inventory available from [PAR, Inc.](#)

Approximate completion time: 10-15 min

Locus of Control

Locus of control is a personality characteristic which may modify an individual's experience of occupational stress as well as response to it (Hurrell & Murphy, 1991). This characteristic is concerned with the degree to which individuals perceive that they have control over events occurring in their lives. An individual with an *external* locus of control perceives that circumstances, bad or good luck, other people, or events are responsible for what occurs in life. An individual with an *internal* locus of control perceives that individuals are the masters of their own destinies and responsible for their own fortunes or misfortunes.

Rotter (1966; reprinted in Rotter, Chance, and Phares, 1972) has developed a 29-item, forced-choice measure of the tendency toward an internal or external locus of control. The 29-item scale includes six filler items intended to disguise the aim of the test and 23 items used to determine an individual's locus of control. His measure has demonstrated internal consistency, test-retest reliability, as well as discriminant validity. Spector (1988) has also developed a 16-item measure of generalized control beliefs in the work setting that shows good reliability.

Found in Rotter, J. B. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs*, 80, 1–28.

Approximate completion time: 15 min

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