

# STUDY ON PERSONALITY HARDINESS AND TEACHING: A ANALYSIS OF STRENGTH AND ADAPTABILITY

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**Kanchan Lata**

Research Scholar, School of Arts and social sciences

The Glocal University, Mirzapur Pole, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh

**Dr. Soniya Rani**

Research Supervisor, School of Arts and social sciences

The Glocal University, Mirzapur Pole, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh

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## Abstract

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping society and passing down knowledge and experience across generations. In today's world, they are among the most exposed professionals, facing challenges such as job insecurity, fear of authority, pressure from examination results, and the increasing expectations of parents, students, and society. These factors can negatively affect teachers' motivation and effectiveness, with the impact varying based on their personality and level of hardiness. Hardiness refers to a set of attitudes and skills that equip individuals with the resilience and strategies to transform stressful situations into opportunities for personal and professional growth. Teachers with a high level of hardiness tend to be more purposeful and view challenges as learning experiences rather than sources of distress. Therefore, it is essential to focus on fostering hardiness among teachers and exploring effective ways to strengthen their resilience.

**Key Words:** *Personality Hardiness, Teachers.*

## Introduction

The stress relating to occupation has become predominant feature of modern life exerting far reaching effects on employee's behaviour and satisfaction. A moderate degree of stress is part and parcel of every occupation. But excessive and consistent stress is prevalent in occupations requiring high level of personal interaction such as teaching. To be effective in the changing and challenging environment, teacher must be more agile, adaptable and resilient in their increasingly complex, connected, fast-moving world.

Teaching profession attracts women, probably for the nature of work and the ability to combine family and employment responsibilities than is found in other occupations. Thus, be it teachers or teacher educators, women's preponderance all over the world towards teaching profession is much more than men. Women in dual earner arrangements have reported more stress and overload than men. This stress automatically shifts upon the minds of young students as all the developmental activities related to social, cultural, intellectual, aesthetic and emotional aspects of child's personality revolve around her. So enhancing the strength of teacher's internal resources such as hardiness and self esteem are assured to act as buffer while encountering any stressful events in occupations life (Kobasa, Maddi and Kahn 1982).

## Personality Hardiness

The world of work is undergoing constant and escalating rates of change (Sparks, Faragher & Cooper, 2001). As the demands on employees increase, there has been a corresponding interest in identifying people who are able to handle the pressure and thrive. Hardiness emerged as a distinguished factor, and it is thus becoming an increasingly hot topic for academics, practitioners and individuals alike. The hardiness concept dates back to 1975 when Dr. Salvatore R. Maddi founder of the hardiness concept, began his research at Illinois Bell Telephone Company. Hardiness focuses on persons that remain relatively healthy after experiencing high amounts of stressful life events.

In recent years, considerable attention has been paid to the construct of hardiness as an inner resource that may moderate the effects of stress on physical and mental health. Hardiness is a personality style that shows commitment, control and challenge.

Kobasa (1979) defines hardiness as a cognitive appraisal processes composed of three characteristics: 1) control was described as a belief that people could control or influence the events of their experience; 2) commitment was described as an ability to feel deeply involved in the activities in their lives; and 3) challenge was described as anticipating change as an exciting challenge to further development.

Kobasa, Maddi and Kahn (1982) defined the concept of hardiness as "a constellation of personality characteristics that function as a resistance resource in the encounter with stressful life events".

International Encyclopedia of Psychology (1999) has defined hardiness as a constellation of behaviors and perceptions thought to buffer the effect of stress; characterized by perceptions of control, commitment and challenge.

Maddi et al. (2002) defined hardiness to be a pervasive aspect of personality reflecting a general tendency towards psychological health (the opposite of neuroticism), extroversion, and openness and to a lesser extent agreeableness and conscientiousness.

Bartone (2006) considers hardiness as something more global than mere attitudes. He conceives of hardiness as a broad personality style or generalized mode of functioning that includes cognitive, emotional and behavioral qualities. This generalized style of functioning, which incorporates commitment, control and challenge is believed to affect how one views oneself and interacts with the world around.

Thus hardiness personality style is a source of positive resistance to the debilitating effects of stressful life events on health. Hardy persons tend to have dedication to a purpose, a survival in the face of stress and also the enrichment of life. Hardy persons have considerable curiosity and tend to find their experience interesting and meaningful. They believe they can be influential through what they imagine, say and do. They accept change to be the norm, and regard it as the key to development.

People, who have courage (hardiness) to favour involvement with others and events (commitment), keep trying to influence the outcomes going on around them, learning from their experiences whether positive or negative (challenge), have more fulfilling, satisfying, resilient, and remarkable life.

The hardy persons easily commit themselves to what they are doing (rather than feeling alienated), generally believe that they can at least partially control events (rather than feeling powerless), and regard change to be a normal challenge or impetus to development (rather than threat). In the perception and evaluation of specific stressful events, hardy persons find opportunities for the exercise of decision making, the confirmation of life priorities, the setting of new goals and other complex activities that they appreciate as human capabilities. Further, they are capable of evaluating any given event in the context of an overall life plan. Their basic sense of purpose and involvement in life mitigates the potential disruptiveness of any single occurrence. The coping styles of hardy persons reflect their belief in their own effectiveness as well as their ability to make good use of other human and environmental resources, coping for them consists of turning stressful events into possibilities and opportunities for their personal development and that of others around them.

## Characteristics of Hardiness

Kobasa (1979) has given three characteristics of hardy personality which are as follows:-

- **Challenge**

The first characteristic of people maintaining health in the face of change and high levels of stress has to do with the "Challenging" way they approach life. Those looking at life as a challenge tend to welcome new situations as opportunities. They learn, grow and develop rather than reacting to new prospects as threats. They believe they can grow from positive life experiences as well as negative ones and they readily accept the idea that change is a positive and normal characteristic of life. This optimistic, challenging attitude about self, the world and the interaction between the two allowed employees in the study to stay motivated. The "glass half-full" as opposed to "half-empty" characterizes this kind of attitudinal shift. This shift also encompasses risk-taking, adapting easily to change and looking at life and its adversity with a "give it your best shot" attitude.

- **Commitment**

"Commitment" is the second characteristic of people showing hardiness. People who are high on commitment are fully involved in what they are doing. This sense of commitment allows people to feel important and worthwhile enough to engage fully in work tasks despite stressful changes that may be taking place. They give activities their best, not their perfect effort and have a curiosity about what they are doing instead of a feeling of detachment or isolation.

- **Control**

The third attribute is "control". Control motivated the thrive group to find ways to influence the outcome of stressful changes, rather than lapse into helplessness and passivity. Individuals with an 'internal locus of control' would rate high on this hardiness element and tend to perceive themselves as "in charge" and "responsible" for the outcomes of their

lives. They tend not to be "blamers" and "complainers" and feel in control of their destiny and direction in life. These people develop a strong sense of self-efficacy instead of feelings of powerlessness. They have a realistic perspective on changing the things they can and accepting the things they cannot.

Hence hardiness may be considered as the measure of one's tendency to make relationship with oneself and one's outside world. It is not mere rigidity or stress "endurance", but a power to cultivate one's way under difficult conditions and go through stressful events. It is not like a reckless attack, but an ability to understand conditions around oneself and ability to self decision.

The theoretical foundation of hardiness lies with existential psychology (Maddi, 2002), which say people live in constantly changing environment and are continually required to make decisions and take actions choosing between what is safe and known, and what is new and uncertain. Many researches have been conducted in the field of hardiness and all confirms that hardiness is a source of resistance against the negative effects of stress.

Thomson (1995) conducted a study on 106 prospective teachers to examine the relationship between hardiness and school climate, and their contribution to feelings of alienation. Results indicated that individuals indicating higher levels of hardiness had significantly lower alienation scores across all school climate conditions than less hardy consists of three non-separable domains: commitment, control, and challenge, which function in the individual personality to mediate a problem.

Christopher (1996) examined the relationship of hardiness, efficacy, and locus of control (a personality trait that refers to an individual's perception of the locus of events as determined internally by his/her own behavior) on the motivation of 49 trainee teachers (32 males and 17 females). Results indicated that internal locus of control was found to be significantly positively related to work motivation. Moreover, teacher efficacy, chance, and hardiness negatively accounted for 17% of the variance, and were determined to be external locus of control.

Pollachek (2001) reported a significant relationship between hardiness and well being, social support and well being. The results of step wise multiple regression analysis showed that hardiness was the only variable that accounted for 28% variance in well being, thereby meaning that only individuals with hardiness reported higher levels of well being.

Chan (2003) conducted a study on hardiness, teacher stress and burnout. Teachers' different responses to positively and negatively worded hardiness items suggested positive and negative hardiness reflecting stress resilience and stress vulnerability. Stress, positive hardiness, and negative hardiness all had a key, independent, and significant impact on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, whereas only positive hardiness had a significant effect on personal accomplishment.

Williams and Lawler (2008) in their study 'Importance of Macro Social Structures and Personality Hardiness to the Stress-Illness Relationship in Low-Income Women' found that hardiness moderated the stress-illness relationship as high stress; low hardy women had higher levels of illness.

Sezgin (2009) in his study 'Relationship between teacher organizational commitment psychological hardiness and some demographic variables in Turkish Primary Teachers' found that psychological hardiness is a meaningful construct predicting the perceptions of primary school teachers on organizational commitment. Psychological hardiness was found to be positively and significantly related to both identification and internalization components of teacher commitment, whereas it was negatively and significantly correlated to the commitment predicated on compliance. Teacher compliance commitment was negatively associated with both identification and internalization. Although gender and years of experience are significant predictors of identification and internalization, the variables of subject specialization and age did not significantly predict all three subscales of teacher commitment.

Azeem (2010) in his study 'Personality hardiness, job involvement and job burnout among teachers' examined the influence of personality hardiness, job involvement and job burnout among teachers from one of the central universities in India. The findings of the study reveal that personality hardiness and job involvement resulted from job burnout of teachers. Job involvement are found to be negatively and significantly correlated with depersonalization and positively with personal accomplishment dimensions of burnout. Commitment, challenge, control and total personality hardiness are found to be negatively related with emotional exhaustion. Commitment and total personality hardiness are also found to be negatively related with burnout and total personality hardiness is the predictors of burnout among teachers.

Qaddumi (2011) in his study 'The Influence of Selected Demographic Variables on Hardiness of EFL Teachers in Palestine' investigated the influence of selected demographic variables like gender, marital status, qualifications, teaching experience, class size and salary on hardiness levels (commitment, control, and challenge) of EFL teachers in Palestine. Results revealed that the total levels of hardiness behavior of English teachers in Palestine were generally high for all domains of hardiness (commitment,

control and challenge). There were significant differences in EFL teachers' hardiness between EFL female teachers and EFL male teachers in favour of female teachers. Moreover, significant differences were found on the qualification variable in favour of the diploma. Whereas, there were no significant differences in EFL teachers hardiness on teaching experience, marital status and salary.

### **Why Personality Hardiness is important for teachers?**

Human capital is one of the important determinants of nation's growth and teachers are the key persons responsible for shaping the destiny of the nations. Teacher is the heart and core of educational process. They have a pivotal role in social reconstruction and in the transmission of knowledge and experience of one generation to another. An effective teacher is the greatest asset of an education system and a good education system is the only hope of all developing nation like ours.

The stress related to job has become predominant feature of modern life. The teacher is one of the most exposed persons in the present era. He lives in the state of the perceptual insecurity and is fearful of the headmaster or principal or head of the department, of examinations results, of his failure to meet the norms and unaccepted and even multiplying demands of the parents, students and society. All these factors have a negative impact on teachers' efficacy and motivation, and the extent to which each teacher is affected will depend on his particular personality and level of hardiness.

Stressful circumstances are an endemic part of living, and courage to deal with such circumstances is needed if one is to grow and develop. Hardiness is a pattern of attitudes and skills that provides the courage and strategies to turn stressful circumstances from potential disasters into growth opportunities. As such, hardiness is particularly relevant to stressful occupations such as teaching. Hardiness contributes to an individual's ability to appraise and adapt to stressful situations and respond more effectively (Maddi, 2006).

Teachers with hardiness are more purposeful and tend to take control of events. They use difficult circumstances as opportunities for growth rather than as sources of stress. So hardiness is an important buffer in stressful situations and teachers who are hardy are better able to successfully cope with such situations. Thus, it becomes necessary to devote special attention towards hardiness among teachers.

### **How hardiness can be developed?**

An individual can develop a sense of stress hardiness by:

- Telling oneself optimistic stories about events in one's life and practicing the techniques for developing optimism
- View one's life as meaningful, problems as opportunities and the future as the challenge.
- Develop a sense of commitment to something other than oneself.
- View change as normal, inevitable and as a stimulating, healthy challenge, not a threat.

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