

## **Perceived Work Deadlines: The Influence of Personality among Software Personnel**

**T.V. Anand Rao and Neelima Pradhan**  
Andhra University, Visakhapatnam

Work deadlines acts as one of the sources of stress that may lead to cause some dysfunctional consequences to the individual as well as to the organizations. The present study was undertaken to examine the influence of personality on perceived work deadlines among software professionals. The perceived dead line was measured with the dimensions namely Task support, Task significance, Task identity, Task management, Task uncertainty and Task capability, and personality measured with Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)- personality inventory. The sample of the study comprised of 78 IT professionals working in different software companies. The results indicate the significance of difference among different personality groups of (i) extrovert and introvert (ii) intuitive and sensing (iii) thinking and feeling and (iv) judging and perceiving on perceived work deadline dimensions.

**Keywords:** Work deadlines, IT personnel, Extrovert - Introvert, Intuition - Sensing, Thinking - Feeling, Judging - Perceiving.

Severe competition, unrealistic expectations from superiors, being achievement oriented, lack of job security, the inability to accept failure and meeting with work deadlines lead to a host of many psychological problems. In recent times, one of the most commonly reported causes of stress was the pressure from meeting work deadlines (Shergold,1995). Meeting work deadlines has become the source of job stress found in various occupations (Turnage & Spielberger, 1991) and conditions of time pressure for the members working in that field (Kelly & McGrath,1985). High pressure, working long hours and tight deadlines acts as the sources of many health problems (Jeanie, 2005). Working with frequent deadlines was found to be associated with work related musculo skeletal disorders (Beech –Hawley, 2004), and also observed some possible infertility and overall exhaustion in IT professionals (Bakhtiar, 2004).

Work environment characterized by strict work deadlines lead to occupational stress and work exhaustion (Rajeswari & Anatharaman, 2005). Deadlines also cause both functional and dysfunctional consequences to the individual, where people dislike the pressure created by deadline, but some like to work under deadlines, where they can utilize their full ability in fixed time limits (Capretz, 2003) play a significant role at work settings, particularly in the field of software industry. Software professionals see change in technology as a pre-requisite for their existence, yet the speed of this change can have the profound psychological and physiological effects (Khosrowpour & Culpan,1989). Setting good work deadlines is one of the techniques in time management (Alexander,1981). Work deadlines are not only considered as time management technique but also help to improve work performance

(Labianca, Emory & Henry, 2005). People working in the field of information technology go through a lot of anxiety, depression and loneliness, because of their work environment and often exhibit feelings of inadequacy, lowered self-esteem and dissatisfaction and reflects in the form of social, marital and sexual problems especially when they are working with too many deadlines (Jeanie, 2005). The employees who are able to meet the deadlines indicates their performance by measuring quantity of work (productivity), timeliness of work (completed according to deadlines or responsiveness standards), accuracy (no errors), and completeness (finished all elements), or combinations of all of these.

Software professionals have been categorized as knowledge workers (Alvesson, 2000; Deetz, 1995). The perception of the individual towards work deadlines mostly depends upon their personality characteristics (Garden, 1997; Wynkoop & Waltz, 2000). Members working under work deadlines have their own perceptions and attitudes, which ultimately affect the overall performance in both negative and positive ways. They are influenced by many external and internal variables like work environment and personality, which makes them different from others in perceiving work deadlines. Importance of personality influencing the work settings are well known in making the differences in thinking, acting and perceiving things. Many earlier studies have revealed that personality influences work performance, job satisfaction, motivation, and other factors (Tett, Jackson & Rothstein, 1991). There is every possibility that personality influences the attitudes towards work deadlines among the professionals of software industry. There is not enough research evidence found in this aspect. Therefore the present study is aimed to examine the influence of personality on perceiving work deadlines among the software personnel.

## Method

### **Sample:**

The study was conducted on a random sample of software personnel working in different software development centers situated at Pune, Baroda, Bangalore and Hyderabad. The sample consisted of 78 software personnel. Mostly the data were collected personally but in few cases through e-mail.

### **Tools:**

i) Perceived work deadlines (PWD) measure: A scale developed by Neelima (2006) was used in the present study. The aspects that represent the essential requisites of meeting work deadlines, which were conceptually developed by earlier researchers, are included as items in this measure. These items are individually or in combination determine how well the members perceive the work deadlines. The items like importance of task, realistic targets, challenging and interesting tasks, heavy work pressure, enough time to complete, proper time schedules, flexible hours (flexi time), planning, setting daily goals, routine work, fear of losing job, having self confidence, larger and complex tasks, new and innovative ways of working etc were included. The respondents were requested to indicate the response by choosing the correct response of strongly agree to strongly disagree. A five-point response category was used in which high scores indicated more towards that aspect. Factor analysis was performed which yielded a six-factor solution to indicate the following dimensions of perceived work deadlines. A high score indicated more of that dimension. This scale measures with six dimensions namely task support, task significance, task identity, task management, task uncertainty and task capability. The internal consistency reliabilities were estimated and obtained values ranged from .684 to .764 for all the six dimensions.

*Task support:* The support and encouragement received from the team members, superiors and management, having good working conditions.

*Task significance:* The importance given to the task which is challenging, interesting, and having with autonomy.

*Task Identity:* It describes with realistic, less work pressure, enough time to complete the task, proper time schedules, planning ahead of time, setting daily goals.

*Task management:* Having with simple task to make the work done and being provided with recreational benefits.

*Task uncertainty:* Describes about the uncertainty in the work environment. *Task capability:* Describes to make the work easier by giving extra time and also able to delegate the work effectively.

ii) Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). This is a standard measure developed by Briggs and Myers (1977). It describes personality types, which are the combination of four different personality traits of extroverts and introverts, sensing and intuition, thinking and feeling, judging and perceiving. The MBTI can offer a wealth of information that can be used in developing people skills as distinct individuals.

**Results and Discussion**

The results indicate significant differences between various personality groups of extroverts and introverts, sensing and intuition, thinking and feeling, judging and perceiving on the dimensions of Perceived work deadlines (PWD)

**Table 1: Perceived Work Deadlines: The influence of Extroversion and Introversion groups**

Work Deadline Dimensions	Extroversion Group (n=44)		Introversion Group (n= 34)		t-value
	Mean	S.D	Mean	SD	
Task Support	37.70	5.48	37.15	5.25	0.45
Task Significance	23.59	3.30	22.82	3.84	0.95
Task Identity	27.86	4.63	26.06	5.72	1.54
Task Management	18.89	3.10	18.74	3.48	0.20
Task Uncertainty	12.68	3.66	15.91	2.68	4.33**
Task Capability	15.91	2.68	15.38	2.05	-0.63

\*\* p<.0.01

**Extroversion – Introversion and PWD**

Significant differences are observed between the extroversion and introversion personality groups on the task uncertainty (t=4.33, p<0.01) dimension of perceived work deadlines (see table 1). The finding indicates that introverts seem to have difficulty in meeting the work deadlines because of the uncertainty with work arising from frequent changes in the targets, poor quality of work, frequent transfers, and rushing last minute work etc. Introverts tend to take longer time

to complete the tasks and thus use their energies towards themselves, when compared to the extroverts. Introvert employees may not be able to adapt to the frequent changes that are occurring in the work because of more work demands. In some occupations with regard to written and oral presentation, the introverts produce better written reports, whereas extroverts comfortable with oral presentations were also observed showing their personality differences (Scott & Cross, 1995).

**Table 2: Perceived Work Deadlines: The influence of Sensing and Intuition groups**

Work Deadlines Dimensions	Sensing Group (n=64)		Intuition Group (n=14)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Task Support	37.44	5.64	37.57	3.98	-0.11
Task Significance	23.33	3.69	22.93	2.87	0.45
Task Identity	26.78	5.57	28.43	2.44	-1.73
Task Management	18.53	3.37	20.14	2.32	-2.15*
Task Uncertainty	13.92	3.77	14.86	2.85	-1.04
Task Capability	15.16	2.58	15.29	2.13	-0.2

**Sensing- Intuition and PWD**

With regard to the difference between the sensing and Intuition personality groups on the dimensions of perceived work deadlines, it has been noted that only on Task management ( $t= 2.15$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) dimension of perceived work deadlines found significant (see table 2). It is observed that intuitive group employees perceive more task management than sensing personality group. It seems the employees of

intuitive personality are well prepared being upto date with their work, they generally avoid multiple tasks, and prefer to take up tasks which do not have frequent changes. The employees with intuitive personality tend to focus on future with a view towards pattern and possibilities; also plan their work before commencing. Whereas sensing personality employees may not anticipate the things which require carrying their work with right planning.

**Table 3: Perceived Work Deadlines: The Influence of Thinking and Feeling groups**

Work Deadlines Dimensions	Thinking Group(n=56)		Feeling Group(n=22)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Task Support	37.63	5.04	37.05	6.20	0.43
Task Significance	23.45	3.61	22.77	3.41	0.75
Task Identity	27.14	4.81	26.91	6.14	0.18
Task Management	18.36	3.29	20.00	2.89	-2.05*
Task Uncertainty	13.57	3.59	15.41	3.46	-2.06*
Task Capability	14.93	2.50	15.82	2.40	1.43

\*  $p < 0.05$

**Thinking –Feeling and PWD**

Table-3 indicates the significance of difference between thinking and feeling personality groups of personnel on the dimensions of perceived work deadlines.. It can be noted from the table that employees of the feeling group obtained higher scores on Task management ( $t=2.05$ ,  $p<.0.05$ ) and Task uncertainty( $t=2.06$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The findings suggest that these employees work without keeping any work pending; they avoid multiple

tasks and do not take the tasks that make frequent changes. These employees may find it difficult to cope with frequent change in the targets, and may not give much importance to the quality of work and they generally do last minute work. Further, this group of employees makes the decisions primarily on the basis of values and subjective evaluation as contrasted to the thinking group whose decisions are based on logic and tend to be more objective. These observations are supported by

research evidence that those are working with frequent deadlines generally work together with others, perform task on a specific

schedule and order, work at a faster rate, perceive their work as hectic and hard (Beechy-Hawley, 2004)

**Table 4 : Perceived Work Deadlines: The Influence of Judging and Perceiving groups**

Work Deadlines Dimensions	Judging group(n=50)		Perceiving group(n=28)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Task Support	38.02	5.34	36.46	5.32	1.24
Task Significance	23.48	3.63	22.86	3.42	0.74
Task Identity	27.56	5.90	26.21	3.47	1.10
Task Management	18.94	3.29	18.61	3.22	0.43
Task Uncertainty	13.80	4.23	14.61	2.13	0.94
Task Capability	15.30	2.70	15.30	2.70	0.57

#### ***Judging –Perceiving and PWD***

It is observed from the table 4, that none of the dimensions of perceived work deadlines differed significantly between the judging and perceiving personality groups. However, these employees are open, adoptable, flexible in nature likely to perceive work deadlines more positively with the support and encouragement received from the team members and their work must be challenging and realistic in nature. But, some employees who feel rushed on their jobs, work with great intensity, or who feel they frequently confront in meeting deadlines might inflate their reported working hours, compared with individuals who do not perceive their jobs as being so stressful (Jerry, 1998). Also the employees who feel that they are working at full capacity are no more likely to exaggerate than are those are only working at a fraction of their capacity (Jerry, 1998). Moreover, external imposed deadlines have an effect on intrinsic motivation. An externally imposed time limit negates the otherwise deleterious effects of deadlines on intrinsic motivation. One can set and meet stringent deadlines and improve their performance better by maintaining a good level of eustress as early as possible and ensuring that it does not turn into distress can help to improve the progress of meeting deadlines (Lussier, 1990).

#### **Conclusion**

The results of the present study indicate that perceived work dead lines would be the function of certain personality traits. The personality types of feeling, intuition, and introversion would be able to meet the work deadlines when the work environment has less uncertainty, includes simple tasks and provides recreational facilities. Personality types also significantly influence perception of work deadlines especially with regard to nature of task. Members energized with one's internal reflection on ideas and impressions are likely to experience deadline related stress mainly because of lack of clarity in the work environment. Understanding the nature of perceived deadlines could be useful in many work situations, for instance, identifying the reasons for work deadlines and also identify the individuals with right type of personality may help the organizations and their employees to function more effectively. The attitudes and behaviors must be congruent with the performance of the individual and it can be detected through appropriate recruitment and selection practices where the individual's personality is considered as one of the requisites (Neelima, 2006). Also the stress induced by work deadlines could be minimized by equipping the personnel with the specific knowledge to work with deadlines.

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**T.V.Anand Rao**, PhD, Associate professor, Department of Psychology and Parapsychology, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam

**Neelima Pradhan**, Research Scholar, Department of Psychology and Parapsychology, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam – 530 003 (A.P.)