Methodology
Design

Design of the study was 2x2x2 factorial with two levels of learned optimism (high/low), two levels of emotional intelligence (high/low) and two levels of hardiness (high/low), for three dimensions of stress resiliency i.e. deficiency focusing, necessitating and skill recognition.

Participants:

Sample for the research comprised of 280 professionally qualified males at the managerial level working in the private sector with average age of 31 years. They had work experience ranging from three years to eight years.

Target population:

Managerial level males, working in private organizations e.g. Infosys, Airtel, Trident, Idea, the Hong kong Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited India, Reliance, Tata Consultancy Services, Deutsche Bank India, Goldman Sachs India and Dell, were approached. Random sampling method was used for selection of organizations. The managers were handed over questionnaires that had complete instructions as per the manuals. Participants were ensured about the confidentiality of their results.

Tools Used

Stress resiliency profile (Kenneth W. Thomas and Walter G. Tymon, Jr, 1992): Stress resiliency profile conceptualizes that stress occurs when people perceive that events are placing excessive demands upon them. The degree of stress experienced depends upon one’s perceptions, which determine whether a given situation is experienced as an “excessive demand” as opposed to challenging task or an opportunity. The perception depends upon
the way one goes about interpreting the facts of the situation. To assess stress resiliency three dimensions that influence stress i.e. deficiency focusing, necessitating and low skill recognition have been considered. These dimensions involve a tendency to pay greater attention on some aspects of the situation than on others. Together they tend to exaggerate individuals’ perception on the severity of situation and thus its stress magnitude.

**Deficiency focusing:** When focusing on deficiencies, individual assumes that it is most useful to be aware of negatives and that being continually vigilant for dangers and deficiencies is the best path to survival, goal attainment or happiness. But such assumptions are not true. Deficiency focusing leads to the recognition of imperfections and problems, but does not find solutions. It does not allow individual to recognise opportunities and enjoy accomplishments. Instead, it tends to produce an exaggerated sense of threat. Focusing on performance deficiencies at work makes individuals feel disappointed and embarrassed. Deficiencies turn out to be focus of attention and induce stress in individual.

**Necessitating:** When looking for necessities, individuals assume that there are areas of life over which they have no choice. It is assumed that such pressures will be helpful in meeting the demands. But the reality is that necessitating can leave individuals with feeling of emptiness because they do not feel true owners of their actions. Exercising choice over one’s actions is the essence of human decision-making. Being able to see a number of options permits an individual to deal with contingencies effectively. Necessitating restricts the feelings of self-determination and fulfilment. The perception is that one has no choice, the task has to be performed and the
demand is inflexible. Such perceptions result in feelings of pressure and stress.

**Low skill recognition:** When an individual consistently attributes his success to factors outside him, it becomes difficult for him to recognise his own competence. He may assume that recognising his own skill could be supercilious. Skill recognition may be associated with the sin of pride. Recognizing individuals’ skills permits him to choose appropriate new challenges and opportunities and to face them with confidence. It's important to realise that recognising his skill is quite different from arrogance and pride. Focusing entirely on others’ contributions to any task results in undervaluing ones’ own contributions. Undervaluing ones’ skills may leave one feeling dependent on. Also by not recognising ones’ own contributions, one can underestimate the extent to which others value him. It is important to realise that skill recognition is involved in working with others to accomplish a task. Such realizations result in stress resiliency.

Profile scores are grouped into three categories namely, Deficiency Focussing, Necessitating and Skill Recognition. These dimensions involve a tendency to pay greater attention to some aspects of a situation than to others.

Individuals high on stress resiliency are those who score low on deficiency focussing, necessitating and high on skill recognition. Scoring high on deficiency focusing and necessitating and low on skill recognition tends to exaggerate an individuals’ perception of severity of a situation and thus its stressfulness. Stress symptoms are more likely to occur for individuals who score higher in deficiency focussing and necessitating and lower in skill
recognition. This scale is a self-administering questionnaire composed of 18 items. Items are based on 7-point Likert rating scale (1 - strongly disagree to 7 - strongly agree). **Chronbach alpha** is 0.87, 0.74, and 0.85, for deficiency focusing, necessitating and skill recognition respectively. It has been widely used in Indian settings (Garg & Rastogi, 2009).

**Learned Optimism Scale (Pethe S., Chaudhari S., Dhar S. and Dhar U., 1971):** This scale has conceptualized optimism "As a generalized expectancy that good as opposed to bad outcomes will generally occur when confronted with problems across important life domains.” In general optimism is used to denote positive attitude or dispositions that good things will happen independent of ones’ ability. Optimism is a thinking style that can be learned. The belief that one has mastery over the events of ones’ life and can meet challenges as they come up, leads to optimism. Snyder (1994) has contended that optimism contains proactive component of planning. Optimistic statements are usually based on logical and concrete facts.

The intimate connection between selecting achievable goals and optimism can be found in the concept of learned optimism. Learned optimism is a sense of enthusiasm, confidence and control, which develops once individual achieves small successes. Setting behaviourally based achievable goals proves that one is capable of accomplishing what one sets out to do. If one sets unrealistic goals the inevitable failures will almost certainly lead one to lack of accomplishment. According to Seligman (1991), how an individual thinks about events in life greatly affects the kind of actions he takes. Explanatory styles vary on a continuum from optimism to pessimism. People who see temporary reasons for good events may give up even when they
succeed believing success was fluke. The optimistic style for good events is opposite to that of bad events. The optimist believes that bad events have specific causes, while good events will enhance everything he/she does. On the other hand, the pessimist believes that bad events have universal causes and that good events are caused by specific factors. The scale consists of 22 items. It’s a self-administering questionnaire based on 5-point Likert type rating scale (1 - strongly agree to 5 - strongly disagree).

The **reliability** of scale was determined by calculating reliability coefficient on a sample of 210 subjects. The split half reliability coefficient is 0.99. This scale can be used for research and survey purposes. Besides having high face **validity**, as all items were related with the variable under focus, the scale also has high content validity. It is evident from the assessment of judges/experts that items of the scale are directly related to the concept of learned optimism. In order to find out validity from coefficient of reliability (Garret, 1981), the reliability index was calculated, which indicated high validity on account of being 0.99. The internal consistency of the scale was tested by finding item total correlation of the scale. It is eminently suitable for group as well as individual testing.

**Emotional intelligence scale (Hyde A. and Pethe S., 2001):** The scale encompasses following factors of emotional intelligence. a) Self awareness b) Empathy c) Self motivation d) Emotional stability e) Managing relations f) Integrity g) Self development h) Value orientation i) Commitment and j) Altruistic behaviour. It’s a self-administering likert type rating scale composed of 34 items (1 - strongly agree to 5 - strongly disagree).
The **reliability** of scale was determined by calculating reliability coefficient on a sample of 200 subjects. The split half reliability coefficient for the scale is 0.88. The questionnaire has a high **face validity** and content validity. In order to find out validity from coefficient of reliability (Garrett, 1981) reliability index was calculated. The reliability index indicated high validity on account of being 0.93. The scale has been successfully used in Indian studies (Rathi & Rastogi, 2008; Garg and Rastogi, 2009).

**Hardiness scale (Paul T. Bartone, 1995):** Hardiness scale has 3 components. **Commitment** - It 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 and have a curiosity about what they are doing instead of a feeling of detachment or isolation.

**Control** - Control is being motivated to influence the outcome of stressful changes, rather than lapse into helplessness and passivity. Control is the extent to which one believes that the outcomes of his actions are contingent on what they do (internal control orientation) or on events outside their personal control (external control orientation). Those who experience unhealthy emotional states and engage in harmful behaviours have an "external locus of control." 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.
**Challenge** - Maintaining health in the face of change and high levels of stress has to do with the “challenging” approach to 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. They look at life and its adversity with a “give it your best shot” attitude. The scale consists of 15 items. It’s a self-administering questionnaire based on five point likert type rating scale (1 - strongly agree to 5 - strongly disagree).

The scale includes positive and negative keyed items covering the three conceptually important hardiness facets of commitment, control and challenge. In a sample of 700 army reservist in medical units mobilized for the Gulf War, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the total hardiness measure is 0.83., and for facets 0.77 (commitment), 0.71 (control) and 0.70 (challenge). Similar internal consistency coefficients are seen with other samples. A three months test retest reliability coefficient was 0.52 (N=95). This scale has demonstrated appropriate criterion related and predictive validity in several samples, with respect to both health and performance under high stress conditions. Also as hardiness theory would predict, candidates who score high on this measure are more likely to succeed in a rigorous and highly stressful selection course. In a study of stress and health in army medical workers deployed to Croatia, regression analyses shows scores on this hardiness measure predict both depression and symptoms reports, and that hardiness interacts with stress to predict health outcomes.
Procedure:

Pilot study was conducted to specify the objectives and hypotheses. Visit to organizations were planned. At first, the human resource departments were approached to seek permission to meet the managers. They were requested to provide list of managers along with their work experience and age. From these lists, the researcher randomly picked the subjects for the study. Then these managers were approached. The researcher made it a point to hand over the questionnaires personally to the managers. It was difficult for the managers to take out time from their busy schedules to fill questionnaire, hence lot of follow up had to be taken. Reminders had to be sent; sms (short message service on mobile phone) and phone calls worked best.

Administration of scales:

The stress resiliency profile questionnaire, learned optimism scale, emotional intelligence scale and hardiness scale were administered. Instructions were in line with the manual. Following instructions were given for the stress resiliency profile.

“This questionnaire measures some of the ways you think about the tasks you are performing. Those tasks could be in your work or in personal life. In the coming pages you will find several statements about different ways you might think. For each statement, please circle the number 1 to 7, which best describes how strongly you disagree or agree with that statement. Please don’t skip any of the items. Although some of the statements appear to be similar, your answer to each of them is important.”

Instructions for learned optimism scale were as follows.
“There is no time limit for completing the scale, however it normally takes around ten minutes to do so. There is no right or wrong answer. The statements are designed to have differences in individual reactions to various situations. The scale is meant to know the differences between individuals and not meant to rank them good or bad. Please make sure that you don’t skip any question. Please answer as honestly as possible. Your responses will be kept absolutely confidential. For each of twenty-two statements, please tick one among the five options, which best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with that statement.”

Instructions given for emotional intelligence scale were as follows.

“Here some statements are given and for every statement you have to express your views by marking tick on any one cell of the five alternatives. There is no right or wrong answer, so please respond to all the statements.”

For hardiness scale, the subjects were asked to agree or disagree with the statements. They were asked to tick on one among five options for each of fifteen statements. It was further mentioned that there were no right or wrong answers. Confidentiality of responses was ensured. Informed consent of the participants was taken prior to administration of scales. The purpose of study was not disclosed.

**Analysis of data:**

Data was subjected to three-way analysis of variance with two levels of learned optimism (high/low), two levels of emotional intelligence (high/low) and two levels of hardiness (high/low), for three dimensions of stress resiliency. The three dimensions were deficiency focusing, necessitating and low skill recognition.