



Workplace Flexibility, Sex-Role Identity and Burnout in Information Technology Employees

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Abstract: The present study is undertaken to determine the gender (Sex role type/Androgyny) of the Information technology (IT) employees. It further compares the variables of burnout experienced by these employees' basis their gender and their workplace flexibility status. These variables are Exhaustion, Cynicism and Professional Efficacy.

Key Words: Workplace Flexibility, Sex role type, androgyny, exhaustion, cynicism, professional efficacy

1 INTRODUCTION

Indian labour market has witnessed significant changes over the past decades. Globalization opened the international market, leading to a rise in service providing sector. In the transitional society of India this change was welcomed with open arms. Information Technology (IT) industry being part of service sector has been gaining momentum and establishing itself strongly as a revenue generating field. This industry laid emphasis on advanced functioning of workplaces. Along with the benefits it has been observed that the advancement has also led to some major concerns related to overall well-being of the employees' and its effect on the work performance. Also, the change in society has brought about change in the roles played by the individuals. There is an increase in the number of dual earning couples, nuclear families, and individuals migrating for job opportunities thus, leading to need of sharing of responsibilities. The social stratum has changed and along with it the issues like job satisfaction, work environment/culture, and work-life-balance have emerged.

It has been observed that it is not work but the perception of work that stimulates stress. Organizations have realised and recognised the need to make work life more convenient for the employees so that they can save their energy and be more productive at work. Majority of previous studies have focused on the outcomes of job stress, with little attention paid to personal characteristics such as sex role, gender, along with workplace flexibility that may affect perceived job stress and ability to cope with it.

In the rapidly changing modern work environment, various schedule pressures usually along with unevenly distributed workloads for and amongst employees seem ever increasing. These are some factors that make it increasingly difficult for working men and women to integrate work and personal life.

Consequently, there is a need for flexible and innovative solutions to manage the integration between work and home.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Indian Corporate Sector has realized the importance of providing facilities as per the needs of the changing workplace and needs of the employees in numerous ways. Surveys have been indicating that there is a need for inclusion of workplace flexibility in order to facilitate the employee retention and productivity. The concept of flexible workplace is becoming an integral part of Indian work scenario. The present research explores the causal relationship of Work Place Flexibility along with Sex role Identity on Burnout of Information Technology (IT) Employees.

1.2 Need for the Study

Information Technology (IT) sector is an ever evolving and dynamic field. It has spread its wings rapidly in India as major multinational companies are investing in Indian market. Information Technology (IT) jobs are intellectually demanding and require constant learning. Studies have suggested that certain personality characteristics and work overload contribute to job dissatisfaction, turnover, disconnect from social life, deterioration of relationship, physical and mental illnesses and decline work performance.

There is a shift in the paradigm from employer centric to employee centric for better performance and output. Taking cognizance of the fact, IT industry is gradually providing strategies related to work-family assistance and work family linkages. These initiatives will be fruitful, if assisted by psychological study, thus the present research.

The concept of location of work (flex place) is an upcoming and fast-growing trend in Information Technology sector. Apart from being less explored area, the pros and cons have been debated upon by experts. The role of location of work (flex place) in relation to burnout will be clarified. Psychological androgyny, how much ever significant aspect of personality, is a neglected and overlooked aspect. The present study intends to explore the importance of psychological androgyny in the light of the changing work- life situation. The present study intends to differentiate between the sex-typed and androgynous employees in relation to the burnout experienced. To the best of the researcher's knowledge this is the first attempt to explore psychological androgyny in Indian IT industry, which attempts to capture the unique dimensions of burnout.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the flex place employees and traditional work-place employees on the basis of their location of work.
2. To identify the two types of personalities i.e., sex-typed (masculine as well as feminine) and psychologically androgynous employees.
3. To study the significance of work place flexibility in relation to burnout experienced by IT employees.
4. To study the significance of sex-role identity in relation to burnout experienced by IT employees.

2 BASIC CONCEPTS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical bases and research reviews of the variables of the present study were done via print and digital resources and the sources were appropriately cited.

The concept of workplace flexibility gaining fame in the Information Technology (IT) field and has been reported to be preferred by many employees (Kumar. V, 2012).

According to Hochschild (1997), although flex time and flex place programs have been adopted at many companies, the employees may not be utilizing it fully. Judiesch and Lyness (1999), state that some managers are doubtful about authorizing flex place arrangements because they feel that it will adversely impact the teamwork and for success the employees need face-to-face supervision. Some employees believe that if they spend less time in the office, they will be less likely to be promoted, and there is recent research to support this viewpoint.

Research using a quasi-experimental design did not show that employees using flex place had better work-family balance than those without flexibility in the location of their work (Hill, Hawkins, & Miller, 1996). Other research indicated home-based work enabled women to spend more time on domestic work than those employed at the company location (Silver & Goldscheider, 1994).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work-home conflict as "a form of inter role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible, such that participation in one role makes it difficult to participate in the other". This definition suggests a bidirectional aspect in which work can interfere with home (Work Home Interference; WHI) and home can interfere with work (Home Work Interference; HWI, Frone, 2003).

It has been reported that 71% of Information Technology (IT) executives surveyed acknowledge that burnout is a serious problem within their organizations (McGee, 2003). Jobs in the IT industry are frequently very intellectually demanding (Glass, Vessey, & Conger, 1992) and often require constant learning (Sonnetag, Brodbeck, Heinbokel, & Stolte, 1994), and when demands of the job consistently exceed the resources of the workers, exhaustion can occur.

Bakker, Demerouti and Euwema (2005) showed that, job demands such as work overload, emotional demands, and conflict between work and home responsibilities, usually culminate in exhaustion and cynicism. In the rapidly changing modern work environment, schedule pressures seem ever increasing and new technology allows

work to be conducted anytime and anywhere. Some evidence suggests that the individual differences (e.g. personal characteristics) have an influence on the reactions to stressful situations (Parker & DeCotiis, 1983). In the light of the earlier studies the present research explores the concepts of workplace flexibility and sex role identity as concepts influencing burnout in IT employees.

3 DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Stage I: Pilot study: Bem's Sex Role Identity (BSRI) short form and Maslach's Burnout Inventory was administered on a sample (n = 99). Internal consistency of both the tests were found to be good with coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha, for Bem's Sex Role Identity (short form) ($r = .83$, $p < .01$) and Burnout ($r = 0.83$, $p < .01$).

Stage II: Main Study: For the present study Between Group Design was used to establish the comparative analysis.

The following hypotheses were formulated to study the groups:

3.1 Hypotheses

1. Male employees without work place flexibility experience significantly a) more emotional exhaustion, b) more cynicism, and c) less professional efficacy as compared to those with work place flexibility.
2. Female employees without work place flexibility experience significantly a) more emotional exhaustion b) more cynicism, and c) less professional efficacy as compared to those with work place flexibility.
3. Sex role typed male employees experience significantly a) more exhaustion, b) more cynicism, and c) less professional efficacy as compared to androgynous male employees.
4. Sex role typed female employees experience significantly a) more Exhaustion, b) more cynicism, and c) less professional efficacy as compared to androgynous female employees.

3.2 Variables and their Operational Definitions

The variables in the present study are as follows-

Work place flexibility: It indicates the provision for the Information Technology (IT) employees to work from home or on move, instead of the traditional concept of working from the work place.

Sex-typed: This refers to those individuals who score high (above the median) on the typical sex typed psychological traits and low (below the median) on the opposite sex psychological traits as measured by Bem's (1981) test. This has three types:

Masculine sex-typed: Refers to men who score high on the typical male psychological traits and low on the typical female psychological traits on Bem's inventory.

Feminine sex-typed: Refers to women who score high on the typical female psychological traits and low on the typical male psychological traits on Bem's inventory.

Psychologically androgynous: Refers to men and women employees who score high on both the feminine and masculine psychological traits on Bem's inventory.

Burnout: This denotes the condition that arises when prolonged stress at work causes the employees energy to turn to exhaustion, involvement to turn to cynicism, and efficacy to become a lack of accomplishment, as measured by Maslach's Burnout Inventory (MBI)-General Survey.

3.3 Variables controlled in the present study were as follows:

Married employees with working spouse were included in the study.

Work place flexibility was considered when availed by the employee at least for a month.

Employees identified as masculine female and feminine males on BSRI were excluded from the study.

3.4 Sample

Incidental sampling method was used to collect data from the vicinity of Pune city. Specific locations where the IT companies were situated in close proximity were included in the study. A sample of 307 was collected for the study out of which 236 Information Technology Employees (Females = 125 and Males = 111) was selected for the study. Mean age of the sample was 33 years. The employees were approached in groups or individually and the tools (Demographic sheet, Sex Role Identity, and Burnout) were administered.

3.5 Tools

A Demographic Data Sheet for collection of general and demographic information consisting of name, age, work type, tenure of work etc. from employees was framed and administered.

Bem Sex Role Inventory-Short Form (BSRISF) (1981): This test is a 30-item adaptation of Bem's original inventory designed to investigate masculinity and femininity as independent dimensions of sex role identity. respondents indicate how well each item describes them on a 7-point scale with endpoints "never or almost never true" (1) and "always or almost always true" (7). Scores on the BSRISF are purported to measure the respondent's degree of masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated sex role identity. Subscales on the BSRISF correlate highly with those of the original version; with coefficients ranging from 0.87 to 0.94. Internal consistency and reliability are generally considered acceptable with estimates ranging from 0.75 to 0.87. It is generally accepted that the 30-item short form of the Bem's Sex Role Inventory is psychometrically superior to the original version, and can be used when assessing sex role identity (Singh & Agarwal, 2007).

Burnout: Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS): It is a 16-item scale developed by Maslach (1996). It measures three dimensions: exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy on seven-point Likert type scale and Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency was found to be .65, .60 and .67 for the three dimensions respectively. Several studies have shown that MBI-GS has excellent psychometric properties (Schutte, Toppinnen, Kalimo, & Schaufeli, 2000; Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2002).

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Preliminary Analyses

Total samples of $n = 307$ were collected out of which 290 complied with the controlled variable along with completely filled data sheet. The sex role identity of the employees was determined by computing the BSRI scores of employees ($n = 290$) with split median method, 37 cases were excluded as they were under undifferentiated category (neither sex role typed nor androgynous). Further, 16 cases were rejected on the basis of not meeting the criteria of being sex role typed (being feminine male and masculine female). Gender-difference on burnout was tested on a sample of 237; it revealed statistically significant difference. For further analyses, data, i.e. male and female employees were categorized into two groups, and analyses were carried out separately for the two groups. The data was subjected to adequacy of sample size, normality of data distribution and homogeneity of variances. All the conditions were met by the sample. The data was tested for outliers, using the cut-off of ± 3 SD. A total of 8 outliers were found on the scores for exhaustion and cynicism. These values were transformed as per Tabachnik and Fidell's (1989) suggestion and as such a total of seven outliers were transformed. One extreme outlying case was removed from the data. Independent samples t-test method was adopted for data analysis ($n = 236$), using SPSS version 20.

4.2 Quantitative Analyses: Result and Discussion

The data was thus administered with t' Test to explore the variance between the groups with the help of SPSS version 20.

The results are presented below:

Analyses of domains of burnout on Workplace Flexibility:

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy on the criterion of workplace flexibility.

Following were the results:

Discussion:

The objectives of the present comparative study have been fulfilled. The research findings indicate the significance acceptance of some formulated hypotheses male employees with workplace flexibility were found to have more professional efficacy than male employees without workplace flexibility. This can be as they have the liberty to complete the work at flexible times where as there is a pressure for the workplace male employees to complete the work in the stipulated work hours and place. Also, the commutation to work place which leads to stress is more in workplace male employees than employees working from home.

A significant difference was found in the scores for exhaustion of female employees with workplace flexibility. A significant difference was found in the scores for cynicism of female employees with workplace flexibility. Bakker, Demerouti and Euwema (2005) showed that, job demands such as work overload, emotional demands, and conflict between work and home responsibilities, usually culminate in exhaustion and cynicism. A significant difference was found in the scores for professional efficacy of female employees with workplace flexibility. In the rapidly changing modern work environment, schedule pressures seem ever increasing and new technology allows work to be conducted anytime and anywhere. Some evidence suggests that the individual differences (e.g. personal characteristics) have an influence on the reactions to stressful situations (Parker & DeCotiis, 1983).

A significant difference in the scores for exhaustion of sex role typed male employees and androgynous male employees. A significant difference in the scores for professional efficacy of sex role typed male employees and androgynous male employees. A significant difference in the scores for exhaustion of sex role typed female employees and androgynous female employees.

A significant difference in the scores for cynicism of sex role typed female employees and androgynous female employees. A significant difference in the scores for professional efficacy of sex role typed female employees and androgynous female employees.

Table 1: Sample Descriptives using 't'-test for equality on means

	Male Employees having Workplace Flexibility		Male Employees having No Workplace Flexibility		
Variable	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	't' test (n=109)
Exhaustion	8.42	5.81	9.76	5.64	-1.22
Cynicism	7.95	4.38	9.41	4.16	-1.76
Professional Efficacy	25.32	7.08	22.22	7.64	2.21*
	Female Employees having Workplace Flexibility		Female Employees having No Workplace Flexibility		't' test (n=123)
Exhaustion	8.84	4.97	11.44	4.89	-2.94**
Cynicism	7.87	4.15	10.00	3.55	-3.08**
Professional Efficacy	21.25	7.12	17.88	6.38	2.78**

**p< 0.01.; *p<0.05.

Table 2: Sample Descriptives using 't'-test for equality on means

	Sex Role Typed Males employees		Androgynous Males employees		
Variable	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	't' test (n=109)
Exhaustion	8.30	5.70	10.74	5.56	-2.11*
Cynicism	8.33	4.47	9.37	3.94	-1.82
Professional Efficacy	25.84	6.62	19.40	7.44	4.57**
	Sex Role Typed Females employees		Androgynous Females employees		't' test (n=123)
Exhaustion	11.84	4.69	8.41	4.90	-3.99**
Cynicism	8.07	3.74	9.81	4.05	-2.49*
Professional Efficacy	16.06	6.78	23.12	5.10	6.62**

**p< 0.01.; *p<0.05.

Table 2: Sample Descriptives using 't'-test for equality on means

	Sex Role Typed Males		Androgynous Males		
Variable	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	't' test (n=109)
Exhaustion	8.30	5.70	10.74	5.56	-2.11*
Cynicism	8.33	4.47	9.37	3.94	-1.82
Professional Efficacy	25.84	6.62	19.40	7.44	4.57**
	Sex Role Typed Females		Androgynous Females		't' test (n=123)
Exhaustion	11.84	4.69	8.41	4.90	-3.99**
Cynicism	8.07	3.74	9.81	4.05	-2.49*
Professional Efficacy	16.06	6.78	23.12	5.10	6.62**

**p< 0.01.; *p<0.05.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Male employees with workplace flexibility were found to have more professional efficacy than male employees without workplace flexibility. There is no significant difference was found in the exhaustion experienced and cynicism of male employees with workplace flexibility and male employees without workplace flexibility. Female employees without work place flexibility experienced more exhaustion and cynicism than female employees with workplace flexibility.

Female employees with workplace flexibility were found to have more professional efficacy than female employees without workplace flexibility.

Sex role typed male employees experience significantly more exhaustion and have less professional efficacy as compared to androgynous male employees. There is no significant difference on cynicism in sex role typed and androgynous male employees.

Sex role typed female employees experience significantly more exhaustion, more cynicism, and less professional efficacy as compared to androgynous female employees.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present research has certain limitations that are mentioned below:

All Information Technology employees are grouped together in the present study.

Only married employees with working spouses were considered for the present study, thus there is a possibility of difference in findings in case of non-working spouses and unmarried employees.

Study is limited to employees in Pune city and findings might differ in case of other cities.

7. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The scope of present research can be extended to employees from different occupations, different cities and states.

A study of male feminine and female masculine employees can be explored.

A comparative study of international and national with regard to work place flexibility can be explored.

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