

Impact of Dress Code Policies on the Work Productivity of the corporate sector in India

Abstract

The research article explores employee productivity and organizational culture impacted by dress code standards within the Indian subculture, which seeks to fill the existing research gap. This paper examines various factors like culture, region, and gender that influence multiple perceptions and adherence to dress codes, furthering their effect on engagement and motivation, drawing from disciplines like sociology, psychology, and management studies.

The research findings vary in terms of the link between work performance and dress code. Some studies explore a positive association, while others suggest no significant or negative association. The article also discusses the challenges of telecommuting. It proposes strategies for organizations to adapt to dress codes while maintaining professionalism and respecting employee autonomy. It highlights the importance of emphasizing clear communication, ongoing flexibility, ongoing training, physical presence, and technology's role in enhanced collaboration.

Introduction

Investigating the Interplay Between Dress Code, Employee Productivity, and Organizational Culture within the Indian organizational culture is crucial in today's world.

Dress code policies and the productivity of individual employees in an organization are the two components of work-life balance. Work-life balance reduces work-related stress and establishes a stable and sustainable working style while sustaining health and well-being. An organization's dress code policy provides parameters for employee appearance expectations. It attempts to maintain an image of professionalism consistent with the business's reputation and ideals while possibly influencing work-life balance by defining the limits between personal expression and professional conduct (Smith, 2020). Individual employee productivity in the commercial sector refers to an individual's efficiency and output in completing tasks and reaching goals within a specific timeframe, frequently assessed by the amount and quality of work done. It is considered a component of work-life balance since it emphasizes optimizing performance while recognizing employees' desire to balance work duties and personal life.

The influences of dress codes and their policies are being researched and studied by many researchers worldwide (Smith, 2023). This paper aims to explore the same within the Indian context. Research is abundant on dress codes and their effect on the view of organizational culture and employees' morale in a given organization. However, there

39 remains a notable gap in the relationship between dress code and its impact on the
40 productivity of an employee and an organization.

41 Despite the plethora of literature on dress code regulations and their effects, there is a
42 scarcity of empirical research on the Indian organizational sector (Kumar & Singh, 2024).
43 Existing research in the area mainly aims to explore the Western context. In contrast, the
44 current research covers an umbrella of contexts and themes in this domain; it fails to examine
45 the nuances that socio-cultural differences bring with them. While looking mainly at the
46 Indian context, diversity is one of the primary contexts that needs to be examined. This also
47 leads to a lack of research on the impact of dress code policies on employee motivation,
48 engagement, and productivity.

49 This issue is significant as it can inform HR practices and organizational policies in
50 the Indian corporate sector (Patel & Desai, 2022). This will help enhance various
51 management strategies and, as a result, help with organizational effectiveness and employee
52 well-being.

53 In recent years, India has been seen as one of the major IT hubs in the world and is
54 expected to grow more in the coming years; it seems somewhat necessary to have a better
55 understanding of the nuances of socio-culture in the parameters of Indian work-life balance.

56 The interdisciplinary nature of this research, which draws from fields like sociology,
57 management studies, and psychology, increases the need to facilitate this topic further.
58 Having a keen interest in cross-cultural dynamics, studying the intersection between dress
59 code norms and productivity in the Indian culture provides me an opportunity to look at
60 organizational culture and behavior from a diversified viewpoint.

61 Dress code standards in the corporate sector have long been recognized as powerful
62 influences on organizational culture, employee behavior, and overall productivity (Smith,
63 2023; Patel & Desai, 2022; Kumar & Singh, 2024). Employees' attire reflects their
64 preferences and the organizational culture, norms, and values. Recently, some researchers
65 have delved lightly into the Indian sub-context of dress code norms. The importance of the
66 standards set by an organization about dress codes and their impact has been overly
67 understated.

68 Dress codes have varied impacts on work productivity. It is crucial for achieving a
69 positive workplace and enhanced productivity. In a meta-analysis study, Smith discusses
70 dress code policies and their relevance to organizational productivity, employee performance,
71 and a positive relationship between dress code and employee performance. Different studies
72 depict a comparison of the research (Smith, 2023). They explore the impact of culture on the
73 dress code norms, emphasizing the varied cultural subtleties while originating various dress
74 code standards of different standards. In his research, Kumar Singh explores the impact of a
75 dress code policy on Indian workplace engagement, focusing on the influence of dress code
76 on employee perceptions and their attitude towards work.

77 Regarding the Indian sub-context, it is integral to keep the nuances organizations face
78 while generalizing or making their dress code norms. Many organizations face the dilemma
79 of having kurtas and sarees or Western attire like suits and coats. This further poses the
80 question of whether to uphold traditional Indian standards or embrace the generalized global
81 dress code norms.

82 Another big dilemma that the organizations in India face is regional variations. Cities
83 like Pune or Mumbai, which are metropolitan, might be more open to global dress code

84 norms than the more comparatively traditional regions. On the other hand, the booming tech
85 industry in India seems to have a more relaxed view of dress code norms compared to other
86 sectors like banking and finance.

87 In a patriarchal society like India, it is also necessary to delve into the gender
88 dynamics. Females might feel like they are under greater scrutiny than the other genders in
89 their workplaces. This might result in internalized pressure on them to stick to a traditional
90 dress code instead of the males. These nuances need to be addressed with a broad and
91 nuanced understanding of the cultures of India.

92 Lastly, the employees' understanding and perceptions of the dress code must become
93 crucial to their organizational productivity. Being confident and comfortable in the clothes an
94 employee wears increases their focus on their work, while having a rigid or restrictive
95 opinion about the dress code makes the employee and, ultimately, the organizational
96 productivity suffer.

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Review of Literature

100 Dress code requirements are a visual manifestation of an organization's culture. As a
101 result, working dress is vital in developing the desired organizational culture (Maysonave,
102 2001; McCarty, 2010; Wood & Benitez, 2003). The amount of formality in a dress code
103 establishes the tone for the organization's setting. If the organization encourages collaboration
104 and togetherness, standardizing the dress code for all employees can reduce status
105 distinctions and Support these ideals. For example, Toyota Corporation requires all
106 employees to wear polo shirts and khakis to represent a cohesive, team-oriented mentality.
107 Similarly, a casual dress code may promote a dynamic and inclusive organizational culture.
108 Employees may feel empowered to provide outstanding customer service, aligning with the
109 company's broader aim of service excellence (Peluchette & Karl,2007).

110 According to S. M. Hughes, casual dress is becoming more common in today's
111 workplaces. However, it is unclear if employers understand the influence of casual attire on
112 job performance. Hughes researched whether supervisors of chosen work-study students at
113 The Master's College saw a drop in employee performance when the campus clothing code
114 was eased. A Likert-type attitudinal scale was used to examine supervisors' attitudes, coupled
115 with demographic information obtained on personal data sheets. Despite the possible impact
116 of informal dressing on performance, supervisors at The Master's College reported no
117 obvious impacts following the easing of the school dress code. As a result, it was established
118 that casual attire has no discernible effect on job performance (Hughes, 2002).

119 In another research, M. A. Sharkey sought to give managers and decision-makers
120 insights into how informal dress rules in the workplace compare to typical corporate cultures,
121 examining the impact of casual clothes on employee morale and productivity—two essential
122 bottom-line metrics. Sharkey polled 148 human resource and performance management
123 professionals from American firms. The survey found that when clothing standards ease,
124 overall employee morale rises. However, 65% of respondents agreed with this assumption,
125 which was lower than in earlier studies (Sharkey, 2000).

126 Nielsen conducted research with volunteers, including four full-time employees from
127 a medical records transcribing department at a small, rural Midwestern hospital. These
128 participants claimed that dress had little impact on job performance, at least in the

129 transcribing department of a tiny rural hospital. They reported that their wardrobe choices had
130 little effect on their morale or creativity, pointing out that casual attire was often more
131 comfortable but did not increase production. These findings show that dress code choices
132 should be based on actual productivity statistics and organizational factors rather than
133 anecdotal evidence or fashion industry influence. Future studies might examine how clothing
134 designs affect quantifiable successes or results in different circumstances (Nielsen, 2006).

135 Allen Smith discussed how organizations are dealing with the difficulty of managing
136 telecommuters' wardrobes during the pandemic. Companies are also researching strategies to
137 guarantee that dress codes do not violate legal rights, such as those protected by the NLRA
138 (National Labour Relations Act). Coupon Follow recently polled 1,000 remote employees
139 and discovered that more than half of those who work from home do not follow a dress code.
140 The poll discovered that people dressed in business-professional, business-casual, and smart-
141 casual gear were more productive than those dressed in gym clothes or pajamas.
142 Approximately 80% of the more professionally dressed respondents reported feeling
143 productive throughout the day, compared to 70% in gym clothes and 50% in pajamas.
144 "Before COVID-19, a work-from-home dress code policy might have seemed unusual," said
145 Megan Toth, a Seyfarth attorney based in Chicago. "However, with the surge in remote work
146 and video conferences, this has become a significant concern for some employers."

147 The new equation that organizations are focusing on achieving is maintaining
148 professionalism and efficiency as they shift more and more toward virtual environments.

149 On top of every other change in organizational culture, teleworking leads to forming
150 two distinct spaces: "public" and "private." Following the path that these questions arise, we
151 get to the need for etiquette, for instance, outfit for a virtual meeting or a course of everyday
152 work. Sometimes, some people say it is comfortable to have casual dress, indicating a relaxed
153 environment for networking purposes. However, some people would always say that if
154 professional conduct is risked and, as a result, an organization's ethics is harmed, all
155 character, motivation, and effectiveness would be lost.

156 The new generation of younger people who have entered the workforce is asking
157 many questions on this matter to be given the correct answer. On the other hand, hardly any
158 organizations adopt formalism in cyberspace. Thus, some organizations have been bold
159 enough to experiment with flexibility yet with informal ways of exhibiting this informality
160 regarding the dress code of virtual meetings and even on the clock. Nowadays, some of them
161 exist that serve as a technique. We intended to meet the unique requirements of an
162 exceptional environment that would monitor remote workers while simultaneously creating a
163 serene environment that would decrease working time.

164 Meanwhile, some company employees like strict dress codes for virtual meetings,
165 which are the usual dress codes in the office, as they think that to achieve order and discipline
166 at work, one should also respect the dress code and civility. In work-at-home situations,
167 employers do not overlook that employees may feel lazy working at home; instead, they
168 should keep good consciousness and not forget to dress up formally for work. They argue that
169 such a policy is good and helps them work effectively because it conceptualizes some degree
170 of everyday routine and professionalism.

171 Not only is there a firm position of the employer, but an organization must also
172 generate apparent boundaries within the designated working hours and meeting times.
173 However, this is when the institutional work dress code is applied to remote workers.
174 However, the virtual meeting is more concerning among the remote workers and a typical

175 dress code for use during work hours. Such rules set community standards by allowing for
176 several different methods of employee addressing so that everyone can bring in their unique
177 cultural practices and remain compliant with the laws of their host nation.

178 In conclusion, dress code norms substantially impact organizational culture and
179 employee behavior. Attire may affect morale, productivity, and professionalism in traditional
180 and remote work contexts. As businesses adjust to the changing nature of work, they must
181 carefully assess their dress codes and how they affect employee engagement and
182 performance. Organizations may foster a healthy work atmosphere that promotes employee
183 well-being and increases productivity by balancing flexibility and professionalism.

184 In brief, dress code conformity primarily influences the company's culture, employee
185 behavior, and corporate image. The uniform may cause improvement in work ethics,
186 productivity, and professionalism both on-premises and remotely. With the evolution of work
187 nature, companies must be careful in how they restructure their dress codes balance them
188 with employee transparency and improve employee performance. Organizations can give
189 employees a positive work zone, which allows them to concentrate on work and makes them
190 feel comfortable by implementing flexibility and professionalism with the right approach.

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Discussion

195 It is worth it to find the line between pointless dress code approval and workplace
196 productivity. Enterprises could define the general dress code standard as relevant to their
197 business, culture, and customers' desires. Frequently relaxing rules on dressing for your staff
198 by letting them dress freely within appropriate bounds can give an advantage to their general
199 health and happiness, eventually increasing productivity.

200 Besides that, organizations also must carefully select dress code standards based on
201 'ambiance' and 'duty.' Formal clothes may be better suited in specific fields and contribute to
202 the professional picture. By contrast, there may be a lenient dress code for those who work in
203 a creative environment or those who have to work informally. Thus, the environment may
204 become refreshed and more comfortable, producing excellent output.

205 While the behavioral sciences have dealt with how dress codes and labor outputs are
206 associated, discrepant results of the studies have underscored a necessity for more research in
207 this area. Some researchers conclude that formal clothes on the body of workers are superior
208 to informal clothes, adding up to the much-talked-creation of confidence, competence, and
209 compliance with work rules. Besides, they reiterate the assumption that implementing a
210 formal dress code is about a business-like environment and the derivation of productivity.

211 However, other studies do not Support this conclusion or suggest that it is connected
212 to decreased productivity. While researching the dress code's role in productivity, these
213 researchers underline the importance of considering the effect of individuals' diversities, the
214 prevailing organizational culture, and job features.

215 Furthermore, longitudinal research is required to examine the long-term effects of
216 dress code rules on productivity. Much prior research has concentrated on short-term or
217 cross-sectional impacts, making it difficult to establish causal linkages or monitor changes

218 over time. Longitudinal research would offer a complete picture of how dress code standards
219 affect productivity over the length of an employee's stay in an organization.

220 Furthermore, the impact of cultural and sociological influences on the link between
221 dress code and productivity has to be investigated further. Dress standards and expectations
222 vary among cultures and can affect employee perceptions, behaviors, and productivity. The
223 cross-cultural study would give insight into how dress code laws materialize in different
224 cultural contexts and their implications on productivity.

225 The literature review gives valuable information about the relationship between
226 clothing standards, organizational culture, and employee performance. Dress code standards
227 are recognized as a visual expression of an organization's culture, with the level of formality
228 impacting the tone and environment in the workplace (Maysonave, 2001; McCarty, 2010;
229 Wood & Benitez, 2003). Standardized clothing regulations, for example, may foster a sense
230 of togetherness and collaboration, as evidenced by Toyota Corporation's mandate that staff
231 wear polo shirts and khakis (Peluchette & Karl, 2007). In contrast, a more informal dress
232 code may promote inclusion and dynamism, improving employee morale and customer
233 service (Peluchette & Karl, 2007).

234 However, there are conflicting studies about the effect of dress codes on job
235 performance. No noticeable improvement in productivity was found after the personnel of
236 The Master's College were allowed to loosen the dress restrictions, according to Hughes
237 (2002). Interestingly, although gross and free clothes do not multiply labor productivity, they
238 have less drastic effects. It can be added that Nielsen's (2006) studies on staff for
239 transcription tasks in hospitals also showed that matters like the choice of clothing are not a
240 performance factor for such employees.

241 This reflects the fact that, in the end, the visitors search for elements that define the
242 organizational characteristics and productivity figures in order for them to choose the best
243 clothing.

244 Additionally, Sharky (2000) also says that the dress code, in a heart sense, is
245 connected with the levels of staff satisfaction, which, in the end, firstly, a loosened clothing
246 policy also brings many benefits. This understanding marks the elaborate dynamics of dress
247 code, organizational culture, and employee outcomes born out of the context. They only
248 thrive when a particular mix of circumstances is created.

249 The problem of code management is a story of specific problems with digital
250 artworks. While employers are looking for new ways to maintain professionalism in internet
251 channels and make working remotely viable, for example, an increasing number of them are
252 seeking ways (Smith, 2020). Some mark more engagement with this relaxed dress policy as
253 an approval of diversity, whereas others remark on the witnessed discipline and
254 professionalism by following conventional norms. (Smith, 2020).

255 The new family co-roles arise, showing many children engaging in senior
256 responsibilities, looking after younger siblings, elderly relatives, or even parents. As people
257 unconsciously pay attention to the effect on internal appearance, some organizations offer
258 cautionary advice for virtual connection etiquette.

259 Furthermore, sustainable alternate plans must be a regular checkpoint, considering that
260 the workplace constantly undergoes alterations. Since remote work has become the norm for
261 many people, we must discover whether the dress code standards we create will affect the
262 workers' satisfaction, interest, and productivity in the virtual environment. This is a way of

263 saying that considering the comfort and inclinations, the specialist should be available to
264 those in responsible positions within the professional and civility norms.

265 Adopting compromising policies such as setting the dress code standards less strict
266 and allowing some space for personal taste are efficient solutions to the problem of working
267 remotely. However, it is important to avoid wearing overly casual clothes that make you look
268 unprofessional during meetings.

269 Organization, the product of our day-to-day experiences and memories, is applied to
270 describe this practically. We can tell that a person's thinking is the method that had been
271 concluded from the culture of people, which is not the result of someone else choice, and
272 what we have now is what they thought was the choice of others, but it was not.

273 However, statistics will be released to show this material is outdated because it may be
274 able to produce styles of shirts and more appropriate clothing that specific customers will feel
275 unique for the person and become the brand for them, which means that the business
276 operation can focus on how to get more customers at the same energy effort users exert rather
277 than deal with all those other brands are for everyone else. When the staff wears the dress
278 code with the firm goals they are trying to achieve, they are trying to build an association
279 already in a business that needs a sense of belonging due to one brain function and
280 cooperation in the short or long term.

281 The last thing is to prepare technical training for employees in business management
282 and to help them reduce financial losses generally operating in the conditions of the
283 association but the intense ones. To complement, the managers can bias the remote working
284 people to think that the business management tips required are not during some times, but at
285 every given time. Staff members will observe office mornings and dress codes according to
286 the culture of dressing in the offices, keeping the initial standards of dressing as they were.

287 On the one hand, they say that the game is becoming more challenging because they
288 never make all the upgrades, but on the other hand, the players can also say that most of their
289 obstacles still come from humans. It is paramount to train and coach these workers by
290 providing them with skills to cope with the virtual world, unlike emotions they may feel and
291 the loss of context. Consequently, such skills must go beyond the norm of Internet
292 interactions and involve the art of virtual interconnectivity with the true mastery of cyber
293 world interconnectedness.

294 Technology gave the edge, and innovations in transport started by inventing the
295 railways and then the aircraft, which are incomparable in the transport system. Today, it is
296 highly possible that a healthy person could not imagine a way of life without driving a car,
297 and he would not have such a bad social view of a car driver just because he cannot make a
298 piecemeal of his life without a car. In other words, this type of effect is as important as using
299 human characters, which create narratives. Therefore, we should use real and special effects
300 as much as possible. Another great way is by hosting virtual events that are virtually created
301 by using conferencing software on any platform to join in during the event. This is one of the
302 most remarkable features you will be delighted with, and it almost matches real
303 environmental settings. Therefore, such views would show up in the opportunities they had
304 planned. On the other hand, the summit will include not only theory and similar contents, and
305 at the end of the summit, we will make real live demos for your choice of whatever could be
306 the best choice, and that will probably be what you may experience during the summit.
307 Another challenge is the fact that the brains of the staffers release stress hormones to
308 counteract the adverse effects of virtual reality, which also impedes their access to non-verbal

309 cues and social interactions. Companies trying to build office spaces of similar designs must
310 go beyond this. From the role of a company, they can establish some virtual areas for a
311 shared sense of a team and job realization where the employees can also be together,
312 regardless of their geographical location. Such spots can be represented as parts of the virtual
313 space with a standard part, and working areas for independently realized tasks to eliminate
314 loneliness and collaborative work at home.

315 Therefore, office space utilization and ambiance will be the primary directive for
316 leaders to think consistently ahead and not rely on the genuinely obsolete guideposts of the
317 past but always search for new routes. Previously, when staff thought about dress code as a
318 fair work policy, the company had different approaches, but the company adapted, and now
319 we have new policies with a new working-from-home mode. Besides that, it is important to
320 look at and explore how these systems can be bettered and make the workers' lives easier and
321 better. This is because of the size of the impact these systems have on their mental states and
322 job performance. In particular, negotiations with this group for shared activities become
323 crucial for more effective results. Community dissemination is another indispensable element
324 in this process, which serves as an orientation on key negotiation strategies and illustrates the
325 community's expectations. These breaks should be supported and conducted by the line
326 managers who guide and supervise the employees in such organizations while also observing
327 professional standards.

328 One probable resolution of the problems associated with distance work is that flexible
329 clothes, on the one hand, allow for individual self-expression; on the other hand, they are
330 suitable for distance jobs. Therefore, Some organizations will advocate for the development
331 of a lookout work culture where people exercise, voice, and exhibit their uniqueness in which
332 freedom, independence, and style are facilitated, allowing the staff to make decisions that
333 unfold the feeling of self and their style. Organizationally, the formal way is not enough. It is
334 more about the unofficial directions of the firm's approach to decorum and professionalism in
335 the virtual space.

336 On the contrary, some groups of firms might shed the use of conventional dress codes
337 in their remote offices and use the same ones elsewhere for the sake of tenet and
338 organizational identity. As an example, workers who fit the brand's dress code and thus
339 internalize the organizational culture may, as a result, become more engaged and adapt more
340 efforts, constituting a higher level of loyalty.

341 It can be the strategy or the other one that suits you best. However, communication
342 and educated employees are all other issues that depend on communication because they are
343 among the most reliable tools for managing remote work formality. Each organization should
344 focus on clear tea rules regarding faking online courtesy conduct and regular duties, such as
345 wearing an acceptable outfit and adequately caring for hygiene. Besides, such training and
346 help in communication should benefit those virtual agents by enhancing virtual
347 communication and showing themselves more favorably during online communication.

348 Nevertheless, the marketplace can develop products with repercussions that make
349 interaction easy and work more effectively. For instance, immersive VR apps that provide
350 real-time operations in a job itinerary and AR technology to assess communication and attire
351 through virtual video calls are just some of the numerous possibilities. Firms can use
352 technologies such as virtual desktop software and collaborative workspaces to develop
353 robust, interactive, and immersive online platforms that establish coordination and
354 camaraderie even for remote workers.

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Strengths and Limitations

356 The paper emphasizes the significance of socio-cultural nuances, including gender
357 dynamics and regional variations, in formulating and implementing dress code policies within
358 Indian organizations. Discussion extends beyond traditional workplace settings to address
359 challenges and implications of dress code standards in remote work environments, especially
360 in the context of evolving technology and virtual communication platforms.

361 Despite a thorough literature review, the paper notes a lack of empirical research on
362 Indian organizations, urging more studies to confirm findings and examine contextual
363 nuances. The paper emphasizes qualitative insights and theories, lacking ample quantitative
364 data to back claims on dress code's impact on productivity. The paper overlooks legal and
365 ethical concerns while discussing the dress code's influence on culture and behavior,
366 especially in diverse cultural settings such as India.

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Future Implications

368 Longitudinal research is necessary to understand how dress code standards impact
369 employee productivity and organizational culture in the long term, considering changing
370 socio-cultural dynamics and technology. More empirical studies should investigate how
371 gender, region, and organizational context influence perceptions and compliance with dress
372 code standards, offering actionable insights for organizations to customize their policies.

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Conclusion

375 The paper explores the complex interplay of gender, culture, region, and
376 organizational context. Despite ample research on the dress code and its impact on an
377 organization's culture, there is a significant lack of empirical research specific to India. The
378 paper finds the need for organizations in India to adapt to various socio-cultural differences
379 while shaping the norms of dress code policies in India and their effect on employee
380 engagement, productivity, and motivation.

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