

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

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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 productivity³ 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 remains a notable gap in the relationship between dress code and its impact on the productivity of an employee and an organization.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Another big dilemma that the organizations in India face is regional variations. Cities like Pune or Mumbai, which are metropolitan, might be more open to global dress code norms than the more comparatively traditional regions. On the other hand, the booming tech industry in India seems to have a more relaxed view of dress code norms compared to other sectors like banking and finance.

In a patriarchal society like India, it is also necessary to delve into the gender dynamics. Females might feel like they are under greater scrutiny than the other genders in

their workplaces. This might result in internalized pressure on them to stick to a traditional dress code instead of the males. These nuances need to be addressed with a broad and nuanced understanding of the cultures of India.

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

Review of Literature

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

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

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

Nielsen conducted research with volunteers, including four full-time employees from a medical records transcribing department at a small, rural Midwestern hospital. These participants claimed that dress had little impact on job performance, at least in the transcribing department of a tiny rural hospital. They reported that their wardrobe choices had little effect on their morale or creativity, pointing out that casual attire was often more comfortable but did not increase production. These findings show that dress code choices should be based on actual productivity statistics and organizational factors rather than anecdotal evidence or fashion industry influence. Future studies might examine how clothing designs affect quantifiable successes or results in different circumstances (Nielsen, 2006).

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

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

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

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

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

Not only is there a firm position of the employer, but an organization must also generate apparent boundaries within the designated working hours and meeting times. However, this is when the institutional work dress code is applied to remote workers. However, the virtual meeting is more concerning among the remote workers and a typical dress code for use during work hours. Such rules set community standards by allowing for several different methods of employee addressing so that everyone can bring in their unique cultural practices and remain compliant with the laws of their host nation.

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

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

Discussion

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

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

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

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

Furthermore, longitudinal research is required to examine the long-term effects of dress code rules on productivity. Much prior research has concentrated on short-term or cross-sectional impacts, making it difficult to establish causal linkages or monitor changes over time. Longitudinal research would offer a complete picture of how dress code standards affect productivity over the length of an employee's stay in an organization.

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

The literature review gives valuable information about the relationship between clothing standards, organizational culture, and employee performance. Dress code standards are recognized as a visual expression of an organization's culture, with the level of formality impacting the tone and environment in the workplace (Maysonave, 2001; McCarty, 2010; Wood & Benitez, 2003). Standardized clothing regulations, for example, may foster a sense

of togetherness and collaboration, as evidenced by Toyota Corporation's mandate that staff wear polo shirts and khakis (Peluchette & Karl, 2007). In contrast, a more informal dress code may promote inclusion and dynamism, improving employee morale and customer service (Peluchette & Karl, 2007).

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

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

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

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

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

Furthermore, sustainable alternate plans must be a regular checkpoint, considering that the workplace constantly undergoes alterations. Since remote work has become the norm for many people, we must discover whether the dress code standards we create will affect the workers' satisfaction, interest, and productivity in the virtual environment. This is a way of saying that considering the comfort and inclinations, the specialist should be available to those in responsible positions within the professional and civility norms.

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

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

However, statistics will be released to show this material is outdated because it may be able to produce styles of shirts and more appropriate clothing that specific customers will feel unique for the person and become the brand for them, which means that the business operation can focus on how to get more customers at the same energy effort users exert rather

than deal with all those other brands are for everyone else. When the staff wears the dress code with the firm goals they are trying to achieve, they are trying to build an association already in a business that needs a sense of belonging due to one brain function and cooperation in the short or long term.

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

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

Technology gave the edge, and innovations in transport started by inventing the railways and then the aircraft, which are incomparable in the transport system. Today, it is highly possible that a healthy person could not imagine a way of life without driving a car, and he would not have such a bad social view of a car driver just because he cannot make a piecemeal of his life without a car. In other words, this type of effect is as important as using human characters, which create narratives. Therefore, we should use real and special effects as much as possible. Another great way is by hosting virtual events that are virtually created by using conferencing software on any platform to join in during the event. This is one of the most remarkable features you will be delighted with, and it almost matches real environmental settings. Therefore, such views would show up in the opportunities they had planned. On the other hand, the summit will include not only theory and similar contents, and at the end of the summit, we will make real live demos for your choice of whatever could be the best choice, and that will probably be what you may experience during the summit. Another challenge is the fact that the brains of the staffers release stress hormones to counteract the adverse effects of virtual reality, which also impedes their access to non-verbal cues and social interactions. Companies trying to build office spaces of similar designs must go beyond this. From the role of a company, they can establish some virtual areas for a shared sense of a team and job realization where the employees can also be together, regardless of their geographical location. Such spots can be represented as parts of the virtual space with a standard part, and working areas for independently realized tasks to eliminate loneliness and collaborative work at home.

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

managers who guide and supervise the employees in such organizations while also observing professional standards.

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

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

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

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

Strengths and Limitations

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

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

Future Implications

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

Conclusion

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

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