



Role of lifestyle orientation and perceived organizational functioning in psychological empowerment of IT professionals

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of lifestyle orientation and perceived organizational functioning in psychological empowerment perceptions of information technology (IT) professionals.

Design/methodology/approach – This study is a cross-sectional survey of 242 IT professionals across ten software product and services companies based in India. Established scales of the research instruments were used for data collection.

Findings – Findings indicate that professionals with aggressive, individualistic and resistive lifestyle orientation are likely to feel more psychologically empowered. Organizational functioning is also found to have a strong effect on psychological empowerment perceptions of IT professionals.

Research limitations/implications – Use of self-reported measures for all the variables may cause desirability bias on the part of participants. Future studies may explore demographic differences and incorporate empowerment climate as well.

Practical implications – Insights from the study would help organizations facilitate employee performance using the empowerment tool and consequently gain competitive advantage by retaining skills and experience within the organization rather than outside it.

Originality/value – Studies of such nature being few in the Indian IT context, findings present both opportunities and challenges for IT human resource managers and can also be taken up for future research work.

Keywords India, Human resource management, Information technology, Employees attitudes, Occupational psychology, Lifestyle orientation, Perceived organizational functioning, Organization diagnosis, Psychological empowerment, IT professionals

Paper type Research paper



1. Introduction

Organizations are some of the most complex sets of phenomena both conceptually and practically. Intermingled within, is also an intricate interplay between employees' deep personal perception of what is happening in the organization and their emotions which often goes unseen. It would therefore be very pragmatic to question how the dynamics of personal perceptions, orientation, feelings and thoughts impact employees, their work and by implication the entire organization.

Empowering information technology (IT) professionals has always been a persistent challenge facing organizations because the effectiveness with which a company can involve, manage, develop, motivate and engage the willing contribution of people who work for them is a key determinant for its success or failure. Studies of workweek have shown that knowledge workers today in comparison to the past eras spend more time not only at the work place but also more time focussed on work issues while outside the office (Amabile and Kramer, 2008). As the proportion of time claimed by work rises, work perception becomes a bigger component of life itself. As far as the IT sector is concerned, it is a dynamic and people centered sector with high demand for knowledge workers and talented professionals who often enjoy a high bargaining power. Knowledge workers are autonomous people who enjoy occupational advancement and mobility, resist command and control culture (Horwitz *et al.*, 2003) and their commitment is more occupational and less organizationally motivated (Despres and Hiltrop, 1995). Besides, IT professionals work in a competitive environment where continuous honing of skills is required (Lee, 2000) hence they may suffer from extensive projects and aggressive timelines (Messersmith, 2007) with a probability of high level of job stress.

Within the Indian context, some studies have examined the influence of human resource management practices on organizational commitment (Paul and Anantharaman, 2004), organizational culture and commitment (Mathew and Ogbonna, 2009), culture, work outcomes and performance (Mathew *et al.*, 2012), management in emerging versus developed countries (Nigam and Su, 2011) and empowerment and commitment (Bhatnagar, 2005). Aspray *et al.* (2006) note that IT research is concentrated in a few countries with the USA contributing to about a third of IT papers and another third by additional traditional centres of concentration of IT research (Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK).

Looking at the evolution of the Indian IT sector, it began as a US\$ 120 million sector in 1990 with 8,500 employees (Heeks, 1996) and is now estimated to aggregate revenues of USD 88.1 billion in FY2011 having generated employment to over 2.5 million people. The industry which is all set to further grow in scale, scope and value add, stands as a global player having presence in 52 countries with over 500 delivery centres, employing over 60,000 foreign nationals, having over 200 cross border acquisitions and over 750 captives (NASSCOM Strategic Review, 2011). Though the Indian IT industry is primarily service oriented unlike China or Brazil and its top players still remain the frontrunners, it has transformed from being a mere body shop for onsite development to offsite development activities and is surging towards product development initiatives from ideation to execution. Professionals are more excited about venturing into entrepreneurship now than before. The domestic market is also expanding due to the growing internet and mobile space with internet users rising from 58 million in 2009 to 81 million in 2010 while mobile subscribers soared from 392 million to 707 million in the same period. In terms of competitiveness, though China, Malaysia, Philippines, Ireland and Eastern Europe are emerging destinations, some distinct factors supporting India's position is the vast reservoir of talent, language skills and availability of a legal and commercial system that is similar to those in the West (Aspray *et al.*, 2006).

More so, the cultural differences between India and the developed or other emerging economies have led to differences in management styles, beliefs and values. For instance, a study by Hofstede (2007) about perceptions of the most and least important

goals between business leaders across countries has showed that family interests and continuity of business were among the most important for Indian business leaders while these were among the least important for business leaders in the USA. Other findings include that Indians value relationships at workplace and loyalty to an organization (Kanungo and Mendonca, 1994) and most of the time, employees are focused on their personal relationships rather than their performance. As per Sinha (1995), juniors in India tend to have faith and trust that they will be taken care of by their seniors while material wealth and possessions were also found to have less importance in India (Nigam and Su, 2011) compared to Western cultures. These findings call for a deeper understanding and further research in the Indian context to bring out perspectives that could help organizations improvise or initiate planned change efforts to synergise with evolving circumstances.

In view of the preceding considerations, the choice of the Indian IT sector as the empirical setting for this study is driven by many reasons. The IT sector in India, over the last few decades has become a key player and a major contributor to the country's growth statistics with contributions having grown from a mere 1.2 per cent in FY1998 to an estimated 6.4 per cent in FY2011 (NASSCOM Strategic Review, 2011) and the sector continues to have a strong and sustainable comparative advantage in software development and services. Keeping in mind that IT professionals bring in with them their distinctive personal characteristics which need to be managed in a unique way and with a dearth of research on human resource management issues pertaining to knowledge intensive firms in India (Aspray *et al.*, 2006; Mathew *et al.*, 2012), this study would also help to explore issues relating to lifestyle orientation, organizational functioning and psychological empowerment in the Indian IT context which would help in bringing out underlying individual and organizational perspectives for implication as well as for future research work.

This paper is organised in three parts. First, a brief review of the literature is presented which locates existing studies incorporating the variables being considered based on which the hypotheses have been drawn out. Second, the context of the study and the methods adopted are detailed, leading to the presentation of the findings of the study. The study concludes with a discussion of the findings and implications that these findings may have for theory and practice.

2. Conceptual background

2.1 Lifestyle orientation

Almost every day we find ourselves describing and assessing people around us. While our informal assessments of people tend to focus more on individuals, personality psychologists use conceptions of personality that can apply to everyone. Personality refers to cognitive and behavioural patterns that show stability over time and across situations (Cattell, 1965). The role of personality traits on work related behavior and outcome has shown renewed interest over the past decade (Furnham *et al.*, 2005). In recent years researchers have given importance to understanding individual differences in approach to work attitudes which is triggered by evidence indicating that individual differences in personality affect job performance (Barrick *et al.*, 2002; Tett and Burnett, 2003) and job satisfaction (Arvey *et al.*, 1989).

Research has also shown that the compatibility between an individual's desires, aspirations and job setting produces high levels of organizational commitment,

involvement and retention (Igbaria *et al.*, 1991). Organizations are widely adopting personality based segmentation to help managers tailor their styles to people they supervise based on personality type which can also have an enormous impact on performance (Cantrell and Smith, 2010). An increasing number of studies are also attempting to understand surface aspects of diversity and deep traits such as personality, attitudes, and cognitive styles (Harrison *et al.*, 1998, 2002; Jehn *et al.*, 1999) and have suggested that personality or attitudes based diversity in work groups can have a sustained and significant impact on outcomes such as social integration and performance at the team level of analysis (Harrison *et al.*, 2002). Research on IT professionals has also shown some interesting indications. Armstrong *et al.* (2007) found that they tend to exhibit characteristics quite different from those in other professions while Beecham *et al.* (2008) through a review of 92 papers observed that the need for growth (challenge, learning new skills) and independence are the most cited characteristics of software engineers in literature.

The idea of understanding people as unified wholes in context to their environment, both physical and social was reflected by Adler (1930). Instead of talking about personality in the traditional sense of internal traits, structures, dynamics, conflicts and so on, he preferred to talk about style of life (nowadays “lifestyle”) which he referred to as the goal a person shapes for oneself and the ways employed to achieve it. Driscoll and Eckstein (1982) have enumerated five lifestyle types based on the work of Adler (1930) and Shulman (1973) which are:

- (1) *aggressive* – who enjoy exercising authority, like to be the centre of attention, and may insist on having their own way;
- (2) *conforming* – who are flexible and more likely to face problems directly;
- (3) *defensive* – earnest and resourceful who lead self-controlled, stable lives;
- (4) *individualistic* – who are not concerned with public opinion and may be egoistic and infringe on the rights of others to get their own way; and
- (5) *resistive* – who prefer to “swim against the current” rather than support “establishment” values.

Though each of us is capable of using all the styles, we are generally more comfortable with one or more of the traits. Lifestyle categories not only provide insight into our outlook but can help us identify personal strengths, weaknesses and also aid in making choice among alternative behaviors. Organizations therefore need to balance it out by knowing and understanding the lifestyle orientations of their employees in order to generate synergy within the organization.

2.2 Organizational functioning

An evolving environment including changing demographics, globalisation and technology requires managers to constantly rethink and retool management approaches to enhance competitiveness (Whitfield and Landeros, 2006) and a high degree of product and service customization also emphasizes the need to find a rapid response to market forces. Each one of us has a fundamental perception of our organizational environment and the extent to which it is in tune with our needs will lead to higher levels of commitment, initiative and performance.

The character of an organisation's work environment (particularly as perceived by an employee) has long been recognised as a compelling influence on employee cognitions, attitudes and behaviour (Ostroff and Schmitt, 1993) and such an environment influences job satisfaction, organizational commitment, employee turnover, vocational adjustment and occupational stability (Holland, 1985; O'Reilly *et al.*, 1991). Organizations that look into themselves, assess their functioning, strategies and have the flexibility to adapt will tend to go greater heights than those who are unable to do so. Organizational diagnosis is increasingly being viewed as significant in developing and maintaining competitive advantage (Lee and Brower, 2006) and a continuous assessment of an organisation using a well planned and executed diagnostic process should normally form a part of its broad organisational management strategy aimed at refining the overall management process (Cummings and Worley, 2005; French and Bell, 1999).

Thus, the impact of any factor in an organization such as structure, leadership, culture, etc. should not be considered independent of others. For this reason, the interdependence between these factors and the need for their diagnostic methods has been the subject of numerous investigations. Among the diagnostic models, Weisbord (1976) suggested six broad categories in his model of organizational life, including:

- (1) *purpose* – which are the organization's mission and goals;
- (2) *structures* – referring to how functions, products or projects are organized;
- (3) *relationships* – is the ways in which people and units interact;
- (4) *rewards* – which could be intrinsic and extrinsic that employees associate with their job;
- (5) *leadership* – the appropriate role for top administration – to keep the entire organization in balance; and
- (6) *helpful mechanisms* in terms of planning, controlling, budgeting and information systems that can help to meet organizational goals.

Preziosi (1980) extended the original version used by Weisbord and developed an organizational diagnostic questionnaire with an additional factor:

- (7) *attitude to change* – towards the members of the organization.

Prior research has indicated that successful interventions using an organisational diagnostic process can have a considerable impact on the financial productivity of an organisation (Cummings and Worley, 2005; Huselid, 1995; Ostroff, 1995) and a diagnosis is important not only when organisations are in difficulty but even when they are going smooth.

2.3 Psychological empowerment

The term empowerment dates as early as 1890 (Simon, 1994) and has transformed over the years. During the 1950s, its focus was on human relations' factors, suggesting that management should establish and maintain a better rapport with employees. In the 1960s, the concept emerged into sensitivity training, with the thought that managers should be sensitive to the professional needs and motivation of its employees. During the 1970s, the employee involvement concept theorized that managers should form teams and hold meetings to gather everyone's input prior to actual decision-making process (Whetten and Cameron, 1998).

In recent years, the concept of empowerment has become a buzzword in management circles and gained prominence as an individual level initiative. At its core, the concept involves increased individual motivation at work through the delegation of authority to the lowest level in an organization where a competent decision can be made (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). Empowerment can be viewed at both a macro and a micro level with empowerment climate referred to as work environment and psychological empowerment referred to as an individual's internal psychological state. Authors (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997; Swift and Levine, 1987) have distinguished between empowering structures, policies and practices on the one hand and empowerment or individuals' psychological reactions to these managerial practices on the other. The empowering structures and practices are seen as contextual variables affecting employee feelings of empowerment.

Seminal work by Spreitzer (1995) and Spreitzer *et al.* (1997), has helped define psychological empowerment as a global mindset that includes four cognitions (*meaning, competence, self-determination* and *impact*) reflecting a proactive orientation with regard to one's role in the organization. Empowered individuals:

- (1) find meaning in their work role;
- (2) feel competent to perform their work role;
- (3) have a feeling of self-determination with regard to specific means to achieve expected results; and
- (4) believe that they can have a real impact on organizational outcomes.

Psychological empowerment construct is designed to emphasize individuals' subjective experiences of empowerment in which one's own personal values, background experience and self-concept act as frames of reference in forming judgments about their work environment. These four cognitions combine additively to form a single unitary construct and lack of any single dimension will decrease but not eliminate the overall degree of empowerment experienced (Spreitzer, 1995).

Once people attain a certain level of material comfort, they look forward to challenging work content, opportunities to take decisions, grow in the job and in the organization, receive feedback, recognition and respect. A wide range of studies on empowerment has revealed its relevance not only in the effective functioning of an organization but also in having a key role at the individual level. When people feel empowered at work, positive outcomes are likely, leading to enhanced performance, productivity, initiative and greater enjoyment on the job (Spreitzer *et al.*, 1997; Spreitzer, 2008) and hence it can be a compelling tool for any organization to enable employee development and gain competitive advantage.

2.4 Lifestyle orientation, perceived organizational functioning and psychological empowerment: an integrated view

Employee empowerment is considered as one of the important change efforts towards anticipated organizational outcomes and for its positive implementation, it is imperative to recognize the influencers underlying employee empowerment cognitions.

Argyris way back in 1973, argued, that a great deal of organizational outcomes depend on the degree of congruence between individual (personal) characteristics and those of the organization while Thomas and Velthouse (1990) point out that the

individual's work context and personality characteristics shape empowerment cognitions, which in turn motivate individual behavior (Argyris, 1930). Conger and Kanungo (1988) suggest that organisational factors, managerial strategies and self-efficacy information to subordinates are the influencers of empowerment. Psychological empowerment is therefore found to have multiple antecedents in terms of individual and organizational factors.

The individuals' experience of their organization is represented by their perception which inevitably varies from person to person and it is these very perceptions which significantly influence work behaviour and outcomes. Increasingly, organizational change efforts are being applied to resolve many human, structural and technological problems in contemporary organizations (White and Wooten, 1983) and their success largely depends on perceptions that employees have about key areas of the organization they work with. Favourable perceptions can be built upon and where perceptions are unfavourable, targeted initiatives can be undertaken.

On examining various studies conducted in context of psychological empowerment over the years, a few inferences emerge. A large body of research has considered empowerment as a causal variable having impacts on job satisfaction (Fuller *et al.*, 1999; Patah *et al.*, 2009), organisational commitment (Bhatnagar, 2005; Ramakrishna, 2007), performance (Tuuli and Rowlinson, 2009), productivity (Etebarian *et al.*, 2010), trust (Barton and Barton, 2011), leadership (Wilson, 2011), creativity and innovative behaviour (Pieterse *et al.*, 2010; Zhang and Bartol, 2010), organisational citizenship behaviour (Bhatnagar and Sandhu, 2005; Raub and Robert, 2007) and turnover intention (Yao and Cui, 2010) to name some. While examining studies which have considered psychological empowerment more as a criterion variable influenced by organisational and individual subtleties, the numbers are limited. Some studies have however revealed that factors like psychological climate (Amenumey and Lockwood, 2008), organizational environment (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990), socio-structural and contextual factors (Spreitzer, 1996; Siegall and Gardner, 2000) and rewards (Gkorezis and Petridou, 2008) do influence empowerment perceptions and outcomes. Since these factors are a part of organisation functioning, it would be rational to assume that organisational functioning will influence psychological empowerment perceptions of employees in some way.

Likewise, with regard to the role of individual dispositions in perception of psychological empowerment, we recognise that employees have unique personality traits or a combination of them which have found to remain stable over time and situation (Cattell, 1965) and are exhibited through work related behavior and hence it is reasonable to expect that some traits may influence the way we perceive our work environment. Much research on individual predispositions has focused on its influence on job satisfaction (Arvey *et al.*, 1989) and organisational commitment (Lee *et al.*, 1992) but it is important to ascertain whether or not dispositional affectivity is associated with something other than work attitudes too. Studies have revealed that *locus of control* (Jha and Nair, 2008; Wilson, 2011) is seen to be significant in influencing empowerment perceptions though the nature of relationship between the two largely remains fluid and needs further research. Although many studies do not directly relate individual orientation with psychological empowerment, since the former has found to directly or indirectly influence job satisfaction, work involvement (Bozionelos, 2003), organisational citizenship behaviour (Comeau and Griffith, 2004) and performance (Cropanzano *et al.*, 1993) which are also seen to be influenced by psychological

empowerment, it leads us to anticipate that individual differences in dispositions will influence perceptions of psychological empowerment.

In context of the Indian IT sector, the concept of empowerment should hold an important place because despite its steady growth, expansion and global attractiveness, the sector faces imminent challenges on account of attrition, employable resources, leadership skills, transforming internal and external environment which need to be timely managed through progressive management techniques and research driven initiatives. With intense head to head competition, entry of multiple players, market driven changes, the Indian IT sector stands at a point where it has worked hard to get into the race but needs to work even harder to retain the competitive edge. The Indian IT sector therefore needs larger number of professionals who can gear organisations through these vicissitudes. Towards some of the challenges, empowerment initiatives could possibly be a powerful tool to enhance employees' feelings of self worth, self control, innovativeness, to generate positivity and involvement at work and for these initiatives to be successful, it is worthwhile to analyse the organisational and individual forces influencing it.

Based on the research literature that has been reviewed so far, the following objectives as well as hypotheses have been framed for the current study.

2.5 Research hypotheses

The objectives of the study are as:

- To explore the relationship of different lifestyle orientations with perceptions of psychological empowerment of IT professionals.
- To study the relationship of employee perception of organizational functioning with psychological empowerment.
- To analyze whether lifestyle orientation, perceived organizational functioning and psychological empowerment will differ within organizational cadres (senior, middle and junior) of IT professionals.

The following hypotheses are also formulated, as:

- H1.* Lifestyle orientation will be related to perceptions of psychological empowerment.
- H2.* Positive perceptions of organizational functioning will be positively related to perceptions of psychological empowerment.
- H3.* There will be a significant difference among the different organizational cadres (senior, middle and junior) in their lifestyle orientation, perceptions of organizational functioning and psychological empowerment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Procedure

To meet the objectives of the study, research was designed in terms of sample as well as psychological questionnaire. Data were gathered using standard psychometric instruments to investigate lifestyle orientation, perceived organizational functioning and psychological empowerment among IT professionals and were administered through multiple methods like in person, through electronic email and online access.

Respondents were assured of data confidentiality. This section gives a detailed description of the respondent's demographic characteristic and the methodology adopted in this study.

3.2 Participants/respondents

A total of 242 IT professionals participated in the study from ten software product and services companies based in India. The sample belonged to three hierarchical cadres of the organisation (junior, middle and senior) and their technical qualification varied from masters and bachelors in technology to Masters of Computer Application (MCA) and Master of Business Administration (MBA, IT). The respondents had a work experience ranging from 1 to 21 years while considering company tenure, 94 per cent of the respondents had company tenure of five years or less. The age profile of the respondents ranged from 23 to 46 years with major chunk of respondents falling between 26 and 35 years (61.2 per cent). Additionally, the respondents were primarily male accounting for 93.4 per cent of the sample. Table I outlines the demographic profile of the respondents while Table II outlines the mean age and work experience of the sample.

		Nos	Per cent
	<i>Gender</i>		
1	Male	225	93
2	Female	17	7
	<i>Age</i>		
1	Less than 25	46	19
2	25-35	148	61
3	36-45	46	19
4	More than 45 years	2	1
	<i>Work experience</i>		
1	Up to 5 years	101	41.7
2	5-10 years	78	32.2
3	10-15 years	57	23.6
4	More than 15 years	6	2.5
	<i>Cadre</i>		
1	Junior	124	51.2
2	Middle	87	36
3	Senior	31	12.8

Table I.
Demographic profile
of respondents

Note: *n* = 242

Table II.
Mean age and work
experience of the
respondents (years)

	Age	Work experience
Male (226)	25-35 (0.636)	Upto 5 (0.816)
Female (16)	25-35 (0.772)	5-10 (0.816)
Total (242)	25-35 (0.644)	Upto 5 (0.884)

Note: Figures in brackets are the standard deviations

3.3 Measures

Standardized self-reporting instruments on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) were used to measure all the independent as well as dependent variables. All the scales used in the study have sufficient reliability and validity. A short description of the questionnaires used in the study is as follows.

3.3.1 Lifestyle orientation. Life style questionnaire developed by Driscoll and Eckstein (1982) illustrating five trait descriptive lifestyle categories of *Aggressive, Conforming, Defensive, Individualistic and Resistive* was used to measure employee lifestyle orientation. The questionnaire has 50 items, ten for each dimension and sample items for each of the five trait descriptions include: "I was a childhood leader" (aggressive); "I try to blend in" (conforming); "I hate to admit defeat to others" (defensive); "I find myself striving for greater freedom and independence" (individualistic); "I enjoy beating the system" (resistive). The Cronbach's α reliability coefficient for the lifestyle orientation scale was found to be 0.89 while for the five lifestyle categories it was in the range of 0.62-0.74.

3.3.2 Organizational functioning. Perceived organizational functioning was measured using the organizational diagnosis questionnaire by Preziosi (1980) which assesses seven areas of organizational activity; *purpose, structure, relationships, rewards, leadership, helpful mechanisms and attitude towards change*. The questionnaire is composed of 35 items, five in each of the seven variables. Sample items include: "The goals of this organization are clearly stated" (purpose); "The division of labour of this organization is flexible" (structure); "My immediate supervisor is supportive of my efforts" (leadership); "My relationship with my supervisor is a harmonious one" (relationships); "My job offers me the opportunity to grow as a person" (rewards); "My immediate supervisor has ideas that are helpful to me and my work" (helpful mechanisms); "The organization is not resistant to change" (attitude towards change). Higher scores indicate problems with organizational functioning while lower scores indicate a lack of problem. Reliability was measured by Cronbach's α which was reported to be 0.94 while for the seven areas of assessment it ranged from 0.60 to 0.80.

3.3.3 Psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment was measured with Spreitzer's (1995) 12-item scale. The questionnaire focused on four dimensions; *meaning, competence, self-determination and impact*. Sample items for each of the four dimensions include: "The work I do is very important to me" (meaning); "I am confident about my ability to do my job" (competence); "My impact on what happens in my organization is large" (impact); "I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job" (self-determination). Each of the four dimensions in the scale is measured by three items. Ratings for the items in each of these four dimensions are totalled to get the dimension score. The Cronbach's α reliability coefficient for the psychological empowerment scale was found to be 0.82 while for the four dimensions of psychological empowerment it was in the range of 0.60-0.69.

3.3.4 Demographic variables. Information was collected about the respondents' age, gender, technical qualification, organizational cadre, designation, work experience and tenure.

3.4 Data analysis

Questionnaire responses of 242 IT professionals were analysed using appropriate statistics to test the research hypotheses and to arrive at meaningful conclusions.

4. Empirical results

The results of the study are reported in three parts. First, the descriptive statistics, correlations and reliabilities are reported. Second, the results of the stepwise regression analysis of lifestyle orientation and perceived organisational functioning along with their sub-dimensions on perceived psychological empowerment is presented. Finally, the findings of the ANOVA are presented which indicate the organisational cadre differences among IT professionals with respect to all the three variables.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

Table III presents the means, standard deviations, alphas and the correlations of the constructs in the study. Results show that all the four measures demonstrated adequate levels of composite reliability which are within the acceptable threshold. Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between lifestyle orientation and psychological empowerment ($r = 0.29, p < 0.01$) and also with three of the sub-dimensions of psychological empowerment, self-determination ($r = 0.14, p < 0.05$), meaning ($r = 0.24, p < 0.01$) and impact ($r = 0.32, p < 0.01$), however with regard to the competence dimension, it was found to have no significant correlation. Looking at the sub-dimensions of lifestyle orientation, only aggressive and individualistic were seen to positively and significantly correlate to psychological empowerment ($r = 0.45$ and $0.32, p < 0.01$) and all its sub-dimensions, self-determination ($r = 0.22, p < 0.01$ and $0.14, p < 0.05$), meaning ($r = 0.40$ and $0.29, p < 0.01$), competence ($r = 0.33$ and $0.32, p < 0.01$) and impact ($r = 0.37$ and $0.22, p < 0.01$). Among the other three sub-dimensions of lifestyle orientation, conforming was found to be significantly and positively correlated only to the impact ($r = 0.22, p < 0.01$) dimension but not to self-determination, competence, meaning or psychological empowerment as a whole. Defensive was found to have a significant negative correlation to competence ($r = -0.16, p < 0.05$) but was not significantly correlated to either psychological empowerment or its sub-dimensions of self-determination, meaning and impact. Resistive was found to be positively correlated to psychological empowerment ($r = 0.26, p < 0.01$), self-determination ($r = 0.20, p < 0.01$), meaning ($r = 0.15, p < 0.05$) and impact ($r = 0.31, p < 0.01$) but not to competence. The above analysis does prove that lifestyle orientation and psychological empowerment are significantly correlated and many of their sub-dimensions are also seen to inter-correlate significantly and hence *H1* is partially proved.

From Table III, it is also apparent that organisational functioning and psychological empowerment are positively and significantly co-related ($r = 0.56, p < 0.01$). Additionally, all the sub-dimensions of both the variables are also significantly and positively co-related thereby fully confirming *H2* that IT professional's positive perceptions of organizational functioning will be positively related to their perception of psychological empowerment and its sub-dimensions.

4.2 Regression analysis

The results of regression analysis indicating lifestyle orientation and perceived organisational functioning as predictors of psychological empowerment are presented in Table IV. A step-wise regressions analysis was conducted whereby in step 1,

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1 LSO	2.51	0.39	{0.89}																
2 AGG	2.19	0.53	0.80																
3 CON	2.55	0.48	0.76																
4 DEF	2.77	0.53	0.705			{0.62}													
5 IND	2.34	0.46	0.849			0.600													
6 RES	2.70	0.51	0.827			0.433													
7 POF	1.99	0.47	0.251			0.461													
8 PUR	2.27	0.76	0.276			0.029													
9 STR	2.15	0.59	0.142			0.037													
10 LDS	2.03	0.59	0.252			0.025													
11 REL	2.10	0.52	0.266			0.043													
12 REW	2.21	0.56	0.230			0.139													
13 HLM	2.08	0.55	0.212			0.030													
14 ATC	2.20	0.52	0.211			0.185													
15 PE	1.99	0.47	0.288			0.096													
16 SD	2.13	0.62	0.139			0.12													
17 MN	1.75	0.62	0.239			0.041													
18 CM	1.64	0.55	0.121			0.111													
19 IM	2.44	0.74	0.318			0.064													

Notes: Significant at: * $p < 0.05$ and ** $p < 0.01$; $r = 242$; alpha reliabilities are shown in parenthesis along the diagonal; LSO – lifestyle orientation, AGG – aggressive, CON – conforming, DEF – defensive, IND – individualistic, RES – resistive, POF – perceived organisational functioning, PUR – purpose, STR – structure, LDS – leadership, REL – relationships, REW – rewards, HLM – helpful mechanisms, ATC – attitude to change, PE – psychological empowerment, SD – self determination, MN – meaning, CM – competence, IM – impact

Table III.
Means, standard deviations, correlations and Cronbach's α reliability coefficients

Table IV.
Regression analysis
predicting perceptions
of psychological
empowerment

Predictor variables	Criterion variable	
<i>1. Lifestyle orientation</i>	β	β
Aggressive	0.498**	0.336**
Conforming	-0.056	-0.031
Defensive	-0.162*	-0.124*
Individualistic	0.051	0.055
Resistive	0.041	0.074
<i>2. Perceived organisational functioning</i>		
Purpose		-0.51
Structure		0.076
Leadership		0.197*
Relationships		0.111
Rewards		0.080
Helpful mechanisms		0.223*
Attitude to change		0.111
<i>F</i>	35.50**	34.60**
<i>R</i> ²	0.229	0.369
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	0.223	0.358
Durbin Watson	1.51	1.67

Notes: Significant at: * $p < 0.05$ and ** $p < 0.01$; $n = 242$

the sub-types of lifestyle orientation were regressed with psychological empowerment to discover any influence and in step 2, the sub-dimensions of organisational functioning were included to examine their effects. This analysis demonstrated some significant results and revealed that lifestyle orientation and perceived organisational functioning explain 35.8 per cent of variation in psychological empowerment perceptions. The regression model was also found significant ($F = 34.60, p < 0.01$) confirming *H1* and *H2*. Within lifestyle orientation, the aggressive sub-type positively predicts psychological empowerment ($\beta = 0.49, p < 0.01$) while defensive ($\beta = -0.16, p < 0.05$) negatively predicts psychological empowerment. Within perceptions of organisational functioning, leadership ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.05$) and helpful mechanisms ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.05$) significantly and positively predict psychological empowerment.

4.3 Analysis of variance

In order to find out whether employees in different cadres of the organisation differed in their perceptions of lifestyle orientation, organisational functioning and psychological empowerment, a one-way ANOVA was performed to compare means for each of the constructs between different cadres (junior, middle and senior) of software professionals (Tables V). Table V shows that statistically significant differences in the mean scores were observed for the three cadres of employees (senior, middle and junior) in their perception of lifestyle orientation ($F = 3.51, p < 0.05$) and psychological empowerment ($F = 7.07, p < 0.01$) however the same was not true for organisational functioning. Within the sub-dimensions of the variables under study significant cadre differences were found in the aggressive ($F = 7.45, p < 0.01$) and conforming ($F = 4.7, p < 0.01$) sub-dimensions of lifestyle orientation, purpose ($F = 4.85, p < 0.01$) and structure ($F = 3.19, p < 0.05$) sub-dimensions of organisational functioning and meaning ($F = 5.47, p < 0.01$), competence ($F = 3.02, p < 0.05$) and impact ($F = 5.48, p < 0.01$)

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Empowerment of IT professionals
<i>Life style orientation (LSO)</i>						
Between groups	1.061	2	0.53	3.515	0.031	
Within groups	36.07	239	0.151			
Total	37.131	241				
<i>LSO (aggressive)</i>						
Between groups	4.016	2	2.008	7.455	0.001	409
Within groups	64.373	239	0.269			
Total	68.389	241				
<i>LSO (conforming)</i>						
Between groups	2.085	2	1.043	4.7	0.01	
Within groups	53.02	239	0.222			
Total	55.105	241				
<i>LSO (defensive)</i>						
Between groups	0.628	2	0.314	1.131	0.325	
Within groups	66.398	239	0.278			
Total	67.026	241				
<i>LSO (individualistic)</i>						
Between groups	1.121	2	0.561	2.697	0.069	
Within groups	49.674	239	0.208			
Total	50.795	241				
<i>LSO (resistive)</i>						
Between groups	0.801	2	0.401	1.551	0.214	
Within groups	61.727	239	0.258			
Total	62.528	241				
<i>Perceived organisational functioning (POF)</i>						
<i>POF (purpose)</i>						
Between groups	1.119	2	0.56	2.468	0.087	
Within groups	54.186	239	0.227			
Total	55.305	241				
<i>POF (structure)</i>						
Between groups	2.222	2	1.111	3.195	0.043	
Within groups	83.083	239	0.348			
Total	85.305	241				
<i>POF (leadership)</i>						
Between groups	1.859	2	0.93	2.695	0.07	
Within groups	82.451	239	0.345			
Total	84.311	241				
<i>POF (relationships)</i>						
Between groups	0.69	2	0.345	1.27	0.283	
Within groups	64.927	239	0.272			
Total	65.617	241				
<i>POF (rewards)</i>						
Between groups	0.853	2	0.427	1.352	0.261	
Within groups	75.418	239	0.316			
Total	76.272	241				
<i>POF (helping mechanisms)</i>						
Between groups	1.61	2	0.805	2.691	0.07	

(continued)

Table V.
ANOVA

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Within groups	71.498	239	0.229		
Total	73.108	241			
<i>POF (attitude to change)</i>					
Between groups	0.988	2	0.494	1.85	0.159
Within groups	63.847	239	0.267		
Total	64.836	241			
<i>Psychological empowerment (PE)</i>					
<i>PE (self determination)</i>					
Between groups	2.931	2	1.465	7.077	0.001
Within groups	49.484	239	0.207		
Total	52.415	241			
<i>PE (meaning)</i>					
Between groups	4.029	2	2.014	5.479	0.005
Within groups	87.874	239	0.368		
Total	91.903	241			
<i>PE (competence)</i>					
Between groups	1.816	2	0.908	3.027	0.05
Within groups	71.718	239	0.3		
Total	73.534	241			
<i>PE (impact)</i>					
Between groups	5.795	2	2.897	5.48	0.005
Within groups	126.358	239	0.529		
Total	132.152	241			

Table V.

dimension of psychological empowerment. Based on these results, it can be said that *H3* that there will be significant difference among the different organizational cadres (senior, middle and junior) in their lifestyle orientation, perceptions of organizational functioning and psychological empowerment is partially accepted.

5. Discussions and implications

Findings, thus establish the role of employee lifestyle orientation and perceived organizational functioning in influencing psychological empowerment perceptions at work and results were reasonably consistent with the three hypotheses framed. To briefly summarize the findings, lifestyle orientation and two of its sub-types aggressive and individualistic were found to be significantly co-related to perceived psychological empowerment and all its sub-dimensions. Of the three remaining sub-types, resistive was significantly related to psychological empowerment and three of its sub-dimensions while conforming and defensive were significantly related to one sub-dimension of psychological empowerment. In addition, aggressiveness was found to predict psychological empowerment positively while defensive was found to predict it negatively.

Perceptions of organizational functioning along with all its sub-areas on the other hand were found to strongly correlate to perceptions of psychological empowerment indicating its criticality in employee empowerment interventions. Among the predictors of psychological empowerment were the sub-area of leadership and helpful mechanisms.

Among hierarchical differentiations, lifestyle orientation and psychological empowerment perceptions significantly differed across cadres but it was not so with organizational functioning.

Findings highlight that employee dispositions and variability in perceptions of organizational functioning can influence feelings of psychological empowerment among IT professionals which has significant implications for practicing IT managers. First, employees who are aggressive, individualistic and resistive are inclined to feel more psychologically empowered than the other sub-types. The underlying reasons may perhaps be that lifestyle categories of *aggressive*, *individualistic* and *resistive* tend towards being more industrious, enterprising and ambitious in nature *vis-à-vis* the *conforming* who are more flexible and the *defensive* who are self-controlled, hence the former three would be disposed towards feeling more psychologically empowered than the other two categories. Similar conclusions have also emerged from studies that individuals who hold themselves in high self-esteem are likely to extend their feelings of self-worth to work specific sense of competence (Bandura, 1977) and also see themselves as valued resources having talents worth contributing (Gist and Mitchell, 1992). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) have also suggested that individuals with internal *locus* of control are likely to feel more empowered. Though there has been little research in examining how dispositions influence empowerment (Spreitzer *et al.*, 1997), certain lifestyles orientations being determinants of psychological empowerment are an important factor for organisations to consider.

As job roles in the IT sector vary in profile, in requirements and are also mentally challenging and demanding, personality, to a large extent would influence employee behaviour, reactions and perceptions towards oneself and the environment. In view of this, managers could work on strategically segmenting their employees based on their disposition to mutually benefit the organization as well as the employee, especially for the person-job-fit aspect of work. An insight into employee characteristics would also help human resource managers in understanding how to deal with different segments of employees for empowerment purposes. As software professionals also bring with them strong individual characteristics, they need to be managed tactfully to not only get the best out of the employee but also maintain a harmonious work environment.

Second, a very important finding surfaced related to organisational functioning and its seven areas of activity which was found to strongly co-relate to perceptions of psychological empowerment and its four sub-dimensions. This clearly spells out the fact that employees in organizations having better systems, functions and environment tend to feel more psychologically empowered thereby enhancing not only their own performance and motivational levels but also that of the organization as a whole. IT companies therefore need to successfully blend technological innovation and organizational functioning since the ultimate test for an organization and its management team is not how fast it can grow in the short-term, but how consistently it can grow over the long-term period in a world where change is relentless and seditious.

As leadership and helpful mechanisms were found to significantly and positively predict feelings of empowerment, it is an indication that organizations must look into their leadership issues and also ensure that organizational support mechanisms are effective for employees to feel not only inspired but also empowered. Our research result also strengthens previous findings which show a degree of consensus between organizational structure, policies and empowerment (Bennis and Nanus, 1985;

Block, 1987; Blanchard *et al.*, 1999). Wallach and Mueller (2006) too found that supervisory and peer support was associated with stronger feelings of empowerment signifying that support systems in organizations do matter for empowerment.

Third, cadre was also found to have an impact on two of the three variables under study. An analysis showed significant cadre differences in lifestyle orientation and psychological empowerment perceptions. This can be further inferred that individual dispositions vary across cadres and sense of psychological empowerment also differs with change in cadre, indicating that employees belonging to different hierarchy level have not only different dispositions but also differ in their meaning and perception about psychological empowerment. In terms of demographics, research has shown that employees with more tenure and greater rank report more feelings of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995) and when subordinates are motivated, they generate positive thoughts that energize them to enhanced productivity while the opposite is true when subordinates do not feel empowered in their work processes. Since empowered leaders are seen to be inspirational and influencing, empowerment initiatives can help to create an amiable working environment leading to superior outcomes for employees as well as the organization.

In the light of above discussions, it distinctly emerges that lifestyle orientation and organizational functioning are important constructs in relation to psychological empowerment perceptions having significant implications for practicing managers but there is also a need for further empirical and theoretical attention in context to IT professionals.

6. Conclusions and limitations

As the world economy is becoming more complex and dynamic and workforce is becoming increasingly diverse, more educated, ambitious and mobile, firms need to effectively understand their internal environment including their employees and the way the organisation functions in addition to the external environment to stay in contest and attain sustainable growth (Friedman, 2005). This global environment has changed the way business is conducted which holds true in the Indian context too. With many management practices of Indian firms having its roots deep in Indian culture, exposure to foreign management methods and diverse cultures may prompt changes in the traditional style of management (Nigam and Su, 2011) and hence Indian managers need to open their eyes to the diaspora of transformations with a futuristic orientation.

Some of the concerns that plague the Indian IT Industry which IT experts have been very vocal about relate to the fact that while Indian software professionals are very competent at their core function, they lack leadership and the softer skills which are required to take on higher roles of decision making, people management, strategizing and the like. Moreover, the human resource function of an organisation needs to play the role of partners in business, strategy, people integration and proactive ascertaining of impending threats to the organisation, innovative processes in addition to their present role so that they can bring out the best from the employees they hold. Studies of such nature eyeing the causal factors of employee and organisational behaviour will go a long way in initiating a research orientated outlook towards impending anxieties so that they do not volcanically erupt in the course of time to impede India's growth curve.

Empowerment has always been considered as an effective management strategy leading to psychological enablement and has been broadly applied to organizational

settings involving change and innovation (Cho and Faerman, 2010). It can facilitate IT organizations to nurture and develop employees to look beyond defined boundaries, inspire team members and foster a supportive environment thereby creating effective leaders and leadership for tomorrow. By highlighting the significant role of lifestyle orientation and positive perceptions of organizational functioning on psychological empowerment perceptions and its sub-dimensions among IT professionals, this study not only provides insights into complexities of employee perceptions and orientations but also presents both opportunities and challenges for human resource managers in the IT Industry. In short, the IT industry needs to bolster highly skilled professionals' sense of empowerment by delving into their dispositions, treating them as intellectual assets and also by providing a trusting and supporting work environment. Additionally, with the IT sector being a technology and people driven sector requiring continuous focus and expertise, it is important to understand factors that would help employees perform at their optimum capabilities and also examine those underlying factors that may be stagnating the empowerment processes. By doing so, organisations can consequently gain a competitive advantage not only by encouraging performance but also by keeping the employees' skills and experience within the organization rather than outside it.

6.1 Limitations and directions for future research

The limitations which were faced by the authors throughout the process of this study are worth highlighting so that they can be considered for future research of similar interest. First, to strengthen theoretical foundations of the variables being researched, a broader perspective focussing on more numbers of IT companies covering various locations and also expansion of the sample base might lead to variation in findings, greater clarity and enhancement of the representative characteristics. Second, since the sample is taken from a specific segment of the IT sector (product and services companies), additional research is needed to confirm the generalizability of these finding across the Indian IT Industry. Third, the use of self-reported measures for all the variables may cause desirability bias on the part of respondents and the data being cross-sectional, findings may also be replicated using a longitudinal design. To get tangible characteristics of the employee psychological empowerment, the moderating effect may also be further studied and taking data from multiple emerging economies can provide an opportunity for comparative analysis. Future studies may also want to explore differences based on demographic characteristics of IT professionals and also study the influence of independent variables on both, empowerment climate as well as psychological empowerment which could pitch in some thought-provoking findings.

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