

Research Paper

## The Impact of Working Models (WFH/Hybrid) on Emotional Intimacy, Ego Resilience and Grit of IT Professionals in India: A Post COVID Study

Manasa A Dharmendran<sup>1\*</sup>, Nimy P G<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought tremendous change in the work culture of IT employees, by introducing the WFH and Hybrid models. The present study aims to find the influence of these working models on the emotional intimacy, ego resilience, and grit of people working in IT post-COVID. The study gathered data from 120 participants, aged 26 - 45 years, with 60 in both working models using a Google form having different sections for informed consent, socio-demographic details, and self-reported questionnaires (Emotional Intimacy Scale, The Ego Resilience Scale, and Grit Scale). The responses collected were evaluated using the Mann-Whitney U test and Spearman's Correlation. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the two groups (WFH/Hybrid) and to find the linkage between the variables under study, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used. The findings of the study revealed that these working models do not have any effect on the variables under study. The empirical findings show that emotional intimacy shares a positive relationship with ego resilience. In other words, a person with high emotional intimacy is also more likely to be high on ego resilience. Likewise, ego resilience indicated a positive correlation with grit. This implies that people with a strong ability to manage their emotions and adapt to difficult situations are more likely to show perseverance in the face of challenges. Surprisingly, the study failed to find any specific connection between emotional intimacy and that of grit.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intimacy, Ego Resilience, Grit, IT Professionals, Hybrid model, Work from Home, Working Models

India's IT revolution has transformed not just the cityscape, but the lives of countless professionals. With the rise of COVID-19, the working dynamics of the IT industry have seen tremendous changes. Work from home (WFH) has provided employees with more flexibility to work comfortably from home, leveraging digital technologies to stay connected and productive. However, the extended work hours led to an issue of having a boundary between professional and personal space. When COVID-19 became a part of our everyday life, we saw the emergence of a new model known as the hybrid or blended work model. This approach is a mix of both – working remotely from the comfort of our homes and spending some days at the office. This model provides the perks of remote work, like

<sup>1</sup>M.Sc. Counseling & Family Therapy, IGNOU

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor – Psychology, Christ College (Autonomous)

\*Corresponding Author

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flexible schedules and autonomy, while also allowing for the valuable social interactions and team spirit fostered in a traditional office environment. Still, it also had issues with managing communication, maintaining team cohesion, and ensuring all employees have equal access to opportunities and resources. The sudden introduction of WFH and hybrid models potentially exacerbated the existing mental and emotional issues of many of the IT professionals.

### **Emotional Intimacy**

Emotional intimacy is a kind of interpersonal relationship that varies in intensity among various relationships. It is the closeness and connection between people that lets you share your true thoughts, feelings, and secrets with someone else without the fear of judgement. It is an inevitable part of any meaningful relationship, be it your partner, a close friend, a colleague, or family member, as it builds the foundation of trust and mutual respect. The shift to WFH deeply impacted emotional intimacy in all kinds of relationships. The lack of in-person interactions in the office led to a lack of closeness and camaraderie among colleagues. Extended work hours, work pressure and fear of losing job has encroached personal and family time. The adoption of the hybrid model brought back direct in person interaction with colleagues but strained personal relationships as there is still an overlapping demand for work and family life.

### **Grit**

Grit is a personality trait possessed by individuals on having a passion and perseverance to stick towards a particular goal, irrespective of whatever obstacles they face. It is not just about hard work but also the resilience and focus over the target which is driven by the sense of purpose. This quality differentiates those who dream from those who achieve their dreams setting posed several challenges to this quality. Even without a proper office setting, IT professionals were forced to maintain the same level of focus and determination and the continuous adaptation of new technologies that made him exhausted. Coming to hybrid model, the key challenge is the fluctuating environment. Hybrid models demand a high level of self-regulation and time management which are essential components of grit.

### **Ego Resilience**

Ego resilience is the dynamic capacity of an individual to adapt to changing environmental demands. It enables you to stay calm, think creatively and find a solution to the sudden unexpected problems that come our way. It is our ability to modify the level of self-control to regulate our emotional and behavioral impulses. It is an important skill necessary for people to navigate through the ups and downs of our life without losing our self or purpose. Working from home has significantly impacted the ego resilience of IT professionals, challenging, and developing their ability to adapt and cope with changes. This new norm demanded quick adaptation to a remote working environment and a greater reliance on self-motivation, significantly testing their resilience. Hybrid work style demands constant adaptability as employees switch between home and office environments, potentially strengthening their resilience by learning to navigate different settings. Balancing the flexibility of remote work with the structure of office work, the hybrid model pushes individuals to develop a robust and adaptable approach to work, thereby impacting their ego resilience.

This study looked at how the various working models (WFH and hybrid) of IT have an impact not only on the professional side but also on the relationships with friends, family,

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and partners. It is like how we fit both aspects of job and personal life together. Studies on emotional intimacy, ego resilience and grit of IT professionals have been relatively scarce in India, despite the significant impact these factors have on an individual's life. So, in this journey we delved deep into understanding how things like determination and bouncing back from challenges and the ability of a person to stay strong in the face of unexpected problems were impacted by the working models. Even though this study focused only on the IT sector, this can be considered for any sector which has these working models. Understanding the relationship between evolving work models and the emotional wellbeing and mindset of IT professionals sets a path for developing interventions, in the workplace. By prioritizing not skills but resilience and interpersonal connections we can foster a thriving workforce that is ready to tackle future challenges.

### ***Problem***

The problem of the present study is to find out the impact of working models (WFH/Hybrid) on emotional intimacy, ego resilience and grit of IT professionals in India post Covid.

### ***Hypotheses***

1. There will be significant difference in the level of emotional intimacy experienced by WFH and Hybrid IT professionals in India post Covid.
2. There will be significant difference in the level of ego resilience experienced by WFH and Hybrid IT professionals in India post Covid.
3. There will be significant difference in the level of grit experienced by WFH and Hybrid IT professionals in India post Covid.
4. There will be a significant relationship between ego resilience and emotional intimacy of IT professionals.
5. There will be a significant relationship between ego resilience and grit of IT professionals.
6. There will be a significant relationship between grit and emotional intimacy of IT professionals.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

1. To find out the levels of emotional intimacy, ego resilience and grit of IT professionals (WFH/ Hybrid) in India post Covid.
2. To find out the difference in emotional intimacy, ego resilience and grit among WFH and Hybrid IT professionals in India post Covid.
3. To find out the relationship between emotional intimacy, ego resilience and grit of IT professionals (WFH/ Hybrid) in India post Covid.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Das, S and Babu, K. N. C. (2023) investigated the influence of grit, curiosity, and job performance among ITES employees. The study concluded that grit has significant positive correlation with job performance and negative correlation with counterproductive work behavior. Similarly, Khan, B. M. and Khan, A. M. (2017) conducted a correlational study on the role of Grit, happiness, and life satisfaction among professionals. The study concluded that the level of grit, happiness and life satisfaction are positively correlated.

Farhan, S and Atif, T (2022) studied the relationship of Ego Resilience, Perceived Social Support and Depression with Job Satisfaction of working women. This study proved a positive relationship between ego resilience and job satisfaction. Similarly, Ha, G. and Kim,

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B. (2019) conducted a study on the Mediating Effects of Ego Resilience on the Association between Career Growth Opportunities and Withdrawal in Employees. The study summarized that the employee's ego-resilience had significant partial mediating effects on the association between career growth opportunities and physical withdrawal.

Singha, P (2016) explored a comparative analysis of Gender difference on the Association between Happiness and Related Psychosocial Correlates and Job Satisfaction among the Employees of Information Technology (IT) Sector. The study could not find any significant association between interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction among the IT sector employees. Likewise, Bermack, B (2014) conducted a study on Interpersonal Relationships and Life Satisfaction Among Information Technology Professionals. The study concluded that Interpersonal relationships were found to be a significant factor in life satisfaction for all demographic groups examined.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### ***Research Design***

The research design used in this study is Quantitative approach, incorporating both descriptive and correlational methods. The descriptive method was used to summarize and describe the characteristics of our study variables, emotional intimacy, ego resilience, and grit. Additionally, the correlational method was used to find the relationships between the variables under study.

#### ***Sample of the study***

The research included 120 IT professionals, from India with a split of 60 individuals working remotely and 60 following a hybrid work model. These participants ranging from 26 to 45 years old reflected a group of both male and female professionals who shared close connections with either a parent, friend, or partner.

#### ***Sampling Method***

The sampling method employed in this study is non-probability convenience sampling. IT professionals were selected based on their availability and accessibility.

#### ***Tools used for Data Collection***

In this study, three self-report questionnaires were used. Firstly, the Emotional Intimacy Scale developed by Sinclair & Dowdy in 2005. This 5 items questionnaire is rated on a 5-point Likert scale which assesses the emotional intimacy component in one close relationship. The internal consistency and test-retest reliability for a 6-week period were .88 and .85, respectively. Secondly, the Grit scale measures the extent to which individuals can maintain focus and interest and persevere in obtaining long-term goals. This scale, which is developed by Angela Duckworth in 2007, contains 12 items, 5-point Likert scale with Cronbach's alpha value=0.85. Finally, the ego resilience scale developed by Block & Kremen (1996) is used to measure the resilience of people. It is a 14-item scale with an internal consistency value of 0.76.

#### ***Procedure of Data Collection***

The data was collected through a Google form-based questionnaire designed to collect informed consent, demographic details specifically regarding age, gender, designation, year spent in the IT field, and current working model (e.g., remote work, hybrid model) in which the participants were employed, and the responses for the three questionnaires: the

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Emotional Intimacy Scale, Grit Scale, and the Ego resilience Scale. All the questions were mandatory. Confidentiality of participants' responses was strictly maintained throughout the data collection process to ensure the privacy and anonymity of their information.

***Procedure of Data Analysis***

The responses of the study were analyzed using statistical techniques provided by the SPSS software package. First, to identify if there are differences between groups, specifically comparing IT professionals working from home and those working in hybrid models, Mann-Whitney U tests were used. Next, to check the relationships between variables, Spearman's correlation analysis was used. This technique can help in finding whether variables are related, and it also measures the strength and direction of associations between grit, emotional intimacy, and ego resilience.

**RESULTS**

*Table 1 shows the mean value, standard error, U value, and level of significance in Emotional Intimacy among Work from Home and Hybrid IT Professionals*

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	.Sig. (2-tailed)
Emotional Intimacy	Hybrid	60	66.19	3971.50	1458.500	-	.071
	WFH	60	54.81	3288.50		1.807	
	Total	120					

The above table shows the mean value, standard error, U value, and level of significance in Emotional Intimacy among work-from-home and Hybrid IT Professionals in India post-COVID. There were 60 participants each in the WFH and hybrid model. The mean score obtained for emotional intimacy in WFH participants 71 was 54.81 and that of the hybrid model was 66.19. The U value and Z value found were 1458.500 and -1.807 respectively. The value of the level of significance obtained was 0.071. Since the level of significance is greater than 0.05, we reject the alternative hypotheses, suggesting that there is no significant difference in emotional intimacy between WFH and hybrid IT professionals.

*Table 2 shows the mean value, standard error, U value, and level of significance in Ego Resilience among Work from Home and Hybrid IT Professionals*

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	.Sig. (2-tailed)
Ego Resilience	Hybrid	60	60.93	3655.50	1774.500	-	.893
	WFH	60	60.08	3604.50		0.134	
	Total	120					

The above table shows the mean value, standard error, U value, and level of significance in Ego Resilience among Work from Home and Hybrid IT Professionals in India post-COVID. The mean value of ego resilience for hybrid and WFH IT professionals was found to be 60.93 and 60.08 respectively. The Mann-Whitney U value for the participants was 1774.500 and the Z value was - 0.134. The level of significance for the participants obtained was 0.893, which is greater than the standard threshold. This indicates that there is no significant difference in ego resilience between the two groups.

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*Table 3 shows the mean value, standard error, U value, and level of significance in Grit among Work from Home and Hybrid IT Professionals*

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	.Sig. (2-tailed)
Grit	Hybrid	60	57.90	3474.00	1644.000	-	.360
	WFH	60	63.10	3786.00			
	Total	120					

The above table displays the mean value, standard error, U value, and level of significance in Grit among Work from Home and Hybrid IT Professionals in India. The mean rank obtained for grit was 57.90 for hybrid IT Professionals and 63.10 for WFH IT Professionals. The Mann-Whitney U value was 1644 and that of Z score was -0.915. The alpha value calculated for the sample was found to be 0.360 which is greater than the threshold value 0.05. Therefore, we are rejecting the alternative hypotheses, suggesting that there is no significant difference in grit between WFH and Hybrid IT Professionals.

*Table 4 shows the correlation coefficient, and level of significance between Ego Resilience and Emotional Intimacy among Work from Home and Hybrid IT Professionals*

			Ego Resilience
Spearman's rho	Emotional Intimacy	Correlation Coefficient	.241
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.008
		N	120

The above table shows the correlation coefficient and level of significance between Ego Resilience and Emotional Intimacy among Work from Home and Hybrid IT Professionals in India postCOVID. The total participants of in the study was 120. The Spearman's coefficient correlation obtained between emotional intimacy and ego resilience was 0.241. The level of significance appeared to be 0.008, which is less than the standard value of 0.01. Hence, we are accepting the alternative hypotheses, suggesting that there is a significant positive relationship between ego resilience and emotional intimacy of IT professionals.

*Table 5 shows the correlation coefficient and level of significance between Ego Resilience and Grit among Work from Home and Hybrid IT Professionals*

			Ego Resilience
Spearman's rho	Grit	Correlation Coefficient	.325
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	120

The above table depicts the correlation coefficient and level of significance between Ego Resilience and Grit among Work from Home and Hybrid IT Professionals post-COVID in India. The Spearman's rho value was 0.325 between the two variables and the level of significance obtained was 0.000. This shows that there is a significant relationship between Ego Resilience and Grit, resulting in accepting the alternative hypotheses.

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**Table 6 shows the correlation coefficient and level of significance between Emotional Intimacy and Grit among Work from Home and Hybrid IT Professionals**

		<b>Grit</b>	
Spearman's rho	Emotional Intimacy	Correlation Coefficient	.096
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.299
		N	120

The above table indicates the correlation coefficient and level of significance between Emotional Intimacy and Grit among work-from-home and Hybrid IT Professionals post-COVID in India. The correlation coefficient between the two variables is found to be 0.096. The level of significance was 0.299. As the significance value is higher than the standard value of 0.05, there is no significant relationship between Emotional Intimacy and Grit. Thus, we are rejecting the alternative hypotheses.

## **DISCUSSION**

Overall, the lack of significant differences in emotional intimacy, ego resilience, and grit between WFH and hybrid IT professionals implies that the work modality does not determine such psychological dimensions. Thus, the WFH and hybrid approaches appear to be equally conducive for establishing the culture of emotional closeness, learning, and goal-oriented commitment. More importantly, the results imply the significance of individual differences and external factors in professionals' psychological well-being, including their personality traits, social capital, and work-related characteristics. Further investigations of other factors' contribution are required to create evidence-based strategies for promoting quality of life in modern working settings.

The identified significant positive relationships between ego resilience and emotional intimacy in IT professionals confirm the interdependent nature of these psychological constructs in the work setting. This indicates that people who show more adaptability and persistence are also more likely to develop stronger emotional ties to others. Moreover, the significant correlation between ego resilience and grit is also supportive of the alternative hypotheses, revealing that those individuals who possess more resilience are probably more perseverant and passionate about their long-term goals. At the same time, the lack of a significant correlation between emotional intimacy and grit reveals that while open emotional ties also play a role in social interaction, but do not directly impact people's determination and perseverance in achieving one's objectives.

### **Implications of the study**

The implications of the study are to understand how different working models influence both sides of life aspects (personal/professional) for IT workers and potentially other sectors. The light this study shed on significant factors of resilience and individual well-being, such as emotional intimacy, ego resilience, and grit helps to get a more comprehensive understanding of mental health-related topics in the workplace. It also paved the way to set paths to developing interventions in the workplace and pivot existing knowledge, that supports immediate interpersonal relationships, and resilience rather than the skills alone. Overall, it will help our society to be more welfare and financially advanced by "protecting" the workers from the worst impact of mental disorders leading to better, more balanced, and healthier work environments.

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### *Limitations of the study*

- It was challenging to get samples from work-from-home individuals.
- Depended on data gathered from self-report questionnaires that may have occasioned response bias and social desirability effect on the outcomes.
- A large percentage of the study's sample were male making it difficult to generalization of the conclusion to gender-diverse populations.

### *Suggestions for further research*

- Make the sample more diverse and inclusive in terms of gender.
- Employ mixed methods and combine interview methods with the usual surveys to obtain a more full-fledged picture of the conduct and thoughts of participants.

## **CONCLUSION**

The current study examined the effects of working models (work-from-home and hybrid) post-COVID of Indian IT Professionals on emotional intimacy, ego resilience, and grit. 120 people took part in the survey, with 60 WFH participants and 60 Hybrid participants. The participants were between the age group of 26 and 45. The instrument used for the data collection was a Google form, shared through LinkedIn, Facebook, and WhatsApp. The questionnaires consisted of a consent form, socio-demographic form, emotional intimacy scale, ego resilience scale, and the 12-item Grit scale. For this data, 6 hypotheses were framed and validated using various statistical analyses including Mann-Whitney U tests and Spearman's correlations. The results showed no significant difference in emotional intimacy between WFH and hybrid IT professionals, as opposed to what was expected. In addition, the results also presented no significant difference in ego resilience and grit between the two study participants' groups. Furthermore, the results presented a significant positive correlation between emotional intimacy and ego resilience, as well as grit with ego resilience, as hypothesized. However, the results did not support the hypothesized significant relationship between grit with emotional intimacy.

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***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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