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EFFECTS OF MOONLIGHTING ON EMPLOYEE-SPECIFIC FACETS IN INDIA: A COMPARISON BETWEEN MOONLIGHTERS AND NON-MOONLIGHTERS

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ABSTRACT

The controversy over moonlighting has sparked new investigations into its practices. In this regard, the goal of this study is to assess the gap between moonlighters and non-moonlighters in India with regard to personal concerns such as mental wellbeing, work-related stress, and job satisfaction. To investigate this issue, a sample comprising 1082 employees from 10 cities in India was chosen. The effect of moonlighting on the following seven personal domains of an individual's life: mental health, physical health, socio-personal relationships, work performance, work-life balance, stress, and job satisfaction were analyzed using a Multivariate analysis of Variance (MANOVA). The analysis revealed statistically significant results. In addition, a multiple univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to explore the distinctions between moonlighters and non-moonlighters with regard to the personal attributes of subjects in the study sample. Results indicate that the non-moonlighters showed better mental and physical health compared to the moonlighters. Furthermore, non-moonlighters also demonstrated better socio-personal relations and work performance, lower stress levels, and higher overall job satisfaction compared to moonlighters. Despite this, moonlighters appear to have a better work-life balance relative to non-moonlighters.

Keywords: Employee health, dual employment, job contentment, moonlighting, work-life balance.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic caused fundamental changes in the personal and professional aspects of an individual's life. The pandemic brought about changes to daily activities, life preferences, and mental health on an individual level (van der Werf et al., 2021; Xiong et al., 2020). This shift also impacted the art of work and one of the significant developments was the emergence of unconventional employment strategies, including the controversial practice of moonlighting (Muller et al., 2023; Gaitonde et al., 2023).

Moonlighting, which means taking on additional work that is separate from a person's primary full-time job, is an established concept (Ara & Akbar, 2016). The term "moonlighter" originated in the 19th century to describe people who took second jobs in the evening after their primary job during the day (Parham & Gordon, 2011). Regardless, this debate about moonlighting has been largely absent from public discourse until the time of the pandemic, when the phenomenon experienced a rapid growth (Asravor, 2021). Recent reports indicate that post-2021, approximately 20% of Indian urban workers engaged in secondary employment, particularly those working in IT and education (Gupta, 2023; Mulokozi, 2015).

The term "moonlighting" varies in its interpretation across contexts. While some business executives regard it as unethical and deceitful (Gulati, 2023; Mukhopadhyay, 2022; Ghosh, 2022), others advocate for their acceptance in a more fluid gig economy (Weidinger, 2023). From an economic standpoint, moonlighting is often more prevalent due to a lack of primary earnings, inflation, or even a rise in living expenses, particularly with junior employees or those in low-paid financially demanding households (Jaju, 2022).

To date, the focus of existing research has been its antecedents—such as the motivation to moonlight—and its effects on performance, work-life balance, or work engagement (Adelugba et al., 2022; Kalra et al., 2023; Jafferson & Nithya, 2023). In the context of India, however, there appears to be a lack of empirical research comparing moonlighters and non-moonlighters across a broader range of personal outcomes. This absence of analysis is a considerable oversight in research, especially given that moonlighting could profoundly affect mental health, stress, job contentment, and overall wellbeing of employees. In addition, while components connected to the workplace such as organizational climate, pay grading, and role expectations may be shared by personnel with a certain common profile, personal facets tend to be employee specific. These dimensions include an employee's mental and physical health, socio-personal relationships, stress, as well as work-life balance. It is pertinent to grasp how these facets of moonlighting impact personal choices on the one hand and organizational policy on the other.

For these reasons, the present research seeks to find out whether, in the context of India, any substantial differences are found between moonlighters and non-moonlighters with reference to these key personal dimensions: mental health, physical health, socio-personal relations, performance at work, balance between work and life, stress levels, and job satisfaction. This study not only fills a significant empirical gap but also addresses the concerns and benefits of moonlighting in modern workplaces.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Moonlighting

Moonlighting is defined as holding secondary employment in addition to a full-time primary employment position. Secondary jobs may consist of overtime work performed beyond scheduled hours and are often undertaken for financial reasons, advancement in career, or self-satisfaction (Ara & Akbar, 2016). As noted by Parham & Gordon (2011), the term ‘moonlighter’ was coined in the 19th century to refer to those who had nightly jobs after regular work hours. Like many other phenomena, moonlighting was known for quite some time, but its widespread adoption surged in post-pandemic periods due to the availability of remote work and income uncertainties (Asravor, 2021). In the present study, moonlighters are defined as employees with a primary job who are also engaged in another secondary job and non-moonlighters are employees who have only one full-time primary job.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study is based on two well-known theories in organizational behavior, namely the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model and Role Conflict Theory. These models explain the impact of moonlighting on the personal as well as professional life of individuals.

The outcomes for employees, as outlined in the JD–R Model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), stem from the intricate interplay of job concerns such as workload, time constraints, emotional fatigue, and the provided resources including autonomy, support, and recovery time. If personal and organizational resources are insufficient to manage the workload, employees face chronic strain, burnout, and a cascade of health and performance issues. Within the scope of this research, moonlighting is an example of job demand imbalance—excessive working hours, split attention, and dual role expectations which drain employees’ physical and mental resources. This accounts for the observed health decline, heightened stress levels, and reduced work performance among moonlighters compared to non-moonlighters who operate under lesser demands. The JD-R model further rationalizes that there is a decline in job contentment and the erosion of work-life balance associated with moonlighting, particularly when personal resources, rest, support, or motivation are unavailable to counterbalance the increased demands.

In support of this standpoint, Role Conflict Theory (Kahn et al., 1964) describes how people with multiple identities like employees, moonlighters, spouses, or parents may have conflicting expectations for each role, resulting in stress and tension along with performance deficits. Moonlighters usually face a challenge managing the expectations of two workplaces and their personal roles, which leads to intra-role and inter-role conflict. This can lead to strained personal relationships, lack of work-life harmony, and emotional distress. The role conflict explanation also accounts for why moonlighting is linked with lower job contentment levels and higher risks of emotional burnout.

With these two theories, it is reasonable to predict that moonlighting (independent variable) negatively impacts multiple personally defined outcomes (dependent variables), including mental health, physical health, socio-personal relations, work performance, work-life balance, stress levels, and overall job contentment. This research seeks to test empirically these assumptions while simultaneously providing a

theoretical contextual contribution by framing moonlighting as an occupational stress-and-strain phenomenon using the JD–R model and Role Conflict Theory.

Mental Health

Mental health is defined as the psychological condition of employees, and includes the following: emotions, cognition, and the ability to manage stress and hardship. As per the Job Demands–Resources Model, workers who take on secondary roles are at an increased risk of suffering from mental exhaustion as a result of excessive effort combined with insufficient recovery periods. This mental strain can contribute to anxiety, depression, and mood swings.

Moreover, as noted by Suri and Kochhar (2023), moonlighting causes employees to work in excess of their regular hours, sometimes achieving a remarkable 72 to 84 hours of labor each week. Such relentless schedules can escalate anxiety, depression, and other psychosomatic ailments such as dizziness and headaches. These findings correlate with those of Saksena (2022), who builds upon the work of Park et al. (2020) and explains that working extended hours, especially common with moonlighters, are associated with a host of sleep insufficiency, negative intrusive thoughts, and emotional dysregulation.

Dual job responsibilities not only increase the workload, but as moonlighters change roles, the psychological strain of competing tasks intensifies, increasing vulnerability to burnout (Greggs, 2022). Not all findings are, however, unidirectional. In a study on African nurses, Engelbrecht et al. (2020) found that although moonlighters had lower emotional well-being, they exhibited high levels of compassion and work engagement.

Moonlighting, while contributing to mental strain, does not exhibit a stark divide in mental health outcomes between moonlighters and non-moon lighters (Jamal & Crawford, 1981). The inconsistent findings underline the need for such research in the Indian context, exploring whether moonlighting results in marked differences in mental health outcomes across various employment groups.

Physical Health

In this study, physical health can be understood as the subjective evaluation of wellness, vigour, and ability to perform daily functions without undue fatigue or illness by the employees. Within the JD–R model, both high work demands, and overtime deplete psychological and physical resources. Employees who moonlight may suffer from inadequate recovery time, poor-quality sleep, and increased physical stress, especially if their jobs involve physical labour.

According to Greggs (2022), moonlighters increase their working hours or tackle more complex and demanding tasks within a fixed timespan. This leads to enhanced fatigue, disrupted sleep, and diminished energy levels. Over a prolonged period, it poses a risk to cardiovascular health, increases musculoskeletal pain, and declines physical functioning. The study also pointed out that such impacts are worsened when there is a physically demanding component in both jobs.

In Africa, Engelbrecht et al. (2020) who studied dual employed nurses presented an intriguing alternative perspective. In spite of scoring lower on mental health indicators, moonlighting nurses tended to score well

on physical health measures, such as uphill walking, stair climbing, and other physically demanding tasks. This was explained by the possibility that the active roles they held physically may help bolster endurance and resilience.

The literature with such contrasting findings raises the possibility that context and occupation may shape the outcomes of physical health associated with moonlighting. This emphasizes the scope of studying the relationship in-depth, especially in a diverse market like India, which has seen moonlighting across industries and job profiles. The urgent objective is to ascertain whether perceived discrepancies exist in self-evaluated physical health among moonlighters as opposed to non-moonlighters.

Socio-Personal Relationships

Socio-personal relationships refer to the quality of an employee's interpersonal connections with family, friends, neighbours, and wider society. In Role Conflict Theory, conflict emerges from the expectations of numerous roles like being an employee, parent, friend, and moonlighter will interfere with one another. In this scenario, moonlighting streams conflict into routines, which include but are not limited to attending family functions, social gatherings, or being present during moments of personal significance, thus weakening the socio-personal bonds.

Gregg (2022) noted that, often, moonlighters face significant challenges associated with maintaining personal relationships and social engagements because of work-related responsibilities. The challenges associated with balancing two jobs lead to reduced availability for social interactions and a lack of emotional bandwidth necessary for fostering meaningful relationships. In a qualitative study, Mapira et al. (2023) showed that moonlighting not only worsens one's work-life balance, but also damages professional relationships at the primary place of employment, indicating spillover effects that may extend into one's social sphere as well.

Based on these findings, the current study proposes that, compared to non-moonlighters, moonlighters are likely to experience greater social isolation or social disconnection. Non-moonlighters are likely to enjoy greater flexibility and more opportunities to engage in social bonding activities. By empirically testing this relationship, the study aims to determine whether moonlighting has negatively affected socio-personal relationships in the Indian context.

Work Performance

For this investigation, work performance is described as self-evaluation as an employee measuring work-related responsibilities within the boundaries of effectiveness and efficiency. In this regard, an employee's effectiveness encapsulates the completion of given tasks, level of innovation, productivity, and quality of work. Based on the JD-R Model, employee performance deteriorates when the job requirements exceed the available resources. The act of moonlighting comes with additional job responsibilities that are both physical and cognitive and further strain already burdened employees who are functioning in more than one role without adequate rest. This may lead to the primary employment role being myopic focus driven by poor concentration, heightened fatigue, and diminished output.

Jafferson and Nithya (2023) note that while moonlighters tend to report higher income satisfaction, they often experience a performance “spillover” at their primary workplace due to a nexus of competing commitments. In a similar fashion, Md Sabron et al. (2017) and Mulokozi (2015) conclude that moonlighting leads to a loss of productivity in both primary and secondary employment due to fatigue and diminished concentration as a result of longer working hours. Their findings indicate a reduction in both the quantity and the quality of work performed.

Furthermore, Role Conflict Theory provides additional rationale for the view that dual employment can give rise to time-based and strain-based conflicts resulting from conflicting obligations, which in turn, give rise to gaps in communication, deadlines, or below-competence performance in the primary role. Employees also tend to feel some guilt or stress for not being able to fulfil both roles of the job, which has an additional bearing on the performance outcomes.

These theoretical arguments and empirical observations justify the study’s objective to determine whether a significant difference in performance exists between moonlighters and non-moonlighters in the Indian setting. Through self-assessments, the study examines employees' perceptions of their output and thus, whether such moonlighting behaviour leads to a deterioration in work performance.

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance concerns an individual’s perception of successfully addressing professional and personal responsibilities, within a sustainable framework. The Role Conflict Theory is particularly important in this context. It posits that having multiple commitments within a single role often results in chronological conflict, where activities within a specific domain disrupt other obligations. In the case of moonlighters, overlapping work hours, surge in workload, and limited downtime contribute to considerable imbalance between work and personal life tension, particularly when family and social obligations are static (Jahangir and Tahseen, 2023; Ajaya & Kotian, 2021).

Jafferson and Nithya (2023) note that while moonlighters are more content with their income, they tend to have persistent difficulties maintaining a work-life equilibrium. This imbalance adversely impacts their health and interpersonal relationships. In the same way, Mapira et al. (2023) report that moonlighting interferes with professional routines and social functioning, signalling a more complex struggle in multi-domain activity integration.

There is also documentation of differing viewpoints. Gragnano et al. (2020) argue that a work-life balance deficit is not simply a matter of time; instead, it factors in control, flexibility, and personal coping mechanisms. Some moonlighters, in this perspective, might balance their roles effectively if they can self-schedule, work remotely, or prioritize. In those circumstances, moonlighting does not necessarily reduce work-life balance, particularly among those who are adept at managing their schedules and who are bolstered by solid support systems.

These differing perspectives indicate that moonlighting may improve or diminish the perceived work-life balance given situational job characteristics, flexibility, and family support. Thus, this study aims to clarify the debate surrounding the relationship by investigating a pronounced difference in work-life balance between Indian non-moonlighters and moonlighters.

Stress

Stress is defined in this study as the emotional and mental burden distress individuals feel when they feel the pressure placed on them exceeds what they can manage, or resources available to them. The JD-R Model offers insight into this relationship. The absence of recovery and support tends to create an imbalance during high demand periods such as work deadlines, double jobbing, or regularly scheduled overtime; this triggers an increase in stress levels. This is especially true during moonlighting periods, as they generally sustain an overload leading to erosion in psychological resilience.

Suri and Kochhar (2023) emphasize that moonlighting can result in chronic fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and anxiety, all of which are signs of enduring stress. In particular, Greggs (2022) argue that moonlighters suffer from multitasking due to an overload of cognitive functions which subsequently increases stress while reducing productivity. The stress resulting from moonlighting may also transfer into personal domains, leading to relationship strains, diminished life satisfaction, and reduced overall well-being (Mittal & Bhakar, 2018).

By qualitative means, Mapira et al. (2023) report that moonlighters not only endure higher levels of professional strain, but also undergo emotional turbulence fuelled by the anxiety of not being able to deliver on either role or being dismissed by their primary employer. This so-called “dual responsibility stress” is intensified in contexts where moonlighting occurs covertly or without explicit employer approval, resulting in heightened anxiety and insecurity about roles.

From the lens of role conflict theory, moonlighters encounter stress because of competing expectations tied to roles in relation to supervisors, clients, familial figures, and personal aspirations. Such conflict can foster feelings of guilt, the burden of limited time, and internalized tension, especially when these conflicting demands drive employees to try to exceed their self-imposed standards in each role.

With consideration of the converging evidence, the objective of the present study is to determine whether moonlighters experience elevated stress levels compared to those who do not moonlight. This analysis aims to determine if moonlighting, although economically driven, is anchored to the psychological burden of stress.

Job Contentment

Job contentment is defined as the appreciation, enjoyment, and emotional gratification that one receives from one’s work activities. It includes one’s affective attachment to work, perceptions of fairness, growth opportunities, and overall sense of value within the organization (Afzal & Azmi, 2022). Based on the perspective of the JD-R model, job contentment is likely to decrease in circumstances where there is an abundance of job demands—with little to no supportive resources available. Those with moonlighting tendencies seem to be burdened with long working hours, and if these hours are not compensated for (especially by the primary employer), job dissatisfaction is almost guaranteed if the secondary job is a necessity. The absence of choice, in combination with the lack of autonomy, recognition, or career advancement in the primary employment drives the primary income earning employees to supplement their income elsewhere. This only leads to greater job discontentment.

Ara and Akbar (2016) noted that moonlighting was commonly practiced among university faculty members, attributing their dissatisfaction to stagnated promotional pathways, limited career progress, and a lack of professional independence. These findings underscore the notion that moonlighting may not solely stem from job dissatisfaction but may exacerbate it by overworking workers and diminishing their emotional engagement with the primary role.

Seema et al. (2021) noted as well that employees who undertook moonlighting were perceived to have lower levels of organizational commitment, which in turn was linked with lower levels of job satisfaction. Employees, when recruited for a secondary position, tend to compare it with the primary one. Thus, if the comparison is made with a rewarding, more flexible, and more autonomous primary employment, then it leads the moonlighter to feel less valued and disengaged at the secondary position.

RESEARCH GAP AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Although moonlighting has been examined in a variety of organizational settings, most studies seem to focus on either the moonlighters themselves or discrete effects such as performance or income satisfaction. There is a lack of a comprehensive perspective that combines several variables focused on the difference between moonlighters and non-moonlighters. In the case of India, where economic constraints, job instability, and increasing costs of living are intensifying the dual-employment trend, this poses a serious gap in research.

There also exists a gap regarding the benefits and disadvantages of moonlighting. Some researchers claim that moonlighting is associated with negative outcomes, including heightened stress, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction. Other researchers suggest that moonlighting may provide some advantages, including heightened income satisfaction and improved time management. These contradictions lack validation of broader applicability beyond a single setting.

Another primary concern revolves around the lack of integration of these factors into a single theoretical framework. Most of the research conducted is anecdotal or purely descriptive, applying only limited theory. These previous studies did not include the use of the theoretical framework of the JD-R (Job Demands-Resources) model or role conflict theory, both of which can effectively explain how additional job demands impact well-being on the personal, social, and professional levels.

In working towards addressing these gaps, the current research examines moonlighters and non-moonlighters in relation to the following seven employee-specific indicators: mental health, physical health, socio-personal relationships, performance on the job, work-life integration, strain, and overall satisfaction with one's roles. It connects these factors to well-established theories and employs multivariate techniques to determine whether statistically relevant differences exist between the groups.

Therefore, in the context of the present study, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H₀₁: Moonlighters and non-moonlighters do not differ significantly on the dimension of mental health.

H₀₂: Moonlighters and non-moonlighters do not differ significantly on the dimension of physical health.

H₀₃: Moonlighters and non-moonlighters do not differ significantly on the dimension of socio-personal relationships.

H₀₄: Moonlighters do not differ from non-moonlighters with respect to work performance.

H₀₅: There is no substantial variance in work-life balance between moonlighters and non-moonlighters.

H₀₆: There is no substantial difference in stress levels between moonlighters and non-moonlighters.

H₀₇: There is no significant variance in job contentment between moonlighters and non-moonlighters.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample Design

The present study was aimed at exploring the different impact of moonlighting behaviour on employee-specific facets. The study sample included members of the workforce from urban India across different industries. In order to obtain a representative sample, the purposive sampling method was used. First of all, the employability data of all Indian cities was accessed. From this database, only the top ten cities, with relatively higher employability were selected. As per the report in Rathore (2023), the cities included were as follows: Mumbai, Lucknow, New Delhi, Pune, Faridabad, Kolkata, Bangalore, Bellary, Kurnool, and Mangalore. The collection of the sample was based on convenience, as well as the snowball sampling approach. The data collection was carried out through a respondent self-administered procedure and the platform for the data collection includes both paper-pencil mode and an online platform. As a result, a total of 110 responses had been collected from each of the 10 selected cities during the period June 2023 to August 2023. While collecting the data, deliberate attempts have been made to ensure equal participation of moonlighters and non-moonlighters from each of the selected cities, providing a total of 555 responses each from the sample of moonlighters and non-moonlighters from the ten cities. The preliminary scrutinization of the data has led to the rejection of 18 responses from outliers and incomplete responses, leaving the size of the usable data numbering 1082 responses.

Furthermore, to ensure that the selected moonlighters and non-moonlighters were comparable, the socio-economic status of the employees sampled was homogenized across groups. The preponderance of the participants were middle-aged male employees between 30 to 35 years old, with a monthly personal income of INR 20,000 to INR 30,000 and a minimum of three years of total work experience. Most of these respondents were graduates from the service industry in mid to lower management positions and resided in nuclear households consisting of two to four members. This sample strategy supports the focus of the study, which is to compare the employee-specific facets of moonlighters and non-moonlighters.

Measures

A systematic pretested questionnaire has been used for the current study to obtain the primary data. The first version of the questionnaire was pilot tested with 50 employees living in the metropolitan area of Mumbai. Their responses shaped the contents and structure of the questionnaire which was then finalized for use in the main study. As pointed out earlier, self-assessed measures were employed in this study to obtain responses on the following seven measures of employee-specific facets. These included the employee’s mental health, physical health, socio-personal relationship, work performance, work-life balance, stress, and job satisfaction. The details of the employee-specific constructs and their measurement scales are as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Construct Description, Citation Sources and Measurement Scales

Constructs	Definition & Citation Source	Operational Definition	Sample Items	Items	Scale
Mental Health	Emotional well-being (Lukat et al., 2016)	State of mental well-being enabling employees to deal with adverse scenarios.	I feel emotionally balanced in my daily life; I can manage my emotions effectively even during adverse situations.	9	4-point Likert
Physical Health	Self-reported physical vitality (Kern et al., 2014)	Extent to which employees believe they are living well without sickness or disease.	I feel physically energetic during most days; I can carry out my daily activities like climbing stairs without much discomfort.	7	7-point Likert
Socio-Personal Relationship	Social connectedness (Gil & Kim-Godwin, 2020)	Employees’ connection with individuals in their social circle, including family, friends, and neighbours.	I feel emotionally supported by people close to me; I maintain positive relationships with people around me.	6	5-point Likert
Work Performance	Task effectiveness (Andrade et al., 2020)	Employees’ perception of completing assigned work tasks effectively.	I complete my assigned tasks efficiently; I am able to meet the performance standards expected in my job role.	10	5-point Likert
Work-Life Balance	Work–personal life integration (Brough et al., 2014)	Ability of employees to balance personal and professional commitments.	I am able to balance my work and personal responsibilities well; I have enough time and energy for both personal as well as professional life.	4	5-point Likert

(continued)

Constructs	Definition & Citation Source	Operational Definition	Sample Items	Items	Scale
Stress	Emotional strain (Cohen et al., 1983)	Pressure or worry experienced while accomplishing work and managing personal responsibilities.	I feel overwhelmed by work-related pressures; I feel tensed while handling multiple responsibilities at one point of time.	4	5-point Likert
Job Contentment	Job satisfaction (Sinval & Maroco, 2020)	Degree to which employees feel pleasure, enthusiasm, and satisfaction in their current job.	I am contended with my current job; I feel happy with the kind of work I do.	5	5-point Likert

Data Adequacy Tests

With the exception of the construct socio-personal relationships, all other constructs such as mental health, physical health, work performance, work-life balance, stress, and job contentment have been measured using standardized scales that possess an appropriate degree of reliability and validity in various contexts and settings. Thus, for these constructs, the reliability and structural validity have been established to ascertain internal consistency and validity in the Indian context. In the case of socio-personal relationships, a set of tests has been applied such as normality, reliability, factorability and validity. In this sense, the values of standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis, were analyzed in order to test the data against the normality assumption of the scale assessing socio-personal relationships. The resultant values were found to comply with the specified criteria put forth by Hair et al. (2012). Additionally, all the internal consistency of the scales was computed and found to equal 0.837, 0.848, 0.803, 0.918, 0.869, and 0.785 for mental health, physical health, socio personal relationships, work performance, work life balance, stress, and job contentment respectively. All of these figures exceed the minimum benchmark of 0.70 set by Hair et al. (2012), indicating an adequate level of internal consistency.

Moreover, the factor-structure of socio-personal relationship has been assessed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The results were as follows: KMO statistics (0.717) and Bartlett's test of sphericity (chi-square value = 2393.240; $p < 0.01$) were found to be in accordance with Hair et al. (2012) and Williams et al. (2010) which suggests adequate data primal for applying EFA. Additionally, the values of communality as well as the factor loadings are also seen as having passed the threshold value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2012). This means that each of the measures constitute a minimum of 50 percent of the underlying construct, and in the present context the socio-personal relationship. Moreover, applying the principal component analysis with latent root criterion resulted in a single factor solution (eigenvalue deviance is noted to exceed one as the only instance) out of the six measures evaluating that construct, which accounts for the percentage of variance 77.84 per cent. Therefore, the proposed model could be confirmed in the factors structure of the socio-personal relationship. In sum, the construct has been confirmed for the factor structure socio-personal relationship. Also, all constructs have been validated using a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) approach. The resulting value of construct validity was 0.50 and reliability was 0.70, which adheres to the recommendations set by Goyal and Aleem (2023), Cheung et al. (2023), and Hair et al. (2012). To test model fitness, the parameters CMIN, RMSEA, GFI, AGFI, and CFI were evaluated against the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2012).

Table 2

Model Fit Indices

Constructs	CMIN (χ^2/df)	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	CFI
Mental Health	2.08	0.03	0.97	0.96	0.95
Physical Health	4.05	0.04	0.91	0.88	0.93
Socio-Personal Relationship	3.84	0.05	0.97	0.93	0.98
Work Performance	2.44	0.03	0.96	0.94	0.95
Work-Life Balance	4.96	0.05	0.86	0.82	0.94
Stress	4.88	0.04	0.98	0.97	0.99
Job Contentment	3.91	0.04	0.98	0.944	0.98
Referential Values	<5	<0.06	≥ 0.850	≥ 0.800	≥ 0.900

Notes. df = Degrees of Freedom; CMIN = chi-square; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Residual; GFI = Goodness of Fit Index; AGFI = Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index.

The results are from the author’s own calculation.

As shown in Table 2, the values of CMIN, RMSEA, GFI, AGFI and CFI are an accepted benchmark, which is indicative of their model fit. In addition, possible multicollinearity has been determined through correlation coefficient values.

Table 3

Correlation Statistics

Constructs	AVE	MH	PH	SPR	WP	WB	St	JC
MH	0.76	0.87	0.83**	0.56**	0.38**	0.21**	0.26**	0.22**
PH	0.72		0.84	0.60**	0.39**	0.18**	0.28**	0.27**
SPR	0.83			0.91	0.65**	0.37**	0.27**	0.32**
WP	0.82				0.90	0.61**	0.37**	0.36**
WB	0.62					0.78	0.56**	0.31**
St	0.65						0.80	0.50**
JC	0.78							0.88

Notes. ** statistically significant at the 1 per cent level of significance; diagonal bold figures represent the square root of AVE and off diagonal values represent the correlation coefficient values.

MH= mental health, PH=physical health, SPR=social-personal relationship, WP=work performance, WB=work-life balance, St=stress, JC= job contentment

Note that the correlation coefficient values (ranging between 0.18 to 0.83; see Table 3) were below the threshold limit of 0.85 suggested by Cheung et al. (2023); Vatcheva et al. (2016); and Hair et al. (2012), thereby, indicating no substantial problem of multicollinearity has been presumed. Also, all the values of square root of average variance extracted (diagonal figures) are noted to be greater than the corresponding correlation coefficient values (off-diagonal values) in Table 3, which substantiates discriminant validity of the data in the present case. Further, the status of hypotheses has been summarised in Table 4.

Table 4

Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Statement (Null)	Decision	Interpretation
H ₀₁	Moonlighters and non-moonlighters do not differ significantly on mental health.	Rejected	Non-moonlighters show better mental health
H ₀₂	Moonlighters and non-moonlighters do not differ significantly on physical health.	Rejected	Non-moonlighters show better physical health
H ₀₃	Moonlighters and non-moonlighters do not differ significantly on socio-personal relationships.	Rejected	Non-moonlighters show stronger socio-personal relationships
H ₀₄	Moonlighters do not differ from non-moonlighters with respect to work performance.	Rejected	Non-moonlighters show better work performance
H ₀₅	There is no substantial variance in work-life balance between moonlighters and non-moonlighters.	Rejected	Moonlighters report slightly better work-life balance
H ₀₆	There is no substantial difference in stress levels between moonlighters and non-moonlighters.	Rejected	Moonlighters report lower stress levels
H ₀₇	There is no significant variance in job contentment between moonlighters and non-moonlighters.	Rejected	Non-moonlighters show higher job contentment

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The present research work, as mentioned earlier was aimed at exploring the relationship of moonlighting behaviour with the specific personal facets of employees. Thus, the independent variable includes the moonlighting behaviour exhibited by both the moonlighters and non-moonlighters. The dependent variables included the following: mental health, physical health, socio-personal relationships, work performance, work life balance, stress, and job contentment. A One-Way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) analysis has been employed based on the suggestions by Grice and Iwasaki (2007). Primarily, assumptions of the MANOVA have been examined. For the empirical treatment of the data, the average of the composite score, for each of the seven factors, has been considered. All the scales have a varied number of measures and different scales of assessment. This has led to the decision of taking the average of the composite score for the empirical analysis carried out in the present study.

Test of Assumptions

The Box’s Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices deals with homogeneous covariances (Nyame et al., 2018). From this perspective, the Box’s M with the value of 52.852 with sig. value = 0.004 < 0.01 demonstrates that this hypothesis is unsupported, which means that at least one of the groups, moonlighters or non-moonlighters, has exhibited different covariances.

Table 5

Normality Test for the Residual of Explained Variables

Dependent Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Mental Health	0.341	833	0.000	0.807	833	0.000
Physical Health	0.317	249	0.000	0.801	249	0.000
Socio-Personal Relationships	0.333	833	0.000	0.816	833	0.000
Work Performance	0.311	249	0.000	0.806	249	0.000
Work-Life Balance	0.248	833	0.000	0.781	833	0.000
Stress	0.291	249	0.000	0.744	249	0.000
Job Contentment	0.293	833	0.000	0.836	833	0.000

As illustrated in Table 5, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests have provided significant results for all the 7 dependent variables, thereby validating the assumption of non-normality for all of them. While this is indeed an issue with such a large sample size (n = 1082), it can be overlooked, given that the residual skewness and kurtosis values were within reasonable bounds.

As mentioned previously, MANOVA is more tolerant of such violations. In addition, the multicollinearity checks indicated that all the VIF metrics between 1 and 6 were well below the cut-off value of 10 (Ibrahim et al., 2018). Also, Levene's Test showed that the equality of variances assumed for moonlighters and non-moonlighters held true (p > 0.01 for all variables).

Multivariate Analysis

The behaviour of the two groups of employees under investigation, the moonlighters and non-moonlighters with regard to their mental health, physical health, socio-personal relationships, work performance, work life balance, stress, and job contentment has been examined through a MANOVA analysis. Accordingly, the null hypothesis has been stated as follows:

H₀: Moonlighting has no impact on mental health, physical health, socio-personal relationships, work performance, work life balance, stress, and job contentment.

Table 6

Multivariate Tests for Moonlighting Behaviour

	Effect	Value	F	Hypot hesis	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	0.95	3049.30	7	1074	0.00	0.95
	Wilks' Lambda	0.05	3049.30	7	1074	0.00	0.95
	Hotelling's Trace	19.87	3049.30	7	1074	0.00	0.95
	Roy's Largest Root	19.87	3049.30	7	1074	0.00	0.95
Moonlighting Behaviour	Pillai's Trace	0.02	3.13	7	1074	0.00	0.02
	Wilks' Lambda	0.98	3.13	7	1074	0.00	0.02
	Hotelling's Trace	0.02	3.13	7	1074	0.00	0.02
	Roy's Largest Root	0.02	3.13	7	1074	0.00	0.02

Notes. Author's Calculation

The multivariate analysis shows that moonlighting behaviour has a significant effect on the dependent variables. The Pillai's lambda value was 0.02; $F = 3.13$; $p < 0.00$ and partial eta squared = 0.02 (see Table 6). In addition, Wilk's lambda value was 0.98; $F = 3.13$, $p < 0.01$ and partial eta squared = 0.02. Hotelling's trace and Roy's largest root was noted to be statistically significant at the one percent level of significance. As a result of all these test values, the null hypothesis has been rejected with the conclusion that moonlighting has had a significant effect on mental health, physical health, socio-personal relationships, work performance, work-life balance, stress, and job satisfaction. Given that the multivariate test results were statistically significant, a follow-up test (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether moonlighting behaviour would have an impact on the dependent variables.

Table 7

Results of the Multiple Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Variables	Groups	Mean	F	Sig.
Mental Health	Moonlighters	2.780	8.372	0.004
	Non-moonlighters	2.944		
Physical Health	Moonlighters	4.774	10.560	0.001
	Non-moonlighters	5.931		
Socio-Personal Relationship	Moonlighters	4.042	7.137	0.008
	Non-moonlighters	4.073		
Work Performance	Moonlighters	3.859	4.540	0.033
	Non-moonlighters	3.937		
Work-Life Balance	Moonlighters	3.970	3.909	0.048
	Non-moonlighters	3.942		
Stress	Moonlighters	2.536	3.981	0.046
	Non-moonlighters	2.933		
Job Contentment	Moonlighters	3.940	5.260	0.022
	Non-moonlighters	3.951		

According to the ANOVA results presented in Table 7, there were marked differences among moonlighters and non-moonlighters in all seven personal facets. In the mental health domain, non-moonlighters displayed significantly better mental health compared to the moonlighters ($M = 2.94$ and $M = 2.78$, respectively), $F(1,1080) = 8.37$, $p < 0.01$, thus confirming H_{01} . Also, physical health was also reported to be better for non-moonlighters ($M = 5.93$) compared to the moonlighters ($M = 4.77$), $F = 10.56$, $p < 0.01$ (H_{02}). Socio personal relationship showed a small but significant difference as well ($M = 4.07$ vs. 4.04), $F = 7.14$, $p < 0.01$ (H_{03}) along with work performance ($M = 3.94$ vs 3.86), $F = 4.54$, $p = 0.03$ (H_{04}). An unexpected finding was that the moonlighters appeared to have better work-life balance ($M = 3.97$) than non-moonlighters ($M = 3.94$), $F = 3.91$, $p = 0.048$ (H_{05} rejected in favour of moonlighters). Moonlighters ($M = 2.54$) exhibited lower stress compared to non-moonlighters ($M = 2.93$), $F = 3.98$, $p = 0.046$ (H_{06}). However, job satisfaction was significantly higher for non-moonlighters ($M = 3.95$) compared to moonlighters ($M = 3.94$), $F = 5.26$, $p = 0.022$ (H_{07}).

The prime rationale of the present study is to examine differences between moonlighters and non-moonlighters in India on seven specific employee metrics: mental health, physical health, socio-personal relationships, work performance, work-life balance, stress, and job contentment. It was also intended to determine whether the two groups differed in a statistically significant manner. These variables formed the basis for particular hypotheses (H_{01} to H_{07}), and the outcomes from the MANOVA and ANOVA tests corroborated most of the hypothesized associations.

The first hypothesis (H_{01}) suggesting there is no difference in the mental health of moonlighters and non-moonlighters was disproved. Participants' responses indicated that non-moonlighters had better mental health. This is consistent with the point about the consolidation potential, which is based on the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model. It associates excessive job demands coupled with inadequate recovery time with psychological distress. Evidence to support this has been provided by Suri and Kochhar (2023) and Saksena (2022), both of whom claimed that working longer hours as a moonlighter led to anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders. Additionally, Greggs (2022) observed that fulfilling dual roles heightened cognitive exertion and emotive volatility; the findings from the present study have corroborated these observations.

As for physical health (H_{02}), the outcomes also favoured non-moonlighters and their physical health. This finding also aligns with the JD–R model which states that greater occupational responsibilities diminish one's physical vitality. Greggs (2022) highlighted the issues of sleep disruption and fatigue that moonlighters experience. While Engelbrecht et al. (2020) reported that African nurses who moonlighted demonstrated high physical endurance, that context was specific to physical resilience. In contrast, the current study's results from India suggest that in urban contexts, non-physical role moonlighting is likely to diminish physical well-being overall.

For socio-personal relationships (H_{03}), a small difference, though noteworthy, leaned towards non-moonlighters, thus aligning with the postulations of role conflict theory. This theory states that the management of different roles minimizes the emotional and physical investment one can offer to one's personal life. As noted by Greggs (2022) and Mapira et al. (2023), moonlighters tend to maintain unsatisfactory personal relationships because of the time and attention challenges, a finding supported in the present study.

In relation to work performance (H₀₄), non-moonlighters scored higher. As pointed out in the JD-R model, split focus and increased workload tasks lead to lower performance effectiveness. Ara and Akbar (2016) noted that moonlighters experienced fatigue from working long hours, which in turn decreased productivity. Md Sabron et al. (2017) and Mulokozi (2015) reached similar conclusions that moonlighting negatively impacted productivity at both the primary and secondary places of employment. The findings therefore, both the theoretical and empirical justifications for the research gap the present study has identified.

It is notable that H₀₅, which considered work-life balance, was the only hypothesis predicated in favor of moonlighters. In fact, moonlighters reported a somewhat greater perceived balance, even with the time burdens linked to the holding of two positions. This observation supports Gragnano et al. (2020) assertion that a work-life balance is not only a matter of temporal allocation, but also psycho-emotional leverage and strategies employed by the individual. In this instance, it is plausible that moonlighters had access to flexible or remote secondary positions which enabled them to better self-manage their obligations. This also aligns with the observation made by Thilagavathy and Geetha (2023) that perceived balance stems more from psychological framing rather than actual time allocation.

Higher stress levels for moonlighters (H₀₆) were also noted, which is consistent with the JD–R model which has linked excessive work demands to emotional exhaustion. Parham and Gordon (2011) and Kinman and McDowall (2009) have suggested that stress associated with moonlighting is heightened on account of dual responsibility and insufficient recovery periods. Mapira et al. (2023) also illustrated that individuals who engaged in moonlighting tended to suffer from anxiety and role insecurity, especially when the secondary job was informal or kept secret. This cumulative stress over time leads to psychological fatigue, which accounts for the elevated stress levels reported by moonlighters in the present study.

Finally, the hypothesis regarding job satisfaction (H₀₇) showed that non-moonlighters were significantly more job satisfied than moonlighters. This supports the theoretical standpoint that moonlighting could be a sign of discontentment with the primary job. Ara and Akbar (2016) stated that employees who engaged in moonlighting were often motivated by stagnated promotional opportunities. Seema et al. (2021) documented lower organizational commitment among moonlighters as well. These findings help broaden the existing literature by showing that not only can job dissatisfaction lead to moonlighting, but also that the act of moonlighting reinforces job dissatisfaction. Employees tend to evaluate the perks and freedom of their secondary employment against the constraints of their primary positions.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study has made a significant contribution to the evolving discourse on dual employment by offering a nuanced understanding of how moonlighting affects employee-specific outcomes. Drawing upon robust theoretical models—the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework and Role Conflict Theory—it has bridged an important empirical gap by comparing moonlighters and non-moonlighters across seven critical personal and professional dimensions within the context of the Indian workforce. Such comparative insights have been largely absent from prior research, which has tended to focus either on moonlighters alone or on isolated outcomes.

At the employee level, the findings serve as a practical guide for informed decision-making. By identifying key domains such as mental and physical health, work performance, and job satisfaction that are significantly affected by moonlighting, employees are better equipped to weigh the trade-offs of taking up secondary employment. For those already engaged in dual employment, the results offer a framework to reassess current commitments and adopt coping strategies—such as flexible scheduling, rest periods, or wellness routines—that can mitigate adverse effects.

For employers, particularly primary organizations, the study provides an evidence-based foundation for designing responsive HR interventions. The identification of specific stressors and performance issues linked to moonlighting allows firms to proactively address potential declines in productivity or engagement. Policy measures could include offering structured overtime opportunities, wellness support, flexible scheduling, or transparent discussions on permissible external engagements—strategies that may reduce the appeal of moonlighting without resorting to restrictive enforcement.

Organizations that do permit or accommodate moonlighting can also leverage these insights to optimize employee well-being and output. Regular well-being assessments, confidential disclosure mechanisms, and tailored support programs may help in managing dual-role employees more effectively. Importantly, this study challenges the binary framing of moonlighting as either ethical or unethical. Instead, it positions moonlighting as a complex, context-dependent phenomenon that requires regulation rather than prohibition.

In sum, this research contributes to both academic theory and managerial practice by offering a comprehensive, empirically grounded assessment of moonlighting's multidimensional impact. It invites future research into sector-specific patterns, gendered experiences, and longitudinal effects, while also guiding organizations toward evidence-informed strategies for managing the realities of a diversifying work economy.

LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The present study focuses on employees from various cities in India. However, the study sample consisted primarily of male employees. Therefore, future research should aim to obtain a more balanced sample that includes a larger proportion of female employees. This study carried out the research by using self-reporting tools which even with, considerable effort, it nonetheless still suffered from common method bias. Therefore, future research may want to include some objective measures, such as estimating the impact of moonlighting on the performance metrics of the employees. Moreover, the current research attempt has been limited to the examination of the effects of moonlighting on the personal dimensions of the employees. In the future, the inclusion of potential precursors to the moonlighting phenomena might provide an even deeper understanding of the varying factors that could influence employees' moonlighting practices.

This research examined moonlighters and non-moonlighters in terms of seven personal and work-related dimensions. The analysis revealed significant differences across all dimensions, with non-moonlighters usually reporting better results regarding health, job satisfaction, and performance. Only in work-life balance did moonlighters exhibited marginally better outcomes. These results underscore, particularly from an Indian perspective, the advantages and disadvantages concerning well-being resulting from dual employment.

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