

WORKPLACE ROMANCE: BOON OR BANE IN ACADEMIC PROFESSION

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Introduction

Since the 1970's, researchers have been looking into the organizational implications of workplace romances. As time spent in the workplace has increased over the years, the prevalence of workplace romances has increased as well (*Gauthier, Frank, & Furstenburg, 2005; Horan & Chory, 2013*). *Horan and Chory (2011)* define a workplace romance as a “non-platonic relationship between two members of an organization in which sexual attraction is present, affection is communicated, and both members recognize the relationship to be something more than just professional and platonic” (pp. 565). A number of studies have looked into how these workplace romances are perceived by their coworkers based on a number of factors which can result in a variety of interpersonal and performance related outcomes (*Alder & Quist, 2014; Barratt & Nordstrom, 2011; Jones, 1999; Wilson, 2015*). Prior research on workplace romance has often focused on the perceptions and outcomes of same-race, heterosexual relationships; however, literature is sparse concerning the implications of workplace romance including stigmatized identities within the relationship. The workplace was recently referred to as a “natural dating service” (*Jones, 1999*) due to its inherent encouragement for employees to pursue romantic relationships with coworkers (*Anderson & Hunsaker, 1985*). This finding has been

attributed to many causes including, but not limited to, (1) employees spending a majority of their available time working for their perspective organizations, both on and off the site and (2) employees find that they share similar interests and values with their organizational peers (*Anderson & Hunsaker, 1985; Byrne, 1971*). In addition to these findings, research on attraction in the workplace has shown that working in close proximity with others, harboring mutual attitudes about each other with another individual, and finding it easy to interact with another individual are all predictors of attraction (*Byrne & Neuman, 1992; Salvaggio, Streich, Hopper, & Pierce, 2011*). Another study proposes that the increasing prevalence of workplace romances can be attributed to the influx of women in the workplace (*Ford & McLaughlin, 1987; Powell, 2001; Swartz, Warfield & Wood, 1987*). Seeing as the number of Black and homosexual employees is rising as well (*Deitch et al., 2003; Phillips, Ingram, Smith, & Mindes, 2003*), this too could have implications for an increased number of stigmatized relationships in the workplace.

Taken together, research in this field is relevant to organizational well-being. As a whole, uninvolved coworkers and supervisors generally perceive workplace romance negatively in the context of the organization (*Brown & Allgeier, 1996*). Managers oftentimes resent these relationships out of fear for what negative outcomes they might incur upon uninvolved coworkers as well as the organization as a whole (*Alder & Quist, 2014*). Concurrent with these findings, an estimated forty percent of managers hold negative perceptions towards employee dating (*Brown & Allgeier, 1995*); furthermore, a survey done by the Society for Human Resource Management in 2002 presented that an astounding eighty one percent of HR professionals as well as seventy six percent of executives describe workplace romance as “dangerous” (SHRM, 2002). Despite this resounding disapproval from management, another survey by the Society for Human Resource Management done in 1998 showed that the frequency of workplace romance has done nothing but increase or remain constant in years past among organizations in the United States (SHRM, 1998). Collectively, the increasing number of workplace romance and the inherent disdain towards those workplace romances from OPs raises important questions as to how stigmatized relationships fit into this finding. Workplace discrimination is still reported (*Bergart, 2004; Deitch et al., 2003; Link & Phelan, 2001*) and, as such, involvement in a workplace romance could pose to be potentially dangerous for stigmatized individuals. Because of this, we see the implicit need for more research examining workplace romances.

Literature Survey

Workplace romance can be defined as “some form of intimate relationship between two employees who have both expressed their romantic feelings in the form of dating or other intimate association” (*Foley and Powell, 1999; Mainiero, 1989; Quinn, 1977*). Workplace romances have been a point of discussion from different disciplinary perspectives like business (*Greenberg, 1998; Mainiero, 1986; Powell, 1986, 2001; Quinn, 1977*), psychology (*Brown & Allgeier, 1995; Dillard & Broetzmann, 1989*), and legal studies (*Hoffman, Clinebell, & Kilpatrick, 1997; Wilson, Filosa, & Fennel, 2003*). It is a mutually preferred relationship among two people at work place with a few components of sexuality and physical closeness (*Powell and Foley, 1998*). Employee relations and productivity at work may be affected by sexual and romantic relationships (*Mainiero, 1989*). On the other hand research suggests that work place romance can enhance employee performance and improves organizational culture and more specifically climate of the organization (*Quinn, 1977*). It also boost excitement, develops communication, fuel creativity and escort to high job satisfaction (*Pierce et al., 1996*). Interestingly “a new sexual revolution” has started with workplace romance *Mainiero (1989)*. Now days the workplace is progressively becoming a sexual environment (*Riach and Wilson, 2007; Morgan and Davidson, 2008*). The reason behind this is not only the entry of more and more women workers (*Hoffman et al., 1997; Neugarten and Shafritz, 1980*) but also their involvement in managerial roles (*Devine and Markiewicz, 1990; Fagenson, 1993; Jones, 1999; Powell, 2001*). Spending long working hours together results into frequent interaction and also increases dependence on each other (*Anderson and Fisher, 1991; Hoffman et al., 1997*). There are possibilities of romantic or sexual encounters because of frequent interaction between male and female employees (*Dillard, 1987; Paul and Townshend, 1998*). It is impossible to eradicate workplace romance completely from the organizations (*Civil, 1998; Lee, 1996*) and it will stay in the workplace (*Gomes et al., 2006*). Understanding work place romance is very essential because then only policies can be made as it is a very sensitive issue (*Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2004*). Supervision and monitoring on interpersonal relations at work may help managers to face these sensitive encounters (*Bowes-Sperry and Powell, 1999; Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2004*).

Social-sexual behavior at work can be known through the study of workplace romance (*Brown and Allgeier, 1995*) which is not frequently studied earlier (*Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2004; Riach and Wilson, 2007*). Workplace romance involves high levels of mutual intimacy and sexual attraction (*Mainiero, 1993; Wittemann, 1993*). Despite of frequent occurrence of workplace romance it is not considered functionally appropriate (*Riach and Wilson, 2007*) and it is not the sign of professionalism. So to be professional one has to keep sex and work separate (*Schultz, 2003*). Love is an irrational emotion which should be avoided otherwise that will hamper the foundation of rationality (*Schultz, 2003*). Though sexual attraction cannot be controlled the guidance of workplace etiquette can suppress office romances (*Morgan and Davidson, 2008*). Not only workplace romance needs to be controlled but disciplinary actions must be taken against those who allowed it (*Schultz, 2003*). This view is not going to be changed in the recent years in spite of increase in workplace romance (*Mainiero, 1989*). Researches about workplace romances are sparse because of the sensitive nature of the topic and therefore researchers are forced to rely on third party observations (*Mainiero, 1986*). Although there is limited empirical research on the topic the extant research indicates negative perception of workplace romance by the employees in organizations (*Brown & Allgeier, 1996; Powell, 1986*). This is not good news for those who have either involved or having a desire to involve in workplace romance (*Bordwin, 1994; Greenberg, 1998; Shellenbager, 2004*). The reason behind this negative perception is highlighted by Quinn (1977) who identified 3 factors “love (a sincere desire for companionship or genuine love), ego (excitement, adventure, and sexual experience), and job (money, advancement, and job security)”. On the contrary Dillard and Broetzmann (1989) highlighted that people involved in workplace romances show positive attitude whereas relationship due to job motives leads to high absenteeism. Employees perceive workplace romance which originates from job motives has a negative effect on organization’s culture, social climate and employee’s work performance (*Dillard et al. 1994*). *Brown and Allgeier (1996)* found that superior- subordinate romances are negatively perceived in comparison to romances between colleagues or of equal status. Money, advancement and job security are the reasons behind subordinates dating superiors. Additionally Jones (1999) reported that workplace romance is more negatively perceived when the supervisor is woman and the subordinate is man.

Objective

The study makes a modest attempt to analyse workplace romance and its antecedents and consequences on various socio-economic variables, in Odisha, specifically in academic sectors.

Data and Method

The current study focuses on the antecedents and consequence of workplace romance from various social, psychological and economic aspects of life.

Scope of study: To study the antecedents and consequence of workplace romance the present study focuses on the academic staffs of various management institutes, across Odisha. The paper covers both private and government institutes. As per AICTE portal there are 81 institutes provide 'PG' courses on 'management' studies in the state of Odisha in the year 2019. Out of 81 institutes 61 are in Khorda district itself. Thus the study selected Khorda as its geographical area of research.

Variable selection: After a systematic literature survey a list of antecedents and consequence of workplace romance, was prepared. Out of the mostly used antecedents and consequence, only those were selected which were applicable to Odisha's academic sector. The list of antecedents and consequence was drafted with the help of expert opinion (Delphi Method).

As pilot survey the questionnaire was circulated among 50 respondents and their responses were recorded. The pilot survey passed both reliability and validity test.

Data Collection method: Early literature showed three prominently used method of collecting data on workplace romance. They are questionnaire method, interview method and case study approach. Mostly researchers in foreign countries have used interview method and case study approach to study workplace romance. For substantiating the objective of the current paper, it was crucial to use quantitative technique. Workplace romance being sensitive subject confidentiality was essential. Direct approach was not suitable. Keeping time and money in mind, questionnaire method was adopted, without compromising the objective of the study. Chi square test is used to test the significance of the result.

Sample size: Using 95 percent confidence interval, 5 percent margin of error, 50 percent population proportion and 61 as population size, sample size turned out to be 53. Simple random sampling (Lottery Method) is used to select the institutes. There are total 945 teaching faculties employed in 81 colleges that is an average of 11 employees per college. Assuming 583 (11×53) as the total number of employees in the selected colleges, sample size obtained is 232. Snow ball sampling technique is applied to distribute 500 questionnaires, during the months of April and May, 2019. Out of 500 distributed questionnaires, 261 were received. Out of which 31 questionnaires was unusable. So the study is based on 230 samples consisting of 103 female and 127 male respondents.

Data Analysis

As per AICTE portal there are total 275 (29%) female faculties and 670 (71%) male faculties. The sector is clearly male dominated. So, to reduce gender biasness in the result, the study consists of 45 percent female and 55 percent male respondents.

The Supreme Court of India declaring Section 377 (same sex relationship) and Section 497 (adultery a criminal offence) of the IPC as unconstitutional in 2018 shows that India is going through a transitional phase. Thus baby boomers, Gen X and Gen Y are sure to have difference of opinion with respect to workplace romance. The study reflects the opinion of Gen Y as 68 percent of the respondents belong to Gen Y.

The study includes both government and private management colleges. In government colleges there are two types of teaching faculties- Those who are recruited by government on regular basis and others who are recruited on contractual basis. Both categories have been taken into consideration. There is a third type of organizations which are owned by the government but are run in self financing mode. These institutes are also included in the study. The data set thus consists of 19 percent faculties who work in government colleges but receive consolidated salary on contractual basis, 57 percent teaching faculties of private colleges and 24 percent of government colleges.

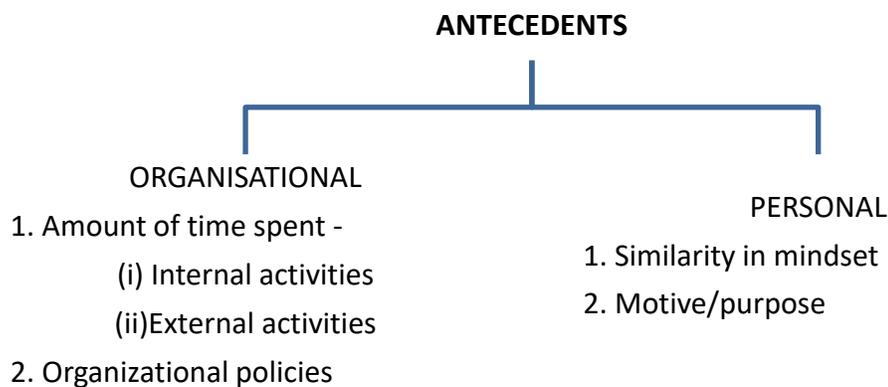
Around 72 percent of the respondents have seen average 3 couples engaged in workplace romance. And 11 percent of the respondent have come across 'above 11' number of couples

engaged in workplace romance. Fifteen percent have faced average 8 couples in workplace romance, while only 2 percent denied to have come across any couples engaged in workplace romance.

Findings

The respondent's reaction to workplace romance is influenced by many factors for example the couple as an individual, the respondent's own perception towards workplace romance, and the work environment. The empirical findings are compared against other studies to find the theoretical and practical implications.

Antecedents of workplace romance



Quinn in 1977 pointed out three conditions which may lead to workplace romance. Firstly the individuals must be sitting close to one another; secondly the task given to them need both of them to work together and thirdly sporadically meeting one another. The first and second conditions are satisfied in case of faculty members of same discipline. And the third is seen in case of faculties of inter disciplinary subject. In colleges workstations are arranged for teachers of common discipline in one departmental room. Usually a group of faculties share a common room. They spend most of their time together, after their classes, post exam duty, during summer and breaks in between the semesters. This frequent interactions leads to attraction (*Quinn and Judge, 1978*). Our findings [Table 1] corroborate with Quinn's analogy, whereby majority of respondents feel that spending more time and helping each other in crucial time generates

workplace romance. Female faculties strongly believe (14 percent) that physical closeness leads to workplace romance.

Table 1- Spending more time and helping each other in crucial time generates workplace romance.

Response (%)	Total	Male	Female
Agree	43	24	19
Strongly agree	23	9	14
Neutral	22	15	7
Disagree	10	5	5
Strongly disagree	2	2	0
Chi-Square statistic	8.17E-10	1.358E-05	4.8E-05

Source: Authors own compilation

“The smaller the physical and functional distance between two people, the more likely they are to be attracted to each other” (*Segal, 1974*). In academics, faculties are often engaged in various research works and other co-curricular activities. These external activities are allotted in groups. Less functional distance among individuals give rise to workplace romance (*Dixit, 1985*). Since the faculties have to spend a lot of time together, this increases their chances of getting attracted to each other (*Byrne and Neuman, 1992*). The study showed similar result. Respondents (80 percent) support that performing external activities together frequently over a long period of time generates workplace romance [Table 2]. Male faculties (44 percent) believe that working together outside the premises leads to workplace romance. Our results substantiate the early research (*Warfield, 1987*) in workplace romance and show that amount of time spent with each other acts as an antecedent of workplace romance.

Table 2- Performing external activities together frequently over a long period of time generates workplace romance.

Response (%)	Total	Male	Female
Agree	53	31	22
Strongly agree	27	14	13
Neutral	14	6	8
Disagree	5	3	2
Strongly disagree	1	1	0
Chi-Square statistic	3.5E-18	4.416E-11	4.4E-07

Source: Authors own compilation

The institutional values and beliefs with respect to workplace romance play a vital role on how it is viewed by others (*Mainiero, 1989; Quinn and Judge, 1978*). In India unlike in foreign

countries, teachers are portrayed as Gods - '*Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu, Guru Devo Maheshwara, Guru Sakshat Param Brahma, Tasmai Shri Gurave Namah*'. workplace romance thus is seen as a taboo. So, even today no colleges in India or in Odisha have any formal written guidelines as to encourage (or discourage) workplace romance. This lack of clear cut guideline on workplace romance gives rise to chaos and confusion. Though majority of respondents (51 percent) believe that lack of organizational policies to suppress workplace romance (Ease of opportunity) instigates it, but still 27 percent of them responded neutral [Table 3]. Sixteen percent of respondent thought that institution guidelines might have no role in workplace romance as it is a personal choice.

Table 3- Lack of organizational policies to suppress workplace romance (Ease of opportunity) encourages it.

Response (%)	Total	Male	Female
Agree	36	22	14
Strongly agree	15	7	8
Neutral	27	14	13
Disagree	16	9	7
Strongly disagree	6	3	3
Chi-Square statistic	1.9E-05	6.397E-04	5.8E-02

Source: Authors own compilation

While choosing a romantic partner generally a male gives more emphasis on the physical attractiveness of the female (*Byrne, Ervin and Lamberth, 1970*). The most significant features are height (*Sheppard and Strathman, 1989*) and weight (*Smith, Waldorf and Trembath, 1990*). Our results showed a different trend [Table 4]. Both male and female respondents together (68 percent) believed that it's the similarity in mindset rather than physical attraction that individuals get attracted to each other romantically in their workplace. The current results support the findings of *Hogg and Cooper (2003)* "Recent studies have consistently found that higher perceptions of similarity are associated with increased levels of relationship quality".

Table 4- It's the similarity in mindset rather than physical attraction that individuals get involved in workplace romance.

Response (%)	Total	Male	Female
Agree	46	28	18
Strongly agree	22	8	14
Neutral	18	13	5
Disagree	11	3	8
Strongly disagree	3	3	0

Chi-Square statistic	9.8E-11	6.672E-08	1.5E-04
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Source: Authors own compilation

Thirty seven percent of the respondents think that workplace romance provides them with job security, gain support and favourism from their superior or colleague and at the same time share job stress and pressure [Table-5]. Twenty five percent of the respondents think that the individuals involved in workplace romance has the potentiality to carry it to the next level. This line of thought also explains why similarity in mindset rather than physical attraction is given priority while choosing a partner [Table -4], that is beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder.

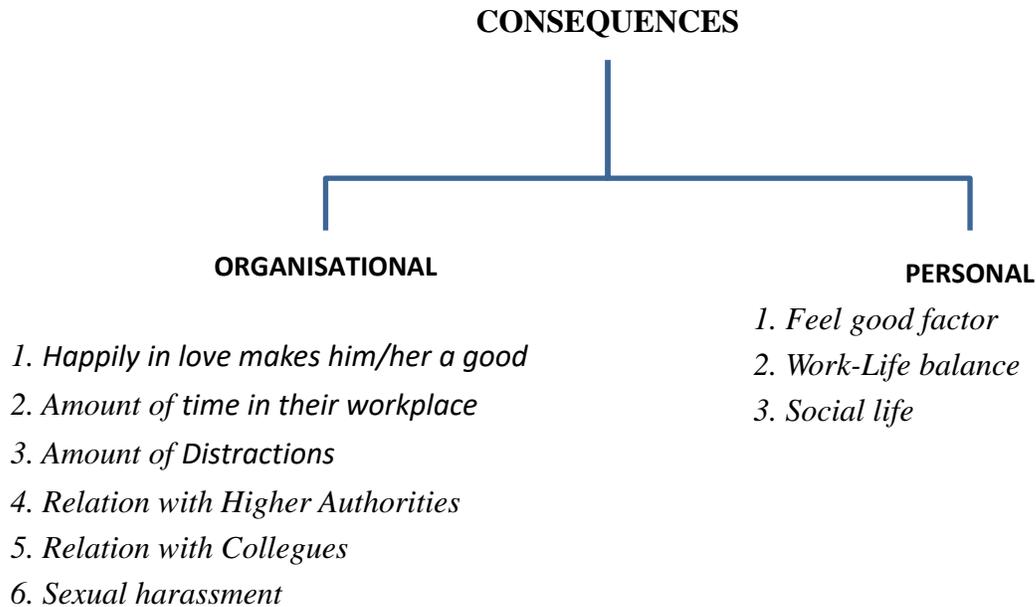
Table 5- workplace romance arises due to need for:

Response (%)	Total	Male	Female
Job related	37	16	21
Ego	2	0	2
Love	25	13	12
Thrill	20	15	5
NOTA	16	11	5
Chi-Square statistic	1.4E-06	4.516E-03	3.2E-05

Source: Authors own compilation

Individuals “get turned on by competence, by being in a team that wins, by being better together than separate. That’s often erotic and compelling” (*Loftus, 1995*). Twenty percent respondent felt that this generates a thrill among individuals who get carried away and develop a workplace romance. Sixteen percent felt that the reason one gets involved in workplace romance is neither because of love, job or ego. They commented that it’s a passing phase and/or infatuation. According to them it’s a temporary phenomenon and with time it usually fades away.

Consequences of Workplace Romance



Early study has shown workplace romance has dual impact on job performance. workplace romance positively (Lobel, Quinn, Clair and Warfield, 1994; Anderson and Hunsaker, 1985; Quinn, 1977) and negatively (Driscoll and Bova, 1980; Quinn and Judge, 1978) affect job performance of the involved couples. The outcome depends on two things - how the relationship is perceived by other faculties and management and how the relationship is perceived by the couple themselves.

Our results gave a mixed response on relationship between workplace romance and efficiency/productivity. Only 32 percent of respondent thought that workplace romance had positive impact on efficiency/productivity, while others were either neutral (15 percent) or differed (fifty three) [Table 6]. To get a clear picture the study has broken the efficiency measuring criteria.

Table 6- Happily in love makes him/her a good worker.

Response (%)	Total	Male	Female
Agree	27	16	11
Strongly agree	5	5	0
Neutral	15	8	7
Disagree	38	23	15

Strongly disagree	15	3	12
Chi-Square statistic	2.9E-06	6.397E-04	7.7E-03

Source: Authors own compilation

workplace romance can motivate an employee to perform better in his/her task, as it develops more passion among couples about their work (*Dillard & Broetzmann, 1989*) because of which they are willing to spend more time in workplace (*Mainiero, 1989*). Seventy one percent of the respondents believed that individuals involved in workplace romance spend more time in their workplace [Table 7], but that does not mean that the extra time is spent productively.

Table 7- Individuals involved in workplace romance spend more time in their workplace (beyond working hours).

Response (%)	Total	Male	Female
Agree	46	27	19
Strongly agree	25	5	20
Neutral	9	7	2
Disagree	19	15	4
Strongly disagree	1	1	0
Chi-Square statistic	2.5E-08	6.319E-06	1.3E-06

Source: Authors own compilation

Study pointed out that [Table 8] the partners involved in workplace romance are less focused in their work (51 percent). The couples are mostly seen busy with their mobile phones. Even during meetings and other discussions they remained aloof. The respondents (29 percent) who supported the point commented that the couples 'did what was asked of them' without delay.

Table 8- The partners involved in workplace romance are more focused in their work (Less Distractions).

Response (%)	Total	Male	Female
Agree	23	10	13
Strongly agree	6	2	4
Neutral	20	15	5
Disagree	36	21	15
Strongly disagree	15	7	8
Chi-Square statistic	1.2E-04	1.234E-03	3.5E-02

Source: Authors own compilation

Using impression management theory, it can be said that as workplace romance is not viewed positively by other colleagues, so the couples go out of the way to impress the management (*Dillard, 1987; Dillard and Broetzmann, 1989*). Fifty eight percent of respondents follow a

similar line of reasoning and viewed that in order to impress management they stay beyond working hours in the colleges and spend more time cozying up with higher authorities [Table 9]. This creates discomfort and insecurity among other faculties, who react negatively towards the couple. This negative behavior is reciprocated. Result showed that the individuals who are involved in workplace romance do not make their utmost effort to impress their co-workers.

Table 9- The individuals who are involved in workplace romance go out of the way to impress management.

Response (%)	Total	Male	Female
Agree	43	18	25
Strongly agree	15	9	6
Neutral	22	15	7
Disagree	18	11	7
Strongly disagree	2	2	0
Chi-Square statistic	1.2E-05	1.797E-01	4.2E-06
The individuals who are involved in workplace romance make their utmost effort to impress their co-workers.			
Response (%)	Total	Male	Female
Agree	23	15	8
Strongly agree	1	1	0
Neutral	18	10	8
Disagree	38	21	17
Strongly disagree	20	8	12
Chi-Square statistic	4.9E-07	3.896E-04	1.7E-03

Source: Authors own compilation

Consensual sexual intimacy among couples is extensively found in many countries (*Powell & Mainiero, 1990; Mainiero, 1993; Pierce, Byrne & Aguinis, 1996*). Sexual harassment begins when females fall victim to undue sexual demand from their male partners or superiors. The fear of losing job, position, increment or favors usually force them to compromise (*Quinn & Judge, 1978; Anderson & Fisher, 1991*). Large portions (47 percent) of the respondent believe this to be the cause. But others feel that once the couples break up, they blame each other of taking advantage [Table 10].

Table 10- Romantic relationships expose organizations to claims of sexual harassment.

Response (%)	Total	Male	Female
Agree	38	19	19
Strongly agree	9	3	6
Neutral	21	12	9
Disagree	25	15	10

Strongly disagree	7	6	1
Chi-Square statistic	1.9E-06	3.846E-03	6.8E-04

Source: Authors own compilation

Workplace romance has a tremendous role in building or breaking the personal life of the couple and as individual.

At a personal level the individual feels happy due to hormonal changes. When an individual is in love, the brain releases dopamine, which increases serotonin levels and generates oxytocin. The respondents (61 percent) thus noticed change in behavior of the couples [Table 11].

Table 11- workplace romance generates 'feel good factor' among partners.

Response (%)	Total	Male	Female
Agree	43	24	19
Strongly agree	18	8	10
Neutral	23	14	9
Disagree	14	7	7
Strongly disagree	2	2	0
Chi-Square statistic	3.8E-09	3.443E-05	3.7E-04

Source: Authors own compilation

A greater part of the respondent (59 percent) thought that individuals involved in work place romance maintain a balance between professional and personal life. Most of the couples resorted to petty lies to cover up their affairs [Table 12]. Twenty five percent remained neutral, mostly male respondent, the reason being 'unaware of family of female partners in the couple'.

Table 12- Individuals involved in work place romance maintain a balance between professional and personal life.

Response (%)	Total	Male	Female
Agree	41	18	23
Strongly agree	18	12	6
Neutral	25	16	9
Disagree	13	8	5
Strongly disagree	3	1	2
Chi-Square statistic	3.6E-08	2.184E-03	4.9E-06

Source: Authors own compilation

Social gatherings are occasions which help in networking and acts as grapevine. Forty one percent respondent feel individuals involved in workplace romance prefer a secluded life in work

[Table 13]. Their avoidance of social gatherings is understandable given that the society see their relationship as 'unhealthy and contagious'.

Table 13- Individuals involved in workplace romance prefer a secluded life in work (avoid social gatherings).

Response (%)	Total	Male	Female
Agree	37	19	18
Strongly agree	4	0	4
Neutral	31	17	14
Disagree	25	16	9
Strongly disagree	3	3	0
Chi-Square statistic	5.8E-10	1.146E-05	9.8E-05

Source: Authors own compilation

Conclusion

When data from table 7, 8, 9 10 and 11 are viewed together it shows that even though individuals involved in workplace romance spend more time in their workplace, yet there is no positive relationship between workplace romance and efficiency/productivity. In other words even though the employees spend more hours in office but still the institute does not gain out of it. But some of the respondent differed from this view. This means that in some of the educational institutions the management was able to capitalize from 'workplace romance'. During framing of questionnaire, few expert opinioned that, when the couple is given task to perform whether within the campus or outside they were pro active. This is possible only when the authority accepts them as a team rather than as individuals in love.

India is a land of tradition and culture. Workplace romance is still a social evil and more so in teaching profession. Teachers are expected to be moral custodian of students. Thus, getting romantically involved in workplace is considered unethical. Even students make fun of teachers who are involved in workplace romance and thus are looked down. Given such circumstances it will take more than a decade to make profit from 'workplace romance'.

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