

Workplace Friendship: A Theory Base

Dr. Smritikana Ghosh

Assistant Professor
Department of Psychology,
Radha Govind University,
Ramgarh, Jharkhand
India

Abstract

Many individuals devote a significant amount of their attention to their professional endeavors. As a result, several colleagues end up making friendships in the workplace. Humans possess an inherent inclination to watch over and collaborate with one another while engaging in group endeavors. Establishing and sustaining relationships with colleagues is essential for fostering employee engagement and job satisfaction. This study focuses on examining the influence of workplace friendships on employee devotion. The presence of buddy chances and the frequency of these contacts in the workplace fostered innovative behaviors. Moreover, there was a positive association between friendship and psychological safety. A positive relationship was found between professional connections and creative production, whereas it was determined that psychological safety did not play a role in mediating this relationship. The findings may be very advantageous for both the academic community and managers in the service business. Both employees and employers might benefit from a harmonious work environment. Consequently, there is an enhancement in performance, a decrease in turnover, and a significant increase in invention and originality. However, professional relationships may still give rise to favoritism, sexual harassment, gossip, and nepotism. The authors provide a novel approach to assessing workplace connections with the aim of enhancing employee morale, cultivating a sense of security, and stimulating creativity. It may be deduced that the camaraderie among workers may be the primary catalyst for creating a nice work environment.

Keywords: Colleagues, Engagement, Creative, Invention and Environment.

Introduction

"Friendship has a more profound impact on a person's life than love." Love has the potential to deteriorate into an unhealthy fixation, but friendship is always characterised by the act of sharing.

Elie Wiesel

Both employees and companies can greatly benefit from actively engaging with one another in the workplace. Workers exhibit higher levels of engagement, exhibit a decreased likelihood of leaving, and showcase an increased capacity for creativity, all of which have a positive influence on productivity. Professional relationships can sometimes lead to undesirable behaviours, including the spread of rumors and incidents of sexual harassment, favouritism, and nepotism. We believe that friendships in the workplace are vital for boosting employee engagement. This is because the opportunity to form friendships and the frequency of these relationships have a significant impact. People can meet various obligations through their profession and workplace, which also provides them with a chance to channel their efforts towards something meaningful and substantial. Humans rely heavily on their professions and workplaces to give their lives direction and purpose (Singh et al., 2012). Employed individuals often devote a substantial amount of their active hours to their work, sometimes even exceeding the time they spend at home.

The usual working hours for individuals are generally from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., although there may be some slight variation. People in the workforce often have more frequent interactions with their coworkers than with their close friends, family, or neighbours. These interactions usually occur on a weekly or monthly basis. The dynamics between coworkers play a crucial role in the overall success of businesses and their ability to achieve their goals. Thus, businesses can experience both positive and negative outcomes from the interactions among their employees, regardless of their proximity.

Interacting with others is a natural inclination for most individuals. They prioritize being accessible and strive to establish meaningful connections with others. There are numerous locations where friendships can develop. As stated by Kiesel (2011), this is a frequent occurrence that impacts various aspects of life, including professional endeavors. It is highly probable that you have developed numerous connections if you have been working for the same company for a long time. There may be colleagues with whom you have developed close friendships, as well as others with whom you have more casual relationships, and you may exchange weekend anecdotes in the morning. In a professional setting, a colleague can either be a valuable resource for fostering connections or a potential risk (Swales, 2015). Every aspect of an employee's experience with an organization, from the recruitment process to their final days on the job, relies on strong employment relations. Every individual involved, from employers to managers to employees and their representatives, plays a crucial part in this exchange. Wanrooy et al. (2011) conducted research that suggests a decline in workplace camaraderie can lead to conflicts. People commonly view colleague relationships as a valuable aspect of professional culture, but they can also lead to employee discontentment and operational inefficiencies.

Literature Review

- ♣ According to Lee and Ok (2011), friendships among colleagues are distinct from other forms of professional contacts because they are consensual and arise from mutual trust, commitment, common interests, beliefs, or values, and the cultivation of shared ideals.
- ♣ Friendships in the workplace are voluntary partnerships in which people engage as distinct individuals rather than in the standardised organisational roles of colleague or supervisor, according to Reich and Herscovis (2011). Building and maintaining connections at work helps with both social support and advancing in one's career. Most importantly, however, we fulfill our urge to belong by making acquaintances at work.
- ♣ Friendship in the workplace moderates the effect of healthy and pathological perfectionism on creative output and fatigue, according to research by Chang et al. (2016). Their findings indicate that working friendships within teams enhance the correlation between constructive perfectionism and creative actions while diminishing the correlation between destructive perfectionism and exhaustion on the job. One possible explanation for their findings is that friendship tends to make people feel good.
- ♣ Potgieter et al. (2018) found that workplace friendships can provide several benefits to workers. These friendships can help individuals adapt to evolving work conditions and promote their professional development through networking opportunities.
- ♣ Researchers have distinguished workplace friendships from other types of office interactions by emphasising their voluntary nature and focus on personalities, despite the absence of a universally agreed-upon definition of the term. Furthermore, friends in the workplace demonstrate a willingness to go above and beyond for each other, dedicating additional time, sharing valuable information, and offering unwavering support (Sias, 2019).
- ♣ Zhang et al. (2021) investigated the influence of workplace friendships on organisations, in addition to the impact of formal interpersonal connections. Two studies were done to investigate the impact of high commitment work systems on employee well-being via workplace friendship. The researchers conducted two separate studies using survey methods. The first study involved 253 full-time employees, while the second study included 310 employees from 61 different organisations. Both studies' findings indicate that there is a positive relationship between high-commitment work systems and workplace friendship. Furthermore, this workplace friendship is also positively associated with employee well-being, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction.

Objectives

- Φ To assess the team spirit in the workplace.
- Φ To examine the significance of workplace friendships.
- Φ Suggestions that are suitable may be offered.

Concept of Colleague Companionship

Friendships at the workplace may be risky for individuals' self-concept because of the mismatch of resources transferred and opposing reciprocity norms. The competition for promotions may have a

greater influence than the emotional connections among colleagues. Workplace friendships provide benefits, but they may also intensify the adverse impacts on some relationships. It is natural that after working there for a long time, we would become friends with our colleagues. We often spend more time with our colleagues than with our families, despite research suggesting that spending quality time with coworkers may greatly affect one's level of pleasure. The current understanding of the influence of workplace friendships is insufficient and requires more research. Gaining insight into the influence of friendship on important employee outcomes is essential for broadening our comprehension. This study seeks to contribute to the existing knowledge on the influence of workplace friendships on four distinct employee outcomes. Developing relationships with colleagues involves engaging in effective communication with individuals both inside and outside the confines of your organisation.

Employees may be obligated to establish interpersonal relationships with colleagues as a component of their professional responsibilities, or they may choose to do so voluntarily due to factors such as physical closeness, emotional bonds, common interests and values, or personal commitment to the organisation. Workplace connections have the potential to evolve into friendships for some individuals, while for others, they remain strictly professional. Social psychologists (Potgieter, Ferreira, & Coetzee, 2019) have observed that employees tend to form close relationships with a limited number of friends. Those who have friendly contact with one another at work are said to be part of the same organizational family. Trust, mutual cooperation, and common ideals distinguish a true working relationship from other forms of friendship. Friendships in the workplace benefit employees' motivation, methods for expressing problems, and sense of empathy for coworkers. Interactions inside the company facilitate the development of camaraderie among workers, managers, and departments. This excludes mandatory associations, like the relationship between a manager and a subordinate. Worker trust, mutual commitment, and shared values are vital. Common duties, close physical proximity, similar personalities, and compatible management approaches form the basis of friendships in the workplace. Although both sorts of relationships may thrive in a professional setting, it is important to recognise that a friendship and an office romance are separate and different from one another. This is because romantic relationships are characterised by greater intimacy and exclusivity compared to friendships and often include just one man and one woman. Nevertheless, our workplace friendship measure just considers the probability of forming friendships at work.

Workplace Friendliness Strategies

It might not be possible to force employees to make human connections, but managers and bosses can make the workplace a safe, friendly, and supportive place for workers to do so. Based on Fisher's research, it's clear that our growing workforce wants to be closer to each other. But it's best to be cautious when starting personal or unimportant conversations with our bosses via text message. Managers can make the workplace welcoming for everyone, which encourages a sense of belonging and makes it easier for people to connect with each other, ultimately improving networking and relationship building. Managers can make it easier for workers to get to know each other by being truly interested in their personal lives. Come up with new ideas to find creative ways to make the place feel friendlier. Let's look at an example of a meeting that moves quickly.

People on LinkedIn, a social networking site, enjoy walking talks because they help them relax and come up with new ideas. If you don't use electronics during talks, you can connect with people more deeply and pay full attention to what they are saying. Sending a short thank-you message on social media can have a big effect on improving mood at work. Just imagine how happy you would be to get an email from your boss praising your great work, and then imagine how that good feeling would spread through your whole network. Publicly recognising our work not only boosts our mood but also helps to build our professional image. There's no need for us to give relationship advice, but it is important to genuinely care about our coworkers. Every time you talk to each other, try to understand each other better. It would be smart to find out why our friend always brings their yoga mat on trips. Personality is more than just what they do for a living. For a better understanding of what drives other people, we should take the time to learn about their different hobbies. Managers and bosses can build strong relationships with their employees and make the workplace a better place by having thoughtful conversations with them. Both managers and workers can feel stressed when they have to punch in and out, but having a close friend at work can help ease some of that stress.

The Significance of Workplace Friendships

One of the biggest advantages is that having mentally stimulating coworkers can significantly increase our overall level of job satisfaction. When they know that their peers are rooting for them, they are more driven and dedicated to doing their best work. Improved output and general work performance may benefit both companies and employees. Collaboration and cooperation have increased, which is another important benefit. When people build close relationships with their coworkers, they are more willing to participate in cooperative projects and share ideas. This could foster a better feeling of collaboration and increase the flow of original ideas. Furthermore, having dependable coworkers during trying times may be quite beneficial to our emotional and mental well-being. According to Huang (2016), workers may enhance their unity and productivity by establishing close relationships that foster trust, commitment, and the exchange of information. These relationships also facilitate the expression of social emotions and viewpoints. When faced with difficult situations at work, having a reliable confidante or conversation partner may greatly improve an employee's mental health. If this happens, businesses may be able to lower the expenses related to turnover and absenteeism.

It is worth mentioning that developing strong connections at work requires a considerable amount of effort. Because of its inherent fragility and authenticity, counterfeiting is simply impossible. It is crucial to avoid displaying any bias or creating cliques, as these actions can have detrimental impacts on the overall team dynamic. Developing strong connections with your coworkers can greatly enhance your overall job fulfilment, which is an immense advantage. When employees understand that they can depend on their coworkers for help when needed, they put in more effort and dedication. Enhancing overall work performance and productivity can bring significant benefits to both employers and employees. Another significant benefit is enhanced collaboration and synergy. When individuals have a harmonious relationship with their peers, they tend to collaborate more effectively and engage in the sharing of insights. This could potentially result in a higher influx of creative concepts and a stronger sense of unity within the team. In addition, having knowledgeable colleagues to confide in during challenging moments can significantly improve our mental and emotional well-being. When someone is feeling overwhelmed at work, having a trustworthy person to confide in can greatly impact their mental well-being. If this situation arises, businesses have the potential to reduce the costs associated with turnover and absenteeism. In addition, it is crucial to uphold professional boundaries. It is crucial to have colleagues who are also friends, and this is not just a common belief; scientific research provides evidence to support this idea.

This is important because cultivating a small, close group of friends in the workplace is essential in order to thrive in both our professional and personal lives. Receiving emotional support, social approval, and a sense of belonging from colleagues can greatly enhance workplace positivity. Each employee who has a best friend at work experiences a sevenfold increase in employee engagement. This is a positive indication of their high degree of involvement, drive, and commitment to their profession and organisation. Maintaining communication with colleagues may help you stay informed about workplace events, which is especially beneficial in the current age of remote work. Their capacity to facilitate more effective interaction with your colleagues can lead to enhanced cooperation and collaboration. During times of excessive burden or anxiety, the presence of colleagues in the workplace may provide significant assistance. In order to support you throughout challenging periods, they may also provide guidance and be available to you when you need it. The presence of colleagues who provide support has a positive impact on both your physical and emotional well-being, perhaps leading to a greater level of job satisfaction. Experiencing satisfaction in one's work environment enhances the probability of being motivated and productive.

The Negative Aspects of Workplace Friendships

There is a lack of coherence and consistency in the studies on the issue lack coherence and consistency, and there is some indication that friendships made on the job aren't always good. We begin with a question about the difficulties of friendship in the workplace and go on to investigate when, how, and for whom the consequences of friendship on the job may become obvious. When coworkers share information and see common ground, it's easier to form friendships and enjoy each other's company. Implementing these techniques in the workplace, however, might potentially cause problems with task performance as well as group and organisational functioning. While the majority

of research on friendship has focused on how it affects people and how they engage with others, one big negative of friendship is that it takes individuals away from their jobs. This disadvantage arises from the conflict between organisational instrumental purposes, community norms, and socio-emotional goals that govern self-disclosure (i.e., needs-based, not exchange-based). The degree to which coworkers provide private information about themselves is a good indicator of the quality of any friendship, new or old, in the workplace. However, for a friendship dyad to function, it is essential for both individuals to affirm each other and provide social and emotional support whenever one shares their ideas and feelings. Putting social contacts ahead of work-related interdependencies and objectives might put instrumental aims at risk.

Effects of Workplace Friendships

There have been a number of studies conducted over the years that have unequivocally proven the positive influence that friendships in the workplace can have. One of the many benefits is improved well-being, pleasure, and job participation. Other benefits include greater productivity, less stress, and enhanced well-being. One of the more recent areas of inquiry is the investigation of the negative impact that friendships in the workplace might have. According to a number of studies, the existence of friendships at the workplace may have a detrimental impact on productivity, morale, and the general dynamics of the company.

A more recent book by Pillemer and Rothbard (2018) argues that systemic issues may be the root of the disadvantages of friendships in the workplace. This is due to the tensions that arise between the qualities of the organization and the essential components of friendships, such as the informality and voluntariness of the relationship. At this time, it is abundantly obvious that friendships in the office may have both beneficial and negative effects on the individuals involved. The lack of extensive investigation into the concept of office friendships has left us unclear about the benefits and drawbacks of fostering these relationships. It would seem that there is no clear consensus in the research about the beneficial or negative effects of friendships within work groups. The amount of camaraderie in the group and the ease with which members express their disagreements and diverse points of view seem to play a role.

- ❖ **Friends at work raise job happiness:-** Workers report more happiness in their jobs when they have strong friendships with coworkers. Employee satisfaction rises, and turnover falls. Having a best friend at work increases job engagement, improves customer engagement, boosts productivity, improves mental health, and decreases the likelihood of workplace injuries. Having a closest buddy at work reduces stress levels in stressful circumstances, according to workers. Respondents who had close work buddies reported higher levels of confidence and composure when faced with challenges.
- ❖ **Colleagues can improve the firm:-** Having friends at work can be advantageous in multiple ways, one of which is mitigating the risk of burnout. Research has indicated that when a significant number of employees in a company develop close relationships with their colleagues, there is a noticeable decrease in safety accidents, an increase in customer engagement, and a boost in profitability. The quality of work relationships can have a significant impact on various aspects of our company.
- ❖ **Colleagues at work lessen stress and increase output:-** Working hours might seem endless. Job burnout is something that most of us will face eventually, no matter what we're doing for a living. Employees who have buddies among their coworkers are less prone to burnout than those who do not. Employees who aren't suffering from burnout tend to be happier and more productive overall.
- ❖ **Workplace friendships provide healthy rivalry to improve:-** Close friends often foster a healthy feeling of rivalry while working together on a project, motivating one another to pursue greatness. They are also quite good at giving each other helpful critiques. In an honest and grateful manner, you are more likely to accept constructive criticism from someone you respect.

Conclusion

Our research analysis shows that workplace friendship is an important phenomenon in businesses. For most people, having friends and reaping the emotional, practical, and psychological advantages they provide is essential. However, there are significant drawbacks to friendships that result from the

difference between these interactions' informal and voluntary character and the rigid work environment seen in certain businesses. It is clear that scholars in the field of positive psychology are more interested in studying positive emotions in organizations than negative emotions. Positive affectivity often reflects a person's level of enthusiasm, activity, and alertness. Based on our discussion, it appears that fostering strong professional relationships can result in positive outcomes for both employee job satisfaction and work performance. The convergence of individual endeavors significantly increases productivity by generating potent synergy.

The context of additional facets of organisational culture underscores the significance and beneficial impact of the present study. In many ways, our friendships shape who we are and how we live. Sure enough, having friends come to work is common and has a big influence on everyone who works there. Being in a relationship with a friend has numerous advantages, but there are also potential drawbacks, especially when it comes to keeping a close relationship with that person. Relationships between coworkers in an organisation may have a positive or negative impact on productivity. A positive work environment may result from employees getting to know one another and developing friendships in the office. When employees develop friendships with one another at work, it boosts morale and enthusiasm for the company's mission. When coworkers are friendly with one another, it creates an atmosphere of caring, cooperation, attention, and trust, which in turn helps everyone do their jobs better. Friendship is obviously not a unidimensional phenomenon, as previous research has shown, so it is crucial to improve the theory of this phenomenon. We are hopeful that the proposed typology will aid in the investigation of this significant phenomenon, particularly in illuminating its causes and effects. Because of this, people will be better able to control their expectations of friendships and the time and energy they devote to them. Additionally, it will assist organisations in determining the best friendships to foster in certain scenarios.

Recommendation

Companies that invest in their employees' friendships see a rise in productivity, contentment at work, and loyalty from their staff. Everyone wins when an organisation fosters a culture that encourages employees to become friends on the job. If you want your business to succeed and your workers to be happy, you should put money into building connections at work. By offering more flexibility in terms of job responsibilities, scheduling, and task distribution, the company might improve the working environment for its staff. Workers must be more watchful to guarantee equitable access to tools and the appropriate use of safety precautions. The company could think about taking more action to proactively handle any future labour shortages.

Gallup's most recent study emphasizes the value of having a trustworthy colleague when it comes to important aspects such as job happiness, plans to quit, and the possibility that employees would recommend their employer. With more and more people choosing to work remotely or in a hybrid capacity, having supportive coworkers is increasingly crucial for maintaining social connections, fostering cooperation, and weathering transitions. Business executives should value in-person meetings above electronic correspondence. Additionally, executives might rearrange desks to promote face-to-face interactions, change expectations, and create new cultural standards. Employees may work together with coworkers from various departments via cross-training or job rotation, which is one strategy. Expanding one's social circle naturally leads to meeting new acquaintances. Arrange for people to meet at the designated place for lunch or a gathering. Put individuals' workstations near one another.

Implications

Based on previous studies' knowledge of workplace relationships, we developed a new approach to help us better understand the tricky and vague concept of office friendship. Based on our knowledge and theoretical understanding, we believe that different types of friendships may offer distinct benefits. We also need to consider the potential drawbacks of business partnerships. The process of making and keeping friends takes a lot of time and work. We believe that both managers and workers should have access to tools that can help them make links that lead to the results they want, which can then make the time and money spent worthwhile. As a friendship grows, it's crucial to think about how things change over time. Does a positive influence become more or less important with time? Is it true that commitment becomes more important with time? To delve deeper into this subject, we use

our suggested model to ask whether a friendship that starts as a tight relationship may grow into a broader one.

Investing in high-quality, focused friendships—what we call "quality friendships"—may be worthwhile at a workplace with long-term projects that include teams of people with diverse backgrounds and talents, such as a construction site. In this approach, people may concentrate their relationships on the job they do together while still developing friendships based on trust, commitment, and emotion. Contrarily, if your profession requires you to work alone a lot, like a contact centre representative, it could be worthwhile to put your energy into developing weak connections. That way, people may get the advantages of friendships—which, at the very least, would include getting along well with one coworker—without having to spend a tonne of energy cultivating ideal relationships. We argue that various friendship types may bring distinct advantages. Friendships formed at work may be risky; therefore, it's important to think carefully before doing so. Building and maintaining friendships requires an investment of time and energy. Therefore, we believe it's crucial to equip managers and employees with the necessary tools to foster connections that could potentially yield the desired results, thereby justifying their efforts. To fully understand the mechanics of workplace camaraderie, further research is necessary.

Future Research

We need further empirical research to evaluate the causes and effects of each category of friendship and to create accurate and trustworthy standards for the categorization we have proposed. Further study is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of workplace relationships. As shown above, the literature of today often views friendships in the workplace as a fixed phenomenon.

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