

IS WORKPLACE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP
SIGNIFICANT? THE IMPACTS OF WORKPLACE FRIENDSHIP ON
WORK PERFORMANCE IN THE INTERNATIONAL
TOURIST HOTEL INDUSTRY

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Abstract

As the hospitality market has flourished in Taiwan, the entrepreneurs in the hotel industry have been devoted to emphasizing the effects between workplace friendship and working performance towards staff so that they may reinforce organizational effectiveness. Thus, the study mainly aims at exploring the impacts of workplace friendship on work performance towards employers and employees in southern Taiwan. Moreover, the relationship between workplace friendship and work performance may

be discussed in this study. The results revealed that “Friendship Prevalence”, “Friendship Opportunity” and “Workplace Friendship” (Overall) were highly correlated with “Work Performance”. Eventually, it was illustrated that “Workplace Friendship” positively and significantly enabled to predict “Work Performance” in the study. For the development of international tourist hotel sectors, the researchers would suggest that entrepreneurs focus on the organizational psychology in industry but stimulate self-perception and team cohesiveness for employers and employees within the hospitality services in order to strengthen the work performance and effectiveness in the workplace.

Keywords: Workplace Friendship, Work Performance, Hospitality Industry

Introduction

With the advancing development of hospitality industry, the use of professionals in the workplace has been one of the key and critical factors for the sustainability of an organization. It may be seen that hotel sectors that provide intensive labor services by manpower play a very influential role in the delivery of tourism services within the travel activities. Therefore, the quality of its professional service delivery will be related to the survival, competition, and development of the hotel industry. If an enterprise can properly apply the strategies of human resource management and human resource development into the industry, it will be beneficial to the interpersonal relationship, professional development, and work performance towards its employers and employees. In Taiwan, the hotel industry has been booming out, but enhancing the organizational effectiveness and efficiency may be necessary. According to the previous studies, it revealed that the workplace friendship may not only reinforce the productivity in the organization (Glaman, Jones, & Rozelle, 1996) but also improve work performance in the industry (Glaman,

Jones, & Rozelle, 1996; Chao, 2018). Furthermore, the positive interpersonal relationship may effectively enhance job satisfaction and organizational performance (Winstead, Derlega, Montgomery, & Pilkington, 1995; Yen & Chen, 2009). In light of above statements, the purpose of this study is to examine whether there would be effects between workplace friendship and work performance to serve the practical and academic advisory reference to human resource management and development in the hotel business.

Review of Related Literature and Research

What is workplace friendship? Workplace friendship, being regarded as a supportive and positive power from the social environment, consists of friendship prevalence and friendship opportunity in the context (Nielsen, Jex, & Adams, 2000). Apart from this, workplace friendship is also an informal, spontaneous, and intimate interpersonal relationship among colleagues, employees, and employers in the workplace (Berman, West, & Richer, 2002). As to work performance, it can be defined as

activities or behaviors that are in association to the goals of an organization (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997; Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). To put it another way, work performance may be regarded the behavior or action itself but not a consequence and the result of actions (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993; Borman & Motowidlo, 1993)

In the organization, the individual does not work alone. It may be collaboration within different employers/employees and departments to determine the strategies to implement and pursue their goals. Therefore, it implies that the workplace may have influences on or affected by others at the organization. Workplace friendship, which plays a role as the key success factor for human resource management and development, may affect the individual's work performance in the industry. According to previous research review, a study illustrated that colleagues via workplace friendships may improve work performance

(Barsade, 2002). Moreover, Hackman and Lawler (2004) indicated that friendship opportunities might reinforce interaction within employees and improve work performance. Hence, in this study, the researchers attempt to propose the hypothesis that workplace friendship has positive effects on work performance.

Methodology

Research Framework

The identification of workplace friendship towards employees/employers may be a prerequisite of the work performance in the hotel industry. In this study, the purposes are (1) to analyze workplace friendship in correlation to work performance for employees and employers in industry, and (2) to examine the impacts of workplace friendship on work performance in industry. Furthermore, the conceptual framework of the study is designed and constructed as follows (see Figure 1).

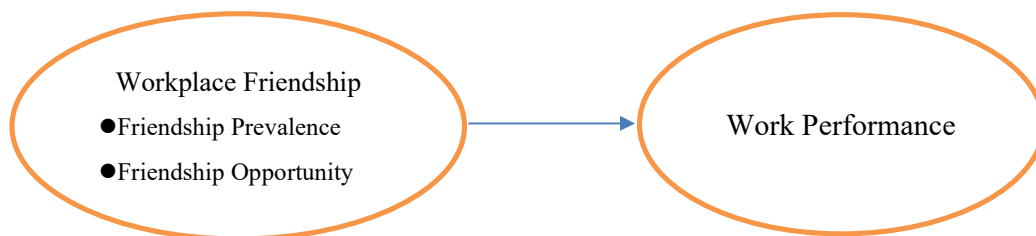


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study *Data Collection and Data Analysis*

In order to analyze the impacts of workplace friendship on work performance in the industry, three international tourist hotels that the employers and employees were willing to be surveyed in southern Taiwan were investigated in this study.

The questionnaire, which is comprised of three sections, was developed and constructed by adopting the related literature reviews. It consisted of the profile of respondents in the first section. Further, the second section included the two dimensions of workplace friendship, such as "Friendship Prevalence" and "Friendship Opportunity"

(Nielsen, Jex, & Adams, 2000). Finally, it was constructed as the three indicators in the work performance which was self-reported by the researchers. All respondents were inquired and surveyed to what extent they perceived from the items applying a five-point Likert scale with 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree, and 1=Strongly Disagree.

Of 300 questionnaires distributed and filled by the employers and employees at three international tourist hotels in southern Taiwan, 285 were returned and clarified as the valid sample, with a valid response rate of 95%. Consequently, the returned and collected data were computed and examined by employing demographic analysis, reliability test and content validity, Pearson's correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis.

Results

A profile of respondents is demonstrated in Table 1. As can be illustrated, female and male distributions were

60.0% and 40.0%, respectively. Nevertheless, 78.4% of respondents were from Housekeeping Department and Food & Beverage Department. Further, Front Office represented 10.5%; other departments accounted for 21.1%.

As can be shown in Table 2, there were two dimensions "Friendship Prevalence" (M=4.53) and "Friendship Opportunity" (M=4.76) in the variable of "Workplace Friendship"; the average of overall in workplace friendship underlying was computed in M=4.65. Also, the average of overall in "Work Performance" was presented in M=4.72. Nevertheless, all indicators and dimensions were developed via literature reviews in this study. Before the survey instrument was established and finalized, the researcher asked three industry professionals to critique and scrutinize the survey to determine the validity of the questions. It was to assure the content validity for the instrument by means of the operation of constructs. Likewise, good content validity for the instrument was established in this study, and the reliability coefficient for the constructs ranging

Table 1. Respondents Profile

| Characteristics | | Num- ber | % |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------|
| Gender | Female | 171 | 60.0 |
| | Male | 114 | 40.0 |
| | Sum | 285 | 100.0 |
| Functional Area | Front Office | 30 | 10.5 |
| | Food & Beverage | 92 | 32.3 |
| | Housekeeping | 103 | 36.1 |
| | Others | 60 | 21.1 |
| | Sum | 285 | 100.0 |

Table 2. Dimensions of Workplace Friendship and Variable of Work Performance

| Dimension | Mean | SD | Cronbach's α |
|-------------------------------|------|------|---------------------|
| Friendship Prevalence | 4.53 | .668 | .909 |
| Friendship Opportunity | 4.76 | .692 | .932 |
| Workplace Friendship(Overall) | 4.65 | .676 | .926 |
| Work Performance(Overall) | 4.72 | .759 | .916 |

from .909 to .932 was developed as well. Hence, the internal consistency of the survey instrument in this study may be acceptable and reliable.

Table 3 presented the results of Pearson's correlation analysis, it revealed that the significantly low and positive correlations occurred within each dimension in workplace friendship. Furthermore, the significantly positive and high correlations existed among each dimension of workplace friendship

and work performance. Also, it highly and significantly correlated between overall workplace friendship and work performance.

As shown on Table 4, it demonstrated the results of the analysis of variance that tested the regression model's level to significantly predict values of the outcome variable. The analysis of variance could be able to predict values of the outcome variable, $F=14.456, p=.005$.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis of Workplace Friendship and Work Performance

| | | F.P | F.O | W.F | W.P |
|--------------------------------|-----|--------|--------|--------|------|
| Pearson's Correlation Analysis | F.P | 1.00 | | | |
| | F.O | 0.32* | 1.00 | | |
| | W.F | 0.35* | 0.39* | 1.00 | |
| | W.P | 0.72** | 0.78** | 0.75** | 1.00 |

Notes: F.P: Friendship Prevalence; F.O: Friendship Opportunity; W.F: Workplace Friendship;

W.P: Work Performance.

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$

As the analysis of variance presented significance, coefficients for the regression model were examined and computed in Table 5. The finding illustrated that "Friendship Prevalence" ($t=4.594, p=.001$), "Friendship Opportunity" ($t=3.847, p=.003$), and the variable "Workplace Friendship"(Overall)

($t=3.802, p=.001$) were positively and significantly able to predict "Work Performance" using the following formula: $R^2=.502$. Moreover, its variance inflation factor ($VIF=2.02, VIF<10$) was acceptable and no multicollinearity existed in this study as well.

Table 4. Multiple Regression: Workplace Friendship and Work Performance

| Source | Sum of Squares | Mean Square | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|--------|----------------|-------------|----------|----------|
| Model | 12.562 | 1.142 | 14.456 | .005* |
| Error | 21.529 | .079 | | |
| Total | 34.091 | | | |

**p*<.05

Table 5. Workplace Friendship that Significantly Predicts Work Performance

| Dimension | <i>B</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Friendship Prevalence | .659 | 3.794 | .001* |
| Friendship Opportunity | .489 | 3.847 | .003* |
| Workplace Friendship(Overall) | .568 | 3.802 | .001* |

**p*<.05

Conclusion

This study aims at exploring the impacts of workplace friendship on work performance towards the employers and employees at the international tourist hotels in southern Taiwan. According to the findings of this study, it revealed that there was a significant positive correlation between workplace friendship and work performance. In addition, workplace friendship positively affected work performance as well. For employers and employees at international tourist hotels, it appears that the higher workplace friendship perceived, the higher work performance owned as well.

As insight shown and known in human resource management and development, workplace friendship may be the social support required necessarily in industry, but work performance can be regarded as the critical effectiveness in the organization. Also, it implies that both

could be interacted, interrelated and indispensable towards employers and employees of international tourist hotel industry in this study. In other words, workplace friendship may reinforce interaction, promote cooperation, and reduce the gaps among colleagues, but facilitate work performance in the industry. Hence, the practitioners and human resource directors at international tourist hotels ought to seriously concern about the organizational psychology towards employers and employees to motivate them to share insightful delivery within individuals or teams via applying various case studies and training programs in order to strengthen and facilitate their performance at work in the workplace.

According to the above discourses and articulations, it also may be suggested that the related organizations and managerial units ought to create friendly workplace environment and to stimulate self-perception and team cohesiveness for employers and employees within the

hospitality services so that they are able to be supported mindfully and emotionally, skilled, and to improve their work performance in the workplace. By and large, it could be anticipated that the employers and employees may be successfully positioned in the international tourist hotel industry through holistically acquiring from the practices of industrial and organizational psychology in the future.

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