Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Informal Relationships in the Workplace: Associations with Job Satisfaction, Organisational Commitment and Turnover Intentions

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Psychology

at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand.

Rachel Kathleen Lopes Morrison

2005

MASSEY UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
1061756820

Abstract

The aim of this thesis was to develop and test a theoretical model of friendships in the workplace. Friendships within organisations may have a profound effect on an employee's experience of work, potentially either hindering or facilitating organisational functioning, yet friendships have seldom been studied in an organisational context. The association between friendships at work and organisational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment and turnover intentions were investigated in three studies, assessing support for a theoretical model.

In the first study, employees of a large Auckland hospital[1] (n = 124) were surveyed using a written questionnaire. Results indicated that cohesiveness and opportunities for friendship were related to increased job satisfaction, leading to increased organisational commitment and decreased turnover intentions. The actual prevalence of friendships was primarily related to decreased turnover intentions. Overall there was good support for the proposed model. The need for further research to ascertain the generalisability of the findings was highlighted.

A second study was conducted using an Internet based questionnaire, accessed both from within New Zealand and worldwide. A diverse sample of employees responded (n = 412). The analysis (structural equation modelling) indicated further support for most aspects of the model, suggesting that the findings are generalisable and the model is robust.

The model of workplace relationships was cross-validated in a third study, confirming linkages between friendships at work and organisational outcomes. The model was then tested for inter-group invariance. The model was invariant across groups reporting differing needs for affiliation, autonomy and achievement, but non-invariant across groups occupying relatively less or more interdependent jobs. Results suggest that the interdependence of individuals' jobs affects the salience of work friendships more than respondents' subjective needs.

Overall, the research suggests that the presence of workplace friendships has a significant effect on several workplace variables, with the effect of friendships being more salient for individuals in interdependent work roles. The implications of the research findings are potentially far reaching. Not only do workplace friendships improve employees' experiences of work, but they also have the potential to affect the financial "bottom line" through factors such as enhanced organisational commitment, job satisfaction and reduced intentions to leave.

[1] Waitemata District Health Board, Auckland (NZ)

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors, Stuart Carr and Richard Fletcher for their help, support and invaluable feedback during this process.

I am also grateful to Massey University for awarding the doctoral scholarship that made this project possible. In addition, the Massey University psychology department provided a grant to assist in travel to London in 2004, where parts of this project were presented at the *Fourth Annual Conference on Emotions in the Workplace* (PhD forum).

I would like to acknowledge Waitemata DHB, for providing access to staff, many of whom took the time to fill out the initial survey, which began this entire project. In addition, the thesis could not have continued without those who generously gave their time to respond to the Internet based survey.

Finally I would like to thank my family and friends, particularly my husband Justin Lopes, for listening, supporting and understanding. Thanks also to Karren Towgood and Rhiannon Herrick for proofreading.

Note:
Parts of this thesis have been published in the *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*:
Morrison, R. (2004). Informal relationships in the workplace: Associations with job satisfaction, organisational commitment and turnover intentions. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 33*(3), 114-128.

Parts of this thesis have been published in *The Bulletin:*
Morrison, R. (2004). Gender comparisons in workplace friendships. *The Bulletin*(102), 35-40.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction *1*

Chapter 2: Literature Review *6*

2.1 Where does this Project Sit Within Psychology? **6**

2.1.1 Social Psychology: A History of Friendship Research 6

2.1.2 Organisational Psychology: A History of Human Factors Research 9

2.1.3 The Current Research 12

2.2 What is it to be a Friend? **14**

2.2.1 Friends Compared to Other Relationships 15

2.2.2 The Nature of Friendship 17

2.2.3 Gender Differences in Friendship 19

2.2.4 Why Do People Engage in Friendships? 21

2.3 Relationships in a Workplace Context **24**

2.3.1 Types of Organisational Peer Relationships 25

2.3.2 The Informal Structure of Organisations 29

2.3.3 The Impact of Friendships in the Workplace 31

2.3.4 The Impact of the Organisation on Friendships 50

2.3.5 Friendship Prevalence 57

2.3.6 Gender Differences in Organisational Relationships 61

2.3.7 Negative Relationships 63

2.3.8 Blended Relationships: Friends as Work Associates 66

Chapter 3: Testing the Model in a New Zealand Hospital *70*

3.1 Introduction **70**

3.1.1 A New Zealand Hospital as a Setting for Organisational Research 70

3.1.2 Research Questions 72

3.1.3 Research Methodology 73

3.2 Method **74**

3.2.1 Participants 74

3.2.2 Materials 75

3.2.3 Procedure 82

3.3 Analysis and Results 83
3.3.1 Imputing Missing Values 83
3.3.2 Factor Analysis 83
3.3.3 Path Analysis 95
3.3.4 Peer Types 103
3.4 Discussion 104
3.4.1 Research Question 1 104
3.4.2 Research Question 2 109
3.4.3 Research Question 3 112
3.4.4 Job Satisfaction and Commitment 114
3.4.5 Satisfaction/Commitment and Turnover 115
3.5 Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research 115
3.6 Conclusions and Implications 117
Chapter 4: Internet Study 120
4.1 Introduction 120
4.1.1 Gender Differences in Friendships 121
4.2 Method 122
4.2.1 Participants 122
4.2.2 Materials 124
4.2.3 Procedure 124
4.3 Analysis and Results 125
4.3.1 Factor Analysis 125
4.3.2 Building the Causal Model 143
4.3.3 Statistical Significance of the Model 145
4.3.4 Other Research Questions 149
4.4 Discussion 152
4.4.1 Résumé of Findings 152
4.4.2 Links to Existing Research 157
4.5 Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research 162

4.6 Conclusions and Implications 163

Chapter 5: Cross-Validating the Causal Model and Testing for Invariance Between Sub-groups Differing in Need Strength and Interdependence of Job 165

5.1 Introduction 165

5.1.1 Needs for Affiliation, Autonomy and Achievement 166

5.1.2 Interdependence of Work Role 171

5.2 Method 174

5.2.1 Participants 174

5.2.2 Materials 175

5.2.3 Procedure 178

5.3 Analysis and Results 179

5.3.1 Measurement Models of the Scales 180

5.3.2 Model of Workplace Relationships 180

5.3.3 Comparing Groups 182

5.4 Discussion 189

5.5 Conclusion 190

Chapter 6: Synthesis and Implications 192

6.1 Summary of Major Findings 192

6.1.1 Hospital Study 192

6.1.2 Internet Study 194

6.1.3 Invariance Testing Study 195

6.2 Synthesis 196

6.2.1 Friendship Opportunities versus Friendship Prevalence 196

6.2.2 Interdependence of Work Role versus Individual Differences in Needs 198

6.2.3 Gender Differences 199

6.3 Future Directions 202

6.3.1 Performance 202

6.3.2 Negative Relationships 202

6.3.3 Organisational Identity and Attributions of Responsibility 203

6.4 Implications 207

6.4.1 Enhancing the Quality of Work Life 207

6.4.2 Situations Where the Findings Might have More Relevance 209

6.4.3 Possible Negative Implications 210

6.5 Conclusion 212

References ***213***

Appendices ***232***

Appendices for the Literature Review (Chapter 2) 232

Appendices for the Hospital Study (Chapter 3) 236

Appendices for the Internet Study (Chapter 4) 266

Appendices for the Invariance Testing Study (Chapter 5) 294

List of Tables

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents of the Hospital Study 75
Table 2: First Pattern Matrix of the Factor Analysis of the Friendship, Cohesion and Dual Role Tension Measures (items to be removed are shaded in grey) 86
Table 3: Final Pattern Matrix of the Factor Analysis of the Friendship, Cohesion and Dual Role Tension Measures 88
Table 4: First Pattern Matrix of the Factor Analysis of the Satisfaction, Commitment and Leaving Intention Measures (items to be removed are shaded in grey) 91
Table 5: Final Pattern Matrix of the Factor Analysis of the Satisfaction, Commitment and Leaving Intention Measures 93
Table 6: Correlations between Measured Variables: Hospital Study 94
Table 7: Showing Critical Ratio (C.R.) Values (parameter estimate divided by standard error) of the Regression Paths in Model 1 96
Table 8: Showing Critical Ratio Values (parameter estimate divided by standard error) of the Regression Paths in Model 1 When Specified with Non-Significant Regression Paths Removed 97
Table 9: Demographic Data for the Internet Study 122
Table 10: Industry of Respondents 123
Table 11: Initial Pattern Matrix for the Workplace Friendship Scale (items to be removed are shaded in grey) 128
Table 12: Final Pattern Matrix for the Workplace Friendship Scale 128
Table 13: Initial Pattern Matrix for the Job Satisfaction Scale (items to be removed are shaded in grey) 131
Table 14: Final Pattern Matrix for the Job Satisfaction Scale 131
Table 15: Pattern Matrix for the Cohesion Scale 137
Table 16: Initial Pattern Matrix for the Needs Assessment Questionnaire (items to be removed are shaded in grey) 140
Table 17: Final Pattern Matrix for the Needs Assessment Questionnaire 140
Table 18: Fit Indices for the Measurement Models: Internet Study 142
Table 19: Correlations between Measured Variables: Internet Study 143
Table 20: Alpha Levels of the Sub-Scales 143

Table 21: Showing Critical Ratio Values (parameter estimate divided by standard error) of the Regression Paths in Model 2 When Specified with Non-Significant Regression Paths Removed 147
Table 22: Fit Indices for the Causal Model: Internet Study 148
Table 23: Correlations between Subscales, Showing those where Measured Variables are Differentially Correlated for Men and Women 149
Table 24: Independent Samples T-test, Comparing Respondents With and Without Negative Relationships at Work 151
Table 25: Hypothesised Relationship between Occupation, Affiliation Opportunities and Opportunities to Acquire Career Capital. 171
Table 26: Breakdown of Demographic Data for Respondents to Cross-validation / Invariance study 175
Table 27: Needs Assessment Questionnaire Items Used in the Current Study 177
Table 28: Fit Indices for the Measurement Models (n = 445) 180
Table 29: Fit Indices for the Causal Model: Based on the Full Sample (n = 445). 181
Table 30: Chi-Square Statistics for Tests of Invariance across Sub-groups of the Sample 182
Table 31: Goodness of Fit Statistics for Tests of Invariance Across Those in Relatively Less and More Interdependent Jobs 184
Table 32: Goodness of Fit Statistics for Tests of Measurement Model Invariance Across Those in Relatively Less and More Interdependent Jobs 186
Table 33: Showing Correlation Coefficients and Critical Ratio Values (parameter estimate divided by standard error) of the Correlation Between the Cohesion (Social Support) and Friendship Opportunity Variables for High and Low Interdependence Groups 188
Table 34: Goodness of Fit Statistics for the High and Low Interdependence Groups. 189

List of Figures

Figure 1: Showing the hypothesised relationship between friendship opportunities and job satisfaction....38
Figure 2: Showing the hypothesised relationship between job satisfaction and organisational commitment....42
Figure 3: Showing the hypothesised relationship between friendship opportunities, job satisfaction and organisational commitment....46
Figure 4: Showing the hypothesised relationship between job satisfaction, commitment and intention to leave....48
Figure 5: Showing the hypothesised relationship between friendship opportunities and cohesion....54
Figure 6: Showing the hypothesised relationship between cohesion and intention to leave....56
Figure 7: Showing the hypothesised relationship between cohesion and organisational commitment and job satisfaction....57
Figure 8: Showing friendship prevalence as the result of increased friendship opportunities and cohesion....58
Figure 9: Showing the hypothesised relationship between friendship prevalence and intention to leave....60
Figure 10: Showing negative relationships added to the model....66
Figure 11: Showing the hypothesised moderating effect of dual role tension (Model 1)....69
Figure 12: Path analysis of Model 1....98
Figure 13: Path from friendship opportunities and cohesion to organisational commitment....99
Figure 14: Path from job satisfaction and organisational commitment to intention to leave....100
Figure 15: Path from friendship opportunities and cohesion to friendship prevalence 100
Figure 16: Path from cohesion to intention to leave....101
Figure 17: Path from friendship opportunities to intention to leave....102

Figure 18: Model 1 redrawn showing only the significant regression weights (Hospital Study) 103
Figure 19: AMOS diagram for friendship scale 130
Figure 20: AMOS diagram for the job satisfaction scale 133
Figure 21: Scree plot for Organisational Commitment Questionnaire 134
Figure 22: AMOS diagram for the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire 136
Figure 23: Scree plot for the cohesion scale 136
Figure 24: AMOS diagram for cohesion scale 138
Figure 25: AMOS diagram for the Needs Assessment Questionnaire 141
Figure 26: The causal model tested for the Internet Study (latent variables only) 144
Figure 27: Model 2, SEM results of Internet Study 146
Figure 28: Results of SEM analysis of the theoretical model. Values represent standardised estimates and correlations based on the full sample (n = 445). 181
Figure 29: The hypothesised mediating effect of identification and attribution, on the relationship between friendship prevalence and job satisfaction. 205
Figure 30: Alternative hypothesised mediating effect of identification and attribution, on the relationship between friendship prevalence and job satisfaction. 206