The Influence of Workplace Friendship on Employees' Well–Being in Korek Telecommunications, Iraq

Ali Razzaq Chyad Al-Falah

Abstract— **This article seeks to examine the influence of workplace friendship on employees' well–being. Both scientists and practitioners emphasize the importance of workplace friendship for organizational success; we collected data from 208 of employees on Korek Telecommunications in Iraq. Data were gathered by a questionnaire and were analyzed using statistical software's SPSS and AMOS. The results showed that there exists a positive significant effect of workplace friendship on employees' well-being. In addition, the results of this study contribute to the literature by creating awareness about the topic not only for scholars but also for the executives as well.**
Index Terms—**Workplace Friendships, Employee well-being, Korek Telecommunications, Iraq.**

I. INTRODUCTION

As employees spend a large portion of their lives at work, interpersonal relationships and friendships between/among employees at work are often formed. While there are some organizations that are conducive to workplace friendship, other organizations resist the notion of workplace friendships fearing friendships will lead to dilemmas in the work environment. Friendships develop from formal relationships in the workplace and are sustained within organizations [1]. Friendship is an essential component of social relations within an organization. Austin (2009) asserted that the development of friendship in the workplace was a key element in the informal structure of an organization [2].

Well-being is an elusive concept, but an intriguing aspect of our lives, one that most of us strive for in every-day life and which enables us to flourish if attained. Well-being has been defined in various ways. Economists, sociologists, and psychologists have offered different definitions depending on their particular field of study (Kopperud, 2012) [3]. From a psychological perspective, well-being is often defined as optimal psychological functioning and experience [4].

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The emotions affect is an emotion that come from the fun and excitement and comfort and represents the positive effects and refers to well-being [5]. Terms such as well-being and the good life have been redefined as more specific, testable psychological constructs like subjective well-being, positive affect, negative affect, life satisfaction and domain satisfaction [3] [6]. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the effects of workplace friendships on employees' well–being in the telecommunications setting. Specifically, this study will examine the effect of workplace friendships on employees' well–being toward their sense and its effect on job.

II. LITERTURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A. WORKPLACE FRIENDSHIPS

Friendships develop in many different ways and provide many different benefits to individuals, teams/groups, organizations, and society. On the other hand, relationships also take effort to maintain, and without the appropriate maintenance, relationships can deteriorate. When this happens, it can create strain, which can potentially negate the benefits of friendship [7]. Workplace friendships are unique, in comparison to coworker acquaintances, in two ways. First, they are voluntary, meaning even though one cannot choose who one works with, one can choose who one is friends with at work. Second, there is a personal focus to these relationships, in that an individual sees the coworker as a whole person and not just someone occupying space in the workplace [8].

According to Lee and Ok (2011), friendship is "a voluntary, personal relationship typically providing intimacy and assistance" [9]. The definitions of workplace friendships, however, are distinct from general types of friendship because workplace friendship is focused on friendship occurred in the workplace. Berman et al. (2002) define workplace friendship as "nonexclusive voluntary workplace relations that involve mutual trust, commitment, reciprocal liking and shared interests and values" [10]. workplace friendships are a phenomenon that is beyond mere behaviors engaged in friendly ways among people in an organization; there should be "trust, liking, and shared interests or values" rather than being only mutual acquaintances [10] [9].

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The friendship behaviors within a relationship (according to social penetration theory) can be viewed in two general dimensions, breadth and depth (seen in Figure 2) [11].
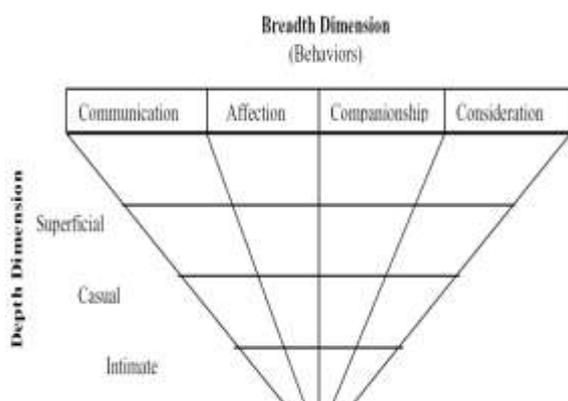

Fig. 1. Depth and Breadth of Friendship Behaviors

The breadth of friendship behaviors is the number of major areas or categories that the individual allows another person to be aware of. These can be seen through the behaviors that two individuals exhibit when interacting. Each one of these categories has specific items or characteristics. The depth dimension is viewed as having layers that differ from the center to outer areas of each category. The outer levels of the depth dimension have to do with more biographical characteristics, like one's gender or age, and are more superficial in nature. The more intermediate areas are attitudes and opinions (casual), and the central areas are fears, and basic values (intimate) [12].

B. EMPLOYEES' WELL–BEING

Positive psychology in terms of well-being has been discussed a great deal in the available literature. This growing number of researchers has gradually divided into two camps considering different yet related perspectives or factors: namely, hedonism and eudemonism [13].

(Sirgy, 2006) define Employees' Well–Being as a state of life satisfaction, happiness, and subjective well-being directly related to job satisfaction. In other words, we are not focusing on job satisfaction per se but life satisfaction, happiness, or subjective well-being directly derived from job satisfaction or the work life domain [14].

According to (Chumg et al., 2015) clarify that subjective well-being can be a sensation which combines and is appraised in terms of three dimensions [15]. These are: (1) satisfaction, (2) positive factors, and (3) negative aspects. Thus, individuals might have a greater sense of well-being when they demonstrate higher levels of positive emotions and life satisfaction, together with lower levels of negative aspects [16].

According to (Huang, et al., 2016, P.299) Employee well-being has received some attention in organization studies. Studies indicate that both management and employees alike believe that happier and healthier employees increase their effort, contributions, and productivity. In broad sense, employee well-being consists not only of employee happiness, but also satisfaction and quality toward life and work [16].

Consistent with these trends, extensive evidence from past studies indicate that employee well-being has positive influence on organizational performance by decreasing employees' absenteeism, turnover and discretionary effort and increasing organizational citizenship as well as job. Earlier studies also suggest some influencing factors to employee well-being, most of which emphasize individual factors such as job stress, personality and work family balance or job characteristics such as job demand.

Although those studies add to our understanding of why employees may (or may not) have a high level of well-being in an organization, how organizations are able to enhance employee well-being is relatively less explored.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. THE NEED OF THE RESEARCH

The employees' well-being has a great and direct role in the success of the organization in addition to that, is source for competence in the organizations for being difficult structure. One of the main study aspects about the importance of the employees' well-being in the management literature is that which is related to the nature of the workplace friendships and its forms variation with the organization. This was the thing that urged to conduct this study which considered the workplace friendships one the main priorities that positively influence on employees' well-being. The issues of this study could be represented more precisely through answering of the following main questions:

1- Does workplace friendship influence employees' well-being?

2- What is the effect of friendship opportunity on employees' well-being?

3- What is the effect of the quality of friendship on employees' well-being?

B. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

There is a need for research concerning the associations between, workplace friendship and well-being among employees. Based on earlier research, it may be assumed that workplace friendship can have effect on employee well-being. The aim of the current study was:

1- To understand the relationship of workplace friendship on employees' well–being.

2- To explore effect of friendship opportunity on employees' well-being.

3- To explore effect of the quality of friendship on employees' well-being.

C. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The Importance of the study lies in:

1- The communications sector which the research field belongs to and the other important and active sectors in the world in general and Iraq in particular at the meantime, conducting such study will hop the tendencies which concentrate on the reforming of the telecommunications systems setting.

2- The results and implications that the research will reach could be useful for the communications sector in general and the Korek Telecommunications in in particular in creating a complementary frame that could be used for determining the points of weakness and strength of determining factors that increasing employees' sense of well–being.

IV. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES
A. RESEARCH MODEL
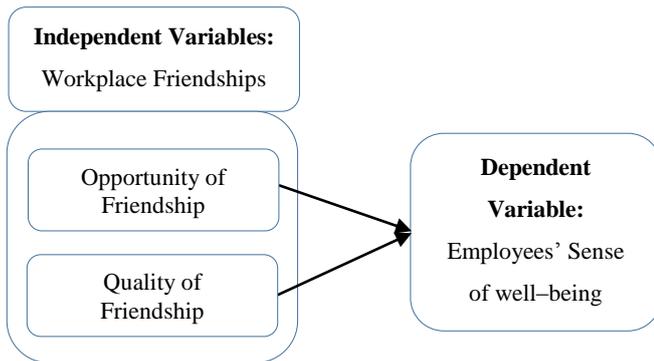
Fig. 1. Research model.

B. HYPOTHESES OF THE RESEARCH

H1. Workplace friendship is positively correlated with employees' well–being.
H2a. Opportunity of Friendship is positively influence with employees' well–being.
H2b. Quality of Friendship is positively influence with employees' well–being.

V. METHOD AND RESEARCH DESIGHN
A. PROCEDURE AND PARTICIPANTS

Questionnaires were distributed in Korek telecommunications in Iraq all employees were requested to participate. The questionnaires were collected and altogether 208 participated in the study (90 percent).

B. MEASURES

-Workplace friendship: Workplace friendship was measured using a 12-item scale developed by Nielsen, Jex, & Adams (2000) [17]. The Workplace friendship was found to measure two dimension of workplace friendship including opportunity of friendship and quality of friendship. Six items on the scale measure friendship opportunity and the remaining six assess friendship (quality) prevalence. The scale items were anchored on a Five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) look appendix. The Cronbach's a for the scale was 0.90.

-Employees' well–being: The degree to which an employee feels a sense of well-being in the organization. An eight-item scale developed by (Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Short-Form, Hills & Argyle, (2002) [18], was adapted to measure employees' well–being in the research. The items were anchored on a Five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) look appendix. The Cronbach's a for the scale was 0.80.

VI. RESULTS
A. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations for all of the key variables. As shown in the table, the correlations of the key variables are in the expected direction.

We found that workplace friendship was positively correlated with employees' well–being (r = .564, p < .01). The resulting accepted for H1.

TABLE 1. CORRELATIONS, MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND CORRELATIONS OF ALL VARIABLES IN THE RESEARCH.

Variables	1	2	3	4
1.Opportunity of Friendship	1			
2. Quality of Friendship	.244**	1		
3.Workplace friendship	.774**	.803**	1	
4. Employees' well–being	.509**	.385**	.564**	1
Mean	3.891	4.027	3.959	3.869
Standard deviation	.847	.803	.857	.889

Notes: N= 208.
** p < 0.01 (two-tailed).

B. THE MEASUREMENT MODEL TEST RESULTS

In the path analysis with latent variables, a measurement model describes the nature of the relationship between (a) a number of latent factors, and (b) the manifest indicators factors that measure those latent variables. The model investigated in this study consisted of four latent variables corresponding to the four constructs of the measurement model: opportunity of friendship (O_F), the quality of friendship (Q_F), employees' well-being (W_B). Each of the three latent variables was measured by many indicators respectively.

Goodness of fit indices for the measurement model is presented in Table 2 and Fig. 2 shows that the measurement model displayed values greater than .9 on the incremental fit index (IFI) and the comparative fit index (CFI), indicative of an acceptable fit and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). Therefore, this measurement model was tentatively accepted as the measurement model (see table 2 and fig.2).

TABLE 2. GOODNESS OF FIT OF MEASUREMENT MODEL

Model	Chi square	df	RMSEA	IFI	CFI	GFI
Measurement Model	32.312	18	.062	.948	.946	.961

Notes: N= 208.

The study tests the hypotheses (Fig. 1) through structural equation modeling using AMOS with the maximum likelihood estimation method. Table 4 depicts the standardized path coefficients for each hypothesis. The findings support hypotheses H2a and H2b.

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The analysis includes examining a revised model comprising only the significant paths. The path between workplace friendships with employees' well–being is significant. The resulting model (Fig. 2) fits the root mean square error or approximation is 0.06, the goodness of fit index is 0.98, the adjusted goodness of fit index is 0.93, the comparative fit index is 0.96, the incremental fit index is 0.94 and the comparative fit index is 0.94. The main results are as follows: (a) perceptions of employees' well-being predict through workplace friendship predicts; (b) there is positively influence between workplace friendships with employees' well–being. The findings show that workplace friendship predicts with relates and positively influence with employees' well–being.
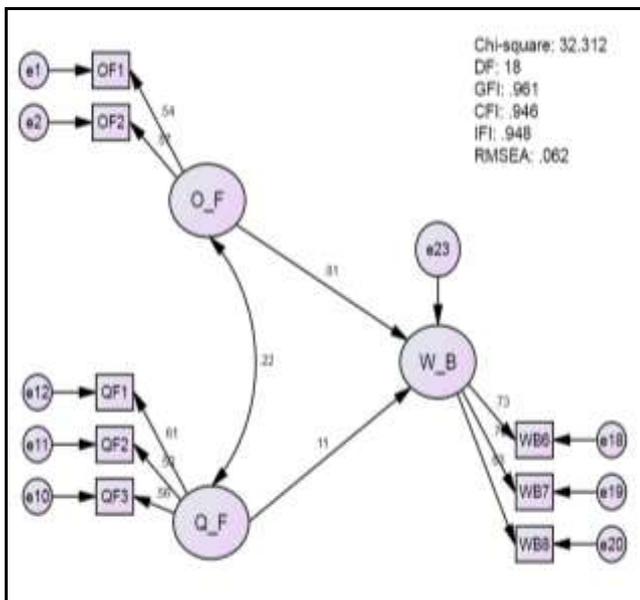

Fig. 2 Structural model of the inter-relationships among opportunity of friendship (O_F), the quality of friendship (Q_F), employees' well-being (W_B).

TABLE 3. REGRESSION WEIGHTS ESTIMATE (NON-STANDARDIZED) AND STANDARDIZED, STANDARD ERROR, CRITICAL RATIO AND P-VALUES FOR THE STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL

			Estimate	standardized	S.E.	C.R.	P
W_B	<---	O_F	1.000	.807			
W_B	<---	Q_F	.123	.111	.125	.984	.325
OF1	<---	O_F	1.000	.543			
OF2	<---	O_F	1.243	.565	.235	5.288	***
QF3	<---	Q_F	1.067	.564	.269	3.963	***
QF2	<---	Q_F	1.073	.503	.271	3.964	***
QF1	<---	Q_F	1.000	.614			
WB6	<---	W_B	1.297	.732	.169	7.692	***
WB7	<---	W_B	1.169	.699	.155	7.532	***
WB8	<---	W_B	1.000	.630			

***<0.001

TABLE 4. RESULTS OF HYPOTHESES (STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING)

Paths	Standardized path coefficients	Hypotheses	Hypotheses supported (yes/no)
O_F-----> W_B	.81	H2a	yes
Q_F-----> W_B	.11	H2b	yes

The model is saturated. The fit is perfect.
*The path coefficient is significant for, at least, p<0.05.

VII. CONCLUSION AND DISCISSION

Literature studies have suggested that workplace friendships increase employees' well-being, and some scholars and researchers have empirically examined the positively influence of workplace friendships both on the organization and on the individual employee.

This research examines the positive impact of workplace friendships on employees' well-being in the communications sector. This research found that workplace friendships have a positive impact on employees' well-being. Therefore, scholars and researchers should pay close attention to workplace friendship.

This research provides support for the idea that the extra role of workplace friendship can contribute to an increase in employees' employees' well-being. Since, this research empirically proves the positively influence of workplace friendship on' employees' well-being.

This research empirically demonstrates that both friendship opportunity and quality of friendship lead to employees' well-being. This finding supports Nielsen et al (2000) model and Song (2005) [19] which divides the concept of workplace friendship into friendship opportunity and quality of friendship.

The statistical results reveal that the measurement model as well as the theoretical model is acceptable at statistically significant levels. These results can be used if applied in other similar organizations. The findings of this study point to several implications for management practice.

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APPENDIX

WORKPLACE FRIENDSHIP SCALE
NIELSEN, JEX, & ADAMS (2000) AND SONG (2005)

1. I have the opportunity to get to know my coworkers.
2. I am able to work with my coworkers to collectively solve problems.
3. In my organization, I have the chance to talk informally and visit with others.
4. Communication among employees is encouraged by my organization.
5. I have the opportunity to develop close friendships at my workplace.
6. Informal talk is tolerated by my organization as long as the work is completed.
7. I have formed strong friendships at work.
8. I socialize with coworkers outside of the workplace.
9. I can confide in people at work.
10. I feel I can trust many coworkers a great deal.
11. Being able to see my coworkers is one reason why I look forward to my job.
12. I do not feel that anyone I work with is a true friend.

EMPLOYEES' WELL–BEING SCALE
(OXFORD HAPPINESS QUESTIONNAIRE SHORT-FORM, HILLS & ARGYLE, 2002)

1. I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am.
2. I feel that life is very rewarding.
3. I am well satisfied about everything in my life.
4. I don't think I look attractive.
5. I find beauty in some things.
6. I can fit in everything I want to.
7. I feel fully mentally alert.
8. I do not have particularly happy memories of the past.