# THE EFFECTS OF WORKPLACE FRIENDSHIP ON JOB INVOLVEMENT

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**Abstract:** This study aims to investigate the assumed direct relationships between workplace friendship and job involvement. Data for the sample was collected from 63 employees working in Karabuk University School of Foreign Languages via survey method. Hierarchical regression analyses was conducted to test the hypotheses. The results show that friendship opportunity and friendship prevalence were positively related to job involvement and friendship prevalence has a bigger effect on job involvement than friendship opportunity. Theoretical and applied implications are discussed.
**Keywords**: Friendship Opportunity, Friendship Prevalence, Job Involvement

## Introduction

This article discusses the effects of the workplace friendships on job involvement. What is more, we argue that workplace friendships have a significant role on the employees' job involvement through friendship opportunity and friendship prevalence.

Work and workplace provide opportunities to human beings to productively channelize energy and create something useful and meaningful and fulfill many of their needs. In this sense then both work and workplace are critical factors in creating purpose and focus in human life (Singh et al., 2012).

It's very common that working people spend much more time at their workplace than their homes. Working hours may vary but people usually work from 9:00 in the morning till 6:00 in the evening. Thus, working people meet other employees more than anyone else even their close friends, family members or neighbors in a week or month. So the relationships between employees at work become very important for the employers and for the company itself for reaching the organizational goals. As a result, close or distant friendships among employees can be a real advantage or disadvantage for the organizations.

Human beings have a social nature. They always try to be in contact with other people and to make relationships. Friendships develop in all kinds of settings. This happens all the time and in all parts of life, including work (Kiesel, 2011). If you've worked with the same company for several years, you've probably built many friendships. Some of your coworkers might be close friends, while others are individuals with whom you might share a weekend story on Monday morning. A friendship at work can become a powerful networking tool or a toxic relationship (Swales, 2015). Effective employment relations are vital to the workplace, whether at the time of recruitment, during an employees' tenure or at the time of separation. Employers, managers, employees and their representatives are all key players in this relationship. Where the employment relationship breaks down, conflict can occur (Wanrooy et al., 2011). To sum up, workplace friendships are often viewed as a positive aspect of organizational culture, but they can also be the cause of discomfort for employees and inefficiency in the organization (Morrison and Nolan, 2007).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
### Workplace Friendship

Many work settings are also social environments. Workers interact with their supervisors and co-workers about job-related matters, such as the job tasks that need to be done and the best way to accomplish these tasks. In addition, workers interact frequently about nonrelated job tasks, such as the weather, current events, and leisure pursuits. Because the workplace can often be a social environment, it has the potential to promote the formations of friendships (Chadsey and Rusch, 1988).

The workplace has become a uniquely important site for the building of cooperative and constructive social ties across lines of group identity and social division. Workplace cooperation, sociability, and solidarity all play a role

in promoting these ties, and all of those emerge out of basic features of human psychology and basic imperatives of human labor in a modern economy (Estlund, 2003). Relationships are important, as they are the mechanism through which we work. Organizations are built on people with skills and resources, and relationships are the links between those people. Good relationships are an investment, and a valuable tool which we use to help attain our work goals. In contrast, bad relationships are a liability. They can be emotionally draining and divert mental energy from work. Dealing with bad relationships can take up valuable time and lead to stress which in turn undermines work performance (Clydesdale, 2013).

Workplace friends share superordinate goals (to fulfil their interdependent work tasks), and workplace contacts have broad institutional support (the backing of managers, owners and the law). Moreover, given the time spent at workplaces, contacts are frequently personal and intimate. Functional and cognitive interdependencies and interpersonal contacts coincide in the prediction that diverse workplaces will generate diverse friendship networks (Kokkonen et al., 2015). In addition, friends at work also form a strong social support network for each other, both personally and professionally. Whether rooting for each other on promotions, consoling each other about mistakes, giving advice, or providing support for personal situations, comradeship at work can boost an employee's spirit and provide needed assistance (Rioardan, 2013). On the other hand, traditionalists argue that pals have no place at the office for a number of reasons. Friendship between colleagues can blur decision making, they say, making difficult decisions more complicated and leading to distractions or inappropriate behavior (Clark, 2013).

Workplace friendship is related not only to employee perception of people, but probably to perception of jobs, and thus affects employees' work motivation (Mao et al., 2012). In fact, it is sometimes hard to overcome the challenges of managing workplace friendships. Workplace friendships represent potential threats to the self-concept of friends if they obtain differential organizational outcomes; they involve the exchange of resources which are incompatible; and they represent contrasting norms of reciprocity. The emotional bond between colleagues may not overwhelm the competition they face over who will get promoted. Indeed, business challenges may be exacerbated by the friendship with rival or debtor. Workplace friendships bring benefits but may also intensify some relational costs (Ingram and Zhou, 2008).

Friendship opportunity, friendship prevalence are the two main subtitles of workplace friendship. Workplaces are the habitat for making friends. When people get a new job they normally meet new people and begin to know each other as they are together nearly more than 6 hours a day. Although workplace friendship depends on voluntary actions, workplaces offer lots of opportunities to socialize and to make friends. Since friendship is a close, mutual and voluntary dyadic relationship workplace is naturally related to opportunities for friendships in the workplace (Bornstein and Lamb, 2011).  Song (2006) concluded that friendship opportunity and quality of friendship have a positive impact on work attitudes and not only do workplace friendships create alternatives to the negative effects often seen in working relationships, but workplace friendships can contribute to the positive aspects of a working relationship.

In organizations, patterns of friendship may vary by status, shared experiences, and interests (Kiopa, 2013). The prevalence of friendship(s) is expected to increase when the co-workers trust each other and spend time as much as after work. However, workplace friendships can lead to an increase in job satisfaction, job involvement, positive organizational commitment, longevity on the job, social support, communication and coordination, can enable shared values, and experiences and for the organization, workplace friendship increases institutional participation, motivates employees to better serve the organizational purpose, establishes supportive and innovative climates, and increases organizational productivity (Song, 2006).

After all, workplace friendship involves more than people merely acting in friendly ways or being mutual acquaintances: There must be trust, liking, and shared interests or values, too. Workplace friendships are sometimes limited to certain spheres of work or work-related leisure (such as having a "lunch" friend). Workplace friends usually are able to articulate what they like about another person or what they enjoy doing together ("What I like most about [working with] you is that …"), even though the relationship includes instrumental considerations as well ("I like you, and I need you, too") (Berman et al., 2002).

## Job Involvement

Workplace friendships directly impact both job satisfaction and job involvement and friendship opportunities are associated with increases in job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment (Riordan and Griffeth, 1995). Job involvement plays a significant role basically on role segmentation and time and attention devoted to the job role at workplaces. There is an important link between the workplace friendships and job involvement at workplaces -the better the quality of workplace friendships, the better the job involvement and performance will be at the organizational level.

According to the Business Dictionary the definition of the job involvement is "The degree to which an employee is engaged in and enthusiastic about performing their work. Business managers are typically well aware that efforts to promote job involvement among staff tend to pay off substantially since employees will be more likely to assist in furthering their company's objectives" (Business Dictionary: 2015).  Job involvement is the degree to which a person is identified psychologically with his work, or the importance of work in his total self-image (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965). Liao and Lee (2009) defined job involvement, "the extent to which a person's self-esteem depends on his or her work efficiency" (p.24).

The job involvement concerns the degree to which employees identify themselves with their job. It may be influenced by the level of satisfaction of one's needs- intrinsic or extrinsic (Gilkar and Darzi, 2013). Disengaged employees are an unfortunate reality in the workplace, and poor leadership is often to blame (Kim and Mauborgne, 2014). On the other hand, affectively job involved employees tend to do their jobs more eagerly and they generate behaviors that facilitate good human relationships for their organization (Ueda, 2012).

As noted by Jayawardanaa et al., (2013), job involvement represents a key factor influencing employees' levels of perceived organizational support and job satisfaction. Job involvement represents a cognitive and emotional identification by individual employees with their job. For highly involved employees, their jobs are connected with their identities, interests and life goals. Highly job-involved employees are more likely to be prepared to reciprocate the organizational benefits and supports provided to them, to exert extra efforts to ensure that organizational goals are achieved. They may also experience high levels of task identity, task significance and job autonomy. On the other hand, low job-involved employees are more likely to leave the organization, withhold work effort or 'engage in various undesirable on-the-job activities'.

Involved employees can use their insights to improve their jobs directly and jobs with a high degree of employee involvement might increase satisfaction. In conclusion, satisfied workers are more likely to increase participation in high-involvement practices and establishments with satisfied workers may be more likely to adopt new programs (Mohr and Zoghi, 2008).

## The Effects of Workplace Friendship on Job Involvement

The importance of the link between workplace friendship and job involvement has been recognized recently in previous studies. The feelings of friendship affect the performance of the workplace. The personal relations in the workplace are associated with the higher level of job involvement. Workplace friendship increases institutional participation, motivates employees to better serve the organizational purpose, establishes supportive and innovative climates, and increases organizational productivity, job satisfaction and job involvement (Song, 2006). Workplace friends give each other more real job information/viewpoints and accept each other's information/viewpoints more than workplace acquaintances do, i.e., others with only a work relationship and workplace friendship has a positive relationship with perceived job significance and job involvement (Mao et al., 2012).

A friendly atmosphere within an organization, making the entire workforce enthusiastically work together in order to achieve individual employees' as well as organizational goals and it directly affects the level of the job involvement of the employees positively. Thus, employees with high job involvement are more focused towards their jobs, likely to have less turnover and leaving intensions and are more motivated to stay with the organization. They grow in expertise and thus become even more valuable to their employer and the organization. Employees with high levels of job involvement make the job a central part of their personal character and focus most of their attention on their jobs (Mohsan et. al., 2011). More involved persons also feel more competent and successful at work, believe that their personal and organizational goals are compatible, and tend to attribute positive work outcomes to their internal and personally controllable factors (Liao and Lee, 2009).

We expect that workplace friendship has effects on the job involvement and we examine the friendship opportunity and friendship prevalence greater detail in the following sections.

**H1: Workplace friendship will be positively related to job involvement.**
H1a: Friendship opportunity will be positively related to job involvement.
H1b: Friendship prevalence will be positively related to job involvement.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD
## Sample and Procedure
Data were collected from the employees' working in Karabuk University School of Foreign Languages via face to face survey. Surveys were distributed to 78 employees and all employees were invited to participate. From 78 employees 63 participants choose to participate and completed the questionnaire. Participants represented staff roles like teaching staff, manager and administrative staff. The questionnaire assessed demographic variables, dimensions of workplace friendship and job involvement. Participants were %51 male and %49 female. %73 working as teaching staff, %6 working as manager and %21 working as administrative staff. %9.5 high school or vocational school graduate, %65 college or university graduate and %25.5 master or doctorate graduate. %5 working in the university 1 year or less, %31.5 working in the university between 2 to 3 years and %63.5 working in the university more than 3 years.

## Measures
Questionnaire was prepared in Turkish. Participants responded to all items using 5-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) with items coded such that a higher score indicated a greater amount of the focal construct.

Items to measure *Workplace Friendship* were derived from Nielsen et al.'s (2000) study. Workplace friendship was measured along two dimensions: friendship opportunity and friendship prevalence. Six items were used to measure friendship opportunity and six items were used to measure friendship prevalence. A sample item for friendship opportunity is 'I have the opportunity to get to know my coworkers' and a sample item for friendship prevalence is 'I have formed strong friendships at work'. The Cronbach's alpha obtained for friendship opportunity was 0.94 and for friendship prevalence was 0.95. A Cronbach's alpha obtained for the workplace friendship scale was 0.93.

*Job Involvement* was measured by Kanungo's (1982) ten-item scale. A sample item for this scale is 'Most of my interests are centered around my job'. The Cronbach's alpha obtained for this measure was 0.93.

## RESULTS
Prior to testing the hypotheses, separate confirmatory factor analyses were performed to examine the construct validity of the studied constructs (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Several fit indices were used to assess model adequacy (Hair et al, 1998; Brown, 2006; Byrne, 2010; Kline, 2011), namely chi-square ($\chi2$), the Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), the Normed Fit Index (NFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI). RMSEA scores below 0.08 and GFI, NFI, TLI and CFI values above 0.90 represent a good fitting model.

In the analysis concerning workplace friendship, results suggest that the two-factor model had an acceptable fit with the observed data, $\chi2(51)= 56.713$, RMSEA= 0.04, GFI= 0.88, NFI= 0.93, TLI= 0.99, CFI= 0.99. In the analysis involving job involvement, the model fit statistics were acceptable, $\chi2(26)= 31.483$, RMSEA= 0.05, GFI= .91, NFI= 0.92, TLI= 0.98, CFI= .99.

Additionally, the convergent and discriminant validity was assessed of the scales by the method outlined in Fornell and Larcker (1981). For convergent validity, the composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated in order to determine whether the measurement variable was representative of the related construct. All AVEs in Table 1 were 0.61 or higher, and exceeded the cutoff value of 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 1998), and all CRs were 0.93 or higher and exceeded the cutoff value of 0.70 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 1998). These results provided evidence for convergent validity of each of the constructs involved in the research model of this study.

The evidence of discriminant validity can be demonstrated when measures of conceptually different constructs are not strongly correlated among themselves as compared to similar constructs. In order to evaluate the discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE in each construct is compared with the correlation coefficients between two constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 1998). The square root AVE in each construct that appear on the diagonal in parentheses in Table 1 was larger than any correlation between the associated construct and any other construct. These results provided evidence for discriminant validity.

The means, standard deviations, zero-order correlations, and reliability estimates ($\alpha$) for the measures used in the study are reported also in Table 1. As seen in this table, zero-order correlations were all in the expected direction and the internal consistency for each measure was above the 0.70 as recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein

(1994). In addition to this, correlations between measures never exceeded 0.85, suggesting that no bivariate multicollinearity exists between scales (Kline, 2011).

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

| | Mean | SD | α | CR | AVE | Correlations | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| **1.Gender** | 1.50 | 0.50 | - | - | - | - | | | | | | |
| **2.Staff Role** | 1.47 | 0.82 | - | - | - | 0.03 | - | | | | | |
| **3.Education** | 3.12 | 0.65 | - | - | - | 0.19 | -0.41** | - | | | | |
| **4.Tenure** | 2.58 | 0.58 | - | - | - | 0.39** | -0.05 | 0.18 | - | | | |
| **5.Friendship Opportunity** | 3.62 | 0.84 | 0.94 | 0,94 | 0,72 | -0.01 | -0.11 | 0.25* | 0.24 | **(0.86)** | | |
| **6.Friendship Prevalence** | 3.38 | 1.03 | 0.95 | 0,94 | 0,73 | 0.01 | -0.27* | 0.29* | 0.04 | 0.50** | **(0.85)** | |
| **7.Job Involvement** | 3.38 | 0.89 | 0.93 | 0,93 | 0,61 | 0.05 | -0.16 | 0.17 | 0.08 | 0.53** | 0.71** | **(0.78)** |

*$p<0.05$; **$p<0.01$; N=63, The square root of the constructs' AVE appear on the diagonal in parentheses

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses (Table 2). Because they may affect the variables and relationships of interest, gender, staff role, education and tenure were included as control variables.

**Table 2. Hierarchical regression analysis examining the effects of workplace friendship on job involvement**

| | Job Involvement | |
|---|---|---|
| | Step 1 | Step 2 |
| | β | β |
| **Control Variables** | | |
| Gender | 0,02 | 0,08 |
| Staff Role | -0,12 | -0,01 |
| Education | 0,11 | -0,09 |
| Tenure | 0,05 | -0,02 |
| **Independent Variables** | | |
| Friendship Opportunity | | **0,25*** |
| Friendship Prevalence | | **0,61**** |
| **F Value** | 0.67 | 11.65** |
| **R²** | 0.04 | 0.55 |
| **Adjusted R²** | -0.02 | 0.50 |
| **ΔR²** | | 0.51** |

*$p<0.05$; **$p<0.01$; N=63

Hypotheses 1a predicted that friendship opportunity would be related to job involvement. As shown in Table 2, friendship opportunity was significantly and positively associated with job involvement (β=0.25, p<0.05). Thus, Hypotheses 1a was supported.

Hypotheses 1b predicted that friendship prevalence would be related to job involvement. As shown in Table 2, friendship prevalence was significantly and positively associated with job involvement (β=0.61, p<0.01). Thus, Hypotheses 1b was supported.

## DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to determine the relationship between workplace friendship and job involvement. For this purpose, data for the sample was collected from 63 employees working in Karabuk University School of Foreign Languages via survey method and the hypotheses were tested by hierarchical regression analyses.

The results of this study confirm and extend prior findings that workplace friendships influence individual and organizational outcomes (Nielsen et al., 2000; Kiesel, 2011; Mao et al., 2012; Asgharian et al., 2013). First, prediction relating to the direct effect of friendship opportunity on job involvement was confirmed. These findings suggests that when a job allows employees to talk with one another on the job and to establish informal relationships with other employees at work, employees are more likely to be committed to their organization identify themselves with their jobs. Second, study findings confirm the direct effect of friendship prevalence on job involvement. That is, when co-workers trust each other and spend time as much as after work, they are more likely to be committed to their organization identify themselves with their jobs. These results were similar to that of prior studies (Riordan and Griffeth, 1995; Nielsen et al., 2000; Morrison, 2004).

The findings of this study also showed that the effect of friendship prevalence on job involvement is greater than the effect of friendship opportunity. This finding shows that while the friendship opportunity is an important predictor of job involvement, spending more time and building trust between employees play a greater role for employees to identify themselves with their job.

This study was conducted on full-time employees labored in a university setting. Thus, the present findings have important implications for university organizations. Universities should be aware that by improving the friendship in working environment, employees will be more committed to their jobs and their organization. Friendship within the work environment may be severely underrated and underutilized as a condition for individual and organizational effectiveness (Riordan and Griffeth, 1995). But, as mentioned by Song (2006), workplace friendship motivates employees to better serve the organizational purpose and increases organizational productivity, job satisfaction and job involvement.

There were a number of limitations to the current study. First, the sample used for the analysis consists of just 63 people. So it limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, data were collected at a single point in time. Thus, the use of cross-sectional research design limits the ability to make causal relationships among the study variables. Future research can rely on experimental or longitudinal designs and provide more convincing evidence on causation.

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