

PEER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT JOB AT WORKPLACE

*SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TEACHERS OF ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGES AFFILIATED TO
MADURAI KAMARAJ UNIVERSITY, MADURAI, TAMIL NADU*

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Abstract: Education is one of the most fundamental as well as the primary requirements of any developing country and also considered as the most powerful instrument to eradicate poverty, inequality, unethical and as superstitious practices prevails in the society. Even though, India has strong resources to create wealth in every aspect such as natural resources, population and technology, unequal distribution of resources among different social classes dwindle the growth. Ideal education model with unique features such as student centric, application oriented and knowledge driven practices could make the country stand with sustainable growth and achievement across globe. Talented, passionate as well the committed teachers are one of the primary sources of providing quality education in the present competitive world especially in higher education. Many factors directly or indirectly hinders the performance and attitude of teachers of higher education both inside and outside of work, figure out the sources of problems would reduce deficiencies in education. Hence the present study is an endeavor to study the peer relationship among teachers in higher education and also measured the present level of attitude towards job such as job satisfaction, motivation and commitment empirically. The results obtained from the statistical analysis of primary data clearly showed that peer relationship, not merely an informal relationship, has significant power to influence behavior, job attitude and service rendered by teachers of higher education.

Keywords: Peer Relationship, Higher Education, Job Satisfaction, Motivation, Commitment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Socializing started since the evolution of humankind in the world as it derives more moral support from others in a group. From children to adult, business tycoon to pauper, everybody needs someone very closer to them in their personal space. Individuals used to spend their time with the close social group who has similar traits, interests and attitude. Peers are pervasive in one's social life as they have enormous roles as an intimate friend, acquaintance, mentor, and a leader so on ^[1]. In Latin, peer stands for "equal/same" not merely a word which exerts great power and influence others believes, behavior and value system.

Good or bad, effects of peer relationship at adolescent or teenage period are reviewed in a pithy manner and pull out the attention of many researcher across disciplines over the world. A well grown matured adult also has been influenced by his/her peers in work context differently, the scenario has been rarely noticed and limited dimensions are taken into consideration. State-of the art technology, competitive compensation and incomparable work culture can become void to workforce while peer pressure and/or non-congenial peer relationship predominantly present at workplace.

Peers at workplace just an informal relationship can trigger, influence, motivate and/or control individuals than what superiors intends to do. Besides peer groups becomes as much as complex to the management to control and /or manage than what they think it would. Peer relationship at workplace can also be classified into informational, collegial and special peers ^[2]. Diversified and dynamic work environment seems to be more complex to millennial irrespective of their job and position in organizational hierarchy. Psychological as well as emotional imbalances due to stress caused by peers leads to an unethical and behaviors opposite to core values of society. It creates necessity to be aware of the need of good peer relationship instead of curb it in workplaces and to develop strategic plans to turn out good results by make the peers team up which would yield mutual benefits to both employee as well the management.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bowling and Lyons (2015) found that the peer reporting in organization directly associated with job attitude and personality traits of the respondents. Precisely, peer's observing and reporting behavior is significantly strong among the employees with more organizational commitment and extrovert attitude ^[3].

In the organization contexts, learning prevents the employees from becoming obsolescence for which peer support, plays a dramatic role. A study by Chou et al. (2014) is a qualitative research with a purpose of understanding the peer support in workplace learning among third year medical students across US medical institutions. The students at clinical clerkship were facing a challenge that applying the classroom learning into clinical practical environment. For this survey, the respondents were asked to work in ad hoc peer group and their perceptions towards the peer support for learning were gathered. The participants felt that the support from peer group was beneficial to share information about roles and responsibilities at work and were less burnout and strong resilient at their workplaces ^[4].

A study on Workplace Peers and Entrepreneurship by Nanda and Sørensen (2010) examined the role of social networks exist in working environment in shaping individual career aspirations and attitude towards entrepreneurship. Result indicates that most of the people spent their quality time in the workplace with peers than their unofficial affairs. Peers are likely to be an important source of social influence for developing entrepreneurial aspiration in their career life ^[5].

Mas and Moretti (2009) investigated how and why the productivity of a worker varies as a function of the productivity his/her co-workers in a group production process. The study among the cashiers of a national supermarket indicated that individuals are motivated by social pressure and mutual monitoring, and suggested that social preferences can play an important role in inducing effort. 10% of increase in co-

workers productivity resulted 1.7% of increase in the respondent's productivity. This study affirmed that peer relationship among individuals positively correlated with their productivity and got significant impact ^[6].

Continuous learning in the workplace context is very much required for the success and growth of business. Motivation and education on professional activities would be helpful to the employees while executing the predetermined course of plans. In a study of Phelan, Barlow and Iversen (2006), a peer collaboration group was formed which consisted of 18 personnel from different health care industry in the region of Canada. For this study, members of the ad hoc group were associated for 6-8 months and provided with critical situations to explore new things within the controlled environment. This collective case study method revealed that informal peer group encouraged people to learn new things enthusiastically in persistent manner than authoritative leadership style ^[7].

Interpersonal relationship among employees at various management levels in the workplace can be determined by many individual and organizational factors that can affect the day-to-day operations of the business. Patricia (2015), accumulated numerous theoretical contributions on different dimensions of interpersonal relationship. The study found that demographics and working environment can affect the level of interpersonal relationship and recommended that management intervention and individual efforts would act as an instrument to develop workplace friendship and positive interpersonal relationship. The study emphasized some important variables such as compatibility, communication, trust level, organizational culture and the job requirements which affected interpersonal relationship significantly ^[8].

Brunetto et al. (2013) investigated the differences in the workplace relationships among nurses of Australia and USA and its effects on job engagement, commitment, wellbeing and rate of turnover. For this study, 510 and 718 nurses were taken from 5 Australian and 2 American private hospitals respectively. Perceived organizational support, supervisor-nurse and team relationship were the dimensions of social relationship in the hospital environment as well as the independent variables of the study and the study found out that all those variables had the significant impact on dependent variables. The study clearly and statistically proved that the social relationship was acted upon differently among the nurses from Australian and American private hospitals, in simple, cultural context brought changes in the respondent's attitudes towards their informal social relationship ^[9].

Reich and Hershcovis (2011), in their study focused on the positive side of the interpersonal relationship at work while majority of the research emphasized negatively. Positive outcomes of interpersonal relationship are discussed in this study such as friendship, mentorship, romance at workplace. Consequences of negative interpersonal relationships and the strategies to overcome the problems caused were discussed by reviewing many literatures related to this study. This study suggested the management to focus on the development of positive interpersonal relationships in the workplace in order to achieve the benefits of positive relationship both for individual and organization ^[10].

Novak, Rogan and Mank (2011) collected the results of various empirical studies on social relationship in workplace and summarized key dimensions in their study. Results are alike that social relationship among workers in the different organizational phenomena produced remarkable results similarly. The collection of studies is mainly deals with emotional wellbeing, prejudices at workplace, informal relationships and networks. And the study projected dark side of the social relationship and its consequences clearly as equal as its positives ^[11].

A voluminous study of Chadsey and Beyer (2001) explored the social life of persons with disabilities at their workplace that dealt of difficulties underwent to have casual social interactions, problems with non-disabled co-workers and the strategies recommended to enhance their work-related and non-work related social interactions. In a working environment, both physical and intellectual disabilities were emphasized and their unique attitude towards interpersonal relationship and behavior in a social context were addressed. Changing behavior of the persons with disabilities, receiving and utilizing the natural supports from co-workers were the strategies mainly discussed and suggested to the disability workers ^[12].

Cunningham (1999), focused on the mentoring relationship among faculty members of Christian higher education and the results statistically confirmed that faculty members were strongly preferred a mentor for their career development irrespective of gender, experience and stream of study. The study results revealed that both female and male faculty members preferred males as mentors by reason of less female faculty members in senior positions. Besides, the results indicated that effective faculty mentoring relationships assisted the personal and professional as well as the institutional growth ^[13].

Job satisfaction and job engagement are important among employees especially in service industries in order to represent an organization's competence. These are mediated by many variables such as organizational and individual factors. In the study of Purpora and Blegen (2015), horizontal violence is a major predictor of nurses' job satisfaction. Horizontal violence was negatively associated with peer relationships while job satisfaction of nurses had direct influence from their peer in their hospitals. Peer relationship plays different roles, in this context; peer relationship mediated the association between horizontal violence and job satisfaction ^[14].

Romera, Cano, Fernandez and Ruiz (2016) identified the level of cyber bullying among teenagers and differences in perception of social competence, peer support and social goals. For this study, 505 Spanish teenagers and their age ranging from 12 to 16 were surveyed and the study aimed to understand the bullies and victim's social role and peer support. The results showed that one in four students was involved in cyber-bullying activities and they had highest social and peer support than those who were not involved in cyber-bullying and also cyber-victims. It clearly showed that teenagers who had less social support, competence and peer support were been bullied mostly. Thus the researchers proved that strong social relationship or peer relationship might help the young generation to protect from or prevent the bullying or cyber-bullying ^[15].

Yildirim and Yildirim (2007) conducted a research on determining the mobbing to the nurses of Turkey hospitals by peers and managers. The study based on the descriptive and cross-sectional study and collected data from 325 public sector and 180 private hospital nurses. The level of mobbing in their workplace, effects of mobbing in emotional, social, psychological aspects and the remedial actions needed to overcome the problems were examined through the study. The statistical analysis empirically stated that all the respondents faced mobbing behavior frequently in a year and mainly from their managers and co-workers. Irrespective of the respondent's age, education, total years of services rendered in specific institutions and positions they were mobbed and from the Cronbach alpha value .95 it was clear that majority of the respondents (72.9%) were feeling stressed. 72.1% of the respondents of the study were preferred to work carefully to avoid criticism from their managers and co-workers ^[16].

As peer friendship relationship has high impact on their behavioral variation and level of productivity, underestimating the power of informal peer friendship leads to undesirable outcomes. Gordon and Hartman (2009) in their study focused on difference in affinity seeking behavior and level of communication among different types of peers. Both affinity seeking and communication are the prime dependent variables and two set of hypotheses predicted that special peers are highly use affinity seeking strategy and have open communication than collegial and informational peers. The study proved that special and collegial peers had similar attitude towards peers at workplace while information peers focused less ^[17].

III. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study confined only to teachers of arts and science colleges affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai which is one of the recognized and reputed Universities in southern zone of Tamilnadu. Technical and other professional institutions belongs to above mentioned university were not taken into consideration for the study.

IV. OBJECTIVES

Persistent and selfless contribution of teachers of all levels ranging from elementary to higher education is quite essential for the social and national development. Many individual, institutional and professional factors disturb the quality of service rendered by teachers, peer relationship is one among them and notable. The following are primary objectives of the present study;

1. To understand the types of supports expected from peers by respondents.
2. To find out the present level of job attitude among respondents.
3. To identify the factors related to peer relationship management.
4. To know the strategies adapted by respondents to maintain good relationship with peers at workplace.

V. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on descriptive research design. The empirical study entirely lied on responses of 375 teachers of 15 arts and science colleges out of 68 affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai and the respondents are randomly chosen by multistage sampling method. A self-administered questionnaire was developed to collect primary data from the respondents. The following are the sampling procedure;

- At the first stage, entire arts and science colleges (total no. of arts and science colleges are 68) are classified into two strata such as aided (33) and self-financing colleges (35), each stratum further divided into based on its autonomous status.
- At the third stage, from the four different strata, two more classifications are made such as co-education and women's colleges.
- In order to take sample from each stratum irrespective of its teachers strength, disproportionate stratification random sampling was adopted.

Suitable statistical techniques such as Factor analysis, Weighted Average and Kruskal Wallis test in SPSS and Garrett's ranking method are used in order to interpret the primary data for the study.

VI. RESULTS

A. Garrett's ranking test results

The Garrett's ranking technique has been adopted to understand the preference of respondents among different types of supports expected from peers at their workplace and ranks are assigned to the variables on the basis of descending order.

Table 1
Types of support expected from the peers

Types of support	Ranks					Total score	Mean score	Rank	Rank
	I	II	III	IV	V				
Emotional support	4940	5368	4450	3280	1275	19313	4940	51.50	
Mentorship	5548	3965	6250	3680	500	19943	5548	53.18	
Informational support	12388	5368	2800	1600	700	22856	12388	60.95	
Financial support	2356	2013	1250	2280	5725	13624	2356	36.33	
Technical support	3268	6283	4000	4080	1175	18806	3268	50.15	

Source: Primary data

Most of the respondents expect informational support from their peers as its get I rank with the mean score of 60.95 followed by mentorship with the mean score of 51.50. Third rank goes to emotional support with the mean score of 51.50. Technical support (50.15) and financial support (36.33) got fourth and fifth ranks respectively.

B. Factor Analysis- Effects of Peer Relationship on Job attitude

Table 2
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity results

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.828	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2805.723
	Df	153
	Sig.	.000

Source: Primary data

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) of Sampling Adequacy test value is 0.828 which indicate that the sample is adequate to apply factor analysis. It is also noted that Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant as its p value is less than 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$).

Table 3
Effect of peer relationship on job attitude – Total variance explained

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.876	32.645	32.645	5.876	32.645	32.645	3.765	20.915	20.915
2	2.512	13.957	46.603	2.512	13.957	46.603	3.393	18.848	39.763
3	1.292	7.177	53.780	1.292	7.177	53.780	1.988	11.043	50.805

4	.983	5.460	59.240	.983	5.460	59.240	1.518	8.434	59.240
5	.956	5.309	64.549						
6	.893	4.959	69.508						
7	.810	4.501	74.009						
8	.724	4.023	78.032						
9	.621	3.449	81.481						
10	.570	3.169	84.650						
11	.509	2.827	87.477						
12	.424	2.355	89.832						
13	.412	2.290	92.122						
14	.381	2.118	94.240						
15	.300	1.664	95.904						
16	.281	1.563	97.467						
17	.265	1.473	98.940						
18	.191	1.060	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Primary data

From above Table, it is clear that four factors are extracted with the cumulative percentage of 59.240. The variance explained under extracted sum of square loadings for I factor, II factor, III factor and IV factor are 32.645, 13.957, 7.177 and 5.460 respectively. The variance explained under rotated sum of square loadings for I factor, II factor, III factor and IV factor are 20.915, 18.848, 11.043 and 8.434 respectively. While computing cumulative percentage of variance, the extracted sum of squared loadings and rotated sum of squared loadings are equal which indicate optimality in the factor analysis.

Table 4
Job Attitude – Rotated component matrix of factor loadings

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
I am looking for better ways to enhance the quality of teaching always.	.798	-.056	.166	.054
I possess career oriented teaching style rather than mere subject oriented	.791	.232	.164	-.053
I am committed to improve my students’ academic performance	.719	.252	-.127	.317
I would like to take additional responsibilities	.639	.215	-.029	.318
I have the drive to achieve more in my profession.	.622	.240	.423	.048
I wanted to be best at my job	.608	.004	.350	.081
I am passionate towards my work	.495	-.078	.325	.414
Management policies are fair and agreeable	.158	.807	-.017	-.034
I feel financially secured with this job	-.041	.791	.155	.241
I derive personal pleasure and self-esteem by this job.	.073	.694	-.114	.135
I have good career growth in this institution	.130	.686	.396	-.053
I am able to balance my work and personal life	.389	.582	.020	-.007
I have good interpersonal relationship in my department	.051	.547	-.031	.290
I experience good team spirit in my department	.024	.005	.758	.058
I am good in challenging works	.431	.049	.577	.028
I feel that the job I do gives me a good status.	.359	.089	.554	.321
I would be in teaching profession throughout my life	.242	.209	.079	.754
I am emotionally attached with my job	.011	.491	.307	.539

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Source: Primary data

Table 4 exhibits the rotated factor loadings for the 18 statements regarding effect of peer relationship on job attitude. It’s clear that all the 18 statements had been extracted into four factors, namely, “Progress on teaching quality and job skills, “Attitude towards organizational factors”, “Team spirit and job environment factor” and “Job aspiration Factor”.

C. Weighted average method results

Table 5
Strategies for maintaining good relationship with peers

Strategies	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	Total score	Mean score	Rank
Sharing general ideas/views	1560	783	312	245	162	15	32	12	12	10	3143	15.251	I
Caring and affection towards peers	450	855	536	518	168	105	52	39	26	6	2755	13.368	II
Spending money	30	99	176	147	270	140	172	189	140	69	1432	6.948	VIII
Gossips	50	27	160	140	156	265	184	132	122	97	1333	6.468	X

Being loyal & openness	800	450	488	371	234	130	84	42	36	13	2648	12.849	III
Gifts sharing	20	117	56	112	228	320	308	180	112	42	1495	7.254	VII
Go for outing such as shopping, movies	90	45	56	196	150	265	240	198	126	59	1425	6.914	IX
Family get together with peers	80	225	200	161	264	260	240	147	82	48	1707	8.283	VI
Sharing personal matters	160	324	288	280	402	250	128	120	54	31	2037	9.884	V
Volunteer to help	510	450	712	476	204	115	72	60	26	9	2634	12.781	IV
											20609		

Source: Primary data

Most of the respondents gave I rank to the statement ‘Sharing general ideas/views’ with the mean score of 15.251 followed by ‘Caring and affection towards peers’ with the mean score of 13.368. Being loyal and openness to peers got III Rank, with mean score of 12.781, volunteering to help peers got IV Rank. Sharing personal matters earned Vth position while the respondents are preferred family get together with peers as their VI strategy, and gift sharing placed as VII strategy. Interestingly, respondent’s last three preferences to maintain good peer relationship at workplace are spending money, outing for shopping and/ or movies and gossiping respectively.

D. Results of Kruskal Wallis Test

Kruskal Wallis test has been employed to analyze the significant difference among the respondents regarding peer relationship management in the work place on the basis of type of college, financial status and their stream.

H₀1: There is no significant difference among the respondents regarding peer relationship management in the work place on the basis of type of college.

H₀2: There is no significant difference among the respondents regarding peer relationship management in the work place on the basis of financial status of the college in which they are working.

H₀3: There is no significant difference among the respondents regarding peer relationship management in the work place on the basis of their stream.

Table 6
Significance difference among respondents regarding Peer relationship and Professional factors

S. No.	Variable	Calculated Value	Statistical Result
1.	Type of College	Co-Education	Chi Square = 21.77419 P<0.05 Significant
		Women’s College	
2.	Financial status	Aided & Autonomous	Chi Square = 54.28721 P<0.05 Significant
		Aided & Non-Autonomous	
		Self -financing & Autonomous	
		Self -financing & Non-Autonomous	
3.	Stream	Arts	Chi Square = 21.77419 P<0.05 Significant
		Science	

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that the calculated value of chi square test for analyzing the significant difference among the respondents regarding peer relationship management in the work place on the basis of type of college, financial status and their stream are 21.77419, 54.28721, 21.77419 and P<0.05 respectively. Null hypotheses are rejected hence there is a significant difference among the respondents regarding peer relationship management on the basis of type of college, financial status of the college and their stream.

VII. KEY FINDINGS

- From the Garrett’s ranking technique, it is clear that most of the respondents of the study are preferred the information support from peers at their workplace which indicates that peer relationship among majority of the respondents is more formal rather than emotional.
- Factor analysis of the study grouped the statements regarding the job attitude of respondents into four different dimensions such as “Progress on teaching quality and job skills”, “Attitude towards organizational factors”, “Team spirit and job environment factor” and “Job aspiration Factor”.
- Weighted average method also transparently showed that peer relationship among the respondents is more formal and genuine as sharing general ideas and views are their primary strategy to maintain congenial peer relationship. Moreover gossiping got least preference.
- It is clearly understood from Kruskal Wallis test that, depends on type of college in which respondents of the study are working, financial status of the college and their stream are highly determine their attitude towards peer relationship.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Efficient relationship management is one of the key requirements for individual as well as the group success in all fields of the modern era. Teaching professionals are not exclusive of it, and they have more accountable for developing empowered future generation. Offering quality education is not merely global standard curriculum and state of the art infrastructure, it lies in the commitment and

performance of teachers in their classroom. Teachers as a team joint together with common goal of imparting students with values, moral and ethics would be invaluable to nation's growth. Teachers as employees of certain educational institutions, they may also go through many hurdles while intends to achieve their individual and professional goals such as diversified workforce, management culture, policies and work environment. Above all, peers at workplace are highly influential in constructing the value system and behavior by forming an informal peer group or small cliques. It is quite powerful and intimate than formal relationship with superiors and subordinates which creates the necessity to have crystal clear picture of temperament of the peer relationship. Peer group of a teacher can encourage him/ her to be more prolific or stimulating to do something unethical to the profession and ethics. This study clearly found that teachers of arts and science colleges affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai are maintaining their peers in workplaces more efficiently in a very formal way and have are more committed to their job. With good team of peers, they are highly striving to offer quality higher education to the students even though they are differed in many professional aspects.

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