

## **How Can Workplace Friendship Affect Employees' Resistance to Change in Egyptian Hotels?: Gender diversity as a moderator**

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### **ARTICLE INFO**

### **ABSTRACT**

#### **Keywords:**

Workplace Friendship;  
Resistance to Change;  
Gender; Moderator;  
Smart\_PLS.

**(JAAUTH)**  
**Vol. 22, No. 1,**  
**(June 2022),**  
**PP.221-232.**

The research aims at investigating the effect of workplace friendship on the employees' resistance to change through gender as a moderator. A questionnaire was directed to 347 employees in 19 five-star hotels in Sharm-Elshiekh. Collected data was analyzed statistically by SmartPLS v.3. The research revealed that females' workplace friendship was found to correlate to resistance to change more than males negatively. The research recommends using employees' friendships to decrease resistance to change, especially with females.

### **Introduction**

To remain competitive and profitable, organizations have to be adopted to continuous improvement and change policies, these changes are highly affected by several elements such as the organizational culture, work colleagues, superiors which may create a comfortable/discomfortable organizational climate (Davis *et al.*, 2004). Especially noticing that the employees are not always passive to change, but their attitude towards change depends on the mutual trust among them and their trust in management (Rafferty and Griffin, 2008). On the other hand, workplace friendship is a double-edged weapon, as it has several advantages for both employees and organization by creating a supportive climate, it may also have some side effects which may increase levels of organizational conflict (Koçel, 2005).

### **workplace friendship**

Friendship is a natural phenomenon at the workplace, as employees spend an increased time in the employment places which encourages interpersonal relationships among them (Morrison 2004). This type of friendship became a part of any organization's informal structures because of similarities in personal culture, lifestyle, personal interests that shape their moral concern and help to form their personality traits in work (Lin and Lu, 2013).

In general, friendship as a core to peoples' life can be classified related to several elements such as nature of friendship, Mutual caring, Intimacy, Shared activity, Value and justification of friendship, Friendship and moral theory, and Individual and social values (Helm, 2005). Dotan (2009) discussed that employees seek workplace friendships for different reasons such as Job security, common interests, and values, affinity, and benefit among employees. In the same context, workplace friendship

works as a social system that emphasizes informal and formal, horizontal and vertical interactions with very wide and open style of communication, (Tse *et al.*, 2008).

Mao (2006) described workplace friendship as a voluntary phenomenon that includes individual bonds and has personal, socio-emotional benefits for individuals and organizations. Therefore, the importance of workplace friendship has become one of the prominent features of successful organizations as friendship shapes a vital part of formulating human values (Song 2006), as it influences the personal behaviours and attitudes that are shared with other employees within the organization which can reduce the employees' negative attitudes by decreasing their narrow self-interests.

However, organizations can't force employees to be friends, but they can create opportunities to make friendships among them. Teamwork management for example is one of these opportunities, as it bases on directing employees to work in groups related to each other, sharing information and experiences which may be a seed of friendship (Rousseau, 1995).

For its advantages for individuals within the organization, workplace friendship involves mutual trust, commitment, and sharing interests or values among employees. such relations involve special norms of informality, openness, and inclusiveness (Guy and Newman 1998). These norms consequently help to create a workplace positive climate, reduce job stress, increase communication among employees (Mao, 2006). Therefore, the organizations' efforts to create workplace friendship may fail if the norms of openness and friendliness are not well promoted (Marelich, 1996). Moreover, friendship can help employees share mutual support and get their jobs done (Riordan and Griffeth, 1995). It can help them find allies, instill loyalty, and stand up for people who support them (Song and Olshfski, 2008). For more clarification, Friendships are a source of support relying on the employees' level of reciprocal comfort, as they usually use each other to enhance their individual lives by sharing advice, discussing medical status, or even improving their physical fitness by doing the joint activity (Lu, 1999).

Despite the possible advantages that workplace friendship can achieve, several adverse consequences may occur because of such a relation; conflict-of-interest for example, as individuals, have different values, behaviours, and attitudes that shape their traits, and if the employees who are in friendship have distinct goals, dexterities, and attitudes, this may result in conflicts (Koçel, 2005). Besides, as in all other relations, workplace friends should work through several challenges of their relationships such as instrumental purposes, competition, envy, or even physical harassment (Bar-on, 1992). However, it is completely unclear whether the organizations' efforts to overcome workplace friendship challenges can be fully resultful or not, but they may go through training programs that emphasize employees' active listening (Seglin, 2000).

### **Resistance to change**

In any organization, the term "Change" refers to any observable transformation that temporarily affects the organization's structure and converts its development course (Abraham, 2000). In the same context, Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) described organizational change as the organizational process that occurs in time, with a period

of instability, in which the lack of system security drives the organization to shift its policies.

Due to change, employees may react with several emotions such as frustration, uncertainty, or fear, and they may also feel threatened and confused. So that, people often exhibit negative and/or defensive attitudes to resist change (Mullins, 2005). However, individuals' reaction towards organizational change differs from one to another; as some of them may accept it grudgingly while others may reject or even resist (Burke, 2008). Therefore, employees' resistance to change is resistance to loss of something valuable for them or even loss of a known by moving to the unknown. Sometimes, regardless, this resistance may be deliberate sabotage (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2010).

To understand the causes of resistance to change, Burke (2008) sorted them according to the elements that can affect to three main types: the first type is "Blind resistance", which occurs when some employees in the organization are afraid of modern issues, intolerant of change, and usually think that the unknown is always discomfoting. While the second type is "Political resistance" which occurs when employees tend to think that they will lose personal benefits if the change is implemented; like losing position, power, organizational role, or even personal compensation. And the third type is "Ideological resistance" which occurs when employees tend to believe that the proposed change is ill-timed, will not work, and may cause damage more than improvement.

Management of change is based on a clear understanding of the employee's behavior in the organization, as the change process has to be respected and managed effectively to succeed. Therefore, the individuals' different impacts of change should be monitored and analysed accurately (Mullins, 2005). On the same line, Boohene and Williams (2012) discussed the most common strategies that the organization can use to overcome the employee's resistance to change were derived from its types; where providing reassurance and letting time pass without putting pressure on employees are suitable tools for facing blind resistance, negotiation to trade a valuable thing with another is a suitable tool for facing political resistance, and persuasion with the importance of change is the most suitable way for facing ideological resistance

### **Gender Diversity at hotels**

Several researchers investigated the mutual relationship between gender diversity in hospitality industry and many other factors such as the distribution of income between males and females in hotels (Biswas and Cassell, 1996; Purcell 1996; Sparrowe and Iverson, 1999), gender differences in promotions at managerial positions (Manwa and Black, 2002; Thrane, 2007). One of them was Kattara (2005), who clarified other factors such as work experience, age, and work-family conflict as factors that can prevent females from reaching the top managerial positions within the Egyptian hotel industry.

From the socialization perspective, males are mainly guided by norms that are based on mastery, control, and self-efficacy to achieve their self-centered goals, while females are more guided by concerns for themselves and others (Eagly, 1987). Besides, men

are more agentic (task-oriented) whereas women are more communal (relationship-oriented) (Hupfer, 2002). These distinguishing characteristics between agentic and communal distinction reflect how each gender relates, observes, and behaves in the workplace environment (Rudmin 1990).

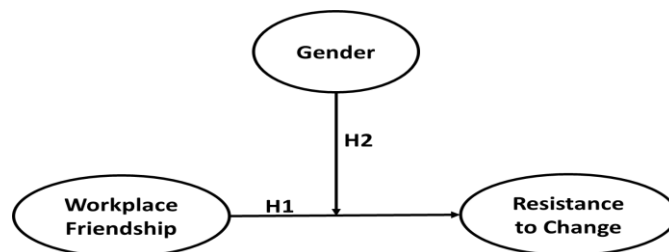
## Methodology

### Research model

**Fig 1** illustrates the study model extracted from the extant literature that suggests two hypotheses to examine:

**H<sub>1</sub>**. Workplace friendship has a negative effect on resistance to change.

**H<sub>2</sub>**. The impact of workplace friendship on resistance to change is significantly moderated by gender.



**Fig.1.** Research framework.

### Sampling and data collection

To examine the proposed hypotheses, a questionnaire was developed consisting of 6 questions for the workplace friendship variable; 7 questions to measure resistance to change; Finally; 2 questions for demographic data (Gender and age). Data collected from hotel employees of 19 five-star hotels located in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, agreed to participate in the study. The researchers connected with human resources managers and general managers in the study's selected hotels to obtain their agreement to send the electronic survey to them, then they sent it to the employees. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed to a simple random sample of employees in the study hotels and 347 valid questionnaires were obtained with a recovery rate of 69.4%. This sample consisted of 55.2% male and 44.8 females between the ages of 22 and 68.

### Measures

Workplace friendship was measured utilizing six items generated from (Nielsen et al., 2000). The study adopted the seven-item scale of Oreg, (2003) to measure the variable of resistance to change. The items of study variables are measured on a five-point Likert scale varying from disagree (1) to agree (5).

### Results

The study utilised the “Structural Equation Model” (SEM) via the “Partial least squares PLS” technique to test the hypotheses of the study with SmartPLS-3.0. The proposed the hypothetical model was investigated using a two-step approach proposed by (Leguina, 2015), As follows;

**Assessment of outer measurement model**

To evaluate the outer model's reliability and validity, internal consistency reliability, indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were tested. First, as displayed in **Table 1**, the structures' internal consistency reliability was tested with Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) changing from 0.904 to 0.946, and the composite reliability (C.R) ranging from 0.924 to 0.957. Second, indicators' reliability was acceptable as all loading values of the structure indicators were higher than 0.70. Third, convergent validity was assessed by the average variance extracted (AVE) values surpassing the adequate value of 0.50 (Henseler et al., 2009).

**Table I**  
Assessment of the formative measurement model

The model items	Outer Loading	$\alpha$	C.R	AVE
<b>Workplace friendship</b>		0.946	0.957	0.788
WF_1	0.857			
WF_2	0.914			
WF_3	0.891			
WF_4	0.880			
WF_5	0.893			
WF_6	0.888			
<b>Resistance to change</b>		0.904	0.924	0.635
RTC_1	0.751			
RTC_2	0.841			
RTC_3	0.811			
RTC_4	0.755			
RTC_5	0.760			
RTC_6	0.815			
RTC_7	0.838			

Finally, three criteria were implemented to assess the discriminant validity of the constructs. They were cross-loading, Fornell-Larcker criterion, and heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) (Leguina, 2015). As indicated in Table (2), the outer-loading for each latent variable - underlined- was higher than the cross-loading with other measurements.

**Table 2**  
Cross loading results

	<b>Workplace friendship</b>	<b>Resistance to change</b>
WF_1	<b>0.857</b>	-0.225
WF_2	<b>0.914</b>	-0.340
WF_3	<b>0.891</b>	-0.310
WF_4	<b>0.880</b>	-0.350
WF_5	<b>0.893</b>	-0.269
WF_6	<b>0.888</b>	-0.284

Continued

RTC_1	-0.163	<b>0.751</b>
RTC_2	-0.160	<b>0.841</b>
RTC_3	-0.144	<b>0.811</b>
RTC_4	-0.360	<b>0.755</b>
RTC_5	-0.452	<b>0.760</b>
RTC_6	-0.315	<b>0.815</b>
RTC_7	-0.323	<b>0.838</b>

As illustrated in Table 3, the bolded values of the AVEs in the diagonals are higher than the correlation among variables. According to (Gold et al., 2001), HTMT values need to be less than 0.90. The study’s value of HTMT was lower than this (HTMT of Resistance to change=0.365). According to the results, the model structure has adequate discriminant validity. Therefore, the outer measurement model results were strong enough to continue assessing the structural model.

**Table 3**

Inter-construct correlations, the square root of AVE results

	AVEs values	
	Resistance to change	Workplace Friendship
Resistance to change	<b>0.797</b>	
Workplace Friendship	-0.340	<b>0.888</b>

**Assessment of the structural model**

The hypotheses were then tested by a structural equation model (SEM). In particular, the model’s predictive capacity and the explanatory power were analyzed (Hair Jr et al., 2016). With the VIF values of the manifest indicators changing from 2.280 to 4.198 below 5, the multicollinearity of the structural model has been verified as inexistent. Next, (Chin, 1998) indicated that the lower limit for the  $R^2$  values is 0.10. Therefore, the  $R^2$  value ( $R^2 = 0.636$ ) is acceptable (**Table 3**). Besides, The Stone-Geisser  $Q^2$  test indicates the Resistance to change value greater than zero (**Table 3**), indicating adequate predictive validity of the model (Henseler et al., 2009). Accordingly, enough predictive validity for the structural model was also confirmed.

**Table 4**

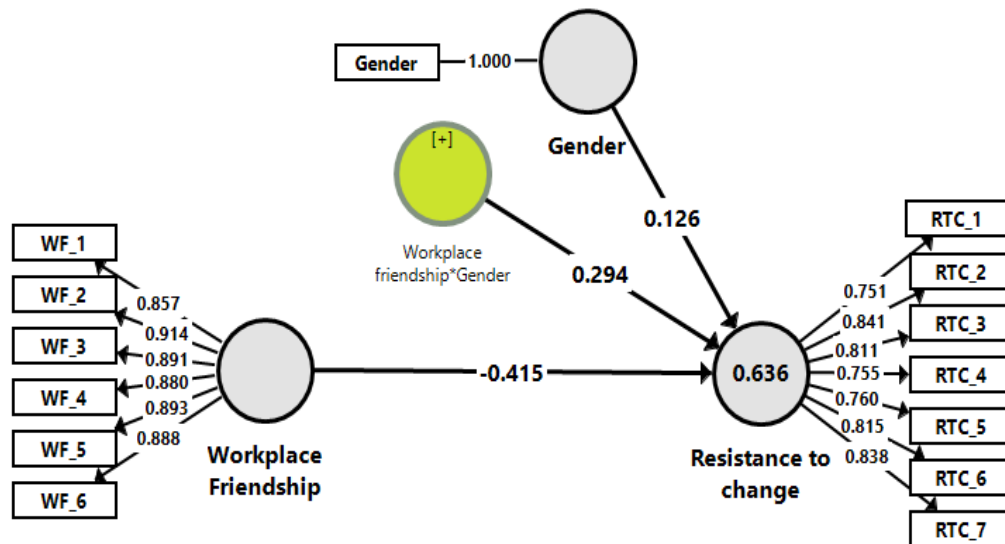
Coefficient of determination (R2) and (Q2) of the model

Endogenous latent construct	(R2)	(Q2)
Resistance to change	0.636	0.238

Lastly, the path coefficient and t-value of the hypothesized association were analyzed using a bootstrapping technique. **Table 4** and **fig 2** show the hypotheses test outcomes, given the path coefficient values and the relevant significance. Workplace friendship was found to be in negative and significant correlation to resistance to change at  $\beta = -0.415, p < 0.01$ , so **H1** was supported. The results also confirm the moderation effect of gender on workplace friendship variable towards the resistance to change variable at  $\beta = 0.294, p < 0.012$ , supporting **H2**.

**Table 4**  
Path Coefficients

	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-values	P Values	Results
Workplace Friendship -> Resistance to change	-0.415	3.956	0.000	Accepted
workplace friendship*Gender -> Resistance to change (Moderating Effect)	0.294	2.510	0.012	Accepted



**Fig.2.** The structural and measurement model

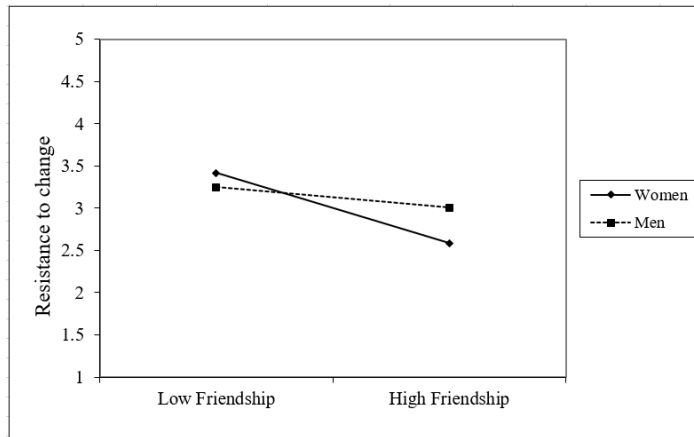
## Discussion

### Workplace friendship and resistance to change

The practical results of this study demonstrated that workplace friendship was in negative and significant correlation to resistance to change, this result is consistent with Mullins (2005) who assured that an employee's behavior highly affects his intention to resist change, and this behavior is influenced by workplace friendship (Song 2006). Besides, Meriac & Gorman (2017) explained that employees with low work ethics always have low friendship relations with their supervisors and peers.

### Assessing the moderating effect

The practical results validated the moderation influences of the gender variable on the relationship between workplace friendship and resistance to change variables. As can be seen in Table 4, the interaction between workplace friendship\*Gender is positive, but it is not entirely clear how it differs in terms of the groups (Male vs Female). In other words, the size and precise nature of this effect are not easy to define from the examination of the coefficients alone. Thus, Dawson (2014) suggested that to follow up for the significant interactions, and interaction plot can be drawn (fig. 3, Interaction plot).



**Fig.3.** Interaction plot for the gender moderation effect on the relationship between workplace friendship and resistance to change variables

(The tool is from <http://www.jeremydawson.co.uk/slopes.htm>)

The interpretation of the interaction plots is to look at the gradient of the slopes and the directions. As can be seen in Fig.3, the line labelled for females has a steeper and negative gradient when compared to the male (less steep and negative gradient) indicating that the negative relationship is indeed stronger for the female group. This means that the greater the friendship at work, the less resistance of employees to change, especially among females than males. The results corroborate the findings by Tajfel (1978) who put social identity theory that clarified that belonging to a group creates a psychological state which composes the social identity. This theory assumes that an individual's self-identity formation is partly a function of a group membership. Moreover, Pinar *et al.* (2007) clarified that females are more stuck to social identity theory than males who have other several elements that affect their identity at work. Moreover, the previous result may be explained as females are more emotional than males which make them more willing to accept change from their friends rather than males. A 2013 study indicated that women are more likely to be social than men and do more activities in groups. On the other hand, it's rare to see four, five, or six men in each other's company unless they're playing sport. The men tend to be more productive working alone, while women thrive on collaboration and work better in groups (Sadeghi, ND). Therefore, when forming the administrative structure, the senior management of hotels must consider the provision of many women in each department to allow the formatting of female friendships that help to resist change.

### Conclusion and recommendation

The current study's results show that workplace friendship decreases the employees' resistance to change within hotels. Moreover, females are more willing to accept change than males if they are in workplace friendships. The study recommends using employees' friendship as a tool for decreasing resistance to change especially with females. Employees' friendships can be done by several ways i.e; corrective selection of team works, behavioral training and enhancing employees' social activities.



### **Limitations and future research**

More additional studies on this subject can be undertaken before studying the relationship between workplace friendship and resistance to change (Such as looking at the factors affecting the formation of friendships among women and why men do not focus on making friends at work?). Future studies could focus on how friendships are used as a leadership style in hotels, studying the impact of women's lack of employment in hotels on the formation of female friendships.

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## كيف يمكن أن تؤثر الصداقة في مكان العمل في مقاومة الموظفين للتغيير في الفنادق المصرية؟: النوع كمتغير معدل

معتز بالله فريد  
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سامح فياض

المعلومات المقالة	الملخص
<b>الكلمات المفتاحية</b> الصداقة في العمل؛ مقاومة التغيير؛ الجنس؛ الفنادق؛ مصر؛ SamrtPLS.	يهدف البحث الى دراسة العلاقة بين صداقات العمل بين الموظفين ومدى مقاومتهم للتغيير في ظل النوع كمتغير معدل Moderator لتلك العلاقة. تم توجيه استمارة استقصاء الى عينة عشوائية بسيطة قدرها 347 عامل منتقاة من 19 فندق من فنادق الخمس نجوم بمدينة شرم الشيخ. تم تحليل النتائج المتحصل عليها احصائيا بواسطة برنامج SmartPLS V3. خلاص البحث إلى وجود علاقة عكسية ذات دلالة إحصائية معنوية بين صداقات العمل ومقاومة العاملين للتغيير، وبخاصة لدى الإناث بصورة أكبر من الذكور. ويوصي البحث بتوظيف علاقة الصداقة بين العاملين كأداة لتقليل مقاومتهم لتغيير السياسات التنظيمية ولا سيما لدى الإناث.