



THE FACTORS THAT TRIGGER WORKPLACE ROMANCE: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Aditya Putra Mahardhika¹, Kabul Wahyu Utomo², P Setia Lenggon³, DwiSunu Kanto⁴, Noverdi Bross⁵
^{1.2.3.4.5}Trilogi University, Jakarta, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Workplace is the best place to find a love partner and have a romantic relationship. Romance relationships in the workplace become a common phenomenon and have an impact on organizational productivity, work motivation, and organizational decision making processes. Romance relationships at work have positive and negative effects on the organization. Things that are influenced by romanticism at work include: productivity, job satisfaction, mood and morale, and so on. This qualitative research aims to to develop a conceptual model of the triggering factors for a workplace romance and its effect on employee performance, especially on employees from the Ministry of Manpower of Republic of Indonesia. Sampling will do by purposive and snowball technique, while data collection is done through triangulation (combined). Data analysis is inductive or qualitative and research results emphasize on the meaning rather than generalization.

KeyWords

Romance, Workplace, Work Performance, Conceptual Model

INTRODUCTION

The workplace is the best place to find love partners and have romantic relationships (Fisher, 1994 in Karl and Sutton, 2000). Based on a research in the United States, nearly a third of couples meet their partners at work (Bordwin, 1994). The same survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management in 2009, which found that 40% of respondents were involved in romance at work (Parks, 2010).

Increased number of women entering professional jobs is also considered a factor that enhances romance at work (Pierce and Aguinis, 2001). Romance relationships at work are common phenomenon and have an impact on organizational productivity (Anderson and Hunsaker, 1985; Dillard, 1987; Dillard and Broetzmann, 1989 at Pierce, Bryne, and Aguinis, 1996), work motivation (Mainiero, 1989, at Pierce, Bryne, and Aguinis, 1996), and organizational decision-making processes (Driscoll and Bova, 1980 in Pierce, Bryne and Aguinis, 1996). Although love relationships at work are common, many organizations do not have policies responding to this problem (Parks, 2006).

In the previous era, a love affair at work was considered inappropriate. Therefore, love relationships at work are often responded harshly by organizations even though the relationship does not violate the rule of law and it is also not an affair or extramarital relations (Mainiero, 1989 in Cole, 2009). If the organization responds too harshly, employees may feel treated unfairly because many people consider a love relationship as something personal (Fisher, 1994 in Cole, 2009). Organizations must respond carefully because it can be mismanaged for the organization if the policy is not well formulated (Cole, 2009).

Romance relationships at work have a dual effect on the organization; positive and negative. The impact also affects many things in employee attitudes and behavior. Appelbaum et al (2007) noted things that were influenced by romanticism in the workplace including: productivity, job satisfaction, mood and morale, tendencies of favoritism, morale and work climate, promotion and demotion, and appropriate sexual harassment laws if the relationship ends badly.

Based on this background, this conceptual paper was made. This conceptual paper aims to examine the triggering factors for a workplace romance and its effect on employee performance. This paper consists of Introduction, Literature Review, Conceptual Model and Research Methodology.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Erich Fromm (2002) explains that love is an active activity. The most obvious activity in loving and being loved is giving. In this world we also find many forms of love. The types of love according to Erich Fromm (2002) are brotherly love, maternal love, erotic love, self-love, and love for God.

In 1996, Pierce, Byrne, and Aguinis developed a significant model to explain the factors that influence the shape and influence of relationships in the workplace. Pierce and Aguinis (2009) define romance at work as a sexual relationship between two people in a company. Romance at work is consensual and welcoming to one another (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Working together enables people to get to know each other; and as familiarity grows, romance at work may be more likely to occur. This relationship may form between coworkers, supervisors, subordinates, or even with company clients (Rabin-Margaloith, 2006). The workplace might even be an ideal setting for developing romantic or sexual interests because of constant exposure. Therefore, individuals can evaluate each other in an atmosphere that is not threatening or time-bound (Amaral, 2006). Licket, Berry, and Whelan-Berry (2009) distinguish 3 types of relationship in the workplace, namely; relations between employees (lateral love relationships), supervisors and subordinates (hierarchical), and relationships where one or both parties are married.

To investigate the influence of organizational factors on love relationships at work is done through the concept of 'climate', a concept that has been used elsewhere in organizational theory (Tagliuri&Litwin, 1968; Rentsch, 1990; Denison, 1996; Ashkanasy et al., 2000; Fey & Beamish, 2001; Stringer, 2001) but not related to the occurrence of romance. The concept of climate offers promises to address both organizational factors (such as organizational policy, structure, and culture) and broader social and cultural factors, such as the values of sexuality, loyalty, and love. By using two contrasting national arrangements and a number of organizations of different sizes, products, and cultures, we have sought to investigate organizational frameworks that inhibit or enhance romance in the workplace and the way romance enters organizational discourse. In planning this study, researchers envisioned three ideal types of organizational climate and an appropriate 'scenario', which is a story line that illustrates how romance enters into organizational discourse.

- Scenario 1 – Love in a cold climate

Impersonal and formal organizational structures have long sought to exclude human feelings and emotions from mainstream organizational activities, instead focusing on instrumental relationships, related tasks (Weber, 1946, 1978; Albrow, 1992; Du Gay, 2000). Such structures can be seen as 'cold climates' which discourage emotions and the possibility of sexual attachment, often through explicit rules and regulations (Mainiero, 1989; Pierce et al., 1996; Pierce & Aguinis, 1997; Powell & Foley, 1998). However, this despair can actually trigger such attachment, both as a mechanism for overcoming emotional distance and, perhaps, as an unconventional and conventional attempt at rebellion into a restricted area. In such a scenario, against official deterrence, love is reintroduced into the realm of organizations in an attempt to oppose impersonal and intrusive organizational control. This is basically a 'compensation' scenario. This scenario finds a lot of literary expressions where lovers oppose laws and social conventions that limit the building and maintenance of illicit relationships.

- Scenario 2 – Love in a hot climate

Many commentators have noted how today's organizations involve the 'aesthetics' of the workforce (Tyler & Taylor, 1998; Hancock & Tyler, 2000; Taylor et al., 2002). Some people argue that aesthetic labor emerges as a different type of workforce such as emotional power, with employees exhibited because of their appearance and style (Warhurst et al., 2000; Witz et al., 2003). Others have noted 'sexual simmer' as trademarks of many industries, including tours, human relations, advertising, mass media, and even catering and retailing (Di Tomaso, 1989; Tancred-Sheriff, 1989; Hall, 1993; Adkins, 1995 ; Yelvington, 1996; Williams et al., 1999; Guerrier&Adib, 2000; Adib&Guerrier, 2003). In such an environment (climate), romantic attachment will emerge as an extension of the workplace sexualization. This is not something ordinary from a TV series, like Ally McBeal or The Office.

- Scenario 3 – Love in a medium or mixed climate

Between these two extremes, it would be reasonable to assume that in some organizations romantic contact is open without active encouragement or against positive despair. Such attachments can appear as an extension of working with close personal contact during late hours, in conferences or work-related accommodations. In this way, the margins of the organization's life (conferences, hotels, dinners and other parties, late-night work, etc.) become a space where the romance at work can develop, not directly opposing the organizational climate or as a direct consequence of that.

Horan and Cowan (2014) revealed the results of his research with his colleagues about the reasons / motives for dating relationships at work. According to him, the 4 reasons for creating love relationships at work are; time, lots of opportunities, equality, and physical attraction.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The general objective of this research is to study the dynamics of the running of relationships in the workplace, those involved in relationships and those around them. The specific objectives to be achieved in this study are to identify; (1) romance in the workplace, and (2) what causes romance in the workplace. Based on the objectives of the literature review that have been carried out, the conceptual model that can be produced in this study is as shown below:

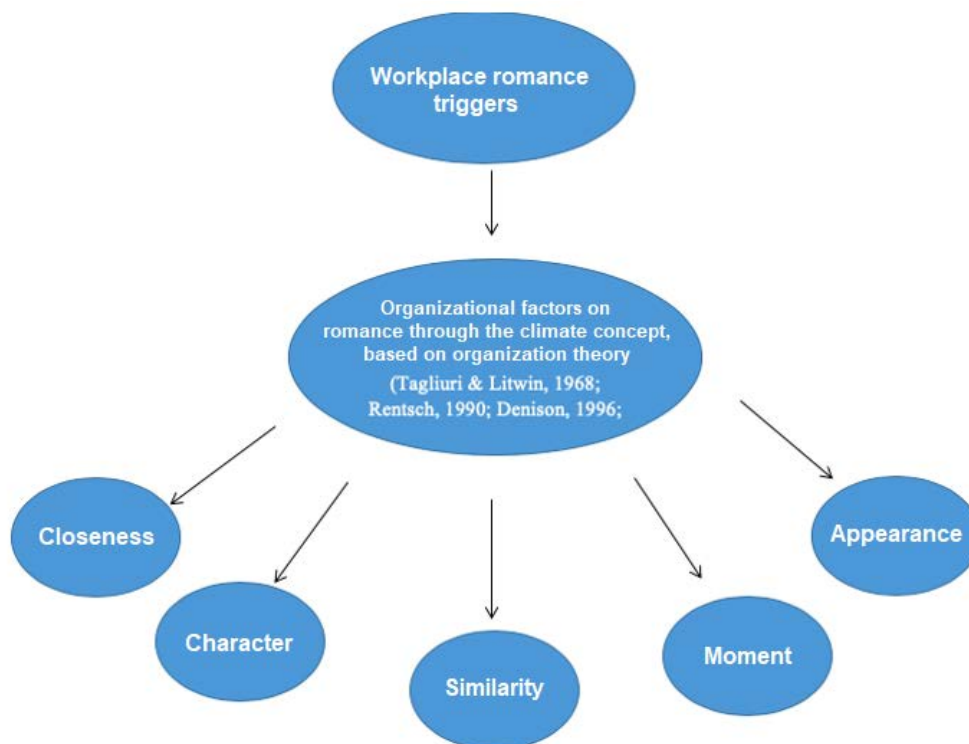


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

The problem of workplace romance is it is difficult for employees and superiors (Binetti, 2007). Management cannot ignore the love relationship at work because the consequences can greatly affect the company. The issues are such as lawsuits, declining productivity, gossip, low moral values, and violence that arise as a result of failed romantic relationships (Lickey, Berry, and Whelan-Berry, 2009).

On the other hand, research conducted by Tengberg and Tidefors (2016) regarding workplace romance shows that research participants state that having a workplace romance is a positive experience. However, all participants described the need to keep their love relationships confidential for two reasons, which are to avoid the negative consequences that might occur and enjoy the feelings associated with a secret love relationship. The results of Boyd's research (2010) state that the prohibition of romance at work is considered as anti-social. Cases of sexual harassment at work tend to be low compared to the number of relationships that last a long time because of love at work.

Bhebhe and Hove (2016) in their research stated that to enable HR to handle workplace romance and prevent negative potentials that arise is to take an "open door" approach that will encourage open communication for employees where employee freedom of association and freedom of expression are guaranteed. Other research by Syaebani and Rachmawati (2017) shows that providing counseling is considered the fairest policy for all combinations and variations of love stories in the office so that the company's response to the dream story in the office should not be through a policy of violence.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative research. In qualitative research, sampling is done purposively and through snowball technique. Data collection technique is done through triangulation (combined). Data analysis is inductive or qualitative and qualitative research results emphasize more on meaning than generalization (Sugiyono, 2011).

Data collection in this study was conducted by interviewing, recording observations, and observations from company reports. The object of this research is employees of the Ministry of Manpower of Republic of Indonesia. The data obtained will go through credibility test, transferability test, dependability test, and confirmability test.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual paper has discussed the issue of relationship and employee performance. The literature review on the relationship between romance at work and its causes, conceptual model, and research methodology were explored. The implementation of this research will provide information about the triggers of love affairs at work and how it will affect employee performance the Ministry of Manpower of Republic of Indonesia.

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