

# A comparative systematic review of empirical research into workplace friendship: Hospitality versus non-hospitality contexts

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## ABSTRACT

Friendship is a fundamental pillar of human existence, shaping both personal and professional lives. While extensive research has highlighted these benefits across various industries, their implications within the hospitality sector remain unexamined. Furthermore, existing studies are fragmented and lack theoretical coherence and continuity, which limits their applicability for scholars and practitioners. This study systematically reviewed 112 empirical studies (including 38 focused on hospitality) sourced from six major academic databases. Findings reveal a strong regional bias in existing research, a scarcity of qualitative studies, and a predominant focus on the positive effects of workplace friendship, with limited attention to potential downsides such as favoritism, conflict, and emotional strain. By synthesizing insights across hospitality and non-hospitality contexts, this study proposes four strategic recommendations to guide future research and inform managerial practices, equipping hospitality organizations with evidence-based strategies to foster productive workplace relationships while mitigating risks.

## 1. Introduction

Interpersonal relationships are fundamental pillars of human existence and a recurring theme in research, with numerous studies highlighting friendship as being essential to creating happiness (Reis et al., 2000; Wheatley, 1994; Amati et al., 2018; Kaufman et al., 2022; Putri and Muttaqin, 2022). Amati et al. (2018) used data from the 2012 multipurpose survey undertaken by the Italian National Statistical Institute, *Aspects of Daily Life*, and found that friendship is positively related to life satisfaction, while Song et al. (2023) used data from the 2019 Korean Community Health Survey, finding that as people age, friendships become increasingly important to their overall happiness; interestingly, frequent contact with a close friend was found to be more impactful on happiness, than interactions with close family members or neighbours. According to David et al. (2023), friendship can emerge from all paths of life, and in various circumstances, whilst the workplace is where friendships tend to naturally develop, as this is where most people spend a great deal of time.

Workplace friendships are a fascinating factor with the potential to influence various areas at both the organizational (Okoe et al., 2016; Chao, 2018) and individual levels (Ahmad et al., 2023; Yan et al., 2021). Sias et al. (2004) stated that people establish different types of

relationships at work, e.g., between peers, managers, and subordinates, as well as mentorship connections. These relationships often evolve into strong bonds, termed 'friendships', and according to Pillemer and Rothbard (2018) and Yan et al. (2021), are typically formed voluntarily, based on mutual liking and a shared interest in each other as whole individuals. These types of relationships facilitate employees and the business to thrive and generate significant outcomes, such as innovative behavior (Helmy et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2022), enhanced job satisfaction and commitment to work (Lee et al., 2022; Yang and Wong, 2023; Yang et al., 2021), and reduction in turnover intention (Asgharian et al., 2015; Tews et al., 2014). Empirical research also provides insights into how workplace friendships benefit the people involved, i.e., through promoting employee wellbeing and helping behavior (Ahmad et al., 2023; Hsu et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2023), knowledge-sharing between colleagues (Helmy, 2020; He et al., 2022), creating psychological safety in the organization (Arshad et al., 2021), supporting psychological empowerment between supervisors and subordinates (Foroutan et al., 2022), and reducing the negative impacts of bullying in the office (Hsu et al., 2019). Omuris (2019) asserts that employees working within the formal structures of an organization simultaneously shape its culture through the relationships and interactions they develop.

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Nielsen et al. (2000) categorized workplace friendships (WPF) into two dimensions: 'friendship opportunity,' which refers to the encouragement of informal connections among employees, and 'friendship prevalence,' which assesses the persistence of the relationship and the psychological benefits it offers to those involved. This scale demonstrates strong reliability and has been widely used in various studies across different contexts (Chen et al., 2013; Rai and Agarwal, 2018b; Randhawa and Lee, 2021). Prior to Nielsen et al. (2000), workplace friendships were typically studied as either friendship opportunities or friendship quality. For instance, drawing on Hackman and Lawler's (1971) friendship opportunities dimension within their model of job characteristics, Riordan and Griffeth (1995) developed a 6-item scale to measure the impact of friendship opportunities on work-related outcomes, focusing solely on the likelihood of employees interacting and communicating with one another. Similarly, Winstead et al. (1995) developed a scale based on the Acquaintance Description Form (ADF; Wright, 1969), which specifically measured the existence of friendships among employees within an organization. More recently, Omuris (2019) developed a new scale dedicated exclusively to the hospitality context. This scale consists of 65 items across six factors: trustworthiness, competence, support, value-life interest similarity, caring personal relationships, and socio-demographic similarity.

Existing literature reveals that a range of theoretical and methodological approaches have been adopted to investigate workplace friendships, and that these have occurred in diverse settings (e.g., hotels, manufacturing, banks, and restaurants). However, findings on this topic are fragmented and disconnected from previous studies, posing challenges for scholars and practitioners in drawing robust conclusions, generalizing results and applying insights to practice. For example, most studies focused on the positive outcomes of friendship within the workplace, such as its positive relationship with job engagement (Khairy et al., 2023), affective commitment (Elnafrawy, 2022; Liu, 2022) and employee well-being (Wang, 2023). Meanwhile, despite the recent growth in scholarly interest in the undesirable effects of this construct, our understanding of its outcomes, underlying mechanisms, and boundary conditions remains incomplete (Fasbender et al., 2023; Pillemer and Rothbard, 2018).

In the hospitality industry, friendship within the workforce also plays a vital role in individual well-being and business success (Ahmad et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2014; Wong and Lin, 2007). This is due to the inherent nature of this field. Hospitality organizations require their employees to deliver impressive service in a timely manner (Ahmad et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2014). To do so, they need to establish and maintain streamlined communication—not only with guests, but also with colleagues across departments throughout their shift (Wong and Lin, 2007). Therefore, forming healthy friendships at work is essential, as social exchange theory (SET) suggests that people are inclined to support and assist their friends (Homans, 1958). This distinctive characteristic of the hospitality context may offer a unique perspective on the study of workplace friendship, compared to non-hospitality contexts.

While most workplace friendship literature in the hospitality context focuses on service performance (Okoe et al., 2016; Randhawa and Lee, 2021) and organizational commitment (Khairy et al., 2023; Ugwu et al., 2022), literature on workplace friendship in non-hospitality contexts encompasses broader research scope. Recent research has focused on its associations with job crafting (Zhang et al., 2024) and affective components (e.g., feeling envied, negative and positive emotions, and motivation) (He and Wei, 2022; Doğan et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023). When comparing workplace friendship between the two contexts (hospitality and non-hospitality), Yang et al. (2021) noted that in high-task interdependent environments such as the hospitality workplace, making friends at work can lead to identity conflicts between employees, especially in this 'online era', whereas the same issue is less likely to occur in low-task-interdependent environments. In order to develop the expanding scholarly works on workplace friendship in the hospitality context, and to set the research apart from previous studies,

the current study offers a more inclusive and comparative analysis of both hospitality and non-hospitality contexts. By highlighting differing perspectives, the gaps between the two contexts will be revealed, inspiring scholars and practitioners to apply findings from other contexts to advance workplace friendship literature in hospitality.

To avoid the limitation of adopting a singular theoretical lens which could reinforce existing myopic perspectives on WPF and contribute to further conceptual ambiguity, this study chose a more integrative approach. While theories such as SET (Homans, 1958) and conservation of resources (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989) provide valuable insights into workplace relationships, relying solely on a single framework risks oversimplifying the dual effect and complexity of WPF. A narrow theoretical focus could overlook critical dimensions of WPF beyond the researcher's specific interest, restrict the exploration of alternative perspectives, and fail to capture the diverse contextual influences shaping WPF. Instead, this study adopts a balanced and inclusive theoretical approach that synthesizes multiple perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of WPF. Through the integration of various theoretical insights, the impacts of workplace friendships within the hospitality context's unique environment, compared to non-hospitality contexts, are examined. This approach not only enriches the theoretical discourse on WPF, but also ensures that findings contributed meaningfully to both academia and industry practice.

This study aimed to address the research gaps identified above through a systematic and critical analysis of existing articles on workplace friendship. The purpose was threefold: first, to identify emerging trends and concepts in the published articles; second, to investigate the similarities and differences in areas of interest between hospitality and non-hospitality contexts; and third, to highlight directions for future research and identify priority areas for scholarly attention. Moreover, to the best of the authors' knowledge, there has been no comprehensive literature review of this construct in either the hospitality, or the non-hospitality context. Therefore, this review, which employed a comparative analysis of the two contexts, will contribute to a deeper understanding of workplace friendship from both perspectives, an insight that could not be achieved if the contexts were examined separately.

The following questions were posed:

- RQ1.** . How has workplace friendship been empirically examined, including its theoretical foundation, research design, context, region, antecedents, outcomes, and underlying mechanisms?
- RQ2.** . How do workplace friendships in the hospitality context differ from those in non-hospitality contexts?
- RQ3.** . Are there any research gaps in the area of workplace friendship within the hospitality context that provide opportunities for future research?

Specifically, the aim of this paper is to provide comparative insight into how workplace friendship has been explored to date in hospitality versus non-hospitality contexts, taking into account elements such as the research context, design, theoretical foundation, antecedents, outcomes, mediating, and moderating factors. The results from the analysis yielded a variety of significant contributions. First, the research uncovered the theoretical foundations and methodologies that have been used to examine friendship in the workplace. This comparative analysis allows hospitality researchers to compare research into workplace friendship within a larger stream, inspiring them to further develop or re-confirm the findings that have been revealed across the existing bodies of work. Second, it captures potential literature gaps that could be the direction for further research, and finally, practitioners, educators, and policymakers can use the findings to develop a range of more effective and efficient strategies for either fostering positivity, or eliminating negativity, from workplace friendships, especially for hospitality businesses.

The paper begins by examining literature focused on conceptualizing workplace friendship, along with its associated theoretical foundations.

Following this, the methods employed for the systematic review are discussed. The findings are then interpreted according to the characteristics of the reviewed research and the cross-tabulation analysis. The paper concludes by presenting implications for further studies and practical operations, along with an outline of the study's limitations.

## 2. Background literature

### 2.1. Conceptualization of workplace friendship

The scholarly exploration of workplace friendship can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution, however, it was only investigated as an independent topic after the 1980s (Wang et al., 2022). Workplace friendship then remained relatively unexplored in literature, both empirically and theoretically, until the early 2000s, and Nielsen et al. (2000) suggested that this could be due to the absence of well-established psychometric measures for assessing the construct. During the early 2010s, the concept of workplace friendship began to emerge, but received only limited scrutiny.

At the time of writing, the literature has not yet established a universally accepted definition of workplace friendship. As a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, workplace friendship is defined somewhat differently by various scholars. Berman et al. (2002) described the relationship as an informal and voluntarily interpersonal organizational association, and Mao (2006) believed that “among workplace relationships, friendship is unique in that it is voluntary, has a personalistic bond, and is for personal, socio-emotional benefits” (p. 1819). Several descriptions, such as being a ‘voluntary, informal, platonic relationship’, ‘a strong bond’, and ‘sharing mutual values or interests’ have been repeatedly seen in different scholars’ definitions of workplace friendship (Pillemer and Rothbard, 2018; Wang et al., 2022; Omuris, 2019). For example, Wang et al. (2022) wrote that workplace friendship is delineated as “a non-exclusive, informal, voluntary, and multiplex interpersonal connection among colleagues, which encompasses profound interactions and emotional bonds that extend beyond the limitations of formal work roles” (p. 4). The conceptualizations of this social phenomenon have remained relatively stable throughout the years, showing little significant evolution. In the context of the current review, workplace friendship is considered to be ‘a voluntary relationship developed among colleagues who share joint interests and principles’.

These unique qualities make workplace friendships stand out compared to other social relationships and traditional friendships, as it frequently develops between people in workplace settings, regardless of either age or marital status (Berman et al., 2002; Wang et al., 2022). However, other demographic characteristics, such as education, gender, and organizational tenure, have been found to have a crucial impact on the forming stage of this type of relationship (Blau and Devaro, 2007; Randhawa and Lee, 2021; Sias et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2022).

### 2.2. Workplace friendship in the hospitality versus non-hospitality context

According to COR theory, workplace friendship can be considered a valuable resource in the organisational setting (Hobfoll, 1989; Rai and Agarwal, 2018b). In non-hospitality contexts, for example, Liu et al. (2013) conducted research on 312 supervisor-subordinate dyads in a Chinese manufacturing firm, revealing that workplace friendship serves as a form of social support that facilitates employees’ social learning from their ethical leaders. Similarly, Potgieter et al. (2018) analyzed data from staff in a South African higher education institution and concluded that workplace friendship functions as a form of social support, aiding employees’ professional growth through networking. While workplace friendship is recognized as beneficial in these contexts, its role in directly shaping business success may vary across industries and organizational settings.

By contrast, existing research highlights that workplace friendship holds particular significance in the hospitality sector, serving not only as

a form of social support but also as a critical factor influencing employee and organisational performance (Ahmad et al., 2023; Wong and Lin, 2007). This distinction stems from the unique characteristics of hospitality jobs, which present challenges from multiple perspectives. First, hospitality work is emotionally demanding (Xu et al., 2020). Employees must engage in emotional labor as a routine aspect of their roles, constantly interacting with colleagues and customers. Furthermore, hospitality employees—particularly women—face a heightened risk of harassment due to the close contact and the inherent power imbalance between staff and guest (Ram, 2018). Second, hospitality jobs are physically demanding. Employees endure long hours of standing, lifting, and carrying heavy items (e.g., chairs, tables, and plates), as well as prolonged exposure to chemicals (e.g., housekeeping staffs). Third, additional contextual factors—such as low wages, irregular work hours (including nights, weekends, and holidays), and the seasonal nature of employment—exacerbate job instability. These elements contribute to an intense and often stressful work environment, characterized by both emotional and physical strain, which may not be so pronounced in non-hospitality contexts. Given these stressors, workplace friendships in hospitality often emerge as a crucial coping mechanism and a source of emotional support (Wong and Lin, 2007). Employees rely on each other to navigate the fast-paced, service-oriented environment, forming close bonds akin to that of a “work family” due to the high levels of teamwork, extended shifts, and shared experiences (e.g., handling difficult customers or adapting to sudden operational changes). Research further suggests that strong workplace friendships in hospitality contribute to positive organizational outcomes, including improved collaboration and a reduction in turnover intention—one of the most persistent challenges in the industry (Boateng et al., 2017; Ozbek, 2018).

Furthermore, the nature of hospitality work inherently facilitates the formation of workplace friendships, as employees primarily engage in face-to-face interactions, fostering frequent and direct social engagement. In contrast, the rise of remote and hybrid work models has significantly reshaped workplace dynamics in non-hospitality sectors, particularly within corporate environments. Beau and Jerman (2024) conducted interviews with auditors from France’s “Big Four” accounting firms and found that remote work often inhibits spontaneous social interactions, requiring employees to make more deliberate efforts to cultivate and maintain meaningful workplace relationships.

Nevertheless, the hospitality industry also faces unique challenges arising from workplace friendships, particularly due to blurred professional boundaries among employees. Yang et al. (2021) highlighted that in highly interdependent work environments, such as hospitality establishments, workplace friendships—especially in the digital age—can lead to identity conflicts among employees. This issue is less pronounced in industries with lower task interdependence. Given these unique workplace dynamics, the hospitality sector presents a contrasting perspective that enriches the broader discourse on workplace friendship by highlighting challenges less frequently observed in non-hospitality contexts.

In conclusion, the increasing scholarly interest in workplace friendship underscores the need for a systematic review; this which would contribute significantly to the existing literature and enhance understanding of its implications in both hospitality and non-hospitality contexts. A comprehensive review is essential for bridging research gaps, synthesizing key findings, and mapping the predominant approaches in the field (Crossan and Apaydin, 2010). Notably, no systematic review has yet been conducted to consolidate research on workplace friendship in both contexts. Therefore, a comparative systematic analysis of workplace friendship in hospitality versus non-hospitality settings would provide valuable insights for scholars and practitioners, facilitating a deeper understanding of how workplace friendships function across different industries.

### 2.3. The theoretical landscapes of the WPF literature

Workplace friendship has been examined using different theoretical frameworks, capturing various antecedents and outcomes. Social Exchange (Homans, 1958) and COR theories (Hobfoll, 1989) are among the most popular.

Social exchange theory emphasizes the role of reciprocal relationships in shaping workplace interactions. It posits that individuals are motivated to engage in high-quality exchanges based on shared personal characteristics and perceived mutual benefits (Cropanzano et al., 2017; He et al., 2022). This theory has been instrumental in explaining the motivational factors underlying WPF. Empirical studies have applied SET across various organizational settings, including hotels, sports centers, universities, and both private and public sectors (Ahmad et al., 2023; Chang et al., 2018; He and Wei, 2022; Xing, 2022; Wu, 2023). For instance, Wu et al. (2023) found that WPF fosters mutual trust among employees, which, in turn, reduces turnover intentions and enhances work motivation. Similarly, Ahmad et al. (2023) used SET to explain how WPF contributes to employees' organizational identity, as friendships at work encourage social engagement, fostering a sense of belonging within the workplace.

Conservation of resources theory has been widely used to explore the role of workplace friendship as a moderating factor in organizational dynamics (Methot et al., 2016). It focuses on the acquisition, preservation, and utilization of resources, asserting that individuals strive to accumulate resources to cope with workplace demands (Hobfoll, 1989; Rai and Agarwal, 2018a). Workplace friendship, within this framework, is conceptualized as a valuable resource that can buffer employees against workplace stressors. For example, Rai and Agarwal (2018) argued that employees with strong WPFs are better equipped to navigate challenging work conditions and mitigate the negative effects of workplace adversity.

While these theoretical perspectives have significantly contributed to the understanding of WPF, their dominance has led to a somewhat narrow and fragmented view of the phenomenon. Workplace friendship is shaped by a complex interplay of personal, social, organizational, and digital factors, which cannot be fully captured through a single theoretical lens.

## 3. Methods

Pickering et al. (2015) state that a systematic review can (1) provide constructive knowledge relating to existing literature, (2) identify gaps, and (3) offer recommendations for future research based on what has already been explored versus what is yet to be investigated. The current systematic literature review was conducted to compile and combine research findings on the topic of workplace friendship. Specifically, this research aimed to:

- examine existing literature on workplace friendship, and
- identify any possible research gaps that could give directions for further investigations.

The selection framework involved the following four stages:

- Step 1 - Framing questions for the review
- Step 2 - Identifying relevant work
- Step 3 - Summarizing the evidence
- Step 4 - Interpreting the findings

### 3.1. Search method

A systematic and thorough literature search was conducted to identify relevant research publications, aiming to gather as much high-quality research material as possible to address the research questions. In keeping with the suggestions of Wang et al. (2024), researchers typically used six databases: Google Scholar, Scopus, EBSCO Host,

Emerald Insight, Web of Science, and ProQuest, to conduct a thorough systematic literature review, based on pre-determined criteria (these will be described in the following paragraphs). These platforms were chosen because they are the largest and most inclusive electronic databases covering peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings in social sciences research (Leung et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2024).

Workplace friendship has been explored across a range of fields, but relevant studies may use differing terminology, as scholars often adapt terms to suit specific industries or the unique nature of each occupation. For example, workplace friendship has been studied in organizational behavior research under the categorization of 'friendship from co-workers' (Kim et al., 2019). Furthermore, unlike previous studies, the current research did not wish to restrict its search to articles exclusively from a pre-selected group of top-rated journals. Consequently, the list of keywords was expanded, and the search was conducted based on a variety of keywords and keyword combinations, such as, 'workplace friendship', 'friendship in the workplace', and 'co-worker friendship', as well as combinations of, 'friendship', 'informal relationship', 'casual relationship', 'personal relationship', 'buddy relationship', 'peer friendship', and 'camaraderie', with 'workplace', or 'organization'. Within the literature search process, there were no restrictions on the year of publication. After all studies that included the designated keywords were collected, the results were rechecked to exclude duplicates.

### 3.2. Study selection

The following criteria were established to ensure the quality of the finalists. Only studies that met these criteria were retrieved:

- The studies were published in full text,
- The studies were written in English,
- The studies were published in referred journals or conference papers,
- The studies investigated workplace friendship as one of the main focal constructs.

Following the guidelines outlined in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Moher et al. (2009), and considering the inclusion criteria, the study selection process was systematically conducted in a step-by-step manner (see Fig. 1).

The initial search yielded 498 articles across various disciplines using the designated keywords. After removing duplicates and ineligible studies through an automation tool, 159 articles were retained. The remaining articles were then retrieved in full text and assessed based on the predetermined inclusion criteria. A comprehensive screening process was undertaken to ensure that only studies that met the specific requirements were included. The initial assessment of the full-text articles narrowed the sample to 149. Following this, a second screening excluded articles that did not investigate workplace friendship as one of the primary constructs. At the completion of the process, only 112 studies remained (see Fig. 1). The final collection of articles spanned from 1995 to 2024, and were published across 72 journals, with two additional items from conference materials. Appendix A1 details the source journals and the number of articles selected from each.

### 3.3. Data coding and analysis

The primary responsibility for coding rested with the first author (after reaching an agreement regarding process with the two additional authors). Disagreements during the coding process were addressed collaboratively, with all three authors engaging in discussions to achieve resolution. Microsoft Excel 2021 was utilized for the coding, and a thorough manual was established to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the coding process. Following the methodology of previous systematic literature reviews (Ayachit and Chitta, 2022; Huang, 2024), eight fundamental study attributes were coded for each study: 'author

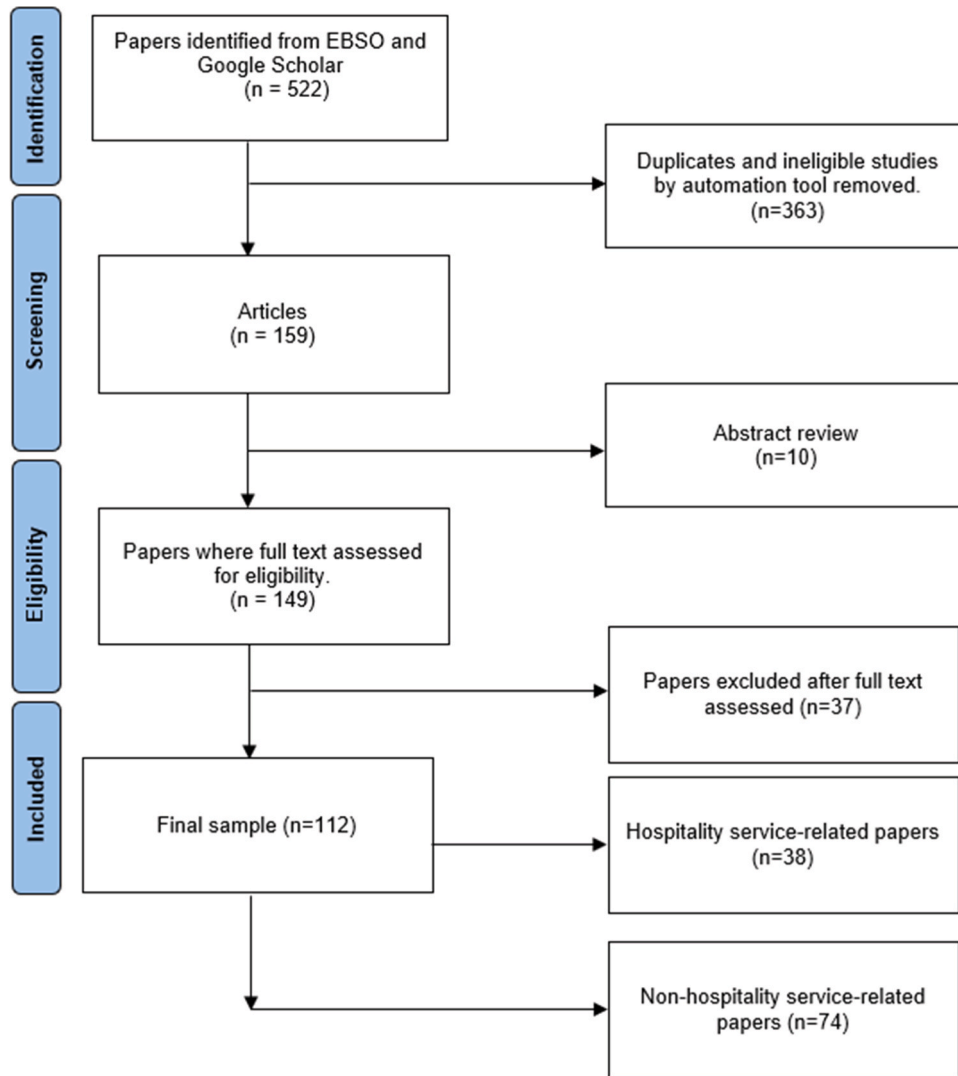


Fig. 1. Flow Chart of Article Search.

name’, ‘year of publication’, ‘journal name’, ‘theory(ies)’, ‘research region’, ‘research context’, ‘research design’, and ‘research technique’. Moreover, factors such as the association between workplace friendship and its antecedents, outcomes, and moderators, were also noted, as these play a crucial role in gaining an overall understanding of the theory of workplace friendship. The 112 final articles were reviewed and

crosschecked by each of the three authors during the coding process. Description and cross-tabulation analysis were employed to identify patterns and characteristics within the samples, offering a nuanced understanding of workplace friendship across various research contexts.

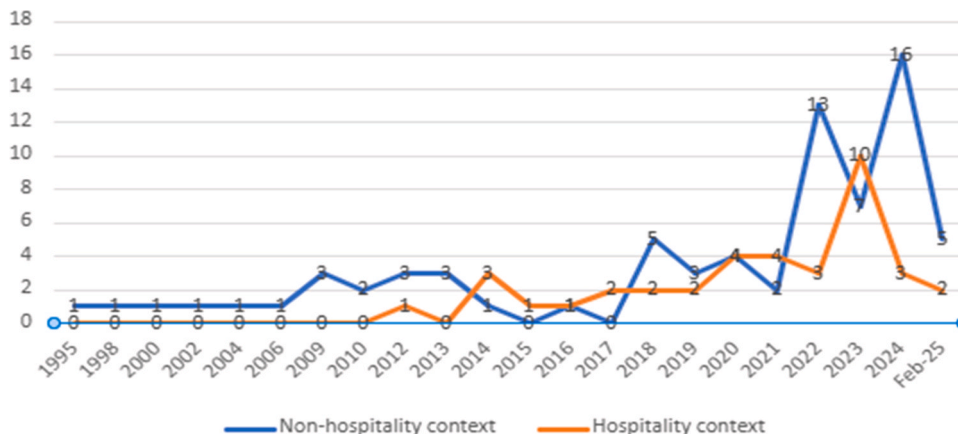


Fig. 2. Number of Studies on Workplace Friendship Published per Year (1995–02/2025).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Publication by year

Fig. 2 provides a clear insight into the temporal distribution of the article samples. The publication timeline spanned 29 years (1995–2024) and described an emerging pattern of total numbers of article publications over the years. The earliest workplace friendship-related article found in the databases was authored by Riordan and Griffeth (1995) and featured in the *Journal of Business and Psychology*. The period spanning 1995–2019 witnessed a lack of interest in this research topic in both hospitality and non-hospitality contexts—in fact, some years during this period had no publications relating to this topic. However, there was a marked increase in the number of publications after 2019, with article numbers jumping to 8 in 2020, 19 in 2024, and 7 in the first quarter of 2025. The number of publications in this period alone comprised more than 65 % of the entire sample.

Meanwhile, Fig. 2 also illustrates the trend of hospitality-related articles throughout the years. In the early 2000s, studies relating to workplace friendship in the hospitality context were still in their infancy, with the first article (Psychology Reports) published by Chen et al. (2012). In general, however, this line of research has gathered attention and developed steadily, and the number of hospitality-related articles only accounted for approximately 34 % of the entire sample of workplace friendship literature.

### 4.2. Publications by journal

Appendix 1 provides insight into research relating to workplace friendship, sorted by journal. The samples (N = 112) were retrieved primarily from journals (98.21 %); only two were conference materials (1.79 %). The majority of the articles were published in and psychology and business-related journals, such as *Frontiers in psychology* (5.36 %), *Sustainability* (4.46 %), *Current Psychology* (3.57 %), *Psychology Reports* (2.68 %), and *Journal of Business and Psychology* (1.79%). They were also featured in hospitality and tourism-related journals, such as *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (5.36%), *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (1.79 %), *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights* (1.79 %), and *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* (0.89 %).

### 4.3. Publications by region

Table 1 illustrates the cross-tabulation analysis between the locations where the research was conducted in both hospitality and non-hospitality contexts. In general, Asia, (i.e., China, 23.33 %, Taiwan 17.78 %, and Egypt 6.67 %) led the number samples for both contexts, followed by America, (i.e., The U.S., 13.33 %), and the Middle East (i.e., Turkey, 8.89 %, and Iran, 1.11 %). In contrast, the topic of workplace friendship appeared to be neglected in the regions of Oceania and Europe; there were only two studies concerning this domain in each region.

### 4.4. Publications by research context and design

Table 1 presents an overview of research contexts in workplace friendship studies. While this topic has been examined across various sectors, such as public (12.15 %) and education (30.84 %), the hospitality sector stands out, comprising over one-third of published articles. Within hospitality, the hotel industry dominates at 65.79 %, followed by service providers, at 18.42 %. In contrast, restaurants (13.16 %) and tourist attractions (2.63 %) remain less studied in this field.

Table 1 also presents insights into the research design utilized in the 98 articles. Over 96 % of the total sample were empirical, with the majority employing quantitative methods. Cross-sectional research emerged as the most popular design in both hospitality (76.32 %) and

**Table 1**

The association between research context and other variables; Comparing hospitality and non-hospitality contexts.

	Hospitality context	Non-hospitality context	Total
<b>Theory</b>	(N = 31)	(N = 60)	(N = 91)
Social Exchange Theory	22.58 %	11.67 %	13.19 %
Affective Events Theory	12.90 %	5.00 %	5.49 %
Social Identity Theory	6.45 %	5.00 %	5.49 %
Conservation of resources theory	6.45 %	21.67 %	9.89 %
Social Interdependence Theory	-	6.67 %	6.59 %
<b>Research design</b>	(N = 38)	(N = 74)	(N = 112)
Cross-sectional survey	76.32 %	67.57 %	70.54 %
Time-lagged survey	13.16 %	17.57 %	16.07 %
Interview	-	8.11 %	5.36 %
Longitudinal survey	10.53 %	6.76 %	8.04 %
<b>Region</b>	(N = 38)	(N = 66)	(N = 104)
Asia	50.00 %	59.09 %	55.77 %
America	7.89 %	16.67 %	13.46 %
The Middle East	13.16 %	9.09 %	10.58 %
Africa	28.95 %	4.55 %	13.46 %
Europe	-	6.06 %	3.85 %
Oceania	-	4.55 %	2.88 %
<b>Research context</b>	(N = 38)	(N = 69)	(N = 107)
Hospitality sector	-	-	35.51 %
Restaurant	13.16 %	-	-
Hotel	65.79 %	-	-
Tourist attraction	2.63 %	-	-
Service providers	18.42 %	-	-
A variety of sectors	-	10.14 %	6.54 %
Education	-	47.83 %	30.84 %
Public sector	-	18.84 %	12.15 %

non-hospitality contexts (63.51 %), followed by time-lagged designs (13.16 % for hospitality and 16.22 % for non-hospitality) and longitudinal designs (10.53 % for hospitality, and 6.76 % for non-hospitality). Notably, no examples of qualitative research were found in the hospitality context.

### 4.5. Publications by theory

The review revealed that researchers studying workplace friendship adopted a diverse range of theoretical foundations across the various fields. SET (13.19 %), COR theory (9.89 %), Social Identity Theory (5.49 %), Affective Events Theory (AET) (5.49 %) and Social Interdependence Theory (SIT) (6.59 %) emerged as the predominant foundations. Social Exchange Theory was the most frequently used in workplace friendship literature for hospitality contexts (22.58 %), while COR theory was the most frequently used in non-hospitality contexts (21.67 %).

Studies examining workplace friendship as a moderator and its outcomes in the hospitality context predominately used SET (22.58 %) over COR (6.45 %). In contrast, studies in non-hospitality contexts, showed a preference for COR (21.67 %) to understand workplace friendship's moderating role and outcomes. Notably, SIT has gained some popularity in non-hospitality contexts (8.16 %) but remains unexplored in hospitality settings. Conversely, AET has attracted some interest in the hospitality context (12.90 %) but remains largely unexamined in non-hospitality contexts.

### 4.6. Antecedents of workplace friendship

Acknowledging the explored antecedents could provide valuable insights, offering guidance for further research to deepen the understanding of the motivations behind workplace friendship. Antecedents

have been divided into three levels: ‘individual’, ‘job’, and ‘organizational’. Fig. 3 provides information relating to the lists of antecedents of each level. It can be seen that previous research primarily drew attention to individual-factor antecedents. Indeed, this is understandable, as classifications of workplace friendship are within this level, where ‘role ambiguity’, ‘demographic details’ (i.e., gender, age, and income), and ‘personality’ are frequently investigated in association with workplace friendship.

Job characteristics were not significantly examined in current literature as only a few factors have been studied, e.g., ‘working hours’, ‘job attributes’, ‘job insecurity’, and ‘friendship opportunities’. Other social and environmental factors, e.g., ‘team culture’, ‘organizational social climate’, ‘interactional justice’, ‘fun activities’, and ‘manager support for fun’, were only briefly explored. At the organisational level, ‘organisational tenure’, ‘organisational commitment’, and ‘organisational level’, were the most commonly examined antecedents to workplace friendship.

In comparison, it can be seen that both contexts considered factors

such as individual, organizational, and social elements within the workplace environment, to be antecedent of workplace friendship, and there were some similar variables used, e.g., ‘organizational level’ (Lim and Ok, 2021; Rai and Agarwal, 2018a), and ‘job insecurity’ (Ozbek, 2018; Jiang et al., 2019). However, there were also several variables that were only explored in non-hospitality contexts (e.g., variables related to career concerns, such as ‘career adaptation and establishment’, ‘job attributes’, and ‘friendship opportunities’).

#### 4.7. Outcomes of workplace friendship

The outcomes of workplace friendship were categorized into three types: ‘individual’, ‘job’, and ‘organizational’. In terms of individual outcomes, factors that related to an employee’s psychological well-being, e.g., ‘employee’s mental health’, and ‘psychological safety’, garnered high levels of attention. It has already been concluded that workplace friendship enhances employee satisfaction (Yang and Wong, 2020) and creates psychological safety at work (Arshad et al., 2021),

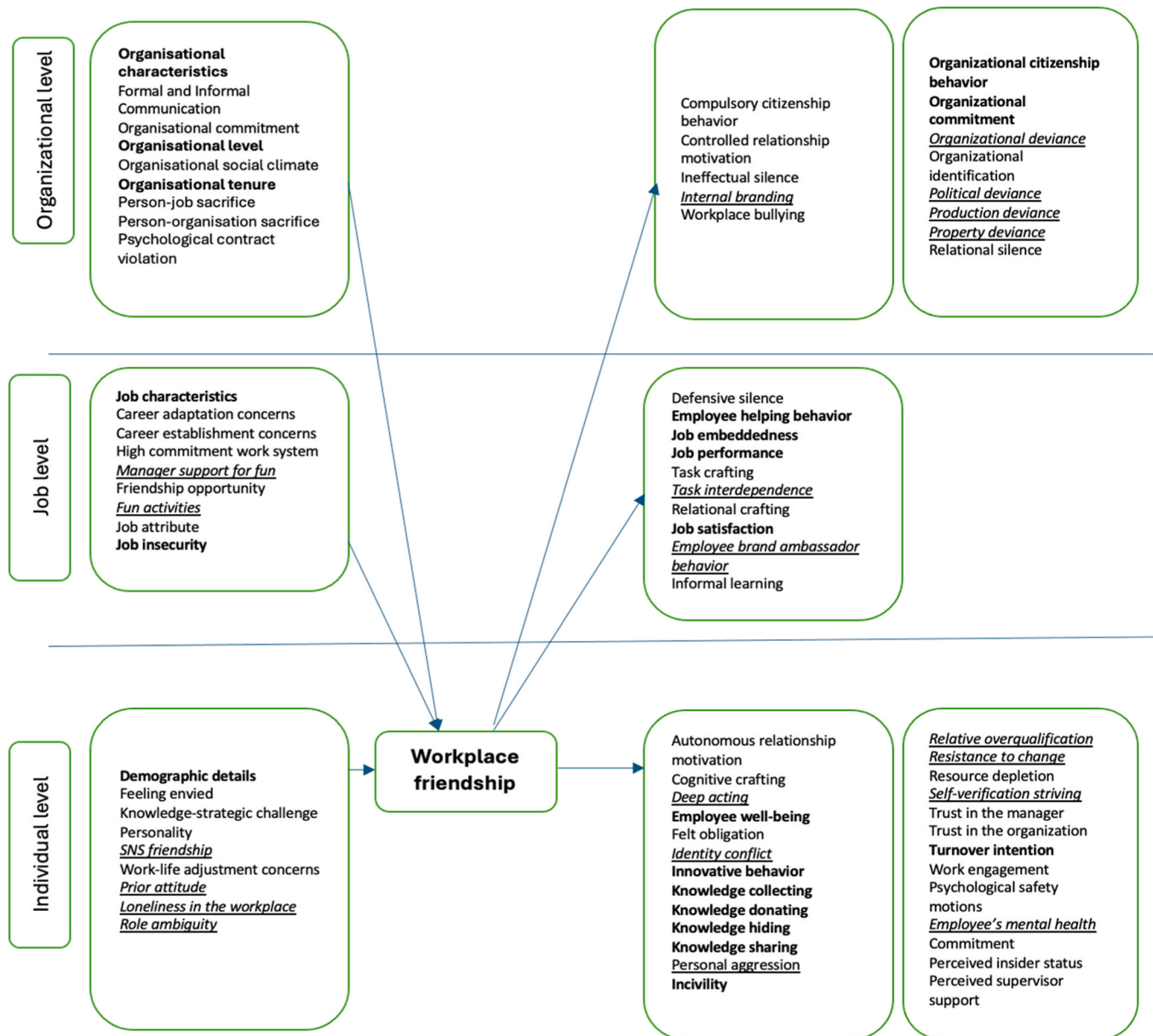


Fig. 3. Antecedents and Outcomes of Workplace Friendship. Note. Text in italics and underlined are hospitality context related, text written in bold indicates commonalities across contexts, and normal text pertains to non-hospitality contexts.

with Hsu et al. (2019) revealing that the establishment of friendships between co-workers helps mitigate the adverse impacts of workplace bullying. This aspect of workplace friendship could be further investigated in the future. Additionally, in today’s rapidly evolving market, several studies have explored ‘innovative behavior’, with Helmy et al. (2020) noting that workplace friendships can foster innovative behaviour in employees. Furthermore, ‘turnover’ and ‘commitment’—particularly ‘affective commitment’—are among the most frequently studied variables in workplace friendship literature. Wu et al. (2023) explained that forming friendships at work may smooth and streamline communication and collaboration between employees, reducing their intention to leave, and increasing their commitment to the workplace.

At the job level, ‘job performance’, ‘job embeddedness’, ‘job satisfaction’ and ‘employee helping behaviors’ were popular choices for research in both contexts. For example, in a study into service sector employees, Ozbek (2018) found that being friends with a supervisor was positively related to job performance for employees with a low work ethic, but not for those with a high work ethic. Nevertheless, job crafting related- variables, e.g., ‘relational crafting’, and ‘task crafting’ were explored in the non-hospitality context, but not in the hospitality context. At the organisational level, ‘organisational citizenship behavior’ and ‘organisational commitment’ were regularly investigated in both contexts. However, several variables studied in a non-hospitality context (e.g., ‘controlled relationship motivation’, ‘organisational identification’ and ‘workplace bullying’) were not discussed in a hospitality context.

In addition, the present review discovered several contradictory findings between articles. For example, whether the impact of workplace friendship on ‘organizational citizenship behavior’ is negative or positive, is still a contentious issue among scholars. Khairy et al. (2023) collected a sample from hotel employees and claimed that workplace friendship dampens the positive correlations between organizational citizenship behavior and work engagement, while in contrast, Wang et al. (2023) studied a sample of students in a university and argued that workplace friendship boosts organizational citizenship behavior through its positive association with employees’ perceived insider status. Another example involves the direct effect of workplace friendship on task performance. While Methot et al. (2016) reported that workplace friendships may lead to reduced task performance during the early stages of a friendship, based on a sample of respondents from various contexts, Chao (2018), studying a hospitality sample, and found that workplace friendships significantly enhance task performance.

4.8. Comparison/analysis of theoretical foundation and research design through cross-tabulation analysis

4.8.1. Research theory and Eastern/Western countries/regions

Table 2 shows a cross-tabulation between the studies’ research theories and the geographic location in which the research was carried out. Conservation of resources (Hobfoll, 1989) (15.79 %) was the most frequently employed theory among studies undertaken in Eastern

Table 2

Associations between research location and other variables.

	Eastern	Western
<b>Research theory</b>	(n = 76)	(n = 12)
Social Exchange Theory	17.11 %	8.33 %
Conservation of resources	15.79 %	25.00 %
Affective Events Theory	9.21 %	-
Social Interdependence Theory	3.95 %	8.33 %
Social Network Theory	1.32 %	8.33 %
<b>Research design</b>	(n = 83)	(n = 19)
Cross-sectional study	71.08 %	68.42 %
Longitudinal study	9.64 %	5.26 %
Time-lagged study	18.07 %	10.53 %
Interview	1.20 %	15.79 %

countries/regions, followed by SET (Homans, 1958) (17.11 %) and AET (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996) (9.21 %). Similarly, COR at 25 % was also the most commonly used theory, followed by SIT (Johnson, 2003) at 8.33 %, SNT (Barnes, 1954) at 8.33 %, and SET (Homans, 1958) at 8.33 % among research carried out in Western countries/regions. In contrast to Eastern countries/regions, AET has not yet been used in studies conducted in Western countries/regions.

4.8.2. Research design and Eastern/Western countries/regions

Table 2 displays a cross-tabulation analysis between the research design and the geographic location in which the research was carried out. Overall, the result revealed that in both Eastern and Western countries/regions, cross-sectional studies were the preferred form of research design. While longitudinal studies comprised 9.64 % of the sample in Eastern countries/regions, they remain less common in Western countries/regions. Conversely, interviews were more frequently used in Western countries/regions (15.79 %) than in Eastern countries/regions (1.20 %).

5. Discussion

By systematically reviewing previous studies, this research provides comparative and up-to-date insights into current trends in workplace friendship literature. Published articles relating to workplace friendship are increasing, suggesting that this area of study may continue to gain popularity in the future. Furthermore, when comparing the two contexts, i.e., hospitality versus non-hospitality, a range of similarities and differences were observed in terms of theoretical foundation, research location, and design; these alone could guide future research. The analysis of 98 articles published between 1995 and 2024 yields the following key implications for scholars and practitioners.

5.1. Research implications

The findings of the systematic review provide information regarding patterns and gaps in workplace friendship literature. First, they reveal that the earliest study to explore this topic dates back to 1995, and the first study to investigate workplace friendship in the hospitality context, published in a hospitality -related journal, appeared much later, in 2012. Moreover, the current study identified an increasing trend in publications on this topic within both hospitality and other types of journals, implying that interest in this topic will continue to grow. Based on the findings, the study offers comprehensive directions for future scholars and practitioners to enhance understanding regarding workplace friendship across all industries, with a particular focus on hospitality.

5.1.1. Expanding research context and location

Regarding the study context, the results highlight that hospitality workplaces have been the most common location for studies on workplace friendship, followed by educational contexts, e.g., university staff, students, and services (e.g., telemarketers and banking). Within the hospitality samples, it is evident that hotel staff are the predominant respondents. This finding suggests a potential path for hospitality researchers to explore workplace friendship in other contexts in this industry, e.g., restaurants, bars and nightclubs, or travel agencies and theme parks. This would provide a broader view of workplace friendship in the hospitality context. Research into workplace friendships in restaurants and bars, in particular, may require urgent attention, as these settings are more -service oriented than other hospitality environments. They demand continual interactions, both between employees and customers, and among employees themselves, with behaviors that frequently change (Shoukat et al., 2024). The findings also suggest an opportunity for scholars to explore workplace friendship in labor-intensive, non-hospitality contexts that operate 24/7 and are under significant time pressure, such as the healthcare sector (e.g., nurses and doctors) or emergency services, (e.g., police and firefighters).

Investigating the role of friendship in these industries would benefit the organizations by generating better outcomes and maintaining and facilitating employee mental well-being at an individual level.

This review has found that the majority of studies were conducted in Asia, in both contexts. As a result, the findings of some studies are likely to be more applicable to Eastern culture, in which society promotes a collectivist orientation, rather than the individualistic orientation often associated with Western culture. A collectivist perspective considers groups to be the fundamental units of society, where relationships are the priority; an individualist approach focuses on individuals, and relationships exist as a secondary context (Triandis, 2001). Therefore, the role of social relationships in general, and workplace friendship in particular, may be perceived differently according to these two cultural perspectives. With this in mind, it is recommended that workplace friendship research be expanded into countries that have been less observed, e.g., the regions of Oceania and Europe, where to date there has been no research on workplace friendship in the hospitality context. Researchers could keep this in mind for future direction, and to obtain a global picture of the topic. Additionally, as indicated in the cross-tabulation analysis, future studies conducted in Western countries/regions could consider implementing SET (Homans, 1958) to explore workplace friendship, as currently there are no studies in these regions that have utilized this theory. Furthermore, an increase in longitudinal studies are needed in Western countries/regions to validate and increase the generalisation of existing findings on how workplace friendship affects outcomes in both Eastern and Western countries/regions.

#### 5.1.2. Diversifying the portfolio of research designs

In terms of research design, the review found that most of the studies in both contexts employed a cross-sectional- research approach (70.54 %). Even though relationships between co-workers may appear to be stable, their degree of stability may vary based on time and context, as close friendships often require time to develop. Furthermore, as friendships deepen, individuals often become more closely identified with and vulnerable toward their close friends, increasing the likelihood of sharing both personal details and professional problems (Sias and Cahill, 1998). Therefore, their behaviors are likely to change from time to time. Pillemer and Rothbard (2018) proposed that the level of closeness in a friendship moderates the association between socioemotional intrusions and the extent of distraction from the results of task performance. Simply stated, intrusions caused by close workplace friendships are more distracting compared with those from friendships that are less close. Hence, more research applying longitudinal and multilevel studies is called for to unlock a deeper understanding of the prevalence of friendship in the workplace, and its outcomes. Additionally, there is a need for more qualitative research, especially in the hospitality context, as this will provide in-depth understanding of this domain; it will also unpack different angles in a real setting. Specifically, a

#### 5.1.3. Theoretical foundations

The systematic review revealed a range of theories, antecedents, and outcomes related to workplace friendship across both hospitality and non-hospitality contexts. It also identified the key theoretical frameworks employed to explain workplace friendship in these settings. Although research on workplace friendship is growing, it remains fragmented and, at times, inconsistent, largely due to the predominant reliance on a limited number of theoretical perspectives. Many studies have adopted a positivist approach, focusing on establishing causal relationships between workplace friendship and organizational outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee performance. However, this body of research tends to draw from a relatively narrow theoretical base. Notably, COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and SET (Homans, 1958) have emerged as the most frequently applied frameworks. Social Exchange Theory has been particularly dominant in

hospitality studies, while COR has been more commonly applied in non-hospitality contexts. Despite their value, overreliance on these two frameworks risks oversimplifying the complexity of workplace friendship, limiting the field's ability to capture its multidimensional and context-specific nature. The under-utilization of alternative theoretical lenses further constrains the development of a more comprehensive understanding of workplace friendship across diverse organizational environments.

In addition, the review revealed that SIT (Johnson, 2003) has recently emerged in non-hospitality contexts; however, this theoretical framework has yet to be adopted to examine workplace friendship within the hospitality sector. Future studies on workplace friendship in the context of hospitality may also benefit from the use of this theory.

Overall, most previous studies on the antecedents of workplace friendship have focused on the individual level, while antecedents at the organizational level—especially factors related to organizational characteristics—have not been thoroughly investigated. In non-hospitality contexts, it was found that several leadership styles i.e., transformational leadership, transactional leadership and ethical leadership, are positively associated with workplace friendships (Kohan et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2022). The hospitality context, however, was represented by only one article concerning this antecedent—that of Khairy et al. (2023), who discovered a positive association between benevolent leadership and the prevalence of workplace friendships. Hospitality researchers may consider replicating and expanding on these studies within the hospitality context to validate the impact of these leadership styles in this area. The hospitality industry is in a unique position, as interpersonal relationships are critical to both job satisfaction (Yang et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2023; Yang and Wong, 2020) and job performance (Ahmad et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2021). Therefore, an understanding of how different leadership approaches can foster or hinder workplace friendships can provide valuable insights at both scholarly and practical levels.

Furthermore, the relationship between other leadership styles (e.g., mentoring, servant leadership, democratic leadership) and workplace friendship, remains an open question in both contexts. Many theories can help to explain this linkage. For example, Social Cognitive Theory posits that individual behavior is formed through adopting the behaviors of others (Cao and Zhang, 2020), and several articles adopted more than one theory to explore the associations between variables and workplace friendship. Yu et al. (2021) explained that “the combinations of variables underscore the need to apply a multi-theoretical approach to fully comprehend the complexity of each part of the research model” (p.2489) (as cited from Liu et al., 2022). Scholars could utilize this type of approach in future studies on workplace friendship.

#### 5.1.4. The double-edged phenomenon

By its nature, workplace friendship is a complex phenomenon, often referred to in the literature as a double-edged- sword or a mixed blessing (Methot, 2016; Wang et al., 2023). While the benefits of workplace friendships (i.e., increased workplace engagement and job performance) are frequently highlighted, studies by Khairy et al. (2023) and Methot et al. (2016) offer contrasting findings on the negative effects of workplace friendship on an employee's organizational citizenship behaviors and task performance. These studies challenge the prevalent view in hospitality research that such relationships are overwhelmingly positive, and underscore the importance of replicating them to either confirm their results, or explore how specific contextual factors might influence the effects of workplace friendships.

Despite growing awareness of its potential drawbacks, relatively little is known about the conditions under which workplace friendships can lead to negative outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the associated consequences, and the boundary conditions that trigger these results (Methot et al., 2016). For instance, Yang et al. (2021) found that task interdependence moderates the relationship between workplace friendships and identity conflicts among Chinese hoteliers, with higher task interdependence intensifying the negative effects of friendship on

identity conflict. This suggests that maintaining workplace friendships requires a balance of trust, support, and self-disclosure, which, if mismanaged, can lead to issues of favoritism, conflict of interest, or breaches of confidentiality—particularly when the boundaries between ‘friend’ and ‘co-worker’ become blurred. Thus, further research is essential to deepen the understanding of these dynamics, and resolve the contradictions present in the current literature.

## 5.2. Practical implications

### 5.2.1. The development of friendship at work

The results of this systematic review on workplace friendship present several important practical implications for organizations. The findings suggest that promoting socialization and friendship in the workplace is essential in both hospitality and non-hospitality contexts, as a high degree of workplace friendship is often linked to organization-preferred outcomes (Guohao et al., 2021; Liu, 2022). Establishing a workplace environment where staff members respect and treat each other as friends is critical for fostering effective internal communication (Sias et al., 2020). Open communication within teams allows for initiative-taking, transparent discussions, and the sharing of ideas. Furthermore, friendships among colleagues can help reduce employees’ intention to leave (Asgharian et al., 2015; Rai and Agarwal, 2018a; Ozbek, 2018), significantly lowering the costs associated with recruitment and training. This approach is especially relevant to the hospitality industry, where high turnover is often seen as an inherent challenge.

Sias and Cahill (1998) noted that the transition from coworkers to friends typically occurs through close collaboration, mutual interests, and informal organizational socialization. Therefore, fostering friendships between employees is more feasible in fields such as hospitality, where constant and effective communication among team members is essential (Ahmad et al., 2023). It is recommended that hospitality organizations implement rotating work shifts to offer employees more opportunities to connect and build friendships with the broader team. Additionally, organizing activities such as meals or book clubs during non-working hours will provide further opportunities for employees to form meaningful relationships, which may help reduce workplace deviance (Zhuang et al., 2020). Moreover, management could subsidize company training programs and encourage senior employees to serve as mentors or lecturers for junior staff. This approach not only facilitates knowledge sharing but also promotes the development of friendships among employees (Zhuang et al., 2020).

In non-hospitality contexts, where employees may not interact with colleagues on a daily basis, it is highly recommended that human resources organize team-building events, such as dinners, group meetings, or field trips, to provide employees with opportunities to bond, form friendships, and increase retention. Sias et al. (2004) suggested that grouping employees with similar personality traits could enhance the formation of workplace friendships. However, this approach may be impractical and inappropriate, as it is unlikely that only individuals with similar personalities can be grouped together for workplace events. Chen et al. (2012) proposed an alternative strategy using interactive justice to foster workplace friendships. They recommended that organizations implement training and workshops to increase supervisors’ understanding of the positive effects of interactive justice and motivate them to create a workplace atmosphere based on respect, fairness, and dignity, which would ultimately improve team cohesion.

### 5.2.2. Subordinate-Supervisor friendship at work

Friendship between subordinates and supervisors is a complex and nuanced workplace dynamic that can have both positive and negative implications. Ozbek (2018), studying service employees in Istanbul, found that friendships between employees and their supervisors can provide social support and accountability, ultimately reducing engagement in organizational deviance. This effect is particularly pronounced for individuals with low work ethics. Based on these findings, it is

recommended that supervisors establish friendships with employees who display lower work ethics to encourage positive workplace behavior. Similarly, Yang et al. (2021), surveying five-star hotel employees in Macau, asserted that extending workplace friendships beyond work-related ties (e.g., through social networking platforms), can foster mutual understanding, enhance communication, and encourage extra-role behaviors that benefit the organization.

However, compared to the hospitality sector, research in non-hospitality contexts presents more conflicting perspectives on workplace friendships, particularly those involving supervisors. For example, Jiang et al. (2014), in a study on employees’ attitudes toward befriending coworkers on Facebook, found that in general, employees tend to consider friend requests from supervisors to be inappropriate. Women, in particular, were more likely to view such requests as inappropriate, signaling concerns over blurred professional boundaries. Furthermore, Morrison and Nolan (2007), using a qualitative approach, argued that workplace friendships can sometimes become a distraction, and negatively impact task performance. They also warned that the emergence of “special peers” can create workplace tensions and perceptions of favoritism.

Given these mixed findings, it is crucial that managers strike a balance between fostering workplace camaraderie and maintaining professional boundaries, ensuring that workplace friendships contribute positively to employee engagement and organizational success, without compromising professionalism or fairness (Morrison and Nolan, 2007).

### 5.2.3. Mitigating the dark side of workplace friendship

As previously discussed, workplace friendship has a dual effect, receiving both positive and negative attention as a relevant and influential factor in organizational settings. While fostering workplace friendship can yield various benefits, it also carries significant risks that need to be carefully managed. According to Social Exchange Theory (SET), negative outcomes can arise when there is an imbalance in the exchange of resources or depletion of personal capital. In such cases, individuals may feel compelled to return favors or engage in activities they find uncomfortable or unethical due to the friendship (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Although few studies have addressed these potential negative effects, it is recommended that hospitality leaders focus on developing effective supervisory strategies, such as multi-layered supervision, to mitigate the undesirable aspects of this phenomenon.

Additionally, as previously noted, unlike low-task interdependence settings in some non-hospitality contexts, workplaces with high task interdependence—such as those in the hospitality industry—are more prone to identity conflicts resulting from close workplace friendships (Yang et al., 2021). To mitigate these risks while still fostering a positive and supportive work culture, hospitality organizations could implement policies that reinforce professional conduct and adherence to organizational rules. One effective approach is the establishment of a transparent reward and punishment system that specifically addresses misconduct, or ethical concerns arising from cross-boundary friendships (Yang et al., 2021).

## 5.3. Limitations and future research

The systematic review was necessary to touch base with the existing literature on workplace friendship and provide direction for future research. However, it is important to acknowledge several limitations when considering the results. First, despite following rigorous search strategies, there is still the possibility that relevant research has been overlooked due to limitations in databases and search terms, or access to specific literature sources. Second, the sample only comprises studies that were written in English. Hence, future research could consider including studies written in other languages to produce a more complete view of workplace friendship literature and diminish potential biases. The authors also recommend that future research conduct a meta-analysis in this domain to further validate the construct of WPF and

its antecedents and outcomes within organizations. In addition, the author encourages future research to conduct follow-up qualitative studies, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups with hospitality employees and managers, to further validate and refine the proposed model. Specifically, future qualitative inquiries could explore how hospitality employees perceive and experience the interplay between positive and negative workplace gossip, particularly in the unique, high-pressure, customer-facing environment of the hospitality industry. Research questions could focus on understanding the motivations behind engaging in positive versus negative gossip in hospitality settings, and the contextual factors (e.g., organizational culture, team dynamics, leadership style) that influence how gossip is interpreted and responded to. Such qualitative exploration could provide richer, industry-specific insights into the mechanisms underlying these processes, and ensure that the proposed model is grounded in the lived experiences of hospitality employees, rather than being solely theoretical.

## Appendix 1

**Table A1**  
Number of published studies on workplace friendship by journal (total  $N = 112$ )

Publication type	Journal name	N	%
Non-hospitality and tourism journals	Academy of Management Review	1	0.89 %
	Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research	1	0.89 %
	Applied Psychology	1	0.89 %
	Basic and Applied Social Psychology	1	0.89 %
	Business Information Review	1	0.89 %
	Central European Management Journal	1	0.89 %
	Chinese Management Studies	1	0.89 %
	Communication Studies	1	0.89 %
	Current Psychology	4	3.57 %
	Dynamic Relationships Management Journal	1	0.89 %
	Education Sciences	1	0.89 %
	Educational and Psychological Measurement	1	0.89 %
	Employee Relations	2	1.79 %
	European J. International Management	1	0.89 %
	European Journal of Management and Business Economic	1	0.89 %
	Evidence-based HRM	1	0.89 %
	Frontiers in Psychology	6	5.36 %
	Group & Organization Management	1	0.89 %
	Human Communication Research	1	0.89 %
	Human Relations	1	0.89 %
	Human Resource Development International	1	0.89 %
	Human Resource Management	1	0.89 %
	International Association of Applied Psychology	1	0.89 %
	International Journal of Conflict Management	2	1.79 %
	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	1	0.89 %
	International Journal of Manpower	1	0.89 %
	International Journal of Organizational Analysis	1	0.89 %
	International Journal of Psychology	1	0.89 %
	International Nursing Review	1	0.89 %
	Interpersona	1	0.89 %
	Istanbul Business Research	1	0.89 %
	Journal for East European Management Studies	1	0.89 %
	Journal La Bisecoman	1	0.89 %
	Journal of Business & Psychology.	2	1.79 %
	Journal of Business Research-Turk	1	0.89 %
	Journal of Economy Culture and Society	1	0.89 %
	Journal of Emergency Medicine	1	0.89 %
	Journal of Family Business Management	1	0.89 %
	Journal of knowledge management	1	0.89 %
	Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies	1	0.89 %
	Journal of Management & Organization	1	0.89 %
Journal of Social and Personal Relationships	1	0.89 %	
Journal of Technology Management in China	1	0.89 %	
Journal of Vocational Behavior	1	0.89 %	
Kybernetes	2	1.79 %	
Leadership & Organization Development Journal	2	1.79 %	

(continued on next page)

Table A1 (continued)

Publication type	Journal name	N	%
	Management Learning	1	0.89 %
	Management Science Letters	1	0.89 %
	Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences	1	0.89 %
	Mental Health and Social Inclusion	1	0.89 %
	Ordu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi,	1	0.89 %
	Organizacija	1	0.89 %
	personnel Psychological	1	0.89 %
	Personnel Review	2	1.79 %
	Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences	1	0.89 %
	Psychological Reports	3	2.68 %
	Psychology and Behavioral Science International Journal	1	0.89 %
	Psychology Research and Behavior Management	1	0.89 %
	Public Administration Review	1	0.89 %
	Research and Practice in Human Resource Management	1	0.89 %
	SA Journal of Human Resource Management	2	1.79 %
	SA Journal of Industrial Psychological	1	0.89 %
	Service Marketing Quarterly	1	0.89 %
	Sex Roles	1	0.89 %
	Social Behavior And Parsonality	1	0.89 %
	SSRN	1	0.89 %
	Sustainability	5	4.46 %
	The Bristish Psychological Society	1	0.89 %
	The International Journal of Human Resource Management	1	0.89 %
	The International Journal of Organizational Innovation	1	0.89 %
	The Journal of General Psychology	1	0.89 %
	The Journal of Human and Work	1	0.89 %
	The Social Science Journal	1	0.89 %
	The Sociological Review	1	0.89 %
	West African Journal of Interdisciplinary Research	1	0.89 %
	Western Journal of Communication	1	0.89 %
	Work, Aging and Retirement	1	0.89 %
Hospitality journals	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	2	1.79 %
	International Journal of Hospitality Management	6	5.36 %
	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights	2	1.79 %
	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	1	0.89 %
	Journal of Association of Arab Universities for Tourism and Hospitality	1	0.89 %
Conference papers	6th Multidisciplinary Academic Conference	1	0.89 %
	9th International Conference: New Perspectives in Tourism and Hospitality	1	0.89 %
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100.00 %</b>

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- Further reading**
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