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**The importance of effective and healthy communication in workplace**

Capstone Sec B

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**Abstract**

The primary objective of this research is to find out whether friendly atmosphere in the workplace is the key factor for the success of both employer and employee. Firstly, foreign authors’ research regarding this topic was synthesized, as well as to get a better understanding of the situation in Armenia online questionnaire and interviews were conducted. The results of the latters showed that for the most part of the participants, working atmosphere is an essential part of their workplace and friendly atmosphere affects positively on overall working process and results. Results of researches conducted by foreign authors similarly illustrate that in fact friendly atmosphere affects positively on employees and employers. The results show that employees are keen to work in workplaces which offer friendly atmosphere, as in that conditions according to interviewees workers feel respected and protected.

**Introduction**

This study focuses on the role of effective interpersonal and organizational communication in working environments. Furthermore, it aims to reveal the correlation between friendly atmosphere in the workplace and the effectiveness of the professional communication. The research is divided into three parts. Firstly, the studies of different human resource professionals were analyzed. These studies aim to come up with techniques that make the working process and organizational communication more effective and comfortable for employees. The study continues with qualitative and quantitative analysis of the above-mentioned issues in Armenia. The methods used for qualitative and quantitative analysis include in-person interviews and online questionnaire respectively.

Usually adults in America spend 9 hours of their day working. The overall effectiveness of the work depends on an environment the employees are working (Kulkarni, 2016). They spend the most part of their day in the workplace and it is very important to have one that motivates employees to do their best during work time and also provides some positive emotions for the rest of the day. The environment not only has to be friendly in terms of relationships of the workers and employers, but also it should be clean and comfortable for the employees. All these small pieces create healthy atmosphere and employees are willing to do everything possible for their work.

Mainly the organization of the workplace is the employer’s obligation (Hppy, 2018). He/she should be responsible for creating a workplace in which every employee would feel comfortable and exclude the chance of bullying in a workplace or any other phenomenon like that. It might seem strange, but bullying in a workplace is very common issue in the world and it can easily harm the working process. The employer’s task is to control and be aware about everything that is happening in the workplace, no matter it is about the working process or not (O’Moore & Lynch, 2007).

Why this topic is so important? Every workplace is a separate community and each community should be organized in an effective way for the goal or mission of the organization. In this sense, each and every organization has to take reasonable measures to make sure that interpersonal communication in the workplace is on a professional level but also maintains a balance between toxic and overfriendly atmosphere.

**Literature Review**

There are numerous studies which raise issues regarding interpersonal and organizational communication and how they affect both efficiency and employee satisfaction in different industries.

In the cross-sectional research Mohammad Mosadegh Rad and Hossein Yarmohammadian (2006) found out that employee satisfaction is highly correlated with the style of leadership of the employer. Authors utilized the data from two surveys which were given out to individuals working in different hospitals. Both employee satisfaction and leadership style were quantified. It was found out that, in general, managers’ style of management is participative including both task and employee oriented components. This style of management is proved not very effective in the sense of employee satisfaction, since on a 6-point scale, the average employee satisfaction was reported to be 3,26. However, the study has several limitations. First of all, the surveyed employees were exclusively from hospitals and other healthcare facilities. This approach fails to describe various aspects of relationships between the employee and the employer specific to other industries. Other than that, the study was conducted in Iran and can hardly approximate the situation in work environments on international scale.

Toxic work culture and negative environment in workplaces can lead to other serious consequences including bullying. O’Moore and Lynch (2007) report on both incidence of bullying in workplaces in Ireland and the reasons that cause it. Questionnaire consisting from 67 questions was distributed to employees from various industries excluding military and religious organizations. According to the study more than 6.2 percent of the respondents reported a regular bullying at work and around 20 percent experienced bullying irregularly. More than 70 percent of bullied individuals though that the main reason behind bullying was the upper management. This perfectly agrees with the study mentioned before. In addition, authors found out that dramatically bigger number of respondents who experienced bullying reported that they work under a management culture which is highly authoritarian. Another interesting result is that around 60 percent of bullied employees reported that their working environment is negative or difficult. More than 80 percent of individuals who reported bullying in past year did not feel any work recognition. From the results above, we conclude that employees who experienced bullying are working in a negative environment without work recognition. In this sense it is very logical to assume that the efficiency of those employers are rather low. However, separate study needs to be done in order to give estimations regarding the correlation of efficiency of employees with toxic working environment. Overall, survey showed that people were bullied mostly in workplaces were the leadership was hostile and non-friendly. The results of this paper indicate that the research question presented in this paper is very important as every workplace should have such environment where every employee can feel comfortable. If the employee does not feel comfort and support, his/her work will suffer in term of be effectiveness. Similar to the previous study discussed above, the respondents of the survey were not coming from all the workforce sectors. Another limitation is that the results of the research are mainly based on subjective reports and may not perfectly convey the overall situation.

Jeffrey Fermin, who is a major figure in solving issues that are actual in today’s workplaces, suggests his theory how friendly atmosphere and employee happiness lead to better revenue. Author, in his work “Creating a Better Work Environment to See More Revenue” (2018) suggests that bad management leads not only to bad relationship between employer and employees but also costs huge money. For example, in US employees annually lose up to $500 billion because of bad management and atmosphere in workplace. Fermin’s theory states that happy workers increase the quality of customer service. As a specialist in sphere of solving problems in workplace Fermin provides good methods of creating good workplace with happy employees. It can be used in Armenia as well, because the solutions that Fermin suggests are applicable for various companies, whether they provide customer service with face to face interaction with customers or for Innovative Technologies (IT) offices. Author admits that creation of good workplace is very hard task for employers and sometimes they choose wrong methods for that. Mautz (2012), takes this question to the emotional condition of the employees. When relationship start to develop on emotional level of the employees they belong to the place and to people in that place and feel more relaxed. Yong-KI, Young, Kyung, Dong-xin used Corporate social responsibility (2012) to create stability in employees’ relationships. All the factors they chose (economic, ethical, philanthropic, legal) have positive affect on work. It is important to mention that job satisfaction is boosted by ethical and legal factors.

Authors working in this sphere choose different factors that influence the overall atmosphere in workplace. Some concentrate on stereotypes (con Hippel, Kalokerinos, Henry, 2013) and its impacts on workers from different age groups. Miller, Madsen and John studied the employees’ willingness to change their attitude toward the work based on some factors. (2006). In first case, the study showed that older people’s job satisfaction is directly connected with stereotypes, especially when those workers are close to retirement. This point needs attention, because workplaces have workers from different age groups and managers as the responsible persons should consider all the obstacles he/she will have in creating good workplace. In the case of the willingness to change, workers prioritize the relationship with their managers and that factor is the most probable to make them change.

Another group of people who has done research in this sphere state that workplace is at first a place, where everything should be eye-friendly (Heitzman, 2018). Authors indicate some key factors for comfortable environment, such as good kitchen, collaborative space. In this sense, employers should thoroughly evaluate the best practices in terms of proxemics in the workplaces. Authors argue that engaging in some sport activities during worktime gives extra energy to employees.

Analyzing the article of O’Daniel and Rosenstein regarding the professional communication in health care system we can state that lack of collaboration between medical staff may occur to fatal errors, such as unexpected patient deaths or severe injuries. In their article “Professional Communication and Team Collaboration” the authors claim that unclear inside information, misinterpreted telephone orders, delays in treatments and other communicational failures are the key factors of medical errors. Thus the article aims to highlight main aspects which will tend to error-free practice while curing the patients. While speaking about communication one should realize that it is not just verbal-based, tone and attitude towards patient are the key factors to inspire them. Co-operation between physicians, nurses and the other staff fosters professionalism of team members, makes sense of their knowledge and skills. Unfortunately, poor communication and teamwork are still actual in many health care systems. Main reason of unprofessionalism of team is the autonomous activity of every single staff member. The paper emphasizes some common barriers to interprofessional collaboration, like personal values, ethnicity, hierarchy and gender. Particularly, as United States is recognized one of the most ethnically various countries in the world, several communicational problems can arise within many clinicians. In such cultures for example nurses may communicate with patients in different ways. In the health care system most nurses are female and on the other hand physicians are male some common gender differences comes out which of course have an impact on team communication. The upward influence in vertical hierarchies is also a common barrier to efficient collaboration where an employee perceives that his co-worker is closed to communication. In addition, nurses who are recognized as the lower part of the hierarchy sometimes hesitate to show up so frequently and they continue to their work as they used to do without communicating with physicians and thus it negatively influences on patient care.

Discussing the benefits of communication and team work, authors aim that it is so important that there should be common communicational tools where the individuals can express their thoughts. Mentioning the importance of complex information exchange within a scarce period of time the Crew Resource Management (CRM) aviation system is implemented in medical aspect. The latter aims to figure out human factors which results air crashes. CRM programs dive deeply in the understanding of human based errors and stressors and tries to reduce the error of occurrences. As a result of different researches, CRM applications work successfully in decision-making system of health care environments. In practice, it is demonstrated in Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System and Stanford University developed Anesthesia Crisis Resource Management (ACRM). Simultaneously, Eglin U.S. Air Force (USAF) Regional Hospital implemented a program well known as Medical Team Management (MTM) which is based on CRM program and targets communication of team, determines the influence of patient safety system. The practical implementation of MTM program results to a decline of severe incidents.

To sum up, we can conclude that effective teams intent to trust, collaborate and respect each other. In health care system to organize an effective team in terms of communication, willingness and commitment should come from the top down and vice versa. Another way to develop the communication inside medical staff is systematically organize some practices based on common complaints of patients. The result should tend to encourage both formal and informal interaction between different health care groups. There should be also developed and implemented a common set of behavior and policies.

 Business Etiquette Expert Jacqueline Whitmore states the importance of knowing the workers outside of workplace (2015). According to her it is important to know workers, see what interests or hobbies they have. This will help to find mutual things with workers and future cooperation will be more productive and effective. Whitmore pays attention to such detail as saying thank you to workers occasionally. It is a good boost for better working and good relationships with them.

In the third chapter of their book “Business and Professional Communication In The Global Workplace” “The Power of Verbal and Nonverbal Communication in the Global Workplace” authors H.L Goodall, Jr., Sandra Goodall and Jill Schiefelbein referred to the importance of communication in the workplace and its influence on workers. They stated that the presence of others of what one says played key in determining his/her identity in workplace. Major aspect of verbal communication is to understand what role it plays in others understanding of who that person is. Identity is developed based on person’s verbal and non-verbal communication (what he/she says or does). Authors believes that the person who is clearly aware of his/her communication influence in the workplace should use:

1. Clear, strategically unambiguous phrases
2. Strategies for upward and downward communication
3. Inclusive, affirming messages
4. Supportive messages
5. Conscious verbal communication that enhances professional credibility
6. Communication that demonstrates the relationship between words and power
7. Communication that displays a respect for differences in the way men and women communicate

Moreover, authors related how bad communication with the personnel and bad supervising affect employees. They used the data by Greensboro News and Record (2000) which showed that for the majority the reason why they have changed their job was bad supervising instead of low pay.

Authors also indicated the importance of good workspace organization. They believe that for creating optimal workspace the worker should

1. Minimize the display of personal life. One family photo is enough
2. Display professional accomplishments: diplomas, certificates and diplomas
3. Keep workplace clean

**Statement of central Research Question**

It is widely accepted that employee happiness affects positively on the overall success of both companies and their employees. This research project aims to reveal the peculiarities of both interpersonal and organizational communication in the workplaces and how friendly atmosphere affects those.

**Methodology**

The methodology for the project includes both quantitative and qualitative analysis to provide the most accurate and objective answer to the research question.

The quantitative research will include an online survey (Appendix 1) using social networks. The survey will target people with more than one year of experience and will be anonymous for participants to be free to answer the questions candid. The questionnaire is aimed to find out how people in Armenia are satisfied with the atmosphere in their workplace and how that atmosphere affects their willingness to work. The first part of the survey will ask about the working experience of people taking part in it, the workplaces they have changed during that time and the reasons for that. Second part of the survey will mainly be addressed to the atmosphere of the workplace of the participants and how it affects them.

As was mentioned the survey will include question regarding the age of participants, as von Hippel’s study showed that older employees have different viewpoint about the workplace environment and it is important to understand their attitude toward this issue. The next question will be about the working experience of the participants. This will help to see the connection between working experience and the relationship within the workplace. Next comes the question of the number of workplaces changed. Atmosphere in the workplace is not always key factor in changing the workplace, but it has its role in it and the following question will show what part of the participants changed their work because of the atmosphere. In the next questions the participants would have to rate the friendliness of their workplace, give the reasons why their workplaces are not friendly and also state their attitude toward importance of friendly atmosphere in the workplace. Moreover, participants will be asked whether they have been bullied in the workplace and how often.

The qualitative will include the interviews with several people, who has experience of working with corporate culture. Those people are the owners of different companies in Armenia, as well as the Heads of the HR departments of that companies. The interview questions will be about the satisfaction of their stuff with the working condition. They will also be asked about the atmosphere within their companies and the relationships with the employees. The next question will be about the importance of the friendly atmosphere in workplace and how it helps them to succeed.

**Research Findings and Analysis**

To qualitatively understand primary aspects of the central research question, four interviews were conducted with managers, team leads and executive directors of three Armenian companies. The types of economic activity of these companies include logistics, caffeine related production, transportation services and information technologies. First of the interviewees is R. Akobian Alujan who is the co-owner and executive deputy director of the largest coffee-related production company in Armenia. He has 8 years of experience and almost 100 employees under direct and indirect management. Second interviewee is N. Sargsyan who is chief operating officer in a transportation company serving dozens of private schools, hotels and other institutions outsourcing their transportation needs. He has been managing approximately 40 people for already three years. The third participant of the interview is A. Bakhshyan who is the general manager of a logistics company of 30 employees organizing large scale cargo transportation. The fourth and last interviewee is K. Davtyan who is leading a software engineering team in one of the leading IT organizations of Armenia. He has 5 years of experience in managing junior and mid-level engineers. Having relatively big experience in managerial and executive roles, all four participants reported that they encountered conflicts in the workplace during their careers. Participants with managerial roles reported that they encounter conflicts at least once per month. On the other hand, the participant with an executive position said that the frequency was not more than one conflict per year. The latter illustrates that conflicts more often arise in medium and lower-medium levels of the positions. When asked to define what friendly atmosphere is, all the respondents agreed that friendly atmosphere should be such that all the employers can feel protected and respected. In addition, among other central characteristics effective communication within the team was also reported. Davtyan stated that if there is no professional communication within the team even the smallest misunderstandings can lead to serious conflicts. He pointed out that especially in IT industry when matters are a bit complicated effective communication becomes a must in terms of overall success of the project. All of the interviewees agreed that they do not see any alternative on how to handle conflicting situations other than thorough conversation between all the interested parties. Sargsyan pointed out that when the root cause of the conflict is broken down and completely understood the conflict resolves itself. Akobian considered team building activities extremely important in the sense that employees get to know each other and freely share each other’s experience. He added that both team building activities are especially important within new teams since it stipulated interpersonal communication within the employees. While the other two respondents agreed on Sargsyan pointed out that interpersonal relationships in the workplace should remain reasonably professional too. Otherwise, employees who have close relationships with each other often cover each other’s mistakes which results in the degradation of overall quality of the work. When asked about primary characteristics of toxic atmosphere respondents mentioned poor communication and aggressive competition within the team. Davtyan recalls that because of miscommunication within the engineering team, one of the engineer’s whole work of the week was ignored since two engineers took the same task simultaneously, which caused a conflict within the engineering staff and the management.

To the question whether the presence of leisure activities (table tennis, board games) or the organization of the furniture positively affect the working atmosphere the respondents said that comfort and facilities for the employees for a proper rest in the workplace are very important factors in terms of effectiveness. When asked about average age groups under management and what age groups they find easy or hard to manage respondents gave opposing opinions. The average age under management for Akobian was 40. Akobian and Baskhshyan think that the most difficult people to manage are those over 55 years old. All four interviewees agreed that the reason for that is that older people are used to work under stable environment and it is extremely difficult to integrate new procedures in their working environments. In addition, they mentioned that younger people can have hard time to communicate older people which can cause various conflict. On the other hand, Sargsyan finds that younger people can also be very difficult to manage since they are energetic, flexible and often fail to follow fixed rules and procedures.

For quantitative research, online questionnaire was conducted in which participated 118 employees of Armenian companies. Participants were asked about their age, working experience, places where they are working or have worked in the past as well as about the atmosphere of workplace and its influence on them. The majority of the participants were under 40 years old and most of them had a working experience from 1 to 15 years. More than 90% of the participants changed less than three workplaces, meanwhile more than half of them have never changed one. None of them worked in more than five places. Almost half of the participants who have ever changed a workplace, the reason was working conditions. For the other big part, it was the working atmosphere. The minority changed their workplace because their position was cut off or the company was closed. Vast majority (83%) of the respondents reported that they consider their workplaces friendly. To the question how they rate their workplace atmosphere on a scale of 1 to 4, the participants mainly answered 3. The relationships with employers and other employees were the primary reasons among the people who were not satisfied with their workplace atmosphere. Besides that, there were other reasons such as poor communication skills and lack of confidentiality in the workplace. More than 60% of the participants consider friendly atmosphere in a workplace the key factor to their success. For the rest, it is rather not essential or they do not care about the workplace atmosphere. As for bulling, the results show that around 25% of respondents have been bullied in their current or previous workplaces. They mostly reported, that it was a one-time phenomenon and only 4 people were bullied frequently.

According to the results of both quantitative and qualitative data collected via online survey and in-person interviews several key theses can be pointed out. First of all, the statement that workplace atmosphere plays key role in terms of employee satisfaction is confirmed both by interviewers and by the fact that huge majority of survey respondents terminated their employments because of either poor working conditions or atmosphere in the workplaces. Working conditions are mainly related to the facilities and comfort in the workplaces which were considered essential factors by interviewees. Since the overwhelming majority of the survey respondent consider their working conditions friendly, we can deduce that employees do not tend to work in unfriendly atmospheres and want to change their employer as soon as possible. Both employers and employees reported that the reasons behind toxic environment in the workplaces include employee-employee relationships. Two interviewees, holding management roles, reported that aggressive competition between employees often cause toxic atmospheres. To ensure healthy working atmosphere companies should think of mechanisms to reduce the risks of direct competition between employers. To achieve the latter, measures should be taken to increase confidentiality whenever possible and wherever possible in terms of privacy regarding salary rates and other confidential information between employer and the employee. Interestingly, lack of confidentiality was also reported as a reason behind terminating the employment.

Based on the results of the online surveys, one can think that creation of friendly atmosphere positively affects employees and therefore contributes to the overall success of the employer organization. However, this is not the case since one of the interviewees holding an executive position reported that over-friendly working environment makes a suitable ground to develop close interpersonal relationships with groups of employees which in turn results to non-professional working procedures such as not revealing the mistakes of co-workers, covering each other in non-professional manner. These kind of phenomena definitely affect negatively to the overall performance of the organization.

**Conclusion**

The aim of this project was to find the importance of interpersonal and organizational communication in the workplace and friendly atmosphere’s effect on those. During the research the collected data showed that friendly atmosphere plays key role in building strong and healthy workplace, which can be reached via correct organization of interpersonal and organizational communication, which should be balanced to avoid creating overfriendly or toxic atmosphere in workplace. Foreign authors believed that key factor for success is friendly and healthy atmosphere in workplace and employee job satisfaction. The methodology used by those authors was similar to one used in this research. To get better understanding of the situation in each place interviews and questionnaires were conducted. After analyzing collected data authors stated that job satisfaction plays key role in jobs final results.

The situation in Armenia is quite similar to the world. Questionnaire conducted during this research showed that for employees in Armenia working atmosphere had major impact on their willingness to work. Those who were satisfied with their working conditions, mainly with work atmosphere, have not changed their workplace and were in good relations with their employers. This showed the level of interpersonal and organizational communication between employees and employers. Employers have done great amount of work to create workplace where employees would feel comfortable and protected. The data showed that only few people were ever bullied in workplace, which is again the result of good management and relations between employees and employers.

Qualitative research showed that employers tried to find the medium between friendly and professional atmosphere in workplace, which would be beneficial for workers and for the overall results. To reach this medium, employers communicated with their workers frequently to know everyone better. This gave them understanding about each worker and made it easier to communicate with them. Interviewees used different methods to know their staff better. Some organize after work gatherings, some communicate with them during worktime. According to them all methods were effective, as they did not have any toxic situations during their working process at all and if they had, those situations were solved easily via talks and understanding of the employers’ issues. The most difficult obstacle for employers was group of workers who were above fifty, as according to them it is difficult for that age group to learn new things or to get used to new conditions and changes. However, for employers it was not an unsolvable problem, as those who have worked with people above fifty had minimum of three years of experience and found the right way to communicate with those people and their job satisfaction is on the same level as the others.

Research showed that friendly atmosphere in the workplace plays essential role in employee satisfaction and success and organizations should take profound measure to guarantee healthy working environments. Means for achieving the latter include but are not limited to adding workplace rest facilities and organizing team building activities. From the other hand, companies should be able to effectively balance the friendly atmosphere with professional environment, since the research showed that over-friendly atmospheres can also harm professional procedures and the effectiveness of the company. The key to achieve all the above mentioned is the organization of the right communication between employers and employees. Those employers who have found the right way of interpersonal and organizational communication with their staff, did not have any problems within their personnel.

There are several limitations on this particular research. Firstly, the number of people participating in both quantitative and qualitative research was limited. To be able to come up with more effective reflection on the topic one needs to include more employers and employees from a broader range of work force sectors, because the type of economic activity of the company is highly correlated with all the topics that are covered in this research. Secondly, one can anticipate the objectiveness of the responses regarding some of the sensitive questions included in the online survey (e.g. bulling) because of psychological issues within the participants. The methodologies that could enhance the quality of the research include classifying the types of the work-force, since based on whether the every-day routine includes primarily manual work or it requires creative thinking the nature of the discussed aspects changes dramatically.

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**Appendix 1**

Survey on the impact of the working environment to employees

Age Group

Working experience (year)

How many workplaces have you changed?



 What was the reason for changing the workplace?

How friendly would you rate your workplace? (from 1 – 4)

Is your current workplace atmosphere friendly?

If no, what is the problem?

Would you consider friendly atmosphere in a workplace as the major factor to success?

Were you bullied in your workplace?

If yes, how often?

