AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Workers' Attitudes and Perceptions on Workplace Romances: Do Heterosexual and Homosexual Relationships Make a Difference?_____

Thesis Chair: ___Dr. Jim Persinger_____

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This paper examined workplace romances and the effect that these relationships have on

the work environment, the organization, and the peers. The research explores the

formation of these relationships, the motives for engaging in these relationships, the

differences in power distance, and the effect that sexual orientation and gender has on

how organizational peers view workplace romance. These relationships can impact the

interpersonal relationships that employees have at work, and the paper explores the key

constructs (solidarity, trust, deception, productivity, and justice) that are influenced by

workplace romance. Suggestions were then made to management and Human Resource

Professionals to assist in addressing workplace romances within their organization by

creating workplace romance policies and developing a culture that is more open to

romantic relationships.

Keywords: Workplace Romance, Hierarchical, Lateral, Motives, Heterosexual,

Homosexual, Policies, Justice, Deception, Productivity, Solidarity

WORKERS' ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS ON WORKPLACE ROMANCE:

DO HETEROSEXUAL AND HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS MAKE A

DIFFERENCE?

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Romantic relationships are not new to research and have been studied within a wide range of disciplines. However, research done on these types of relationships have primarily been focused on family and health. There has been much debate and research done upon romantic relationships in a workplace setting. Workplace romance research began around the late 1970s, due to the shift of women leaving the home to seek out career paths. Many of the careers women started to enter were primarily dominated by men, since historically organizations were established and organized by men (Devine & Markiewicz, 1990). This brought on a new age for the working person because now both men and women were employed alongside each other. As the number of women entering the workforce increased, there was also an increase in workplace romances because it led to more interaction among genders (Pierce, Byrne, & Aguinis, 1996). In addition, it made it possible to formulate intimate relationships with one another.

Workplace romance is not a novelty topic and has been present in the workplace since women entered the workforce (Aurora & Venkatachari, 2014). Workplace romance is a big topic even in the media (Powell, 1998). Sexual behavior and workplace romances seem to be an increasing phenomenon within organizations that needs more attention from the academics (Biggs, Matthewman, & Fultz, 2012). However, it should have a larger presence in the literature than it does, especially since individuals are focused on advancing their careers by working longer hours instead of progressing their personal lives. It is only when they are stable in their career, will most get married (Biggs, Matthewman, & Fultz, 2012; Powell, 1998; Powell & Foley, 1998). Since the individuals

are focusing so much on their careers, the most conceivable place they will find their romantic partner is at work. The odds are in their favor since there is almost an equal amount of men and women working, which creates more opportunity to develop a romantic connection with a colleague. In any case, many individuals are beginning to partake in workplace romances, and these relationships lead to implications for both the couple engaging in the relationship, their colleagues, and the organization. These implications focus on attitudes, perceptions, and group dynamics that affect workplace romances. The literature review explores the different types of workplace romances, the formation of these relationships, and how gender effects the perception and attitudes toward these romances.

Workplace romance is very much present in the day-to-day professional lives of individuals. Yet, the topic remains taboo for researchers because it seems inappropriate for some scholars to research and discuss sexual relations within the workforce, especially when typical research about the workforce focuses primarily on power, workplace norms, justice, and ethics. Professional research tends to stray from love, sex, and family relationships that can result in workplace romances (Powell & Foley, 1998). However, it should be a topic for discussion especially since it has become a widespread organizational issue because it influences work-related factors such as job productivity, managerial decision making, and worker motivation (Pierce, Byrne, & Aguinis, 1996). In addition, workplace romances create gossip, stigma, and attitudes that could be perceived as being either positive or negative depending on the type of relationship, lateral or hierarchical. It can cause backlash for the organization, such as turnover, depending on how the relationship unfolds within the workplace. It could also lead to sexual

harassment lawsuits if the relationship is unwanted (Pierce, Byrne, & Aguinis, 1996).

Lastly, this type of relationship can create animosity towards individuals who engage in

workplace romance due to perceived special treatment, conflict of interest, and biases in

decision making.

Defining Workplace Romance

In the 1970s, workplace romance was defined as a relationship between two

individuals of an organization perceived by others to be characterized as having sexual

relations. In the late 1990s, it was viewed as an actual relationship, opposed to strictly

sexual partners, because there was a level of intimacy and emotional attachment (Pierce

et al., 1996). In the late 2000s, it was defined as a mutually desired relationship involving

sexual attraction between two employees at the same organization (Wilson, 2015). For a

relationship to be considered a workplace romance, both employees involved must be

sexually attracted to one another. In addition, the relationship must not be viewed as

professional or platonic but communicate romantic affection (Cowan & Horan, 2014). A

more recent definition for workplace romance focuses more on flirting, sexual

interactions, intimacy, and a mutual desire between two employees of the same

organization (Biggs, Matthewman, & Fultz, 2012). Workplace romance relationships do

not always lead to dating or a formal relationship, instead it can be limited to just the

sexual or intimate interaction between the two employees (Pierce, Bryne, & Aguinis,

1996). Gutek (1985) also stated that about 80% of employees have engaged in socio-

sexual behavior which includes: flirting, desire, and passionate affection towards their

coworkers. It should be noted that workplace romance relationships are wanted and are

not warranted to be sexual harassment or harassing since it is characterized as a joint

desire (Pierce, Bryne, & Aguinis, 1996). However, the risk of a sexual harassment lawsuit does dissuade organizations to permit workplace romances because some organizations fear that these relationships will lead to unwanted advances.

Across many countries and different organizations, employees have been engaged in these types of relationships. Findings have varied between Wilson (2015), Barratt and Nordstorm (2011), and Cowan and Horan (2014) on the percentage of employees who have either been involved or who have welcomed the opportunity to be involved in a workplace romance. Data collected through surveys have shown that approximately 70% of employees in the United Kingdom have experienced workplace romance and about one fifth of working individuals have met their spouse at work (Wilson, 2015). In addition, Baratt and Nordstorm (2011) have estimated that within a span of one-year about 10 million workplace romances have occurred within the United States, and approximately 40% of employees engage in workplace romances. While other research has reported that about 47% of employees are involved in a romantic relationship at work and about 19% would engage in a relationship if given a chance (Cowan & Horan, 2014). Workplace romance is not a small topic, and it has the potential to impact every working individual and the individual's organization. The number for workplace romances may even rise more if the number of working hours increased, especially in the United States. Biggs and his colleagues (2012) found that due to employees spending more time at work, they are more willing to engage in workplace romances because they do not want to feel like they are wasting their lives. As noted before, individuals are getting married later and working more, therefore, the likelihood of finding their future significant other at work is more probable than outside of work due to less free time and outside personal

interactions. Even with the increase in workplace romances, some companies are looking to have some formal or informal policy in place for these romances.

Workplace Romance Policy

If workplace romances end on bad terms, the organization could risk having to deal with a sexual harassment lawsuit if proper practices and procedures are not established. This usually occurs when one of the two in the relationship is not ready to move on and continues to make advances to try to make amends. However, it should be noted that not all workplace romance separations end in a sexual harassment lawsuit. Even without a lawsuit, a breakup of a workplace romance could cause a mood or climate change within the team, the department, or the organization. It can be difficult to develop a policy for these relationships because it brings to question of what is appropriate to include. Some employees feel that workplace romances should be unregulated, and that couples should be trusted not to create issues within the workplace. They also feel that if an organization were to create a policy against workplace romances it would cause ill feelings and negative responses toward the company (Tengberg & Tidefors, 2016). Most organizations try not to get involved with the employees' personal lives even though these relationships have the potential of having a large impact to the organization (Barratt & Nordstrom, 2011). The Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) reported that about 70% of organizations have yet to develop a workplace romance policy (Barratt & Nordstrom, 2011). Through a survey conducted by SHRM (2013), it was found that of the organizations which do have policies, almost all prohibit the relationship between a supervisor and a direct report, between employees of a significant rank difference, and employees who report to the same supervisor.

It is important to have a policy in place for workplace romances because it does open up an organization to a variety of issues. Pierce and Aguinis (1997) pointed out that if a relationship ends poorly it can harbor many negative feelings and put the company into some uncomfortable situations. They gave some scenarios of potential outcomes. The first one is to get revenge on the individual who ended the relationships by accusing the supervisor or subordinate of sexual harassment; this could be likely if the individual had a job-related motive for the relationship. This scenario may be an extreme, but a policy would at least put in a format to investigate these claims before acting on them. The second scenario is a subordinate terminating the relationship with a supervisor and the supervisor trying to rekindle it. Since they both work in the same area, it could be hard for the subordinate to avoid the supervisor's advances. The last scenario they provided was a termination or relocation of subordinate to avoid any negative feelings or outcomes from the breakup (Pierce & Aguinis, 1997). Human Resources or management may terminate an employee if he or she starts to decline in performance or disrupts the work environment post-breakup.

The research on workplace romance is in a consensus that it is very important to have some policy established for hierarchical relationships, since these relationships have the most effect on the company and its peers. If they do not have a workplace romance policy established, it could be accused of being unjust or gender-biased depending on how it addresses workplace romances. Without having a policy, it allows for subjectivity to interject in the process of addressing issues that arise. A policy creates a standardized procedure for what is allowed and how to address workplace romances. Once a policy is established, then the company can determine the repercussions of breaking the policy

especially for hierarchical relationships. SHRM (2013) suggests that any punishment given to an employee for breaking a policy should be based on an employee's rank within the organization. Through a survey, conducted by SHRM, on consequences for breaking policy, they found that employees were terminated, transferred to a different department, or asked to attend counseling sessions (SHRM, 2013). The problem with consequences for these romances is that they usually affect the women more than the men (Riach & Wilson, 2007), especially if a woman is to be terminated first, since they are less valuable (Riach & Wilson, 2007; Powell, 1986; Pierce, Bryne, & Aguinis, 1996).

Not all companies are going to have a robust workplace romance policy that has a procedure for every situation. Most are going to be bare minimum with a few outlined points to follow, but overall, they will be limited. Doll and Rosopa (2014) suggested that organizations focus on what elements play a role in the formation of workplace romances and how to prevent them before a policy would even come into effect. This way organizations do not need to have robust, fine detailed policies for workplace romance. One element to the formation of these relationships is interactions between coworkers and supervisor because an interpersonal relationship is able to form. If an organization made a point to try to limit the interaction between coworkers and supervisors, it could inhibit interpersonal connections. This prevention of interaction is not feasible to enforce in an office setting because it is important to do jobs efficiently. Another element is the personality of employees because it effects how individuals interact with one another. Doll and Rosopa (2014) suggests reviewing personality in the selection process and hiring individuals who were more conscientious because they would be more mindful of the rules. In addition, they would be less likely to engage in counterproductive work

behaviors, so they be more likely to avoid workplace romances (Doll & Rosopa, 2014).

The elements given by Doll and Rosopa to help inhibit workplace romances' formations

are not a guarantee that workplace romances will not occur. Boyd (2010) suggests that

organizations prohibit workplace romances based on the fear of a sexual harassment

lawsuit. Companies try to prohibit romantic relationships in the workplace to eliminate

the chance of having a sexual harassment lawsuit. But prohibiting romantic relationships

would not prevent lawsuits because employees are usually reluctant to disclose personal

affairs to management. A "Love Contract" is another way for companies to try to prevent

lawsuits from romantic relationships at work. Employees who are engaging in a

workplace romance are asked to sign a "Love Contract" affirming that they will not bring

a sexual harassment case to the organization at any time in the relationship (Boyd, 2010;

Pierce & Aguinis, 1997). In addition, these contracts are meant to also ensure that the

relationship is consensual for both parties. If the company is able, the contract dictates

that if the relationship should end, one of the individuals involved in the relationship will

agree to have his or her office moved to another area in the building (Pierce & Aguinis,

1997). The principle target for workplace romance policies is hierarchical relationships

because the power distance can create many issues for the organization and workers.

Workplace romance policies are difficult to implement especially since

companies have no control over their employee's personal lives. Companies should be

aware of workplace romances occurring in their organization and should have a

standardized procedure in addressing the relationships if they become disruptive to the

work environment. The policies should not be put in place simply to avoid sexual

harassment lawsuits. Instead, policies should be put in place to have expectations for

employees to behave professionally in the workplace and not allow personal affairs to interfere with their productivity.

Hierarchical and Lateral Workplace Romances

Workplace romances can lead to negative attitudes and perceptions from co-workers especially if there is a power distance present. There are two types of workplace romances, lateral and hierarchical. Lateral relationships are between two employees who are on equal levels, usually coworkers. Hierarchical relationships are between two employees who are at different power levels within an organization, usually being a manager and a subordinate (Wilson, 2015; Barratt & Nordstrom, 2011). Hierarchical and lateral workplace romances influence attitudes, morale, and productivity (Pierce, Bryne, & Aguinis, 1996). In general, hierarchical workplace romances are perceived more negatively than lateral workplace romances (Pierce, Byrne, & Aguinis, 1996; Powell & Sharon, 1998; Biggs, Matthewman, & Fultz, 2012). It has also been suggested that hierarchical relationships pose a threat to the existing power structure of the organization (Powell, 1986).

Hierarchical Relationships.

Hierarchical relationships can be very problematic for work groups because it effects the trust and perceived fairness of the subordinates outside of the relationship. Many of the coworkers may view a hierarchical relationship as an exploitation of each participant for the other's personal gain (Biggs, Matthewman, & Fultz, 2012). In addition, hierarchical relationships are perceived as being disruptive in the workplace which results in a low tolerance for these relationships. Research by Powell (1986) revealed that the next generation of managers, who were currently business students and

MBA students at the time of the study, looked down upon romantic relationships between supervisors and their subordinates. In addition, women were more likely than men to disapprove of a supervisor showing sexual attention to their subordinate. In general, women react more negatively towards workplace romances than men. In research done by Jones (1999), it was found that women and men are equal in their attitudes of finding love at work. However, women react more negatively than men do when their supervisor is in a romantic relationship with their team member (Jones, 1999). Biggs and his colleagues (2012) interviewed 21 entry-level employees and 15 managers and found that both groups were against hierarchical workplace romances. Both groups viewed hierarchical romances to be the most destructive to the organization. In addition, they were unconcerned about the motives of the subordinate, but instead were more focused on the favoritism from the supervisor that the relationship presented (Biggs et al., 2012).

Promotions and raises can be a conflict of interest when lower employees are engaging in workplace romance with a decision maker. Depending on who the superior is in a hierarchical workplace romance, he or she may have the ability to give unwarranted promotions and raises to his or her significant other. Tengberg and Tidefors (2016) found in their research that participating in a hierarchical relationship could jeopardize the lower status employee's chances of getting promotions and thus creating a career barrier.

An example of this is World Bank, in the UK, where Paul Wolfowitz gave his girlfriend a raise within the organization and neglected to give any other employee a raise. The bank received so much scrutiny from this situation that Mr. Wolfowitz was forced to resign from his high-profile position (Labour Research, 2007). The World Bank

is not the only organization that received backlash from a hierarchical relationship, and it probably will not be the last.

Many organizations have no way of preventing hierarchical workplace romances and some choose to ignore the relationships. About 70% of employees feel that these types of relationships should not be permitted in the workplace and there should be policies created to enforce this restriction (Barratt & Nordstrom, 2011). Organizations need to develop policies that restrict hierarchical relationships or develop a protocol to handle these relationships that become problematic. Organizations need a process established to address workplace romances for two reasons, legal costs and organizational climate. Organizational climate was touched on previously in the section and focused on attitudes towards hierarchical relationships. Legal fees and large settlements can also be very costly to a company when it must go to court for a sexual harassment lawsuit, especially if it is associated with hierarchical romances. Companies try to limit their liability for sexual harassment lawsuits by generating policies for workplace romance relationships. The policies are meant to develop protocols that employees can trust in and know that workplace romances will be addressed fairly. Overall, the goal for the creation of these policies is to maintain employee morale and to create legal defense for the company (Powell, 2001).

Also, in hierarchical relationships, women are perceived more negatively for their motives to engage in workplace romances from their co-workers and the organization. Women are viewed as using a hierarchical workplace romance relationship for organizational rewards which cause co-workers to be hostile, cynical, and disapproving of the relationship (Anderson & Fisher, 1991). In general, women tend to be the low-

level individuals in the relationship due to the low number of women in managerial roles (Powell, 2001). Therefore, women are more frequently fired for engaging in workplace romances due to the fact they have a lower status than their partner (Mainiero, 1986; Anderson & Fisher, 1991; Powell, 2001). Anderson and Fisher (1991) also found that within their research comparing men and women in workplace romances, women were perceived as being more motivated to engage in workplace romances for job-related reasons. The research found that women were perceived ten times more likely than men to engage in workplace romance to exploit their sexuality for job-related gains. While men in the study were perceived two times more likely than women to engage in workplace romance for ego gratification.

Lateral Relationships.

Lateral relationships do not present the same risk of exploitation (Barratt & Nordstrom, 2011). Devine and Markiewicz (1990) found that organizational peers reacted more positively to workplace romances when the relationships were between two employees with equal status. Lateral relationships typically do not cause tension within the organization because the relationship is not threatening. Instead, work groups tend to be more accepting of lateral relationships when the couple shares equal amounts of power (Mainiero, 1986). Since they are equals, neither one is able to give any advancement within the company. In addition, when they exchange resources with one another, it is solely focused on personal issues or tasks and not related to career benefits (Anderson & Fisher, 1991). Exchange of resources can take place both in a personal and task domain. However, in hierarchical relationships, there is a career domain, which can influence career outcomes, such as sexual relations for a promotion. This creates an unfair

advantage to the individuals who are involved with the workplace romance.

Organizational peers are against the abuse of power, which is apparent in hierarchical

relationships, especially if these power behaviors include favoritism, ignoring complaints,

promoting others, and flaunting their power for the other's benefit (Quinn, 1977).

Mainiero (1986) reported that if a workplace romance is exhibiting exploitation behavior,

organizational peers will try to sabotage the relationship to establish justice and equity

within the work group again. However, if the workplace romance relationship is not

posing a threat to the work group, they will leave the relationship alone. The research

found that when relationships do not pose a threat or exhibit exploitation behavior, the

work group is more productive and communicates more effectively (Mainiero, 1986).

Gender and Workplace Romances

Treatment of individuals who engage in workplace romances differ depending on

an individual's gender. Gender does play a role on how co-workers will react to a

workplace romance. Devine and Markiewic's (1990) research focused on the difference

in perceptions that co-workers had towards the males and females within a workplace

romance relationship. It was found that co-workers tend to perceive females more

negatively than males, especially when they are in a high-status position within an

organization. Organizational peers were more resentful towards a workplace romance

couple when the female held a higher position than the male. In romantic relationships,

co-workers perceive male as being more trustworthy and better willed, while they

perceive females as less caring and trustworthy. This is especially true when a woman is

dating her superior (Tengerberg & Tidefors, 2016). Females generally receive more

negative backlash and stigma for engaging in workplace romances. This is especially true

for women in high-status positions because engaging in a workplace romance increases her risk of losing her job (Devine & Markiewic, 1990). Men are not perceived as negatively as women. They are perceived as behaving like a typical man and not in a professional manner (Boyd, 2010). Devine and Markiewicz (1990) also found that organizational peers, who witness a workplace romance where the female holds higher-status position than the male, were more resentful, disloyal, disrespectful, and chastised the couple. Overall, the main idea taken from the research regarding the differences between genders in workplace romances is that gender plays a significant role in the perceptions and judgments from organizational peers.

Gender inequality is not a new topic to researchers or the workforce. A big topic in gender inequality is the differences in compensation packages between both men and women. Men are paid more than women. Gender inequality is also apparent in workplace romances because men are treated more fairly than women (Tengberg & Tidefors, 2016). It is risky for women to engage in workplace romances because they are usually the ones to be terminated, gossiped about, or moved to another department (Anderson & Fisher, 1991; Jones, 1999; Powell, 1986; Quinn, 1977). This is especially true for women who hold lower-level positions within the relationship because they are easily replaceable (Mainiero, 1986). Men, on the other hand, are not regarded as negatively nor received as harsh a punishment for being involved in workplace romance relationships. Whereas women are subjected more to stereotypes for their behavior such as using the relationship to climb the ladder of success (Anderson & Fisher, 1991; Powell, 1986; Mainiero, 1986). Men are just perceived as using workplace romance relationships to satisfy their ego or to show their power (Powell, 2001). Men hold more power in the organizations so the

repercussions for being involved in a relationship are not as taxing to them as it would be to women. In addition, the power structure in the organization favors men over women because men typically move up the ladder faster and hold higher positions within an organization (Jones, 1999). The research that has been conducted on workplace romances has shown that the gender of the participant effects his or her organizational peers' perceptions and judgments on the relationship. These relationships can also affect the way an organization makes decisions on terminations or promotions.

Overall, men are more likely than women to view sexually ambiguous incidents as appropriate work behavior (Gutek, 1985). In Gutek's research, he found an apparent gender gap in the perception of having sex. Men and women were asked if they would like to have sex at work, and it was found that women were insulted while men were flattered by the question. In general, women and men view sex differently at work. The gender gap could exist because women are afraid of being viewed negatively by co-workers, and they have more to lose in the relationship.

Homosexuals in the Workplace

Workplace romances are not limited to heterosexual couples. Homosexual couples are also assumed to be engaging in workplace romances, but are not as public about their relationships with organizational peers. There is an underwhelming amount of research and testimonies from homosexuals who have experienced workplace romances (Embrick, Walther, & Wickens, 2007; Powel & Foley, 1998; & Rumens, 2008). As society becomes more accepting of homosexuals in organizations, there may be an increase of homosexual workplace romance relationships within the workplace. The perceptions of homosexual workplace romances are limited, but to overcome this

limitation, researchers could look at perceptions toward homosexuality in the workplace. Homosexual workplace romances may be perceived negatively by co-workers due to the established negative attitudes and perceptions already surrounding homosexuality. For example, heterosexual lateral relationships are perceived more positively than other relationships, while homosexual lateral relationships are perceived equally as negative as hierarchical relationship for both sexual orientations (Barratt & Nordstrom, 2011).

Friskopp and Silverstein wrote a book on the struggles and discrimination that homosexuals encounter and experience in a workplace setting. In a survey administered by Friskopp and Silverstein (1995), 37 participants responded that they believe their sexual orientation did affect their careers. Some were subjected to blackmail, physical and emotional abuse, or missed professional opportunities because their co-workers and the company did not agree with their sexual orientation. To decrease the abuse and discrimination some homosexuals received, they choose to behave heterosexually by changing the way they dressed and interacted with others. Homosexual males started to dress more masculine while homosexual females dressed more feminine, and both changed the way they interacted with the opposite sex by flirting or dating them. Some homosexuals decided to appear more heterosexual to ward off homophobic behavior from others (Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995; McNaught, 1993). Homophobia can lead to individuals treating homosexuals differently or behaving violently towards them. Homophobia can be a reason why the workplace does not experience many open homosexual workplace romances because the couple may be afraid of the reaction and treatment from their peers. There is a risk that a workplace romance could cause even more discrimination and abuse for the homosexual couple.

Heterosexism could also play a role in the limited research on homosexual workplace romances because it is the belief that everyone is or ought to be heterosexual (McNaught, 1993; Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995). It creates the assumption that everyone is the same in their sexual orientation, which establishes an environment where anti-gay comments or jokes are not perceived as being offensive. The person making the offensive comments might not realize that he or she is making an individual, who identifies as being gay, feel uncomfortable because they perceive him or her as heterosexual if he or she has not shared their sexual orientation. Heterosexism creates a naivety that homosexual workplace romances are strong friendships instead of intimate affairs. As sexual orientation becomes more accepted, the complacency of such behaviors has started to decline as workplaces develop towards being more diverse and inclusive. In a survey done by Friskopp and Silverstein (1995), a large majority of gay men and almost all the lesbian respondents said that they would object to such anti-gay slurs and not necessarily have to reveal their sexual orientation. Slowly, homosexuals are "coming out" more frequently at work, especially if the organization has an anti-discrimination policy (Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995; McNaught, 1993). As of recently, more homosexual professionals are standing up to heterosexism and are speaking out against the anti-gay slurs and discrimination they are experiencing. Organizations are making the shift to educate its employees and to create a more inclusive environment (Ng & Rumens, 2017).

Even with more individuals speaking out against heterosexism, homosexual relationships still have a higher likelihood to experience more prejudices and negative attitudes than heterosexual relationship. Research done by Barratt and Nordstrom (2011) explored the area of sexual orientation and found it has a signification influence on the

perceptions of the organization. Overall, homosexual relationships are perceived more negatively compared to heterosexual relationships. However, lesbian relationships were perceived even more negatively than their male counter parts (Barratt & Nordstrom, 2011). The reason for the difference between the two genders is because females endure more stereotyping. Male homosexuality has also been mainstreamed through television shows (*Glee* and *Will & Grace*) and female homosexuality remains a taboo subject (Barratt & Nordstrom, 2011).

Even though lesbian workplace romances are perceived negatively, research by Friskopp and Silverstein (1995) found that lesbians were more likely to partake in workplace romances than homosexual men. Gay males seldom engage in workplace romances because there is a potential risk for an increase in discrimination. Gay men have more opportunities to meet other gay men outside of work. Gay females have a harder time finding a partner since they are met through mutual interests and friends (Firskopp & Silverstien, 1994). In addition to their findings, it was reported that roughly half of the lesbians surveyed had already had a workplace romance in the past and the relationship was long-term (Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995). Interestingly, though, the research revealed that none of the lesbians came out to their co-workers or their office about their workplace romance; it is assumed, though, that others knew about these relationships. Aside from research done by Friskopp and Silverstein, all other research is focused on attitudes and prejudices that others have towards homosexuals in the workplace.

Motives and Types of Workplace Romance

There are three different motives to having a workplace romance: love/companionate motives, job/mutual motives, and ego/fling motives (Powell & Foley, 1998; Pierce & Aguinis, 2001). These three motives are overarching themes as to why individuals engage in these workplace romances. Job motives pursue promotions, job security, and power. Love motives pursue long-term companionship or desire for intimacy. Lastly, ego motives pursue adventure, power and confirmation of their own self-importance (Powell, 2001; Powell & Foley, 1998; Tengberg & Tidefors, 2016; Wilson, 2015). Each motive has its own effect on how others will perceive the relationship. The motives will also influence the type of relationship the workplace romance will be. Overall, motives play a large role in the development of workplace romances and more than one can be present in a relationship.

Motives should not be used to totally define workplace romances. Powell and Foley (1998) argue that they are only a small part of the workplace romance relationship. They agree that there are many different types of romantic relationships in the workplace, but there are five types of relationships that most likely will occur. The different types of workplace romances are a combination of motives put together to recreate a relationship: (a) companionate love, where the motive is pure love, (b) passionate love, where love and ego are the motivators, (c) fling, where the relationship is motivated by ego, (d) mutual user, where the lovers are motivated by the job-related benefits each will receive, and the last (e) utilitarian, where the subordinate is engaging in the relationship for job-related motives and the supervisor engages for ego related motives (Doll & Rosopa, 2015; Powell & Foley, 1998). The type of relationship can influence attitudes and perceptions

more than actual motives because the behaviors of the relationship is more visible. For example, organizational peers can observe a utilitarian relationship through compensation raises or assignment of a desirable project. Organizational peers may feel slighted if their supervisor is showing extra attention or displaying his or her authoritative power over their significant other. Organizational peers could ostracize the couple if the couple is using their workplace romance to increase their chances of getting promoted or receiving a raise in the future. Not all workplace romance relationships are developed for personal gain; some are sincere in nature, and this is noticeable, too. The perceptions of workplace romances can have a large effect on how the romantic relationship will be accepted by others.

Workplace romance relationships can lead to positive and negative outcomes for the organization, the team, and themselves. Some workplace romances encourage the couple to have an increase in job involvement, engagement, and motivation because their romantic relationship was developed at work. The positive behaviors associated with workplace romances can help decrease the amount of negative perceptions and attitudes organizational peers have toward these relationships. Individuals in workplace romances tend to take on more responsibility, have higher job satisfaction, and are more motivated to work. In return, it lessens the work for their peers and makes for a healthy work environment. There are many benefits to workplace romances, but it can still lead to a decrease in work morale if the relationship is hierarchical (Maniero & Jones, 2013). The organizational peers' sense of jealousy and unfairness developed from the workplace romances can have a negative effect on productivity, morale, and motivation. Lateral relationships are more accepted by peers than hierarchical relationships, and lateral

workplace romances are associated with more positive outcomes. The outcomes for workplace romances can be predicted by the type of relationships.

Formation of Workplace Romance

During an individual's career, he or she is likely to witness or to engage in a workplace romance. With an increase of women in the workforce, it makes workplace romances more plausible in occurring (Mainiero, 1986; Powell, 2001; Quinn, 1977). Workplace romances can be between leaders and subordinates, mentors and protégés, or group members, but the formation of these relationships varies (Powell & Foley, 1998). Work lives are changing compared to how it was a few decades ago. Both men and women have their own careers and are not reliant on one another to make ends meet. Employees are working longer hours and are focusing more on their careers than previously (Pierce, Bryne, & Aguinis, 1996; Powell & Foley, 1998). The changes that the workforce is experiencing helps expand the possibility for workplace romances to occur. A leading factor for this is the long hours that employees do at work. Longer hours at work lead to more physical interactions due to close proximity of the office space. Many researchers agree that the hours held at work plays a large role in workplace romances because the long hours could increase the chances that employees are still single. Biggs, Matthewman, and Fultz (2012) suggested that the longer employees are around each other, the higher the likelihood that a romantic or sexual relationship will form. Anderson and Fisher (1991) also stated that workplace romances are virtually unavoidable due to the long hours at work. Lastly, Aurors and Venkatacharis (2014) believe the workplace is a natural place for romance to occur since professionals are spending more time at work than at home. Aurors and Venkacharis also point out that workers interact more with their

coworkers than they do with their own spouses since employees spend a lot of time at work. All these factors can contribute to a perfect environment for workplace romances to occur and be maintained by employees.

Proximity is a starting point for workplace romances to form. Without an opportunity to interact and form a connection, there is no opportunity to form a romantic relationship (Pierce, Bryne, & Aguinis, 1996). Proximity assists in workplace romances because it allows for familiarity among workers and the sharing of ideas that generate positive feelings (Anderson & Fisher, 1991). Ultimately, proximity is one of the prime factors for attraction because of the repeated expose, especially since teamwork and group collaboration are very important for millennials and new generations.

Proximity can vary depending if the organizational peers live near each other, if they are constantly assigned to the same work groups, and if they only occasionally see each other (Pierce, Bryne, & Aguinis, 1996; Powell & Foley, 1998). There are three types of proximity which are: on-going geographical, on-going work requirements, and occasional contact. On-going geographical proximity is when organizational peers and supervisors share either the same office space or is located fairly close to one another. An example of on-going geographical proximity is a secretary and a boss developing a workplace romance by developing a personal relationship through sharing personal aspects about their personal lives. On-going work requirements is when organizational peers attend trainings together, travel on business trips together, and supervise other employees within the same department. An overnight business trip creates more of an opportunity for an individual to develop romantic feelings for a peer as opposed to working together in the office. Overnight business trips allow for more causal

interpersonal interactions between organizational peers that would not be appropriate at work. The last type of proximity is the occasional contact which includes individuals who work in the same organizations but do not interact with one another on a daily basis (Quinn, 1977).

Each type of proximity has its own effect on workplace romance and the likelihood of a relationship forming. Surveys, focusing on the formation of workplace romances, found that 94% of workplace romances are between individuals in the same building, 68% of workplace romances are between individuals in the same vicinity, and 34% of workplace romances are between individuals who are in the same or adjoining offices (Pierce, Bryn, & Aguinis, 1996). Quinn (1997) surveyed how likely the different types of proximity effected the formation of workplace romances. His survey found that on-going geographical workplace romance occurred 63% of the time and on-going work requirements workplace romances occurred 77% of the time. Based on the data, proximity of employees has a huge impact on workplace romances. Mainiero (1986) states that working closely to another employee increases the chance of personal interaction which could result in a higher likelihood to develop romantic feelings and physical attraction.

Intensity is need for the development of workplace romances. Intensity occurs when employees share and pursue similar goals with one another (Mainiero, 1986). This creates a sense of excitement and comradery that can generate mutual affinity (Anderson & Fisher, 1991). In addition to being brought together to pursue similar goals, individuals are repeatedly exposed to one another as they explore similar events and trainings within the organization. This repeated exposure allows for familiarity and a mutual attraction

due to common interests and shared experiences (Jones, 1999; Pierce, Bryne, & Aguinis, 1996). Organizational peers would be able to interact with each other more effectively due to their shared experiences and commonalities. Eventually, developing a stronger sense of mutual attraction can develop into a romantic relationship. The last necessary element needed for a workplace romance is physical arousal. Physical arousal is generated by the proximity of the individuals, the intensity of their passions, and the repeated exposure to each other (Pierce, Bryne, & Aguinis, 1996). There are many elements that contribute to the formation of a workplace romance, but the couple needs to be physically aroused and attracted to one another to make it work.

Impacts from Workplace Romance

Workplace romances can have different impacts on the individual, organizational peers, and organization. It can pose a threat to organizational peers or to group dynamics because workplace romances can case a conflict in interest within the workplace (Mainiero, 1986). Workplace romances can potentially lead to the perception of favoritism and create ill feelings among their organizational peers. The perception of favoritism is present in hierarchical and lateral relationships because the couple may select his or her partner's ideas or capabilities over his or her peers. In workplace romances, there is a risk of a breach in sensitive information since the couple may discuss matters which were meant to be confidential (Clark, 2006). The common negative effects of workplace romances are: employee gossip, exploitation, and decrease in productivity, which all could result in low job performance. Positive effects of workplace romances are: an increase in job satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment and potential increase in job performance (Barratt & Nordstrom, 2011). Quinn (1977)

reported that negative outcomes from workplace romance outweighed the positive outcomes. The negative outcomes include slower decision-making, threatened reputation for the team, acts of sabotage against the workplace romance, and redistribution of job responsibility. While positive outcomes for workplace romance include an increase in teamwork, lowered tensions, better communication, and increased group productivity, these were mentioned less frequently in research (Anderson & Fisher, 1991).

In some organizational cultures, workplace romances are not accepted, and it is looked upon negatively by other organizational peers. The organizations that have a more conservative culture are more traditional and typically discourage workplace romances. Whereas, an organization with a more liberal, fast-paced culture, encourages these types of relationships because of the intense pressure and activity that helps stimulate sexual excitement (Pierce, Bryne, & Aguinis, 1996). Some organizations forbid employees from engaging in workplace romances because they fear that the organization will eventually face a sexual harassment lawsuit. This is mostly due to poor breakups where one is not ready to let go and continues to pursue their ex. Prohibiting workplace romances due to the possibility of sexual harassment lawsuits is absurd because of the rarity of these occurrences. Some organizations do not allow workplace romances because of the damage that may occur, as they do not only affect the couple but the surrounding workers and the organization.

Previously it has been noted that some individuals will engage in a workplace romance for professional gain, this is problematic for the organizational peers outside of the relationship, especially if the organizational peers' professional development or advancement is jeopardized because the relationship is with a decision-making superior.

Newly dating couples are usually more distracted and inattentive due to the newness of the relationship. This creates issues for their organizational peers because it increases their responsibilities to overcompensate for the lack of productivity of the couple. In turn, the couple's organizational peers can start to gossip and become distracted because they are annoyed and frustrated with the added workload. This leads to a drop-in productivity for all individuals in the work group (Boyd, 2010). Whether it is the newness of the relationship or the motives behind the romance, workplace romances can have an effect on the productivity of the workers. Attitudes of the organizational peers differ depending on the relationship type. As previously noted, hierarchical relationships are viewed negatively by their organizational peers because they fear that the lower-status employee engaging in the relationship will be treated better than the rest of the group. The organizational peers will assume that the lower-status employee will receive better work assignments, receive more flex time for projects, receive confidential information, or even share private information about the team to the supervisor (Barratt & Nordstrom, 2011).

In Powell's (1986) research on what managers consider appropriate in the workplace, sexual intimacy was seen to have little positive effect on the productivity of the company. It was determined that as long as the romantic relationship was not extreme, nor affecting the productivity of the organization, managers were willing to ignore the relationship. Managers did agree that some form of intimacy was acceptable in the workplace. Powell (1986) also investigated acceptable sexual orientated behaviors by others and found that flirting with a manager or supervisor was considered more negative than dressing provocatively to attract the opposite gender, however women and the MBA

students associated with the study still disapproved of dressing to attract the opposite gender. In addition, Powell found that men were more tolerant of sexual jokes and innuendos than women. Within a workplace romance, women tend to receive a lot more negative gossip for being involved in a workplace romance especially from other women (Powell, 2001). Men are not perceived as harshly since this is how men typically behave. In the study by Powell (1986), it was concluded that women and older MBA students were more opposed to sexual intimacy and romantic relationships at work than undergraduate students and men. It was concluded that women saw less value to these relationships, were less likely to engage in sexual intimacy at work, wanted more managerial interference to discourage these relationships, and believed that an employee's personal life was not the business of management (Powell, 1986). What to take away from to his research is that men are more willing to engage in sexual intimacy within the workplace and have a higher tolerance for sexually orientated behavior than women. It can be inferred that women are less likely to encourage workplace intimacy and romance because women have more to lose within workplace romances than men (Powell, 1986; Powell & Foley, 1996).

Research has also looked at the implications of workplace romances and how it is perceived by different groups of workers such as older workers versus younger workers (Powell, 2001). Some organizational peers felt upset at work due to a workplace romance because the employees in the relationship were being treated differently from the rest. The belief of favoritism causes many organizational peers to assume that they will be passed up on promotions or important projects. Some relationships occur between managers and subordinates, and these specific relationships are the ones that often

receive the negative stigma. Favoritism may not necessarily occur due to workplace romance, but since many perceive it being present, it creates tension within departments. For some organizations, workplace romances can be toxic for the team.

Attitudes of Workers towards Workplace Romance

Workplace romances are not limited to the couple itself, but it also affects the organizational peers surrounding the relationship. Hierarchical relationships can be detrimental to the work morale of the organization or team and can result in an overall decrease of work performance. Workers tend to gossip about the romantic relationships occurring in the workplace, and the discussion can either be negative or positive (Powell & Foley, 1998). Some workers believe that hierarchical romances will lead to favoritism, to pay raises and promotions for the subordinates, and to increasing the subordinate's power (Powell & Foley, 1998). In addition, it can affect employee morale by raising or lowering it depending on how the relationship effects the group (Pierce, Bryne, & Aguinis, 1996). A lateral workplace romance relationship has the power to increase morale, while a workplace romance hierarchical relationship usually decreases employee morale because it creates distrust within the work group. Hierarchical workplace romance relationships are perceived more negatively due to the jealousy and suspicion of favoritism. Overall, organizational peer attitudes are highly influenced by the type of workplace romance relationship and the power that the relationship has to influence decision-making due to the status held by each individual.

CHAPTER TWO

CONSTRUCTS

Workplace romance is difficult to prevent and in some cases is inevitable. In the following sections, the most important constructs at play in workplace romance are explored and reviewed to explain the impact that these relationships have on the organization and its peers. These constructs are solidarity, trust, deception, productivity, and justice. Solidarity is important to the organization since it allows the organizational peers to feel a sense of belonging within the organization. Workplace romance threatens to dissolve solidarity in the workgroups and creates "us versus them" complex which can cause a divide within the groups. Without solidarity, organizational peers become more distrusting of their colleagues. Trust is also important for organizations because it creates an open environment where employees are able to share ideas and speak their mind in a safe place. Workplace romance causes organizational peers to become less trusting towards these relationships and this creates tension within the workgroups. A lack of trust can make it difficult for peers to work alongside each other. When there is a lack of solidarity and trust, they become more deceptive with information sharing; deception can have huge impacts on the organization's success. If important information is not being fully shared, it could create unnecessary road blocks or interfere with the effectiveness of projects the group is trying to complete. Workplace romance can encourage their peers to behave more deceptively to create a sense of equality in knowledge; deceptive behaviors effect an employee's productivity. Productivity is a very important construct because it effects the organization's success and effectiveness. Workplace romances can be a distraction for both the couple and their organizational peers and cause employees to fall

behind on their responsibilities or to reassign the responsibilities to others. Lastly, justice is a key element to employee morale because it is how the organization addresses decisions and punishments. Workplace romances can skew the perception of justice within an organization because some organizational peers feel that some treatments toward workplace romance are unjust. These five constructs will be explored further within this section to explain how workplace romance interacts with these constructs and how they impact the organization and its peers.

Solidarity

Organizations tend to hire and to recruit based on person-organization fit because it decreases the amount of turnover and increases the amount of organizational commitment (Gautier, 2007). Person-organization fit is defined as compatibility between the individual and the organization (Reich & Hershcovis, 2011). Derous and Wille (2017) adds that person-organization fit contributes to the attractiveness of an organization for an individual, especially if the individual's values, culture, and skills are aligned with the company. Gautier (2007) would argue that person-organization fit indirectly assists in creating an environment for workplace romances to develop. The model of person-organization fit is the compatibility between the company and the employees, essentially the model seeks out similarities and familiarities between the two. These similarities and familiarities help to establish strong interpersonal relationships that may develop into mentorships or friendships instead of workplace romances. Organizations who cultivate strong interpersonal relationships are able to create a more collaborative work environment and have happier employees (Reich & Hershcovis, 2011). Some of positive outcomes for these relationships are lowered stress levels for employees, better

perceptions of management, and an increase in recognition across all levels in the organization. Strong interpersonal relationships also have an impact of an employee's health where they reported an increase in their overall well-being.

Weak interpersonal relationships have the opposite and more negative effect on the employees. They can contribute to individuals feeling ostracized and closed off from other organizational peers, and this has a negative effect on the individual's well-being (Sias, 2014). Professionals who experience weak interpersonal relationships with their organizational peers will be more likely to leave the organization or to report a lower level of job satisfaction. Organizations should strive to create strong interpersonal relationships between their employees to create a more positive work environment. Strong interpersonal relationships bring about a sense of belonging which decreases the change of turnover and leads to higher commitment and team cohesiveness (Reich & Hershcovis, 2011). A sense of belonging creates an environment for employees to be vulnerable and develop stronger relationships with one another. A sense of belonging is solidarity because it refers to the psychological, physical, and emotion closeness in interpersonal relationships.

The types of interaction organizational peers have with their colleagues will determine the level of solidarity they feel towards each other. Organizational peers who only exchange conversations about work and job-related tasks experience lower levels of solidarity than the colleagues who shared more information about his or her personal lives including work (Horan & Chory, 2009). The strongest interpersonal relationships are formed with individuals who have more in common and are more willing to be vulnerable with their peers. Solidarity is important to have in the workplace because it

establishes a sense of belonging and creates a safe environment for peers to express themselves. When an individual is engaging in a hierarchical relationship, solidarity diminishes between the individuals in the relationship and their peers especially if the low-status employee's peers perceived that he or she has a stronger loyalty towards the high-status partner than to his or her peer group. The organizational peers may stop sharing personal information or ideas with someone in a hierarchical relationship because they do not know what will be reported back to their high-status partner. Hierarchical workplace romances will eventually lead peers to pull away from the couple because of the perception of negative motives for the relationship and the distrustfulness of the relationship.

Building a strong interpersonal relationship takes time, but once it is broken, it can be very difficult to make amends. This is especially true if one of the peers feels wronged by the relationship. Solidarity creates a support system, but workplace romance poses a threat to the support system for individuals who engage in these types of relationships. In lateral workplace romances, it is not as difficult to be accepted back into the group and gain support after a breakup. Hierarchical workplace romances, on the other hand, will face more challenges to be accepted back and typically are given less support from their organizational peers post-break. In Riach and Wilson (2007) research, it was uncovered that when a hierarchical workplace romance separates, the organizational peers of the lower-status employee will put pressure on him or her to leave the organization. The lack of support for the lower-status employee is because he or she betrayed the interpersonal relationships within the team by engaging in a workplace romance and disrupted the solidarity of the work environment. The lack of support from

organizational peers is not equal between genders. In Riach and Wilson's research, they found a difference in perception how men and women handled breakups and if they needed support post-breakup. Women were perceived as being over-emotional and unstable after a breakup whereas men were perceived as the opposite and thought to be able to handle breakups more level headed. Due to this perception, women were typically forced to leave the company because they received harsher judgements from their peers and lacked a support group to overcome the breakup and the unfair treatment. The differences in the treatments received by men and women engaging in workplace romances show that there is power in strong interpersonal relationships and workplace romances can have a lasting effect on these relationships. Solidarity is an important element for peers to get along with each other and be effective team members. Workplace romance puts that element in jeopardy.

Trust

Interpersonal relationships are based on trust, and without trust there is a lack of solidarity within the team. Without some degree of trust, individuals would not be able to work efficiently and well together. Within the office environment, professionals trust their peers and their supervisors to behave ethically, fairly, and competently towards others within the organization (Horan & Chory, 2009). It is important that employees have trust in managerial and organizational peer relationships because these relationships can influence interpersonal and group behavior on how each interact with one another. The more an individual trust an organizational peer, the more likely each person will confide in each other and share ideas that can lead to better organizational outcomes. Trust is commonly regarded as a "psychological state that comprises the intentions to

accept the vulnerability based upon the positive outcomes of intentions and behaviors of others" (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998, p. 395). In managerial relationships, it is important to develop a relationship of trust in order to be able to share ideas and try to limit destructive behaviors. Chory and Hubbell (2008) found that if a managerial relationship was built on trust, there was an increase in employee satisfaction for their subordinates and a decrease in deception and hostility towards their managers. When employees feel that their managers are trustworthy, they are more likely to follow their manager's direction and be more productive at work. In an organizational peer relationship, trust creates a more open environment for communication and collaboration between one another (Horan & Chory, 2009). For example, Employee A and Employee B are friends and share a strong level of trust. If Employee A also trusts Employee C, who is not within the original friend group, Employee B is more than likely trust Employee C also. Individuals tend to base their perceptions of others off their friend's perceptions thus creating a platonic relationship of trust (Horan & Chory, 2013). The platonic relationship of trust can be affected by workplace romances if one of the organizational peers in the friend group stops trusting the couple. Eventually the others within the friend group will also.

Workplace romances can be detrimental to established trusting relationships between organizational peers or supervisors. In the research completed by Horan and Chory (2009), it was found that employees trusted peers dating superiors less than they trusted peers dating other peers especially since it was perceived that the employee who was dating a superior had an unfair advantage and received preferential treatment from the superior employee. Gender also effects the level of trust employees have with

organizational peers who are dating superiors. Women in hierarchical relationships are trusted less than men in similar relationships (Horan & Chory, 2009; Horan & Chory, 2013). Organizational peers trust women less in these types of workplace romances because they believe women are typically in workplace romances for job-related gains.

Trust helps facilitate a collaborative work environment. It makes employees feel safe and secure in their role within the organization because they trust that the organization has the employee's best interest in mind. Building trust within a relationship takes time, but it can be easily damaged depending on the circumstances. This is why workplace romances have such a large impact on trust. It can create confusion for the organizational peers on what they can and cannot share with the couple since they are uncertain where the couple's allegiances lie. Trust is very important for the organization's success, and it can have a lasting effect if employees lose trust in the company, their peers, and their supervisors.

Deception

Working interpersonal relationships not only consist of solidarity and trust but also deception through information sharing. Information sharing is vital in an organization to collaborate and be effective within and across teams as well as being able to operate ethically and successfully. Strong interpersonal relationships between organizational peers and supervisors tend to result in receiving more accurate and useful information in a timely manner (Sias, 2014). However, when a coworker or a superior is engaging in a workplace romance, the interpersonal relationships within these teams change. Information manipulation is more likely to occur through deception. Deception is when an individual is deliberately attempting to mislead others (DePaulo, Lindsay,

Malone, Muhlenburck, Charlton, & Cooper, 2003). Workplace romances can create

deceptive behavior where organizational peers tend to be less willing to share or give

accurate information. McCornack (1992) created the information manipulation theory to

help translate how information can be accounted for. It is spilt into four maxims:

Quantity (the amount of information disclosed), Quality (the type of information shared),

Manner (how the information was shared), and Relation (the relevance of the information

shared). This theory suggests that there are a multitude of ways to manipulate information

to deceive others. Organizational peers can pick and choose what type of information

they are willing to share and when they are willing to share it. In a workplace romance,

information runs the risk of being overshared because the couple is more likely to share

confidential or sensitive information between themselves through "pillow talk." This is

extremely problematic because some information is not meant to be shared and some

information is not meant to be leaked out of certain departments (Lickey, Berry, &

Whelan-Berry, 2009). Information sharing in workplace romances can be complicated

since the couple at times is willing to overshare information with their partner while their

organizational peers are more willing to be deceptive with their information. This is true

when the workplace romance is hierarchical. Organizational peers are more deceptive

towards hierarchical relationships than they are toward lateral relationships (Horan &

Chory, 2013).

By being deceptive with information, organizational peers can regain some

balance between themselves and the workplace romance especially if the relationship is a

hierarchical relationship because the couple may have access to more information that

gives them an advantage over their peers and subordinates. In this case, organizational

peers are less likely to indulge accurate or much information to maintain some control over their knowledge. Deception also affects the "rumor mill" because individuals who have been closed off from their organizational peers may miss out in receiving a "heads up" to prepare for organizational changes or new initiatives (Sias, 2014). Gender and sexual orientation have an effect on the organizational peers' deceptive behavior. In research completed by Horan and Chory (2013), they found that there was a statistically significant level of men being perceived as more competent and caring than women and therefore were less likely to be deceived than women. To counter that, lesbians and gays were perceived as being more caring and having a higher character than their heterosexual counterparts. This finding is interesting and shows that there is a difference in perception based on gender and sexual orientation. Heterosexual women are perceived and treated differently when engaging in workplace romances.

Information sharing is important for the organization to operate effectively. When employees practice deceptive behaviors, they are not only hurting the receiver but the organization in its entirety. Individuals who do engage in workplace romances must be aware of deceptive behaviors and try their best to gain the proper information and not hinder anyone else from obtaining the correct information.

Productivity

Employees who struggle with trusting their fellow peers withhold information to stay ahead and struggle to feel a sense of belonging typically show a decrease in productivity and teamwork. Workplace romances can cause a shift in productivity in both the individuals in the relationship and the organizational peers witnessing it. Since workplace romances can generate discussion and speculation about the behaviors and

motives of the couple, organizational peers tend to focus on the gossip of workplace romances instead of focusing on their job responsibilities (Shakeshaft, 1992). Lickey and his colleagues (2009) would argue that productivity within a workplace romance decreases because the couple would rather spend time with one another than complete their assigned job responsibilities. However, the research on productivity and workplace romances have mixed results (Verhoef & Terblanche, 2015).

Some research suggests that productivity decreases during the honeymoon phase (Boyd, 2010) as well as when the relationship ends (Verhoef & Terblanche, 2015). When the relationship has passed the honeymoon phase and has become a more stable, committed relationship, productivity and job commitment increases (Verhoef & Terblanche, 2015). In addition, stable committed couples report that they enjoy their work more and have a decrease in their stress levels (Lickey et al., 2009). In research completed by Verhoef and Terblanche (2015), they studied women who had recently ended a workplace romance in Cape Town, Africa, and found that some of the women experienced a decrease of productivity while others saw no change. One participant noted that she had an increase in productivity since she wanted to compensate for the lack of trust her organizational peers had in her. Riach and Wilson (2007) found similar results in their self-report research with pub houses. One employee stated that he worked harder while in a relationship, so his organizational peers would not view him as slacking. These results do depend on the culture of the organization and how organizational peers and management address workplace romances. In the research of Riach and Wilson (2007), the participants stated that they believed that having workplace romances was a good thing since it showed that the employees were happy at work and getting along with their

peers to create deeper, intimate relationships. They believed that workplace romances increase productivity because employees help in covering shifts or staying at work late to be with their significant other or to get close to a crush. Gautier (2007) found that productivity was affected by workplace romance when the couple could not put their differences aside when working together after a breakup. Riach and Wilson (2007) had similar findings that individuals who had recently ended their workplace romance tended to call in sick more regularly or miss shifts to avoid seeing their former-lover.

The decrease in productivity due to workplace romances is problematic because it starts to impair work performance. Individuals who miss work due to a recent breakup are missing out on opportunities to recreate their interpersonal relationships and gain insight on information that can contribute to improving their job performance (Sias, 2014). The organization needs to be proactive with support systems to assist in post-breakup situations to decrease the chance of turnover and low productivity rates.

Justice

The perception and attitude towards workplace romance, especially hierarchical romances, can be characterized as unjust. Organizational peers feel that these kinds of relationships are unjust because the individuals are benefitted by the status of the higher-level employee. This could mean receiving better project assignments, an increase in favoritism, or more opportunities for promotions or raises. Members of the organization who are not in the romantic relationship may develop feelings of anger or resentment towards the couple due to the inequality of the situational benefits (Horan & Chory, 2013). Organizational peers who witness a low-status employee engaging in a hierarchical relationship, may perceive him or her as receiving more favorable treatment

from the high-status employee and will decide to ostracize the low-status employee. The ostracized employee will then be cut off from developing more interpersonal relationships and miss out on information that could lead to better job outcomes. This type of outcome can occur in both workplace romances and general work relationships (Sias, 2014).

There are three types of organizational justices: distributive (fairness in outcomes), procedural (fairness in the decision-making process), and interactional (fairness on how supervisor communicate to subordinates on organizational decisions) (Chory & Hubbell, 2008; Kassing & McDowell, 2008). Workplace romance interrupts the balance of organizational justice, which is the perception of fairness and evaluations regarding workplace outcomes or processes (Chory & Hubbell, 2008). Workplace romance creates a distrust in the process of decision making and equal treatment for all employees. The perception of organizational justice is not equal across all employees. Instead, the perception of organizational justice is subjective (Kassing & McDowell, 2008) and typically hierarchical romantic relationships skewed the perception of the three types of justices.

In workplace romances, research has supported that organizational peers may perceive and believe that hierarchical relationships are unjust and unfair especially when an organizational peer perceives the better treatment of the lower-level employee to be related to the status of his or her significant other and not from his or her own job performance or job knowledge. When employees perceive situations being unjust, they tend to discuss it amongst themselves instead of addressing it upward. In the research completed by Kassing and McDowell (2008), it was found that when non-managers feel

that the organization is behaving unjustly, they tend to dissent laterally or to friends and family outside of the organization. This is especially true when managers communicate poorly to their subordinates about how and why a decision from the organization was made. When management does not communicate well, employees begin to perceive their supervisor as unethical and untrustworthy (Hubbell & Chory-Assad, 2005). Communication is key to keeping the perception of a just organization. If a decision was made that favored an individual in a workplace romance, the manager would need to communicate fully as to why the decision was made. If they do not, it will reconfirm the illusion of favoritism or preferential treatment.

CHAPTER THREE

DISCUSSION

Workplace romances are always going to be present in the workplace, and it should not be considered a taboo subject or ignored by organizations or research. It is not simply a romantic relationship between two individuals at work without lasting repercussions for others around the relationship. Instead, it can have lasting effects on the organization's effectiveness, employee morale, and job outcomes which should be important to management and the organization. The perception of workplace romances is complex because a lot of factors are at play in shaping the way organizational peers perceive these relationships. Is it a workplace romance between lateral employees or is it a romance between employees ranging in status? Which genders are engaging in the workplace romance? Last, what position do they hold within the company? These questions tie into factors that do effect how workplace romances are perceived and what attitudes organizational peers have towards them.

Lateral workplace romances are more accepted and not subjected to as much scrutiny as hierarchical workplace romances. Women in workplace romances are judged more harshly and observed to be using workplace romance as a tool to continue to move up within an organization. Men are regarded more positively and identified as acting like a typical male if they engage in workplace romance. Lastly, organizational peers are still deciding on their attitudes towards homosexual workplace romances. Currently, gay workplace romances are a slightly more accepted than lesbian workplace romances, but this could be a contribution from gay relationships being more mainstream in the media. Organizational peers need to remember that not all workplace romances occur because an

individual wants a job advancement or that couples get special treatment. Most of these relationships occur because two employees have a mutual attraction for each other and share a lot of commonalities. Organizations need to remember that a majority of workplace romances do not end in a sexual harassment lawsuit, but it should be prepared on how it will address behavior and the negative stigma surrounding workplace romances.

There is a lot of negative stigma around workplace romances that make organizations uneasy and organizational peers distrusting of these relationships. They should not give merit to this negative stigma since workplace romances are natural and occur because organizations are striving to create cultures with likeminded, interesting people. These people work long hours and have a limited amount of time to interact with others outside in order to find love or a mate. Instead, individuals are developing stronger, deeper interpersonal connections with their organizational peers that can turn into something more. The organization needs to be prepared on how it will approach workplace romances to decrease the impact that it will have on the 5 constructs outlined in Chapter Two. In addition, learning to embrace this concept within their organization will help decrease the negative stigma surrounding these relationships, but also, they may want to support their employees who decide to engage in a workplace romance.

Manager Suggestions

Workplace romance is an important topic which managers and human resource (HR) professionals should not ignore. Yet, why should supervisors and HR professional care about workplace romances? They need to understand that workplace romance relationships are not going to go away. Instead, they are on the rise due to an increase

demand in job requirements and organizations' cultures. This means that employees are working longer hours, collaborating more with each other, and being able to create deeper interpersonal relationships that may turn into something more. Managers need to be prepared to overcome the repercussions that occur within the work group when one of their organizational peers engages in a workplace romance.

In other words, why is understanding workplace romance and the consequences important to know and understand? As the workforce becomes more diverse, organizations will see more women taking on leadership roles as well as seeing more diversity in their employees. More employees are coming out about their sexual orientation and more women are waiting to have children, so they can focus on their careers. With all these changes occurring, it does create a shift in how employees behave and express themselves in the workplace. Empowerment and inclusion within the workplace are on the rise and the organizations must have a plan on how to approach these changes. Workplace romance is a part of all these changes and ignoring them within an organization is not going to benefit anyone. Instead, management and HR professionals are going to have to address the shift in solidarity amongst the organizational peers, the distrustfulness that they have in individuals in workplace romances, the deceptive behaviors in information sharing, the decrease in productivity, and the perception of the injustice surrounding workplace romances. There is not one way to overcome all these impacts that stem from workplace romances, but management and HR professionals need to be open to suggestions to lessen the repercussions from workplace romances.

Hierarchical relationships have the most impacts on workplace romances because the higher-level employee within the relationship has more power and influence than employees engaging in lateral relationships. Organizations cannot prohibit hierarchical relationships completely because they will still form secretively. Instead, organizations could move the higher-level employee to either another department or assign them to a different team. This way the higher-level employee does not have the ability to make decisions that would impact their partner's job responsibility or pay. Hierarchical workplace romances create the perception of an elitist group since organizational peers feel like they are not subjected to the same treatment as the couple. They believe that the lower-level employee in the relationship is treated better and has an advantage. This feeling of neglect from hierarchical workplace romances contributes to organizational peers moving away from solidarity, feeling more distrusting, and behaving more deceptive. By moving the higher-level employee to a different department or group, organizational peers will not feel threatened by the relationship and will not need to ostracize the lower-level employee. This move will maintain the balance within the workgroups and maintain the interpersonal connections. management and HR professionals need to create policies and procedures for workplace romances that are transparent to the workforce. This way organizational peers will be able to understand that workplace romances are not affecting decision making or career outcomes for employees.

Policies or standardized procedures should be created and enforced in regards to workplace romance to be consistent across all relationship types, lateral and hierarchical. A standardized procedure on how to address a workplace romance and what will be

tolerated with workplace romance can give organizational peers a sense of justice. Currently, organizational peers feel like the treatment of workplace romances are unfair and unjust because special treatment does occur within certain relationships. management and HR professionals need to ensure organizational peers that there is a check and balance in procedures on job assignments and promotions. A standardized procedure will allow for more objectivity and stray away from subjective decision making. Along policies and standardized procedures, management and HR professionals need to be more transparent with information sharing. Currently within organizations, information is a very valuable sought-after tool that organizational peers tend to use to their advantage. Deceptive behavior for information sharing is not just unique to organizations, but it also bleeds into individual's personal lives as well by telling half-truths to avoid hurting others. Information stops becoming as valuable if everyone is in the know. In this case, management and HR professionals need to work on communication within the organization and be transparent on organizational changes and other organizational matters. This way organizational peers and individuals in a workplace romance no longer have an advantage over each other because everyone has access to the same information. Once again, it is important to reiterate that there is less of an issue with lateral workplace romance relationships than hierarchical workplace romance relationships. Research has suggested to limit hierarchical relationships and if these types of relationships do occur they both should be separated.

Within the policies or procedures, the wording on how to address a new workplace romance relationship and a post-breakup must be clear, and the verbiage must reflect an unbiased treatment towards all types of workplace romances. The beginning

and the end of workplace romances are the most impactful to the company and team because both can contribute to a decrease in productivity and a shift in team dynamics. In any budding relationship, the couple wants to spending time together to develop a deeper connection. This behavior ostracizes the remaining team members and can develop a sense of distrust, deception, and separation in the team dynamic. When a new relationship forms, if the employees are in the same department, management should move both to different locations to show fairness and not show a gender-bias. Once the move of the two have been finalized, also present guidelines on what is proper work behavior and what will not be tolerated within working hours. By having stipulations on workplace romances, the destructive behavior can be addressed, and managers and HR professionals will be able to discipline without running a risk of a lawsuit. In addition, team members will know that preferential treatment will not be granted to individuals in workplace romances.

When a couple breaks up, the individuals tend to become reclusive and avoidant towards their former-lover. Both cases are problematic when they are on the same team. If organizations allow workplace romances to happen, they need to have a plan established on how to approach break ups. Depending on how the relationship ends, the organization could have to face sexual harassment lawsuits if one of the individuals in the relationship continues to make advances on the other. Organizations should have a support system to assist in lessening the tension between the two former-lovers' post-breakups. The support system is ideal because research has shown that in post-breakups, women typically are forced to leave the organization because they lack a support system to help them through the post-breakup emotions.

Policies and procedures are not meant to be intrusive or controlling. Many HR professionals and organizations try to avoid creating workplace romance policies since these policies affect employees' personal lives. However, that is not the case. These polices are being set as an extra precaution to help protect employees in the organization. It also gives a protocol on how to address and handle workplace romances to decrease the chance of lawsuits and the withdrawal of their employees. HR professionals and managers must remember the following when addressing workplace romance issues and policies.

- Organizations need to trust their employees to make their own decisions when it comes to their personal lives and be supportive in the process.
- They need to be transparent in decision-making and with their information to discourage deceptive behavior towards individuals engaging in workplace romances.
- They must also put guidelines in place for hierarchical workplace romance relationships and remove the higher-level employee to a different work group or department maintain the solidarity within the team.
- They must create an accepting culture that is flexible and open with workplace romances to assist in limiting the negative stereotypes of workplace romance.
- They need to develop a protocol of best practices on how to handle workplace romances to be standardized on their treatment at all stages in the relationships to create a sense of justice when decisions are implemented.

- Lastly, they need to create a support system for employees to readjust to their teams and role post-breakup, so employees are able to continue being productive and engaged at work.

If organizations can adapt their culture to embrace and celebrate workplace romances instead of condemning and ignoring them, organizations will be able to maintain the solidarity within the work groups, continue to establish trusting relationships, decrease the amount of deceptive behavior in information sharing, increase the productivity of their employees, and issue decisions and punishments that organizational peers feel are just. Being proactive on policies and these workplace romance guidelines will save the company time and money. But most importantly, it will keep employees engaged and committed to their job.

Future Research

Workplace romance has been studied since the mid-1970s with an array of topics being focused on. As the literature on workplace romance has developed, it has become more inclusive on topics like LGBTQ. The LGBTQ topic is still in the infancy stage of research because researchers still need to expand their studies on LGBTQ individuals within the workplace. It would be good to keep developing that literature and explore the implications between sexual orientation and workplace romances focusing on team dynamics and organization commitment. As LGBTQ becomes more accepted in the workplace and in public, it would be interesting to look at how their organizational peers perceive them and what attitudes their organizational peers have towards LGBTQ workplace romances. There is some research done already on these types of relationships, but there is still room to develop this area of research further.

Another topic that would be effective in expanding the literature on workplace romance is generational differences. It could be assumed that millennials, or the newer generations, are more accepting towards workplace romances and more likely to engage in workplace romances. This could be contributed to the hookup culture that is prevalent through online dating and lack of commitment towards romantic relationships. Current research on workplace romance has explored some areas on generational differences by looking at age within relationships and how workers perceive these relationships. However, they are primarily looking at age differences within the relationships and not at the different values that are ingrained into the individual based on their generation. This could also lead to research focused on the development of organizational culture, turning away from more traditional, conservative organizational structure and shifting towards progressive, liberal structures.

The research done currently is primarily focused on the negative consequences of workplace romances and on heterosexual workplace romance relationships. Researchers should start focusing on the change in culture that the workforce is experiencing through diversity and inclusion trainings and the increase in self-expression. As noted before, workplace romance is not on the decline, but rather on the incline. Research needs to keep up with the changes to help direct the HR professionals and organization to address the changes effectively.

Conclusion

Workplace romance is very much present in the workplace and many organizations choose to ignore that they exist. By ignoring its existence, it opens an organization up to a lot of scrutiny that can be costly and create negative impacts. This is

why organizations should work in creating policies and procedures on how to address lateral and hierarchical relationships that vary in sexual orientation and power distance. Workplace romances are not just between the two individuals, but it has a lasting effect on the workers and the organization. If the organization does not address workplace romances properly, it could create lasting negative effects. If these relationships are approached properly, workplace romances can make the organization stronger through higher organizational commitment and employee engagement. Happy employees equal a more successful organization.

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