A Study on the Consequences of Workplace Romance in Iranian Organizations

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A Study on the Consequences of Workplace Romance in Iranian Organizations

1. Introduction

Workplace romance experiences are varied and unique—almost as varied as the people participating in such relationships. For many, like Sarah Kay and Matt Lacks, a workplace romance can grow to be a happy and lasting relationship. The couple met when both were employees at a New York area community center, and they quickly developed a romantic relationship after sharing lunch, stories, and interests with one another. They recently married (Rosenbloom, 2007). At the other extreme, a workplace romance can lead to disaster, such as the (in)famous case involving astronauts Lisa Nowak and William Oefelein. The two became romantically involved when they trained together in Houston. Oefelein eventually broke off the romance, sending Nowak into serious despair and depression. When Oefelein began dating another coworker, Colleen Shipman, Nowak became despondent and extremely jealous. She began harassing and stalking Shipman, in violation of a restraining order. The situation took a dangerous turn when Nowak, in disguise, drove 900 miles from her home in Houston to Orlando, approached Shipman in her parked car, and attempted to shoot Shipman with pepper spray. Arriving on the scene, police found a steel mallet, a knife, rubber tubing, $600 in cash, and garbage bags in the bag Nowak was carrying. Nowak was charged with attempted kidnapping and attempted murder ("NASA Astronaut," 2007).

The philosophy behind the attendance of women in organizations and possession of sensitive jobs and positions—equal with men—is a controversial discussion among scientific and managerial community. No longer is it the exclusive realm of high level male executives surrounded by females with lukewarm ambitions. Historically few women worked outside the home until the late 1800s, and men and women seldom mixed socially after marriage. In the 1890s females began to move into the workplace, albeit in subordinate roles. Even in the 1970s, 99 percent of business travelers were men. Now it is a contest to achieve goals by powerful professionals of both sexes. Subsequently organizations face an old but altered challenge: how best to deal with the sparks generated by men and women working together. What made this study important is that many organizations nowadays are not immune against workplace romances. In another word, love, kindness and attractiveness among peers in organizations are taking place and cannot be avoided. If relationship among employees negatively affects the organization and values are not correctly structured and unfavorable romantic relationships among workers are formed, the workers privacy and organization’s interests will be in a big hazard. Today, development of quality and quantity of work life, the culture of mutual respect, improvement of workers’ skills, setting of logical relations with co-workers, leverage of organizational efficiency, establishing a safe environment for workers and many more factors are listed in the very first priorities of management planning. On the other hand, due to increasing number of women in organizations facing men in different projects, these organizations are confronted with unavoidable challenges in managing workplace romances. However, organizations can avail positive outcomes by setting
appropriate policies and guidelines. Research indicates 75% to 85% of employees experience a romantic relationship at work, either as a participant or an observer (Pierce & Aguinis, 2003).

Workplace romance in Iran has not been fully studied yet. The reason may be that religious or cultural limitations have made it as a taboo and people do not talk about it comfortably. The other reason could be that it has not ever been studied systematically and since the start of women participation in work does not go back too far, workplace romance always has been postponed to be fully investigated. Although many people still are reluctant to tackle this issue, we found it very interesting and vital to monitor and study people romantic desires and consequences in the work environment in Iranian organizations. This study goes through the literature review of the concept in general, at the beginning, and the narrows its scope about Asian, and finally Iranian cases, at the end.

2. Definition of Workplace Romance

Romantic relationships differ from friendships in a number of important ways, however. The difference between friendship and romance represents the difference between liking and loving, affection and passion, intimacy and arousal. While friendships have an emotional component that can, but does not necessarily, threaten rationality, romantic relationships incorporate emotion at a higher and more intense level. The emotional, as well as physiological, nature of romantic relationships leads practitioners to fear the repercussions of workplace romance and the development of policies to “manage” or even forbid these relationships (Quinn, 1977).

In 1977, Robert E. Quinn, author of the first widely cited research article on workplace romance, defined organizational romance as a relationship between two members of an organization which is perceived by a third party as sexual attraction. At a broad level, a workplace romantic relationship is any “relationship between two members of the same organization that entails mutual attraction” (Pierce, Byrne, & Aguinis, 1996, p. 6). At a deeper level, workplace romances incorporate both emotional and physiological components, including the following:

(a) an intense, passionate desire to be in the presence of one’s romantic partner, (b) a shared, intimate exchange of personal disclosures, (c) affection and respect, (d) pleasant emotional states such as satisfaction, happiness, and sexual gratification, and (e) physiological arousal and the desire for sexual acts such as kissing, petting, and intercourse with one’s partner. (Pierce et al., 1996, p. 6)

So workplace romantic relationships are emotional, physiological, and consensual. It is important to note that the consensual nature of these relationships distinguishes workplace romance from sexual harassment and much research has focused on distinguishing between romantic communication and sexual harassment.

A survey by ‘vault.com’ recently reported that most employers are currently aware of at least one workplace romance at their firm. A similar survey held by ‘officeclick.com’, an online service for administrative professionals, found that office romances are rampant and two-third of the surveyed employees mentioned that they were aware of office relationships between co-workers in the past year.

3. Sexual Harassment
The most cited definition for harassment is ‘an act based on the work, with expectation of distressing another person or forcing him in order to achieve actor’s valued personal goals’. For Sexual harassment, the definition is: ‘one person either explicitly or implicitly makes sexual request in exchange for some desired result, e.g. raise, promotion, sale …’. Markert (1999) organized various types of social-sexual behavior with respect to the extent to which the behavior is clearly sexual harassment, or more ambiguous and open to various interpretations. Relying on survey data, as well as sexual harassment case law, Markert argued that any “quid pro quo” behavior is clearly sexual harassment. Quid pro quo refers to requests for sexual favors in exchange for job security or enhancement, and case law identifies such behavior as sexual harassment. Moreover, 95% of the American public also interprets quid pro quo behaviors as sexual harassment (Markert, 1999). Situations in which the initiator is male, and the target is female are most likely to be perceived as sexual harassment. Those involving female initiators and male targets are slightly less likely to be interpreted as sexual harassment. Finally, same-sex quid pro quo is less likely to be interpreted as sexual harassment.

In 1993, over 32000 harassment charges- both sexual and non-sexual- were filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and state and local Fair Employment Practice agencies. Obviously serious and strong policies are necessary. Jensen and Gutek(1994), providing more detail on this study, reported that the victims experience disorders in response to incidents of sexual harassment, including depression (20%), disgust (80%), and anger(68%). There is also another term, called ‘hostile environment’. This side of sexual harassment is much more subtle, and is often called a “grey area”; because there is no universal agreement on what constitutes a hostile environment.

We count two main intentions for sexual harassment: emotional and instrumental. An emotional goal is concentrated on actors’ personal needs. In some cases aggression is exhibited because the actor has learned that it “feels good”. Instrumental goals, on the other hand, are motivated by environmental consequences. For example, a fruitful feeling for sexual harassment will cause an interest for achieving sexual act. In a recent review, Lengnick-Hall in 1995 identified several theoretical approaches to explain harassment, including the gender approach, role approach, and power approach:

1. Gender approach: in this approach, scholars view sexual harassment as a likely outcome of interactions between men and women at work, based on the contact hypothesis, which suggest that the greater work-related contact between men and women, the more sexualized work environment and the greater frequency of sexual harassment.

2. Role approach: it is exemplified by sex-role spillover theory; adherents of this theory state that sexual harassment results from inappropriate carryover of sex-based behavioral expectations and desires into the workplace.

3. Power approach: it formulizes sexual harassment as a mechanism for maintaining the economic and political superiority of men over women.

Researches show women are more likely than men to interpret looks and glances as sexually harassing. Asking the same person out multiple times after being rejected also can be construed as harassment because the continued requests are perceived as pressure. Research suggests that women generally feel two refusals should be sufficient, and any requests after that constitute

Solomon and Williams (1997) used an experimental design to identify variables that make it more likely for social-sexual behaviors to be interpreted as sexual harassment rather than a romantic overture. Their results indicate that messages which more explicitly convey sexual interest, which are initiated by supervisors, which are initiated by unattractive individuals, and which are directed toward attractive targets are more likely to be interpreted as sexual harassment than romantic overture. Although there are no sex differences with respect to interpretations of sexual harassment, these findings suggest that men are perceived to be more sexual at work than women.

4. Romantic Workplace Relationship: Emergence and Development

Researchers have identified a variety of romantic relationship types by examining the partners’ motives for engaging the relationship. Quinn (1977) was the first to empirically address these issues. Via qualitative and quantitative studies, he identified three primary motives for participating in a romantic relationship. The job motive refers to instances in which individuals engage in a romantic relationship for purposes of job advancement and security, financial rewards such as promotions and bonuses, increased power, and easier or more efficient tasks. Ego motives reflect the desire for excitement, adventure, and ego gratification. Love motives reflect sincere affection, love, respect, and companionship. Employees motivated by love seek a long-term commitment from the romance.

Several scholars have also attempted to identify various factors that impact the development of workplace romantic relationships. Some factors which influence relationship development are as follow:

1. Proximity (geographic, ongoing work requirement, occasional contact)
2. Attitudinal similarity
3. Employee attitudes toward workplace romance
4. Job autonomy
5. Organizational culture (“conservative” vs. “liberal”)
6. Organizational climate (“cold” vs. “hot”)

Quinn (1977) identified three primary types of proximity that are associated with the development of romantic relationships. Geographical proximity refers to individuals being physically near one another via proximal work spaces or offices. Ongoing work requirement proximity refers to proximity resulting from employees working on joint projects, training workshops, business trips, and other requirements of the job that bring the individuals in close proximity to one another. Occasional contact refers to situations in which the individuals do not enjoy regular, patterned proximity via their work station locations or ongoing requirements of their job, but instead are brought into occasional contact with one another via such mechanisms as riding the elevator together or running into one another in other locations, such as a cafeteria, because they work in the same organization.

Much research identifies attitude similarity as an important contributor to liking and eventually
romance. Pierce et al. (1996) argue that such relationships are particularly likely to develop in organizations because organizations, via their hiring and selection processes, tend to attract and retain individuals with similar interests (e.g., occupation) and attitudes, and filter out those individuals who are dissimilar to the organization’s general population.

The type of job an employee has can impact the likelihood that he/she will develop a romantic workplace relationship. Specifically, the more autonomous one’s job, the more likely one is to engage in workplace romance (Haavio-Mannila, Kauppinen-Toropainen, & Kandolin, 1988; Pierce & Aguinis, 2003).

The organizational culture can also enhance or hinder romantic relationship development. Mainiero (1989) found that “conservative” organizations, for example, those that were slow paced, conventional, and traditional, were more likely to discourage workplace romances via formal or informal policies than were “liberal” organizations, for example, those that were fast paced, action oriented, and dynamic (Pierce et al., 1996). Moreover, the fast-paced, dynamic environments of “liberal” organizations “often contain an atmosphere of intense pressure and activity that stimulates sexual excitement” (Pierce et al., 1996, p. 16). Similarly, Mano and Gabriel (2006) examined workplace romance in “hot” and “cold” organizational climates. Cold organizational climates are characterized by impersonal, formal organizational structures. Grounded in bureaucratic principles, such climates are designed to “exclude human feeling and emotion from mainstream organizational activities, focusing instead on instrumental, task-related relationships” (Mano & Gabriel, 2006, p. 10). Hot climates, in contrast, “involve an ‘aestheticization’ of labor that puts employees ‘on display’ with respect to their physical appearance.” As Mano and Gabriel (2006) note, industries such as tourism and advertising tend to have a “sexual simmer” about them, sexualizing employees and the workplace itself. By gathering stories of romance from individuals in different types of organizational climates, Mano and Gabriel (2006) found that those in “hot” climates told more stories of romance, with more passion, and indicated a more hospitable environment for romance than did those in “cold” climates. Employees in cold climates, instead, told stories of the rare romance and employees’ attempts to keep the relationship a secret.

5. Workplace Romances Outcomes and Consequences

The results obtained from Fax Forum indicate that workplace romances affairs are acceptable by people. In this regard 70 percent said that they have been romantically involved with someone they met at work. Romantic relationships between co-workers are tolerable if the couple maintain their professional demeanor at work. Three-fourth think romances are acceptable even between people at different levels of the organization. While many studies have demonstrated the negative impact of romantic relationships, researches suggest such relationships can have positive impact, not only on the employees involved in the relationship, but also on the larger work environment. Kaleel Jamison believes if we let people feel positive about them and their co-workers, organizations will improve, productivity will be increased and employees will work better together. Laster Talbot agrees that sexual attraction can affect the organization positively. It’s a positive, exciting emotion that causes happiness and creates energy. If the energy is guided properly, it will flow into anything the employees do. It will have a positive, energizing effect on the organization; “If they would be open about sexual attraction and would educate employees about it, the people attracted would feel less guilty and wouldn’t feel the need to be sneaky. That is what’s disruptive.” (Talbot, …)

However many people believe that romantic relationships between teammates or members of the
However many people believe that romantic relationships between teammates or members of the same departments might cause problems. Classical management school of thought believes that emotion has no useful place in organizational processes (e.g., Fayol, 1949; Weber, 1946). There are two main categories of impacts possibly stem from workplace romance:

1. **Impact on Coworkers**
   1. Gossip
   2. Morale
   3. Jealousy
   4. Attributions of motives

2. **Impact on Relationship Partners**
   1. Attitudes and morale
   2. Job satisfaction
   3. Motivation
   4. Behavior and performance
   5. Productivity
   6. Favoritism
   7. Sexual harassment (after romance dissolves)

Engaging in a romance can improve the participants’ job satisfaction (Pierce et al., 1996). In addition, participating in a workplace romance can improve an employee’s motivation (Dillard & Broetzman, 1989; Mainiero, 1989). This is likely because individuals engaged in a romance tend to feel better about them and show a willingness to work longer hours to be with their partner (Pierce et al., 1996).

Jeanne Bosson Driscoll and Rosemary A. Bova reported the following reasons why organizations commonly disfavor (sexual) attraction: Personal distraction interferes with productivity. People may avoid working together because of the consequences of attraction. Sexual relationships have “power transition” implications within the organization. Promotions may be lost or gained through sexual favoritism. Studies demonstrate that workplace romances give rise to favoritism and have injurious effects such as hostility in the work group, distorted communication, lowered productivity, slower decision making, acts of sabotage, gossip, and lower morale.

Laster Talbot believes that men have tried to keep organizations sterile and without emotion; they fear emotion erodes the organization." Sexual attraction is a highly emotional issue, so they try to ignore it and hope it goes away." (Talbot, ....). That is a part of masculinity phenomenon which stands against femininity. Thus the fact is that sexual attraction incidents are increasing, they are getting more serious, and they will not simply fade from the organizational scene.
6. Theoretical Background in Social Science

It is important to differentiate between two types of workplace romance: lateral and hierarchical. A lateral romance is a relationship between employees of equal status. A hierarchical workplace romance occurs when the individuals are at different organizational levels, such as when a manager is romantically involved with his or her subordinate. Hierarchical romances are more pervasive and more problematic than lateral romances, and are often the source of hostility in the workplace. Here we are to explain the mechanisms behind the workplace romance and its effects on coworkers.

6.1. Power Dynamics and Social Exchange Theory

The power dynamic of an ordinary manager-subordinate relationship in the workplace involves the exchange of resources from two separate domains. Resources in the Task Domain are those which are necessary for an employee to perform his or her job functions and to complete work in an efficient and productive manner. Career Domain resources concern career advancement and are typified by positive evaluations from superiors in order to obtain support for desired promotional opportunities. Analyzing the relative power and dependency levels for a manager-subordinate relationship becomes much more complex when a hierarchical romance is added. The addition of the Sexual Domain can easily threaten the balance of power in the task and career domains. Coworkers may fear that sex will be exchanged for a promotion. Thus, coworkers involved in lateral romances may only participate in the exchange of resources in the sexual and task domains. In contrast, the hierarchical workplace romance provides an opportunity for the exchange of sex for career benefits such as promotions, salary increase or favorable assignments. Coworkers perceive this as an unfair exchange that "crosses the boundaries of propriety, equity, and justice."

6.2. Coalition Formation

Once workgroup members are aware of a workplace romance, they may view the couple as having formed a power coalition. Since other workgroup members cannot participate in this exchange, they cannot join the coalition. These excluded workgroup members begin to fear that what is said to one member of the coalition will be repeated to the other. This fear disrupts communication patterns in the workplace.

6.3. Coworker Perceptions of Workplace Romances

In a 1999 study, Sharon Foley and Gary Powell analyzed coworker perceptions of workplace romance. Specifically, they were interested in the way coworkers perceived workplace romance to impact the work environment. Their model assumes that coworker perceptions consist of two components: (1) perceived conflict of interest, and (2) perceived workgroup disruption.

Hierarchical workplace romances inevitably present conflicts of interest. Disruption can be caused when the participants of the romance engage in inappropriate behavior in their coworkers' presence. In most cases, workplace romances are characterized by negative workgroup outcomes such as high levels of gossip, complaints, hostilities, distorted communications, lower morale, and lower productivity. Coworkers' perceptions of participants' motives for engaging in workplace romance influence their responses to such romances.
Because the number of women proportionately decreases as one travels up the rungs of the organizational ladder, women have tended to be the lower level participants in hierarchical organizational romances. As a result of their lower status and power, women have historically suffered more and have been subjected to more negative stereotypes than their male partners once the workgroup becomes aware of the romance. The stereotypical view of an organizational romance is a utilitarian relationship between a lower level female and a higher level male. Accordingly, women are more likely to identify with the traditional role of the woman in the hierarchical romance. Since women have traditionally suffered more in workplace romances than men, they will tend to identify with, and adopt the perspective of, the woman as a victim in such a relationship. Moreover, women may view the hierarchical workplace romance as a more serious problem than men because they see themselves as having more to lose from such a relationship.

7. Workplace Romance Policies

There are no etched-in-stone policies for managing sexual attractions in the office. It’s still sort of a myth that women are attracted to men, or that mutual attraction occurs. The introduction of a large number of professional women to the workplace has made a substantial impact and nobody has really come to grips with it yet. Similar to workplace friendships, romantic relationships are not part of an organization’s formal structure and are not formally sanctioned or mandated by management. Most companies have realized that love cannot be regulated. Managers could create policies and rules promising serious consequences for violations of their dating policies, but it’s impossible to prevent people from being attracted to one another or falling in love. Violations to these policies usually result in one of two actions: the strictest firms require both employees be terminated, while the more flexible firms have one individual resign or terminate. Workplaces should be pleasant and workers shouldn’t be afraid of punishment. However, managers should establish guidelines to lessen the dangers. Liroyd discusses his firm’s feelings on office romances: “…we don’t allow couples to work in the same area, because it makes it difficult for others, especially if one is in a position of power over the other.”. A study by Losey in 1993 showed that 97 percent of organizations allowed dating to their employees, and 73 percent of organizations have written policies for couples who are working together. From our review of the literature (e.g., Quinn, 1977; Anderson & Hunsaker, 1985; Mainireo, 1986), six management interventions or workplace romance policies are identified. Ordered from most lenient to most strict, they are: take no action, counsel the couple on the risks involved in forming romantic relationships, verbally reprimand, give written warming, transfer, and terminate.

Jamison takes the issue with the conclusion that says there is no way to manage sexual attraction in the office. He acknowledges that the level of relationship and the conditions surrounding it determine how deeply two employees can be involved without hurting themselves and their organization. She developed a Touch Spectrum that combines touch and words appropriate for each level of a relationship:

Step 1: Acceptance; marked by handshake.

Step 2: Caring; marked by assisting gestures, such as ‘helping someone with a heavy package’.

Step 3: Trust; includes casual, accidental touches that are not perceived as sexual in motive and do not cause embarrassment.
Step 4: Affection; includes friendly gestures, such as an arm around someone’s shoulder, hugs and kisses on the cheek, all without sexual intent.

Step 5: Eroticism.

Step 6: Genitalia; touches at these stages are explicitly sexual in nature.

Jamison makes these suggestions to the organizations:

1. Provide clear guidelines to managers on what is considered taboo in the organization. Also, define sexual attraction and distinguish it from sexual harassment.

2. Teach managers to deal with sexual attraction in the most human and caring way possible.

3. Teach them to take special care in cases of taboo relationship.

4. Managers also should learn to help employees define the levels and appropriate behaviors of their relationships. Through this, employees will become more aware and more able to control sexual tensions.

5. Teach managers to deal with relationships that affect work negatively by discussing the problem with the employees involved. Talk first with the higher ranking of the two, then with the other.

They also recommend forbidding only supervisor-subordinate romantic relationships, as these are the ones most likely to motivate legal action.

People in the department may have trouble with these treatments at first. It may look unusual. However eventually everyone really will enjoy it and productivity improves. When the air of the office is more conducive to the expression of neutral emotions, when it no longer is strange and unusual for co-workers to exchange affections, the disruptive qualities of sexual attraction in the office will be lessened. Warmth will replace sterility, and a more productive work environment will grow. That will only happen if the rules are clear and that people are not punished-fired-for falling in love at work. When managers are aware of workplace romance affairs, they keep all the information confidential. Workers should feel that romantic relationships at work are private, personal and legal and should not be controlled by managers. However some scholars believe in not having a written policy about romantic relations in the workplace. “Don’t establish a policy prohibiting it, and don’t ignore gossip that it exists. Do provide sexual harassment training and buy employment liability insurance.”, says Karen E. Klein in SmartAnswers. Klein has two reasons against establishing a written policy: Employers cannot control human nature, so a workplace romance policy is unenforceable, and if they establish one, it sends a message to employees about the company’s willingness to impose itself into their personal lives. The other thing is that employers don’t want to make a Romeo and Juliet situation. If there is a policy against workplace romances, people feel they must lie and sneak around. Klein believes that in the case of occurrence, employer should not blow the situation out of proportion; if starts sounding punitive right away, things can deteriorate quickly.

On the other hand, this opinion that employers have no right to control romantic relationships between employees is in stark contrast to the numerous articles warning managers of the risks in ignoring workplace romances. If the relationship sours, the subordinate may retaliate by claiming sexual
harassment, or the supervisor may block further rewards for the subordinate. Such situations may result in litigation against the employer. Even when both members of the couple are at the same level in the organization, the romance may negatively affect the morale of other co-workers. Researchers have stated different negative consequences of having romantic relationships, such as increasing tension and anxiety, jealousy, pessimism and loneliness, ambiguity in working relations, hostile and aggressive environment, mal competition, misunderstanding, selfishness, and... Other studies show that romantic relationships will result in disciplinary problems and by continuing these relationships; the workplace becomes intolerable environment for women, which may lead to discharging or transferring job.

8. Workplace Romance in Asia

Sexual harassment in the workplace as an age-old problem has emerged as a serious concern in Asia and the Pacific recently. In Bangladesh, large scale of women’s entry into paid labor force has increased incidences of sexual harassment. The 1996 figure shows that women’s participation in labor force is 51 percent, women engaged in agriculture are 63 percent, women in service sector are 27 percent and women in industrial activities are 10 percent. Sexual harassment, work and mobility appear to be closely intertwined in Bangladesh.

Women are forced to face double jeopardy when it comes to sexual harassment. They are vulnerable to physical, psychological and sexual abuse in the workplace; they are frequently subjected to harassment in the public domain of the street. According to a health survey on safety regulations in the garment industry, sexual harassment is likely to be the most dominant source of stress for garment workers. In Nepal a research on Sexual Harassment at the Workplace revealed that the problem of sexual harassment is highly prevalent in workplaces, as 53.84 percent of women employee/workers reported that they have faced the problem of sexual harassment in their workplaces, 57.14 percent of male and 23.08 percent women employee/workers were of the view that they were aware of sexual harassment at the workplace. However, the problem is not brought out in the open because the subject is taboo and Nepali women still do not share the problem among the friends and leave it bringing to the authorities’ attention. Also, there is no mechanism to address the problem in the workplaces and also there is no specific law on sexual harassment and the other relevant laws are not useful in addressing the problem.

In Japan, a study conducted by Ministry of Labor found that out of 2254 women respondent, two third were subject to sexually harassed, 11 % had experienced quid pro quo and 45 % had been subjected to hostile working environment.

Various initiatives have slowly begun to address sexual harassment in Asia. Also, specific legislation exists for example in Belize, Costa Rica, France, Luxembourg, and the Philippines. In Bangladesh sexual harassment was made punishable by Section 10 (2) of the Nari O Shish Narjaton Domon Ain (2000) states that any man who, in order to satisfy his lust in an improper manner, outrages the modesty of a woman, or makes obscene gestures, will have engaged in sexual harassment and for this, the above mentioned male will be sentenced to rigorous imprisonment of not more than seven years and not less than two years and beyond this will be subjected to monetary fines as well. Also, advocates and court’s creativity are commendable, for example, in Sri Lanka, prior to the amendment of the Penal Code in 1995 to recognize ‘unwelcome sexual advances,’ a case filed by an employee against a superior officer who allegedly demanded sexual favors in exchange for a promotion was recognized by the court as an act of soliciting ‘bribery.’ Some of the initiatives established statutory
recognized by the court as an act of soliciting 'bribery.' Some of the initiatives established statutory obligation, in Japan, the 1997 amendment to the Equal Employment Opportunity Law created a new provision for sexual harassment, which imposed an obligation on employers to prevent both quid pro quo and hostile environment. Good practices have begun in enterprises where the employment policies have included the provisions to address sexual harassment in the workplace in response to continuous advocacy and judicial decisions in some of the countries in South Asia. In Nepal, some of the hotels and industries have adopted policy to address the problem through formation of committee to listen to complains and take actions. Whereas in India such practices is initiated by larger number of enterprises especially after the Vishakha guideline.

The concept of workplace romance should be elaborated with societal culture surrounding it. The definitions of the terms like workplace romance, sexual harassment and others remain the same. What changes are the indicators and consequences. While in Western cultures the Touch Spectrum is wider, in East it is tighter and is determined more conservatively. It Islam even shaking hands by two different sexes could be of question. However the importance of the context and the problem is not less. Workplace romance has its impacts in Islamic societies and organizations as well as in West. The point is that it has to be investigated locally and in the proper cultural framework. The consequences in a religious environment may be much more crucial than just termination of a job! What is clear is that the culture and religion in most Islamic societies, by their own, take care of the safety of workplace relations and forces people to be much more conservative and picky. However like their Western counterparts, Eastern organizations are facing workplace romance stories, harassments, dysfunctions, consequences and reactions.

9. **Empirical Research : A Study in Iran**

We have studied the relation between romance in workplace and organizational performance through an empirical field research. The main objectives of the study were as follows:

- Studying and identifying the fundamental principles and factors of creating romantic relationships in the work place
- Studying influential factors in romantic affairs taking place between employees in the work place.
- Studying outcomes resulted from the emotional ties formed between male and female employees in an organization
- Studying and determining the factors of creating rational and formal romantic relationships resulting in organizational marriage phenomenon, among the employees
- Establishing ways to determine the limitations and boundaries of healthy and pleasant relationships among the staff
- Identifying possible factors of shaping romantic relationships among the employees in the work place
- Identifying and classifying causes of love and kindness.
- Developing a direct scientific relationship between the causes of romantic relationships among
The employees, and the organization efficiency

The main hypothesis of the research is “There is a significant correlation between romantic relationship in the work place, and increasing efficiency and effectiveness of the organization.” There are also some more sub-hypothesizes which are concluded as the artifacts of this statistical study. They are: “There is a significant relationship between training staff and creating a pleasant space, away from discrimination and effectiveness of the organization”; “There is a meaningful correlation between logical relationships and interests among the organization staff leading to marriage, and effectiveness of the organization”, etc.

The type of the research is based on practical objectives and its method, based on how data is collected, is descriptive and correlative. Library and explorative studies are used for compiling and establishing theoretical foundations, and polls and survey researches are used to collect data to test research hypotheses.

The research is a descriptive survey study which has been applied over 298 staff of Iran Department of Environment. 25.5% of the samples are women and 74.5% are men. For data analysis and hypothesis testing, Pearson correlation coefficient is used. 10.2% of the samples have graduate education. Questionnaires with 27 questions were distributed among the staffs and their opinions and perceptions are collected. Different variables are defined, such as “liking and loving staff at work”, “organizational performance”, “Sexual harassment”, …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>First Factor</strong></th>
<th><strong>Second Factor</strong></th>
<th><strong>Pearson Correlation Coefficient</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>liking and loving staff at work</td>
<td>organizational performance</td>
<td>0.724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>training the organization staff and creating a pleasant space away from discrimination</td>
<td>organizational performance</td>
<td>0.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rational interests and relations among the employees, resulting in marriage</td>
<td>organizational performance</td>
<td>0.635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controlling romantic relationships at work</td>
<td>organizational performance</td>
<td>0.630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rational affection</td>
<td>organizational performance</td>
<td>0.830</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results lead to confirming ten hypotheses:

1. The first research hypothesis considers the relationship between “liking and loving staff at work” and “efficiency of organization”. According to the Pearson correlation coefficient the obtained results confirm a significant and meaningful relationship between two variables. As the results of the Fax forum, if personnel express their feelings to each other, this feeling expression can become sexual attractiveness, increase efficiency of organization and this is when people think positively about themselves and their colleagues. Also, another study by Lester Talbot stipulated that expressing kindness and love by the staff can affect the organization positively and expand a space filled with excitement throughout the organization. Moreover this strengthens the synergy among the staff, and leads to the raise of efficiency.

2. The second hypothesis considers the relationship between “training the organization staff and creating a pleasant space away from discrimination”, and the effectiveness of the organization. The aim of this issue is to see that how training of the organization staff can create a suitable and dynamic space coupled with efficacy. Considering the expressed issues, empowering employees through education and making a culture about how to deal with romantic relationships in the workplace can be considered an essential need. Lester Talbot in his research has stipulated that managers should be more open about sexual attraction and provide the staffs with necessary trainings. Also, Diana L. Ddryk considers the education programs necessary in order to upgrade the knowledge and insights of managers and employees. We also concluded that organizations need to provide the necessary platform for empowering workers through education and learning.

3. The third hypothesis of research considers the solidarity between “rational interests and relations among the employees, resulting in marriage”, and the effectiveness of the organization. According to the Pearson correlation coefficient, obtained result can confirm a significant and meaningful relationship between the two variables. In fact, managers can provide opportunities for marriage of employees, reasonably and within the policies, by providing the necessary platform for development of
romantic relationships at work. Contemporary German psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich believes that if the psychological relationship between two people is not creative and beautiful, this closed relationship not only is not beautiful but is destructive. We should particularly note that the underlying sector of logical relationships and interests leading to marriage is wisdom, i.e. people should be wise, and then they love. People who are not rational will not have a place in the Eros.

4. The fourth hypothesis considers the relationship between “controlling romantic relationships at work”, and the effectiveness of the organization. Pearson correlation coefficient value of 0.63 was obtained between these two variables which showed a significant and meaningful relationship between controlling romantic relationships at work and the effectiveness of the organization. According to Charles E. Pierce, romantic relationships at work are divided into two types, hierarchical and horizontal that in both cases it’s necessary to develop organizational strategies and policies for progress of processes rationally. According to the researches done by Diana L. Ddryk, senior managers in organizations need to create an atmosphere in which the employees control their own behavior and efficiency (self-control system).

5. The fifth research hypothesis examines the relationship between “rational affection”, and the effectiveness of the organization. Organizations are material and spiritual properties of the managers; material in this way that they are the place of earning money and making profit for them, and intellectual property because of the tight emotional tie the owners have with them. Therefore the manager does play a major role in the organization in this perspective; if the intellectual properties of the staff are strengthened by the managers- while a democratic system rules the organization- the staff achieves a degree of organizational trust and becomes easier to show rational emotions. It is clear that when a shade of organizational trust is developed, logical relationships and emotions among the staff will be empowered and this will bring more efficiency for the organization. Studies conducted by this research also confirm a direct relationship between two variables mentioned.

6. The sixth research hypothesis considers the relationship between “mutual trust” and the effectiveness of the organization. As mentioned in the fifth hypothesis, by strengthening intellectual properties in the organization we can obtain a degree of trust among employees in order to achieve the organizational goals. It should be noted that ignorance, selfishness, deception and force are the nature of the organizations without intellectual property. The leaders of these organizations also become self-infatuated. Therefore, creating an atmosphere of trust in organizations, beside human development and permanent development, can bring organizational effectiveness.

7. The seventh research hypothesis considers the relationship between “sexual harassment” and “sexiness”. Regarding the correlation coefficient 0.73, a significant relationship between two variables is confirmed. In researches conducted by Teel in 1980, he considered tempter behavior, sexual harassment, sexual bribery, sexual coercion and sexual attacks as different types of sexual harassment. In the expression of causes of sexual harassment in organizations by Jane Adams Roy and Julian Burling, mostly the female employees while traveling in the corridors or hallways are attended in an anti-ethical way by male employees and on the other hand, they often were about to being immorally abused by showing sexy photos and nasty reactions, often by their colleagues, and this played an important role in starting sexual harassments. Stanford and Gardiner in 1993 considered the sexual harassment as a result of both biological stimulants and high number of employees in the organizations, and expressed that sexiness influences the organization as a result of these factors and
causes the sexual harassment. Therefore, based on the available contents and the research that has been done for this paper, direct and significant relationship between sexual harassment and sexiness is confirmed.

8. The eighth research hypothesis considers the correlation between “romantic relationships”, and sexual harassment. The correlation coefficient of 0.64 for testing this hypothesis can confirm a significant and meaningful relationship between these two variables. Jean Boson Doris Cole and Rose Marie E. Boa have reasoned discontent of organizations from incidence of sexual attractiveness as follows: Sexual relations in organizations have strong implicit symptoms. Promotions may be disappeared due to sexual discrimination. Employees may avoid working together because of fear of attractiveness. Personal distresses are inconsistent with the efficiency. Jemison has stated that sexual attraction is always a problem in organizations and also there is no way to handle it. Also regarding another study conducted by Anderson in 1985, the negative consequences of development of sexual attraction appears in organizations without formal written measures; increased concern and anxiety, creating an aggressive and hostile environment, jealousy, sexual harassment, gloomy relationships, etc are such examples.

9. The ninth hypothesis of this study considers the relationship between “Non-sexual interests between colleagues”, and the effectiveness of the organization. The correlation coefficient of 0.70 to test this hypothesis confirms a significant relationship between these two variables. Given that employees essentially spend most of their working hours in organizations and with each other, organizations are considered to be appropriate places for personal and social life. The review carried out by Fisher in 1994 specified that organization can be a good place to find a commercial or life partner for the staff; because people who work together tend to have common background, talent and practice. Therefore positive results from pure interest in each other will be made; such as reducing stress and worry, increasing efficiency and effectiveness, improving work flow, creating an enjoyable space for staff, enhancing morale, etc. Talbot also has confirmed a significant correlation between these variables and expressed that when the pure interest in each other is increased, inevitably the energy and working morale in organizations will be expanded, that ruling it in the right direction and leads to increase of working motivation and efficiency in organizations. Regarding the studies performed and the correlation coefficient obtained in the study, a significant correlation between the pure interest among personnel and organization effectiveness is confirmed.

10. The tenth research hypothesis considers the relationship between “acceptance of romance in workplace by the staff”, and the effectiveness of the organization. The correlation coefficient of 0.787 to test this hypothesis, confirms a significant relationship between two variables. According to the research done by Diana L. Ddryk, accepting will be achieved by the development of mutual respect culture in organizations, individuals and group level on the one hand, and creating a safe and dynamic working environment on the other hand. In other words, when the behavior of employees, organizational culture and norms turn in to a common understanding and acceptance of mutual respect, the staff will become easier to accept each other, work flow will be done in a better way, and ultimately organizational efficiency will be increased. Jemison also believes that when the work environment is safe, healthy and appropriate for organizational activities, the staffs have more confidence in each other, mutual acceptance rate goes up, and organizational efficiency can increase. Walker in his researches has concluded that whatever sense of acceptance and being together is stronger, the feeling of achieving goals and efficiency as a couple will be stronger too.
As it is illustrated in table 1, we see the figures demonstrating positive relationships between all pairs of the mentioned factors.

11. Conclusion and Suggestions

Love is not only shaped among members of an organization, but is also transferred to the people outside the organization. It’s recommended in organizations to codify laws and policies to determine the boundaries of relationships among the staff. Obviously, having done this important matter, the staff will know the boundaries of relationships within the common law with regard to religious and cultural rules of each community, and each person in his own territory will continue his organizational activities by making effective communications in order to increase efficiency. The results indicate that organization officials, deputies, senior managers and senior experts, in most cases without having enough information about the incidence of romantic relationships phenomena at work or how to deal with the agents, intervene personally, and this process does not make sense for employees. In this respect, informing employees of how to deal with these issues, determining the limits and boundaries and holding dialogue sessions so that the staff can express their complaints, ideas and questions freely, can reduce possible tensions and create a pleasant and effective space in the organization.

It is recommended that the senior manager of the organization, using patterns of religion, establish a general system in the organization in which the employees may freely and without fear – in order to reduce the division and the outspreading of rumors- tell the manager about their own comments about marrying a member of the organization, and in this friendly environment, the manager should deal with the issue with a fatherly view and in a way consistent with a leadership coupled with love and kindness.

The appropriateness of organizational structure in order to taking advantage of the positive functionalities seems essential. In other words, an organization cannot be both too severely legal and seeking to increase effectiveness.

It seems essential to create an atmosphere full of trust in the organization in order to increase efficiency. Undoubtedly, weaknesses and shortcomings in environments without trust will never come to the eye and repetitive and adrift work will be replaced with creativity and innovation. The results suggest that reviewing problems in a collective and not individual way by using staff views in decision-making process and encouraging them in this direction by high-level officials of the organization, can create a climate of trust in the organization, strengthens the sense of ownership and organizational identity of the staff, and increases the effectiveness of the organization. If the concept of romantic relationships and philosophy of love at work is not guided in a proper direction, this will cause sexual harassment that often has a lot of negative consequences for the organization and its employees.

The results indicate that attractiveness and romantic relationships in the workplace have always caused challenges and often there is no way to handle them within organizations. Therefore, it is recommended that at the first step, the missions and objectives of the organization be fully explained for the staff, and high-level official of the organization hire an expert and committed consultant, warn about positive and negative consequences of romantic relationships at work, and announce the boundaries of them to the employees.

The results also show that when the workplace is safe, healthy and full of trust, the staff will continue to work in an intimate atmosphere and with more motivations, and this will lead to more efficiency. It’s
recommended that regarding the social identification of the workers, a platform be provided, so that each employee can obtain an adequate understanding of favorites, interests and personal characteristics of other employees. Continuity in business activities and the formation of informal groups with common views and specified organizational identities could be useful in achieving this matter.

Reference


14. Diana L. Deadrick, R. Bruce McAfee and Paul J. Champagne. “Preventing workplace harassment: an organizational change erspective”. Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia, USA


