Building a Supportive Workplace: How Workplace Friendship and Emotional Support Foster Employee Well-being through Work-Life Balance

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Abstract

This study explores the influence of workplace friendship on employees' psychological well-being, drawing on the conservation of resources theory to elucidate how social resources enhance well-being. The present study specifically examines the mediating role of emotional support and the moderating effect of work-life balance within this relationship. Employing a quantitative research design, data were gathered from 395 employees through a structured survey and analyzed using structural equation modeling and Hayes' Process macro. The findings reveal that workplace friendship significantly enhances psychological well-being, with emotional support partially mediating this effect. Additionally, work-life balance strengthens both the direct and indirect effects, amplifying the positive influence of workplace friendship. These results highlight the critical role of supportive workplace relationships in fostering employee well-being. The present study offers valuable insights for academics, policymakers, and organizations by highlighting the importance of workplace friendships, emotional support, and work-life balance in enhancing employee psychological well-being and productivity.

Keywords: Psychological well-being, workplace friendship, emotional support, work-life balance, and conservation of resources theory.

Introduction

In contemporary organizational settings characterized by high performance demands and persistent stressors, the role of social dynamics within the workplace has gained increasing attention (Wolak & Johnson, 2021). Among these dynamics, workplace friendship emerges as a significant yet underexplored construct that contributes to psychological resilience and organizational cohesion (Arshad et al., 2021). As employees navigate complex tasks and fluctuating job demands, the presence of genuine interpersonal connections can serve as a buffer against occupational stress, fostering both individual well-being and collective efficacy (Wang et al., 2025). Despite its relevance, workplace friendship often remains marginalized within formal organizational structures, necessitating deeper academic inquiry into its implications for employee outcomes and organizational performance.

Workplace friendships play a crucial role in shaping employees' psychological well-being by providing emotional support, fostering a sense of belonging, and reducing workplace stress (He and Wang, 2022). As organizations increasingly recognize the importance of social connections, researchers have explored the impact of workplace relationships on job satisfaction, engagement, and overall performance (Huang, 2016; Bella, 2023). Although workplace friendship is acknowledged as a crucial social resource in organizational settings, its direct impact on employee psychological well-being remains insufficiently explored (Han et al., 2025). Existing research primarily emphasizes workplace friendship's role in fostering job commitment, creativity, and team cohesion, but limited studies investigate its influence on employees' mental health and emotional resilience (Zhang et al., 2022; Suneera et al., 2025). Given the rising concerns over workplace stress and burnout, understanding how workplace friendships contribute to psychological well-being is crucial (Han et al., 2025). This wide space necessitates further research to examine the extent to which workplace friendship serves as a psychological buffer, mitigating stress and enhancing overall well-being in professional settings (Durrah et al., 2023).

Likewise, a significant factor that influences the impact of workplace friendships on psychological well-being is work-life balance. Employees who maintain a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives are better positioned to leverage social support at work, leading to enhanced well-being (Bulger, 2024). Conversely, employees experiencing work-life conflict may find it challenging to maintain and benefit from workplace friendships, thereby diminishing the positive effects on their mental health. In high-pressure work environments, where demands are constantly increasing, the ability to draw upon workplace friendships as a coping mechanism becomes even more critical (Alves et al., 2024). When employees struggle with work-life balance, their capacity to engage in meaningful workplace relationships may be compromised, reducing the availability of social resources that contribute to psychological stability (Casper et al., 2024).

Additionally, emotional support at work serves as a key mediating factor in the relationship between workplace friendship and employee psychological well-being. Employees who experience strong emotional backing from colleagues report lower stress levels, increased job satisfaction, and better coping mechanisms when facing workplace challenges (Pohl et al., 2022). Emotional support, which manifests in the form of encouragement, empathy, and assistance, helps individuals navigate complex work-related stressors and fosters a sense of security (Deng et al., 2023). This, in turn, enhances psychological well-being by mitigating anxiety, burnout, and emotional exhaustion (Romano et al., 2021). However, the extent to which emotional support at work translates into improved well-being is contingent upon an individual's ability to maintain a work-life balance, further emphasizing the need to consider multiple factors in this relationship.

Despite the growing body of research on workplace relationships, research gap exists in understanding the interconnected role of work-life balance and emotional support in strengthening the friendship–well-being relationship. While studies have examined the impact of workplace friendships on employee outcomes, there is limited empirical evidence addressing how these friendships function as a psychological resource under varying conditions of work-life balance and emotional support (Korber et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). Existing studies primarily focus on job performance, engagement, and organizational commitment, often overlooking the psychological dimension of employee well-being (Chen et al., 2024). Hence, this study seeks to fill the existing research gap by exploring how work-life balance moderates and emotional support mediates the relationship between workplace friendship and employees' psychological well-being.

This study aims to examine the direct effect of workplace friendship on employees' psychological well-being, investigate the mediating role of emotional support at work, and assess the moderating influence of work-life balance in this relationship. Current study is grounded in the conservation of resources theory, which posits that individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect valuable

resources to mitigate stress and enhance well-being (Hobfoll et al., 2018), the study highlights workplace friendships as a crucial social resource that helps employees replenish emotional reserves and maintain psychological stability. However, the effectiveness of these friendships depends on the availability of complementary resources, such as work-life balance, which strengthens the psychological benefits of social support. Understanding these concepts are essential for both researchers and practitioners, as organizations that foster workplace friendships can enhance employee well-being. This study adds to the existing literature and provides practical guidance for organizations aiming to foster a supportive and engaging workplace.

Literature Review
Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory
The COR theory, presented by Hobfoll (1989), suggests that individuals are motivated to obtain, preserve, and safeguard valuable resources to manage stress and improve their well-being. These resources may be social (such as workplace friendships), psychological (like emotional support), or structural (such as work-life balance). According to Hobfoll et al. (2018), the loss of these resources can contribute to stress, whereas their accumulation enhances overall well-being. In workplace settings, relationships serve as a key resource, enabling employees to navigate professional challenges, reduce burnout, and foster resilience. Workplace friendship, in particular, provides emotional support, which helps employees buffer stress and maintain psychological stability, aligning with the principles of COR theory (Islam & Chaudhary, 2024).

Applying COR theory, workplace friendship is a crucial social resource that strengthens employee psychological well-being by offering emotional support at work, which acts as a coping mechanism against job stress (Mahmood et al., 2024). However, the ability to leverage workplace friendships effectively depends on work-life balance, as individuals with poor work-life balance may struggle to maintain and utilize these friendships for emotional support (Li et al., 2024). Employees with strong workplace relationships are more likely to experience higher levels of well-being due to resource accumulation, while those lacking such resources may face increased stress and emotional exhaustion (He et al., 2022). This framework highlights the importance of maintaining workplace friendships and encouraging a supportive work environment to enhance overall employee well-being.

Workplace Friendship
Workplace friendship refers to informal, reciprocal relationships between colleagues that are characterized by trust, emotional closeness, and mutual support (Ozbek et al., 2018). These relationships go beyond professional interactions, fostering a sense of belonging, collaboration, and psychological security within the organization. Employees who develop strong workplace friendships experience higher job satisfaction, improved engagement, and increased organizational commitment due to the social support system embedded in these relationships (Dietz & Fasbender, 2022). Research suggests that workplace friendships create a positive work environment by enhancing communication, reducing stress, and increasing overall well-being. Furthermore, they contribute to knowledge-sharing and teamwork, as employees are more willing to cooperate with and assist colleagues they trust and respect (Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018). Despite their benefits, workplace friendships must be carefully managed to avoid conflicts of interest, favoritism, or reduced objectivity in decision-making, which can impact workplace dynamics.

In addition, studies emphasize the growing importance of workplace friendships in reducing burnout, increasing resilience, and enhancing employee psychological well-being (Chang et al., 2016; Milam, 2012). **Moreover,** employees with strong workplace friendships reported lower stress levels and greater job satisfaction due to perceived support received from workplace

(Gümüştaş et al., 2025; Rahmaningtyas et al., 2022). Similarly, **Xiao et al. (2020)** highlighted that employees who perceive their workplace as socially supportive are more likely to demonstrate proactive behaviors and organizational citizenship, ultimately benefiting the overall work culture. Moreover, **Wong et al. (2018)** examined the role of friendly environment at workplace in promoting work-life balance, showing that employees with strong workplace bonds found it easier to manage work-related stress and personal responsibilities. Organizations that recognize and support workplace friendships can create environments that enhance employee well-being, job performance, and overall organizational success (Dietz & Fasbender, 2022).

Workplace Friendship and Employee Psychological Well-being
Workplace friendship refers to informal and voluntary relationships among colleagues that are built on trust, emotional support, and mutual respect (Sias et al., 2019). Unlike purely professional interactions, workplace friendships extend beyond work-related discussions and contribute to a positive social environment within organizations. Research suggests that such friendships enhance job satisfaction, teamwork, and organizational commitment, making them a crucial aspect of the modern workplace (Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018; Akila and Priyadarshini, 2018). Employees with strong workplace friendships experience lower stress levels, improved motivation, and greater engagement with their work, as these relationships provide a sense of security and belonging (David et al., 2023).

Employee psychological well-being, on the other hand, refers to an individual's overall mental and emotional state in relation to their work environment (Bodhi et al., 2021), which includes factors such as job satisfaction, stress management, and emotional resilience, which significantly impact performance and productivity (Arnold et al., 2017; Yiming et al., 2024). A supportive and friendly workplace can contribute to positive psychological well-being by reducing job-related anxiety and enhancing employees' ability to cope with work-related pressures (Bella et al., 2023). Workplace friendships create a sense of camaraderie and mutual support, enabling employees to navigate workplace challenges more effectively and maintain a healthy emotional state (Abdulmohdi, 2024).

Recent studies emphasize the importance of workplace friendships in fostering psychological well-being. Moreover, employees with strong social bonds at work reported lower burnout levels and higher motivation (Radaelli et al., 2024; Delroisse et al., 2023). Similarly, workplace friendships act as a buffer against negative work experiences, providing emotional and psychological support in stressful situations (Fasbender et al., 2023). However, despite growing evidence of these benefits, the direct relationship between workplace friendship and employee psychological well-being remains an underexplored area in organizational research. While previous studies have focused on job satisfaction and engagement, fewer have examined how workplace friendships specifically contribute to employees' psychological health and emotional stability (Chen et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). This gap in research highlights the need for further investigation into how organizations can leverage workplace friendships to enhance employee well-being.

The COR theory offers a valuable framework for understanding this relationship. The COR theory posits that individuals are driven to obtain, preserve, and safeguard important resources—such as emotional and social support—in order to cope with stress and promote their well-being (Hobfoll, 2011). Workplace friendships serve as a critical social resource that helps employees cope with workplace demands, preventing resource depletion and promoting psychological resilience. When employees have strong friendships at work, they are better equipped to handle stress, maintain motivation, and sustain their overall well-being (Fasbender et al., 2023). Applying COR theory to workplace friendships suggests that fostering positive social relationships at work is not only

beneficial for employees but also for organizations seeking to improve productivity and retention rates.

H1: Workplace friendship is positively related to psychological well-being.

Mediating Role of Emotional Support at Work

Emotional support at work refers to the psychological and social resources provided by colleagues, supervisors, and the overall work environment, which help employees manage stress, cope with challenges, and maintain well-being (Mathieu, 2019). This support may take various forms, including empathy, encouragement, active listening, and assistance in handling workplace difficulties (Pohl & Galletta, 2017). A supportive work environment fosters a sense of belonging and psychological security, reducing emotional exhaustion and promoting overall job satisfaction (Saccardi & Masthoff, 2025). Employees who perceive strong emotional support at work are more likely to experience lower stress levels, higher morale, and improved psychological well-being, contributing to a healthier and more productive workforce (Himle, et al., 1989; Han et al., 2023). Workplace friendship is a crucial predictor of emotional support at work, as friendships naturally provide a foundation for mutual understanding, trust, and encouragement (Korber et al., 2024). Employees with close workplace friendships are more likely to share their concerns, receive constructive feedback, and find reassurance in times of stress (Sias et al., 2012). Such friendships create a network of emotional support, reducing feelings of isolation and increasing resilience against workplace stressors. As a result, employees who experience strong emotional support through workplace friendships are better equipped to handle work-related pressures, ultimately leading to enhanced psychological well-being (Colbert et al., 2016). However, the extent to which emotional support mediates the relationship between workplace friendship and well-being has not been thoroughly explored, creating a gap in the literature that warrants further investigation.

The research highlights the significant role of emotional support in mitigating workplace stress and enhancing employee psychological well-being. For instance, a study by Halbesleben (2019) found that employees who receive high levels of emotional support at work exhibit greater job engagement and lower burnout rates. Similarly, Yang et al. (2020) demonstrated that emotional support buffers the negative effects of workplace stress, improving employees' emotional resilience and job satisfaction. While workplace friendships have been identified as a key source of such support, more research is needed to understand the mechanisms through which emotional support mediates the relationship between friendships and well-being outcomes.

The conservation of resources theory offers a meaningful lens for examining the mediating role of emotional support in the workplace. The COR theory suggests that individuals are motivated to obtain, preserve, and protect essential psychological and social resources to mitigate stress and sustain their well-being (Hobfoll, 2011). Workplace friendships serve as a resource that facilitates emotional support, helping employees conserve their psychological energy and cope with workplace demands. When employees receive consistent emotional support, they are better able to replenish their emotional resources, reducing stress and enhancing psychological well-being (Saccardi & Masthoff, 2024). This theoretical perspective highlights emotional support as a crucial mediating factor that amplifies the positive influence of workplace friendships on employee well-being.

H2: Emotional support at work mediates the relationship between workplace friendship and psychological well-being.

Moderating role of Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is defined as an individual's capacity to manage professional duties alongside personal and social obligations in a way that prevents one area from negatively affecting the other

(Shen, 2019). Achieving this balance is vital for overall well-being, as excessive work pressure can result in stress, burnout, and diminished job satisfaction (Volk et al., 2024). Organizations that support work-life balance through flexible schedules, manageable workloads, and employee-friendly policies help foster psychological resilience and enhance overall happiness (Cvenkel, 2021). Employees who maintain a healthy work-life balance are more likely to stay engaged, motivated, and productive at work, while also enjoying a satisfying personal life (Begum, 2025). When considering the relationship between workplace friendship and employee psychological well-being, work-life balance plays a crucial moderating role. Employees who have strong workplace friendships but struggle with poor work-life balance may find it difficult to fully benefit from social support at work, as excessive work demands limit their ability to engage in meaningful interactions (Bressler, 2025). Conversely, employees who maintain a balanced work-life dynamic are better positioned to leverage workplace friendships as a source of emotional support, stress relief, and motivation, ultimately enhancing their psychological well-being (Putri, 2023). Work-life balance enables employees to cultivate friendships without feeling burdened by work-related pressures, thus strengthening the positive effects of workplace friendships on well-being (Cvenkel, 2021).

Recent research highlights the significance of work-life balance in shaping workplace relationships and employee well-being (Ravenswood, 2022). Likewise, employees with a high degree of work-life balance reported stronger workplace friendships and lower stress levels compared to those who struggled to separate their work and personal lives (Arar & Öneren, 2021). Similarly, employees who maintain work-life balance experience greater psychological well-being due to reduced work-related strain and increased opportunities for personal fulfillment (Aruldoss et al., 2022). Despite these insights, limited studies have examined how work-life balance influences the relationship between workplace friendship and employee psychological well-being, leaving a research gap that requires further exploration.

The COR theory offers a robust framework for understanding how work-life balance influences the relationship between workplace friendships and psychological well-being. COR theory posits that individuals strive to conserve essential resources—such as time, energy, and emotional strength—to minimize stress and maintain resilience (Hobfoll, 2011). Work-life balance acts as a vital resource, enabling individuals to manage both personal and professional demands more effectively, thereby reducing the risk of resource exhaustion (Shen, 2019). When work-life balance is achieved, employees are more capable of investing in meaningful workplace relationships, which can positively impact their psychological well-being. This theoretical perspective positions work-life balance as a moderator that reinforces the beneficial link between workplace friendships and well-being.

H3: Work-life balance moderates the relationship between workplace friendship and psychological well-being, such that the positive relationship is stronger at higher levels of work-life balance.

H4: Work-life balance moderates the indirect relationship between workplace friendship and psychological well-being via emotional support, amplifying the mediating effect.

Methods

This research utilizes a quantitative approach to investigate the connection between workplace friendships and employees' psychological well-being, with a particular emphasis on the mediating influence of emotional support within the workplace. A time-lagged survey methodology is used, with workplace friendship and emotional support measured at Time 1, and psychological well-being and work-life balance assessed at Time 2. Data is collected from employees in Pakistan's textile sector, a highly demanding and competitive industry where workplace relationships play a

crucial role in employee well-being. The study follows a deductive approach, utilizing a structured questionnaire to gather responses, questionnaires, distributed both physically and electronically. The target population includes employees from textile manufacturing and export firms in major industrial hubs such as Faisalabad, Lahore, and Karachi, where a large portion of Pakistan's textile workforce is concentrated (Nawaz, et al., 2025).

A purposive sampling technique ensures representation across various organizational levels, including workers, supervisors, and managerial staff. Employees with a minimum of six months of experience in their current organization are included to ensure familiarity with workplace relationships (Islam et al., 2022). In addition, to improve response rates and minimize biases, HR departments and professional networks within the textile sector facilitate data collection. The questionnaire is designed in English to accommodate employees with different proficiency levels. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and respondent anonymity, are strictly upheld to ensure data reliability and credibility (Ahmed et al., 2023).

Measurement Scales

This study adopts well-established scales from previous research to measure the key variables. Workplace friendship is assessed using the workplace friendship scale developed by Nielsen et al. (2000), which consists of 12 items capturing the prevalence and opportunity for friendships in the workplace. Employee psychological well-being is measured using the psychological well-being scale developed by Ryff (1989) and later refined by Ryff and Keyes (1995), comprising 18. Emotional support at work is evaluated using the workplace social support scale developed by House (1981), which includes eight items measuring both coworker and supervisor support. All responses are recorded using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Results and Analysis
Preliminary Analysis and Missing Data
To ensure the dataset's quality for further analysis, preliminary analysis was conducted on missing data, outliers, normality, multicollinearity, reliability, and homoscedasticity showed in Table 1. The total sample size consisted of 395 responses. An analysis of missing data revealed that less than 5% of responses were missing across variables. Little's MCAR test was conducted to determine whether the missing data were random, yielding a non-significant p-value, indicating that data were missing completely at random. Outliers were examined using standardized Z-scores, and cases with values exceeding ±3.29 were removed to maintain data integrity.

Normality of the data was evaluated through skewness and kurtosis metrics, with all values observed within the acceptable range of -3 to +3, suggesting an approximately normal distribution. Additionally, multicollinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), and all VIF values were found to be below 10, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern among the independent variables. The reliability of each construct was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, where workplace friendship, emotional support, work-life balance, and psychological well-being all had values exceeding 0.70, ensuring internal consistency. Levene's test for homoscedasticity was performed, and the non-significant result confirmed that variance across groups was equal, suggesting no heteroscedasticity concerns.

Table 1: Preliminary Analysis

Test	Results
Total Sample Size (N)	395
Missing Data (%)	<5% (MCAR Test: p = 0.243)

Outliers Detected	7 cases removed (Z-scores > ±3.29)
Normality (Skewness & Kurtosis)	Within range (-3 to +3)
Multicollinearity (VIF)	All VIF < 10 (no collinearity issues)
Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)	Workplace Friendship = 0.82, Emotional Support = 0.85, Work-Life Balance = 0.78, Psychological Well-being = 0.88
Homoscedasticity (Levene's Test)	p = 0.128 (no heteroscedasticity)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was undertaken to assess the measurement model, which included the constructs of workplace friendship, emotional support, work-life balance, and psychological well-being. The outcomes reflected a good model fit, as demonstrated by the following fit statistics: $\chi^2/df = 2.81$, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.06, and SRMR = 0.05. These figures meet the accepted benchmark criteria—χ^2/df below 3, CFI and TLI above 0.90, and both RMSEA and SRMR below 0.08—indicating a well-fitting model.

To determine internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were computed, and all values surpassed the minimum threshold of 0.70, confirming strong reliability for each construct. Convergent validity was confirmed through the average variance extracted (AVE), with every construct achieving AVE scores above 0.50. This demonstrates that each construct adequately captures the variance of its respective items. These results, as presented in Table 2, affirm both the soundness and validity of the measurement model.

Table 2: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Constructs	α	CR	AVE
Workplace Friendship	0.82	0.85	0.61
Emotional Support	0.85	0.87	0.64
Work-Life Balance	0.78	0.81	0.58
Psychological Well-being	0.88	0.90	0.67

To assess discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker Criterion was applied. This approach stipulates that a construct's square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) should exceed its correlations with other constructs. As indicated in Table 3, the diagonal elements—representing the square roots of each construct's AVE—are all higher than the corresponding off-diagonal correlation values. This pattern supports the conclusion that discriminant validity has been adequately established.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Constructs	1	2	3	4
Workplace Friendship	**0.78**			
Emotional Support	0.62	**0.80**		
Work-Life Balance	0.55	0.58	**0.76**	
Psychological Well-being	0.60	0.63	0.59	**0.82**

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Descriptive statistics for all variables, including workplace friendship, emotional support, work-life balance, and employee psychological well-being, were examined to understand their central tendency and dispersion. The mean values for workplace friendship (3.85), emotional support (3.92), work-life balance (3.78), and psychological well-being (3.95) suggest that respondents generally reported moderate to high levels of these constructs. Standard deviations ranged from 0.76 to 0.84, indicating a reasonable spread of responses without extreme variability. Skewness

values between -0.43 and -0.35 and kurtosis values between 0.21 and 0.33 confirm that the data distributions are approximately normal, as all values fall within the acceptable range of -3 to +3. Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships among all variables. Workplace friendship showed a strong correlation with emotional support (r = 0.62, p < 0.01), work life balance (r= 0.55, p < 0.01) and psychological well-being (r = 0.60, p < 0.01), indicating that friendships at work enhance both emotional support and well-being. Emotional support also correlated positively with psychological well-being (r = 0.63, p < 0.01) and work-life balance (r = 0.58, p < 0.01), suggesting its mediating role. Additionally, work-life balance was positively associated with psychological well-being (r = 0.59, p < 0.01) displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3	4
Workplace Friendship	3.85	0.76	-0.43	0.21	1			
Emotional Support	3.92	0.81	-0.38	0.29	0.62**	1		
Work-Life Balance	3.78	0.84	-0.35	0.33	0.55**	0.58**	1	
Psychological Well-being	3.95	0.79	-0.41	0.27	0.60**	0.63**	0.59**	1

N=395, p < 0.01

Hypothesis Testing and Mediation Analysis

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted using SmartPLS to test the hypothesized relationships, assessing both direct effects and the overall fit of the model. Mediation and moderation analyses were performed using Hayes' Process macro in SPSS, with bootstrapping applied (5,000 resamples) to ensure robust and reliable estimation of indirect and interaction effects. The hypothesis testing results in Table 5 confirm that workplace friendship plays a crucial role in enhancing employee psychological well-being. The direct effect analysis shows that workplace friendship has a positive and significant impact on psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating its importance in fostering a supportive work environment. Additionally, workplace friendship significantly influences emotional support at work ($\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting that strong interpersonal relationships in the workplace contribute to emotional resources. Furthermore, emotional support itself positively affects psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing the idea that a supportive work culture improves employee mental health.

The mediation analysis further indicates that emotional support partially mediates the relationship. The indirect effect of workplace friendship on psychological well-being through emotional support is significant ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that while workplace friendship directly enhances psychological well-being, part of this effect operates through the provision of emotional support. The persistence of a significant direct effect alongside the indirect effect confirms partial mediation, suggesting that both direct interpersonal relationships and the emotional support they provide contribute independently to employee psychological well-being.

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing and Mediation Analysis

Path	β	SE	t-value	p-value	Result
Workplace Friendship → Psychological Well-being	0.42	0.05	8.40	<0.001	Supported
Workplace Friendship → Emotional Support	0.55	0.04	13.75	<0.001	Supported
Emotional Support → Psychological Well-being	0.38	0.05	7.60	<0.001	Supported

| Workplace Friendship → Emotional Support → Psychological Well-being	0.21	0.03	6.80	<0.001	Supported (Partial Mediation)

N=395, p < 0.01

Moderation Analysis

A moderation analysis revealed that workplace friendship positively and significantly affects psychological well-being (β = 0.42, p < 0.001), emphasizing its essential role in enhancing employee mental health. Similarly, work-life balance was found to have a direct and significant positive effect on psychological well-being (β = 0.30, p < 0.001), indicating its value in supporting a balanced and healthy work atmosphere. Furthermore, the interaction term was significant (β = 0.18, p < 0.001), suggesting that higher levels of work-life balance amplify the beneficial impact of workplace friendships on psychological well-being.

Table 6: Moderation Analysis

Path	β	SE	t-value	p-value	Result
Workplace Friendship → Psychological Well-being	0.42	0.05	8.40	<0.001	Supported
Work-Life Balance → Psychological Well-being	0.30	0.04	7.50	<0.001	Supported
Workplace Friendship × Work-Life Balance → Psychological Well-being	0.18	0.03	6.00	<0.001	Supported

N=395, p < 0.01
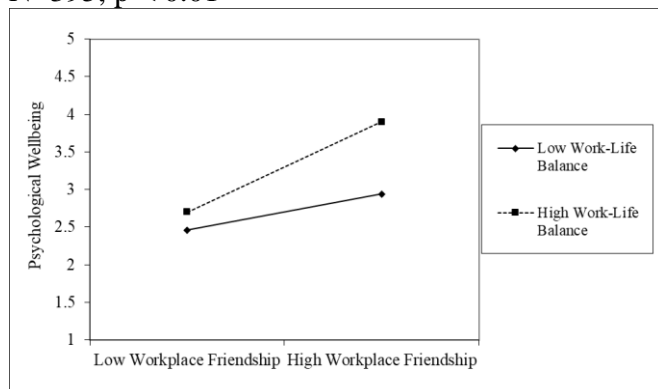
Figure 1: Interactional Effect of Workplace Friendship and Work-Life Balance on Psychological Well-being

Moderated Mediation Analysis

The moderated mediation effect shows that the indirect effect of workplace friendship on psychological well-being via emotional support strengthens as work-life balance increases. Specifically, when work-life balance is low, the effect remains significant but weaker (β = 0.14). At an average level of work-life balance, the indirect effect is moderate (β = 0.21), while at high levels, it is at its strongest (β = 0.30), as displayed in Table 7. These results confirm that workplace friendship significantly contributes to psychological well-being, with emotional support serving as a partial mediator in this relationship. Moreover, work-life balance not only moderates the direct effect of workplace friendship on psychological well-being but also amplifies the indirect effect, emphasizing its role in maximizing the positive impact of workplace friendship.

Table 7: Moderated Mediation Analysis

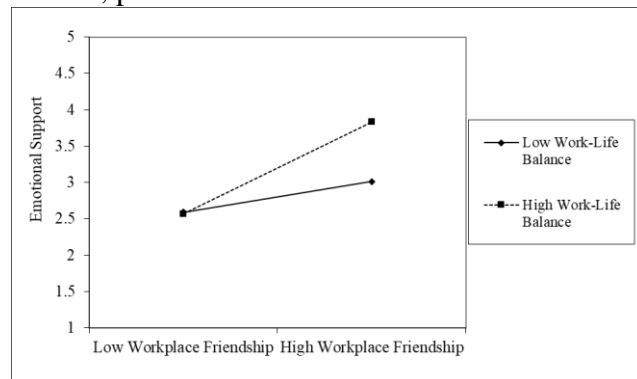| Conditional Indirect Effect	β	SE	t-value	p-value	Result
(Workplace Friendship → Emotional Support → Psychological Well-being at different levels of Work-Life Balance)					
Low Work-Life Balance (-1 SD)	0.14	0.03	4.67	<0.001	Significant
Mean Work-Life Balance	0.21	0.03	6.80	<0.001	Significant
High Work-Life Balance (+1 SD)	0.30	0.04	7.50	<0.001	Significant

N=395, p < 0.01

Figure 2: Interactional Effect of Workplace Friendship and Work-Life Balance on Psychological Well-being via Emotional Support

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the relationships between workplace friendship, emotional support at work, and employee psychological well-being. The findings offer valuable insights into how social interactions within the workplace impact employees' mental health and overall job satisfaction. The results align with the research objectives, demonstrating that strong workplace friendships and emotional support significantly contribute to employee psychological well-being. The positive association between workplace friendship and well-being suggests that social bonds at work serve as a crucial resource for employees, reducing stress and enhancing job satisfaction (Langreet, 2024; Birmingham et al., 2024). Similarly, emotional support from colleagues and supervisors acts as a buffer against workplace stressors, reinforcing psychological resilience (Brunsting et al., 2021).

The study's findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the importance of social relationships in workplace well-being. The results indicate that employees with stronger workplace friendships report higher levels of job satisfaction and engagement (Ugwu et al., 2022; Khairy et al., 2023). This supports the notion that social bonds foster a supportive work environment, leading to better psychological health. Additionally, the findings support Zhang et al. (2022), affirming that emotional and social support positively contribute to psychological well-being, particularly in professional settings. The significant role of emotional support at work, as measured by Durrah's (2023) Workplace Social Support, highlights the importance of coworker and supervisor support in mitigating stress and improving employee morale.

Recent studies have consistently emphasized the significance of workplace friendships and emotional support in enhancing employee well-being. For instance, Gümüştaş et al. (2024) found that workplace friendships improve job performance and reduce burnout, aligning with the findings of the current study. Similarly, Chen et al. (2024) demonstrated that social support at work positively impacts employee engagement and psychological well-being, highlighting the importance of supportive work relationships. These findings underscore the need for organizations

to cultivate a culture that encourages workplace friendships and emotional support to improve employee well-being and organizational outcomes. From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the growing literature on workplace relationships and employee well-being, particularly within the framework of the conservation of resources theory.

Theoretical Contributions

This study makes a significant theoretical contribution by integrating the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) to explain the role of workplace friendship, emotional support, and psychological well-being in organizational contexts. According to COR theory, individuals aim to acquire, maintain, and protect valuable resources, such as social and emotional support, to effectively cope with workplace stressors and enhance their well-being (Hobfoll, 2011). Workplace friendship serves as a key social resource that employees utilize to mitigate stress and enhance psychological well-being (Birmingham et al., 2024). The findings reinforce the idea that strong workplace relationships provide emotional and instrumental support, reducing the likelihood of resource depletion and improving employees' overall mental health.

Furthermore, this study extends existing research on workplace social support by emphasizing its dual role in providing both coworker and supervisor support (Gümüştaş et al., 2024). The results indicate that employees who receive consistent emotional support experience greater psychological well-being, aligning with Chen (2024). This study contributes to the broader literature on organizational behavior and human resource management by emphasizing workplace friendship and emotional support as essential social resources. It also highlights how social relationships can moderate the impact of workplace stress, providing fresh insights into strategies for improving employee well-being.

Practical Implications for Organizations

The findings of this study offer important practical insights for organizations seeking to improve employee well-being and productivity. Workplace friendship and emotional support are key factors in creating a positive work environment where employees feel valued and supported (Durrah, 2023). Organizations should consider implementing policies and initiatives that promote social interactions, such as team-building activities, mentorship programs, and collaborative workspaces. By promoting workplace friendships, organizations can help employees build strong social support networks that reduce stress, increase job satisfaction, and enhance overall psychological well-being. Additionally, supervisors should be trained to provide consistent emotional support, as their role is instrumental in shaping a supportive and inclusive workplace culture (Khairy et al., 2023).

Moreover, organizations should recognize the importance of emotional support as a strategic tool for improving employee retention and performance. Human resource management strategies should incorporate employee well-being initiatives, such as mental health support programs, peer support groups, and open communication channels between employees and leadership. By fostering an environment where employees feel psychologically safe and supported, organizations can reduce absenteeism, improve engagement, and increase organizational commitment (Khairy et al., 2023). Future workplace policies should prioritize both formal and informal support structures to ensure employees have the necessary resources to thrive in their professional roles.

Limitations, Recommendations, and Future Research Directions

Despite its valuable contributions, this study has some limitations that should be recognized. First, the study relies on self-reported data, which could introduce common method bias and social desirability effects. Future research could benefit from incorporating multi-source data collection

methods, such as supervisor or peer evaluations, to improve objectivity. Second, the study's longitudinal design with only two-time data points may limit the ability to establish causal relationships between workplace friendship, emotional support, and psychological well-being. The longitudinal studies with three different time data collection methods are recommended to examine the long-term effects of workplace relationships on employee outcomes. Additionally, the study is conducted within a specific organizational or cultural context, which may limit generalizability. Future research should explore cross-cultural variations in workplace friendships and support mechanisms to understand their broader applicability.

To build on the findings of this study, future research could introduce other workplace mediating and moderating variables that further explain the relationship between workplace friendship and psychological well-being. For instance, **job satisfaction** or **work engagement** could be examined as potential mediators, explaining how workplace friendships and emotional support translate into improved well-being. Similarly, **organizational culture** or **leader-member exchange (LMX)** could act as moderators, determining the strength of these relationships in different organizational settings. Future research could also explore the role of digital workplace friendships in remote or hybrid work environments, examining whether virtual social connections provide the same psychological benefits as in-person interactions.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant role of workplace friendship and emotional support in enhancing employee psychological well-being. Grounded in the conservation of resources theory, the findings emphasize that strong social connections at work serve as valuable resources that reduce stress and promote well-being. Organizations should foster supportive work environments through policies that encourage social interactions and emotional support. By prioritizing employee well-being, organizations can improve job satisfaction, engagement, and overall performance.

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