Employees' Workplace Relation Civility In Workplace: The Role Of Positive Relation Management And Accepted Of Change

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study was to provide knowledge related to employees' workplace relation civility at work—including, acceptance of change, and positive relation management. We examined the extent to which positive relation management and acceptance of change predict employees' workplace relation civility at work and examined the moderating role of acceptance of change in the relationship between positive relation management and employees' workplace relation civility at work. Respondents were 432 (179 males, 255 females) employees selected randomly using a convenience sampling method from public and private organization sectors in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. The Workplace Relational Civility Scale was used to evaluate employees' relational civility in the workplace. While the Positive Relation Management Scale was used to measure the positive relation management of employees and the Accepted of Change Scale was used to measure employees' acceptance of the change. The hypothesized model was tested using structural equation modeling through IBM Statistic SPSS AMOS 23 Program. The fit indices of the modified model (CMIN/DF = 1.561; CFI = .999; GFI = .997; TLI = .991; RMSEA = .036) suggested that the data fit the final model well. The results indicated that from three sub-dimension of positive relation management, only the sub-dimension of caring affect employees' work relational civility positively and significantly. A significant path coefficient was also found from the sub-dimensions of respect and caring to the sub-dimensions of Acceptance to Change: Positive Reaction, Support for Change, Cognitive Flexibility, and Predisposition to change. The results also revealed a significant positive direct effect of the sub-dimension of acceptance to change: Support for change and positive reaction to change, but a negative direct effect of change seeking on employees' work relational civility. The finding indicated only the indirect effect of the sub-dimension of caring on employees' work relational civility through change seeking was significant.

Keywords: Acceptance to Change, workplace relations civility, and positive relation management.

INTRODUCTION

Global change increases the challenge of management sustainability. To adapt to the complexity and being in the competitive industry, the working environment could be aggressive, and employees' psychological and well-being are exposed to the threat. Past studies agreed that workplace incivility is widespread and has consequences on employees' work-related attitudes, behaviors, psychological and physical health, as well productivity (Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Magley, & Nelson, 2017). Aida Ishak, Ahmad, and Anuar Ishak (2018) predicted a negative working environment like incivility behavior could lead hospital staff to burnout. Workplace civility conveys oppositely, where employees show concern for others, respect others and act tactfully (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Employees are the society that is responsible to fulfil organization objectives, therefore their well-being is undebatable. Improving the quality of social interactions in the workplace is a challenge because incivility, rudeness, and aggression are seeming common issues (Leiter, Day, Oore, Spence, & Heather, 2012). Addressing these workplace issues requires effective interventions.

Positive psychology is an alternative to that. Since creating a positive working environment is essential to accelerate organizational performance and the interaction of employees is one of the principals to success, this study chose to focus on workplace relations civility, acceptance of change, and positive relation management. Working in a complex environment, civility in the workplace is of utmost importance to create a positive working environment and ensure employees' well-being. Civility is related to the human behavior of being courteous and respectful to reduce tense interaction (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016; Gori & Topino, 2020). The workplace relational civility is defined with three dimensions, relational decency (RD), relational culture (RCu), and relational readiness (RR). Relational decency is the ability to show respect and converse confidently with high sensitivity in dealing with complex issues (Di Fabio, 2016). Kim and Strudler (2012) emphasized moral decency and embracing culture improve work civility in the workplace. Relation culture is a projection of one person to communicate with polite in considering of differences and diversity (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016). Relational readiness is the ability to understand the emotion of others, this involves being focused and empathetic (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016).

Positive relation management is another notable positive psychology, the positive relationship exists if one is competent to socialize with emotion intelligent when handling complex issues (Di Fabio, 2016). The principal of being

positive in social skills are respect, caring, and connection (Di Fabio, 2016). Only when one chooses to respect and care about themselves can lead them to act the same towards others to build a healthy connection.

Acceptance of change is defined as a willingness to embrace change, open for a new challenge for personal development that includes positive reaction to change, change seeking, cognitive flexibility, predisposition to change, and support for change (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016). The positive reaction to change encourage oneself to embrace a new challenge, change seeking urge individual to seek information on how to pursue the changes, cognitive flexibility enables the individual to weigh the plus and minus point when considering to change, predisposition to change describes individual shall motivate to learn from the changes, while support for change includes the motivation in term of emotional and cognitive support (Di Fabio, Giannini, Loscalzo, Palazzeschi, Bucci, Guazzini, Gori, 2016; Di Fabio & Gori, 2016).

The variables are newly constructed, there were a small handful of studies are explored. In Italy's working setting, Gori and Topino (2020) found there was a positive relationship between workplace relational civility and one of the acceptances of change dimension, predisposition to change that increase job satisfaction. Peiró, José, Bayona, Caballer, and Di Fabio (2020) proved that self-disposition that is confidently to perform a task can mediate the working environment and outcome. The studies show that performing work with high self-disposition led the employees to accept more challenging tasks and embrace social interaction whereby they are keen to communicate effectively with colleagues and clients. That is to say, self-disposition to change is predicted can act as a mediator in the connection between management and society. Besides, Safman (2018) agreed acceptance of change is easily embraced by employees with condition support

systems that exist in the organization. Di Fabio et al. (2016) found a positive relationship between acceptance of change and workplace relation civility that increases the employee's well-being overall.

Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez (2014) claimed large studies focused on how negative antecedents like incivility behavior in the workplace affect badly on the organization's performance and employee well-being. Perhaps it is ideal to explore positive antecedents that could accelerate a positive working environment. Plus, only small studies could relate these variables, especially in the Eastern context, the positive relation management, employees' workplace relation civility, and acceptance of the change. In echoing that, this study was aimed to investigate the relationship between positive relation management and employees' workplace relation civility at work with mediation role accepted of change among employees in Malaysia.

METHOD

Respondents

Four hundred and thirty Malaysian employees of different public and private organizations in Koto Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia participated in the study. The respondents were selected randomly using a convenience sampling method. There are 175 workers (40.7%) of the participants were men and 225 (59.3%) were women. Their ages ranged from 18 to 60 years (M = 33.74, SD = 8.63). Off all, 142 (33.02%) were Malaysian government servants and 225 (52.33%) of the participants were private company employees. The mean job tenure of the respondents with their current employer was 7.83 years (SD = 7.32)

The Workplace Relational Civility Scale (WRCS)

The Workplace Relational Civility Scale (WRCS) is a self-report mirror instrument designed to measure relational civility in the workplace. The scale consists of 26 items to measure three dimensions: relational culture (RCu), relational readiness (RR), and relational decency (RD) at work. The sum of these dimensions gives an overall score in workplace relational civility. The responses for the items were a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = somewhat, 4 = much, 5 = a great deal). This scale consists of two parts, Part A concerns the analysis of an individual's self-perception regarding a particular issue (e.g., "I was polite toward others"). Part B involves the analysis of an individual's perception of others regarding the same issue (e.g., "Others were polite toward me"). Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the three dimensions of Part A and Part B in Malaysia context were as follows: Part A: Relation Readiness = 0.83, Relational Culture = 0.76, Relational Decency = 0.75 and total scores = .87. Part B: Relation Readiness = 0.86, Relational Culture = 0.88, Relational Decency = 0.85 and total score = 0.92 (Chua Bee Seok, Pan Lee Ching, & Rosnah Ismail, 2020).

Positive Relation Management Scale (PRMS)

Positive Relation Management Scale (PRMS) consists of 12 items designed to assesses three dimensions of relationships (respect, caring, connection) and yields three subscale scores and a total score (e.g., Respect: "I keep a balance between respect toward others and toward myself"; Caring: "I often take care of others"; Connection: "I have good relationships with my family"). The Cronbach's alpha values for the three dimensions and total score are: respect = 0.82; caring = 0.80; connection = 0.81; PRMS total = 0.85 (Di Fabio, 2016). The responses for the items were a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Di Fabio, 2016b).

The Acceptance of Change Scale (ACS)

The Acceptance of Change Scale (ACS) consists of 20 items that were developed to measure the tendency of the respondents to accept or move toward change (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016). The response options of the items was a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = somewhat, 4 = much, 5 = a great deal). The ASC consisted of five dimensions: Positive reaction to change, change seeking, cognitive flexibility, predisposition to change, and Support for change. The example of item Positive reaction to change: "I am able to give new meanings to the things that I have been doing for a long time," example of item Change seeking: "I am looking for changes in my life, even when things are going well," Cognitive flexibility, the example of item Cognitive flexibility: "If necessary, it is not difficult for me to change my mind,", the example of item Predisposition to change: "Thinking about new plans is easy for me," and Support for change, and example of item Support for change: "I trust the people close to me when faced with change". The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the five dimensions were α = 0.83 for Predisposition to change; α = 0.79 for Support for change; α = 0.80 for Change seeking; α = 0.75 for Positive reaction to change, α = 0.72 for Cognitive flexibility, and α = 0.88 for the overall scale.

Results

Associations Among Positive relation management, Acceptance of Change and Employees' Work Relational Civility

Structural equation modelling was employed to test the proposed theoretical model. The goodness-of-fit statistics of the overall hypothesized model was not fit the data well. Then, the nonsignificant paths starting with the lowest standardized coefficients were deleted one at a time until only significant paths remained in the model. The fit indices of the modified model (CMIN/DF = 1.561; CFI = .999; GFI = .997; TLI = .991; RMSEA = .036) suggested that the data fit the final model well (Hu & Bentler 1999). The model also accounted for robust variance of 42% in Work Relational Civility (R^2 = .42). Figure 1 depicts the final model with only significant path coefficients that were statistically significant at p >.05.

The Effect of Positive relation management and acceptance of change on employees' work relational civility

The results indicate a significant positive direct effect of caring the sub-dimension of positive relational management on employees' work relational civility (estimate = 0.47, p < 0.05). However, a non-significant path coefficient was found from the sub-dimension of respect and connection to employees' work relational civility. Refer to Table 1 and Figure 1 for the direct and indirect effect of the mediation test of positive relational management on employees' work relational civility through acceptance of change among the employees.
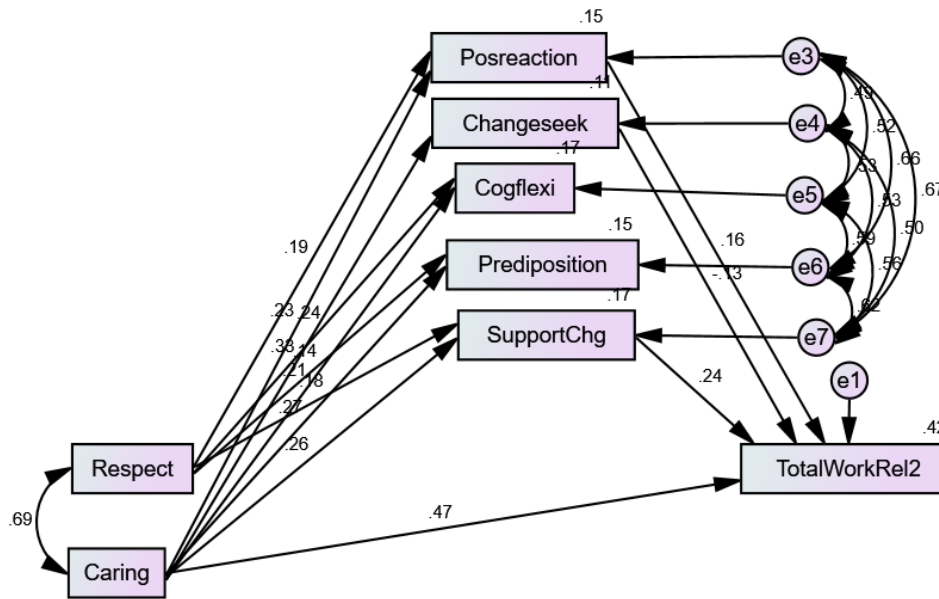
Figure 1. The Mediation Test of Positive Relation Management on Employees' Work Relational Civility Through Acceptance of Change.

Table 1. Mediation of the Effect of Acceptance of Changes in the Relationship between Positive Relation Management and Employees' Work Relation Civility

Direct Effect	Estimate	p-Value
From Caring to Work Relation Civility	.417	.000
From Support for Change to Work Relation Civility	.236	.000
From Positive Reaction to change to Work Relation Civility	.161	.004
From Change seeking to Work Relation Civility	-.128	.006
From Respect to Positive Reaction to change	.186	.000
From Caring to Positive Reaction to change	.231	.000
From Caring to change seeking	.331	.000
From Caring to Support for Change	.180	.000
From Respect to Support for Change	.264	.000
From Caring to Cognitive flexibility	.240	.000
From Respect to Cognitive flexibility	.215	.000
From Caring to Predisposition	.142	.007
From Respect to Predisposition	.272	.000
Indirect Effect		
From Caring to Work Relation Civility through change seeking	-.042	.050

Besides, findings revealed a significant path coefficient was found from Respect and Caring the sub-dimensions of Positive Relation Management to the sub-dimensions of Acceptance to Change: Positive Reaction, Support for Change, Cognitive Flexibility and Predisposition. The analysis provides the support that positive relational management has a positive effect on employees' acceptance to change (refer to Table 1). The results also revealed a significant positive direct effect of the sub-dimension of acceptance to change: Support for change (estimate = 236, $P < .05$) and positive reaction to change (estimate = .161, $P < .05$), but negative direct effect of change seeking (estimate = -.128, $P < .05$) on employees' work relational civility. The finding provides initial support that acceptance to change may have a positive and negative mediating effect on the relationship between positive relation management and the employees' work relational civility.

The indirect effects of positive relational management on employees' work relational civility to provide evidence for the mediating role of acceptance to change was also calculated. The finding indicated only the indirect effect of the sub-dimension of Caring (estimate = -0.042, $p < 0.05$) on employees' work relational civility through Change Seeking the sub-dimension of Acceptance to Change was significant. The result showed Change Seeking has a negative mediating effect on the relationship between the sub-dimension of caring and the employees' work relational civility.

Discussions

The main aim of this study was to examine the extent to which positive relation management and acceptance of change predict employees' workplace relation civility at work. The next goal of this study was to examine the moderating role of acceptance of change in the relationship between positive relation management and

employees' workplace relation civility at work. Overall, the model could be partially confirmed.

Specifically, there are eight main results of the current study which were: First, research findings demonstrated that Caring, the sub-dimension of Positive Relation Management showed positive relational management on employees' work relational civility. Based on the psychology-of-working framework, the need for social connection and adaptive relationships in the workplace is important (Blustein, 2011) which need to be characterized by civility (Jiménez et al., 2015). Andersson and Pearson (1999) defined civility as "interpersonal behaviours that demonstrate mutual respect between individuals or groups". Therefore, employees who are caring toward self and others tend to have positive interpersonal behaviour in the workplace.

Second, the results indicated that only two sub-dimension of Acceptance of Change Scale (ACS) which are support for change and positive reaction to change affect employees' work relational civility positively and significantly. Meanwhile, change seeking affect employees' work relational civility negatively and significantly. This could mean that when things are going well in the workplace and the relationships in the workplace are fine, employees are not keen to seek changes in their life. This is in line with past studies in which resistance to change is a way of defence mechanism (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016b; Wanberg & Banas, 2000).

Third, the study found that Respect and Caring in the Positive Relational Management scale are positively related to Positive Reaction to Change in the Acceptance of Change scale. Currently, the working situation in the world is changing from time to time. Therefore, an employee must adapt and embrace changes

within or outside the organization. Positive interactions in the organization such as respect and caring for the self and others workplace may ease the process or create a positive reaction to change because for most people, coping with change is not always easy (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016; Reis & Gable, 2003).

Fourth, Caring in the Positive Relational Management scale is positively correlated with Change Seeking in the Acceptance of Change scale. This result indicated that employees who are taking care of self and others are open to seeking changes in their everyday life and the workplace regardless of the situation in the workplace (di Fabio, 2016). Based on this premise, positive relationships influence employees decision in the workplace (Blustein, 2011).

Fifth, both Caring and Respect in the Positive Relational Management scale has a significant relationship with Support for Change in the Acceptance of Change scale. This is in line with previous studies which stated that positive employees able to communicate with other people kindly and tend to accept change and therefore well to any challenges (di Fabio, 2016; Di Fabio & Gori, 2016c). Therefore, this study implies that Malaysian employees who care and respect one and other more likely to respond better to changes in the workplace.

Sixth, the results demonstrated that caring and respect positively related to cognitive flexibility. This study revealed that employees who care and respect themselves and others can work well when previous approaches in the workplace do not work. In other words, the employees have the propensity to work well in any situation and to keep up with the ever-changing work environment (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016c; Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2015).

Seventh, the study findings revealed that caring and respect for oneself and others at work is positively associated with predisposition to change the Acceptance of Change scale. Positive relationship in the workplace enables employees to use change to improve their quality of life (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016b). Even though change can be very difficult, but employees who are open to change are more likely to be optimistic and view the changes as an opportunity to grow (Collishaw et al., 2004; Di Fabio et al., 2016; Gori & Topino, 2020).

Lastly, our study showed that Change Seeking has a negative mediating effect on the relationship between Caring (sub-dimension of Positive Relation Management) and the employees' work relational civility. This indicated that caring has an indirect negative effect on work relation civility via its positive effect on Change seeking. This means that caring reduced work relation civility indirectly as it increases change seeking. Positive relational management in the workplace will decrease work relation civility indirectly if employees increase change seeking.

Previous researchers focused more on workplace incivility rather than civility in the workplace. However, this study focuses on the positive psychology in the workplace to promote positive behaviour in the workplace, improve quality of work-life and encourage effective work and organization environment (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016a). This concept of positive psychology is in line with workplace relation civility in workplace introduced by (Di Fabio & Gori (2016a) which emphasised on the idea of respect and caring for the self and others and the relationships between people. The present study also revealed that positive relational management in the workplace is vital to create a positive environment in the organization to enable employees to have a sound relationship within the workplace and between

employees thus, increase their resources (di Fabio, 2016). The sub-dimension of the positive Relation Management in the study did not include Connectedness as in the original study by di Fabio (2016) involving Italian workers. This may reflect cultural differences in the Malaysian context which should be explored in future studies.

The working environment is rapidly changing due to external and internal factors, thus lead to uncertainty. Therefore, acceptance of change enables employees to find ways to manage work and life to help them face the challenges in the most adaptive way (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016c). The study revealed that social support (positive relation management) ease acceptance to change and therefore encourage employees workplace relation civility. This finding may be used as key information for organizational intervention in order to emphasize the importance of positive psychology.

Future research may consider a larger sample from various public and private organization across Malaysia to better represent all Malaysian employees and authenticate the recent study results in another part of Malaysia. Malaysian working culture might be different from other countries, therefore future studies can compare the results to other employees in other countries.

Conclusion

The current study contributes to the body of literature on employee's workplace relation civility in the workplace by empirically investigating the relationship with positive relation management and acceptance to change. The findings confirmed the significant association between positive relation management and acceptance of change predict employee's workplace relation civility.

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