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Work Place Romance: A Cross-Cultural Investigation

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### Abstract

Work place romance is a mutually desired relationship that includes physical attraction between two members of the same organization. Working 40 hours per week with other workers who share a common interest may develop emotional connections that are often not appropriate in the work place. The purpose of this research was to identify how different cultures view dating within the work place. This correlational study involved 4 different countries: United States, The Bahamas, South Korea, and Dominican Republic. There was a convenient sample size of 30 participants from each nation. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in the number of participants involved in a romantic relationship with a coworker across each country surveyed. It was also hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in the attitudes towards: dating, having sexual relations with coworkers, and fear of getting fired because of dating. Do cultural norms, beliefs, and organization policies affect an individual's perspective on their attitudes towards dating coworkers? Previous literature was also used to acknowledge the pros and cons of allowing dating within the work environment and how it effects an organization. The results demonstrated that culture has no significant effect to an individual's opinion towards dating a coworker, thus the null was retained. The average age for all 4 nations was 27 with a total of 62:58 male to female ratio. However, the conclusion made is that younger generations are becoming more alike, aside from its traditional collectivistic or individualistic nature.

*Keywords:* work place romance, cultural relationships, attitudes, cross-cultural, policies

## Introduction

Love at first sight can be an overwhelming and emotional experience. It would be ideal to meet a significant other at a school, coffee shop, mall or even a bus stop, but what about someone's own place of work? There are many challenges affecting a relationship that is developed in a work place. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), the average American spends about 40 hours at work during their week. That provides many opportunities to form friendly relationships with other coworkers, even intimate ones. However, what happens when a relationship between two people does not work out and a person is stuck seeing someone every day?

Research shows that about 80% of Americans have experienced some type of romantic relationship with another individual at work (Appelbaum, Marinescu, Klenin, & Bytautas, 2007). This states that chances are very high for an employee to have some sort of attraction to another coworker. The most common problem with having an attraction to another person is that it may be received differently by them. One individual may think he or she is being presented as being flirtatious and charming when the receiving end may find it offensive and inappropriate. These actions may lead to reports of sexual harassment, mixed messages, legal ramifications, settlements, and legal fees (Appelbaum et al., 2007). In the past, people have dated coworkers for casual sex, extramarital affairs, or attain some form of power or promotion for doing certain acts i.e. *Quid Pro Quo*.

There is limited research comparing differences in people's attitudes towards dating within the work place, and there are fewer studies comparing the attitudes of different nations. The original hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference in the attitudes towards

dating, having sexual relations, and knowledge of work place policies concerning dating coworkers. From the words of Erik Erikson, and influential theorist in human development, he believed that seeking romantic relationships is a pivotal element in the quest for one's personal identity (Erikson, 1950). Where are couples more likely to meet? School and work are places where people spend most of their time. Employees of each organization share specific interests and goals. People who work together also often live near each other and see each other on a daily basis (Mok, 1999).

To truly understand the aspect of discerning whether there was a cultural difference within work place attitudes, it was important to select countries that shared a the least amount of commonalities. The tool that was utilized for the measurement of the opinions was the survey. It recorded people's opinions using a Likert scale which also portrayed the amount of influence from cultural norms, beliefs, and organizational policies each participant had when compared to each other. Every individual had their own perspective about what kind of relationship is appropriate at work and the researchers had no influence in reconstructing their opinion. By analyzing the data using an ANOVA, the inferences were also able to be used to gather information on how much of a difference the countries differed in their opinions as a whole.

The purposed research study was to distinguish the level of significance between different cultures and their views on dating coworkers. Do cultures view romantic relationships in the work environment as acceptable or not? And do they take into consideration the consequences that may result from it? This study will enable researchers to study the differences in how people from different cultures perceive building romantic relationships with other coworkers. This takes into account the individual's history, experiences, beliefs, culture, work

environment, and identity. The problem that affects many organizations worldwide result from the type of relationships formed within the work place environment.

The workplace is great for meeting other individuals who share a common goal, common interest and build long term friendships. There are many arguable problems that derive from romantic relationships between coworkers such as productivity loss, charges of sexual harassment, favoritism, breach of privacy, and even workplace violence (Lickey, Berry, & Whelan-Berry, 2009).

### **Definition of Terms**

With any research conducted, it is important to define the terms to get a better understanding of the study itself and what is being analyzed. The attitude being studied is a positive or negative evaluation of and disposition toward person, groups, policies, or other objects of attention. Attitudes are based on cognitive, affective, and behavioral categories. Attitudes are learned and relatively persistent (Vogt & Johnson, 2011, p. 17). The perspective refers to the point of view; it is a cognitive sense to categorize or measure one's opinion usually comparing with another. Questions were also asked to the participants concerning sexual relations which is a relationship between two or more individuals involving sexual intimacy through the use of genital or anal intercourse.

The general definition of "dating" is when someone is in an active romantic relationship with another person (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, 2012). The researchers targeted all both single and married statuses. "Married" by definition meaning the social institution under which a man and a woman establish their decision to live as husband and wife by legal commitments, or religious ceremonies (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, 2012). According to the purpose of this research, work place romance is a mutually desired relationship that

includes physical attraction between two members of the same organization (Lickey et al., 2009). Cohabitation concerns the people who live together and have sexual relationship (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, 2012). Finally, fraternization in this research is to be friendly with someone; to spend time with someone in a friendly way especially when it is considered wrong or improper to do so (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, 2012).

It was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in the perception of each country's attitude towards dating between the countries of interest. Though as liberal as the United States may seem to be, there was a higher presumption that there would be more perspectives against dating and any other form of it within the job than the predicted amount. It was also assumed that there would be more participants who would be against dating coworkers than those who are for it. At this time, not much research is available for the other following countries concerning dating in the work place but it was also assumed that a country as conservative and collectivistic as South Korea would result in having the highest ratings to being against having romantic relationships in the work place with other workers.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Because dating and sex have become more of a casual phenomenon in today's culture, companies have to keep in mind of how to address this issue and formulate whether or not it plays a role in the productivity, safety, and comfort of the company. According to Freedman and Phillips (1988), because there are more women entering the work place, there is an increased frequency of office romance. It is understandable to predict that the more women are entering a male dominated field, the higher the probability of a romantic relationship occurring.

Time spent in the office or place of work is another proponent to romantic relationships at work. According to the results of the General Social Survey conducted by Statistics Canada in 2005 shows that the average time spent at work for individuals between the ages of 25 to 54 has increased from 8.2 hours in 1986 to 8.6 hours in 2005 (Appelbaum, Marinescu, Klenin, & Bytautas, 2007). Appelbaum and colleagues (2007) referred that in 1999, Pierce Jones stated in his article of workplace romance that predispositions which lead to work place attraction are closeness, repeated exposure, and physical arousal. Thus, as companies continue to build a more collaborative and team-oriented work environment with high levels of interaction, employees will be more conducive to find "love" at work (Appelbaum, Marinescu, Klenin, & Bytautas, 2007).

According to Appelbaum and colleagues (2007), there was further research conducted about the effects of workplace dating. The positive aspect of dating is the increase in job satisfaction, but in contrast it can also lead to denied promotion, job relocation, and employment termination (Appelbaum, Marinescu, Klenin, & Bytautas, 2007). A survey of 3,000 human resource professionals by the Society of Human Resource Management reported that in conjunction to work place romance, 28% of co-workers complained about favoritism, 24%

claimed sexual harassment, 24% reported a decrease in productivity of the participants, 16% reported a decreased morale of coworkers, and 11% stated there was a decrease in the productivity of the coworkers (Appelbaum, Marinescu, Klenin, & Bytautas, 2007).

Though 80 % of workers may get involved in a romance with another, only about 15% of employers between 2001 and 2005 had a policy dealing romance and sexual relations because they often believe that someone's love life is no one else's business (Lickey, Berry, & Whelan-Berry, 2009). General Human Resource management policies have guidelines about sharing confidential workplace information and what appropriate behavior in the workplace is, but a small amount focus on romance. Research also shows that 25% of American employers discourage romance, but only 9% were surveyed to having a policy that outright prohibited employees from dating each other (Lickey, Berry, & Whelan-Berry, 2009).

Many more employees in the workplace are working more hours in a segregated, team-based work environment where these interactions logically contribute to increased romance, dating, and marriage or at least interactions that go beyond being purely professional. Lickey, Berry, and Whelan-Berry (2009), describe 3 types of workplace romance: employee peer-to-peer workplace romance, supervisor and subordinate workplace romance, and married couple romance. Employee peer-to-peer relationships tend to be less threatening as compared to the organizational hierarchy. These relationships are also usually kept secret, at least in its beginning stages.

Supervisor and subordinate romance, or hierarchical romance, is viewed as inappropriate or unfair by most other employees. A failed romance increases an organization's liability in the aftermath because of difference in power and authority. Other employees tend to see supervisor-subordinate romances negatively because of potential and unfair outcomes such as: assignment,



promotions, pay raises, and bonuses (Lickey, Berry, & Whelan-Berry, 2009). In married workplace romances, negative outcomes to the organization can be further increased. When bringing in cultural norms, extramarital affairs are regarded negatively by North American social norms because of lack of professionalism and judgment. It also may have a negative impact on the company as it ruins its reputation (Lickey, Berry, & Whelan-Berry, 2009).

Going back to Freedman and Phillip's (1988) supportive argument of the increased number of female workers in the work force, there has been an overall increase in all fields of employment such as lawyers, pharmacists, veterinarians, and various managerial positions. Within the early 1990's, over 48% of working women were employed in support and service occupations that had a tendency to get paid less compared to males. Another interesting finding from this particular article is that it studied the correlation of attractiveness level to job opportunities (Freedman & Phillips, 1988). Research showed that women who are more attractive are at a disadvantage when applying for a traditionally male position because they are regarded as being more feminine than less attractive women (Freedman & Phillips, 1988). In contrast, men who are more attractive are rated as more masculine. Thus, attractiveness is an asset for males but a disadvantage to females when they are applying for a particular job (Freedman & Phillips, 1988).

Because a portion of the research will be conducted in South Korea, studies were pulled from Asian cultural dating and relationships. According to Taresa A. Mok from Purdue University (1999), Asian females are more likely to adopt and cultivate to values and norms of other cultures, specifically White American culture. Research showed that Asian women tend to cultivate at a faster rate compared to Asian men as they are more traditional in certain aspects. In regards to Asian culture, they are not encouraged to date as much as White Americans. As a

matter of fact, many Asian families would disown or cut off a member from the family for not following cultural tradition (Mok, 1999). Therefore, Asians perceive their parents to have a great influence over partner choice as compared to typical Americans (Mok, 1999).

Because this research involves the topic of sex, it is important to cover some statistics of cultural sex involvement. Regan, Durvasula, Howell, Ureno, and Rea (2004) discussed a research in their article involving sexual experiences during young adulthood. In 2000, Paikoff, McCormick, and Sagrestano discovered that levels of sexual intercourse experience vary among different ethnic and racial groups within the United States. 79% of African Americans and 54% of Latinos/as between the ages of 15 and 19 have had sexual intercourse, compared to 37% of Euro-Americans and 16% of Asian Americans (Regan, Durvasula, Howell, Ureno, & Rea, 2004).

Within Regan and colleague's study, they conducted an experiment discovering the first time of sexual experiences which include intercourse, along with kissing and dating within a Western university with an N=683. Through a series of z-tests, they found that more woman (87.9%) than men (81.8%) reported being in love at least once. More women (92.5%) than men (88.4%) reported being kissed, but there was a greater amount of men (78.9%) than women (72.9%) reporting having sexual intercourse (Regan et al., 2004).

It is understandable to acknowledge the fact that cultures vary in many different aspects and attitudes. A research study conducted by Monica P. Adya (2008) measured the career experience and perceptions of South Asian women and women in the United States within a particular field of work. This article provided this researcher with more insight to how different women can be in certain aspects with a job. Adya studied women who worked for information technology (IT), through the use of interviews, questionnaires, and observation. Significant findings from her article relating to this research were that South Asian women perceive more

jobs to be neutral or non-gender than American women. South Asian women felt less discriminated against in regards to allocation as opposed to American women who reported to having higher perceptions of discrimination from coworkers and supervisors (Adya, 2008).

Coping mechanisms were also perceived differently by both groups as South Asian women were more passive and accepting compared to American women who ranged from rebellion to acceptance (Adya, 2008). South Asian women in Adya's particular study also sought out senior male figures as mentors compared to American women who sought senior or peer females (Adya, 2008). The last interesting and relevant piece of information gathered from the results showed that South Asian women identified to have lower turnover intentions compared to the American women within the study (Adya, 2008). This information allows for an identification of how different culture's genders are.

With gender differences in mind, can work place romance be managed in different countries? C. Boyd (2010) was able to identify and list arguments for romance in the work place as a manageable experience. Boyd listed past scandals that involved fraternization or romance between coworkers or people in their job. The President of the American Red Cross in 2007 was fired for having a personal relationship with a subordinate and in 2005 the CEO of Boeing was fired for having an "improper relationship" with a female Boeing executive (Boyd, 2010). Even prestigious women like the Editor-in-Chief of the *Harvard Business Review* in 2002 and the Senior Vice President of Marketing Communications in 2006, were accused of having affairs with other executives within their organization (Boyd, 2010).

Boyd also mentions that some organizations feel that it is their moral duty to protect its employees from sexual misconduct, specifically those that were married so they would not commit adultery. In 1993, an married employee was fired from Wal-Mart for engaging in a

relationship with another person other than his wife which also led this case to be the first court case prosecuted under New York labor Law Section 201-d, which prohibits an employer from discriminating against an individual based on a variety of his or her activities outside the workplace (Boyd, 2010). Boyd then stated that Wal-Mart changed the policy in the handbook to prohibit romance between superior and subordinate regardless of their marital status.

Nina Cole (2009) reported in her article the benefits of workplace romance. Work place romance can increase motivation, energy, and self-actualization beyond an employee's limits (Cole, 2009). It can encourage creativity, innovation, and soften work-related conflicts because parties are happier and easier to get along with (Cole, 2009). Still, 70% of organizations do not have formal work romance policies, although there are always general agreements that it is not advisable for managers and employees to date (Cole, 2009). The way that HR managers intervene in any case of work place romance is when the relationship leads to dysfunctional results such as a decline in performance or a violation of company policy is breached (Cole, 2009).

Cole's purpose for her experiment was to investigate the impact of several variables on coworker's perceptions of fairness regarding workplace romance management practices. She indicated in her hypothesis that coworker perception of fairness in regards to managerial action in work place romance will be lower when the couples are straight rather than same-sex, peer-to-peer, single (non-married), and based on a love motive. She accumulated other hypotheses about perception in fairness which enabled for further thought into other hypotheses for attitude towards workplace romance upon forming and planning this experiment. It is hypothesized that cross cultural perspectives on dating, sex, and marriage in the work place varies across the following countries: United States, the Bahamas, Dominican Republic, and South Korea. Also

cultural attitudes on dating, sex, and marriage in the work place are defined by the cultural norms of the country in which the person resides. Lastly, there is a significant difference in cohabitation rates amongst employees of the same organization across countries.

Considering that this research involves dating and forming relationships with others, personality has to be taken into consideration. In an article constructed by Rachel Grover and her colleagues, they indicated that anxiety among individuals plays a huge role whether a person is bound to being in any sort of relationship with another individual. A study using a large sample of college students indicated that about 37% of men stated that they were very anxious about dating (Grover et al., 2007). The study revealed that individuals who have high social anxiety participated in fewer opposite sex interactions, exhibited poorer social performances, and reported lower satisfaction in interacting compared to individuals with lower amounts of social anxiety (Grover et al., 2007).

This information only supports the argument that romance in the work place can improve satisfaction as it involves building relationship. But what causes people to flirt? Flirting is defined as behaviors that receivers interpret as a desire to connect and promotes attention and interest from another person (Henningsen, Braz, & Davies, 2008). Ambiguity appears to be a key component in the reason behind flirting as it intentionally promotes ambiguity in terms of sexual intent (Henningsen, Braz, & Davies, 2008). As mentioned earlier in the article, employees can send mixed signals to coworkers due to how others perceive their form of contact which may be taken as a flirtatious gesture. Henningsen and colleagues referred to a study conducted earlier by Henningsen in 2004 that identified six motivations that endorsed reasons why people flirt.

Six reason people flirt with others are to facilitate a sexual contact motivated by sexual intent, to advance an existing romantic relationship motivated by building a relationship, for fun

as it can be enjoying, to explore the potential of getting into a romantic relationship and learning more about the other, to boost self-esteem, and to encourage another to do something which is usually perceived as seduction or manipulation (Henningsen, Braz, & Davies, 2008). Henningsen also identified in his article differences in motivation from employees and students. Flirting for sexual desire can be perceived as sexual harassment in the work place, so it may be anticipated that employees would view flirting for reasons of manipulation as more important to get things done (Henningsen, Braz, & Davies, 2008).

Many times, flirting comes in natural as part of a conversation and cannot have a policy against it. But Lynn Lieber (2008) stated in her article ways to prevent lawsuits over sexual harassment and what to include in non-fraternization policies. A study conducted by MSNBC.com revealed that 53% of intimate employee relationships end within one year and 84% of these relationships end within five years, finalizing that the majority of these relationships formed will end also causing problems for the employee and/or the company (Lieber, 2008). It is up to Human Resource professionals to lessen the risk of damage resulting from work place romance by constructing appropriate policies.

Lieber suggests that the first step into constructing the policy is to govern behaviors and relationships that are acceptable in the work place. The most common and recommended policy is prohibiting supervisors from dating subordinates as it can lead to perceived favoritism, mislead evaluations, and discipline (Lieber, 2008). Many supervisors do not recognize the policy and go on dating subordinates. Employers need to communicate and enforce the policy consistently, even up to the highest position and imply that disciplinary action will be taken if they policy is broken (Lieber, 2008). Which changing time, policies also need to be updated regularly covering

all types of harassments and informing the level of confidentiality when harassment is reported (Lieber, 2008).

Because part of this research is being taken place in Dominican Republic which is of a Spanish origin, an article from Rebecca Merkin was found to be helpful which studied sexual harassment in Latin American countries. The countries studied were Argentina, Brazil, and Chile with a sample size of 8,108 participants. Of these participants, 48% were males and 52% were females (Merkin, 2008). Results found that sexual harassment decreased with education because there seems to be a link between age and harassment being that more educated individuals tend to be older (Merkin, 2008).

Therefore, the younger an employee is the more likely they are to experience sexual harassment. According to the final results of the study, sexual harassment within the three countries deferred: 8.7% of employees in Chile were harassed, 4.8% in Brazil harassed, and 3.5% in Argentina were harassed (Merkin, 2008). Another significant finding from this study was that women between the ages of 16 and 34 showed to be the most likely to being harassed (Merkin, 2008). This study will be applied to the survey to see if there is any significance in the percentages of harassment between the 4 countries being studied.

So with this previous study, would it be pivotal for organizations and companies that attract younger groups of employees to adopt relationship policies to avoid discrimination or harassment? William Neese and colleagues (1989) discussed the importance of having a legitimate policy written for an organization to decrease losses. If a policy is valid, then management has the right to enforce the policy through involuntary discharge which should concern preventing sexual harassment (Neese, Cochran & Bryant, 1989). If the policy is so broad and invalid, then the employee can file a lawsuit resulting in a loss for the company when a

supervisor is held responsible (Neese, Cochran & Bryant, 1989). There may be a difference in the policies held in each country being studied?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants of this study consisted of adults over the age of 18 from the following countries: United States, Dominican Republic, the Bahamas, and South Korea. In order for the participants to qualify for this study they had to have at least 1 year of experience in the work force. Each researcher for each country also had a quota to meet of 30 participants to complete the short survey to gather a large enough sample variance. Participants in the United States were surveyed from several cities such as Miami, Tampa, Orlando, Daytona Beach, and Lakeland. These particular cities were traveled to by the researcher to collect the data. Other cities around Florida and other states were contacted via email and responded through various electronic techniques such as: Survey Monkey, email, Facebook, and referred by another participant.

The same techniques were applied to the other countries as well. Participants in Dominican Republic (DR) were mostly from San Pedro de Macoris, San Francisco de Macoris, and Blanco Ariba de Tenares. Each of these locations in DR also made up a good sample of the city, country, and village inhabitants with different types of jobs such as: farmers, store owners, office workers, and transportation laborers. Participants from the islands of the Bahamas were surveyed from two particular islands: Nassau and Long Island. The Bahamas is made up of over 700 islands, but these two islands are the most populated and industrialized to collect data from. Finally, participants from South Korea were surveyed from the city of Yangju-si, Gyeonggi-do. The researcher's assistant was able to collect a convenient sample of participants from several small businesses, local stores, and restaurants.



## **Instruments**

Two instruments were developed to obtain information and opinion from the participants of this correlational study. A consent form (see Appendix A) was constructed to inform the participant about: the study, how their opinions will be used, the safety of its process, and the confidentiality of their responses. The consent form did not require the participant to sign their name, but did state that upon filling out the survey, they were agreeing to the terms and conditions of the study. The consent form also provided information about how to get in contact the researcher in case of any concerns regarding the experiment. Upon providing a brief insight on what the experiment was about, it also provided information about the minimal risks and benefits upon completing the survey.

The next tool was a Likert-Scale based survey (see Appendix B1, B2, and B3) composed of 13 questions regarding the participant's personal opinion about the issue measuring their work place attitudes along with other questions needed to identify the demographic groups. The survey was constructed in several languages to accommodate the language barrier. The United States and the Bahamas both used mostly the English surveys as seen in Appendix B1, with a minor few who preferred the Spanish translation to get a better understanding, particularly in Miami, FL. Dominican Republic was given the Spanish translation as seen in Appendix B2, which was reviewed and corrected several times using online tools such as Google and Spanish teachers. The South Korean survey shown in Appendix B3, went through the same process of getting reviewed and written to best fit their language with the help of assistants and online tools.

There were questions that requested the participant to choose either "Yes" or "No", questions that request to write down demographic information such as age, and questions that request to rate a comment regarding their attitudes towards it. Most of the general questions were

gathered from several articles that simply ask for gender and age for the purpose of utilizing that information into the statistics portion of reviewing who will be among the represented population.

It is ideal to make sure the questions asked were clear and concise so the participants could comprehend the meaning and reduce error in perceptions. Directions were placed by some questions as to how to answer them. In 2009, Nina Cole studied the perception of employee's opinion among fairness levels in regards to workplace romance which also inspired and directed some of the questions from her survey to be used in this survey. Merkin's study in 2008, also inspired questions concerning harassment in the work place which also helped to construct certain opinions to measure differences in occurrence across each nation.

The researcher listed 4 specific questions needed to assess whether the participant was for or against romantic relationships within the workplace:

1. I have been in a romantic relationship in the past or present.
2. I am in favor of coworkers dating each other.
3. Employees date each other because they are looking for a pay raise.
4. People who work in the same job should not be allowed to date each other.

As mentioned previously, these opinions were measured using a Likert scale so the participant would rate each response with one choice from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The researcher assigned the opinions with numbers to make inferences with the collected data. Strongly Disagree was represented by the number 1 and Strongly Agree was represented by the number 5. Neutral was represented by the number 3. It was also important to understand that the value of the questions differed in point representation. When the participant rated 5 for the example listed above on question 1, they are showing that they are strongly in favor for work

place romance. But, when a 5 is given for question 4, they are strongly against work place romance. So, reverse scoring was applied in the final analysis to get an accurate final score.

### **Procedure**

The researcher began the process by recruiting educated assistants who were proficient with computer skills and research knowledge from the countries being studied. The researcher properly informed the assistants in the other countries who advocated on his behalf about the project and how to administer the process to reduce error. They were instructed on how to present the consent form and the survey depending on which technique they used in gathering participants whether is was in person or via online resources. Communication between the research party was maintained through the use of telephone, email, social networking, and video conferences.

There was a total of 4 researchers for the 4 countries each equipped with the ethical standards of surveying according to National Institutes of Health (NIH) guidelines. Notes and information from the NIH website was sent to all researchers for their own knowledge and awareness. The researcher conducted the survey utilizing other experiments and survey questions to construct and measure what was being studied. The researcher used resources such as databases, libraries, and textbooks. The researcher also indicated who the target audience was by reviewing the necessary information. The locations discussed to look for participants were the following: small businesses, outdoor restaurants, parks, colleges, and other public places that enabled a high turnout.

Participants were introduced by the researcher or his national representative and briefly informed what the research was about by reviewing the consent form, and provide them with the survey. The survey and consent form was translated to fit the nation's language where the results

were being gathered. The process of translation began with the original English construction. Then the translation was provided by online tools such as Google translation. That copy was then sent to the assistants to get it analyzed for corrections. Corrections were made by either professors or educated individuals who specialized in understanding both English and Spanish.

The researchers were told to meet a quota of 30 successfully completed surveys for a larger sample size distribution. The approximate date for the collection of the data was during the summer of 2012. The main researcher contacted the assistants on a weekly basis to collect data and all other information. Each researcher collected surveys at their own pace due to time differences. Upon completion of the surveys, the researcher and assistants secured the collection of data in a safe file and properly thanked the participant for their time and effort. For those participants who participated via online resources, they were also informed of the project and given enough detail about how their responses was going to be used in the study. Aside from websites such as Survey Monkey, other forms of distribution such as email and social networks, participants were warned and aware of the fact their identity was not completely hidden since it would be able to get traced back to them.

Once all the data was collected from each county, the assistant sent the results via email or was collected in person by the researcher. The results were then placed into Microsoft Excel using the number system indicated in the Instruments section. Analysis of Variance was used on the mean score of the four main questions discussed previously to attain the overall opinion of each individual. Graphs and charts were created to get a visual perspective of who participated and what they rated work place romance. Further detail for the summary is provided in the results section.

## Results

After a long careful process of analyzing the data and reversing scores to best fit the accurate opinions of each survey, the conclusion was made. As previously stated, each question was represented with a number 1-5, with 5 being strongly in favor for work place romance. Other questions concerning demographics were labeled as well with numbers to be placed in an excel spreadsheet to accurately count the representative sample. Following along with the Appendix provided below, Table 1C shows what numbers were given to each criteria. Figure 1 in Appendix C is the final illustration of the overall attitude for each country towards work place romance.

As it can be seen in Figure 1 accompanied with Figure 6 which shows the ANOVA results, the United States (US) scored a 3.175 out of 5. The Dominican Republic (DR) scored a 3.167 out of 5. South Korea (SK) scored a 3.667 out of 5. Finally, the Bahamas (BA) scored a 3.141 out of 5. As it is shown within the results, all countries scored within the range of 3, also referred to as the neutral attitude towards dating in the work place. This means that some participants were opposed to the idea, and others were in favor. But, it for the most part means that most people do not mind where they date another person, even if it is in the environment of their job. Was there a cultural influence according to the results? No, it seems that with the upcoming generation, people are becoming more alike in attitude.

Originally, the researcher suspected for the more collectivistic country, South Korea, to be highly against dating in the work place, but as a matter of fact, they scored the highest in favor for it. Keep in mind, the participants are a small sample of the distribution and they are also a younger group which leads into the discussion of the demographics. The total number of female participants was 58 compared to a total of 62 males as represented in figure 2. There was

an unintentional collection of an almost even amount of men to female representatives as it was a convenient sample. Figure 4 shows that the US surveyed 19 males and 11 females. DR surveyed 17 males and 13 females. SK surveyed 15 males and 15 females. Lastly, the BA surveyed 11 male and 19 females.

Because age was an important variable in this study as well, a representation for the groups was labeled. Table 2C separates the age range into increments of 5 years. The Bahamas showed the larger sample of older participants and South Korea showed a larger collection of younger participants. Figure 3 shows a better illustration of the age ranges of the whole sample collected. The larger group of participants ranged from 18-27, the younger generation. The next group ranged from 28-42, and the smallest respondents ranged from ages 43-62. Furthermore, most the data is based on a larger group of younger participants which according to the results are also more in favor of work place dating.

Figure 5 shows the results of all 30 participants of each country. These numbers were inputted in ANOVA using the Excel spreadsheet. Figure 3 illustrates the results used from attaining the average score of each participant to apply in the Analysis of Variance. Figure 4 shows the results of the applied data in the ANOVA. The F-Critical difference is 6.9, thus concluding to showing no significance in the differences between each nation. In conclusion, these four countries studied were all neutral about whether they believe that being in a romantic relationship with another individual was acceptable or not.

### **Discussion**

This research was conducted to measure how much of an influence culture, religion, and environment may have on the type of relationships formed in the work place. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average American spends about 40

hours at work during their week. The four locations that were studied were: Florida, USA, Yangju-si, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea, Nassau, Bahamas, and San Pedro De Macoris, Dominican Republic. There are many challenges affecting a relationship that is developed in a work place such as: breaking up, jealousy, public display of affection, sexual harassment, and/or bullying/teasing. What happens when a relationship between two people does not work out and a person is stuck seeing someone every day?

This topic was chosen because not only is it an interesting topic on dating but also to learn about cultures around the world and their views on relationships between each other. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in the opinion of the attitudes towards dating in the workplace from these countries. The hypothesis was not supported, thus leading the research to retain the null. There is no difference in dating attitudes in the workplace from these different countries. It seems that most people do not mind dating someone they might work with regardless of the religion, cultural difference, or place they spend most of their time in.

Figure 1 explains how the labeling process occurred when the results were being analyzed by the researcher to keep an accurate indication of which question was which and how the points were going to be implemented in the results using numerical values. Strongly Disagree was represented by the number 1, which also stood for the least amount of favor towards dating in the work place. On the contrary, 5 represented Strongly Agree and also most in favor for dating in the work place. Demographic information was labeled as well with numbers to get a precise indication of the sample of participants.

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations to this particular study. Each research was conducted at different times and days due to time differences and researcher availability. Also, the sample

being measured was not a complete indication of the entire population being studied. The city of Miami represents a portion of the United States, but it is also one of the most diverse cities in America. The cities in Dominican Republic are also not a complete identification of the entire culture because these particular cities are generally middle class workers and far different from cultures in the mountainous areas referred to as “el Campo.”

Nassau in the Bahamas is the capital and is also a small representation of the over 700 islands it is associated with. This particular island is also known for Paradise Island which holds Atlantis, so there are constant large amounts of tourists from all parts of the world. Lastly the city in South Korea, Yangju-si, Gyeonggi-do, is also similar to the 3 other cities in that it is diverse and populated by most middle class citizens. Other limitations regard the results as they should be taken with caution due to the self-report instrument as it regards to some sexual content. Adults may be less likely to report honestly about sensitive topics such as sexual behavior which would also result in biased results (Willoughby & Carroll, 2010).

It should also be known that there was a quota of meeting no more and no less than 30 participants from each country regardless of the number of males to females. A number of 30 participants were gathered to meet minimal requirements for assessing a decent portion of a sample to make inferences from. The external validity is also poor because of the convenient sample. The survey also provided enough information to conduct other correlational studies that would compare the differences in: discrimination between countries, amount of harassment, significance of religion and dating in the work place. So with these idea in mind, future research can be developed in the study.

What could have been done differently was a broader collection of age ranges because most participants were young. The researchers themselves were younger and had easier access to



the younger population which was another limitation. Also, there could have been more questions that target their opinion on dating rather than just having 4. However, the results did show an interesting find though the hypothesis was not proven. It was interesting to find that all the nations were more alike than assumed. Further research can be done on what other attitudes are similar within these diverse groups and how each generation will be affected in the future.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

**INFORMED CONSENT**

**Title of the Project:** Work Place Romance: A Cross-Cultural Investigation

**Responsible Principle Investigator:** Rafael E. Taveras, B.A.

**Other Investigator:** Toni M. DiDona, Ph.D.

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this study is to discover the differences in cultural opinions about dating in the workplace.

**Procedure to be followed:** The procedure to be followed is simply for the researcher to introduce him or herself and briefly inform what the research is about, explain the consent, and provide the survey which will then be collected and stored for evaluation.

**Discomforts and Risks:** This research has minimal risks. Survey will require giving personal opinion which will be confidential and anonymous.

**Benefits:** The primary benefit for this opportunity is to gain knowledge and better understanding of cultural differences in the work environment.

**Statement of Confidentiality:** All information obtained from the applicant during the research study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications. The applicant's identity will remain anonymous and confidential. No information that is personally identifiable will be asked. Survey will be kept in a secured location. The information obtained from the surveys will be kept until completion of the study and then be destroyed.

**Whom to contact:** Please contact Rafael Taveras, the Responsible Principal Investigator (RPI), with any questions or concerns about the research. If you have any questions about your rights as

a participant in this study, the contact information for the RPI and Other Investigator (OI) is indicated below:

Dr. Toni M. DiDona

Rafael E. Taveras

tdidona@albizu.com

retaveras720@sunmail.albizu.edu

**Cost of Participation:** There is no cost to you for participating in this study.

**Voluntariness:** Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may discontinue participation at any time.

**By completing the survey, I am acknowledging that I:**

- Am willing to participate in the study.
- Have read and understood the above consent form.
- Was given a copy of this consent form for my records.

## Appendix B1

**Relationships Formed at Work (English Translation)**

- What is your age? \_\_\_\_
- Are you Male\_\_\_\_ or Female\_\_\_\_? (place a check after the gender)
- Marital Status (Please circle one): Single or Married
- Do you know anyone you work with that is dating a coworker?  
(Circle) Yes or No
- I am familiar with my job's romantic relationship policy.  
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- I have felt discriminated against at work by another coworker.  
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- I have been in a romantic relationship with a coworker in the past or present.  
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- I prefer working with Males.  
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- I have been sexually harassed at work.  
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
  - If so, did you report it to the authorities such as the supervisor or human resources?  
(Circle) Yes or No
- I prefer working with Females.  
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- What is your religious affiliation? (circle)  
Buddhist Christian Jewish Hindu Muslim Other None
- I am in favor of coworkers dating each other.  
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- Employees date each other because they are looking for a pay raise.  
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- I would date someone of a different culture.  
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

- I would get fired if I date someone I work with.  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree
- My religion and/or cultural belief affect who I get into a romantic relationship with.  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree
- People who work in the same job should not be allowed to date each other.  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree
- I cannot help who I fall in love with.  
Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

**Thank You for your participation in this survey!**

### Appendix B2

#### **Relaciones que se formó en el trabajo (Spanish Translation)**

- ¿Cuál es su edad? \_\_\_\_\_
- ¿Eres Hombre\_\_\_\_ o Mujer\_\_\_\_? (Coloque un cheque después el género)
- (marque con un circulo) de estado civil: soltero/a o casado/a
- Conoces a alguien del trabajo con que está saliendo con un compañero/a de trabajo?
- Estoy familiarizado con la política de relación romántica de mi trabajo.
- Me he sentido discriminado/a en el trabajo por otro compañero/a de trabajo.
- He estado en una relación romántica con un/a compañero/a de trabajo en el pasado o presente.
- Prefiero trabajar con los hombres.
- He sido acosada sexualmente en el trabajo.
- Si así, usted reportarlo a las autoridades como el supervisor o recursos humanos?
- Prefiero trabajar con hembras.



- ¿Cuál es su afiliación religiosa? (círculo)
- Yo estoy en favor de empleados de el mismo trabajo compartiendo en romántica relaciones.
- Los empleados obtienen en una relación romántica entre su trabajo porque están buscando un aumento de salario.
- Obtendría en una relación romántica con alguien de otra cultura.
- Yo perdería mi trabajo si consigo una relación romántica con alguien que trabajo con.
- Mi religión o creencia cultural afecta la relación romántica con que me meto.
- Personas que trabajan en el mismo trabajo no debe estar en una relación romántica con otro empleado.
- Uno no elige de quien se enamora.

**Gracias por su participación en esta encuesta!**

### Appendix B3

#### 직장에서 형성 하는 관계 (South Korean Translation)

- • 귀하의 나이 무엇입니까? \_\_\_\_\_
- • Male\_\_\_\_ 또는 Female\_\_\_\_ 입니까? (성별 후 검사 장소)
- • 결혼 상태 (하나는 제발 원): 단일 또는 결혼
- • 사람이 함께 작업 동료를 데이트 아십니까?  
○ (원) 예 또는 아니요
- • 내 직업의 로맨틱 한 관계 정책에 익숙한 오전.
- • 다른 동료에 의해 직장에 대 한 차별 느낌.
- • 왔다 로맨틱 한 관계에 있는 동료와 함께 과거 나 현재에.
- • 남성 작업을 선호 합니다.
- • 성적으로 직장에서 초조 하 게 되었습니다.
  - 경우에 그래서, 았았다 당신은 보고 감독자 또는 인적 자원 등 관련 기관에?  
○ (원) 예 또는 아니요
- • 여성 작업을 선호 합니다.
- • 귀하의 종교 유무를 무엇입니까? (원)
- • 동료 서로 데이트에 찬성 해요.
- • 직원 급여 인상에 대 한 찾고 있습니다 때문에 각각 다른 날짜.
- • 누군가 다른 문화를 날짜 것.
- • 함께 일할 사람을 데이트 하는 경우 해 고를 얻을 것 이다.

- □ 내 종교 및/또는 문화적 신념에 누구와 함께 로맨틱 한 관계에 들어갈 영향을 합니다.
- • 같은 직장에서 일 하는 사람들이 서로 낯짜 허용 되지 해야 합니다.
- • 와 사랑에 빠지게 하는 사람을 도울 수 없습니다.

**이 설문 조사에 참여해 주셔서 감사 합니다!**

Appendix C

Demographic Information Review and Results

Table 1C

<u>Opinion</u>	<u>Religion</u>	<u>Gender</u>
1 Strongly Disagree	1 Buddhist	1 Male
2 Disagree	2 Christian	2 Female
3 Neutral	3 Jewish	<u>Status</u>
4 Agree	4 Hindu	1 Single
5 Strongly Agree	5 Muslim	2 Married
	6 Other	<u>Dating a</u>
	7 None	<u>Coworker</u>
		1 Yes
		2 No

Figure 1.

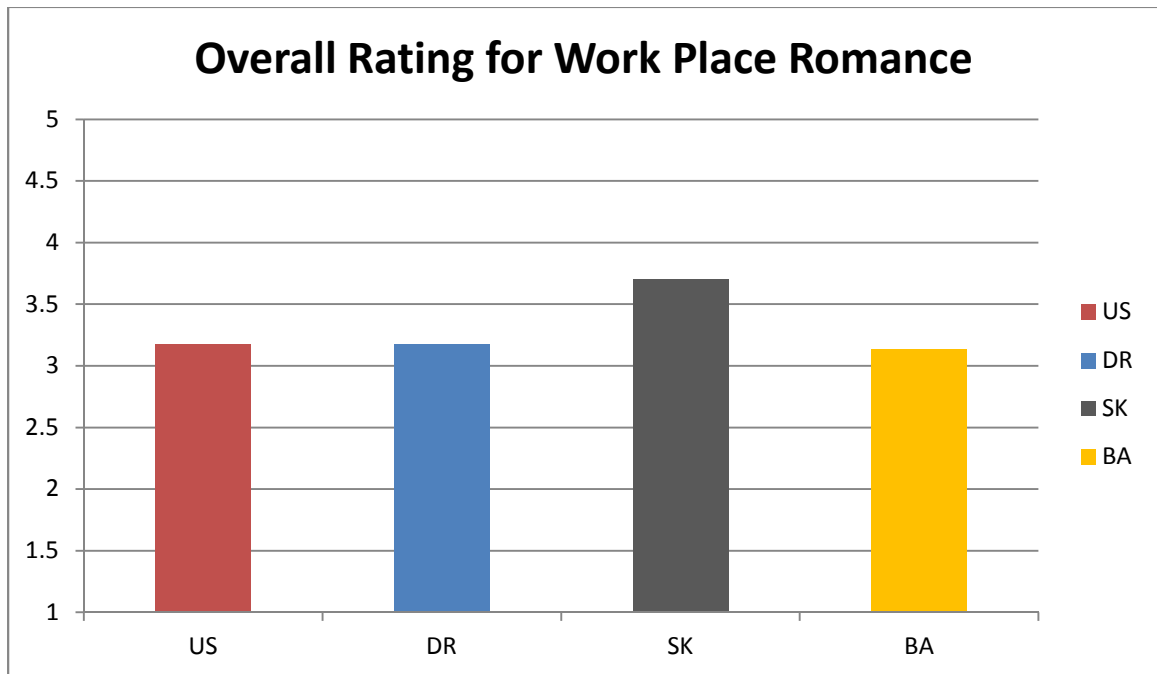


Figure 2.

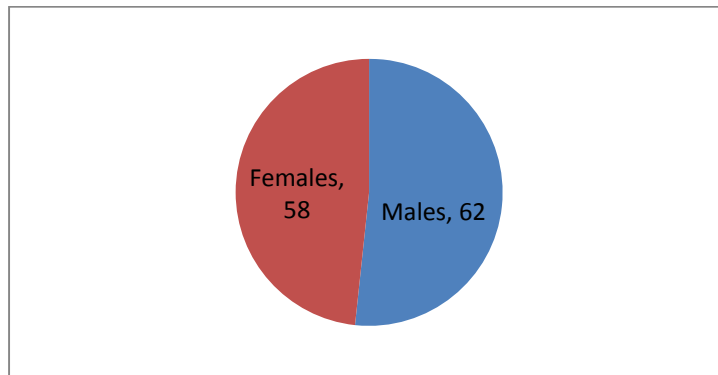


Table 2C

<b>Dominican Republic</b>		<b>United States</b>		<b>The Bahamas</b>		<b>South Korea</b>	
<u>Range</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Number</u>
58-62	0	58-62	0	58-62	1	58-62	0
53-57	0	53-57	0	53-57	1	53-57	0
48-52	0	48-52	0	48-52	3	48-52	0
43-47	0	43-47	2	43-47	1	43-47	0
38-42	7	38-42	2	38-42	2	38-42	1
33-37	4	33-37	3	33-37	1	33-37	2
28-32	2	28-32	6	28-32	2	28-32	2
23-27	12	23-27	10	23-27	5	23-27	12
18-22	5	18-22	7	18-22	14	18-22	13

Figure 3.

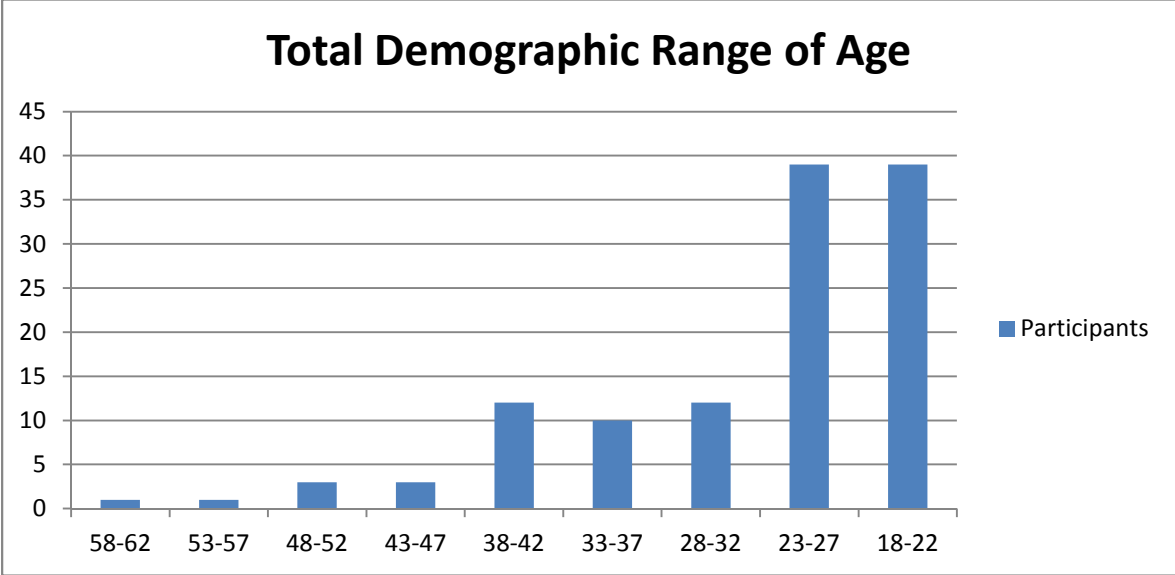


Figure 4.

	Males	Females
US	19	11
DR	17	13
SK	15	15
BA	11	19

Figure 5.

Participants	COUNTRIES			
	US	DR	SK	BA
1	3	4	4	3
2	3	2	3.5	3.25
3	3.75	3	2.75	3.25
4	2.75	2.75	4.25	3.25
5	2.75	2.75	3.5	3
6	3.5	3.5	2.75	2.75
7	3	3	4.25	2.75
8	3	4	3.75	3
9	3.25	3.75	4.25	3
10	2.75	2.75	2.5	3.25
11	3.75	4	4.25	3.25
12	3.25	2.75	3.25	3.25
13	3	3	3.5	3.25
14	3.5	2.75	3.5	3.25
15	3.5	4	3	2.5
16	3	3.25	4	4
17	2.75	2.75	3.75	2.75
18	3	3	4	4
19	3.5	2	3.25	3.25
20	3.25	3	3.25	3
21	2.5	2.75	4.25	2.75
22	3	3.75	3.75	3.5
23	3.75	2.75	3	2.75
24	3.25	4	4.5	3
25	2.75	3.5	4.5	3.25
26	3.75	3	3.75	3
27	3.25	3.25	3.75	3.5
28	3	3.5	3.75	3
29	3	3.5	4	3.25
30	3.75	3	3.5	3.25

Figure 5 illustrates the results used from attaining the average score of each participant to apply in the Analysis of Variance. A sample of 30 participants from each country was gathered. Read the results section for further detail.

Figure 6.

ANOVA: Single Factor Summary Results						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
US	30	95.25	3.175	0.129957		
DR	30	95	3.166667	0.307471		
SK	30	110	3.666667	0.281609		
BA	30	94.25	3.141667	0.110704		
Src of Var	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between G	5.76875	3	1.922917	9.269957	1.52E-05	2.682809
Within G	24.0625	116	0.207435			
Total	29.83125	119				

Figure 6 shows the results of the applied data in the ANOVA. The F-Critical difference is 6.59, thus concluding to showing no significance in differences between each nation. Further detail provided in the results.