Workplace Friendship and Team Cohesion of Private Security Firms in Rivers State

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Abstract: *The study investigated workplace friendship and team cohesion of the private security firms in Rivers State. Two dimensions of workplace friendship (friendship opportunity and friendship prevalence) and two measures of team cohesion (social cohesion and task cohesion) were used. 116 employees of 5 registered private security firms in Rivers State constitute the population of the study. The study was a census study. The Partial Least Squares (PLS) - Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with the aid of Smart PLS 3.3.3, was employed in testing the bivariate hypotheses. The work showed that there are positive and significant paths between friendship opportunity and social cohesion; and friendship opportunity and task cohesion; as well as positive and significant paths between friendship prevalence and social cohesion; and friendship prevalence and task cohesion. The study recommends that the administrators of private security firms should provide an enabling environment for friendship to prevail within the organization in order to enhance the employees' interpersonal relationship to the collective task.*

Keywords: *Workplace Friendship, Friendship Opportunity, Friendship Prevalence, Team Cohesion, Social Cohesion, Task Cohesion*

1.0 Introduction

Working long hours, participating in demanding work schedules, realizing the value of group collaboration and so supporting it, all add to the consideration of interpersonal relationships in organizations. There are different tiers of friendship that can develop at work. There exist friendships between coworkers and bosses, or vice versa, as well as between subordinates and superiors. According to Gunlu, Donmez, Miral, and Omuri (2010), these can have a variety of effects on organizational climate and performance in addition to individual career, performance, and motivation. Workplace friendship, which Berman, West, and Richter (2002) defined as non-private, voluntary workplace connections, was said to manifest itself as mutual trust, fancy, commitment, common interests, and values. According to studies on close friendship, these ties started in workplace settings (Song, 2005), which can promote team cohesion. These interactions then developed into friendship as a result of already-existing official relationships and places.

Since team-based work arrangements are now the norm in businesses (Kozlowki & Ilgen, 2006), researchers have focused a lot of their attention on understanding cooperation and figuring out how to improve team outcomes. Team cohesion is one factor that has been identified as crucial for team performance (Dion, 2000). Despite the fact that cohesiveness is described in a variety of ways, it typically refers to some kind of attraction or link that keeps a team together (Casey-Campbell & Martens, 2009). The most

significant concept when examining small groups, cohesiveness has been extensively investigated and is recognized as a major factor in team efficiency (Carron & Brawley, 2000). This study will fill this gap since it aims to experimentally investigate the connection between workplace friendship and team cohesion of private security organizations.

Statement of the Problem

Nigerians are very concerned about their security, and this worry is reflected in the expansion of private security firms. Private security firms have increased dramatically in Nigeria over the past ten years. Through the services they offer, private security firms assist the police in preventing crime, upholding the law, and generally improving societal security, all of which support long-term national growth. States develop and establish policies that aim to govern their operations to be able to fully benefit from their contribution and keep them from engaging in criminal activity. Private security firms contribute to both national development and the process of ensuring society is safe by providing an extensive spectrum of services (including developing skills, security guidance, guard and surveillance, and education) (Bearpark & Schulz, 2007). Teams of workers are employed by these businesses. If these team-oriented personnel have an impact on the organization through the quality of their job, then they are necessary. Hence, this work seeks to examine the relationship between workplace friendship and team cohesion in private security firms in Rivers State,
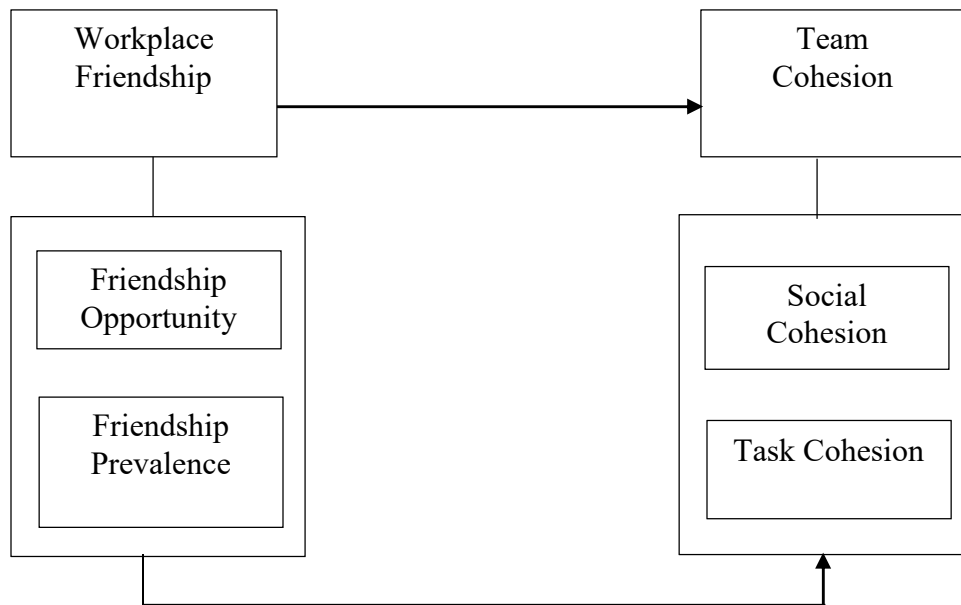
Source: Conceptualized by the researchers
Fig 1: Conceptual Framework of workplace friendship and team cohesion

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The study investigates the Workplace friendship and team cohesion of the private security firms in Rivers State. The specific objectives are:

To determine the relationship between:
1. Friendship opportunity and social cohesion.
2. Friendship opportunity and task cohesion.
3. Friendship prevalence and social cohesion.
4. Friendship prevalence capability and task cohesion.

Research Questions
1. How does friendship opportunity influence social cohesion?
2. What is the association between friendship opportunity and task cohesion?
3. How does friendship prevalence relate to the social cohesion?
4. What is the bond between friendship prevalence and the task cohesion?

Research Hypotheses

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between friendship opportunity and social cohesion of private security firms in Rivers State.

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between friendship opportunity and task cohesion of private security firms in Rivers State.

Ho_3: There is no significant relationship between friendship prevalence and social cohesion of private security firms in Rivers State

Ho_4: There is no significant relationship between friendship prevalence and the task cohesion of private security firms in Rivers State.

2.0 Review of Related Literature
Workplace Friendship
Workplace friendship is an unofficial relationship between two or more individuals who have a common goal with one another, cooperate with one another, and have the same attitude on a particular topic. Workplace relationships have extensive institutional support (the support of managers, owners, and the law), and workplace buddies have superordinate goals (to complete their interdependent job responsibilities). Additionally, considering the amount of time spent at work, interactions are typically private and intimate. The assumption that different workplaces will produce different friendship networks is supported by cognitive and operational connections in addition to interpersonal relationships (Kokkonen et al., 2015). Additionally, coworkers can rely on one another as a reliable social network for both personal and professional needs.

Workplace friendship influences employees' motivation to work because it influences how they perceive not just other people but also their employment (Mao et al., 2012). In truth, managing workplace friendships can present its share of difficulties. The self-concept of friends may be threatened by workplace connections if they achieve alternative organizational results, require the exchange of resources that are incompatible, and

represent divergent reciprocity standards. The rivalry they face for promotions may not outweigh the emotional ties that coworkers share. Indeed, friendship with a competitor or debtor may make commercial problems worse. Although friendships at work have advantages, they can also increase some relational costs (Ingram and Zhou, 2008).

Workplace friendships, according to Sias (2009), are distinctive in two key ways: first, they are chosen, not forced; and second, they have a personalistic focus that other workplace interactions lack. Friends from work will converse with each other as complete persons, not only as occupants of employment roles. They may be identified as such by the talks people have that cut beyond their personal and professional lives and by a shared commitment to intimacy that may not exist in cordial relationships between coworkers. Such claims are convincing, and ideas from the sociological study of companionship may help researchers better understand if or how workplace friendships are distinct and what behaviors make them so (Sias, Heath, Perry, Silva, & Fix, 2004).

Insofar as friendship is an iterative, enacted practice rather than the result of a fundamental truth about human connection, employees may be seen as engaging in workplace friendships. Research on workplace friendship may look more closely at how people engage in friendship-type interactions in the corporate setting with the intention of disrupting the hegemony of using employees' experiences of friendship as a resource in order to enhance organisational results like performance and efficiency (Sias, Pedersen, Gallagher, & Kopane). Workplace friendships are constituted through practices in, around, and away from organizational settings. The two main aspects of workplace friendship are friendship opportunity and friendship predominance.

Friendship Opportunity

According to Yavuzkurt and Kiral (2020), Hackman and Lawler (1971) defined the friendship opportunity dimension as the extent whereby workers' jobs permit them to interact with each another informally and assess the value of friendship at work. According to Spencer and Pahl's (2006) study, interviewees who were asked to depict and describe their personal communities gave incredibly rich qualitative accounts of how work friends can play a variety of roles. These accounts are especially salient when friendship opportunities are significantly influenced by challenges, opportunities, and changes in work and home life. The environment for making friends at work. As they spend roughly more than six hours a day together when they start a new work, people usually meet new people and get to know one another. Despite the fact that friendship at work is largely optional, there are several opportunities for networking and forming new relationships. Opportunities for friendships in the workplace are inherently correlated with the close, voluntary, and reciprocal nature of friendship (Bornstein & Lamb, 2011). In addition to providing substitutes for the adverse consequences frequently observed in working relationships, workplace friendships can also assist in the positive aspects of a working relationship, according to Song (2006). Both the opportunity for friendship and the calibre of friendship has a beneficial effect on the workplace attitudes.

Friendship Prevalence

Friendship prevalence, according to Nielsen, Jex, and Adams (2000), indicates whether or not there are workplace friendships within the organization. According to position, common experiences, and shared interests, friendship patterns in companies can change (Kiopa, 2013). When coworkers trust one another and socialize as much as they do after

work, the prevalence of friendships is anticipated to rise. However, friendships made at work can increase job satisfaction, job involvement, positive organizational commitment, longevity at work, social support, communication, and coordination, and they can allow for the sharing of values and experiences. For the organization, workplace friendship also boosts institutional participation, encourages staff to work more effectively toward organizational goals, creates supportive and creative environments, and boosts organizational output.

Team Cohesion

Team cohesiveness is defined by Carron, Burke, and Shapcott (2009) as a dynamic process that deals with a group's propensity to come together and amalgamate due to active reasons and also for the fulfillment of associates' emotional needs. Team cohesion is characterized by how appealing a team is to its members and how strong the interpersonal ties are among team members. According to Zaccaro, Rittman, and Marks (2001), team cohesion is the extent whereby individuals are dedicated to one another, other team members, and the team's objective. To attain a shared platform, a team must accomplish a single purpose, which might be achieved if all members work to complement one another and prevent pointless confrontations. In order to effectively develop a team, communication that is constructive and transparent is essential (Dato & Hossan, 2021). Communication among the team members or group members could facilitate their efforts to foster acceptable attitudes and comparable views, which would logically raise the likelihood of team cohesion. In fact, studies have demonstrated that dialogue can increase interpersonal understanding and a sense of community. Additionally, it has been proposed that a supervisor-subordinate relationship may encourage participation in decision-making, which benefits group cohesion (Dato & Hossan, 2021). A team will function more effectively to meet needs if its members are more cohesive. To meet the needs of the team, they will also demand higher conformity from one another. It has been discovered that team cohesion fosters a variety of beneficial attributes in groups and is associated with a variety of positive outcomes, including the awareness of problems, propensity to change, higher motivation, boosted morale, improved decision-making, and increased creativity.

Social Cohesion

According to Carless and De Paola (2009), social cohesiveness refers to how well team members get along with one another both inside and outside of the team. According to Castano, Watts, and Tekleab (2013), social cohesion refers to how much team members enjoy being a part of the group. The creation of team member commitment to one another depends on social cohesion, which has been demonstrated to positively correlate with task cohesion. The team task benefits more from this loyalty to one another (Marcos, Pedro, David, & Tomas, 2010). The relationship between task cohesiveness and group performance is direct, whereas the relationship between social cohesion and group performance may only be indirect (Careless & De Paola, 2009).

Task Cohesion

Task cohesiveness is described by Carless and De Paola (2009) as the level of dedication a team has to the task it is trying to perform. Task cohesiveness is the team members' dedication to the task at hand (Castano et al., 2013). A key factor in predicting team

effectiveness is task cohesiveness. Team commitment to the work is affected by interactions among team members that are connected to the task, which influences task cohesiveness. The efficiency of the team is related to this shared dedication to common objectives (Carless & De Paola, 2009). Because it strengthens a person's interpersonal connection to the group task, individual efficacy is a crucial element of team task cohesiveness. The ability of the team to accomplish its goals is improved by collective efficacy among team members (Wang, 2012). By boosting team productivity and communication, positive interdependence strengthens task cohesiveness (Wang, 2012).

Empirical Review

In the Malaysian setting, Dato and Hossan (2021) looked at team cohesion as a mediator in determining Millennial employee engagement. This essay incorporates a few elements from the social exchange theory, which emphasizes the complementary nature of what is provided to the provider, which is the organization. The study uses a self-administered questionnaire and a cross-sectional survey approach. The cluster sampling strategy was employed to create the sample for this investigation, which employs a quantitative approach. 205 respondents provided the data, which was then analyzed with SPSS and Smart PLS software. The study demonstrates that employee engagement is positively correlated with feedback, goal setting, rewards and recognition, and supervisor-subordinate relationships. Team cohesion acts as a mediator between these relationships and employee engagement.

Yavuzkurt and Kiral's (2020) study, which involved 269 volunteer teachers, sought to understand the relationship between secondary school teachers' opinions of workplace friendship and their job happiness. The Minnesota Job Satisfaction Scale and the Workplace Friendship Scale were both used in the study to achieve this goal. Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were applied in this study, which was built on the relational screening model. The study's results indicated that secondary school teachers had high perceptions of their internal job satisfaction and opportunities for friendship. It was discovered that the teachers' perceptions of friendship varied greatly by gender and married status, and that their levels of job satisfaction varied significantly by age, marital status, and professional seniority. Additionally, it was discovered that views of workplace friendship and teachers' job happiness were positively and moderately correlated. It was found that the instructors' perceptions of friendship opportunities significantly and favorably impacted their job happiness.

In order to establish the relationship between workplace friendship, personal qualities, and work characteristics among nurses working at Minia University Hospitals, Abd EL Latief, Refeai, Mohammed, Emam, and Ghazawy (2019) conducted an analysis of the literature. It is a cross-sectional study that covered all 476 nurses employed by Minia University Hospitals between December 2018 and January 2019. Job performance, the workplace friendliness scale, and the likelihood of turnover were assessed. The scores of boys and girls varied significantly on the Friendship Opportunity Dimension (FOD) subscale. Regarding workplace friendships, marital status or age group had little influence. Department and work shift had a big impact on friendship opportunities and prevalence. Although the chance to make friends had an impact on job performance (P=0,150 and p=0.005), it had no discernible influence on the likelihood of turnover. In

contrast, the presence of friendship significantly influenced both the scales measuring job performance and turnover intention (P=0,195 and p=0.0001, P=-0,170 and p=0.002, respectively). At the Minia University Hospitals, the nurses got along well with one another. Males appeared to have more mature friendships. There were greater prospects for workplace friendships during night shifts. Workplace relationships have an impact on work performance and intention to leave.

The impacts of extraversion on team cohesion and the effects of team gender composition on team cohesion were both discussed by Davis, Espey-Sundt, Kunsal, Pickering, and Svoboda (2012). We gathered information on respondents' extraversion ratings, gender distribution, and degree of team cohesion by interviewing a small, private liberal arts college in the Midwest and a simple random sample of students. In contrast to single-gender teams, we hypothesized that extraverted students are more likely to be in cohesive teams, and that mixed-gender teams are less cohesive. Our findings indicate that extraversion and team cohesion are related, and that the gender makeup of teams has no bearing on team cohesion.

In their 2017 study, Biqer and Buyukyilmaz looked into the presumptive direct relationships between workplace friendship and involvement. 63 employees of the Karabuk University School of Foreign Languages were surveyed to obtain the information for the sample. To test the theories, hierarchical regression analysis was used. The findings demonstrate a positive relationship between friendship prevalence and job involvement, with friendship prevalence having a greater impact than friendship opportunity.

3.0 Methodology

The researcher adopted cross sectional survey, a quasi-experimental design in this study. 116 managers and supervisors of 5 registered private security firms in Rivers State constitute the population of the study. The study was a census study. The descriptive and inferential statistics was employed to analyse the data for this study. The Partial Least Squares (PLS) - Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with the aid of Smart PLS 3.3.3 , was employed in testing the bivariate hypotheses - in order to ascertain the relationship between the dimensions of organizational workplace friendship and the measures of team cohesion.

Workplace friendship (WOF), Friendship opportunity (FRO), Friendship prevalence (FRP), Team cohesion (TEC), Social cohesion (SOC) and Task cohesion (TAC).

Table 1: Reliability Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
FRO	0.847	0.895
FRP	0.898	0.926
SOC	0.857	0.895
TAC	0.828	0.879

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability and Composite reliability values for each of the constructs were greater than 0.7. Therefore, our constructs are reliable.

Table 2: Validity Test

	AVE	FRO	FRP	SOC	TAC
FRO	0.637	0.798			
FRP	0.714	0.273	0.845		
SOC	0.633	0.135	0.184	0.795	
TAC	0.600	0.270	0.494	0.195	0.775

The average variance extracted (AVE) of all the constructs are greater than 0.5 which signifies the presence of convergent validity. The diagonal values (in bold) are greater than the AVEs, thus confirming that each construct is distinct from any other one. Hence, the model endorsed discriminant validity for all the constructs.

4.0 Analysis And Discussion
126 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents, out of which, 94 copies were returned, and hence, were utilized in this research. The hypotheses were tested using PLS-SEM to test the relationship between workplace friendship and team cohesion. There are 20 observed variables for which questionnaire has been framed. All these 16 observed variables are conceptually related to four Latent variables (Friendship opportunity, Friendship prevalence, and Social cohesion and Task cohesion). The indicators represent the different components of the Latent variables. The diagrammatic representation of the relationship between the variables is given in the Path Diagram of Figure 2.
Workplace friendship (WOF), Friendship opportunity (FRO), Friendship prevalence (FRP), Team cohesion (TEC), Social cohesion (SOC) and Task cohesion (TAC).
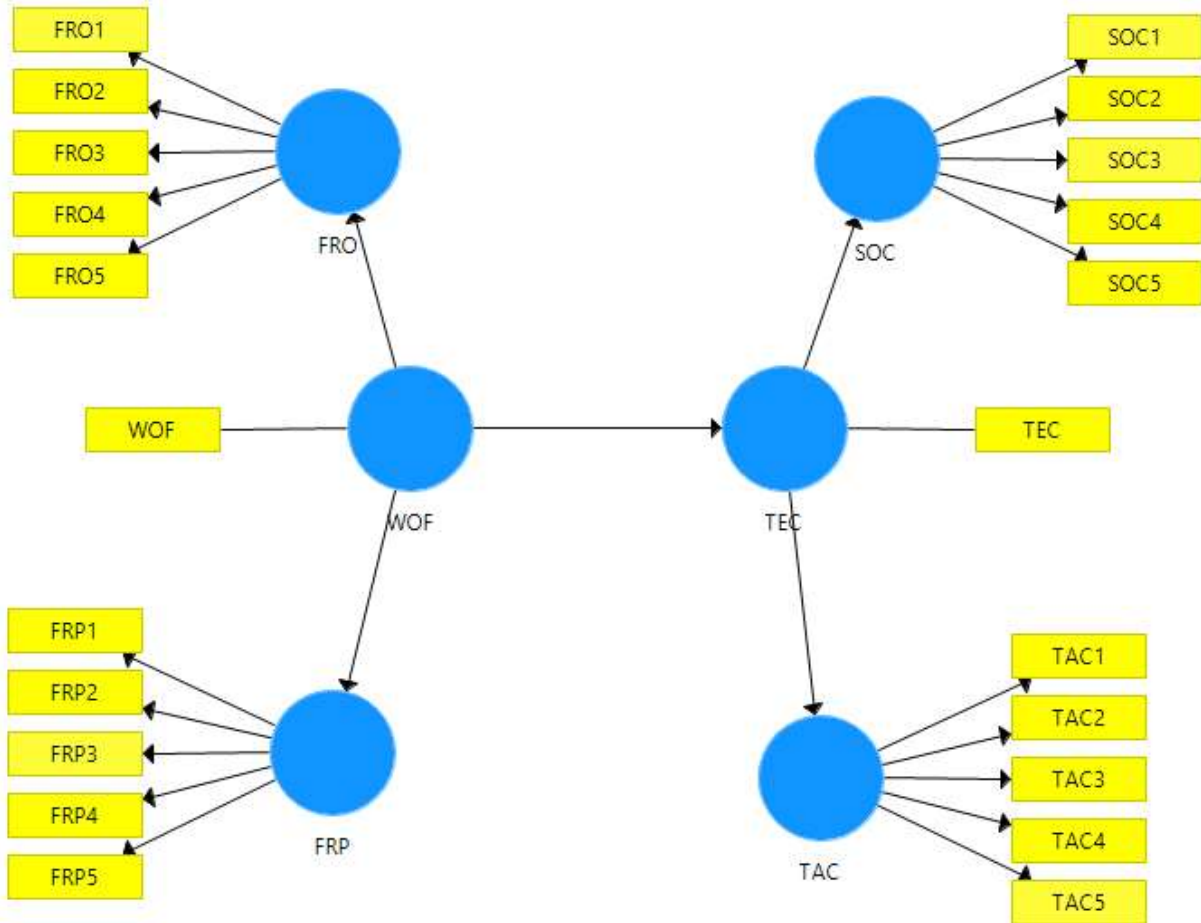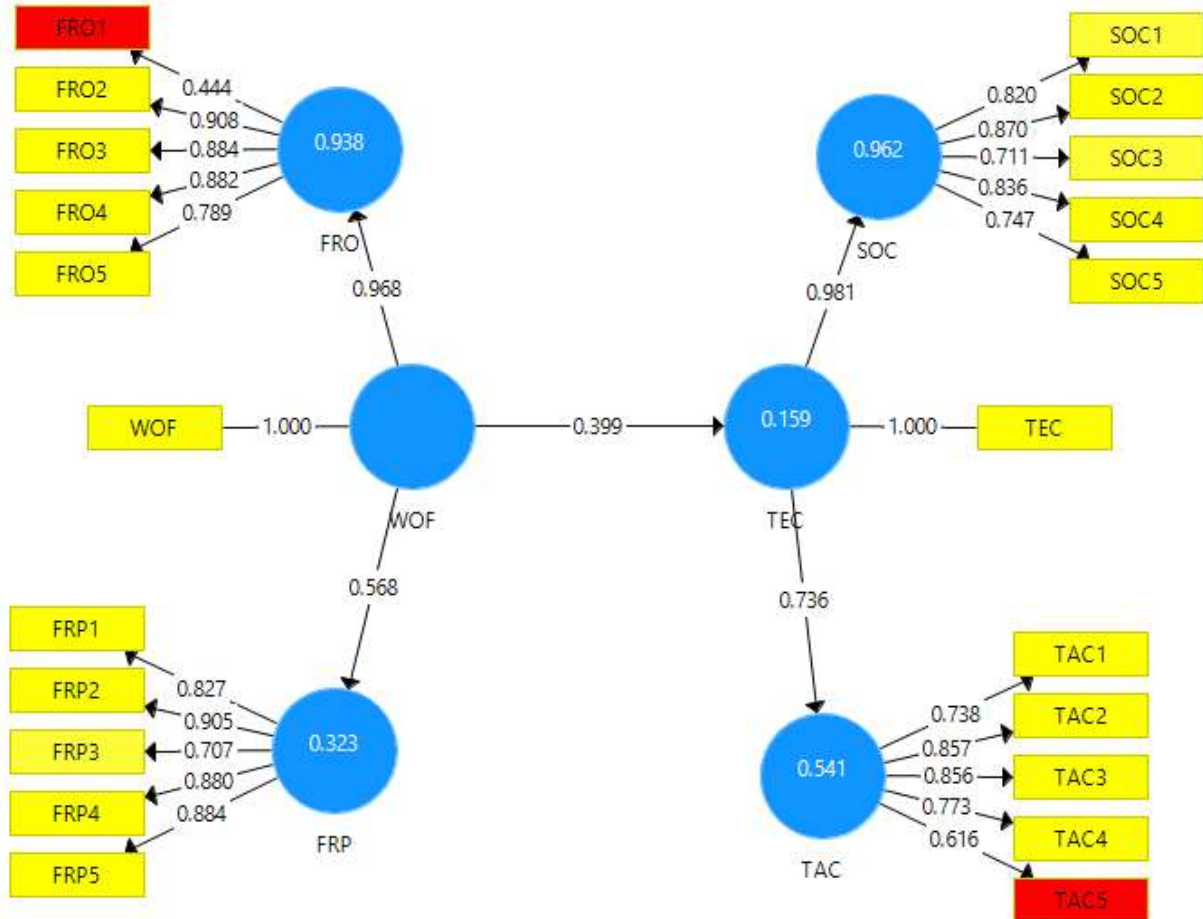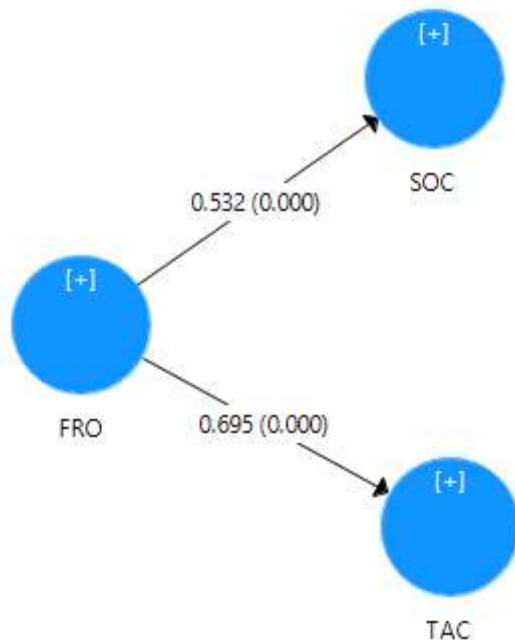
Figure 2: Research Model

Figure 3: Output for Outer Loadings of Indicators
Figure 3 shows that all the response items for the constructs satisfied the threshold condition of 70%, except FRO1 and TAC5 that had loadings less than 0.70. FRO1 and TAC5 were not used in the analysis.
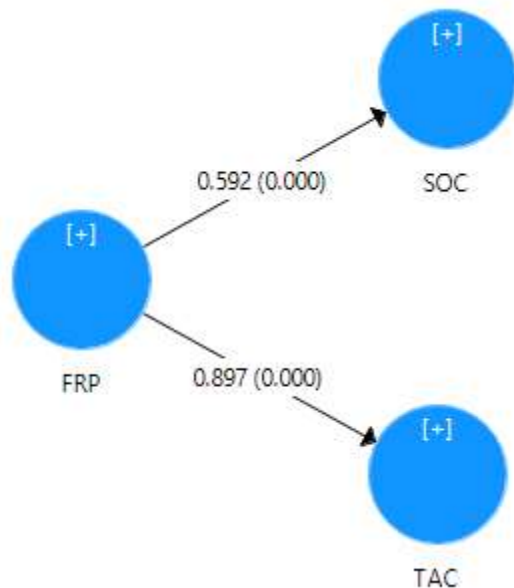
Figure 4: Hypotheses 1 and 2

The path relationship analysis presented in Figure 4 indicate that there are positive and significant paths between Friendship opportunity and Social cohesion (where, β = 0.532; p = 0.000; and R^2 = 0.283), and Friendship opportunity and Task cohesion (where, β = 0.695; p = 0.000; and R^2 = 0.483). Therefore, the null hypotheses 1 and 2 were rejected and the alternate hypotheses were accepted.

The result of the analysis for hypothesis one showed that there is a significant relationship between friendship opportunity and social cohesion of private security firms in Rivers State. It was also observed that the relationship between the two variables is positive and strong. The null hypothesis is rejected. The coeficient of determination (R^2) was 0.283. Which implies that friendship opportunity accounts for 28.3% change in social cohesion. This confirms the work of Yavuzkurt and Kiral (2020) who opined that friendship opportunity perceptions predicted team cohesion and job satisfaction significantly and positively.

The result of the analysis for hypothesis two indicated that there is a significant relationship between friendship opportunity and task cohesion of private security firms in Rivers State. The coeficient of determination (R^2) was 0.483. Which implies that friendship opportunity accounts for 48.3% change in task cohesion. The null hypothesis be rejected and the alternate hypothesisis accepted. This confirms the report of Abd EL Latief, Refeai, Mohammed, Emam and Ghazawy (2019) who noted that workplace friendship relates with team cohesion and influenced job performance and turnover intention. Dato and Hossan (2021) noted that supervisor-subordinate relationships have a positive significant effect on team cohesion.

Figure 5: Hypotheses 3 and 4

The path relationship analysis presented in Figure 5 indicate that there are positive and significant paths between Friendship prevalence annd Social cohesion (where, β = 0.592; p = 0.000; and R^2 = 0.380), and Friendship prevalence and Task cohesion (where, β = 0.897; p = 0.000; and R^2 = 0.805). Therefore, the null hypotheses 3 and 4 were rejected and the alternate hypotheses were accepted.

The result of the analysis for hypothesis three indicated that there is a significant relationship between friendship prevalence and social cohesion of private security firms in Rivers State. The coeficient of determination (R^2) was 0.380. Which implies that friendship prevalence accounts for 38.0% change in social cohesion. The null hypothesis was rejected. This result supports the report of Davis, Espey-Sundt, Kunsal, Pickering and Svoboda (2012) that there is a relationship between extraversion in the workplace and team cohesion. Biqer and Buyukyilmaz (2017) opined that friendship prevalence has a big effect on job involvement through team cohesion.

The result of the analysis for hypothesis four indicated that there is a significant relationship between friendship prevalence and task cohesion of private security firms in Rivers State. We find that there is strong positive bond between friendship prevalence and task cohesion. The coeficient of determination (R^2) was 0.805. Which implies that friendship prevalence accounts for 80.5% change in task cohesion. It is concluded, based on the decision rule, that the null hypothesis be rejected. This supports the work of Biqer and Buyukyilmaz (2017) whose results showed that friendship opportunity prevalence was positively related to job involvement through team cohesion.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings, we conclude that there is a strong and significant connection between workplace friendship and organizational responsiveness. Tram cohesion ca be enhanced through workplace friendship. The work showed that there are positive and significant paths between friendship opportunity and social cohesion; and friendship opportunity and

task cohesion; as well as positive and significant paths between friendship prevalence and social cohesion; and friendship prevalence and task cohesion. Thus, it could be concluded that organizations should inculcate the workplace friendship in promoting team cohesion in the workplace. As such, we recommend that:

(i.) Managers of private security firms should support informal relationships and provide relaxed atmosphere which is very important for employees to interact socially inside or outside of a team and be satisfied with their jobs.

(ii.) Managers of private security firms should support and create opportunities for friendship within the organisation this will boost the task cohesion.

(iii.) Private security firms should create opportunities for friendship prevalence as prevalence of friendship(s) increases when the co-workers trust each other and spend time as much as on the task showing great levels of commitment to it.

(iv.) The administrators of private security firms should provide an enabling environment for friendship to prevail within the organization in order to enhance the employees' interpersonal relationship to the collective task.

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