

***Consequences of Friendship at the Workplace, Psychological Safety, and Thriving at Work Towards Innovative Work Behavior Among Personnel of Telecommunication and Communication Service Provider in Thailand***

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**Abstract**

At present, technological advancement is an important instrument in measuring the advantages of business competition. The personnel of each organization is a pivotal key to organizational development. Promoting innovative behaviors in the workplace is conducive to creativity and driving ideas to reality. It is an important strategy leading to the designated goals of the organization. This research aims to study the consequences of workplace friendship, psychological safety, and thriving at work towards innovative working behaviors among personnel of telecommunication and communication service provider in Thailand. The samples were full-time employees who had been working for more than 2 years. The data were collected by proportional stratified random sampling from 240 personnel. The data were analyzed using a multiple regression analysis system. The results of this study are consistent with the research hypothesis. Friendship at the workplace, psychological safety, and thriving at work together explained innovative behaviors at work 66.20%. Thriving at work variables influencing innovative behavior at work at a high level. statistically significant influence on innovative behavior in work ( $\beta=.52, p <.05$ ) It was shown that the Thriving at work variable was the strongest predictor of innovative behavior at work. This research can be applied in policy formulation, planning, and personnel development of organizations to have more innovative behaviors at work. Increasing the level of workplace friendship among personnel within the organization creates psychological safety and thriving at work.

Keywords: Workplace Friendship, Psychological Safety, Thriving at Work, Innovative Work Behavior, Telecommunication, Communication Service Provider

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## Introduction

At present, the business world has entered a digital age which increases business competition (Spanuth & Wald, 2017). Particularly, in the telecommunication industry, a new telecommunication industry has emerged (New Telco Market) i.e. communications market comprised of digital service providers from various countries that change communication behavior. In 2021, communication behavior has changed from using mobile networks to using Applications Line up to 32% (Manager Online 2022). This makes telecommunication and communication service providers in Thailand shift to become innovative organizations to create more business competitiveness. In order to be an innovative organization, the organization should encourage its personnel to develop their working behaviors that can produce creativity and be able to drive those ideas into reality until they become innovative organizations. This is another important strategy that will lead the organization to achieve the goal. Therefore, work behavior plays an important role in helping the organization to be filled with creativity and innovation which is named as an “Innovative Work Behavior: IWB”. When people have creative behavior in workplace personnel then exhibits their creativity and innovation (Abid et al, 2015). The innovative work behavior that occurs will be a personal action which leads to innovation, introducing new things, or the application of new things in a working (De Jong & Den Hartog 2007).

However, from the study of the past research, there are not many research that describe the factors that influence innovative work behavior in the field of the telecommunications and communications industry in Thailand. Also, there is no information that can explain the factors affecting innovative work behavior. For this reason, the research aims to analyze the influence of workplace friendships, psychological safety and thriving at work that affect innovative work behavior of personnel of a telecommunication service provider to find ways to develop and encourage personnel to have more innovative behaviors.

In past research, innovative work behavior in work was explained by using the concept of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). This is a concept related to the relationship between factors that determine the expression of behavior that influence each other, such as environmental factors and personal factors. In which one behavior of a person that occurs does not occur and changes due to environmental factors alone. But there are personal factors as well and the combination of individual factors must be mutually exclusive in a manner that fundamentally defines each other (Bandura, 1997). For example, research that uses the concept of social cognitive theory to develop a research framework, such as the research of Rahmaningtyas et al., (2022) explains the influence of environmental factors like workplace friendships and personal factors such as psychological safety affect the innovative work behavior of personnel. Or in the research of Cao & Zhang, (2020) describes the influence of environmental factors such as workplace friendships, and personal factors such as psychological safety affecting the innovative work behavior of personnel details as shown in Figure 1.

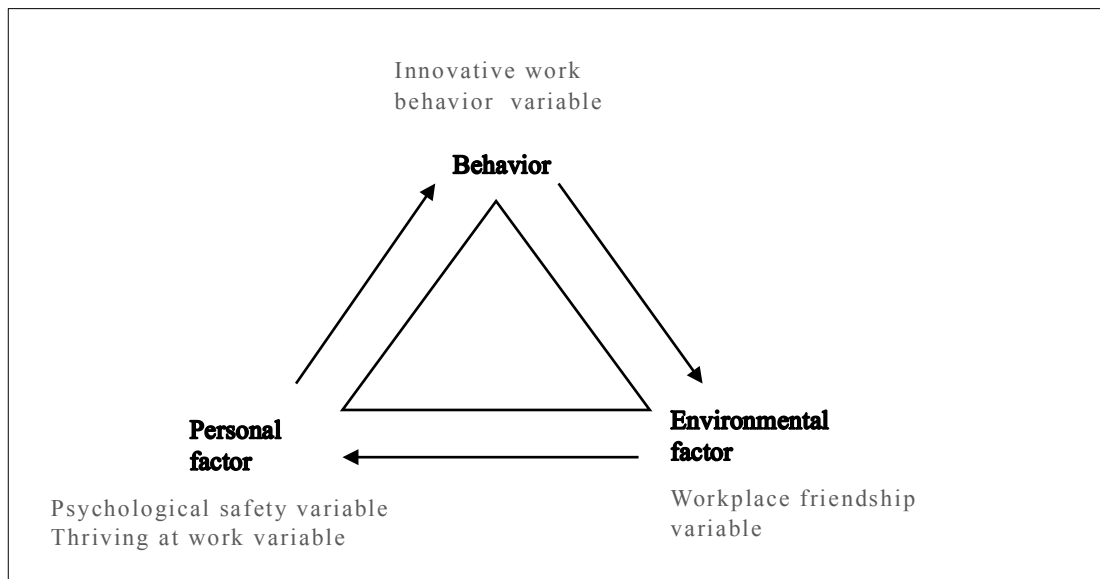


Figure 1 Research Conceptual Framework  
Source: Bandura, 1997

From the concepts of the social cognitive theory presented above, the researcher determined 3 variables used to explain the causal relationship of innovative work behavior, workplace friendship, psychological safety, and thriving at work. In other words, workplace friendship is a variable that is consistent with environmental factors. If the working environment context is friendly, it is more likely to foster innovative work behaviors (Shadur et al., 1999; West & Berman, 1997). While psychological safety and thriving at work were variables that were consistent with personal factors in the ever-changing situation in the workplace. If a person feels psychologically safe at work the person is more likely to be innovative and explore new methods (Hirak et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2016). As a result, a person is filled with a sense of energy, liveliness, and a sense of learning in the workplace, or call these positive states of mind thriving at work (Zeng et al., 2020). Thriving at work will result in the display of innovative work behavior of a person (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2015; Porath et al., 2012; Wallace et al., 2016).

## Methodology

### Participants

The research sample is Personnel of a private company in a telecommunication organization in Bangkok who is a regular employees with a working period of more than 2 years. the researcher has determined the method of sampling by the proportional stratified random sampling method (Proportional Stratified Random Sampling (Hair et al., 1998) a total of 240 people the samples were females more than males LGBTQ+, and those who do not want to specify gender 78.3% (n=188), 15.0 (n=36), 5.0 (n=12) and 1.7 (n=4). Respectively, the age group are from 22-59 years (M=3.32, SD =0.59). Employees who are working in support work 35.8% (n=86) and customer service department 64.2% (n=154). Most personnel's education level is at bachelor's level 87.5% (n=210). Most personnel are in the position of CM Representation and Senior officer 43.3% (n=104) and 17.1% (n=41). most personnel work in the department operation contact center followed by department Collection management 40.4% (n=97) and 15.4% (n=37). Most personnel have been working for 11-15 years, followed by 6-10 years 27.5% (n=66) and 22.5% (n=54) respectively.

## **Research Tool**

### **Measuring Psychological safety**

Measuring Psychological safety is adapted from Edmondson's (1999) measurements. There are 6 questions such as "I feel safe and brave to speak up" The scale is a 5-point Rating Scale, where 5 points means agreed very much till 1 point means least agreed. The measurement has good internal consistency Cronbach's alpha coefficient=0.87.

### **Measuring Thriving at work**

Measuring Thriving at work is adapted from Porath et al., (2012). There are 10 questions such as "I see myself constantly improving." The measure is an estimation scale (Rating Scale) 5 levels, where 5 points means agreed very much up to 1 point means least agreed. The measurement has good internal consistency Cronbach's alpha coefficient=0.90.

### **Measuring Workplace friendship**

Measuring Workplace friendship is adapted from Nielsen et al., (2000). There are 11 questions such as "I had the opportunity to meet my colleague." The scale is a 5-point Rating Scale, where 5 points means agreed very much, and 1 point means least agreed. The measurement has good internal consistency Cronbach's alpha coefficient=0.92.

### **Measuring Innovative working behavior**

Measuring Innovative working behavior is adapted from Chaiyut Kleebua and Amaraporn Surakarn which was developed from the measurement model of De Jong & Den Hartog (2010). There are 16 questions such as: "He looks for important points that can improve the way of working to be better than the present." The scale is a 5-point Rating Scale, where 5 points means agreed very much up to 1 point which means least agreed. The measurement has good internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha coefficient=0.97.

As these measurements have developed originally from abroad, the researcher has translated its meaning into the Thai language and re-checked the quality of the aforementioned questionnaires from 3 experts for cultural equality in terms of language, content, and concepts.

## **Data Analysis**

In preliminary data analysis, the researcher used descriptive statistics to characterize the distribution of baseline data of the sample, including the mean, standard deviation, and data analysis using multiple regression to meet the objectives of the research.

### **Results of data analysis**

The purpose of this research is to analyze the influence of friendships in workplace, psychological safety, and thriving at work affecting innovative behavior at work, the results of the analysis were divided into 2 parts as follows:

**Part1** The results of the basic statistical analysis of all 4 variables found that the observed variables in the model had the mean values, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Correlation coefficient, mean, and standard deviation of the observed variables in the model. (N=240)

Variable	Psychological safety	Thriving at work	Workplace friendship	Innovative work behavior
Psychological safety	1			
Thriving at work	.75**	1		
Workplace friendship	.66**	.64**	1	
Innovative work behavior	.70**	.78**	.64**	1
Mean	3.76	3.69	3.89	3.75
S.D.	.82	.73	.72	.73

\*p<0.05

**Part 2** The results of the analysis of the influence of variables on the model when considering the influence of factors affecting innovative work behavior, it is found that all 3 variables had an influence on innovative work behavior. The thriving at work variable was the factor that had the highest influence on innovative work behavior ( $\beta=.52$ ,  $p <.05$ ), followed by psychological safety influences ( $\beta=.19$ ,  $p <.05$ ), and workplace friendships ( $\beta= .18$ ,  $p <.05$ ) and, respectively as it is represented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Showing the coefficients of the observed variables.

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients b(SE)	Standardized Coefficients $\beta$	t	P-value
(Constant)	.442 (.163)		2.709*	.007
Psychological safety	.172 (.054)	.192	3.155*	.002
Thriving at work	.529 (.060)	.524	8.783*	.000
Workplace friendship	.184 (.054)	.181	3.419*	.001
$R^2 = .66$ , $F = 153.764$ , $DF = 239$				

\*P< 0.05

## Discussion and suggestions

The research findings are consistent with the conceptual framework and research hypothesis. The research also found that the results of the analysis of the causal influence of workplace friendships, psychological safety, and thriving at work that affect innovative work behavior of personnel of a telecommunications and communications company are consistent with empirical data. Some of the interesting issues that the researcher will bring to discuss are as follows.

### **The role of friendships in workplace for innovative behaviors**

From the results of the analysis of the influence of workplace friendship on innovative work behavior, it was found that workplace friendship of personnel has a statistically significant influence on innovative work behavior ( $\beta=.18$ ,  $p <.05$ ). This goes according to the hypothesis. When people have workplace friendships will recognize the opportunity of having workplace friendships. This gives us the opportunity to work together and get to know each other better. (Riordan & Griffeth,1995; Nielsen et al., 2000) When personnel can feel the feeling of having a strong friendship between employees in the organization with mutual trust there will be mutual assistance (Hackman & Lawler,1971; Nielsen et al.,2000). Perception of such feelings may give that person the courage to express their opinions. Express their creativity with ease which is consistent with the research results of Cao&Zhang (2019), Rahmaningtyas et al.,(2022), and Helmya et al., (2020) which studied the influence of workplace friendship on innovative work behavior. The results of the study found that workplace friendships had a direct influence on innovative work behaviors.

### **The role of psychological safety in innovative work behavior**

From the analysis of the influence of psychological safety on innovative work behavior, it is found that the psychological safety of personnel has a statistically significant influence on innovative work behavior ( $\beta=.19$ ,  $p <.05$ ). This goes according to the assumption that when personnel in the company are psychologically safe, the personnel will feel at ease and dare to show their abilities or feelings. Not afraid that it will affect the image or affect the work, or even when facing a constantly changing work environment dare to explore problems in work to find solutions to work problems. This is consistent with the research results of Cao & Zhang (2019), Xu et al.,(2022), and Ali et al., (2022) in studying the influence of psychological safety on innovative work behavior.

### **The role of thriving at work in innovative work behavior**

From the results of the analysis of the influence of thriving at work on innovative work behavior, it is found that thriving at work of personnel statistically significant influence on innovative work behavior ( $\beta=.52$ ,  $p <.05$ ) which has a higher influence value than other variables in the research, thus accepting the hypothesis that when personnel in the company progress in their work Personnel it will have an emotional state of mind that feels alive. Stay active and feel like learning. Improvement may lead to new concepts or work processes in order to work more efficiently consistent with the research of Sidra et al.,(2018), Yanjun et al.,(2019), and Irfan Helmy (2022) in studying the influence of thriving at work on innovative work behavior.

### **Research recommendations**

The recommendations for this research were divided into 2 topics presented as follows:

#### **Suggestions for the use of research results**

From the research results, it is found that the variable that plays the most important role in innovative work behavior is thriving at work shows that personnel with an attitude like to always learn things. Continuous self-improvement with a feeling of vigor and vitality. Personnel with these attitudes will tend to encourage more innovative work behaviors which

relevant agencies can take into account in planning organize training to encourage personnel to have more thriving at work to create value and benefit to the organization in creating business competitive advantages. In this research, the results can be classified by age range. in order to organize programs to promote learning to meet more target groups.

### **Suggestions for further research**

This research is a quantitative study. According to the results of the research, there are variables in the causal influence model on workplace friendship. Psychological safety and thriving at work affect innovative work behavior. Each variable had a positive influence on innovative work behavior, but the workplace friendship variable and psychological safety still have relatively little influence on innovative work behavior therefore, further study of other variables that may have an indirect effect should be studied. So that the model can explain more causal influences such as corporate culture, etc.

### **Conclusion**

Personnel in telecommunications and communications organizations have high innovative work behavior provided there are workplace friendships, psychological safety and thriving at work. They are positively correlated with innovative work behaviors. It has also been confirmed that thriving at work is the strongest predictor of innovative work behavior. Therefore, in order to promote innovative work behaviors, it is important to encourage individuals to have an attitude of learning on the job and continue developing themselves with a sense of vitality.

### **Limitation**

This study looked at a limited number of participants from 8 departments of a telecommunication organization in Bangkok, which could not reflect a true perception of the overall attitude and behavior of all telecommunications and communications organizations. Therefore, further research is needed in other contexts to expand the sample further.

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