Relational Aggression among Filipino On-The-Job-Training Students

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This study assessed the effects of different social environments (school vs. workplace), degrees of friendship (friends vs. acquaintances), and sociability levels (high vs. low) on on-the-job-training students' likelihood of adopting different types of relationally aggressive behavior. By means of two questionnaires, on-the-job-training students from different universities in Manila were assigned to one of two sociability groups and assessed by their likelihood of adopting different types of relationally aggressive behavior in situations involving a friend or a simple acquaintance, occurring in school and in the workplace. Results revealed that: 1) individuals with low sociability are more likely to use backstabbing than individuals with high sociability; 2) social environment is an important factor in determining individuals' likelihood of adopting specific relationally aggressive behaviors such as spreading rumors and silent treatment. However, these results were qualified by interactions with sociability and degree of friendship; and 3) no differences were observed concerning the excluding behavior. Results are discussed focusing on the findings' practical applications.

Aggression has been one of the most well studied topics in psychology. A brief look in the history of aggression research shows that studies on aggression have primarily focused on direct and overt forms of aggressive behavior such as physical aggression (Buss, 1963, 1966; Dollard, et al., 1939; Gaebelein, & Taylor, 1971; Thompson, & Kolstoe, 1973). Buss (1961) introduced the concept of indirect aggression, a kind of aggressive behavior in which the identity of the aggressor is not easily identifiable such as in the spreading of rumors, in the destruction of one's properties, etc. More recently, aggressive behaviors that focus on social manipulation,

independently of whether it takes a direct or an indirect form, have started to receive more emphasis (Crick, 1997; Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997; Underwood, 2003; Werner & Crick, 1999). These socially manipulative aggressive behaviors are used in an attempt to inflict harm to others not by physically aggressing them but by targeting and interfering with peoples' ability to relate with others, that is, damage others' social relationships. This form of aggression became known as relational aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Compared to physical aggression, relational aggression constitutes a more subtle form of aggressive behavior that proved to be equally disruptive, psychologically damaging, and emotionally disturbing. Relational aggression can be expressed in several ways such as by saying bad things about someone to others (i.e., backstabbing), by spreading rumors, or by gossiping (Duck, 1998; Rosnow & Fine, 1976). Rumors are essentially a resource in social exchange (Devito, 1992); they have entertainment value and also have the function of bestowing status upon the teller. Being so, they can become a powerful tool in socially manipulative behavior. Relational aggression can also be expressed by ignoring or inciting others to ignore someone, by not allowing a person to join a conversation group or a group activity, by not inviting someone to a party while inviting his or her peers, etc.; in other words, by giving a silent treatment or by deliberately excluding someone from a social group.

To this date, the great majority of studies done on the topic have focused on factors involved in relationally aggressive behavior among preschool and elementary school children (Crick, Casas, & Ku, 1999; Crick & Nelson, 2002; Crick, Grotpeter, & Bigbee, 2002; Isobe, Carvalho & Maeda, 2004). Few studies have assessed relational aggression among adults (Werner & Crick, 1999). As the use of overt forms of aggressive behavior is not socially acceptable nor particularly efficient, and as the importance and implications of social relationships increase in adulthood, it is reasonable to assume that socially manipulative behaviors such as those used in relational aggression may continue to be present and, perhaps, even increase in adolescence and adulthood. The present study assesses some of the factors that may play a role in the use of relationally aggressive behavior among college students. The main objective of this study is to assess the effects of different social environments, degrees of

friendship, and individual sociability on students' usage of different types of relationally aggressive behavior.

Relational Aggression in Different Social Environments

Adaptiveness is one of the most pervasive characteristics of human behavior. Previous studies have shown that different types of aggressive behaviors may change in terms of consequences, intensity, frequency, and even in their function according to the social setting in which they take place (Namie & Namie, 2001; Rosnow & Fine, 1976).

The different characteristics and objectives of school and workplace settings may determine the type, frequency, and intensity with which different types of aggressive behavior are used. The aggressive behaviors involved in bullying, for example, are present in both the school and workplace settings. However, the stakes for workplace bullying are, in many aspects, more serious than in school. Apart from psychologically, emotionally, and socially damaging, workplace bullying threatens the economic livelihood both of the target's and the target's family. As reported by Namie and Namie (2001), bullies' actions in the workplace have the most important defining characteristics of damaging the target's health and self-esteem, relations with the family and friends, economic livelihood, or some combination of them all.

Relationally aggressive behaviors may be just as contingent to social environment as bullying is. For example, individuals could be more likely to use silent treatment in school environments since the nature of the relationships in that setting allows them, without serious consequences, to avoid talking to specific others. The same is less likely to occur in the workplace, in which frequent communications with other members of the work group (i.e., exchanging of ideas or discussion of work outcomes, etc.) may be constantly expected and required. In such environments, other types of relationally aggressive behavior may be more prevalent. For example, Rosnow and Fine (1976) argue that an organizational social environment may encourage the activation of rumors when status hierarchies prevent the fine flow of information. In that study, they observed a prevalence of rumors in an industrial firm where hearsay was frequently related to local economic irregularities pertaining to job security, promotions, benefits, and working conditions.

Knowing what types of relationally aggressive behavior are more likely to be observed in different environments could offer important information on how to intervene in those environments for reducing that kind of behavior. Despite its practical relevance, no empirical studies have directly addressed the issue.

Relational Aggression among Friends and Acquaintances

Degree of friendship is another factor that can also affect the type and frequency of relationally aggressive behaviors. Pogrebin (1987) identifies different degrees of friendship in relationships. Acquaintanceship is the lowest level of friendship and it is characterized by being shallow and bland. Acquaintances are people one knows by name or face and with whom smiles and amenities are occasionally exchanged upon meetings in the streets and corridors. True friendship, on the other hand, is the highest level of friendship. It is characterized by close companionship, reciprocity, similarity, mutual intimacy, and social support.

Basic conceptions of degrees of friendship seem to be acquired developmentally and become gradually sophisticated (Berndt, 1982; Berndt & Perry, 1986). One implication of these basic conceptions is that they can affect one's expectations and perceived responsibilities in a relationship as well as one's behaviors towards other people in different contexts. It is reasonable to assume that the characteristics of different degrees of friendship may directly affect the type of relationally aggressive behavior that individuals may use. For example, excluding and giving a silent treatment may be powerful means to hurt friends, whereas saying bad things about others behind their back may be more common among acquaintances or non-friends.

Grotpeter and Crick (1996) have demonstrated that, among children, relational aggression often occurs in the context of a friendship. Moreover, that the friendships of relationally aggressive individuals are characterized by high levels of intimacy, secret sharing, and exclusivity. These characteristics have been hypothesized to create a context favorable to the appearance and maintenance of relational aggression (Isobe, Carvalho, & Maeda, 2004).

Since the need for close friendship emerges in preadolescence to meet newfound needs for affection, alliance, and intimacy outside the

family (Kagan, 1998), the establishment of close friendships is an important developmental milestone (Pogrebin, 1987). Studies of adults have revealed that friendship is a critical source of social support that protects individuals against the negative effects of life stress (Kagan, 1998). However, similar to what happens with children, high levels of intimacy and exclusivity can also promote relationally aggressive behaviors among adult friendships as they may create excessive mutual dependence at the same time offering access to important and private information about the other person.

In previous studies of aggression among adults, the dynamics of whether or not relational aggression is more prevalent in the context of a friendship or whether different types of relationally aggressive behaviors are more common among friends and non-friends has not been empirically assessed.

RELATIONAL AGGRESSION AND SOCIABILITY

Sociability, which is the personality trait that leads individuals to seek out the company of other people, enjoy their company, and feel comfortable with social situations (Eysenck & Wilson, 1976), provides individuals with opportunities to develop social competence and to acquire skills that help them in dealing with social situations in different settings.

Individuals with high sociability have more chances to acquire social competence, which is the broader term used to describe a person's ability to establish and maintain high quality and mutually satisfying relationships and to avoid negative treatment or victimization from others (Stanberry, 2002). Individuals with low sociability, on the other hand, have fewer opportunities to develop socially competent behavior. They are usually characterized by having few friends, by enjoying solo activities, and by being inclined to withdraw from oppressive social contacts (Eysenck & Wilson, 1976). According to Kagan (1998), individuals with low sociability are usually considered as loners, outcasts, or rejected and often, are the type of individuals who get picked on.

Previous studies have demonstrated that children's use of physical as well as relationally aggressive behavior differs according to their sociability level and ability to engage in pro-social behavior towards

their peers (Coie, & Dodge, 1998; Crick, Casas, & Ku, 1999). Similarly, among adults, although high levels of physically aggressive behavior have often been associated with low sociability and lack of social competence (Novaco, 1985), data on adults' use of relational aggression according to their sociability levels is scarce.

The tendency to use physical forms of aggression tend to decrease with age and more refined social manipulative behaviors tend to increase; therefore, the potential for the use of different types of relationally aggressive behaviors also tends to increase. Considering this and the fact that the great majority of the studies on relational aggression were done with children, it seems that there is a theoretical as well as practical necessity to investigate the dynamics of this kind of aggression among adults. The present study aims to answer the following question: Does the individual's social environment (i.e., school vs. workplace), the degree of friendship in a relationship (i.e., friends vs. acquaintances), and the individual's level of sociability (i.e., high vs. low) affect his or her likelihood of adopting different types of relationally aggressive behavior (viz., spreading of rumors, silent treatment, backstabbing, and excluding someone from the group)?

To study the relationship between sociability levels, degree of friendship, social environment and the effects of these variables on individuals' use of different types of relationally aggressive behaviors, on-the-job-training college students from different universities in Manila were asked to complete two survey questionnaires as described below.

METHOD

Design
We adopted a 2 (Environment: school vs. workplace) x 2 (Relationship: friends vs. acquaintances) x 2 (Sociability: high vs. low) factorial design. Sociability varied between participants, whereas Social Environment and Relationship varied within participants. The dependent variable of this study is the degree to which relationally aggressive behaviors (viz., backstabbing, spreading of rumors, excluding someone from the group, and silent treatment) are reported to be used.

Participants

Using a purposive sampling technique, 130 college on-the-job-training students from different universities in Manila were selected (age range of 18 to 21 years old). One criterion for inclusion in the study was that the participant should have undergone a minimum practicum experience of 100 hours. Participation in the study was voluntary and no special incentives were given.

Instruments

This study used two survey questionnaires in gathering data. The first survey questionnaire assessed the frequency with which participants reported they would use different types of relational aggression in situations occurring in school and in the workplace supposedly involving their friends and acquaintances. The second survey questionnaire used assessed the sociability level of the respondents.

Relational Aggression Assessment Questionnaire. The relational aggression assessment questionnaire was composed of thirty-two items depicting hypothetical situations, which have been shown to be considered particularly annoying by Filipinos (Andres & Andres, 1987). The situations take place either in the school or in the workplace and supposedly involve either a close friend or a simple acquaintance of the participant. Each situation was followed by a different type of relationally aggressive response (i.e., backstabbing, spreading of rumors, excluding someone from the group and silent treatment). Participants were required to rate in a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from "always" to "never") their likelihood of adopting the response depicted in the situation. Examples of these items are: "You saw in school that a close friend of yours is cheating on his girlfriend or on her boyfriend. You share this with your other friends and bring out old rumors about him or her being a playgirl or a playboy in his or her younger days"; "A person from school whom you only know by face doesn't hang out with you, but when you got close with someone popular, that person started hanging out with you also and you felt it wasn't just a coincidence. You let him or her get closer to you but without that person knowing it, you tell other people that he or she is a 'social climber'"; "An acquaintance from work always butts in during conversations he or she is not part of. You are really irritated with this

person because of his or her rudeness so when he or she decides to join you and your friends for lunch, you tell your friends to refuse his or her company."

The four relationally aggressive response types were equally divided among the 32 items included in the questionnaire: eight items had a "backstabbing" response type, eight had a "spreading of rumors" response type, eight had an "excluding" response type, and eight had a "silent treatment" response type. In each of these categories, two of the items were allotted for friends and another two for acquaintances in the school environment and two of the items were allotted for friends and another two for acquaintances in the workplace environment.

In order to counterbalance the 32 situations with the four different relationally aggressive response types, four different sets of the questionnaire (Sets A, B, C, and D) were created. Internal validity of the relational aggression assessment questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The questionnaire sets proved to be very reliable. The alpha values for the different sets were: set A, .79; set B, .87; set C, .92; set D, .90.

Sociability Assessment Questionnaire. The second questionnaire used in this study assessed the level of sociability of the respondents. The items in this instrument comprise the sociability subscale of Eysenck and Wilson's (1976) personality test. The sociability assessment questionnaire contained 30 questions that assesses participants' social preferences in different situations and should be answered in a 3-point Likert scale ("yes," "undecided," "no"). Examples of these items are: "Are you relaxed and self-confident in the company of other people?"; "Do you spontaneously introduce yourself to strangers at social gatherings?"; "Are you inclined to avoid people whenever possible?"

Procedures

A purposive sampling technique was used to create a list of potential respondents in several universities in Manila. Participants were contacted and the purpose of the study was individually explained. They were informed that their identities as well as their responses would be kept confidential. Once they agreed to participate in the study, they were scheduled to receive and consequently answer the two survey questionnaires.

When answering the questionnaires, they were informed that they should do it at their own pace and that they should be as truthful and as accurate as possible.

Results

Four 2 (Social Environment: school vs. work place) x 2 (Degree of Friendship: friends vs. acquaintances) x 2 (Sociability: high vs. low) mixed-design analyses of variance (ANOVA) were carried out to separately analyze the participants' likelihood of adopting each relationally aggressive response (backstabbing, spreading of rumors, excluding, and silent treatment). The post hoc tests were carried out using Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) Test. All effect sizes reported in this study were computed as Cohen's d (Cohen, 1988).

Participants were divided in two groups according to their level of sociability. Participants received "1 point", "0.5 points", or "0 points" according to their answers in each of the items included in the questionnaire. Possible scores ranged from a minimum of zero to a maximum of 30 points. Their scores in the Sociability Assessment Questionnaire were computed and they were assigned to either a high or a low sociability group by using the scale provided by Eysenck and Wilson (1976). Participants whose scores ranged from 0–16 composed the low sociability group while those whose scores ranged from 17–30 composed the high sociability group.

Spreading of Rumors

Means and standard deviations for spreading of rumors are presented in Table 1. Results of the mixed-design ANOVA on spreading of rumors revealed a main effect of social environment, $F(1, 128) = 6.93$, $MSE = 0.49$, $p < .01$, $d = .19$. Despite the small effect size, social environment significantly affected the likelihood of participants to report that they would spread rumors. Participants reported to be significantly more likely to engage in spreading of rumors in school than in the workplace. The effect of the degree of friendship also reached significance, $F(1, 128) = 9.39$, $MSE = 0.56$, $p < .01$, $d = .23$. Despite the small effect size, degree of friendship in a relationship significantly affected the likelihood of participants to report that they would spread rumors. Participants reported that they would engage in

spreading rumors about their acquaintances significantly more than in spreading rumors about their friends.

These main effects, however, were qualified by the marginally significant interaction of degree of friendship and social environment, $F (1, 128) = 3.05$, $MSE = 0.74$, $p = .08$. Post hoc comparisons and effect size analysis revealed that participants would engage in spreading rumors about their friends significantly more in school than in the workplace ($d = .29$), whereas no difference in the spreading of rumors about their acquaintances was observed according to social environment ($d = .07$). In addition, it was also observed that while in school there was no significant difference in the likelihood of engaging in spreading of rumors according to degree of friendship ($d = .12$); participants reported that in the workplace they would engage in spreading rumors about their acquaintances significantly more than spreading rumors about their friends ($d = .34$).

Results of the mixed-design ANOVA also showed that the interaction of social environment and sociability reached significance, $F (1, 128) = 6.93$, $MSE = 0.49$, $p < .01$. Post hoc comparisons and effect size analysis indicated that among those who scored high in sociability, there is a tendency to report that they would use spreading of rumors in the school environment more than in the workplace ($d = .34$); whereas among those who scored low in sociability, no significant difference in their reports of their likelihood of spreading rumors in school and in the workplace ($d = .03$) was observed. No further significant differences were observed.
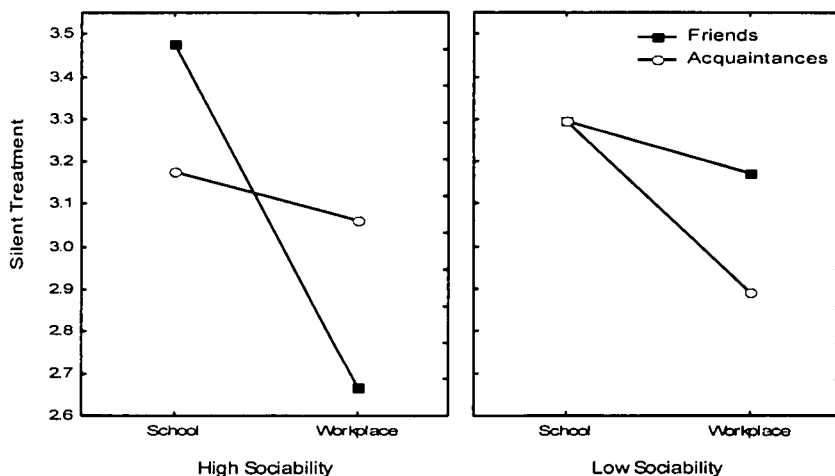
Silent Treatment

The mixed-design ANOVA carried out on silent treatment revealed a main effect of social environment, $F (1, 128) = 24.40$, $MSE = 0.71$, $p < .001$, $d = .38$. Effect size analysis indicated that social environment significantly affected the likelihood of participants to report that they would use silent treatment. Participants reported to be significantly more likely to engage in silent treatment in school than in the workplace. This main effect, however, was qualified by the interaction of social environment, degree of friendship, and sociability, $F (1, 128) = 8.03$, $MSE = 0.97$, $p < .01$ (see Figure 1). Post hoc comparisons and effect size analyses revealed that among participants with low sociability scores, no significant differences were observed in their reported likelihood of using silent treatment

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for the four different relationally aggressive behaviors assessed according to social environment, degree of friendship, and sociability

| | School | | | | Workplace | | | |
| | Friend | | Acquaintance | | Friend | | Acquaintance | |
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Spreading of Rumors								
High sociability	3.40	1.01	3.48	0.75	2.98	0.90	3.31	0.85
Low sociability	3.37	0.86	3.48	0.78	3.26	0.83	3.54	0.91
Total	3.38	0.93	3.48	0.76	3.12	0.88	3.42	0.88
Silent Treatment								
High sociability	3.48	0.91	3.17	0.89	2.67	0.98	3.06	0.71
Low sociability	3.30	1.00	3.30	0.87	3.17	1.08	2.89	1.01
Total	3.39	0.95	3.23	0.88	2.92	1.06	2.98	0.87
Backstabbing								
High sociability	3.12	0.84	2.95	0.92	3.11	0.91	3.16	0.90
Low sociability	3.23	0.84	3.27	0.95	3.30	0.94	3.59	0.88
Total	3.17	0.84	3.10	0.94	3.20	0.92	3.26	0.89
Excluding								
High sociability	3.42	0.75	3.39	0.79	3.43	0.90	3.42	0.83
Low sociability	3.48	0.98	3.49	0.81	3.49	0.87	3.58	0.75
Total	3.45	0.87	3.44	0.80	3.46	0.88	3.50	0.79

Figure 1. Effect of social environment, degree of relationship, and sociability on silent the use of silent treatment.

according to their degree of friendship (d = .14) and their social environment (d = .27). Among the participants with high sociability scores, no significant difference was observed in their reported likelihood of using silent treatment towards acquaintances according to the social environment (d = .14); however, the large effect size shows that they reported being significantly more likely to use silent treatment towards their friends in the school environment than in the workplace (d = .86).

Backstabbing

Results of the mixed-design ANOVA on backstabbing revealed a marginally significant effect of sociability, $F(1, 128) = 3.55$, $MSE = 1.49$, $p = .06$, $d = .29$. Only a small effect size was observed showing that participants with low sociability scores reported they would engage more in backstabbing than the participants with high sociability. No other significant difference was found regarding the use of backstabbing.

Excluding

The mixed-design ANOVA carried out revealed that no significant differences were observed in participants' reports of their likelihood of how much they would engage in excluding someone from the group according to social environment, degree of friendship, and sociability.

DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study was to assess the effects of social environments, degrees of friendship, and individual sociability levels on individuals' likelihood of adopting different types of relationally aggressive behavior. Results showed that those variables seem to have distinct effects on individuals' likelihood of adopting the types of relationally aggressive behavior assessed.

Among the different variables assessed in the study, the individuals' social environment seems to be an important factor in determining individuals' likelihood of adopting specific types of relationally aggressive behavior such as the spreading of rumors and silent treatment, which were reported as being more likely to be adopted in the school environment than in the workplace. One explanation for such difference concerns the social status that on-the-job-training students have in the school and in the workplace and the expectations that their superiors may have concerning their performance in the workplace. Being new in the company and working as trainees give them a relatively lower status compared to their colleagues. Moreover, in the workplace, the on-the-job-training students may also have to cope with specific situations such as interacting with people of different generations, following a more strict set of rules, and adjusting to the standards of their bosses; whereas in school, their relationships may be considerably more homogeneous and flexible in nature. The willingness and need to present a good impression to their colleagues and superiors in the workplace may be determinant factors of their behavior in that setting.

However, as shown by the significant two-way interaction of social environment and sociability for spreading of rumors, this adjustment of behavior differed among individuals in this study. Individuals with low

sociability reported that they are as likely to spread rumors in school as in the workplace, whereas individuals high in sociability are significantly more likely to adjust their behavior in the workplace by reducing their likelihood of spreading rumors in that setting. One possible explanation is that, in general, individuals with high sociability may recognize that the nature of their relationships in school and in the workplace is different and, consequently they act in different ways. Moreover, those individuals may also recognize that the stakes for relationally aggressive behavior in the workplace are more serious than in school, both for them and for the target of the aggressive behavior; the same does not seem to happen with the individuals with low sociability. It is possible that the more extensive social interactions of highly sociable individuals increase their sensitivity to environmental factors, which in turn, may help them make more accurate assessments of the appropriateness of their behavior and adjusting them accordingly.

Another behavioral difference observed as a function of sociability was that individuals with low sociability reported being more likely to use backstabbing when compared to individuals with high sociability. Backstabbing is characterized by the avoidance of direct confrontation with the target of the aggressive behavior by attempting to maintain a good image with the target of the aggressive behavior while demeaning his or her reputation in the eyes of others. Such way of dealing with a conflict is typical of individuals who lack the social competence to solve their problems in ways that are more effective. Low sociability is often associated with withdrawal from social contacts, lack of social competence, and loneliness (Eysenck & Wilson, 1976; Kagan, 1998). Individuals with high sociability, on the other hand, have more opportunities to learn effective problem solving strategies and skills when dealing with adverse situations by relating more with other people and by dealing with different situations that arise as a result of those social interactions.

Results of the present study also revealed that the frequency with which Filipino on-the-job-training students report that they would adjust their behavior according to the social setting also changes according to the degree of relationship they have with the target of the aggressive behavior. Two results, in particular, show this tendency: the two-way

interaction of degree of friendship and social environment for the use of spreading of rumors and the three-way interaction of degree of friendship, social environment, and sociability for the use of silent treatment.

The interaction of degree of friendship and social environment revealed that while no differences were observed in the school setting, on-the-job-training students reported that in the workplace, they would engage in spreading rumors about their acquaintances significantly more than spreading rumors about their friends. One reason for that outcome concerns the distinct nature of relationships that the on-the-job-training students have in school and in the workplace and that in the latter they have comparatively less friends than in the school setting. When engaging in occasional informal talks with colleagues at the workplace, it may be less likely that they would spread rumors about those few friends they have in that setting, instead it is more likely that they would do so about those with whom they have only a more superficial relationship, that is, their acquaintances. In the school setting, on the other hand, they may belong to more than one group of friends at a time, and the opportunities to engage in such informal talks may be more common. For that reason, they may be more likely to engage in rumor-spreading about their friends. Another explanation may be cultural in nature, that Filipinos may be more concerned about the needs and well-being of their friends than their acquaintances, particularly in situations or settings in which the stakes are perceived to be higher such as the workplace.

Another finding of interest concerns the three-way interaction of degree of friendship, social environment, and sociability for the use of silent treatment. The only significant difference observed in the interaction was that individuals with high sociability reported being more likely to use silent treatment towards their friends in the school setting than in the workplace. In this finding, the ability of individuals with high sociability to adjust their behavior according to the demands of their social setting can also be observed. For the on-the-job-training students, the school environment is a ground for richer relationships of a more casual nature compared with the workplace in which a more structured and formal behavior is constantly required. For a highly sociable on-the-job-training student, giving a silent treatment in school may be a common behavior, but doing it in an environment such as the workplace would

not be appropriate especially towards their friends, whose goals in the workplace they may share and perceive as more important than whatever reasons that may have originated their dispute.

It is important to acknowledge that considering the idiosyncrasies of the on-the-job-training students who participated in this study, the extent to which the findings of this study may be generalized to a larger population is limited. Perhaps different patterns of behaviors would be reported if there was a between-subject manipulation of the social environment variable using full-time students and full-time workers.

However, considering the lack of studies assessing adults' use of different relationally aggressive behavior according to their sociability levels, degrees of friendship, and social environments, the results of the present study revealing that those variables dynamically interact to determine those behaviors provide important information on the dynamics of the use of relational aggression among Filipino on-the-job-training students. They also provide empirical grounds for improvements that can be implemented by companies in the training of their new recruits.

If practices focusing on the enhancement of young recruits' sociability levels and on the fostering of friendship among them are incorporated in their training programs as well as in their regular activities, this can contribute to the reduction of relationally aggressive behaviors that can be very disruptive to the smooth flow of information among workers which may ultimately jeopardize the major objectives of the company.

Finally, considering the need of studies assessing in more detail the usage of relational aggression among adults and the practical application of the results of those studies, we suggest that future researches focus on factors that may further clarify the dynamic usage of this kind of aggressive behavior in adult social interactions. In concrete terms we suggest that, to test for reliability, different measures of relational aggression should be used to investigate the types of relationally aggressive behavior that were assessed in this study as well as other types. Finally, by adopting more refined measures of relationships (e.g., best friends, friends, acquaintances, strangers, etc.) and by assessing social relations of different nature (e.g., immediate relatives, work colleagues, church community members, etc.), future studies should also give emphasis to cultural characteristics that can facilitate the use of relationally aggressive behavior

as well as to contextual factors that may incite a relationally aggressive response in individuals in various settings.

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