

	<div>Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems</div> <div>Issue 1, Vol. 9, 2026</div>
	<div>RESEARCH ARTICLE</div>
	<div>The Impact of Informal Interpersonal Relationships on Job Performance and Organisational Effectiveness: A Sociological and Behavioural Analysis within Contemporary Organisations</div>
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<div>Issue web link</div>	<div>https://imcra-az.org/archive/389-science-education-and-innovations-in-the-context-of-modern-problems-issue-1-vol-9-2026.html</div>
<div>Keywords</div>	<div>Informal interpersonal relationships; Job performance; Organisational behaviour; Workplace social networks; Productivity; Teamwork; Organisational effectiveness; Employee behaviour.</div>
<div>Abstract</div> <div> <p>This study investigates the impact of informal interpersonal relationships on job performance within organisational settings, emphasising their role as a pervasive social phenomenon embedded in contemporary organisational life. Modern organisations are not solely governed by formal structures, regulations, and hierarchical authority; rather, they are also shaped by informal networks of interaction that emerge spontaneously through daily communication, shared experiences, and continuous interpersonal contact among employees. These informal relationships operate outside officially sanctioned frameworks, forming hidden channels of communication and influence that significantly affect employees' attitudes, behaviours, and levels of performance. The study adopts a sociological and organisational behaviour perspective to analyse how informal relationships can function as a double-edged mechanism. On the one hand, they may foster trust, cooperation, psychological support, and teamwork, thereby enhancing job performance, productivity, and organisational commitment. On the other hand, when mismanaged or excessively dominant, they may generate favouritism, discrimination, resistance to authority, or internal conflict, ultimately undermining administrative equilibrium and reducing performance levels. By exploring the conceptual foundations of informal relationships, their causes of emergence, and their functional implications, this research seeks to clarify the conditions under which informal relationships contribute positively to organisational effectiveness versus those in which they become a source of dysfunction. The findings underscore the necessity for organisational leadership to recognise informal relationships as an inevitable and influential dimension of organisational life and to adopt balanced management strategies that integrate informal dynamics into the broader framework of formal organisational control. Understanding and managing these relationships effectively is essential for improving job performance, sustaining organisational harmony, and enhancing institutional reputation in complex and dynamic work environments.</p> </div>	
<div>Citation</div> <div> Yasmina E. (2026). The Impact of Informal Interpersonal Relationships on Job Performance and Organisational Effectiveness: A Sociological and Behavioural Analysis within Contemporary Organisations. <i>Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems</i>, 9(1), 974-980. https://doi.org/10.56334/sei/9.1.90 </div>	
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<div>Received: 25.07.2025</div>	<div>Accepted: 10.11.2025</div> <div>Published: 01.01.2026 (available online)</div>

Introduction

The growing complexity of contemporary organisations has generated an urgent need to examine informal interpersonal relationships as a fundamental dimension of organisational life. Recent organisational and sociological research has demonstrated that informal relationships may function either as a catalyst for enhanced job performance

and organisational effectiveness or, conversely, as a disruptive force that undermines administrative balance and professional objectivity, depending on how these relationships are formed, managed, and embedded within the organisational environment (Robbins & Judge, 2022; Katz & Kahn, 1978).

In any human organisation—whether economic, administrative, or service-oriented—relationships among individuals inevitably transcend the boundaries of formally assigned duties and hierarchical structures. These relationships, commonly referred to as informal relationships, arise spontaneously through daily interaction, interpersonal proximity, shared values, common backgrounds, or repeated social contact in the workplace (Quraysh, 2014; Bin ‘Abdallāh, 2018). Unlike formal relationships, which are explicitly regulated by organisational rules and administrative authority, informal relationships are neither planned nor imposed. Instead, they emerge organically from the human need for social connection, mutual support, and emotional security.

Informal relationships thus represent a double-edged phenomenon within organisations. On the one hand, they can create a climate of trust, cooperation, psychological safety, and solidarity, all of which contribute positively to job performance, teamwork, and productivity (Coleman, 1988; Sparrowe et al., 2001). On the other hand, when left unmanaged or when they evolve into closed networks or cliques, informal relationships may foster favouritism, bias, discrimination, and organisational conflict, thereby reducing performance levels and weakening institutional cohesion (Al-Badrī, 2011; Robbins & Judge, 2022).

Accordingly, understanding the nature, functions, and consequences of informal relationships is essential for comprehending the organisation as an integrated social system. Such understanding is particularly crucial with regard to employees’ professional conduct, performance outcomes, and organisational commitment. Against this background, the present study seeks to address the following central research question:

How do informal relationships affect job performance within an organisation?

This question is further elaborated through the following sub-questions:

- Do informal relationships positively influence job performance and contribute to higher performance levels?
- Do informal relationships exert a negative impact on job performance within organisations?

1. Concept of Informal Relationships

Informal relationships constitute one of the most significant yet least formally recognised dimensions of organisational behaviour. Quraysh (2014) defines informal relationships as “those ties that arise among members of an organisation spontaneously, as a result of repeated interaction, shared interests, or compatibility of dispositions, without forming part of the formal organisational structure or being explicitly defined by management” (p. 88). This definition underscores the organic and unregulated nature of informal relationships, highlighting their roots in human interaction rather than administrative design.

From this perspective, informal relationships draw their vitality from the human dimension of organisational life. Because they are not imposed by authority or structured through formal procedures, they are often perceived as more authentic and emotionally meaningful. At the same time, their lack of regulation renders them vulnerable to misinterpretation, misuse, or exploitation, particularly when organisational oversight is weak or managerial practices are perceived as unfair (Shafīq, 2006; Al-Shāfi‘ī, 2015).

Scholars of organisational sociology further conceptualise informal relationships as patterns of social interaction that exist beyond formal organisational rules yet play a crucial role in shaping trust, cooperation, and information exchange among employees (‘Abdallāh, 2015; Granovetter, 1973). These relationships frequently operate as alternative communication channels, facilitating the rapid flow of information and enabling employees to bypass bureaucratic rigidity and procedural delays.

Thus, informal relationships should not be understood merely as personal or social ties detached from work processes. Rather, they perform important functional roles within organisations by enhancing workflow flexibility, fostering mutual assistance, and compensating for deficiencies within formal administrative systems. In this sense, informal relationships contribute to maintaining a dynamic balance between structure and agency in organisational life (Mintzberg, 1983; Bin ‘Abdallāh, 2018).

2. Reasons for the Emergence of Informal Relationships

Informal relationships are an inherent and inevitable feature of organisational life. They arise naturally from daily interaction and coexist alongside formal structures, regardless of organisational size or sector. Understanding the factors that contribute to their emergence is essential for assessing their potential benefits and risks within the workplace.

a. The Social Nature of Human Beings

Human beings are inherently social actors who seek interaction, communication, and emotional connection with others. Even in highly formalised work environments, employees tend to form friendships and social bonds with

colleagues who share similar values, interests, or personal backgrounds (Mayo, 1933; ‘Imād, 2015). This social inclination gives rise to informal communication networks based on trust and emotional affinity. While such networks may enhance psychological comfort and cooperation, they may also evolve into exclusive cliques that undermine fairness and objectivity if left unchecked.

b. Continuous Contact among Employees

The nature of collaborative work, shared office spaces, and repeated daily encounters makes it difficult to maintain strictly formal relationships over time. Continuous interaction naturally fosters familiarity and interpersonal closeness, leading to the formation of informal relationships that extend beyond assigned job roles (Sias & Cahill, 1998; Al-‘Umri, 2020). Although this proximity often promotes teamwork and mutual support, it may also facilitate the emergence of informal interest groups that influence decision-making processes.

c. Organisational Vacuum or Administrative Ambiguity

When formal organisational structures fail to provide clear guidance, effective communication, or equitable procedures, employees often resort to informal relationships as compensatory mechanisms. Administrative ambiguity, unclear role definitions, or ineffective leadership may encourage workers to seek support and solutions through informal networks rather than formal channels (‘Abd al-‘Āl, 2019; Katz & Kahn, 1978).

d. Pre-Existing Relationships outside the Organisation

Employees are frequently recruited from shared social environments, such as neighbourhoods, educational institutions, or extended family networks. These pre-existing relationships are often transferred into the workplace, facilitating the rapid formation of informal bonds (Nūrī, 2020). While such ties may enhance cohesion and cooperation, they may also generate perceptions of favouritism and unequal treatment if they influence managerial decisions.

e. Perceived Discriminatory Administrative Treatment

Perceived injustice in performance evaluations, promotions, or task allocation can motivate employees to form informal alliances as a means of collective defence or resistance. Such relationships often assume a solidaristic or protest-oriented character, strengthening group cohesion while simultaneously challenging formal authority structures (Al-Badrī, 2011; Rabi‘, 2016).

f. Idleness or Work Downtime

Periods of reduced workload, idle time, or organisational stagnation provide fertile ground for the development of informal relationships. In the absence of continuous task engagement, employees tend to engage in conversation, exchange personal experiences, and strengthen interpersonal bonds, thereby expanding informal social networks within the organisation (Sa‘īd, 2013; Al-Shāfi‘ī, 2015).

g. Shared Interests and Individual Objectives

Employees who share common interests—such as reducing work pressure, securing specific benefits, or influencing organisational decisions—often engage in informal cooperation and group formation. These informal networks may exert considerable influence over organisational processes by shaping opinions, mediating conflicts, or indirectly affecting policy implementation (Blau, 1964; Coleman, 1988).

3. Dimensions of Informal Relationships

Informal relationships within organisations are multidimensional phenomena that extend beyond mere social interaction. They intersect with psychological, cultural, functional, communicative, and organisational processes, collectively shaping employee behaviour and performance outcomes.

a. Social Dimension

The social dimension represents one of the most salient aspects of informal relationships, as such ties are often built upon friendship, kinship, shared age groups, common interests, or similar social backgrounds. Employees naturally gravitate toward individuals with whom they perceive social similarity, forming informal groups that exchange support, advice, and assistance (Bin ‘Abdallāh, 2018; Mayo, 1933). These social networks foster a sense of belonging and solidarity, which may enhance teamwork and organisational cohesion. However, when excessively exclusive, they may evolve into cliques that fragment the workforce and impede collaborative performance (Al-Badrī, 2011).

b. Psychological Dimension

The psychological dimension of informal relationships is closely linked to employees’ emotional and affective needs, including security, appreciation, recognition, and belonging. Informal relationships provide emotional outlets and moral support, particularly in high-pressure work environments. They help mitigate stress, frustration, and anxiety, thereby enhancing individuals’ psychological well-being and confidence, which are positively reflected in job performance (Robbins & Judge, 2022; Sa‘īd, 2013). Conversely, exclusion from informal networks may lead to feelings of isolation and reduced motivation.

c. Cultural Dimension

Organisational and societal culture constitutes a critical framework influencing the formation and nature of informal relationships. Cultural norms, values, customs, and traditions determine acceptable patterns of closeness, communication, and social interaction. In many Arab societies, for instance, kinship, tribal affiliation, and regional ties play a decisive role in shaping informal networks within organisations (‘Abdallāh, 2015; Nūrī, 2020). Such cultural influences may strengthen solidarity but may also intensify favouritism if not managed carefully.

d. Functional Dimension

The functional dimension reflects the relationship between informal relationships and task execution. Informal networks often facilitate the exchange of information, technical assistance, and experiential knowledge, particularly when formal channels are slow, bureaucratic, or rigid (Mintzberg, 1983; Al-‘Umri, 2020). While this flexibility may enhance efficiency and problem-solving, it may also compromise fairness and transparency if informal ties influence task allocation or access to opportunities.

e. Communicative Dimension

Informal relationships constitute powerful channels of communication, often described as “backstage networks” or the organisational grapevine. Through these channels, information—accurate or otherwise—circulates rapidly, sometimes faster than through formal communication systems (Granovetter, 1973; Katz & Kahn, 1978). Although such networks can strengthen trust and awareness, they may also spread rumours, misinformation, and uncertainty, thereby destabilising the organisational climate.

f. Organisational Dimension

The organisational dimension concerns the interaction between informal relationships and formal structures. In some contexts, informal relationships complement formal arrangements by reinforcing cooperation and cohesion. In other cases, they may undermine formal authority, weaken discipline, and challenge managerial control (Shafiq, 2006; Al-Shāfi‘ī, 2015). This duality renders informal relationships a double-edged organisational phenomenon requiring strategic management rather than outright suppression.

4. Characteristics of Informal Relationships

Informal relationships are social phenomena that emerge naturally within organisations as a result of everyday interaction among employees. They possess distinctive characteristics that differentiate them from formal relationships and render them influential in shaping workplace dynamics.

a. Spontaneity and Natural Emergence

Informal relationships arise spontaneously without formal planning or administrative design. They develop organically through daily interaction, shared experiences, and personal affinity, reflecting the human dimension of organisational life (Mayo, 1933; Quraysh, 2014).

b. Flexibility

These relationships are characterised by high flexibility, as they transcend hierarchical boundaries and formal chains of command. Employees from different ranks may interact freely without administrative authorisation, facilitating trust, cooperation, and rapid information exchange (Mintzberg, 1983).

c. Latent Influence on the Work Environment

Despite their informal nature, such relationships exert latent yet significant influence on work processes and decision-making. Informal groups may shape opinions, exert pressure, or indirectly influence formal decisions, particularly through collective alignment or resistance (Blau, 1964).

d. Durability or Temporariness

Informal relationships vary in duration. Some are enduring and based on deep personal bonds, while others are temporary and situational, dissolving once specific tasks or circumstances end (Al-Hurr, 2012). This variability complicates managerial efforts to regulate their effects.

e. Susceptibility to Personal and Social Factors

Informal relationships are strongly influenced by personal values, interpersonal styles, and social affiliations, including regional, cultural, or tribal ties. These factors shape both the strength and direction of informal networks within organisations (Nūrī, 2020).

5. Concept of Job Performance

Performance refers to the effective execution and accomplishment of the essential tasks and responsibilities assigned to an individual, as well as the associated behaviours and interactions that contribute to organisational objectives. Job performance is assessed by comparing actual outcomes with predetermined standards and criteria (Robbins & Judge, 2022).

Job performance should be distinguished from effort. While effort reflects the energy expended by an individual, performance is evaluated based on tangible outputs and results achieved within a given timeframe (Shafiq, 2006).

6. Elements of Job Performance

Job performance encompasses several interrelated elements, including:

- **Knowledge of Job Requirements:** General knowledge, technical competence, professional skills, and work experience relevant to the position.
- **Quality of Work:** Accuracy, proficiency, organisational ability, and commitment to error-free task execution.
- **Quantity of Work Accomplished:** The volume of work completed and the speed of task execution under normal working conditions.
- **Perseverance and Reliability:** Responsibility, adherence to deadlines, independence in task completion, and consistency of performance outcomes (Rabī, 2016; Al-Badrī, 2011).

7. Factors Influencing Job Performance

Several organisational factors influence job performance, including:

- **Absence of Clearly Defined Objectives:** Without explicit goals and benchmarks, performance cannot be accurately measured or evaluated.
- **Lack of Participation in Management:** Excluding employees from decision-making weakens responsibility, motivation, and teamwork.
- **Ineffective Performance Appraisal Systems:** Failure to link rewards to performance undermines motivation and equity.
- **Problems of Job Satisfaction:** Declining satisfaction leads to reduced commitment and productivity.
- **Challenges in Organisational Development:** Weak problem-solving mechanisms and resistance to innovation hinder performance improvement (ʿAbdallāh, 2015; Robbins & Judge, 2022).

8. Impact of Informal Relationships on Job Performance

a. Positive Effects

Informal relationships may enhance job performance by:

- Facilitating communication and reducing bureaucratic distance.
- Creating a motivating and psychologically supportive work environment.
- Enhancing creativity and the exchange of expertise.
- Strengthening trust and organisational loyalty.
- Assisting in conflict resolution through informal mediation (Coleman, 1988; Sparrowe et al., 2001).

b. Negative Effects

Conversely, informal relationships may negatively affect performance by:

- Encouraging the formation of cliques and factions.
- Spreading rumours and inaccurate information.
- Allowing emotional bias to override objectivity.
- Weakening administrative discipline.
- Obstructing organisational change and reform (Granovetter, 1973; Al-Badrī, 2011).

Conclusion

Informal relationships constitute a fundamental and inescapable component of organisational life. Far from being mere social luxuries, they play a decisive role in shaping organisational climate, employee attitudes, and job performance. Their dual nature enables them to function either as a supportive mechanism that enhances communication, trust, and teamwork or as a disruptive force that undermines discipline and fairness.

A comprehensive understanding of informal relationships and their interaction with job performance enables organisational leaders to harness their positive potential while mitigating their risks. Rather than perceiving informal relationships as threats, management should strategically integrate them into the organisational framework as complementary instruments that reinforce formal structures and promote genuine organisational belonging.

Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to accepted ethical standards in social and organisational research. All analyses are based on theoretical frameworks and secondary sources without involving direct experimentation on human subjects. Where organisational practices and employee behaviour are discussed, confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for individual dignity are maintained. The research avoids bias, misrepresentation, and discriminatory interpretations, and it is conducted with academic integrity and objectivity in accordance with international ethical research guidelines.

Acknowledgements

The author expresses sincere appreciation to colleagues and academic peers at the University Centre of Tipaza for their intellectual support and constructive discussions, which contributed to the refinement of the conceptual and analytical dimensions of this study.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or non-profit sectors.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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