

# Reciprocity or redistribution of resources? The dynamics of friendship, helping and perceived stress at work

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In this paper, I examine the dynamics of friendship, helping and perceived work pressure among employees in different organizational contexts. What is the relative importance of perceived work pressure and the quality of existing relationships (friendship) on receiving and providing help? And to what extent does helping have an impact on perceived work stress for the recipient and for the helper?

The theoretical framework combines relational and situational perspectives on helping. Existing research on interpersonal helping at work has typically taken a relational perspective. Social exchange theory is the dominant framework here. On the other hand, research on friendship norms suggests that helping is often an expected part of friendship relationships (i.e., based on a generalized reciprocity principle, rather than balanced reciprocity as suggested by social exchange theory). By contrast, experimental studies have adopted a situational perspective, focusing on recipients' need for help and potential helpers' ability to help, as well as considering the effectiveness of the help provided. Here, helping is considered a way of redistributing resources (such as time, knowledge, or equipment) from helpers to recipients.

Drawing on both relational and situational perspectives, in this paper I develop and test competing hypotheses using stochastic actor-based modelling. Data on social networks (helping and friendship) and perceived work pressure come from two waves of employee surveys in seven small and medium-sized private and public sector organizations in Finland.

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