

Employees' perceptions of workplace gossip in the hospitality industry

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ABSTRACT

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This study provides insights on gossip related organizational communication in the context of hospitality businesses and reveals the relationship between employees' personal attitude for gossip and their perception of workplace gossip. A quantitative research approach was adopted, and data were collected from 451 hotel employees through the survey. The relationships were examined by using path analyzes through the AMOS program. Findings show that managerial gossip attitude influences perception of workplace gossip dimensions (comparison and exaggeration, fun and entertainment, physical appearance, flow of social-information, managerial, and sublimation). This study differs from similar studies in related field as it examines how employees perceive gossip in the work environment through their individual attitudes towards gossip.

1. Introduction

Effective communication in organizations is a means of successful managerial functioning. Organizational communication includes the spread of information through both formal and informal channels. Both forms of communication may exist simultaneously in any organization. Like formal communication, informal communication plays a crucial role in organizational surviving (Crampton et al., 1998). Both forms of communication contribute to change and different structuring in the organization, hence it is not possible to understand the communication structure in organizations without considering and evaluating both communication channels (Morreale & Shockley-Zalabak, 2015). Previous studies show that more than 75% of communication takes place through informal communication channels (Atak, 2005; Eroğlu, 2005). It can be expressed as one of the most important, effective and fast communication channels in any organization. There may be many different ways of informal organizational communications (Crampton et al., 1998). As a means of informal communication, gossip has been studied in different settings. The consequences have been discussed mainly in the services industries like banks and financial enterprises (Tian et al., 2019; Kuo et al., 2018), hospitals (Ceylan & Çetinkaya, 2020; Altuntaş et al., 2014; Georganta et al., 2014), manufacturing properties

(Kuo et al., 2018), technology enterprises (Yao et al., 2020) and iron and steel industry (Liu et al., 2020a). As a people-intensive industry, hospitality industry is not exempted from this (e.g., Ye et al., 2019; Babalola et al., 2019).

As an important part of communication in organizations, gossip is influential even in the formation of the organizational culture. Therefore, it is studied in the context of different sectors including hospitality. However, the number of studies remains limited (Guo et al., 2022; Ye et al., 2019; Babalola et al., 2019; Aboramadan et al., 2020; Li et al., 2023). Guo et al., (2022) state that in a workplace where people gossip, employee who attach importance to interpersonal relationships may be more sensitive to negative gossip and perform more unethical behaviours in result. Or people may try to rationalize their irrational or unethical behaviour by thinking or asserting that others do it too. Therefore, studying gossip perception and attitude towards gossip can provide useful insights for both practice and literature.

As briefly discussed above, informal communication is inevitable in industries where social interactions are intense; therefore, studying the influences of informal communication in these industries is gaining more and more importance each day. In line with this argument, the review of the related literature has revealed that there is a need for an intensive study to contribute to the current

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Research paper

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knowledge accumulation in this field, particularly to the section of hospitality employees' personal tendency for gossip and their perceptions of workplace gossip. We believe that gossip will exist in any organization where people are served by people. Therefore, it will be useful to understand and find the managerial solutions to manage gossip-related information (Akande & Odewale, 1994). Paine (1967) states that gossip is a powerful tool of communication for anyone who is able to strategically manage it and direct its effects. Similar results were found in studies conducted in Turkey. In the study carried out by Akgunduz et al. (2023), it is seen that negative organizational gossip affects the employees' revenge intentions and blaming others plays a mediating role in this relationship. In another study conducted in Turkey (Ünüvar & Bilge, 2007), it was determined that employees' trust in each other increases more when they do not gossip. Hence, this study aims to provide insights on gossip related organizational communication in the context of hospitality businesses and reveals the relationship between employees' personal attitude for gossip and their perception of workplace gossip.

2. Literature Review

Understanding the Terms: Gossip and Rumour

The terms "gossip" and "rumour" are almost indistinguishable and often used interchangeably among the public and even the academics (Horodowich, 2021; Michelson & Mouly, 2000; Rosnow, 1974), they can be encountered in any place where people exist and generally confused in some cases. The source of gossip and rumour is usually third parties, and in many cases the source and location of the message are not easily known (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007a). On the other hand, some researchers (Cox, 1970; Paine, 1967) define gossip as a cultural tool that the individual uses in line with his/her own interests. DiFonzo and Bordia (2007a) defined gossip as social conversation about individuals in order to have fun, adapt to the group and be a part of the social network, while Noon and Delbridge (1993, p. 25) defined gossip as "conveying valuable information to individuals in the social environment". In other words, gossip is basically the sharing of information amongst individuals about any development, incident, event or even people who are not present at the time. It is defined as informal communication amongst individuals, regardless of whether the message is correct or not (Akande & Odewale, 1994; Michelson & Mouly, 2000; DiFonzo et al., 1994). Focusing on individuals rather than events, Kurland and Pelled (2000) describe gossip as an informal and evaluative talk between no more than a few people about a person which is not present at the time of talk. Although gossip is associated with idle talk and chatter, it is generally believed that every gossip is correct to a limited degree (Mishra, 1990; Michelson & Mouly, 2000).

DiFonzo and Bordia (2007b) define the rumour as "circulating unverified information statements that arise in contexts of uncertainty, danger, or potential threat, and help people make sense of a phenomenon and manage risk". They also point out that the rumours originate from ambiguous, threatening or potentially threatening situational contexts and people's psychological need for facts or security. According to Rosnow, (1988, p. 14) "rumours are hypotheses or unconfirmed propositions, which would imply that the difference between information and rumour is to a high degree a property of the situation in which a communication is considered".

Michelson and Mouly (2000) assert that while both forms of informal communication are based on some hearsay information, rumour generally includes more realistic assumptions than gossip. Gelfert (2018), on the other hand, makes a distinction between these two terms as gossip being social information about other people and rumour not being restricted to social information about other people. He further suggests that gossip is subspecies of rumour, and the latter is more like an umbrella term. While the primary motive of spreading rumour is minimizing uncertainty, gossip is associated with ego satisfaction, entertainment, and strengthening one's own social standing (Horodowich, 2021; Houmanfar & Johnson, 2004; Michelson & Mouly, 2000). Another distinction between gossip and rumour is that gossip is expressed as first-hand information while rumour is referred to as second-hand information (Gelfert, 2018). Horodowich (2021) argues that gossip is more of an intimate talk between two people, and this becomes a rumour when the number of people who talk about the subject grows.

While formal communication is based on chain of command and formal procedures, gossip is more flexible and can basically proceed in four ways (Davis, 1953, p. 45): namely, single strand, gossip, probability and cluster chain (Figure 1). In single strand chain, person A tells any information to person B, then who tells it to person C, and C tells it to person D, and subsequently the information arrives at person F as a way of person to person informal communication. In gossip chain, the source of information, namely person A who tells any information to all the people around him or her. In probability chain, person A tells any information to a few people randomly, and they also tell some other people in the same manner. It is not certain that all the people around will hear about the news since it is based on probability. Lastly, in cluster chain, the source of information tells three people, perhaps one of them tell other two people and the information spreads so on by this way (Davis, 1953, p. 45).

Whatever the purpose is, through gossip and rumour, information can be spread within an organization (internal environment) and to and/or from its external environment. Therefore, understanding the gossip and rumour related

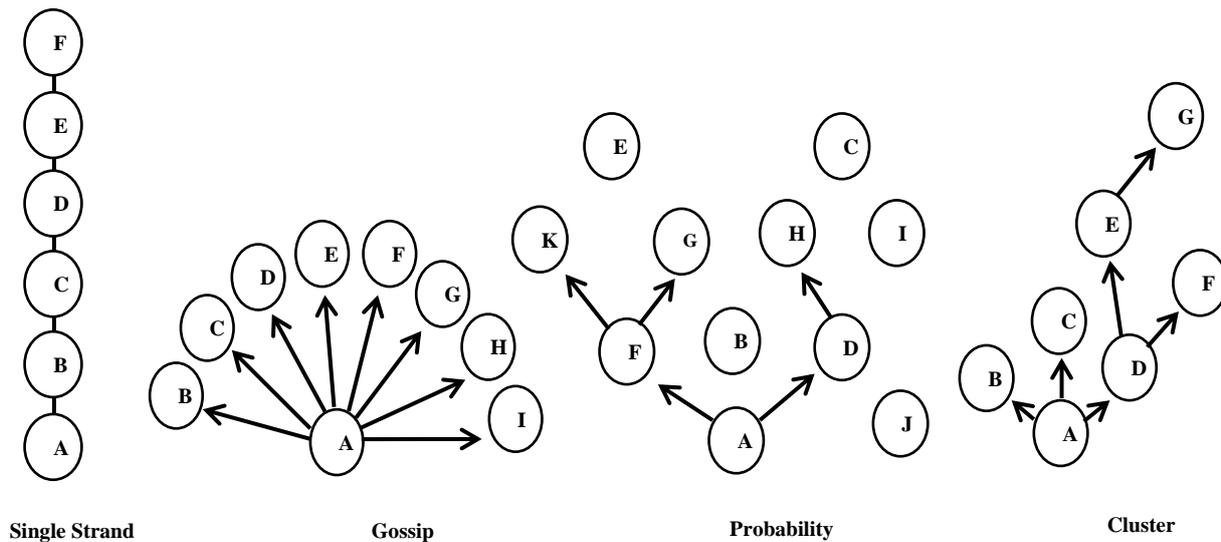


Figure 1. Forms of how gossip spreads

Source: Davis, 1953

issues are very important to manage them for the benefit of the organization.

Perception, attitude, and behaviour

Perception, attitude, and behaviour are important concepts of social psychology. Jain (2014) describes attitude as the way individuals react to what is happening around them. It is defined by Ajzen (1989, p. 241) as “an individuals’ disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event, or to any other discriminable aspect of the individual’s world”. Social psychologists define attitude as individuals’ feelings and beliefs and their reactions (behaviours) to events (Myers, 2010). One of the basic attributions of attributes is that they are subjective in nature; that is, they are subjective evaluations of people about an identifiable object rather than how the object is (Olson & Maio, 2003). Perception is a means for us for understanding the world around us which is comprised of people, events, and objects (Heider, 1958). Social perception is defined as the process we evaluate and comprehend the words and actions of other people (Bordens & Horowitz, 2008). Lastly, behaviour is ultimate actions of people (Hogg & Vaughan, 2017).

Attitudes are thought to have a direct impact on human behaviour (Jain, 2014); however, the empirical evidence regarding the consistency between attitude and behaviour is not robust (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006). This situation is called as attitude-behaviour consistency and it is a long-standing controversial issue in the relevant literature (e.g., Allport, 1935; Fazio & Zanna, 1978; Zanna et al., 1980; Fazio & Zanna, 1981; Armitage & Christian, 2003; Taylor et al., 2005). Early research on the subject presumed that knowing attitudes of a person is the key to predict his/her behaviour (Fazio & Zanna, 1981; Armitage & Christian, 2003). Fazio (1986) stated that behaviour is determined by the individual’s perceptions of the situation in the first

place and therefore, behaviour is largely a result of individual’s perception and definition of the object or situation. However, this thought was compelled by some other research. It has been asserted that there are situations where attitudes predict behaviour as well as the situations they do not (Myers, 2010). In other words, it has been asserted that attitudes need to have some certain attributes to be able to predict ones’ future behaviour. Stable attitudes and attitudes formed on an experience are expressed to be the better determinants of behaviour (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006; Taylor et al., 2005). Similarly, Fazio and Zanna (1981) concluded that attitudes that were formed on a previous experience have a significant role in shaping the future behaviour. It was also stated that attitudes better predict behaviour when they are high in stability, certainty, and affective-cognitive consistency (Kraus, 1995; Fazio, 1989; Olson & Maio, 2003). Fazio (1989) discussed that attitudes lead to behaviour when they are easily accessible in the human memory. One other factor that is thought to manipulate attitude-behaviour consistency is ambivalence (Olson & Maio, 2003). Ambivalent attitudes are thought to be less predictive of human behaviour. Besides accessibility and ambivalence, Hogg and Vaughan (2017) add that factors like to what degree individuals talk about their attitudes publicly and to what degree they identify an attitude with a group also affect the predictability of behaviours through one’s attitudes.

On the other hand, three-component model assumes that a person’s attitude toward an object is positive when s/he has positive feelings, beliefs, and behaviours toward it, and vice versa (Olson & Maio, 2003). Kraus (1995) pointed out that attitudes are determinants of our future behaviour in a significant and substantial way. Hogg and Vaughan (2017) state that attitudes may offer clues to predicts someone’s behaviour and if we can change attitudes, we may have chance to change behaviours. In another study, it was concluded that contrary to the popular belief that our

behaviours are always on purpose and planned, we might not always be aware about many of the determinants of our behaviour (Ferguson & Bargh, 2004). Looking from a behavioural point of view, Olson and Maio (2003) indicated that certain types of behaviour are more predictable from individuals' attitudes than other types. To illustrate, some behaviours are shaped as a result of external influences like social norms or social pressure rather than the volitional control of the individual. They further stated that the controllability and difficulty of behaviour have an impact on the interaction between the attitude-behaviour relation.

Another related concept, perceptions, is expressed to serve as the antecedents of behavioural responding to the events (Dijksterhuis & Bargh, 2001). It was also stated that attitudes have a role in the formation of perceptions about events and objects and determining individuals' definitions of these (Fazio, 1986). Expanding social behaviour model, Bordens and Horowitz (2008) posit that individual characteristics and input from social situation together form social cognition and perception which eventually lead to overt social behaviour. Rosenberg and Hovland (1960, as cited in Manstead, 1996, p. 5) articulate by means of three-component model that attitudes lead to a set of three responses, namely, affective, cognitive, and behavioural. Affective responses refer to verbal statements of attitudes while cognitive responses refer to perceptual responses, and behavioural responses refer to overt actions of people.

Gossip in organizational setting

In the organizational context, researchers have mostly focused on negative workplace gossip. For example, it was found that negative gossip in organizations is directed at individuals who have lesser number of friends in the workplace (Ellwardt et al., 2012a). Perceived negative gossip in organizations was found to have a negative impact on employees' self-esteem and organizational citizenship behaviour (Wu et al., 2018a), proactive service performance (Tian et al., 2019), service performance and organizational identification (Ye et al., 2019), employee behaviour (Kong, 2018), productivity of employees and profitability of firms (DiFonzo et al., 1994) and psychological well-being (Tan et al., 2021). It was reported that negative workplace gossip promotes knowledge hiding behaviour among employees (Yao et al., 2020) and creates emotional exhaustion which in turn has a negative influence on creativity of employees (Liu et al., 2020a). Perceived negative gossip in organizations was noted to create negative mood which again has an impact on the service performance of employees (Babalola et al., 2019). Perceived negative workplace gossip was also found to affect proactive behaviour negatively particularly for more traditional people (Wu et al., 2018b). In the context of bullying and mobbing, gossip can be used as a means of applying oppression, dominance, social pressure, expressing envy, degrading the subject and as an attempt to increase or decrease the power distance among

employees (Pheko, 2018). Malicious gossip can create a hostile working environment for people who are the victims of gossip and who are exposed to it (Grosser et al., 2012). It was also discussed that gossip is partly negatively correlated with team viability and inclusion in the team (Beersma et al., 2019).

Perceived negative workplace gossip has more adverse effect in terms of psychological distress on highly neurotic employees (Liu et al., 2020b). Conducting a study on observers of gossip, Zhou et al. (2021) concluded that observers of gossip who have high levels of just world belief are reluctant to provide support for the victims of malicious gossip and they can develop a negative attitude towards the victims after witnessing such events. Using cognitive-dissonance theory, it was concluded in a study that people involving in negative workplace gossip would experience a dissonance arising from their misbehaviour (gossiping) and their cognition (Zou et al., 2020). It was also reported that the context of gossip is rather in-group members rather than out-group members and high social status in organizations gives individuals the privilege of not being the subject of any negative gossip (Ellwardt et al., 2012a).

Gossip has been largely regarded as a deviant behaviour in the context of organizational research (Brady et al., 2017). However, as Baumeister et al. (2004) suggest if researchers keep regarding gossip as a purely evil phenomenon, they may underestimate the potential benefits of it. Tan et al. (2021) suggest that gossip in organizations can function both as a beneficial and detrimental communication tool. Therefore, it can be expressed as a phenomenon which may induce both benefits and drawbacks for any organization.

Gossip occurs in organizations for many reasons. As mentioned earlier, information is transmitted at an incredible speed through informal channels compared to formal communication channels. In addition, gossip has a complementary or supportive role in formal communication channels (Mishra, 1990). Individuals can better understand their social environment by means of gossip (Michelson & Mouly, 2000). People want to know about the developments that are emerging around them. In some cases, being knowledgeable with the current events makes people feel good and strong. Especially during the times of change like restructuring, mergers, acquisitions and downsizing, communication through informal channels will increase if employees are not informed through official channels (Dodig-Crnkovic & Anokhina, 2008). Ambiguous and complex situations create discomfort and insecurity as their consequences and effects are unpredictable. Gossip gives insight to individuals by explaining such uncertain situations, therefore relieves anxiety in a sense (DiFonzo et al., 1994). On the one hand gossip may reduce stress and provide information transfer about new situations; on the other hand, it may also increase and spread uneasiness (Dodig-Crnkovic & Anokhina, 2008).

The entertaining and stress relieving roles of gossip was also reported in previous studies (Mishra, 1990; Michelson & Mouly, 2000; Beersma et al., 2019). Peng et al. (2015) argued that people are somehow amused by hearing positive gossip about themselves and negative gossip about others, particularly the celebrities in the context of their study. When it comes to gossip at work, gossip about managers is one of the things that come to mind. As the current literature proves employees are more likely to gossip about their managers when they have issues of trust, distant relationship, and are seldom in touch with managers (Ellwardt et al., 2012c) In the organizational context, gossip is also expressed as a way for individuals to acquire information that can help them compare themselves with others (Michelson & Mouly, 2000). It can be embarrassing and risky for an individual to compare his/her abilities and position clearly with others'; therefore, gossip is a way of acquiring such information. All gossip involves social comparison and therefore, gossip can be a way for individuals to compare themselves with others (Wert & Salovey, 2004). Moreover, gossip contributes to the structuring of the organizational identity and maintaining group norms and social order (Noon & Delbridge, 1993; Beersma et al., 2019). Organizational rules, values, business traditions and history are also communicated among the employees through gossip. Other functions of gossip in organizations are obtaining information, being influential among others, unburdening oneself to someone, interpersonal aggression, forging closer ties with colleagues, fostering cooperation, increasing sense of control, efficacy and self, and communicating emotions (Grosser et al., 2012; Beersma et al., 2019; Waddington, 2005; Watson, 2011).

There is also some empirical research about the characteristics of gossipmongers. Although gossip is generally associated with women (Levin & Arluke, 1985), the literature offers some opposite evidence. Watson (2012) noted that the relationship between gossip and friendship is stronger for males compared to females and quality of friendship is expressed to be positively related with tendency to gossip for males. High-frequency gossipers, particularly those who always talk about negative events, are not perceived as socially powerful by other people (Farley, 2011), and they are not perceived as trustworthy and confidential friends as they have the impression that they are not sensitive about the personal information of people (Ellwardt et al., 2012b).

Based on theoretical background given above and the studies from which the scale items are derived the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1. Hotel employees' personal attitude for gossip has a positive influence on their comparison and exaggeration perception of workplace gossip.

Hypothesis 2. Hotel employees' personal attitude for gossip has a positive influence on their fun and entertainment perception of workplace gossip.

Hypothesis 3. Hotel employees' personal attitude for gossip has a positive influence on their physical appearance perception of workplace gossip.

Hypothesis 4. Hotel employees' personal attitude for gossip has a positive influence on their flow of social-information perception of workplace gossip.

Hypothesis 5. Hotel employees' personal attitude for gossip has a positive influence on their managerial perception of workplace gossip.

Hypothesis 6. Hotel employees' personal attitude for gossip has a positive influence on their sublimation perception of workplace gossip.

3. Methodology

Based on the current literature (Nevo et al., 1993; Litman & Pezzo, 2005) and the opinions gathered from the related academic circles through e-mail-based communication, a self-administered survey tool was developed to collect data from hotel employees. The survey tool has been divided into three sections: the first section includes demographics and work-related individual respondent features; the second focuses on respondents' gossip perceptions and attitudes; and the last section deals with respondents' workplace gossip perceptions.

Scale items first were gathered from the related literature (Chandra & Robinson, 2009; Wu et al., 2018a) and was sent to 110 academicians as an e-mail attachment in January 2019 requesting them to evaluate and indicate the appropriateness of each item with the purpose of research and suggest more, if any. 14 academicians replied to the e-mail in the first round. A reminding e-mail was sent to remaining 96 academicians after two weeks and 10 more replies were received, making a total of 24 feedbacks. A pilot test was conducted with 30 hotel employees working in 3- and 4-star hotels in the Region of Cappadocia to measure the content validity. Although the Cappadocia Region is geographically known as a region consisting of Nevşehir, Kayseri, Niğde, Aksaray and Kırşehir provinces (Yılmaz, 2015), Ürgüp, Uçhisar, Avanos, Göreme, Derinkuyu and Kaymaklı districts of Nevşehir are generally referred by the name Cappadocia (Türkeş, 2005). Final version of the scale was formed composing 40 items in total both the second and the third sections of the survey tool.

The study was conducted with the hotel employees working in 3-, 4-, and 5- star hotels located in some of the prominent tourism destinations in Türkiye (Nevşehir, Kayseri, Antalya, Muğla, İstanbul, Samsun and İzmir) between March 10, 2019, and March 30, 2019. Since the authors cannot reach a list of all hotel employees and therefore not every one of them has equal chance to participate in the research, hence convenience sampling, which is one of the non-probability sampling techniques, was adopted. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) state that a sample consisting of 384 people would be sufficient no

matter the size of the universe of a study is. Starting from this, a sample of 400 participants was aimed to be reached. With the assumption that there might be incomplete or invalid questionnaires, hence the authors aimed to reach to a sample size of 480. Researchers had the opportunity to contact the owners or general managers of the accommodation establishments while administering the questionnaires. Friends of friends and relatives were instrumental in initiating the contacts. This is an effective method of conducting research in a culture where such personal requests are difficult to decline. The surveys were conducted face to face with the hotel employees working in the Region of Cappadocia. The remaining surveys were sent to the participants in other cities by either ordinary mail or e-mail. A total of 451 valid responses were gathered.

4. Analysis

The data were analyzed in four steps. First, descriptive statistics were applied to define the sample profile. Then, explanatory factor analysis was applied to determine the dimensions of the perception of workplace gossip. Varimax was used as the rotation technique. The criteria suggested by Hair et al. (2006) as (a) having a factor load of .50 and above and (b) having eigenvalues of 1.0 and above were adopted for this study. Thirdly, confirmatory factor analysis was applied to examine the dimensions. The goodness of fit values suggested by Byrne (2010) and Hu and Bentler (1999) were considered in the confirmatory factor analysis. Finally, path analysis was applied via AMOS program to determine the effect of independent

variable on dependent variables. The findings were analyzed in terms of theory and practice.

5. Results

Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample

The socio-demographic characteristics and occupational status of the participants are shown in Table 1. The gender distribution points out that male participants (64.1%) are considerably higher than female participants (35.9%). Most of the participants are between 18-39 ages and they are mostly primary, secondary school graduates or have undergraduate degree. 58.2% of the participants received a vocational training and mostly worked in housekeeping (25.1%) and kitchen (17.7%) departments. Finally, more than half of the participants have been working in the sector for 0-5 years (58%) and most of them have been working in their existing businesses for 0-3 years (76.9%).

Refinement of the scale

In this study, explanatory factor analysis (EFA) was applied to the data set to determine the underlying constructs of perception of workplace gossip and managerial gossip attitude and the expressions defining these constructs. In order to conduct EFA, Principal Component Analysis, with varimax rotation, was employed. In the study, expressions with eigenvalues above one, factor load below .50 (low communalities), loaded on both factors and factor loads less than .10 were excluded from the analysis. The perception of workplace

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender (N = 449)	Female	161	35.9
	Male	288	64.1
Age (N = 426)	18-28	180	42.3
	29-39	157	36.9
	40 and above	89	20.9
	Primary and secondary	120	26.8
Education (N = 448)	High school	148	33
	Associate degree	74	16.5
	Undergraduate and above	105	23.4
	Other	1	.2
Vocational education (N = 421)	Yes	245	58.2
	No	176	41.8
Department (N = 451)	Front office	57	12.6
	Kitchen	80	17.7
	Restaurant	75	16.6
	Housekeeping	113	25.1
	Accounting	29	6.4
	Human resources and sales and marketing	35	7.8
	Other	62	13.7
Term of employment in the sector (N = 439)	0-2 years	134	30
	3-5 years	123	28.0
	6-8 years	61	13.9
	9-11 years	66	15
	12 years and above	55	12.5
Term of employment in the operation (N = 436)	0-1 years	169	38.8
	2-3 years	166	38.1
	4-5 years	69	15.8
	6 years and above	32	7.3

Source: By author

Table 2. Perception of workplace gossip

Constructs	Factor loadings	Means	Variance explained (%)	Cronbach's alpha
Comparison and exaggeration			18.72	.913
22. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work exaggerate what they hear from others and pass it on to others.	.749	3.28		
23. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work overdraw topics by bending truths.	.743	3.22		
24. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work gossip by comparing their working conditions with those of rival businesses around us.	.641	3.25		
21. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work talk about managers.	.632	3.27		
12. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work talk about other people's financial gains.	.630	3.35		
Fun and entertainment			16.35	.894
1. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work like to talk about other people.	.823	3.32		
2. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work like to learn about what is happening in other people's lives.	.801	3.35		
3. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work think gossiping is a good way to spend time.	.673	3.15		
5. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work surely share everything they hear with others.	.585	3.20		
Physical appearance			13.12	.887
8. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work talk about the physical appearance of other people.	.800	3.16		
9. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work comment on other people's appearance after social events.	.741	3.13		
7. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work talk about male-female relationships.	.634	3.22		
Flow of social-information			11.38	.841
14. Some of my co-workers in the department where I work contribute to conversations with interesting information while chatting about people.	.728	3.26		
15. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work talk about the problems other people have at work.	.675	3.25		
13. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work gossip about other people's achievements (performances) in their jobs.	.591	3.30		
Managerial			10.22	.845
27. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work evaluate the distinctive behavior of our managers in their business and private lives with their other friends and families.	.822	3.11		
26. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work evaluate the decisions (positive and negative) made by our managers with other colleagues and their families.	.800	3.28		
Sublimation			10.06	.804
19. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work read biographies of celebrities.	.817	3.19		
20. Some of my colleagues in the department where I work tell interesting details about other people's lives.	.701	3.19		

Total variance explained: 79.88%; KMO: .951; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 6719.741 (.000)

Source: By authors

Table 3. Managerial gossip attitude

Constructs	Factor loadings	Means	Variance explained (%)	Cronbach's alpha
Managerial gossip attitude			78.79	.729
14. I evaluate the decisions (positive and negative) of my managers with my friends and family.	.888	3.48		
15. I evaluate the distinctive behavior of our managers in their business and private lives with my friends and family.	.888	2.94		

Total variance explained: 78.79%; KMO: .500; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 180.747 (.000)

Source: By authors

gossip scale, which was 27 statements at the beginning, dropped to 19 statements after EFA. Managerial gossip attitude scale, which was 3 statements, was reduced to 2 statements after the EFA. As a result, six factor that explain 79.88% of the variance were obtained for scale of perception of workplace gossip. These dimensions are named as “comparison and exaggeration”, “fun and entertainment”, physical appearance”, flow of social information”, “managerial”, “sublimation”. The Cronbach’s α coefficients of the dimensions vary between .804 and .913 (Table 2). According to Nunnally (1978) and Hair et al. (1998), these values are at an acceptable level. On the other hand, the managerial gossip attitude scale has a one-dimensional structure consisting of two expressions. The total explained variance of this scale is 78.79%. The Cronbach's α coefficient value of the expressions in the scale is .729 and this value is also in the acceptable range (Table 3).

Finally, VIF (variance inflation factor) values are examined to understand whether there is a multicollinearity between variables. Since VIF values for all variables are less than five (range 1.04 - 4.36), it shows that there is no multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2011).

Research model analysis

Two-stage analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between research variables. First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to evaluate the measurement model. Afterwards, because the scale expressions were compiled from different studies, structural equation modeling was performed via the AMOS program to test the research model (Hair et al., 2014). The goodness-of-fit indices belong to reflective measurement model are shown in Table 4. These values are in the acceptable range according to Hu and Bentler (1999) and Byrne (2010). Factor loadings (FL) and average variance extracted (AVE) values were used to evaluate the convergent validity of the measurement model. As seen in Table 5, all factor loads are .67 and above and exceed the value of .60 as recommended (Albayrak et al., 2020). The AVE values of the measurement model are between .593 and .916. In addition to FL, AVE values above .50 indicate that convergent validity is provided. To assess discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE value for each construct and the correlations between constructs were compared. As can be seen in detail in Table 6, the fact that the square roots of the AVE values for each structure are

higher than the inter-construct correlations support discriminant validity.

Table 5. Measurement model results

Construct	Items	FL	AVE	CR
Comparison and exaggeration	I22	.87	.686	.916
	I23	.88		
	I24	.83		
	I21	.74		
	I12	.79		
Fun and entertainment	I1	.81	.683	.896
	I2	.85		
	I3	.84		
	I5	.78		
Physical appearance	I8	.86	.728	.889
	I9	.85		
	I7	.83		
Flow of social information	I14	.75	.641	.843
	I15	.83		
	I13	.81		
Managerial	I27	.84	.733	.846
	I26	.87		
Sublimation	I19	.77	.678	.808
	I20	.87		
	I10	.87		
Managerial gossip attitude	IM14	.67	.593	.742
	IM15	.85		

FL: Standardized factor loading; AVE: Average variance extracted; CR: Construct reliability

Source: By authors

Table 6. Discriminant validity of the constructs

Construct	CE	FE	PA	FSI	M	S	MG A
Comparison and exaggeration (CE)	.828						
Fun and entertainment (FE)	.819	.826					
Physical appearance (PA)	.784	.798	.853				
Flow of social information (FSI)	.875	.772	.806	.801			
Managerial (M)	.719	.637	.633	.740	.856		
Sublimation (S)	.750	.642	.758	.739	.469	.824	
Managerial gossip attitude (MGA)	.253	.313	.286	.336	.325	.293	.770

Source: By authors

In this study, after testing the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model was tested to determine whether the hypotheses were supported or not. Goodness-of-fit values for the structural model are shown in Table 7.

Table 4. Model fit indices for measurement model

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	SRMR	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	NFI	IFI	CFI
Measurement model	532.332	168	3.169	.035	.895	.856	.069	.925	.648	.947

Source: Hu and Bentler (1999) and Byrne (2010).

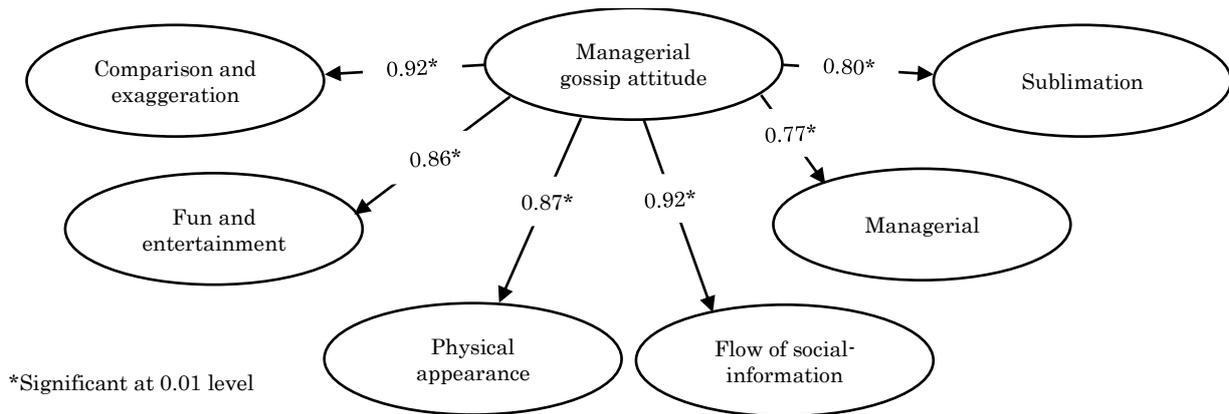


Figure 2. Hypothesized model with path estimates (Standard path coefficient)

Source: By authors

Table 7. Model fit indices for structural model (hypothesized model)

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	SRMR	GFI	IFI	CFI
Measurement model	740.306	183	4.04	.0524	.867	.920	.916

Source: By authors

These values are in the acceptable range according to Hu and Bentler (1999) and Byrne (2010).

Path coefficients (β) and significance levels were used to test the hypotheses. As seen in Figure 2, the path coefficients from managerial gossip attitude to comparison and exaggeration ($\beta=.93$), fun and entertainment ($\beta=.86$), physical appearance ($\beta=.87$), flow of social-information ($\beta=.93$), managerial ($\beta=.77$) and sublimation ($\beta=.81$) are significant and positive. In this case, all 6 hypotheses in the study are accepted.

6. Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between employees’ managerial gossip attitude and their perception of workplace gossip using data collected from 451 employees working in 3-4 and 5-star accommodation establishments. The relationships examined within the scope of the research were analyzed using path analyzes through the AMOS program. The findings of this study support that the managerial individual gossip attitude has a significant and positive effect on comparison and exaggeration.

Theoretical implications

This study outlines valuable insights on employees’ managerial gossip attitude and perception of workplace gossip and sheds light on the existing body of knowledge. As the results show, the positive attitude of the employees towards gossiping about managerial issues increases their perception that other employees in the workplace also gossip for comparison and exaggeration purposes. However, in a study conducted on restaurant employees (Ugwu et al., 2022), it was determined that when employees experience job-related motivation loss due to negativities caused by customers, they focus on work by

means of positive gossip spread by managers. This finding underlines that when an employee’s attitude towards gossiping on managerial issues increases, s/he sees those around him/her as prone to gossip.

Secondly, the positive attitude of employees to gossip about managerial issues also affects their perception that their co-workers also gossip for entertainment purposes. In other words, when employees are willing to gossip about managerial issues, they feel that their co-workers also gossip for fun. In the related literature, it is stated that negative workplace gossip will trigger a negative mood, and this will have a negative impact on service performance (Babalola et al., 2019). As a result of this study, it is understood that gossip can also be done for a pursuit of fun and entertainment, and it may meet this need. Although gossip is perceived as an evil behavior, it can be thought that when it is at a manageable level and does not harm any people, employees can have more fun at work.

Another finding in this study is that the positive thoughts of the employees towards gossiping about managerial issues have an effect on the tendency of other employees in the workplace to gossip about physical appearances. More specifically, when employees tend to gossip about managers, they think that other employees also gossip about physical appearances of people. Similarly, as stated in the relevant literature, negative workplace perception has an impact on moral disengagement and moral disengagement has an impact on unethical employee behaviors (Guo et al., 2022). Therefore, it can be said that as an employee’s attitude towards gossiping on managerial issues increases in a positive manner, it may create some unethical problems such normalizing other people’s gossip behavior about physical appearances and relationships of other people.

Another contribution of this study to the related literature is that the attitude of the employees towards gossiping on managerial issues have an impact on their thought that other employees gossip for the purpose of social information flow. Therefore, an employee's tendency to gossip triggers him/her to think that other employees are also gossiping in order to exchange information. It is known that some negative behaviors in the workplace can cause a decrease in employees' commitment to work, but the friendly environment in the workplace prevents employees from quitting (Ugwu et al., 2022). By combining this information, it can be interpreted that when the employees gossip due to the social information flow in the workplace, their friendship will improve and thus their loyalty to the business will increase. In some cases, the manager's transmission of information through gossip, as opposed to directly conveying information to all employees, may allow this information to be more widely adopted and disseminated.

The fifth important finding is that the positive attitude of the employees to gossip about managerial issues has an effect on their thinking that other employees also gossip about managerial issues. Similarly, in the study conducted by Ugwu et al. (2022) it was determined that when an employee encounters a negative situation in the workplace, positive gossip about the employee initiated by the manager and the presence of a positive working environment in the workplace motivates employees. Therefore, if managers are tolerant of a certain degree of harmless gossip and sometimes initiate a motivating flow of information, both the relationship between the employees can be improved and loyalty to work can be achieved. Of course, this may cause a certain disorder in the enterprise. Therefore, it should be handled very sensitively. The more managers allow gossip about themselves, the lonelier they can be. In other words, the more employees gossip about managers and management, the more they can unite against the management, and they can even affect negatively those who have positive thought or are neutral. In this case, it can be quite difficult for managers to gather their employees for a specific purpose.

Practical implications

The research findings of the present study offer a number of useful outcomes for practitioners in forming their strategies about workplace. Firstly, in this study, it is determined that positive attitude of the employees towards gossiping about managerial issues increases their perception that other employees in the workplace also gossip for comparison and exaggeration purposes.

Although gossip may strengthen the bond between employees, it may not be possible to stop the spread after a while and may make it difficult for the manager to achieve the goals within the business. In addition, it is possible for employees to think that their colleagues are also gossiping because they have an attitude towards gossiping on

managerial issues. Secondly, positive thoughts of the employees towards gossiping about managerial issues have been identified as having an influence on tendency of other employees in the workplace to gossip about physical appearances. Although gossip increases the connection of employees with each other, gossiping about personal issues like this may cause the loss of other people working in the business and create a hostile work environment. At the same time, gossip about such personal matters may cause the employees to not see themselves as a part of the business and withdraw into himself/herself. For this reason, managers and business owners can identify the source of gossip in such cases and deter such unethical behaviors with some penalties.

Another finding of this study is that the attitude of the employees towards gossiping on managerial issues have an impact on their thinking that other employees gossip for the purpose of social information flow. For this reason, a subject that is desired to be transferred to accommodation businesses can be spread by a manager in the form of word of mouth. In other words, the information that needs to be conveyed can be transferred better if a manager provides information to employee A, employee A to employee B, and employee B to employee C. In some cases, employees can disseminate confidential information obtained from their colleagues more quickly and effectively within the organization compared to an official source of information. The other important finding of this study is that positive attitude of the employees to gossip about managerial issues has an effect on their thinking that other employees also gossip about managerial issues. From this point of view, it can be suggested to business managers to break this gossip cycle when they think that their employees are gossiping about each other. Otherwise, the spread of gossip within the business may create disorder within the business. Therefore, managers must either ensure that this gossip is at minimal level to manage or deter this gossip and future gossip with some penalties.

Limitations and future research

As in many studies, there are some limitations in this study and these limitations also serve as a guide for future research. First, in this study, data were collected from accommodation business employees. As it is known, in a special issue such as gossip, the density of people with whom employees work is very important. Therefore, this study on gossip attitudes and perceptions can be repeated in businesses that have fewer employees working together at the same time, such as food and beverage operations, transportation operations and entertainment operations. On the other hand, since this study was carried out only in Türkiye, it may cause some cultural misconceptions. In other words, employee behaviors in this regard can be examined and compared in societies with different cultures rather than a feminine and collectivist society with a high-power distance (Hofstede, 2021). In this study, the relationship between the attitude towards gossip and the

perception of gossip in the workplace was examined. Future research can examine the tendencies of gossip among different departments of accommodation establishments, attitudes towards gossip in different gender and age groups, and workplace gossip perceptions in different positions.

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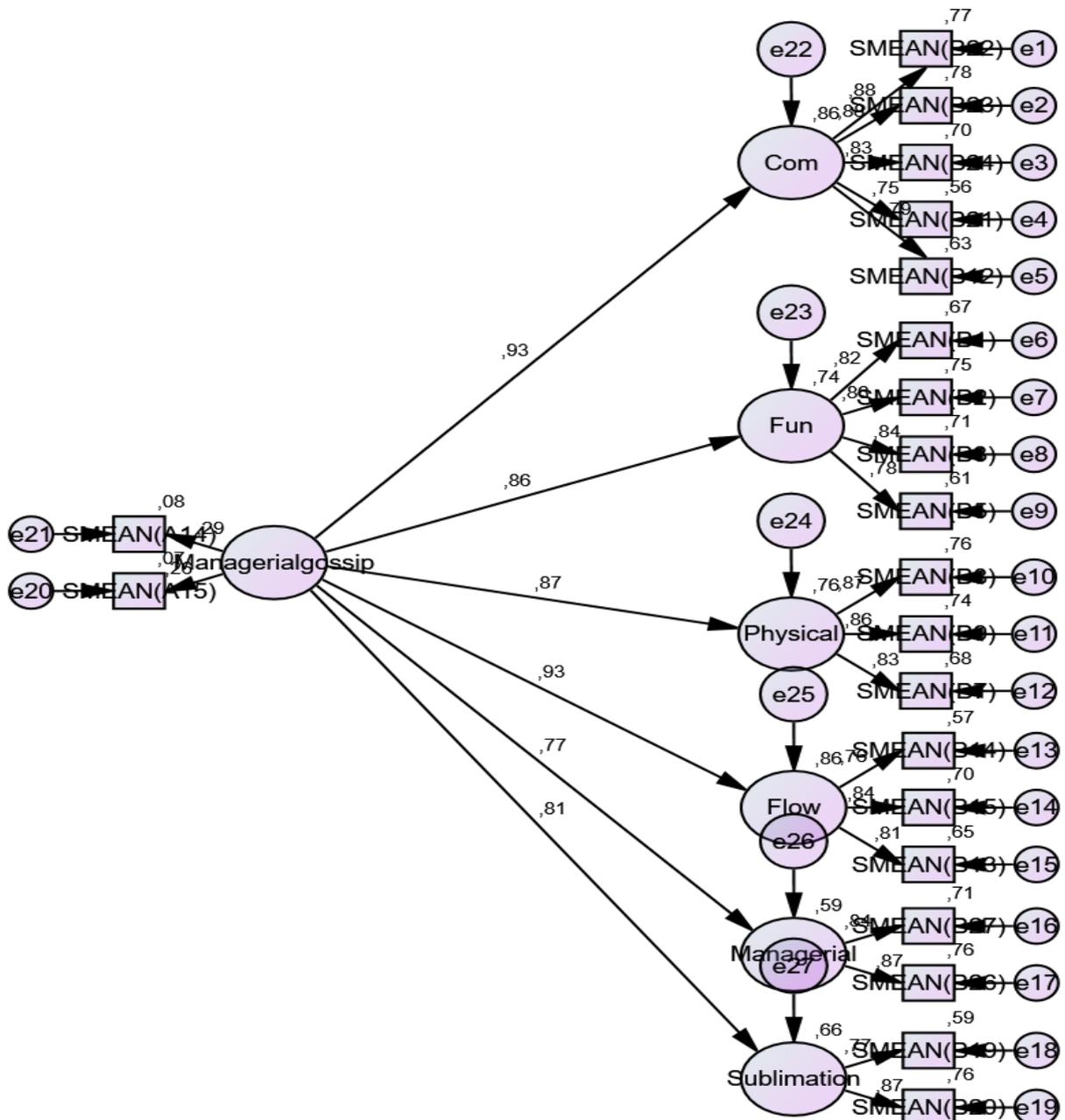
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Appendix: Justification of structural model



INFO PAGEEmployees' perceptions of workplace gossip in **the** hospitality industry**Abstract**

This study provides insights on gossip related organizational communication in the context of hospitality businesses and reveals the relationship between employees' personal attitude for gossip and their perception of workplace gossip. A quantitative research approach was adopted, and data were collected from 451 hotel employees through the survey. The relationships were examined by using path analyzes through the AMOS program. Findings show that managerial gossip attitude influences perception of workplace gossip dimensions (comparison and exaggeration, fun and entertainment, physical appearance, flow of social-information, managerial, and sublimation). This study differs from similar studies in related field as it examines how employees perceive gossip in the work environment through their individual attitudes towards gossip.

Keywords: Gossip, Informal communication, Workplace gossip, Employee perception.

Authors

Full Name	Author contribution roles	Contribution rate
Kurtuluş Karamustafa:	Conceptualism, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Resources, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing	25%
Pembe Ülker:	Conceptualism, Methodology, Software, Formal Analysis, Resources, Writing - Original Draft	25%
Mustafa Ülker:	Conceptualism, Methodology, Software, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Resources, Writing - Original Draft	25%
Mehmet Umur:	Conceptualism, Methodology, Software, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Resources, Writing - Original Draft	25%

Author statement: Author(s) declare(s) that All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. **Declaration of Conflicting Interests:** The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article

This paper does not required ethics committee report

Justification: This research was conducted before January 1, 2020. For this reason, it is exempt from "ULAKBİM TRDizin" criterion.