Relationship of Gossips Culture, Perceived Organizational Support and Workplace Ostracism among Corporate Employees in Universities

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Abstract: This research paper focuses on the relationship between gossip culture, perceived organizational support, and workplace ostracism among corporate employees in universities. Gossip, an informal communication process, can be both a social bonding activity and a source of psychological distress when it is motivated by envy and competition. In universities, where corporate employees are often employed in a hierarchical and limited resource setting, negative gossip may exacerbate feelings of exclusion. This paper explores the relationship between the spread of gossip, and how perceived organizational support (POS) can buffer the negative consequences of gossip on employee relationships and psychological well-being. Through non-probability purposive sampling of 107 corporate employees with an age range of 21-54 years (M=29.36, SD=5.49) were taken to conduct this research. The Gossips Culture, Perceived Organizational support and Ostracism Experience Scale was used to assess the sample. The Pearson Moment Correlation, Multiple Linear Regression and Independent Sample test was used to test the hypotheses. The result showed positive relationship between gossip and ostracism. This study also indicated the Additionally, this paper examines workplace ostracism as a severe consequence of a toxic gossip culture, resulting in decreased morale, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. This research paper employs a quantitative method to gain insights into the psychological processes that underlie employee interactions in universities.

Key Words: Gossips Culture, Perceived Organizational Support, Workplace Ostracism, Employees

Introduction

Employees experience interpersonal dynamics and informal social processes even within the organizational set up, especially in modern day corporate set ups embedded within universities. In these types of workplaces, social interactions are common, working relationships are very close, and there are constant performance comparisons. Although these conditions can contribute to teamwork and sharing of information, they can also contribute to the negative interpersonal conditions like gossip, rivalry, social support perceived deprivation and ostracism in the workplace. These experiences have significant consequences on the psychological health, attitudes, as well as behavior of the employees and are thus a key area of research in the field of Industrial/Organizational (I/O) Psychology (Shaharuddin et al., 2022; Kuo et al., 2018).

Gossip at work is one of the most common types of informal communication in companies. It entails critical talks concerning missing persons and is typically done out of the structure of the formal organization. In spite of the fact that gossip can have a functional use in certain situations, e.g. information exchange or social bond, studies always show that negative gossip may hurt trust, destroy the relationships between people and even lead to social exclusion. Gossip may have a considerable implication on the workplace climate and how employees perceive fairness and inclusion in

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structured corporate entities in the university, where hierarchical relations and power dynamics hold true (Kuo et al., 2018; Shaharuddin et al., 2022).

Perceived organizational support (POS) is the belief of the employees regarding the degree to which their organization appreciates their efforts and also is concerned about their well-being. One such important socioemotional resource is POS, which influences the nature of workplace interpretation and reaction on the part of employees. Positive attitudes and resiliency in the presence of stressor are linked to high perceptions of support, and the opposite of this, namely, low perceived support and high negative effects of negative interpersonal interactions may make the person more vulnerable to exclusion and disengagement (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Drake Van Egdom et al., 1986).

Ostracism or even being thought to be being sidelined, locked out, or even avoided by other people at the workplace is a form of interpersonal abuse that goes unnoticed but is hazardous. Ostracism has become a menace to some of the fundamental psychological needs such as belongingness and self-esteem that leads to emotional distress and poor performance at the workplace. The corporate university is also prone to ostracism in an indirect manifestation in gossips or social comparison processes or absence of organizational support, in this case, it is hardly possible to trace and act on the matter (Ferris et al., 2008).

Because the culture of gossip, perceived organization support, and workplace ostracism have very close associations there is the necessity to explore these constructs in an interactive manner (Mao et al., 2017). The present study will be geared towards the analysis of the relationships between gossip culture, perceived organizational support and workplace ostracism among corporate employees working in university. The proposed study will contribute to a more in-depth examination of negative interpersonal processes in the workplace based on a well-established set of measurement tools and available empirical findings (Shaharuddin et al.,2022).

Workplace gossip has mostly been defined as the critical communication concerning the third party who is not present and who has taken place in an organizational set up. It is one of the most significant informal means of communication that shapes social norms, the vision of people towards each other, and power relationships at their workplace. Theorized gossip engagement as a measurable variable that indicates how well employees are engaged in gossips related activities and determined that gossip plays a dominant role in influencing relationship and climate development at the workplace (Shaharuddin et al., 2022).

The studies have indicated that gossip might be particularly damaging in case such is a negative or malicious gossip. It has been described that negative gossip is associated with a lower amount of trust, an increase in the interpersonal feud and reputational harm caused to the affected individuals. The impacts of gossip are further amplified by the fact that gossip by supervisors is linked to ugly employee behaviors including emotional exhaustion and social alienation that adds to the impact of gossip on cultivating bad working environments. These may be understandable in a corporate university where supervisors with a lot of power in career promotion and thus promoting ostracizing relationships are not uncommon (Shaharuddin et al., 2022; Kuo et al., 2018).

Whereas earlier studies have considered gossip, perceived organizational support, and workplace ostracism separately, there are limited studies that found out the combined effect of the four variables in corporate university contexts. By combining these constructs, I become able to know the negative interpersonal dynamics in the work environment in a more comprehensive way. Relying on the social comparison theory, organizational support theory, and study on the informal communication, the current study fills this gap by exploring the relationship between gossip culture and the potential of perceived organizational support to suppress these relationships. This integrative approach can be a useful source of information when it comes to organizational interventions to facilitate ethical communication, supportive leadership, and inclusive work environments (Shaharuddin et al., 2022; Kuo et al., 2018).

Objectives
- To find out the relationship between workplace gossip and ostracism.
- To find out the gender differences of workplace ostracism.

▶ To find out the negative predictor of workplace ostracism.

Hypotheses
▶ There is likely to be a positive relationship between gossip culture and workplace ostracism among employees in university.
▶ Perceived Organizational Support is the negative predictor of workplace ostracism.
▶ There is likely to be a negative relationship of perceived organizational support with gossip culture and workplace ostracism among employees in university.
▶ Females are more likely to be a victim of workplace ostracism than males.

Methodology

Sample and Sampling Strategy
Non-probability purposive Sampling technique was used to collect the data. The sample calculated from was 114 but the sample was taken from 114 employees who were working permanently in the corporate sector of university. The interns, contract based, temporary and the people who had night shift were excluded from this research after screening the sample size became 107 (N= Males= 56, Females= 51) age ranging from 25 to 54 years (M=29.36, SD= 5.498).

Assessment Measures
Following were the assessment measures used in this study.

Demographic Questionnaire
Demographics include details such as age, gender, education, designation, department, work shift, job status, employment type, tenure, work schedule etc. were asked from the employees of corporate offices in university.

Gossips Culture
The Revised Gossips Function Questionnaire (RGFQ) developed by Meltem in 2024 was used as gossip culture. This scale was useful in research for social, organizational, and developmental psychologists who are interested in how and when gossip comes about, and how it affects individuals, groups, and organizations and the employees. This is a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree". The scale has internal consistency of (α=.84)

Perceived Organizational Support
The Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) developed by Eisenberger in 1986 was used as perceived organizational support of the employees. This scale was rated on 7-point likert scale ranging from 1 to 7 "Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree". The scale has internal consistency of (α=.94)

Workplace Ostracism Scale
The Ostracism Experience Scale (OES) developed by Adrienne Carter was designed to assess an individual's perceptions of being ignored by or excluded from the social group. This scale was rated on 7-point likert scale ranging from "1 to 7" Hardly ever to Almost always". This scale has the internal consistency of (α=.98)

Statistical Analysis
The IBM-SPSS Statistics 25 version was used to carry out the analysis. Outliers and missing data were dealt. Firstly, preliminary analysis was performed and normality analysis was carried out to check if the data was normally distributed. Cronbach's alpha was calculated. In the main analysis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Multiple Linear Regression and Independent Sample t-test was used in the study.

Results

Table 1

Using Pearson Moment Correlation Analysis Sample to Calculate Relationship Gossips Culture, Perceived Organizational Support and Workplace Ostracism (N=107).

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. Gossips Culture	26.73	11.13	--	-.565**	.372**	-.550**
2. Perceived Organizational Support	18.32	10.19			--	-.167
3. Workplace Ostracism	35.08	18.64				--

Note: *M*= Mean, *SD*=Standard Deviation, **p ≤ 0.01

Table 2 indicated the correlations between the study variables. Gossips Culture had positive correlations with Workplace Ostracism. Although Workplace ostracism had positive correlations with gossips culture. Perceived Organizational support exhibited a negative correlation with all the variables. It had negative correlations with Gossips Culture, and Workplace Ostracism among the employees in the university.

Table 2

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting, Gossips Culture, Perceived Organizational Support (N=107).

Variables	*Workplace Ostracism*		
	B	β	*SE*
Constant	5.74		5.43
Gossip Culture	-.144	-.086	.121
Perceived Organizational Support	-.142	-.078	.109
R²	.83		

Note:B=Unstandardized Co-efficient, β = Standardized Regression Co-efficient, *SE*= Standard Error, R^2 = Co-efficient of Determination*** *p* <.001

The table indicated that gossip culture, perceived organizational support predict workplace ostracism to be a significant extent through a multiple linear regression analysis (N=107). The model showed that there is a large amount of variance in workplace ostracism that is explained by the model, R^2 =.83), On the other hand, there were weak negative relationships between gossip culture and perceived organizational support and the ostracism (.086 and.078 respectively). All in all, 83 per cent of the variance of workplace ostracism was attributed to the predictors in the case of the university employees.

Table 3

Independent Sample t-test Determining Gender Differences of Gossips Culture, Perceived Organizational Support (N=107).

Variables	Male (N=56)		Female (N=51)		*t(105)*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
1. Gossip Culture	28.17	10.02	25.15	11.97	1.409	.16	0.27
2. Perceived Organizational Support	20.39	9.88	16.05	10.14	2.237	.02	0.43
3. Workplace Ostracism	31.87	18.23	38.60	18.63	-1.88	.06	0.37

Note: M= Mean, *SD*= Standard Deviation, *t*=Value of difference, *df* = Degree of freedom, *p*= significance, *Cohen's d* =effect size

It indicated significant mean differenced of gossips culture with *t* (105) =1.40, *p* .16>.05. Results showed that males exhibit greater score on gossips culture (*M* = 28.17, *SD* = 10.02) as compared to females (*M* = 25.15, *SD* = 11.97). The value of Cohen's *d* was 0.29 (<0.50) which shows small effect size.

It showed non-significant mean differenced of perceived organizational support with $t(105) = 2.23$, p .02 $<$ .05. Results showed that males exhibit greater score on perceived organizational support ($M = 20.39$, $SD = 9.88$) as compared to females ($M = 16.05$, $SD = 10.14$). The value of Cohen's d was 0.43 ($<$ 0.50) which shows small effect size.

There were significant mean differences of workplace ostracism $t(105) = -1.88$, p .06 $>$ .05. The result showed that the females exhibit higher scores on workplace ostracism ($M = 38.60$, $SD = 18.63$) as compared to males ($M = 31.87$, $SD = 18.23$). The value of Cohen's d was 0.37 ($<$ 0.50) which indicates small effect size.

Discussion

The study showed the significant gender differences between males and females. The females were more likely to be ostracized in the workplace. The result was aligned with the previous studies. There was a slight but statistically significant correlation between gender and ostracism; men are more likely than women to report experiencing it. This unexpected discovery contradicts more general theories about the relationship between gender and mistreatment, which suggest that women are more likely to be victims of ostracism. It's likely that role- based feminine traits like, nurturing, lead to women being mistreated more at work but being shunned less, while generally masculine traits, such aggression led to men being mistreated but being shunned more (Cortina et al., 2008 & 2013; Pratto, 1999).

Social dominance theory has been used to understand how privileges and responsibilities are commonly allocated unequally across arbitrary set of groups and how certain groups and individuals may extend and act on their desires for group-based dominance and inequality. It was showed that the females were more likely to be the victim of the ostracism. The females have low power due to gender discrimination that leads them towards ostracism (Pratto et al., 2006; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

The results of the current research point to the fact that gossip culture has a considerable relationship with workplace ostracism in corporate employees in universities, which implies that negative informal communication may play a role in the development of the sense of exclusion and social rejection in the organizational context. This finding is in line with earlier studies that highlight the fact that gossip is not just an innocent conversation, but a potent social process that determines the climate at the workplace, interpersonal trust, and inclusion of employees (Shaharuddin et al., 2022).

Moreover, perceived organizational support was found to have negative relationship with gossip and workplace ostracism, and this indicates its importance as a key socioemotional resource in organizations. In line with the idea of organizational support, when employees feel that support and appreciation is offered, then they will not tend to perceive interactions in the workplace as a threatening and isolating event. This indicates that POS can compensate the employees of the ill effects of the toxic gossip culture through the advancement of psychological safety and belonging. (Eisenberger et al., 1986)

The originality of the current study is that it is concerned with the topic of corporate employees that are integrated in the context of universities, which is still underrepresented in the body of literature on mistreatment at workplaces. The study fills a significant gap by offering a combination of gossip culture, POS, and ostracism into one framework and provides practical implications on interventions in organizations. To minimize the hostility and exclusion by gossip, the universities and corporate departments must promote supportive leadership, ethics communication, and employee well-being programs. (Ferris et al., 2008)

Overall, the females are more likely to be affected by the ostracism. Organizational support is the negative predictor of the workplace ostracism. If the organizational support and the emotional intelligent training given to the employees then it can reduce the negative emotions. The training of peer support and the organizational workshops should be given to the employees so that the universities can become safe place for the employees who are working.

Implications

The implications of this study were given below.

- ▶ The employees should be given the training of peer support, good communication, collaboration and mutual respect instead of competition and conflict.
- ▶ The HR department should conduct regular surveys to assess the mental well-being of the employees.
- ▶ The organization should provide training on creating a sense of belongingness of employees with each other and the organization.
- ▶ The organizations should give regular training to employees on how to cope with stress and psychological issues.
- ▶ The organization should give emotional intelligence training to the employees so that they don't feel excluded and manage their emotions properly.
- ▶ The employees should be given the training of conflict management instead of being envious of each other.

Conclusion

This study indicated that the gossips culture can lead the university corporate employees towards the workplace ostracism. The lack of organizational support can affect the mental well-being of the employees. The study concludes that a negative gossip culture in university workplaces, is a major contributor to workplace ostracism and poor interpersonal relationships among corporate employees. These actions lead to feelings of being left out, lack of trust, and negative impacts on the psychological well-being of employees. But having high perceived organizational support is a crucial buffer that mitigates the negative impacts of gossip. When employees feel valued and supported, they are less likely to be involved in negative gossip and are more resilient to experiences of ostracism.

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