

Demographic Differences in Workplace gossiping behaviour in Organizations-An Empirical Study on Employees in SMEs

Dr. Vijayalakshmi Kanteti

Professor & Principal, St Xaviers P.G.College, Gopanpally, Hyderabad . Mobile No: 9346935235
.E.mail:principal@stxavierspgcollege.com

Abstract

Workplace gossip is the most common phenomenon around the world. The present study contributes to the body of knowledge in the area of work place gossiping behaviour by examining the link between demographic variables and the gossiping behaviour. The paper is based on survey of the employees of Small and Medium Scale Enterprise (SMEs) in Ranga Reddy district of Telangana State in India. A sample of 130 respondents was selected using convenience sampling method. Data was collected using self-designed questionnaire administered at the work place. Data analysis is based on the use of percentages, independent sample *t* test and chi square test to study the differences in attitudes towards gossiping using SPSS version 16.0. Results indicate that the means of the demographic characteristics were significantly different from each other as well as the theme of gossiping as per the demographic differences. The findings help in controlling gossiping behaviour through a policy change in organizations suiting to the demographical characteristics. Future studies should examine the causes of work place gossiping in organizations and measures to control these behaviours.

Keywords: work place Gossip, Demographic differences, theme of gossiping, SMEs

1. Introduction:

Gossip is a basic process in everyday life, and it is not surprising that gossip provides us with information to cope with the world and people around us. While gossip is denounced publicly, its useful role in socializing, informing, and entertaining, raises the question of whether there are individual differences in people's private attitudes about gossip. Gossip is commonly referred to as "the exchange of personal information (negative or positive) in an evaluative way (negative or positive) about absent third parties" (Foster, 2004, p 83).

2. Review of literature:

Management research surrounding gossip is scant (Hafen, 2004; Kurland & Pelled, 2000; Noon & Delbridge, 1993). Houmanfar and Johnson (2004) notice that employees gossip in order to gain information, influence others, and socialize in the organization. Farley, Timme, and Hart (2010) investigated perceptions of female gossipers in workplace and found that high gossipers were perceived as having a greater

need to exert control of others than low gossipers and high gossipers were perceived as less emotionally warm than low gossipers. According to research conducted in the Netherlands by Massar et al. (2012), gossip about physical appearance and sexual reputation are the focal elements of the evolutionary value of gossip. Research by Wilson, Wylczinski, Wells and

Weiser, (2002) shows that those who engage in gossip are generally disliked, especially when their motives are seen as self serving. Shermer (2004) opined that People were interested in gossiping about the activities of others which increases their inclusiveness. This included all types of choices and their outcomes, giving an opportunity to observe life of others and to identify different winner or loser strategies. The favorite themes of gossip are norm violations (betrayal, cheating, aggression, and violence.), sex, social status and standing, births and deaths, political and religious commitments, physical and psychological health, and various nuances of human relationships. Research has shown that people devote approximately 65% of their

Demographic Differences in Workplace gossiping behaviour in Organizations-An Empirical Study on Employees in SMEs

speaking time to social topics, with only marginal variation among age, gender and cultures (Dunbar 2004) and that upto two thirds of all conversations refer to third parties.

3. Problem Statement

The occurrence of gossiping behaviour is pervasive in organisations and hence there is more need to focus upon more empirical work in this area especially with respect to the characteristics of demography of employees. Also Workplace gossip can create tension and disruption in a workplace, can undermine productivity and can cause irreparable damage. It can hurt morale and can also focus employees away from their more important responsibilities. Therefore it is important to first identify the various themes of gossiping in work place based on demographical characteristics. Accordingly, the current paper explores the relation between demographics and gossiping behavior, because no organisation can have the luxury to entertain gossiping behaviour in the work place given the cost associated with such behaviours

4. Objectives of the study

The main objectives of this study are as given below:

1. To identify the various themes of work place gossiping behaviour
2. To explore the relationship between various demographic variables like gender, age, marital status and job level and work place gossiping behaviour.
3. To understand the differences in the theme of gossiping based on demographical characteristics.

For fulfilling the objectives of the study the following four hypotheses were formulated:

- H1. Work Place gossiping behaviour of males will not be significantly different from that of female.
- H2. There is no significant relationship between Age and Workplace Gossiping behaviour.
- H4: There is no significant relationship between marital status and work place gossiping behaviour.

6.2 Theme of work place gossiping:

H3. There is no significant relationship between Job level and Workplace Gossiping behaviour.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study is designed as descriptive in nature since it attempts to obtain a complete and accurate description of situation. Primary data for this study was collected by preparing a well structured questionnaire consisting of closed ended questions. A survey study of 130 employees of small and medium scale enterprises in Ranga Reddy District, Telangana Region selected through the use of convenience sampling method for a period of 45 days.

5.2 Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 16.0. The data file was uploaded into SPSS 16.0, and the variables were categorized as nominal, ordinal scale as appropriate. In addition, the variables were labelled appropriately to make the SPSS output easier to interpret. This study utilized such technique as descriptive statistics, chi-square test and independent sample t-test to investigate the relationships between the various demographic variables as independent variables with workplace gossiping behavior as dependent variable.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Demographic profile of respondents:

The samples were defined with the intent to identify the relationship between gossiping behaviour and demographical characteristics. Out of these 130 respondents, 55 were male respondents (42.3 %) and 75 were female respondents (57.6 %). The employees were divided into two age groups i.e. 76 respondents (58.4 %) fall between 25-40 years, and 54 respondents (41.53%) fall between 41 and 55 years. 81 respondents (62.3%) were single and 49 respondents (37.6%) were married. 81 respondents (62.3%) were executives, 49 respondents (37.6 %) of total respondents fell into the category of Managerial level..

Demographic Differences in Workplace gossiping behaviour in Organizations-An Empirical Study on Employees in SMEs

Table 1: showing the descriptive statistics on theme of work place gossiping behaviour

S.No.	Work place gossiping behaviour		
	Theme	N	Percent
1.	Personal issues of others	39	30
2.	Health issues	13	10
3.	Work related issues	18	13.8
4.	Family issues	12	9.2
5.	Social issues	12	9.2
6.	Self projection issues	31	23.8
7.	Management issues	5	3.8
Total		130	100

Source: primary data

39 respondents (30%) agreed that the theme of gossip is Personal issues of others, while 13 respondents (10%) opined that they usually engage in gossip on health issues, 18 respondents

(13.8%) gossip on work related issues, 12 respondents (9.2%) were mostly on family issues, while 12 respondents (9.2%) on social issues, 31 respondents (23.8%) on self projection issues and the remaining 5 respondents (3.8%) were on Management issues.

Table 2: chi square test showing the association between demographic variables and opinion on Theme of work place Gossip:

Opinion on theme of work place gossip	Gender	Age	Marital status	Job level
a) Chi-Square	12.373	31.782	30.787	28.441
b)Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.054	.000	.000	.000

Source: primay data

Table 2 shows the association among all the demographic characteristics like gender, age, marital status, job level and the theme of work place gossip with the chi-square values being statistically significant with a p-value less than .05. From the above table, it is clearly seen that the theme of gossiping behavior is not same across the demographical characteristics and there is a significant difference.

6.3 Relationship between work place gossiping behaviour of employees and Demographic variables

An independent sample t -test was computed to test the mean differences regarding the facets of work place gossiping. The findings indicate that there is a significant mean difference between the demographic characteristics with respect to all the facets of work place gossiping behavior.

Table 3 :showing the group statistics and independent sample t test results of the respondents

Group statistics					t-test for Equality of Means		Hypotheses
Gender	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error of Mean	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Female	75	4.00	2.371	.274	2.024	.045	Rejected
Male	55	3.16	2.267	.306			

Demographic Differences in Workplace gossiping behaviour in Organizations-An Empirical Study on Employees in SMEs

Age							
25 to 40 yrs	76	3.26	2.205	.253	-2.233	.027	Rejected
41 to 55yrs	54	4.19	2.473	.337			
Marital status							
Single	81	3.27	2.258	.251	-2.372	.019	Rejected
Married	49	4.27	2.405	.344			
Job level							
Executive	81	3.17	2.246	.250	-3.038	.003	Rejected
Managerial	49	4.43	2.345	.335			

Source: Primary data

In order to test the hypotheses formed in this study, the data obtained from the respondents was fed in the SPSS 16.0 and independent-samples t test was applied between the demographical variables and dependent variable i.e work place gossiping behaviour. The results obtained by it are shown in Table 1. Since, there is difference between the Means of all the demographical variables at 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference, the value of t is less at $p= 0.05$ hence it can be concluded that Work place gossiping behaviour is not same across the demographical characteristics of the respondents. Women gossip more compared to men, employees in the age of 41-55 years, married employees, and managerial level employees gossip as compared to their counterparts as per the findings. Hence the hypotheses set are rejected.

7. Limitations/Scope

Few employees were afraid of being criticized and embarrassed to answer few of the questions. Sample selection is based on convenience sample which does not allow generalisation of the findings to the larger population of employees. The study does not estimate the opportunity cost of gossiping in the work place. The present paper does not examine the causes of gossiping.

8. Conclusion

Gossiping at work place is one of the most common issues encountered in different

organizations today. There are various issues that make up the theme of the gossip like personal issues of others, health issues, Management issues, work related issues, social issues, family issues, and self boasting issues are some of the common themes. Since the results above show that there are significant differences between the type of gender, age-group and other demographic variables with respect to the gossiping behaviour in general and also differences between the themes that makes up the gossiping at work place. It can be concluded that Work place gossiping behaviour is not same across the demographical characteristics of the respondents. Women gossip more compared to men, employees in the age of 41-55 years, married employees, and managerial level employees gossip as compared to their counterparts as per the findings. Hence, the organizations can think about some solutions and measures to be taken to control the gossiping behaviour depending upon the demographic characteristic of the employees.

References

1. Farley, S.D., Timme, D.R., & Hart, J.W. (2010). On coffee talk and break -room chatter: Perceptions of women who gossip in the workplace .Journal of Social Psychology, 150 (4), 361- 368.
2. Foster, E. K. (2003). Researching gossip with social network analysis. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA

Demographic Differences in Workplace gossiping behaviour in Organizations-An Empirical Study on Employees in SMEs

3. Hafen S. (2004). 'Organizational gossip: A revolving door of regulation and resistance'. Southern Communication Journal, 69: 223–240.
4. Houmanfar, R. and Johnson, R. (2004), Organizational Implications of Gossip and Rumor, Journal of Organizational Behavior Management, Volume: 23 Issue: 2/3
5. <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/gossip-affects-bottom-line-business-43818.html>
6. <http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/employeerelations/articles/pages/office-gossip-policies.aspx>
7. <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/variety/offices-can-benefit-from-good-gossip/article4174227.ece>
8. Shermer, M (2004), The Science of Good & Evil: Why People Cheat, Gossip, Care, Share, and Follow the Golden Rule, Times Books.
9. Wilson, D. S., Wilczynski, C., Wells, A., & Weiser, L. (2000). Gossip and other aspects of language as group-level adaptations. In C. Heyes & L. Huber (Eds.), Evolution and cognition (pp. 347–365). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.