

Workplace gossip can benefit employees and employers: Study

December 13 2023



Some workplace gossip could reduce the likelihood of employee turnover and, as a result, potentially boost an organization's effectiveness, according to new research from Binghamton University. Credit: Binghamton University, State University of New York

New research from Binghamton University, State University of New York shows how some workplace gossip could reduce the likelihood of employee turnover and, as a result, potentially boost an organization's effectiveness.

"Organizations should be aware of the impact of positive [gossip](#) because turnover can be a very important factor in dictating an organization's success," said Jinhee Moon, a doctoral student at the Binghamton University School of Management who conducted the study with a team of other researchers.

"To make employees participate in positive gossip, the organization should do the right things by treating their employees well, and being aware their behaviors can show they care about their employees."

While studies linked to [workplace](#) gossip aren't new, Moon's work builds upon previous research by exploring how employees who gossip might experience social gains. Moon [previously worked on a study](#) that dealt with why people participate in gossipy behavior at their workplace, and the recent publication is connected to her own leadership research focus at SOM, which centers on [interpersonal relationships](#) and social networks.

For the recent study, Moon and fellow researchers surveyed 338 [health workers](#) in South Korea on positive and negative forms of workplace gossip related to their organizations and management. Some of the topics included:

- "At work, I sometimes complain about my organization when management is absent."
- "If I feel treated badly by management, I talk about this to my colleagues."
- "I sometimes praise my organization's capability when the

management is absent."

Moon said the research showed gossip is viewed as more valuable when people positively talk about their [management](#) or organization. Health workers who participated in the survey expressed more interest in information they could use to enhance or maintain their organizational status.

The study also indicated no relationship between negative gossip and coercive power in the workplace, which Moon said proved contrary to what researchers had expected.

"We expected that if you participate in negative gossip, maybe you're trying to appear powerful or controlling or want to 'beat someone up,' but we couldn't find any supportive results," Moon said. "If anything, we found that people didn't value that type of gossip as information and just saw it as someone who wants to complain. So, if you're thinking about negative workplace gossip, you might want to save your time because there's no positive impact for you."

But one of the most helpful aspects of the research, as Moon saw it, was how it highlighted that participating in positive gossip among one's coworkers could reduce the chances of voluntary [employee](#) turnover.

"It can be very hard just to quit your job, and if you're experiencing difficulty where you work, maybe you want to participate in positive gossip with your colleagues and talk about some of the more bearable aspects of the organization," Moon said. "Eventually, that can help you gain some personal power. It's a very convenient way to reduce [negative feelings](#) toward your own workplace, which can help you more in the long run."

More information: [How Does Workplace Gossip Benefit Gossip](#)

Actors? The Impact of Workplace Gossip on Power and Voluntary Turnover, *Group & Organization Management* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/105960112312037](https://doi.org/10.1177/105960112312037)

Provided by Binghamton University

Citation: Workplace gossip can benefit employees and employers: Study (2023, December 13) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-12-workplace-gossip-benefit-employees-employers.html>

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