

When Gossip Helps or Harms: Workplace Gossip, Rumination, and Well-being

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Abstract

An increasing number of organisations have recognised that focusing on the well-being of their employees is a crucial factor for maintaining their competitiveness and sustainability. The sense of well-being among employees is influenced by both individual and organisational factors. One such individual factor is the extent to which an employee ruminates about work-related issues. We can distinguish between positive and negative topics and events in terms of rumination. Rumination can significantly impact our well-being because it makes it difficult to detach one's self psychologically from work. On the organisational side, workplace gossip can have a substantial effect on employees' well-being. Organisational gossip can also be categorised based on its impact: positive and negative gossip. But what kind of relationship can be observed among these three factors among Hungarian employees? Results indicate that positive workplace gossip has both a direct and an indirect effect on employee well-being through positive rumination, whereas the hypothesised mediation model for negative gossip was not supported.

Keywords

work, well-being, workplace gossip, positive work rumination, negative work rumination

1 Introduction

The connections between workplace well-being, gossip, and rumination are complex and have been extensively studied in various psychological and organisational research. Workplace well-being is often measured by employees' overall satisfaction, mental and physical health, and positive relationship with the work environment (Danna and Griffin, 1999). Gossip, although often seen in a negative light, is a form of workplace communication that can help build relationships among employees and shape organisational culture (Michelson and Mouly, 2000). However, the negative effects of gossip, such as loss of trust and conflicts, can significantly impact workplace well-being (Kurland and Pelled, 2000). Rumination, which involves the repetitive and passive focus on negative thoughts, is also a critical factor in workplace well-being. Rumination increases stress and anxiety, potentially reducing employees' well-being and performance (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008). There is also a close relationship between gossip and rumination: hearing or spreading gossip can increase rumination, especially when the gossip is personal or negative (Beersma and Van Kleef, 2011).

In summary, workplace well-being, gossip, and rumination are interconnected phenomena that together determine employees' overall satisfaction and mental health. Although numerous studies have been conducted on workplace gossip and work-related ruminations separately, little is known about how social information related to gossip becomes internalised cognitively through reflection and how this process affects employee well-being. Even less is known about how this looks in the case of Hungarian employees. In Section 1.1, we would like to clarify the concepts used in our research and their relationships.

1.1 Well-being

There is no consensus among different authors regarding the concept of well-being. Various types of well-being can be discussed: subjective, psychological, economic, mental, social, workplace, or even environmental well-being. These terms are often used interchangeably. Psychological well-being is influenced by mental health, behaviour, and individual beliefs (Deutsch et al., 2015). Economic well-being depends on our income and financial situation (Deutsch et al., 2015),

while environmental well-being refers to the environment in which we live and work (Kotler and Keller, 2012). An individual's macroenvironment is influenced by external environmental forces that are beyond the individual's control and can only be adapted to, not influenced, such as climate changes (Rehdanz and Maddison, 2005) and changes in the economic environment (unemployment rate, inflation) (Winkelmann and Winkelmann, 1998).

The most relevant model for the research is Seligman's (2011) PERMA model, which breaks down well-being into five components: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. The combined presence of these elements ensures a state of well-being. This is also a multidimensional model, as it encompasses the individual's subjective experiences (e.g., emotions), the individual's activity (e.g., how actively they seek and form relationships, strive for a meaningful life, and aim to achieve), and their balanced relationship with the environment (e.g., whether they receive feedback and have a supportive environment) (Deutsch et al., 2015).

In the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011), work-related well-being is also included, as the pursuit of results and success is typically experienced through one's work. Work has a positive impact on an individual's sense of well-being (Waddell and Burton, 2006), and since people spend a significant portion of their day at work, it is crucial to prioritise workplace well-being.

Workplace well-being is the individual's sense of well-being derived from their emotional relationship with their work and work activities (Page, 2005), or their satisfaction with external and/or internal work values (Kun, 2010). Examples include a stress-free work environment, recognition of performance, job satisfaction, and relationships with colleagues. Warr (1987) interpreted well-being in the context of work and defined it in three dimensions: autonomy characteristic of the job, workplace demands, and workplace social support. Beyond formal job characteristics and organisational policies (Seligman, 2011; Warr, 1987), employees' well-being is continuously influenced by informal social interactions that structure daily work experiences. One such interaction is workplace gossip.

1.2 Gossip

Gossiping is one of the behaviours that connects people, thereby influencing their sense of well-being. It involves the sharing of information about an absent third party, which includes some form of judgment (Brady et al., 2017). Gossip is inextricably linked to the group. Group learning

is less costly than individual learning, which also applies to gossip (De Backer and Gurven, 2006). Through gossip, a group can express and sustain its shared values and beliefs. It provides the opportunity for the group to manage internal conflicts (Noon and Delbridge, 1993). For group members, it is crucial to know the state and thoughts of other members, increasing their chances of asserting their own interests (Szvetelszky, 2011). The roles of intimacy and trust are significant in gossip; therefore, researchers interpret it as a form of acceptance. According to Merry (1984), the closer the relationship between the gossiping parties, the stronger the judgment that may be expressed in the gossip, indicating a higher level of intimacy/trust. In this way, gossip can serve as an indicator of the closeness of relationships, create new ones, and reshape existing ones (Császi, 2002; Merry, 1984).

People spend an average of 65% of their work time gossiping (Ye et al., 2019), and 95% of employees participate in gossiping on average (Grosser et al., 2012). Gossip is not only about individuals but also about the organisation and the group (Michelson and Mouly, 2002). Employees' gossip about the organisation spreads not only within the workplace environment but also among their acquaintances, friends, and family members. Additionally, the corporate gossip environment includes gossip about customers, suppliers, and competitors, meaning workplace gossip extends beyond the organisation (Szvetelszky, 2011).

DiFonzo and Bordia (2000) divided corporate gossip into external and internal dimensions: the external dimension includes the organisation's reputation, economic situation, and stock market position, while the internal dimension pertains to personnel changes, security, and workplace satisfaction. In the literature, a typical distinction is made between "good gossip" and "bad gossip". Bad gossip is harmful, malicious, and induces uncertainty within the organisation, whereas good gossip helps strengthen group cohesion and supports organisational goals (de Gouveia et al., 2005). Szvetelszky (2011), however, suggests that it is more appropriate to treat gossip as a value-changing phenomenon.

Workplace gossip can be categorised into two groups based on its impact: positive and negative gossip (Ellwardt et al., 2012). Positive workplace gossip involves behaviour where positive information is shared about an absent third person, including positive judgments (Foster, 2004). This can involve recognition and praise for the person's work, attitude, and performance (Wang et al., 2022). It typically refers to some normative behaviour or positive reputation

that can influence the discussed employee's attitude and behaviour (Brady et al., 2017). In contrast, negative gossip involves the transmission of negative information within the organisation, containing judgments about an absent member of the organisation (Chandra and Robinson, 2009; de Gouveia et al., 2005; Wu et al., 2016).

1.2.1 The impact of workplace gossip on well-being

According to the social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), people's behaviour and attitudes are significantly influenced by their social and environmental context. People decide which attitudes and behaviours to adopt based on their processing and interpretation of specific social information. Those who participate in gossip interpret and evaluate the social signals they receive during gossip and then shape their behaviour, attitudes, and emotions at work accordingly (Kuo et al., 2020). Positive workplace gossip positively influences people's mental health, while negative workplace gossip negatively affects it (Cheng et al., 2022). Employees who receive more positive social signals experience more positive emotions, leading to better mental health (Llorens et al., 2007). Conversely, those exposed to more negative social signals experience more negative emotions, feel more burdened by their work, and are more likely to experience stress and depression, resulting in poorer mental health and well-being (Darr and Johns, 2008; Tan et al., 2021).

Negative workplace gossip leads to social undermining (Kong, 2018) and contributes to a more negative workplace atmosphere. It is also important to note that gossip is closely linked to mobbing behaviour. In their research on workplace harassment, Zapf et al. (2011) identified seven dimensions of mobbing behaviour, one of which is spreading gossip about the victim. The research further distinguished between direct and indirect manifestations of aggression, with gossip being classified as indirect aggression. Gossip in such behaviour tends to have fewer topic variations, poorer content, and is characterised by intentionality compared to naturally occurring gossip (Szvetelszky, 2011).

Those subjected to a lot of negative gossip at work find it harder to trust others and cooperate with colleagues (Aquino and Thau, 2009), which can reduce their workplace performance and satisfaction (Greengard, 2001; Michelson and Mouly, 2000). The invasion of privacy experienced by the targets of gossip can generate negative feelings, such as confusion and shame. Under such circumstances, the employee may be forced to spend a significant amount of time and energy clarifying negative

gossip, which involves physical and psychological pressure (Chandra and Robinson, 2009; Duffy et al., 2002).

In contrast, positive workplace gossip can help individuals effectively cope with workplace uncertainty by alleviating workplace unrest (Jiang et al., 2019). Positive workplace gossip can also enhance employees' organisational identity and lead to more organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB) (Ye et al., 2019). Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) involves employees voluntarily taking on extra tasks without expecting any rewards, characterised by three main factors: the behaviour is voluntary, involves taking on tasks beyond job descriptions, and contributes to organisational effectiveness (Organ, 1988). Recognition and praise for employees' capabilities, attitudes, and performance create a positive work environment and foster close interpersonal relationships among employees, leading to a more positive evaluation of the organisation and themselves, and thus higher job satisfaction (Wang et al., 2022). Positive gossip can improve the workplace atmosphere and reduce the pressure employees feel to perform (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978).

A study of nurses found that conversations beyond work, especially gossiping about patients and colleagues, had a stress-reducing effect on the subjects (Waddington, 2005). Furthermore, it was found that gossip can enhance self-awareness and support the experience of emotional control. Thus, researchers suggest that gossip can reduce stress and may be related to coping mechanisms through seeking support and discussing events (Szakács, 2008).

Workplace gossip psychological impact extends well beyond the immediate social interaction. Gossip-related information often remains cognitively salient after the interaction has ended, influencing how individuals interpret social relationships, evaluate their own status, and anticipate future workplace dynamics (Beersma and Van Kleef, 2011; Foster, 2004). In this sense, gossip represents not only a communicative act but also a trigger for ongoing cognitive and emotional processing.

1.3 Rumination

Rumination is a critical conceptual link for understanding how gossip experiences are transformed and another factor that can affect people's well-being. But first, it is important to account for what we mean by rumination. Rumination is a cognitive thinking style where a person gets stuck in thinking about their own problems and depressive symptoms. This thinking style is self-focused, repetitive, inflexible, and has a negative focus (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991).

Martin and Tesser (2006) later defined rumination as conscious repetitive thoughts that revolve around a specific theme and occur without any environmental triggers. They suggested that rumination can be considered a coping mechanism. Watkins (2008) further developed the theory, claiming that rumination can have positive outcomes depending on the events, thoughts, and experiences that are the focus of the ruminative thoughts.

Although rumination can vary situationally, researchers generally interpret it as an individual characteristic or variable (Kuo et al., 2012; Treynor et al., 2003), indicating how prone a person is to ruminate. Those who ruminate often do so with the aim of better understanding the problem they are facing, trying to comprehend what is causing their negative mood, expecting that this will improve their mood and make them feel better. However, during rumination, the opposite usually occurs, as thinking about negative events increases negative mood (Lyubomirsky and Nolen-Hoeksema, 1995).

Workplace rumination involves thoughts, experiences, and emotions related to work. Frone (2015) distinguishes between positive and negative workplace rumination: negative workplace rumination refers to being preoccupied with work, with thoughts revolving around negative workplace experiences and events repeatedly during and outside of work hours. Conversely, positive workplace rumination refers to being preoccupied with work, with thoughts revolving around positive workplace experiences and events repeatedly during work hours and outside of work (Frone, 2015).

Establishing a clear conceptual distinction between gossip and rumination is essential. Gossip is inherently an interpersonal phenomenon, as it always involves communication about an absent third party within a social context and does not have an intrapsychic form. In contrast, rumination primarily operates at the intrapsychic level and refers to repetitive cognitive processing of emotionally salient experiences (Beck et al., 1987). While gossip originates in social interaction, its psychological impact emerges when gossip-related information is internalised and cognitively elaborated. This distinction provides a theoretical basis for conceptualising rumination as a mediating mechanism between workplace gossip and well-being.

1.3.1 The impact of workplace rumination on well-being

After work, people employ various methods to "heal" from the stress they experienced during the day. Traditionally, vacations or weekend breaks were considered forms of rest, but current research focuses on the individual cognitive processes that people use daily to reduce stress (Koopman

et al., 2016; Lisbona and Salanova, 2016). In a toxic work environment (indicated, for example, by an increased amount of negative gossip), methods that provide psychological relief for employees are even more necessary, as such environments consume much more mental energy (Frost, 2003; Wilson et al., 2004). However, some habits, routines, or actions can hinder this recovery process. Rumination is one such mechanism. This can lead to a decrease in employees' well-being, manifesting in poorer sleep quality, fatigue, or deteriorating health (Zijlstra et al., 2014).

To recover from work stress, it is not enough to physically distance oneself from work; it is also important to do so psychologically (Sonnentag and Fritz, 2015). Successful recovery also requires replenishing the resources used (Hobfoll, 1989), alleviating symptoms of fatigue (Meijman and Mulder, 1998), and effectively self-regulating the psychophysiological state (Zijlstra et al., 2014).

According to the perseverative cognition hypothesis, the inability to disconnect from work prolongs psychophysiological activation (Brosschot et al., 2005). Thus, thinking about and mentally reliving work events causes similar levels of stress as the original situation. Prolonged psychophysiological activation prevents resource replenishment, increases symptoms of strain and fatigue, and hinders psychological detachment from work. Rumination is one mechanism that facilitates this process.

Excessive processing of negative information is unhelpful and maladaptive, as it increases the personal significance of events, heightens emotional reactivity, and impairs problem-solving, thereby limiting the availability of alternative plans (Watkins, 2008). Focusing on negative details, or negative rumination, can reduce life satisfaction (Quoidbach et al., 2010). Another study found that negative job characteristics and the presence of workplace rumination predicted a decline in well-being (Zheng et al., 2024).

In contrast, processing and recalling positive information can be adaptive, as it allows us to relive positive emotions (Positive Mental Time Travel (PMTT)) (Lyubomirsky et al., 2006; Suddendorf and Corballis, 2007). Experiencing positive emotions is an important component of well-being, thereby increasing an individual's well-being (Seligman, 2011).

1.4 The aim and hypotheses of present study

Our research question originated from the assumption that positive workplace gossip positively influences employees' well-being, while negative gossip negatively affects their sense of well-being. Furthermore, we hypothesise

that workplace rumination will mediate this relationship. We did not find any existing literature supporting this model, so we based our reasoning on the following: workplace gossip primes work-related topics, keeping workplace events more prominent in people's thoughts, even after they have returned home, making it more likely that they will ruminate. As discussed in the literature review, the outcome of rumination depends on the focus of the thoughts (Watkins, 2008). Positive topics facilitate the re-experiencing of positive emotions, which can enhance the sense of well-being, while negative topics are associated with the re-experiencing of negative emotions, which can increase perceived stress and thereby reduce individual well-being (Seligman, 2011; Watkins, 2008).

2 Study

2.1 Participants and procedure

The overall sample included 120 participants (96 females, 80%). The mean age of the sample was 43 years ($SD = 12.4$), and participants' age varied between 19 and 69 years.

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration (WHO, 2001). The research was approved by the Unified Psychology Research Ethics Committee under approval number 2023-160. Prior to the commencement of the study, participants received an informed consent statement and were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time.

2.2 Measures

Seligman's PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) was used as a framework for measuring workplace well-being. We use a measurement that was developed based on this model (Kun et al., 2017). Although the PERMA model focuses on positive aspects of well-being, this measurement also captures the negative side of workplace well-being. The Workplace PERMA Questionnaire comprised 6 dimensions:

1. Positive emotions;
2. Engagement;
3. Positive relationships;
4. Meaning of work;
5. Accomplishment;
6. Negative aspects of work.

Respondents had to record their answers on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale had a Cronbach α of 0.87, which indicated that the scale was reliable for the sample. During the completion of the questionnaire, participants could achieve

a minimum of 35 points and a maximum of 175 points. The scale also includes reverse-scored items. The total score reflects the overall well-being of the participant, with higher scores indicating higher levels of well-being.

Workplace rumination was measured using the Hungarian-translated version of the *Negative and Positive Workplace Rumination Scale* (NAPWRS) (Frone, 2015). This Hungarian version has not yet been validated. The scale had a Cronbach α of 0.70, which indicated that the scale was reliable for the sample (Yang et al., 2020). The scale comprises two factors: positive workplace rumination and negative workplace rumination. Each factor is associated with four items, resulting in a total of 8 items on the questionnaire. In the original study, these factors were further divided into subscales: the positive rumination factor splits into enjoyment of happiness and positive coping subfactors, while the negative rumination factor divides into suppression of happiness, self-denial, and negative attribution subfactors. Respondents had to record their answers on a 7-point Likert scale. The scale does not include any reverse-scored items. Participants could score between a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 56 points. The instrument measures the frequency with which participants ruminate about work; the lower the score, the more frequently they ruminated about workplace related events.

Workplace gossip was measured using the Hungarian-translated version of the *Workplace Gossip Scale* (WGS) (Brady et al., 2017). The Hungarian version has not yet been validated. The scale had a Cronbach α of 0.98, which indicated that the scale was reliable for the sample (Brady et al., 2017). The scale comprises four subscales: positive and negative gossip about supervisors, and positive and negative gossip about coworkers. Each subscale consists of five items. The scale is measured on a 7-point Likert scale and does not include any reverse-scored items. Participants could score between a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 140 points. The instrument assesses how frequently the participant engages in gossip; higher scores indicate more frequent participation in gossiping.

2.3 Results

The internal consistency values of the scales were high in the sample, indicating excellent reliability of the instruments. For the mediation analysis, we used SEM path analysis within the JASP software (version 0.18.3) (The JASP Team, online). According to our first model, positive gossip is expected to impact well-being, with part of this effect being mediated by positive rumination. After running the

analysis, we found that this model was confirmed, indicating partial mediation in this case. Positive gossip has a direct effect on well-being ($\beta = 0.33, p = 0.004$) and an indirect effect through positive rumination ($\beta = 0.16, p = 0.005$). Given the positive value obtained in the analysis, we can conclude that positive gossip can enhance well-being. The model is illustrated in Fig. 1, and the values corresponding to each pathway are shown in Table 1.

In the mediation analysis, we demonstrated both the direct and indirect effects, indicating that positive gossip influences well-being partly directly and partly through the enhancement of positive rumination.

The second model hypothesised that negative gossip would affect well-being by decreasing it (negative effect), with part of this effect being mediated through negative rumination. After conducting the analysis, we found that this effect could not be substantiated; neither the direct effect ($\beta = -0.128, p = 0.512$) nor the indirect effect ($\beta = -0.005, p = 0.927$) was significant. The model is illustrated in Fig. 2, and the values corresponding to each pathway are shown in Table 2.

In the mediation analysis, neither the direct nor the indirect pathways could be confirmed. As we have seen, the total effect was not significantly proven, likely due

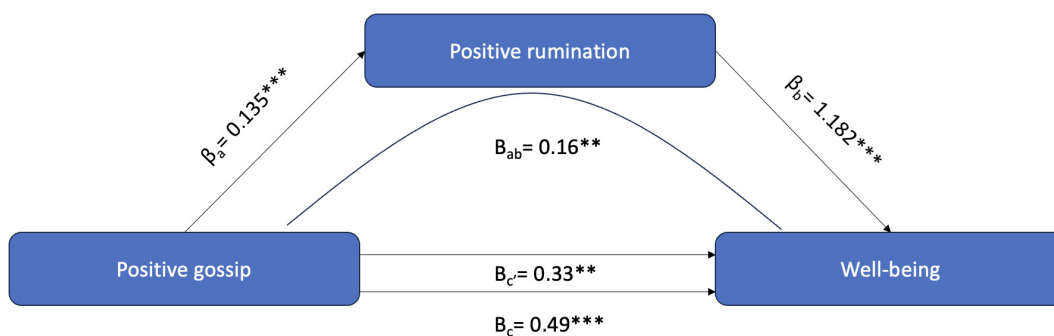


Fig. 1 A mediation model of the direct and indirect effects of positive gossip

Table 1 The values of the mediation model (N = 120)

| X | Y | β | SE | Z-value | p | LLCI | ULCI |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------|-------|---------|--------|-------|-------|
| Positive rumination | → Well-being | 1.182 | 0.269 | 4.400 | <0.001 | 0.655 | 1.708 |
| Positive gossip | → Well-being | 0.330 | 0.114 | 2.882 | 0.004 | 0.106 | 0.554 |
| Positive gossip | → Positive rumination | 0.135 | 0.037 | 3.674 | <0.001 | 0.063 | 0.208 |

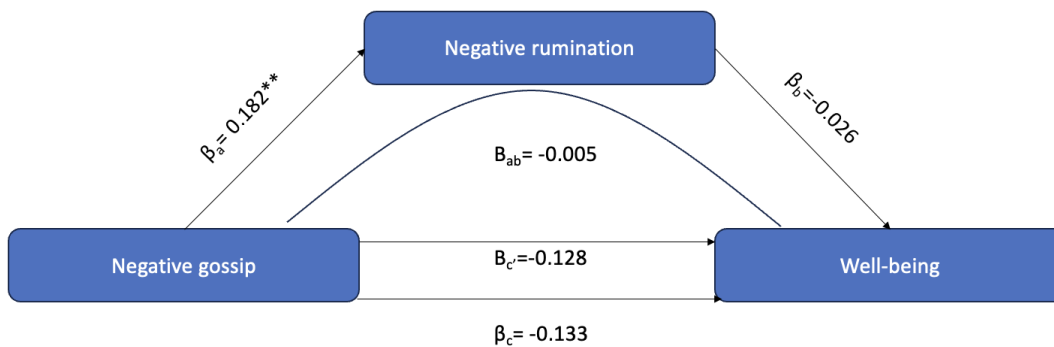


Fig. 2 A mediation model of the direct and indirect effects of negative gossip

Table 2 The values of the mediation model (N = 120)

| X | Y | β | SE | Z-value | p | LLCI | ULCI |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|--------|-------|
| Negative rumination | → Well-being | -0.026 | 0.282 | -0.091 | 0.927 | -0.579 | 0.528 |
| Negative gossip | → Well-being | -0.128 | 0.195 | -0.656 | 0.512 | -0.511 | 0.255 |
| Negative gossip | → Negative rumination | 0.182 | 0.061 | 2.978 | 0.003 | 0.062 | 0.301 |

to an insufficient sample size for this mediation analysis. The only significant result from this analysis was that negative gossip significantly impacts negative rumination ($\beta = 0.182, p = 0.003$), as it can increase it.

3 Discussion

This study investigated the impact of workplace gossip on well-being both directly and indirectly through rumination. The study confirmed that both gossip and rumination can influence our sense of well-being at work. The direct effect of positive workplace gossip on employee well-being has also been confirmed by previous research. Since positive gossip helps to cope with job insecurity (Jiang et al., 2019), increases the likelihood of organisational identity emergence and can lead to more organisational citizen behaviour (OCB) (Ye et al., 2019), it improves workplace climate, leads to better job performance and higher job satisfaction (Wang et al., 2022). Our study further confirmed our hypothesis that positive workplace gossip increases the level of positive rumination, which in turn enhances well-being. The indirect pathway shows a relatively weak effect ($\beta = 0.16$), whereas positive gossip alone has a much stronger direct impact on well-being ($\beta = 0.33$) compared to the effect mediated through positive rumination. Several theories might explain this phenomenon. Positive memories do not influence us as strongly as their negative counterparts (Baumeister et al., 2001). It is well established that human perception has evolved to be more attuned to negative information, which we tend to assign greater significance to and remember for longer periods (Luu, 2000). According to Baumeister et al. (2001), the emotions experienced at the time of a memory's formation affect how well we can recall it later. Negative emotions (e.g., anger, sadness) leave a stronger imprint and are more easily remembered. Our brains are wired to prioritise negative information, meaning that if an experience evokes a strong emotional reaction, it can trigger the entire memory network. In contrast, positive or neutral emotions elicit a much smaller response, resulting in less accurate recall of positive events or information (Baumeister, 2001; Ito et al., 1998). We also consider it plausible that positive gossip may immediately enhance well-being, without the need for the effect to be mediated through later recall. In our sample, we observe that positive rumination exerts a very strong effect on well-being. This strong effect may overshadow the entire mediation. The impact of positive rumination on well-being is also supported by the research of Quoidbach et al. (2010), which found that during the experience of positive events, focusing on the present

moment and engaging in positive rumination enhanced positive affect. Additionally, when these positive events were shared with others, life satisfaction increased. In this study, we did not measure co-rumination or social rumination, which could also influence this model. It would be worthwhile to measure the frequency of co-rumination in a future study. Positive gossip might be shared through co-rumination with family members or friends, allowing individuals to re-experience positive events and strengthen their relationships (Rose, 2002), which could further enhance their sense of well-being (Seligman, 2011).

The direct and indirect effects of negative gossip on well-being could not be confirmed in our study. While the indirect effect of negative gossip is supported by the literature, since research indicates it impacts employees' health and increases their anxiety, with rumination mediating the relationship in both cases (Hu et al., 2024; Jalil et al., 2022), the direct effect of negative gossip on well-being is also documented in the literature. Employees who receive more negative social cues at work tend to have poorer mental health, experience more negative emotions, feel more burdened by their work, and are more susceptible to stress and depression (Darr and Johns, 2008; Tan et al., 2021). Negative gossip also leads to increased distrust among employees, making it more difficult for them to collaborate with others (Aquino and Thau, 2009), which decreases their job satisfaction and performance (Greengard, 2001; Michelson and Mouly, 2000). The fact that our study failed to demonstrate these effects is likely due to an insufficient sample size to detect them. Additionally, due to social desirability bias, participants might have been less likely to admit how much they engage in gossip. Most people associate gossip with negative connotations and are reluctant to acknowledge their involvement, especially with negative gossip, as no one likes to admit they speak poorly of others behind their backs. In the case of the positive model, it is less risky for participants to admit that they spread good news about someone or praise and acknowledge their leaders or colleagues, which is why we believe that, contrary to expectations, we were able to confirm the positive model instead of the negative one. The only significant pathway in this model was the effect of negative gossip on negative rumination ($\beta = 0.182$). The model indicates that negative gossip increased negative rumination. This result is also consistent with previous research (Hu et al., 2024; Jalil et al., 2022).

4 Future opportunities

The results of our research carry an important message for organisations: the power of gossip should not

be underestimated. As seen in the literature review and throughout the study, gossip plays a crucial role in informal communication, often serving as the primary source of information for employees. If our goal is to understand how information flows within an organisation, who the key influencers are, and where the information hubs are located, it is essential not to overlook the significant role of gossip in the analysis.

However, it is also important to consider the limitations of our research. For example, the sample may not be ideal: we were able to involve a relatively small number of participants, with a significantly higher number of women

completing the survey compared to men, and the data collection was not conducted in a representative manner. As a result, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to the entire population. Additionally, the research was conducted with a sample of Hungarian employees, so the findings only reflect the characteristics specific to Hungary. Furthermore, out of the three questionnaires used in the study, two – the Workplace Gossip Scale and the Negative and Positive Workplace Rumination Scale – were translated into Hungarian by our team, meaning that these instruments have not yet been validated on a Hungarian sample. Our next research step is to carry out this validation process.

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