



Levels of Gossip Among Adults Christians in Selected Parishes of the Catholic Diocese of Lokoja Nigeria

Martin Adavize Bello¹, Wambua Pius Muasa², Elizabeth Ngozi Okpalaenwe¹

¹Psycho-Spiritual Institute of the Lux Terra Leadership Foundation of Marist International University College, A Constituent College of Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, 00100, Kenya.

²Tangaza University College, P. O. Box 15055-00509, Nairobi, 00100, Kenya

ABSTRACT

Gossip is characterized by the exchange of negative or private information about others, which has been a pervasive issue within human interactions, affecting interpersonal relationships in various contexts. The research objective is to assess the levels of gossip among adults in St. Matthew's Catholic Church Felele. The study was grounded in Robin Dunbar's Gossip Theory and used a Descriptive Research Design. The data for gossip was collected using Gossip Function Questionnaire. The target population was 1,120 Christian adults while the sample size was 295 participants, which was selected using simple random sampling. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics. The results of the study was presented using percentages, frequencies, and tables. The study findings showed a moderate level of gossip among the participant and highlighted the need for parishioners to become more aware of the danger of gossip, to help improve their interpersonal relationship. The Bishop and The Parish Priests should organise seminars and workshops to highlight the detrimental influence of gossip on interpersonal relationship and to provide avenues for seeking support and guidance when dealing with gossip related conflict.

Key Words: Levels; Gossip; Christian Adults; Catholic Diocese; Lokoja Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Gossip is a behaviour that may be found in many cultures and societies, including religious communities. While gossip is frequently seen as harmless or insignificant, its consequences can be far-reaching, especially in close-knit societies like adult Christians. Interpersonal relationships are important in the lives of Christians because they serve as the foundation for their faith-based communities. Investigating the impact of gossip on these connections becomes critical for identifying potential sources of conflict, division, and loss of trust.

Gossip can be used as a noun, verb, or even an adjective. Gossip is information about a person that is spread from person to person without independent verification. It is frequently imbued with a specific ideology, point of view, or agenda (Sharan, 2009). Typically, gossip is not shared directly with those to whom it pertains, at least not at first. There is not a lot of literature on gossip in psychology and anthropology. Lomer (2014) sees the need to spread derogatory stories about people as stemming from the interaction of the group mind and the individual's hampered discharge of sexual instinct, as well as the striving of all subordinate individuals for social revenge, using Le Bon's work on crowd psychology as a springboard. Gossip is considered as a negative social phenomenon that emerged when people attempted to trade knowledge about an unobservant third party in an evaluative manner (Chua & Uy, 2014).

Gossip, or passing judgement on individuals when they are not there, is a regular occurrence. It has been called destructive and malicious (Beersma & Van Kleef, 2012; Peters & Kashima, 2013), religiously condemned (Nevo, Nevo, & Derech-Zehavi, 1993b), and "spiritually unhealthy" (Westacott, 2000, p. 78). According to Dunbar's (2004) evolutionary perspective, gossip functioned to restrain "free riders and social cheats" (p. 100). Feinberg et al. (2012) discovered that people gossiped to aid others by way of social interaction. People see gossipers as unlikable (Farley, 2011), untrustworthy, and not credible (Turner et al., 2003). It is not unexpected that people understate the level to which they gossip on a daily basis (Hartung & Renner, 2013). Following the above research, there are two perspectives on gossip. One half of the research thinks gossip it is great, while the other half thinks gossip it is terrible.

According to Szekefi and Szvetelszky (2015), gossip is a mix of specific stories and opinions about the narrative, and it plays an important role in spreading opinions about political preferences, urban legends, and even what things to buy. True gossip is distinguished by the transference of one's thoughts about the narrative rather than by the story itself. According to Crockett (2014), most people have excellent intentions to avoid gossip but lack the insight and understanding to refrain from discussing everything they know. This lack of wisdom can cause harm to both individuals who are the target of gossip and those who participate in it.

According to Liubov (2022), gossip is "idle talk or rumour, especially about the personal or private affairs of others"; the act is also known as dishing or tattling. Gossip is a research issue in evolutionary psychology, which has discovered that gossip is an important way for people to monitor cooperative reputations and hence preserve broad indirect reciprocity. Indirect reciprocity is a type of social interaction in which one actor assists another and is then rewarded by a third party. Robin Dunbar (2004), an evolutionary scientist, found gossip as enhancing social bonding in big groups. It has been discovered that gossip has an impact on trust, communication, and community cohesion. Understanding the fundamental causes of gossipy behaviour is critical for establishing methods to reduce its impact.

In Spain, Fonseca et al. (2020) emphasised that it is often considered that people will spread false gossip for selfish reasons. If correct, this assumption poses a challenge to the rising corpus of evidence claiming that gossip is a quick source of reliable reputational information and hence improves wellbeing. Cruz et al. (2021) emphasised the importance of gossip--a sender talking to a receiver about an absent third party--in reputation creation, partner selection, and collaboration.

Pápay et al. (2023) describe gossip in Budapest as chatting about relevant persons while they are not present. It is thought to account for a significant portion of informal communication. The perception of gossip's predominance means that it may be easily detected and distinguished from other topics in casual discussion. Multiple theoretical viewpoints, including one that portrays in-group gossip as an informal technique for enforcing norms and penalising norm breakers, and another that argues gossip is used to relieve irritation and transmit envy, may justify its peculiarity. However, if the ultimate goal of gossip is to enable social bonding between the sender and the receiver, this does not distinguish gossip from other conversational subjects that bring social satisfaction, such as entertainment and food.

In Africa, Dlamini and Mdletshe (2019) stressed that gossip is relevant in any workplace, in South Africa. The authors contend that employees are more likely to improve their performance if the gossip is about work-related matters as opposed to unrelated ones. Equally, if gossip is there all the time, it could be detrimental to a worker's sense of self-worth. According to Dlamini and Mdletshe's research, there is both positive and negative gossip in the workplace. While positive gossip is important, negative gossip can negatively affect employees' self-efficacy and interpersonal interactions.

Studies carried out in Nigeria show that employees frequently engage in workplace gossip. It happens informally (outside of work contexts) as well as formally (during work hours). Babalola et al. (2019) investigated the influence of negative workplace gossip on customer service performance and the moderating effects of trait mindfulness and forgiveness in Nigeria. According to the study, targets' ability to provide excellent customer service be hampered by perceived unfavourable workplace gossip since it creates a foul attitude. They argue that this mediation mechanism is regulated by the targets' forgiveness and awareness. Workers gossip for a variety of reasons, such as information-seeking, social connection, and frustration release. Workplace rumours have a big impact on the culture of the company. Positive gossip, like complimenting co-workers or exchanging success tales, promote unity and friendship among teammates. Negative gossip, on the other hand, can ruin a workplace by spreading rumours, disparaging others, or discrediting co-workers. The definition of gossip is the same in Africa. There are two perspectives on gossip: the positive and the negative, rather than religious gossip, the focus is largely on workplace gossip.

Gossip has been demonstrated to have certain psychological effects in social psychology research. People who have been the target of gossip have been demonstrated to experience sadness, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and eating disorders, according to Beersma and Van Kleef (2012). Furthermore, it is never simply the individual who is targeted who suffers. Investigating the influence of gossip on these connections becomes critical for uncovering latent sources of conflict, division, and loss of trust among the participant of St. Matthew's Parish Felele and St. Theresa's Parish Ganaja. Gossip is a global phenomenon that exists in all cultures and society. It usually entails the dissemination of unsubstantiated information about others, generally in an unfavourable or judgemental light. However, according to research, gossip spreads quickly within social networks, resulting in its predominance in interpersonal connections among adult Christians (Scott & Nowak, 2019).

Gossip has both positive and negative effects on Christian communities. While some studies in the United States of America suggest that sharing prayer requests and support for those in need can foster a sense of unity (Clinton & Langberg, 2011), other research indicates that negative gossip can lead to division, distrust, and the erosion of community bonds (Arbuckle, 2004). The last statement is consistent with biblical teachings on the value of speaking sweetly and avoiding slander.

Campbell (2014) investigated how church gossip might damage one's faith and/or service in the Christian church through study on church gossip in Canada. The study looked into the hazards and benefits of gossip in the Christian community across four provinces and seven denominations in Canada. The study discovered that one of the important markers of whether church gossip was supposed to be detrimental or beneficial was the intent of the individual giving the information.

Gossip is a prevalent behaviour that can have serious effects in a number of situations, particularly among Nigerian Christians. The spread of unreliable or unsupported information is one of gossip's distinguishing traits. Spreading unfounded gossips, conjectures, or subjective viewpoints about other people without supporting documentation or first-hand experience is referred to as gossip (Giardini & Wittek 2019). People who gossip are insecure or low in self-esteem. By disparaging others, rumours and negative discussion about them might give the gossiper a short-lived sensation of dominance or superiority and improve their self-esteem (Tan, 2021). Talking about someone else's accomplishments, success, or attractiveness might cause feelings of envy or jealousy. Rather than recognising the successes of others, gossipers could try to discredit those they regard as competitors by distributing unfavourable information or rumours. According to Bechtoldt et al. (2020), the need for social acceptability and affirmation fuels gossip. People may gossip in order to attract attention, win others over, or blend in with a specific social group. One of the main causes of gossip is poor communication skills. People who find it difficult to confront issues or communicate their emotions openly may turn to gossip as a release valve for their annoyances or as a means of getting approval from others.

St. Matthew Catholic Church Felele Lokoja, Kogi State, is located in the North central part of Nigeria. Her worshippers have lived in unity since the community started. However, it has been a thing of concern on how information have been handled and communicated from persons to persons which is causing seeming division among the people. There have been undocumented studies of gossip and its influence on the interpersonal relationship of the Parishioner. This informed the purpose of this study. Similar research was carried out at St. Theresa Catholic Church Ganaja, Lokoja Diocese, Nigeria.

Interpersonal relationship in the parishes is the problem. Parishioners are of the opinion that invalidated information among adult Christians have affected greatly the interpersonal relationship in St. Matthew's Catholic Church, Felele, and St. Theresa Catholic Church Ganaja, Lokoja Diocese. In St. Matthew's parish for example, Parishioners find it difficult to relate well because of underline issues that revolve around gossip. The Mass is the only unifying factor that keep the people of God together, such that, after the mass it is nearly impossible to get adult Christians to agree on other issues as it concerns the life and growth of the people of God.

The prevailing issues of malice, enmity, division among the people of God as a result of misinformation, unverified information and wrong channels of communication, has also led to psychological issues. Psychological issues like depression, anxiety and suicidal tendency of people who have been the subject of gossip and are not able to integrate properly with fellow church members. Many of the reason of the unspoken conflict, through bi-directional communication is perceived to be tied to gossip.

People spread rumours out of disrespect for personal space and boundaries; others spread rumours out of a desire for entertainment or a desire to pass the time. People gossip to make their social connections stronger or to divert attention away from their personal issues or dissatisfaction; the need for approval and validation from others. People engage in gossip as a means of gaining favour, being noticed, or fitting in with a particular social group. Therefore, this study investigated the levels of gossip among adult Christians in both parishes.

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Robin Dunbar's Gossip Theory guided the study. Robin Dunbar, a British anthropologist and evolutionary psychologist, proposed Dunbar's Gossip Theory (2004). According to Dunbar's hypothesis, gossip is essential in human social interactions and acts as a tool for preserving social links and managing relationships within a society. This research applied Dunbar's theory to the unique setting of adult Christians and their interpersonal relationships within the church community. The research also looked into the potential good and negative effects of gossip in this religious context. This study adds to our understanding of the role of gossip in interpersonal relationships among adult Christians by utilising Dunbar's theory to offer light on how gossip functions within this particular social and religious community.

This study aimed to increase awareness and stimulate meaningful debates about the implications of gossiping within faith-based communities by identifying the influence of gossip on adult Christian interpersonal relationships. The outcomes of this study, we hope, will encourage proactive actions to foster healthy, supportive, and inclusive Christian communities. Finally, cultivating strong connections based on trust and respect can contribute to the Christian community's general well-being and togetherness.

The practise of gossip is prevalent in all nations and cultures. It usually entails the dissemination of incorrect information about others, frequently in a disparaging or judgemental way. According to research, gossip has a high prevalence in adult Christians' interpersonal connections due to how quickly it can travel through social networks (Scott & Nowak, 2019). The level of gossip in Christian communities, where the ideals of compassion, humility, and respect for others are frequently emphasised, creates crucial issues regarding how believers balance their adherence to religious precepts while engaging in interpersonal interactions.

A Canadian study by Farley (2011) on *Is Gossip Power? The Inverse Relationships between Gossip, Power and Likability*, used a qualitative analysis of 128 persons. The study applied the social information processing theory, which revealed that high frequency social secular gossipers were regarded as weaker and less loved than low frequency gossipers., that high frequency gossipers were perceived as less likeable and powerful the more negative they became. The study discovered that those who gossip frequently nonetheless have a lot of friends. The study made an educated guess that high frequency liars might be tolerated in social networks out of concern for others' access to knowledge, but they would be kept at a distance. While this study is useful, it is still inadequate because it lacks revealing information about the relationship between gossip and interpersonal relationship outside the area of its study. This present study sought therefore, to build on the gap by undertaking a study in Nigeria that considers levels of gossip.

Fonseca et al. (2020) in Spain highlighted in the study on Truth, Lies, and Gossip that it is often believed that people would spread false rumours for their own selfish interests. The study used 320 participants and applied the Relational Aggression theory in the qualitative study. By investigating the frequency and kind of spontaneous lies told by gossiping participants in networks playing a series of one-shot trust games (n=320), this inaccuracy hypothesis was put to the test. Whether or not gossipers were in competition with one another was influenced. It was determined that lies account for a sizable portion of messages and are twice as common in situations where gossipers are competing. The amount of trust was unaffected by this, though. This was explained by the discovery that some lies are welfare enhancing and that gossip targets are insensitive to lying. These results imply that lying need not stop chatter from serving reputational purposes and might even facilitate it. The reviewed study above was qualitative and thus lacked quantitative findings for generalization. In order to fill the knowledge gap, the present study used a mixed method approach.

Cruz et al. (2021) conducted a quantitative study in Dutch on Gossip and Reputation in daily life. Using a sample size of 309, they used the Social information process theory, and laboratory experiments revealed that people gossip about the cooperativeness of others, and that they utilise gossip to condition their own cooperation. Daily events in which people either transmitted or received gossip about a target were sampled in a Dutch community sample (n=309) over a 10-day period (ngossip = 5,284). The authors go outside the laboratory to test various predictions regarding the substance of

ordinary gossip and how people use it to update the reputation of others in their social network based on theories of indirect reciprocity and reputation-based mate selection. Receivers largely perceived gossip to be accurate and modified their target evaluations based on it. In turn, a positive shift in a target's evaluation was connected with higher intentions to aid them in future interactions and lower intentions to avoid them. Thus, in everyday life, gossip is utilised to affect and update reputations in a way that allows for partner selection and indirect reciprocity. Thus, while it is commendable, the present study covered the gap by focusing on another variable with another target population.

In Italy a study by Riace, Driel, and Verkuyten (2022) on Gossip, Diversity, and Community Cohesion: The Case of Multi-Ethnic Communities was conducted. The empirical research is based on 11 months of fieldwork in Riace, a tiny town in Southern Italy that has supported 365 refugees and migrants for over 20 years. The authors concentrated on the Dunbar gossip hypothesis as it manifests itself in daily life and is ingrained in the local social context. The study investigated whether gossip can help to include and integrate people from various ethnic and migration origins into a local society. The findings show that much of the local gossip is inter-ethnic and promotes strong community bonds by preserving local norms and fostering trust relationships and shared narratives. According to their findings, local gossip does not have to be divisive but can potentially have inclusive and integrative ramifications in multi-ethnic local environments. The study is highly insightful to the field of research; nevertheless, it was conducted in Italy, not Nigeria, leaving a gap that the current study seeks to fill.

Pápay et al. (2023) conducted a survey in Budapest, Hungary, to determine how gossip differs from other topics in spontaneous conversation. The qualitative study employed the Communication privacy management theory with a sample size of 123 to investigate how gossip differs from other forms of communication. Gossip, or chatting about relevant persons in their absence, is thought to account for a considerable portion of informal communication. The perception of gossip's predominance means that it may be easily detected and distinguished from other topics in casual discussion. Multiple theoretical viewpoints, including one that portrays in-group gossip as an informal technique for enforcing norms and penalising norm breakers, and another that argues gossip is used to relieve irritation and transmit envy, may justify its peculiarity.

In Africa, Dlamini and Mdletshe (2019) carried out a study on Employees' Perceptions of Workplace Gossip in South African Public Sectors: The Implication on Job Performance. Using the normative gossip theory, this qualitative study examined how employees protrude themselves after becoming victims of gossip in a workplace with 25 participants. Data was collected and examined after interviews with twenty-five office workers. The study found that if the gossip is work-related rather than non-work-related, employees are more likely to enhance their performance. Continuous exposure to gossip, on the other hand, might have a negative impact on an employee's self-efficacy. The study's objective was to provide managers and practitioners with a comprehensive understanding of office gossip by adding a new dimension to the impact of workplace gossip on job performance and employee self-efficacy. The study is significant to research. However, it focused on job performance because of work place gossip. The study lacked information about Church gossip or gossip among Christians. Thus, this present study sought to cover the knowledge gap in the study.

Babalola et al. (2019) explored the Negative workplace gossip: Its impact on customer service performance and the moderating roles of trait mindfulness and forgiveness in a qualitative study in Nigeria. The qualitative study based on Affective events theory analyses why and when targets' in-role performance in the context of service is hampered by perceived bad workplace gossip. The study included 50 people, these included employee-customer dyads in ten hotels in Nigeria's business hub (Lagos). Front-line desk officers, room service personnel, food service, bartenders, and customer service agents are examples of focal employees. In each of the hotels, trained data collectors gained permission from the manager-in-charge to conduct multi-wave surveys as part of a big research study targeted at enhancing hospitality service delivery. The study suggest that perceived bad workplace gossip hinders targets' customer service performance by triggering negative mood. The study contend that the targets' traits of mindfulness and forgiveness regulate this mediating mechanism. These findings lend credence to the affective events viewpoint in understanding negative workplace gossip and provide a more comprehensive understanding of its implications. Again, while the study presents work place gossip, this time in Nigeria, this present study will focus on Church gossip, that is prevalence of gossip among Christians. Thus, the gap in literature was filled by the present study.

Few researches have been conducted to investigate the prevalence of gossip within Christian communities. In Canada, a study by Campbell (2014) on Church Gossip: Prophecy or Profanity How is one's Faith and /or Ministry affected by Church Gossip? Was conducted across various congregations and discovered that about 75% of participants acknowledged to partaking in gossip at some point. In a qualitative research, the study interviewed seven Christians from four provinces in Canada from diverse denominations to go more into the topic of gossip within the Christian church community and the potential risks and advantages. The study demonstrated how church gossip can both be prophecy and profanity using literature studies, theological analysis, and participant information. The aim of the individual giving the information is a key determinant of whether church gossip was intended to be detrimental or beneficial. While Campbell focused on prophecy and obscenity in church gossip, it did not connect gossip to interpersonal relationships, a gap that this study seeks to remedy. Campbell employed a qualitative research approach in his study of church gossip; the current study used a descriptive survey research design to examine the level of gossip.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive research design. According to Creswell (2014), Descriptive research is a research method used to determine the characteristics of a population or particular phenomenon. This study employed quantitative data collection and analyses procedures. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The targeted population in this study comprised faithful from two parishes within Lokoja town. According to the annual Diocesan statistics of 2023, the population of the parishes are 350 and 770, excluding children, giving a total of 1,120. The study included both males and females from 18 years to 70years. This was because people between ages 18 to 70 were assumed to have full understanding of the concept of gossip.

The research questionnaire comprised of 18 questions. The questionnaire constituted of closed-ended questions, and was administered to the participant of St. Matthew's Catholic Parish Felele, and St. Theresa Catholic Parish Ganaja, Lokoja Diocese. The questionnaire consisted two sections, A to B. The first section A, addressed the respondents' demographic information. The second section B, addressed the levels of gossip in St. Matthew and St. Theresa Parishes. The research systematically followed the recommended data collection procedures. The researcher's authorization letter was obtained from the Psycho-Spiritual Institute of Lux-Terra Leadership Foundation Abuja: An Affiliate of Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi. This letter was obtained a week before the data collection exercise. The letter was presented to the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Lokoja, where the Parish under study is located. The research also obtained the permission of the Parish Priests of St. Matthew's Parish Felele and St. Theresa Parish, Ganaja. Upon being granted permission to carry out data collection, the researcher prepared data collection exercise in a week time.

The researcher adequately communicated with the research assistant, who helped to organize a meeting with the respondents and made introduction about the research. This was done to assure the respondents of the confidentiality of any information they will provide and requested them not to write their names as they responded. Then the number of those to participate were by simple random sampling. The questionnaire that was distributed contained close-ended questions and they took on the average between 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

6.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study sought to assess the levels of gossip among participants in St. Matthew's Catholic Church Felele, and St. Theresa's Catholic Church Ganaja, Lokoja Diocese, Nigeria. The scoring of the Gossip Function Questionnaire by Foster (2004) indicates that, the higher scores indicate more influence of gossip in that area. Using Egunjobi (2022) A Guideline to Reporting Statistics in APA Style, the scorings are as follow:

Table 1

Levels of Gossip

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Very High	1	.5
High	8	3.8
Moderate	141	66.8
Low	60	28.4
Very Low	1	.5
Total	211	100.0

This study's findings on the levels of gossip among participants showed differing degrees of involvement in gossip-related behaviours. In particular, moderate levels of gossip were reported by 66.8% of participants, low levels by 28.4%, and very low levels by 0.5%. Furthermore, 3.8% and 0.5%, respectively, indicated high and extremely high levels of gossip. These results demonstrate the common occurrence of gossip among participants; a sizeable percentage claimed relatively little involvement, while other participants indicated higher levels of gossip behaviour.

The distribution of responses indicates that gossip is a common phenomenon among the study participants, as the majority reported at least a moderate level of engagement in gossip-related behaviours. This finding aligns with Campbell (2014) study on Church Gossip: Prophecy or Profanity How is one's Faith and /or Ministry affected by Church Gossip? That about 75% of participants acknowledged to partaking in gossip at some point, across various congregations.

From a psycho-spiritual perspective, moderate gossip may be a sign of deeper problems like social comparison, insecurity, or poor communication skills among parishioners in St. Matthew and St. Theresa Parishes Lokoja. Individuals who report low levels of gossiping might be more conscious of the detrimental effects of gossip and more dedicated to using ethical communication techniques. From a Psycho-Spiritual standpoint, this subgroup might gain from encouragement to avoid gossiping temptations, reinforcement of positive social norms, and assistance in developing genuine and courteous relationships within the faith community.

Participant who report extremely low levels of gossip could be excellent role models in the religious community, exhibiting qualities like prudence, integrity, and compassion in their dealings with others. On the other hand, people who report very high and high levels of gossip may also report higher degrees of mistrust, spiritual alienation, and interpersonal conflict. Psycho-spiritual treatment can help these people heal from deep emotional scars, grow in empathy and responsibility, and, if necessary, promote forgiveness and reconciliation.

In summary, the results emphasise how crucial it is to deal with gossip in the context of psycho-spiritual therapy. Therapists can support individuals in developing healthier communication patterns, fostering empathy and understanding, and fostering a culture of respect, trust, and compassion within the faith community by investigating the psychological, relational, and spiritual aspects of gossip-related behaviours. Psycho-spiritual therapy also facilitates

personal growth and spiritual transformation by assisting individuals in connecting with their spiritual resources, strengthening their sense of purpose and togetherness, and bringing their behaviours into alignment with their religious beliefs.

7.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This section examined the main findings and conclusion of the study in relation to the theory and practice of gossip. The level of gossip is moderate. This implies that gossip is a common occurrence among the participants. The researcher encountered some challenges in the course of carrying out this study. A major challenge in this research was the few studies done on the levels of Gossip. This area of research although not new, most of the work to date, are only definitional in nature. Due to the distance from the study area, the research engaged in sending the questionnaire to the participants by email and WhatsApp, using the Google form. The research followed up through calls and text messages to make sure that the participants filled out and send back the questionnaires. However, the data obtained from the online questionnaires were sufficient for generalization of the research findings.

Gossip is a prevalent phenomenon in various social contexts, including religious communities. Understanding the dynamics of gossip and its impact on interpersonal relationships among Christian is crucial for promoting healthy social interactions within religious communities. There is an urgent need for more research into the impact of gossip on adult Christians' interpersonal relationships, with a focus on culture, spirituality, and psychology. We need to investigate Christians' habits, beliefs, and attitudes to see how gossip influences individuals personally and, by implication, their faith.

The Parish priests should implement clear communication channels. Implementing clear communication channels within religious communities to reduce moderate gossip to a low level. Encourage open dialogue and provide platforms for individuals to address concerns or conflicts directly rather than resorting to gossip.

The bishop in connection with the Parish priests can offer educational workshops or seminars that highlight the detrimental effects of gossip on interpersonal relationships and community cohesion. Provide resources and strategies for addressing conflicts constructively and promoting a culture of respect and confidentiality. Foster a culture of accountability and support within religious communities by encouraging individuals to hold themselves and others accountable for their words and actions. Provide avenues for seeking support and guidance when dealing with gossip-related conflicts.

The Parish Priests can establish counselling and emotional support services within religious communities to assist individuals who have experienced strain due to gossip. Provide access to trained counsellors or pastoral care providers who can offer guidance and support in navigating interpersonal challenges. Emphasize the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation in resolving conflicts and healing relational wounds caused by gossip. Encourage individuals to practice forgiveness and seek reconciliation with those affected by gossip, fostering a culture of grace and restoration within the community.

REFERENCES

- Adegoke, A. A. (2011). *Helping Professions in Africa*. University Press.
- Adler, A. (1927). *Understanding Human Nature*. Greenberg Press.
- Arbuckle, G. (2004). *Violence, Society, and the Church: A Cultural Approach*. Liturgical Press.
- Baumeister, Roy; Vohs, Kathleen & Zhang, L. (2004). Gossip as cultural learning. *Review of General Psychology*, 8(2), 111-121.
- Bechtoldt, M. N., Beersma, B., & Dijkstra, M. T. M. (2020). Editorial: Why People Gossip and What It Brings About: Motives for, and Consequences of, Informal Evaluative Information Exchange. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11(24).
- Beersma, B., & Van Kleef, G. A. (2012). Why people gossip: An empirical analysis of social motives, antecedents, and consequences. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 11(42). <https://doi.org/26402670>. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.2012.00956.x
- Brown, A. P., & Smith, J. E. (2020). Talking about gossip: Developing a grace-centered approach. *Journal of Christian Counselling*, 3(45), 132-148.
- Campbell, R. (2014). Church Gossip: Prophecy or Profanity How is one's faith and/or ministry affected by church gossip? *Atlantic School of Theology*.
- Chua, S. V. & Uy, K. J. (2014). The psychological anatomy of gossip. *American Journal of Management*, 3(14), 64-69.
- Clinton Tim and Langberg Diane. (2011). *The Quick-Reference Guide to Counselling Women*. Baker Publishing Group.
- Creswell, J. W. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach* (4theditio). Sage Publishing Inc.
- Crockett, M. (2004). *Gossip*. Author House.
- Cruz TDD, Thielmann I, C. S. (2021). Gossip and reputation in everyday life. *Philos Trans R SocLond B Biol Sci*. [https://doi.org/376\(1838\):20200301](https://doi.org/376(1838):20200301).
- Darmon, D. (2019). An Intercultural Analysis of Gossip. *The Hague University of Applied Sciences*.23(7), 1736–1751.
- Dlamini Phakamani Irvine & Mdletshe Bonga Blessing. (2019). Employee's Perception on Workplace Gossip in the South African Public Sectors: The Implication on Job Performance. *Journal of Management and Strategy*. <https://doi.org/doi:10.5430/jms.v10n3p48>.
- Dunbar, R. I. M. (2004). Gossip in evolutionary perspective. *Review of General Psychology*, 8(2), 100–110. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1037/1089-2680.8.2.100>.

- Egunjobi, J. P. (2022). *A Guideline to Reporting Statistics in APA Style*. <https://doi.org/DOI-10.13140/RG.2.2.14923.05921>
- Eric K. Foster. (2004). Research on Gossip: Taxonomy, Methods, and Future Directions. *Review of General Psychology*, 8(2), 78–99. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1037/1089-2680.8.2.78>.
- Ester Driel & Maykel Verkuyten. (2022). *Gossip, diversity and community cohesion: the case of multi-ethnic Riace, Ethnic and Racial Studies*.45 (16), 591–613. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1080/01419870.2022.2114806>.
- Farley, S. D. (2011). Is gossip power? The inverse relationships between gossip, power, and likability. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 41(5), 574–579. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1002/ejsp.821>
- Feinberg, M., Willer, R., & Schultz, M. (2019). The Bright and Dark Side of Gossip for Cooperation in Groups. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 1374, 10(1374).
- Feinberg, M., Willer, R., Stellar, J., & Keltner, D. (2012). The virtues of gossip: Reputational information sharing as prosocial behaviour. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(5), 1015–1030. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1017/S0140525x11001233>.
- Fonseca, P. (2020). Truth, lies, and gossip. In *Psychol Sci.* (Vol. 31, Issue 6).
- Freud, S. (1917). *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. (p. 16). Standard Edition.
- Giardini, F., & Wittek, R. (2019). On the Nature of Gossip, Reputation, and Power Inequality. In O. U. Press. (Ed.), *Handbook of Gossip and Reputation* (pp. 1–18).
- Hartung, F.-M., & Renner, B. (2013). Social curiosity and gossip: Related but different drives of social functioning. *PLoS One Journal*.Pone.,8(7). <https://doi.org/doi:10.1371/0069996>
- Liubov Ben-Noun. (2022). *Gossip: A Prevalent Human Behaviour 'Thou Shalt not go up and down as a Gossiper among the People' (Leviticus 19:16)*. B.N. Publication House.
- Lomer. G. Uber den Klatsch. (1961). EinepsychologistheStudie. *Chkat.-Neurol, Rvschr*, 15(171–175), 1913–1914.
- Luna, Alfred & Chou, S. Y. (2013). Drivers for workplace gossip: An application of the theory of planned behaviour. *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*, 17(1), 115–129.
- Marks, L. (2000). *Railing, Tattling, and General Rumour: Gossip, Gender, and Church Regulation in Upper Canada*. (Vol. 81, Issue 3). University of Toronto Press. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.3138/CHR.81.3.380>
- Mayowa T. Babalola, Shuang Ren, Thomas Kobinah, YuanmeiElly Qu, Omale A. Garba, L. G. (2019). Negative workplace gossip: Its impact on customer service performance and moderating roles of trait mindfulness and forgiveness. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 80(ISSN 0278-4319), 136–143. <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.02.007>.
- McAndrew, F. (2014). How ‘the gossip’ became a woman and how ‘gossip’ became her weapon of choice. In M. L. Fisher (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of women and competition*. (pp. 1–18). <https://doi.org/http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxford/9780199376377.001.0001/>
- Miller, R. S., & Johnson, D. J. (2018). Trusting and being trusted by Christians and non Christians: The role of personality, religious affiliation, and gossip. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 57(5), 1676-1690.
- Nevo, O., Nevo, B., & Derech-Zehavi, A. (1993). Gossip and counselling: The tendency to gossip and its relation to vocational interests. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 6(3), 229–238. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1080/09515079308254117>.
- Nicole Hauke & Andrea E. Abele. (2020). The Impact of Negative Gossip on Target and Receiver. *A “Big Two” Analysis, Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 42(2), 115–132. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1080/01973533.2019.1702881>
- Nils Ling. (2007). *Gossip: The Inside Scoop*. Plenum Press.
- Pápay, B.T., Kubik, B.G., Galántai, J. and Takács, K. (2023). Gossip is distinct from other topics in spontaneous conversation and Intersections. *East European Journal of Society and Politics*.8(4), 149–178. <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i4.939>.
- Peters, K., & Kashima, Y. (2013). Gossiping as moral social action. In & J. L. In J. P. Forgas, O. Vincze (Ed.), *Social cognition and communication* (pp. 187–202). New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Peterson, R. B. (2017). The power of words: Hurtful gossip, constructive critique, or something else? *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 37(2), 99–121.
- Promsri, C. (2019). The Effect of Gossip Tendency on Political Skill. *East African Scholars Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, 2. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.36349/easjebm.2019.v02i07.004>
- Rosenbauxi, B. Jean & Subrin, M. (1963). The psychology of Gossip. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*. <https://doi.org/doi/10.1177/000306516301100407>.

- Roy Liff & Ewa Wikström. (2021). *Rumours and gossip demand continuous action by managers in daily working life*, *Culture and Organization*.27 (6), 456–475. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1080/14759551.2021.1884681>
- Scott, J., & Nowak, G. (2019). Gossip spreads quickly in social networks. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 117(2), 199–219.
- Sharan, M. (2009). *Qualitative Research*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Szekfu, B., & Szvetelszky, Z. (2005). Three degrees of inclusion: The gossip-effect in human networks. *AIP Conference Proceedings*, 776, 308–313. <https://doi.org/10.1063/1.1985397>
- Tan, G. (2021). Gossip and Christians. *Theology, Social and Cultural Anthropology, Cultural Anthropology, Gossip*.
- Taylor, E. M. (2005). Gossip as an interpersonal communication phenomenon. *Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Problem Reports*, 860.
- Turner, M. M., Mazur, M. A., Wendel, N., & Winslow, R. (2003). Relational ruin or social glue? The joint effect of relationship type and gossip valence on liking, trust, and expertise. *Communication Monographs*, 70(2), 129–141. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1080/0363775032000133782>.
- Van Rijn, B., Wild, C., & Moran, P. (2011). Evaluating the Outcomes of Transactional Analysis and Integrative Counselling Psychology within UK Primary Care Settings. *International Journal of Transactional Analysis Research & Practice*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.29044/v2i2p34>
- VandenBos, G. R. (Ed.). (2015). *APA dictionary of psychology*. American Psychological Association.
- Vansteenkiste, M., & Ryan, R. M. (2013). On psychological growth and vulnerability: Basic psychological need satisfaction and need frustration as a unifying principle. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 23(3), 263–280.
- Westacott, E. (2000). The ethics of gossiping. *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 14(1), 65–90. <https://doi.org/doi:10.5840/ijap20001418>.
- Xia Fang, Zhenyu Yang, Y. Z. & C. G. (2023). *Adverse Effects of Data Breach on Public Companies: A Study Based on Interpersonal Gossip Theory*, *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade*.59(9), 3094–3107. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1080/1540496X.2023.2210721>
- Yucel M, Sjobeck GR, Glass R, R. J. (2021). *Gossip, sabotage, and friendship*. networkpercentage0Adataset.107717.
- Yucel M, Sjobeck GR, Glass R, R. J. (2021). *Being in the know: social network analysis of gossip and friendship on a college campus*.32 (3), 603–621.