Organizational Climate and Gossip at Work among Cameroonian Employees

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Abstract: Gossip at work is the subject of much research in Work and Organizational Psychology (Baumeister, Zhang & Vohs, 2004; Foster, 2004; Farley, 2011; Brady, 2015, Kuo et al., 2015). Considered for decades to be malicious behavior, it is only recently that its positive aspect has been taken into account. Being an informal phenomenon, gossip has been linked to several variables (power, trust, organizational justice, emotions, individual differences, stress, contemptuous behavior). Despite the multiplicity of this research and to our knowledge, there is no study that links it to the organizational climate in the African context in general and the Cameroonian context in particular. Organizational climate and gossip are two important concepts that have been investigated separately and yet they are informal phenomena. This research aims to investigate the relationship between these two variables and addresses the problem of positive and negative gossip in the workplace as a phenomenon influenced by the organizational climate.

To this end, Brady's (2015) gossip scales and Patterson et al.'s (2011) organizational climate scale, as well as items measuring sociodemographic characteristics, were administered to 230 workers in various sectors of activity in the city of Yaoundé. The data collected were processed by correlation and regression analysis using IBM-SPSS-Amos, version 22. The results show that organizational climate is significantly correlated with negative (r= -0.865 with p<.001) and positive (r=-0.825 with p<.001) gossip towards supervisors on the one hand, and with negative (r= -0.856 with p< .001) and positive (r= -0.855 with p< .001) gossip towards co-workers. These results are the first data on gossip at work in Cameroonian organizations. This is a promising start to the exploration of the phenomenon in sub-Saharan Africa in general, and in Cameroon in particular, especially since the psychometric properties of the scales used are proven.

Keywords: gossip, positive and negative aspects, organizational climate, work, employees.

Résumé: Le commérage au travail fait l' objet de nombreuses recherches en Psychologie du Travail et des Organisations (Baumeister, Zhang & Vohs, 2004 ; Foster, 2004 ; Farley, 2011 ; Brady, 2015, Kuo et al., 2015). Considéré pendant des décennies comme étant un comportement malveillant, ce n' est que récemment que son aspect positif a été pris en compte. Etant un phénomène informel, le commérage a été mis en relation avec plusieurs variables (pouvoir, confiance, justice organisationnelle, émotions, différences individuelles, stress, comportement méprisant). Malgré la multiplicité de ces recherches et en notre connaissance, il n' y a pas d' étude qui le met en lien avec le climat organisationnel dans le contexte africain en général et camerounais en particulier. Le climat organisationnel et le commérage sont deux concepts importants qui ont été investigués séparément et pourtant ce sont des phénomènes informels. La présente recherche se propose d' étudier la relation entre ces deux variables et pose le problème du commérage positif et négatif en milieu du travail en tant que phénomène influencé par le climat organisationnel.

À cet effet, les échelles du commérage au travail de Brady (2015) et l' échelle du climat organisationnel de Patterson et al. (2011) ainsi que les items mesurant les caractéristiques sociodémographiques ont été administrés à 230 travailleurs de divers secteurs d' activités dans la ville de Yaoundé. Les données recueillies ont été traitées par l' analyse de corrélations et régressions par l' entremise du logiciel IBM-SPSS-Amos, version 22. Il ressort des résultats que le climat organisationnel est significativement corrélé avec le commérage négatif (r= -0,865 avec p< .001) et positif (r= -0,825 avec p< .001) envers les superviseurs d' une part, et avec le commérage négatif (r= -0,856 avec p< .001) et positif (r= -0,855 avec p< .001) envers les collègues d' autre part. Ces résultats constituent les premières données sur le commérage au travail dans les organisations camerounaises. Il s' agit d' un début prometteur de l' exploration du phénomène en Afrique noire en général, et au Cameroun en particulier, ce d' autant que les propriétés psychométriques des échelles utilisées sont éprouvées.

Mots-clés: commérage, aspects positifs et négatifs, climat organisationnel, travail, employés.

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Introduction

In global and African companies in general, and particularly in Cameroon, the individual is required to spend more time with colleagues and superiors. Their coffee breaks and free time are distracted by gossip. Since virtually everyone engages in gossip in a wide range of circumstances and anyone can be affected by it, gossip cannot be understood solely as counterproductive behavior. This is a widespread behaviour that, according to Foster (2004), is in itself neither positive nor negative. It defines it as an exchange of personal information in an evaluative manner about absent third parties. For Difonzo and Bordia (2007), gossip is a discussion, social and evaluative, about people who are usually not present, occurring in the context of social networks. Gossip plays an important role in informal conversations, and the organizational environment is not immune to this phenomenon. In Africa in general and Cameroon in particular, negative gossip has become a weapon of mass destruction, used by the envious, the wicked, the discontented, the frustrated against those they hate and hate and sometimes for no reason. Used under several names: cancan, kongossa, karambanie, missossi, tchotcholi, l'intox, zapzap... It is a desire to harm, to make suffer, to denigrate and demean the other. It is an unarmed, indirect, conscious and calculated psychological assassination. Kongossa is a term of Cameroonian origin also used in Nigeria, Gabon, the Congos and Côte d'Ivoire, whether in French, English or Pidgin, as well as in the Krio of Sierra Leone, it refers to public rumours, word-of-mouth and gossip (Ndé, 2010; Tsoualla, 2011). Gossip in the workplace is not transparent, directly observable behaviour, but rather is private and secretive in nature, making it more difficult to assess and monitor. Despite multiple previous studies on gossip in the workplace, to our knowledge, there is no study that links it to the organizational climate. The latter is considered to be the perception of the organizational atmosphere by employees. Organizational climate is the set of measurable properties (dimensions) of the work environment that people who live and work in that environment perceive directly or indirectly and that are thought to influence their motivation and behavior (Litwin & Stringer, 1968; Furnham & Gunter, 1993). Organizational climate and gossip are two important concepts that have been investigated separately and yet they are informal phenomena. That's why we found it necessary to link them (organizational climate and gossip).

1. Gossip at work
1.1. Causes of gossip

According to Morneau (2012), there are several reasons why employees gossip: Feeling part of the group: Employees gossip to feel more integrated into their workplace. However, when acceptance is based on the sharing of a secret, it is no longer based on an individual's identity, but rather on exclusion or malice. Sense of importance: Some employees like to be seen as a source of information, which makes them important when their colleagues ask them questions to find out more. Feelings of superiority: Employees who are not considered in their workplace feel better for a while when they make negative judgments about their colleagues. Envy: Some employees peddle gossip in an attempt to hurt those with talents or lifestyles they envy. Boredom: Employees who don't have enough work to do or are unable to start an interesting discussion about knowledge or ideas fill this gap with gossip. Anger: An employee who doesn't have the courage to resolve a conflict in person or isn't able to resolve a situation with a superior often retaliates by making remarks that denigrate that person. These causes are not without effect on the individual and on the organization. Gossip, if not properly controlled and dealt with, can have disastrous consequences for both the employee and the organization.

1.2. The Positive and Negative Components of Gossip

Considered a type of behavior (Hafen, 2004), gossip can be positive (e.g., discussing a colleague's accomplishments) or negative (e.g., discussing a colleague's poor performance) (Fine & Rosnow, 1978). Some authors (Kniffin & Wilson, 2005; Baumeister, Zhang & Vohs, 2004) show that gossip is positive because it allows: the acquisition of information; relieving feelings of tension and anxiety, especially during periods of organizational change; strengthening social ties between employees; communication and enforcement of organizational standards; shaping and modelling. In short, gossip at work is part of employees' cultural and organizational learning. It gives voice and power to employees who are otherwise marginalized in organizations, facilitates cooperation, and improves the level of reciprocity, trust, and reputation of an organization's employees (Bok, 1982).

Other studies, on the other hand, show that gossip is essentially negative (Leaper & Holliday, 1995; Foster, 2004; Cole & Dalton, 2009). According to them, gossip leads to a climate of tension or fear, confusion of facts, altered perceptions and judgments, job loss, grief, a climate of friction that is not conducive to problem-solving, compromised reputations, closed office doors, staff reluctant to express their thoughts, etc. stress, decreased productivity, feelings of distress and confusion. Gossip undermines productivity and creates a climate of mistrust (Baker & Jones, 1996; Burke & Wise, 2003). In addition, the relationship between the two parties (the gossip and the listener) can have a subtle impact on the influence of gossip. Grosser et al. (2010) argue that

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when the two gossips have a close or intimate friendship, they can engage in both positive and negative gossip. Conversely, if gossips have a defining relationship as general colleagues or social contacts, they are more likely to engage in merely positive gossip.

2. Organizational climate

Organizational climate is a set of measurable properties (dimensions) of the work environment that people who live and work in that environment perceive directly or indirectly and that are thought to influence their motivation and behavior (Litwin & Stringer, 1968; Taguiri, Furnham & Gunter, 1993).

Denison (1996) identifies three approaches to organizational climate: The structural approach, which considers organizational climate as the result of the objective assessment of the organizational attributes that make up the organizational environment (James & Jones, 1974). The subjective or psychological approach that integrates interactions between employees and their environment. The perceptual approach that integrates the objective and subjective aspect of the organizational climate. She considers organizational climate as a phenomenon of the perception of organizational attributes, i.e. the perceptions that employees have about their work environment (Brunet & Savoie, 2000). In this study, we will use the conceptualization of Patterson et al. (2011) to operationalize organizational climate. The choice of this operationalization is justified by the fact that it takes into account the interactional nature of the organizational climate and thus brings together all the dimensions contained in other works. They operationalize the organizational climate in four dimensions that they call quadrants. The human relations model that contains norms and values associated with belonging, trust and cohesion, achieved through means such as training and human resource development. From this perspective, we hypothesize that human relationships influence gossip at work (HS1). The open systems model that emphasizes readiness, change, and innovation, where norms and values are associated with growth, resource acquisition, creativity, and adaptation. Relative to this idea, our hypothesis states that open systems influence gossip at work (HS2). The rational goal model focuses on the pursuit and achievement of well-defined goals, where norms and values are associated with productivity, efficiency, goal achievement, and performance return. At this level, we hypothesize that rational goals influence gossip at work (HS3). The internal process model that emphasizes stability, where the effects of environmental uncertainty are ignored or minimized. In this case, we hypothesize that internal processes influence gossip at work (HS4). Coordination and control are achieved through compliance with formal rules and procedures.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Our study was conducted among 230 employees from the public, private and semi-public sectors, representing 38.7%, 43.9% and 17.4% respectively in the city of Yaoundé. These include secondary school teachers, health care workers, employees of non-governmental organizations, occupying and performing various positions and functions. The two sexes are unequally distributed, with 62.6% or 144 men and 37.4% or 86 women. The average age is 31.87 (±5.95) years, with the youngest worker being 23 years and 48 years for the oldest. The average duration, in terms of time already put into the labour market, is 4.27 (± 3.11) years, with the shortest duration being one year compared to 15 for the longest. Single people are the most numerous (59.1%), followed by monogamous married people (27.4%), polygamous married people (4.3%), and common-law workers (9.1%). Nine of Cameroon's ten regions are represented, albeit unevenly, namely Adamawa (1.3%), Centre (25.2%), East (15.7%), Far North (2.2%), Littoral (10%), North (0.9%), North-West (8.3%), West (21.3%), and South (15.2%). To select these participants, we used the purposive sampling technique. The inclusion criteria are as follows: be a resident of the city of Yaoundé, be employed in the public, private or parapublic sector. The definition of the inclusion criteria led to the exclusion criteria which are here: being a resident of the city of Yaoundé is not employed in one of the selected sectors. To get in touch with the participants, we had the help of friends and colleagues working in one of the structures, or wrote a letter to the manager of the company who gave us his approval. All participants were screened and subjected to direct administration. We administered a questionnaire with scales and items related to the variables in our study. This information is summarized in the following table:

Table 1: Participants

Entitled	Gender		Ages	Sectors of activity		
	Male	Female	[23-48[	Public	Private	Parapublic
Number	144	86	230	150	50	30
Total		230	230	230		

3.2. Materials and procedure

Two (02) scales were used in this study for data collection. The first is Brady's (2015) gossip scale, which is composed of two dimensions, the first of which measures, *negative gossip towards the supervisor (5items, e.g., "asked a co-worker if he or she has a negative impression of something your manager did" and positive gossip towards the supervisor (5items, e.g., "praised your manager's actions by talking to a co-worker").* The second dimension measures negative gossip towards co-workers (5 items, e.g., "asked a co-worker if he or she had a negative impression of something another co-worker did"). Positive gossip towards co-workers (5 items, e.g., "praised an employee's actions by talking to another co-worker". The introductory statement was: "In the last few months, how many times have you........ Participants were asked to rate their perceptions of gossip and organizational climate by a number ranging from 1 to 7 on the Likert-type scale 1= "never" to 7= "more than once a day". The second scale is the organizational climate scale of Patterson et al. (2011). Participants were asked to rate their perceptions using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1= "strongly disagree" to 4= "strongly agree". They consisted of four (04) dimensions: human relations (29 items, e.g., "Managers let employees make their own decisions most of the time"); open system (16 items, e.g., "New ideas are easily accepted here"); rational objectives (28 items, e.g.: Employees have a good understanding of what the company is trying to do"; internal process (9items, e.g.: It is considered extremely important here to follow the set rules".

3.3. Data analysis

Our results are derived from two statistical analyses, descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. For descriptive analysis, we used indices of central tendency (mean, standard deviation and frequency) and correlations. We were inspired by Cohen and Cohen's (1988) interpretation that the value of the correlation is between -1 and 1 ($-1 < r < 1$). For this author, a correlation is weak when it is between .10 and .30 ($.10 < r < 30$); medium when it is between .30 and .50 ($.30 < r < 50$) and strong when it is between .50 and 1 ($.50 < r < 1$). The correlation is denoted r. For inferential analysis, we used regression analyses.

3.3.1. Gender and gossip at work

It is observed that men (M) and women (W) as a whole are willing to spread negative and positive gossip towards their supervisors and colleagues. The same is true for negative and positive gossip towards colleagues (Means NGSM= 5.12; Means. NGSW=5.46; Means PGSM=5, 3; Means. PGSW=5, 4); as well as negative and positive gossip towards colleagues (Means NGCM= 5.13; Means NGCW=5.41; Means PGCM=5, 15; Means. PGCW=5, 35). Levene's Equality of Variance test, which shows that the variance of men is not greater than that of women for either negative or positive gossip towards the supervisor (NGS: F=3.624; p=.058; PGS: F= 0.048; p= .827) than for negative and positive gossip towards co-workers (NGC: F= 1.220; p=.271; PGC: F=.933; p=.335). The t-test of equality of means confirms this equality and shows that the average of men is not higher than that of women for either negative or positive gossip towards the supervisor (NGS: t= -1.250; p=.212; PGS: t= -0.307; p=.759) than for negative and positive gossip towards co-workers (NGC: t= -1.086; p=.279; PGC: t=-0.806; p=.421). So we can say, with a 5% chance of being wrong, that women as much as men spread gossip at work. Specifically, the results do not show a significant difference between the average of women and men, and this for the different dimensions of gossip at work, which shows a p>.05.

3.3.2. Age and gossip at work

The results of the averages show that there is no difference between age and gossip at work. The same is true for negative and positive gossip towards supervisors (Means. NGS = 5.25; Means PGS=5.36); as well as negative and positive gossip towards co-workers (Means NGC= 5.24; Means.PGC=5.23). The correlation matrix shows that there is no linear statistical relationship between age and positive gossip towards the supervisor (r= 0.025 with p= .708), negative gossip towards the supervisor (r= -0.011 with p=.867) on the one hand; and positive gossip about co-workers (r=0.025 with p=.708) and negative gossip about co-workers (r=0.014 with p=.836). Hence age is not correlated with the practice of positive and negative gossip towards supervisor and co-workers. In other words, workers engage in gossip or avoid it regardless of their age.

3.3.3. Organizational Climate and Gossip at Work

Table 2: Distribution of Means and Standard Deviation of Participants by Workplace Gossip

Dimensions	Means by dimension	Standard deviation by dimension	Frequency (t de Student)
Negative gossip towards supervisor	5,2496	2,02296	More than 2 to 3 times a week
Positive gossip towards supervisor	5,3635	1,74868	More than 2 to 3 times a week
Negative gossip towards co-workers	5,2391	1,93836	More than 2 to 3 times a week
Positive gossip towards co-workers	5,2296	1,76739	More than 2 to 3 times a week

Based on the values and corresponding responses (1 = never, 2 = once a month, 3 = 2 - 3 times a month, 4 = once a week, 5 = 2 - 3 times a week, 6 = once a day, 7 = more than once a day), of the Brady (2015) gossip scale presented in Table 2, then the mean by dimension indicates scores significantly different from 5, both for negative gossip towards the supervisor (M=5.25), positive gossip towards the supervisor (M= 5.36), negative gossip towards co-workers (M=5.24), and for positive gossip towards co-workers (M=5.23). All of these forms of gossip are committed by study workers at a frequency greater than 2 to 3 times per week. Negative and positive gossip are not mutually exclusive, on the contrary, the tendency to do one presupposes the tendency to do the other in time.

Table 3: Distribution of Means and Standard Deviation of Participants by Organizational Climate

Dimensions	Means by dimension
Human relations	1,85
Open system	1,94
Rational Objectives	1,92
Internal Process	1,95

Table 3 shows the distribution of participant means and standard deviation by organizational climate. Referring to the values, and the corresponding responses (Strongly Disagree (1), Somewhat Disagree (2), Somewhat Agree (3), Strongly Agree (4)), it appears that the means by dimensions indicate low scores, both for human relationships (M=1.85), the open system (M=1.94), rational objectives (M=1.92), than for internal processes (M=1.95). These results indicate an unfavorable perception of the organizational climate by employees in Cameroonian companies.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix Between Organizational Climate Dimensions and Workplace Gossip

	Human relations	Open system	Rational Objectives	Internal Process	Organizational Climate	Total_ Negative gossip towards supervisor	Total_ Positive gossip towards supervisor	Total_ Negative gossip towards co-workers	Positive gossip towards co-workers
Human relations	1	,971**	,968**	,933**	,989**	-,847**	-,808**	-,837**	-,840**
Open system		1	,962**	,932**	,983**	-,835**	-,783**	-,817**	-,818**
Rational Objectives			1	,960**	,991**	-,857**	-,817**	-,851**	-,849**
Internal Process				1	,964**	-,890**	-,873**	-,888**	-,876**

Organizational Climate	1	-,865[**]	-,825[**]	-,856[**]	-,855[**]

**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 (two-sided) level.

Table 4 presents the correlation matrix between organizational climate and workplace gossip. This table also shows a strong negative correlation between the dimensions of organizational climate and those of gossip at work. This link is very strong since the values of r are close to 1. As a result, there is a strong negative linear statistical relationship between human relationships and negative gossip towards supervisors (r= -0.847 with p< .001), positive gossip towards supervisors (r= -0.808 with p< .001) on the one hand; and human relationships and negative co-worker gossip (r=-0.837 with p<.001) and positive co-worker gossip (r=-0.840 with p<.001).There is a strong negative linear statistical relationship between the open system and negative gossip towards supervisors (r= -0.835 with p< .001), positive gossip towards supervisors (r= -0.783 with p< .001) on the one hand; and open system and negative co-worker gossip (r=-0.817 with p<.001) and positive co-worker gossip (r=-0.818 with p<.001). There is a strong negative linear statistical relationship between rational goals and negative gossip towards supervisors (r= -0.857 with p< .001), positive gossip towards supervisors (r= -0.817 with p< .001) on the one hand; and rational goals and negative co-worker gossip (r=-0.851 with p<.001) and positive co-worker gossip (r=-0.849 with p<.001).

Internal processes are strongly negatively correlated with negative gossip towards supervisors (r= -0.890 with p< .001), positive gossip towards supervisors (r= -0.873 with p< .001) on the one hand; and rational goals and negative gossip toward co-workers (r=-0.888 with p<.001) and positive gossip toward co-workers (r=-0.876 with p<.001). Overall, organizational climate is strongly correlated with negative gossip toward supervisors (r= -0.865 with p<.001), positive gossip toward supervisors (r=-0.825 with p<.001) on the one hand; and organizational climate and negative co-worker gossip (r=-0.856 with p<.001) and positive co-worker gossip (r=-0.855 with p<.001). However, this correlation is negative.

4. Discussions

4.1. Gender, Age and Gossip at Work

Our results showed that gender and age do not discriminate the practice of gossip, whether positive or negative; In other words, on the one hand, workers as well as workers engage in the propagation of gossip in the same way, and on the other hand, workers engage in gossip or avoid it regardless of their age. This is because gossip is universal and occurs equally between men and women in an organizational setting; As much as women, men are likely to spread gossip (Bergmann, 1993). Thus, there is no difference between young men and women in this respect (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990). In terms of age, previous work contradicts our findings and shows that women aged 26 to 35 tend to spend the most time chatting, with an average of 74 minutes spent gossiping per day (De Backer et al., 2007). He points out that the older the participants, the more negative gossip they spread than the younger ones.

4.2. Organizational Climate and Gossip at Work
➢ **Human relations and gossip at work**

Our results showed a significant correlation between negative (r= -0.847 with p<.001) and positive (r=-0.808 with p<.001) gossip towards supervisors on the one hand, and with negative (r= -0.837 with p<.001) and positive (r= -0.840 with p<.001) gossip towards co-workers on the other hand and confirm our first hypothesis. The human relations model contains norms and values associated with belonging, trust, and cohesion, achieved through means such as training and human resource development Patterson et al. (2011). It refers to the valuation and treatment of employees, to autonomy in the workplace. Thus, these results can be explained by the theory of self-determination, which shows that the individual's self-determined behavior is prompted by affective and cognitive motives that push him or her to maintain a positive state of self that translates into a perception of oneself as competent and effective (El Akremi, Nasr & Camerman, 2006).

Déci and Ryan (2002) postulate that humans, innately, tend to satisfy three basic psychological needs: the need for autonomy, competence, and affiliation. The need for autonomy refers to the need for the individual to perceive himself as being at the origin of his actions. The need for competence is the act of acting effectively with one's environment and achieving demonstrable results. The need for affiliation, on the other hand, refers to the continual desire to feel connected to other individuals, supported and loved by them. Thus, gossip can help meet these needs, as it provides individuals with the opportunity to gain insights into their work context, influence others, and create connections with others. This perspective would suggest that gossip is more frequent among those who experience these basic needs more strongly, which will depend on their perception of

the human relationship dimension of the organizational climate, based on the way in which the employee is able to control his organizational climate, better his organizational relations and his various tasks. If we focus on the valuation and treatment of employees in this dimension, we can explain the link between human relationships and gossip through Greenberg's (1987) theory of organizational justice, which states that fair treatment is rewarded with cooperation, assistance, and support. Injustice, on the other hand, is experienced as a moral transgression motivating dissatisfaction, non-cooperation, and revenge (Bies & Tripp, 2001; Bordia, Restubog & Tang, 2008). In this way, employees who will be treated fairly will be able to spread positive gossip, unlike those who will be treated unfairly. The latter will be prone to spreading negative gossip at work.

One of the elements that makes up human relationships is participation. The latter is defined as the influence of employees on business decision-making. As a result, organizational decision-making and policies are shared at the highest levels (Wert & Salovey, 2004). Employees' lack of involvement in organizational decision-making leads them to seek information about themselves through gossip. Fair procedures are seen as mechanisms that strengthen social cohesion and demonstrate that employees are seen as full members of the organization (Tremblay et al., 2000). Some studies show that the mere threat of becoming a target of gossip has a powerful effect on collaborative decisions among employees, as employees fear the reputation of gossip and are driven to adopt more cooperative behavior (Beersma & Van Kleef, 2011; Piazza & Bering, 2008). In psychology, gossip is often described as a kind of currency, negotiated and valued by the taker according to its timeliness, usefulness and especially its rarity. They are used in groups to exclude outsiders (Gluckman, 1963). Thus, new adherents find it difficult to integrate into informal conversations, where meanings are firmly anchored in long and complicated histories and, in the case of professional groups, frequently expressed in codified language (Gluckman, 1963; Dunbar, 2004).

> ### Open system and gossip at work
Our second hypothesis was formulated as follows: The positive and negative aspects of gossip at work vary according to the quality of the open system among Cameroonian employees. Our results showed a significant correlation between the open system and negative (r= -0.835 with p< .001) and positive (r= -0.783 with p<.001) gossip towards supervisors on the one hand, and with negative (r = -0.817 with p< .001) and positive (r= -0.818 with p< .001) gossip towards colleagues on the other hand and confirm our second hypothesis. The open systems model emphasizes preparedness, change, and innovation, where norms and values are associated with growth, resource acquisition, creativity, and adaptation. March and Simon (1958) suggest that the decision-making process results from the conflict of interest that characterizes members of a firm whose domains generally compete for limited resources. Thus, inequality in the distribution of resources can lead to gossip in an organizational environment. In another case, avoiding a direct conflict between an employee and the hierarchy can lead to the spread of gossip.

According to Drory and Romm (1990), the existence of conflict is inevitable in an enterprise. Some individuals may wish to avoid it and therefore not resist. Thus, the policy of rewarding and promoting employees in organizational settings stimulates the spread of gossip in the workplace. Some key elements of organizational climate are systems, practices, and leadership style (Moran & Volkwein, 1992). When these aspects are perceived unfavorably by the employee, it leads to gossip. The latter is a communication process that allows employees to express their dissatisfaction and thinking about the organizational system and leadership style. For example, employees spread negative or positive gossip about how to lead superiors. In the onboarding process of the new employee, the old ones are usually led to spread positive or negative gossip about their manager in order to prevent the new one. A good manager is one who takes note of the information about the members for whom he or she is responsible. As a result, the search for information on these members leads some managers to spread gossip at work by listening to the words of their spy in the workplace. To inform them about employee behaviors and complaints. Organizational climate is defined through four dimensions: the nature of interpersonal relationships, the nature of hierarchy, the nature of work, and the approach to coaching and rewards (Schneider et al., 1996). Constant innovation in problem-solving can quickly render subunit knowledge obsolete, which explains the nature of the constant change in energy flow. The foregoing explanations for the relationship between the open system and gossip at work.

> ### Rational objectives and gossip at work
Our third hypothesis was formulated as follows: The positive and negative aspects of gossip at work vary depending on the quality of rational objectives among Cameroonian employees. Our results showed a significant correlation between rational goals and negative (r= -0.857 with p<.001) and positive (r=-0.817 with p<.001) gossip towards supervisors on the one hand, and with negative (r= -0.851 with p< .001) and positive (r = -0.849 with p< .001) gossip towards colleagues on the other hand and confirm our third hypothesis.

Rational objectives focus on the pursuit and achievement of well-defined objectives, where norms and values are associated with productivity, efficiency, goal achievement, and performance return. Self-determination theory explains how individuals are involved by feeling competent, capable of achieving their goals and controlling their behaviour, in short, of feeling autonomous (Déci & Ryan, 1985). It is part of the theories of self-regulation and metacognition, which study the processes that intervene between the cognitive and affective mechanisms of the individual when he or she seeks to achieve goals (Roussel, 2000). Employees talk to others when they think they can influence or change opinions, and the more people gossip, the more informal influence they have in the eyes of their colleagues (Grosser, Lopez-Kidwell, & Labianca, 2010). Through gossip, line managers can influence employees' opinions to adhere to their goals in a number of ways. Gossip exerts social control by pressuring members of their network who pursue selfish interests to meet group norms, or by praising top performers (Baumeister et al., 2004; Dunbar, 2004; Feinberg et al., 2012). In addition, gossip allows employees with low power to indirectly oppose or support others by damaging their reputations or enhancing their reputations (Wert & Salovey, 2004; Wu, Balliet & Van Lange, 2016). Gossip can give employees some control over their work situation (Noon & Delbridge, 1993). Employees whose control is reduced due to the hierarchical nature of organizations may question management's prerogatives and boycott their actions through gossip (Ellwardt et al., 2012b; Sommerfeld et al., 2008).

> **Internal process and gossip at work**

Our results showed a significant correlation between internal process and negative (r= -0.890 with p<.001) and positive (r=-0.873 with p<.001) gossip towards supervisors on the one hand, and with negative (r= -0.888 with p< .001) and positive (r= -0.876 with p<.001) gossip towards colleagues on the other hand, and confirm our fourth hypothesis. The internal process model represents the classic bureaucracy. The dimensions that may reflect this model are: formalization (a concern related to formal rules and procedures) and tradition (established ways of doing things are valued). Our findings are explained by the fact that as an observational learning mechanism (Baumeister et al., 2004), gossip allows employees to understand and interact with their work environment and to gain knowledge about the goals, values and norms set by supervisors.

Considered a process of social control, as it involves sharing reputation information about the past behavior of members of an organization and helping them assess their trustworthiness. It allows members of an organization to track the actions of their interaction partners, which is particularly useful because users cannot personally observe all of the behaviors of others (Dunbar, 2004; Wu et al., 2015; 2016). It limits and controls the ability of individuals to pursue their own interests and serves as a control device to ensure the collaboration of members of an organization, as well as the maintenance of employee performance (Beersma & Van Kleef, 2011, 2012; Sommerfeld et al., 2007, 2008; Wu et al., 2015, 2016). With respect to the concern related to the formal rules and procedures of the organizational climate, gossip helps groups communicate and reinforce organizational morale, values, and norms by providing concrete examples of the application of standards to employees (Baumeister et al., 2004; McAndrew et al., 2007). It helps define and communicate the social identity and boundaries of the organization by establishing, who is or is not considered a member of an organization and what behaviors or attributes are expected of employees. In addition, being shared privately with trusted individuals, gossip facilitates the creation of social and emotional bonds between organizational members. Visualizes the organization's goals and common interests in relation to other potentially rival organizations. Although gossip is socially frowned upon, people are encouraged to gossip to warn others about breaking the rules (Beersma & Van Kleef 2012).

Conclusion

This study made it possible to understand that gossip at work is not only negative, but can help organizational communication and taking it into account in an organizational environment can help to better manage this phenomenon. Specifically, the results of this research suggest that organizational climate should be considered, as it plays a role in preventing harmful gossip in the workplace. These findings can be used to help organizations develop policies and standards to promote respectful and positive interactions among employees, while ensuring that a supportive organizational climate is maintained. This work also helps educate employees about the negative effects of gossip and the importance of maintaining a healthy work environment that can help prevent this toxic behavior.

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