

Certain Habits Done by Some Academics in their Workplace

Salim AL Shukaily¹, Rabee AL Shukaili², Mohammed AL Shammakhi³, Maha Al Darei⁴,
Hilal AL-Shandudi⁵ and Younes Audeh⁶

^{1,2,3,4,5,6} University of Technology and Applied Sciences- Ibri –Sultanate of Oman

Abstract

This paper examines university faculty members' perceptions about some bad habits that normally happen at academic institutions such as gossiping and backbiting. To highlight this serious issue, the researchers distributed a questionnaire among (20) male and female teachers in AL Dhahira Region- the Sultanate of Oman. What has been uncovered and revealed throughout this paper is that gossip is a frequently used communication means everywhere, although some participants have different perceptions regarding this issue. In addition, the results showed that gossip might be seen as a way of conveying information and developing relations among teachers at schools, colleges, and universities. However, in terms of harmful effects, gossip is a threat to schools' stakeholders. Discussion, explanation, and recommendations will be highlighted in detail throughout this article.

Keywords: academic, backbiting, gossip, harm, participants, professors, stakeholders

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Study Problem

This study aims to explain the problem that some teachers suffer from: gossiping. What effect does this problem have on students, in particular? Why do some teachers gossip about and backbite others?

Study Objectives

- uncovering and exploring the dangerous and bad effects of gossiping about students' performance and well-being, both, academically and personally.
- uncovering the causes beyond "gossiping" that some teachers do?
- determining the extent and limit that would be badly affected as long as gossiping exists at certain academic institutions.
- suggesting solutions to this serious problem.

Research Question

- Why do teachers gossip about their students and colleagues?
- Do social, economic, psychological factors help create a gossiping community?

Introduction

Gossip might be explained and defined as a means of sending, or conveying an evaluative piece of information or news about an absent person who is not aware of that. This act is utterly refused and rejected by all religions and traditions worldwide and considered disgusting, bad and untrustworthy behavior that is condemned by all as a violation of human rights around the globe. Moreover, some people consider gossiping as *Backbiting* and *Sin*. Despite its negative effect, a number of people, scholars in particular, admit that people, in general, are interested in sharing, conveying, and receiving information, and ready to spend much time gossiping. Though condemned, gossip is widespread fabricated stories. In fact, gossiping and spreading fake news against rivals could damage their reputation and prestige in society. No matter what benefits achieved by gossiping, it remains a disgusting and shameful habit. This paper discusses the act of gossiping at academic institutions and checks whether educators do gossip, weave and fabricate fake stories about their students and /or colleagues.

Literature Review

“Gossip is the root of all evil. If an individual has a problem, it should be addressed in a healthy, productive manner in which all parties feel as though the outcome is mutually beneficial” (Bilbiloski, 2019, Para. 1).

Gossip is defined as mischievous or idle talk about the affairs of others. It is usually degrading and belittling, and always unnecessary. Backbiting is making a verbal attack on someone behind their backs when they're not around to defend themselves. It's similar to gossip, but more malicious and with more evil intent. Jealousy indicates resentment and hostile envy toward someone because of their seeming advantages, good fortune, etc. (Whelchel, 2015, Para. 2).

Gossiping has become universal; almost all nations do that. It does not spread only among a certain and specific class in the society; it has become a common phenomenon. Academics: teachers, students, college and university doctors may gossip about their colleagues, students and administration.

You know the phrase “You are what you eat”? It applies to teaching, too. You are what you teach (well, okay, who you teach). For all the benefits of spending time days with young energetic people, we also pick up on some negative teen traits. The result is that teachers are often worse than the kids when it comes to gossiping (Bilbiloski, 2019, Para. 3).

In fact, there is a reason why some people gossip; if they work in a place where there is some fun, joy, amusement, etc. This environment encourages employees to feel free to talk in any topic and person, including themselves. Office life leads to talking about some issues and peers, as well.

The real reason teachers gossip is because life at a school is just more fun than what is happening in most of our peers’ lives. While they went to work in offices and sit in a cubicle with their stapler all day, we get to relive (over and over again) what should have been the “best days of our lives.” (Bilbiloski, 2019, Para. 8).

Why Gossip

People tend to gossip about, and sometimes backbite, their colleagues if there is something funny, or juicy to talk about, or even if there is a strange issue such as a *scandal*. It is a sort of passing time, or demeaning. No matter what the cause is, it is a bad habit, especially if done by those who are supposed to be considered as the elite in the society and top of the hierarchy—academics.

There is no definitive answer to this question since it would depend on the individual teachers and their personal relationships. However, in general, most people tend to gossip about others, whether they are teachers or not. This is especially true if there is something juicy or scandalous to talk about. So it is likely that teachers do gossip about each other, although it is likely to be more subtle than if they were not educators (Bilbiloski, 2023, Para.1).

Teachers tend to gossip about their colleagues and even students because they work together for a long time daily and know many things about each other’s affairs. It sometimes takes the shape of jokes with good intentions and just for fun, but in the end, it is unacceptable. Another reason why teachers gossip is that they all work in a competitive environment which means some individuals should appear as distinguished. This might not be achieved without destroying others’ reputation by gossiping – the worst weapon ever.

There are a few reasons why teachers might be more likely to gossip about each other than other professionals. For one, teachers are in a unique position where they have access to personal information about their students. They may also know more about their colleagues than people in other professions, which can lead to juicy gossip. Additionally,

teachers can be competitive with each other, which can lead to backstabbing and rumors (Bilbiloski, 2023, Para.2).

Curiosity works. If a teacher feels that someone gossips about him/ her, he should go directly to the gossip and ask him/her about the reason why he/she does that. This policy works and clears things and reduces gossiping to the minimum.

If you are curious about whether your teachers gossip about you, the best way to find out is to ask them directly. This can be a difficult conversation to have, but it can be helpful in clearing the air. If your teachers are gossiping about you, it is best to address the issue head-on and put an end to it (Bilbiloski, 2023, Para.4).

If you are concerned that your teachers are gossiping about you behind your back, there are a few things you can do to try and address the issue. First, try to be aware of any behavior that might be causing them to gossip about you. If you are acting out of character or doing something that is making you stand out, it is possible that your teachers are talking about you (Bilbiloski, 2023, Para.5).

Jealousy plays a crucial role in gossiping about people around. The issue becomes more if it develops to backbiting and fabricating fake news and information about individuals.

Well, as unpleasant as these topics are, the facts are, many of us work in environments where these three things are common occurrences. How do you deal with it? I've noticed three common reactions you'll find to gossip, backbiting and/or jealousy (Whelchel, 2015, Para. 1).

There are some ways to retaliate to gossiping. Some victims prefer to not reply and keep silent though they feel bitterness inside themselves, and prefer to avoid confrontation for some reasons. But sooner or later, this will burst and result in bad consequences.

On the other hand, there are others who simply sigh huge sighs of frustration and resign themselves to the inevitableness of the situation, not because they don't want to fight, but because they don't know how and they're afraid. Lots of people do that, particularly women, because they want to avoid confrontation. These people often harbor a great deal of anger underneath the surface, which comes out in other unhealthy ways. (Whelchel, 2015, Para.3).

When insecure, gossipers can practice their bad habit. They normally do that as a way to show they are in a good shape and look better before others surrounding them. Whether they do that with good or bad intentions, this act does not justify gossiping.

One important element in dealing with people is to understand why they are the way they are. Well, one reason people make these malicious, unflattering, spiteful comments about others is that they feel very insecure about themselves, and this is a destructive way they have developed to try to make themselves look better. It certainly doesn't justify their behavior, but you can at least see why they do it, and that helps you cope with them better (Whelchel, 2015, Para.7).

From a religious view point, Islam insists that people should not gossip about or backbite others. It is clearly mentioned in the Holy Quran:

O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful. [Quran, 49:12]

Some teachers, by nature, cannot live without causing troubles to others. Tension and gossiping have the priority in their lives. They think they can get some reputation and good appearance. They tend to pull everybody into their environment to create problems for them. Some teachers resist and refuse to fall in that disgusting domain; it is wise to survive in this situation.

You see, there are teachers who can't live without the tension, the backbiting, the gossip, and the scheming. They revel in climbing an imaginary stratum of power and reputation. A small minority, such people can be found in every organization, education or otherwise. The problem is that they pull everyone else into the same vortex. Though you may go kicking and screaming (and venting to your family), you feel as if you have to take part just to survive (Linsin, 2023, Para. 2).

People gossip because it's a way to get attention. It's a way to make themselves feel important and to feel like they're part of something. Gossiping can also be a way to feel closer to someone. When you gossip about someone, you're sharing something intimate with the person you're talking to (Gupta, 2023, Para. 20).

As a precautionary step, in order to avoid being gossiped about, one should hold his tongue, control his words, and watch his back. "You have to watch your back, build alliances, and defend your record. You have to calculate the words you use or hold your tongue or work the angles" (Linsin, 2023, Para. 3).

"Some helpful guidelines: Keep your professional distance. Never take criticism personally. Treat everyone with the same kindness. Don't try to look good. Share your best stuff. Speak sparingly. Be humble. Concentrate on your students. Be impossible to

offend. Take the high road. Stay busy. Keep secrets. Don't gossip" (Linsin, 2023, Para. 6).

Gossiping about students seems an ongoing process; a teacher was gossiping about some of his students warning his colleague teachers that some bad students are going to join their classes this year. He is saying bad words about them.

One of his old teachers, Mr Sherman, was nearby gossiping with staff, warning them about some of the kids coming into their grade. He said, "Good luck with *my child* this year. He's always getting into something and doesn't know how to shut up or listen. I'm glad I don't have to deal with him this year (Katelaris, 2023, Paras.4-5).

Teachers should not gossip about students. It is unprofessional and could damage the student's reputation. It is also a violation of the student's privacy. If teachers are caught talking about students, it will make the students feel uncomfortable and make them not want to come to school (Gupta, 2023, Para. 5).

As a sort of advice, or warning, teachers should not take part in gossiping. It is said that the schools are the center and environment of weaving fake stories and gossip in the community. Teachers' lounge and cafeteria are the best places to gossip.

The faculty and staff within a school should never start, participate in, or promote gossip. However, the truth is that all too often schools are the focal point of gossip in the community. The teacher's lounge or the teacher's table in the cafeteria is often the center of where this gossip occurs (Meador, 2018, Para. 2).

Nobody denies that gossip is disappointing and frustrating. It creates obstacles between the body of teachers and staff at a certain school. It splits teams and groups of teachers in half, and in the end, students are the victims, and face the bad consequences.

(Meador, (2018, Para. 3) concludes: Gossip is frustrating because it builds walls between teachers and staff members that need to be working together. Instead, they feud because someone said something about the other to someone else. The entire idea of gossip among a school faculty and staff is disheartening. Gossip can split a school's faculty and staff in half and in the end, the people who are hurt the worst will be your student body.

A possible way of dealing with this grave issue-gossip- is to conduct local conferences, meetings, symposia to educate faculty members and staff about the bad results and consequences and problems caused by "gossiping".

Teachers should have each other's back, not talk behind each other's back. Gossip creates a large part of your [discipline issues](#) with students, and it will create even larger problems within your faculty and staff if it is not dealt with quickly. The key to minimizing the

gossip issues among your faculty/staff is to educate them on the topic (Meador, 2018, Para. 4)

Have regular conversations with your faculty and staff members discussing the bigger picture about the damage that gossip can cause. Furthermore, implement strategic team, build activities that bring them together and naturally forge solid relationships. When it comes to gossip, make sure they know what your expectations are and how you will deal with it when it becomes an issue (Meador, 2018, Para. 4).

The teacher being gossiped about, has the right to take this case to the court if he/she gets abused, and faces severe problems that affect his academic or personal life which will affect his students, as well.

Gossiping can also lead to civil lawsuits if the person being gossiped about suffers damages as a result. In some cases, the damages suffered could be severe enough to warrant punitive damages. So, while gossiping may seem like harmless fun, it can actually have some very serious consequences (Gupta, 2023, Para. 13).

Methodology

The researchers apply the analytical approach that concentrates on getting data from a reliable and dependable source to get accurate results about the widespread problem—gossiping and backbiting.

Participants

This study was applied to twenty male and female school teachers in AL Dhahira Region in the Sultanate of Oman. Some are Omani, others are expats who come from different Arab countries. Their first language is Arabic, and they teach different subjects: Arabic, history, Islamic culture, etc.

Nature of Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of (10) questions: (5) Yes/No, (5) Agree/ Disagree. This is shown in the appendix page.

Findings and Discussion

Table1

1. Faculty members and staff at certain academic institutions should never start, take part in, or promote gossip.	Yes 20	No -
	100%	100%

1. Faculty members and staff at certain academic institutions should never start, take part in, or promote gossip.
20 responses

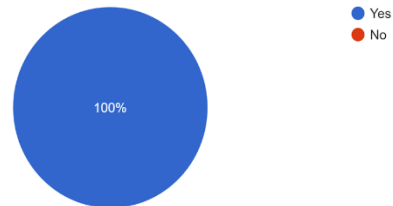


Table 1 shows that all participants -(100%)- believe that faculty members and staff at certain academic institutions should never start, take part in, or promote gossip. This is a good measure of the participants' perception that gossip in academic institutions has the potential to be extremely harmful.

2. A possible way of dealing with this grave issue-gossip- is to conduct local conferences, meetings, and symposia to educate faculty members and staff about the bad consequences of gossiping.	Yes 17	No 3
	85%	15%

2. A possible way of dealing with this grave issue-gossip- is to conduct local conferences, meetings, and symposia to educate faculty members and staff about the bad consequences of gossiping.
20 responses

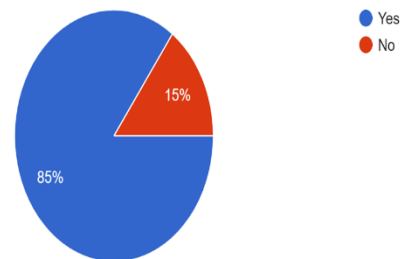


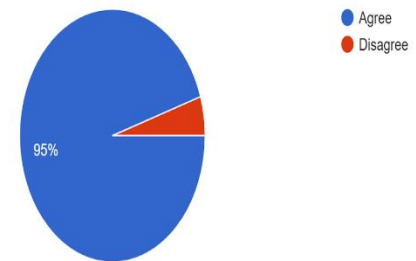
Table 2

Table 2 illustrates that 85% of participants agree that a possible way of dealing with this grave issue-gossip- is to conduct local conferences, meetings, and symposia to educate faculty members and staff about the bad consequences of gossiping.

Table 3

6. Gossiping and backbiting, and bad rumors, especially at academic institutions, result in severe troubles and consequences for the academic community—students, teachers, administration, and employees- personally and professionally.	Agree	Disagree
	19	1
	95%	5%

6. Gossiping and backbiting, and bad rumors, especially at academic institutions, result in severe troubles and consequences for the academic commu...and employees- personally and professionally.
20 responses



The findings indicate that most participants - (95%)- believe that gossiping and backbiting, and bad rumors, especially at academic institutions, result in severe troubles and consequences for the academic community—students, teachers, administrators, and employees- personally and professionally.

Table 4

9. One way why gossipers gossip is that they feel insecure about themselves.	Agree	Disagree
	15	5
	75%	25%

9. One way why gossipers gossip is that they feel insecure about themselves.
20 responses

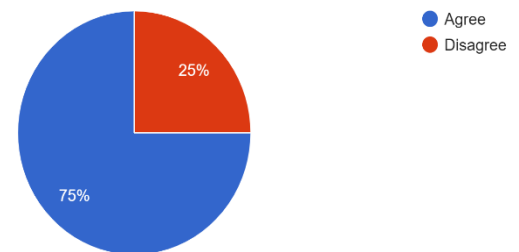


Table 4 shows that most of the participants -(75%)- agree that One way why gossipers gossip is that they feel insecure about themselves. Thus, it is evident that gossip-seeking behaviour can be influenced by feelings of insecurity.

Recommendations

- All people, especially teachers, should not talk behind each other's back.
- Teachers should set a positive example of ethics at academic institutions.
- Teachers should be humble, concentrate on their students, and be impossible to offend.

- Although gossiping might seem harmless fun, it could have some very serious consequences for gossipers and victims.
- One way why gossipers gossip is that they feel insecure about themselves; it is wise to leave the place where they are.
- Be informed that gossip is the root of all evil and mischief; avoid this environment.
- One important element one should consider while dealing with people around them is to understand why they are the way they are.

Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to thank all male and female teachers in AL Dhahira Region in the Sultanate of Oman- who participated in this questionnaire without whom things would not have come this way.

Conclusion

To conclude, gossiping and backbiting, and spreading bad rumors, especially at academic institutions, result in severe troubles and consequences for the academic community—students, teachers, administrators, and employees: personally and professionally. These bad habits are, most of the time, fabricated and woven on purpose to demean and make fun of others, and cause them harm. It is natural to make sense of things around us, but it becomes uncomfortable not being aware of that. Gossiping is a crime and the gossipers should be sued and punished as he/she negatively affects the way people view and see themselves and others. Teachers who gossip and weave fake stories about their colleagues should look for another job, as this career is improper for them; they represent a destructive, rather than constructive, means wherever they work.

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Appendices

Questionnaire

Dear participants,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information for an article titled “Certain Habits Done by Some Educators in their Workplace”. This information will not be misused, and you will not be identified.

Part One

Yes/ No questions ¹

1. Faculty members and staff at certain academic institutions should never start, take part in, or promote gossip.

(A)Yes

(B)No

2. A possible way of dealing with this grave issue-gossip- is to conduct local conferences, meetings, and symposia to educate faculty members and staff about the bad consequences of gossiping.

(A)Yes

(B)No

3. Gossip is disappointing and causes frustration; creates obstacles between the body of teachers and staff at a certain academic institution.

4. Teachers should not gossip about their students, as it is unprofessional, and could damage students' reputation-personally and academically.

(A)Yes

(B)No

5. Gossiping and spreading fake news against rivals could damage their reputation and prestige in the society.

(A)Yes

(B)No

Part Two**Agree / Disagree**

6. Gossiping and backbiting, and bad rumors, especially at academic institutions, result in severe troubles and consequences for the academic community—students, teachers, administrators, and employees- personally and professionally.

(A) Agree

(B) Disagree

7. Warning! all people, especially teachers, should not talk negatively behind each other's back.

(A) Agree

(B) Disagree

8. Teachers should set a positive example of ethics at academic institutions.

(A) Agree

(B) Disagree

9. One way why gossipers gossip is that they feel insecure about themselves.

(A) Agree

(B) Disagree

10. One should remember that gossip is the root of all evil and mischief.

(A) Agree

(B) Disagree

About the Researchers

Maha AL Darei is an ESL/EFL instructor at the Preparatory Studies Centre - University of Technology and Applied Sciences- the Sultanate of Oman. She has CELTA from Polyglot and EFL from Birmingham University, UK. She has been teaching for the past nine years. She is interested in using digital technologies in EFL/ESL classroom.

Salim AL Shukaily is a lecturer of English at the Preparatory Studies Centre - University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Ibri- the Sultanate of Oman. He has many years of experience. His main interest is EFL/ESL.

Rabee AL Shukeili is an experienced and dedicated professional who holds a B.A in Education and English Language Teaching -University of Leeds, United Kingdom, Diploma of Teaching English. MA in Applied Linguistics- University of Southern Queensland, Australia. Currently he is a lecturer of English at the Preparatory Studies Centre - University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Ibri- the Sultanate of Oman.

Mohammed Al Shammakhi is a Lecturer at the Preparatory Studies Center, UTAS, Ibri, in the Sultanate of Oman. He has done master's in Applied Linguistics from University of Southern Queensland in Australia. He has been teaching English language in various schools and colleges of technology for the past twenty-nine years. His major interest area is designing teaching materials.

Hilal Alshandudi is an ESL/EFL instructor at the Preparatory Studies Centre - University of Technology and Applied Sciences- the Sultanate of Oman. He holds a Ph.D. in Educational Management and Leadership from the University of Reading- UK. He has been teaching English for a long time at a number of schools, colleges and the Ministry of Education, College of Health Sciences in Oman. His research interest is —Educational Leadership and Management.

Younes Audeh is a lecturer at the Preparatory Studies Centre - University of Technology and Applied Sciences- the Sultanate of Oman. He is an M.A. holder in Applied Linguistics from Indiana University of Pennsylvania- USA. He has been teaching English as an ESL/EFL for a long time. He has taught at a number of colleges and universities in different countries: Jordan, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and the Sultanate of Oman. His research interest is “academic writing”.