

“Gossip” in Organizational Communication Between Nurse, Doctor and Dentist Academicians

Hemşire, Doktor ve Diş Hekimi Akademisyenler Arasında Örgütsel İletişimde “Dedikodu”^{1*}

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Gossip which is unheeded or even tried to be prevented is not possible to get rid of it altogether even in the best organizations. Therefore, it is important that managers should manage gossip to maximize its positive effects, by controlling it, rather than trying to suppress it.

AIM: This descriptive study was conducted to determine whether the gossip is used in organizational communication by academicians.

METHODS: This research was conducted with academicians in nursing, dentistry and medicine that offer education about human health at a public university (N=177). A survey form developed by the researchers after a review of the literature was used for data collection. The ethics committee's consent and written official permissions were obtained for the study. The data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution tests and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 22.0 software.

RESULTS: As a result of the evaluation of the data, it was determined that the academicians were generally gossiping about their working conditions, in order to share information face-to-face with their friends, and when they felt angry. It was also determined that they felt remorse and internal stress and tried not to gossip again, yet their stress levels fell, their self-confidences increased and they felt relieved after they gossiped.

CONCLUSION: The results of the research showed that academicians in the field of health are occasionally gossiping.

Keywords: Academician, gossip, health, organizational communication

ÖZ

GİRİŞ: Örgütlerde önemsenmeyen, görmezlikten gelinen, hatta engellenmeye çalışılan dedikodunun en iyi örgütlerde bile tamamen ortadan kaldırılması olası değildir. Bu nedenle yöneticilerin bunu bastırmaya çalışmak yerine kontrol altında tutarak, olumlu etkilerini artıracak şekilde yönetmeleri büyük önem taşımaktadır.

AMAÇ: Araştırma, örgütsel iletişimde dedikodunun akademisyenler tarafından kullanılma durumunu belirlemek amacıyla tanımlayıcı tasarımda gerçekleştirilmiştir.

YÖNTEM: Araştırma, bir kamu üniversitesine bağlı olarak insan sağlığı ile ilgili eğitim yapan tıp, diş hekimliği ve hemşirelik alanındaki akademisyenler (N=177) üzerinde yapılmıştır. Verilerin toplanmasında, araştırmacılar tarafından literatürden yararlanılarak oluşturulan bir anket formu kullanılmıştır. Araştırma için etik kurul onayı ile yazılı resmi izinler alınmıştır. Veriler bilgisayar ortamında Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for Windows 20.0 programı kullanılarak frekans ve yüzde dağılımı testleri ile analiz edilmiştir.

BULGULAR: Verilerin değerlendirilmesi sonucunda akademisyenlerin genel olarak arkadaşlarıyla, kızgınlık hissettiklerinde, yüz yüze, bilgi paylaşmak amacıyla, çalışma koşulları ile ilgili konularda dedikodu yaptıkları belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca dedikodu yaptıktan sonra vicdan azabı çektikleri/iç gerginlik yaşadıkları ve bir daha dedikodu yapmamaya çalıştıkları, ancak dedikodu yaptıklarında streslerinin azaldığı, kendilerine güvenlerinin arttığı, rahatladıkları da saptanmıştır.

SONUÇ: Araştırma sonuçları sağlık alanındaki akademisyenlerin dedikoduyu kullanma oranının düşük olduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Akademisyen, dedikodu, sağlık, örgütsel iletişim

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important factors in the success of managers and their organizations is good organizational communication (Atak, 2005). Organizational communication includes not only formal communication, but also the informal communication of information. More than 65% of the communication in an organization is established using informal communication channels (Dunbar, 2004; Atak, 2005; Eroğlu, 2005).

Informal communication spontaneously occurs as a natural consequence of personal intimacy and relationships in environments where employees know each other well. This form of communication tends to be ‘gossip’ (Atak, 2005; Hopkinson, 2010). Gossip is defined in the literature as “empty talk,” “chatter,” “talking about daily life, social or personal events,” “women’s talk,” and “the exchange of personal information (positive or negative) in an evaluative way (positive or negative) about absent third parties” (Michelson and Mouly, 2000; Kurland and Pelled, 2000; Rosnow, 2001; Foster, 2004; Waddington and Fletcher, 2005).

Gossip, the oldest form of communication in professional life, has been a topic of sociology, anthropology, psychology and modern management by this time (Eroğlu, 2005; Kniffin and Wilson, 2010). It is considered as a social fact and an inevitable component of social and organizational life (Foster, 2004; Yılmaz, 2009; Kniffin and Wilson, 2010).

Gossip is largely a spontaneous form of verbal communication that two or more people use to praise or accuse people and to share valuable and important information (Kurland and Pelled, 2000; Michelson and Mouly, 2000; Foster, 2004; Atak, 2005; Waddington and Fletcher, 2005; Thomas and Rozell, 2007). People gossip to reduce anxiety, to relax while gathering or spreading information, to strengthen friendships, to socialize, to feel belonging to a group, to establish relationships between group members, to influence others, to have fun and to escape monotony (Laing, 1993; Kurland and Pelled, 2000; Rosnow, 2001; Foster, 2004; Michelson and Mouly, 2004; Solmaz, 2004; Waddington and Fletcher, 2005; Thomas and Rozell, 2007). They gossip when formal communication channels do not work effectively, when information sharing is poor or unsatisfying, when information is hidden, and when they experience crises and uncertainties such as restructuring, transfers, promotions, dismissals and times of change (Laing, 1993; Houmanfarand Johnson, 2004; Atak, 2005; Eroğlu, 2005; Sabuncuoğlu and Tüz, 2005; Waddington and Fletcher, 2005; Solmaz, 2006; Yılmaz, 2009). The literature notes that gossip has advantages such as simplifying information flow, reinforcing group solidarity, reducing employees’ stress and assisting formal communication by conveying wishes and complaints to managers (Michelson and Mouly, 2000; Waddington and Fletcher, 2005; Thomas and Rozell, 2007). It also enables managers learn about changes in the environment in a timely manner and to take required precautions (Kurland and Pelled, 2000; Solmaz, 2004; Atak, 2005). It helps managers to assess employees’ response to new practices (Michelson and Mouly, 2000; Michelson and Mouly, 2004; Eroğlu, 2005; Thomas and Rozell, 2007) and is used consciously by managers to create organizational cultures and convey ideas (Laing, 1993; Eroğlu, 2005; Hopkinson, 2010).

However if gossip is not managed properly it also has disadvantages. It can lead employees to form negative attitudes against innovations (Foster, 2004), reduce their morale, impair their relationships and affect their health (Eroğlu, 2005). It can be detrimental to teamwork (Georganta et al., 2014), cause conflicts and disturbances (Houmanfar and Johnson, 2004; Solmaz, 2004) and lead to apathy in relationships between superiors and subordinates. Gossip can also be used as a form of psychological harassment or a threat when people spread disparaging information about their enemies (Kurland and Pelled, 2000; Foster, 2004; McAndrew et al., 2007; Yılmaz, 2009; Kniffin and Wilson, 2010; Taniguchi et al., 2012).

Although gossip is ignored or seen as unimportant, efforts are still made to prevent it, however it cannot be eliminated entirely even in the best organizations (Atak, 2005; Yılmaz, 2009). Therefore, it is important that managers should manage gossip to maximize its positive effects, by controlling it, rather than trying to suppress it (Michelson and Mouly, 2000; Atak, 2005; Thomas and Rozell, 2007; Yılmaz, 2009).

A variety of relevant studies have been conducted with health care workers (Georganta et al., 2014), professional caregivers at welfare facilities (Taniguchi et al., 2012) and nurses (Waddington, 2005a; Hopkinson, 2010; Altuntaş et al., 2014).

In academic environments, employees often have these difficulties: intensely professional competition, inadequate sharing of professional information, communication incompetence, managerial problems in career process, conflicts, and lack of motivation (Argon and Kösterelioğlu, 2009), burnout (Ardıç and Polatçı, 2008), intimidation, psychological pressure (Celep and Konaklı, 2013), heavy course loads and insufficient payment (Odabaşı et al., 2010). Moreover, in health care fields, where females predominate, they are likely to also encounter problems such as taking

on multiple roles as mothers, wives and academic professionals, guilt about insufficiently fulfilling responsibilities in their private lives, career obstacles and delays and gender inequality (Akbulut, 2011; Alaçam, 2014). Because of these difficulties by gossiping, academicians share their distress, find relief and reduce their stress. Indeed gossiping is one of the informal communication types.

However, no studies have determined whether this form of communication has been used among academicians. This study was carried out to answer this question. It is the first study both in Turkey and in the world concerning the usage of gossip on academicians in the health care area. Its results will lead the way for national and international literature and researchers in administrative sciences and health.

METHODS

Purpose and research design: This descriptive study was conducted to determine whether the gossip is being used in organizational communication by academicians.

Sample: The study population comprised of nursing, dentistry and medicine academicians working in a public university located in Turkey. They were selected because they have received similar education, worked in same environment, experienced similar difficulties and communicated with each other more often than with academicians at other universities.

Of the participants, 42.9% were working in the Faculty of Dentistry, 31.1% in the Faculty of Health Sciences Nursing Department, and 26.0% in the Faculty of Medicine. It was determined that they were research assistants (57.1%), assistant professors (19.23%), and 9.6% are full professors (9.6%). Of them, 58.2% were female, and 65.5% were married.

Instrument: In the study a survey form created by researchers after a review of the literature was used (Solmaz, 2004; Atak, 2005; Waddington, 2005b; Waddington and Fletcher, 2005; McAndrew et al., 2007; Yılmaz, 2009) to collect research data. This survey form included questions about the academicians' descriptive characteristics (gender, title, marital status and so forth). It also included questions about the nature of their gossip (ie. How often and with whom do you gossip in the work environment? What do you gossip about? When do you gossip? What means of communication do you use to gossip? How do you feel after gossiping? and, How do you respond when you learn that gossiping is continuing?).

Ethical considerations: Prior to the study, the ethics committee's consent was obtained from the organization, where the study would be conducted (02.05.2011) and written official permissions were obtained from organizations where data were to be collected. The purpose of the study and the confidentiality of its data were explained to the academicians and the data of the voluntary participants were obtained.

Data collection and analysis: The study data were collected between December 2011 and January 2012. In visits to the organizations, the data were collected individually from the 177 academicians who agreed to participate in the study. The data were analyzed using percentage Distribution Tests on SPSS for Windows 2.0 Software.

Limitations

This study's findings were limited to three groups of academician in a single university. There are few studies in the research area, and this limited the discussion of its results.

RESULTS

The findings about gossip frequency and the people who academicians gossip with in the work environment (Table 1) were similar among the three different academician groups. It was found that most academicians in each group gossip seldom or sometimes with their colleagues in the same department, rarely with colleagues in other departments, and never with the administration or the patients and their companions. Moreover, most of the academician physicians and academician dentists stated that they rarely gossip with other academicians, while academician nurses reported that they never gossip.

Table 1: Distribution of Academicians’ Gossip in The Work Environment (N=177)

Answers	Academician nurses (%) (n=55)					Academician dentist (%) (n=76)					Academician physicians (%) (n=46)						
	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Usually	Often	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Usually	Often	No answer	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Usually	Often	No answer
With my friends working in the same department	12.7	32.7	36.4	12.7	-	5.5	7.9	31.6	42.1	10.5	5.3	2.6	10.9	37.0	30.3	8.7	2.2
With members of my administrators	63.6	10.9	7.3	-	-	18.2	47.4	27.6	7.9	2.6	-	14.6	50.0	13.0	6.5	-	2.2
With patients or companions	80.0	3.6	1.8	-	-	14.6	65.8	14.5	3.9	1.3	-	14.5	65.2	6.5	2.2	-	2.2
With my friends working in other departments	18.2	34.5	29.1	3.6	1.8	12.8	21.1	40.8	21.1	3.9	1.3	11.8	13.0	39.1	19.6	6.5	-
With my friends working at other faculties	50.9	21.8	10.9	1.8	-	14.6	32.9	43.4	6.6	1.3	-	15.8	23.9	28.3	26.1	2.2	-

The distribution of the topics of academicians’ gossip (Table 2) showed that both academician nurses and academician dentists gossiped most about current events, social life, organizational practices, their colleagues and the management styles of administrators. They gossiped less about other issues. Academician physicians gossip most about current events, social life, colleagues they did not like, organizational practices, new and old colleagues both in their department and other departments.

It was found that (Table 2) academician nurses’ were mostly gossip to relax or to share and obtain information. Academician dentists gossiped mainly to criticize and to share information. Academician physicians gossiped mainly for relaxation, criticism and sharing and obtaining information (the purposes of gossip).

The findings about the time when participants gossiped (Table 2) showed that both academician dentists and academician nurses gossiped mostly when they were angry at someone, when they felt nervous or stressed or they needed to talk about something. Academician physicians mostly gossiped after work, when they needed to talk about something and when they felt good or relaxed.

The findings about means of communication that academicians used to gossip showed that all three groups mainly gossiped face- to- face, then by telephone or on line (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of Findings About The Topic, Purpose, Time and Medium of Academicians’ Gossip in The Work Environment (N=177)

Answers	Academician nurses (%) (n=55)						Academician dentists (%) (n=76)						Academician physicians (%) (n=46)					
	1. rank	2. rank	3. rank	4. rank	5. rank	No answer	1. rank	2. rank	3. rank	4. rank	5. rank	No answer	1. rank	2. rank	3. rank	4. rank	5. rank	No answer
What do you gossip about?																		
About current events and social life	60.0	3.6	9.1	5.5	10.9	10.9	47.4	22.4	7.9	6.6	3.9	11.8	58.7	6.5	15.2	8.7	8.7	2.2
About colleagues I do not like	7.3	14.5	7.3	12.7	41.8	16.4	5.3	19.7	14.5	17.1	19.7	23.7	13.0	39.1	13.0	17.4	8.7	8.8
About the practices of my organization	9.1	21.8	20.0	27.3	10.9	10.9	34.2	21.1	19.7	7.9	9.2	7.9	28.3	34.8	15.2	2.2	10.9	8.6
About colleagues in my department	1.8	9.1	12.7	23.6	23.6	29.2	3.9	7.9	10.5	21.1	32.9	23.7	21.7	17.4	17.4	13.0	10.9	19.6
About new coworkers	-	1.8	3.6	10.9	50.9	32.8	3.9	1.3	6.6	7.9	38.2	42.1	19.6	19.6	13.0	13.0	19.6	15.2
About my colleagues in other departments	1.8	5.5	10.9	16.4	38.2	27.2	1.4	5.3	10.5	19.7	34.2	28.9	13.0	26.1	13.0	17.4	19.6	10.9
About my colleagues in other faculties	1.8	1.8	1.8	9.1	52.7	32.8	-	1.3	5.3	9.2	47.4	36.8	8.7	21.7	13.0	4.3	32.6	19.7
About the management styles of administrators	9.1	3.6	14.5	23.6	21.8	27.4	13.2	14.5	18.4	11.8	18.4	23.7	13.0	6.5	23.9	10.9	39.2	6.5
About private life	16.4	21.8	10.9	12.7	29.1	9.1	10.5	14.5	10.5	9.2	31.6	23.7	-	8.7	13.0	8.7	43.5	26.1
For what purpose do you gossip?																		
To relax	27.3	10.9	14.5	14.5	20.0	12.8	14.5	15.8	5.3	15.8	31.6	17.0	39.1	10.9	17.4	4.3	17.4	10.9
To criticize	9.1	20.0	16.4	10.9	29.1	14.5	27.6	15.8	14.5	10.5	17.1	14.5	30.4	32.6	15.2	8.7	8.7	4.4
To share information	34.5	10.9	20.0	10.9	12.7	11.0	27.6	18.4	21.1	10.5	10.5	11.9	26.1	28.3	21.7	4.3	8.7	10.9
To obtain information	23.6	12.7	12.7	12.7	20.0	18.3	13.2	19.6	14.5	21.1	18.4	13.2	26.1	19.6	19.6	10.9	8.7	15.1
To attract supporters for my opinions	1.8	1.8	7.3	7.3	50.9	30.9	10.5	2.6	7.9	13.2	36.8	28.9	8.7	6.5	10.9	6.5	56.5	10.9
To measure people's responses about one issue	5.5	9.1	7.3	20.0	27.3	30.8	13.2	13.2	15.8	11.8	26.3	19.7	19.6	10.9	13.0	6.5	32.6	17.4
When do you gossip?																		
When I am angry at someone	58.2	1.8	10.9	7.3	12.7	9.1	43.4	14.5	7.9	9.2	9.2	15.8	19.6	17.4	13.0	23.9	19.6	6.5
When I feel nervous or stressful	23.6	16.4	16.4	10.9	23.6	9.1	13.2	28.9	9.2	10.5	17.1	21.1	15.2	17.4	19.6	15.2	23.9	8.7
When I have a break	9.1	9.1	9.1	14.5	38.2	20.3	6.6	9.2	9.2	9.2	34.2	31.6	23.9	8.7	30.4	8.7	6.5	21.8
When I leave work (after working hours)	10.9	5.5	10.9	14.5	36.4	21.8	3.9	7.9	11.8	21.1	30.3	25.0	21.7	21.7	8.7	15.2	15.2	17.5
When I need to talk about something	12.7	27.3	7.3	23.6	14.5	14.6	15.8	17.1	18.4	13.2	18.4	17.1	21.7	17.4	15.2	15.2	10.9	19.6
When I feel good and relaxed	3.6	14.5	10.9	9.1	38.2	23.7	3.9	6.6	3.9	13.2	39.5	32.9	17.4	17.4	8.7	13.0	15.2	28.3
When innovation or change needs to be made in the workplace	7.3	16.4	16.4	12.7	23.6	23.6	14.5	6.6	22.4	3.9	26.3	26.3	19.6	13.0	15.2	21.7	13.0	17.5
What means of communication do you use to gossip?																		
By telephone	7.3	40.0	41.8	-	-	10.9	5.3	38.2	40.8	-	-	15.7	6.5	23.9	43.4	-	-	26.2
Face to face	76.4	12.7	9.1	-	-	1.8	76.3	11.8	5.2	-	-	6.7	63.0	13.0	15.2	-	-	8.8
In electronic environment (mail, message etc.)	3.6	14.5	58.2	-	-	23.7	2.6	13.2	64.5	-	-	19.7	-	10.9	45.7	-	-	43.4

Table 3: Distribution of Findings About How Academicians Feel After Gossiping (N=177)

Answers	Academician nurses (%) (n=55)						Academician dentists (%) (n=76)						Academician physicians (%) (n=46)					
	1. rank	2. rank	3. rank	4. rank	5. rank	No answer	1. rank	2. rank	3. rank	4. rank	5. rank	No answer	1. rank	2. rank	3. rank	4. rank	5. rank	No answer
I feel deeply relaxed.	10.9	12.7	18.2	5.5	29.1	23.6	10.5	5.3	14.5	17.1	22.4	30.2	15.2	4.3	6.5	8.7	45.7	19.6
I feel less stress.	12.7	12.7	16.4	18.2	18.2	21.8	6.6	18.4	18.4	15.8	14.5	26.3	17.4	8.7	4.3	10.9	41.3	17.4
My self-confidence increases.	1.8	5.5	7.3	5.5	47.3	32.6	-	2.6	6.6	14.5	31.6	44.7	2.2	2.2	13.0	2.2	54.3	26.1
I want to make certain of what I heard.	16.4	9.1	14.5	9.1	20.0	30.9	26.3	10.5	13.2	10.5	11.8	27.7	17.4	15.3	6.5	13.0	30.4	17.4
I feel remorse (internal tension)	30.9	14.5	7.3	9.1	16.4	21.8	18.4	13.2	18.4	15.8	11.8	22.4	8.7	2.2	6.5	6.5	56.5	19.6
I feel insecure about those around me (I feel that what I gossiped may be hold against me)	12.7	5.5	14.5	9.1	29.1	29.1	5.3	7.9	15.8	10.5	22.4	38.1	2.2	2.2	2.2	10.9	43.5	39.0
I'm afraid of being heard (I suffer anxiety)	5.5	5.5	5.5	16.4	29.1	38.0	2.6	2.6	11.8	14.5	30.3	38.2	-	4.3	4.3	8.7	56.5	26.2
I apologize to the people I discussed.	-	1.8	10.9	14.5	32.7	40.1	1.3	1.3	11.8	6.6	38.2	40.8	2.2	2.2	4.3	4.3	56.5	30.5
I try not to gossip again	27.3	1.8	7.3	23.6	16.4	23.6	13.2	15.8	11.8	9.2	19.7	30.3	6.5	4.3	4.3	10.9	45.7	28.3
I am never affected by it.	1.8	9.1	7.3	9.1	32.7	40.0	13.2	3.9	5.3	7.9	31.6	38.1	15.2	4.3	-	10.9	30.4	39.2

When academicians were asked how they feel after they gossip (Table 3), academician nurses responded that they primarily felt remorse and internal stress, and that they tried not to gossip again. Academician dentists reported that they primarily wanted to make certain of what they had heard, and that they felt remorse. Academician physicians responded that they primarily felt that their stress levels fell, and that they wanted to verify what they had heard. The participants in all three groups thus mentioned relaxation, lowered stress and increased self-confidence. However, they did not feel secure against others and were afraid of being overheard by others. In other words, they also experienced anxiety (Table 3).

Table 4: Distribution of Findings About How Academicians Respond When They Learn That Their Colleagues Gossip (N=177)

How do you respond when you learn that gossip is occurring?	Academician nurses (%) (n=55)				Academician dentists (%) (n=76)				Academician dentists (%) (n=76)			
	About me	About my academician friends	About my administrators	About my friends in my department	About me	About my academician friends	About my administrators	About my friends in my department	About me	About my academician friends	About my administrators	About my friends in my department
I respond to it normally, or I do not react.	32.7	12.7	27.3	21.8	23.7	11.8	21.1	13.2	26.1	19.6	28.3	28.3
I call people who gossip to account for it.	16.4	7.3	-	1.8	19.7	3.9	1.3	1.3	13.0	6.5	2.2	2.2
I pay attention to what I heard and investigate the matter	20.0	12.7	7.3	23.6	25.0	14.5	14.5	18.4	6.5	8.7	13.0	28.3
I try to join in the gossip.	-	-	3.6	1.8	1.3	1.3	10.5	7.9	-	4.3	2.2	4.3
I overhear gossip, but I do not actively engage in it.	1.8	18.2	21.8	3.6	7.9	26.3	23.7	19.7	8.7	6.5	15.2	4.3
I warn people who gossip not to do so.	12.7	23.6	14.5	20.0	6.6	18.4	9.2	21.1	2.2	15.2	6.5	2.2
I move away immediately.	5.5	14.5	14.5	10.9	7.9	13.2	13.2	2.6	17.4	13.0	8.7	6.5
I inform the person the gossip concerns.	-	3.6	1.8	1.8	-	-	-	3.9	-	-	-	-
No response.	10.9	7.4	9.2	14.7	7.9	10.6	6.5	11.9	26.1	26.2	23.9	23.9

The study found that the three groups of participants’ responded differently to questions about gossip (Table 4) depending on the person being interviewed. It was determined that academician nurses responded to gossip about themselves or their administration normally and they did not react in any way. When someone gossiped about their colleagues, they warned them not to do so. If the gossip was about colleagues in their department, they considered it and investigated the matter. The study determined that academician dentists paid attention to gossip about themselves and investigated the matter when they heard the gossip about their colleagues and administration, but did not participate actively in the gossip. When someone gossiped about colleagues in their department, they warned them not to do so. Academician physicians generally responded to gossip normally or did not react, although some of them paid attention to gossip and investigated it.

DISCUSSION

This study showed that academicians do not gossip in organizational communication with their administration or patients and companions; however, they do gossip some with colleagues in their own or other departments. It may be that academicians do not use gossip to communicate with their administration because they are concerned about their administration using this gossip against them or perceiving it as complaining. It is also thought that they do not gossip with patients to avoid creating a negative image. It is to be expected that academicians gossip with colleagues in their departments or others with whom they interact with most and experience similar difficulties.

This study’s participants were mostly research assistants (57.1%) and they experienced the difficulties of academic life most. Many of them gossiped to relax when they were stressful or nervous, and they felt themselves relieved and less stressful after they gossiped (Table 3). These might be the reasons why they gossiped.

A similar study conducted with nurses determined that nurses never gossip with their administration or patients and companions, and that they rarely gossip with nurses working in their department and colleagues working in other departments (Altuntaş et al., 2014).

The topics of academicicians’ gossip in the work environment shared similarities (Table 2). Academicicians in all three groups gossiped about topics such as the organizational practices, their colleagues, the management styles of their administrators, current events and social life. Administrators should consider these topics in particular since gossip can lead to undesirable situations that reduce organizational productivity and efficiency. Administrators should be careful to prevent these negative outcomes among academicicians. Since academic environments are highly competitive professional environments, people in them may use gossip to advance themselves and wear away at their peers and the administration. Altuntaş et al. (2014) similarly found that nurses gossip mostly about organizational policies and practices, working conditions and the management styles of administrators.

The purposes of academicicians’ gossip were also similar. Academicicians in all three groups reported that they gossiped to relax, to share and obtain information and to criticize (Table 2). These findings correspond to the findings about the time when they gossiped since many academicicians gossiped mostly when they were angry at someone, when they felt nervous or stressful or needed to talk about something (Table 2). Since these academicicians cared for human health and faced the difficulties of academic life, they experienced more stress. Therefore it is to be expected that participants gossiped to get relief and reduce their stress. This idea is supported by the findings of Waddington and Fletcher (2005). It has also been determined that nurses gossip to share information, to criticize and to relax when they need to talk about something or feel nervous or stressful (Altuntaş et al., 2014).

Participants’ use of gossip to share and obtain information suggests that in these organizations, information sharing between the administrators and employees was insufficient and so academicicians, who were not sufficiently informed, attempted to meet their need of gaining information using informal communication.

It was determined that the participants mainly gossip face-to-face (Table 2). Since face-to-face communication is used more in the work environment, more fluent and involves body language, the participants can express their feelings and ideas more comfortably face-to-face. Altuntaş et al. (2014) also found that nurses tend to gossip face-to-face.

It was determined that after gossiping academicicians felt remorse, suffered stress, tried not to gossip again and primarily wanted to make certain of what they had heard (Table 3). The desire to verify gossip shows that academicicians considered the possibility of wrong, false, partial information transfer using this communication type and treated it with suspicion. This is a positive result for academicicians which shows that, despite their heavy workload, academicicians do not have blind confidence in the information they receive and have a tendency to investigate its accuracy. On the other hand, the fact that academicicians felt reduced stress after they gossiped is consistent with other researchers’ findings about using gossip when the people is nervous, stressful and angry. Other studies have also found that nurses reduce their stress levels by gossiping (Waddington, 2005b; Waddington and Fletcher, 2005). Unlike these findings, academicicians’ feelings of remorse and trying not to gossip again suggest that they indulged in this form of communication despite not actually wanting to do so. This leads to the thought that academicicians prefer not to gossip, but need to obtain information due to insufficient organizational communication. The literature reports that that guilt is an emotional response to gossip, and some studies of nurses have found that they feel angry after gossiping (Waddington, 2005b; Waddington and Fletcher, 2005). Like these study findings Altuntaş et al. (2014) found that after gossiping nurses make certain of what they heard, reduce their stress, feel remorse and try not to gossip again.

Other responses indicate that the participants in the three groups felt relaxed after they gossiped, that their stress levels fell and their self-confidence levels rised; however, they did not feel secure against others, and they were afraid of being overheard by others. In other words, they experienced anxiety (Table 3).

The study found that participants responded to gossip differently dependent on the person being talked with (Table 4). However, it is remarkable that academicician physicians considered gossip as a normal phenomenon regardless of whom it concerned and did not respond in any way. This suggests that physicians are indifferent to gossip.

CONCLUSIONS

The study found that academicicians generally use gossip as a means of communication in their organizations and they gossip face-to-face with their friends when they felt angry, to share information and about working conditions. It is also found that they feel remorse and internal stress and try not to gossip again after they gossiped, yet gossip has a variety of effects on health like reducing stress, increasing self-confidence and giving a sense of relief. This subject needs to be studied further because it is a new research topic in the literature, both for the health care field and academia.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING

The administrators of academic organizations should ensure that academicians obtain accurate information that they need by developing effective formal communication systems. This will help to control gossip and its negative effects. Further research in this area in different regions and with larger samples will improve the understanding of this subject.

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