ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

From Workplace Gossips to Innovation: Examining Moral Deficits, Psychological Entitlement and their Impact on Performance

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Abstract— The present study investigated negative workplace gossip effects on moral deficits and psychological entitlement through creative stress and creative performance. We seek moral attentiveness moderating role among moral deficits and psychological entitlement with creative stress and creative performance. A cross-sectional method was used for data collection; 250 samples were collected from an IT employee working in a Software house in Leads and Manchester, England. The analysis employed strong measures of reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability), validity (convergent and discriminant validity), regression, and correlation. The mediation moderating effect was tested and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in SmartPLS 3.0. Our results show that a positive relationship between negative workplace gossip affects moral deficits and psychological entitlement and is moderated by moral attentiveness. Lastly, we highlight its managerial implications and possible directions for further study.

Index Terms— Negative workplace gossip, Moral deficits, Psychological entitlement, Creative stress, Creative performance, Moral attentiveness
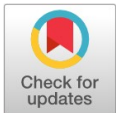
Introduction

The majority of people either participate in or are the target of gossip at various points during their daily lives, making it a prevalent social phenomenon. According to Xie, Huang, Yan, and Liang (2024), people engage in gossip for almost half of their conversational time. Workers find gossip to be a valuable informal communication technique at work, and they frequently engage in it to meet their social requirements Cheng et al. (2020) and to obtain and share knowledge (Naeem, Weng, Ali, & Hameed, 2020; Yao, Luo, & Zhang, 2020). It is challenging for the target to determine its source or stop the spread of negative workplace rumors since they are frequently distributed without a target (Zhou, Fan, Cheng, & Fan, 2021). According to Cheng et al. (2020) and Xie et al. (2024), gossip is a dynamic process that involves several employees, including "gossipers," "listeners," and "objects." In social groupings, gossip produces a variety of results for the gossip triad. The extent to which workers believe they are the subject of unofficial, unfavorable evaluation conversations while they are not present at work is known as perceived negative workplace gossip (Murtaza, Neveu, Khan, & Talpur, 2023). Negative rumors, however, are probably common in the workplace and might make targeted employees feel stressed out (Kim, Shin, Kim, & Moon, 2021). Thus, harmful effects of perceived bad workplace gossip include increased stress González Moreno and Molero Jurado (2023), depressed mood Vartanian, Saint, Herz, and Suedfeld (2020), and poor creative performance (Christensen-Salem et al., 2021).

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Many researchers have been interested in entitlement in recent years (Naseer, Bouckenooghe, Syed, Khan, & Qazi, 2020). According to Kazarovytska et al. (2022), entitlement can be an acceptance of narcissism, even though some scholars use the terms entitlement and narcissism interchangeably (Rahaei & Salehzadeh, 2020). In other words, narcissists think well of themselves and are affectionate (Schwarz, Newman, Yu, & Michaels, 2023). When workers are aware of positive feedback and fairness inside the company, they are more likely to actively participate in its operations, a phenomenon known as psychological entitlement (Zhang, Choi, Wang, & Kim, 2025). Employees maintain a favorable attitude towards the company and themselves when innovative ideas are turned down; instead, they go underground (Al Halbusi, Morales-Sánchez, & Abdel Fattah, 2021; Jam, Singh, Ng, & Aziz, 2018; Jotterand & Levin, 2019). According to R. Khan, Murtaza, Neveu, and Newman (2022) and Murtaza et al. (2023), those who work to uphold moral behavior have greater moral entitlements, while those who engage in dubious or immoral behavior have greater moral deficiencies (Uçkun, Arslan, & Yener, 2020). Since acting under creative stress is an act of morality that goes against ethical norms and compromises actors' moral pride, employees who engage in creative performance will feel morally deficient perspective (Ames, Bluhm, Gaskin, & Lyytinen, 2020; Dong, Lu, Hu, & Ni, 2021; Kazarovytska et al., 2022).

Although moral conduct is usually linked to favorable results, calling on leaders to be more morally aware may have unforeseen negative effects. In fact, R. Khan et al. (2022), subsequently postulated that when people encounter conflicting demands from multiple stakeholders, moral attention may considerably increase the degree of moral stress. Moral attentiveness describes "the process by which an individual actively screens and considers stimuli related to morals."y." High moral attentiveness individuals are both sensitive to morally challenging circumstances and conscious of the ethical consequences of morally challenging knowledge (Ames et al., 2020; Murtaza et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Figure 1 shows the primary anticipated contributions of the current study. We examine how, from the perspective of the gossip target, bad gossip psychological entitlement, moral deficiencies, and personal integrity by drawing on the Conservation of Resources (COR) hypothesis (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll, Tirone, Holmgreen, & Gerhart, 2016; Morelli & Cunningham, 2012). According to Murtaza et al. (2023), gossip is an "unwanted leak" that jeopardizes personal information control and could be a benefit but instead increases creative stress. The COR theory, which connects psychological entitlement to sentiments of resource depletion, is in line with this viewpoint on gossip. In this instance, taking information intended to stay in a private reserve of priceless personal energy resources is equivalent to gossip. Energy resources are defined by the COR-based taxonomy as resources that can be used to acquire other resources but have the potential to gain value on their own. They consist of funds, credit, and expertise (Hobfoll et al., 2016). First, it contributes to the body of literature by examining gossip as a correlate of psychological entitlement and moral deficiencies, a link that requires further empirical research. Second, adding the significance of creative stress and performance expands the concept of gossip. Third, by incorporating moral attentiveness as a personal resource that modifies the relationship between negative gossip and creative stress and performance, this study enhances COR-based research.
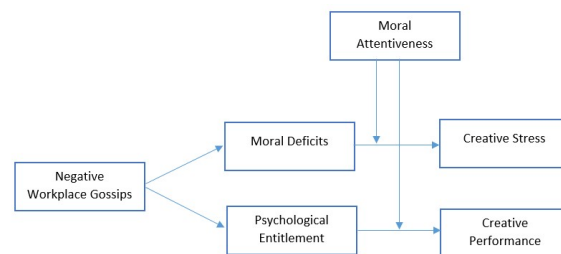

Fig. 1 *Conceptual framework*

Literature and Hypotheses

For the past twenty years, gossip has drawn a lot of scholarly attention from a variety of disciplines, including psychology Cheng et al. (2020) and ethics (Naeem et al., 2020). In general, gossip has been linked to malicious or pointless conversations (Xie, Huang, Wang, & Shen, 2020). It is a widespread occurrence (Xie et al., 2024), and workplace gossip is described officially as an "informal and evaluative talk in an organization about another member of the thorganizationion who is not present" (Yao et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2021). According to Cheng et al. (2020), the majority of applied management research highlights gossip as a covert source of workplace stress. As a result, gossip is seen as a danger to one's reputation, respect, and dignity and can have an effect on one's mental health (Murtaza et al., 2023; Xie et al., 2024; Yao et al., 2020). Beyond determining the correlates and linkages of gossip, there is still considerable work to be done to offer a cogent theoretical framework. According to Xie et al. (2020), workplace gossip typically targets the target's privacy and includes

sensitive, private, or nonpublic information, such as divorce, extramarital affairs, and discrimination. According to current research, gossip can be beneficial for reducing the intensity of emotionally charged interpersonal interactions and increasing group motivation (Murtaza et al., 2023; Naeem et al., 2020; Yao et al., 2020). According to González Moreno and Molero Jurado (2023), stress resilience can be described as the capacity to effectively recover resources, manage resource threats, or avoid resource loss. To put it another way, those who are better equipped to recover lost resources and safeguard their remaining resources might be more resilient to the damaging effects of stress and strain (Hobfoll, 2011). The knowledge that people constantly work to acquire and safeguard their resources forms the basis of COR theory. When these resources are consumed, spent, or otherwise lost, or when they are thought to be in danger, stress results (Hobfoll et al., 2016). This condensed illustration of COR theory emphasizes the importance of resource availability and quantity, but it also makes the crucial point that the stress equation should take the value of available resources into account. It should be highlighted, nonetheless, that experimental psychology is primarily responsible for this favorable literature.

Negative workplace gossip and moral deficits

Xie et al. (2020) concentrate on negative gossip about coworkers among the various forms and targets of gossip. Both favorable and adverse evaluations of absent persons are made by gossipers (Kim et al., 2021; Xie et al., 2020). While negative gossip is perceived as discussing norm violations or negative traits, positive gossip involves gossipers highlighting the positive aspects of gossip targets, such as normative behaviors or positive traits (Xie et al., 2024). Positive and negative gossip can be seen as self-serving and group-serving gossip, respectively Yao et al. (2020), or praise as opposed to criticism (Zhou et al., 2021). Although there is both positive and bad gossip regarding absent employees, gossip is typically seen by the general public as disparaging remarks about other people (Cheng et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2021). Furthermore, gossip is more likely to focus on unpleasant events with absent people. According to Murtaza et al. (2023), interpersonal issues are likely to trigger retaliatory behaviors because people are more likely to react in a variety of ways (e.g., physiological, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral) to negative stimuli and events than to positive or neutral ones. In fact, when faced with uncertainty, employees frequently start gossiping to learn more about others (Kim et al., 2021). Their social judgments usually rely on negative information rather than positive information, which is less ambiguous due to social desirability bias (Naeem et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2024). In addition, gossiping about fellow workers who are part of the same unit of work is anticipated to better reflect how the internal group features (e.g., group diversity and structure) affect workplace gossip, in contrast to other interest gossip targets (e.g., organizational authorities, customers), who are primarily outside the work unit boundaries. Therefore, gossip in this study is limited to negative gossip about colleagues. According to (Xie et al., 2020), moral deficiency results in a loss of moral credit. According to Yao et al. (2020), morally commendable or ethical actions will result in moral credits, but immoral or morally dubious actions will result in moral deficits or a loss of moral credits. Individual's moral deficits, or "one's perceived moral standing at any given moment" Cheng et al. (2020) and Zhou et al. (2021), fluctuate as "each morally relevant act moves one's moral self-regard either up or down" (Xie et al., 2020). This changing procedure is reflected in moral self-regulation. Scholars of behavioral ethics view moral credit as a numerical indicator of moral self-esteem (Xie et al., 2020, 2024). In light of this, we propose the following:

H1: Negative workplace gossip has a significant influence on moral deficits.

Negative workplace gossips and psychological entitlement

Informal, critical, and evaluative conversations among group members regarding a third party who is not present are considered negative workplace gossip (Cheng et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2021; Murtaza et al., 2023). It has three noteworthy characteristics. First of all, it targets an organization member and contains judgmental and negative information (Naeem et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2020). According to Xie et al. (2020), this type of gossip typically concerns the target's privacy and typically includes sensitive, private, or unrevealing information, such as cyberloafing, divorce, or affairs. This negative information could harm targets' standing within the company or damage their reputation (Zhou et al., 2021). Second, negative workplace gossip is subtle and covert (Cheng et al., 2020). Negative workplace gossip does not target victims directly, in contrast to other forms of abuse, including sexual harassment (Kim et al., 2021) and workplace violence (Yao et al., 2020) It typically takes place in a comfortable and private setting Xie et al. (2024), Yao et al. (2020) and (Zhou et al., 2021) and is an informal communication method used in organizations Cheng et al. (2020) andNaeem et al. (2020), and does not involve the targets (Murtaza et al., 2023). Thirdly, negative workplace gossips travel quickly, and since the targets are not there, it is challenging for them to locate the source or understand the specifics (Kim et al., 2021). Because of these reasons, it is challenging to prevent gossip from spreading, and the targets are unable to handle the situation by using a direct, confrontational approach. Psychological entitlement occurs when people believe they should receive more compensation, praise, incentives, and recognition than others without taking into account their proportion within the company (Zhang et al., 2025). Aggression, greed, unethical actions, disputes, and other undesirable consequences can result from this emotion (Schwarz et al., 2023). It should be mentioned that people within an organization are the ones that evaluate and contrast workload, working hours, compensation levels, benefits, and welfare facilities in order to determine how fair

organizational processes and interactions are (Rahaei & Salehzadeh, 2020). A truly equitable exchange is not always the foundation of psychological entitlement (Naseer et al., 2020). Kazarovytska et al. (2022) and Schwarz et al. (2023) made the case that all disciplines see rights as connected to what people feel they are entitled to. According to Rahaei and Salehzadeh (2020), rights are something that the law grants and cannot be taken away without following the proper procedures. According to Schwarz et al. (2023), there are only two options for property or the right to belong to someone or not, making an individual's entitlement a dichotomy. In light of this, we propose the following:

H2: Negative workplace gossip has a significant influence on psychological entitlement.

Mediating role of moral deficits

The moral self-regulation perspective of Jotterand and Levin (2019), holds that people check their moral credits in an effort to keep their moral bank account balanced, and this information also influences their subsequent actions (Ames et al., 2020). Furthermore, people will work to prevent their moral account from dropping below an equilibrium point because morality is crucial for one's self-concept (Dong et al., 2021; R. Khan et al., 2022). As a result, people will act in morally admirable ways to boost their moral accounts when the moral balance decreases below a particular threshold (Kazarovytska et al., 2022). Thus, we propose that creativity causes moral deficiencies to be seen more frequently, which in turn encourages actors to act in morally admirable ways. Put differently; moral deficiencies serve as a mediator in the indirect and positive association between creative stress and negative workplace gossip. Employee gossiping has been attributed to a number of factors, such as promoting information sharing Uçkun et al. (2020), forming a social circle Miao, Eva, Newman, Nielsen, and Herbert (2020), acquiring coercive power Dong et al. (2021), establishing power dynamics within organizations (Kazarovytska et al., 2022), and exercising control over coworkers (R. Khan et al., 2022). Furthermore, earlier research made an effort to pinpoint the possible targets of workplace gossip and discovered that low-status individuals of an organization are interested in gossip concerning a higher-status organizational member (Al Halbusi et al., 2021; Jotterand & Levin, 2019; Miao et al., 2020). Building on the idea of moral self-regulation, we believe that workers who perform creatively may, ironically, go on to engage in morally admirable actions like creative stress because they believe they are lacking in moral qualities. As previously said, creative performance is a form of moral transgression that compromises actors' moral self-esteem and transgresses fundamental ethical standards (Dong et al., 2021; Murtaza et al., 2023). The moral self-regulation approach holds that when moral deficiencies are experienced negatively, actors are more likely to respond in ways that restore their moral self-esteem (Al Halbusi et al., 2021; R. Khan et al., 2022). In light of this, we propose the following:

H3: Moral deficits have mediating influences between negative workplace gossip and creative stress.

Mediating role of psychological entitlement

According to Al Halbusi et al. (2021), entitlement frequently arises from a social contract between a person and another entity, whereby the person feels entitled to particular results as a result of their involvement in a social relationship with that entity (for example, an employee of a business organization). Regardless of their actual performance, workers with high psychological entitlement tend to have positive opinions of themselves and believe they should receive a lot of recognition and benefits (Ames et al., 2020). There are significant conceptual and empirical differences between psychological entitlement and other qualities like narcissism, despite the fact that academics have pointed out similarities between the two. For instance, Dong et al. (2021), contend that while narcissism inflates self-importance independent of others, entitlement requires that one's sense of self be inflated based on how one is treated in relation to others (Jotterand & Levin, 2019; Kazarovytska et al., 2022). Researchers have also demonstrated empirically that psychological entitlement can exist apart from other important narcissistic qualities, such as insincerity and aggressiveness (R. Khan et al., 2022; Miao et al., 2020). Psychological entitlement at work by Murtaza et al. (2023) examined its connections to negative job outcomes. For instance, Dong et al. (2021) discovered a positive correlation between entitlement and job frustration, which in turn led to political behaviors and colleague abuse, in line with the theory (R. Khan et al., 2022) and COR theory. Kazarovytska et al. (2022) also discovered that more entitled workers were more likely to view their boss as abusive and respond to deviant actions compared to less entitled workers. In order to demonstrate that this anticipation originates from participation in the social contract rather than performance, Naseer et al. (2020) indicate workplace psychological entitlement as the employee's belief that they should receive. Psychologically entitled personnel are individuals who feel they should receive "special or unique treatment" in comparison to their peers (Rahaei & Salehzadeh, 2020). Managers have been very concerned about psychological entitlement, which is the phenomenon where people continuously feel that they should receive large rewards and treatment regardless of their true characteristics or performance levels (Schwarz et al., 2023). Dong et al. (2021), made the case that all disciplines see rights as connected to what people feel they are entitled to. According to Naseer et al. (2020), rights are something that the law grants and cannot be taken away without following the proper procedures. According to Murtaza et al. (2023), there are only two options for property or the right to belong to someone or not, making an individual's entitlement a dichotomy. The entitlement theory, which contends that people's prior circumstances might establish various rights, was first put forth in the field of philosophy by Naseer et

al. (2020). According to Dong et al. (2021), people have a fundamental right to liberty, life, and health against injury, as well as control over their own property. Therefore, when people believe their efforts are worth more than what they have received in return, psychological entitlement arises (Rahaei & Salehzadeh, 2020). In light of this, we propose the following:

H4: Psychological entitlement has mediating influences between negative workplace gossip and creative performance.

Moderating role of moral attentiveness

Even though moral attentiveness research is still in its infancy, a number of studies have added to its growing network. Moral attentiveness refers to "the extent to which an individual chronically perceives and considers morality and moral elements in his or her experiences" (Al Halbusi et al., 2021). It has a reflective component that promotes time spent reflecting on and thinking about moral issues, as well as a perceptual component that makes the moral components of everyday life easier to notice. First and foremost, moral attentiveness influences moral judgment. This was demonstrated in an experiment wherein the reflective and perceptual aspects of moral attentiveness, respectively, reduced cheating behaviors by providing more realistic ethical models and raising moral awareness of the circumstances (Uçkun et al., 2020). Morally attentive managers may be more aware of conflicting stakeholder demands since moral attentiveness is also positively correlated with the perceived role of ethics in business from the stakeholder perspective (Murtaza et al., 2023). They are more likely to react to unethical leadership with deviant behaviors than followers with low moral attentiveness, which may be explained by the higher expectations of corporate ethics from morally attentive personnel (Miao et al., 2020). While those with low moral attentiveness tend to be unconcerned with moral difficulties, those with high moral attentiveness tend to be more interested in the ethical challenges of everyday and organizational life. Three related concepts, moral attentiveness, moral awareness, and moral sensitivity, have been separated (R. Khan et al., 2022). According to Dong et al. (2021), moral sensitivity and consciousness grow together. They are brought on by moral occurrences and entail the processing of knowledge as an objective, extrinsic component. It is only in certain moral circumstances that these notions can be evaluated. Moral attentiveness was found to affect both the deliberative moral decision-making model proposed by rest and an intuitive moral decision-making model (Ames et al., 2020). Moral attention may have a greater influence on the "pre-rational" Dong et al. (2021), stage of a moral dilemma, where the feelings and thoughts linked to moral stress and moral dissonance, respectively, are likely to emerge. Creativity is essential during tumultuous crisis situations when organizations encounter unforeseen obstacles (Al Halbusi et al., 2021). Individual creativity, or CP, includes taking risks, embracing novel ideas and methods, and bringing about change (Christensen-Salem et al., 2021). Similarly, CP at work is described as an individual worker's creation of new concepts, goods, services, or processes that could benefit the company (Faraj, Faeq, Abdulla, Ali, & Sadq, 2021; González Moreno & Molero Jurado, 2023). Employees who flourish at work perform better, are happier in their positions, and are more dedicated to the company, according to (Kehl et al., 2021; Liu, Li, Taris, & Peeters, 2022; Sio & Lortie-Forgues, 2024). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that those who experience greater levels of thriving at work are more creative (Tønnessen, Dhir, & Flåten, 2021; Vartanian et al., 2020). People are more equipped to identify issues and find answers when they flourish and undergo learning and development (S. M. Khan & Abbas, 2022). According to Dong et al. (2021), motivated personnel with digital abilities who are given the resources they need are more likely to solve problems creatively. In light of this, we propose the following:

H5: Moral attentiveness has moderating influences on moral deficits and creative stress.
H6: Moral attentiveness has moderating influences on moral deficits and creative performance.

Methods

Researchers recruited 300 IT workers from software houses in Manchester and Leads, England, to take part in the current study in order to test our hypotheses. For both public and commercial enterprises, the IT industry provides a broad range of services for problem-solving and strategy computation. Participants included both non-technical (such as advertising and sales, HR, client finances, and administration) and technical (technicians, software developers, and programmers) employees. The first author's professional and personal connections provided access to the research by making these organizational units available for sampling. Respondents were guaranteed complete anonymity and that participation in the study was entirely voluntary, according to a cover letter outlining the goals and parameters of the investigation. English is the language of teaching for all university courses in England and is taught as a major required subject in schools. Everyone working in England is able to read and comprehend English, with the exception of entry-level positions, where virtually little schooling is needed. Additionally, English is the official working language in England, and those employed by software companies have completed high school and college to be qualified for these positions. Therefore, we did not need to translate the questionnaire into its original language, given the sampling frame. Previous studies using samples from England have corroborated this practice (Firth, Allinson, & Watson, 2024; Wilson-Kovacs & Wyatt, 2024). Total confidentiality was guaranteed to each and every participant. Employees were given 300 questionnaires in all, and 250 of them returned them, or 83% of the total. The employees' average age ranged from 28 to

32 years, 73% of them were men, they had been with the company for three to four years on average, and 58% of them had earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

Measures

Every survey was distributed to IT staff members who worked for software companies in Manchester and Leads, England. A response scale with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree" was used to rate the items.

Negative Workplace gossips

Negative workplace gossips were measured by Kim et al. (2021) five-items. A sample Item was "A work colleague if they have a negative impression of something that another coworker has done". The Cronbach Alpha (α) value of this scale was 0.826.

Moral deficits

Moral deficits were measured by Jotterand and Levin (2019), five-items. A sample Item was "Spent too much time daydreaming instead of working". The Cronbach Alpha (α) value of this scale was 0.899.

Psychological entitlement

Psychological entitlement were measured by Kazarovytska et al. (2022) five-items. A sample Item was "People like me deserve an extra break now and then". The Cronbach Alpha (α) value of this scale was 0.862.

Moral attentiveness

Moral attentiveness were measured by Murtaza et al. (2023) five-items. A sample Item was "I regularly think about the ethical implications of my decisions". The Cronbach Alpha (α) value of this scale was 0.945.

Creative stress

Creative stress were measured by Vartanian et al. (2020) five-items. A sample Item was "I am confident about your ability to handle your personal problems". The Cronbach Alpha (α) value of this scale was 0.932.

Creative performance

Creative performance was measured by Liu et al. (2022) in five items. A sample Item was "This employee improves methods for solving a problem when an answer is not apparent." The Cronbach Alpha (α) value of this scale was 0.915.

Results

The measurement and structural model were estimated using SmartPLS v. 3.0. The basic goal of employing SEM is to predict outcome variables and explain variance; PLS-SEM is an alternate technique to CB-SEM, where theory is still being developed (Hair, Sharma, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Liengaard, 2024). Furthermore, being a non-parametric data analysis method, PLS-SEM eliminates the conflict surrounding distributional assumptions (Hair Jr et al., 2016). Lastly, it can manage complex models with relative ease (Hair et al., 2024).

Assessment of measurement model

The measurement model evaluation includes the validity and reliability tests. We examined four key indicators such as outer loadings, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, as per Hair et al. (2024). The requirement of 0.708 is exceeded by all indicator loadings, suggesting satisfactory item dependability. Since removing it did not substantially change our results, we kept the item loading slightly below the threshold for the subsequent analyses. Additionally, as the composite reliability (CR) indicator measures reliability more precisely and less flexibly, we looked into Hair et al. (2024) to analyze internal consistency reliability. Table 1 indicates that each construct has satisfactory to good composite reliability, with all composite reliability values exceeding the 0.70 criteria. Additionally, we examined the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to determine each construct's convergent validity. Hair et al. (2024) state that as all AVE values are over the 0.5 limit, each construct has adequate convergent validity.

Table I
Measurement model results

Variables	Items	Factor Loadings	α	Composite Reliability	AVE
Negative Workplace Gossips	NWG1	0.819	0.826	0.829	0.878
	NWG2	0.736			
	NWG3	0.749			
	NWG4	0.816			
	NWG5	0.720			
Moral Deficits	MD1	0.861	0.899	0.926	0.714
	MD2	0.846			
	MD3	0.867			
	MD4	0.882			
	MD5	0.764			
Psychological Entitlement	PE1	0.689	0.862	0.879	0.903
	PE2	0.852			
	PE3	0.829			
	PE4	0.864			
	PE5	0.874			
Moral Attentiveness	MA1	0.909	0.945	0.958	0.820
	MA2	0.901			
	MA3	0.910			
	MA4	0.911			
	MA5	0.898			
Creative Stress	CS1	0.843	0.932	0.949	0.788
	CS2	0.911			
	CS3	0.927			
	CS4	0.907			
	CS5	0.847			
Creative Performance	CP1	0.870	0.915	0.937	0.748
	CP2	0.779			
	CP3	0.895			
	CP4	0.891			
	CP5	0.884			

Since each square root of the AVE value was greater than the construct's corresponding correlation with every other construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), discriminant validity was proven (Table 2). The measurement model results collectively demonstrated adequate discriminant and convergent validity. According to Table 2, every HTMT result is below the 0.85 limit, demonstrating that every concept has adequate discriminant validity.

Table II
Discriminant validity result

Constructs	CP	CS	MA	MD	NWG	PE
Creative Performance	0.865					
Creative Stress	0.750	0.888				
Moral Attentiveness	0.803	0.776	0.906			
Moral Deficits	0.527	0.724	0.685	0.845		
Negative Workplace Gossips	0.471	0.465	0.441	0.649	0.769	
Psychological Entitlement	0.708	0.699	0.788	0.721	0.594	0.809

Assessment of structural model To assess our structural model, we investigated the statistical significance and relevance of the route coefficients. The R2 and adjusted R2 values were used to evaluate this model's descriptive and predictive powers, respectively (Table 3).

Table III
Results of R^2

Constructs	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Creative Performance	0.660	0.658
Creative Stress	0.672	0.670
Moral Deficits	0.421	0.420
Psychological Entitlement	0.353	0.352

Following that, bootstrapping (subsamples 10,000) was used to estimate the standardized coefficients and *p*-values for each path (Hair et al., 2024). Table 4 shows the results of negative workplace gossip's positive influences on moral deficits (β=0.649; *p*=0.000). Direct analysis of negative workplace gossip positively influences psychological entitlement (β=0.594; *p*=0.000). Hence, H1 and H2 are supported. Indirect effects mediating role of moral deficits among negative workplace gossiped creative stress (β=0.235; *p*=0.000). Similarly, the mediating role of psychological entitlement between negative workplace gossip and creative performance (β=0.117; *p*=0.000). Hence, H3 and H4 are supported. Furthermore, moral attentiveness negatively moderates moral deficits and creative stress (β=-0.211; *p*=0.004). Also, moral attentiveness negatively moderates psychological entitlement and creative performance (β=-0.155; *p*=0.000). Thus, H5 and H6 supported.

Table IV
Structural Model results

Hypothesis	β	Mean	SD	*T*-value	*P*-value
Direct Analysis					
H1: Negative Workplace Gossips -> Moral Deficits	0.649	0.652	0.027	24.376	0.000
H2: Negative Workplace Gossips -> Psychological Entitlement	0.594	0.597	0.029	20.192	0.000
Mediation Analysis					
H3: Negative Workplace Gossips -> Moral Deficits -> Creative Stress	0.235	0.238	0.027	8.833	0.000
H4: Negative Workplace Gossips -> Psychological Entitlement -> Creative Performance	0.117	0.118	0.035	3.385	0.001
Moderation Analysis					
H5: Moral Deficits * Moral Attentiveness -> Creative Stress	-0.211	-0.210	0.028	3.380	0.004
H6: Psychological Entitlement * Moral Attentiveness -> Creative Performance	-0.155	-0.152	0.036	4.359	0.000

Discussion

A moderated mediation model for creative stress, creative performance, and unfavorable workplace gossip was developed and evaluated in this research. In particular, we looked at how moral attentiveness might moderate the link between psychological entitlement, moral deficits, creative stress, and creative performance. The current study is positioned under the COR theory, which views gossip as a determinant of creative performance and views it as a loss of control over one's information (Hobfoll, 2011). Furthermore, psychological entitlement and moral deficits are mediating roles among negative workplace gossip, creative stress, and creative performance. Additionally, we discovered that moral attention mitigates the unfavorable association, making it more noticeable for workers with different moral attentiveness levels. Therefore, we discovered that among IT professionals, negative workplace gossip predicts outcomes and that the effect is mediated by moral deficiencies and psychological entitlement, especially when moral attentiveness is used extensively. However, we also discovered that gossip targets with high moral attentiveness had less of an impact from negative workplace gossip on creative stress and performance.

Theoretical implications

Our investigation makes several theoretical contributions. First, there is little knowledge of the effects of creative stress and performance, despite the fact that many researchers have examined the causes of these two phenomena (Christensen-Salem et al., 2021; González Moreno & Molero Jurado, 2023; S. M. Khan & Abbas, 2022; Liu et al., 2022; Vartanian et al., 2020). Our knowledge of the connection between negative workplace gossip and an efficient mediator of the positive moral deficits and psychological entitlement relationship is enhanced and deepened by this study. In line with COR theory, we contend that employees may experience psychological exhaustion and creative stress as a result of the deficiencies in consumption brought on by coping with negative gossip. Crucially, we think that disparaging remarks about someone who isn't there might spread like a poisonous virus and eventually impair creative performance. In response, workers are inspired to practice moral attentiveness in order to make up for the psychological harm caused by negative workplace gossip (Schwarz et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2025). This study advances knowledge of the crucial role that moral deficiencies and psychological entitlement play in the spread of negative workplace gossip, in addition to the mediating mechanism previously mentioned. In addition to joining calls to investigate creativity's possible dark side Rahaei and Salehzadeh (2020), it questions the body of existing literature, which typically emphasizes the "bright side of creativity" (Naseer et al., 2020).

Examining the viewpoint of COR theory, Hobfoll (2011) suggest that negative gossip as a work stressor might threaten or actually conflict among coworkers, hurt feelings, harm employees' performance, compromise privacy, and be harmful to the workplace. Additionally, resources are used up in the process of addressing negative gossip, which can cause stress in the creative process. On the other hand, this resource loss can be restored by the resource gains acquired from an individual's value of morality or aspects of it. For instance, morally attentive persons are more conscious of morality and moral aspects of life and are thus expected to demonstrate greater creative performance Liu et al. (2022) in reaction to negative gossip. Employees with high moral attentiveness are likely to consider ethics and

the implications of their actions. A moral framework and constructive individual features may demonstrate an enhancement pattern in ethical decision-making and avoiding stress. According to Kazarovytska et al. (2022), morally conscious people automatically see and comprehend things in terms of morality. As a result, they may be more sensitive to creative stress and perform better creatively. This result confirms the COR theory's viewpoint that a high rate of the use of attentiveness increases negative discourse (NWG) about other people, which causes stress in the creative process and creative performance. At the same time, awareness to moral aspects as personal resources reduces the extremity of violent reactions induced by perceived negative talk. These outcomes are in line with findings from a recent study by Murtaza et al. (2023) and Uçkun et al. (2020), which indicates that concentrated individuals' responses to a negative stress and creative performance.

Managerial implications

The findings of this investigation have several significant consequences. Rather than being an obvious, open behaviour, negative workplace gossip is more covert and concealed, which makes it harder to examine and control. Negative gossip spreads uncontrollably and causes irreparable damage to workers' output. Employers can therefore take a number of actions to create healthier and happier workplaces. Managers, for example, can communicate regularly with administrative members to better grasp what is happening in the workplace. Consistent interactions and healthy communication with employees may effectively minimize negative gossip. Supervisors are able to employees should be taught the importance of their words and how to avoid having conversations that could harm other people. Managers can also excite employees with challenging assignments in order to reduce their time and opportunities for gossiping (Naeem et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2020). The results demonstrated that negative workplace gossips can cause creative tension in people. People may act negatively towards the organisation because they believe it is to blame for their unfavourable working conditions. Alternatively, it might be an effort to bring the issue to the attention of moral people (Cheng et al., 2020). Because of the unpleasantness they encounter, which comes directly from coworkers, interpersonal problems can encourage workers to react more negativity to others (Kim et al., 2021). Managers should offer interventions like civility, respect, and participation to prevent such negative emotions towards coworkers because such training is still helpful in cases of workplace mistreatment (Naeem et al., 2020). By offering such training, supervisors may ensure that staff members maintain their civility towards coworkers and resist the urge for retaliation, in addition to preventing gossiping behaviour. In order to evaluate and induce stress, managers should develop clear guidelines and provide moral examples (González Moreno & Molero Jurado, 2023; Vartanian et al., 2020). Additionally, managers should understand that psychological entitlement and moral deficiencies at high levels of creative stress and performance, particularly in those with low moral attentiveness, may unintentionally harm actors and organisations. Therefore, in order to emphasise the significance of moral behaviours, organisations should put in place training and development programs on moral attentiveness.

Limitations and future directions

Our study has a number of limitations that also point to significant areas for further investigation. First, because we used a survey to test our hypotheses, common method variance was the main issue in our study. We advise future investigations to replicate our findings using objective measures of unfavourable workplace gossip and creative performance in order to allay worries about common method variance. Second, we simply investigated psychological entitlement's mediation effect on the connection between negative workplace gossip and innovative output. Future researchers should theories and empirically investigate the indirect effect of unethical behaviour on performance via psychological entitlement, given the possible impact of psychological entitlement on organizational innovative behaviour. Third, we countered any socially acceptable response inclinations by relying on our respondents' voluntary engagement and guaranteeing their complete anonymity. In order to rule out the possibility of creative performance bias, we additionally gathered our data at one-month intervals. We were unable to establish causation between the constructs in our model, even though these actions helped allay some worries about common method bias.

Future studies could examine the hypothetical model utilising a longitudinal design and additional data collection techniques, which could uncover intriguing dynamic correlations between the study characteristics now under investigation. Future longitudinal designs will present excellent chances to identify dynamic relationships over time, based on the current findings. Fourth, the results may not apply to other industrial and cultural contexts because the data we used was from a single organisation in a specific industry sector (Firth et al., 2024).

Future research should be conducted in many industries and nations to ascertain whether our findings are generalizable. Finally, the findings may not be as broadly applicable as they could be because we gathered the data from IT staff members employed by software companies in Manchester and Leads, England. There could be cultural variations in gossip. Consequently, it would be beneficial to do this study again in different cultural settings. For example, current models that examine the impact of workplace gossip can incorporate the dichotomy of individualism against collectivism.

Conclusion

Because gossip is so common, any employee may at some point encounter negative gossip at work. Our study examined that how negative workplace gossips direct and positive impact on moral deficits and psychological entitlement. We empirically investigated that moral deficits mediating role among negative workplace gossips and creative stress and psychological entitlement among negative workplace gossips and creative performance. Given that the literature on negatively moderating impact of moral attentiveness on moral deficit, psychological entitlement with creative stress and creative performance. It also investigated COR theory provides a helpful framework for negative workplace gossips impact on creative stress and creative performance. This pattern suggests network psychology as a promising research option for examining how the creative brain functions under creative stress, and it can help explain why stress can have a negative impact on creativity in some situations. We believe that this study will serve as a foundation for future research on the circumstances in which workers with high psychological entitlement may demonstrate constructive creative stress and creative performance.

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