


RESEARCH ARTICLE

The impact of organizational gossip on affective organizational commitment, feelings of loneliness, and turnover intention: A mixed methods study

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of organizational gossip on workplace outcomes, including affective organizational commitment, loneliness, and turnover intention, with a focus on differences between the public and private sectors. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combines qualitative and quantitative data from surveys conducted with Turkish citizen partners and in-depth interviews with employees in both sectors. The findings reveal that positive gossip enhances social bonds and commitment, while negative gossip leads to loneliness and increased turnover intention, especially in the private sector where job insecurity is higher. The study introduces an integrated framework linking gossip dynamics to organizational processes. Practical implications suggest that managers should address negative gossip while promoting positive gossip to strengthen workplace relationships. This study highlights the dual role of gossip in shaping employee experiences and retention strategies.

Keywords: public/private; gossip; affective commitment; loneliness; intention to stay

Introduction

Workplace gossip, a pervasive and complex element of organizational life, significantly shapes workplace dynamics. Rooted in social interaction, gossip serves multiple psychological and organizational functions, including information exchange, social bonding, and norm enforcement (Foster, 2004; Lyu, Wu & Yurong Fan, 2024). In psychology, it is seen as a key mechanism for regulating social behavior, maintaining group cohesion, and reinforcing shared values (Liao, Wang & Li, 2022). Organizational behavior research also recognizes gossip as a double-edged sword – it can foster trust and belonging while contributing to uncertainty and workplace stress (He, Feng, Xiong & Wei, 2023; 2002).

The positive psychology paradigm highlights the importance of fostering job involvement and retention, making it crucial to understand the factors that influence employees' intentions to leave. Turnover intention has been linked to a variety of individual, organizational, and environmental factors (Harris & Jones, 2023; Mitchell, 2011). While many turnover predictors have been explored, the role of workplace gossip in shaping employees' attitudes toward their organizations remains underexplored. This study aims to examine workplace gossip as a key factor influencing turnover intention.

Gossip in the workplace can have both positive and negative effects (Ellwardt, Steglich & Wittek, 2012; Grosser, Lopez-Kidwell & Labianca, 2010; Liao et al., 2022). Its dual nature arises from its

complex structure – while gossip can promote relationships and job satisfaction (Hu, Wang, Lan & Wu, 2022; Song & Guo, 2022), it can also fuel dissatisfaction and increase turnover intention. The varying emotional responses to gossip further explain its diverse impact on employee attitudes and behaviors. While gossip can build relationships and foster positive emotions, its effects diminish when the content is uninteresting or actively avoided by employees (Nguyen & Walker, 2020; Smith & Brown, 2022).

Based on the findings from the literature, we first conducted Study 1. Findings from Study 1, which involved interviews with both public- and private-sector employees, provide further empirical support for these perspectives. The qualitative insights reveal that workplace gossip demonstrates differently across sectors, with public-sector employees emphasizing its role in information dissemination, while private-sector employees highlight its impact on psychological safety. These interviews also indicate that employees' perceptions of gossip depend on contextual factors such as organizational culture and structure participating in gossip networks (Li, Huang, Wang & Wang, 2023).

Given the various reasons outlined in the theoretical background and Study 1, it is important to establish a connection between workplace gossip and individual or organizational factors by considering the significance conveyed by the dimensions involved. With this insight obtained, Study 2 was conducted. In Study 2, we investigated the impact of workplace gossip on employees' intention to leave their jobs. We also examined the variables that mediate this relationship. Researchers have demonstrated that negative gossip can deter selfish behavior and promote cooperative and helpful behavior in specific situations (Feinberg *et al.*, 2014; Kniffin and Sloan Wilson, 2010). The researchers of this study estimate that gossip, which leads to attitude and behavioral change, promotes positive affect and increases the employee's affective commitment to the organization. Furthermore, embracing collaborative behavior patterns can effectively combat feelings of loneliness in the workplace. On the other hand, it is important to note that the effects of gossip can also be negative, depending on how it impacts the other party and the nature of the gossip itself. Gossip can disrupt positive emotions and undermine emotional commitment within an organization, thus leading to feelings of loneliness among employees. In both situations, researchers assume that employee attitudes regarding their intentions to leave will change.

This study offers an insightful contribution to literature by delving into the negative and positive dimensions of workplace gossip. While research in existing literature only presents either positive or negative sides of workplace gossip, our study discusses both the positive and negative aspects of the concept simultaneously. For this reason, a qualitative research method was utilized in this study to explore the motivations behind gossip in the workplace. The research focused on the functions of gossip in the workplace and how it is employed for positive or negative purposes. Research has demonstrated that gossip is a prevalent form of communication in the workplace, influencing both interpersonal relationships and organizational processes. However, our understanding of the intentions and consequences of gossip remains limited. This study aims to address this gap by examining how various motivations drive gossip and the role these motivations play in organizational concepts.

We estimate that the second contribution of the study is that these possible relationships may vary in the intention to quit depending on whether the employee is a public- or private-sector employee. Namely, positive gossip enhances an employee's commitment to the organization by significantly activating positive emotions. Therefore, this positive mood reduces the likelihood of them leaving their job. However, while negative gossip can lead to loneliness and weak emotional commitment, it's important to consider the impact of being an employee in the public or private sector when it comes to revealing the intention to leave the job. The importance of an employee's economic well-being and job prospects may outweigh the significance of feeling lonely or emotionally committed to the organization. While being a public employee provides a job guarantee and psychological comfort, the possibility of a private-sector employee finding another job opportunity with similar conditions is an important factor that may affect the decision to leave the job. Therefore, in order

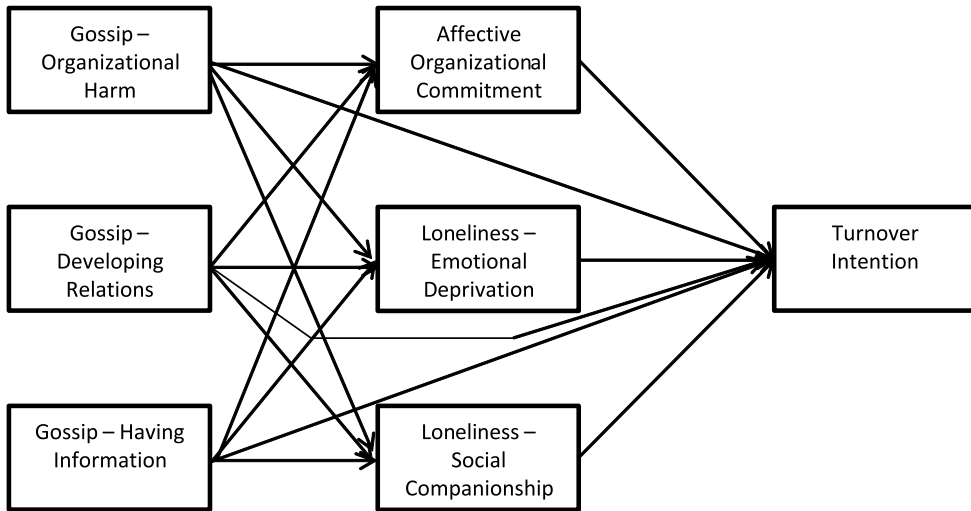


Figure 1. Model of the study.

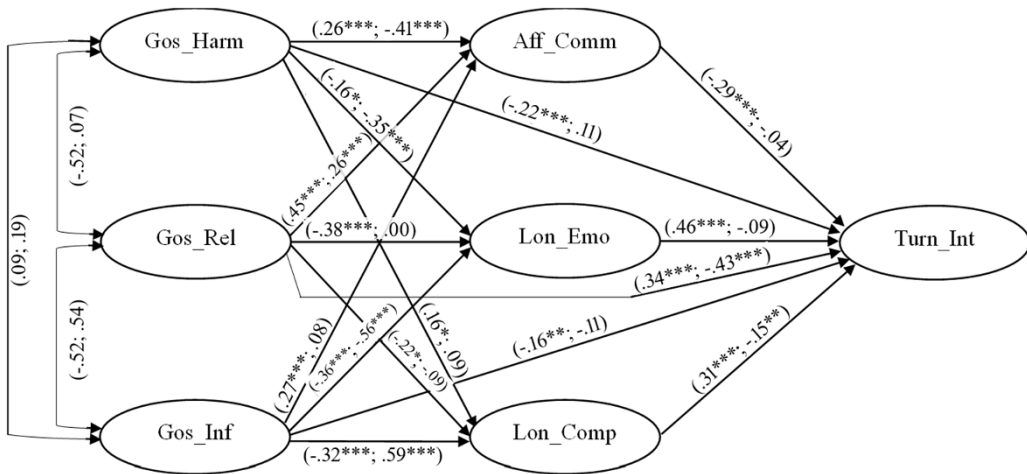


Figure 2. SEM results of the research model.

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ level (two-tailed). Lon_Emo: Emotional Deprivation, Lon_Comp: Social Companionship, Gos_Inf: Having Information, Gos_Rel: Developing Relations, Gos_Harm: Organizational Harm, Aff_Comm: Affective Commitment, Turn_Int: Turnover Intention.

for the research model to produce generalizable results, the sample limitations must be assessed under such conditions. This study, which considers public- and private-sector dynamics, points out another contribution of the study to the field. In addition, considering the effects of culture and sectors on employee behavior and attitudes (Cheng, Duan, Wu & Lu, 2023; Hofstede, 2001), the study was conducted on Turkish citizens working in the service sector in Turkey.

Researchers stress the importance of using diverse strategies, methods, and techniques in social science research, highlighting that gathering data from multiple sources enhances the generalizability of results. In examining workplace gossip as a precursor to the intention to leave, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of communication literature theory and practice.

Study 1

Gossip: ‘third-party information’

Gossip is a conversation that revolves around daily life (Giardini & Conte, 2011). It can be referred to as ‘idle talk’ or ‘chitchat’ as it involves discussing social and personal issues (Foster, 2004). In the workplace, informal and spontaneous communication is also considered to occur through personal interactions rather than official channels (Allen, 1995). In this perspective, organizational gossip involves individuals discussing and evaluating third parties or events within and outside the workplace with colleagues they feel close to (Michelson, Van Iterson & Waddington, 2010).

As defined by Michelson and colleagues (2010), the literature addresses organizational gossip in two ways: work-related and nonwork-related gossip (Beersma, Van Kleef & Dijkstra, 2019; Mills, 2010; Noon & Delbridge, 1993). Work-related gossip among all employees, both horizontally and vertically, can involve (un)constructive criticism and insights about performance, workplace relationships, ethical considerations, employee rights, and organizational policies and procedures (Noon & Delbridge, 1993). Here, employees compare their outputs, such as wages and promotions, to evaluate their value based on upward or downward assessment (Kramer, 1999; Mills, 2010). Gossip at the vertical level typically involves discussions about the organization’s operation and management-related matters (Mills, 2010). This is a form of communication in which managers assess their employees or employees offer critiques of the management. Additionally, gossip unrelated to work involves sharing news about the personal lives of others within the organization (Chang, 2023). In terms of strengthening informal employee relations, gossip, particularly on a horizontal level, can be viewed as a mediating factor (Estévez, Wittek, Giardini, Ellwardt & Krause, 2022). In addition, the literature discusses gossip in organizations as having positive and negative aspects. Positive workplace gossip involves sharing favorable information about an absent individual and a positive personal assessment among people in appropriate contexts (Foster, 2004). Conversely, negative organizational gossip refers to informal communication that aims to harm individuals or the organization. Examples include damaging a coworker’s reputation, undermining management, or creating conflict within teams for self-serving or malicious reasons (Kurland & Pelled, 2000).

Gossip motives: public versus private sector

The primary difference between the public and private sectors lies in the ownership of the business (Johnson, 2020). In the public sector, ownership is generally held by a government entity, whereas in the private sector, ownership is maintained by nongovernmental individuals or institutions (Mirze, 2006). The rights and working conditions of employees naturally vary depending on the type of ownership (Needle & Burns, 2010).

In these sectors, the choice between the public and private sectors depends on social value, individual characteristics, economic conditions, and institutionalization within the organization (Bhui, Dinos, Galant-Miecznikowska, de Jongh & Stansfeld, 2016). Working as a civil servant is often seen as an appealing opportunity in societies that prioritize job security (Willem, De Vos & Buelens, 2010). In some countries such as Turkey, Germany, and Korea, public-sector employees enjoy legal protection for job security and may benefit from lifetime tenure (see OECD, 2023).

In the public sector, the high job security perceived by civil servants is a product of the structured bureaucratic system. This system ensures that all processes, from hiring to dismissal, are conducted in accordance with established rules, promoting a sense of fairness and stability. The primary objective of all employees is to serve society, rather than focusing on profitability (Buelens & Van den Broeck, 2007). In the private sector, businesses strive for a balance between profitability and productivity. The employee’s contribution to this goal is a key factor in performance measurement, and behaviors such as quitting or being fired may affect this. Consequently, public employees consider job security a significant advantage and a key factor in their decision to remain in the public sector (Aguiar Do Monte, 2017). However, in the private sector, job security can be improved by enhancing individuals’

skills through education and experience, and by transitioning to companies with strong financial resources (Munnell & Fraenkel, 2013).

When this situation is evaluated specifically in terms of workplace gossip, the difference in the sector leads to variations in employees' approaches to gossip and, more importantly, in their work attitudes and behaviors. As mentioned above, the prioritization of efficiency and competition in the private sector leads to employees who engage in gossip being punished more swiftly, facing management decisions regarding their performance, or even being dismissed. This situation can create a basis for employees to behave more cautiously/strategically in participating in informal information flow within the organization, including information sharing. In the public sector, however, due to job security, gossip can lead to long-term attitudes and behaviors among employees. At this point, employees, especially in bureaucratic environments where official communication channels are slow, may approach gossip more tolerantly as an informal communication tool. It is considered important to determine the impact of this concern on employees' job attitudes, particularly their emotional commitment to the organization and their intention to leave. For this purpose, it is believed that adding these variables to the quantitative research, which constitutes the second part of the article, will allow for a detailed examination and understanding of this difference.

Method

Research settings and samples

Cultural and sector-specific factors significantly influence employee behavior (Cheng et al., 2023). Turkey's high-context communication culture and collectivist values play a key role in shaping how employees interact, particularly in informal communication contexts like gossip (Hofstede, 2001). These cultural traits foster stronger social bonds and in-group solidarity, allowing gossip to have a more substantial impact on organizational dynamics. Additionally, the hierarchical structure typical of Turkish workplaces, along with strong familial ties, influences how relationships are formed and maintained in the workplace (Kuo, Wu & Lin, 2018).

The service sector is distinct from other sectors due to its unique operational demands, including customer-facing roles and a high degree of interpersonal interaction. Employees in the service sector are often required to manage emotions and maintain positive interpersonal relationships with customers and colleagues, which can lead to specific challenges in terms of stress management, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions (Cheng et al., 2023). Unlike manufacturing or technical sectors, service sector employees are continuously engaged in maintaining relationships, which influences their job satisfaction and emotional commitment to the organization (Bencsik & Juhasz, 2020). These sector-specific dynamics contribute to distinct employee behaviors, and attitudes. As a result, managing the interpersonal and emotional aspects of work in the service sector requires specific strategies to enhance employee well-being and reduce turnover, making it a critical area for organizational research (Grosser et al., 2010; Michelson et al., 2012). Therefore, to control for potential cultural and sectoral influences, the study was conducted with Turkish citizens working in both public and private service sector organizations in Turkey.

Using qualitative research under the interpretive paradigm, the study aims to investigate the process of gossiping in organizations in depth. A series of semi-structured interviews were used to gather information for the current study. The data collected from the participants were further analyzed using the content analysis approach, a meticulous, methodical, and thorough review and interpretation of a specific body of material to find themes, patterns, assumptions, and meanings (Berg & Latin, 2008). A standard set of analytic activities arranged in a general sequence order: (a) Information is gathered and formatted to be 'read', such as by turning it into text. (b) Codes are attached to sets of notes or transcript pages after being produced analytically and/or inductively detected in the data. (c) Codes are converted into themes or categorized labels. (d) The materials were arranged according to these categories, revealing related terms, trends, connections, and similarities or differences. (e) Examining sorted materials allowed one to identify significant patterns and processes.

Table 1. Sociodemographics of participants

Part.	Gender	Age	Education	Sector	Org.Cnt.	Tenure	Emp.Cnt.
P1	Female	45	Master	Private	2	25	3000
P2	Female	33	Master	Private	3	10	600
P3	Female	30	Master	Private	5	10	15
P4	Female	29	Master	Private	1	3	200
P5	Female	27	Bachelor	Private	8	7	7
P6	Female	41	PhD.	Private	9	15	800
P7	Female	34	Bachelor	Public	6	10	200
P8	Female	37	Master	Public	8	13	65
P9	Male	35	Bachelor	Private	10	12	40
P10	Female	40	Bachelor	Public	8	16	60
P11	Male	40	Bachelor	Public	10	17	60
P12	Male	38	Bachelor	Public	6	13	45
P13	Male	43	Bachelor	Public	12	19	50
P14	Male	32	Bachelor	Public	6	6	200
P15	Male	34	Bachelor	Public	8	8	90

Note: Part.: Partner, Org.Cnt.: Experience in the Organization, Emp.Num.:Number of Employees

The purposive sample approach was used to select study participants. Five open-ended questions were utilized in semi-structured face-to-face and online interviews to gather qualitative information about participants’ opinions of organizational gossip and the motivations behind it. These questions can be found under the appendix section. As per the aim of this study, a varied sample of employed individuals from several demographic categories – including age, gender, sector, and professions required. In addition, the study participants had to deal with gossip in their daily jobs. As a result, 15 workers were chosen to be the study’s primary participants. Every member works full-time, at least 40 hours a week; the public and private sectors employ 8 and 7 people, respectively. Their demographics matched those of the projected sample, allowing us to obtain a snapshot of representative workplaces (Table 1).

Findings

In line with the research questions, the answers given by the participants were divided into two groups. In the first group, themes and subthemes were obtained from the participant’s answers to the motives for gossiping in organizations. We captured six main themes: Prosocial Intentions, Self-serving/malicious Intentions, Sincere/intimate Intentions, The Need to be Informed, Enjoying Work, and In-group Formation and Solidarity. In the second group, themes and subthemes are obtained from the participants’ responses regarding the possible consequences of organizational gossip (Table 2). Under the consequences of organizational gossip, we explain three main themes, namely ‘Individual work attitudes, behaviors, and emotions’; ‘Dyadic interactions’; and ‘Organizational effectiveness’. Subthemes and expression patterns belonging to the themes in the two groups are explained under the following headings.

Motives of organizational gossip

Participants’ perceptions of the underlying intentions were collected under 6 themes and 11 sub-themes. While some participants viewed gossip as a challenge to improving communication schemes

Table 2. Motives of organizational gossip

Subthemes	Sample Phrase
Prosocial intention	
Facilitating positive outcomes	‘If we talk amongst ourselves about things that are going badly, maybe we can make the managers hear and realize. It is not always possible to talk to them openly. In this way, bad incidents can be prevented before they happen.’
Warning against coworker/manager	‘Gossiping is a good thing, especially for newcomers, because sometimes some people can show themselves differently. For example, through gossip, you may find out that a person is a very bad manager.’
Self-serving/malicious intention	
Organizational harm (hidden agenda etc.)	‘I witnessed in the gossip that the organization and the managers were deliberately exaggerated and maligned because of the injustices experienced, especially when I was outside the organization.’
Coworker harm (reputational attack etc.)	‘There is a lot of envy and jealousy. For this reason, people can make up unfounded things about the employees or managers they dislike, and they always say the same things.’
Selfish personality traits	‘I think personality traits are also important. Sometimes people can talk freely about things they are not sure about just to reassure themselves.’
Getting a second opinion	‘Gossip is an opportunity to learn things you don’t know and what others think about that topic/person.’
Sincere intentions	
Genuine emotional display	‘Especially in cultures like ours, gossip is a must. It is a kind of sharing between people. Because you only gossip with people you consider them as sincere.’
The need to be informed	
Having information	If my colleague sees something happen when I’m not around, I’d want them to tell me about it. After all, I would do the same for her. We trust each other and always keep each other in the loop about what’s going on in the institution.
Reliable source of information	‘If everything is discussed confidentially in the organization and you are not aware of what is going on behind closed doors, you will gossip with someone you trust to find out what is really going on, this is very normal.’
Enjoying work	
Favorable mood	‘As humans, we love gossip, and we develop relationships through it. It creates a pleasant environment. We get excited, we laugh, we have fun.’
In-group formation and solidarity	
Motivation to seek support	‘When I hear something bad about someone doing or saying something to someone else, my morale gets low. Therefore, I distance myself from everyone except my closest friends. I know they won’t gossip about me. This setting is a witch’s cauldron; we must look out for each other.’

in the workplace, others perceived gossip as a tool to facilitate the management of workplace relationships and to be informed (see the details in [Table 2](#));

... If we talk amongst ourselves about things that are going badly, maybe we can make the managers hear and realize. It is not always possible to talk to them openly. In this way, bad incidents can be prevented before they happen ... (P1, Facilitating Positive Outcomes)

... Gossiping is good, especially for newcomers, because sometimes some people can show themselves differently. For example, through gossip, you may discover that a person is a terrible manager. (P5, Warning against coworker/manager)

Here, P1 and P5 state that gossiping at work can be a tool to improve interpersonal relationships and thus prevent negative events from occurring in the organization. Moreover, P1 believes that if managers become aware of the negative events that employees talk about among themselves, some positive developments will occur.

If everything is discussed confidentially in the organization and you are not aware of what is going on behind closed doors, you will gossip with someone you trust to find out what is going on; this is very normal. (P3, Reliable source of information)

As P3 stated, if the organization's communication structure creates obstacles to informing employees, it seems normal for people to learn about workplace developments from gossiping. However, unlike some participants, P2 and P4 stated that gossiping carries the intention of harming the reputation of employees or the organization rather than gaining information or improving relations in the organization.

... I witnessed in the gossip that the organization and the managers were deliberately exaggerated and maligned because of the injustices experienced, especially when I was outside the organization ... (P2, Organizational Harm/Hidden Agenda)

... There is a lot of envy and jealousy. For this reason, people can make up unfounded things about the employees or managers they dislike, and they always say the same things. (P4, Coworker Harm/Reputational Attack)

When we look at the participants' statements focusing on the positive aspects of gossip, P10 emphasizes that the basis of gossip in the organization is the trust relationship established between colleagues. P10 also believes that employees can only get accurate information from colleagues whom they trust.

... If my colleague sees something happen when I'm not around, I'd want them to tell me about it. After all, I would do the same for her. We trust each other and always keep in the loop about what's happening in the institution ... (P10, Having Information)

Emphasizing that gossip can also be used to improve interpersonal relations, P11 stated that gossip adds energy to the workplace atmosphere and even has a motivating and uplifting aspect. On the other hand, P13 stated that gossip reinforces the strengthening of in-group relations and may cause people in the formed group to trust each other.

... As humans, we love gossip, and we develop relationships through it. It creates a pleasant environment. We get excited, we laugh, we have fun. (P11, Favorable Mood)

... When I hear something bad about someone doing or saying something to someone else, my morale gets low. Therefore, I distance myself from everyone except my closest friends. I know they won't gossip about me. This setting is a witch's cauldron; we must look out for each other. (P8, Motivation to seek support)

Consequences of organizational gossip

Participants' perceptions of the consequences of gossip were collected under 3 themes and 18 sub-themes. Some participants see gossip as a challenge to maintain positive attitudes and behaviors in the

workplace, while others perceive it as a facilitator to manage dyadic interactions in the organizations (see the details in Table 3);

... For whatever reason, I feel uncomfortable in an environment where gossiping occurs. I am also afraid that if the people being talked about one day find out about it, my relations with them will deteriorate. (P2, Emotional distress)

... Honestly, I'm afraid that one day this kind of talk might happen about me, and I'll be in a difficult situation... (P4, Concern for self-protection)

... Nobody wants to work in a work environment where there is gossip, but it is not easy to leave the job at this time, but if I found a better place, I would leave immediately. (P1, Turnover intentions)

Here, P2 and P4 underlined that gossiping in the work environment may have negative effects on people's emotional well-being. They stated that they were worried that their relationships with other people in the organization would deteriorate if it was discovered that they were gossiping. Moreover, P1 stated that one might feel uneasy about working in a place with gossip. It stated that working in a different institution would be better when the opportunity arises.

Looking at the statements of P10 and P11, it is seen that they focus on the possible positive consequences of gossip. While P11 stated that establishing close friendships with which he/she can gossip in the work environment positively affects his/her feelings about his job, P10 similarly stated that being aware of what is going on within the organization reinforces his/her feelings of ownership towards the organization.

... I love having close friends at work with whom I can gossip. Times like these make my job more enjoyable. It's fun to gossip with them about the workplace and other colleagues. When something happens during the day, and we discuss it, time flies by, and I find my job more enjoyable ... (P10, Enjoying work)

... I don't think gossip is a bad thing at all. I've been in this workplace for six years. Of course, I have to know what's going on. If I don't know what's happening, I'll be the outside latch on the outside door ("distant relations with target" in the local language). I'll only have a give-and-take relationship with the institution. Knowing what's happening in the institution makes me feel like there is mine ... (P11, Feelings of possession)

As P1 stated, gossip can be a way to gain power and authority over other people within the organization, in proportion to the importance and power of the information obtained. In addition, P2 stated that being in the middle of the information network in the organization can provide some advantages to the employees in bilateral relations. At this point, P1 and P2 emphasized that gossiping can provide privilege for employees and that information can provide a strategic advantage in bilateral relations. P3, on the other hand, stated that if the person who is the subject of the gossip realizes the gossiping, bilateral relations may deteriorate, and some conflicts may occur.

... Having important information and being able to access this information is empowering ... (P1, Informal Power)

... I think being in a group where the information flow in the organization is intense provides an advantage to the person. Thus, you will not miss important news/events ... (P2, Network centrality)

Table 3. Consequences of organizational gossip

Subthemes	Sample Phrase
1) Individual work attitudes, behaviors, and emotions	
Concern for self-protection	‘Honestly, I’m afraid that one day this kind of talk might happen about me, and I’ll be in a difficult situation.’
Emotional distress (Fear, guilt, etc.)	‘For whatever reason, I feel uncomfortable in an environment where gossiping occurs.’
Job-related affective commitment	‘Although I am uncomfortable with gossiping in the organization, it does not negatively affect my attitude towards my job, because I like it, and sometimes gossiping makes me focus more on my job.’
Extra-role behavior	‘I know that I will be gossiped about, so I try to be the best at my job. Sometimes I even try to do things better that are not in my responsibility.’
Turnover intentions	‘Nobody wants to work in a work environment where there is gossip, but it is not easy to leave the job at this time, but if I found a better place, I would leave immediately.’
Having information	‘I keep my friend informed about what’s happening at work when he hasn’t come in for two days, and he does the same for me. This way, we stay informed about what’s happening at the institution even when we’re not there.’
Enjoying work	‘I love having close friends at work with whom I can gossip. Times like these make my job more enjoyable. It’s fun to gossip with them about the workplace and other colleagues. When something happens during the day and we discuss it, time flies by, and I find my job more enjoyable.’
Prefer to be alone	‘I don’t think such vulgar talk is appropriate for our colleagues and educated people. I give gossipers their due and draw boundaries. That’s why I have a little social circle at work. I prefer to be alone.’
Difficulty in social adaptation	‘People can’t find anything to discuss when you don’t respond to gossip. Over time, the number of people I had deep relationships with at work decreased. I was alone. I started to think I was antisocial and went to a psychologist. Why couldn’t I have sincere relationships?’
2) Dyadic interactions	
Network centrality	‘I think being in a group where the information flow in the organization is intense provides an advantage to the person. Thus, you will not miss important news/events.’
Informal power	‘Having important information and being able to access this information is empowering.’
Closeness and feelings of familiarity	‘I think that especially the conversations about the negative attitudes of the managers or the injustices in the organization bring the employees closer to each other. It feels good to have the same problems and to share them.’
In-group formation	‘In the early years, when I heard negative gossip about someone/institution in my unit, I observed who else agreed with me. Over time, we formed a small group within the team with these people. We shared everything and kept ourselves separate as a group and supported each other, but we didn’t isolate ourselves from the rest of the team either.’
Interpersonal conflicts	‘The conversations do not stay between people, but somehow go to the ear of the person spoken about, and then there may be problems amongst employees.’
3) Organizational effectiveness	
Climate of distrust	‘An organization where there is gossip does not give people confidence. I think it is an indicator that there is a managerial problem in terms of communication.’
Workplace incivility	‘I think gossip is an ethical problem in the organization. Employees should focus on their work and not talk about any person/organization in a positive/negative way. This behavior can lead to other uncivil behaviors later on.’
Constitution of informal communication	‘If the communication structure of an organization is not trusted, the information coming from there may be treated with skepticism, which may lead to the formation of a new communication/information sharing network among employees.’

... The conversations do not stay between people, but somehow go to the ear of the person spoken about, and then there may be problems amongst employees ... (P3, Interpersonal conflicts)

In their speeches, P4 and P5 emphasized that gossip can negatively affect the productivity of organizations. They underlined that in organizations where gossip is frequently used, employees cannot develop a sense of trust towards their organizations, and such uncivil behaviors may increase. This situation can be seen as a managerial deficiency. P2, on the other hand, stated that gossip can also be an important means of information and can create a new communication channel, especially in organizations with a weak communication structure, and can create a basis for employees to work more effectively.

... An organization where there is gossip does not give people confidence. I think it is an indicator that there is a managerial problem in terms of communication ... (P4, Climate of distrust)

... I think gossip is an ethical problem in the organization. Employees should focus on their work and not talk about any person/organization in a positive/negative way. This behavior can lead to other uncivil behaviors later on ... (P5, Workplace incivility)

... If the communication structure of an organization is not trusted, the information coming from there may be treated with skepticism, which may lead to the formation of a new communication/information sharing network among employees ... (P2, Constitution of Informal Communication)

Discussion for study 1

This study investigated how individual, group, and organizational dynamics interact with gossip in the work management process of Turkish employees. Using a sample of white-collar employees employed in the private and public sectors, we specifically examined how employees perceive blurred work-life due to the role of the growing use of gossip at workplaces and how individual and organizational dynamics have reconfigured work-life relations through the entanglement with gossip.

The analysis results revealed that the participants' perceptions of work-life relations regarding organizational gossip vary significantly. Similar to past research findings (Sun, Schilpzand & Liu, 2023), the study participants also differed in their perception of gossip in workplace relationships. The participant data indicated that the reasons for these differing perceptions could be attributed to various individual, group, and organizational factors that foster gossip and the underlying dynamics specific to the employed sector (private/public). A detailed examination of the participants' responses shows that individuals' desire to establish social connections within the organization is one of the main motivations behind gossip. Indeed, Beersma and Kleef (2012) mentioned that gossip fosters a sense of closeness and trust among employees, stating that this situation can strengthen interpersonal relationships. Researchers note that environments where employees share personal information or experiences enhance these close relationships, reinforcing group cohesion and solidarity.

Observing another topic participants emphasized, we find that employees' motivations to verify information about organizational happenings significantly influence their gossiping behavior. In addition to social ties, the participants consider gossip important in spreading information within the organization and serving as a tool for verifying the information held. According to the literature, gossip provides a simple method for gathering information about individuals or events within the organization, enabling individuals to compare their information and thereby facilitating informed decision-making (Giardini & Wittek, 2019). It is believed that gossip can be an important tool

in understanding the social dynamics within organizations, especially in organizational structures where official communication channels are limited or ineffective.

However, the motivations behind gossip are not solely positive. In particular, negative gossip can serve as a mechanism of social control and power within the organization, potentially carrying the intention of harming the organization or colleagues. For example, it has been observed that negative workplace gossip is linked to a decrease in job satisfaction among employees and an increase in intentions to leave the job because this situation creates a hostile atmosphere that undermines morale and commitment (He & Wang, 2022).

In addition, the participants indicated that the characteristics of the organization where the gossip occurs significantly influence the motivations underlying the gossip. For example, in organizational environments with high-stress levels, gossip can serve as a coping mechanism for employees experiencing emotional difficulties (Bulduk, Özel & Dinçer, 2016). It is particularly believed that in countries with collectivist cultural characteristics, information sharing among individuals can provide support to one another during tough times and may even lead to increased enjoyment in their work. Conversely, Phoko (2018) notes that in organizational structures with intense competitive relationships, such as those in the private sector, gossip can become more aggressive, with individuals using it to undermine their colleagues or gain an advantage over them. This situation is considered significant because it demonstrates, as particularly emphasized by the participants in this research, that organizational culture and existing group dynamics play a critical role in shaping the nature and motivations of gossip. Additionally, the individuals involved in this research indicate that social networks and internal group relationships within the organization can also shape gossip motivations, and employees are more likely to gossip with those with whom they have strong relational ties (Grosser *et al.*, 2010).

Examining the statements provided by participants in response to the second research question reveals that gossip can significantly impact workplace dynamics, employee emotions and attitudes, and overall organizational effectiveness. Despite the generally negative perception of organizational gossip, evaluating its outcomes reveals a multifaceted structure encompassing harmful and beneficial outcomes. It is noteworthy that the participants in this study emphasized the impact of organizational gossip on employees' emotions, attitudes, and behaviors and its effect on trust relationships in the workplace. Similarly, Kurland and Pelled (2000) demonstrated how gossip can function as a mechanism of power and influence over employees and how this situation can undermine trust between employees and management. In an organizational environment where negative gossip about employees occurs, trust relationships can be undermined, leading to tension and conflicts among individuals (Arian, Kozekanan & Zehtabi, 2011).

Detailed examination of participant responses reveals that organizational gossip can have multifaceted effects, primarily on employees' emotions, attitudes, and behaviors. Examining the relevant literature reveals results that support this finding. For instance, Dai, Zhuo, Hou and Lyu (2022) emphasize that these positive interactions establish a foundation for employees to feel more valued and recognized, thereby increasing job satisfaction and overall emotional well-being. On the contrary, participants have mentioned the negative effects of workplace gossip on employees' emotional states and the attitudes they develop towards the work environment. Indeed, Zong, Xu, Zhang and Qu (2021) emphasize that negative gossip can create a foundation for emotional exhaustion and mood deterioration among employees that adversely affect individuals' job performance and levels of organizational commitment. Furthermore, Zong *et al.* (2021) assert that negative gossip erodes the organizational self-esteem of employees, resulting in feelings of loneliness and enduring harm to their overall morale (Song & Guo, 2022). Furthermore, the participants stated that negative gossip could lead employees to engage in defensive behaviors and experience concerns about their future in the organization because they feel threatened and insecure. At this point, the significance of the emotional burden left on individuals by being involved in the negative gossip process in the work environment is notable. The burden in question can make employees feel worthless and unsupported by their organizational structure, leading to emotional detachment from their organizations and jobs.

According to Kuo, Chang, Quinton, Lu and Lee (2014), this burden can cause employees to feel worthless, unsupported by their organizational structure, and ultimately develop an emotional detachment from their organizations/jobs.

Depending on the findings, motivations for the emergence of gossip in the workplace is seen that the cultural codes of employees can also facilitate the behavior in question. Different cultures have varying norms, values, and communication styles that shape how individuals perceive and engage in gossip. As it is known, the work culture in Turkey is mainly influenced by collectivism, high-context communication, and medium-high power distance (Hofstede, 2001), and therefore, all these factors shape the way and effect of gossip in the workplace. Accordingly, it is quite possible that in a social interaction process where social ties are strong and loyalty is reinforced and valued, employees may consider gossip as a way of maintaining group cohesion. In addition, it is known that employees are more cautious than usual, especially when talking about sensitive issues, and prefer informal ways of sharing information that contains subtle messages/implications. This can be considered as one of the reasons for the respondents' preference for high-context communication. In addition, especially in organizations with a hierarchical structure, it is inconvenient for employees to express/confront their dissatisfaction with their managers for various reasons. For this reason, it is seen that gossip channels created by employees among themselves are used as an informal communication tool that serves to express ideas. Therefore, understanding cultural tendencies is important when analyzing gossip in diverse workplaces, as it provides insight into both the motivations behind gossip and its potential impact on organizational dynamics.

Additionally, organizational gossip plays an important role in shaping interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Similarly, Zhong and Tang (2023) indicate that individuals, particularly in environments where negative gossip is prevalent, tend to distance themselves from others, participating in their work less than usual, and due to the feelings of loneliness they experience, their intention to leave their jobs increases. On the contrary, in a work environment where positive gossip occurs, it reinforces feelings of friendship and solidarity among employees, increasing teamwork and collaboration (Ellwardt et al., 2012). The research participants also discussed gossip's potential impact on interpersonal dynamics and organizational culture. In addition, Arian and his colleagues (2011) state that promoting a collaborative culture in organizations can reduce the negative effects of gossip. It is believed that if organizations prioritize trust and open communication among employees, the likelihood of gossip developing and its destructive effects may be reduced. On the contrary, it has been stated that gossip in a competitive organizational culture can shape power relations and areas of conflict among employees. From this perspective, individuals are believed to intentionally initiate negative gossip processes to weaken their colleagues and gain a power advantage over them. This competitive atmosphere inevitably creates a foundation for increased stress levels and anxiety among employees, leading to a deterioration of well-being in the workplace (Ellwardt et al., 2012). Interestingly, participants have expressed that gossip within the organization can serve as a coping mechanism for employees with workplace concerns. Jiang, Xu & Hu's (2019) study confirms this finding. The study in question states that gossip can contribute to alleviating the negative effects experienced by workplace colleagues who share similar feelings. This situation allows employees to use gossip to come together and form common bonds, thereby reducing the shared concerns they experience.

Finally, the participants made some statements about the organizational effects of gossip. One of the important findings of the research is that gossip can create a new communication channel within the organization, and that a climate of distrust may become widespread. In addition, it is stated that the spread of gossip, like a spiral throughout the organization, creates a basis for employees to engage in rude behaviors. Indeed, Brandy and her colleagues (2017) stated in their study that negative gossip can heighten the visibility of uncivil behaviors in the workplace. Similarly, Kulik, Bainbridge and Cregan (2008) stated in their study that gossip can contribute to an atmosphere of distrust within the organization and, when evaluated in terms of the organization, it can damage individuals' morale and cohesion in a way that affects the organization's overall efficiency. When evaluated from this

perspective, it is believed that this research's results are valuable in revealing the multifaceted nature of gossip in working life, both harmful and potentially beneficial. At the same time, this situation is important in demonstrating the complexity and frequency of the role of gossip in organizations. As previously stated, negative gossip can adversely affect positive feelings and attitudes, such as interpersonal trust and commitment, leading to harmful outcomes. In contrast, positive gossip strengthens social connections and enhances group loyalty (Fehr & Seibel, 2023). It is considered vital for organizational leaders to understand this dual structure to harness the potential benefits of gossip and mitigate its harmful effects.

Study 2

Study 1 highlights the significant impact of workplace communication on employees' emotions, attitudes, and behaviors. To build upon these findings, Study 2 was designed to explore the qualitative data on how employees perceive themselves, their feelings toward the organization, and their intention to stay at work in the context of gossip. It is hypothesized that positive gossip will enhance the employee's connection with the organization, alleviate feelings of isolation at work, and not adversely affect their intention to stay. Conversely, negative gossip is expected to have the opposite effect on these relationships. The research model of Study 2, developed within this framework, will be further discussed below.

Theory and hypothesis development

Affective Events Theory

According to the Affective Events Theory (AET; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), the main idea of the theory explains how emotions and moods influence employees' behaviors. It suggests that the emotional experiences individuals have had in the past continue to influence their current organizational behaviors. The attitudes and behaviors of employees within an organization are impacted by the emotions and moods they experience, which are influenced by both internal and external environmental factors. These emotions can guide individuals in their responses to new events and interactions (Weiss & Beal, 2005). Put simply, the emotional impact of an event during the day can extend into later parts of the same day. This suggests that the emotional responses triggered by work events shape employee attitudes and reactions to emotional experiences in the workplace (Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2008). Given that each employee has unique individual tendencies, including character and experience, it's natural to expect that different work events will evoke varied emotions and, consequently, lead to diverse work attitudes and behaviors (Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2008).

AET offers a crucial theoretical framework for understanding the relationships between the variables in this study. It explains how gossip influences the emotional reactions of employees and how these reactions impact organizational outcomes, such as affective organizational commitment, feelings of loneliness, and turnover intention.

Gossip and turnover intention

As organizational gossip is a communication mechanism that mediates the spread of both true and false information (Wittek & Wielers, 1998), it is almost inevitable to feel its positive and negative effects (Grosser et al., 2010; Lyu et al., 2024) as it arouses interest or discussion within the organization (Dores Cruz, Nieper, Testori, Martinescu & Beersma, 2021). Eder and Enke (1991), researchers who emphasized the positive effect of gossip in the workplace, claimed that it is the most common salient social process in dyadic conversation and fulfills an essential need in the individual's developmental process. Noon and Delbridge (1993) supported the idea that informal social networks, like gossip, play a role in developing intragroup communication and collective identity (Crampton,

Hodge & Mishra, 1998). In addition, researchers argued that gossip helps individuals form important social connections, become part of a group, manage relationships within the group, and maintain membership (Farley, 2011; Soeters & van Iterson, 2002). Therefore, eliminating this phenomenon can harm organizational communication. Most importantly, it inhibits the information dimension of gossip. According to Peters, Jetten, Radova and Austin (2017), positively sharing information about the behavior of others within an organization can enhance motivation. For instance, communicating success stories and acknowledging achievements can significantly bolster employee morale, positively influencing others within the organization (Eder & Enke, 1991). At the same time, the gossip mechanism can promote the adoption of beneficial norms within the organization and can be leveraged to build internal organizational reputation and influence (Grosser, Kidwell & Labianca, 2012). Encouraging positive communication in organizations by celebrating employee achievements, recognizing hard work, and sharing inspiring stories can foster a more positive and supportive work environment (Ellwardt et al., 2012).

In the model suggested by Muchinsky and Morrow (1980), it is anticipated that employees will be inclined to stay in their current jobs due to the positive aspects of their work environment. As it is known, employees' turnover intention is the psychological and behavioral inclination to leave their current organization or profession (Griffeth & Hom, 1988; Mobley, 1982). Therefore, the positive aspects of organizational gossip lead to low levels of perceived job stress, experiencing positive emotions, and having a strong perception of the company's reputation. Therefore, it is believed that AET, which explains the relationship between emotional reactions to work events and employees' attitudes and behaviors, will also impact the outcome of this study, specifically turnover intention. In this direction, this positive perception is fostered by an employee-centered work environment, possibly facilitated by informal communication such as gossip. This expectation applies to employees in both the private and public sectors. The findings of our qualitative study align with Muchinsky and Morrow's (1980) model. Participants indicated that positive gossip triggered positive emotions and, as suggested by AET, contributed to a positive workplace environment. They reported that gossiping helped them relieve stress, enjoy their time at work, and develop a sense of satisfaction with their organizational settings. These findings support the literature-based expectation that the model applies to both private- and public-sector employees. Our research enhances the theoretical understanding and empirical evidence regarding how a positive work environment increases employees' motivation to stay engaged at work.

Hypothesis 1: While developing relations dimension of gossip increases, turnover intention decreases for both public- and private-sector employees.

Hypothesis 2: While having information dimension of gossip increases, turnover intention decreases for both public- and private-sector employees.

On the other hand, although Eder and Enke's (1991) studies emphasize the positive aspects of gossip, the general opinion agrees that the concept can be a malicious or negative action (Morrill, 1995). Research (see Ellwardt et al., 2012; Grosser et al., 2012; Kim, Shin, Kim & Moon, 2021; Martinescu, Jansen & Beersma, 2021; Wittek & Wielers, 1998; Wu, Kwan, Wu & Ma, 2018) indicates that negative gossip, which tends to be more common, can harm relationships, diminish trust, and create a toxic work environment (Michelson et al., 2010). Moreover, third-party information can sometimes lead to unnecessary anxiety and uncertainty in the work environment due to incomplete or incorrectly conveyed facts (Wert & Salovey, 2004). Inaccurate or exaggerated information can unjustly damage someone's reputation and impact their career advancement (Kurland & Pelled, 2000). As gossip content spreads upward, it can undermine trust between employees and management. Employees may hesitate to share information openly or collaborate effectively (Wu et al., 2018). Song and Guo (2022) provided additional evidence of the negative impact of workplace gossip. Their research findings contradicted those of Farley (2011), showing that negative workplace gossip can harm employees' social relationships, particularly regarding trust and cooperation.

The impact of negative gossip on employees' turnover intention may differ based on whether they work in the public or private sector. The perception of job security is an important factor in motivating

employees, particularly in the public sector, where job security often plays a significant role in people's decision to work in public service (see part of Private vs Public-sector: Differences in the Job Security Perception of Employees). Research indicates that public-sector employees place a higher value on job security compared to their counterparts in the private sector. As a result, this tendency contributes to lower turnover rates within the public sector (Willem *et al.*, 2010). Public-sector employees prioritize job security and are less likely to leave their positions, even when affected by negative gossip, due to the challenges of finding new employment. In contrast, private-sector employees, who have less job security, may be more inclined to leave a toxic work environment since they can more easily find comparable roles. Based on these observations, the third hypothesis states that the negative impact of gossip on turnover intention is weaker for public-sector employees than for private-sector employees. Therefore, the third hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 3: While organizational harm dimension of gossip increases, Turnover intention increases for private-sector employees but not for public-sector employees.

Affective organizational commitment

Meyer and Allen (1991) proposed that organizational commitment revolve around employees' commitment to the organization because they 'want', 'need', or 'feel obligated'. The commitment form of employees who choose to remain in the organization because they want to be known as affective commitment. Affective commitment is generally defined as 'the emotional bond of employees to their organization' (Allen & Meyer, 1996). An employee's emotional state may be influenced by individual tendencies stemming from positive and negative gossip within the workplace. For instance, the dimensions of gossip, such as having information and developing relations dimensions of gossip, fulfill the socialization needs of employees within the organization and promote workplace friendships (Zong *et al.*, 2021). Considering an individual's need to establish relationships, the work environment becomes more enjoyable for employees who fulfill their social needs through informal communications and the exchange of information that they cannot obtain through formal channels (Coşkun, 2020). Interacting and sharing important or unimportant information to create stable relationships and their own 'circles' will foster deep emotional connections between individuals (Cheng, Kuo, Chen, Lin & Kuo, 2022). As a structure that fosters employee connection, gossip enhances solidarity and teamwork by creating team awareness (Melwani, 2012). Positive organizational gossip is expected to boost emotional commitment to the organization by facilitating employee communication and fostering relationships. Additionally, informal communication can help employees obtain information quickly, reducing uncertainty and increasing psychological safety (Alshehri, 2017).

Research on AET indicates that both positive (e.g., high perception of organizational support) and negative (e.g., low perception of organizational justice) emotional events in the workplace significantly impact employees' job satisfaction (Wegge, Van Dick, Fisher, West & Dawson, 2006; Weiss & Beal, 2005). Hence, it is widely understood that job satisfaction, as a significant result of AET, is negatively correlated with the intention to leave (Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2005; Mitchell, 2011; Shaw, 2004). It is also recognized that a lasting sense of job satisfaction can be attained through organizational commitment (Patrick & Sonia, 2012; Van Scotter, 2000). According to this theory, positive gossip can help create an environment where positive emotions act as a barrier to employees wanting to leave their jobs. It is believed that positive gossip can enhance an employee's emotional commitment to the organization by eliciting a positive emotional response. As a result, these positive emotions can improve the employee's job commitment by fostering a positive work attitude. In this scenario, the employee's intention to leave the job is assumed to be reduced. This theory applies to both public- and private-sector employees.

Our qualitative research findings align with the premise of AET, which suggests that positive and negative emotional events in the workplace influence employees' feelings, attitudes, and behaviors related to their work. Participants indicated that positive gossip strengthens emotional bonds among

colleagues, leading to favorable emotional responses within the workplace. These positive emotions enhance employees' emotional bonds to their organization and increase their commitment. Thus, their job satisfaction can increase, and they don't have turnover intentions. Our research predicts that positive gossip can have remarkable effects on affective commitment for employees in both the private and public sectors. Additionally, these effects contribute positively to reducing turnover intentions. Consequently, we posted that:

Hypothesis 4a: Affective Organizational Commitment mediates the relationship between developing relations dimension of gossip and Turnover Intention for public- and private-sector employees.

Hypothesis 4b: Affective Organizational Commitment mediates the relationship between having information dimension of gossip and Turnover Intention for public- and private-sector employees.

We have acknowledged that, due to the individual nature of AET, different employees may experience varying emotions during work events (see Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2008). Organizational gossip can impact employees differently, some finding it enjoyable and others annoying. It's important to consider the differing effects of gossip on individuals within the organization (Michelson et al., 2010). Organizational gossip can harm an employee's emotional well-being, primarily due to its harmful nature (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Majorly, the content of harmful gossip may lead to the erosion of employee trust and morale (De Gouveia, Van Vuuren & Crafford, 2005). This is because rumors are spread in the organization without clear information about what is fact and what is not (Grosser et al., 2012). Adversely, because negative gossip is often concealed and indirect, it is challenging to identify the source, verify its content, or prevent its spread (Foster, 2004). Issues that cannot be openly discussed may result in prejudice, misunderstandings, and employee conflicts (Grosser et al., 2010). Continuously spreading rumors and gossip might give rise to biased opinions and divisions, potentially harming employees' morale (Hartung, Krohn & Pirschtat, 2019). New rumors and gossip can lead to the formation of biases and factions, which may hurt employees' feelings and cause a loss of reputation.

While gossip can temporarily relieve work stress, it inevitably leads to a bad mood for the person being gossiped about. This negative conversation can reduce emotional commitment and trigger the intention to leave the job. However, the impact on the intention to leave the job may vary between public- and private-sector employees. The main reason for this difference can be based on the psychological security comfort that job security provides. Being a public employee in Turkey is desirable due to the guarantee of job security for life, which is a significant advantage for individuals. An employee who cannot afford to lose this benefit is estimated to have low emotional commitment but low or no intention to leave the job. Qualitative research findings align with this information. Some public employees generally highlighted the 'job guarantee', viewing it as an opportunity that was hard to relinquish.

Hypothesis 4c: Affective Organizational Commitment mediates the relationship between the organizational harm dimension of gossip and turnover intention for public- and private-sector employees.

Loneliness in the workplace

People describe a good work environment as a place where individuals are trusted and enjoy working and where they take pride in their work (Wright, Burt & Strongman, 2006). Based on this definition, positive gossip in organizations can improve social relations and increase emotional connections (Kuo et al., 2018), thus reducing feelings of loneliness. Numerous researchers have highlighted the benefits of positive gossip in cultivating a harmonious work environment within organizations. They have also recognized gossip as a valuable communication mechanism that promotes unity among individuals (Yücel et al., 2023; Ellwardt et al., 2012; Estévez et al., 2022). By engaging in gossip, employees can alleviate the burden of their daily routine and personal problems (Alshehri, 2017). Loneliness in the workplace is the absence of meaningful interpersonal relationships with others (Zhou, 2018). Lam and Lau (2012) emphasized that incomplete and insufficient

social connections characterize workplace loneliness. This highlights the importance of considering individuals' subjective experiences, such as their levels of closeness, interpersonal trust, and support, when addressing loneliness in the workplace (Özçelik & Barsade, 2018). The study's final hypothesis, centered around the feeling of loneliness, investigates how the subdimensions of emotional deprivation and social companionship can influence the relationship between workplace gossip and the intention to leave the job.

First, the emotional deprivation dimension emphasizes the quality of the employee's relationships with their coworkers (Wright *et al.*, 2006). An emotionally deprived employee refrains from sharing her thoughts with colleagues, perceiving a lack of understanding and distancing herself/himself as an outsider (Wright, 2005). From this perspective, if we remember that gossip occurs between individuals who trust each other (Burt & Knez, 1996), it is feasible for an employee to build trust and closeness with another through gossip (Kuo *et al.*, 2014). Employees who openly share their knowledge and express their thoughts and feelings through interpersonal communication can strengthen their relationships. Additionally, an employee experiencing negativity can find relief and build intimacy through sharing these feelings with others, ultimately improving their emotional state and relationship dynamics (Fine & Rosnow, 1978). From another perspective, employees can also distance themselves from daily issues or negativity and shift their focus to another subject through gossip (Alshehre, 2017).

It is not suggested that gossip and all its dimensions affect turnover intention in the same way as assumed by other hypotheses. Sharing positive gossip (developing relationships and having information dimensions) is anticipated to reduce employees' feelings of emotional deprivation, activate positive emotions, and decrease their intention to leave the job. Our qualitative research findings align closely with existing literature on the role of gossip in strengthening emotional connections among employees. Participants emphasized that they could form warm relationships with their coworkers, mainly through positive gossip. As a result, they found the workplace enjoyable and did not experience feelings of loneliness. In light of this information, it is estimated that this assumption will be similar for individuals working in both the private and public sectors.

Hypothesis 5a: Emotional Deprivation mediates the relationship between developing relations dimension of gossip and Turnover Intention for public- and private-sector employees.

Hypothesis 5b: Emotional Deprivation mediates the relationship between having information dimension of gossip and Turnover Intention for public- and private-sector employees.

However, the sense of emotional deprivation is likely to increase in the dimension of organizational harm, which refers to the negative aspect of gossip. This idea can be considered from two perspectives. First, negative gossip, like positive gossip, requires meaningful bonds based on employee trust (Ellwardt *et al.*, 2012; Estévez *et al.*, 2022). In fact, due to the risk involved in negative gossip, a strong tendency to trust may be necessary between the parties (Grosser *et al.*, 2010). It may be mistaken for friendship if negative gossip is exchanged between parties. However, regardless of whether it is directly related to the organization (e.g., related to the organization's direction, management, or a colleague), an employee's loneliness can increase in proportion to their decreasing level of social interaction when they are unable to share their feelings or information (O'Keefe & Sulanowski, 1995). Therefore, employees who do not engage in negative gossip may feel lonely at work due to the lack of deep, trusting ties with colleagues.

Second, negative gossip in the workplace can evoke negative emotions, diminish trust, and harm interpersonal relationships (Aboramadan, Turkmenoglu, Dahleez & Cicek, 2020; Liff & Wikström, 2021). Employees exposed to such gossip may distrust the gossipers (Mokwebo & Carrim, 2023), avoid meaningful interactions, and experience a toxic atmosphere. This environment fosters loneliness, reducing emotional commitment and potentially increasing turnover intention (Ertosun & Erdil, 2012; Özçelik & Barsade, 2018; Wahyuni & Ikhwan, 2022). Research supports these findings, showing that loneliness at work decreases organizational commitment and prompts intentions to leave. Qualitative findings align with this literature, revealing that participants exposed to negative gossip reported surface-level interactions, interpersonal conflicts, and a preference for solitude,

underscoring the detrimental impact of a gossip-driven toxic workplace (Giardini, Balliet, Power, Számadó & Takács, 2022; Wahyuni & Ikhwan, 2022).

Following this situation, the individual's attitude and behavioral response toward work indicate an intention to leave the job. The career paths for private- and public-sector employees may differ. While job security may lead a public-sector worker to stay despite feelings of isolation, private-sector employees might actively seek a job that utilizes their current skills.

Hypothesis 5c: Emotional Deprivation mediates the relationship between the organizational harm dimension of gossip and turnover intention for public- and private-sector employees.

Social loneliness refers to the absence of social connections among employees or an individual's inability to be part of a community that will accept them (Wright, 2005). With positive gossip and social friendships, employees may join the social network and see themselves as part of the work social network. Wright and Silard (2020) acknowledge that if an employee is gossiping about social issues with someone in the organization, it indicates that the employee is not isolated from the organization. Furthermore, Noon and Delbridge (1993) suggested that gossip is a communication tool that fosters the development of a collective identity. This is because gossip allows employees to feel a sense of belonging and to enhance their relationships through social interaction (Silard & Wright, 2020). Sharing work-related problems and personal thoughts relieves employees, and the gossip's developing relations dimension reinforces their positive feelings. Wright and Silard (2021) noted that when employees gossip about social issues, it suggests they do not feel isolated within the organization. Our qualitative findings support this perspective, showing that participants use gossip to strengthen their social connections and foster a sense of unity, togetherness, and friendship. Furthermore, as discussed in the literature section, there is a notable overlap between our qualitative findings and Noon and Delbridge's (1993) emphasis on gossip's role in forming collective identity, particularly regarding themes of friendship, intimacy, and strong social relationships that emerged during in-depth interviews with participants. The participants reported that sharing their problems had a calming effect and helped improve their relationships. Overall, these findings indicate a strong alignment between the theoretical framework in literature and the qualitative data collected. In the dimension of having information, employees can spend time together during their breaks, stay informed about organizational updates, and feel like a part of the organization. The assumptions are similar for both public- and private-sector employees.

Consequently, the hypothesis below is provided:

Hypothesis 6a: Social Companionship mediates the relationship between developing relations dimension of gossip, and turnover intention for public- and private-sector employees.

Hypothesis 6b: Social Companionship mediates the relationship between having information dimension of gossip, and turnover intention for public- and private-sector employees.

Employees affected by harmful gossip often experience social isolation and struggle to express their concerns or opinions. They may feel excluded from workplace social circles, avoid sharing ideas, and even spend breaks alone to escape gossip (Wright et al., 2006). This self-imposed isolation limits participation in social and organizational activities, reducing communication and engagement (De Gouveia et al., 2005). Qualitative findings confirm that employees frequently adopt solitude as a coping mechanism, restricting social interactions to shield themselves from gossip's negative impacts and safeguard their reputations.

As a result, this lack of communication can contribute to an increasing sense of insecurity and the proliferation of negative feelings (Liff & Wikström, 2021). However, in line with existing research on workplace loneliness, individuals can mitigate feelings of isolation and inadequacy by expressing themselves (Wright, 2005). Because effective communication helps group members build trust and understanding through timely and meaningful relationship building (Asunakutlu, 2002).

As Foster (2004) explains, negative gossip tends to be covert and indirect, and employees may perceive this information sharing as a violation of organizational ethics when viewed from a broader perspective. This is not an unreasonable thought because, during gossip, the sender communicates with the receiver about a target who is unaware of the content or is not present

(Dores Cruz *et al.*, 2021). This time, the employee who doubts the personal qualities and professional ethics of the person spreading gossip may develop negative feelings toward them. Thus, a hostile social atmosphere and public opinion environment are created, and this interpersonal environment affects employees' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Furthermore, employees who choose not to engage in negative workplace gossip feel isolated from other organization members due to ethical concerns (Kuo *et al.*, 2018).

Such emotional reactions may lead to employees' intention to leave because they trigger affect-focused behaviors and work attitudes (Gunter, van Emmerik & Schreurs, 2014). Building on Weiss and Cropanzano's (1996) AET that work environments can directly affect job attitudes, this study's final proposition is that harmful gossip will affect turnover intentions through social companionship. However, as AET suggests, the impact of emotions on attitudes and behaviors may vary depending on individual circumstances. Therefore, being a public- or private-sector employee will affect the Social Companionship – organizational harm dimension of gossip and Turnover Intention relationship differently. Although public employees lack social companionship due to harmful gossip, their intention to leave the job will be low.

Hypothesis 6c: Social Companionship mediates the relationship between the organizational harm dimension of gossip and Turnover Intention for public- and private-sector employees.

The model of the study which is shown in Figure 1 shows the phenomena's relations.

Method

Research setting and sample

To test the hypotheses of the study, the organizations in the service sector in Turkey have been reached. The sample group consists of people working in businesses that differ in terms of ownership type, namely public and private sectors, following the research model. To compare public- and private-sector employees, it was decided that the dynamics of the businesses would be the most suitable for this comparison. First, the activities of both public- and private-sector organizations are similar, and they are all in the service sector category (such as bank employees, university administrative staff, notaries, or insurance agencies). Second, employees in both sectors have been working in the same workplace for at least one year to ensure that employees know each other and are involved in gossip channels. The employees of the organizations have reached out to obtain the necessary verbal permission and distributed the survey to the appropriate pilot group online and in paper format.

Following the preparation of the survey, the pilot survey was distributed to 43 participants. The feedback regarding the clarity of the survey was collected from the participants. After the satisfaction of the researchers about the questionnaire's quality, the survey was distributed to the sample group. (Yaslioglu, 2017). The survey was sent to 752 participants online who are working in Istanbul/Turkey. A total of 698 of the participants reacted, and 87 of the reacted surveys were eliminated due to missing answers. Following Schafer's (1999) study, a 5% cutoff level was used to exclude the missing answers from the study. Thus, data obtained from a total of 611 participants were analyzed. Demographical Statistics of Participants (Age = 20–56 years). Gender; (*Female* = 311, *Male* = 300). Marital Status (*Married* = 256, *Not Married* = 355). Sector statistics, (*Public* = 290, *Private* = 321). Experience in the Organization (1–27 years). Number of Employees, (*Less than 10* = 91, *11–50* = 198, *51–250* = 184, *251–500* = 34, *501–1000* = 11, *More than 1001* = 92).

Survey data were collected using the random selection method. To measure the attention of the participants, the statement has included 'If you are reading this statement, select 'I disagree' from the options below' in the survey in an attempt to prevent possible random markings.

Assessment of Common Method Bias

Since the survey applied in the study is aimed at measuring the perceptions of the participants, it should be checked whether the data is affected by Common Method Bias (CMB) to ensure the validity

of the findings. CMB was examined in two stages. In the first stage, the Harman's single-factor test method was applied (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986). The results obtained show that the single-factor variance is 32.8. Since the result obtained is lower than the accepted 50% cutoff, it shows that the data obtained in the first stage are not affected by CMB (Podsakoff et al. 2003).

In the second stage, the Unmeasured Latent Method, which is considered a more reliable method by the researchers, was applied (Podsakoff et al. 2012). The relationship between Item Loads was examined with and without the addition of a Common Latent Factor (CLF) (Richardson et al., 2009). Regardless of CLF presence, the variance indicated by the method factor is modest, and the differentiation of correlations does not exceed the threshold level. As a result of the findings, the variance among items can be explained to a single CLF. The results of the two applied methods reveal that there is no CMB effect in the study.

Measures

This study employed a survey technique, and we utilized four measurement tools in conjunction with a personal information form. The questionnaire has provided an opportunity for participants to measure the phenomena by using a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Items, item loadings, Cronbach's alpha value, McDonald's Ω , and Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value for the dimensions are given in Table 4. All the computed Cronbach's alphas and McDonald's Ω s are internally consistent (Vallerand & Richer,). In addition, the combined scale and dimension results from Bartlett's test are significant ($p = .000 < .001$).

The study employed the 3-item 'Intention to Turnover Scale', developed by Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth in 1978, to measure the intention to turnover as the dependent variable. Numerous research has successfully employed this single-dimensional scale, affirming its high validity and reliability in statistical terms (Hu et al., 2022; Lin, Hu, Danaee, Alias & Wong, 2021; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Örüçü and Özafşarlıoğlu (2013) conducted the adaptation of the scale to Turkish culture and ensured its linguistic equivalence. The scale's Cronbach's alpha reliability value, which consists of a single dimension like the original scale, is .90. None of the scale items include negative statements. Example item: Often think about quitting my present job.

The 24-item 'Organizational Gossip Scale', developed simultaneously in English and Turkish by Han and Dağlı (2018), was used to measure the gossip variable in organizations, which is the study's independent variable. The scale consists of three dimensions: 'having information', 'developing relations', and 'organizational harm'. During the scale development phase, the items were developed considering the sample group of teachers. For this study, the phrase 'in my school' in the items was changed to 'in my institution/workplace'. The structural equation values of Han and Dağlı (2018) scale were found to be the GFI value (0.84), the AGFI value (0.81), and the NFI value (0.88). The KMO value is .91, and the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is .82. When examined in terms of sub-dimensions, Cronbach's alpha for the having information dimension (7-item) is .92; for developing relations dimension of gossip (7-item), it is .94; and for the organizational harm dimension (10-item), it is .94. Example item: Through gossip, I learn a lot of information about newcomer colleagues at my workplace (from having an information dimension); I am having fun by gossiping with my colleagues at my workplace (from a developing relations dimension); The gossips about my colleagues at my workplace create prejudice against them (from an organizational harm dimension).

The Commitment Scale, originated by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) and adapted to Turkish by Dağlı, Elçiçek and Han (2018), was utilized as the mediator variable in the study to measure employees' affective commitment toward their workplaces. The scale consists of three subdimensions: effective, continuance, and normative. However, since it was believed that employees' emotional commitment to their workplaces would mediate in the research model, only the affective commitment dimension (a 6-item dimension) was included in the survey. The scale has been used in numerous studies (see Bal, de Lange, Zacher & Van der Heijden, 2016), and its adapted form has become a valuable tool for researchers due to its high validity and reliability values [(KMO = .889; Cronbach's

Table 4. Factor analysis of the scales

	Loading	α	KMO	Loading	α	KMO	Loading	α	KMO
Items	Collective			Public			Private		
Gossip/Developing relations									
Gos_Rel_14	931	935	888	964	926	881	889	940	833
Gos_Rel_11	892	857	918						
Gos_Rel_13	886	903	867						
Gos_Rel_12	883	868	893						
Gos_Rel_10	864	929	826						
Gos_Rel_8	822	813	819						
Gos_Rel_9	674	513	792						
Gossip/Having information									
Gos_Inf_1	952	969	912	959	963	900	944	975	907
Gos_Inf_4	931	917	942						
Gos_Inf_3	929	897	958						
Gos_Inf_7	909	904	919						
Gos_Inf_2	907	893	922						
Gos_Inf_5	903	867	939						
Gos_Inf_6	897	902	900						
Gossip/Organizational harm									
Gos_Harm_21	93	936	911	943	928	851	942	960	907
Gos_Harm_20	922	924	939						
Gos_Harm_19	905	942	887						
Gos_Harm_18	865	887	864						
Gos_Harm_22	861	749	942						
Gos_Harm_17	828	744	886						
Gos_Harm_23	787	653	901						
Gos_Harm_24	701	637	741						
Affective organizational commitment									
Aff_Comm 1	899	890	864	915	920	762	865	838	861
Aff_Comm 7	885	880	899						
Aff_Comm 6	874	943	851						
Aff_Comm_5	871	872	897						
Aff_Comm_4	643	735	494						
Loneliness/Emotional deprivation									
Lon_Emo_3	881	935	868	894	945	856	874	923	841
Lon_Emo_2	876	892	875						
Lon_Emo_4	871	884	854						
Lon_Emo_7	856	862	849						
Lon_Emo_9	844	832	871						
Lon_Emo_8	831	911	714						
Lon_Emo_1	784	802	77						

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued.)

	Loading	α	KMO	Loading	α	KMO	Loading	α	KMO
Items	Collective			Public			Private		
Loneliness/Social companionship									
Lon_Comp_11	863	914	818	881	937	802	852	890	774
Lon_Comp_10	853	866	846						
Lon_Comp_17	837	908	747						
Lon_Comp_13	823	859	827						
Lon_Comp_12	794	839	774						
Lon_Comp_16	765	892	604						
Lon_Comp_15	762	747	805						

alpha = .884 for the overall scale; Cronbach's alpha = .80 for the affective commitment dimension)] (see Yavuzaslan & Yıldız, 2022). Example item: I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.

Finally, the 'Loneliness at Work Scale (LAWS)' developed by Wright et al. (2006) was utilized as a mediator variable in the study to assess employees' feelings of loneliness at work. The scale consists of two subdimensions: emotional deprivation and social companionship. It was adapted to Turkish by Doğan, Çetin, and Sungur (2009). Consistent with the original scale, the adaptation study also divided the scale into two dimensions. Scale's KMO value was strong as '.92'. At the same time, LAWS demonstrated a high Cronbach's alpha of '.91' for the overall scale, '.87' for an emotional deprivation dimension, and .83 for a social companionship dimension. While the original scale was based on a 7-point Likert-type system, this study used a 6-point Likert-type system to ensure survey integrity (Because it is based on emotions, only for this scale was used the type of Likert scale as 1 = never ... 6 = always). Example item: I often feel alienated from my co-workers (from the emotional deprivation dimension); There is no one at work I can share personal thoughts with if I want to (from the social companionship dimension).

Results

In the first stage, a number of preliminary analyses were conducted using SPSS 24.0 software to analyze the distribution of the research variables, as well as to discover confounders and correlations between the variables and descriptions. In the second stage, AMOS 24.0.0 software was used to examine the model fit, validity, and reliability of the structure, as well as the regression analysis. Table 5 shows the mean, standard deviation, and correlation. In addition, an independent *t*-test was run on the data with a 95% confidence interval (CI) for the mean difference. The results are also shown in the same table. Variance inflation factors (VIF) were applied to all models before testing, and the VIF values are less than 2; consequently, the potential for multicollinearity is eliminated in the study (Howell, 1994).

According to Conway and Lance (2010), 'One way to rule out substantial method effects is to demonstrate construct validity of the measures used'. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis model including all study variables was utilized to test the model fit of the hypothesized factor structures. According to widely accepted cutoff criteria, a model has an adequate level of fit if CFI is near .95, RMSEA is less than .07, and TLI is close to .95 for both data (Byrne, 2014).

In the research, the chi-square difference test was applied to the model established by the data collected from the public sector and the data collected from the private sector. According to the results

Table 5. Descriptive results and correlation coefficient matrix of the research variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 Age	1	.509**	.544**	.932**	.563**	-.241**	.621**	-.404**	.386**	.051	-.519**	-.161**	-.210**	.490**
2 Gender	.262**	1	.196**	.587**	.595**	-.0823	.507**	-.454**	.549**	.127*	-.501**	-.456**	.118*	.224**
3 Mar_Stu	.689**	.026	1	.571**	.260**	-.435**	.377**	-.142*	-.161**	-.172**	.138*	.373**	-.157**	.147*
4 Tenure	.742**	.256**	.679**	1	.618**	-.198**	.692**	-.438**	.410**	.057	-.530**	-.169**	-.216**	.458**
5 Exp_Org	.691**	.152**	.576**	.794**	1	.094	.213**	-.601**	.494**	-.270**	-.441**	-.244**	-.132*	.237**
6 Emp_Cnt	.004	.463**	-.228**	.184**	.225**	1	-.239**	.231**	.179**	-.215**	.168**	-.273**	.224**	-.360**
7 Org_Cnt	.168**	.261**	.160**	.263**	-.139*	-.106	1	-.416**	.299**	.510**	-.445**	-.368**	-.037	.450**
8 Aff_Comm	-.119*	-.141*	-.238**	-.044	-.245**	-.175**	.064	1	.201**	-.287**	.141*	.271**	-.378**	-.176**
9 Lon_Emo	-.145**	-.162**	-.011	-.061	-.307**	-.001	.150**	-.647**	1	.056	-.612**	-.521**	.005	.598**
10 Lon_Comp	-.211**	-.135*	-.038	-.142*	.049	.062	-.075	-.119*	-.479**	1	-.436**	-.493**	.242**	.225**
11 Gos_Inf	-.122*	-.050	-.073	-.154**	.057	-.148*	-.337**	.565**	-.626**	.554**	1	.609**	.086	-.355**
12 Gos_Rel	.068	-.188**	.283**	.222**	.238**	-.163**	-.303**	.481**	-.328**	.229**	.539**	1	-.517**	-.498**
13 Gos_Harm	.326**	-.123*	.187**	.067	.089	-.054	.056	.049	-.449**	.191**	.186**	.071	1	.073
14 Turn_Int	.116*	.116*	-.016	.024	-.050	-.114*	.119*	-.575**	.139*	-.236**	-.565**	-.181**	-.354**	1
Public Med.	33.540	1.345	1.410	15.330	27.211	2.570	3.198	4.251	3.896	3.714	3.101	3.131	3.574	3.587
Std. Dev.	7.959	.476	.492	8.519	6.733	1.621	1.996	1.045	.908	.986	1.492	1.147	1.308	.928
Private Med.	37.790	1.649	1.784	14.663	6.972	3.25	3.996	4.257	3.997	4.174	2.809	2.513	3.926	3.189
Std. Dev.	8.909	.478	.411	9.564	5.352	1.325	2.332	1.032	1.07	1.194	1.484	1.268	1.008	.819
t-test (pub/pri)	6.243	7.911	9.959	5.727	-1.657	5.317	4.556	.080	1.266	5.194	-2.433	-6.355	3.722	-5.637
p-value	.000	.809	.000	.000	.000	.001	.000	.053	.000	.835	.817	.002	.000	.023

obtained from the comparison of the two models, the differences between the two models are significant. Therefore, as expected in the research, public and private are separated from each other in terms of the research model. The results obtained are shown in Table 7.

In order to test the mediation effects, a single connection was established between the tested independent variable and the mediator at AMOS, and the connections with the other mediator variables were deleted. Thus, it was assumed that the indirect effect occurred just through the tested mediator. For this reason, separate indirect effect results are presented for each tested mediator in Table 6.

According to the results obtained from the analysis of Hypothesis 1 for bias-corrected (BC) confidence level for the ratio of 95%; (Total Effect on Turnover Intention; $[\text{Gos_Inf}]_{\text{Public}} = -.565$, $p < .01$, $\text{CI} = [-.641; -.463]$; $[\text{Gos_Inf}]_{\text{Private}} = -.363$, $p < .01$, $\text{CI} = [-.475; -.252]$). The results obtained from the analysis support Hypothesis 5 for the public sector and for the private sector. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is fully supported.

BC confidence level Hypothesis 2 analysis results for the ratio of 95%; (Effect on Turnover Intention; $[\text{Gos_Rel}]_{\text{Public}} = -.181^{**}$, $p < .01$, $\text{CI} = [-.305; -.041]$; $[\text{Gos_Rel}]_{\text{Private}} = -.503^{**}$, $p < .01$, $\text{CI} = [-.587; -.417]$). The results obtained from the analysis support Hypothesis 2 for the public and private sectors.

The results obtained from analysis support Hypothesis 3 for both data collected from the public and private sectors are; BC Confidence Level Hypothesis 3 analysis results for the ratio of 95%; (Total Effect; $[\text{Gos_Harm}]_{\text{Public}} = -.354$, $p < .001$, $\text{CI} = [-.434; -.267]$; $[\text{Gos_Harm}]_{\text{Private}} = -.079$, $p > .05$, $\text{CI} = [-.210; .171]$). The organizational harm dimension of gossip negatively affects the turnover intention of the participants from the public sector. Still, there is no significant effect of the harm dimension on the turnover intention for the private sector.

For the public sector, while the indirect effect of developing relations dimension of gossip on turnover intention over affective organizational commitment is significant and negative (Indirect Effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Rel}]_{\text{public}} = -.130^{**}$), developing relations dimension of gossip has a negative direct effect on turnover intention (Direct effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Rel}]_{\text{Public}} = -.223^{***}$). Thus, for the public sector, affective organizational commitment partially mediates the relationship between developing relations dimension and turnover intention. However, for the private sector, there is no indirect effect of developing relations dimension on turnover intention over affective organizational commitment (Indirect Effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Rel}]_{\text{private}} = -.009$). Thus, the private-sector affective organizational commitment does not mediate the relationship between developing relations dimension of gossip and turnover intention. The results obtained from the analysis partially support Hypothesis 4a for the public sector but not for the private sector.

According to the results obtained for 95% BC Confidence Level Hypothesis 4b analysis results affective organizational commitment mediates the relationship between having information dimension of gossip and turnover intention. While the indirect effect of the organizational harm dimension of gossip on turnover intention over affective organizational commitment is significant and negative (Indirect Effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Inf}]_{\text{Public}} = -.080^{**}$). On the other hand, information dimension of gossip has a negative direct effect on turnover intention (Direct effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Inf}]_{\text{Public}} = -.160^{**}$). However, for the private sector, there is no significant indirect effect of the information dimension of gossip on turnover intention over affective organizational commitment (Indirect effect on turnover intention $[\text{Gos_Inf}]_{\text{Private}} = -.003$). Thus, Hypothesis 4b is partially supported for the public but not for the private sector.

According to the mediation analysis method of Baron and Kenny (1986), which is widely used by numerous researchers, if the independent variable (X) does not have a significant effect on the dependent variable (Y), the mediation role of a third variable (M) is also deemed nonsensical. The assumption in Baron and Kenny's (1986) proposition is that both the effect of X on M and the effect of M on Y (Total effect) must be significant variables. In contrast, Zhao, Lynch and Chen (2010) argue that 'One might object that the direct effect can reflect the net effect of two or more omitted

Table 6. Regression analysis results

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	Lower	Upper	Mediator	Estimate	Lower	Upper
Public	Direct effect			Indirect effect					
Aff_Comm	Gos_Rel	454***	054	5.445	29	656			
Lon_Emo	Gos_Rel	-.383***	066	-4.742	-.512	-.233			
Lon_Comm	Gos_Rel	-.219*	076	-2.442	-.384	-.083			
Aff_Comm	Gos_Inf	266***	04	3.716	093	419			
Lon_Emo	Gos_Inf	-.365***	048	-5.263	-.466	-.254			
Lon_Comm	Gos_Inf	-.316***	056	-4.095	-.457	-.184			
Aff_Comm	Gos_Harm	261***	054	3.933	168	35			
Lon_Emo	Gos_Harm	-.161*	066	-2.513	-.316	-.015			
Lon_Comm	Gos_Harm	156*	076	2.187	026	26			
Turn_Int	Aff_Comm	-.29***	07	-6.223	-.418	-.164			
Turn_Int	Lon_Emo	462***	056	8.115	286	515			
Turn_Int	Lon_Comm	311***	052	3.592	1	231			
	Aff_Comm	-.130**	-.194	-.083					
Turn_Int	Gos_Rel	337***	066	4.874	199	478	Lon_Emo	-.175**	-.253
	Lon_Comm	-.067**	-.120	-.026					-.108
Turn_Int	Gos_Inf	-.16**	049	-2.683	-.265	-.051	Aff_Comm	-.080**	-.144
	Lon_Emo	-.173**	-.238	-.116					-.025
	Lon_Comm	-.102**	-.155	-.059					
Turn_Int	Gos_Harm	-.223***	063	-4.244	-.3	-.123	Aff_Comm	-.076**	-.116
	Lon_Emo	-.075*	-.142	-.011					-.050
	Lon_Comm	049*	009	095					

(Continued)

Table 6. (Continued.)

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	Lower	Upper	Mediator	Estimate	Lower	Upper
	Direct effect			Indirect effect					
Private									
Aff_Comm	Gos_Rel	257***	047	4.453	093	389			
Lon_Emo	Gos_Rel	-.001	042	-.028	-.093	084			
Lon_Comp	Gos_Rel	-.094	043	-1.733	-.207	028			
Aff_Comm	Gos_Inf	079	037	1.341	-.035	181			
Lon_Emo	Gos_Inf	-.561***	033	-11.889	-.629	-.484			
Lon_Comp	Gos_Inf	589***	034	1.648	505	668			
Aff_Comm	Gos_Harm	-.411***	035	-8.291	-.512	-.302			
Lon_Emo	Gos_Harm	-.345***	032	-8.668	-.416	-.263			
Lon_Comp	Gos_Harm	088	032	1.891	-.015	192			
Turn_Int	Aff_Comm	-.036	056	-.669	-.151	088			
Turn_Int	Lon_Emo	-.085	062	-1.292	-.218	037			
Turn_Int	Lon_Comp	-.151**	061	-2.681	-.25	-.036			
	Aff_Comm	-.009	-.049	020					
Turn_Int	Gos_Rel	-.432***	049	-7.556	-.577	-.276	Lon_Emo	000	-.009
	Lon_Comp	014	-.002	.045					012
Turn_Int	Gos_Inf	-.113	05	-1.507	-.301	072	Aff_Comm	-.003	-.022
	Lon_Emo	048	-.020	131					005
	Lon_Comp	-.089*	-.150	-.021					
Turn_Int	Gos_Harm	108	043	1.883	-.018	26	Aff_Comm	015	-.037
	Lon_Emo	030	-.011	087					065
	Lon_Comp	-.013	-.043	000					

Table 7. Chi-square difference test results

	χ^2	<i>df</i>
Unconstrained	195	628
Constrained	685	789
Difference	490	161
<i>p</i> -Value	.000	

Note: The *p*-value of the chi-square difference test is significant; the model differs across groups. **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001 level (two-tailed).

mediators with different signs. That is true, but if the net effect is positive (negative), at least one omitted mediator is positive (negative).’ Therefore, when the direction of the effect of *X* on *M* is opposite to the direction of the effect of *M* on *Y*, and these two values cancel each other out, the total effect may become nonsensical. In this case, the mediation relationship is presented as a hypothesis without considering Baron and Kenny’s proposition and without questioning the direct effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Indeed, in Hypothesis 3, it is hypothesized that for the public sector, organizational harm dimension of gossip does not have a significant effect on turnover intention; however, mediation relationships are hypothesized in Hypotheses 4c, 5c, and 6c for the public sector.

According to the results obtained for 95% BC confidence level Hypothesis 4c analysis results affective organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational harm dimension of gossip and turnover intention. While the indirect effect of the organizational harm dimension of gossip on turnover intention over affective organizational commitment is significant and negative (Indirect Effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Harm}]_{\text{Public}} = -.076^{**}$), organizational harm dimension of gossip has negative direct effect on turnover intention (Direct effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Harm}]_{\text{Public}} = -.223^{**}$). On the other hand, analysis result obtained for the private sector is different. For the private sector, direct effect and indirect of organizational harm dimension on turnover intention is not significant (Indirect Effect on turnover intention: $[\text{Gos_Harm}]_{\text{Private}} = .108$; Direct Effect on turnover intention: $[\text{Gos_Harm}]_{\text{Private}} = .015$). Thus, Hypothesis 4c for the public sector is partially supported, but for the private sector Hypothesis 4c is not supported.

While the indirect effect of developing relations dimension of gossip on turnover intention over emotional deprivation for the public sector is significant (Indirect Effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Rel}]_{\text{Public}} = -.175^{**}$), developing relations dimension also has a direct and positive effect on turnover intention (Direct effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Rel}]_{\text{Public}} = .337^{**}$). Thus, for the private sector, emotional deprivation dimension of loneliness partially mediates the relationship between developing relations dimension and turnover intention. Thus, Hypothesis 5a is partially supported for the public sector.

Analysis results reveal that emotional deprivation mediates the relationship between having information dimension of gossip and turnover intention. While the indirect effect of the organizational harm dimension of gossip on turnover intention over emotional deprivation is significant and negative (Indirect Effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Inf}]_{\text{Public}} = -.173^{**}$), the information dimension of gossip has a negative direct effect on turnover intention (Direct effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Inf}]_{\text{Public}} = -.160^{**}$). On the other hand, for the private sector, the results are different (Indirect effect on turnover intention $[\text{Gos_Inf}]_{\text{Private}} = .048$; Direct effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Inf}]_{\text{Private}} = -.03$). For the private sector, there is no direct and indirect effect on turnover intention. Thus, Hypothesis 5b is partially supported for the public sector but not for the private sector.

For the public and private sectors, organizational harm dimension of gossip has a significant effect on emotional deprivation. While the indirect effect of the organizational harm dimension on turnover intention over emotional deprivation is significant and negative for the public sector, direct effect is

also significant and negative (Indirect Effect on turnover intention: $[\text{Gos_Harm}]_{\text{Public}} = -.075^*$; Direct effect on turnover intention: $[\text{Gos_Harm}]_{\text{Public}} = -.223^{**}$). Thus, for the public sector, emotional deprivation partially mediates the relationship between organizational harm dimension of gossip and turnover intention. Thus, Hypothesis 5c is partially supported for the public sector. However, for the private sector, direct and indirect effects of the organizational harm dimension on turnover intention over emotional deprivation are not significant (Indirect Effect on turnover intention: $[\text{Gos_Harm}]_{\text{Private}} = .108$; Direct Effect on turnover intention: $[\text{Gos_Harm}]_{\text{Private}} = .030$). Thus, Hypothesis 5c is not supported for the private sector.

The indirect effect of social companionship of developing relations dimension on turnover intention is significant (Indirect Effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Rel}]_{\text{Public}} = -.067^{**}$), and the direct effect is also significant (Direct effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Rel}]_{\text{Public}} = .337^{***}$). Thus, the result of Hypothesis 6a analysis reveals that for the public sector, social companionship partially mediates the relationship between developing relations dimension and turnover intention. In contrast to the private sector, there is no significant effect of developing relations dimension on turnover intention over emotional deprivation and social companionship. Thus, for the public sector, Hypothesis 6a is not supported.

The results revealed that social companionship partially mediates the relationship between the having information dimension and turnover intention for the public sector. While the indirect effect of the organizational harm dimension of gossip on turnover intention over social companionship is significant and negative (Indirect Effect on turnover intention: $[\text{Gos_Inf}]_{\text{Public}} = -.102^{**}$), the having information dimension of gossip also has a direct effect on turnover intention (Direct effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Inf}]_{\text{Public}} = -.160^{**}$). On the other hand, for the private sector, the results reveal that social companionship fully mediates the relationship between the organizational harm dimension of gossip and turnover intention (Indirect effect on turnover intention: $[\text{Gos_Inf}]_{\text{Private}} = .157^*$; Direct effect on turnover intention: $[\text{Gos_Inf}]_{\text{Private}} = -.113$). Thus, Hypothesis 6b is fully supported for the private sector but partially supported for the public sector.

For the public sector, while the indirect effect of the organizational harm dimension on turnover intention over social companionship is significant and positive (Indirect Effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Harm}]_{\text{Public}} = .049^*$), organizational harm has a negative direct effect on turnover intention (Direct effect on turnover intention; $[\text{Gos_Harm}]_{\text{Public}} = -.223^{***}$). Thus, for the public sector, social companionship partially mediates the relationship between organizational harm and turnover intention. However, for the private sector, there is no significant effect of organizational harm on the social companionship dimension of loneliness. Thus, for the private sector, social companionship does not mediate the effect of organizational harm on turnover intention. Thus, Hypothesis 6c is partially supported.

In the [Figure 2](#) the analysis results are shown for detailed and clear information.

General discussion

This research examines how gossip, as an informal communication channel, influences employee emotions, attitudes, and behaviors within organizations. Literature categorizes gossip as either constructive or destructive, as well as positive or negative. This distinction is important because the content of gossip can lead to significant changes in employees' emotions, attitudes, and behaviors (Martinescu, Janssen & Nijstad, 2019).

In the initial phase of the study (Study 1), in-depth interviews were conducted with employees. They highlighted two key findings related to gossip. The first, which may be the most significant in influencing the other variables of the study, is that the emotions, attitudes, and behaviors influenced by gossip have different effects on public-sector employees compared to those in the private sector. In the socioeconomic context of the research, citizens value civil service positions primarily for

their high perception of job security. Consequently, the negative dimension of gossip highlights how employees' attitudes and behaviors can shift based on the sector they work in. This finding serves as a crucial foundation for the second phase of the research (Study 2).

To further explore this connection, Study 2 focuses on employees' turnover intentions, which may be influenced by gossip directly or indirectly. Turnover intention is also associated with job security perceptions, which can remain significant regardless of job satisfaction levels. While the quantitative results of Study 2 partially support Study 1's findings, it is noted that the consequences of gossip may vary by sector. Public-sector employees are less likely to quit due to negative gossip, whereas private-sector employees show a greater tendency to leave. This distinction has guided the development of Study 2's research model. Both studies reveal that gossip can cause negative organizational outcomes, but Studies 1 and 2 yield conflicting results in some areas. Additionally, employees may respond to harmful gossip by isolating themselves from the organizational social environment as a self-protective mechanism.

The first hypothesis of Study 2 (Hypothesis 1) indicates that the development of relationships reduces turnover intention, was confirmed for both sectors. This finding is predicted since gossip is vital for forming and enhancing friendships (Litman & Pezzo, 2005). Employees who share their experiences and opinions through gossip experience momentary relief from stress, making gossip a coping strategy for problem-solving (Farley, Timme & Hart, 2010). Gossip can enhance friendship ties and foster a sense of community among employees. Facilitating open communication encourages collaboration and strengthens group awareness, promoting teamwork and cooperation within the workplace (Feinberg, Willer, Stellar & Keltner, 2012). In his study, Adkins (2017) examined gossip from a multidimensional perspective. The researcher noted that gossip plays a crucial role in organizational socialization by strengthening friendships among employees and serves as an important precursor to sincerity. Additionally, the empirical findings from the study demonstrate that gossip helps employees understand one another better, fosters connections in the workplace, and contributes to overall organizational harmony (Akgeyik, 2015). When we view gossip as a 'rich, multifaceted communication' channel that serves various social functions, we can see its role in building connections with others. Gossip helps form alliances that enhance the perception of social support, facilitates the exchange of personal information, and aids in creating consensus. These factors can be significant barriers to an individual's intention to leave their job.

The second hypothesis (Hypothesis 2) anticipated that the information dimension would reduce turnover intention, and this was confirmed in both sectors. In the realm of information sharing, employees gained new insights about their colleagues. As a result, the intimacy and friendships developed through relationship building were also strengthened during the process of acquiring this information. Gossip serves as a tool for learning important information in the workplace. Obtaining information about colleagues within the organization fulfills employees' need for knowledge and enhances friendship ties during the exchange of information, thereby reinforcing positive feelings (Estévez *et al.*, 2022). Research has shown that positive gossip helps individuals bond with group members, provides entertainment, facilitates information exchange, allows emotional expression, and upholds social order (Alshehre, 2017; Dai *et al.*, 2022; Dores Cruz *et al.*, 2019; Ugwu, Onyishi, Anozie & Ugwu, 2022). When viewed as a constructive action, gossip can foster cooperation among employees and enhance adherence to community and group norms (Akgeyik, 2015; Dai *et al.*, 2022; Dores Cruz, 2024; Dores Cruz *et al.*, 2019; Testori, Giardini, Cruz & Beersma, 2023). Furthermore, in terms of information gathering, it allows for learning private information about someone disliked through gossip (Akgeyik, 2015).

The third hypothesis of the research (Hypothesis 3) posited that the organizational harm dimension of gossip increases turnover intention in the private sector, but not in the public sector; however, this hypothesis was not confirmed in either sector. Thus, the organizational harm dimension of gossip does not discourage employees in the public sector from leaving their jobs, as the organizational harm dimension of gossip increases, employees' turnover intentions decrease. This may occur because harmful gossip relies on mutual trust and has a relationship-enhancing aspect. Research conducted by

Grosser et al. (2012) indicates that negative gossip tends to occur among individuals who share friendship ties. In contrast, employees who maintain only business relationships are likely to avoid engaging in negative gossip due to a lack of mutual trust. When there is genuine communication and closeness among employees, they may feel comfortable participating in negative gossip. Consequently, it can be inferred that engaging in harmful gossip within an organization can strengthen relationships, suggesting that a solid friendship bond already exists among those involved. However, this same effect is not observed in the private sector. Negative gossip at work does not seem unlikely to prompt private-sector employees to seek new employment. Many individuals place more excellent value on the benefits and rights provided by their current workplace. This is because of the challenges associated with job hunting. The competitive landscape and employability in the private sector necessitate that employees safeguard their current positions. According to the 'Labor Force Statistics, IV. Quarter: October–December 2023' report published by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT), the number of people not included in the labor force has reached 30 million 588 thousand. This figure was 30 million 179 thousand in the previous quarter and 29 million 937 thousand in the same period of October–December 2022. Because unemployment rates increase each year, employees do not consider leaving their jobs due to the difficulties they face at the organizational level. In summary, both positive and negative gossip behaviors are evident among individuals who have friendships and business relationships (Grosser et al., 2010; Kim, Gabriel, Kim, Moon & Rosen, 2023). This may arise from obtaining information through informal channels, such as gossip, which can create a more confident perception of the organization's stability. Encouraging open communication can help address any uncertainties.

Upon examining Hypotheses 4a, 4b, and 4c of the study, it was found that the mediating role of affective organizational commitment was confirmed for employees in the public sector, but not for those in the private sector. In the public sector, it was observed that as gossip increases in the dimension of developing relationships, employees' affective organizational commitment also increases, leading to a decrease in their intentions to leave the organization. We propose in Hypothesis 1 that this outcome is due to the strengthening of relationships, which reduces turnover intentions, while the gossip related to these developing relations dimension fosters sincere and warm friendships. In an organization characterized by genuine relationships, employees are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and unity, resulting in a stronger commitment to the organization (Begemann, Lehmann-Willenbrock & Stein, 2023; Dai et al., 2022). In these circumstances, employees who exhibit greater emotional organizational commitment will align themselves with the organization and willingly choose to remain within it (Carmeli, 2003). In Hypothesis 4b, it is suggested that an increase in gossip within the information dimension leads to higher levels of affective organizational commitment and lower turnover intentions. This hypothesis has been confirmed because being informed about people and events within the organization gives employees a sense of satisfaction regarding organizational engagement. While eliminating uncertainty and the desire to understand the organization due to knowledge can activate positive emotions in employees, it can also enhance their sense of belonging to the organization (Allen, Kern, Rozek, McInerney & Slavich, 2021). Raza, Wisetsri, Chansongpol, Somtawinongsai and Ramírez-Asís (2020) noted in their study that employees develop interpersonal relationships or redefine their relational boundaries to obtain essential information. In Hypothesis 4c, it was anticipated that the organizational harm dimension of gossip would lead to a decrease in affective organizational commitment and an increase in employees' intentions to leave their jobs. This hypothesis was confirmed for the public sector. Gossip, which refers to negative or unconstructive conversations among employees, can create the perception of an unsafe environment within the organization (Kuo et al., 2014). Gossip can be destructive and damaging, leading to insecurity and unhappiness among employees. Over time, this may undermine the intimacy and cooperation expected in developing organizational relationships. According to AET, the ongoing presence of negative situations can result in negative emotions for employees (Weiss & Beal, 2005; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Low-trust organizational relationships among employees negatively impact interpersonal communication and coordination. Consequently, employees may

feel less connected to the organization and develop turnover intentions. The surprising finding is that in Hypothesis 3, as gossip in the organizational harm dimension increases, turnover intention decreases. However, when the mediating role of affective organizational commitment is introduced, the outcome changes. When we look into the reasons for this outcome, we discover that negative gossip, much like other types of gossip, depends on intimate relationships. Engaging in negative gossip suggests that there is at least one individual within the organization with whom we share a close connection (Jaeger, Skelder & Rosnow, 2013). Negative gossip among two or three trusted individuals can nurture relationships and enhance employee retention (Sun *et al.*, 2023). When negative gossip is prevalent in the organization, it undermines employees' trust in the organization's integrity and reliability, ultimately diminishing their affective commitment (Agina *et al.*, 2023). When effective organizational commitment decreases, turnover intention increases as well (Wong & Wong, 2017). Negative gossip may foster a sense of closeness and solidarity among employees, but it also entails destructive elements such as displeasure, condemnation, and unfounded rumors (Adkins, 2017). While this may offer temporary relief or enjoyment, such social interactions can ultimately create an unsafe and toxic organizational environment (Brown, 2023). This behavior undermines affective organizational commitment, which may lead employees to consider leaving their jobs. Despite the significance of job security, it is noteworthy that public employees think about leaving their positions when their affective organizational commitment declines. This is an important point that should be emphasized. All employees, including public employees, need intrinsic motivation to meet their emotional and psychological needs (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2010). However, organizational factors like gossip can create a toxic atmosphere and negatively impact on the work environment (Khan, Li, Akram & Akram, 2023; Srivastava, Saxena, Kapoor & Qadir, 2024). Even job security may not be sufficient to prevent employees from wanting to leave their positions.

The absence of a mediating role for affective organizational commitment among private-sector employees may be attributed to their ability to cultivate and maintain workplace relationships outside the office. The private sector operates under intense market competition, which creates stress at both organizational and individual levels. As employees face high workloads, their stress levels rise due to the competitive pressure they experience. This environment transforms the employee–organization relationship into a transactional one, leading individuals to evaluate their roles more rationally (Kumar, 2015). Consequently, this can hinder affective commitment between employees and the organization. The organization's competitive environment may pressure employees to perform at high levels consistently. This expectation can be exhausting and may lead to feelings of worthlessness among employees. When employees are continuously pushed to excel, and their efforts go unrecognized or unrewarded, it can harm their commitment to the organization. Even if employees do not feel a strong emotional connection to their workplace, the benefits and material conditions they have secured may discourage them from seeking a new job. Consequently, while gossiping can help foster relationships and facilitate information sharing among employees, it does not necessarily create a sense of affective commitment to the organization (Tebbutt & Marchington, 1997). The relationships employees build at work foster a positive environment, and through gossip, they create social bonds that enhance communication (Dai *et al.*, 2022). Employees enjoy their work and can have a good time through gossip, which strengthens the relationship between employees. While individuals who have a psychologically comfortable work environment do not intend to leave their jobs, all the dynamics that develop during communication may not increase the employee's affective commitment to the organization because gossip strengthens the relationship between employees (Alshehre, 2017; Ellwardt *et al.*, 2012; Wax, Rodriguez & Asencio, 2022). This information clarifies Hypotheses 4a, 5a, and 6a.

When the sub-hypotheses (Hypotheses 5a, 5b, and 5c) of quantitative study were examined, the effect of gossip with all its dimensions on turnover intention was investigated through the feeling of emotional deprivation, which is one of the subdimensions of loneliness in the workplace. Emotional deprivation mediates the relationship between the two variables for public-sector employees, but it does not play a mediating role for private-sector employees. When examining the relationships

among public-sector employees, the literature consistently shows that gossip helps alleviate feelings of emotional deprivation in their social interactions (Dai et al., 2022). The social connections and emotional bonds employees develop through gossip indicate that they do not lack intimate relationships within the workplace (Farley et al., 2010). As relationships develop, gossip, social support, and sharing among employees increase, providing emotional satisfaction from these connections (Bencsik & Juhasz, 2020). Employees who do not experience loneliness due to emotional deprivation are likely to have low or no turnover intentions. Conversely, emotional deprivation acts as a mediator between having information and turnover intentions. In this context, gossip facilitates the flow of information among employees, meeting their need to learn and making them feel more 'involved'. When employees feel like they are part of the organization, they develop a strong sense of belonging (Foster & Rosnow, 2013). In terms of organizational harm, gossip can be destructive. As the frequency and intensity of gossip increase, negative emotions spread throughout the workplace, as mentioned in AET (Kuo et al., 2014). Over time, this leads to decreased mutual trust among employees, causing individuals to distance themselves from these negative feelings (Cheng et al., 2023). Ultimately, an employee who feels alienated from their work environment may isolate themselves further. As a result, the employee may begin to consider turnover intention. However, for employees in the private sector, emotional deprivation does not play a mediating role in established relationships. Due to the highly competitive environment in the private sector as mentioned before, employees may come to accept informal forms of communication as normal. Similar to positive gossip, negative gossip is recognized as a part of workplace relationships. This negative gossip is perceived as a reality of the workplace and is often tolerated, ignored, or accepted as natural behavior.

As expected, the relationships proposed in this area of loneliness at work align with the predictions. Trust-based workplace relationships enhance social connections (Fischer & Walker, 2022). Since the public sector's management structure reflects an organizational culture characterized by a strong emphasis on authority, hierarchy, and discipline, sharing the pressure among employees (Lane, 2000) can foster social and emotional support. Loneliness can be more prevalent in the public sector due to its organizational structure, which is largely defined by formal relationships. Developing a genuine and supportive organizational environment can be challenging within a hierarchical and authoritarian framework. However, informal interactions and gossip can help soften this rigid structure, allowing for more sincere relationships to form among employees. Enhancing communication and interaction through gossip is essential for socialization and fosters a sense of belonging within an organization. This factor also significantly contributes to employees' motivation to remain at work. Additionally, gossip serves as a means of exchanging information and inherently involves mutual interaction (Bencsik & Juhasz, 2020). Employees can maintain their morale and motivation by sharing information through gossip. This exchange helps to build trust, which ultimately strengthens social relationships within the workplace. Additionally, gossip can fulfill the need for information and foster social support among employees. This support plays a crucial role in managing work-related stress, which employees may experience in their work environment. Effectively managing this work stress can also enhance employees' attitudes toward staying with the organization.

The findings of Hypothesis 6a, 6b, and 6c analysis underline the importance of considering sectoral differences in organizational research. The distinct dynamics in the public and private sectors – particularly in relation to job security and organizational culture – can significantly alter the effects of gossip on employees' attitudes and behaviors.

The findings of Hypothesis 6a can be attributed to the hierarchical structure of the workplace and its impact on work relationships, as discussed in the previous hypotheses, alongside the pressures and expectations specific to each sector. It indicates that employees in the public sector experience a work environment characterized by stronger social ties, which may partially influence their intention to remain with the organization. In contrast, the private sector's work environment, being more competitive and individual-focused, suggests that social camaraderie does not significantly affect employees' intentions to leave their jobs. This result has important theoretical and practical implications for

understanding how the nature of the work environment shapes employees' relational dynamics and their impact on their intention to leave.

The findings for Hypothesis 6c underscore that the organizational harm dimension of gossip has a notable negative direct effect on turnover intention in the public sector. Negative gossip within public organizations can lead to dissatisfaction, stress, and ultimately higher turnover intentions. This effect may be exacerbated in public-sector environments where hierarchies and formal structures often make addressing interpersonal conflicts more challenging. Interestingly, the private sector did not exhibit significant effects for organizational harm on turnover intention, suggesting that private-sector employees might be less sensitive to negative interpersonal dynamics or that the competitive environment minimizes the long-term impact of such harms. This distinction offers valuable insights into how the type of organizational setting may modulate the effects of negative gossip.

Although gossiping employees can cultivate a sense of trust within their group, negative gossip can erode overall confidence in the organization and foster distrust towards employees outside their in-group (Cheng *et al.*, 2023). Over time, such negative gossip may generate harmful emotions within employees, as emphasized on AET, leading to a decline in organizational unity and trust. This environment can result in individuals feeling isolated or forming small cliques, ultimately reinforcing feelings of loneliness within the Social Companionship dimension. Consequently, employees who feel insecure and experience diminished connections with their colleagues may seek a healthier and more trusting work environment.

Some sources suggest that sincere relationships are necessary for harmful gossip to occur (Ellwardt *et al.*, 2012; Peters & Kashima, 2015); however, the gossip's nature can make the intimacy between employees superficial rather than deepening their connections (Begemann *et al.*, 2023). In an environment where harmful gossip is prevalent, employees may become anxious about being the subject of gossip themselves. This fear of being judged can lead to insecurity. Furthermore, employees might hesitate to share personal information, worried that it could become gossip material (Grosser *et al.*, 2010). The resulting lack of trust can cause employees to isolate themselves, leading to feelings of loneliness. Harmful gossip can make employees feel isolated and anxious, even in a crowded workplace.

Hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c are not supported for private-sector employees. One primary reason may be the goal-oriented work behaviors typical of these employees. The competitive nature of the private-sector drives employees to maintain high performance continuously, leading them to view gossip as an irrelevant issue outside of their work responsibilities. Moreover, private-sector employees often experience frequent and rapid job changes, meaning their relationships with colleagues are generally more superficial or temporary. This situation hinders the development of strong commitments to their coworkers and the organization. From another perspective, employees who do not place value on gossip tend to view it as impersonal. In fact, they often see exchanging information through gossip as advantageous.

Theoretical implications

The present study highlights the impact of gossip on employees' turnover intentions. It demonstrates that the relationship between gossip and turnover intention varies depending on the sector in which the employee works. The differences between public- and private-sector dynamics play a crucial role in shaping the atmosphere within organizations. Therefore, gossip and its content can be critical to this atmosphere. This intriguing finding highlights the need for a deeper examination of the consequences of gossip within organizations.

This study explored gossip in all dimensions and its direct impact on employees' intention to leave their jobs. In addition, the research included how gossip influences employees' emotions and attitudes. The findings confirmed that fostering relationships and engaging in constructive gossip enhances the bond between the organization and employees while reducing feelings of loneliness. Additionally, it was found that gossip, which facilitates information exchange and social networking,

positively affects affective organizational commitment and reduces feelings of employee loneliness, ultimately lowering the likelihood of employees leaving their jobs.

Conversely, harmful gossip damages these aspects, triggering the behavior of leaving the job. This finding aligns with existing literature on the subject for the public sector. However, the study's most remarkable finding is that harmful gossip does not influence private-sector employees' turnover intention, nor does it affect this relationship through mediating variables.

Practical implications

In workplace relationships, gossip functions as an informal organizational communication tool. Therefore, gossip is crucial in how the organizational atmosphere is perceived as constructive or destructive. While gossip can serve as a means of gathering information and fostering relationships, ultimately affecting turnover intention, it is noted that employees in the private sector tend to have lower intentions of leaving compared to those in the public sector, depending on the constructive side of gossip. On the other hand, gossip in the public sector is a mechanism that strengthens relationships. This is more prevalent in the public sector than in the private sector.

When gossip is examined as a source of information, it is seen that it significantly contributes to the low turnover intention. While employees in the private sector perceive gossip as a means of providing information, the satisfaction of the need to receive information explains that the rate of their intention to stay at work is higher than that of public-sector employees. However, the impact of harmful gossip on employees' turnover intentions was much different than expected, clearly showing how public- and private-sector dynamics influence employees' attitudes and behaviors.

Future research directions

Future studies should further explore gossip as a multidimensional construct, considering both its constructive and destructive aspects, as well as its positive and negative effects. The qualitative findings from this study suggest that important mediating and moderating variables exist, which could influence how gossip affects emotions, attitudes, and behaviors. Investigating these variables could deepen our understanding of the phenomenon.

Additionally, future research should examine gossip dynamics at various levels, including individual, team, and organizational, to uncover different insights across these contexts. The impact of gossip could vary depending on the organizational level, and exploring these differences may yield valuable results. Lastly, it is important for future studies to account for the differences between public- and private-sector dynamics when designing research models and selecting samples, as these differences significantly shape workplace behavior and attitudes.

Limitations

This study is primarily limited by its focus on Istanbul, Turkey, a specific geographical and cultural context that may affect the generalizability of the findings. The sociocultural, economic, and political dynamics of the region play a significant role in shaping nature and interpretation of workplace gossip. To address this limitation, a comparison between public- and private-sector employees was made, as sectoral differences can significantly influence organizational behavior. The qualitative findings revealed that employees' responses to gossip differ across these sectors, providing a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

Furthermore, the quantitative phase employed a cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to make causal interpretations. To draw more reliable causal conclusions, future research would benefit from using longitudinal designs. Despite these limitations, the mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data, enhanced the internal validity of the findings.

Conclusion

This study examines the impact of gossip on employees' turnover intentions, highlighting sectoral differences between public and private organizations. Gossip, as an informal communication tool, significantly influences workplace relationships and organizational atmosphere. Constructive gossip strengthens bonds, fosters relationships, and facilitates information sharing, thereby reducing turnover intention. In the private sector, gossip serves as a key source of information, enhancing organizational commitment and satisfaction, leading to lower turnover intention than the public sector. Conversely, in the public sector, gossip primarily fosters social relationships, mitigating feelings of loneliness and reducing employees' likelihood of leaving. Interestingly, while harmful gossip aligns with increased turnover intention in the public sector, it does not impact private-sector employees' turnover intention, nor does it mediate related variables. These findings emphasize the dual role of gossip in shaping organizational dynamics and highlight the need for tailored approaches to address its effects across sectors.

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Appendix

Study 1: Interview questions

1. When you think about your overall work experience, (a) Could you please describe in a few sentences an incident where a colleague spoke positively/negatively about another colleague who was not present? (b) What was this conversation about?
2. What are your thoughts on why your colleague spoke positively/negatively about the target person? (b) What is your comment on your colleague's motivation?
3. Did this gossip incident affect your attitudes and behaviors at work in a certain way? (b) If so, please explain how the incident affected your workplace attitudes/behaviors.
4. Did this gossip incident affect your colleagues' attitudes and behaviors at work in a certain way? (b) If so, please explain how the incident affected their workplace attitudes/behaviors.
5. If you were working in the public/private sector, would there be a change in your work attitude and behavior after the gossip incident?