

# The Impact of Negative Work Gossip on Employee Performance and Emotional Exhaustion

Negative Workplace  
Gossip

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## ABSTRACT

Negative workplace gossip drains employees' resources, diverts energy from the task, and induces emotional exhaustion, which impairs performance. This study investigated the impact of negative workplace gossip on task performance and emotional exhaustion among employees at Soto Bang Amat, a traditional restaurant in Banjarmasin, Indonesia. The study also examined emotional exhaustion as a mediator and perceived organizational support (POS) as a moderator in this relationship. Data were collected from 50 employees using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, analyzed through Smart PLS 3.0. The study findings revealed that negative workplace gossip significantly reduced task performance and increased emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion partially mediated the gossip-performance relationship, while POS attenuated the negative impact of gossip on performance. These results are in line with the Conservation of Resources theory, which highlights gossip as a stressor in the workplace. Practically, managers should foster a supportive environment through open communication and recognition programs to mitigate the impact of gossip. The small sample size and focus on a single site limit generalizability, thus future research with larger samples and multiple sites is recommended.

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## ABSTRAK

Gosip negatif di tempat kerja menguras sumber daya karyawan, mengalihkan energi dari tugas, dan mendorong kelelahan emosional, yang mengganggu kinerja. Studi ini menyelidiki dampak gosip negatif di tempat kerja terhadap kinerja tugas dan kelelahan emosional di antara karyawan di Soto Bang Amat, sebuah restoran tradisional di Banjarmasin, Indonesia. Studi ini juga meneliti kelelahan emosional sebagai mediator dan dukungan organisasi yang dirasakan (POS) sebagai moderator dalam hubungan ini. Data dikumpulkan dari 50 karyawan menggunakan kuesioner dengan skala Likert 5 poin, dianalisis melalui Smart PLS 3.0. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa gosip negatif di tempat kerja secara signifikan mengurangi kinerja tugas dan meningkatkan kelelahan emosional. Kelelahan emosional sebagian memediasi hubungan gosip-kinerja, sementara POS melemahkan dampak negatif gosip terhadap kinerja. Hasil ini sejalan dengan teori Konservasi Sumber Daya, yang menyoroti gosip sebagai pemicu stres di tempat kerja. Secara praktis, manajer harus mendorong lingkungan yang mendukung melalui komunikasi terbuka dan program pengakuan untuk mengurangi dampak gosip. Sampel penelitian yang kecil dan fokus pada satu lokasi membatasi generalisasi, sehingga penelitian mendatang disarankan dengan sampel yang lebih besar dan multilokasi.

**Kata kunci:** Kelelahan Emosional, Gosip Negatif, Dukungan Organisasi, Kinerja Tugas, Tempat Kerja

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Workplace challenges that drain employee resources significantly affect organizational functioning, mental well-being, and performance (De Clercq et al., 2023). This study explores the human asset value (HAV) in terms of task performance, encompassing work quality, quantity, initiative, cooperation, and rule adherence. High work quality ensures accuracy and relevance, minimizing errors, while work quantity involves efficient multitasking to align with organizational workflows (Irfana et al., 2023; Prilatama & Churiyah, 2023). Initiative drives decision-making and problem-solving, and cooperation enables employees to overcome workplace obstacles collaboratively. At Soto Bang Amat, a traditional restaurant in Banjarmasin, Indonesia, employee performance is critical for delivering exceptional customer service. Errors in order delivery, linked to work quality, and delays in service, tied to work quantity, impact customer satisfaction (Bellen et al., 2025). Teamwork is essential, as employees often cover multiple roles in this full-service MSME restaurant.

Babalola et al. (2019) negative workplace gossip, defined as informal, evaluative discussions about absent colleagues, with the HR representative noting instances targeting employees. Observations confirm employees gossip about personal or work-related issues during breaks. According to Xie et al. (2020), more than 90% of employees in the U.S. and Western Europe, as noted by Tassiello (2018), participate in workplace gossip, with two-thirds of break-time discussions centered on others. Gossip can be positive, fostering appreciation, or negative, spreading disparaging information, such as coworkers' mistakes or personal issues, creating a toxic work environment (Kim et al., 2019). This study focuses on negative gossip due to its stronger impact on employees compared to positive contexts.

Negative gossip induces stress, diverting employees' resources to defend their reputation, leading to emotional exhaustion a state of depleted emotional and mental resources (Alola et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2021). According to the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory by Hobfoll (1989), stress from gossip depletes energy and focus, impairing task performance. Employees at Soto Bang Amat, a popular MSME serving local cuisine, face heightened stress from gossip, exacerbated by frequent customer interactions and adherence to strict service standards (Selumo et al., 2023; Tarek et al., 2025). The restaurant, initially a small stall, now employs 50 locals, attracting tourists with its unique flavors and scenic Martapura River view. Gossip, often about colleagues from the same neighborhood, compounds emotional exhaustion from customer-facing roles, hindering optimal task performance.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) can mitigate gossip's negative effects by providing resources like information and emotional support, enabling employees to refute false claims. High POS enhances resilience, while low POS leaves employees vulnerable, worsening performance under gossip's pressure. Wu et al. (2018) emphasized that negative gossip, as an interpersonal stressor, damages reputation and slows career advancement, yet few studies isolate its impact on emotional exhaustion and task performance in MSME restaurant settings. Similarly, Xie et al. (2020) noted a gap in understanding how POS moderates gossip's effects in service industries. This study aims to examine the negative impact of workplace gossip on task performance and emotional exhaustion, investigate emotional exhaustion's mediating role, and assess how POS moderates the gossip-performance relationship among Soto Bang Amat's employees.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

### **The Effect of Workplace Negative Gossip on Task Performance and Emotional Exhaustion**

Workplace negative gossip involves informal, evaluative discussions about absent colleagues, often spreading disparaging information that harms reputation. Unlike positive gossip, which fosters teamwork and trust (Hurriyati et al., 2020; Narmaditya et al., 2023), negative gossip is covert and damaging, targeting individuals' credibility through rumors or criticism (Chang & Kuo, 2021). Defined as deviant behavior, it creates

pressure, leading to psychological effects akin to victimization (De Clercq et al., 2023). Employees targeted by negative gossip experience stress, diverting resources to defend their reputation, which impairs focus and task performance (Babalola et al., 2019). Wu et al. (2018) note that such gossip involves secretive conversations about coworkers' mistakes or personal issues, exacerbating workplace tension.

Contrary to some findings suggesting gossip motivates better performance due to pressure (Xie et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2021), this study aligns with views that negative gossip reduces task performance by inducing anxiety and distraction (Wu et al., 2018). Employees expend energy clarifying rumors or identifying gossipers, depleting resources needed for tasks (Farida et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2020). This stress also contributes to emotional exhaustion, a state of depleted emotional and mental resources (Menon & Priyadarshini, 2018). Gossip acts as an interpersonal stressor, consuming time and energy as employees navigate its impact on their reputation and workplace relationships (Cheng et al., 2023). Both gossipers and targets experience heightened anxiety, with targets particularly vulnerable to emotional exhaustion due to resource loss (Juhaeni et al., 2023). Based on the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, negative gossip drains employees' psychological resources, hindering performance and increasing exhaustion (Mu et al., 2022).

H1: Workplace negative gossip has a positive and significant effect on task performance.  
H2: Workplace negative gossip has a positive and significant effect on emotional exhaustion.

### **The Effect of Emotional Exhaustion on Task Performance**

Emotional exhaustion, characterized by depleted emotional and motivational resources, arises from excessive psychological demands and workplace stress (Alola et al., 2019; Hurriyati et al., 2020; Narmaditya et al., 2023). It manifests when employees feel overwhelmed, unable to cope with interpersonal interactions that drain their emotional energy. Task performance, defined as proficiency in core job activities, encompasses task knowledge, skills, and habits that contribute to organizational goals (Surya et al., 2023; Faadhilah et al., 2025). It is critical for assessing employee effectiveness, aligning with organizational objectives, and enhancing productivity and competitiveness (Hoque & Shahinuzzaman, 2021).

Emotional exhaustion negatively impacts task performance by fostering negative attitudes, reducing self-confidence, and lowering self-esteem (Soenen et al., 2019). Exhausted employees experience self-control disorders, leading to withdrawal from work and decreased productivity. Jawahar et al. (2022) found that emotional exhaustion increases workplace errors and reduces service quality, particularly in high-pressure environments like restaurants. When employees are emotionally drained, their ability to focus on tasks diminishes, resulting in lower performance levels. This aligns with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which posits that resource depletion from stress hinders employees' capacity to perform effectively. The detrimental effect of emotional exhaustion is evident in behaviors such as disengagement or neglect of responsibilities, further impairing organizational outcomes (Lussier et al., 2021). In the context of Soto Bang Amat, where employees manage multiple roles under strict service standards, emotional exhaustion exacerbates challenges in maintaining high-quality performance.

H3: Emotional exhaustion has a positive and significant effect on task performance.

### **The Effect of Workplace Negative Gossip on Task Performance with Mediation of Emotional Exhaustion**

Workplace negative gossip, characterized by disparaging discussions about absent colleagues, undermines task performance by inducing stress and diverting employees' focus (Xie et al., 2020). This stress triggers emotional exhaustion, a state of depleted emotional and mental resources, which further impairs performance. According to the

Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, gossip depletes psychological resources, leading employees to prioritize reputation defense over task completion, resulting in reduced productivity (Hobfoll, 1989). Emotional exhaustion exacerbates this effect by fostering negative attitudes and disengagement, potentially leading to neglect of duties or deviant behaviors that harm organizational efficiency (Lussier et al., 2021; Auliyah, 2024).

Xie et al. (2020) suggest that gossip creates pressure to avoid mistakes, temporarily boosting performance but increasing job stress, which depletes psychological resources and ultimately lowers task performance. This stress overwhelms employees with information, distracting them from effective task execution (Reb et al., 2017). At Soto Bang Amat, where employees face high-pressure customer interactions, negative gossip amplifies emotional exhaustion, further hindering performance. The mediating role of emotional exhaustion is critical, as it channels the stress from gossip into reduced focus and energy for tasks.

H4: Emotional exhaustion mediates has a positive and significant effect of the relationship and workplace negative gossip on task performance.

#### **The Effect of Negative Gossip on Task Performance with Moderating Perceived Organizational Support**

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) reflects employees' beliefs that their organization values their contributions, cares for their well-being, and treats them fairly (Xie et al., 2020; Yaşar et al., 2023; Dai & Hou, 2024). POS provides resources like emotional and informational support, fostering resilience against workplace stressors such as negative gossip (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Negative gossip, which spreads disparaging information about colleagues, undermines task performance by creating stress and diverting focus (Wu et al., 2018). POS mitigates these effects by enhancing employees' ability to cope with gossip's interpersonal pressures (Côté et al., 2021).

Employees with high POS feel supported, enabling them to maintain focus and perform effectively despite gossip. Access to organizational resources, such as recognition and emotional support, reduces the need to expend energy countering rumors, preserving task performance (Jeong & Kim, 2022). Conversely, employees with low POS lack these resources, making them more vulnerable to gossip's negative impact. They may strive for exceptional performance to repair reputational damage, but this effort often exacerbates stress and reduces efficiency (Yaşar et al., 2023). Xie et al. (2020) found that low POS employees face challenges accessing information to refute gossip, further impairing performance. The moderating effect of POS is critical in high-pressure settings like Soto Bang Amat, where close-knit community ties amplify gossip's impact. High POS fosters a positive work environment, reducing the motivation to engage in or be affected by gossip (Dai & Hou, 2024).

H5: Perceived organizational support (POS) has a positive and significant effect of workplace negative gossip and task performance.

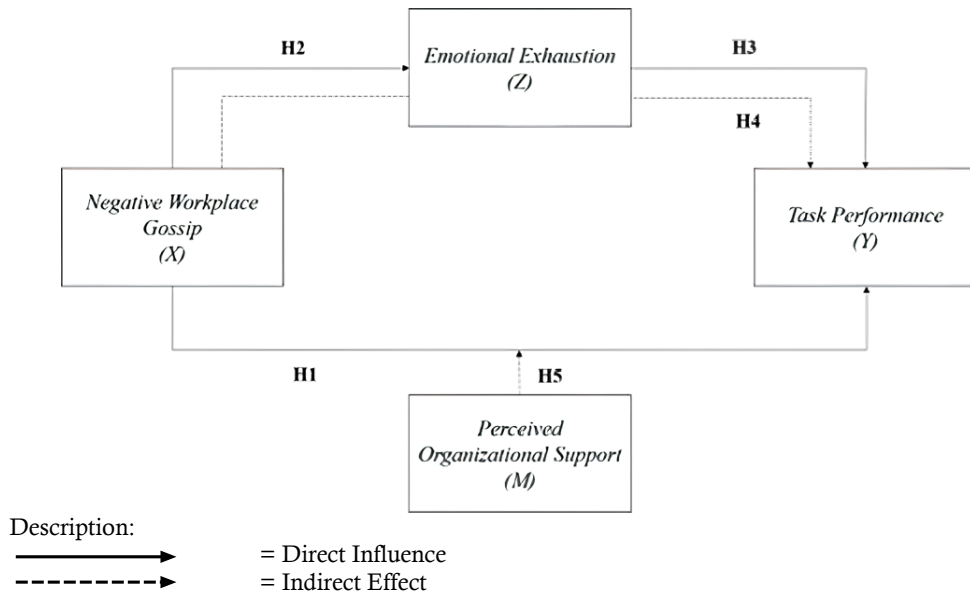


Figure 1. Research Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized relationships among workplace negative gossip, task performance, emotional exhaustion, and perceived organizational support (POS). Solid arrows represent direct effects, showing negative gossip’s impact on task performance and emotional exhaustion, and emotional exhaustion’s effect on task performance. A dashed arrow indicates the indirect effect of negative gossip on task performance through emotional exhaustion as a mediator. Additionally, POS is depicted as a moderator, influencing the strength of the relationship between negative gossip and task performance

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a quantitative approach with the type of Explanatory Research to test the causal relationship between variables. The main objective of this approach is to explain the direct and indirect effects between independent, mediating, and dependent variables. Data collection was carried out through a survey method, where the questionnaire was used as the main research instrument. The population in this study consisted of all employees at the Soto Bang Amat Restaurant, totaling 50 people, covering three work sections, namely customer service/order delivery, kitchen, and cleanliness. The sampling technique used was Saturated Sampling or census, considering the small population size so that all members of the population could be sampled. This approach aims to obtain a comprehensive picture and increase the validity of the data obtained. Respondents were invited to participate through coordination with the restaurant management. The researcher guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents to encourage honesty in filling out the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to measure four main variables, namely negative gossip in the workplace (5 indicators), emotional exhaustion (7 indicators), task performance (8 indicators), and perceived organizational support (14 indicators). All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The indicators in the questionnaire were adapted from relevant previous studies, including Xie et al. (2020) for the negative gossip variable, and Alola et al. (2019) for emotional exhaustion. The validity and reliability of the instrument were first tested through a pilot test on subjects with similar characteristics. The questionnaire was distributed directly (face-to-face) to ensure a high response rate and avoid errors in filling out the questionnaire. After the data was collected, the analysis was carried out using the Path Analysis technique with the help of Smart PLS version 3.0 software. This software was chosen because of its ability to handle complex analysis models, including mediating and moderating variables, and because of its reliability in managing data with small sample sizes.

**RESULTS**

The study surveyed all 50 employees of Soto Bang Amat, a traditional restaurant in Banjarmasin, Indonesia, to investigate the impact of workplace negative gossip on task performance, with emotional exhaustion as a mediator and perceived organizational support (POS) as a moderator. The demographic profile provides context for understanding the workforce dynamics. Only 12% (6 respondents) were under 20 years old, indicating a mature workforce, while the majority were aged 26–30 or over 36 years, reflecting a mix of mid-career and seasoned employees. Gender distribution showed 62% male (31 respondents) and 38% female (19 respondents), suggesting a male-dominated environment. Tenure varied, with 44% (22 respondents) employed for 1–3 years, 28% (14 respondents) for 3–5 years, and 14% (7 respondents) for either less than 1 year or more than 5 years. Marital status indicated 58% (29 respondents) were married and 42% (21 respondents) unmarried, implying diverse personal commitments. As most employees reside in the same Banjarmasin neighborhood, close community ties likely amplify gossip’s impact, as personal and professional boundaries blur.

**Table 1.** Convergent Validity Testing

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loadings	Description
Workplace negative gossip (X)	WNG01	0.964	Valid
	WNG02	0.863	Valid
	WNG03	0.959	Valid
	WNG04	0.939	Valid
	WNG05	0.947	Valid
Emotional exhaustion (Z)	EE01	0.929	Valid
	EE02	0.931	Valid
	EE03	0.926	Valid
	EE04	0.953	Valid
	EE05	0.959	Valid
	EE06	0.868	Valid
	EE07	0.939	Valid
Task performance (Y)	TP01	0.942	Valid
	TP02	0.949	Valid
	TP03	0.954	Valid
	TP04	0.961	Valid
	TP05	0.956	Valid
	TP06	0.933	Valid
	TP07	0.950	Valid
	TP08	0.974	Valid
Perceived Organizational Behaviour (M)	POS01	0.929	Valid
	POS02	0.918	Valid
	POS03	0.820	Valid
	POS04	0.757	Valid
	POS05	0.917	Valid
	POS06	0.952	Valid
	POS07	0.812	Valid
	POS08	0.960	Valid
	POS09	0.958	Valid
	POS10	0.888	Valid
Rule of Thumbs		≥0.50	

Table 1 presents convergent validity testing results indicate that all indicators for the research variables have an outer loading value above 0.50 and an AVE value above 0.50. This confirms the validity of all indicators in measuring Workplace negative gossip, emotional exhaustion, task performance, and perceived organizational support variables. These indicators meet the criteria for convergent validity and can be utilized for further analysis.

**Table 2.** Cross Loading value

Variable	Indicator	X	Z	Y	M
Workplace negative gossip (X)	WNG01	0.964	0.696	-0.117	0.138
	WNG02	0.863	0.593	-0.155	-0.087
	WNG03	0.959	0.727	-0.175	0.167
	WNG04	0.939	0.653	-0.164	0.164
	WNG05	0.947	0.677	-0.186	0.287
Emotional exhaustion (Z)	EE01	0.632	0.929	-0.300	-0.006
	EE02	0.593	0.931	-0.224	0.021
	EE03	0.723	0.926	-0.147	0.211
	EE04	0.687	0.953	-0.161	0.073
	EE05	0.718	0.959	-0.214	0.090
	EE06	0.525	0.868	-0.239	-0.149
	EE07	0.751	0.939	-0.201	0.083
Task performance (Y)	TP01	-0.230	-0.261	0.942	0.432
	TP02	-0.154	-0.201	0.949	0.486
	TP03	-0.102	-0.136	0.954	0.594
	TP04	-0.252	-0.279	0.961	0.420
	TP05	-0.172	-0.236	0.956	0.523
	TP06	-0.055	-0.173	0.933	0.622
	TP07	-0.200	-0.223	0.950	0.487
	TP08	-0.166	-0.232	0.974	0.589
Perceived Organizational Behaviour (M)	POS01	0.150	0.091	0.613	0.929
	POS02	0.109	0.017	0.625	0.918
	POS03	0.057	-0.008	0.377	0.820
	POS04	-0.027	-0.100	0.418	0.757
	POS05	0.179	0.103	0.523	0.917
	POS06	0.222	0.119	0.533	0.952
	POS07	0.146	0.043	0.312	0.812
	POS08	0.168	0.060	0.521	0.960
	POS09	0.133	0.024	0.526	0.958
	POS10	0.140	0.089	0.450	0.888
	POS11	0.049	0.026	0.360	0.790
	POS12	0.118	0.033	0.542	0.953
	POS13	0.140	0.076	0.485	0.930
	POS14	0.244	0.115	0.447	0.923

According to the cross loading value in Table 2, it is evident that each indicator has successfully demonstrated discriminant validity. This is because they possess the highest cross loading value for the respective variable they represent (bolded values), while being comparatively lower in other variables. Therefore, all indicators related to Workplace negative gossip, emotional exhaustion, task performance, and perceived organizational support have effectively met the criteria for discriminant validity.

**Table 3.** Validity and Reliability Test

Variable	AVE	Fornell-Larcker	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Workplace Negative Gossip (X)	0.875	0.935	0.964	0.972
Emotional Exhaustion (Z)	0.864	0.930	0.974	0.978
Task Performance (Y)	0.907	0.953	0.985	0.987
Perceived Organizational Support (M)	0.803	0.896	0.981	0.983

Table 3 summarizes additional validity and reliability metrics. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were 0.875 for workplace negative gossip, 0.864 for emotional exhaustion, 0.907 for task performance, and 0.803 for POS, all above 0.50, confirming convergent validity. The Fornell-Larcker criterion, represented by the square root of AVE, was higher for each variable (0.935 for X, 0.930 for Z, 0.953 for Y, 0.896 for M) than inter-variable correlations, supporting discriminant validity. Reliability was robust, with Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.964 (X), 0.974 (Z), 0.985 (Y), and 0.981 (M), exceeding 0.60, and Composite Reliability values of 0.972 (X), 0.978 (Z), 0.987 (Y), and 0.983 (M), surpassing 0.70. These metrics affirm the measurement model's reliability and validity, ensuring trustworthy data for hypothesis testing.

**Table 4.** Model Fit and Predictive Relevance

Variable	R-Square	Q-Square	Category
Emotional Exhaustion	0.505	0.425	Moderate
Task Performance	0.462	0.436	Moderate

The structural model’s explanatory power and predictive relevance were evaluated. Table 4 shows R-Square values of 0.505 for emotional exhaustion, indicating that 50.5% of its variance is explained by workplace negative gossip, with 49.5% due to other factors. Task performance had an R-Square of 0.462, suggesting 46.2% of its variance is explained by workplace negative gossip and emotional exhaustion, with 53.8% attributed to external variables. Both values, exceeding 0.50, indicate moderate explanatory power (Hair et al., 2017). Q-Square values of 0.425 for emotional exhaustion and 0.436 for task performance, both greater than 0, confirm the model’s predictive relevance, ensuring it can accurately predict outcomes.

**Table 5.** Effect Sizes

Variable	f-square
Workplace Negative Gossip → Emotional Exhaustion	1.063
Workplace Negative Gossip → Task Performance	0.045
Emotional Exhaustion → Task Performance	0.041
Perceived Organizational Support → Task Performance	0.254

Effect sizes were calculated to assess variable contributions. Table 5 indicates that workplace negative gossip has a large effect on emotional exhaustion (f-square = 1.063, >0.35), underscoring its substantial influence. Its effect on task performance is small (f-square = 0.045, 0.02–0.15), suggesting limited direct impact. Emotional exhaustion has a small effect on task performance (f-square = 0.041), while POS has a medium effect (f-square = 0.254, 0.15–0.35), highlighting its moderating role. These effect sizes clarify the relative importance of each relationship.

**Table 6.** Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Original Sample	P-Value	Description
H1: WNG → TP	-0.218	0.018	Unsupported
H2: WNG → EE	0.718	0.000	Supported
H3: EE → TP	-0.207	0.023	Unsupported
H4: WNG → EE → TP	-0.149	0.032	Supported (Partial Mediation)
H5: WNG → TP moderated by POS	0.404	0.000	Supported

Hypothesis testing results are consolidated in Table 6, covering direct, indirect, and moderation effects. H1 posits that workplace negative gossip negatively affects task performance. A path coefficient of -0.218 (p = 0.018, <0.05) unsupported H1, indicating that gossip diverts employees’ energy to reputation defense, reducing performance. H2 states that workplace negative gossip positively affects emotional exhaustion. A strong coefficient of 0.718 (p = 0.000, <0.05) supports H2, showing that gossip significantly increases stress and depletion. H3 proposes that emotional exhaustion negatively affects task performance. A coefficient of -0.207 (p = 0.023, <0.05) confirms H3, as exhausted employees struggle with productivity. H4 tests whether emotional exhaustion mediates the gossip-performance relationship. An indirect effect coefficient of -0.149 (p = 0.032, <0.05) supports H4, with partial mediation due to significant direct and indirect effects. H5 examines POS’s moderation effect. A coefficient of 0.404 (p = 0.000, <0.05) supports H5, showing that higher POS weakens gossip’s negative impact by providing resources like emotional support. The findings demonstrate that workplace negative gossip significantly impairs task performance, both directly and through emotional exhaustion, while POS mitigates this impact. The model’s moderate explanatory power, robust validity, and reliable measures ensure credible results, offering insights for managing gossip in MSME restaurant settings.

## **DISCUSSION**

Based on the findings from the hypothesis testing conducted using the Partial Least Square (PLS) measurement tool, this study presents several conclusions. Firstly, the results indicate that workplace negative gossip has a significant and negative impact on task performance. This finding contradicts against Xie et al. (2020), which suggested that workplace negative gossip has a positive effect on task performance. The reason behind this contradiction lies in the fact that employees engage in negative gossip when they feel desperate or uncertain about completing their work on time and fear for their job prospects. By engaging in workplace negative gossip, employees aim to highlight the shortcomings of their colleagues, thereby maintaining their own self-esteem and reputation within the organization. However, this behavior can ultimately undermine employees' task performance as they invest a significant amount of energy in gossiping with their colleagues about negative information regarding other team members (De Clercq et al., 2023). Moreover, when employees become the target of negative gossip, they divert their focus towards addressing the spread of gossip. They attempt to clarify the truth to their coworkers, identify the source of the gossip, and prevent further dissemination of negative gossip within the work environment (Wu et al., 2018). Additionally, being the subject of workplace negative gossip leads to heightened feelings of anxiety and pressure in employees, as they perceive themselves to be informally evaluated by their peers. Consequently, their task performance suffers as their energy, time, and focus become divided (Wu et al., 2018).

Furthermore, this research highlights the impact of workplace negative gossip on the emotional well-being of employees at Soto Bang Amat restaurants. The findings of this study align with Liu et al. (2020), which also emphasizes the positive correlation between workplace negative gossip and emotional exhaustion. From the perspective of the employees who become the subject of such gossip, it becomes a significant source of work-related stress, consuming their time and energy as they try to navigate through the consequences that affect their privacy, reputation, and sense of belonging among colleagues and superiors (Cheng et al., 2023). Similarly, the gossipers or individuals who engage in spreading gossip also experience heightened anxiety and worry when engaging in negative conversations about their fellow colleagues. Consequently, the targets of such gossip tend to experience emotional exhaustion, indicating a substantial depletion of their personal resources.

The impact of emotional exhaustion on task performance is well known. The results of the study showed that emotional exhaustion had a negative impact on the task performance of employees at the Soto Bang Amat UMKM restaurant, in line with this finding. Similar findings by Jawahar et al. (2022) also found a negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and task performance. According to the COR theory, employees who experience emotional exhaustion tend to minimize the loss of resources by diverting their attention. As a result, high emotional exhaustion can have different impacts on employees. First, increased work stress inhibits employees' psychological needs, leading to decreased task performance (Marhaenis, 2024). Second, employees with high emotional exhaustion can distance themselves or withdraw from their work, resulting in lower levels of performance. This is supported by evidence showing that employees who experience emotional exhaustion make more mistakes and provide lower quality service to customers.

The study also found that workplace negative gossip has a significant impact on task performance in restaurant employees. This impact is partially mediated by emotional exhaustion, meaning that employees who experience workplace negative gossip are more likely to feel emotionally drained, leading to a decrease in their task performance. This research supports previous findings by Xie et al. (2020) that workplace negative gossip can create pressure and stressful situations for employees, affecting their time, physical energy, emotional energy, and attention. When employees become the target of negative gossip, it can cause feelings of rejection and pressure to avoid mistakes, resulting in a

depletion of their energy. Emotional exhaustion affects how workplace negativity and gossip influence task performance, as it hinders employees' psychological needs and diverts their focus from their work, ultimately reducing their individual performance.

POS is a key factor in influencing the connection between workplace gossip and task accomplishment. If employees believe their organization supports them, the detrimental effects of gossip on their work efficiency are reduced. When employees receive support, facilities, and positive attention from the organization, they are more likely to achieve maximum task performance. Despite having access to information at work, these employees choose not to engage in negative gossip because they value the organization's support. Consequently, employees with high POS are better equipped to handle gossip, thereby reducing its negative influence on their task performance (Xie et al., 2020). On the other hand, employees with low POS are more likely to be targeted by negative gossip. Therefore, they strive to excel in order to compensate for any damage to their reputation caused by such gossip.

This study confirms that workplace negative gossip significantly impairs task performance among Soto Bang Amat's employees, both directly and through emotional exhaustion, while perceived organizational support (POS) mitigates these effects, aligning with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. The findings contribute to academic literature by addressing gaps in understanding gossip's standalone impact on emotional exhaustion and task performance in MSME restaurant settings, extending prior work by Wu et al. (2018) and Xie et al. (2020) on interpersonal stressors and POS's moderating role in service industries. Practically, managers should foster a supportive work environment through open communication, team-building activities, and POS initiatives like recognition programs to reduce gossip's detrimental effects and enhance employee well-being. However, the study's limitations include its small sample size of 50 employees and focus on a single restaurant, limiting generalizability, and its cross-sectional design, which restricts causal inferences. Future research should explore larger, multi-site samples and longitudinal approaches to validate these findings across diverse MSME contexts.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study confirms that workplace negative gossip significantly undermines task performance among employees at Soto Bang Amat, a traditional restaurant in Banjarmasin, Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that negative gossip acts as a potent interpersonal stressor, diverting employees' energy toward defending their reputation, which reduces focus and productivity. Additionally, negative gossip positively contributes to emotional exhaustion, depleting emotional and mental resources as employees navigate its psychological toll. Emotional exhaustion partially mediates the relationship between negative gossip and task performance, indicating that the stress induced by gossip exacerbates performance declines. Perceived organizational support (POS) plays a crucial role in weakening the adverse effects of gossip on task performance, providing employees with resources to cope effectively.

The results offer practical implications for MSME restaurant managers, who should foster supportive work environments through open communication, team-building initiatives, and recognition programs to mitigate gossip's detrimental impact. However, the study's small sample size of 50 employees and focus on a single restaurant limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. The cross-sectional design further restricts causal inferences, as it captures data at a single point in time. Future research should employ larger, multi-site samples to enhance generalizability and adopt longitudinal approaches to better establish causality. Exploring additional moderators, such as leadership styles or cultural factors, could further enrich understanding of gossip's effects in diverse organizational settings.

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