

EXPLORING MEN'S MOTIVE TO GOSSIP

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ABSTRACT

This research purpose is to exploring men's motive to gossip. Many research about gossip exploring more women participants than man. In addition, there is a stereotype said that women tends to gossip more than man, research prove this too. This research used qualitative phenomenology descriptive method. Participants are 3 men who like to gossip. Author interviewed all participants, then analyze to gather significant statements. In the process, author focused on their motives to gossip. Analysis showed that there's a motive in all participants but not included in theory of motives to gossip. Men has a solidarity as motive to gossip. By gossiping, men can build up a solidarity between their group.

Keywords: Men, Gossip, Descriptive Phenomenology, Motive to Gossip.

INTRODUCTION

Our language evolved as a way of gossiping, new linguistic skills acquired by modern humans some seventy thousand years ago allowing them to gossip for hours on end (Harari, 2017). Approximately sixty percent of adult conversations are about people who are not participating in the conversation (Wert & Salovey, 2004). Research by Fine and Rosnow (1978) shows that gossip is a discussion about someone's qualities and behavior which is usually based on trivial rumours in a social context. If you look at it from the school of Evolutionary Psychology, then this gossip is rooted in the term free rider. Where free riders are the term for people who take advantage, but are reluctant to carry out their obligations (Dunbar, 2004). In a community, information about free riders will be very useful, because they are detrimental (Dunbar, 2004). How this free rider information is disseminated is called gossip (Enquist & Leimar, in Dunbar, 2004).

In Indonesia itself, gossip is a quite popular phenomenon. For example, on an Instagram gossip account called @lambe_turah. The large number of posts that were liked and commented on indicates that netizens' attention to the gossip account @lambe_turah is very high (Juditha, 2018). Then, a study by Wicaksono and Irwansyah (2017) showed that anonymous sources of gossip were actually more popular with netizens than official sources of information.

The word "gossip" is more specifically associated with women (Rysman in Foster, 2004). In research by Levin and Arluke (1985) it was said that women gossip more than men, in particular women talk more about close friends and family. The results of research by Levin and Arluke (1985) show that women talk more about the third person in their conversations (71%) than men (64%). Research from Nevo, Nevo, and Derech-Zehavi (1993) shows that women's gossip tendencies are higher than men, while a study on gossip content conducted by Eckhaus and Ben-Hadar (2017), even used fewer male respondents (42.7 %) than women (57.3%).

In exploring the phenomenon of gossip, the social function of gossip itself is known. There are four social functions of gossip, namely information, entertainment, friendship and influence (Foster, 2004). Instead of seeing the important social function of gossip, gossip only has a reputation on the negative side (Hartung & Pirschtat, 2019). From these social functions of gossip, it was then developed into the theory of motives to gossip by Beersma and Van Kleef which explains the motives for why someone gossips (Cruz et. al., 2019). There are four motives for gossip, namely negative influence, validation and seeking information, social pleasure, and group protection (Beersma & Van Kleef, 2012). The author is interested in exploring the motives for gossip in men, who are considered to gossip less frequently.

There is some recent research on gossip motives. For example, research from Cruz et. al. (2019) shows that the results of measuring gossip motives with the addition of the emotional venting dimension are better when compared to the usual measurement model which includes emotional venting in the gossip motive dimension. This shows that there is emotional involvement in the gossip motive. Then research by Hartung and Pirschtat (2019) shows that in work and private domains, how important their motives for gossiping are is determined by the nature of the gossiper. Gossip has real negative consequences for the people being gossiped about, but on the other hand, it actually creates social glue that binds people who gossip in one group (Besnier, in Goebel & Herriman, 2013).

However, these studies had fewer male participants than female participants. Research from Cruz et. al. (2019) was conducted on 493 participants aged 18-91 (69% women and 31% men). Meanwhile, research from Hartung and Pirschtat (2019) used 134 participants aged 21-78 years (59% women and 41% men), the majority of whom were working. Research by Cruz, Beersma, Dijkstra, and Bechtoldt (2019) shows that there is a positive correlation between education and the tendency to gossip; undergraduate students tend to be higher than diploma students. Seeing the age and higher tendency of students to engage in gossip activities, the author is interested in exploring this research with male student subjects.

Both studies have limitations that form the background for this research. Weaknesses of Cruz et. al. (2019) is that researchers did not consider fewer male subjects in the study. The weakness of Hartung and Pirschtat's (2019) research is that the gossip events remembered by the participants were not the same as each other, and there were fewer male subjects than female subjects. Most of the research on gossip was conducted using quantitative methods or meta-analysis (Cruz et. al., 2019; Dunbar 2004; Fine & Rosnow, 1978; Foster, 2004; Hartung & Pirschtat, 2019; Martinescu, Janssen, Nijstad, 2019;). The suggestion from Hartung and Pirschtat's (2019) research is to carry out more comprehensive and investigative research, the in-depth interview method might be able to show additional motives for why someone gossips. Qualitative research is considered more suitable for studying cultural characteristics (Gabranje, in Hakim, 2014).

To explore this phenomenon, researchers will use qualitative phenomenological methods. Because to fully understand human experience, it is very important to see it from the perspective of the subject who feels it (Karp, in Johnston, 2016). The aim of this research is to find out how men's motives for gossiping are described.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative phenomenological design, namely descriptive phenomenological analysis. Researchers will conduct this research using in-depth interviews. Phenomenological research begins with explanations of psychological experiences obtained

from interviews (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003). According to Creswell (2007), phenomenological studies describe the meaning of several individuals and describe what participants generally feel. When collecting data, subjects will be asked to tell about their life experiences related to gossiping activities and the motives behind these activities.

The author uses a descriptive phenomenological method. Descriptive phenomenological research emphasizes the process of describing participants' experiences (Kahija, 2017). In descriptive phenomenology, the author will interview participants. Then the results of the interview will be analyzed so that the essence of the experience can be found.

Participants

In this research, researchers want to interview 3 subjects. The required subject characteristics are male students who have carried out gossip activities. Obtained by purposive sampling.

Table 1: Searching for and Knowing Information (Information Gathering and Validation)

No.	Information	Subject E	Subject J	Subject EW
1.	Initials	EZ	JP	E.W
2.	University	Brawijaya, Malang	Bina Nusantara, Jakarta	Tarumanagara, Jakarta
3.	Major	Marine Science	Economics	Communication Studies
4.	Age	22	22	22
5.	Gender	Man	Man	Man
6.	Interview date	March 3, 2020	March 10, 2020	March 13, 2020
7.	Interview Place	The Gade Cafe, Depok	The Gade Cafe, Depok	Starbucks Coffee, Campus 1 UNTAR

ANALYSIS RESULTS

The author uses a descriptive phenomenological analysis method. In carrying out this analysis, the author analyzed verbatim to obtain the themes that existed for each participant. From the themes of each participant, the author then created a combined theme which is a collection of themes experienced by all research participants.

Providing Negative Influence

This motive is self-serving behavior, where someone shows their power to destroy someone's reputation (Beersma & Van Kleef, 2012). Negative influence as a reason for someone to gossip is not found in all subjects, however, negative impacts do emerge from gossiping activities.

This motif appears in the third subject (Subject EW). In this case, the subject brings someone down by gossiping. The way to do this is to seek out the masses by spreading gossip about someone.

(...) for example, like I don't like this one person, initially we only didn't like 3 people. We'll discuss it behind the scenes. When we all agreed, it was like we were looking for the masses from that institution to...eee...in soft language, corner that person, you know. (...) The point is that from the start there were only three people aiming, but we were looking for additional ammunition to make more, to strengthen things... to be like, to knock down the target.

This motif appears in the second subject (Subject J). Subject J explained that gossip can arise from the need for information that cannot be obtained. Subject J explained this as follows,

“Yes. And from there, rumours also emerged from there. It's like we can't get information directly from him. Either we don't want to get it or we can't get what's really going on.”

Social Enjoyment (Social Enjoyment)

This motive was seen in the three research participants. In subject E, he explained his feelings when gossiping, “Happy. Hehehe.” He also added that he gossips when hanging out with his friends, “Hanging out, really. Just hanging out with friends, like that.”

In subject J, he explained that he gossiped in his spare time with his friends while doing work. Right on campus break. It's right when it's break time or after campus. Usually there are assignments, if you are doing assignments then you just gossip about it. Or if you're stuck and don't have any work to do, let's hang out first, talk to people. 'Eh, this is a really strange person I met earlier' and kept saying that.

Apart from that, subject J also explained that he gossiped to relieve stress.

Because it's really stressful. I want to express my frustration with this person. Finally, I've finished gossiping. (...) because stress has to be let out like that... let it out somewhere. In the end, that's it...we talk about it, we gossip about it. From there, it's like...it's like going there.

On the subject of EW, she explained explicitly that she gossips for fun.

(...) Personally, I prefer to create an atmosphere and just have fun. There's no other meaning, I'm afraid of other people, I'm like, 'Wow, this is like this'. That's why I once again think that backbiting is more internal. I mean, it's like being at someone's house, really having an exclusive gathering. It's rare to hang out in public places like this. Even that seems like a far away place. I hope no one is attached to him like that. One more thing like that, just for fun.

Protecting Groups (Group Protection)

This motif was seen in subject J. Subject J explained that in his experience, subject J's gossiping friends gossiped about people outside his group, especially those who did not conform to the values held by subject J and his group.

Hehehe. Yes, usually, outball is class. The person whose social support our class is talking about. Which is, yes, it's evil. It just ends up being him again. This is annoying, saying 'I'm tired of doing assignments until 3 in the morning', yes we are all close to the exam and we all work together until 3 in the morning. Yes, definitely digitize the gossip. Of course... because I often talk about people who are not part of the group, that's usually how it is.

Subject J also received support from his group in his experience of gossiping.

There was a time when I was in the same group, I was a boy and the rest were girls. When you're on campus, you're usually very focused, so you have to do whatever you have to do. And sometimes they become like... the term is parno, paranoid like that if this doesn't meet their expectations. At that time there was progress in their work which was not satisfactory for them. Then they do...they don't...what do they do...sometimes they share information even though they are from different groups. They're just clashing. When I was clashing, I got hit with lead, I got angry too. After that, I was a bit annoyed, right? Finally, after class, I hung out with my friend and my friend and I immediately started talking like 'Why do you think that after being scolded like that, your face is straight up'. (...) and we talked about it as we walked.

Familiarity and Solidarity

This is a motive that is not covered by gossip motive theory, but the author found it in this research. This motive is found in every participant.

In subject E, this motif appears when the author asks about the resulting closeness. To the writer, subject E said, "Yes, yes. Especially if it's one opinion." This is also supported by subject E's statement that gossiping activities are only carried out by people he already knows, as said by subject E, "Hanging out, really. Just hanging out with friends, like that." Subject E also said, "(...) and sometimes see my friends too. "If his friends really see him, they prefer to gossip, okay, let's gossip."

In subject J, this can be seen from how they gossip about someone among themselves. According to subject J, they have a good relationship regarding what is gossiped about. Even though subject J also gossips about his friends, there is an understanding that exists between subject J and his group of friends. Subject J explained, "(...) usually with your own group it doesn't reach that level. It's just like chilling, because in my group we understand each other like that."

EW's subjects shared how gossip created intimacy between them. Because of gossip, friends who are not close become close, and even chat together. To the writer, the EW subject told,

(...) I was hanging out with my friends from group A, talking about B. Talking. It turns out... well, at another time... this B was hanging out with my friends, apparently trying to cheat. It's like that for me. Then, sometimes the ghibah...is recorded...some of it is recorded by my friend. So it's like it's embarrassing to record it. So, when they join us... we bring them to hang out again, so we can make them talk again. So... I don't know, maybe it's because of the proximity effect or what. Maybe if I were the protagonist, my group would really believe in me. And we've both felt the effects of B, right, so we're just giving in like that. But when this person B talked about me to anyone... fortunately we... we were insulted, but we had defense.

Themes such as familiarity, solidarity, and understanding one another appear in each subject. It can be explained that in gossiping there can be closeness and solidarity. This motif is different from the group protection motif because in group protection there is something that is to be protected by gossiping. Meanwhile, in this motif, the internal closeness of the group is strengthened by gossiping about something that is of interest to the group.

According to the author, the closeness that arises from this gossip activity is caused by the three subjects' habit of carrying out gossip activities with their friends when they gather. The three subjects consistently explained that they gossiped with their friends when they were hanging out/getting together.

DISCUSSION

From the results of the analysis, there is a match between the interview results and theoretical studies. In all three subjects, it appears that they have the same motive, namely social pleasure. This is in line with what Ben-Ze'ev said (in Wert & Salovey, 2004), that gossip is a fun thing.

In this research the author used a descriptive phenomenological analysis method, where the final result was a synthesis of the themes of all participants. There is one theme where this theme is not explained in the theory of gossip motives in theoretical studies. This theme is the closeness and solidarity that arises from gossiping. In all three subjects, this theme emerged.

This cannot be equated with the motive for gossip as group protection, because there is no value to be protected by establishing closeness or solidarity.

Subject E explained that gossip makes friendships become closer. In subject J, by gossiping about the group he was having problems with, his friends provided support. Meanwhile, the EW subject said that by gossiping, friends who were less familiar became more familiar.

In all participants, there were similarities found, namely good verbal communication skills. The author observed that the three participants were able to tell their experiences when gossiping well and clearly. Future research on gossip could explore the relationship between gossip and communication skills.

From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, gossip was originally used as a way to obtain information about people who were not carrying out their social obligations (Dunbar, 2004). However, now gossip is developing not only for that matter. Now gossip has many social purposes.

This research would be more perfect if it was carried out by adding one or two participants and also providing a questionnaire as a complement. Nevertheless, the author hopes that this research will continue to make a contribution to science. Future research can also explore variables related to this research.

This research can be a reference for research on gossip in Indonesia. Apart from that, this research can also be a reference for studies on gender stereotypes. For research in social psychology and other humanities sciences, this research can also be an additional reference.

In the future, research on gossip can be developed in qualitative or mixed form. If quantitatively we can determine the single motive of each participant, then with the addition of qualitative methods future researchers can obtain other motives and their dynamics. See table 2.

Table 2:

Gossip Motive	Subject E	Subject J	Subject EW
Negative influence			√
Information gathering and validation		√	
Social enjoyment	√	√	√
Group protection		√	
Familiarity/Solidarity	√	√	√

Limitations

Meanwhile, the weakness of this research is that the author did not use psychological measurements to ensure that the participants in this research often gossiped. It is best to use the Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire to measure a person's tendency to gossip.

CONCLUSION

There are other motives underlying men's gossip. Namely familiarity and solidarity. This can be caused by the habit of gossiping with a group of friends.

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