

From Victim to Perpetrator: The Cascading Impact of Perceived Negative Workplace Gossip on Hospitality Employees

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Abstract

Drawing on cognitive dissonance and social identity theories, this study examined how and why perceived negative workplace gossip influenced the counterproductive behavior of hospitality employees at work. Using time-lag data collected from hospitality workers in Vietnam, the findings revealed that moral disengagement mediated the negative impact of workplace gossip on counterproductive work behavior. It is also found that workplace friendship moderated the indirect effect that workplace gossip had on moral disengagement, and that this mediating effect was more pronounced when the friendship was stronger. The implications of the findings are provided for hospitality researchers and practitioners.

Keywords

perceive negative workplace gossip, counterproductive behaviors, moral disengagement, workplace friendship, time-lag data, moderated mediation analysis

Introduction

The presence of gossip in society has been long-standing, with the earliest records of this phenomenon able to be traced back to Mesopotamia and ancient Greece (Pan et al., 2024). Indeed, people encounter gossip almost every day, in different shapes or forms, and gossip is no longer seen as an unusual concept in academic discourse. Prior research suggests that gossiping may serve as a stress-coping mechanism (Grosser et al., 2012), and Testori et al. (2024) revealed that sharing negative gossip is a method that promotes cooperative behaviors within social groups. In 2009, Cole & Dalton reported that workplace gossip accounted for 14% of tea break discussions, and around 66% of general discussion between employees, and Grosser et al. (2012) found that 90% of employees participated in gossiping on the job, and almost everyone either proactively or reactively participates in evaluative (i.e., judgmental) commenting regarding absent colleagues. Not surprisingly, gossiping in the workplace is considered to be “the norm” today.

However, it is only recently that scholars have begun to investigate this phenomenon in the context of the hospitality industry. The inherent natures of the hospitality workplaces cultivate conditions that are conducive to gossiping (Liu et al., 2022). Indeed, communication is a key factor in the success of hospitality businesses, as frontline employees are required to engage in numerous conversations throughout the day, not only with guests but also with

colleagues within and across departments to navigate and meet diverse customer needs, go above and beyond expectations, and create memorable guest experiences (Cheng et al., 2021; Guo et al., 2022). Given this unique dynamic and collaborative nature of the work, hospitality employees are able to maintain conversations with their coworkers even throughout their shifts. There is no need to wait until a coffee break to start chatting with others.

Interestingly, opinions on the outcomes of negative gossip are divided. For instance, Sun et al. (2023) and Testori et al. (2024) argue that sharing negative gossip can promote cooperative behaviors within social groups. In contrast, other studies have emphasized the adverse consequences of negative gossip for those involved (Aboramadan et al., 2021; Babalola et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2018). In workplace settings, in particular, negative gossip has been linked to various harmful effects. At an individual level, the experience of being the target of negative workplace gossip can severely impact a person’s psychological well-being, due to the erosion of trust and destruction of bonds with coworkers (Tan et al., 2021). This adverse experience has been shown

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to further indirectly influence an employee's personal life through psychological detachment (Xie et al., 2024). As well as having a negative impact at an individual level, the presence of negative workplace gossip has no positive effect at an organizational level, and several researchers have highlighted the destructive consequences associated with this practice. For example, Wax et al. (2022) found that negative gossip wielded a profound impact on the climate and trust within an organization. They further explain that even independent instances of negative gossip, over time, may reshape communication patterns within the workplace, ultimately shifting behavioral norms and impacting the organization's overall functioning. While researchers may agree that gossip can be a chronic issue for any community or group, special attention from both researchers and practitioners is required to fully understand and address the issues surrounding it.

Baumeister et al. (2004) categorized negative workplace gossip as verbal attacks directed at the gossip target. Similarly, Cheng et al. (2023) identified negative gossip as a form of abuse, even equating it to violence and victimization. Research shows that social mistreatments, such as workplace bullying and abusive behavior, negatively affect targets' behavior, well-being, psychological safety, and job performance (Cheng et al., 2023; Kong, 2018; Moayed et al., 2006; Xie et al., 2019). However, negative gossip differs from other forms of destructive behavior due to its discreet, covert, and indirect nature (Foster, 2004), making it more challenging for targets to defend themselves or confront the gossip senders (Brady et al., 2017). This study seeks to examine the impact of negative workplace gossip within the hospitality industry.

Aboramadan et al. (2021) revealed that negative workplace gossip can act as a weapon that destroys trust and personal associations within an organization, and that this can lead to a reduction in an employee's motivation to work efficiently. Several researchers have found that negative workplace gossip has a profound impact on employee life satisfaction, organizational self-esteem, and task performance (Babalola et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2022; Xie et al., 2024). There is insufficient information, however, to fully understand the effect of negative workplace gossip on the behavioral tendencies of a targeted worker, especially within the scope of hospitality (Wu et al., 2018). Indeed, people react differently toward different negative events in life. Spector et al. (2006) revisited the notions of "fight or flight" responses and suggested that experiencing negative emotions (e.g., anger and frustration) could lead a person to engage in a "fight" response, and that suffering boredom and feelings of depression may correspond to a "flight" response. Several researchers have revealed connections between being the target of workplace gossip, and feeling anger, shame, and disgust (Naeem et al., 2019; Zong et al., 2024). Surprisingly, however, "fight" responses, as a consequence

of negative gossip, have been largely overlooked (Wu et al., 2018). Therefore, to fill this literature gap, this study proposed that counterproductive work behavior (CWB) would be the outcome of perceived negative gossip.

A number of studies have found a causal link between negative workplace gossip and such unfavorable behaviors as knowledge hiding (Khan et al., 2022) and abusive behaviors (Naeem et al., 2019). However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, this study is the first to explore the relationship between perceived negative workplace gossip and CWB. What stands out in this study is the impact of negative workplace gossip on CWB, which expands the current understanding of this phenomenon. A more profound reason to understand the relationship between these two constructs is that CWB is costly and has severe consequences that impact both the employees (at personal and professional levels) and their organizations (Chang & Smithikrai, 2010). Carpenter et al. (2021) concluded that CWBs are negatively associated with not only cooperative and task-related behaviors (e.g., innovative behaviors and productivity) but also with profitability and operational functions (e.g., turnover and customer satisfaction).

Given the serious consequences of perceived negative workplace gossip for targeted individuals and the organizational climate, it is crucial to explore the mechanisms through which this gossip exerts its impact. Negative workplace gossip can lead to CWB, initially by causing employees to feel unfairly treated and distrusting their peers. Cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) suggests that when employees experience stress from negative gossip, they may adjust their beliefs or behaviors to reduce the discomfort. This often leads to moral disengagement, where harmful actions can be justified by downplaying the usual moral standards, that is, employees might convince themselves that their CWB is a fair response to the gossip, helping them reconcile their actions with their self-concept. This study highlights moral disengagement as a key factor that mediates the relationship between negative gossip and CWB, offering insight into how these behaviors develop.

Hospitality workplace settings often lead to close relationships among employees due to the collaborative nature of the work environment, which involves long hours and teamwork (Zhuang et al., 2020). Therefore, perceived negative workplace gossip may produce different results, depending on the levels of workplace friendship within the organization. From a social identity theory perspective, the "ingroup" (in this scenario, the individuals who take part in the gossip) often experiences a sense of belonging and affiliation (Zhang et al., 2023). Ingroup individuals tend to socialize more with people in their circle, creating the foundation to form workplace friendships, which reinforce the sense of belonging and solidarity, and also enhance the group's own social identity within the organization. This enhancement of work identity may influence moral disengagement levels, thereby affecting the

likelihood of engaging in CWB. A simple example is that morally disengaged individuals within an ingroup may have close workplace friendships, leading their friends to cover for their mistakes and avoid holding them accountable. This highlights “ingroup favoritism” versus “outgroup discrimination” and could potentially cause the target of the gossip to engage in CWB. Hence, the study proposed “workplace friendship” as a moderator variable to investigate the point at which negative gossip might impact CWB in an organization.

In summary, this research was conducted to fill several gaps in the existing literature. First, it investigated the relationship between “perceived negative workplace gossip” and the targeted worker’s CWB. Second, it examined “moral disengagement” as a mediator in the relationship between perceived negative workplace gossip and CWB. Finally, it investigated workplace friendship as a moderating factor on the indirect relationship between perceived negative workplace gossip and CWB, through moral disengagement. The current work will help hospitality researchers to obtain a better understanding of negative workplace gossip in relation to its consequences, mediator, and moderator. In addition, this study will assist hospitality practitioners in understanding not only the importance of cultivating a healthy workplace culture but also the double-edged sword effect of workplace friendship.

Theoretical Foundation and Hypothesis Development

Perceived Negative Workplace Gossip

Workplace gossip occurs when informal discussions with peers include evaluative comments about an absent team member (Brady et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2018). A workplace gossip event includes at least three parties, the gossiper, the gossip recipient, and the target (Wu et al., 2018). There are several misunderstandings around the identification of workplace gossip. “Talking behind a person’s back” is not necessarily identified as gossip. As per Brady et al. (2017), informal discussions that only include factual information cannot be categorized as gossip, as they are neither evaluative nor influential on another’s norms or reputation, even though they occur in the absence of the coworker being discussed. For example, talking about the wedding of a coworker (not evaluative), or the potential promotion of a manager (an event), is not workplace gossip. Gossip is a distinctive social-psychological phenomenon that distinguishes itself from other informal socialization forms (e.g., small talk or workplace chit-chat) by its highly evaluative comments. These subjectively directed comments often occur in private places and usually relate to physical features, personalities, and competency (Akgunduz et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2018). For example, an informal discussion that judges how poorly a coworker dresses or behaves can

be considered to be negative workplace gossip. Gossip at work has traditionally been viewed negatively in organizational behavior literature (Brady et al., 2017), but it is important to recognize that gossip can also have positive aspects. For example, an informal discussion about how nice or helpful a coworker is can be considered to be positive workplace gossip.

The consequences of negative workplace gossip have only recently garnered attention in the hospitality setting, despite being a deeply ingrained issue in society. There has been limited research conducted on this topic and in this particular field before 2020, and an understanding of the influence of negative gossip on a targeted individual’s behavior is still incomplete (Wu et al., 2018; Ye et al., 2019). There has also been minimal research on the topic of how being the target of negative gossip affects an employee’s work-related behavior, particularly the full course of that influence (Wu et al., 2018), and within hospitality scholarly work, the authors only found a small number of studies that looked into this phenomenon. For example, Akgunduz et al. (2024) disclosed that perceived negative workplace gossip may lead to an increase in an employee’s intention to take revenge. The majority of the research on this topic, however, has concentrated on the impact of gossip on target employees performance (Babalola et al., 2019). Wu et al. (2018) suggested that most studies in this field examined “flight” responses, for example, refraining from organizational citizenship behaviors, hiding knowledge, or weakened service performance (Khairy et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2022; Ye et al., 2019), as these responses are safer and more covert. As such, this study was conducted to answer the call from Wu et al. (2018), to fill the gap in the literature, and to uncover the “fight” responses adopted by targeted employees in response to negative gossip, in particular, in the hospitality sectors.

Perceived Negative Workplace Gossip and Counterproductive Workplace Behavior

The notion of CWB originated from a study into human aggression has been linked to negative affectivity (e.g., anger, contempt, disgust, and frustration) and clarified as a form of response to external factors in either social psychological or organizational scholarly works (Spector et al., 2006). Counterproductive workplace behavior has been collectively defined as harmful actions aimed at a person’s colleagues or workplace, including unwanted behaviors such as discriminating against colleagues, and perpetrating deception and corruption (Helle et al., 2018). The inherent nature of the hospitality workplace, that is, of being under intense pressure, having unusual working hours, and often being seasonal, may cause severe consequences to its employees. The stresses of the everyday environment can lead to fluctuations in financial-well-being, and of more concern, to burnout, which

can be a breeding ground that manifests in deviant behaviors (Zhao et al., 2013). Helle et al. (2018) claimed that some CWBs overlap with unethical behaviors; it is important to highlight, however, that there are two distinct concepts. For example, engaging in numerous unnecessary conversations at work may be CWB, but not to be unethical. Similarly, the use of false marketing to increase revenue is unethical, but may also support the business; hence, it is not CWB. The meaning of CWB narrows to the norms of the workplace, rather than to the norms of society.

Research into negative workplace gossip has revealed that perceptions of negative gossip can lead to a range of deviant behaviors (Guo et al., 2022; Kong, 2018; Martinescu et al., 2021; Xie et al., 2019). Due to its inherent nature, negative workplace gossip is often indirect and subtle, and it can be difficult to verify either its content, or its origin, to prevent any wide-reaching effects (Foster, 2004). In such cases, due to the inability to locate the root of the problem and uncertainty surrounding its escalation, the target of the gossip may experience feelings of injustice and a persuasive sense of distrust toward their peers and the organization; this can lead to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Georganta et al., 2014). Chirasha and Mahapa (2012) stated that deviant behaviors typically occur when an employee perceives that they have been mistreated, regardless of whether the wrongdoing occurred. As a result, their frustration may shift toward the organization. Researchers have also suggested that ostracism in the work environment is positively linked to hospitality employees' CWB (Hitlan & Noel, 2009; Zhao et al., 2013), and Spector et al. (2006) revealed that perceived injustice is the primary factor that leads to an employee's CWB.

It is reasonable to propose, therefore, that perceived negative workplace gossip would be positively related to employee CWB, and this study used social network theory to explain the full course of the association between these two variables. This theory dives into the significant influence that the social structure and relationships surrounding individuals, groups, or organizations have on shaping their beliefs and behaviors (Barnes, 1954). In accordance with social network theory, negative workplace gossip can be seen as one of the informal communication channels that exists within the "web of relationships" in an organization, where all information flows (Barnes, 1954). Negative workplace gossip is a judgmental and invasive practice, which can be used by people to significantly exert their influence on the social dynamic within the workplace. In such a situation, the targeted employee's behavior and attitude will be modified in response to the negativity existing within their social context; this negativity can lead to feelings of depression, a sense of exclusion, and decreased morale. These adverse emotional states can, in turn, lead to the employee exhibiting CWB, which is detrimental to both individuals and the organization. As such, it was posited that:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): *Perceived negative workplace gossip would be positively related to counterproductive workplace behavior.*

The Mediating Role of Moral Disengagement

To further understand how an employee might exhibit CWB when targeted with negative gossip in the hospitality workplace, this study used a combination of social network and cognitive dissonance theories to introduce moral disengagement as a mediator for this relationship. To date, there has been no theoretical explanation for this causal linkage.

Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that individuals who experience psychological stress at work may adjust their attitudes, beliefs, or actions, as a coping mechanism (Festinger, 1957). According to this theory, individuals strive to rationalize their actions by adopting new beliefs, values, or confirmation bias to alleviate discomfort and align their internal beliefs with external realities. When employees become targets of negative workplace gossip, they are subjected to an unethical work environment, which can lead to cognitive dissonance (Guo et al., 2022). It is plausible that negative environments such as these could deactivate the targeted employee's natural tendencies for self-regulation (Grosser et al., 2012), and that this could subsequently increase the likelihood that they would engage in moral disengagement to justify any retaliatory actions or deviant behaviors that might align with their perceived necessity for self-preservation (Bandura, 1999; Fida et al., 2015). Furthermore, the feelings of envy and jealousy that arise when other people are seen to experience better treatment from the team or higher levels of management can also cause targeted employees to disengage morally. Fida et al. (2018) suggested that moral disengagement can occur under the influence of negative emotions, and Moore et al. (2012) stated that even personal differences can motivate employees to morally disassociate. As such, given the amount of negative affectivity and reputational damage caused by negative workplace gossip, it is logical to assume that if employees become aware that they are the target of adverse rumors at work, they are more likely to develop moral disengagement. Kuo et al. (2015), for example, confirmed a positive relationship between workplace gossip and employee cynicism, and Cheng et al. (2020) revealed that negative workplace gossip can lead to political acts.

In accordance with moral disengagement theory, a state of moral disengagement allows a person to rationalize unethical or harmful behavior, by minimizing their moral standards, shifting responsibility, justifying their actions, or minimizing the consequences (Bonner et al., 2016). These responses make it easier for targeted employees to engage in the types of CWB that disrupt organizational goals, damage workplace dynamics, and harm individual well-being (Zhao et al., 2013). Moore et al. (2012) also revealed that

moral disengagement is the predictor for unethical behavior. One way of justifying behavior that does not align with accepted moral standards is through advantageous comparison. For instance, a morally disengaged targeted employee may rationalize their engagement by enacting nonconfrontational CWB (e.g., theft or sabotage), considering these to be a less harmful means of coping with the negativity at work, as opposed to resorting to more aggressive behavior, for example, physical violence or bullying (Samnani et al., 2014). Hence, when targeted employees experience moral disengagement, and their self-regulation is deactivated, it is highly probable that this will result in CWB.

Building on social dissonance theory, a state of moral disengagement allows a person to reconcile any counterproductive actions with their own self-concept. This creates a state of mental consistency and allows the employee to experience feelings of vindictive satisfaction in response to the negativity experienced by being a target of gossip. Simply stated, employees who feel that they are being wronged at work will morally disengage to justify their CWB. They may use the mechanism of “attributing blame” to convince themselves that it is the fault of the organization or their peers. Their coworkers have cultivated a toxic work environment that fosters negative gossip, and the system has failed to adopt policies or adequate measures to support them; therefore, it seems fair (and even justified) that they adopt CWB to get even. Indeed, the mediating role of moral disengagement has been investigated in a number of studies that have focused on individual-level antecedents and morally concerning consequences (Moore, 2015). Zhao et al. (2022) found that moral disengagement mediated the positive relationships between illegitimate tasks and destructive voice and time theft. In line with this, Raza et al. (2023) revealed that the relationship between workplace harassment and organizational deviance was mediated by moral disengagement. Considering all the points discussed, the following hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): *Moral disengagement would mediate the relationship between negative workplace gossip and counterproductive workplace behavior*

Workplace Friendship as a Moderator

Wang et al. (2022) describe workplace friendship as a non-exclusive, informal, voluntary, and multiplex interpersonal connection among colleagues, which encompasses profound interactions and emotional bonds that extend beyond the limitations of formal work roles. The majority of scholars and practitioners investigating this topic have devoted their attention to the positive outcomes of workplace friendship associated with organizational benefits, for example, reductions in intentions to leave, political deviance, property deviance, and personally aggressive behavior among hoteliers (Asgharian et al., 2015; Zhuang et al., 2020).

Despite the growing popularity of “workplace friendship” as a topic of study, there has been relatively little research into the adverse impacts associated with this construct. Methot et al. (2016) reported that workplace friendship may lead to reduced task performance at the beginning phase of a friendship, and Yang et al. (2021) reported that being friends at work in this “online era” could provoke new problems related to identity conflict in various channels, which could consequently compromise task performance and job satisfaction. Likewise, in regard to workplace friendship as a moderator, the existing literature has primarily focused on the favorable outcomes that this variable could help to produce (Hsu et al., 2019; Rai & Agarwal, 2018; Randhawa & Lee, 2021; Ugwu et al., 2022). For example, Liu et al. (2013) suggested that the relationship between ethical leadership and task performance is strengthened under the influence of workplace friendship. As a result, this study was conducted to fill the literature gap, while at the same time enhancing knowledge on whether friendship at work could lead to undesirable outcomes.

People who have shared similar experiences often develop a deep sense of mutual understanding and empathy; they can relate to each other’s emotions and perspectives, leading to stronger emotional bonds, which is a premise on which to build a friendship (Omuris, 2019; Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018; Wang et al., 2022). Forming friendships with coworkers who have faced similar difficulties can provide a valuable source of support and understanding, and workplace friends may form a cohesive ingroup, seeking support and validation from one another while distancing themselves from those outside their social circle. According to social identity theory, individuals strive to obtain a positive identity within their group by favoring their ingroup and discriminating against outgroups (Tajfel, 1981). Consequently, these factors may encourage hospitality employees to prioritize the interests of their friends or colleagues over those of the organization, or at least to cover up their friends’ mistakes, as a way to demonstrate support and loyalty. This behavior helps them maintain and enhance their social identity within their friendship group.

In addition, social learning theory explains that behavior is influenced by the interaction between individuals and their surroundings, where people learn by observing others’ behaviors (Bandura, 1999). If these observed behaviors lead to positive outcomes, employees are more likely to adopt and repeat them for similar results. However, observed behaviors could also stimulate negative behavioral practices and the venting of frustration. According to social learning theory, if employees observe that engaging in CWB helps their friends to maintain and enhance their identity within the group, they might imitate these deviant behaviors themselves (Bandura, 1999). For hospitality employees, if moral disengagement is normalized within their friendship group, they may feel obliged to adopt these

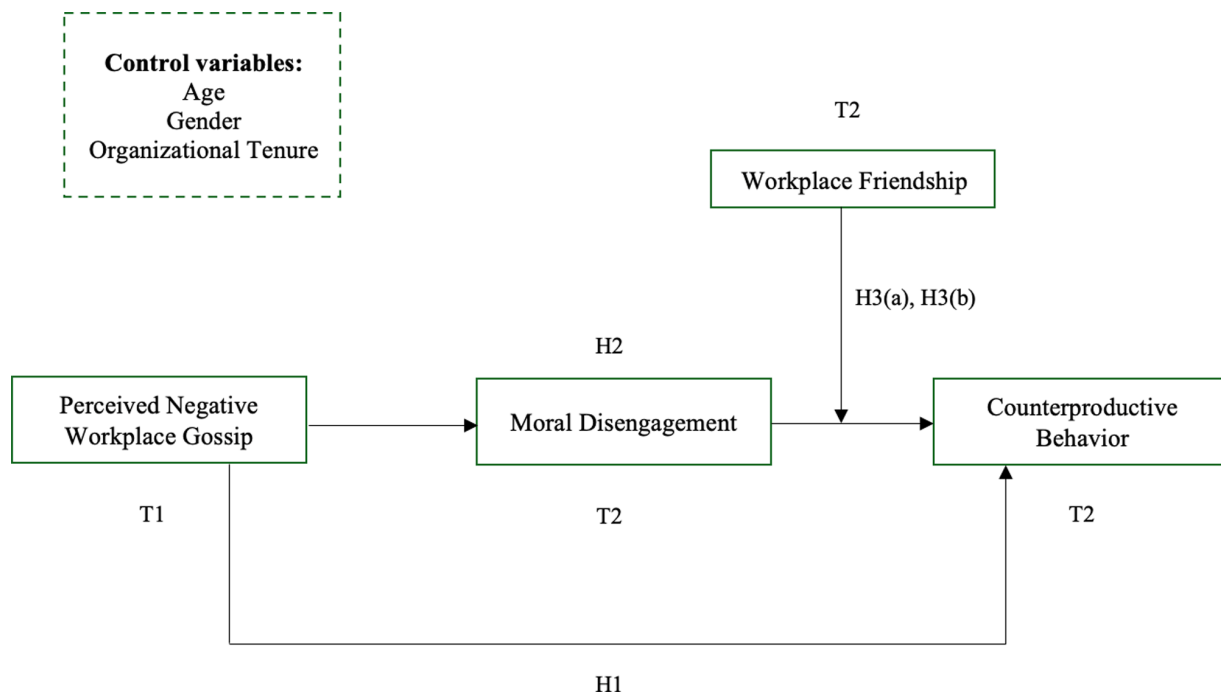


Figure 1.
Theoretical Model of this Study.

new norms and values to uphold their social standing within the group. This can simultaneously serve as a rationalized reason for either engaging in or not exposing the CWB of those with whom they are socially tied.

To summarize, employees with strong workplace friendships may be more likely to engage in CWB when they morally disengage, as these friendships promote ingroup favoritism and provide social support, which justify and reinforce such behavior. Conversely, employees without strong workplace friendships may exhibit a weaker relationship between moral disengagement and CWB, as they lack the social reinforcement to justify such behavior. Hence, the following hypothesis was developed:

Hypothesis 3a (H3a): *Workplace friendship would moderate the relationship between moral disengagement and counterproductive workplace behavior, such that the relationship would be more pronounced when workplace friendship is strong. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical model of this study.*

Integrating the above arguments (H2 and H3a), a moderated mediation model was proposed. Specifically, that workplace friendship would moderate the relationship between moral disengagement and CWB, and that moral disengagement would mediate the relationship between negative

workplace gossip and CWB. Thus, the following hypothesis was developed:

Hypothesis 3b (H3b): *Workplace friendship would moderate the indirect effect of negative workplace gossip on counterproductive workplace behavior through moral disengagement, such that the indirect effect would be more pronounced when workplace friendship is strong.*

Method

Sampling

Data for this study were collected from employees in a range of hospitality establishments in Hue, Hanoi, and Tuyen Quang, Vietnam. By including a mix of businesses across different sectors and regions, the study aimed to capture a holistic view of organizational behaviors in Vietnam's hospitality and tourism industry. The three cities were chosen for their distinct tourism profiles: Hanoi as an urban hub, Hue for its cultural heritage, and Tuyen Quang as an emerging destination. From an initial pool of more than 250 businesses, 79 were ultimately selected for participation, comprising 8 hotels, 3 serviced apartments, 29 restaurants, 4 bars, 1 nightclub, 25 cafés, and 9 travel agencies. The

final selection prioritized businesses willing to provide access to their premises for data collection from frontline employees, which was essential for the research. The study targeted respondents with basic knowledge of hospitality work. Therefore, participants were required to be over 18 years and have at least 1 month of experience in the industry. Veal (2006) proposed a formula for calculating minimum sample size, where the number of items in the measurements is multiplied by 5. The surveys for this article included 21 statements; hence, the minimum required sample size was 105, and therefore, the target sample size for this study was determined to be between 105 and 205 participants. In addition, since this study adopted a time-lagged design, the sample size of the baseline survey was set to be above 300, to account for attrition.

A pilot test was conducted before finalizing the survey. First, the questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese by one of the authors, who is a native speaker. The translated version was then reviewed by two bilingual researchers in Vietnam. After their review, a mutual agreement was reached to slightly adjust the wording of a few items to improve clarity in the Vietnamese context. The revised questionnaire was then distributed for the pilot test to 20 professionals working in the hospitality field in Vietnam, 10 of whom were bilingual. Upon completion, each respondent provided feedback on the wording of the items, the overall length of the survey, the question order, and the time taken to complete it. The pilot test suggested adding explanations for each term in the questionnaire to ensure better understanding of the variables by all respondents. The final versions of the questionnaire are presented in the Appendix (Figure A1 and Figure A2).

Data Collection

First, for all businesses, either the HR department or the owner was contacted to seek approval to advertise and collect data on their premises. After approval was granted, four trained research assistants visited the establishments to introduce the research and to recruit participants through the use of invitation posters. Posters were also placed on notice boards and in staff rooms to draw attention to the research. Those interested in joining the study were asked to contact the research team using the contact details provided on the poster. Participants were then provided with a participant information sheet outlining details about the research (e.g., project title, purpose, and participant compensation), along with a consent form to sign. After signing, they could submit the form electronically via email or Facebook Messenger. The consent form required respondents to provide their signature and their contact details (e.g., phone number). Upon completing the form, participants were sent a link to access the survey.

At Time 1, participants were asked to complete the baseline survey, which measured perceptions relating to

perceived negative workplace gossip, and collected demographic information. After the Time 1 survey was closed, 340 valid responses were obtained. Respondents who had completed the Time 1 questionnaire were then invited to participate in Time 2, which took place 2 weeks later. The Time 2 questionnaire measured CWB, moral disengagement, and workplace friendship. Prior research suggested the use of short time intervals in study designs, to capture the strongest relationships, thereby minimizing the impact of individual or organizational events that could potentially confound the examined relationships (Dormann & Griffin, 2015). In addition, the 2-week interval is consistent with other organizational behavior studies published in high-impact hospitality and tourism journals (see Akhtar et al., 2022). After the Time 2 survey was closed, 194 valid responses were recorded. From Time 1 to Time 2, the attrition rate was around 42% which was in the acceptable range (see Chen et al., 2017; Kristman et al., 2005; Zhu et al., 2024). To match their responses over time, respondents were asked to provide the last four digits of their mobile phone number as a unique code, when completing each survey. Respondents received a financial incentive via bank transfer, as detailed in the participant information sheet provided before survey participation (15,000 VND for completing the first survey and 30,000 VND for the second).

Measures

All items included in the survey questionnaire utilized a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree.

Perceived Negative Workplace Gossip at Time 1. In this study, the three-item scale based on Chandra and Robinson (2010) was used to measure employees' perceptions of negative workplace gossip. The following statement is an example of those used, "*In the past six months, others (e.g., coworkers and/or supervisors) communicated damaging information about me in the workplace.*" The Cronbach's alpha values for this scale were 0.84.

Moral Disengagement at Time 2. The eight-item scale initiated by Moore et al. (2012) was used to measure employee's levels of moral disengagement. The following statement is an example of those used, "*Taking something without the owner's permission is okay as long as you are just borrowing it.*" The Cronbach's alpha values for this scale were 0.86.

Counterproductive Workplace Behavior at Time 2. The five-item scale based on Fox and Spector (1999), Fox et al. (2001), and Marcus & Schuler (2004) was used to measure employees' CWB. The following statement is an example

of those used, “*I purposely wasted company materials/supplies.*” Cronbach’s alpha values for this scale were 0.85.

Workplace Friendship at Time 2. The five-item subscale based on the workplace friendship scale developed by Nielsen et al. (2000) was used to evaluate the prevalence of friendship in the workplace. The following statement is an example of those used, “*I have formed strong friendships at work.*” The Cronbach’s alpha values for this scale were 0.66.

We controlled for employees’ age, gender, and organizational tenure, consistent with the approaches of Hsu et al. (2019) and Zhuang et al. (2020).

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 29, was used to perform descriptive analysis on respondents’ demographic details, as well as correlations among all the variables of the research. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) test was conducted using Mplus 8.3 to ensure the validity and reliability of the measurement model of observed variables. To test the six proposed hypotheses, PROCESS by Hayes (2017) was used to perform several regression analyses. Model 4 of the PROCESS macro was adopted to test the mediation effect, and Model 14 of the PROCESS macro was used to test the moderated mediation effect. The bootstrapping technique was incorporated to test these models (Hayes, 2017), to ensure more reliable estimation of indirect effects, and to exclude any assumptions about the normality of the sampling distribution (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Significant results were determined by examining the 95% confidence interval resulting from the bootstrapping analyses. A confidence interval that does not include zero suggests a significant mediation or moderation effect.

Findings

Respondent Profile

As shown in Table 1, of the 194 respondents, 83.5% were female; this was reflected in the insights provided by the International Labour Organization (2020), where female employees accounted for 70% of the overall labor force in the hospitality industry in Vietnam (UN Tourism, 2021). Participants’ mean age was 22 years. Of all the respondents, 33.5% worked in food services business (e.g., restaurants, bars, nightclubs, and cafés), 25.8% worked for accommodation providers (e.g., hotels and serviced apartments), and 24.7% were employed in travel businesses (e.g., travel agencies). Overall, the majority of the respondents (79.9%) held a Bachelor’s degree, and most of the respondents (38.1%) had been with their current employer for 1 year or more.

Table 1.
Respondent profile.

Respondent profile (N = 194)	Total sample	
	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	162	83.5
Male	32	16.5
Total	194	100
Age		
Under 20 years	6	3.1
Between 20 and 29 years	186	95.9
Between 40 and 49 years	1	0.5
Above 50 years	1	0.5
Total	194	100
<i>Mean = 21.86, SD = 1.69, Min = 18, Max = 51</i>		
Industrial sector		
Accommodation	50	25.8
Food services	65	33.5
Travel	48	24.7
Others (e.g., Event and Spa)	31	16
Total	194	100
Highest qualification		
None or high school qualification	21	10.8
National certificate	13	6.7
National diploma	4	2.1
Bachelor’s degree	155	79.9
Postgraduate (Master’s or Doctorate degree)	1	0.5
Total	194	100
Organizational tenure		
Less than 1 year	120	61.9
Between 1 and 3 years	71	36.6
Between 3 and 5 years	2	1
More than 5 years	1	0.5
Total	194	100

Measurement Model and Descriptive Statistics

CFA indicated that the baseline model fit the research data well ($\chi^2 [183] = 335$, RMSEA = 0.06, CFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.89). Following the suggestion of Bentler and Bonett (1980), the baseline model was compared with several alternative models. As shown in Table 2, the CFA results demonstrated that the hypothesized four-factor model provided the best fit to the data compared with all alternative models.

Table 3 includes mean, standard deviation, and zero-order correlations. The results indicated significant correlations between perceived negative gossip with moral disengagement ($r = .23, p < .01$) and CWB ($r = .33, p < .01$). The findings also demonstrated significant correlations between moral disengagement and CWB ($r = .58$,

Table 2.
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Fit Indices for Measurement Model.

Model	No. of factors	χ^2	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Baseline model	Four factors: PNWG, MD, CWB, and WPF	335	183	N/A	.90	.89	.06
Alternative 1	Three factors: (PNWG + MD), CWB, and WPF	562	186	227	.75	.73	.10
Alternative 2	Two factors: (PNWG + MD +CWB) and WPF	706	188	371	.67	.63	.12
Alternative 3	One factor: (PNWG + MD +CWB +WPF)	790	189	455	.61	.57	.13

Note. CFI = Comparative Fit Index; CWB = counterproductive workplace behavior; DF = degrees of freedom. IFI = Incremental Fit Index; MD = moral disengagement; PNWG = perceived negative workplace gossip. RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; WPF = workplace friendship.

Table 3.
Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations.

Variable	M	SD	CA	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender ^a	—	—	—	—	—	1							
2. Age	21.86	1.69	—	—	—	.03	1						
3. Organizational tenure (in years)	0.82	9.47	—	—	—	.01	.25**	1					
4. Career tenure (in years)	1.10	13.26	—	—	—	.07	.28**	.74*	1				
5. PNWG.T1	2.75	1.91	.84	.85	.65	.01	.15 ⁺	.04	.01	1			
6. MD. T2	3.34	1.51	.86	.86	.5	.16*	.04	.07	.03	.23**	1		
7. CWB.T2	2.65	1.64	.85	.85	.54	.09	.06	.04	.02	.33**	.58**	1	
8. WPF.T2	4.40	1.31	.64	.66	.3	-.02	.07	-.08	-.05	.11	.17*	.22**	1

Note. $N = 194$; CWB = Counterproductive workplace behavior; MD = moral disengagement; PNWG = perceived negative workplace gossip; WPF = workplace friendship.

^a0 = female, 1 = male.

⁺ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

$p < .01$). Table 3 also presents the CR values for all domains, all of which fall within the adequate range.

Table 3 also highlights the square root of the AVE for all domains. Except for one domain, WPF (0.3), which has an AVE below 0.5, the remaining three domains—PNWG (0.65), MD (0.5), and CWB (0.54)—demonstrate strong or at least acceptable convergent validity. Despite the low AVE of WPF (0.3), it remains higher than the correlation between this construct and any other construct, thereby supporting discriminant validity.

Hypothesis Testing

As can be seen in Table 3, The relationship between perceived negative workplace gossip and CWB was positive and significant ($r = .33$, $p < .01$). When frontline employees perceive that they are the target of negative workplace gossip, they are more likely to exhibit CWB. Therefore, H1 was supported. PROCESS (Model 4) macro for SPSS was adopted, with a bootstrapping sample size of 2,000 and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) to test the mediation (H2). The results (see Table 4) revealed a significant indirect effect of the impact of perceived negative workplace gossip on CWB

(point estimate = 0.10, 95% CI: 0.04, 0.18). Hence, H2 was supported. Furthermore, the direct effect of perceived negative workplace gossip on CWB in the presence of moral disengagement was also revealed to be significant ($b = .19$, $p < .001$). Hence, moral disengagement partially mediated the relationship between perceived negative workplace gossip and CWB. Moreover, a Sobel test was performed to confirm the bootstrap results. The results once again indicated that the indirect effect was significant ($Z = 2.98$, $p < .01$). Thus, the results supported the mediation hypothesis.

A simple slope test was conducted to test the moderating role of workplace friendship, namely H3a (see Figure 2). The results revealed that the effect of the interaction term between moral disengagement and workplace friendship on CWB was significant ($B = .15$, $p < .01$). In addition, as shown in Figure 2, moral disengagement exerted a stronger effect on CWB when workplace friendship was high (+1 SD) ($B = .67$; $t = 9.55$; $p < .001$), than when workplace friendship was low (−1 SD) ($B = .40$; $t = 4.94$; $p < .001$). Therefore, the results supported the moderating H3a.

To examine H3b, a moderated mediation was run using PROCESS (Model 14) macro for SPSS, with a bootstrapping sample size of 2,000 and 95% CIs. It was observed that the

Table 4.
The Mediating Role of Moral Disengagement in the Relationship Between Negative Workplace Gossip and Counterproductive Workplace Behavior.

Direct effect			Indirect effect			
	B	SE	Point estimate	95% CI		
				Lower	Upper	
Age → MD	-0.01	0.03	NWG → MD → CWB	.10	.04	.18
Gender → MD	-0.64*	0.29				
Organizational tenure → MD	0.01	0.01				
PNWG → MD	.18*	.06				
Age → CWB	-0.01	0.03				
Gender → CWB	-0.01	0.26				
Organizational tenure → CWB	-0.01	0.01				
MD → CWB	.59***	.06				
PNWG → CWB	.19***	.05				

Note. CWB = Counterproductive workplace behavior; MD = moral disengagement. PNWG = perceived negative workplace gossip; WPF = workplace friendship.
 * $p < .05$, *** $p < .00$.

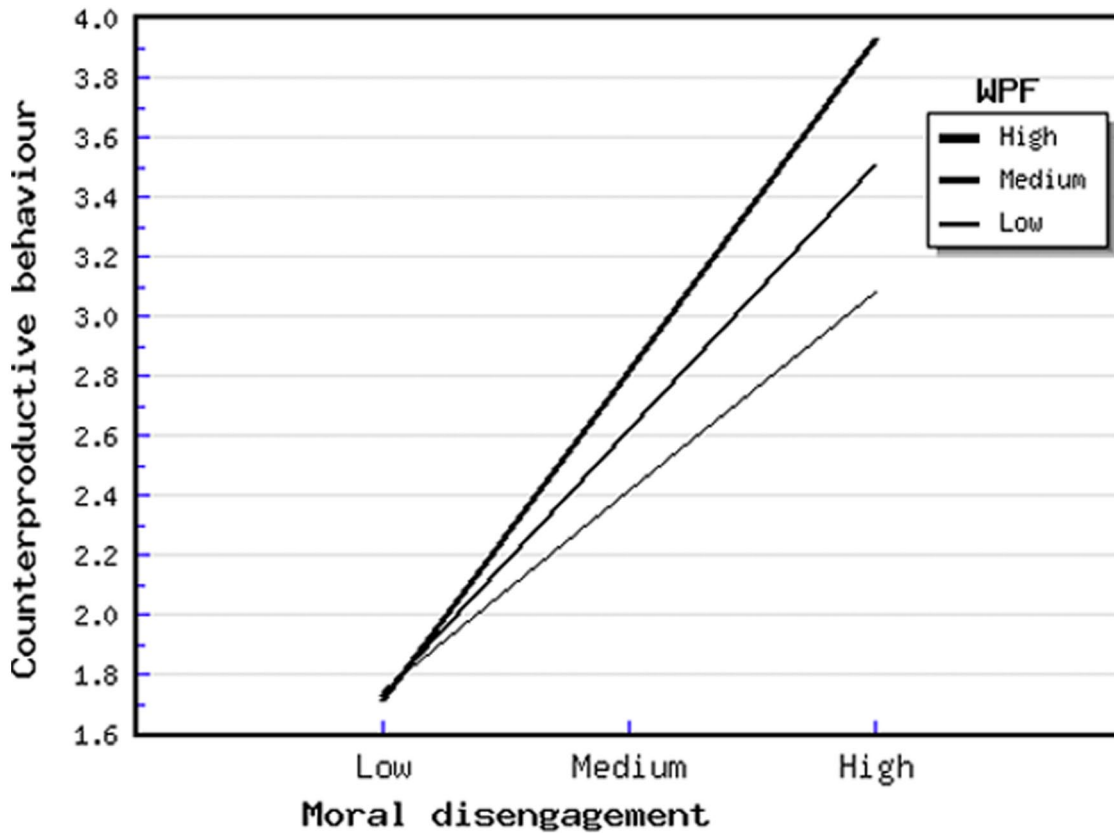


Figure 2.
The Moderating Role of Workplace Friendship in the Relationship Between Moral Disengagement and Counterproductive Workplace Behavior.

Table 5.
Moderated Mediation Analysis and Conditional Process Analysis Summary.

Moderator	Level	Outcome variable	Indirect effect	Boot SE	95% bias corrected bootstrap CI
WPF	High	CWB	.12	.04	[.05, .21]
	Medium		.10	.03	[.04, .17]
	Low		.07	.03	[.02, .15]

Note. CWB = Counterproductive workplace behavior; MD = moral disengagement. PNWG = perceived negative workplace gossip; WPF = workplace friendship.
p* < .05, **p* < .001.

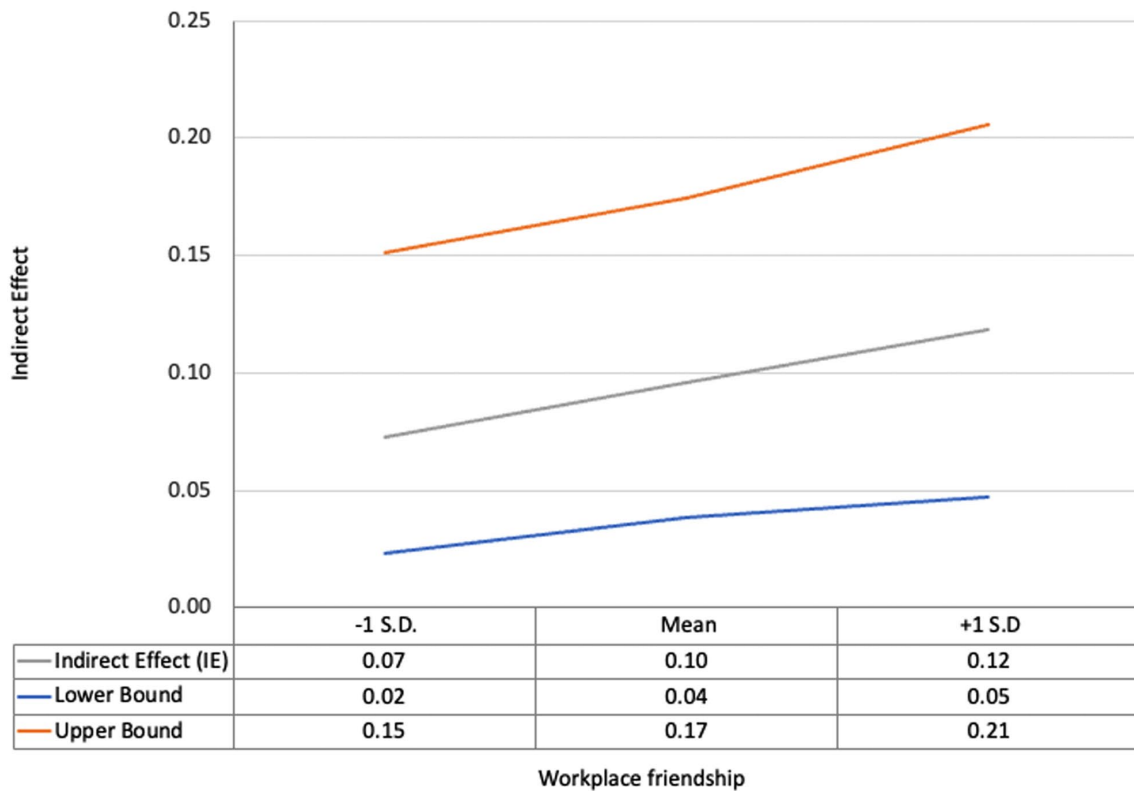


Figure 3.
The Moderated Mediation Effect.

conditional indirect effect of perceived negative workplace gossip on CWB through moral disengagement was significant, as the 95% CI of the moderated mediation index did not include zero (Index = 0.02; 95% CI: 0.01, 0.04). Specifically, as shown in Table 5 and Figure 3, the mediation effect was stronger when workplace friendship levels were high (point estimate = 0.12; 95% CI: 0.05, 0.21) than they were when workplace friendship levels were low (point estimate = 0.07; 95% CI: 0.02, 0.15). Thus, H3b was supported.

Robustness Check

Because the sample was characterized by a comparatively young age distribution, we conducted supplementary analyses to evaluate whether age played a role in shaping the focal relationships. First, we tested whether age moderates the relationships among workplace gossip, moral disengagement, and counterproductive behavior using PROCESS Model 1. Across the three models, the interaction terms

were not statistically significant, indicating that age did not significantly moderate any of the relationships: the effect of workplace gossip on counterproductive behavior ($b = 0.0011, p = .9697$), the effect of moral disengagement on counterproductive behavior ($b = 0.0139, p = .7301$), and the effect of workplace gossip on moral disengagement ($b = 0.0155, p = .5806$). These findings provide no evidence for a moderating role of age in the proposed relationships.

Second, we conducted Monte Carlo simulations with 5,000 replications (see Liu et al., 2022; Yu & Duffy, 2021) to evaluate the robustness of the hypothesized mediation and moderated mediation effects. These simulations incorporated a more representative age distribution (mean = 35, $SD = 10$), reflective of the hospitality workforce (see Bae, 2023; Kalargyrou et al., 2018), and included age, gender, and organizational tenure as control variables. Results supported the hypothesized mediation model: Workplace gossip significantly predicted moral disengagement ($b = 0.1763, SE = 0.0594$), which in turn predicted counterproductive behavior ($b = 0.5793, SE = 0.0821$), with a significant indirect effect ($b = 0.1022, SE = 0.0377, 95\% CI = [0.0281, 0.1763]$). To assess moderated mediation, we estimated the conditional indirect effects at low and high levels of perceived workplace friendship. The indirect effect was stronger when workplace friendship was high ($b = 0.1193, SE = 0.0442, 95\% CI = [0.0146, 0.2040]$) compared with when it was low ($b = 0.0728, SE = 0.0310, 95\% CI = [0.0183, 0.1272]$), with a difference of 0.0466 ($SE = 0.0296, 95\% CI = [0.0004, 0.0995]$), suggesting evidence for a moderated mediation effect.

Discussion

This study investigates the effect of perceived negative workplace gossip on CWB. We found that being the target of negative workplace gossip is significantly associated with the exhibition of CWB among employees, with this relationship being partially mediated by moral disengagement. In addition, the effect of negative workplace gossip on CWB through moral disengagement is stronger when workplace friendships are more robust. Strong friendships may amplify the emotional harm caused by gossip and increase the tendency to rationalize unethical behavior, thus heightening the likelihood of engaging in CWBs. This makes the indirect effect of gossip more pronounced in workplaces with close friendships. Finally, we present several theoretical implications to advance the workplace gossip literature and provide practical recommendations for hospitality organizations.

Research Implications

First, the research findings have highlighted the destructive impact of negative workplace gossip on the behavior of a

targeted employee. Although no previous research has specifically investigated the relationship between perceived negative workplace gossip and CWB, the correlation identified in this study aligns with findings in previous research across various industries, including hospitality. Prior scholars found that negative workplace gossip can negatively affect a target's psychological health, life satisfaction, task performance, and also their career prospects (Cheng et al., 2023; Xie et al., 2019, 2024). Indeed, being the target of negative gossip in the workplace is far from a desirable experience (Cheng et al., 2023). The current findings suggest that when frontline employees become aware that they are targeted by negative gossip in the workplace, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that are harmful toward both the organization and other coworkers. Such findings help to extend the applicability of social network theory in the literature of workplace gossip, which posits that social relationships may impact the workplace dynamic, leading to attitudinal or behavioral change. This current article has also responded to the call for more studies to investigate the impactful influence of gossip in the workplace (Wu et al., 2018) by examining the "fight" response enacted by targeted employees as a response to negative gossip at work. It also extends the scope of the literature on gossip by testifying that negative gossip in the workplace has a direct impact on the targeted employee's CWB.

Second, by examining moral disengagement through the framework of cognitive dissonance theory, this research offers a new perspective to understand the core mechanisms between negative workplace gossip and the CWB of hospitality frontline employees. In particular, the study underlined the fact that moral disengagement may be triggered when employees are the target of negative gossip at work, and that this may provoke them to adopt CWB as they strive for mental consistency and a restoration of personal harmony. The majority of studies have focused on the mediating effect of affective reaction (Khan et al., 2022). For instance, Cheng et al. (2022) claimed that the relationship between negative workplace gossip and political acts was mediated by ego depletion, and Cheng et al. (2023) revealed that psychological distress mediated the influence of negative workplace gossip on employees' subjective well-being. The current research's findings on the mediating role of moral disengagement in the relationship between negative workplace gossip and CWB provide a novel theoretical lens, suggesting that moral reasoning processes are central to understanding how negative gossip can lead to harmful actions. This insight contributes to existing theories by integrating cognitive dissonance and moral disengagement as key components in the framework of CWB.

Both moderating hypotheses were supported. According to social identity and social learning theories, the impact of moral disengagement on counterproductive behavior strengthens at higher levels of workplace friendship, and

vice versa. Similarly, negative workplace gossip and counterproductive behavior through moral disengagement are more likely to occur when workplace friendship levels are higher, and vice versa. Throughout the extensive literature review undertaken on workplace friendship, it became apparent that this variable has predominantly been studied as a positive moderator to generate *desirable* results (Hsu et al., 2019; Rai & Agarwal, 2018; Ugwu et al., 2022). For example, Ugwu et al. (2022) demonstrated that a high level of workplace friendship weakens the damaging impact of customer incivility on employee work engagement, and Rai and Agarwal (2018) posited that the negative impact of workplace bullying on EVLN outcomes (i.e., exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect—the four ways employees respond to job dissatisfaction) is weaker in the presence of high levels of workplace friendship. As such, the purpose of this study was to fill in the gap in the existing literature regarding the “dark” side of this interesting phenomenon, and also, to reinforce the double-sided effect caused by this variable in the workplace environment. This study also contributes to the literature on workplace friendship by examining its moderating impact through the perspectives of social identity and social learning theories and lays the groundwork for future research into the negative aspects of workplace friendship.

The time-lag approach adopted to mitigate common method bias and to account for the time it takes for individuals to recognize and internalize negative gossip, allowed for a more accurate observation of how those targeted by gossip gradually experience moral disengagement, which in turn influences their likelihood to engage in CWB. By considering lagged effects, the findings provide a more nuanced understanding of the causal relationships among variables, while answering the call from Akgunduz et al. (2024) to gather samples from different hospitality enterprises. Diverse samples were duly collected from all sectors of the Vietnamese hospitality industry, that is, hotels, motels, restaurants, bars, nightclubs, cafés, and travel agencies.

Practical Implications

The research findings reveal valuable insights into workplace management, along with a range of practical implications applicable to hospitality establishments. In modern society, workplace gossip is an inevitable issue, facilitated by the various devices and channels available both on- and offline (Cheng et al., 2023); hospitality workplaces, in particular, can be fertile breeding grounds (Ye et al., 2019).

The study found that employees who perceive that they are the target of negative workplace gossip are more inclined to experience moral disengagement and to exhibit counterproductive behavior. Therefore, it is imperative to minimize the presence of negative gossip at work (Raza et al., 2023). From an organizational perspective, a business should

establish a policy of “zero tolerance” toward negative workplace gossip to diminish its presence, with systems put in place to ensure that any misbehaviors will be detected and quickly addressed. For example, setting up an anonymous channel to report any inappropriate behavior and misconduct would be a good tactic to protect those employees who wish to make a complaint. In addition, managers could initiate regular conversations with their frontline employees to share information promptly and thoroughly. An effective communication channel within an organization is key to the cultivation of a welcoming and positive working environment (Khan et al., 2022). Other useful team-building activities could be initiated, such as the implementation of a rotating roster system (giving employees the chance to work together) or hosting regular staff lunches, both of which would assist in fostering meaningful relationships between coworkers, thereby reducing the risk of negative gossip (Khan et al., 2022).

Moral disengagement was found to mediate the relationship between perceived negative workplace gossip and CWB, and therefore, the provision of an environment where moral disengagement is less likely to arise also requires special attention from management. Businesses could create opportunities for employees to self-reflect on the complexities of moral issues and provide training that equips them with the tools and knowledge to facilitate ethical decision-making (Paciello et al., 2023). Specifically, the incorporation of realistic scenarios in these ethical training sessions would increase workers’ awareness of their own ethical failures, thereby improving their self-reflective abilities when encountering similar situations. Paciello et al. (2023) also reported that moral disengagement may arise as a result of the distress caused by being the target of negative workplace gossip. In such a situation, the HR department could offer counseling services to help the employee to overcome this negative state of mind.

It was also found that workplace friendship moderated the indirect effect of negative workplace gossip on counterproductive behavior through moral disengagement, that is, the indirect effect was more pronounced when workplace friendship was strong. Although this finding highlighted the negative side of workplace friendship, it may not be optimal to discourage employees from befriending their coworkers, as friendship at work increases job satisfaction and reinforces trust within an organization (Akyüz, 2020; Yang & Wong, 2020). However, organizations should alert their employees to the fact that friendships should not come above professional etiquette and organizational regulations. Employees should be encouraged to verify the boundaries of the relationship at the beginning stage of a friendship by defining what is acceptable to consider as supporting behavior, as opposed to covering for their friends’ mistakes. To address such complex issues, the management team could adopt programs, such as cross departmental- or organization-wide chats, or parties,

that promote informal communication among employees, to ensure that issues around friendship groups are not perceived to be insurmountable.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has several limitations that could be a valuable reference for future research. First, despite the fact that a time-lag survey design was adopted, the results may be subject to common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). For future research, a longitudinal study is highly recommended. The nature of workplace gossip is covert (Foster, 2004), and therefore, it may take time for individuals to acknowledge and react. This approach would be particularly effective for observing how a targeted worker's perceptions of being the subject of gossip evolve over time, providing valuable insights into the long-term effects these perceptions may have on behavior and well-being.

The low AVE of WPF may be a limitation of this study. This could be attributed to using only a five-item subscale from Nielsen et al. (2000) and potential issues with translation, as the surveys were distributed in Vietnam and translated into Vietnamese. Misinterpretations of the translated items may have occurred if they failed to fully capture the original meaning, leading to inconsistent responses. In addition, cultural differences may have contributed to misunderstandings, as some phrases or concepts in the questionnaire may not have been fully relevant to Vietnamese respondents. Future research should address these factors to enhance the validity and reliability of the measurement scale for this emerging construct.

In addition, the Vietnamese culture is heavily influenced by collectivism. This emphasizes the sense of belonging and harmony within an organization, while an individualistic culture prioritizes a person's privacy and personal opinions (Hofstede, 2011). As a result, in a Vietnamese workplace, negative gossip may disrupt the sense of harmony and group cohesion more deeply and lead to stronger psychological effects on employees, compared with those in an individualistic culture, where personal boundaries are more emphasized. This cultural specificity may limit the generalizability of the current findings, as the impact of negative gossip could vary significantly in workplaces that prioritize individualism over collectivism. Future research could use samples from different geographic regions to test the research model and improve its contextual reliability.

A limitation of this study is the relatively young age profile of the sample, although robustness checks showed that age did not significantly influence the primary relationships or affect the validity of the findings, the moderating role of age remains theoretically plausible but empirically underexplored. Drawing on socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen, 1992), age is associated with shifting social motivations: Younger employees are more likely to pursue

broader, less intimate social networks, and are more susceptible to external social cues, such as gossip. In contrast, older employees tend to prioritize emotionally meaningful goals and regulate their emotional responses to preserve interpersonal harmony (Lang & Carstensen, 2002). Consequently, older workers may be less psychologically impacted by negative gossip, potentially weakening its effects on moral disengagement and counterproductive work behavior. However, the limited age variability in the present sample may have constrained the ability to detect such moderating effects. Future research should draw on more age-diverse samples to better assess whether and how age moderates the psychological and behavioral consequences of negative workplace gossip.

In addition, drawing on social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), employees rely on social cues from their environment to shape their behavioral responses. These cues and their effects may differ depending on job position and organizational context. For instance, as Mao (2006) noted, entry-level employees, who are more embedded in task-specific routines and peer-level interactions, may be more sensitive to workplace gossip, making them more prone to moral disengagement or counterproductive behavior when targeted. Likewise, the type of hospitality business may moderate the impact of gossip due to structural and operational differences. For example, cafés and restaurants often involve dense, team-based interactions during shifts, which may amplify gossip exposure and emotional impact. Future research should explore how job roles and business types interact with gossip dynamics to better understand their boundary conditions in hospitality settings.

In a real setting, both negative and positive gossip can co-exist in the workplace. This study, however, focused solely on the negative side. Future studies could expand on this limitation by exploring both types of gossip and their roles, along with their effects in the workplace. Furthermore, further study on how workplace gossip may impact on all three involved parties, the gossip, the gossip recipient, and the target, is encouraged (Wu et al., 2018). Such research will add greater knowledge to the literature on workplace gossip and provide practitioners with valuable insights relating to each party.

Future research could also extend the research framework proposed in the current research by incorporating other moderators in the relationship between perceived negative workplace gossip and CWB. For example, integrating the four dimensions of organizational justice into the model (i.e., distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational) would enhance both the theoretical framework and with the practical applications of the findings and shed more light on the boundary conditions in this relationship. High levels of organizational justice can foster trust in management and encourage employees to feel

more protected and valued (Chen et al., 2015), and, therefore, less likely to exhibit CWB in response to negative gossip. The researchers strongly recommend that future multilevel studies investigate the impact of management (i.e., supervisors and duty managers) on this relationship, as this would paint a complete picture of the workplace, rather than treating this phenomenon as solely relating to frontline employees.

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Appendix

The poster has a light beige background with faint, abstract orange and red lines. The title 'RESEARCH PARTICIPANT WANTED!' is in large, bold, black serif font. Below it are sections for 'An invitation', 'What will be involved?', 'How to join us?', 'Are you eligible?', and 'Contact details'. At the bottom, it states 'Participation is voluntary. You have the right to stop your participation in this study at any time.'

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT WANTED!

An invitation

I'm reaching out to invite you to participate in our research on workplace gossip within the hospitality and tourism industry. This study explores the effects of workplace gossip on its targets. Participation is entirely voluntary. As compensation, participants will receive a financial incentive via bank transfer (15,000 VND for completing the first survey and 30,000 VND for the second). If you choose not to participate, there is no need to provide a reason, and you have the right to withdraw at any time.

What will be involved?

You will be surveyed two times, at a 2-week interval. At each time point, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire, and each will take about 10 - 15 minutes to complete (approximately 30 minutes in total).

How to join us?

If you are interested, please feel free to contact me using the details below. You will be provided with a Participant Information Sheet, which outlines the details of the study, and a Consent Form to sign. Once we receive your signed Consent Form, the questionnaires will be sent to you via email or Facebook Messenger. Compensation will be provided after we confirm your completion of the survey.

Are you eligible?

- You are above 18 years old.
- You are currently employed by a hospitality organisation.
- You have hospitality work experience of one month or more.

Contact details

Please contact me if you are interested!

Email:

Phone number:

Facebook:

**Participation is voluntary.
You have the right to stop your participation in this study at any time.**

Figure A1.
English Version of the Participant Recruitment Poster.

THAM GIA KHẢO SÁT NHẬN NGAY TIỀN THƯỞNG!

Mục Đích của Nghiên Cứu Là Gì?

Tôi viết thư này để mời bạn tham gia vào một nghiên cứu trong ngành khách sạn và du lịch. Nghiên cứu này nhằm khám phá tác động của việc tám chuyện nơi công sở đối với những người là mục tiêu của chúng. Việc tham gia hoàn toàn là tự nguyện. Những người tham gia sẽ nhận được khoản hỗ trợ tài chính qua chuyển khoản ngân hàng (15.000 VND sau khảo sát đầu tiên và 30.000 VND sau khảo sát thứ hai). Nếu bạn quyết định không tham gia, bạn không cần đưa ra lý do và có quyền rút lui khỏi nghiên cứu bất kỳ lúc nào.

Sẽ có gì xảy ra trong nghiên cứu này?

Bạn sẽ được khảo sát hai lần, cách nhau hai tuần. Tại mỗi điểm thời gian, bạn sẽ được yêu cầu hoàn thành một bảng câu hỏi trực tuyến, và mỗi lần mất khoảng 10 - 15 phút để hoàn thành (tổng cộng khoảng 30 phút).

Bạn muốn tham gia?

Nếu bạn quan tâm, vui lòng liên hệ với tôi qua thông tin liên lạc bên dưới. Bạn sẽ được cung cấp Bản Thông Tin Người Tham Gia, trong đó trình bày chi tiết về nghiên cứu, cùng với Mẫu Đơn Đồng Ý để ký. Sau khi chúng tôi nhận được Mẫu Đơn Đồng Ý đã ký, bảng khảo sát sẽ được gửi đến bạn qua email hoặc Facebook Messenger. Khoản hỗ trợ tài chính sẽ được chuyển sau khi chúng tôi xác nhận bạn đã hoàn thành khảo sát.

Đối tượng tham gia?

- Bạn trên 18 tuổi.
- Bạn hiện đang làm việc cho một tổ chức ngành Du Lịch và Dịch Vụ.
- Bạn có kinh nghiệm làm việc trong ngành Du Lịch và Dịch Vụ ít nhất một tháng.

Thông tin liên hệ

Liên hệ người nghiên cứu qua các thông tin dưới đây:

Email:

Số điện thoại:

Facebook:

Bạn có quyền dừng tham gia vào nghiên cứu này bất cứ lúc nào.

Figure A2.

Vietnamese Version of the Participant Recruitment Poster.