

Attitudes and Perceptions of Dental Students Towards Social Curiosity and Gossip

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Abstract: This study examined two related attributes, social curiosity and gossip. This study was designed among 200 dental male and female students (first, second, third, fourth years, interns) from Mamata dental college in 2019. Analysis showed that both samples believed that they are less gossipy but more curious than their peers. Study revealed that social curiosity and gossip are related constructs with different patterns of social functions. Gossip appears to serve predominantly entertainment purposes whereas social curiosity appears to be more driven by a general interest in gathering information. The needs for gathering and sharing information represents two related attributes of cultural learning.

Keywords: social curiosity, gossip, attitude, perception

1. Introduction

We are all humans, and we are all curious by nature and have the tendency to gossip by default. Gossip and social curiosity are two substantially related concepts. Interest in social conversations is a strong interlink between both aspects of a social behavior. Humans are more used to live in a complex cultural society that leads the individuals to store and share knowledge collectively. The mere interest in things happening around us and the pleasure we derive from gossiping and sharing the information might ensure a continuous learning and adaptation process across the life span [1].

A. Conceptions of curiosity

Curiosity is the predisposition to recognize and search for new knowledge and experiences. People who are open and curious orient their lives around an appreciation of novelty and a strong urge to explore, discover and grow. Being open, curious is linked to a wide range of adaptive behaviors including tolerance of anxiety and uncertainty, positive emotional expressiveness, initiation of humor and playfulness, unconventional thinking, and a non-defensive, non-critical attitude. Curiosity is neither an interpersonal or interpersonal process by nature; it is relevant to any context where there is the potential for novelty, uncertainty, complexity, surprise, and conflict between the urges to approach or avoid stimuli [2]. Several studies have examined how interpersonal processes

such as gratitude and kindness influence well-being. These exploratory and novelty seeking tendencies focus attention and behavior toward activities that facilitate learning, competence and self-determination from which enduring meaning and well-being. These exploratory and novelty seeking tendencies focus attention and behavior toward activities that facilitate learning, competence and self-determination from which enduring meaning and well-being can be derived [3]. Curious people are proposed to engage in behaviors that are particularly relevant for increasing the livelihood of positive social outcomes and healthy social relationships.

B. Conceptions of Gossip

Gossip may be defined as informally exchanging evaluative information about absent third parties, is often perceived as despicable as well as untrustworthy behavior and is condemned as a norm violation in almost all cultures (Wilson et. al., 2000; Foster, 2004). Despite this largely negative perception, several scholars have argued that people are interested in sharing and receiving gossip, and spend a considerable amount of their conversation gossiping. Gossip seems to be a paradoxical phenomenon: it is condemned, but it is widespread [4]. Indeed, in organization sciences, Brady et. al. (2017) argued that gossip should no longer be regarded as “deviant behavior.” Furthermore, several cross sectional field studies suggest that gossip in real world organizational contexts may have detrimental consequences. Specifically, gossip in groups has been found to relate to decreased intra-team trust, psychological safety, and viability, to increased negative self-conscious emotional such as fear, to lower organizational citizenship behavior and proactive behavior as well as higher emotional exhaustion [4].

2. Methodology

A cross sectional study was designed among 200 students of Mamata dental college from 9-September-2019 to 12-September-2019, a structure self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was explained and informed consent is taken prior to study from study

subjects.

Total number of students present during the survey conducted were 200 students which includes 156 females and 44 males of ages 17 to 27.

The background questionnaire included questions on a range of demographic variables such as age, gender and course of study.

Permission was taken from head of the department of public health dentistry. All the students of Mamata dental college present during the study on the day of survey and not willing to participate were excluded.

A 15 item questionnaire measuring attitudes and perceptions of dental students towards social curiosity and gossip that includes questions on how they perceived these two terms gossip and social curiosity were asked to rate themselves for personality traits. A 3 -point rating scale was provided as answers.

Statistical analysis was done by using spss25. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics chi- square test was done to know the association among categorical variables.

3. Results

Table 1

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Male	44	22.0	22.0	22.0
Female	156	78.0	78.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows the number of male and female participants in the study. Total number of male participants are 44 and total number of female participants are 156.

The number of participants included in the study are 200. In this study most of them were females (78%). Majority were fourth year students (61 members) (30.5%).

Table 2

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
1 st year	4	2.0	2.0	2.0
2 nd year	43	21.5	21.5	23.5
3 rd year	57	28.5	28.5	52.0
4 th year	61	30.5	30.5	82.5
Interns	35	17.5	17.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows that total number of first year students included in the study are 4, total number of second year students included in the study are 43, total number of third year students included in the study are 57, total number of fourth year students included in the study are 61, 35 interns were included in the study.

Mean age group of study is 20.57 and standard deviation is 1.877.

Table 3

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	200	17	27	20.57	1.877
Valid N	200				

For the statement how people perceived gossip, majority of the students (79%) answered gossip is mere talking about other's private lives, just idle talk or rumor, Unconstrained conversation about others, which are not confirmed true, very few people (2.5%) answered that gossiping is mere talking about other's private lives, few people (4.5%) answered that gossiping is mere idle talk or rumor. 80.7% of females, 72% of males answered that gossiping is talking about other's private lives, just idle talk or rumor, Unconstrained conversation about others, which are not confirmed true. Statistically significant difference was observed to be p- 0.006.

Table 4

	Frequency	Percent	P- 0.006
Idle talk or rumor	9	4.5	
Unconstrained conversation that are not confirmed true	22	11.0	
All of the above	158	79.0	
Total	200	100.0	

For the statement, if participants considered gossiping to be healthy, most of the participants (48.5%) considered gossiping to be unhealthy and on the contrary very few participants (6%) considered gossiping to be healthy. Most of the males (52.27%) and 47% of females considered gossiping to be unhealthy and on contrast very few females (7.69%) considered gossiping to be unhealthy. Statistically significant difference was noticed to be p- 0.014.

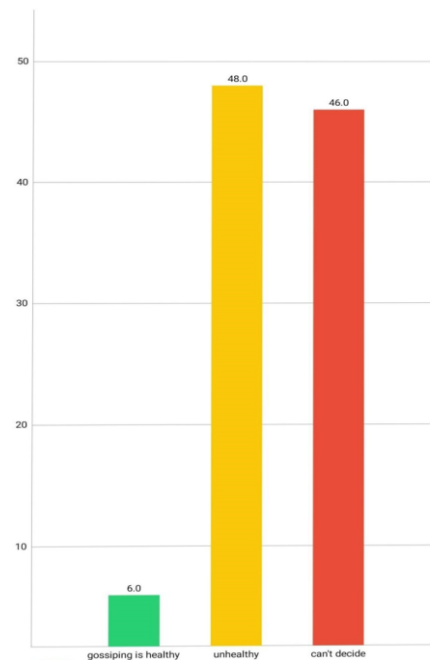


Fig. 1.

When asked, if the participants have ever been a victim of gossip, most of the participants (50.5%) answered that they have been a victim of gossip and the rest of them (48.5%) on contrast answered that they have never been a victim of gossip. Of the 156 females 46.5% answered that they have been a

victim of gossip and 53.2% answered that they have not been a victim of gossip. On the contrary 65.9% of males admitted that they have been a victim of gossip. Statistically significant difference was observed to be $p = 0.006$.

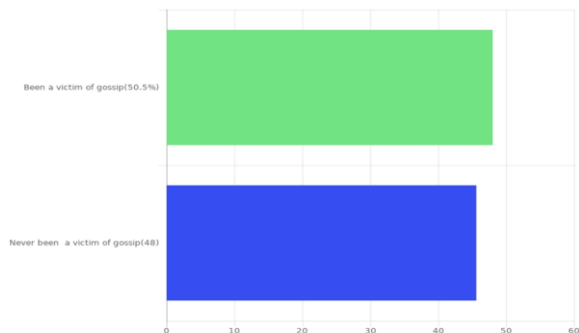


Fig. 2.

When the relation between lay conceptions of curiosity and gossip was examined, most of the participants (60%) perceived that both these terms are so related to each other that gossip is an after effect of curiosity and on the other hand rest of the participants (40%) viewed the two concepts as two distinct personality attributes which have a strong boundary between them. 75% of first year students answered that gossip is an after effect of curiosity. Similarly, most of the second year (53.48%), third year (71.9%), interns (74.28%) answered that gossip is an after effect of curiosity, whereas majority of fourth year students answered that they have a strong boundary between them. Statistically significant difference was noticed to be $p = 0.008$.

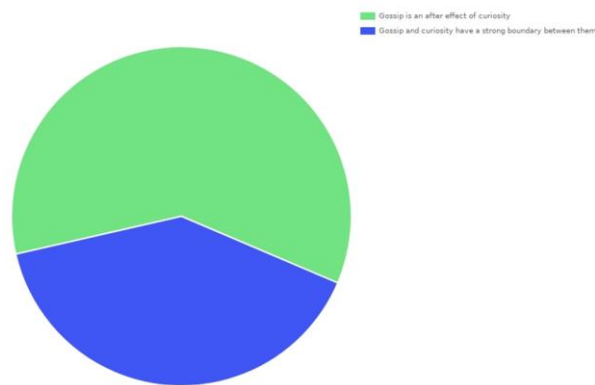


Fig. 3.

Majority of the participants (44.5%) rated their curiosity as being average when compared to their peers, few of them (25.5%) rated their curiosity being below average, very few participants (9%) rated their curiosity being above average. Majority of the participants from first year, second year, third year, fourth year, interns uniformly rated their curiosity average when compared to their friends in their circle. Statistically

significant difference was observed to be $p = 0.022$.

Table 5

	Frequency	Percent	P-0.022
Much below average	51	25.5	
Average	89	44.5	
Much above average	18	9.0	
Total	200	100	

4. Discussion

The present study was conducted to assess the attitudes and perceptions of dental students towards social curiosity and gossip.

The main goal of the study is to investigate lay conceptions and relationship between social curiosity and gossip.

Participants uniformly perceived themselves as being more curious but less gossipy. Most of the participants viewed social curiosity as exploration and absorption of new information about other people and social world; gossiping as an idle talk or rumor about other's private lives, unconstrained conversation about others, which are not confirmed true. However, the multidimensional model suggests that curiosity and gossip steer social conversation on the basis of different motive patterns. When asked to rate their curious nature in comparison with their peers most of them rated average which differed from previous studies where they rated above average.

Gossip behavior appears to be more strongly driven by the desire for entertainment, whereas social curiosity appears to be more strongly driven by a general interest in gathering information about how other people feel, think, and behave and the need to belong. Participants predominantly conceptualize conversations as gossip when they serve the purpose of pleasure and amusement. This pattern indicates that the everyday understanding of the term gossip is narrower than and different from the construct used by researchers.

Curiosity is a viable mechanism in the short-term sustainability of well-being. Study revealed that most people like to listen to some random conversations while on public transport or in any public place and most of the participants are curious to know about a new person they meet.

Analysis shows that participants gossip just to figure out what's going on around in the lives of people around them. However, majority of the people perceived gossiping to be unhealthy, as they considered gossiping may damage careers and life in long run if they spread malicious rumors. Majority of the males in the study admitted that they have been a victim of gossip, whereas majority of the females admitted that they have never been a victim of gossip.

Considering the present study one may further speculate that willingness to learn remains high across the lifespan. Similarly, high levels of curiosity is seen in adolescent individuals when compared to children and geriatric age groups. Social curiosity and gossip represent two different core drives of cultural learning. Information about other people and their behavior gives us possibility to learn where pitfalls and opportunities lie

without the need to learn from our own trials and errors (social learning theory).

5. Conclusion

The data revealed that social curiosity and gossip represent two different sides of cultural learning coin. Curiosity is an important, neglected process in the pursuit of the life well lived. Gossip remains a paradoxical behavior that has both positive and negative aspects. Integrative insights on gossip can aid in fully understanding the phenomenon of gossip, which is an essential and pervasive element of all human groups and can be key in solving challenges of cooperation such as working in teams in the workplace. Social participation and high social activity promotes better cognitive functioning in older age. Hence, people may be designed as cultural animals as suggested by Baumeister with social curiosity and gossiping representing innate drives facilitating socialization and cultural fitness.

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