

A Comparison Study of Organizational Rumors and Gossip, Engagement, and Generations in the Working Sector of Puerto Rico

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Abstract

This research aimed to study the correlation and differences of organizational rumors and gossip on engagement, generations, and the sociodemographic variables sector and sex in Puerto Rico. This study is based on the Rumor Transmission Theory of Buckner (1965), following a quantitative-descriptive correlation transversal design as well as various statistical methods, used to test the hypotheses such as MANOVA, ANOVA, t-tests, Pearson, and a multiple regression. A non-probabilistic snowball sampling method was used to reach the participants. The sample consisted of 150 participants which 65% were females, and 59% were from the private sector. The results showed a significant difference in rumors between Baby Boomers and Millennials, and a significant relationship in rumors and engagement and no significant difference in rumors by sex and sector.

Keywords: engagement, rumors, generations, gossip.

Un estudio comparativo de los rumores y chismes organizacionales, el engagement y las generaciones en el sector laboral en Puerto Rico

Resumen

Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo evaluar la relación y diferencias de los rumores y chismes en el engagement, la brecha generacional y las variables sociodemográficas sector de trabajo y género en Puerto Rico. El estudio fue transversal de diseño descriptivo correlacional basado en la teoría de transmisión de rumores de Buckner (1965). Para la comprobación de las hipótesis se aplicaron diversos métodos estadísticos tales como MANOVA, ANOVA, prueba t, Pearson y regresión múltiple. La muestra consistió en un total de 150 participantes escogidos por la técnica de muestreo no probabilística bola de nieve, de los cuales el 65% fueron del sexo femenino y el 59% pertenecían al sector privado. Los resultados mostraron diferencia significativa entre los Baby Boomers y la generación de Millennials en los rumores en la organización. Al mismo tiempo, reveló relación entre los rumores y el engagement, sin embargo, no se registró diferencia significativa entre los rumores en la organización por sexo y sector.

Palabras claves: engagement, rumores, generaciones, chisme.

Rumors have been a controversial and vague subject in the workplace, and it is limited to employee's quotidian social conversations. In modern industrial societies, rumors have proliferated, and the social media communications and the Internet have played an enticing role in increased rumor transmission which produced a negative impression in the organizations.

In the business world, rumors can have an adverse impact on employees, in the work productivity, and the products and services provided to consumers in the public and private sectors. Furthermore, workplace gossip or office gossip may also have counterproductive outcomes in the organizations, especially on employees work

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Furthermore, workplace gossip or office gossip may also have counterproductive outcomes in the organizations, especially on employees work relationships and men and women alike (Kimmel, 2008, 2012).

Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter and Taris (2008), stated that engagement is positively related how employees work, feel motivated and committed to work. Based on the literature review, organizational rumors may tend to affect employee's commitment, job performance, and their trust towards the organization, as well as some workers may renounce their jobs due to unconstructive rumors in the workplace. However, there are no studies about how rumors may impact on engagement. On the other hand, Lancaster and Stillman (2002), pointed out that each generation possesses distinct work values, customs, and attitudes about work and on their careers. Even more, each generation may express their political views, family values, and their behavior in the workplace and to other co-workers. The generation shapes the workplace environment, the daily work routines, and the workplace relationships. Nonetheless, very few studies exist about organizational rumors and office gossip on engagement and the different generations at work. Based on these assumptions, this study seeks to explore some of these questions. Do the different generations perceive rumor and gossip differently? Does rumors and gossip influence work engagement? Do rumors and gossip impact the public and private sector and men and women differently?

Rumors

Allport and Postman (1947), defined rumors as a specific or topical proposition or a belief that is passed along from person to person by word of mouth without having standards shred of evidence. From a sociological point of view, Shibunati (1966), said rumors are regarded as a recurrent form of communication in which individuals are caught together in an ambiguous situation. People will attempt to construct an understanding-logical interpretation by drawing on their intellectual resources and use it as a form of group collective problem-solving.

Rosnow (1980, 1988, 1991), stated that rumors are technically a proposition belief of topical reference disseminated without official verification. Rosnow and Fine (1976) and Rosnow (1980), asserted a rumor is a process of explaining occurrences and events of the human affairs, and it integrates with a range of findings based on four conditions: personal

anxiety, general anxiety, credulity, and topical importance, which may predict rumor transmission. Since rumors are public communications that reflect private hypotheses about how the world works, as well as of exaggerated allegations and circumstantial evidence. DiFonzo and Bordia (2013), defined rumor as false information and intended use for a belief in people and rumors are usually unconfirmed.

Gossip

Rosnow and Fine (1976) and Rosnow and Foster (2005), stated that gossip has a derogatory connotation. They defined gossip as news about the affairs of another, to one's memoirs or confessions, or to any hearsay of a personal nature, it can be spoken or in print. Noon and Delbridge (1993), argued gossip is a process of informal communications in value-laden information about members in a social network setting. They believed that gossip is a complex activity that involves individual and groups dynamic relationships and conversations that take place in a group social setting, thus regulated by both formal and informal rules. The individual may intentionally or in unintentionally distort the information and may influence the cohesion of a group. Grosser, Lopez-Kidwell, and LaBianca (2010), stated gossip is merely an exchange of information between two people about a third, absent person. DiFonzo and Bordia (2013), defined gossip as an evaluative social talk about individuals, usually not present, that arises in the context of social network formation, and the maintenance of building group solidarity. Bergmann (1993), said that gossip draws a line between what a person does in public and what keeps in secret about a person's private affair. Waddington (2014), reported that gossip in the organizations or organizational gossip is relational, reflexive, and it is a communicative process that makes people engage in sense-making and interchange information. Organizational gossip is volatile, uncertain, complex, and still an ambiguous phenomenon.

Engagement

Torrente, Salanova, and Llorens (2013), defined work engagement as a work-related psychological state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Bakker et al. (2008) and Torrente et al. (2013) considered that vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working as well the willingness to invest effort in one's work,

having persistence even facing with difficulties. Dedication is when an employee is actively involved in one's work and experienced a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. As for absorption, is when an employee is sufficiently concentrated and happy to engross in one's work. Therefore, time passes by quickly; the employee may have trouble from detaching oneself from work.

Generations

Lancaster and Stillman (2002), mentioned that the generation Millennials also called as the Generation Y have different work values and the Millennials value work and the institutions where they work for having a significant value and a purpose in life as well they tend to judge the institutions based on merit. In addition, they have a concern for the world, are realistic, value diversity, are environmentally conscious, they have practical technological understanding, they like to try new things, and are cyber-literate. Their values are diverse in the workforce and education, they prefer a balance between their lifestyle and work, and they see that work is not the only important thing, but a way to start on opportunities, and they like innovation. Howe and Strauss (2007), believed that the Millennials are more upbeat, team-oriented, and they tend to plan things on time. Many of them live nearby from their parent's home and are more confident about the future compared to the Baby Boomers, and the Generation Xers.

Lancaster and Stillman (2002), mentioned that the Baby Boomers are individuals who were born in the years 1946 to 1964. Baby Boomers view work and want to make a difference in the world and leave behind their legacy. This generation is believed to have traits such as being idealistic, optimistic, competitive, and have the urge to succeed. They tend to question authority, sometimes have a hard time admitting mistakes, are team-workers, and they do not have the habit of asking for help. They value organizations that have integrity, a well-paid salary, and like to get involved in the workplace.

The Generation Xers are individuals who were born during the years 1965 to 1981. This generation view work as an opportunity to develop their career, and sometimes they may perceive their workplace as skeptical. They possess traits such as being resourceful, like new changes, are self-reliant, eclectic, and adaptable; sometimes they can be skeptical of work and personal relationships, but are entrepreneurial, independent, like to innovate,

and are full of energy. They want to be in charge and be the boss; are team-oriented and want to seek new opportunities (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

Kowske, Rasch, and Wiley (2010), said that a group of individuals who have experienced the same historical events are similar in age is called generational cohort. A cohort generation comes of age almost at the same time and life experiences such as similar historical events, cultural expectations, social peer pressures. Each generation shares mutual membership based on the same age group and a historical period. Also, the different generations share experiences and have unique traits and characteristics such as different attitudes, trends, personalities, values, which differentiate one generation to another. Moreover, each generation has different personalities and may have different work attitudes and other work-related outcomes in the workforce.

Buckner's Rumor Transmission Theory

Buckner (1965), argued that there are two patterns of rumors; the first type of rumor is when a rumor moves from person to person in a serial sequence and a series of single interactions. The second type of rumor is called the network in which a broader audience of people hears the rumor from more than one source. The two-group level variables operate to encourage or to slow down the spreading or replication rumors. Also, individuals will form a group of people, which becomes a public audience. As a result, the general audience continues to spread the rumor, and there is active participation from the audience in spreading the rumor. Meanwhile, a rumor holds a keen interest in a group. In the end, the individual can interact with more than one person. Thus, the rumor will be more accurate at each stage of transmission due to cross-checking with the available references to test the truth.

In other words, according to Buckner's theory, there is a close group of individuals who have high involvement participation in a rumor. Consequently, the individuals participating in rumor activity would generate a good deal of interaction and recirculation, and rumors will recirculate, thus creating a higher level of multiple interactions, rather than a single chain reaction of rumor transmission. A dispersed group of individuals having a higher rumor involvement ought to generate serial chains of communications and a few bits of information recirculation; subsequently, moderate levels of multiple interactions. Next,

the close group of individuals having a low rumor involvement will result in a few smaller serial chains and bits of information and recirculation, once again generating only multiple moderate interactions. Lastly, the dispersed group of individuals having a low rumor involvement would generate shorter serial chains and low multiple interactions (Buckner, 1965; Bordia, 1996; Bordia & Rosnow, 1998; DiFonzo & Bordia, 2013).

Rumors and Gossip-based on Sex and Sector

Aertsen and Gelders (2011) conducted a study in Belgium in the public and private sector and examined corporate communication on rumors from internal and external stakeholders. The authors discovered that the government communicators frequently confronted with malicious rumors compared to the private sector business communicators. The public sector frequently confronts malicious rumors and experiences the same amount of the adverse effects, however, does not design strategies to combat the rumors. On the other hand, the private sector faced less malicious rumors and quickly initiate strategies to undertake negative rumors. Each sector indicated that they view rumors to be very detrimental to their organization.

A study by Farley, Timme, and Hart (2010) in the United States examined the perception of female gossipers in the workplace. The study was to identify female workers as either high or low-gossipers. The participants were asked to think about a woman who either frequently or rarely spread negative gossip about other people in their conversations. The results showed that high-gossipers females were rated higher and had the tendency to control and have power compared to low-gossipers women. Another finding in their study that the high-gossipers women do not want others to have power or be controlled by others compared to low-gossipers women.

Watson (2012) examined the gender differences in the relationship between friendship and friendship quality with the tendency to gossip. That the gender differences in friendship, males are agentic and females more communal, the relationship between gossip and friendship was predicted to be stronger in the males compared to the females. Friendship quality was positively correlated with gossip tendency in the males, but this effect was not present in the females. Another finding in Watson's study that males may emphasize friendship, information, and control of information as a method of attaining status. Physical appearance and gossip was found to be more prevalent

in females, but not related to friendship quality. This type of gossip may be a more of a competitive threat to the relationship in females.

Abdul Manaf, Ghani, and Mohamed Jais (2013) conducted a study on workplace gossip in the private and public sector in Malaysia. The authors concluded that gossip continues to be a definite element and part of the social and organizational landscapes, and without the social activities among employees that take place in the workplace, the interpersonal communication, and the organizational communication would not exist. Even though the employees participated in gossip activities, gossip activities were part of the employees' daily work routine.

Gossip with Engagement

Schmidt (2010) conducted a study in the United States and examined the effects of office gossip on cognition-affective, organizational commitment, engagement, and organizational citizenship behaviors. That office gossip had a positive correlation with employee engagement; however, that office gossip had no significant relationship with employee engagement on Absorption and Dedication. Also, there is a relationship between affective organizational commitment and engagement in which office gossip has a positive impact maintaining group cohesion and in the individual's cognition. Lastly, that office gossip might strengthen work relationships among employees; thus, employees may have a strong tie with the organization.

Statement of the Problem

Schmidt (2010, 2011), argued employees engage in gossip behavior when there is an ambiguous workplace environment filled with uncertainty and when there are no reliable open communication channels from the management department or from their supervisors. Also, interchanging gossip is considered a valuable source of information and it can facilitate in-group cohesion and work relationships, and engaging gossip can be beneficial for both parties.

Grosser et al. (2010), considered that gossip is not seriously studied in the academia, and even today it is an omnipresent phenomenon that exists in many organizations. DiFonzo and Bordia (2013) concluded when employees hear a considerable amount of negative rumors it will have an impact on their

attitudes, on their ratings of formal communication, their trust in the company, job satisfaction, engagement, and organizational commitment. The number of malicious rumors in circulation showed a relationship between the intentions of employees to leave the company, consequently, affecting work productivity and employees' work behaviors.

Schullery (2013), stated that the different four generations in the workforce about workplace engagement show that Millennials possess unique values, personality, and attitudes compared to the Generation X and the Baby Boomers. The author claimed that there was no significant difference between the altruistic value of work in each generation and inferred that the Millennials' values might help to understand their concept of work engagement.

Toomey and Maselli (2013), argued when employees are engaged, they see themselves empowered. Consequently, they will work on the most productive work behavior. However, moderately engaged employees tend to fluctuate between passive involvement behaviors or become a passive-aggressive employee versus employees not engaged have a habit of carrying out counterproductive work behaviors.

Nevertheless, Waddington (2014) believed that gossip in the organizations is a sign of a deeper problem and that there is a serious organizational issue, and it can serve as a warning system for the management to perceive future disasters and failures within the organization. Brown and Napier (2004), stated that the business management does not seriously study rumor and gossip, and it is still a ubiquitous social phenomenon in the organizations. Likewise, Pezzo and Beckstead (2006) pointed out there are few substantial academic studies published in social psychology journals, and yet there is a belief in the academia and the organizations, that studying rumors and gossip are irrelevant studies. Noon and Delbridge (1993), mentioned that gossip has been under-researched in the academia, and that gossip reveals an essential role in the social organization of work and forms part of the social relationships in the organizations, it includes in the context of the intrinsic organizational life. Lastly, Waddington (2014), said that gossip is neglected and seen as a taboo in many organizations, and even in research and practice.

The Aim of this Study

This study aimed to explore if there is a correlation between organizational rumors and gossip

in the workplace with employee engagement. In addition, to examine if there are any differences in organizational rumors and gossip in the workplace by the sociodemographic variables sex, generations (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y) and sector (private and public). Next, to determine which are the predictors of the sociodemographic variables on gossip.

Hypothesis

The researcher pretended to answer the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: Is there is a significant relationship between gossip in the workplace, organizational rumors, employee engagement, vigor, dedication, and absorption.

Hypothesis 2: Is there is a significant difference in organizational rumors by sex.

Hypothesis 3: Is there is a significant difference in gossip in the workplace by sex.

Hypothesis 4: Is there is a significant difference in organizational rumors by generations (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y).

Hypothesis 5: Is there is a significant difference in gossip in the workplace by generations (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y).

Hypothesis 6: Is there is a significant difference in organizational rumors of rumors by sector (public and private).

Hypothesis 7: Is there is a significant difference in gossip in the workplace by sector (public and private).

Hypothesis 8:

H0: The sociodemographic independent variables sex, sector, or generations do not predict workplace gossip.

H1: At least one β_i is $\neq 0$. of the independent variables predict workplace gossip.

Methodology

This study followed a quantitative and descriptive-correlational and transversal design. The sample was nonprobabilistic and upon availability. The researcher applied the snowball method or sometimes called

snowball sampling to search for the participants. The purpose of this approach was due to the nature of the topic, and the researcher encountered some difficulties obtaining permissions from many organizations to participate in this study.

Sample

The requirements of the participants in this study that they must be currently working at least part-time either in the public or private sector in Puerto Rico and must be 21 years old and older and belong to the generation Baby Boomers, X, or Millennials. The sample of this study consisted of 150 and 65% (n = 97) were females, and 35% were males. The mean age of the participants was 36.55, and the age range was from 21 to 65 years old. Most the participants belonged to the Generation Y (1981-1999) 49% (n=73), the Generation X (1965-1980) was 32%, and the Baby Boomers (1946-1964) was 19%.

A 48% (n=72) of the participants were single and a 29% (n=44) had a Bachelor's degree. A 71% (n=107) lived in the Southern region, a 59% (n=88) worked in the private and 41% in the public sector. In tenure, the majority 45% (n=67) worked 1 to 5 years in the organization. A 79% (n=119) held a non-management position and a 22% a management position.

Instruments

Four instruments were distributed to the participants. The first instrument was the 9-item Sociodemographic Questionnaire created by the researcher. It collected the following datum: sex, age, generations, sector, civil status, education, geographic location, job position, and tenure. The second was the Spanish version of the 9-item Office Gossip Scale of Schmidt (2010), which went through a back-translation process from English to Spanish and had a Cronbach's alpha of .92. The scale is a 7-point Likert Scale ranging from 1= "*hardly ever*" to 7 = "*almost always*."

The third was the 8-item Perception of Organizational Rumor Scale designed by the researcher. The scale was constructed on a 7-point Likert Scale ranging from 1= "*hardly ever*" to 7 = "*almost always*." The scale contains two subscales. The first subscale is the Existence of Rumors, that is the fact of the existence or a present of rumors and have four items and the second is Veracity of

Rumors that is the conformity to the facts, accuracy, and verification of rumors and have four items. The scale had a Cronbach's alpha of (.87). The fourth was the 9-item, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale short version by Schaufeli et al. (2006), a 7-point Likert Scale ranging from 1= "*never*" to 7 = "*always*." It consists of three-subscale which are Absorption, Dedication, and Vigor and the scale had a Cronbach's alpha of (.93).

Procedure and Permissions

First, to comply with the objective of this study and accordingly to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), permission was granted by the university's IRB committee. Second, the researcher contacted and requested the author's permission of the Work Engagement Scale and the Office Gossip Scale. Third, a consent form was handed out to the participants, which they were informed about the purpose of the research, the confidentiality, and when the results are available.

Administration of the Instruments

The researcher visited various private and public organizations located in Puerto Rico, and the workplace public spaces such as an office lobby, cafeteria, and other office space where workers are during on their break and distributed the instruments and were available to participate. Also, the researcher conducted a field study and visiting public areas and used word of mouth. The participants were asked if they could recommend other persons whom they may know to participate in the study using word of mouth.

Statistical Analysis

The results were tabulated using the computer IBM software, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 for Microsoft Windows to quantify the data into statistical analysis. After the data had been collected, statistics were applied to test the hypothesis. A Pearson was used to explore a statistical relationship between the variables rumors, gossip, and engagement. MANOVA and ANOVA were used to measure the differences between two or more than two independent variables and two or more dependent variables. Also, a *t*-test was used to compare groups such as sector and sex. Lastly, a standard multiple regression used on the sociodemographic variables to predict workplace gossip.

Results

First, a Pearson was performed to explore the correlation between gossip, the existence of rumors, the veracity of rumors, organizational rumors, engagement, vigor, dedication, and absorption. There was a statistically significant relationship between existence of rumors and engagement.

However, there was an inverse correlation in engagement, a negative $r(148)=-.22$, $p=.00$, but also there is a correlation with rumors $r(148)=.49$, $p=.00$ with gossip. The following table 1 presents the results.

Table 1

Correlation Matrix between Rumors, Existence, Veracity, Gossip, and Engagement

Scales	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Rumors	24.80	11.56	1							
2 Existence	12.83	6.79	.85**	1						
3 Veracity	11.97	6.81	.85	.44	1					
4 Gossip	21.94	10.70	.49**	.45**	.39**	1				
5 Engagement	41.00	9.77	-.13**	-.22**	-.01	-.07	1			
6 Vigor	13.67	3.08	-.01	-.01	.08	.03	.84**	1		
7 Dedication	13.03	4.30	-.19*	-.28**	-.04**	-.14	.94**	.69**	1	
8 Absorption	14.31	3.52	-.13**	-.19**	-.04**	-.04	.90**	.62**	.78**	1

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed); *Correlation is significant at the level 0.05 (two-tailed).

Second, a one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to investigate sex differences in rumors. The three dependent variables were used: organizational rumors, the existence of rumors, and the veracity of rumors. The independent variable was sex.

There is no statistically significant difference between males and females on the combined dependent variables, $F(2, 147)=6.33$, $p=.532$; Wilks' Lambda=.99 and partial eta squared=(.00). The following table 2 presents the results.

Table 2

Comparison analysis of Sex with the dimensions of the Perception of Organizational Rumor Scale with a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

Scale	Sex	N	M	SD	MANOVA F(1, 148)	Sig.	Effect Size (η^2)
Organizational Rumor Scale	Masculine	53	25.57	12.49	0.36	.55	0.00
	Feminine	97	24.38	11.06			
Existence	Masculine	53	12.83	7.00	0.00	.97	0.00
	Feminine	97	12.82	6.71			
Veracity	Masculine	53	12.74	7.02	1.00	.31	0.01
	Feminine	97	11.56	6.70			

Third, an independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the Office Gossip Scale Spanish version scores for males and females. There is a significant difference in scores for males ($M=24.69$, $SD=11.84$) and females ($M=20.44$, $SD=9.76$; $t(148)=2.36$, $p=.02$ two-tailed). The magnitude of the difference in the means (mean difference=4.24, 95% CI: - 8.03 to 7.80) was a small effect ($\eta^2=0.04$).

Fourth, a one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to investigate generations differences in

rumors. The three dependent variables were used: organizational rumors, the existence of rumors, and the veracity of rumors. The independent variable was generations. There was a statistically significant difference between generation on the combined dependent variables, $F(4, 292)=3.69$, $p=.006$; Wilks' Lambda=.91; partial eta squared=.05. The results for the dependent variables were considered separately, the only difference to reach statistical significance was the existence of rumors, $F(2, 147)=4.80$, $p=.010$, partial eta squared=(.06). A post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD and an inspection of the mean

scores indicated that the Generation Y reported slightly higher on the existence of rumors ($M=14.38$, $SD=7.08$) than Baby Boomers ($M=10.07$, $SD=5.40$).

The Generation X ($M=12.13$, $SD=6.56$) did not differ significantly from either the Baby Boomers and the Generation Y. The following table 3 presents the results.

Table 3

Comparison analysis of Generations with the Dimensions of the Perception of Organizational Rumor Scale with a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).

Scale Subscale	Generations	N	M	SD	MANOVA F(2,147)	Sig.	Effect Size (η^2)
Organizational Rumor Scale	Baby Boomers	29	22.86	10.73	1.05	.35	0.01
	Generation X	48	23.92	11.53			
	Generation Y	73	26.15	11.87			
Existence	Baby Boomers	29	10.07	5.40	4.80	.01*	0.06
	Generation X	48	12.13	6.56			
	Generation Y	73	14.38	7.08			
Veracity	Baby Boomers	29	12.79	7.04	0.26	.77	0.00
	Generation X	48	11.79	6.69			
	Generation Y	73	11.77	6.87			

Note: *statistically significant

Fifth, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the impact of generations on workplace gossip, as measured by the Office Gossip Spanish version scale. The participants were divided into three groups (Group 1: Baby Boomers; Group 2: Generation X, and Group 3: Generation Y. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p<.05$ level in Office Gossip Spanish version scale for the three generations: $F(2, 147)=4.35$ $p=.01$. Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between groups was quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared was (.05). The post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated

that the mean score for Group 1 ($M=17.48$, $SD=6.73$) was significantly different from Group 3 ($M=24.15$, $SD=11.88$). However, Group 2 ($M=21.28$, $SD=9.96$) did not differ significantly from either Group 1 or 2.

Sixth, a one-way MANOVA was conducted to study sector differences in rumors. The three dependent variables were used: organizational rumors, the existence of rumors, and the veracity of rumors. The independent variable was sector (public and private). There is no statistically significant difference between sector on the combined dependent variables, $F(2,147)=647$, $p=.525$; eta squared .01. The following table 4 presents the results.

Table 4

Comparison analysis by sector with the dimensions of the Perception of Organizational Rumor Scale with a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

Scale Subscale	Sector	N	M	SD	MANOVA F(1,148)	Sig.	Effect Size (η^2)
Organizational Rumor Scale	Private	62	25.37	11.71	0.26	.61	0.00
	Public	88	24.40	11.50			
Existence	Private	62	13.47	6.60	0.94	.33	0.01
	Public	88	12.38	6.92			
Veracity	Private	62	11.90	6.96	0.01	.92	0.00
	Public	88	12.02	6.75			

Seventh, an independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the Office Gossip Spanish version scores for the sector (public and private). There is no significant difference in scores for public (M=22.02, SD=11.12) and private (M=21.83, SD=10.45; $t(148)=-.108$, $p=.91$, two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference=-.193, 95% CI: -3.30 to 3.32) was very small ($\eta^2=.00$).

Last, a preliminary analysis was performed to analyze if there were no violation of the assumptions of normality; linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity occurred, using the criterion of $p<0.001$ for Mahalanobis distance. There were no outliers found in all these cases. A standard multiple regression was calculated to predict gossip based on the sociodemographic variables sex, sector, and generations. A significant regression was found $F(3, 146)=4.38$, $p<.001$) with an $R^2=.083$, which indicates the regression is a good fit for the data and model, and the R square explains an 8.3 of the variance. Participant's predicted gossip is equal to $17.94 + -3.770$ (Sex) + $.309$ (Sector) + 2.952 (Generations). Only two predictors were statistically significant on gossip by Sex ($\beta = -.17$, $p<.001$) and Generations ($\beta = .21$, $p<.001$). The following table presents the results.

Table 5
Standard Multiple Regression on Gossip with the Sociodemographic variables

	R ²	β	B	SE	CI 95%(B)
Model	.83***				
Sex		-.17*	-3.77	1.86	-7.44 / -.10
Sector		.01	.31	1.82	-3.29 / 3.90
Generations		.21*	2.95	1.13	.72 / 5.19

Note: Statistical significance * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$; SE = Standard Error; CI = Confidence Interval with lower and upper bound.

Discussion

In the first hypothesis, there was a statistically significant relationship in the existence of rumors on engagement. According to DiFonzo and Bordia's study (2013) on corporate rumors, when there are high levels of harmful rumors it tends to affect employee's commitment, job satisfaction, engagement, and workers may have the intention to leave the company. Also, based on the literature review, the authors agreed that workplace rumors and gossip sometimes are associated with each other as well as has an impact in the organizational's communications channel and on

the co-worker's work relationships with their peers, supervisors and their work production.

However, in Schmidt's study (2010), the author concluded that office gossip had a positive correlation with employee engagement and that Vigor may have a relationship to office gossip. The office gossip had no significant relationship with employee engagement on Absorption and Dedication.

Based on the literature review which DiFonzo and Bordia (2013), argued that gossip only occurs in a private space among trusted friends, it is a form of social entertainment. The researchers inferred it might be that gossip does not have a significant impact on engagement; since it is not as threatening compared to rumors. Rumors tend to produce anxiety, uncertainty, and chaos in people and to the general public versus gossip, it does the contrary. Gossip may be a mood enhancer for employees and a source of information and entertainment inside the workplace. Schmidt's (2010) study and the current study may provide new insights about gossip on engagement. There are very few studies conducted on organizational rumors, especially office gossip with engagement.

The researcher also inferred that it could be that participants may not perceive gossip part of their work engagement or it has to do with their work productivity. However, instead see gossip that occurs only in a private space and in social relationships, a social gathering of trusted friends, it is a form of entertainment as DiFonzo (2008), stated before about gossip. It may be that gossip in a way may not have an impact on engagement; since it is not as threatening compared to rumors. In this study, there was not enough evidence to support the first hypothesis.

In the second hypothesis, there was no significant findings, however, based on the literature review, Buckner (1965) and DiFonzo and Bordia (2013), argued that rumors affect people in general, as well as that there is no distinction between sexes. There is very few research on how rumors affect males and females or the difference between sexes in the workplace.

In the third hypothesis, there was a significant difference of workplace gossip by sex. Based on the literature review, Watson (2012), argues that males had lower friendship quality scores and females showed higher gossip scores. Also, that the gender differences in friendship, males are more agentic than females, and the relationship between gossip and friendship was predicted to be stronger in males compared to

females. Friendship quality was positively correlated with gossip tendency in males, but the effect was not present in females. However, Waddington (2014) argued that males gossip more than females, but Kimmel (2012) said that males chat the same way as females.

Further, in Farley et al.'s study (2010) on females in the workplace, they concluded that females who were rated as high gossipers have the habit of controlling over other females and have social status of power. The researcher concluded that Watson's (2012) study and Farley et al.'s (2010) study might provide some insight into gossip between males and females in the workplace. However, in the current study, the researcher concluded that there was a significant difference between males and female workers gossiping in the workplace of Puerto Rico. Still, it is a current debate which sex gossip frequently based on the literature review. Also, the researcher questioned if it is because Puerto Rico has a different culture, that gossip has a distinct role in the workplace.

In the fourth hypothesis, there was a significant difference in Existence of Rumors, where the Baby Boomers differed from the Generation Y. However, it is important to indicate the sample size, the Baby Boomers (n=29) and the Generation Y (n=73), it may be a limitation of the overall results. Lancaster and Stillman (2002), mentioned that the Millennials or Generation Y have different work values and their values are diverse in the workforce. Howe and Strauss (2007) believe that the Millennials are more confident about the future compared to the Baby Boomers.

In the current study, the researcher questioned if each generation possesses different values and those values it is how they will perceive workplace rumors. Also, there are non-existing studies available for generations on workplace rumors, and the results may provide new insights about the different generations perceive workplace rumors. The researcher pondered if the Baby Boomers consider rumors a serious matter compared to the Generation Y. Based on the literature review, some authors argue that with specific topics and trends, Baby Boomers are more conservative compared to the Generation Y. The researcher also questioned the Generation Y do not consider rumors a taboo in the workplace.

In the fifth hypothesis, there was a significant difference and had similar results with the fourth hypothesis due to the sample size which the Baby Boomers and the Generation Y. Also, in the current study, the researcher questioned if the Baby Boomers

regard gossip political incorrect, and that gossip does not possess any integrity, and gossiping is a disloyal activity in the organization and taboo. Addition, if the Generation Y may not perceive gossip as taboo, are more open-minded about gossiping, and less conservative. DiFonzo (2008) points out that gossip serves as a mood enhancer and a form of social entertainment. However, the researcher also questioned if the Generation Y perceives workplace gossip as a mode of releasing stress at work, while Baby Boomers may view it as a waste of time and counterproductive.

In the sixth hypothesis, there was no significant difference. In Aertsen and Gelders' (2011) study the authors concluded that the government communicators frequently confronts with malicious rumors compared to the private sector business communicators. Historically, the public sector in Puerto Rico confronts negative rumors, and it is very susceptible to the sociopolitical changes due to the different socioeconomic, cultural, political system compared to Belgium and other countries. The government of Puerto Rico is very highly political, and the changes occur in every election year; the public sector may not have established or even developed effective strategies and logistics to combat counterproductive rumors. On the other hand, the private sector, many private entities are frequently trained and well organized and have their strategies and logistics planned out when the moment occurs. It may be that the private sector in Puerto Rico may share its similarities in Aertsen and Gelders' study (2011) where the private industries combat with less harmful rumors and initiate a campaign against rumors.

The seventh hypothesis, there was no significant difference in gossip in the workplace by sector. Based on a study by Abdul Manaf et al. (2013) concluded that gossip is part of the employees' daily work routine and interpersonal communication in the organization and that gossip is a private affair among employees, as well as there is a strong presence of gossip activity in both sectors. Noon and Delbridge (1993) stated that gossip is constantly an omnipresent phenomenon present in the organizations. The results from this current study confirm along with Abdul Manaf et al.'s (2013) study that gossip exists in both sectors, and it may be similar in Puerto Rico.

In the eighth hypothesis, the predictor sociodemographic variables sex and generations showed an effect on workplace gossip but not in the sector. As mentioned earlier, there are any

available studies of generations on gossip; therefore, the researcher is limited to generalize the results. However, in the sector, there is no statistical significance, and it may seem to have similar results as in Abdul Manaf et al.'s (2013) research that there is no difference in the working sector on gossip as well as the sector will not have an impact on gossip. Based on the literature review, Waddington (2014) and Kimmel (2012) mentioned the women and men do gossip in the workplace, but there is still a difference of opinions among the two authors which sex gossip frequently. Also, many studies show that women and men participate in gossip activity in the workplace; however, depending on the context how men and women define gossip due to cultural differences. In sum, gossip will always be an omnipresent phenomenon in the organizations.

Limitations of this Study

One of the limitations of this study that there were no available studies conducted in Puerto Rico on organizational rumors, workplace gossip, generations and engagement by sector and sex differences to support the hypothesis. Therefore, this research is limited to generalize the results. This research was based on the literature review on rumors, gossip, and generations extracted from international academic-scientific articles outside of Puerto Rico. Also, the small sample size was not an adequate proportion, especially in the sociodemographic variables such as sex, sector, and generations and may have caused a sampling error, and the participants were upon availability using the snowball sampling in which might affect the results significantly. Another limitation was the administration of the instruments since employees had a limited time on their lunch break and may have experienced other external factors such as noise, a sudden change in room temperature, lack of privacy and poor concentration, and other distractions from co-workers that influenced the results in this study.

Recommendations

First, for future research on this topic, it is necessary to apply a larger sample size to reduce the sampling error and use a probabilistic sampling with another type of statistic methods to test the new hypothesis on organizational rumors and gossip. Using the probabilistic sampling with a much large sample size with robust statistics methods may

provide stronger empirical studies on organizational rumors and gossip in the workplace with the different generations, and the sociodemographic variables in the Puerto Rican workforce. Lastly, conduct cross-cultural studies and compare how organizational rumors and gossip in Puerto Rico may be different in other Latin countries to determine cultural differences.

Conclusion

This study may be a contribution to the literature review in the Industrial-Organizational Psychology, in the Business Management and Human Resources disciplines in Puerto Rico. Also, it may provide new insights of the different generation's work values and engagement on rumors and gossip, as well as how males and females differ on rumors and gossip, and how the sector perceives the phenomenon in their workplace in Puerto Rico. This study can serve as a cornerstone for industrial-organizational psychology students if they wish to research on organizational rumors and gossip in the workplace which there is at least one available study in Puerto Rico. Like all studies has its limitations, especially this study used a small sample size and non-probability snowball technique which may have produced some of the hypothesis were not significant, especially there is non-existing literature review about generations on rumors and gossip, nor rumors and gossip on engagement as well as sex differences gossiping in the workplace.

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