

---

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE ON GOSSIP TENDENCY**

**Dr. Chaiyaset Promsri**

Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, Bangkok, Thailand

Corresponding E-mail: [Chaiyaset.p@rmutp.ac.th](mailto:Chaiyaset.p@rmutp.ac.th)

**ABSTRACT**

This study aimed at investigating association between social intelligence and gossip tendency. Participants were selected from sixty undergraduate students in Bangkok using Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS) and The Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire (TGQ) for data collection. Results of multiple regression analyses indicated that social information process, social skills, and social awareness could explain 40.6 percent of variance to gossip tendency. Findings revealed that social information process had a significantly positive influence on gossip tendency whereas social awareness had a significantly negative impact on gossip tendency. This implied that respondents with a higher ability to ascertain and foresee others' feelings and behavior as well as understand their messages during the social interaction were more likely to gossip about other people. In addition, participants with a greater capability to recognize and be aware of oneself and others' feelings and behaviors in the relationship were less likely to gossip.

**Key Words:** Social intelligence, Gossip, Gossip tendency

**INTRODUCTION**

Social intelligence has increasingly become an interesting topic in social psychology and organizational behavior. This ability has been extended from emotional intelligence and deemed very important for career success. Goleman (2006) pointed out that social intelligence is the combination of social awareness and social facility, which is critical for life success. Social intelligence alludes to the ability to sense others' feeling and behaviors and build relationship with them leading to gain collaboration for goals achievement in the workplace (Albrecht, 2009). Social intelligence is often viewed as "people skill." Scholars believed that social intelligence can be developed in order to succeed in working relationships (Morin, 2019).

Gossip is a form of informal conversation among people focused on personal issues of others. Although gossip is social phenomenon happened in everyday of life, it is often viewed as a deviant behavior. Despite the negative perception, many individuals are interested in exchanging evaluative information of others, which is a gossip. Past research showed that gossip provide both positive and negative side. The recent research demonstrated the relationship between positive gossip and self-improvement and negative gossip and self-promotion (Martinescu, Janssen, & Nijstad, 2014). In the workplace, gossip is found to be a motivating factor to protect group members from non-cooperators (Cruz, Beersma, Dijkstra, & Bechtoldt, 2019). As shown, gossip plays a major role in social interaction and has been passed between people who have common background or shared interest (Rosnow & Foster, 2005). This behavior is assumed to be

appeared to fulfill individuals in many ways such as encouraging cooperation, relieving stresses, and raising self-improvement. A recent study of Stanford researchers revealed that when individuals received information about others' behaviors through gossip, they frequently employed what they have learned to support the cooperator. On the other hand, those who violate the norm of cooperation can be then excluded from group activities (Haupt, 2015). This implies the ability to understand others' feelings and behaviors, which refers to "social intelligence."

The role of social intelligence of individuals to help strengthen them to achieve goals is important. However, insufficient studies in this arena particularly Thai context have still existed. Moreover, an investigation on gossip tendency as one of important social phenomenon has been omitted in the scholarly research in Thai context because this behavior is often seen as a negative behavior. In addition, the broad examination on the relationship between these two topics in international scholarly articles has been overlooked despite social intelligence is the ability for success in working relationships occurred in the organization, where gossiping appears to be an everyday phenomenon in social interaction and relationships. As a result, this present study attempted to fill the gap in the scholarly literatures and enhance a body of knowledge in this field by paying attention on the linkage between these two topics. Hence, the purpose of this study was to scrutinize the relationship between social intelligence and gossip tendency. This study was noteworthy to be the first study in this area that investigated the correlation between these variables especially in Thai context. Based on this objective, this study proposed research hypothesis as "there was a significant effect of social intelligence on gossip tendency."

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

### Social Intelligence

Social intelligence is a person's capability to effectively connect with other people, and influence them to work together with oneself (Albrecht, 2009). Individuals with social intelligence understand and recognize how other people feel, and know what to communicate in social interaction (Morin, 2019). The concept of social intelligence was firstly introduced by a well-known psychologist Thorndike (1920) who defined social intelligence as "the ability to understand and manage men and women and intelligence.

Many researches in social intelligence in an early stage had been built on the work of Thorndike. Thereafter, the comprehensive understanding of cognitive development and individual behavior had been contributed. In the early of 1980s, the concept of social intelligence was introduced in a business mainstream as evidenced by numerous published books and articles in this area (Essex, 2018). Social intelligence was clearly highlighted on the famous book of Goleman (1995), *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, and the following one in *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Social Relationships*, which examined the intercorrelations among emotions, cognition and behaviors to describe the concept of social intelligence in relationships.

To measure social intelligence, numerous researchers attempted to develop valid and reliable instruments but the scale measurement that has been extensively employed in various studies in the past decades was Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS) developed by a group of Norwegian researchers named Silvera et al. (2001). This scale measurement comprised of three dimensions of social intelligence: social information process (SP), social skills (SS), and social awareness (SA). Social information process refers to the ability to understand and foretell others'

feelings and behaviors as well as the ability to recognize messages conveyed during conversation in social situations. Social skills refer to the ability to adjust own behaviors to effectively fit to a new social condition and the capability to make new networks. Social awareness refers to the ability to identify and realize oneself and others' frame of minds and actions in the relationship. In Thai context, this instrument has been adapted and broadly utilized in the work of Promsri (2014; 2017; 2019) to explore the relationship between social intelligence and other relevant variables.

### **Gossip Tendency**

Gossip is defined as a conversation of individual information about an absentee that is conveyed in an evaluative manner (Foster, 2004). Gossip is usually seen as a deviant behavior as evidenced by term "small talk", "shop talk", or "idle talk" (Chua & Uy, 2014). Although gossip is often viewed as a negative behavior, numerous researchers addressed the benefits of gossip in various ways including information exchange, stress relief, receipt of entertainment, improve their understanding of others and building friendship, and use information to control others' actions (Aghbolagh & Ardabili, 2016). Previous research found that individuals utilized information received from gossip to friendly connect with those who deemed cooperative and disconnected with those who violate the norm of collaboration in the organization (Haupt, 2015).

To understand how individuals gossip, Nevo et al. (1993) developed the instrument called the Gossip Tendency Questionnaire, which encompassed four dimensions: physical appearance, achievement, social information, and sublimated gossip. As this scale instrument received a high validity and internal consistency, this scale measurement has been broadly been utilized in gossip research for more than two decades. In Thai context, Promsri (2015) used this scale measurement to examine the difference in gossip tendency between male and female students in Thai college. This study gathered data from 166 students at a public university using a modified version of Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire in which scale of measurement was reduced from 6-point scale in an original version to 5-point scale. Findings revealed that female students were more likely to gossip in terms of physical appearance than male students.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This empirical study aimed at exploring relationship between social intelligence and gossip tendency. Respondents were collected from undergraduate students in management program at a public university in Bangkok, Thailand. A total of 60 students were participated in data collection using a survey questionnaire. A Thai version of Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS) modified by Promsri (2014) based on the construct of original version developed by Silvera et al. (2001) was employed to evaluate social intelligence of students. This instrument was a 21-item of 5-point rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) encompassing three components: social information process (SP), social skills (SS), and social awareness (SA). The Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire (TGQ) developed by Nevo et al. (1993) translated into Thai by Promsri (2015) was utilized to assess gossip behaviors of participants. This scale measurement was a 19-item of 6-point rating scale ranging from (1) never to (6) always, which respondents were asked to rate each item to the extent in which each characteristics described them accurately. To ensure the validity and reliability of this instrument, content validity and Cronbach's alpha test were conducted. Table 1 demonstrated an acceptable internal consistency for these scales as alpha scores were higher than 0.6, according to

Nunnally (1978). Social intelligence scale had alpha score of 0.66, and gossip tendency scale had alpha score of 0.94. An inferential statistic used to test a research hypothesis of this study was multiple regression analysis.

**Table 1: Reliability Coefficients of Social Intelligence and Gossip Tendency**

Scale Measurement	No. of Items	Alpha Score
Social Intelligence	21	0.66
Gossip Tendency	19	0.94

**RESULTS**

Findings demonstrated that the preponderance of respondents in this study were female (51.7%) with the average between 18-25 years old (71.7%). To scrutinize the linkage between three sub-scales of social intelligence and gossip tendency, the multiple regression analysis was conducted. The basic assumptions of using multiple regression analysis were carefully checked. The Q-Q plot was virtually checked along with the scatter plot to confirm the normality of variables. The plot illustrated no serious departures of dependent variable, which indicated that normality assumption was met. The Durbin-Watson was calculated to check autocorrelation in regression data. The value of 1.775 could be assumed that there was no first order linear autocorrelation in multiple linear regression data. Multicollinearity was also tested to identify the intercorrelations among independent variables. As results of tolerance values were greater than 0.2, and variance inflation factor (VIF) were less than 10, multicollinearity was not problematic for running multiple linear regression analysis.

Analysis of multiple regression indicated that social information process, social skills, and social awareness could explain 40.6% of variance to gossip tendency ( $R^2 = .406$ ,  $F(3, 60) = 12.745$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This suggested that there were other factors that could describe gossip tendency of these undergraduate students that had been omitted in this study. Table 2 demonstrated that social information process and social awareness were significant predictors. To be more specific, social information process ( $\beta = .302$ ) had a lower effect on gossip tendency than social awareness ( $\beta = -.386$ ). This can be concluded that social information process had a significantly positive influence on gossip tendency while social awareness had a significantly negative impact on tendency to gossip. This implied that respondents with a higher ability to ascertain and foresee others' feelings and behavior as well as understand their messages during the social interaction were more likely to exchange evaluative information about other people. In addition, participants with a greater capability to recognize and be aware of oneself and others' feelings and behaviors in the relationship were less likely to gossip.

**Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis of Social Intelligence on Gossip Tendency**

Model 1	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Constant	4.492	.788		5.703	.000**		
SIP	.373	.165	.302	2.259	.028*	.592	1.689
SS	-.303	.265	-.160	-1.144	.257	.546	1.83/
SA	-.492	.192	-.386	-2.562	.013*	.468	2.138
<b>n = 60</b>							
<b>F = 12.745      df = 3      p-value &lt; .01      R = .637      R<sup>2</sup> = .406      Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .374</b>							
<b>Durbin- Watson = 1.775</b>							

\*Significant at 0.5 level, \*\*Significant at 0.01 level. SIP = Social Information Process, SS = Social Skills, SA = Social Awareness

**CONCLUSION, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This present study was remarkable as it appeared to be the first study in the field of organizational behavior especially in Thai context that investigated the linkage between social intelligence and gossip tendency. Although the relationship between the overall social intelligence based on the combination of three dimensions proposed by Silvera et al. (2001) and tendency to gossip was not found, two sub-scales of social intelligence demonstrated a significant influence on gossip tendency. As mentioned previously, social information process had a significantly positive influence on gossip tendency while social awareness was found to have a negative effect on tendency to gossip. Findings of this study supported the concept of social intelligence and gossip. As social information process refers to the ability to recognize and foresee others’ feelings and behaviors as well as the ability to recognize messages conveyed during conversation in social situations, the more socially intelligent person in terms of this ability was likely to talk about others’ personal and sensitive affairs to collect this information to use as part of their evaluation to understand others’ feelings and actions(Haupt, 2015). This finding supported the concept of gossip as social functions that people established to fulfill their needs in many forms including improve their understanding of others and building friendship, and use information to control others’ actions (Aghbolagh & Ardabili, 2016). On the other hand, individuals who had higher social awareness, which alludes to the ability to ascertain and understand oneself and others’ emotions and actions in the relationship, tended not to talk or exchange evaluative information about third party as these variables were found in a negative correlation. As individuals realize the dark side of gossip and its consequences, they try not to talk about others’ private or sensitive story in order to maintain their relationships. When gossiping about the person who is absent from the conversation, the one who is in the gossiping situation can bring this information to tell to that absentee. Findings of this study contribute knowledge in both social intelligence and gossip topics and can be used for the extensive study in this field.

Nonetheless, this study has some limitations. The sample size was the weakness of this study and needed to be expanded in a replication study. Independent variables were limited to social intelligence solely, which could explain gossip tendency less than 50 percent. Hence, the next study should include additional independent variables to examine the relation to gossip tendency. In addition, this study focused on the term “gossip tendency”, which referred to the propensity to talk or share evaluative information about other people, as a whole not paid attention to each dimension of gossip tendency including physical appearance, achievement, social information, and sublimated gossip. Thus, generalization of this study’s results needs to be done carefully.

### Acknowledgement

I am very thankful to Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon for publication sponsorship and facility supports.

### REFERENCES

- Aghbolagh, M. B. & Ardabili, F. S. (2016). An overview of the social functions of gossip in the hospital. *Management Issues in Healthcare System*, 2, 27-33.
- Albrecht, K. (2009). *Social intelligence: The new science of success*. New York, NY: Pfeiffer.
- Chua, S. V. & Uy, K. J. (2014). The psychological anatomy of gossip. *American Journal of Management*, 14(3), 64-69.
- Cruz, T., Beersma, B., Dijkstra, M. & Bechtoldt, N. (2019). *The bright and dark side of gossip for cooperation in groups*. Retrieved from <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01374/full>
- Essex, S. (2018). *A brief history of social intelligence*. Retrieved from <https://tracom.com/blog/brief-history-social-intelligence>
- Foster, E. K. (2004). Research on gossip: taxonomy, methods, and future directions. *Review of General Psychology*, 8, 78-99.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.
- Goleman, D. (2006). *Social intelligence: the new science of human relationships*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.
- Haupt, J. (2015). *5 benefits of gossip (even negative gossip)*. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/one-true-thing/201506/5-benefits-gossip-even-negative-gossip>
- Martinescu, E., Janssen, O. & Nijstad, B. A., (2014). Tell me the gossip: the self-evaluative function of receiving gossip about others. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*. 40(12), 1668-1680
- Morin, A. (2019). *How to increase your social intelligence*. Retrieved from <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-social-intelligence-4163839>
- Nevo, O., Nevo, B., & Derech-Zehavi, A. (1993). The development of the tendency to gossip questionnaire: construct and concurrent validation for a sample of Israeli college students. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 53, pp.973-981.
- Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

- Promsri, C. (2014). An empirical study on social intelligence of Thai employees in a private organization. *Proceeding of Eurasia Business Research Conference, 16-18 June 2014, Nippon Hotel, Istanbul, Turkey.*
- Promsri, C. (2015). Gender differences in gossip tendency of Thai's university students: a case of RMUTP students. *Proceeding of Interdisciplinary Research at Phetchaburi Rajabhat University, Phetchaburi, Thailand.*
- Promsri, C. (2017). The influence of social intelligence on change leadership behaviors of managers in Thai listed firms. *Saudi Journal of Business and Management Studies, 2(11), 971-975.*
- Promsri, C. (2019). The effects of social intelligence on workplace spirituality. *Journal of Advances in Social Sciences and Humanities, 5(5), 755-762.*
- Rosnow, R. L. & Foster, E. K. (2005). Rumor and gossip research. *Psychological Science Agenda*. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2005/04/gossip>
- Silvera, D., Martinussen, M., Dahl, T. I. (2001). The Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale: a self-report measure of social intelligence. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 34(4), 313-319.*
- Thorndike, E.L. (1920). Intelligence and its use. *Harper's Magazine, 140, 227-235.*