

The Relationship Between Negative Workplace Gossip and Job Satisfaction: A Study on the Mediating Role of Servant Leadership at IT&B Campus Medan

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of negative workplace gossip on job satisfaction among lecturers, focusing on the role of servant leadership as a mediating factor. The research was conducted at IT&B Campus Medan, with academic lecturers as respondents. Data was collected through both online and offline surveys. Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to evaluate the relationships among variables. The results indicate that negative workplace gossip negatively impacts job satisfaction, which can be minimized through servant leadership. Servant leadership was found to play a significant mediating role, improving interpersonal relationships and creating a supportive work environment, thereby enhancing job satisfaction. This study contributes to existing literature by providing empirical evidence of the mediating role of servant leadership in reducing the negative effects of gossip in academic settings, thereby enhancing our understanding of leadership dynamics in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Negative workplace gossip, job satisfaction, servant leadership

INTRODUCTION

A healthy work environment is a key determinant in achieving optimal performance, whether in business, education, or other organizations (Y. Lubis et al., 2024). In higher education, lecturers play a crucial role in shaping the quality of education and contributing to academic development (Harinto, 2024). Therefore, it is essential for universities to create a work environment that supports lecturers' well-being, one of which is by ensuring the absence of negative factors that may disrupt the work climate

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(Satrianny et al., 2025). This condition requires higher education institutions to take responsibility for fostering an environment that enhances the quality of lecturers' work, which in turn impacts the quality of teaching and academic development (Syaifuddin et al., 2023).

One factor that can disrupt the work environment is negative gossip that often arises among colleagues (Feng, 2025). This gossip typically consists of rumours or unverified information that can affect the professional relationships of lecturers (Aftab et al., 2024). The interpersonal tensions caused by such gossip have the potential to damage trust, create disharmony, and lower the work morale of lecturers (B. Cheng et al., 2024). The impact of negative gossip not only disrupts social relations at the workplace but also diminishes lecturers' job satisfaction, which ultimately affects the quality of teaching and their academic performance (S. Cheng et al., 2025).

The phenomenon of negative gossip in academic work environments is not new (Kumar P & Vilvanathan, 2024). Several previous studies have shown that gossip can worsen communication between individuals, reduce job satisfaction, and increase stress and conflict levels in the workplace (Li et al., 2023). This undoubtedly presents a significant challenge for higher education institutions, including IT&B Campus Medan, which aim to create a positive and productive work environment. In this context, it is important to understand how negative gossip can affect lecturers' job satisfaction, which in turn can impact the overall quality of teaching and academic performance.

The negative impact of gossip is often not immediately visible or clearly felt (Song & Guo, 2022). Although gossip can damage relationships among colleagues and create discomfort, its harmful effects are often gradual and develop over time (Zhu et al., 2025). One effective solution to mitigate these impacts is through good leadership (Alahbabi, 2023). Effective leadership, particularly in the form of servant leadership, can ease interpersonal tensions and create a more supportive and respectful work environment (Rasheed, 2023). By improving communication and enhancing relationships among lecturers, an effective leader can reduce conflicts arising from negative gossip, while simultaneously fostering a healthier and more productive work atmosphere (Kyambade et al., 2023).

One leadership approach that can help address this issue is servant leadership (Nasib, 2020). This leadership style focuses on serving others, with an emphasis on empathy, individual development, and the needs of team members (F. R. A. Lubis et al., 2023). In servant leadership, leaders prioritize the well-being and growth of their team members over merely achieving results (Bhastary et al., 2024). This approach stresses



the importance of listening, understanding, and providing support to team members, thereby strengthening relationships, enhancing trust, and creating a more harmonious work environment (Syaifuddin, Lie, et al., 2024).

Previous studies have shown that servant leadership can strengthen social relationships in the workplace, create a supportive environment, and enhance team job satisfaction (Fadli, 2024)(Syaifuddin, Rezeki, et al., 2024)(Faris et al., 2024). This leadership style focuses on individual development, empathy, and attention to the needs of team members, which helps create a positive work atmosphere (Y. Lubis et al., 2023). Servant leadership plays an effective mediating role in reducing the negative impact of gossip in the workplace. Furthermore, this approach can also improve job satisfaction among lecturers by improving interpersonal relationships and creating a more harmonious work environment, which supports productivity (Nasib et al., 2022).

Despite a number of studies discussing the impact of negative gossip on workplace well-being and some exploring the role of servant leadership in organizations, there remains a significant research gap. Most previous studies have not directly examined the relationship between negative gossip and job satisfaction in higher education environments, particularly in Indonesia. Additionally, the role of servant leadership as a mediator in reducing the negative effects of gossip on lecturers' job satisfaction has not been extensively studied. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by examining how negative gossip affects job satisfaction among lecturers at IT&B Campus Medan, and how servant leadership can serve as a mediator in improving social relationships and the work environment.

The urgency of this research lies in the importance of creating a conducive work environment for lecturers in higher education. High job satisfaction among lecturers not only enhances their individual well-being but also contributes to better teaching quality and research outcomes. Given the significant impact of negative gossip on job satisfaction and the potential of servant leadership in mitigating its effects, this study is highly relevant in efforts to improve social dynamics and the work atmosphere in universities. The findings of this research are expected to provide new insights for higher education institutions in designing more effective leadership policies that can foster a healthier academic environment and support lecturers' career development.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach, with a survey method for data collection. The population of this study consists of lecturers working at IT&B Campus Medan. The

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sample was selected using purposive sampling, with the criteria being lecturers who have worked at the Campus for at least one year. The expected sample size for this study is 51 lecturers. The data analysis technique used in this study is quantitative analysis employing Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS). Quantitative analysis is a data analysis method that uses statistical techniques to test the relationships between the predetermined variables. The data collected consists of primary data obtained from the results of questionnaires and secondary data sourced from campus documentation. The collected data will be analysed and processed through structural model testing and path analysis to examine the relationships between negative gossip, servant leadership, and job satisfaction among lecturers.

Table 1: Respondent Demographics

	Measurement	N	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	23	45%
	Woman	28	55%
Age	20 – 25 Year	12	24%
	26 – 30 Year	16	31%
	31 – 35 Year	12	24%
	36 – 40 Year	11	21%
Education Level	S2	38	75%
	S3	13	25%
Total Respondent		51	100%

Source: Data processed by the author 2025

This research aims to provide a clear picture of the impact of negative gossip on job satisfaction among lecturers at IT&B Campus Medan, as well as to examine the role of servant leadership as a mediator in this relationship. By using SEM-PLS analysis, the study is expected to gain a deeper understanding of the social dynamics within the academic environment and its impact on lecturers' performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to examine the effect of Negative Workplace Gossip on Job Satisfaction among lecturers through Servant Leadership as an intervening variable at IT&B Campus Medan. Statistical testing is conducted using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)



based on Partial Least Squares (PLS). This testing includes validity and reliability analysis of constructs to ensure that the data collected meets the necessary statistical standards.

Validity and Reliability Tests

The convergent validity test shows that all indicators for the Negative Workplace Gossip, Servant Leadership, and Job Satisfaction variables have outer loading values greater than 0.7, indicating that these indicators are valid. Additionally, the Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values demonstrate that all variables in this study are reliable and consistent.

Table 2. Convergent Validity

Variable	Kode	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Negative Workplace Gossip (X)	NG1	0,762	0,819	0,887	0,549
	NG2	0,747			
	NG3	0,734			
	NG4	0,822			
	NG5	0,761			
	NG6	0,744			
	NG7	0,799			
Servant Leadership (M)	SR1	0,827	0,843	0,912	0,560
	SR2	0,753			
	SR3	0,800			
	SR4	0,785			
	SR5	0,762			
	SR6	0,774			
	SR7	0,742			
Job satisfaction (Y)	JO1	0,865	0,913	0,940	0,680
	JO2	0,878			
	JO3	0,892			
	JO4	0,869			
	JO5	0,822			
	JO6	0,804			
	JO7	0,809			



	JO8	0,773		
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Source: Data processed SEM PLS 2025

Based on Table 2 above, it can be seen that all indicators for the Negative Workplace Gossip, Servant Leadership, and Job Satisfaction variables meet the outer loading values greater than 0.7. This indicates that the indicators in this study are valid and capable of measuring the intended constructs effectively. The Composite Reliability values for all variables also show good results, as the values are greater than 0.7. This means that the questionnaire used in this study can produce stable and consistent measurement results. Additionally, the Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables are greater than 0.6, indicating that the instruments used are reliable and stable in measuring the constructs.

Hypothesis test

Table 3. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Results
Negative Workplace Gossip → Servant Leadership	-0.422	2.491	0.014	Significant
Negative Workplace Gossip → Job satisfaction	-0.391	2.140	0.032	Significant
Servant Leadership → Job satisfaction	0.430	3.218	0.001	Significant
Negative Workplace Gossip → Servant Leadership → Job satisfaction	0.254	2.578	0.010	Significant

The Negative Impact of Workplace Gossip on Servant Leadership

The results of the analysis showed that the relationship between negative workplace gossip and servant leadership had a regression coefficient of -0.422 with a t-value of 2.491 and a p-value of 0.014. These results show a significant relationship between negative workplace gossip and servant leadership at a significance level of 0.05. A negative regression coefficient of -0.422 indicates that the higher the level of negative gossip in the workplace, the lower the level of servant leadership shown by the leader. This indicates that negative gossip can reduce the effectiveness of leaders in serving their teams, which can ultimately affect the quality of leadership. With a p-value of 0.014, which is smaller than 0.05,

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an alternative hypothesis (H1) stating that there is a significant influence between negative workplace gossip and servant leadership is accepted. This means that negative workplace gossip has a negative effect on the implementation of servant leadership by leaders in the workplace.

These findings align with previous research that shows negative gossip worsens communication among colleagues, causes interpersonal conflicts, and decreases job satisfaction (Zhu et al., 2025)(Khalid et al., 2025)(Feng, 2025). Gossip in the workplace can create discomfort and damage the quality of working relationships, which negatively impacts job satisfaction. Other studies also found that gossip can undermine motivation and work enthusiasm, which ultimately reduces job satisfaction. The tension caused by gossip often creates a negative atmosphere at work, reduces trust between individuals, and lowers the spirit to perform tasks, which results in low levels of job satisfaction in the organizational or academic environment (Aftab et al., 2024).

Distorted relationships between individuals due to gossip can damage integrity and trust, which ultimately leads to a decline in job satisfaction (Kosasih & Salqaura, 2024). Negative gossip is often associated with increased stress in the workplace, which results in lower job satisfaction (B. Cheng et al., 2024). Gossip in the workplace can create an unhealthy atmosphere of competition and reduce trust among colleagues, leading to low job satisfaction (Agus Susanto et al., 2022). Additionally, relational aggression such as gossip and rumours can affect employees' emotional well-being, create tension, and decrease job satisfaction (Kosasih et al., 2022). The further impact of gossip is an increased turnover rate, as employees feel uncomfortable and less motivated to stay in an environment full of uncertainty and interpersonal conflict (S. Cheng et al., 2025).

Managerial implications suggest that management needs to implement policies that reduce negative gossip, such as improving open communication between lecturers and management to avoid baseless rumours. Additionally, effective leadership training should be provided to help leaders manage interpersonal tensions and create a harmonious work environment. Building an inclusive work climate based on mutual respect is also important to reduce potential conflicts. A solution-based approach to addressing emerging interpersonal issues will prevent gossip from developing. Finally, regular evaluations through job satisfaction surveys will help detect problems that could potentially turn into negative gossip.

The Negative Impact of Workplace Gossip on Job Satisfaction

Based on hypothesis testing, it was shown that the relationship between negative

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workplace gossip and job satisfaction showed a regression coefficient of -0.391 with a t-value of 2.140 and a p-value of 0.032. The value of the negative regression coefficient (-0.391) indicates that the higher the level of negative gossip in the workplace, the lower the employee's job satisfaction rate. This indicates that negative gossip can have a bad impact on employees' satisfaction with the lecturer's work. With a p-value of 0.032, which is smaller than 0.05, an alternative hypothesis (H2) that states that there is a significant influence between negative workplace gossip and job satisfaction is accepted. This means that negative workplace gossip has a negative effect on employee job satisfaction.

The results of this study are in line with previous research, which shows that negative gossip can worsen communication among colleagues, cause interpersonal conflicts, and decrease job satisfaction (Kumar P & Vilvanathan, 2024)(Li et al., 2023)(Song & Guo, 2022). Gossip that develops in the workplace often creates discomfort and damages the quality of working relationships, which negatively impacts job satisfaction (Kosasih, 2023). Other studies also indicate that gossip undermines motivation and work enthusiasm, ultimately reducing job satisfaction [30]. The tension caused by gossip creates a negative atmosphere, reduces trust between individuals, and lowers the spirit to perform tasks, which leads to low job satisfaction in the organizational or academic environment (Dai et al., 2022).

Distorted relationships between individuals due to gossip can damage integrity and trust, which ultimately leads to a decline in Job Satisfaction (Gutnick et al., 2022). Negative gossip is often associated with increased stress in the workplace, which results in lower job satisfaction (Nasution et al., 2023). Additionally, gossip can create an unhealthy atmosphere of competition and reduce trust among employees, which in turn impacts job satisfaction (Nazah et al., 2021). The further consequence of gossip is an increased turnover rate, as employees feel uncomfortable and less motivated to stay in an environment filled with uncertainty and interpersonal conflict (Wang et al., 2022).

Managerial implications suggest that management needs to implement policies to reduce negative gossip. This can be achieved by improving open communication between lecturers and management to avoid baseless rumours. Additionally, effective leadership training should be provided to help leaders manage interpersonal tensions and create a harmonious work environment. Building an inclusive work climate based on mutual respect is also crucial to reduce potential conflicts. A solution-based approach to addressing emerging interpersonal issues will prevent gossip from developing. Finally, regular evaluations through job satisfaction surveys can help detect issues that may potentially turn into negative gossip.



The Influence of Servant Leadership on Job Satisfaction

The results of the analysis showed that the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction had a regression coefficient of 0.430 with a t-value of 3.218 and a p-value of 0.001. These results show a significant relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction at a significance level of 0.05. The positive regression coefficient of 0.430 shows that the higher the implementation of servant leadership in the workplace, the higher the level of job satisfaction of lecturers. This indicates that leaders who apply the principle of servant leadership can increase lecturers' satisfaction with their work. Leadership that focuses on service, attention to the needs of lecturers, and their empowerment tends to create a supportive and motivating environment, which in turn increases job satisfaction. With a p-value of 0.001, which is much smaller than 0.05, an alternative hypothesis (H3) that there is a significant influence between servant leadership and job satisfaction is accepted. This means that servant leadership has a positive effect on job satisfaction lecturers at IT&B Campus Medan

The results of this study align with previous research showing that servant leadership has a significant effect on increasing job satisfaction among employees and lecturers (Zafar et al., 2025b)(Zafar et al., 2025a)(Elsaied, 2025). Leaders who implement the principles of Servant Leadership, such as empathy, attention to team members' needs, and individual development, create a more supportive environment that enhances job satisfaction (Wijaya & Chaniago, 2025). Other studies also indicate that service-oriented leadership strengthens interpersonal relationships and creates a harmonious work atmosphere, thereby increasing motivation and work enthusiasm (Tambunan, 2020). Additionally, lecturers led by servant leadership tend to feel more valued and supported, which results in higher job satisfaction (Sipayung et al., 2023).

Based on the findings of this study, the management of IT&B Campus Medan needs to implement Servant Leadership to enhance lecturers' job satisfaction. Leaders who apply service-based leadership, empathy, and attention to lecturers' needs can create a more positive work environment that supports faculty development. Management should also provide leadership training focused on interpersonal skills and effective communication. In addition, creating an inclusive work climate that fosters mutual respect and supports lecturers' well-being should be a priority, in order to build more harmonious relationships among faculty members. Regular evaluations through job satisfaction surveys can help management identify issues and continuously improve the quality of the work atmosphere.



The Negative Influence of Workplace Gossip on Job Satisfaction Through Servant Leadership

The results of the analysis showed that the indirect relationship between negative workplace gossip and job satisfaction through servant leadership had a regression coefficient of 0.254 with a t-value of 2.578 and a p-value of 0.010. These results show that this indirect influence pathway is significant at a significance level of 0.05. A positive regression coefficient of 0.254 showed that although there was a direct negative influence between negative workplace gossip and job satisfaction, but through servant leadership, there was a significant positive contribution to increasing job satisfaction. This means that although negative gossip can directly damage job satisfaction, the implementation of servant leadership by leaders can improve these negative effects and increase job satisfaction of lecturers at IT&B Campus Medan. With a p-value of 0.010, which is smaller than 0.05, an alternative hypothesis (H4) stating that there is a significant influence between negative workplace gossip and job satisfaction through servant leadership is accepted. This means that servant leadership serves as a mediator that strengthens the relationship between negative gossip and job satisfaction.

The results of this study align with previous research showing that negative gossip can worsen communication among colleagues, cause interpersonal conflicts, and decrease job satisfaction (Feng, 2025)(B. Cheng et al., 2024)(Kumar P & Vilvanathan, 2024). Gossip that develops in the workplace often creates discomfort and damages the quality of working relationships, which negatively impacts job satisfaction (Song & Guo, 2022). Other studies also indicate that gossip undermines motivation and work enthusiasm, ultimately reducing job satisfaction. The tension caused by gossip creates a negative atmosphere, reduces trust between individuals, and lowers the enthusiasm for performing tasks, which results in low job satisfaction in the campus environment (Gutnick et al., 2022).

Distorted relationships between individuals due to gossip can damage integrity and trust, which ultimately leads to a decline in job satisfaction (Aftab et al., 2024). Negative gossip is often associated with increased stress in the workplace, which results in lower job satisfaction (Dai et al., 2022). Additionally, gossip can create an unhealthy atmosphere of competition and reduce trust among lecturers, which in turn impacts job satisfaction (Li et al., 2023). The further consequence of gossip is an increased turnover rate, as lecturers feel uncomfortable and less motivated to stay in an environment filled with uncertainty and interpersonal conflict (S. Cheng et al., 2025).

Managerial implications suggest that IT&B Campus Medan management needs to implement policies to reduce negative gossip. This can be achieved by improving open

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communication between lecturers and management to avoid baseless rumours. Additionally, effective leadership training should be provided to help leaders manage interpersonal tensions and create a harmonious work environment. Building an inclusive work climate based on mutual respect is also essential to reduce potential conflicts. A solution-based approach to addressing emerging interpersonal issues will prevent gossip from developing. Finally, regular evaluations through job satisfaction surveys can help detect issues that may potentially evolve into negative gossip.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the impact of negative workplace gossip on job satisfaction among lecturers at IT&B Campus Medan, focusing on the role of servant leadership as a mediator. The research results indicate that negative gossip has a significant negative impact on job satisfaction, as gossip creates tension, reduces trust, and hinders effective communication. Additionally, servant leadership has been shown to mitigate the negative effects of gossip by fostering a supportive and harmonious work environment. This suggests that while gossip can lower job satisfaction, leaders who prioritize empathy, actively listen, and promote individual development can improve the work atmosphere and enhance lecturers' satisfaction.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that Campus management promote Servant Leadership practices and create policies that can reduce negative gossip. Leadership training focused on communication skills and emotional intelligence should be prioritized. Additionally, building an inclusive and respectful work culture can help reduce gossip and foster a more collaborative environment. Regular job satisfaction surveys can also help detect potential issues and maintain a positive academic climate.

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