

## Gossip Tendency of Thai Students

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**Abstract:** The aim of this present study was to explore gossip tendency of Thai students in one specific university in Bangkok, Thailand, and to compare gender and origin differences in tendency to gossip. A total sample of 60 undergraduate students was gathered for data collection through a survey questionnaire. A modified version of the Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire (Thai version) was utilized to measure gossip tendency of participants in this study. Results showed that this group of students seldom gossiped other people as the total mean score of tendency to gossip was 3.16. Among four tendency to gossip subscales, physical appearance was reported as the highest mean score of tendency to gossip while sublimated gossip was rated as the lowest mean score. In addition, findings revealed a significant difference in gossip tendency between males and females, which females had a higher score on an overall gossip tendency than males. However, this study did not find significant difference in tendency to gossip in terms of people with different places of origin.

**Keywords:** Gossip, Gossip tendency, Gender differences, Origin differences, Thai students.

### INTRODUCTION

Gossip is a social phenomenon and viewed as an unavoidable activity in a society. Prior research demonstrated that people spent more than 60 percent of their conversation on social topics with only minimal difference among age, gender, and cultures [1]. Gossip alludes to communications when an individual who is mentioned does not presently appear at that moment [2]. Many people perceive gossip as one of deviant behaviors, but some believe that gossip can provide benefits to a person who talks about other people. Past studies revealed that individuals gossip in order to fulfill their psychological and social needs such as minimizing their uncertainty and increasing social interconnection through shared sensitive information [9]. People gossip based on different reasons such as they need to obtain information, they need to use that information to influence others, and to entertain themselves [4]. Despite information conveyed in gossip might not be truthful and reliable, people are still more likely to gossip during their interaction and conversation to exchange information about absent people [5].

Past studies in gossip attempted to describe this phenomenon by focusing on gender difference. Coates [6] noted that gossip is frequently viewed as women's habit. Previous studies supported this statement as findings revealed that women had a higher tendency to gossip than men [7, 9]. Moreover, recent research found that not only women were more likely to gossip than men, but they also were more positive when gossiping [8]. As women friendship run deeper than men friendship, gossip in female group can provide more negative effects than males' gossip particularly gossiping about physical appearance [7]. Although various studies found that women tended to gossip more than men, findings in some areas of these studies were still inconsistent in particular when studied in different contexts and cultures. Also, studying gossip tendency of college students was scant and needed more investigation [9, 7, 9]. Therefore, this present study aimed at increasing body of knowledge in this area, and examining college students' tendency to gossip in a different context.

### Literature Reviews

Nevo *et al.* [3] developed the instrument called Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire (TGQ) to assess

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gossip tendency of Israeli college students. This group of researchers attempted to construct a valid and reliable scale measurement of tendency to gossip to ensure internal consistency of the scale measurement. Factor analysis was conducted to categorize different types of gossip, which were finally proposed as physical appearance, achievement, social information, and sublimated gossip. Nevo *et al.* [9] claimed that this instrument was appropriate to widely use in different context not only in Israel. The aim of this original 20-item TGQ crated by Nevo *et al.* [3] was to measure tendencies to talk about other people in relation to a variety of different topics in general such as appearance, people's love affairs and relationship, and achievement. Each item of TGQ consisted of a 7-point frequency scale ranging from (1) "Never" to (7) "Always". Based on factor analysis, item#4 in this scale measurement was reported a weak relationship to one of these four factors of tendency to gossip. Therefore, the finalized version of TGQ was recommended to remove this item for the measurement in order to avoid some interpretation problems.

Watson [7] investigated gender differences in the relationship between gossip tendency and friendship quality. A sample of 167 undergraduate female students and 69 male students in Western Canadian University was gathered for data collection through the Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire (TGQ) and Friendship Questionnaire (FQ). The reason to employ TGQ to assess gossip tendency of Canadian students was due to the appropriateness and suitability of measuring individuals' general gossip. Nevertheless, only three subscales excluding sublimated gossip remained to be used for data collection after assessing validity and reliability of scale measurement. Findings of this study revealed that friendship quality was positively associated with gossip tendency in males, but did not demonstrate the connection in females. To place emphasis on gender difference in gossip tendency, this study discovered the significant differences between males and females in the overall of gossip tendency as well as physical appearance and social information subscales.

Promsri [3] studied gender differences in gossip tendency of Thai students in a selected public university. A total of 166 students from different levels were gathered through an adjusted version of Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire (TGQ). The scale measurement of this modified version was reduced from 7-point rating scale to 6-point rating scale in order to easy for participants to evaluate their frequency of doing behaviors described in each statement. To compare differences between male and female students, independent samples t-test was utilized. Results found that tendency to gossip about physical appearance in female students were significantly higher than male student at 0.05 level. However, findings showed no

significant differences in other dimensions of tendency to gossip between males and females.

Eckhaus and Ben-Hador [8] measured gender differences in gossiping habits, subjects, and attitudes by using a mixed methodology. A survey questionnaire was employed to collect data from samples by using an open question format, which allowed respondents to imagine gossiping scenario. A total of 2,230 participants agreed to participate and filled out the questionnaire. Results of this study found no significant difference in gossiping activity between males and females. However, this study found that women were more engaged in gossiping about social relationships and physical appearance than men. In addition, this study revealed that women were more likely to be positive in gossiping than men.

According to these literature reviews, previous studies attempted to measure gossip tendency of people in different contexts and cultures, and compared gender differences in gossip tendency through the use of Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. Thus, this present study decided to employ this scale measure in particular Thai version modified by Promsri [3] to assess gossip tendency of Thai students. Moreover, as discussed in the literature reviews, although prior studies tried to examine gender differences in gossip tendency, consistency and inconsistency in some subscales of gossip tendency among these studies were still found. Therefore, the research hypotheses of this present study was developed based on these reviews and extended to the limited area that previous studies did not pay attention such as the comparison on gossip tendency of people with different places of origins. The research hypotheses were proposed as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>: There was a significant difference in gossip tendency between male and female students.

H<sub>2</sub>: There was a significant difference in gossip tendency between people with different places of origins (Bangkok and upcountry).

## METHODOLOGY

This study was a descriptive study. Participants in this study were students in two different cohorts who registered for management program at a selected Rajabhat university in Bangkok. Since the topic of this study was sensitive, the researcher ensured that all participants were understood the purpose of the study and confirmed the right protection of subjects. Sixty students agreed to participate in this study. The participants were asked to fill out the Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire (Thai version) by assessing their frequency of gossip in four major areas. The Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire (TGQ) developed by Nevo *et al.* in 1993 was modified and translated to Thai language and used for data collection with their permission by Promsri [3]. The Tendency to Gossip

Questionnaire (Thai version) was conducted the content and construct validity and reliability test to ensure the internal consistency of this scale measurement. According to Promsri [3], the Cronbach's alpha score of this scale was 0.908, which was highly acceptable. This present study conducted reliability test once again and found alpha score of 0.944 for this scale measurement.

The Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire (TGQ) (Thai version) was a 6-point rating scale of 19-item ranging from 1 = never, 2 = almost never, 3 = seldom, 4 = sometimes, 5 = often, and 6 = always. Respondents were required to rate each item of scale to the extent in which each characteristics described them properly. Criteria used to interpret mean scores was determined by calculating the interval class as follows: maximum score – minimum score/ number of levels. Hence, the mean scores interpretation can be classified to 6 levels as follows:

- Mean scores between 5.20 – 6.00 = Always
- Mean scores between 4.36 – 5.19 = Often
- Mean scores between 3.52 – 4.35 = Sometimes
- Mean scores between 2.68 – 3.51 = Seldom
- Mean scores between 1.84 – 2.67 = Almost never
- Mean scores between 1.00 – 1.83 = Never

To test research hypotheses of this present study, independent samples t-test was computed.

## RESULTS

Demographic variables of sample respondents showed that the majority of respondents was female

(51.7%). Average age of these respondents was between 18-25 years (71.7%). More than a half of them studied in a full-time program (51.7%). Almost a half of they reported that they had the range of 3-4 family members (45%). For participants' tendency, findings showed that the total mean score of TGQ was 3.16, which could be described that this group of students seldom gossiped other people. To consider each dimension of TGQ score, 'physical appearance' was rated as the highest mean score (M = 3.40, S.D. = 1.092) followed by 'achievement' (M = 3.22, S.D. = .984), 'social information' (M = 3.02, S.D. = 1.077), and 'sublimated gossip' (M= 2.97, S.D. = 1.030), respectively.

To compare gender differences and origin differences in tendency to Gossip, independent samples t-test analysis was calculated. Table 1 demonstrated the significant difference in overall of tendency to gossip between male students and female students (t = -2.280, p = 0.026). Females were more likely to gossip than males as the total mean score of females' tendency to gossip (M = 2.89, S.D. = .967) was higher than males (M = 3.41, S.D. = .780). Specifically, this study also found a significant difference in 'physical appearance' between males and females, which females had a higher score on this dimension than male. In addition, 'sublimated gossip' was found to have a significant different between both genders, which females were scored higher than males. However, results showed no significant differences in 'achievement' and 'social information' dimensions between males and females.

**Table-1: Gender Differences in Tendency to Gossip (n = 60)**

Dimensions	Males (n=29)		Females (n=31)		t	Sig.
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Physical Appearance	3.08	1.128	3.69	.989	-2.196	.032*
Achievement	2.97	1.047	3.45	.873	-1.956	.055
Social Information	2.80	1.163	3.21	.966	-1.498	.140
Sublimated Gossip	2.67	1.094	3.25	.896	-2.243	.029*
TGQ	2.89	.967	3.41	.780	-2.280	.026*

\*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 2 showed the comparison on the overall of tendency to gossip and each dimension between participants who were from different origins (Bangkok

and upcountry). Results indicated no significant difference in tendency to gossip and all four dimensions of TGQ between people with different place of origins.

**Table-2: Origin Differences in Tendency to Gossip (n = 60)**

Dimensions	Bangkok (n=40)		Upcountry (n=20)		t	Sig.
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Physical Appearance	3.40	1.150	3.40	.994	.000	1.000
Achievement	3.23	1.034	3.22	.898	.018	.985
Social Information	3.09	1.217	2.87	.723	.895	.375
Sublimated Gossip	3.06	1.113	2.77	.830	1.042	.302
TGQ	3.20	1.030	3.08	.600	.490	.565

## CONCLUSION, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings of this present study were consistent with Promsri [3] in which physical appearance subscale of tendency to gossip was found to be the highest mean score rated by respondents. However, this present study did not support Promsri [3] who found that social information subscale was rated as the lowest mean score since this present study reported that sublimated gossip was perceived as the lowest dimension of tendency to gossip among Thai students. For the comparison on gender differences, this present study supported Promsri's study [3] in terms of gender difference as females had a higher score on tendency to gossip in overall than males. Moreover, this study found the consistent result to Promsri's in which females a higher score on tendency to gossip about physical appearance than males. This finding was also consistent with Nevo *et al.* [9] who reported that women were scored higher than men on physical appearance dimension. However, this study discovered that females also had a greater score on sublimated gossip than males, which contributed new knowledge in this topic that not found in a previous research before. For origin differences comparison, this study found no significant difference in tendency to gossip between people who were originally from Bangkok and upcountry. This finding was not previously found in prior studies before and contributed new knowledge in this area. However, the finding of this present study was inconsistent with the results of Pathak's study [1] in which no significant difference in gossip tendency between males and females was found. Different contexts and cultures between these studies might be a good description for the inconsistency. Pathak's study [1] explored impact of gossip activities at work by Indian workforces in a service cluster, whereas this present study focused on gender and origin differences on Thai college students' gossip tendency. Additionally, this present study partly supported Watson [7] who found that female undergraduate students in Western Canadian University had a greater gossip tendency in overall as well as physical appearance subscale than male students. However, this study also found a significant difference in social information between males and females, which was not found in this present study. The different findings on this point were due to the cross-cultural difference aspect in which North American countries

highly focused on individualistic while this present study was conducted in Thailand viewed as collectivistic country.

Like other studies, this study had some limitations. Firstly, the sample size of this study was limited to only two groups of undergraduate students at one selected Rajabhat University in Bangkok, Thailand. Thus, findings of this present study could not be generalized, and a number of sample sizes should be increased and extended to other colleges and universities in a further study. Secondly, the scale measure utilized in this present study was emphasized on tendency to gossip rather than people sentiments. Hence, the next study should develop or employ other instruments that can evaluate individuals' attitudes towards gossiping. Lastly, this study focused on gender differences and place of origin differences solely, which might not be sufficient for knowledge enhancement. Therefore, a further study should add other variables such as age, family members, and marital status for the comparison.

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