Research on the Influence Mechanism of Negative Gossip in the Workplace on the Turnover Tendency of Employees

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ABSTRACT: *Based on the theory of social exchange and trait activation, this paper takes the negative gossip of the workplace as the independent variable, the employee turnover tendency as the dependent variable, the work involvement as the intermediary variable, and introduces the positive trait emotion as the adjustment variable, and examines the intermediary mechanism and boundary condition that the negative gossip in the workplace affects the employee's turnover tendency. This paper takes 340 questionnaires as a sample to empirically test the impact of negative gossip on the turnover intention of employees. The results show that the negative gossip in the workplace is positively affecting the employee turnover tendency; the work involvement in the workplace is a partial intermediary between the negative gossip in the workplace and the employee turnover tendency; the positive traits negatively regulate the relationship between the negative gossip and the work involvement in the workplace. . The conclusions of the study help us to understand the psychological mechanism of negative gossip in the workplace affecting the turnover intention of employees, and provide guidance for managers to take effective measures to reduce employee turnover.*
KEY WORD:*Negative gossip in the workplace, Work involvement, Turnover tendency, Positive trait emotion*

I. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of Internet technology, the pace of people's work and life is accelerating, and the competition between people is also intensifying. The pressure of work and life has increased the friction between people and even evolved into exclusion. These "cold violence" in the workplace will have an impact on the psychology and behavior of employees, and it is very likely that it is one of the factors that affect the frequent turnover of employees. However, the current academic research on "cold" violence in the workplace is mostly concentrated in the fields of workplace exclusion, workplace bullying, etc., and the lack of attention to the negative gossip in the workplace. Gossip, also known as gossip or small talk, is real in our lives (Noon& Delbridge,1993), but due to its diversity and concealed modes of communication, difficulty in traceability, and amplification effects, Therefore, the negative impact of negative gossip in the workplace should not be underestimated. Some scholars have suggested that more attention should be given to negative gossip in the workplace (Baumeister, Zhangm, & Vohs, 2004). Yue Wenzhong and others (2018) believe that negative gossip in the workplace will have a negative impact on employees' forward-looking work behavior. Xiangfan Wu, & Ho Kwong Kwan (2015) pointed out that negative gossip in the workplace has a negative impact on employee sentiment, which in turn affects employee initiative, and work involvement refers to a person's attitude towards his or her job. Passion for love (Chunmei Wang,2008), will be affected by some external conditions. Therefore, it is not difficult to speculate that, as a negative event, the existence of negative gossip in the workplace will have a negative impact on the work involvement of employees. This is because the information transmitted by the negative gossip in the workplace is a kind of infringement on the reputation of the gossip. When the gossip feels that his reputation is damaged, he will try to change the status quo, which will take up the time that should be put into the work and make the employees work. The degree of involvement is reduced, and the low involvement of employees in work leads to a tendency for employees to leave (Liqing Lin,2012).Wu, Chiang & Zhang (2018) believe that individuals can perceive and predict negative gossip in the workplace, and then control their behavior by changing their self-perception. In addition, this process will be regulated by its individual traits such as negative emotions. The results of this study provide a new perspective for the future. Therefore, this paper introduces positive trait emotions as regulatory variables, and based on social exchange theory and trait activation theory, constructs negative negatives in the workplace as the independent variables, turnover intention as the dependent variable, exploring the mediating role of work involvement and positive trait emotions negative for the workplace. The regulatory effect of the relationship between gossip and work involvement is expected to make corresponding contributions in theory and practice.

II. THEORETICAL BASIS AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

2.1 Negative Gossip in the Workplace and Employee Turnover Tendency

Negative gossip in the workplace refers to information that people perceive at work to be harmful to others (Chandra & Robinson, 2009). It is a common social phenomenon that occurs in all types of organizations. Because the information it conveys is often negative information, and has the characteristics of fast propagation speed and strong intrusion against the gossip target, it will form a strong public opinion effect in a certain space in a short time, which will inevitably lead to the gossip and produce tremendous mental stress. The formation of employee turnover intention is mainly related to three factors: individual factors, organizational factors, and external environmental factors. From the individual factor, the individual's gender, age, working years and personal ability will affect the employee's turnover intention. Generally speaking, when employees have a long working life, the richer their social experience, the less likely they are to be affected by external affairs. Therefore, in the face of negative gossip in the workplace, it is less likely to have a tendency to leave; in terms of organizational factors, employees Satisfaction with the work, and the fairness of the organization, etc., will affect the employee's loyalty to the organization. A good organization will make employees feel strongly dependent on it, and the lower the turnover intention; from the external environmental factors, Employees will assess their own development and their relationship with the organization according to changes in the social environment, and judge whether the organization can provide a good development path for itself. If it is not satisfied with the evaluation results, it will have a higher turnover tendency. Studies have shown that when employees are excluded from the workplace, employees' sense of belonging to the organization will be greatly reduced. They may consider withdrawing from the current organization or directly choosing to leave. This is the injury that the individual avoids from workplace exclusion in this negative situation. An adaptive response (Ferris et al., 2008). Similar to workplace exclusion. The information transmitted by the negative gossip in the workplace is generally the damage to the reputation of the Gossip target, which damages its self-esteem. Related research indicates that negative gossip in the workplace can exacerbate employee emotional exhaustion, reduce job satisfaction and lack motivation (Greengard, 2001; Michelson, 2000). Therefore, it is not difficult to speculate that when employees encounter negative gossip in the workplace, in order to maintain self-esteem, they generally consider leaving the current organization that causes harm to themselves. Based on the above analysis, the following hypothesis is to be verified:

(H1: Negative gossip in the workplace is positively affecting employee turnover intentions)

2.2 Mediation effect of work involvement

The term work involvement was first proposed by Lodahl and Kejner in 1965. P. Robbins believes that job involvement is the degree of recognition of the employee's psychological work and the importance of his performance level to self-worth. According to the theory of social exchange, all social activities of human beings are exchanged for purpose, and follow the principle of fairness and reciprocity. If individuals feel positive feedback or evaluation in the organization, they will give back to the organization with positive attitudes and behaviors; on the contrary, If individuals gain negative experiences or feedback in the organization, they often respond with negative attitudes and behaviors to maintain fairness in social exchanges. The information conveyed by the negative gossip in the workplace is harmful information to the gossip target, which damages its reputation. Like other cold violence such as workplace exclusion, it will double the pressure of the gossip, suffer physical and mental damage, and cause emotional exhaustion by the gossip (Greengard, 2001; Michelson, 2000). Therefore, when an individual becomes a target of negative gossip, he or she will have to face pressures such as endless rumors and privacy leaks. These pressures will make the gossip target feel impaired and the bottom line of values will be challenged. In order to maintain their own dignity, they often spend a lot of time thinking about how to change the status quo, and try to take certain measures to clarify the truth. This process will take a lot of time, resulting in less time for individuals to work and less work involvement. On the other hand, negative gossip in the workplace will reduce the sense of belonging to the organization by the gossip. This is because when an individual suffers from a negative gossip in a workplace, the individual will perceive the unfriendly behavior of the members of the organization and even the organization, thus dissatisfied with the interpersonal atmosphere of the organization, and fall into negative emotions such as anxiety, irritability and so on. As a punishment for the organization, and in order to maintain a balance within the heart, they will also respond to the organization in a negative way of behavior, reducing their involvement in the work. In addition, as the degree of employee involvement is reduced, employees' attention to their work-related issues is reduced, and employee turnover intentions will become increasingly apparent. Based on the above analysis, the following hypothesis is to be verified:

(H2: Work involvement is mediating between negative gossip in the workplace and employee turnover)

2.3 The regulating effect of positive trait emotion

Watson et al. (1988) argue that trait emotions are the propensity of individuals to respond emotionally to the things they experience. The trait emotions are divided into positive trait emotions and negative trait emotions. Based on relevant research at home and abroad, this study regards trait emotional consent as a relatively stable emotional tendency in the short term, which can play an important role in the process of individual perception of the external environment, and does not rule out it for a long time. It will also be affected by the external environment. In this study, one of the dimensions, positive trait emotions, was selected for research. Positive trait emotions mean that individuals can always show positive emotions, such as self-confidence, pride, and excitement, at different times and situations. It shows a positive attitude. According to the theory of trait activation, the individual's traits, as a kind of orientation and potential structure, are affected by the situational factors and thus affect their behavior. Some scholars have also confirmed through research that events or conditions in the work situation are closely related to emotional state, emotional state and individual attitudes and behaviors (Jurgen et al., 2006). Negative gossip in the workplace as a kind of "cold violence" in the workplace, which will form a negative public opinion environment in the process of communication. This negative impact on the identity and status of individuals in the organization should not be underestimated. Generally speaking, the attack of the individual in the organization of power and status will be marginalized in many cases (NOON M. DELBRIDGE R, 1993). In this case, changes in the individual's behavior at work are influenced by their individual traits. When faced with negative gossip in the workplace, employees with high positive traits tend to experience a positive organizational environment, while neglecting some negative gossip about themselves, not easily generating negative emotions, and they also have higher self-regulation functions. As a result, the negative impact is less, and the negative impact on the extent of its involvement is reduced. Conversely, employees with low positive traits will be able to reduce their level of work involvement to a certain extent when they suffer from negative gossip in the workplace. Based on the above analysis, the following hypothesis is to be verified:

(H3: Positive trait emotions play a regulatory role in negative gossip and work involvement in the workplace. The higher the positive traits of employees, the weaker the negative relationship between negative gossip and work involvement in the workplace.)

The influence mechanism model of the workplace negative gossip on employee turnover tendency constructed in this study is shown in Figure 1.
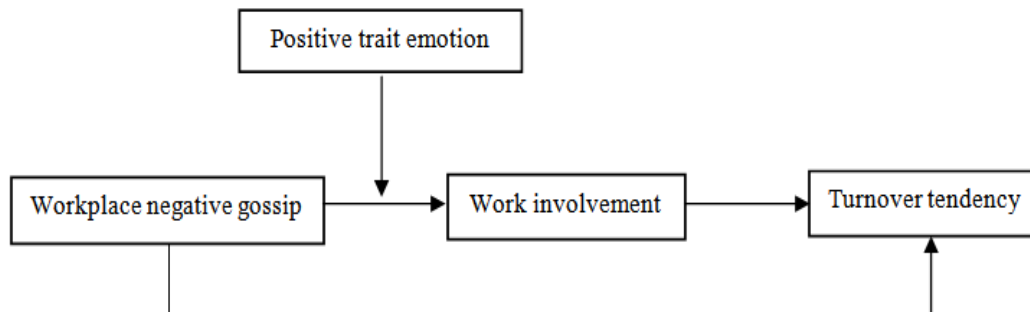

Figure 1 Hypothetical Model

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research object

This paper uses questionnaire star, e-mail and other channels for China's domestic first-line, second-tier urban large enterprise employees to issue questionnaires.

3.2 Variable measurement

The scales used in this study are mature scales at home and abroad, and the Likert five-point score is used in the scoring method. For the measurement of the "negative gossip in the workplace" variable, 1 means "never", 2 means "occasionally", 3 means "general", 4 means "frequent", and 5 means "every day". Measurements 1 to 5 for the other three variables are indicated by "very non-conformity" to "very consistent".

Negative gossip in the workplace. In this study, the scale used by negative gossip in the workplace was compiled by Chandra and Robinson (2009), which contained a total of three items, such as "others spread rumors about me", "someone spread false accusations about me", "Others convey harmful information about me to others." The reliability of this scale in this study is 0.876, and the reliability is good.

Work involvement. This study used Kammgo's Work Enrollment Scale (JIQ) based on the concept of belief in the psychological identity and cognitive status (1982), a total of 10 items. Examples such as: "Work is

one of the most important things in my life""I am fully committed to the present work", etc., the measured Krumbach alpha value of 0.931.

Positive trait emotions. This study will use the positive traits emotional and negative traits emotional scales developed by Watson and Other (1988) scholars. This article only selects the dimension of positive trait emotions, a total of 10 items, including adjectives such as "enthusiasm", "positive" and "energetic". The measured Klenbach alpha value was 0.921.

Turnover tendency. This study will use the scale of 3 items developed by Richard et al. (2001). On the basis of "separation idea" and "separation plan". For example, "I have recently been thinking about whether to resign", "I have begun to look for other jobs" and so on, this study selected the scale is mainly based on the scale around the employee's recent idea of whether to leave and the intention to re-look for other work to measure the employee's intention to leave, and the purpose of the study is very consistent. The measured Klenbach alpha value is 0.902.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive statistical analysis

In this study, 361 questionnaires were collected, and 340 valid samples were obtained after invalid questionnaires such as "Z" glyph, such as the regular filling of information and the existence of contradictions. The recovery rate of effective questionnaire was 94%. In this sample, the ratio of male to female is 1:1.73;In terms of age, the number of people aged 25 to 30 years was the largest, accounting for 63.53% of the total, followed by under 25 years of age, accounting for 23.53%. In terms of academic qualifications, undergraduate and master's degree accounted for 43.53% and 40%, respectively, and the majority of working years were 1-3 years, accounting for 54.12% of the total. The majority of work positions are ordinary employees, accounting for 41.18%, followed by grass-roots managers, accounting for about 37.65% of the total.The specific findings are shown in table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Samples

Attributes	Category	Number	Proportion
Gender	Male	128	37.65%
	Female	212	62.35%
Generation	Under 25 years old	80	23.53%
	26-30 years old	216	63.53%
	31-35 years old	32	9.41%
	Over 36 years old	12	3.53%
Education	Specialist and below	52	15.29%
	Bachelor	148	43.53%
	Master	136	40%
	Doctor	4	1.18%
Working years	1 year and below	68	20%
	1-3 years	184	54.12%
	3-5 years	44	12.94%
	5-10 years	32	9.41%
	More than 10 years	12	3.53%
Work position	General staff	140	41.18%
	Grassroots manager	128	37.65%
	Middle manager	64	18.82%
	Senior manager	8	2.35%

4.2 Correlation analysis

In this study, the correlation coefficient of key variables was calculated using software SPSS24.0. The specific results are shown in Table2. It can be seen from Table 2 that the negative gossip in the workplace is significantly negatively correlated with the work involvement (r=-0.744, P<0.01), and the negative gossip in the workplace is significantly positively correlated with the turnover intention (r=0.635, P<0.01). At the same time, the work involvement was significantly negatively correlated with the employee turnover tendency (r=-0.776, P<0.01). These results are consistent with the hypothesis and provide a preliminary basis for the follow-up study.

Table 2 Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Coefficient between Variables of Each Main Variable

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender									
2. Age	-0.009								
3. Education	0.156**	0.039							
4. Working years	-0.045	0.600**	-0.380**						
5. Work position	-0.109*	0.634**	-0.059	0.649**					
6. Negative gossip	-0.048	0.137*	-0.074	0.047	0.160**				
7. Work involvement	-0.087	-0.101	0.005	0.078	0.047	-0.744**			
8. Positive trait emotion	-0.014	-0.042	0.009	-0.003	0.117*	-0.374**	0.686**		
9. Turnover tendency	0.024	0.100	-0.094	-0.012	-0.078	0.635**	-0.776**	-0.606**	
Mean	1.620	1.930	3.270	2.220	1.820	2.259	3.465	3.330	2.510
Standard Deviation	0.485	0.683	0.727	0.988	0.815	0.865	0.734	0.702	0.991

Note: n = 340; ** means p< 0.01, * means p< 0.05

4.3 Hypothesis Test

In this paper, SPSS24.0 and other analysis tools are used for hierarchical regression analysis to verify the above assumptions, and the results of hierarchical regression analysis are shown in table 3.

Table 3 Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Variable	Work involvement				Turnover tendency			
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8
Gender	-0.092	-0.100**	-0.103***	-0.091**	0.027	0.034	-0.044	-0.031
Age	-0.312***	-0.192***	-0.144***	-0.153***	0.313***	0.210***	0.073	0.086
Education	0.137*	0.016	0.047	0.048	-0.175**	-0.071	-0.069	-0.060
Working years	0.269*	0.084	0.167***	0.156***	-0.140	0.019	0.067	0.073
Work position	0.068	0.226***	0.058	0.074	-0.193*	-0.328***	-0.141**	-0.182***
Negative gossip		-0.761***	-0.571***	-0.561***		0.654***		0.162**
Work involvement							-0.771***	-0.647***
Positive trait emotion			0.458***	0.450***				
Gossip * Emotion				0.058*				
R2	0.064	0.611	0.778	0.781	0.065	0.469	0.621	0.632
ΔR2	0.050	0.604	0.774	0.776	0.051	0.459	0.615	0.624
F	4.593***	87.150***	166.607***	147.737***	4.648***	48.982***	91.106***	81.345***

Note:*p < 0.05，p < 0.01，***p < 0.001。**

Regarding the test of the main effect, it can be seen from the model 6 in Table 3 that the negative gossip in the workplace has a significant positive influence on the employee turnover tendency (β=0.654, p<0.001), and the hypothesis 1 is supported.

Regarding the test of mediating effects, following the criteria proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986), it can be seen from model 6 in Table 3 that workplace negative gossip has a significant positive impact on employee turnover intention (β=0.654, p<0.001); Model 2 shows that negative gossip in the workplace has a significant negative impact on job involvement (β=-0.761, p<0.001); from Model 7, it can be seen that work involvement has a significant negative impact on employee turnover intention (β=- 0.771, p<0.001)); Model 8 puts the negative gossip in the workplace and the work involved in the regression analysis. The results show that the work involvement has a significant impact on employee turnover intention (β=-0.647, p<0.001). At the same time, negative gossip in the workplace still has a significant impact on employee turnover (β = 0.162, p < 0.001), but the impact is weakened. This indicates that work involvement is partially mediating in the relationship between negative gossip and job involvement in the workplace. In order to more rigorously test whether the mediating role of family-like exchanges exists, this study adopts the recommendations of Wang and Preacher(2015) to test the significance of mediating effects through Bootstrap method. The number of Bootstrap random sampling is set to 10000. The data shows that the median effect value of the work involvement in the negative gossip between the workplace and the employee turnover tendency is 0.5640, the 95% confidence interval is [0.4296, 0.7145], and the interval does not contain zero. The intermediary role is significant. Thus, hypothesis 2 is supported.

Regarding the test of the adjustment effect, it can be seen from the model 4 in Table 3 that the product coefficient of the negative gossip in the workplace and the positive trait emotion of the employee is significant ($\beta=0.058$, $p<0.05$). Thus, hypothesis 3 is supported. In order to more intuitively reveal the adjustment effect of employees' positive traits, this study uses the method proposed by Cohen(1975) to describe the different positive traits of employees by means of mean plus one standard deviation and one standard deviation. The difference in the impact of negative gossip and job involvement in the workplace. As shown in Figure 2, negative negative influences in the workplace affect the work involvement, positive traits negatively regulate the relationship between the two, the higher the positive trait level, the weaker negative impact of negative gossip on job involvement.
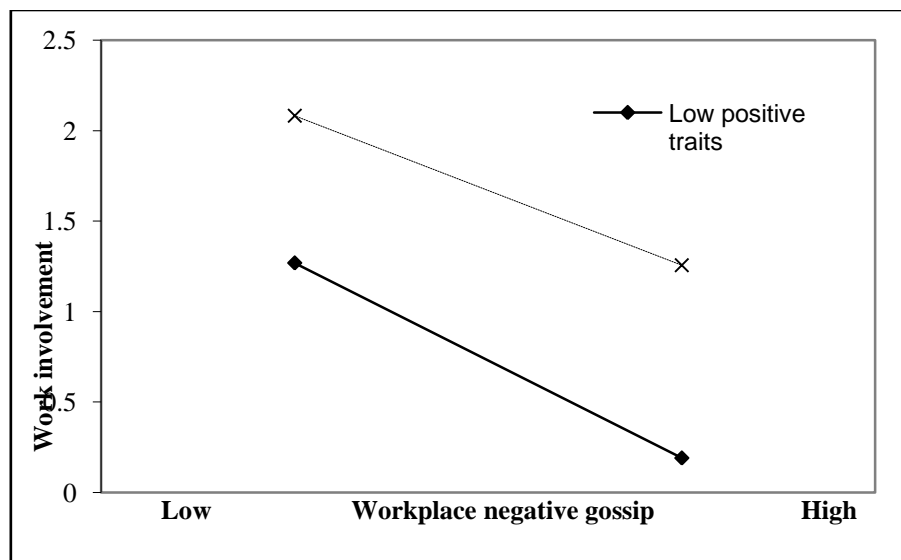

Figure 2 The effect of positive traits on negative gossip and work involvement in the workplace

V.   RESEARCHCONCLUSIONSANDDISCUSSION

5.1 Research Result

This study draws the following conclusions: Negative negative gossip in the workplace affects employee turnover; work involvement is partially intervening between negative gossip in the workplace and employee turnover; positive traits are between negative gossip and job involvement in the workplace The role of regulation, the higher the level of positive traits of employees, the weaker negative relationship between negative gossip and work involvement in the workplace.

5.2Theoretical Contribution

This study focuses on the research perspectives of the gossip. It aims to provide guidance for managers to take effective measures to reduce employee turnover intentions by discussing the impact mechanism of negative gossip on employee turnover intentions. It has important theoretical significance.

First of all, it reveals the mechanism of the negative gossip in the workplace on the employee turnover tendency, and calls on relevant scholars to pay attention to the negative gossip in the workplace. At present, the academic research on "cold" violence in the workplace is mostly concentrated in the fields of workplace exclusion, workplace bullying, etc., and the emphasis on negative gossip in the workplace is low. Negative gossip in the workplace is indeed true and ubiquitous in the workplace, and has become one of the important factors affecting employee turnover. In addition, previous studies have discussed the impact of job involvement on turnover intentions. So far, no scholars have put the negative gossip, work involvement, and turnover intentions into a model for research. This study confirms that work is involved in negative workplaces. The intermediary role between gossip and employee turnover tendencies has enriched the mechanism of negative gossip in the workplace affecting employee turnover intentions.

Secondly, based on the theory of social exchange and trait activation theory, this study derives the intermediary mechanism of negative gossip in the workplace and the adjustment mechanism of employee traits on negative gossip and work involvement in the workplace, and provides new ideas for related research. More innovative. Regarding the study of cold violence in the workplace, the theoretical basis adopted by most scholars in the past is generally the theory of social identity. In this study, we explore the regulation mechanism of employee trait emotions on the negative gossip and work involvement relationship in the workplace. We use the trait activation theory to think that the behavior of employees at work is related to personal traits, which

further enriches our negative attitude towards the workplace and the tendency of employees to leave. The understanding of the boundary conditions of the relationship.

5.3 Management Revelation

This study can provide the following three suggestions for companies to reduce the negative impact of negative gossip in the workplace and reduce employee turnover:

First of all, we must pay attention to the negative impact of negative gossip in the workplace and control its source of communication. Negative gossip in the workplace as a kind of "cold violence in the workplace" is widely existed in various organizations and has become one of the important factors affecting employees' work behaviors. The negative impacts can not be underestimated. This article takes the negative gossip of the workplace as the independent variable, and guides the manager to stand in the perspective of the emotional experience of the employees in the workplace and understand the problems brought by the negative gossip in the workplace. Although it is not realistic for companies to completely eliminate gossip, they can still take measures to control their sources of communication. For example, the office area prohibits employees from whispering and spreading rumors.

Secondly, Company should establish an excellent corporate culture and increase the employee's job involvement. Work involvement refers to the degree to which a person is proactive and passionate about his or her job. This is often influenced by some external conditions. When employees feel that their values match the organizational culture, they tend to increase their loyalty to the organization and increase their work involvement. Therefore, organizations can increase their recognition of the organization by adopting measures to establish an excellent corporate culture, thereby increasing their work involvement.

Thirdly, This paper can provide guidance for corporate managers to recruit and train management staff. This study proves through the empirical evidence that employees' positive traits and emotions negatively regulate the relationship between negative gossip in the workplace and employee involvement. In the face of negative gossip in the workplace, employees with high positive traits are less affected by the negative impact, and the less likely they are to reduce their work involvement. Therefore, this can be instructed that managers should strengthen their attention to factors such as the traits of new generations of employees when recruiting, and start from the recruitment, training and other aspects to effectively control.

5.4 Limitations

Although this study explains the mechanism of the negative gossip in the workplace on the employee turnover tendency from a new research perspective, there are still some shortcomings that need to be further improved. Firstly, in the study of the main effect, this paper is based on the theory of social exchange. In the study of the regulation effect, this paper is based on the theory of trait activation. In the future, further research can be carried out using theories such as resource conservation; secondly, because boundary conditions are not easily controlled, and there is a lack of mature and feasible scales. This paper only discusses the influence of negative gossip on employees' turnover intention from the perspective of gossip, that is, victims. With the deepening of research, future research can conduct comparative research from multiple dimensions, enhancing the innovation and interest of research. Thirdly, the negative mechanism of negative gossip in the workplace may be related to the industry. However, this paper does not distinguish the industry field in the research, and the specialized research for a certain industry will have a higher performance. Therefore, Future research can start from this aspect and further broaden the mechanism of negative gossip in the workplace.

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