

Double-edged sword of Workplace Gossip, Performance Pressure and Employee Outcomes, Insights from Affective Events Theory

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ABSTRACT

Purpose—The research focuses on the influence of gossip at work, both positive and negative, on the behavioral outcome of employees in the banking industry in Pakistan. The study is based on the Affective Events Theory (AET), which examines the mediating role of performance pressure in the gossip-outcome relationship, as well as the boundary condition of perceived organizational support (POS) in mediating the performance pressure-innovative work behavior (IWB) relationship.

Study Design/methodology/approach—A cross-sectional, quantitative research design was used. The survey information was gathered through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire on 320 employees in 4 leading commercial banks in Pakistan: Allied Bank, MCB Bank Limited, Bank al-Habib Limited, and Meezan Bank Limited.

Findings—Negative workplace gossip is a strong predictor of both performance pressure and workplace incivility, and performance pressure is a strong mediator in the negative gossip-incivility relationship. Negative gossip has a negative influence on performance pressure.

Practical Implications—The findings were challenging for managers in high-pressure service industries, leading them to believe that the problem of gossip management is a psychological or cultural intervention issue. The research shows that positive gossip with the creation of reputational debt is psychologically as uncomfortable as negative gossip, and that performance pressure, irrespective of its social source, is a key cause of workplace incivility.

Originality/Value—The current research contributes to the literature of organizational behavior by developing the notion of reputational debt to explain why positive gossip produces obligation-based anxiety in collectivist contexts, offering a more culturally sensitive explanation than the current two-sided sword explanations. It develops a culturally inflected extension of AET by showing that cultural relational logic, namely collectivism and power distance, is not just a contextual.

Keywords: Workplace positive gossip, Workplace negative gossip, Performance pressure, Innovative work behaviour, Workplace incivility.

JEL Classification Codes: M12, M14, D23

1 | INTRODUCTION

Informal evaluative discourse, commonly recognized as Workplace gossip, with its fluid, often volatile undercurrents, characterizes the organizational terrain of the mid-2020s (Khalid et al., 2025). It has garnered increasing attention from numerous scholars due to its dual and critical nature (H. Zhao et al., 2024; L. Zhao et al., 2024). Even though the classical management paradigm considered gossip at the workplace as an

external or even deviant distractor, the modern evidence indicates that gossip is a principal social mechanism that determines the heartbeat of organizational life ([Gai & Greer, 2025](#)). The major tool for information processing and navigating reputational risks has become challenging due to gossip in a high-stakes environment marked by macroeconomic variability, digital disruption, and collective cultural change, in which the Pakistani banking sector now operates ([Akbar et al., 2026](#)). This exploration leaves behind the naive gossip as an important caveat to conduct a critically argumentative study of the psychological processes behind evaluating talk into actual behavioral consequences.

Using the Affective Events Theory (AET) ([Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996](#)) and integrating the latent mechanisms that motivate employees to engage in workplace gossip, the present study describes how performance pressure is a paradoxical mediator that can propel employees towards constructive innovation or destructive incivility, grounded in the valence of the conversation and the existence of organizational boundary conditions ([Zhu et al., 2025](#)). The current academic literature has long recognized the omnipresence of gossip in the workplace, and empirical evidence from researchers such as [Begemann et al. \(2023\)](#). It confirms that about 90 percent of employees gossip, and evaluative discourse represents up to 15 percent of all professional digital communication. Nonetheless, there are major gaps that interfere with the existing knowledge of these dynamics.

Moreover, the psychological black box between being told about gossip and acting on it is still not entirely black-and-white ([Sun et al., 2023](#)). Although direct correlations between negative gossip and turnover intentions have been established, the mediating role of performance pressure remains undefined ([Zhu et al., 2024](#)). Discovering how the same pressure created by gossip can simultaneously create both challenge appraisals, which drive innovation, and threat appraisals, which create workplace incivility, is unknown. The literature lacks a synthesized perspective on the results. Research has traditionally drawn a line between pro-social and counterproductive actions, and it does not consider the duality of gossip experience, a situation in which one employee is a victim of both positive and negative gossip at the same time ([Zhu et al., 2025](#)). This exploration brings these pieces together into a specific theoretical construct. Gossip is a salient affective event that requires a resource-heavy response, the effectiveness of which depends on perceived organizational support.

1.1 | Theoretical Gap and Research Problem

The research problem stems from the inability of current models to explain the divergent behavioral patterns that arise from informal evaluative talk in high-pressure service settings. In the attempt to go beyond evocative descriptions, the following three theoretical gaps are identified and prioritized in this study:

1.2 | The Gap between the Mediated-Affective Pathway

The current literature often assumes a positive linear correlation between gossip and its consequences ([Ajay & Sedari Mudiyansele, 2025](#)). This ignores the internal cognitive load being carried till it becomes unbearable and translates into incivility or otherwise ([Cheng et al., 2024](#); [Pang & Zhao, 2025](#)). How the performance pressure serves as the critical cognitive-affective hinge that mediates social information into behavioral intent remains unknown.

1.3 | The Contextual Boundary Gap

The use of Affective Events Theory (AET) has been quite widespread in the literature to explain the impact of workplace gossip and the consequences ([Sun et al., 2023](#)). However, it does not explain how cultural norms such as saving face and deference to hierarchies in the banking industry of Pakistan alter the emotional salience of gossip ([Akbar et al., 2026](#)). The gap lies in the fact that identical gossip events lead to different levels of "displaced aggression" across cultures and sectors.

1.4 | Outcome Duality Synthesis Gap

No cohesive study exists that looks at the effects of gossip on the promotion of both "Innovation" (IWB) and "Incivility" (WIN) ([H. Zhao et al., 2024](#)). The inadequacy of one-sided outcome models in this paper is filled by the discussion of the two-fold direction through which informal talk determines the survival of organizations in the new generation of digital change.

Based on the gaps, the following objectives have been identified;

- To examine the influence of positive and negative gossip in the workplace-on-workplace incivility.
- To analyze the performance pressure mediation of the relationship between workplace gossip and WIN, as well as innovative work behavior.
- To study the boundary condition of POS as a moderator of the relationship between performance pressure and innovative work behavior in the banking sector of Pakistan.

1.5 | Research Questions

RQ1: How, in the banking sector of Pakistan, can positive and negative gossip influence the WIN?

RQ2: Does the mediating role of performance pressure impact the relationship between gossip and employee outcomes (WIN and IWB) at the workplace?

RQ3: How does the boundary condition of POS moderate the relationship between PP and Employee outcomes, especially in the banking sector of Pakistan, and manifest within the socio-cultural and organizational context?

Table 1

Mapping of Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question	Hypotheses	Relationship Path/Mechanism	Theoretical justification
RQ1: How do negative and positive gossip patterns influence the manifestation of workplace incivility through the mechanism of performance pressure?	H ₁ : Negative workplace gossip (WNG) positively impacts workplace incivility (WIN).	WNG to WIN	Negative gossip is a social stressor that triggers "threat appraisals," depleting psychological resources (self-esteem) and leading to displaced aggression as a retaliatory defense.
	H ₃ : Negative gossip (WNG) is positively related to performance pressure (PP).	WNG to PP	
	H ₆ : Performance pressure (PP) positively impacts workplace incivility (WIN).	PP to WIN	
		WNG to PP to WIN1	

RQ2: Through what psychological pathways does informal evaluative talk foster or hinder innovative work behavior in high-stakes service environments?	H ₇ : Performance pressure (PP) positively mediates the relationship between negative gossip (WNG) and workplace incivility (WIN).			
	H ₂ : Positive workplace gossip (WPG) positively impacts innovative work behavior (IWB).	WPG to IWB		Positive gossip enhances "psychological safety" and "promotion focus," allowing employees to reframe performance pressure as a challenge, thereby driving risk-taking and idea generation.
	H ₄ : Positive gossip (WPG) is positively related to performance pressure (PP).	WPG to PP		
	H ₅ : Performance pressure (PP) positively impacts innovative work behavior (IWB).	PP to IWB		
RQ3: Under what contextual conditions does organizational support modify the relationship between performance-induced strain and constructive behavioral outcomes?	H ₈ : Performance pressure (PP) positively mediates the relationship between positive gossip (WPG) and innovative work behavior (IWB).	WPG to PP to IWB	1	
	H ₉ : Perceived organizational support (POS) moderates the relationship between performance pressure (PP) and innovative work behavior (IWB).	POS X PP to IWB (Moderation)	1	POS serves as a "resource caravan" that provides the safety net needed to prevent "affective rumination" from becoming debilitating, instead channeling energy into adaptive thinking.

1.5 | Contribution Towards the Study – “Insights from Pakistan’s Banking Sector.”

Past studies on workplace gossip ([Greenslade-Yeats et al., 2025](#); [Khalid et al., 2025](#)) are mostly concerned with individualistic societies where autonomy and personal reputation matter. As Pakistan is a collectivist society with high power distance, here the gossip is mostly bound to the hierarchical relational network. In banking sectors of emerging economies like Pakistan, positive gossip fosters indirect cohesion that is mediated by performance pressure arising from expectations and hierarchical reputational visibility. This corrupts employees' trust in the system and can corrode intrinsic motivation to be more innovative and productive. It shows heightened sensitivity towards organizational control and hierarchical evaluation. This divergence from universality to the context-specific extension leads to the Affective Event theory extension to the collectivist service sector environments ([Lyu et al., 2024](#); [Madan et al., 2026](#)). Now, this clarifies that the gossip’s impact is not universal but culturally oriented, making this study a context-based theoretical contribution.

1.6 | The Future of the Banking Industry in Pakistan (2024 - 2026)

The Strategic Context. Gossip and pressure are two factors that need to be analyzed within the environment in which they occur to understand how they operate. The banking sector in Pakistan in 2025 is operating in a cautious-optimistic environment amid macroeconomic uncertainty.

Table 2

Banking Sector of Pakistan

Economic Variable	Strategic Status (2024/26)	Link to Research Mechanism
Monetary Policy	Interest rate cuts to stimulate credit	Margin compression increases target-driven performance pressure International (2026) .
Islamic Banking	Full conversion mandate by Jan 2028	Massive reskilling stress triggers informal "protection-based" gossip about job security (International, 2026 ; Raza et al., 2023).
Skills Shortage	35,000 to 40,000 unfilled positions	Increased workload and "visibility" of high performers, intensifying gossip-induced pressure (Mach, 2025)
Digital Banking	SBP 'Raqami' & 'KT Bank' pilots	Fear of obsolescence creates a fertile ground for evaluative rumors and affective rumination, as in International (2026) . (Fu et al., 2025 ; Méndez-Suárez et al., 2025)

1.7 | Theoretical Application of AET to the Research Model

Workplace events activate emotional as well as cognitive responses, which subsequently outline employee attitude and their behaviors according to the Affective Event Theory ([Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996](#)). In the research model, workplace gossip serves as the salient affective event (both positive and negative). Gossip can induce comparison that can be judgmental and reputational visibility, thereby triggering performance pressure as a psychological mechanism ([Gai & Greer, 2025](#); [Wax et al., 2022](#)). This can translate into either constructive or negative outcomes, which pertain to innovative work behavior and incivility, respectively.

1.7.1. Workplace Gossip to Performance Pressure

Workplace gossip heightens employees' awareness of peer evaluation, inducing emotional arousal (Trust erosion and cognitive load) and reputational anxiety. This aligns with AET's premise that the events can activate affective states and can manifest into heightened performance expectations ([Ruoxi et al., 2023](#)).

1.7.2. Performance Pressure to Workplace Incivility

A strain and negative energy are created when performance pressure is perceived as excessive. It will lead to low-intensity deviant behavior that may violate the norms of respect within the organizations. As reflected by [BANO et al. \(2021\)](#), the pathway from negative affective events to counterproductive work behaviors.

1.7.3. Performance pressure on Innovative Work Behavior

Now, when the gossip is positive, it exerts pressure, but in a positive way, motivating and inspiring curiosity toward constructive innovation. This illustrates AET's dual pathway, where events can elicit both positive and negative affect depending on interpretation ([Ruoxi et al., 2023](#)).

1.7.4. Perceived Organizational Support as a Moderator

POS shapes how employees interpret gossip and pressure. High support environments shield negative affect and intensify positive emotions and consistent contextual outcomes, shaping emotional responses ([Utomo et al., 2023](#)).

Table 3

Theoretical Mechanisms and Underpinning of the Research Model

Variable	AET Mechanism	Effect on Outcomes
Workplace Gossip ($\pm$)	Salient affective event $\rightarrow$ triggers evaluation	Initiates performance pressure
Performance Pressure	Emotional arousal $\rightarrow$ reputational concern	Mediates gossip $\rightarrow$ incivility/innovation
Workplace Incivility	Negative affective response $\rightarrow$ strain	Deviant behavior violates respect for norms
Workplace Gossip ($\pm$)	Salient affective event $\rightarrow$ triggers evaluation	Initiates performance pressure

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | The Valency Tension: Functional necessity vs. Dysfunctional distraction.

There is a basic controversy on whether or not workplace gossip is deviant in nature or functional. Conventional perceptions identify gossip as a factor that results in distrust and declining performance ([Akbar et al., 2026](#)). In recent research by [H. Zhao et al. \(2024\)](#), this has been refuted by viewing gossip as a double-edged sword, however. The conflict is in the Source-Target-Recipient Triad: gossip can help strengthen the bond between the gossipers and the target, but it is also a kind of cold violence that demeans the self-esteem of the target ([H. Zhao et al., 2024](#)). Gossip is an essential informal feedback mechanism used in the banking industry in Pakistan, with limited formal communication, but it is also used as a form of social exclusion.

2.2 | The Emotional Pathway: Shame vs. Resilience

The mediating role of distinct emotions (Performance Pressure) is split into two sides in current research. According to one of the schools of thought, negative gossip leads to moral abhorrence and avoidance ([Gai & Greer, 2025](#)). In its turn, [Akbar et al. \(2026\)](#) find the narrower mechanism within the Pakistani context: Shame. This poses a theoretical dilemma: does the shame caused by gossip always result in withdrawal, or can Emotive Suppleness help to alleviate it? [Ghazanfar Ali et al. \(2026\)](#) present the argument that adaptive coping is employed by strong people in order to continually control negative emotions and thus sustain pro-social behaviors even when they experience feelings of shame.

2.3 | The Conceptualization of the Gossip Paradox of High-Power Distance situations

Workplace gossip (WG) has been conservatively discussed as an informal, critical conversation regarding a third party that is not present, but the purpose of it within organizations is much more complicated than mere transfer of information ([Abdelghani et al., 2025](#)). There is a major theoretical conflict in the literature concerning the valency of gossip. Although the functionalist paradigm implies that gossip is an important social regulator and norm-enforcement tool ([Liao et al., 2022](#)), the dysfunction school of thought views it as a type of managerial passive violence, which undermines interpersonal trust ([Zong et al., 2021](#)).

This tension is magnified in the particular situation of the banking sector in Pakistan, where there is a high-power distance and collectivist culture ([Ullah et al., 2021](#)). In contrast to Western individualistic environments, where gossip is usually about individual autonomy, gossip in Pakistan is well-established within the framework of hierarchical relationship networks ([Khan & Chaudhary, 2026](#)). In this case, gossip is a kind of informal substitute for the more restricted upward feedback processes, but it also forms a more socially visible space in which the reputation of an individual is a collective property, and any evaluative discourse is high-stakes.

2.4 | Negative Workplace Gossip and Workplace Incivility

Negative gossip acts as a destructive and affective event in a workplace that induces emotional reactions that impact interpersonal trust and emerge as uncivil behavior. Gossip provokes feelings of embarrassment, resentment, and suppressed anger and is defined as the informal communication about colleagues not present at the spot that potentially harms reputation and career prospects ([Greenslade-Yeats et al., 2025](#)). According to AET ([Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996](#)), such an event category generates negative emotions that shape ensuing actions. Hence, in the case of negative gossip, the emotional exclusion and distrust manifest as WIN ([Newman et al., 2025](#)). Empathy and respect in the workplace ([Akbar et al., 2025](#)) are displaced by incivility, whether hidden or overt ([Mahmoodi, 2025](#)), leading to disengagement and reduced cooperation.

Recent applications of Affective Events Theory (AET) suggest that NWG acts as a "salient affective event" that triggers a cascade of negative internal states ([Arooj, 2024](#)). In Pakistan's banking industry, NWG often reaches the target through close-knit professional circles, damaging their self-concept and triggering "moral disgust" or shame ([Ghazanfar Ali et al., 2026](#)). When employees go through this erosion of self-worth, they often engage in displaced aggression ([Cheng et al., 2024](#)). Because the high-power distance environment makes direct retaliation against the gossiper (often a supervisor or influential peer) economically and socially risky, employees redirect their hostility toward "seemingly innocent targets"—most notably, customers ([Madan et al., 2026](#)). This mechanism of "service sabotage" demonstrates that the impact of NWG is not merely psychological but carries tangible economic consequences for the bank's service quality and reputation.

H₁: *Negative workplace gossip positively impacts workplace incivility.*

2.5 | Positive Workplace Gossip and Innovative Work Behavior

Positive workplace gossip serves as a constructive, effective event that motivates innovative work behavior by highlighting colleagues' achievements and strengths ([BANO et al., 2021](#)). This type of activity

generates pride, inspires, and creates a sense of belonging that motivates employees to engage in creative problem-solving and to share ([Dai et al., 2022](#)). Recent studies highlight the positive effects of positive gossip that fosters psychological safety and collective efficacy, which are the antecedents of innovation ([Liao et al., 2022](#)). Reputational capital strengthening signals competence, driven by positive gossip, and can motivate employees to take risks, experiment, and offer novel solutions. This behavior links the informal communication to innovative outcomes ([Soliman et al., 2024](#)).

Although the effect of WPG on innovative work behavior (IWB) is not linear, the concept to which social bonding and pride are typically linked ([Dai et al., 2022](#)). In theory, WPG enhances Psychological Safety, which is the antecedent to the risk-taking and idea promotion required for innovation. Nevertheless, WPG may be a two-edged sword in collectivistic societies. The important point of the argument here is that being the topic of positive talk gives rise to a sense of reputational watchfulness or burden of excellence. It causes a Promotion-oriented Cognitive Crafting process, in which employees actively re-construe their surroundings in ways that help them achieve growth objectives, but also face increased anxiety as a result of overthinking and pressure to sustain their high social status ([Liu et al., 2022](#); [Sun et al., 2023](#)). This stress indicates that WPG does not merely inspire, but it puts a special kind of social pressure that requires a resource-intensive reaction to avoid thinking overload.

H₂: *Positive workplace gossip positively impacts the innovative work behavior.*

2.6 | Workplace Gossip and Performance Pressure

Workplace Gossip, thought to be insignificant, is in fact a powerful social informal communication mechanism. It entails reputational capital, visibility, and incivility ([Greenslade-Yeats et al., 2025](#)). The dual nature of gossip has been detrimental to both reputation and career opportunities, and sometimes shown to strengthen reputational capital and cue competence ([Abdelghani et al., 2025](#)). Under the Affective Events Theory ([Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996](#)), gossip is an affective event, which brings out emotional responses, either fear of reputational loss or pride of recognition, which order future actions.

Employees who think gossip is widespread tend to believe that it is an implicit social evaluation, making them more attuned to their visibility as employees, and forcing them to work harder to evade being the victims of negative gossip ([El-Sayed Mousa & ElSayed Mahmoud, 2024](#)). This type of contact creates a paradox: even though gossip is informal and hard to control, it exerts a strong influence on employees to maintain productivity and protect their social status ([Khalid et al., 2025](#)). Previous literature shows that reputational issues associated with gossip may intensify performance pressure, leading to increased productivity and even innovation, as employees expect to be rewarded for excellence ([Cheng et al., 2024](#); [Gao et al., 2024](#); [Tebbutt & Marchington, 1997](#)). Nevertheless, the same process may lead to stress and interpersonal strain, especially when gossip is misunderstood or disproportionately affects vulnerable populations. Therefore, gossip is a two-sided affective process that can inspire performance by instilling reputational watchfulness, but can just as well destroy morale and relationships when unregulated.

H₃: *Negative gossip is negatively related to performance pressure.*

H₄: *Positive gossip is positively related to performance pressure.*

2.7 | Psychological Meta-cognitive Analysis of Performance Pressure.

Performance Pressure (PP) is the hinge of the cognitive explanation of this model offered by AET. Instead of a consistent job feature, PP is a variable affective experience, which is motivated by social evaluation ([BANO et al., 2021](#)). The theoretical discussion centers on whether PP is a challenge or a threat. Induced by NWG, PP is generally viewed as a threat, which initiates Affective Rumination, an intrusive thought process that exhausts the mental resources of the employee and leads to either quiet quitting or incivility ([Mahmoodi, 2025](#)). On the contrary, positive gossip or when the employee has a strong Internal Locus of Control, PP can be redefined as a challenge, creating resilience and innovative ways of solving the problem ([Trivedi & Pattusamy, 2022](#)). Though the positive may sometimes build the performance pressure so much that it may go towards incivility instead of creativity due to the emotional exhaustion ([Akbar et al., 2025](#); [Khan et al., 2024](#)). In the banking sector in Pakistan, which is experiencing a tremendous transformation (an Islamic conversion and the digital disruption), such appraisal management is essential for organizational survival.

2.8 | Performance Pressure and Innovative Work Behavior

Inventiveness and novelty can also be achieved by stimulating effective events through performance pressure within organizations, especially in Pakistan's banking sector. Affective Events Theory posits ([Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996](#)) that the emotional response to an occurrence in the workplace affects succeeding events. When performance pressure is seen as a challenge rather than a threat, employees experience positive arousal, focus, and motivation, which can lead to innovative behaviors such as generating ideas and experimenting ([De Clercq et al., 2023](#)). Recent studies suggest that medium-pressure rates enhance thinking and encourage employees to seek new methods for meeting difficult goals.

In this sense, performance pressure may be deployed as a driver of innovation by creating a sense of urgency and provoking adaptive thinking ([Ruoxi et al., 2023](#)). It is supported by both emotional and cognitive processes. The pressure of performance heightens attentional focus and perceived responsibility, which in turn induces proactive behavior and risk-taking required in innovation. It also brings affective states such as determination and resilience that are between pressure and creativity ([El-Sayed Mousa & ElSayed Mahmoud, 2024](#)). The impact, though, is contingent on contextual variables: if the climate and psychological safety are favorable, pressure can be transformed into positive energy; in other cases, it may lead to stress and burnout ([De Clercq et al., 2023](#)). The assumption that performance pressure positively influences innovative work behavior, therefore aligns with AET, as pressure is an affective experience that initiates motivational emotions and mental engagement, ultimately driving employees into innovative activity ([Trivedi & Pattusamy, 2022](#)). Further research is required to understand the influence of digital workplaces and AI-intelligence-based performance monitoring on this dynamic, especially in hybrid workplaces under increased technology-mediated pressure.

H₅: *Performance pressure positively impacts innovative work behavior.*

2.9 | Performance Pressure and Workplace Incivility

Acts of incivility can be described as psychological harassment or emotional hostility that breaches the ideal standards of mutual respect intended to be present in the workplace ([Blanco-Donoso et al., 2019](#)). The activities of colleagues and managers in the workplace are a source of anxiety for employees ([Muñoz-Fernández & Sánchez-Jiménez, 2020](#)). Attitudes of incivility in the workplace may be classified into two categories: hidden and overt. The incivility that occurs in the workplace is either caused by coworkers or has a detrimental impact on employees and the business in many ways. Additionally, it destroys the interpersonal relationships that exist between colleagues, which drives up the cost of health care. According to [He and Wei \(2022\)](#), employees who are subjected to antisocial behavior are more likely to be unwilling to assist their coworkers in the future.

The issue of incivility in the workplace is something that has to be addressed by organizations that have the goal of fostering interpersonal interactions among their workforce ([Chen & Eyouun, 2021](#)). Incivility and offensiveness are two of the many characteristics that might have an impact on the performance and profitability of an organization. An employee who participates in incivility in the workplace may have considerable unpleasant sentiments as a result of the consequences that it has on job satisfaction, dedication, turnover, as well as trust between individuals and individuals inside the business ([Petitta & Jiang, 2019](#)). Even though "affect" is often used to define job happiness, relatively little is understood about the factors that lead to meaningful emotional experiences in the workplace and the implications of such experiences ([Coles et al., 2019](#)). The present study has used an affective event theory at work, which highlights the significance of work events as proximal sources of affective responses. This theory is based on the fundamental literature on moods and emotions, and it is presented here ([Hunter et al., 2019](#)). When employees believe that the prevalence of gossip related to their place of employment is high, they should be subjected to higher levels of performance pressure. This means that employees feel more pressure to perform well on the job and experience a decline in their psychological well-being when the valence of their perceived gossip prevalence is negative ([Tan et al., 2021](#)). Incivility in the workplace is linked to a decline in performance, anxiety, and discouragement from one's organization. In light of this, it is hypothesized that:

H₆: *There is a positive relationship between performance pressure and workplace incivility.*

2.10 | Performance Pressure as a Mediator

As workplace gossip has dual behavioral outcomes, negative workplace gossip is treated as a harmful affective event, and it may increase pressure on performance, potentially leading to destructive outcomes ([Gai & Greer, 2025](#)). Gossip in general is a way that triggers emotions such as anxiety, shame, and defensiveness. AET by [Weiss and Cropanzano \(1996\)](#) elucidates that these emotional reactions mediate consequences, with performance pressure emerging as a key mechanism. Pervasive negative gossip compels employees to demonstrate competence to avoid reputational harm, yet this heightened pressure often leads to strain and uncivil responses ([Khan et al., 2024](#)). Thus, performance pressure mediates the link between negative gossip and incivility, as workers attempt to protect their image under evaluative scrutiny.

H₇: *Performance pressure positively mediates the relationship between negative gossip and incivility.*

Conversely, positive workplace gossip serves as a form of recognition and belonging, functioning as a constructive affective knowledge that channels performance pressure into prosocial consequences ([Liao et al., 2022](#)). Gossip in the workplace progresses, validates capability, and also nurtures an emotional state of pride and permission. As soon as employees engage in constructive discourse, they view performance pressure as motivational rather than a threat, thereby minimizing incivility and inspiring IWB ([Dai et al., 2022](#)). Positive gossip about workplace consequences is mediated by performance pressure. The direction of the pressure varies. Negative gossip-induced pressure increases incivility, whereas Positive gossip-induced pressure elicits innovation and collaborative interactions ([Khan et al., 2024](#)). This type of mechanism highlights the significance of contextualizing gossip in AET, as its valency determines whether it is a devastating oppressor or an innovative stimulus.

Mutually, given results stress the contradictory nature of gossip in workplaces: it is both a reputational threat and a motivational resource ([Dai et al., 2022](#)). According to the performance pressure as mediator, the gossip can be translated into conflicting results: incivility or novelty, based on its valence. Researchers can further explore other moderating variables, such as culture and gender. By putting forward AET with new evidence, the researchers can comprehend the influence of workplace gossip on emotive experiences, performance pressure, and finally, the path of employee performance ([El-Sayed Mousa & ElSayed Mahmoud, 2024](#)).

H₈: *Performance pressure positively mediates the relationship between positive workplace gossip and innovative work behavior.*

2.11 | Moderation of Perceived Organizational Support

Although literature has discussed the perceived organizational support as a moderator, this has not been discussed formally with performance pressure or negative gossip directly as a moderator. Precisely, performance pressure can serve as a motivational-affective event that nurtures creativity; still, it is often perceived as a stressor that brings emotional enervation and disconnection ([Wax et al., 2022](#)). The AET offers a valuable perspective that the emotional implications of performance pressure are contingent on contextual signals, with POS serving as a pivotal boundary condition ([Ding et al., 2023](#)). When employees feel that their organization is behind them, they view pressure as a challenge, which builds resilience and psychological safety that enable them to take risks and generate new ideas ([Liao et al., 2022](#)). In low-support contexts, however, the same pressure is more likely to cause strain, which stifles innovation. This indicates that POS not only mitigates adverse outcomes but also actively reinterprets the significance of performance pressure, aligning it with positive emotional trajectories.

The banking industry is a great example of this moderation effect from a sectoral point of view. Banks put a lot of pressure on their employees because they have high performance expectations, strict rules, and customer-focused goals. Without support from the organization, this kind of stress can lead to burnout, rule-following errors, and reduced innovation ([Aldabbas et al., 2023](#)). But when banks put money into good HR

practices, recognition systems, and employee development, POS changes the way performance demands are seen as chances to grow and stand out from the competition. Employees in supportive banking environments are more likely to channel pressure into innovative service delivery, digital transformation, and customer relationship strategies (Ni et al., 2026). Thus, POS moderates the pressure–innovation link by providing the psychological and structural resources necessary to convert stress into creativity, underscoring its strategic importance in high-pressure industries where innovation is essential for survival.

H₉: *Perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between performance pressure and innovative work behavior.*

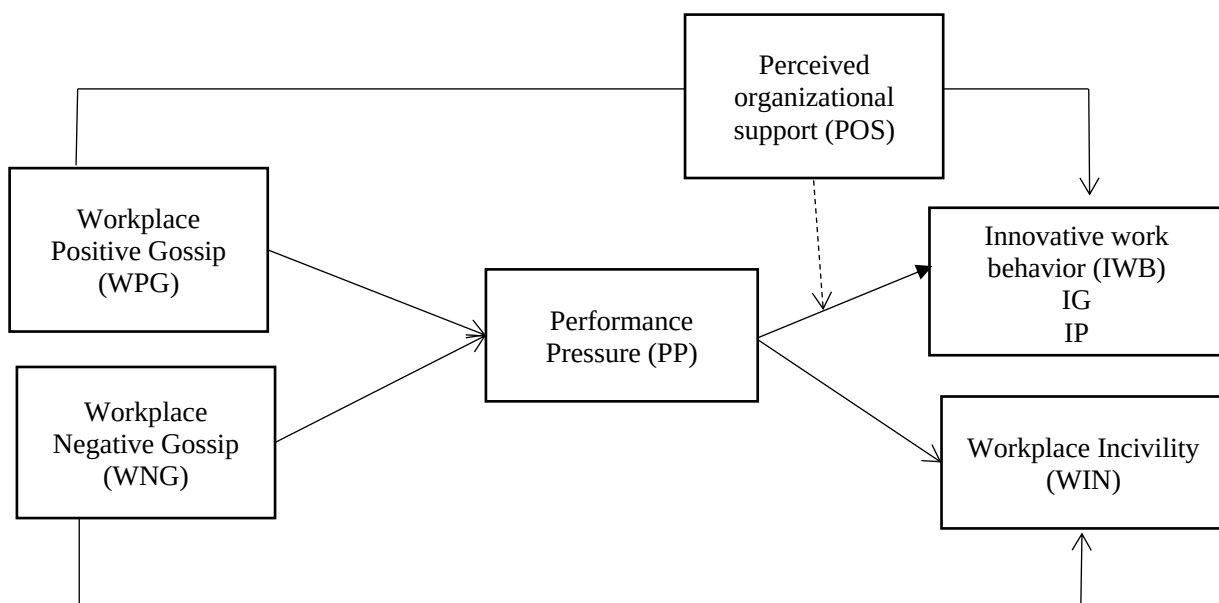
2.12 | Border Conditions of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Resilience

The last integrated gap is the role of the Perceived Organizational Support (POS) as a parade of resources (Utomo et al., 2023). In high-stakes service settings, POS plays a key role as a boundary condition that alters the level of emotional intensity of gossip-generated pressure (Wang & Fu, 2024). The psychological safety that is offered by high-support environments would protect the employees against the adverse contagion of NWG.

Moreover, it is labeled as Emotional Resilience, which enables employees to cope with shame and continue to behave pro-socially despite negative social incidences (Akbar et al., 2025). Devoid of these organizational and individual buffers, the growing workplace pressure of 2025-2026 is thus likely to result in a systemic disengagement and loss of the so-called human-tech hybrid superiority that contemporary banks need (Mach et al., 2025).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



3 | METHODOLOGY & DESIGN

3.1 | Research Design

This study adopts a cross-sectional research design focusing on employees in Pakistan's banking sector, specifically Allied Bank, MCB Bank Limited, Bank Al-Habib Limited, and Meezan Bank Limited. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a Likert scale to assess workplace gossip, performance pressure, perceived organizational support, WIN, and innovative work behavior. A deductive approach was employed, guided by research questions and hypotheses. Although the study analyses a theoretical model, its primary contribution lies in predicting how the informal mechanism translates into professional behaviors in a specific, high-stakes service environment. The sample size of 320 falls within the recommended range of 100–350 for Structural Equation Modeling ([Hair et al., 2019](#)), ensuring reliability. During pilot testing, it was observed that the item of Performance pressure, PP4, was deleted due to its lower value. Similarly, items WIN6 and WNG1 were also eliminated for the same reason.

3.2 | Research Design and Sampling Strategy

Even though current research assumes a cross-sectional design owing to the immediate accessibility of the research population, it is recognized that this design offers an overview of perceptions, rather than conclusive evidence of causal relationships ([Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2024](#)). But the research is grounded in Affective Events Theory (AET) that offers a strong rationale for the proposed causal relations. In addressing selection bias from the purposive sampling, we ensured that respondents had been working in the bank for one year to ensure they were well-connected in the informal communication channels of the bank.

3.3 | Measures

[Kuo et al. \(2015\)](#) 10-item questionnaire is used to find out how people feel about workplace gossip. It uses a 7-point frequency scale to separate workplace positive gossip (WPG) from workplace negative gossip (WNG). [Eisenberger and Aselage \(2009\)](#) two-item scale, expanded to six items. The two-item performance pressure scale was adapted to include six items to reflect the complexity of social and professional pressures in the Pakistani banking sector. The change was theoretically based on the need to incorporate "visibility" and "reputational vigilance" in collectivist cultures ([Hughes et al., 2020](#)). A pilot study was conducted with 30 bankers to assess validity. The content validity was established by two experts. In this stage, items with factor loadings (PP4=0.21, WIN6=-0.02, WNG1=0.26) less than the statistical value of < 0.70 (PP4, WIN6, WNG1) were removed to enhance Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and reliability ([Kruyen et al., 2013](#)). [Cortina et al. \(2001\)](#) seven-item Workplace Incivility Scale (WIN) measures workplace incivility using a 5-point Likert scale to record disrespectful actions. To enhance this framework, perceived organizational support (POS) is assessed utilizing the 8-item short version of [Eisenberger et al. \(1986\)](#). Survey of POS, which gauges the degree to which employees perceive themselves as valued and cared for by their organization. Innovative work behavior (IWB) is commonly assessed using [Janssen \(2000\)](#) nine-item scale, which captures idea generation, promotion, and realization. Together, these validated scales provide a comprehensive measurement framework for examining how gossip, PP, POS, and IWB interact to shape workplace outcomes such as incivility and innovation.

4 | RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 | Sampling Methodology and Use of SMARTPLS 4.0.

This research made use of purposive sampling, whereby employees in various organizational units were sampled so that the respondents would have firsthand experience with gossiping in the workplace as well as pressures associated with performance. The use of purposive sampling can be explained by the fact that, in this way, researchers will be able to recruit the participants who are the most relevant to the investigated phenomenon and, therefore, enhance the validity of the results obtained ([Etikan & Bala, 2017](#); [Etikan et al., 2016](#)). Among the 350 launched questionnaires, 320 were returned, resulting in 91% response rate, which is above the minimum level that is recommended in structural equation modeling and guarantees the necessary level of statistical power ([Kline, 2015](#)). Measurement as well as structural models were estimated in SmartPLS v4.0 since partial least squares (PLS-SEM) is especially appreciated in exploratory studies, analysis of complex mediation and moderation, as well as studies with comparatively small sample sizes relative to covariance-based SEM ([Hair et al., 2019](#)). PLS-SEM is more suitable than CB-SEM to investigate the dynamic nature of the relationship between workplace gossip and performance pressure, as well as perceived organizational support and innovative work behavior, because it focuses on prediction and variance explanation as opposed to model fit and theory confirmation, as is the case of CB-SEM ([Dash & Paul, 2021](#)). This research design enhances rigor by aligning the method of analysis with the exploratory and predictive character of the research question. More importantly, the data was not normal, and the best research method in this case is PLS based analysis as it does not consider the normality of the data.

4.2 | Justification for using the sampling method

The use of purposive sampling is valid in this study since the processes of workplace gossip are very context-specific and influenced by organizational culture, hierarchy, and sector-specific dynamics ([Obilor, 2023](#)). Gossip in the banking industry of Pakistan is entrenched in hierarchical relational structures and reputational salience and performance pressure; therefore, it is imperative to strategically choose participants to address the issues in contexts where they are most relevant ([Sangavi & G, 2026](#)). In contrast to probability sampling, purposive sampling enables researchers to sample employees who are directly exposed to gossip-driven interactions, and this ensures that the data reflects the subtle affective and behavioral processes postulated by Affective Events Theory.

In addition, purposive sampling is also reasonable due to the fact that the study aims to investigate particular psychological mechanisms (performance pressure, incivility, innovation) instead of making generalizations on the basis of all industries ([Greenslade-Yeats et al., 2025](#)). The approach selects banking institutions that have high performance requirements and collectivist cultural values; therefore, the sample will capture the crucial circumstances under which gossip functions as a reputational risk and as a motivational asset. This purposeful choice complements the theoretical contribution by placing findings in a framework where dual pathways of gossip are most evident.

Table 4*Descriptive Statistics*

Name	Mean	Observed min	Observed max	Standard deviation	Cramér-von Mises p value
PP1	3.74	1	5	1.05	0
PP2	4.11	1	5	0.94	0
PP3	3.91	1	5	0.98	0
PP5	3.94	1	5	1.07	0
PP6	3.98	1	5	0.91	0
WIN1	3.93	1	5	1.04	0
WIN2	4.10	1	5	0.90	0
WIN3	3.96	1	5	0.91	0
WIN4	3.96	1	5	0.96	0
WIN5	3.98	1	5	0.93	0
WPG1	4.03	1	5	1.00	0
WPG2	3.90	1	5	0.97	0
WPG3	3.73	1	5	1.15	0
WPG4	3.80	1	5	1.14	0
WPG5	3.66	1	5	1.12	0
WNG2	3.94	1	5	1.01	0
WNG3	3.92	1	5	0.96	0
WNG4	3.98	1	5	0.97	0
WNG5	3.98	1	5	0.97	0
POS1	3.81	1	5	1.02	0
POS2	3.76	1	5	1.05	0
POS3	3.91	1	5	0.87	0
POS4	3.75	1	5	0.88	0
POS5	3.67	1	5	0.98	0
POS6	3.67	1	5	1.05	0
POS8	3.97	1	5	0.88	0
IP1	3.75	1	5	0.96	0
IP2	3.69	1	5	0.97	0
IP3	3.78	1	5	1.01	0
II1	3.64	1	5	1.04	0
II2	3.85	1	5	1.08	0
II3	3.74	1	5	0.94	0
POS7	4.06	2	5	0.90	0
IG1	3.93	2	5	0.84	0
IG2	3.71	2	5	0.94	0
IG3	3.79	2	5	0.93	0

**Note.* PP = Performance Pressure; WIN = Workplace Incivility; WNG = Workplace Negative Gossip; WPG = Workplace Positive Gossip; IG = Idea Generation; II = Idea Implementation; IP = Idea Promotion; POS = Perceived Organizational Support. All items (e.g., PP1–PP6, WI2–WI7, WNG1–WNG5, WPG1–WPG5, IG1–IG3, II1–II3, IP1–IP3, POS1–POS8) represent individual measurement indicators of their respective constructs.

4.3 | Measurement Model

The measurement model results provided evidence for satisfactory convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 5*Validity & Reliability*

Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho-a)	Composite reliability (rho-c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Performance pressure	PP1	0.59	0.75	0.76	0.83	0.45
	PP2	0.56				
	PP3	0.71				
	PP5	0.75				
	PP6	0.67				
Workplace Incivility	WIN1	0.54	0.84	0.84	0.88	0.56
	WIN2	0.67				
	WIN3	0.72				
	WIN4	0.78				
	WIN5	0.74				
Workplace Negative Gossip	WNG2	0.75	0.85	0.85	0.89	0.63
	WNG3	0.84				
	WNG4	0.80				
	WNG5	0.83				
	WPG1	0.53				
Workplace Positive Gossip	WPG2	0.74	0.78	0.80	0.85	0.54
	WPG3	0.78				
	WPG4	0.80				
	WPG5	0.76				
	IG1	0.81				
Innovative Work Behavior	IG2	0.87	0.96	0.96	0.97	0.78
	IG3	0.88				
	II1	0.88				
	II2	0.90				
	II3	0.91				
	IP1	0.90				
	IP2	0.91				
	IP3	0.90				
	POS1	0.86				
Perceived Organizational Support	POS2	0.89	0.94	0.94	0.95	0.72
	POS3	0.85				
	POS4	0.86				
	POS5	0.83				
	POS6	0.87				
	POS7	0.81				
	POS8	0.80				

Table 5 indicates that the validity and reliability of the selected construct exceed threshold levels and are robust, with strong internal consistency. Performance pressure has an AVE of 0.45. This slight difference from the threshold of 0.5 can be explained by the strengthening values of Composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha. Hence, following the recommendation of [Fornell and Larcker \(1981\)](#), the AVE value for Performance pressure indicates a satisfactory level, given its alpha (0.75) and composite value (7.6), which exceed the minimum threshold of 0.7.

4.4 | Discriminant Validity

The purpose of establishing discriminant validity is to demonstrate that a particular construct is theoretically distinct from other constructs and can be measured as being different from constructs that are disconnected from one another.

Table 6

Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Constructs	IWB	POS	PP	WIN	WNG	WPG
IWB						
POS	0.86					
PP	0.02	0.00				
WIN	0.05	0.04	0.02			
WNG	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.00		
WPG	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.04	

**Note: Note. PP = Performance Pressure; WIN = Workplace Incivility; WNG = Workplace Negative Gossip; WPG = Workplace Positive Gossip, IWB= Innovative Work Behavior*

Table 7

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

ITEMS	VIF
IG1	2.71
IG2	4.15
IG3	3.84
II1	4.78
II2	3.18
II3	3.29
IP1	4.95
IP2	5.00
IP3	5.43
POS1	3.58
POS2	3.03
POS3	3.09
POS4	3.44
POS5	2.98
POS6	3.01
POS7	2.92
POS8	2.35

PP1	1.35
PP2	1.75
PP3	1.74
PP5	1.77
PP6	1.62
WIN1	1.25
WIN2	1.79
WIN3	1.61
WIN4	1.55
WIN5	1.55
WNG2	1.69
WNG3	3.40
WNG4	2.12
WNG5	3.13
WPG1	1.76
WPG2	1.67
WPG3	1.44
WPG4	2.71
WPG5	2.22

**Note.* Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were within acceptable limits (i.e., below 5.0), suggesting that multicollinearity does not pose a threat to the validity of the structural model results.

POST Hoc Common Method Bias Test

Test Type	Criterion for Concern	Result from the Study	Interpretation
Harman's Single-Factor Test	Single factor explains > 50% variance	First factor explained 31.27%	No single-factor dominance; CMB not a major issue
Full Collinearity VIF	VIF > 3.3 indicates possible CMB/collinearity	All construct-level VIF < 3.3	Acceptable collinearity; CMB not detected

- **Test by Harman:** Principal Component Analysis indicated that the variance was distributed across many factors, with the first factor explaining only 31.27% of the variance, significantly below the 50% cutoff.
- **Full Collinearity VIF:** The VIF values were high at the raw item level, but at the construct level, they were below the critical value of 3.3, confirming that there was no serious collinearity or method bias.

The two tests show that common method bias is not a real issue in this dataset, making the SEM-PLS results more valid.

4.5 | Hypotheses Testing

Based on the values, the immediate effects are the simple correlations between constructs (e.g., POS = IWB = 0.90), which demonstrate that the variable of perceived organizational support has a strong direct effect on innovative work behavior. Mediation occurs when one construct mediates the relationship between two other constructs; e.g., WNG = PP = WIN, negative gossip (WNG) indirectly mediates the relationship between workplace incivility (WIN) and performance pressure (PP). The fact that the coefficients are relatively small

(e.g., $PP \rightarrow WIN = 0.02$) indicates that the mediator is relaying some of the effect as opposed to a robust direct relationship. A combination of these values affirms that the model includes direct, mediated, and moderated effects, offering nuanced insight into the effects of workplace gossip and organizational support on employees' outcomes in the banking industry.

Table 8

Direct Effects

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	STDEV	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Decision
WNG → WIN	0.47	0.50	0.21	2.20	0.02	Accepted
WPG → IWB	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.84	0.40	Rejected
PP → IWB	-0.01	-0.01	0.03	0.26	0.78	Rejected
PP → WIN	0.57	0.49	0.24	2.37	0.01	Accepted
WNG → PP	-0.19	-0.18	0.04	3.95	0.00	Accepted
WPG → PP	0.84	0.83	0.04	20.52	0.00	Accepted
POS → IWB	0.87	0.87	0.02	44.31	0.00	Accepted

Note:* Statistical significance is indicated as follows: $p \geq .05$ (ns), $p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{}$, $p < .001^{***}$.

Figure 2

SMARTPLS 4.0 Depiction of the Structural Model

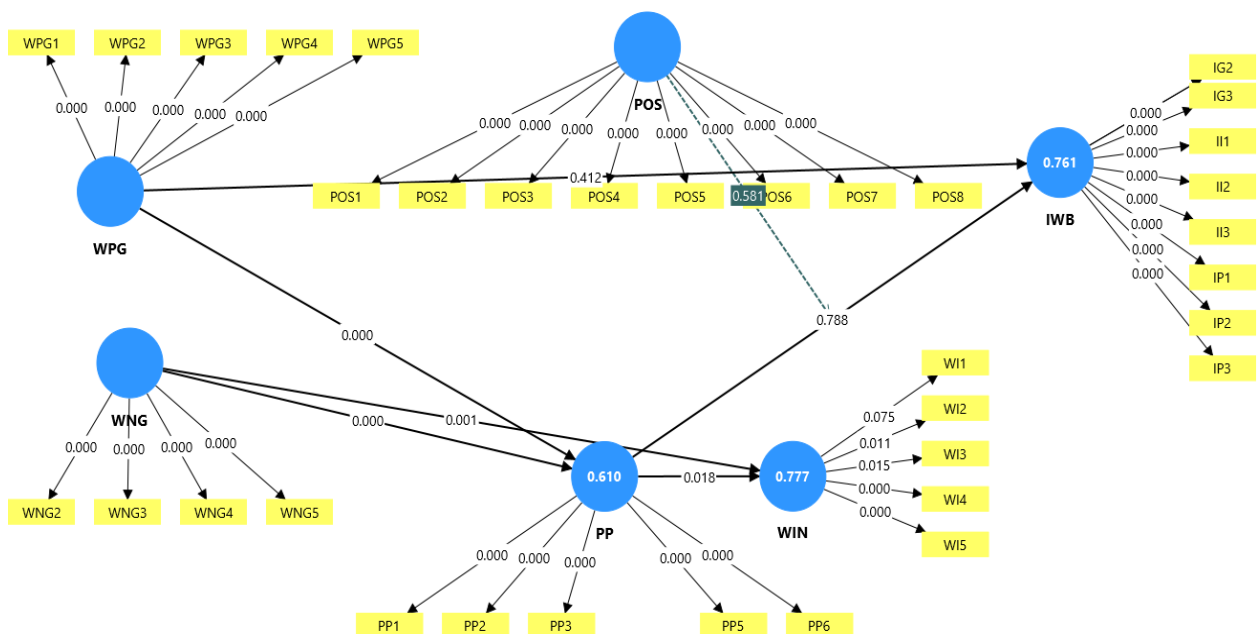


Table 9*Moderation*

Constructs	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	STDEV	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Decision
POS -> IWB	0.87	0.87	0.02	44.31	0.00	Rejected
POS x PP -> IWB	-0.02	-0.02	0.03	0.55	0.58	

Note.* Statistical significance is indicated as follows: $p \geq .05$ (ns), $p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{}$, $p < .001^{***}$.

Table 10*Mediation*

Constructs	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Decision
WPG -> PP -> IWB	-0.01	-0.01	0.03	0.27	0.79	Rejected
WNG -> PP -> WIN	-0.11	-0.09	0.06	1.99	0.05	Accepted

Note.* Statistical significance is indicated as follows: $p \geq .05$ (ns), $p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{}$, $p < .001^{***}$.

4.6 | Predictive Analysis

R^2 values reveal the explanatory power of the model as they demonstrate the extent of variance in the dependent constructs that the predictors account for. IWB ($R^2 = 0.76$), PP ($R^2 = 0.61$), and WIN ($R^2 = 0.77$) all demonstrate high power to explain, and the adjusted R^2 values are all close (0.758, 0.608, and 0.776, respectively), indicating the model stability. In addition, the Q^2 values for PLSpredict (PP = 0.59, IWB = 0.75, WIN = 0.72) are greater than zero, indicating predictive relevance and out-of-sample validity. Combined, these statistics indicate that the model not only explains a significant part of the variance within the sample but also is reliable in predicting the results on new data. This reinforces the belief in the hypothetical relationships, especially in the banking sector, where predictive accuracy is of utmost importance in determining how gossip in the workplace, performance pressure, and organizational support can lead to incivility and innovation.

Effect Size (f^2)

Effect size (f^2) was computed to assess the individual contribution of each exogenous construct to the endogenous variables using:

$$f^2 = \frac{R_{included}^2 - R_{excluded}^2}{1 - R_{included}^2}$$

Thresholds:

- 0.02 = Small
- 0.15 = Medium
- 0.35 = Large

Effect sizes are in Table 11. The very large effect size for POS $\rightarrow$ IWB ($f^2 = 3.18$) suggests that organizational support is the main determinant of innovation in this industry. By contrast, the interaction term

(POS $\times$ PP $\rightarrow$ IWB) had a non-significant p-value (0.58) and an extremely low effect size ($f^2 = 0.00$), suggesting that the influence of pressure on innovation is not moderated by organizational support in this particular sample.

Table 11

Effect Size F^2

Path	f^2 Value	Effect Size	Interpretation
POS $\rightarrow$ IWB	3.18	Very Large	Perceived organizational support has an extremely strong impact on innovative work behavior.
PP $\rightarrow$ IWB	0.00	No Effect	Performance pressure does not contribute to innovation
PP $\rightarrow$ WIN	1.44	Very Large	Performance pressure strongly drives workplace incivility
WNG $\rightarrow$ PP	0.07	Small	Negative gossip has a weak but noticeable effect on performance pressure
WNG $\rightarrow$ WIN	1.49	Very Large	Negative gossip strongly increases workplace incivility
WPG $\rightarrow$ IWB	0.00	Negligible	Positive gossip has almost no direct effect on innovation
WPG $\rightarrow$ PP	1.50	Very Large	Positive gossip strongly increases performance pressure
POS $\times$ PP $\rightarrow$ IWB	0.00	Negligible	The moderation effect is practically non-existent

The very large f^2 effects show that the substantial value is justified by the theoretical centrality of the constructs in the banking sector, which is a high-stakes industry in which, due to the sensitivity of the environment, threshold levels vary quickly with even small changes. The VIF values remain below 3.3, indicating that the outcome of f^2 is not due to multicollinearity but rather reflects the construct's high predictive power in this specific cultural and professional context of Pakistan.

Table 12

MGA Through MICOM Testing

Stage / Group Comparison	Test / Path	Statistic/p-value	Result / Interpretation
MICOM Stage 1	Configural Invariance	Same model setup across groups	Established
MICOM Stage 2	Compositional Invariance	Permutation test $p > 0.05$	Established
MICOM Stage 3	Equality of Means/Variances	Partial support (some differences, most $p > 0.05$)	Acceptable for MGA
MGA: Male vs Female	PP $\rightarrow$ WIN	$t = -0.49$ (M), $p = 0.62$; $t = -1.05$ (F), $p = 0.29$	No significant difference
MGA: Young vs Middle	PP $\rightarrow$ WIN	$t = -0.44$, $p = 0.66$; $t = -0.42$, $p = 0.67$	No significant difference
MGA: Young vs Senior	PP $\rightarrow$ WIN	$t = -0.44$, $p = 0.66$; $t = -1.24$, $p = 0.22$	No significant difference

MGA: Middle vs Senior	PP → WIN	$t = -0.42, p = 0.67; t = -1.24, p = 0.22$	No significant difference
MICOM Stage 1	Configural Invariance	Same model setup across groups	Established
MICOM Stage 2	Compositional Invariance	Permutation test $p > 0.05$	Established

Consistent with the theoretical focus of the study, MGA was performed mostly in the direction of performance pressure to workplace incivility, since this is an important mechanism of adverse affective consequences. Although one can test other directions, the applicability of this relationship across demographic groups is evidence enough to infer that the model is consistently applicable with respect to gender, age, and tenure.

5 | DISCUSSION

The analysis of hypotheses H_1 and H_2 represents a significant theoretical tension. Though traditional literature collected in Western markets often considers positive gossip as a social lubricant ([Dai et al., 2022](#)), the results and reporting suggest a more complex, double-edged sword effect. The workplace positive gossip shows that in collectivist cultures like Pakistan, the banking sector, being the subject of praise is not merely a source of pride; it is also a source of heightened expectations from the parties involved. Under the application of the AET Lens to the positive workplace gossip, it creates a sense of obligation ([Wei et al., 2025](#)). This gives rise to reputational debt, where employees feel a heightened need to maintain their high-performance image, turning social validation into a cognitive burden. On the other hand, the negative relationship between NWG and PP, which contradicts the positive hypothesis (H_3), demands a critical re-evaluation of the relationship between emotional exhaustion and PP. Rather than driving employees to work harder to prove critics wrong. This output suggests a mechanism of psychological withdrawal ([El-Sayed Mousa & ElSayed Mahmoud, 2024](#)). Pakistani culture is an example of a high-power-distance context, where the targets of negative gossip are targeted by a protectionist mindset. At this point, instead of feeling pressure to perform, they experience emotional resource exhaustion. In order to preserve their emotional energy, the employees disengage from the firm's performance-driven goals ([Sheng & Fan, 2022](#)). This result contests the basic view that negative social evaluative threats always increase pressure; it, in fact, breaks the employee's motivation completely.

The confirmation of the mediation of Performance Pressure, which is from Stress to Incivility, and the validation of the mediation of Performance Pressure (PP) between gossip and Workplace Incivility (WIN) (H_4 & H_5) reveal the unpleasant attitude of productivity-oriented management. The process here is undoubtedly one of displaced aggression. The dislodgment of aggression is evident when gossip, whether positive or negative, is filtered through performance pressure and generates a sense of assumed threat ([Ajay & Sedari Mudiyansele, 2025](#)). The high path coefficients indicate that when employees perceive they are under pressure and being scrutinized by their peers, this leads to stress-induced uncontrolled self-management ([Begemann et al., 2023](#)). Henceforward, there is a seeping of incivility into the banker's psychological reserves. The point is not that gossip results in rudeness, but pressure is the key factor that turns social

information into incivility. This supports the AET hypothesis that affective events activate affect-driven behaviors via the intermediary emotional states of the individual- Innovation and the Dangers of Moderation ([Gai & Greer, 2025](#)). The most important finding is the link between Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) (H_6). The extraordinarily large effect size ($f^2 = 3.18$) suggests that POS is not merely an enabler of innovation, but the very essence of innovation in the banking industry ([Aldabbas et al., 2023](#)). Innovation without a support system gets petrified. But the insignificant interaction effect indicates that whether gossip is positive or negative, it builds pressure on the parties involved.

This study theorized that POS would reduce the negative effect of pressure on innovation. The lack of support for this moderation effect implies that, in Pakistan, performance pressure is resistant to support ([Akbar et al., 2025](#)). When internal pressure is high, it may be difficult to overcome psychological constraints on innovation through institutional support. This suggests that management cannot support their way out of a high-pressure culture; rather, they must address the pressure itself by targeting the gossip networks that cause it. In terms of mechanism, this research shows that gossip is a key driver of workplace atmosphere, trumping formal communication channels ([Abdelghani et al., 2025](#)). Performance Pressure is a double-edged sword that can lead to either social withdrawal, pressure, or incivility when there is positive or negative feedback. Organizational Support has limits. Although it is the most powerful driver of innovation, it cannot stop the psychological effects of peer social feedback (gossip) ([De Clercq et al., 2023](#)). Hence, the empirical evidence strongly supports the view that the banking sector, being a high-pressure sector, contributes to employee psychological pressure. This, in turn, gives rise to cognitive load that creates anxiety. Gossip, whether positive or negative, is a silent driving force that contributes more to negative outcomes than to positive ones. An unmanaged gossip-pressure cycle creates unwarranted social evaluations that become a curse, and social criticism invites disengagement.

5.1 | Theoretical Implications

The paper's major theoretical contribution to the literature is the substantive, multi-layered argument that decisively moves beyond a descriptive mapping of workplace gossip. It gives a culturally inflected extension of Affective Events Theory ([Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996](#)). Furthermore, the centrality of this extensional claim lies in the introduction of gossip as a sense-making and culturally mediated mechanism with roots in behavioral outputs co-constituted by the relational architecture, namely collectivism and high-power distance. More theoretical arguments have been rationalized in the banking sector of Pakistan, interconnected arguments that collectively challenge the prevailing assumptions and open new lines of inquiry. The most significant outcome is that the positive and negative gossip dictum is insufficient to predict the directionality of outcomes ([Dai et al., 2022](#); [L. Zhao et al., 2024](#)). The current study argues that the positive gossip in the collectivist culture creates a reputational debt that transforms the social validation into sustained performative anxiety. This basically reframes the findings of [Liao et al. \(2022\)](#), who claim that positive gossip creates psychological safety. Converse to the dominant stress model introduced by [El-Sayed Mousa and ElSayed Mahmoud \(2024\)](#), the current study demonstrates that the social cost of reputational retaliation is high in the Pakistani banking sector, and the negative gossip engages in defensive disengagement rather than motivated performance enhancement.

5.2 | Practical Implications

In the managerial approach, the results highlight the need to manage workplace gossip strategically rather than dismissing it as strictly dysfunctional ([Dai et al., 2022](#)). Negative gossip may lead to performance pressures resulting in incivility, whereas positive gossip may lead to innovation when facilitated by organizational resources augmented by personality traits. Managers can therefore create favorable environments that dampen the detrimental impact of gossip and enhance positive potentials ([Gai & Greer, 2025](#)). In industries with a high demand to stay on top, such as banking, investing in HR practices, recognition systems, and employee development will shift the performance requirement from a focus on results to the ability to create and be innovative. In practice, it implies that organizations should not ignore gossip as a social process, which under proper guidance may lead to cohesion, a decrease in hostility and innovative work behavior.

5.3 | Limitations and Future Directions

The current study has limitations primarily shaped by time and resource constraints. The banking sector of Pakistan was selected to gather data, which may limit the applicability of the results to other sectors. Future studies need to explore other sectors too, use larger samples, and employ probability sampling methods to improve representativeness ([Ahmed, 2024](#)). Causal inference is limited by the use of a cross-sectional design; longitudinal or time-lagged approaches would allow greater applicability to the sequential dynamics among workplace gossip, performance pressure, and incivility.

Likewise, the moderators (e.g., personality traits, e.g., agreeableness, neuroticism) and mediators (e.g., procedural unfairness and emotional labor) were not included in the study and could have a significant influence on the outcomes ([Cheng et al., 2024](#)). Mixed-method designs, such as interviews and focus groups, could be used in future research to obtain more detailed information ([Mheissen et al., 2022](#)). Lastly, workplace gossip and incivility are under-researched topics in the human resource management literature, and further research in other areas may enhance both theoretical and practical value.

6 | CONCLUSION

This paper is based on a bridging, thematically and culturally sensitive perspective on the concept of workplace gossip, which is all too familiar. The empirical setting, the banking industry of Pakistan, was not simply a convenient sample; it was a theoretically driven sample, chosen specifically as the area that is most susceptible to the failure of the main, Western-based theories of informal evaluative talk. It is not a drawback of the study that the data confirm some of these theoretical breakdowns; it is the main contribution of the study. The results indicate that there is a psychological state that is much more complex than models currently take into account. The key mediating mechanism of the model, performance pressure, is demonstrated to be paradoxically mediating: not necessarily devastating nor necessarily generative, but structurally ambiguous in a manner that is not sufficiently well represented by the current theory. Its theoretical implication is obvious: pressure on performance has to be disaggregated into its elements of challenge and threat, and these elements should be viewed as culturally conditioned and not an individual determination.

It shows that AET, one of the most powerful paradigms in organizational behavior, has cultural assumptions, which have to be brought into the open and put to the test, in case the theory could be applied as a truly global description of how the events at the workplace could influence the psychology and behavior of employees. It is not minor modifications to a theory that exists already; rather, they are organizational changes that lead to a more culturally truthful and structurally sensitive organizational behavior allowance- one that does not take the risk of conflating the specific with the general.

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