



# Towards a Psycho-Spiritual Understanding of Gossip and Interpersonal Relationships among Adult Christians in Selected Parishes of Lokoja Diocese, Kogi State, Nigeria.

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## ABSTRACT

Gossip is characterized by the exchange of negative or private information about others, which has been a pervasive issue within human interactions, affecting interpersonal relationships in various contexts. This study investigated the relationship between gossip and interpersonal relationships among adults in St. Matthew's Catholic Parish Felele and St. Theresa's Catholic Parish Ganaja, in Lokoja Diocese. The research objective found Psycho-Spiritual approaches to gossip and interpersonal relationship among adults in St. Matthew's Parish Felele and St. Theresa's Parish Ganaja Lokoja. The study was grounded in Robin Dunbar's Gossip Theory and used a descriptive research design; the research instruments used for the collection of data was interview guides. The sample size was 10 participants by purposive sampling. The objective was analyzed using thematic analysis. The participant highlighted the need for parishioners to become more aware of the danger of gossip, using psycho-spiritual approaches to help improve their interpersonal relationship. The Bishop and The Parish Priests should organize seminars and workshops to highlight the detrimental influence of gossip on interpersonal relationship and to provide avenues for seeking support and guidance when dealing with gossip related conflict.

**Keywords:** Psycho-Spiritual, Gossip, Interpersonal Relationship, Catholic Church, Lokoja Diocese

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Gossip is a behaviour that may be found in many cultures and societies, including religious communities. While gossip is frequently seen as harmless or insignificant, its consequences can be far-reaching, especially in close-knit societies like adult Christians. Interpersonal relationships are important in the lives of Christians because they serve as the foundation for their faith-based communities. Investigating the impact of gossip on these connections becomes critical for identifying potential sources of conflict, division, and loss of trust.

Gossip can be used as a noun, verb, or even an adjective. Gossip is information about a person that is spread from person to person without independent verification. It is frequently imbued with a specific ideology, point of view, or agenda (Sharan, 2009). Typically, gossip is not shared directly with those to whom it pertains, at least not at first. There is not a lot of literature on gossip in psychology and anthropology. Lomer (2014) sees the need to spread derogatory stories about people as stemming from the interaction of the group mind and the individual's hampered discharge of sexual instinct, as well as the striving of all subordinate individuals for social revenge, using Le Bon's work on crowd psychology as a springboard. Gossip is considered as a negative social phenomenon that emerged when people attempted to trade knowledge about an unobservant third party in an evaluative manner (Chua & Uy, 2014).

Gossip, or passing judgement on individuals when they are not there, is a regular occurrence. It has been called destructive and malicious (Beersma & Van Kleef, 2012; Peters & Kashima, 2013), religiously condemned (Nevo, Nevo, & Derech-Zehavi, 1993b), and "spiritually unhealthy" (Westacott, 2000, p. 78). According to Dunbar's (2004) evolutionary perspective, gossip functioned to restrain "free riders and social cheats" (p. 100).



Feinberg et al. (2012) discovered that people gossiped to aid others by way of social interaction. People see gossipers as unlikable (Farley, 2011), untrustworthy, and not credible (Turner et al., 2003). It is not unexpected that people understate the level to which they gossip on a daily basis (Hartung & Renner, 2013). Following the above research, there are two perspectives on gossip. One half of the research thinks gossip it is great, while the other half thinks gossip it is terrible.

According to Liubov (2022), gossip is "idle talk or rumour, especially about the personal or private affairs of others"; the act is also known as dishing or tattling. Gossip is a research issue in evolutionary psychology, which has discovered that gossip is an important way for people to monitor cooperative reputations and hence preserve broad indirect reciprocity. Indirect reciprocity is a type of social interaction in which one actor assists another and is then rewarded by a third party. Robin Dunbar (2004), an evolutionary scientist, found gossip as enhancing social bonding in big groups. It has been discovered that gossip has an impact on trust, communication, and community cohesion. Understanding the fundamental causes of gossipy behaviour is critical for establishing methods to reduce its impact.

In Africa, Dlamini and Mdletshe (2019) stressed that gossip is relevant in any workplace, in South Africa. The authors contend that employees are more likely to improve their performance if the gossip is about work-related matters as opposed to unrelated ones. Equally, if gossip is there all the time, it could be detrimental to a worker's sense of self-worth. According to Dlamini and Mdletshe's research, there is both positive and negative gossip in the workplace. While positive gossip is important, negative gossip can negatively affect employees' self-efficacy and interpersonal interactions.

Studies carried out in Nigeria show that employees frequently engage in workplace gossip. It happens informally (outside of work contexts) as well as formally (during work hours). Babalola et al. (2019) investigated the influence of negative workplace gossip on customer service performance and the moderating effects of trait mindfulness and forgiveness in Nigeria. According to the study, targets' ability to provide excellent customer service be hampered by perceived unfavourable workplace gossip since it creates a foul attitude. They argue that this mediation mechanism is regulated by the targets' forgiveness and awareness. Workers gossip for a variety of reasons, such as information-seeking, social connection, and frustration release. Workplace rumours have a big impact on the culture of the company. Positive gossip, like complimenting co-workers or exchanging success tales, promote unity and friendship among teammates. Negative gossip, on the other hand, can ruin a workplace by spreading rumours, disparaging others, or discrediting co-workers. The definition of gossip is the same in Africa. There are two perspectives on gossip: the positive and the negative, rather than religious gossip, the focus is largely on workplace gossip.

Gossip has been demonstrated to have certain psychological effects in social psychology research. People who have been the target of gossip have been demonstrated to experience sadness, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and eating disorders, according to Beersma and Van Kleef (2012). Furthermore, it is never simply the individual who is targeted who suffers. Investigating the influence of gossip on these connections becomes critical for uncovering latent sources of conflict, division, and loss of trust among the participant of St. Matthew's Parish Felele and St. Theresa's Parish Ganaja. Gossip is a global phenomenon that exists in all cultures and society. It usually entails the dissemination of unsubstantiated information about others, generally in an unfavourable or judgemental light.

The term interpersonal relationship has been defined in a variety of ways by diverse authors, yet they all point to the same meaning. Devito (2004) defines interpersonal relationship as communication that occurs between two individuals who have created a relationship, and the people are related in some way. As a result, relationships can exist between romantic partners, business associates, doctors and patients, counsellors and counselees, and so on; they pervade our lives. According to Berschield (1999), an interpersonal connection is a strong, deep, or close association and acquaintance between two or more persons that might range from brief to long-term. This connection could be motivated by love, inference, or solidarity. The context could vary from family or kinship to friendship, work, clubs, neighbourhoods, and places of worship.

According to Burns (2017), the origins of interpersonal relationship studies may be traced back to the social science fields of sociology and psychology. Yingshan and Fangwei (2017) believe that relationships do not



happen by chance, but rather as a result of social labour, because an interpersonal relationship is the social link between two or more people. Interpersonal relationships are an essential part of human life, impacting people's happiness, personal development, and societal integration. Littlejohn and Foss (2011) explore theories of interpersonal communication, looking at ideas like relational dialectics, uncertainty reduction theory, and social penetration theory. They talk about how these theories explain how interpersonal relationships work, including how intimacy develops, how to deal with uncertainty, and how to work through conflicts in relationships.

According to Reich and Hershcovis (2011), interpersonal relationships in the workplace are an unavoidable reality for all those who work in organisations. They concentrated on positive interpersonal ties at work. Using a multi-level approach, the issue will be examined from organisational, group, and dyadic perspectives, with an emphasis on both the results and determinants of effective working relationships. Communication competency in workplace is conceptualised by Rubin and Martin (1994) using interactional techniques, socio-cultural theories, and cognitive-behavioural models. It compiles the main ideas and definitions of communication competency put out by academics in the domains of sociology, psychology, communication studies, and related subjects.

Adegoke (2011) consistently considers interpersonal relationships as a process of comprehending human connections with an emphasis on social skills, self-analysis techniques of effective communication, and conflict resolution. Thus, interpersonal relationship denotes a process involving continuous, interconnected thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of people in a relationship or affiliation in which empathy is valued, social skills are developed, and active engagement is encouraged. Interpersonal relationships are invariably defined as a person's subjective sense of repeated interaction or connection with another person. In their multidimensional analysis of interpersonal communication ability, Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) pinpoint the essential elements and aspects that lead to productive interpersonal relationships. The comprehension of interpersonal communication skills, incorporating elements from social psychology, psychology, sociology, and communication studies

Ogu et al., (2022) conducted research in Nigeria on the Influence of Interpersonal Relationships on Psychosocial Well-Being of Consecrated Catholic Women Religious in Ibadan, Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to look at the impact of interpersonal connections on the psychosocial well-being of Consecrated Catholic Religious Women in the Ibadan Archdiocese of Nigeria. An individual's psychosocial well-being is critical for improving interpersonal interactions. Furthermore, those who are psychosocially stable are physically, psychologically, professionally, culturally, and spiritually strong.

Several academics have emphasised the importance of social interaction and information exchange as motivators. Dunbar (2004) proposed that gossip may be used to build connections and preserve social cohesiveness within church communities. Furthermore, religious scholars such as Campbell (2004) have suggested that gossip can sometimes be motivated by a desire to safeguard and uphold the moral principles of the faith. Adults in the Christian community can endeavour to establish healthier and more rewarding interpersonal relationships by encouraging open and honest communication, encouraging accountability and forgiveness, and cultivating a culture of grace and understanding.

Campbell (2014) investigated how church gossip might damage one's faith and/or service in the Christian church through study on church gossip in Canada. The study looked into the hazards and benefits of gossip in the Christian community across four provinces and seven denominations in Canada. The study discovered that one of the important markers of whether church gossip was supposed to be detrimental or beneficial was the intent of the individual giving the information. The idea that gossip can be utilised as a manipulation tool is crucial in dealing with such activities inside the church's structure. Gossip, a complicated social practise, plays an important role in Christian societies. While research on the prevalence of gossip among adult Christians reveals its multidimensional nature, additional research is required to properly understand the motivations, repercussions, and underlying dynamics of gossip across denominations and cultural contexts. Understanding gossip's function within religious groups can help Church leaders promote healthy communication while respecting the Christian faith's core ideals of love, compassion, and respect.

Certain settings, including toxic workplaces or social circles and religious settings, might encourage a culture of gossiping; hence have a negative effect on interpersonal interactions. In Nigerian Christian communities, gossip



can be addressed and eliminated with the help of an understanding of these underlying factors, to help promote health interpersonal relationship.

St. Matthew Catholic Church Felele Lokoja, Kogi State, is located in the North central part of Nigeria. Her worshippers have lived in unity since the community started. However, it has been a thing of concern on how information have been handled and communicated from persons to persons which is causing seeming division among the people. There have been undocumented studies of gossip and its influence on the interpersonal relationship of the Parishioner. This informed the purpose of this study. Similar research was carried out at St. Theresa Catholic Church Ganaja, Lokoja Diocese, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Interpersonal relationship in the parishes is the problem. Parishioners are of the opinion that invalidated information among adult Christians have affected greatly the interpersonal relationship in St. Matthew's Catholic Church, Felele, and St. Theresa Catholic Church Ganaja, Lokoja Diocese. Parishioners find it difficult to relate well because of underline issues that revolve around gossip. The Mass is the only unifying factor that keep the people of God together, such that, after the mass it is nearly impossible to get adult Christians to agree on other issues as it concerns the life and growth of the people of God.

The prevailing issues of malice, enmity, division among the people of God as a result of misinformation, unverified information and wrong channels of communication, has also led to psychological issues. Psychological issues like depression, anxiety and suicidal tendency of people who have been the subject of gossip and are not able to integrate properly with fellow church members. Many of the reason of the unspoken conflict, through bi-directional communication is perceived to be tied to gossip.

People spread rumours out of disrespect for personal space and boundaries; others spread rumours out of a desire for entertainment or a desire to pass the time. People gossip to make their social connections stronger or to divert attention away from their personal issues or dissatisfaction; the need for approval and validation from others. People engage in gossip as a means of gaining favour, being noticed, or fitting in with a particular social group. Therefore, this study will find the Psycho-Spiritual Approach to reduce Gossip and Increase Interpersonal relationship among the adults Christians in St. Matthew's Catholic Church Felele and St. Theresa's Catholic Church Ganaja, Lokoja Diocese, Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the study**

To find the Psycho-Spiritual Approach to reduce Gossip and Increase Interpersonal relationship among the adults Christians in St. Matthew's Catholic Church Felele and St. Theresa's Catholic Church Ganaja, Lokoja Diocese, Nigeria.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Efforts to mitigate the harmful effects of gossip within Christian communities have gained attention in recent years. Encouraging honest and compassionate communication, cultivating a culture of accountability, and promoting forgiveness are some strategies that have proven effective. Moreover, educating individuals about the psychological consequences of gossip, emphasizing biblical teachings against gossip, and fostering an atmosphere of grace and understanding can contribute to healthier interpersonal relationships among adult Christians (Brown & Smith, 2020).

Robin Dunbar, a British anthropologist and evolutionary psychologist, proposed Dunbar's Gossip Theory (2004). According to Dunbar's hypothesis, gossip is essential in human social interactions and acts as a tool for preserving social links and managing relationships within a society. A compelling case can thus be made that language developed to aid the bonding of huge social groups. It accomplishes this primarily by allowing one to expand the size of broadcast network (the number of people with whom we can contact directly and indirectly) and by allowing transmission of information about changes in the social networks (Dunbar, 2004). According to Dunbar's view, gossip is profoundly ingrained in human nature and has evolutionary origins. It is thought to have



had an important role in the emergence of complex social systems and language. Gossip acts as a social adhesive, assisting in the formation and maintenance of social bonds, the resolution of conflicts, and the transmission of cultural information.

Studies have explored the prevalence of Gossip, the levels of interpersonal relationship, and how gossip can affect interpersonal relationship. These studies have not viewed it from the psycho - spiritual perspective, which involves the cultural, spiritual and psychological relationship between gossip and interpersonal relationship.

Luna and Chou (2013) studied the impact of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behaviour control on intention to gossip. The study did not consider culture, other studies made correlations between culture and attitudes such as social desirability response bias (Bernardi, 2006), perceived ethical behaviour (Jeurissen & van Luijk, 1991, as cited in Bernardi, 2006), and corruption and dishonesty (Husted, 1999, as cited in Bernardi, 2006), but few examine the role that culture has on determining attitudes towards gossip. However, various Psycho-Spiritual interventions have been done on several other topics.

In the Journal of Psychotherapy Integration, Vansteenkiste and Ryan's (2013) study, "On psychological growth and vulnerability," offer a theoretical framework that investigates how fundamental psychological requirements contribute to psychological development and reduce vulnerability. The authors put out a unifying theory that connects many facets of mental health and well-being to the fulfilment or unfulfillment of these fundamental requirements. An overview of self-determination theory (SDT), a well-known framework in motivated psychology, is given by the writers. According to SDT, people have three basic psychological needs: relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Vansteenkiste and Ryan talk on how positive outcomes like increased self-esteem, intrinsic drive, and subjective well-being are fostered when basic psychological needs are met. The study addressed the implications of their framework for psychotherapy and intervention, proposing that by assisting clients in meeting their most basic psychological needs, therapists can foster psychological development and resilience. An admirable effort to foster interpersonal relationships through the application of psychotherapy procedures and psychological ideas.

Balansuah et al (2019) researched on the Influence of emotional intelligence on enhancement of pastoral ministry among catholic priests in tamale archdiocese, Ghana with a psycho-spiritual intervention. Base on Emotional Intelligence Theory, the study used the concurrent triangulation design within the mixed method. The target population comprised 54 priests and 2,000 lay faithful. A sample size of 34 priests and 160 lay faithful was used for quantitative data using random and stratified sampling techniques, respectively. Interview guide and questionnaires were used as instruments to obtain qualitative and quantitative data respectively. Qualitative data obtained from 6 priests were analysed using thematic analysis while the quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study findings affirmed a strong positive correlation between emotional intelligence and pastoral ministry among catholic priests, and highlighted the need for priests to strive to grow in self-awareness of their emotions, intensify their prayer life to enhance their relationship with God and others. Seminary formators, bishops, and religious superiors should intensify efforts in integrative formation of emotions and intelligence, and ensure concrete ongoing formation for priests on self-awareness and holistic healing through seminars on psycho-spirituality and emotional intelligence.

Karbo et al, (2019) examined The Influence of Spiritual Direction on the Psychosocial Well-Being of the Students in Formation at Marist International Centre, Kenya with a Psycho-Spiritual Intervention. The study employed a descriptive design, mixed methods. The theoretical framework of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs motivation theory informed the research. The target population was 72 participants comprising of 67 temporary professed Marist brothers and 5 formators in Marist International Centre, Kenya; who were purposively sampled to participate in the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from 52 students, open-ended questionnaires for 5 formator and 8 participants were interviewed. The study used descriptive and inferential statics for the quantitative data and thematic analysis for the qualitative data. Data generated was computed using the statistical program for social sciences (SPSS) version 20. A partial correlation was done to establish the relationship between spiritual direction and psychosocial wellbeing. The findings of the study revealed that despite the challenges students face in spiritual direction, there is a positive influence of spiritual direction on psychosocial wellbeing. The study is quite apt in the field of research. It will inform the decisions of superiors and formators in formation program and planning.



Wapokurwaet al (2019) researched on the Effects of war on the psychosocial wellbeing of the youth in Adjumani-Maaji III refugee camp, Arua Diocese-Uganda using a psycho-spiritual approach. The refugee-issue that is triggered, among others, by war situation, persecutions and natural disasters, is a significant problem, not only in Africa, but all over the world. The study objectives were to examine the effects of war on the psychological wellbeing of the youth. To investigate the effects of war on the social wellbeing of the youth. To explore what coping strategies were being used by the youth in handling the effects of war in Uganda and to find out what psycho-spiritual approach was used to support the youth.

The Self-affirmation Theory and Rational Emotive Behaviour Theory (REBT) informed the study. The study applied qualitative-phenomenological research design. The target population was the 150-youth living in Adjumani-Maaji III refugees' camp. The sample size was comprised of 49 participants: Twenty-five for the Interview Guide and 24 for Focus Group Discussion selected using simple random sampling technique. The qualitative validity of the instrument was censored by the expert judgment of the academic supervisors aligned to Psycho-Spiritual Institute. According to the findings, the effects of war on the psycho-social wellbeing of the youth in AdjumaniMaaji III refugees' camp included: Depression, disappointment, mental confusion, loss of hope, fear, anger, post-traumatic stress disorder, school-dropout, socio-economic impoverishment, family disintegration, displacement, loss of lives and properties and moral decadence. The study outcome is quite revealing and informative. It exhibits a stable trajectory of functioning and meaningful life, full of hope and assurance for the refugee youth.

Previous studies as presented above examined gossip from a cultural perspective but in a work environment. This presents a gap, which this current study filled. This study looked at how culture, psychology and spirituality (important elements of Psycho-Spiritual Counselling and Therapy) have a role to play in gossip as it concerns interpersonal relationship among adult Christians. Hence, this study presented the cultural, spiritual, and psychology intervention to the influence of gossip on the interpersonal relationship among adult Christians of St. Matthew Catholic Parish Felele and St. Theresa Catholic Parish Ganaja, Lokoja diocese Nigeria.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used interview to gather data on one-on-one bases, hence a qualitative study. The study was carried out in two Parishes in Lokoja Diocese: St. Matthew's Catholic Church, Felele, and St. Theresa's Catholic Church Lokoja Diocese in Nigeria. These parishes are situated in Lokoja Local Government, Kogi State, Nigeria. These two parishes were selected randomly. Interview for 10 selected Respondent were selected purposively: The researcher used in-depth interview method of data collection. This was meant to give the participants the flexibility and the opportunity to express their opinions and beliefs. The research systematically followed the recommended data collection procedures. The objective was analysed using thematic analysis from detailed manual transcription of interviewed data bring out relevant themes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research study on the relationship between gossip and interpersonal relationships among adult Christians in St. Matthew's Catholic Church Felele and St. Theresa's Parish Ganaja, Lokoja Diocese, Nigeria, is presented and discussed in this chapter. The participant's demographic data is covered in the first section, and the research objectives are presented in the chapter. The discussion of the results followed the objective of the study.

**Table 1: Interview List and Codes of Participants**

Participant	Code
1	JA
2	MD
3	VA
4	MO
5	NA
6	MA
7	BA



8	FA
9	KK
10	DB

Table 1 gives the codes assigned to interviewed participants. The participant column numbered 1 to 10 gives the order in which the participants were interviewed.

### **The Psycho-Spiritual Interventions of Interpersonal Relationship and Gossip**

The objective of the study sought the Psycho-Spiritual approach of Interpersonal relationship and Gossip among the adults in St. Matthew's Catholic Church Felele and St. Theresa's Catholic Church Ganaja, Lokoja Diocese, Nigeria. It was reasonably established by the quantitative data that gossip could mar interpersonal relationship. In the psycho-spiritual approach, since literature provided state that gossip physically, socially, spiritually and psychologically affect victims as JA and DB equally indicated:

I gossip sometimes, I have been gossiped about too. The intention of the gossip is what determines. I have been a victim of gossip. As a church leader, I hear things said about me after a while, I must say it can be disheartening at first, when such gossip eventually comes to you, and there is need to communicate your feeling about what was said, and sometimes you just feel inadequate to communicate that feelings. Which could lead to isolation, maybe depression and not only you but others close to you become affected by the isolation or depression as the case maybe (JA, DB 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024).

This qualitative finding agrees and was re-echoed by Riace, Driel, and Verkuyten (2022) study on gossip having certain psychological effects on people who have been the target of gossip. They are susceptible to conditions not limited to; sadness, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and eating disorders. All these are capable of hindering interpersonal relationship among communities.

#### **Attentive Listening**

The art of active listening is an important approach in interpersonal relationships. It is important to consider ways to enhance interpersonal relationship and reduce gossip within the Parish. These will help individuals improve the level of their interpersonal relationship. NA explained:

By setting a good example through engaging healthy conversations, by active listening. Encouraging others to call out gossip when one sees it happening. By focusing the conversation on positive aspects of a person or situation, rather than dwelling on the negative. I have learned this one area with time (NA 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024).

The respondent statement can only be achieved when retreat are being organised, workshops, or seminars centred on themes of listening skills, forgiveness, reconciliation, genuineness, empathy and spiritual growth within relationships. This will help individuals through a process of acknowledging hurt, releasing resentment, and extending forgiveness towards others as a pathway to healing and reconciliation. MD and KK were of the opinion that:

It is important to remember that everyone makes mistakes and that gossiping about someone's mistakes can make them feel judged and ostracized. Instead, one should try to focus on the positive changes someone has made over the weaknesses of People. If possible, one should avoid saying anything about the negative behaviour of people but if need be take action to prevent an evil to which one is prone then necessary action should be taken (MD, KK 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024).

This finding agrees with Ogu et al., (2022) those who are psychosocially stable are physically, psychologically, professionally, culturally, and spiritually strong. Therefore, encouraging participants to apply Christian principles of service and charity in their interactions with fellow parishioners and the broader community.

#### **Pastoral Counselling**

Pastoral counselling combines psychological principles with spiritual and religious perspective in order to meet



the emotional, psychological, relational, and spiritual needs of individuals, couples, families, and groups within a religious or faith-based setting. The practise of gossip is prevalent in all nations and cultures. It usually entails the dissemination of incorrect information about others, frequently in a disparaging or judgemental way. MA stated:

Gossip concerns sharing personal information about individual with the intent to cause harm or which is capable of causing harm. Gossip undermine secrecy, it undermines trust. It comes with the intention to destroy your reputation and relationships. (MA 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024).

The respondent is well aware of the devastating effect of gossip to interpersonal relationship. The danger it brings to reputation among individual that undermines secrecy. It becomes important that pastoral counselling be implored to address the bane of gossip among individual. MO said:

Offering individual or couples counselling sessions with trained pastoral counsellors or clergy members to address interpersonal conflicts, communication issues, and other relationship challenges. Incorporate spiritual guidance, prayer, and scripture into counselling sessions to help individuals draw on their faith for strength, wisdom, and healing (MO 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024)

This respondent mentioned the importance of counselling in promoting interpersonal relationship. It will help warn and caution about the detrimental nature of gossip to one's Christian faith as stated by Campbell (2014). Pastoral counselling becomes a veritable tool to help aid interpersonal closeness. This psycho-spiritual approach integrates psychological principles with spiritual, psychological and cultural resources and practices, providing a holistic approach to addressing interpersonal relationship challenges and gossip within the context of faith communities. It is important to tailor interventions to the specific needs, preferences, and cultural context of the individuals and communities involved.

### **Group Therapy**

Group therapy is a form of psychotherapy. It involves a small group of people meeting with one or more trained therapists on a regular basis to discuss and work through emotional, psychological, and relationship issues in a safe and encouraging group environment. The content of what is talked about in gossip capable of influencing relationships among people psychologically (Farley, 2011). VA indicated:

Facilitate support groups or therapy groups focused on interpersonal relationships will help sustain and caution on the danger of gossip, providing a safe space for individuals to share their experiences, receive validation, and learn from one another. Integrate psycho-educational components into group sessions to explore topics such as effective communication, conflict resolution skills, and healthy boundaries (VA 10<sup>th</sup> March 2024).

This psycho-spiritual approach by the respondent encompasses a variety of approaches aimed at addressing psychological, emotional, and spiritual aspects of individuals' lives within the context of their faith. Hence, interpersonal relationship can be enhanced among adult Christians in the parishes by educating people about the danger of gossip through group therapy.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study sought possible psycho-spiritual interventions to promote interpersonal relationship. The study was guided by Robin Dunbar theory of gossip. Some related literature to the study objectives were reviewed in chapter two and the result revealed that there exists a considerable knowledge gap in the research area because not much study has been done with regard the relationship between the gossip and interpersonal relationship among adult Christians. As such, the study was found relevant. Descriptive research design was employed. The study population was 6 participants for interview from Christian adults of St. Matthew and St. Theresa Parishes in Lokoja Diocese, Nigeria.

From the results of the findings confirmed that gossip is detrimental. Gossip is destructive especially when the content of the discussion is harmful. Hence, Psycho – Spiritual practices to help reduce the influence of gossip



on interpersonal relationship. Practices like, Attentive listening, pastoral counselling, group therapy, retreats, psychoeducation and spiritual directions as ways to improve interpersonal relationship.

The researcher encountered some challenges in the course of carrying out this study. A major challenge in this research was the few studies done on the relationship between Gossip and interpersonal relationship. This area of research although not new, most of the work to date, are only definitional in nature. Due to the distance from the study area, the research engaged in online interview. The research followed up through calls and text messages to make sure that the participants were available for interview. However, the data obtained from the online interview was sufficient for generalization of the research findings.

Gossip is a prevalent phenomenon in various social contexts, including religious communities. Understanding the dynamics of gossip and its impact on interpersonal relationships among Christian is crucial for promoting healthy social interactions within religious communities. There is an urgent need for more research into the impact of gossip on adult Christians' interpersonal relationships, with a focus on culture, spirituality, and psychology. We need to investigate Christians' habits, beliefs, and attitudes to see how gossip influences individuals personally and, by implication, their faith.

The Parish priests should implement clear communication channels. Implementing clear communication channels within religious communities to reduce moderate gossip to a low level. Encourage open dialogue and provide platforms for individuals to address concerns or conflicts directly rather than resorting to gossip.

The bishop in connection with the Parish priests can offer educational workshops or seminars that highlight the detrimental effects of gossip on interpersonal relationships and community cohesion. Provide resources and strategies for addressing conflicts constructively and promoting a culture of respect and confidentiality. Foster a culture of accountability and support within religious communities by encouraging individuals to hold themselves and others accountable for their words and actions. Provide avenues for seeking support and guidance when dealing with gossip-related conflicts.

The Parish Priests can establish counselling and emotional support services within religious communities to assist individuals who have experienced strain due to gossip. Provide access to trained counsellors or pastoral care providers who can offer guidance and support in navigating interpersonal challenges. Emphasize the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation in resolving conflicts and healing relational wounds caused by gossip. Encourage individuals to practice forgiveness and seek reconciliation with those affected by gossip, fostering a culture of grace and restoration within the community.

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