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## Office Rumor as a Cankerworm to Organisation and Human Development at the Lagos State University of Science and Technology

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### ABSTRACT

The study focus on the office rumor as a cankerworm to organization and human development in Lagos State University of Science and Technology. To achieve this objective, the study employed a cross-sectional survey design and a sample of 91 office secretaries were sampled in the institution. Through a validated questionnaire, a regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis, and the results show that office rumor has a significant positive effect on human development ( $R^2 = 0.249$ ,  $F(2,293) = 32.050$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This finding suggests that increase in office rumors and gossip will significantly result to decline in human development. Moreover, this institution should every means to disseminate firsthand information and not rumors with the staff so as to enhance development of staff which will eventually improve performance of the secretaries and the institution as a whole.

**Keywords:** Office Rumor, Human Development, Gossip, Performance.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The term 'human development' may be defined as an expansion of human capabilities, a widening of choices, 'an enhancement of freedom, and a fulfilment of human rights. At the beginning, the notion of human development incorporates the need for income expansion. However, income growth should consider expansion of human capabilities. Hence development cannot be equated solely to income expansion. Income is not the sum-total of human life. As income growth is essential, so are health, education, physical environment, and freedom. Human development should embrace human rights, socio-eco-politico freedoms. Based on the notion of human development. Human Development Index (HDI) is constructed. It serves as a more humane measure of development than a strictly income-based benchmark of per capita GNP. The first UNDP Human Development Report published in 1990 stated that: "The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives." It also defined human development as "a process of enlarging people's choices", "and strengthen human capabilities" in a way which enables them to lead longer, healthier and fuller lives.

From this broad definition of human development, one gets an idea of three critical issues involved in human development interpretation. These are: to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated, and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Barring these three crucial parameters of human development as a process enlarging people's choices, there are additional choices that include political freedoms, other guaranteed human rights, and various ingredients of self-respect.

Human development in an organisation could be hindered by rumor among workers in an office, rumours have been interpreted as a method through which refugees participate in collective interpretation and meaning-making in environments where they may otherwise feel voiceless. Rumour ([British English](#); [see spelling differences](#); derived from Latin: ['rumorem'](#) - noise), is "a tall tale of explanations of events circulating from person to person and pertaining to an object, event, or issue in public concern. It involves a form of a statement whose veracity is not quickly or ever confirmed. In addition, some scholars have identified rumor as a subset of [propaganda](#). [Sociology](#), [psychology](#), and communication studies have widely varying definitions of rumor.

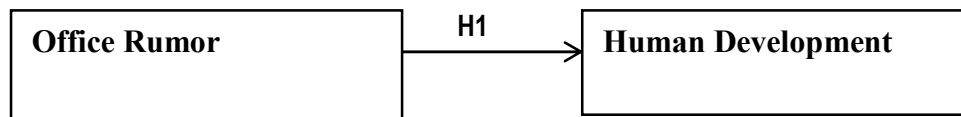
Rumors are also often discussed with regard to [misinformation](#) and [disinformation](#) (the former often seen as simply false and the latter seen as deliberately false, though usually from a government source given to the media or a foreign government). A rumor, or rumour, is "a tall tale of explanations of events circulating from person to person and pertaining to an object, event, or issue in public concern." In the social sciences, a rumor involves a form of a statement whose veracity is not quickly or ever confirmed. Rumor is an ancient and mysterious existence, which is produced almost at the same time with human civilization. In the long history of human development, rumors have never been absent. Especially during the Second World War, rumors forced people to face and reflect on the existence of rumors. Since then, people's research on rumors has really begun, and has been deepening in the process of social development and progress. Experts and scholars at home and abroad pay more attention to the identification, dissemination and governance of rumors, and rarely do in-depth study on the definition of rumors. Gengyun Xie et al. studied the definition of rumor by foreign experts and scholars, discussed the definition of rumor and discrimination of related concepts of rumor, public opinion and propaganda; Xia Lei studied the original meaning, use and evolution of rumors, and put forward a new definition of rumor on the basis of discussion and summary; Anping Zhou pointed out that the spread of rumors will have negative consequences, which will bring about negative consequences for man. In view of the above discussion, this study intends to investigate office rumor as a canker worm to organization and human development in Lagos State University of Science and Technology.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the Rumor in Han Dynasty, Zongli Lv pointed out that songs and ballads are rhymes, which are catchy and easy to spread orally. However, most of the ballads are spread among illiterate or low educated groups such as common people and children, and the terms are more popular and easy to remember. Historical documents since the book of the Latter Han Dynasty often refer to such folk or unofficial ballads as "rumors". They are a form of rumor in Chinese history. Compared with gossip, falsehood and rumor, rumor is easier to spread and has more extensive influence because of its rhyme form. Knapp believes that rumors are "a declaration intended to make people believe that it is related to current events and widely circulated without official confirmation." Allport and Postman believe that rumor is a "proposition related to the events at that time, in order to make people believe that it is generally spread among people by means of oral media, but there is no specific information to confirm its accuracy.

" Peterson and Gist believe that rumor is "an unsubstantiated statement or interpretation of a thing, event or issue of public interest that is circulated privately among people." Shibutani believes that the rumor is "a description, language or explanation formed in informal communication, which is not confirmed by official information, but is seriously accepted by most interested groups." Michelson and Molly believe that "a rumor is a conversation whose authenticity has not been confirmed by the disseminator himself or by relevant evidence." Edgar Morin believes that "rumors are information related to current affairs that are popular in certain social circles, and usually have no factual basis and are not spread in the mass media." Kapferer believes that rumors are a "proposition related to the events of the time, in order to make people believe that they are generally spread among people by means of oral media, but there is no specific information to confirm its accuracy", and "widely spread without official confirmation". Yu Hu believes that "a rumor is an unproven exposition or interpretation of an object, event or problem of public interest spread through public or non-public channels." There are also scholars with similar views, such as Huabao Zhang, Shenghong Jiang, Jianwen Guan, and other scholars. They all believe that the unified feature of rumors is that they are "not officially confirmed / have no factual basis / incomplete information" on the basis of wide spread, that is to say, the authenticity of rumors cannot be confirmed, and the definition of rumors is neutral.

**H1:** There will be no significant influence of office rumor on human development in Lagos State University of Science and Technology.



**Fig 1:** Researcher Conceptual Model, 2022

## 2.1 Office Rumor and Human Development

Extant studies have shown that gossip is connected to rumor in an organisation (Drati et al., 2016). A study of the Ghanaian telecommunication sector suggests that office rumor is positively related to an organisation as regard human development (Durlak, 2016). In addition, another study examined the impact of office rumor in Indian banking sector and findings revealed a solid relationship between office rumor and human resource development (Edison, 2016). Likewise, the study of a scholar in Nigeria found out that office rumor confidently influences employees' development among staff of Nigerian banks. A researcher investigated office rumor impact on human development of employees' in selected Indian banks that are privately owned with a sample of sixty-five (65) employees and office rumor among bank employees was assessed on five dimensions namely- self -mindfulness, emotions handling, self-motivation, emotions of others and relationship control (Evenson, 2018). It was established that individuals that spend time in gossiping and passing rumor in the office would perform woefully. A scholar investigated the factors that affect office rumor among bank employees working in Punjab and examined how the factors determine their performance (Ewing, 2018). The study was exploratory in nature. With one hundred and twenty (120) population of the study, consisting of bank employees in both private and public-sector.

Employees' of the banks were found to be aware of this comparatively new concept 'office rumor'. It was revealed that male and female employees differ significantly as regards various rumor carrying attitude. A study examined the influence of office rumor on human development. Results indicate that social-talents, self-mindfulness, social-mindfulness, and self-controlling have influence on human development. To achieve this, trainings on the development of employees in organisations, information, talents, and personality orientation should be promoted. Related study on the level of rumor among bank staff revealed that there are few major factors affecting office rumor namely, Self-Mindfulness, Self- Control, Social-Talents and Empathy. A study examined the influence of office rumor and relationships management on human development (Lichtenberger, 2016). The study adopted exploratory method with seventy-six (76) employees of a Nairobi hotel but sampled thirty-eight (38) employees through simple random sampling. Data was collected through questionnaire and interviews means. Outcomes of the study showed that self-awareness, self-management and relationships-management proxies of office rumor influence human development.

A scholar claimed that the perception of human development can be used in organizations that contain key experiences for generating and maintaining the quality of services in organizations (Khajehpour, 2016). A scholar postulated that office rumor make performance of staff and the organization to decline and also result in retarding staff morale and the quality of work life, in achieving greater self-understanding, in demonstrating the balance better health, and self-confidence in developing closer working relationships with and among individuals in the organization. It is important that the significance of office rumor is recognized by organizational leaders and that they actively reject it.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to establish the detrimental effect of office rumor on human development in Lagos State University of Science and Technology. Employees considered are secretaries of Lagos State University of Science and Technology. The population of the office secretaries are 91. The researchers employed total enumeration of the 91 secretaries in the institution because the population is not much, hence it does not require sampling. The study adapted from existing literature (P.M. Gichohi, 2015). A 20 items questionnaire to substantiate the link between the two variables (office rumor and human development). The adapted questionnaire had four-point Likert-type-scale response options (1= strongly disagree and 4= strongly agree). We align to prior empirical survey research by ensuring that each item under the variables in the questionnaire were examined by professionals and experts in the department of information management to ensure they met with literature and are not too difficult for the intended respondents. Physical distribution of the questionnaire was done by the researcher for the period of two weeks after which 90 responses were received and considered large enough to sample the data for analysis using SPSS.

### **4. ANALYSIS & RESULT**

To validate this study, instrument was gathered through related literature review and adaptation from questionnaires that have been used by other researchers. Content and construct validity was done. Content validity was used to assess the internal validity of the research instruments which were ascertained through the seniors and experts in information management field. Corrections made were incorporated in constructing the final questionnaire which were given out to the respondents for the study. Through the principal component factor analysis, the researcher ascertain the overall adequacy and validity of the adapted questionnaire and establish construct validity. The SmartPLS statistical platform version 3.3.3 was used to run the analysis.

In the analysis, Average Variable Extracted/Explained (AVE) value greater than 0.5 provided proof of convergent validity and the discriminate validity value for all the construct below one on the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) criterion provided additional evidence of construct validity for each of the measured variable. Both the AVE and discriminant validity values provided evidence of construct validity for all the variables under study. Table X and Y below presented a summary of the construct validity for these questionnaire items of this study.

**Table 4.1: Summary of regression analysis for the office rumor as a cankerworm to organization and human development in Lagos State University of Science and Technology.**

Model <sup>1</sup>	Beta	T	Sig.	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	ΔF	Sig. F Change
(Constant) <sup>1</sup>	2.498	8.383	0.000	.499 <sup>b</sup>	0.249	0.242	0.006	1.588	0.209
Office Rumor	0.147	6.700	0.000						
Human Development	0.07	1.260	0.209						
F & Anova Sig: 32.050 (2,293), p=.000									

Predictors: (Constant), Human Development

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Results (2022)

Tables 4.1 present regression results for the influence of office rumor on human development in an organisation. Result summarizes the output for the analysis. Therefore, in this model, the independent variable was office rumor. From table 4.1, The model reveals that  $R = 0.499$ ,  $Adj. R^2 = 0.249$ , and  $F 32.050 (2,293)$ ,  $p = 0.000$ . The value of  $R^2$  coefficient of determination,  $Adj. R^2$  indicates that 24.9% of the variance in the human development in Lagos State University of Science and Technology, was explained by office rumor being a cankerworm in the sampled organization among the secretaries. The remaining 75.1% of the total variation in human development are explained by factors not included in the model. The explained variation in the interaction among office rumor and human development was found to be significant at p-value of 0.000 which is below the accepted threshold of 0.05. The regression coefficients section in Table 4.1 shows that the coefficient and constants were both positive and statistically significant given the p-value of 0.000.

## 5. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study confirms the hypothesis that office rumor influence human development. The findings of this study found support in empirical studies. For example in a study conducted by a scholar that proof that studies have shown that gossip is connected to rumor in an organisation (Drati et al., 2016). A study of the Ghanaian telecommunication sector suggests that office rumor is positively related to an organisation as regard human development (Durlak, 2016). In addition, another study examined the impact of office rumor in Indian banking sector and findings revealed a solid relationship between office rumor and human resource development (Edison, 2016).

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To achieve this, trainings on the development of employees in organisations, information, talents, and personality orientation should be promoted. Related study on the level of rumor among bank staff revealed that there are few major factors affecting office rumor namely, Self- Mindfulness, Self- Control, Social-Talents and Empathy. A study examined the influence of office rumor and relationships management on human development (Lichtenberger, 2016). The study adopted exploratory method with seventy-six (76) employees of a Nairobi hotel but sampled thirty-eight (38) employees through simple random sampling. Data was collected through questionnaire and interviews means. Outcomes of the study showed that self-awareness, self-management and relationships-management proxies of office rumor influence human development.

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This study offers significant contribution to literature conceptually, theoretically, and empirical. Conceptually, the study focused on identifying gaps in literature pertaining office rumor and human development. From the theoretical stand point, conspiracy theory was strengthened. The rumor theory which states that rumor may be regarded as something that is constantly being constructed; when the communicative activity ceases the rumor no longer exist. This study's results are in correlation with these theoretical perspectives. Empirically, the study is able to add to recent literature on the relationship between office rumor and human development. Though, studies on office rumor and human development abound in develop economy context, however empirical study from developing countries like Nigeria seems to be few in this regard. This mean not much is known about how office rumor has results into cankerworm to human development in Lagos State University of Science and Technology. Hence by the findings of the hypothesis examined, the study become a basis for reference for future study on office rumor and human development. Moreover, the study provides findings which later scholars can use to buttress the empirical submissions in their study.

Overall, these above-mentioned points lay emphasis on the fact that this study offers significant contribution to knowledge and has practical implication for the management of Lagos State University of Science and Technology. The study concluded that office rumor has become detrimental factor of human development of Lagos State University of Science and Technology. The study recommended that the management of the institution should monitor the secretaries significantly in order to produce the best and be competitive.

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