

# Tsismis Pa More! Exploring the Positive Dimensions of Tsismis and Its Roles in Social Connection, Belongingness, and Stress Relief

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## ABSTRACT

*Tsismis* is a common cultural practice in the Philippines that is often associated with negative outcomes, such as workplace conflict, damaged relationships, and loss of trust. However, when practiced responsibly and ethically, it may strengthen social connections, foster a sense of belongingness, provide emotional support, and relieve stress. Guided by the Filipino Psychology concepts of *pakikipagkuwentuhan* and *pakikipagkapwa*, the study explored the lived experiences of employees from a private higher education institution in the Philippines regarding the positive dimensions of workplace *tsismis*. A qualitative descriptive phenomenological design using Husserl's approach was employed. Ten (10) employees with at least one year of employment were selected through criterion purposive sampling. Data were collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. Five themes emerged: (1) *Tsismis* as an Informal Form of Workplace Communication, (2) Fostering Workplace Social Connection, (3) Employees' Sense of Workplace Belonging, (4) Emotional Support and Stress Relief, and (5) Maintaining Ethical and Professional Boundaries. The findings indicate that ethical workplace *tsismis* strengthens interpersonal relationships, promotes social connection and belongingness, provides emotional support and stress relief, and contributes to employee well-being. Findings showed that *tsismis* can help strengthen relationships within the workplace, including building trust, camaraderie, social connection and sense of belonging. But participants also emphasized the importance of respecting professional boundaries and confidentiality, and also preventing harmful conversations. The study concludes that *tsismis* can be both positive and negative depending on its context or purpose. *Tsismis* can be both harmful or beneficial for individuals. Participants answered differently based on situations, some perceive *tsismis* as negative connotations, while others view it as a way to release stress, vent out frustrations, expressing emotions, coping mechanisms, entertainment and also fostering social relationships and a sense of belongingness.

**Keywords:** *tsismis*, Filipino psychology, social connection, sense of belongingness, stress relief

## INTRODUCTION

In the Philippines, *tsismis* commonly perceived as a cultural phenomenon that affects social relations. It can build connections, social bonds and good communication with others. (Araña & Mabulay, 2023) Most Filipinos would agree that *tsismis* or gossip is the most popular and pleasurable way to engage with one another. It can occasionally occur when two or more people casually talk in unexpected settings, including outside their homes, in front of a *sari-sari* store, certain public areas, or even in the workplace. Filipino communities frequently engage in these social activities, which have become ingrained in their social dynamics. (Ruvo, 2023)

According to the World Health Organization (2025), social connection refers to how individuals interact, give support to each other and build relations. It involves a sense of belongingness, close relationships and being valued by others. Social connection provides a sense of community, shared support and emotional security. The advantage of social connection allows you to feel understood and accepted without feeling judged.

Humans are naturally social beings, and their relationships with family, peers, acquaintances, co-workers and community are essential in their lives. Maintaining a strong and supportive relationship can help them cope with stressful life obstacles. Social connection helps people feel a sense of belongingness, love, value and care from others. It is important to individuals' physical and mental well-being. Connection with others can prevent social isolation and illness. Individuals with strong social connections are more likely to live longer and have healthier lives. (Center for Diseases Control and Prevention, 2024)

People naturally seek belongingness, especially when they are new in a workplace environment. Positive *tsismis* especially in sharing positive comments and good feedback about co-workers can help newcomers develop a sense of belongingness. It allows employees to build friendships with co-workers, making the individuals feel included, and accepted in the workplace. Through social connections and interaction, newcomers are more likely to adjust comfortably and feel that they are part of the organization. (Zong et al. 2021)

In Filipino culture, *pakikipagtsismisan* is often viewed negatively. According to existing local studies, negative *tsismis* includes casual talks and backstabbing which can harm someone's reputation. (Araña, et al., 2023) *Tsismis* can cause negative effects including problems, conflicts, and contributions to toxic environments which can lead to end relationships with other people. Negative *tsismis* can also lead to distrust, broken relationships, and social division. When misinformation is shared, it can damage an individual's credibility and workplace environments. (Desacada & Suing, 2024; Baticos & Jullanda, 2025)

According to Wang, et al., (2022), *tsismis* can also positively affect individuals, positive *tsismis* such as praising someone's skills or accomplishments can make employees feel appreciated and recognized. Research suggests that positive workplace *tsismis* may improve job performance, strengthen relationships, and contribute to a supportive work environment.

Based on the recent studies, *tsismis* is really ingrained in Filipinos. Araña (2023), *tsismis* is one of the reasons for maintaining social relationships. In a way, when talking to other people, the chances of feeling comfortable and trusting are also high because there is closeness, trust, and camaraderie or *pakikipagkapwa* that is built. And then in the previous study used by the researchers in the study by Suing et al. (2024), *tsismisan* is said to be their way of building social connection and emotional support, such as sharing personal experiences, sense of belonging, and also improving interpersonal skills. Also according to Russo (2024), it explains that *tsismis* is not actually harmful – it depends on how people use it. Instead of viewing *tsismis* as negative, it is their lived experiences, especially when the topics being discussed are positive or neutral. By talking in a positive way, they are able to reduce social isolation and build connections.

In these findings, it connects to Filipino Psychology by Virgilio Enriquez, especially the *pakikipagkuwentuhan* and *pakikipagkapwa* (shared identity). According to Enriquez, the interpersonal interaction through *pakikipagkuwentuhan* reflects shared identity. In a way that the self and others are not separate, rather, the other person is considered part of one's social self.

In the context of Filipino Psychology, *tsismis* or *kuwentuhan* can be viewed as a normal practice rooted in Filipino cultural norms. Filipino individuals are able to easily form connections with others through *tsismisan*. The study suggests that if the positive aspects of *tsismis* are maintained over time, it may contribute to healthier interactions and a more supportive work environment. And the study may serve as a reference for future researchers and encourage society to become more open-minded when encountering *tsismis*. Although it may be unfamiliar to some individuals, it can offer new perspectives, particularly in understanding the concept of positive *tsismis*. Through informal conversation, the possible outcomes may be that employees are able to share experiences, celebrate other people's achievement, and build social bonds with others to reduce stress. Moreover, these interactions further develop camaraderie, friendship, and a sense of belongingness among employees.

Many studies focus on its negative consequences, including workplace conflicts, decreased trust, damaged reputation and increased stress for those who become the subject of *tsismis*. However, limited study explores its potential positive effects especially in terms of social bonding, sense of belongingness and examining whether

engaging in *tsismis* – when practiced in a positive manner, can serve as an informal coping mechanism that helps reduce work stress among employees. (Suing et al., 2024)

While it is often criticized for its harmful effects, many employees continue to engage in it. It raises the question of whether *tsismis* serves a functional role in managing stress. It remains unclear whether employees with higher stress levels are more likely to use *tsismis* as a way to release tension and seek emotional support, or whether *tsismis* contributes further to workplace stress. Stress relief also remains underexplored in existing related studies. Given the increasing concern about workplace stress and employee well-being, understanding how lived experiences operate in real work settings is necessary.

The study aims to clarify whether *tsismis* can contribute positively to employees' well being in the workplace. However, studies related to stress relief are still limited in that it focuses only on the work management rather than the positive effects like stress relief of *tsismis* on employees' well-being. Thus, this study aims to explore these gaps by exploring positive outcomes of *tsismis*, especially its contribution to social connections, belongingness and stress relief among employees. Research aims to provide additional information and different perspectives of *tsismis* by exploring its positive dimension in its role to social connection, belongingness, and stress relief.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Tsismis

Yucel and Moulder (2024) highlights that within the organization settings, *tsismis* is studied through two primary mechanisms: the normative function where the individual observes and evaluates the behaviors of others, on the other hand, the relationship function where the individuals feel belong to an organization where people work during *tsismisan*. It implies that *tsismis* serves social purposes in a way that employees may engage in *tsismis* to strengthen social bonds with co-workers, gain a sense of belongingness, and to cope with stress within the organization.

Estevez et al. (2022) highlights individuals' perceptions of others may change based on the opinions and statements shared within their social environment. This study is relevant to the present study, especially in education settings because it demonstrates how second hand information or *tsismis* can shape relationships and interactions build a connection and belongingness within the groups in organization.

These studies suggest that *tsismis* is not totally a negative workplace behavior, but also a socially meaningful interaction within organizations. However, beyond its negative connotation, *tsismis* may also function as a form of self-preservation and social awareness among individuals within the workplace.

However, despite the existing studies discussing *tsismis* socially and psychologically, there still remains limited studies focusing specifically on the positive dimensions of *tsismis*, lived experiences, and subjective perceptions of employees regarding *tsismis* within the workplace settings, particularly in academic institutions.

### Workplace Dynamics

Begemann et al. (2023) showed that workplace *tsismis* refers to conversations that evaluate or talk about an absent person inside the workplace. The study reported workplace *tsismis* as a complex and dynamic behavioral process, which includes the sender, the receiver and the *tsismis* target. The research focused on the level of organization, involving organizational trust and its changes. Workplace *tsismis* can affect the environment at work. When *tsismis* commonly occurs at the organization, it may create a *gossip-spreading* atmosphere that can possibly harm the organization which may negatively affect organizational performance and increased employees' turnovers.

Workplace *tsismis* happens to sabotage employees and organization's performance. It is also one of the work-related stresses that can lead to negative behaviors and unkind treatment towards target employees. The findings showed that workplace *tsismis* is positively connected to knowledge hiding, revenge intention and deviant silence, showing that *tsismis* negatively affect workplace dynamics, which can damage social connections or good relationships within an organization. (Madan, et al., 2025)

In contrast with the previous studies, Kucuk et al. (2025) argued that *tsismis* does not only cause negative effects, it can also make a positive impact on employees. The researchers explained that *tsismis* serves psychological and organizational functions, which includes sharing of information and strengthening social bonds.

In psychological explanation, *tsismis* viewed as a coping mechanism, it allows individuals to express their values, morale, motivations and perceptions by sharing information through *tsismis*, which can lead to group cohesion, increased trust and maintain strong social connections. *Tsismis* can also provide important information and promote social support within an organization. This study revealed that workplace *tsismis* can be a complex and widespread informal communication way in an organization that influences workplace dynamics.

### Workplace *Tsismis*

Workplace *tsismis* is commonly known as informal communication among employees regarding an absent colleague often carries evaluative comments that can be either positive or negative (Wei et al., 2025). It implies that the *tsismis* is not entirely negative, while it may carry harmful or consequences for the organizational as a whole, however, *tsismis* has a positive function, particularly in understanding individuals emotions through engagements of interaction. Since it is normal for people to talk and interact with others, *tsismis* develops a space where the individuals can share their emotions, frustrations, and work experiences with their co-workers.

*Tsismis* carries a deeper meaning rooted in the actual experiences of the employees. Instead of simply seeing it as a harmful communication, phenomenology emphasizes how individuals interpret daily interactions to make sense of individuals' work life. It focuses on how workers consciously understand and make sense of individuals' daily interactions. Employees consciously interpret workplace *tsismis* based on their experiences, relationship, and organizational interactions

Although studies on Filipino culture were conducted outside workplace settings, these still show how *tsismis* can carry social connections, as a mechanism for stress relief, and meanings within organizational interactions. Suing et al. (2024) describe *tsismis* functions as a culturally embedded defense mechanism. The findings among housewives revealed that engaging in *tsismis* allows individuals to express suppressed emotions, process personal concerns, and maintain social relationships. Similarly, Baticos et al. (2025) it emphasized the Filipinos' social connection through sharing updates and communicating everyday is a natural and frequent form of interaction everyday as a defense mechanism. These studies suggest that *tsismis* are often used to express emotions and maintain social connection, which may also interpersonal experiences within workplace settings.

Gumarao (2024) also argued that *tsismis* can promote learning, exposure to different perspectives, and relational closeness. When practiced with boundaries, it may contribute to personal growth and social connection. These findings suggest that *tsismis* may serve as a way for people to express their emotions and ideas, and connect with others through communication.

In workplace settings, *tsismis* becomes part of informal organizational communication. Employees often exchange information about colleagues, supervisors, and institutional matters. While some forms may be harmful, others may serve relational or emotional functions. However, these studies focus on the community behavior and Filipino culture rather than workplace experiences in academic institutions. There are still limited studies exploring how employees experience and interpret *tsismis* in academic workplaces.

### *Tsismis* as Social Support in the Workplace

Recent literature recognizes that not all *tsismis* is destructive. Dai et al. (2022) findings revealed that positive *tsismis* refers to constructive, supportive, or non-malicious sharing of information that strengthens relationships

rather than damages reputations. In workplace settings, positive *tsismis* involves sharing praise, defending colleagues, or providing encouraging information, and it functions as a form of social support. (Chen et al., 2022)

Employees who engage in positive *tsismis* report closer relationships with coworkers, increased trust, and a stronger sense of belongingness in the workplace. Positive *tsismis* allows the release of stress, validation of experiences, and reassurance that their challenges are shared by others. Through these interactions, employees gain optimism, resilience, and motivation, which can enhance focus and creativity. These experiences highlight how employees personally experience and interpret positive *tsismis* as part of employees everyday engagement, especially in supporting each individual. These studies suggest that *tsismis* can become a meaningful that contributes to emotional and stress relief, and a sense of belongingness within the workplace settings.

Several studies supporting social support in *tsismis*. Baticos et al. (2025) found that *tsismis* can increase work motivation and promote group cohesion. It allows employees to feel included and updated, contributing to a sense of belonging. The exchange of experiences may foster empathy and shared understanding. Gumarao (2024) revealed that individuals engaging in positive *tsismis* often experience emotional relief and validation. Through sharing perspectives, employees may feel heard, supported, and reassured. This aligns with the broader concept of social support, which is to help against stress.

Studies also consistently emphasize the importance of co-workers support reducing stress and improving employee well-being. Baylon and Agudo (2025), in their study among BPO employees, found that social support significantly correlates with reduced work stress. Although *tsismis* itself was not identified as the stress-reducing factor, the interpersonal interaction component played a crucial role. Similarly, Vilorio (2023) emphasized that teachers who receive support from coworkers demonstrate healthier coping mechanisms and greater work fulfillment. Niere et al. (2023) also highlighted that coworker support reduces workplace tension.

Araña, A. et al. (2023) found out that the effects of *tsismis* in people's daily lives and social relationships. It also seeks to examine *tsismis* contribution to social solidarity. Findings showed that *tsismis* is not the worst thing, it functions as a society's way to create connections and make social bondings. Even if *tsismis* can cause harmful effects, many Filipinos seem to be used to it. It serves as their way of social interactions, source of entertainment during their free time and social activities that accept its positive and negative consequences. This article discussed the different types of *tsismis*, which are the negative *tsismis* and positive *tsismis*. Negative *tsismis* includes casual talks and backstabbing which can harm someone's reputation. On the other hand, positive *tsismis* gives people an ability to express their opinions comfortably and encourages people to be more open in understanding different perspectives. When positive *tsismis* applied constructively, it can enhance social relationships and improve emotional well-being, and also increase one's confidence, excitement and sense of self.

Cuadra (2023) explains that Filipinos naturally use *tsismis* to stay connected with others. But the people should be mindful, self-aware, and caring about facts and validity to those that may affect the *tsismis* as long as the conversation is positive and not meant to hurt anyone, it actually helps people; it boosts the mood and morale of everyone involved, creating a stronger and more supportive bond between friends and co-workers.

*Tsismis* also fosters social connectedness, trust, and a sense of belonging within workgroups (Yeats et al., 2023; Russo & Stix, 2024). When employees share personal or sensitive information through *tsismis*, they often experience greater closeness and stronger interpersonal bonds with their coworkers. This increased sense of trust and belonging contributes to improved collaboration, teamwork, and motivation. Employees who feel integrated into social circles are more likely to focus on their tasks and engage in creative problem-solving. For employees, this theme emphasizes that *tsismis* not only reduces stress but also reinforces interpersonal relationships and creates a supportive work environment that enhances well-being. These findings suggest that informal conversations including positive *tsismis* — may function as emotional outlets and relational support systems.

Belongingness and trust are essential components of employee well-being. Suing et al. (2024) found that *tsismis* strengthens social connection. Baticos et al. (2025) emphasized that *tsismis* reinforces shared norms and collective identity.

Workplace literature consistently shows that strong coworker relationships reduce stress (Viloria, 2023; Baylon & Agudo, 2025). When employees feel socially connected, they are more resilient to job demands.

However, workplace settings, particularly academic, have not been specifically studied in relation to *tsismis* and work stress. Although previous studies highlighted the role of *tsismis* in promoting social connection, emotional and stress relief, and belongingness, it remains unclear on how employees personally experience and perceive positive *tsismis* within their workplace.

### ***Tsismis* as a Coping Mechanism for Work Stress**

Workplace stress is an ongoing concern that significantly impacts employees' emotional wellbeing. Employees commonly experience stress due to workload demands, interpersonal conflicts, pressures within the organization, emotional exhaustion. As a response for the individuals, it develops different coping mechanisms to manage workplace stress and to regulate emotions.

Within workplace settings in academic institutions, *tsismisan* may emerge during shared lunch, conversations among co-workers, or during worktime about workplace experiences, allowing employees to regulate their stress together.

Recent studies suggest that employees engage in *tsismis* during stressful situations in the workplace. An et al. (2025) found that employees often share experiences, frustration, and concerns with co-workers as a way of releasing emotional tension. Similarly, Martinescu and Beersma (2024) explained that workplace *tsismis* allows employees to express emotions, reduce isolation, and gain reassurance from others who share similar experiences. It implies employees feel validated when their experiences are acknowledged by others. Through *tsismisan*, employees are able to release stress and emotional burden instead of suppressing them, which may contribute positively to their emotional, physical, and psychological well-being.

Recent studies show that *tsismis* is not merely casual in *tsismis* among employees, but a shared experience where individuals openly express workplace stress, and emotions. Through *tsismisan*, employees may find validations, advice, and emotional support from co-workers, especially when workplace experiences already affect their personal well-being.

Work stress has been widely examined in various professional settings. Chico et al. (2023) found that work stress significantly affects job performance. Increased stress leads to reduced productivity and effectiveness. Niere et al. (2023) identified workplace stressors such as workload and interpersonal conflicts as primary sources of tension. Paril (2023) observed heightened stress levels among teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly among male teachers adjusting to new teaching modalities.

In coping literature, Teodoro et al. (2023) found that students in a Christ-centered institution turned to prayer to manage academic stress. (Viloria, 2023; Gumarao, 2024). highlighted that healthy coping mechanisms, particularly social support, improve employee well-being.

Recent studies that also provide a deeper understanding of lived experiences related to *tsismis*. Suing et al. (2024) also showed that *tsismis* can be used as a defense mechanism, especially when they are targeted as the subject of *tsismis*, leading them to damaging someone's feelings and ruin reputations, including their own.

As stated by Gumarao (2024) it focused on exploring the experiences, realizations and motivations of Marites. Marites can also involve two or more participants engaging with *tsismis*. This study investigated lived experiences among Marites who stayed aware about the latest issues and did not mind sharing it to other people. Being a marites has been normalized in the Philippines. However, in this study, it revealed that marites can have complex identities. It is perceived not just finding answers, but also increases interests, desire to know, connections and personal development. This research showed that *tsismis* or marites serves as a coping mechanism that can lessen stress through social bondings. Marites can offer meaningful perspectives that can give emotional support and healing. These practices can lead to personal and spiritual growth when they use it

properly and wisely, along with self-reflection. Despite the stigma and negative perception about marites, the findings showed that engaging as a marites is part of coping if the individual uses it wisely and objectively.

Similarly, Villaceran (2026) findings suggest that most coping strategies are actively used when Filipino students are stressed. When individuals experience stress, it is natural for them to look for ways to cope or release what they feel during stressful events. However, coping strategies may differ from one person to another – some may rely on religiosity, others may prefer overactivity or release emotions, while some may turn to substance use. It implies that it depends on the individual how they cope when stressed.

However, *tsismis* was not examined as a coping strategy in these studies. Given that *tsismis* allows emotional expression, shared processing of concerns, being informed and raising awareness, emotional support and relational reassurance (Suing et al., 2024; Gumarao, 2024.), it may function as an informal coping mechanism in workplace settings.

In Filipino culture, emotional concerns are often shared in conversational spaces rather than formal counseling settings. Therefore, *tsismis* may serve as an accessible and culturally relevant coping tool.

### Positive Dimensions of *Tsismis*

Desacada et al. (2024) highlight the dual nature of *tsismis*, emphasizing that while *tsismis* may lead to misunderstanding and interpret conflict, it can also promote social interaction and camaraderie among individuals. In the workplace setting, this perspective suggests that *tsismis* may also function as a form of social interaction among employees, allowing them to share experiences, express emotions and develop a sense of belongingness with co-workers. This supports the present study in exploring the idea that workplace *tsismis* is not solely negative, but may also contribute to social bonding and connection among employees across different departments.

Shan et al. (2024) applied social information processing theory and found that positive workplace *tsismis* increased work engagement, whereas negative *tsismis* resulted in affective rumination. The finding of the study is that positive *tsismis* occurs when individuals hear or engage in favorable talk about others, which can serve as a form of positive reinforcement. As a result, individuals may feel appreciated and valued, especially when the statements being shared about them are affirming and positive.

As stated by Suing et al. (2024) the findings revealed that *tsismis* have different multiple purposes. *Tsismis* perceived as a way of entertainment, a source of information, creating social connections and can be used as a defense mechanism. *Tsismis* can also impact individuals' well-being. It plays an important role to every individual, *tsismis* commonly used as a way to share thoughts, experiences and information with others which leads them to create closer social relationships. *Tsismis* can make both positive and negative impacts to people, *tsismis* can provide positive impacts such as forming social bonds and meeting new friends or colleagues by engaging with *tsismis*.

Chiel et al. (2025), findings found that *tsismis* regulates emotions through social support, allowing the expression or vent of emotions, reducing stress and pressure, gaining validation, understanding experiences and increasing the feeling of security. This study revealed that *tsismis* can build trust and strengthen social connections.

Qing et al. (2025) study showed that positive workplace *tsismis* defined as positive comments about an absent employee, which includes defending them and complimenting certain behavior. These recognition or positive feedback may increase employees' motivation and creativity to perform at the workplace, which can lead to employees' healthy well-being and enhance supportive workplace environments.

Zong et al. (2021) highlight that positive workplace *tsismis* helped employees build social connections and relationships in the workplace. These relationships develop employees' sense of belongingness and social connection. It supports the present study in exploring the positive dimensions of positive *tsismis* among employees.

Based on the recent studies, *tsismis* is not only associated with the negative connotation, but it also serves as positive outcomes of *tsismis* among employees such as developing social connections, sense of belonging, and work stress relief through *tsismis*. However, despite highlighting the importance of two sides of *tsismis*, there remains limited focus on how *tsismis* specifically affects employees well-being in workplace dynamics.

### Synthesis of the Study

The reviewed literature shows that *tsismis* is a complex behavior with both negative and positive effects in the workplace. Traditionally, *tsismis* is seen as harmful because it can cause misunderstanding, damage reputations, create conflict, and increase stress among employees (Desacada, 2024; Baticos et al., 2025). These findings highlight that *tsismis*, when used irresponsibly, can contribute to a toxic work environment.

Recent studies emphasize that *tsismis* is not always negative. *Tsismis*, which includes sharing compliments, support, or helpful information, builds trust, comfort, it can also strengthen relationships and improve workplace morale (Dai et al., 2022; Chen & Wang, 2022). Employees who engage in *tsismis* tend to feel more connected, supported, appreciated, validated and motivated. It also helps reduce negative feelings toward the organization and may even lower turnover intentions (Chiel, 2025). This suggests that *tsismis* can function as a form of informal social support.

In the Filipino context, *tsismis* has a deeper cultural meaning. It is a common way for people to communicate, build relationships, and express emotions. Studies show that *tsismis* can serve as a defense mechanism, allowing individuals to release stress and process their experiences (Suing et al., 2024; Gumarao, 2024). It is also seen as part of everyday social interaction that strengthens social bonds and creates a sense of belonging (Araña, 2023; Cuadra, 2023).

Moreover, *tsismis* plays a role in coping with work stress. Employees often engage in informal conversations to vent frustrations, seek advice, and feel understood by others (Martinescu, 2024; Wei et al., 2025). When used positively, *tsismis* can provide emotional support, increase resilience, and improve overall well-being (Viloria, 2023; Baylon & Agudo, 2025). It also contributes to trust, teamwork, and a supportive work environment (Zong et al., 2021; Yeats et al., 2023; Russo & Stix, 2024). Despite these findings, there is still limited research that directly examines *tsismis* as a lived experience for work stress, particularly in academic institutions. Most studies focus either on its negative effects or its role in general social contexts, without clearly distinguishing between positive and negative *tsismis* in relation to stress outcomes. Therefore, further research is needed to better understand how *tsismis* functions in the workplace and how it may contribute to employees' well-being, social connection, sense of belongingness, and stress management.

### Philosophical Underpinning

The study was grounded in the descriptive phenomenological paradigm rooted in Husserlain's philosophy, which seeks to describe the essence of individuals' lived experiences as consciously perceived. The paradigm assumes that participants are capable of providing rich and detailed descriptions of their experiences and that the researcher, through the process of bracketing (epoché), sets aside personal assumptions, biases, and prior knowledge to focus on the participants' accounts as faithfully as possible. In examining the positive dimensions of *tsismis* among employees of an educational institution, the study seeks to describe the participants' lived experiences of workplace stress relief, social connection, and belongingness without imposing external interpretations or theoretical explanations, thereby remaining consistent with the principles of Husserlian descriptive phenomenology.

From a metaphysical perspective, the study views reality as it is consciously experienced by individuals through their lived experiences. Consistent with Husserlian descriptive phenomenology, reality is understood through participants' direct awareness of phenomena rather than through external explanations or objective measurements. In the study, *tsismis* is approached as a phenomenon experienced by employees in their everyday work lives, where conversations may be consciously perceived as opportunities for emotional expression, stress

relief, social connection, and a sense of belonging. The study seeks to describe these experiences as participants present themselves to consciousness without imposing predetermined interpretations.

Epistemologically, the study is grounded in Husserlian's view that knowledge is gained through the careful description of lived experience. Participants are regarded as the primary source of knowledge because participants have directly experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Through in-depth phenomenological interviews, participants describe how participants experience *tsismis* within their workplace, while the researcher employs bracketing (*epoché*) to set aside personal assumptions, prior knowledge, and biases. The process enables the researcher to focus on participants' descriptions as faithfully as possible and to identify the essential structures of the phenomenon.

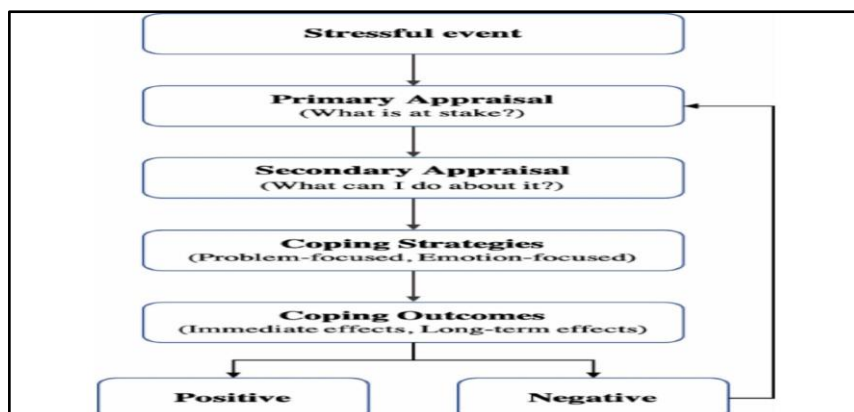
Axiologically, the study recognizes the importance of maintaining openness, neutrality, and respect throughout the research process. The researcher acknowledges personal beliefs and experiences related to *tsismis* but intentionally brackets these perspectives to minimize their influence on data collection and analysis. Ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' voices, guide the conduct of the study. By remaining faithful to participants' lived experiences, the study aims to present authentic descriptions of how *tsismis* is experienced in relation to workplace stress relief, social connection, and belongingness.

From a contextual perspective, the study recognizes that employees' lived experiences occur within the everyday environment of an educational institution, where workplace interactions naturally form part of daily life. Although organizational culture and interpersonal relationships provide the context in which these experiences occur, the study does not seek to explain or interpret organizational processes. Instead, it focuses on describing how participants consciously experience *tsismis* within the setting and the meanings that emerge from those lived experiences.

In conclusion, the study is philosophically anchored in Husserlian descriptive phenomenology. It emphasizes the careful description of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, and the practice of bracketing to understand the essence of employees' experiences of *tsismis* as related to workplace stress relief, social connection, and belongingness.

## Framework of the Study

The study is grounded in psychological and organizational theories that explain social interactions, coping strategies, and stress management in the workplace, namely the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, the Social Support Theory, and the Social Exchange Theory. These theories were used only as sensitizing lenses to provide conceptual background and frame the research problem, rather than as hypotheses or explanatory frameworks to be tested. Consistent with Husserlian descriptive phenomenology, the researchers bracketed these theoretical assumptions through *epoché* during data collection and analysis to ensure that the findings emerged from the participants' lived experiences.



**Figure 1 Transactional Stress and Coping Model**

Note. From Figure 1, by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman, 1984, (<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2017-19288-021>).

The main theoretical framework applicable for the study is the Transactional Stress and Coping Model proposed by Lazarus and Folkman's (1984). The model explains that stress is a result of the individual's perception of environmental demands exceeding their coping resources. Engagement in *tsismis* can be viewed as an informal coping strategy, where employees interpret workplace challenges and social interactions, using *tsismis* as a means to regulate emotions and reduce perceived stress. Through social exchanges, employees may gain emotional support, validation, or a sense of belonging, which aligns with the coping mechanisms described in the transactional model. The framework is relevant to the study as it helps employees' identify sources of stress and explain how they manage or cope with work-related stressors.

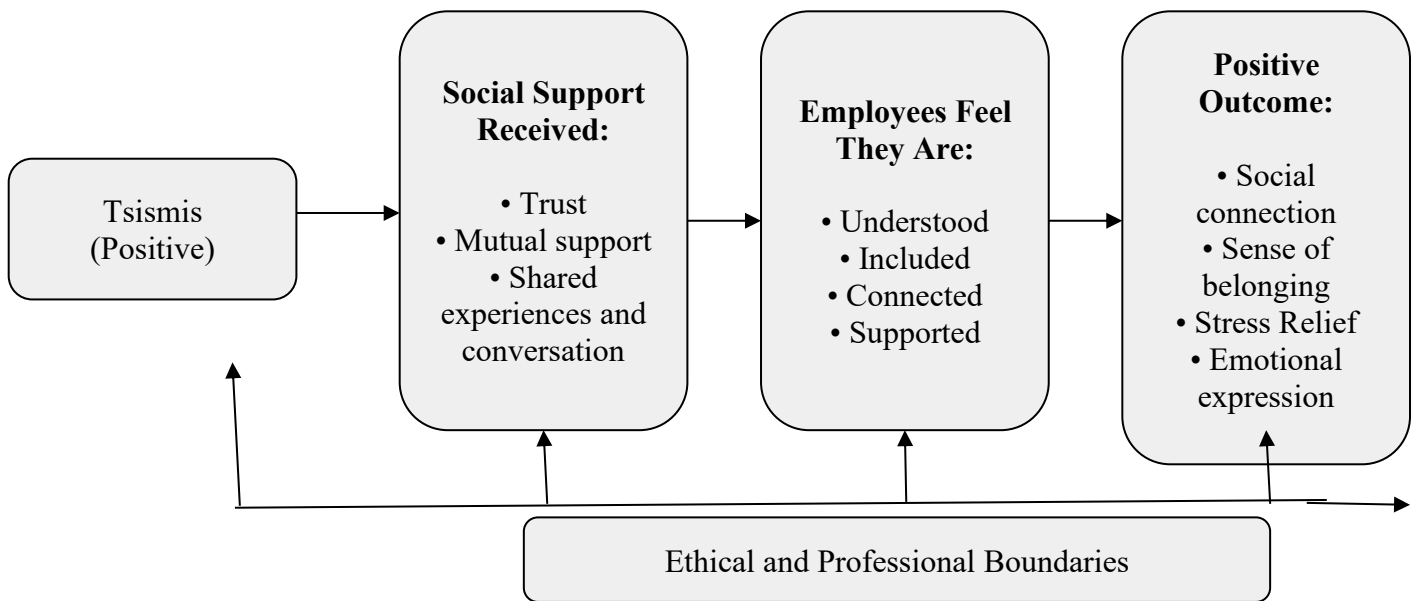
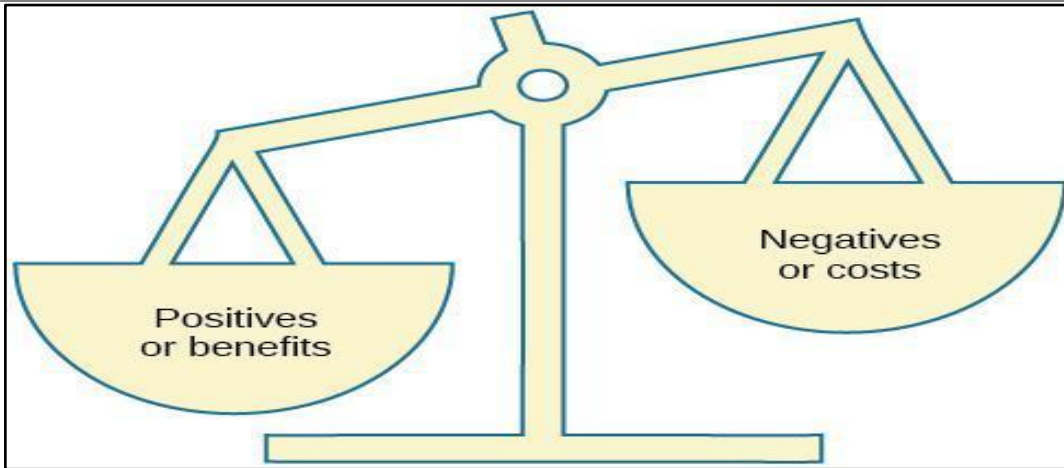


Figure 2

### Social Support Theory

Another relevant theory adapted in Sidney Cobb's Social Support Theory (1976), it is defined as one's beliefs that they are seen, valued, loved, respected and also belong to mutual responsibilities. The theory explained that supportive gestures from one another can help prevent people from having any physical or mental health problems and also decrease life stress. The framework is relevant to research as it can help employees increase emotional comfort, esteem support, network support, and sense of belongingness, which strengthen good relationships and healthier work dynamics.



**Figure 3**

Social Exchange Theory

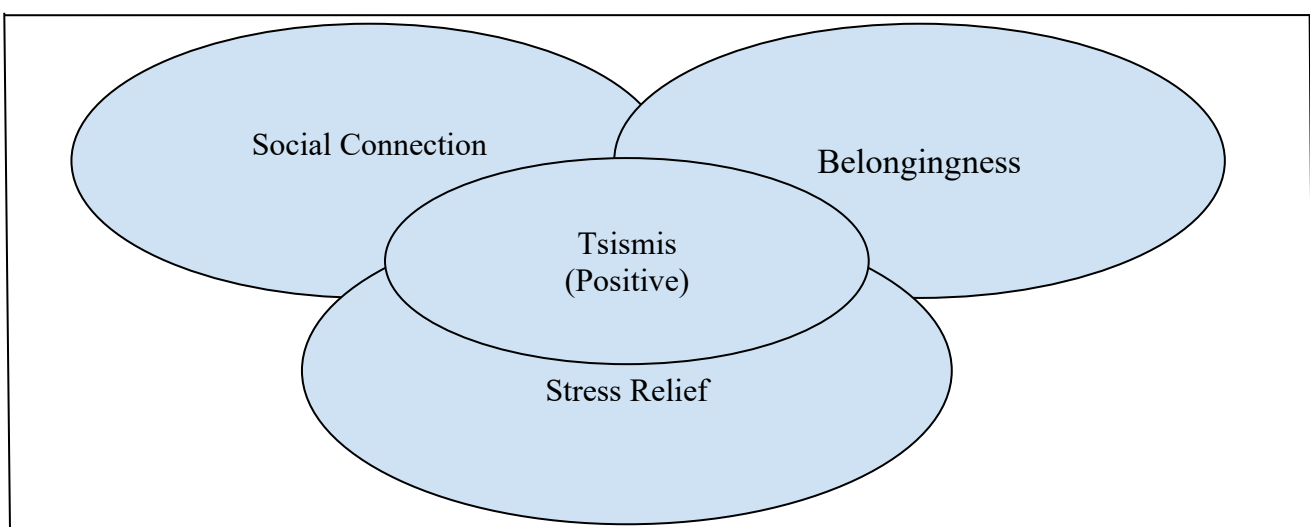
*Note.* From *Figure 5*, by Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964,

(<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/intropsychology/chapter/prosocial-behavior/>).

Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964) provides a framework for understanding interpersonal interactions as transactions that involve costs and benefits. *Tsismis*, in this sense, can be viewed as a social exchange where employees share information to build relationships, gain social support, or establish informal influence. Positive outcomes from these exchanges, such as increased social cohesion or emotional relief, may reduce perceived work stress, while negative outcomes, such as conflict or mistrust, may increase stress. By situating *tsismis* within the social exchange framework, this study investigates how these informal interactions can function as lived experience in a work environment.

These three theoretical perspectives provide foundation for understanding how *tsismis* influence work stress, coping strategies, social interactions, social belongingness, and work dynamics among employees. The combination of transactional stress and coping, social support, social exchange highlights the complex dynamics through which *tsismis* influences employee well-being and workplace functioning.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



**Figure 4 Conceptual Framework of the Positive Dimensions of Tsismis and Their Roles in Social Connection, Belongingness, and Stress Relief**

The figure presented above is the positive aspects of workplace *tsismis* and its influence on employees' experiences. It illustrates how positive *tsismis* may contribute to social connection, belongingness, and stress relief within the organization. Through engaging in positive *tsismis*, employees may develop social connections because *tsismis* can reduce the professional barriers and develop trust among employees. As employees interact with another, individuals may also develop a sense of belongingness by feeling understood, validated, and emotionally safe within the workplace. *Tsismis* may serve as a coping mechanism for stress relief in the workplace. (Chen et al., 2022; Suing et al., 2024; Gumarao, 2024; Martinescu and Beersma, 2024)

### Research Question

1. How do employees perceive the positive effect of *tsismis* in their workplace?
2. In what ways do employees feel positively connected with others in terms of positive *tsismis* in the workplace?
3. How do employees feel that they belong to the organization when they involve themselves in positive *tsismis*?
4. In what ways can *tsismis* positively affect the employees sense of stress management and relief?

### Assumptions of the Study

The study are based on the following assumptions:

1. Lived experiences of *tsismis* are consciously perceived and described by employees.

Guided with the Husserlian Phenomenological Approach using Thematic Analysis, the study assumed that employees perceive and described *tsismis* differently based on their lived workplace experiences, social connections and emotional responses (Sun et al., 2023).

2. Employees share lived experience of *tsismis* that shapes how employees personally understand and social connections with others in the workplace.

It is assumed that participating in *tsismis* may affect employees' relationships with colleagues by strengthening social connection, social bonds and trust. (Estevez et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022).

3. Positive *tsismis* is a workplace communication phenomenon that is a natural part of how employees communicate in everyday life.

The study assumes that employees may view *tsismis* as an informal communication which includes sharing knowledge or awareness, exchanging of information and also can be used as a coping strategy within the work environments (Cuadra, 2023).

4. Heavy workloads cause employees' stress and emotional strains, however, having a coping mechanism as a *tsismis* in the workplace might help employees cope and lessen stress.

The study assumed that positive *tsismis* is considered or perceived as a coping mechanism that allows employees to release their emotions and manage stressful situations in the workplace (Düdina & Martinsone, 2025).

### Significance of the Study

The study is significant because it provides deeper insights into the positive dimensions of *tsismis*. While *tsismis* is commonly associated with negativity, conflict, and unprofessional behavior, the research explores how *tsismis* may also function as a social connection, belongingness, and stress relief. Through examining the lived experiences and perspectives of employees, the study aims to create awareness that *tsismis* may not always

produce harmful outcomes, but can also serve social and emotional functions when practiced within healthy boundaries.

For **Employees**, the findings of the study may help employees gain a better understanding of how *tsismis* influences their workplace experiences and interpersonal relationships. Employees may become aware that *tsismis* can sometimes provide emotional comfort, strengthen camaraderie, and reduce feelings of stress or isolation in the workplace. By promoting awareness, the study may help employees develop balanced perspectives regarding *tsismis* and its role in workplace socialization and well-being.

For the **Human Resource Department**, the study may provide the Human Resource Department with valuable insights into how *tsismis* affects employee interaction and workplace atmosphere. Understanding the positive dimensions of *tsismis* may help the department recognize the importance of social connection and peer interaction in promoting employee well-being. The findings may also guide HR personnel in creating programs, activities, or communication policies that encourage healthy socialization while preventing harmful *tsismis* and workplace conflict.

For **Academic Institutions**, the study may contribute to a broader understanding of employee dynamics and organizational culture within educational settings. The findings may help institutions recognize that *tsismis* practices are part of everyday workplace interaction and may influence employee morale, connectedness, and emotional support systems. By understanding these dynamics, institutions may become more aware of the importance of fostering open communication, healthy social environments, and supportive workplace cultures.

For **Different Workplaces**, the study may also benefit different workplaces and organizations beyond academic institutions by providing new perspectives regarding *tsismis*. Organizations may use the findings to better understand how workplace interactions contribute to employee satisfaction, stress relief, and social bonding. The study may encourage workplaces to promote healthier communication practices that strengthen relationships among employees while minimizing toxic or harmful forms of gossip.

For **Mental Health Practitioners**, the study may provide additional knowledge about the social and emotional functions of *tsismis*. The findings may help practitioners understand how employees use *tsismis*, as a means of coping with stress, seeking emotional support, and developing a sense of belongingness. The result of the study may assist practitioners in designing mental health programs, stress-management activities, and workplace interventions that emphasize healthy communication, peer support, and positive social engagement among employees.

For **Researchers**, the study may serve as a valuable contribution to existing literature regarding workplace communication, social interaction, and employee well-being. Since studies about the positive dimensions of *tsismis* remain limited, the study may provide additional empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives that challenge the common negative perception of *tsismis*. Researchers may use the findings as supporting literature in exploring workplace behavior, organizational communication, social belongingness, and stress management within institutional settings.

For **Future Researchers**, the study may serve as a reference and foundation for further studies related to *tsismis*, informal workplace communication, and employee well-being. Through this, the study may encourage broader and more balanced discussions about the role of *tsismis*.

### Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study focuses on the lived experiences of employees from a private higher education institution in the Philippines regarding the positive dimensions of *tsismis* in the workplace. It specifically examines how employees understand and experience *tsismis* in their daily work interactions and how it contributes to social connection, belongingness, and stress relief within their organization.

The study was grounded in a Husserlian phenomenological research design, which aims to describe the essence of a lived experience rather than measure frequency or test relationships between variables. It focuses on the subjective meanings that employees attach to *tsismis* as part of their workplace interactions.

The study was conducted at a private higher education institution in the Philippines. It did not cover other schools, companies, or workplaces.

Participants were limited to ten (10) employees who have been actively employed during the period of data collection and must have at least one (1) year of employment in a private higher education institution in the Philippines. Employees on leave and those with less than one year of service are excluded from the study.

Data were gathered through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, using a researcher-made interview guide. The study relied solely on participants' narratives and experiences shared during interviews, and did not include surveys, experiments, or external behavioral observations.

The study was limited to exploring the positive aspects of workplace *tsismis*, particularly its role in building social relationships, fostering belongingness, and providing emotional relief. Other aspects of *tsismis*, such as negative effects or workplace conflicts, were not the main focus unless voluntarily mentioned by participants.

As a qualitative phenomenological study, the findings were not generalizable to all employees or workplaces. They were limited to the experiences of the selected employees from a private higher education institution in the Philippines and were intended to provide an in-depth understanding rather than broad statistical conclusions.

## METHODOLOGY

The chapter presents the methodology utilized in the study, focusing on the exploration of the lived experiences of *tsismis* among employees. It discusses the research design, participants, research site, research instruments, data gathering procedures, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations. Furthermore, the chapter outlines the procedures undertaken to ensure that the study was conducted rigorously, accurately, and in accordance with established ethical standards.

### Research Design

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design, specifically grounded in a Husserlian phenomenological approach, to explore and describe the lived experiences of employees who engage in *tsismis* within the workplace. The design is considered most appropriate because the study aims not to measure frequency, establish causal relationships, or generalize behavior across populations, but rather to gain an in-depth understanding of how individuals subjectively experience, interpret, and assign meaning to *tsismis* in their everyday work interactions.

Qualitative research was particularly suitable because it prioritizes the exploration of human experiences within their natural context and recognizes that social realities are constructed through personal and interpersonal meanings. Since *tsismis* was a socially embedded and culturally nuanced phenomenon, understanding it required attention to employees' thoughts, emotions, motivations, and interpretations rather than relying solely on numerical indicators or predetermined categories. Through qualitative inquiry, participants are given the opportunity to articulate their experiences in their own words, allowing the study to capture the complexity, depth, and context-dependent nature of workplace *tsismis*.

More specifically, the study adopted a Husserlian phenomenological perspective, which sought to uncover the essential structure or essence of a phenomenon by examining how it was consciously experienced by individuals. Husserlian phenomenology emphasizes returning "to the things themselves," focusing on participants' direct descriptions of experience while minimizing external interpretation. Guided by the principle of epoché or bracketing, the researcher intentionally suspends personal assumptions, biases, and prior judgments regarding *tsismis* to remain open to participants' perspectives as they are lived and expressed.

Using the approach, the study sought to move beyond viewing *tsismis* merely as informal communication or workplace behavior and instead understand how employees experience it as a social and psychological phenomenon. It examined how employees make sense of engaging in *tsismis*, the meanings they attached to these interactions, the emotions and reflections that accompany them, and how these experiences influence their perceptions of workplace relationships, belongingness, and interpersonal dynamics.

### Research Site

The study was conducted in Quezon City, one of the largest and most highly urbanized cities in the Philippines. Quezon City serves as a major center for education, commerce, governance, and employment, making it an appropriate setting for examining workplace-based social experiences and interpersonal communication practices. The city accommodates a highly diverse working population across institutional, corporate, and community-based environments, creating conditions where social interactions and *tsismis* naturally occur as part of everyday organizational life.

Quezon City was considered a suitable locale for the study because of its dynamic and socially dense environment, where employees regularly engaged in both formal and informal workplace interactions. In organizational contexts, informal communication practices—such as *tsismis*—often emerge alongside structured work processes and may contribute to social connection, emotional regulation, and the development of interpersonal relationships. Since the study aimed to explore the lived experiences of employees regarding the positive dimensions of *tsismis*, conducting the research in a large urban setting allowed for richer and more contextually grounded insights into how workplace relationships are formed and maintained.

The study was conducted at a private higher education institution in the Philippines because it provided an appropriate institutional setting for investigating employees' lived experiences regarding the positive functions of *tsismis*, particularly in fostering social connection, strengthening feelings of belongingness, and served as a form of emotional or stress relief. Employees operated within a structured workplace environment that encouraged regular interaction, making it possible to understand how *tsismis* emerges and becomes integrated into everyday work experiences.

Moreover, this private higher education institution in the Philippines was considered the most suitable site due to its accessibility to the researchers and the voluntary willingness of employees to participate in the study. The locale was therefore not selected solely for convenience but because its urban, institutional, and socially interactive characteristics align directly with the objectives of understanding how *tsismis* may function as a meaningful social experience within workplace settings.

### Sample and Sampling Design

The participants of the study consisted of ten (10) employees of private higher education institutions in the Philippines who were actively employed during the period of data collection and had been employed at that specific private higher education institution in the Philippines for at least one (1) year. Employees who are on extended leave and those with less than one (1) year of employment in that specific site were excluded from the study. The criterion was established to ensure that participants had accumulated sufficient workplace exposure and experience to provide relevant insights regarding workplace interactions and experiences related to *tsismis*.

The study used purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique commonly utilized in qualitative research to intentionally select participants who possessed characteristics relevant to the phenomenon being explored. Specifically, criterion purposive sampling was employed, wherein participants were selected based on predetermined inclusion criteria aligned with the objectives of the study. Participants were chosen because participants were expected to provide meaningful and information-rich accounts of their experiences and perceptions regarding workplace *tsismis*.

The inclusion criteria for participation were: (1) must be an employee of this specific private higher education institution in the Philippines; (2) must be actively employed during the period of data collection, and (3) must

have at least one (1) year of employment at the specific site. These characteristics were selected because employees with longer employment duration and active workplace involvement are more likely to have developed sustained interpersonal experiences that are relevant to understanding workplace *tsismis*.

Employees in that private higher education institution in the Philippines were selected as the target participants because the institution provided a relevant and accessible setting for examining workplace *tsismis*. Their work environment allowed the researchers to gather firsthand accounts of everyday social interactions and experiences associated with workplace *tsismis*. Additionally, selecting employees was feasible and practical in terms of accessibility and data collection.

A total of ten (10) participants were included in the study. The number was considered appropriate because phenomenological research focuses on obtaining rich, detailed descriptions of participants' lived experiences rather than achieving statistical representation. Since the study used purposive sampling, participants were intentionally selected based on characteristics that allow them to provide relevant and meaningful insights into workplace *tsismis*. According to John W. Creswell (2013), qualitative studies commonly involved a small number of participants who could provide detailed and in-depth information about the phenomenon being investigated. Creswell further suggested that a reasonable sample size for a phenomenological study ranged from three to twenty-five (3–25) participants, which was considered sufficient to gather rich qualitative data while remaining manageable for analysis. Therefore, selecting ten participants was considered sufficient to generate detailed accounts and achieve a depth of understanding that addressed the objectives of the study.

## Research Instruments

The study utilized a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide as the primary research instrument. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to explore the positive dimensions of *tsismis* and its roles in promoting social connection, belongingness, and stress relief.

The interview questions were aligned with the research questions of the study. Specifically, the guide questions focused on employees' experiences and perceptions regarding the positive dimensions of *tsismis*, the ways *tsismis* contributes to social connection and belongingness, and how *tsismis* serves as a form of stress relief. The interview guide also explored the positive outcomes employees associated with *tsismis* in their daily workplace interactions and how awareness regarding its positive dimensions may be enhanced within the workplace.

The semi-structured format allowed the researchers to ask predetermined guide questions to determine whether the participants meet the study's participant criteria while also providing flexibility to ask follow-up and probing questions whenever clarification, elaboration, or deeper explanation were necessary. Through that approach enabled participants to openly share experiences and insights while ensuring that the discussion remains aligned with the aims and research questions of the study.

The development of the interview guide underwent a systematic validation process to ensure content validity, relevance, and appropriateness. The initial guide questions were constructed based on the study's research aims, research question, and existing concepts regarding *tsismis*, social connection, belongingness, and stress relief. The questions were carefully formulated to ensure neutrality, clarity, sensitivity, and alignment with the phenomenological design of the study.

To establish the validity of the researcher-made instrument, the interview guide was subjected to expert validation. The validators included a registered psychometrician, psychologist, and human resource professional. The validators evaluated the relevance, coherence, sensitivity, and appropriateness of the questions in eliciting participants' lived experiences and perceptions regarding the positive dimensions of *tsismis*.

The comments, suggestions, and recommendations provided by the validators were incorporated into the revision of the interview guide. Ambiguous, leading, repetitive, insensitive, and unclear questions were modified to improve the clarity, neutrality, and effectiveness of the instrument in gathering rich and meaningful qualitative

data. The validation procedure ensured that the interview guide adequately captures information relevant to the phenomenon being explored.

The finalized interview guide contained main interview questions and corresponding probing questions intended to encourage participants to elaborate on responses and provide detailed descriptions of experiences regarding the positive dimensions of *tsismis*.

### Ensuring Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of the study was established based on the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability proposed by Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (1985).

**Credibility** was established through several validation procedures to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the participants' lived experiences and perceptions regarding the positive dimensions of *tsismis*.

Expert validation of the interview guide conducted involving a registered psychometrician, psychologist, and human resource professional to ensure the clarity, relevance, appropriateness, and alignment of the guide questions with the aims and research problems of the study.

Triangulation was also employed to strengthen the credibility of the gathered data. The researchers utilized audio recordings, interview transcripts, and field notes to compare and validate the consistency of participants' responses and observed non-verbal behaviors during the interview process. Through that procedure allowed the researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of employees' experiences related to *tsismis*, social connection, belongingness, and stress relief.

Member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review and verify the accuracy of the statements, responses, and interpreted meanings during and after the interview process. The procedure helped ensure that the researchers' interpretations faithfully represented the participants' intended meanings and actual experiences.

Theme validation by experts was also conducted to strengthen the credibility of the findings. The extracted themes and interpretations were reviewed by the expert to assess whether the thematic analysis accurately reflects the participants' narratives and aligns with the aims and research questions of the study.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted to facilitate richer interaction and in-depth data collection. With the participants' consent, audio recordings and field notes will be utilized to accurately capture verbal responses, emotions, reactions, and non-verbal cues throughout the interview process.

**Dependability** was ensured by maintaining a systematic, organized, and well-documented research process throughout the study. The researchers carefully documented the development and validation of the interview guide, participant selection, data collection procedures, transcription process, coding procedures, and thematic analysis. Maintaining proper documentation ensured consistency and traceability throughout the conduct of the study.

**Confirmability** was established by ensuring that the findings were grounded in the participants' actual responses rather than the researchers' personal assumptions or biases. Audio recordings, interview transcripts, and field notes served as supporting evidence for the gathered data and interpretations. The researchers will also practice careful documentation and expert review to maintain objectivity and neutrality during data analysis and interpretation.

**Transferability** was ensured through the provision of thick and detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and workplace context of the study. Detailed descriptions regarding the participants' experiences and workplace interactions allowed readers and future researchers to determine the applicability of the findings to other similar workplace settings or contexts.

## Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering process began with securing ethical clearance from the Institutional Ethics Review Board (ERB). Following approval, a formal letter of request was submitted to the administrators and the Human Resource Department of the specific private higher education institution in the Philippines to obtain permission to conduct the study. The letter outlined the purpose, objectives, procedures, and duration of the research.

Upon approval, eligible employees were identified through a pre-interview process based on the established inclusion criteria. Qualified participants were then invited to participate in the study. Prior to participation, each participant was provided with an informed consent form explaining the nature and purpose of the study, voluntary participation, the right to withdraw at any time without penalty, and the confidentiality of their responses. Only those who voluntarily sign the consent form will be included in the study.

In-depth, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide based on the research questions. Each interview lasted approximately ten (10) to thirty (30) minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accurate data capture. Participants were informed that they could skip any question they found uncomfortable and could discontinue participation at any time without consequences.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, bracketing was practiced by the researchers throughout the research process by setting aside personal assumptions, biases, and preconceived notions to remain focused on the participants' actual experiences and perspectives. Member checking was also conducted after transcription and initial interpretation of the data. Participants were given the opportunity to review and verify the accuracy of their statements and the researchers' interpretations to ensure that their experiences were represented accurately.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim after data collection. To maintain confidentiality, no identifying information was included in the transcripts; instead, pseudonyms or codes were assigned to participants. All electronic data, including audio recordings and transcripts, were stored in a password-protected folder accessible only to the primary researchers and the research adviser. Any printed materials were securely kept in a locked cabinet.

Data were retained only for the duration necessary to complete the study. After the research has been finalized and approved, all audio recordings will be permanently deleted, and printed documents were shredded to ensure proper disposal and protection of participants' information.

The findings of the study were presented in thematic and narrative form to provide a comprehensive understanding of employees' lived experiences of *tsismis* and its positive dimensions and its roles in social connection, belongingness, and stress relief.

## Data Analysis Procedure

The study employed a descriptive phenomenological approach grounded in Husserlian phenomenology. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis to explore the positive dimensions of *tsismis* and its roles in social connection, belongingness, and stress relief among participants.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data. The researchers reviewed each transcript alongside the audio recordings to verify the participants' responses and preserve the authenticity of their lived experiences. As the study followed a descriptive phenomenological approach, the researchers practiced bracketing by consciously setting aside their personal assumptions and biases regarding *tsismis* before analyzing the data.

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis, the researchers first familiarized themselves with the data by repeatedly reading the interview transcripts and listening to the audio recordings to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences. Second, initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful features and patterns across the dataset. Third, the codes were organized into potential themes that reflected shared meanings and experiences related to social connection, belongingness, and stress

relief. Fourth, the themes were reviewed and refined by comparing them with the coded extracts and the entire dataset to ensure coherence and consistency. Fifth, the researchers defined and named each theme by clearly identifying its central meaning and relevance to the research objectives. Finally, the findings were presented in a coherent narrative, with representative participant quotations used to support and illustrate each theme.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to the ethical principles outlined in the Code of Ethics for Philippine Psychologists and Psychometricians of the Psychological Association of the Philippines. (PAP, 2022) The researchers ensured that all procedures comply with established ethical standards before, during, and after data collection. Prior to participation, the participants were fully informed about the purpose, procedures, nature, and objectives of the study. An informed consent form was provided and signed before the conduct of the interview. Participation in the study was strictly voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty, coercion, or negative consequences. Informed consent was obtained from all official participants before data collection.

The researchers ensured that the study poses no significant physical, psychological, or emotional harm to the participants. The research instrument to be used was appropriate for workplace-related research and will not contain harmful or offensive content. The potential benefits of gaining insights into positive dimensions of *tsismis* and its roles in social connection, belongingness, and stress relief outweighed any minimal risks associated with participation.

The principle of justice was observed by ensuring fair and equal selection of participants. All qualified employees were given an equal opportunity to participate in the study without discrimination based on gender, age, position, or personal background.

**Reflexivity.** The researchers recognized that *tsismis* is a culturally embedded practice in the Philippines and that they held personal experiences and preconceived notions regarding its positive and negative aspects. To minimize researcher bias, the researchers practiced reflexivity throughout the research process by engaging in bracketing, setting aside personal assumptions before and during data collection and analysis. During the interviews, the researchers maintained a neutral and nonjudgmental stance, encouraged participants to freely share their lived experiences, and avoided leading questions or imposing personal interpretations. Regular reflective discussions among the research team were also conducted to examine potential biases and ensure that the themes accurately reflected the participants' perspectives rather than the researchers' own views.

Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the research process. No identifying information was included in the research reports. The data gathered were treated with utmost confidentiality and were presented only in aggregate form to prevent individual identification. All collected data were securely stored, and access was limited solely to the researchers and the research adviser. Furthermore, the information obtained from the participants was used strictly for academic and research purposes only.

### **Ethical Approval**

This study involved human participants and was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles for research. Before the data collection began, ethical approval was obtained from the Ethical Review Board. Personal identities of participants were kept confidential, and their privacy and confidentiality were strictly secured. All collected data were used solely for research purposes.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The researchers declared that there are no potential conflicts related to the conduct, data collection, analysis and interpretation of the study. The research was conducted objectively and no financial, personal, professional relationships influenced by the design, implementation or findings of the study.

### **Data Availability**

The data gathered and analyzed in this study are not publicly available to secure and protect the participants' privacy and confidentiality.

## RESULTS

**Table 1** Themes, Sub-themes, Representative Quotes, and Interpretations on Employees' Perceptions of Workplace Tsismis

| Theme                                                                 | Sub-theme                                                | Quotes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Interpretation                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Tsismis as an Informal Form of Workplace Communication</b>      | <b>1.1 Tsismis as Informal Information Sharing</b>       | “Tsismis is a form of communication... sharing stories of how things went throughout the day.”“It's a way to communicate with others.”“Para siyang informal feedback system.”“It makes everyone... be aware or be updated.”“Tsismis may be a form of... relaying information.”            | Participants viewed tsismis as an informal communication channel for exchanging workplace updates, organizational information, and daily experiences. It helped employees stay informed and complemented formal workplace communication. |
| <b>1. Tsismis as an Informal Form of Workplace Communication</b>      | <b>1.2 Positive Tsismis as Harmless Conversation</b>     | “Purely katuwaan lang... pampa-light lang ng workload namin.”“Minsan harmless, minsan kukwentu-kwentuhan.”“Joke tsismis... it's not directly personal.”“Pangkwentuhan lang... light conversation.”“It's just like a natural conversation.”                                                | Participants distinguished harmless tsismis from harmful gossip. It was described as casual, light-hearted, humorous, and non-malicious conversation that created enjoyable social interaction without negatively affecting coworkers.   |
| <b>1. Tsismis as an Informal Form of Workplace Communication</b>      | <b>1.3 Tsismis as a Channel for Emotional Expression</b> | “Nagve-vent out lang.”“Para ma-vent out ko yung feelings ko.”“Sharing what I feel at the end of the day.”“We make tsismis to vent out ng stress and frustrations.”“Nakakapag-open ka.”“May isang tao ka na nakakausap.”                                                                   | Tsismis served as a space for expressing emotions, sharing frustrations, and discussing workplace experiences. It provided opportunities for emotional disclosure, mutual understanding, and coping with workplace challenges.           |
| <b>2. Tsismis as a Means of Fostering Workplace Social Connection</b> | <b>2.1 Building Interpersonal Relationships</b>          | “Ginagawa siyang bonding moment ng mga Filipino.”“Yung tsismis para sa akin is for entertainment or pagre-release ng stress.”“Usually... lunch break or coffee break... part siya ng closeness niyo as a co-worker.”“Mas masarap ang magtrabaho kapag yung mga kasama mo is good enough.” | Participants described tsismis as an opportunity for frequent interaction and bonding. Casual conversations and shared experiences helped develop friendships, rapport, camaraderie, and stronger interpersonal relationships.           |
| <b>2. Tsismis as a Means of</b>                                       | <b>2.2 Developing Trust Through</b>                      | “Nagiging stronger yung relationship natin... it's simply we trust                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Tsismis was perceived to strengthen trust through                                                                                                                                                                                        |

|                                                                      |                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Fostering Workplace Social Connection</b>                         | <b>Open Communication</b>                                 | somebody.”“You can trust the person.”“Mas mata-trust mo sila.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | openness, mutual sharing, and confidentiality. Trust developed when conversations remained respectful and personal information was handled responsibly.                                                                                                                               |
| <b>3. Tsismis and Employees' Sense of Workplace Belonging</b>        | <b>3.1 Participation in Informal Conversations</b>        | “Kapag breaktime lang... habang kumakain kami.”“During lunch break... kapag walang ginagawa o hindi busy.”“Usually kapag vacant o free time... lunch time.”“Usually, during lunch break or coffee break... kapag wala nang ginagawang trabaho.”                                 | Participation in tsismis was associated with feeling included in workplace interactions. Sharing conversations and experiences fostered acceptance, connection, and a welcoming workplace environment.                                                                                |
| <b>3. Tsismis and Employees' Sense of Workplace Belonging</b>        | <b>3.2 Sense of Workplace Belonging</b>                   | “Everyday... curiosity first talaga... ayaw mong ma-left out... kailangan updated din ako.”“May group of friends... bonding.”“Diyan ako nakahanap ng totoong kaibigan ko sa trabaho.”“I became friends with a lot of people here... because of sharing stories and sentiments.” | Many participants linked tsismis with social inclusion, friendship, and belonging. However, some indicated that belonging is influenced by personal values and workplace relationships rather than tsismis participation alone, showing individual differences in its social meaning. |
| <b>4. Tsismis as a Source of Emotional Support and Stress Relief</b> | <b>4.1 Emotional Support Through Shared Conversations</b> | “We are venting our frustrations sa isa't isa.”“We make tsismis to vent out ng stress and frustrations.”“Nakakapag-open ka.”“May isang tao ka na nakakausap.”“May nakakaintindi sa'yo.”                                                                                         | Participants viewed tsismis as an avenue for emotional disclosure and mutual support. Sharing frustrations, seeking advice, and receiving understanding from coworkers helped employees cope with workplace challenges.                                                               |
| <b>4. Tsismis as a Source of Emotional Support and Stress Relief</b> | <b>4.2 Stress Relief Through Informal Interaction</b>     | “Nakakatulong ba ito para mas gumaan o mabawasan ang stress? — Oo, sobra.”“Hindi lang naman pala ikaw yung na-stress.”“Mas nagiging magaan yung atmosphere.”“Mababawasan yung stress.”                                                                                          | Informal tsismis contributed to stress relief through humor, enjoyable interaction, and shared experiences. It helped employees realize that they were not alone in experiencing stress and made the workplace atmosphere lighter.                                                    |
| <b>5. Maintaining Ethical and Professional Boundaries in</b>         | <b>5.1 Practicing Responsible Information Sharing</b>     | “Dapat may limitasyon pa rin talaga.”“Pili lang ang kinukuwento ko.”“May iba na hindi talaga puwedeng ilabas.”“Pinakikinggan ko                                                                                                                                                 | Participants emphasized responsible communication by verifying information,                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

|                                                                                |                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Workplace Tsismis</b>                                                       |                                                       | lang kung tama ba o mali.”“Ang tsismis kasi... hindi mo vinalidate yung dalawang panig.”“Kailangan ko pa ring maging cautious.”“Nag-stay 'yon within the group.”                                                                                                                                                 | maintaining confidentiality, limiting disclosures, and critically evaluating information. These practices helped keep tsismis constructive rather than harmful.                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>5. Maintaining Ethical and Professional Boundaries in Workplace Tsismis</b> | <b>5.2 Balancing Camaraderie with Professionalism</b> | “Mas gusto ko yung magtrabaho na lang.”“Hindi aim para manira ng tao.”“Friendship is not built because of tsismis itself.”“Kailangan normal ka. Balance lang.”“Hindi lahat kailangan ipagkakatiwala mo.”“Kailangan maingat.”“Harmless and light lang.”“If it tackles personal intentions... hindi siya maganda.” | Participants recognized that although tsismis can strengthen workplace relationships, it must not compromise professionalism. Appropriate boundaries, avoidance of harmful discussions, and limited personal disclosure were considered essential for maintaining respectful workplace relationships. |

## DISCUSSIONS

**Participant Profile.** The study involved ten (10) employees of the specific site in private higher education institution in the Philippines who met the established inclusion criteria: (1) participants were the specific site in private higher education institution in the Philippines employees, (2) participants were actively employed during the period of data collection, and (3) participants had at least one (1) year of employment at the specific site in private higher education institution in the Philippines. These criteria ensured that participants possessed sufficient workplace experience to meaningfully describe their lived experiences of workplace *tsismis*. To protect their privacy and maintain confidentiality, no identifying personal information is presented.

The study examined the lived experiences of employees concerning the effects of workplace *tsismis*. Employing Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, five principal themes were identified: (1) *Tsismis* as an Informal Form of Workplace Communication, (2) *Tsismis* as a Means of Fostering Workplace Social Connection, (3) *Tsismis* and Employees' Sense of Workplace Belonging, (4) *Tsismis* as a Source of Emotional Support and Stress Relief, and (5) Maintaining Ethical and Professional Boundaries in Workplace *Tsismis*. These themes indicate that participants regarded *tsismis* as more than casual conversation. Rather, they considered it a meaningful social practice that facilitates communication, strengthens interpersonal relationships, enhances emotional well-being, and contributes to a supportive workplace environment when conducted responsibly.

The data demonstrate that employees actively construct positive meanings from their routine interactions through *tsismis*. In alignment with the phenomenological perspective, participants interpreted these informal conversations based on their lived experiences, workplace relationships, and shared organizational contexts. Rather than perceiving *tsismis* solely as harmful or destructive, participants described it as an opportunity to exchange information, express emotions, build trust, foster a sense of belonging, and manage workplace stress. Simultaneously, participants acknowledged the importance of maintaining ethical judgment, confidentiality, and professional boundaries to ensure that *tsismis* remains constructive and respectful.

The chapter interprets the findings in relation to the existing literature presented in Chapter 2. Each theme is examined to determine how participants' experiences support, extend, or diverge from previous research. Through the analysis, the study offers a deeper understanding of the role of *tsismis* within an academic workplace and its contribution to employees' interpersonal relationships and overall workplace well-being.

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## Theme 1. *Tsismis* as an Informal Form of Workplace Communication

The theme captures how participants understood *tsismis* as an informal mode of workplace communication. Rather than viewing it solely as harmful gossip, participants described *tsismis* as a means of exchanging information, engaging in casual conversations, and expressing emotions with colleagues. Collectively, these experiences demonstrate that *tsismis* served broader communicative functions in the workplace. The theme is reflected through three interconnected subthemes: (1) *Tsismis* as Informal Information Sharing, (2) Positive *Tsismis* as Harmless Conversation, and (3) *Tsismis* as a Channel for Emotional Expression. Table 1 presents the complete thematic matrix and supporting quotations.

Participants perceived *tsismis* as a meaningful form of informal workplace communication rather than merely a harmful practice. Participants described it as a way of sharing information, engaging in casual conversations, and expressing emotions with colleagues. From a Husserlian phenomenological perspective, these descriptions reveal how participants consciously experienced and assigned positive meaning to *tsismis* in their everyday workplace interactions. Rather than defining *tsismis* according to its commonly negative connotation, participants understood it through their own lived experiences. Table 1 presents the complete thematic matrix and supporting participant quotations.

### *Tsismis* as Informal Information Sharing

The subtheme focuses on how participants used *tsismis* to exchange workplace updates, clarify information, and remain informed about daily organizational events. Unlike the broader theme, which emphasizes communication in general, the subtheme specifically highlights the informational function of *tsismis*.

Participants consistently described *tsismis* as an informal channel for exchanging workplace information and daily experiences. One participant explained that "*Tsismis is a form of communication... sharing stories of how things went throughout the day*", while another stated, "*It makes everyone... be aware or be updated*". These accounts suggest that *tsismis* complemented formal organizational communication by helping employees remain informed about workplace events and organizational concerns.

The finding is consistent with An et al. (2025), who described workplace *tsismis* as an informal communication process that extends beyond rumor dissemination. Similarly, Gumarao (2024) emphasized that *tsismis* can facilitate learning and strengthen interpersonal relationships when practiced constructively. Participants therefore viewed *tsismis* as a practical means of sharing information that enhanced workplace awareness rather than replacing formal communication. Additional supporting quotations are presented in Table 1.

### Positive *Tsismis* as Harmless Conversation

The subtheme emphasizes *tsismis* as casual, enjoyable conversation that promotes social interaction. Rather than focusing on the exchange of information, it highlights the social and recreational function of *tsismis* through humor, storytelling, and shared experiences.

Participants distinguished positive *tsismis* from malicious gossip by describing it as casual, light-hearted, and enjoyable conversation. As one participant shared, "*Purely katuwaan lang... pampa-light lang ng workload namin*" (Translation: "*It's purely for fun... just to lighten our workload.*"), while another remarked, "*It's just like a natural conversation*". These narratives indicate that participants associated positive *tsismis* with humor, shared experiences, and social interaction rather than criticizing or harming others.

These findings support Desacada et al. (2024), who noted that *tsismis* may promote camaraderie and strengthen social relationships despite its potential negative effects. Likewise, Shan et al. (2024) found that positive workplace *tsismis* enhances work engagement by fostering positive interpersonal interactions. The present findings further suggest that employees consciously differentiated constructive *tsismis* from harmful gossip based on the absence of malicious intent. Additional illustrative quotations are provided in Table 1.

## ***Tsisimis* as a Channel for Emotional Expression**

The subtheme focuses on the emotional function of *tsisimis*. Participants described using conversations with coworkers to express feelings, share frustrations, and receive understanding and support, making *tsisimis* an avenue for emotional disclosure.

Participants also described *tsisimis* as a safe space for expressing emotions, discussing workplace experiences, and releasing frustrations. One participant simply stated, "*Nagve-vent out lang*" (Translation: "*It's simply a way of venting out.*"), while another explained, "*Nakakatulong siya na ilabas yung emotions mo*" (Translation: "*It helps you express your emotions.*"). These responses demonstrate that *tsisimis* functioned as a supportive interpersonal communication process through which employees could openly express their feelings and receive understanding from coworkers.

The finding is consistent with Suing et al. (2024) and Gumarao (2024), who identified *tsisimis* as a culturally embedded practice that allows individuals to express emotions, address concerns, and maintain social relationships. Viewed through Husserlian phenomenology, these accounts demonstrate that the meaning of *tsisimis* emerged from participants' lived experiences rather than from its commonly negative societal definition. More participant quotations supporting the subtheme are presented in Table 1.

Overall, participants perceived *tsisimis* as a constructive form of informal workplace communication that facilitated information sharing, encouraged light-hearted social interaction, and provided opportunities for emotional expression. Although *tsisimis* is often associated with negative consequences, the lived experiences of participants suggest that, when practiced responsibly and without malicious intent, it can contribute positively to communication and interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

## **Theme 2. *Tsisimis* as a Means of Fostering Workplace Social Connection**

The theme reflects how participants perceived *tsisimis* as a means of fostering social connection and strengthening interpersonal relationships within the workplace. Beyond serving as a form of communication, participants described *tsisimis* as a social process that brought coworkers closer together through shared experiences and everyday conversations. From a Husserlian phenomenological perspective, these accounts demonstrate that the meaning of *tsisimis* emerged from participants' lived experiences of building relationships, developing trust, and maintaining workplace connections. The theme is represented by two interconnected subthemes: (1) Building Interpersonal Relationships and (2) Developing Trust Through Open Communication. Table 1 presents the complete thematic matrix and supporting participant quotations.

### **Building Interpersonal Relationships**

The subtheme focuses on how *tsisimis* helped employees establish and strengthen interpersonal relationships with their coworkers. Rather than emphasizing the exchange of information, the subtheme highlights the relational function of *tsisimis* by creating opportunities for friendship, camaraderie, and rapport through informal interactions.

One participant described *tsisimis* as "*Ginagawa siyang bonding moment ng mga Filipino*" (Translation: "*Filipinos use it as a bonding moment.*"), while another explained that "*Usually... lunch break or coffee break... part siya ng closeness niyo as a co-worker*" (Translation: "*Usually during lunch break or coffee break, it becomes part of building closeness with your co-workers.*"). These accounts suggest that informal conversations enabled employees to interact beyond their formal work responsibilities, allowing them to know one another on a more personal level and develop meaningful workplace relationships.

These findings are consistent with Gumarao (2024), who argued that *tsisimis*, when practiced constructively, promotes relational closeness and interpersonal connection. Likewise, Suing et al. (2024) found that *pakikipagkuwentuhan* strengthens friendships and social bonds through open and regular communication. Araña et al. (2023) similarly described *tsisimis* as a form of social interaction that promotes solidarity and strengthens interpersonal relationships. The present findings extend the literature by showing that participants experienced

*tsismis* as a "*bonding moment*" that reinforced camaraderie and made the workplace feel more socially connected. Additional supporting quotations are presented in Table 1.

### Developing Trust Through Open Communication

The subtheme focuses on how *tsismis* contributed to the development of trust through open, respectful, and responsible communication. Unlike the previous subtheme, which emphasizes relationship formation, the subtheme highlights trust as an outcome of mutual openness, confidentiality, and responsible sharing of workplace experiences.

As one participant shared, "*Nagiging stronger yung relationship natin... it's simply we trust somebody*" (Translation: "*Our relationships become stronger because we learn to trust one another.*"), while another stated, "*Mas mata-trust mo sila*" (Translation: "*You become more trusting of them.*"). Participants explained that trust developed when coworkers listened to one another, respected confidentiality, and communicated without malicious intent. These experiences suggest that *tsismis* fostered an environment where employees felt comfortable sharing personal thoughts and workplace concerns.

These findings are consistent with Yeats et al. (2023) and Russo and Stix (2024), who reported that workplace *tsismis* can strengthen trust and interpersonal bonds when it involves supportive and respectful communication. Similarly, Chen et al. (2022) suggested that positive *tsismis* functions as a form of social support by encouraging constructive interactions among employees. Participants also echoed Cuadra's (2023) observation that trust depends not merely on sharing information but on exercising honesty, discretion, and respect throughout the conversation. Additional supporting quotations are presented in Table 1.

Overall, participants perceived *tsismis* as a meaningful social resource that strengthened workplace relationships and fostered trust among employees. While the first subtheme emphasized how *tsismis* facilitated friendship, rapport, and camaraderie, the second highlighted its role in cultivating trust through open and respectful communication. Together, these lived experiences suggest that *tsismis* is more than casual conversation; when practiced responsibly, it becomes a valuable interpersonal process that promotes social connectedness and a supportive workplace environment.

### Theme 3. *Tsismis* and Employees' Sense of Workplace Belonging

The theme captures how participants perceived *tsismis* as contributing to their sense of workplace belonging. Participants described that engaging in informal conversations helped them feel included, accepted, and connected with their coworkers. Through these interactions, employees experienced a stronger sense of being part of the workplace community. However, some participants emphasized that their sense of belonging did not solely depend on *tsismis* but was also shaped by personal values and workplace relationships. From a Husserlian phenomenological perspective, these findings demonstrate that the meaning of workplace belonging is constituted through employees' lived experiences and individual interpretations of their social interactions. The theme is reflected in two interconnected subthemes: (1) Participation in Informal Conversations, which focuses on employees' engagement in everyday informal workplace interactions, and (2) Sense of Workplace Belonging, which highlights the feelings of acceptance, inclusion, and connectedness that participants associated with those interactions. Table 1 presents the complete thematic matrix and supporting participant quotations.

#### Participation in Informal Conversations

The subtheme focuses on employees' participation in *tsismis* as part of their everyday workplace interactions. Participants described engaging in informal conversations during breaks and free time, providing opportunities to interact with coworkers and become involved in workplace social exchanges.

One participant shared, "*Kapag breaktime lang... habang kumakain kami*" (Translation: "*Usually during break time, while we are eating.*"), while another explained, "*Usually, during lunch break or coffee break... kapag wala nang ginagawang trabaho*" (Translation: "*Usually during lunch break or coffee break, when work has already been completed.*"). These accounts indicate that *tsismis* commonly occurred during informal moments in the

workday, creating opportunities for employees to engage with coworkers beyond their formal work responsibilities.

These findings are consistent with Baticos et al. (2025), who found that *tsismis* promotes group cohesion by helping individuals feel included and connected. Similarly, Suing et al. (2024) emphasized that *pakikipagkuwentuhan* strengthens social relationships through regular interaction. Additional supporting quotations are presented in Table 1.

### Sense of Workplace Belonging

The subtheme focuses on the psychological outcome of participating in informal conversations. Participants described that these interactions contributed to feelings of acceptance, inclusion, and belonging within the workplace. At the same time, some participants emphasized that belonging remained a personal and subjective experience that could exist even without active participation in *tsismis*.

As one participant stated, "*Diyan ako nakahanap ng totoong kaibigan ko sa trabaho*" (Translation: "That is where I found my true friends at work."), while another shared, "*I became friends with a lot of people here... because of sharing stories and sentiments*". These accounts illustrate how participants associated *tsismis* with developing meaningful workplace relationships and feeling recognized as members of the organization.

However, several participants also explained that their sense of belonging depended more on their personal values and relationships than on participation in *tsismis*. The finding suggests that while *tsismis* may facilitate social inclusion, it is not the sole determinant of workplace belonging. These findings are consistent with Yeats et al. (2023), Russo and Stix (2024), and Suing et al. (2024), who reported that constructive workplace interactions promote social connectedness and belonging. Additional supporting quotations are presented in Table 1.

Overall, participants perceived *tsismis* as contributing to workplace belonging by encouraging participation in informal conversations and fostering feelings of acceptance and inclusion. While participation in *tsismis* strengthened many employees' sense of connectedness, participants also recognized that belonging is a subjective experience influenced by multiple aspects of workplace relationships. Together, these findings demonstrate that *tsismis* can serve as one avenue through which employees experience belonging within the organization.

### Theme 4. *Tsismis* as a Source of Emotional Support and Stress Relief

The theme captures how participants perceive *tsismis* as contributing to their emotional well-being by providing emotional support and helping them cope with workplace stress. Beyond serving as a means of communication or social interaction, participants described *tsismis* as a meaningful coping resource that allowed them to express emotions, receive understanding from coworkers, and temporarily relieve work-related stress. From a Husserlian phenomenological perspective, these experiences demonstrate that participants consciously assigned positive meaning to *tsismis* based on how it helped them manage workplace challenges. The theme is reflected in two interconnected subthemes: (1) Emotional Support Through Shared Conversations, which focuses on the emotional support employees received through informal discussions, and (2) Stress Relief Through Informal Interaction, which highlights how these conversations promoted relaxation and reduced workplace stress. Table 1 presents the complete thematic matrix and supporting participant quotations.

#### Emotional Support Through Shared Conversations

The subtheme focuses on how employees experienced emotional support through sharing workplace concerns and personal experiences with their coworkers. Participants described *tsismis* as providing opportunities to express frustrations, receive reassurance, and feel understood by colleagues who had similar experiences.

One participant shared, "*We are venting our frustrations sa isa't isa*" (Translation: "We vent our frustrations to one another."), while another explained, "*May nakakaintindi sa'yo*" (Translation: "There is someone who

*understands you.*"). These accounts suggest that *tsismis* created a supportive environment where employees felt comfortable expressing their emotions and seeking encouragement from trusted coworkers.

These findings are consistent with Wei et al. (2025), who reported that employees often share workplace frustrations with coworkers to reduce emotional tension. Likewise, Martinescu and Beersma (2024) found that workplace *tsismis* provides opportunities for emotional expression and reassurance from peers with similar experiences. Suing et al. (2024) and Gumarao (2024) similarly emphasized that *tsismis* can serve as a culturally embedded means of emotional expression, validation, and mutual support when practiced responsibly. Additional supporting quotations are presented in Table 1.

### Stress Relief Through Informal Interaction

The subtheme focuses on how engaging in *tsismis* helped employees temporarily relieve workplace stress through enjoyable and informal interactions. Rather than emphasizing emotional support alone, the subtheme highlights the stress-relieving effects of humor, shared experiences, and casual conversations that created a lighter workplace atmosphere.

As one participant stated, "*Nakakatulong ba ito para mas gumaan o mabawasan ang stress? — Oo, sobra*" (Translation: "*Does it help make stress feel lighter or reduce it? — Yes, very much.*"), while another remarked, "*Mas nagiging magaan yung atmosphere*" (Translation: "*The atmosphere becomes lighter.*"). Participants explained that sharing experiences with coworkers helped them realize they were not alone in facing workplace challenges, making stressful situations feel more manageable.

These findings are consistent with Baylon and Agudo (2025), who found that coworker social support significantly reduces work-related stress. Similarly, Vilorio (2023) and Niere et al. (2023) reported that supportive workplace relationships promote healthier coping strategies and reduce workplace tension. Although these studies did not specifically examine *tsismis*, the present findings suggest that *tsismis* may function as an informal form of social support through which these stress-reducing benefits are experienced. Chiel et al. (2025) and Qing et al. (2025) likewise emphasized that positive *tsismis* promotes emotional regulation and supportive workplace interactions. Additional supporting quotations are presented in Table 1.

Overall, participants perceived *tsismis* as a meaningful source of emotional support and stress relief in the workplace. The first subtheme emphasized how shared conversations provided reassurance, understanding, and emotional validation, whereas the second highlighted how informal interactions helped reduce stress and created a more relaxed work environment. Together, these lived experiences suggest that, when practiced constructively and without malicious intent, *tsismis* serves as an informal coping mechanism that supports employees' emotional well-being and contributes to a healthier workplace environment.

### Theme 5. Maintaining Ethical and Professional Boundaries in Workplace *Tsismis*

The theme captures how participants perceived that the positive effects of *tsismis* depend on ethical responsibility and professional conduct. While the previous themes described the communicative, social, and emotional benefits of *tsismis*, the theme emphasizes how employees consciously regulated their participation to ensure that these benefits were maintained. Participants recognized that constructive *tsismis* requires responsible information sharing, respect for confidentiality, honesty, and professional judgment. From a Husserlian phenomenological perspective, these findings demonstrate that participants assigned meaning to *tsismis* not only through the conversations themselves but also through the ethical values and intentions that guided their interactions. The theme is reflected in two interconnected subthemes: (1) Practicing Responsible Information Sharing, which focuses on how employees managed the information they shared, and (2) Balancing Camaraderie with Professionalism, which highlights how participants maintained respectful workplace relationships while observing professional boundaries. Table 1 presents the complete thematic matrix and supporting participant quotations.

## Practicing Responsible Information Sharing

The subtheme focuses on how employees ensured that *tsismis* remained constructive through responsible communication. Participants described carefully evaluating information before sharing it, respecting confidentiality, limiting personal disclosures, and avoiding conversations that could mislead or harm others.

One participant explained, "*Dapat may limitasyon pa rin talaga*" (Translation: "There should still be limits."), while another shared, "*Kailangan ko pa ring maging cautious*" (Translation: "I still need to be cautious.").

These accounts suggest that participants did not engage in *tsismis* indiscriminately but instead exercised personal judgment regarding the accuracy, appropriateness, and potential consequences of workplace conversations.

These findings are consistent with Cuadra (2023), who emphasized that while *tsismis* serves important social functions, it should be practiced with honesty, self-awareness, and consideration for its possible effects on others. Likewise, Wei et al. (2025) observed that workplace *tsismis* can produce either positive or negative outcomes depending on how it is communicated. Participants similarly emphasized that responsible information sharing was essential for preserving trust and preventing misunderstandings. Additional supporting quotations are presented in Table 1.

## Balancing Camaraderie with Professionalism

The subtheme focuses on how employees balance positive workplace relationships with professional responsibilities. Rather than avoiding *tsismis* altogether, participants emphasized the importance of maintaining respect, fairness, and appropriate workplace behavior while engaging in informal conversations.

As one participant remarked, "*Kailangan normal ka. Balance lang*" (Translation: "You just need to be normal. It's all about maintaining balance."), while another stated, "*Hindi aim para manira ng tao*" (Translation: "The aim is not to ruin someone's reputation."). Participants explained that although *tsismis* could strengthen friendships and camaraderie, it should never compromise professionalism or damage the reputation of others. They emphasized exercising discretion, avoiding harmful conversations, and respecting personal boundaries to maintain positive workplace relationships.

These findings support Desacada et al. (2024), who reported that *tsismis* may strengthen social interaction when practiced responsibly but may also create misunderstandings when ethical boundaries are ignored. Similarly, Gumarao (2024) and Suing et al. (2024) emphasized that *tsismis* contributes to personal growth, emotional support, and social relationships only when appropriate boundaries are maintained. Participants' lived experiences demonstrate that the benefits of *tsismis* depend on balancing camaraderie with professionalism and ethical responsibility. Additional supporting quotations are presented in Table 1.

Overall, participants perceived ethical responsibility and professional boundaries as essential conditions for maintaining the positive functions of workplace *tsismis*. The first subtheme emphasized responsible information sharing through honesty, confidentiality, and careful judgment, whereas the second highlighted the importance of balancing social interaction with professional conduct. Together, these lived experiences suggest that *tsismis* is most beneficial when employees intentionally communicate with respect, discretion, and ethical responsibility, thereby promoting healthy workplace relationships and organizational well-being.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study explored the lived experiences of employees from a private higher education institution in the Philippines regarding the positive effects of workplace *tsismis* using a Husserlian descriptive phenomenological approach. Analysis of the interview data using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis generated five major themes that describe how participants experienced and interpreted *tsismis* in their workplace.

The first theme, *Tsismis as an Informal Form of Workplace Communication*, revealed that participants perceived *tsismis* as more than casual gossip. Participants described it as an informal communication process that facilitated

information sharing, light-hearted conversations, and emotional expression, helping employees remain informed and connected in their daily workplace interactions.

The second theme, *Tsismis* as a Means of Fostering Workplace Social Connection, demonstrated that participants viewed *tsismis* as a means of building interpersonal relationships and developing trust with coworkers. Through shared conversations and experiences, employees strengthened friendships, rapport, and camaraderie, contributing to a more supportive and socially connected workplace.

The third theme, *Tsismis* and Employees' Sense of Workplace Belonging, showed that participation in informal conversations contributed to feelings of acceptance, inclusion, and belonging among many participants. However, some employees emphasized that their sense of belonging was also influenced by personal values and workplace relationships, indicating that belonging is a subjective experience that extends beyond participation in *tsismis*.

The fourth theme, *Tsismis* as a Source of Emotional Support and Stress Relief, highlighted that participants experienced *tsismis* as a valuable source of emotional support. Informal conversations provided opportunities to express frustrations, receive understanding from coworkers, and temporarily relieve workplace stress, contributing to their emotional well-being.

The fifth theme, Maintaining Ethical and Professional Boundaries in Workplace *Tsismis*, emphasized that participants believed the positive effects of *tsismis* depended on responsible communication. They stressed the importance of verifying information, respecting confidentiality, exercising sound judgment, and maintaining professional boundaries to ensure that *tsismis* remained constructive rather than harmful.

Overall, the findings indicate that participants perceived workplace *tsismis* as a meaningful social practice with positive communicative, relational, and emotional functions when practiced responsibly and ethically. From the participants' lived experiences, *tsismis* was understood not merely as gossip but as an informal form of workplace interaction that fostered communication, strengthened relationships, promoted belonging, supported emotional well-being, and reinforced ethical responsibility within the workplace.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study explored the lived experiences and perceptions of employees regarding the positive effects of *tsismis* in the workplace. Findings revealed that participants perceived *tsismis* as both harmful and beneficial, depending on its content, purpose, and manner of communication. While it may contribute to conflict when used irresponsibly, participants emphasized its positive functions when practiced ethically and respectfully.

The findings showed that *tsismis* served as a means of strengthening workplace relationships by fostering camaraderie, social connection, trust, and a sense of belonging among employees. It also provided opportunities for emotional expression, stress relief, entertainment, and the informal exchange of workplace information. Furthermore, participants recognized the importance of maintaining ethical and professional boundaries by verifying information, respecting confidentiality, and avoiding malicious or harmful conversations. The findings of the study supported the assumptions. The results showed that most employees were aware of *tsismis* and interpret it differently based on the situation, supporting the assumption that lived experiences of *tsismis* are subjectively perceived and described by employees. While some participants see *tsismis* as having negative meanings or negative connotations, others perceive it as having different functions within the workplace such as emotional expression as a way to vent frustrations, manage stress, and some *tsismis* were purely entertainment during periods of heavy workloads. The findings further revealed that *tsismis* can serve as a coping mechanism for stressful events. *Tsismis* also helps build trust within the group – especially during the bonding moments, engaging with interesting conversation or stay updated during breacktimes or lunch break with their co-workers and it stays within the group. This confirms that employees share lived experience of *tsismis* that shapes how employees personally understand and social connections with others in the workplace. Additionally, employees considered it a natural communication of everyday in the workplace, as long as professionalism was still

observed. In conclusion, the findings suggest that *tsismis* is a natural and common social interaction that contributes to employees' social connection, sense of belongingness, emotional expression, and coping in the workplace.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are:

For **Employees**. Employees may also benefit when they continue practicing healthy communication and boundaries. The results suggest that *tsismis* may also serve positive functions such as emotional expression, social connection, a sense of belongingness within the group, and stress relief as a coping mechanism among employees.

For the **Human Resources (HR) Department**. The HR Department may create programs, seminars, spaces that promote healthy workplace communication among employees. These initiatives may also help both HR to reinforce clear policies and ethical guidelines against malicious *tsismis* while recognizing that informal communication, when practiced with respect, professionalism and boundaries can help among employees' social connection, sense of belongingness, and stress relief.

For **Institutions**. Institutions are encouraged to raise awareness that *tsismis* is not solely negative and can serve positive functions when done responsibly. This study may provide a deeper understanding regarding positive effects of *tsismis* in different types of social settings and how it affects individuals' engagement and stress.

For **Mental Health Practitioners**. Mental Health Practitioners should consider the positive side of *tsismis* when creating workplace wellness programs. *Tsismis* can help with emotional expression, feel connected, have a sense of belongingness, and cope with stress.

For **Future Researchers**. Future Researchers should explore more about the positive outcomes of *tsismis* using different types of frameworks. They should also study positive and negative *tsismis* for a more balanced view. Since this study did not consider sex or gender among selecting participants, future research may explore how males, females and other gender employees from different age groups differ in perceptions, understanding, and engagement with *tsismis*, particularly in how it helps them build social connections, feel a sense of belongingness in the workplace and how it affects individuals' stress. And also, future researchers are encouraged to explore different workplace settings and institutions to determine whether the findings are consistent across various organizations and explore individuals' different perceptions about *tsismis* workplace. Future researchers should also study digital or online *tsismis* to explore its impacts on individuals' mental health well-being and its effects on individuals' stress relief. This can help future researchers expand their understanding and exploration of the topic involving more participants and gain more different perspectives. Results can possibly change depending on the responses among individuals.

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**N.P.B**

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