

## Designing a Qualitative Pattern of Gossip Management in the Context of Social Networks in the Iran's Government Organizations

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**Purpose:** Rumor management in the context of social networks for government organizations is very important in order to maintain the organization's reputation and improve its performance. Therefore, the current research was conducted with the aim of designing a qualitative pattern of rumor management in the context of social networks in the Iranian government organizations.

**Methodology:** The current research in terms of purpose was applied and in terms of its implementation method was qualitative. The research population was experts in the field of public administration and organizational behavior in the field of research. The sample of the present study according to the principle of theoretical saturation was estimated to be 15 people which this number was selected by the purposeful sampling method and they were subjected to semi-structured interviews, and its validity was confirmed by the triangulation method and its reliability was estimated by the Cohen's kappa coefficient method 0.719. Data were analyzed by coding method in MAXQDA-2020 software.

**Findings:** The findings of this research indicated that 95 open codes, 5 core codes and 2 selective codes were identified for rumor management in the context of social networks in the Iranian government organizations. In this study, the selected codes were included the malicious rumors with three core codes of bad feelings, rumor transmission and thinking power, and innocent rumors with two core codes of trust building and reference support. Finally, the output of the software was drawn for the qualitative pattern of rumor management in the context of social networks in the Iranian government organizations.

**Conclusion:** Based on the findings of the present research, the managers of Iranian government organizations can prevent their destructive effect on the advancement of the organization's goals by managing malicious rumors and innocent rumors.

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## 1. Introduction

Today, organizations are facing considerable pressures to improve performance and seize competitive opportunities, a neglect of which could endanger their survival and effectiveness (Fayyazi & A'rabi, 2014). Human resources, as the most valuable asset of an organization, confront various issues and problems (Doagooyan, Hasani, & Samieiani, 2022). Rumors are often defined as unconfirmed statements or interpretations of events or subjects of general public interest. Academic interest in organizational rumors has increased in recent years. Rumors are a socially constructed phenomenon consisting of interpersonal communications, usually involving informal communications and evaluation of speculative or confirmed information related to other social actors not directly involved in the communication (Greenslade-Yeats, Cooper-Thomas, Corner, & Morrison, 2023). The phenomenon of rumor is a process through which news is spread without passing through conventional channels. A rumor can originate from incorrect information or it may be a source of correct but exaggerated and mistaken information. Rumor is recognized as a social anomaly extensively studied by social psychologists, who are seeking ways to eradicate it (Rabbani, Borandegi, & Mehrbani, 2014). Social networks are specific websites or applications enabling users to interact by sharing information, opinions, messages, images, etc., with each other (Norz, Dornauer, Hackl, & Ammenwerth, 2023). Individuals, when given the opportunity to spread rumors, exhibit more social tendencies than when their behavior is completely anonymous (Imada, Hophthrow, & Abrams, 2020). However, when it comes to the content of news and news discussion, this implies an individual's will to increasingly only see content that aligns with the stated interests of a person (Bhansali & Schaposnik, 2020). Rumors can rapidly spread on social media platforms and, if not promptly and effectively addressed, can damage an organization's reputation (Gao, Guo, Yin, Wu, Cao, & Li, 2022). Failure to control and manage rumors on social networks in an organization can have irreparable consequences, spreading them can harm personal reputation, impact financial markets, and cause social panic and instability. Nowadays, with the advent of the internet, individuals can spread rumors through instant messengers, emails, microblogs, etc., which increases the virtual spread of rumors, making them more impactful than ever before (Li, Hu, & Jin, 2019). Organizational culture, closely linked to the general culture of society, plays a significant role in shaping organizational behaviors, including rumor-mongering. With technological advancements and the significant growth of online social media, rumors, in addition to their traditional form, have found easier and faster ways to spread on social networks. Therefore, finding an appropriate solution for "detecting rumors on social networks" requires conducting relevant studies and experiments to manage rumors effectively by presenting an optimal model. Given the above, the main issue of this research is to answer the question: What is the qualitative pattern of rumor management on social networks in Iranian public organizations?

## Theoretical Literature

Rumor and its Management:

The behavioral functions of employees hold an important position in organizations and society, and neglecting them can cause problems for the organization, one of which is destructive rumors (Bakhshi Jagnab, 2022). Rumor is defined as the mouth-to-mouth transmission of tales, information, and unverified news, based on rumors or consensus, gaining credibility from its frequency and prevalence. Rumor is a specific assumption typically passed from person to person without reliable evidence (Doaei, Eslami, & Gholami, 2021). Rumors are transmitted from one individual to others and arise due to the emotional needs of people trying to reduce uncertainty. Rumors are unconfirmed statements that are not necessarily false, but when a person performs truth-seeking behaviors momentarily, doubts arise. Rumors are vague information that operates like "news" on subjects of broader interest and "often are complex. Due to the nature of the quality of their content and reasoning, rumors can be considered credible, but belief in them requires judgment based on the relative mindset of the content for the audience (Nekmat & Kong, 2019). Rumor management refers to the process of monitoring, addressing, and controlling rumors or incorrect information that could potentially harm the reputation of an organization or individual (Chen, Chen, Song, Zhao, Deng, Xie, & Yang, 2021).

**Social Networks:**

Social networks represent a new generation of internet websites. On these websites, internet users gather virtually around a common core and form online communities. Social networks, depending on their subject of activity, offer other facilities such as internet news feeds, the ability to upload videos and computer files, and communication with other personal media (Jafari, Karimi, & Abarghouzadeh, 2016). With the expansion of social networks, the way news is accessed has fundamentally changed. Newspapers, radio, and television were the main means of receiving news before the emergence and growth of social networks. Publishing news in media such as newspapers and television can be somewhat time-consuming. In contrast, with the growth of social networks, anyone can publish news without verifying its accuracy. This leads to news dissemination by non-professionals on social networks at a much higher speed than in official media. However, the accuracy and credibility of this news dissemination process are much lower than the news published in professional media (De Arruda, Cardoso, De Arruda, Hernandez, Costa, & Moreno, 2022).

**Management of Rumors in the Context of Social Networks in Organizations and the Motivation Behind Their Creation:**

Effective management of rumors on social networks is crucial for organizations to maintain their reputation, attract customers, and promote economic growth. Having a clear communication strategy and a team to address rumors, public organizations can ensure they are prepared to manage any rumors that may arise on social media platforms (Nunkoo, Gursoy, & Dwivedi, 2023). The management of rumors on social networks is important for organizations both theoretically and practically. On one hand, managing rumors on social networks can help individuals understand situations they perceive as threatening, either personally or collectively. On the other hand, failure to manage rumors can be harmful to organizations and their social networks, and can quickly spread through social networks. Therefore, organizational resistance to rumors, preventing the spread of falsehoods and disseminating the truth is crucial (Gao et al., 2022). Rumor management in the context of social networks involves strategies and techniques to prevent the spread of virtual rumors, provide accurate information to counter false claims, and create trust and credibility among social network users (Xu, Mei, Yang, & Kong, 2019).

Like all social actions, rumor spreading requires motives that prompt individuals to engage in it. Social psychologists and sociologists have explored why people create and spread rumors. In the readiness to accept rumors, individual, social, and cultural differences play a role. People with lower self-confidence and those who are less educated and unaware of their surroundings are more influenced by rumors. Individuals with better mental health are less likely to accept rumors than those lacking this feature (Dadgaran, 2010). The spread of rumors is a fundamental mechanism for information dissemination. The dynamics of rumor spread and factors influencing it, such as media coverage in the age of information, have made online social networks like Facebook, Viber, Telegram, and WeChat some of the most studied mediums for rumor dissemination in recent years (Zhou, Liu, & Su, 2019). People engage in positive and negative rumor spreading for various reasons and with different objectives, resulting in different outcomes. Negative rumors are positively correlated with emotional exhaustion, personality distortion, and suboptimal care, and negatively correlated with job commitment and safety culture (Babaei Aghbolagh & Sattari Ardabili, 2018).

**Empirical Literature**

Hatefi (2022) focused on the discursive pattern of rumor management and dissemination during the COVID-19 pandemic on the Telegram social network. The findings suggest that as news verification sources lose credibility, the ground for rumor formation in relation to fraud and forgery increases.

Sahafizadeh and Tork Ladani (2021) conducted research on rumor control on social networks using soft security mechanisms. The article presents a model for the dissemination and control of rumors as a soft threat on social networks. Evaluation results indicate that the proposed rumor control mechanism can be an effective method for controlling rumors on social networks, and developers of these networks can use the proposed method and provide necessary facilities for user self-control of rumors.

Abbaspour, Momenzadeh, and Arfaenia (2019) studied rumor dissemination on social networks. With the emergence of social networks, a form of individual journalism has arisen, where millions of social users can lead to serious issues for societies, necessitating the control of rumor dissemination on social networks. Many models have been proposed for controlling the spread of rumors, but none have been able to control the most shared rumors. In this article, we have merged two immune models, SIR and SEIR, which have shown more desirable results than other models, to present the RSEIR model for predicting and controlling the spread of rumors. This model, considering the attractiveness of rumors and the number of rumor shares, was able to control all rumors uniformly.

Jain (2022) researched an entropy-based method for controlling and managing COVID-19 rumors on online social networks using leaders' thoughts. During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, people disseminate various rumors and hoaxes via online social networks, negatively impacting human civilization. The final results showed the significant impact of online social networks in controlling COVID-19 rumors.

Puyod and Charoensukmongkol (2021) examined the effects of workplace rumors and organizational formalization on role ambiguity and emotional exhaustion of employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Online survey data from 522 faculty and staff members of three public universities in the Philippines were collected. Results show that workplace rumors and organizational formalization are positively associated with role ambiguity and emotional exhaustion, with role ambiguity mediating the effect of workplace rumors on emotional exhaustion. Additionally, moderation effect analysis indicates that workplace rumors and organizational formalization interactively exacerbate the ambiguity and emotional exhaustion experienced by employees.

Han (2021) conducted research on rumor management techniques and organizational rumors in Turkish schools. The aim of this study is a qualitative phenomenological research conducted through semi-structured interviews with 33 teachers in Turkey. Data were analyzed using content analysis techniques, creating themes and categories. Based on the research findings, school management should organize educational seminars on awareness, communication, and values to reduce the harmful aspects of rumors. School management should adopt a transparent management approach, create a feedback mechanism, establish effective communication, manage formal communication channels, and respond to those who spread harmful rumors and gossip.

Yucel, Sjobeck, Glass, and Rottman (2021) researched the social network analysis of rumors and friendships at universities in the United States. Results showed that rumors allow important rules to be clarified and reinforced, enabling individuals to strengthen their bonds with the group and track their social networks. To measure how rumors relate to friendship, participants from men's and women's service teams referred to their friendships and willingness to spread rumors about each of their teammates. Using social network analysis, we found that the group friendship association of members has a significant relationship with their involvement in positive and negative rumor networks. Increased friendship connections were associated with less involvement in spreading negative rumors or being the target of negative rumors.

## 2. Methodology

This study is categorized as developmental research. It employs a qualitative research design aimed at exploration. In other words, the present research is applied in objective and qualitative in approach. The population of this study included experts in public management and organizational behavior, specifically in the field of rumor management and communications. The sample of this study was estimated to be 15 individuals based on the principle of theoretical saturation, selected through purposive sampling.

The samples underwent semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted in person and by phone with experts to extract dimensions and indicators of rumor management and to discover the nature of the concept. After arranging necessary appointments for interviews, all interviews were conducted by the researcher and were audio-recorded with permission from the interviewees. It was determined in the thirteenth interview that theoretical saturation had been achieved, as the responses provided were similar to previous ones and did not add new insights, hence there was no need to continue with further interviews. However, to ensure this,

interviews continued up to the fifteenth participant. The validity of the research tool was confirmed by triangulation, and its reliability was estimated with a Cohen's Kappa coefficient of 0.719.

**Table 1.** Frequency and Percentage Results of Subjects' Demographic Information

Cohen's Kappa		Criteria	Condition
Value	0.719	<0	Weak
		0-0.20	Insignificant
		0.21-0.40	Medium
p	0.0001	0.41-0.60	Good
		0.61-0.80	Valid
		0.81-1.00	Excellent

In this study, interviews were conducted individually, and after each interview, a coding process was performed to ensure saturation of findings. It is noteworthy that the objectives, importance, and necessity of the research were explained to the samples, and the interviewer committed to observing ethical considerations. Finally, the data were analyzed using coding in MAXQDA-2020 software.

### 3. Findings

In this study, all interviews were transcribed first, and then open coding was performed using key point coding. This involved writing the collected data from the interviews on paper, followed by line-by-line and paragraph-by-paragraph analysis to create open codes. Open coding of interviews is presented after editing, with codes being excerpts from the texts or in some cases, the texts themselves. From the analysis of 15 interviews, 206 meaningful phrases were extracted, resulting in a total of 95 new open codes. In the second phase, axial coding was conducted. Axial coding is the process of relating categories and linking them at the level of their properties and dimensions. In this phase, categories, properties, and dimensions from open coding were compiled and placed appropriately to create increasing knowledge about the relationships. In other words, axial coding resulted in the creation of categories and subcategories. All final open codes were reviewed again and compared with the literature, leading to the confirmation of 5 core factors or codes by experts, including rumor transmission, bad feelings, creating trust, reference support, and thinking power.

**Table 2.** The Results of Open and Core Codes by Analysing Semantic Phrases

Row	Semantic Phrases	Open Codes	Core Codes
1	Positive attitude towards spreading rumors	Good insight into rumors	Rumor Transfer
2	Creating fake posts and falsifying the backgrounds of celebrities	Creating fake posts	Rumor Transfer
3	Universal consensus on a topic and its acceptance	Collective agreement regarding rumors	Bad Feelings
4	Mismatch between the information provided about a rumor and reality	Contradictory information	Creating Trust
5	Believing without research and reasoning based on hearsay	Belief without investigation and consultation	Creating Trust
6	Unquestioning acceptance of news mentioned in online newspapers	Unconditional acceptance of online news	Reference Support
7	Enjoyment from rumors	Entertainment with rumors	Rumor Transfer
8	Joy when discussing rumors	Happiness regarding rumors	Bad Feelings
9	Pleasure from spreading rumors	Feeling comfortable in expressing rumors	Rumor Transfer
10	Transferring rumors via the internet	Online rumor spreading	Rumor Transfer

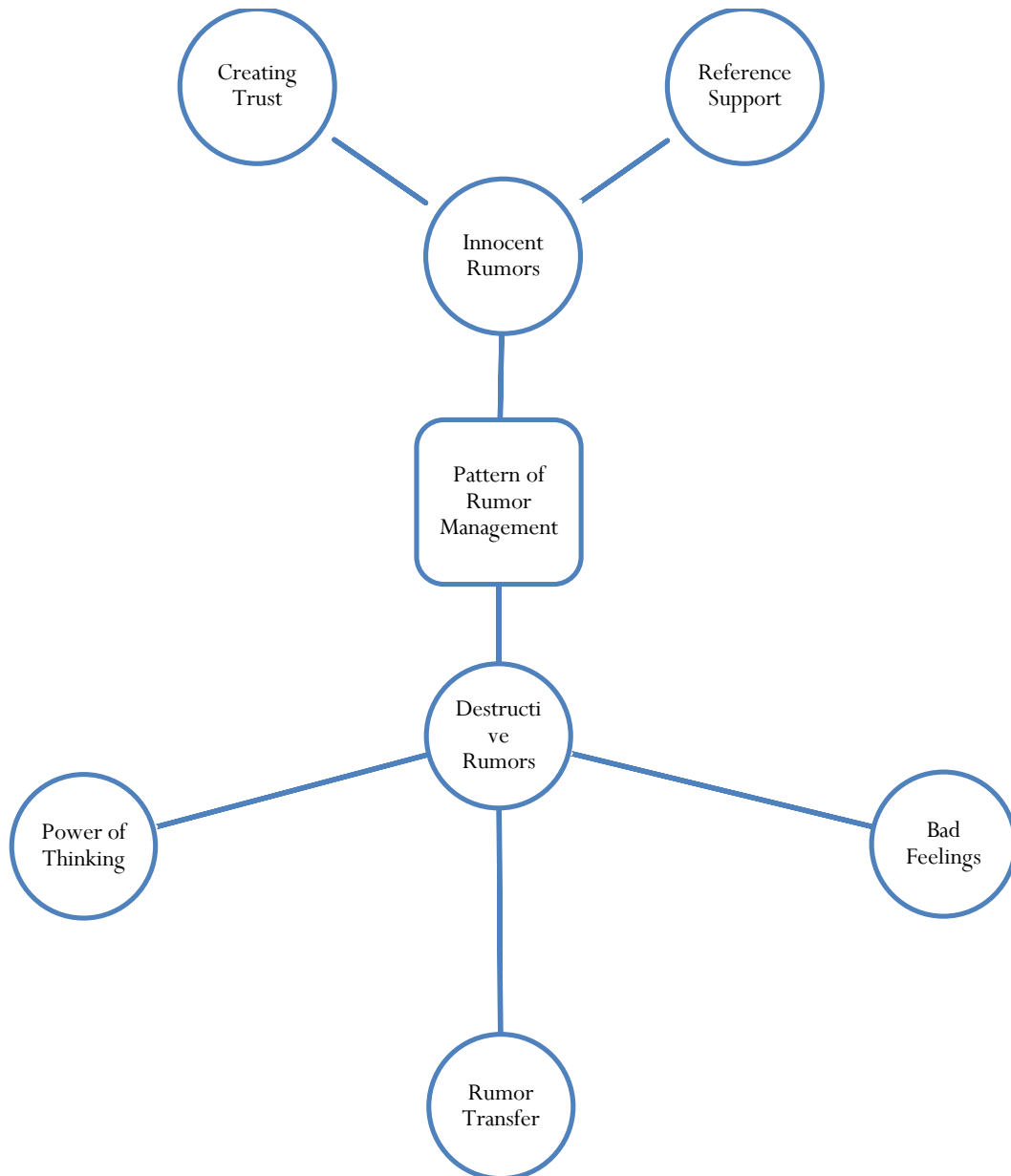
Row	Semantic Phrases	Open Codes	Core Codes
11	Considering rumor spreading desirable	Recommending rumor spreading	Rumor Transfer
12	Excitement when manipulating and falsifying the backgrounds of celebrities	Excitement upon seeing a rumor	Rumor Transfer
13	Not studying even with the consensus of most people about a rumor	Not following up on rumors	Creating Trust
14	Confirming opinions about information provided in a rumor	Agreement on rumors	Rumor Transfer
15	Considering discussions and reasoning about rumors valid	Positive reasoning about rumors	Power of Thinking
16	Accepting news existing in media and websites	Narrative capability of rumors	Reference Support
17	Interest in rumors	Supporting rumors	Rumor Transfer
18	Not being surprised or astonished upon hearing a rumor	Not being astonished by rumors	Creating Trust
19	Valuing and feeling good about spreading rumors	Valuing rumors	Rumor Transfer
20	Spreading rumors to others via Facebook, email, or blogs	Spreading rumors to others	Rumor Transfer
21	Perceiving rumors as true and factual	Normalizing rumors	Power of Thinking
22	Entertainment through cheating and manipulating the backgrounds of celebrities	Enjoyment from cheating and manipulation	Rumor Transfer
23	Accepting a rumor when most acquaintances believe it	Believing in rumors	Power of Thinking
24	Information provided in a rumor confirming previously available information	Confirming information in rumors	Rumor Transfer
25	Finding discussions about rumors convincing	Finding rumors inspiring	Power of Thinking
26	Accepting content written on news websites	Accepting written rumors	Power of Thinking
27	Feeling satisfied when hearing a rumor	Being happy about rumors	Rumor Transfer
28	Feeling disappointed upon hearing rumors	Feeling discouraged after hearing rumors	Bad Feelings
29	Considering the spread of rumors important	Considering rumors important	Rumor Transfer
30	Spreading rumors using online tools without any alterations	Transferring rumors without alteration	Rumor Transfer
31	Feeling closeness with someone who spreads the rumor	Feeling closeness to rumors	Rumor Transfer
32	Agreeing to manipulate and falsify the backgrounds of celebrities	Agreeing on spreading rumors	Rumor Transfer
33	Judging based on rumors considering people's opinions	Making decisions based on rumors	Power of Thinking
34	Bringing reasons for discussing rumors	Bringing reasons for rumors	Power of Thinking
35	Trusting news broadcast on satellite networks	Trusting satellite news	Power of Thinking
36	Feeling happy and excited when a rumor is heard	Becoming excited upon hearing a rumor	Rumor Transfer
37	Presenting hearing rumors as pleasant and good	Finding rumors pleasant	Bad Feelings
38	Assuming rumors are meaningful and substantive	Considering the spread of rumors meaningful	Rumor Transfer

Row	Semantic Phrases	Open Codes	Core Codes
39	Firmly believing news published in magazines	Full belief in newspaper news	Reference Support
40	Not regretting or being upset about spreading rumors	Not being discouraged from spreading rumors	Bad Feelings
41	Spreading and altering rumors online	Spreading and altering rumors online	Rumor Transfer
42	Accepting rumors published on the internet	Accepting virtual space rumors	Power of Thinking
43	Not being scared or apprehensive about spreading rumors	Being reckless about spreading rumors	Bad Feelings
44	Transmitting rumors through Facebook, email, or blogs with alterations	Receiving, altering, and transferring online rumors	Rumor Transfer
45	Believing rumors stated by people	Believing in what others say	Rumor Transfer
46	Excitement about hearing new news	Anxiety and worry	Rumor Transfer
47	Having a negative view of others	Naivety and gullibility	Power of Thinking
48	Having a negative attitude towards opposing individuals	Lack of high self-confidence	Power of Thinking
49	Broadcasting news that is doubtful	Individual perception of events	Creating Trust
50	Being talkative and verbose among others	Talkativeness and exaggeration	Rumor Transfer
51	Lack of proper mechanisms for offering suggestions	Lack of information	Rumor Transfer
52	Inadequate communication about a topic	Absence of an official news network	Bad Feelings
53	Ambiguity in published news and lack of official verification	Ambiguity in published news	Rumor Transfer
54	Lack of official and reliable sources for information dissemination	Novelty of information	Rumor Transfer
55	Insufficient relationship and poor communication with others	Insufficient relationship	Creating Trust
56	Exaggerating self-importance through spreading rumors	Narcissism	Creating Trust
57	Exaggerating feelings of capability and merit through spreading rumors	Excuse	Rumor Transfer
58	Receiving excessive praise through spreading rumors	Myth-making	Power of Thinking
59	Pretension and posturing through spreading rumors	Pretense	Reference Support
60	Looking good through spreading rumors	Influence	Creating Trust
61	Dominance and authority over others through spreading rumors	Dominance	Creating Trust
62	Proving superiority and perfectionism through spreading rumors	Superiority seeking	Reference Support
63	Excessive effort to gain power-seeking positions through spreading rumors	False advertising	Rumor Transfer
64	Achieving one's desires through spreading rumors	Slander	Rumor Transfer
65	Fulfilling others' desires through spreading rumors	Righting wrongs	Reference Support
66	Judging and arbitrating others through spreading rumors	Slander	Bad Feelings

Row	Semantic Phrases	Open Codes	Core Codes
67	Reducing anxiety and worry through spreading rumors	Popularizing	Rumor Transfer
68	Creating anxiety or unease through spreading rumors	Anxiety and worry	Rumor Transfer
69	Gaining awareness about many issues through rumors	Gossip	Reference Support
70	Hearing existing information in official channels through rumors	Nonsense	Rumor Transfer
71	Learning about things that should be covered through rumors	Spreading	Rumor Transfer
72	Becoming informed about the truth of some issues through rumors	Baseless rumors	Rumor Transfer
73	Rumors as a free opportunity for expressing thoughts	Refreshing the atmosphere	Reference Support
74	Finding new friends and colleagues by talking about rumors at work	Accompaniment	Reference Support
75	Getting nervous from hearing rumors	Anxiety	Bad Feelings
76	Getting upset from hearing rumors	Despair	Bad Feelings
77	Creating conflict and differences among others through rumors	Sowing discord	Rumor Transfer
78	Attracting attention in a group	Discussion	Power of Thinking
79	Harming other members	Intensity	Creating Trust
80	Conflicts between individuals	Disagreement	Rumor Transfer
81	Pleasing others	Satisfaction	Creating Trust
82	Existence of informal groups	Friendship	Creating Trust
83	Open and hidden hostility	Conflict	Bad Feelings
84	Threatening motives	Intimidation	Rumor Transfer
85	Strengthening friendship among group members	Companionship	Creating Trust
86	Being aware before believing any rumor	News importance	Power of Thinking
87	Political conditions of society	Unstable	Power of Thinking
88	Instability in economic issues	Fluctuation	Power of Thinking
89	Social conditions	Discrepancy	Power of Thinking
90	Performance of competitors	Testing	Power of Thinking
91	Lack of information and absence of proper mechanisms for offering suggestions	Ineffective	Power of Thinking
92	Lack of an official news network and inadequate communication about a topic	Incompetence	Bad Feelings
93	Ambiguity in published news and lack of official verification	Ambiguity in published news	Bad Feelings
94	Novelty of information and lack of official and reliable sources for information dissemination	Uncertainty	Rumor Transfer
95	Insufficient relationship and poor communication with others	Unconfirmed	Rumor Transfer



In this study, 5 core factors or codes including rumor transmission, bad feelings, creating trust, reference support, and thinking power were selected for selective coding and were categorized into two selective codes: destructive rumors and innocent rumors. Therefore, the selective codes comprised destructive rumors with three core codes: bad feelings, rumor transmission, and thinking power; and innocent rumors with two core codes: creating trust and reference support. Based on open, axial, and selective codes, a simple model of rumor management in the context of social networks in Iranian public organizations was developed using the software output.



**Figure 1.** Simple Model of Study

**Table 3.** A Summary of Selective Coding

Selective Code	Core Code	Number of Open Codes	Frequency of Open Codes
Destructive Rumors	Bad Feelings	13	73
	Rumor Transfer	41	
	Power of Thinking	19	
Innocent Rumors	Creating Trust	13	22
	Reference Support	9	

#### 4. Conclusion

The primary aim of this research is to present a qualitative model for rumor management within the context of social networks in public organizations. In this study, a coding method was used to develop a qualitative model of rumor management in social networks. Fifteen experts were interviewed for this research, with repetitive information observed from the thirteenth interview onwards. However, interviews continued up to the fifteenth participant to ensure data were completely repetitive and reached what is termed theoretical saturation. Initially, the content of all interviews was transcribed, followed by open coding using key point coding. The collected data from the semi-structured interviews were written on paper, then analyzed line-by-line and paragraph-by-paragraph to create open codes. The open coding of the interviews, presented after editing, consisted of excerpts from the texts or, in some cases, the texts themselves. From the analysis of 15 interviews, 206 meaningful phrases were extracted, resulting in a total of 95 new open codes. The second phase involved axial coding. Axial coding is the process of relating and linking categories at the level of their properties and dimensions. In this phase, categories, properties, and dimensions derived from open coding were compiled and placed appropriately to enhance knowledge about the relationships. In other words, axial coding led to the creation of categories and subcategories. All final open codes were reviewed again and compared with research literature, and ultimately, 5 factors were confirmed by experts. To validate the coding process and control the quality of the extracted codes in the qualitative section, Cohen's Kappa index was used, which reached a level of acceptable agreement. The dimensions of rumor management in the context of social networks in Iranian public organizations consist of 5 core codes and 2 selective codes (destructive rumors and innocent rumors).

Destructive rumors in this research included three core codes: bad feelings, rumor transmission, and thinking power. Managing destructive rumors on social networks in public organizations can significantly affect productivity, morale, and employee welfare. Destructive rumors can undermine productivity and damage morale. Managing destructive rumors in public organizations is necessary to prevent these negative consequences. Destructive rumors on social networks in organizations can have a negative impact on performance. While not all rumors are necessarily malicious, they can still cause harm. Destructive rumors can be spread through cyberbullying, damaging the social or professional reputation of the victim. Individuals who have violated norms or underperformed at work may engage in compensatory behavior, which could include spreading rumors or engaging in other negative behaviors. In today's tense environment, some competitors engage in unfair practices, spreading baseless rumors about their peers in cyberspace. Virtual space, especially messengers and social networks, has become an indispensable part of many people's lives. Easy and affordable communication, staying informed about news and current issues, using practical and skill-enhancing pages, entertainment, and filling leisure time are some of the functions of this space. However, the central use of this space has allowed anyone, with any belief or goal, to easily promote a particular idea, belief, or attitude by creating an account, page, or channel. Additionally, in this research, innocent rumors included two core codes: creating trust and reference support. Innocent rumors are typically produced in social networks to benefit public organizations and are generally managed with specific strategies. Innocent rumors can be a way for individuals to understand ambiguous or uncertain situations. Innocent rumors may be spread unintentionally, as people might not realize the impact of their words or actions. Innocent rumors created on social networks refer to sharing information about an issue without intending to harm the organizational ensemble. However, even innocent rumors can have negative consequences, such as spreading

misinformation and damaging someone's reputation. Managing these types of rumors can control the negative effects of the rumor. Innocent rumors may not have a significant impact, but if not managed, they can be harmful. For example, they can destroy employees' self-confidence, affect their self-esteem, and lead to depression, suicidal thoughts, and eating disorders.

Considering the research results, namely the identification of 95 open codes in two selective codes - destructive rumors (with three core codes: bad feelings, rumor transmission, and thinking power) and innocent rumors (with two core codes: creating trust and reference support), it is suggested:

1. Training employees on social media policies: All employees should be educated about the organization's social media policies and guidelines to ensure they are aware of the consequences of spreading rumors or negative comments about the organization online. General knowledge enhancement and deepening employees' insights into the nature and detrimental effects of rumors on social networks are recommended. Implementing and executing comprehensive training programs at various levels, both directly and indirectly, and organizing workshops on recognizing the nature and adverse effects of rumors are proposed.
2. Establishing a communication plan for crises: The presence of a powerful, courageous, honest, and popular spokesperson as the official and primary representative of the organization, and disseminating the most important news and events in the fastest times, using the most accurate phrases and precise words, can be entirely effective and useful in preventing the proliferation of the undesirable culture of rumor-mongering. A crisis communication plan should be in place that outlines the necessary actions in case a rumor or negative opinion is published on social media. This plan should include designated spokespersons, messaging templates, and methods for monitoring and responding to social media channels.
3. Using social media for disseminating official information: Utilize official social media channels to communicate important information about the organization, such as service updates or promotions, to prevent the spread of rumors.
4. Establishing rumor clinics: In public organizations, similar to some European organizations, rumor clinics should be established to bring together individuals prone to creating rumors and ask them to create rumors that can be managed by the organization at an opportune time and for issuing official statements. Occasionally, to enlighten public opinion and eliminate the harmful effects of rumors, a short, clear, and precise statement from government officials should be prepared and published for public information. It is essential that these statements or oral explanations do not contain any ambiguity, insinuation, digression, or justification. If the oral explanations or written statements of officials are lengthy, vague, or ambiguous, it may strengthen the existing rumor.
5. Legal actions: Once the primary source of rumor production or factors contributing to its spread and transmission on social networks are identified, necessary legal actions and decisive legal follow-ups should be taken against non-committed journalists and writers directly or indirectly involved in spreading rumors.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In this study, all ethical standards, including confidentiality and privacy, were observed.

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### **Authors' Contributions**

The first author was responsible for conducting the interviews, collecting data, and writing the initial draft of the article, while the other authors supervised the conduct of interviews, data collection, and the final writing of the article.

## Conflict of Interest

There was no conflict of interest among the authors.

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