# Negative Gossip Has Strong Impact on Seven-Year-Old Children's Social Behaviour, Study Finds



New research by psychologists has found that negative gossip exerts a disproportionately strong influence on the social behavior of seven-year-old children. Conducted by scientists from Osaka University and NTT Communication Science Laboratories in Kyoto, the study involved 108 seven-year-olds who watched videos featuring puppets sharing positive, negative, or neutral gossip about other characters.

The study showed that children were more generous with rewards when they heard positive gossip from multiple sources. In contrast, just one instance of negative gossip significantly reduced the rewards the children allocated. Positive gossip described kind acts like sharing sweets or helping others, whereas negative gossip involved accusations of hitting or stealing.

Published in the journal Royal Society Open Science, the findings suggest that the tendency of children to react strongly to negative information may be an adaptive behavior to avoid potential harm from others. Experts like Kirk Chang from the University of East London and Kim Peters from the University of Exeter highlighted that sensitivity to negative information might be more pronounced in young children who have yet to fully develop risk assessment skills.