

Chapter 4

Social Media Bullying in the Workplace: Impacts on Motivation, Productivity, and Workplace Culture

Marcia Marie Herron

Purdue University Global, USA

ABSTRACT

Research has identified the prevalence and characteristics of workplace bullying, yet little research has specifically considered workplace cyberbullying. Therefore, in the present study, 49 employees across U.S. workplaces completed online surveys about workplace cyberbullying. Findings suggested that cyberbullying occurred across ethnicities and ages and more frequently reported by women. Women were also more often cyberbullying perpetrators. Cyberbullying persisted from a few days, 43%, to more than a year, 22%. Most reported bullying by more than one coworker, $M = 2.41$ (6.27), yet only in one workplace. Most victims had no warning signs that cyberbullying would arise. Many reported substantially decreased motivation and productivity from the cyberbullying. Despite known best preventive practices and costs of workplace bullying, most workers believed their companies lacked clear steps for reporting cyberbullying; of those who reported, most felt unsafe doing so, and many, 43%, indicated that reporting did not stop the cyberbullying.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Workplace Bullying Institute (2015), bullying in the workplace is one of the most intrusive behaviors and is associated with diminished worker motivation, productivity, and workplace culture. Individuals are often targeted and isolated through the use of gossip, abusive or violent language, and even bodily harm. Deviant behavior in the workplace – which includes theft, sabotage, misrepresentation of performance, and excessive absenteeism (Harvey, Martinko, & Borkowski, 2017) may arise in those who are bullied and often escalate over time if no intervention occurs to correct the bullying. With the

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-4912-4.ch004

Social Media Bullying in the Workplace

advent of social media, workplace bullying has taken on more aggressive forms that encourage dangerous behavior from the perpetrators (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2015).

Research into social media and workplace bullying has begun to grow as social platforms have taken the place of other popular outlets for stress relief. According to Privitera and Campbell (2009), the use of social media and the Internet has increased sharply in recent years. With this increase, there is an increased level of bullying associated with more individual access to the Internet. Perpetrators are able to access their targets on a broader scale and on multiple platforms, often with the advantage of anonymity. The researchers further noted that there are different types of bullying associated with mobile and digital device, including cyberbullying and social media bullying. *Cyberbullying* is more personal and direct; *social media* bullying involves public bullying.

Mitsopoulou and Giovazolias (2015) found that males engage in cyber and social media bullying at higher rates than females. For instance, the results of a meta-analysis demonstrated that low levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness and high levels of extraversion and neuroticism were associated with bullying and victimization. One of the many reasons that it is important to research social media bullying and its effects on employees is the social, psychological, and behavioral ramifications that occur with bullying. The workplace is intended to promote healthy behaviors that encourage productivity and motivation. Productivity in the workplace is defined as a measure of labor efficiency and organizational performance. Effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of work life are all contributors to productivity (Flynn, 2013). Motivation in the workplace is defined as a psychological process that directs individual's choices regarding the type and intensity of their behavior (Sachau, 2013). By better understanding what leads to and sustains social media bullying, organizations may be more able to equip employees and managers with the appropriate intervention methods to avert such bullying behaviors (Mitsopoulou & Giovazolias, 2015).

Social media bullying has been defined as any type of bullying that occurs over digital devices, including cell phones, computers, and tablets. These instances of bullying can occur through SMS, text, social media platforms, and other forums. Social media bullying is often sending, posting, or sharing negative content regarding another individual. The information that is shared is often personal and private, meant to cause embarrassment or humiliation to the target. Social media bullying includes repeated threats and attacks toward a target intended to cause harm against the target, including physical or mental abuse. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2017) concluded that, unlike traditional bullying, cyber and social media bullying usually comprises mental torturing rather than physical threats. The fact that a perpetrator has the ability to constantly attack the target at anytime makes the issue of cyber or social media bullying a serious issue. This form of bullying can have a lasting effect on the target in that it may create a permanent, negative online record that may be accessible to and misunderstood by schools, employers, and colleagues. The target is often an individual who has been identified as a threat in a manner that is unique to the perception of the perpetrator. Targets in the workplace are often the most skilled employees, well liked, and with better social skills than the perpetrator (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2012). These individuals are often well liked among by both colleagues and upper management, which is often a reason why they are intimidated through bullying. Targets tend to be individuals who have personality traits that are desirable in the workplace, which include a desire to help, teach, develop, and nurture others (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2012). When the organization does not implement training or intervention methods to end bullying, the effects can be felt through stress-related health problems in the target individual. This increases the chances of the target becoming less motivated and less productive in the workplace (Namie & Namie, 2009).

16 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/social-media-bullying-in-the-workplace/263421

Related Content

Stakeholder Positioning and Cultural Diversity in the Creative Sector: A Case Study of the London Modern Architecture Scene

Hendrik Leendert Aalbers and Annemarie Charlotte Kamp (2015). *Cross-Cultural Collaboration and Leadership in Modern Organizations* (pp. 176-195).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/stakeholder-positioning-and-cultural-diversity-in-the-creative-sector/132627

Strategic Information Systems and Business Outcomes

Alberto Bento, Regina Bento, Lourdes White and Ana Bento (2014). *International Journal of Human Capital and Information Technology Professionals* (pp. 15-25).

www.irma-international.org/article/strategic-information-systems-and-business-outcomes/105571

Toxic Waste Disposal

(2015). *Business Ethics and Diversity in the Modern Workplace* (pp. 162-176).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/toxic-waste-disposal/122701

Transformational Leadership and Occupational Self-Efficacy in Software Product Line Institutionalization

Youngkeun Choi (2019). *International Journal of Human Capital and Information Technology Professionals* (pp. 33-45).

www.irma-international.org/article/transformational-leadership-and-occupational-self-efficacy-in-software-product-line-institutionalization/229058

Antecedence of Attitude Towards IoT Usage: A Proposed Unified Model for IT Professionals and Its Validation

Sheshadri Chatterjee (2021). *International Journal of Human Capital and Information Technology Professionals* (pp. 13-34).

www.irma-international.org/article/antecedence-of-attitude-towards-iot-usage/273698