

CYBERBULLYING AT WORKPLACE – A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECTOR IN CHENNAI

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Abstract

Cyberbullying has become an important public health issue that affects millions of people each year. Cyberbullying is traditionally associated with children and adolescents, but recent statistics show it is becoming an increasing problem among adults. The most common ways adults have experienced cyberbullying is through verbal harassment with the purpose of embarrassing an individual, threats of physical harm, and cyber stalking and sexual harassment. A major issue facing adults is cyberbullying in the workplace, which has been increasing as technology has become more advanced and integral to our work lives. All the work places with no exemptions to any sector are facing the issues. The present study intends to identify the cyber bullying at Information Technology sector in Chennai.

Key words: Cyberbullying, physical harm, cyber stalking and sexual harassment

Introduction and Problem

Workplace bullying is recognized as a phenomenon of global prevalence and an important issue to be studied across various parts of the world. At a worldwide average, at least 1 out of 10, and maybe as many as about 1 out of 5 employees are exposed to workplace bullying. The phenomenon involves repeated and prolonged mistreatment of employees in the workplaces. With rapid technological change has come a blurring of boundaries between personal and workplace space. Employers are challenged to develop guidelines and policies to direct the appropriate use of technology to maintain a civil workplace. The explosive growth of social media technologies and the ubiquitous use of Internet and mobile tools provide more mechanisms through which bullies can target their victims. As of 2019, the number of active Facebook users stands at over 2.6 billion. Twitter users send approximately 900 million tweets per day, and every second, 15000 Instagram users “like” a photo. The extent and importance of social media in our lives has potentially concerning implications for its use and misuse.

Online bullying in a workplace context is further complicated by the transformation that organizations are undergoing due to technology, social media and mobile platforms. “Work” is no longer a well-defined activity with sharp boundaries in terms of time, location, and tools. All three have blurred boundaries, which serve to modify the understanding that employees and employers have of civility, bullying and the limits of their corresponding rights and obligations, particularly in relation to online communication. According to Marcello (2010), IT sector is one of the unrepresented sectors in workplace bullying literature, while IT professionals in the US have reported their frequent exposure to negative behaviors at work. Since little is known about the phenomenon in Indian IT industry, there is a need to understand the victims’ experiences, prevalence, nature, consequences and antecedents of workplace bullying in the industry.

During the past few decades, the Information technology (IT) has emerged as one of the most important industry in the global economy. India is the leading global sourcing destination for IT industry, having a market share of more than 50%. IT industry in India is one of the most significant and the fastest growing sector of the Indian economy. Indian IT industry encompasses of IT services, Hardware, Software products, & Engineering services, E-commerce and Business Process Management (BPM/ITES-BPO). IT-BPM sector is the largest private sector employer in India, employing nearly 5 million people. IT professionals are knowledge workers with high levels of education and intelligence. The ‘Best IT-BPM companies to work for in India- 2015’ survey among 149 IT-BPM organizations explains that 70 per cent of the employees hold a positive perception about the factors such as friendly and welcoming work environment, non-discrimination, availability of resources and a safe working environment (NASSCOM, 2015). The low perception on fairness

inperformance evaluations, need for unique benefits, and perception on managementwalking the talk, inadequate opportunities for involvement in decisions, and the needfor more demonstrated care were reported to be some of the key areas forimprovement for IT-BPM organizations in India (Ibid.).

IT workplaces are stressful due to high demands, heavy workloads, tightdeadlines, and time pressures. The international and national studies report a highturnover intention, low job satisfaction and low organizational commitment amongIT professionals due to unmanageable deadlines, high workload and extended work hours. These challenges create high degree of stressand may pose serious threat to the psychological, physical, and emotional well-beingof the employees. The stressful work environment contributes to higher incidence ofbullying at workplaces. IT work environment are considered stressful,and therefore provides a fertile place for the occurrence of workplace bullying.Although the impact of cyberbullying has not been widely studied, there is no reason to assume thatits impacts will be less severe. With the significant role of technology in the workplace, and itsincreased capabilities, bullying and specifically cyberbullying will become a more urgent problem.

Literature samples

Cyberbullying is usually defined as using electronic media (e.g., e-mail, SMS, social media, virtualcommunities) to inflict intentional and repeated harm to a target similar to conventional bullying [Chris Piotrowski].However, cyberbullying has some additional features that make it unique from traditionalbullying [Douglas M. Towns, Mark S. Johnson and Robert S. Tokunaga]. First, with cyberbullying, the perpetrator can be anonymous, which not only reducesresponsibility for these negative acts, but also the possibility for sanction. Second, there are no limitsfor reach and frequency. These negative acts can be perpetrated broadly and repeatedly because thereare virtually no boundaries on the extent of the audience. Finally, there is no generally accepted codeof cyberconduct, which means formal and informal control mechanisms are limited. For these reasons,it may be understandable why cyberbullying has become a significant form of bullying in theworkplace [Chris Piotrowski, Patricia Borstorff, Glenn Graham, and Michael Marker].

Methodology

A total of 150 respondents from various Information Technology and its allied companies are being chosen using simple random sampling method. The data from the respondents are being collected using structured questionnaires. The secondary data required for the study is being collected from various published resources.

Analysis and discussion

The SEM approach was adopted in the data analysis to presents the resultsof the revised model with standardized path coefficients between constructs andindicated that the endogenous variables, as explained with the four factorsas follows. Those four factors are then analyzed throughassessment criterion such as CMIN, GFI, NFI, RMR, AGFI and IFI in SEMapproach.

Validities of Convergent, Discriminant, Content and Composite Reliability

Table 1: Convergent Validity and Composite Reliability for the Extracted Factors

| Observed Variables | Convergent Validity | | | Composite Reliability |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------|-------|-----------------------|
| | Factor loadings | Reliability | AVE | |
| Factor I | 0.7821 | 0.852 | 0.815 | 0.805 |
| Factor II | 0.7721 | | | |
| Factor III | 0.6821 | | | |
| Factor IV | 0.6698 | | | |

It has been shown in the table above the calculated values of Composite Reliability and AVE value to support Convergent Validity, Discriminant Validity and Content Validity of the measurement model. Composite reliability is also used to check the internal consistency, whichshould be greater than the benchmark of 0.7 and AVE should be greater than 0.5to be

considered adequate¹. Since the calculated value of composite reliability is 0.799 and the AVE value of 0.726 which shows an adequate result for the present model.

Table 2: Discriminant and Content Validity for the Model

| Indicator | Observed variable | Fit indices | AVE |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------|
| Discriminant validity | 0.823 | >0.5 | 0.602 |
| Content validity | 0.778 | >0.7 | --- |

To evaluate Discriminant validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) is used. It is clear from the above table the observed value for Discriminant is 0.823 which shows the adequate validity of the model. The fit value for content should be greater than 0.7 also established by the model as it possesses 0.778.

Goodness of Fit – Comparison between Default and Independent Model using Standardized Solutions

The goodness of fit of a statistical model describes how well it fits a set of observations. Here the measures of goodness of fit typically summarize the discrepancy between observed values and the values expected under the factors of airline service agreeability of consumers. The following figure shows the standardized solutions of the model.

Cyber Bullying at Workplace

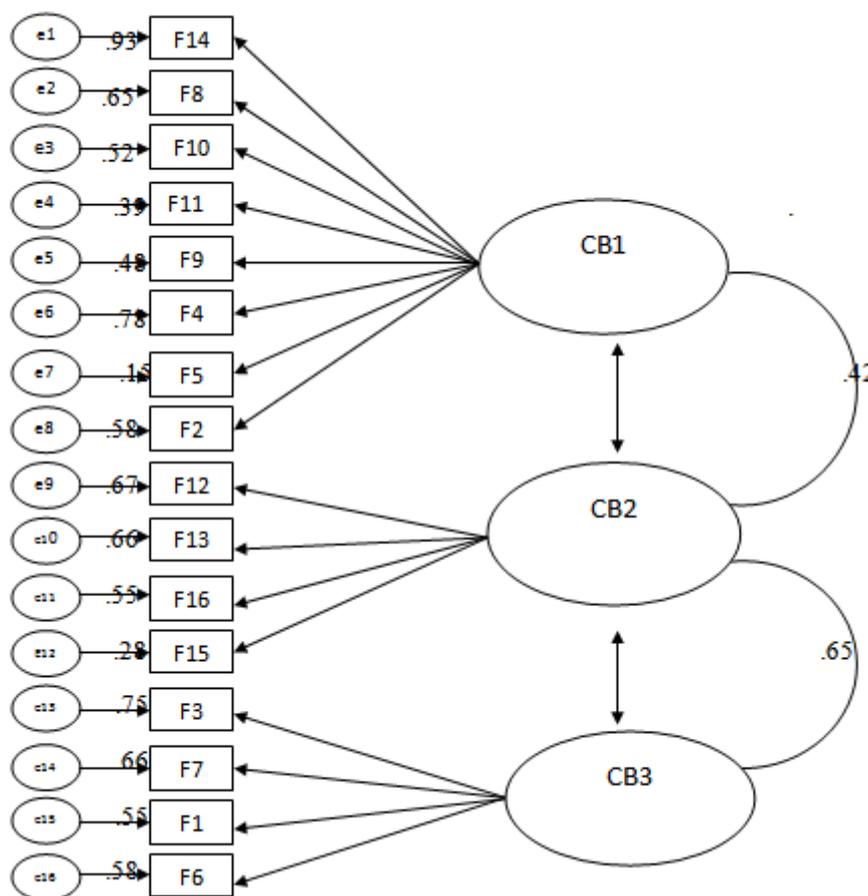


Table 3: Goodness of Fit Summary

| Index | Acceptable Value | Actual Value |
|-------|------------------|--------------|
| CMIN | < 2 | 1.656 |
| GFI | > 0.9 | 0.972 |
| CFI | > 0.9 | 0.946 |
| NFI | > 0.9 | 0.933 |
| RMR | < 0.1 | 0.023 |

¹Fornell and Larcker 1981

| | | |
|--------|--------|-------|
| AGFI | > 0.9 | 0.969 |
| IFI | > 0.9 | 0.918 |
| RMSEA | < 0.05 | 0.036 |
| PClose | > 0.05 | 0.082 |

CMIN: (Chi square in Amos): Smaller chi-square values indicate better fit. Ideally, the chi-square would be non-significant indicating no significant discrepancy between model and data. Also, slight discrepancies between model and the data may result in a statistically significant chi square. It is clear from the above table the value of CMIN is less than 2 which shows better fit of the variables representing cyber bullying.

GFI: (Goodness-of-Fit Index) indicates the proportion of the observed covariance explained by the model covariance. GFI is always less than or equal to 1. GFI = 1 indicates a perfect fit. It is clear from the above table the value of GFI is less than 1 which denotes the best fit of the variables representing cyber bullying.

CFI: (Comparative Fit Index) is directly based on the non-centrality measure. The CFI is also known as the Bentler Comparative Fit Index. It is clear from the above table the value of CFI is greater than 0.9 which shows good fit of the model.

NFI: (Normed Fit Index) was developed as an alternative to CFI, but one which did not require making chi-square assumptions. It varies from 0 to 1, with 1 = perfect fit. It is clear from the above table the value of NFI is equal to one which proves the fit of the model. NFI reflects the proportion by which the researcher's model improves fit compared to the null model (random variables). NFI is also similar to preceding model fit indices, telling how big discrepancy there is between the models being evaluated and the independent model.

RMR: (Root Mean Square Residual) is an absolute measure of fit and here is defined as the standardized difference between the observed and predicted correlation. A value less than 0.1 is generally considered a good fit. It is clear from the above table the Value of RMR is 0.023 which is less than 0.9 shows the best fit of model.

AGFI: (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index) is a sensible fit index in association with the sample size. The norms of AGFI should be between '0 to 1' and it was proved by the above table show the model fit.

IFI: (Incremental Fit Index) by convention, IFI should be equal to or greater than 0.90 to accept the model. To compute the IFI, first the difference between the chi square of the independent model in which variables are uncorrelated and the chi-square of the target model is calculated. Next, the difference between the chi-square of the target model and the degrees of freedom for the target model is calculated. The ratio of these values represents the IFI. It is clear from the above table the value of IFI is 1 which shows the acceptance of model.

RMSEA value is 0.036 which is less than the target of less than equal to 0.05. The RMSEA estimates lack of fit compared to the saturated model.

All the statistical parameters confirm close fit of the model. This means the null hypothesis is rejected. In SEM the P of close fit (PClose) is a test of close fit, a measure that provides greater than 0.050. The PClose is observed as 0.082 and concluded that the fit of the model is close enough.

Conclusion

Cyber bullying is an ever growing issue in workplaces. Cyberbullying in the workplace has been relatively unexplored through research when compared to traditional bullying and warrants further exploration so researchers can better understand the prevalence and impact of cyberbullying in the workplace. The study provides some limited support for understanding the impact of cyber bullying on various aspects within the work place. It can be suggested that cyberbullying may influence worker's social self-efficacy, which in turn is associated with lowered job satisfaction.

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