Project Dissertation Report On

WORKPLACE HARASSMENT – HR'S ROLE IN THE CYBERNATED WORLD

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CERTIFICATE FROM THE INSTITUTE

This is to certify that Mridula Sharma has satisfactorily completed the Project Report titled **"Workplace Harassment – HR's role in the Cybernated World"** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Business Administration from Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, New Delhi during the academic year 2020-2022.

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STUDENT DECLARATION

I, **Mridula Sharma**, Roll Number **2K20/DMBA/69** hereby declare that the project work entitled "Workplace Harassment – HR's role in the Cybernated World" was submitted to Delhi School of Management, DTU towards partial fulfillment for the award of Master of Business Administration. It is my original work and has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, associateship, fellowship, or any similar title to the best of my knowledge.

Date:

Place:

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<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</u>

At the outset, I express my heartfelt thanks & gratitude to those who sincerely helped and supported me throughout the project & without their active support & help it would not have been possible for me to complete the venture. As such, I once again extend my sincere thanks & gratitude to all of them.

To this effect, at first, I take the opportunity to express my profound gratitude and deep regards to my project supervisor Dr. DeepShree for her active guidance and constant supervision together with time to time providing of necessary information connected with the project and their active support in completing the project.

I also sincerely thank the participants that I surveyed and interviewed. Finally, I would like to express my earnest gratitude to my friends and family members for their constant support & encouragement without which the assignment would not have been completed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research project takes on a topic that has not been explored to its full extent and many of the originations have not given enough attention to it yet. Cybernated Workplace Harassment can be defined as "any use of information and communications technology to support deliberate and hostile attempts to hurt, upset or embarrass another person".

The technological advancement in recent years has been imperative in changing the ways in which business organizations work, it can be said that a modern-day organization will be rendered obsolete without the presence of technology.

Technology is not only a choice of businesses but also has become a necessity to survive. In order to maximize productivity and make an organization cost-effective, the inclusion of technology in almost every aspect of the business is important. Recent developments in the work environment, especially the Covid-19 Pandemic has forced organizations to be heavily dependent on technology for even the most minor tasks.

The increasing trend of remote working and cross-cultural hiring has also made technology and internet services a mandatory part of every organization. The virtues of technology, the internet, and cyberspace are uncountable but a very big problem that is on the rise is the issue of cyberbullying in the workplace, it has been impacting the performances of the employees as well as their personal lives as well. Upon spending a considerable amount of time researching literature, it was concluded that the literature on Cyberbullying in the workplace is very limited, though there has been a lot of work done on the area of workplace bullying as

organizations are obviously concerned about their employees and do not want them to go through something that is absurd in nature. The paucity of research in this area, especially in the Indian context is the motivation for choosing this topic.

This research work is carried out by doing an extensive study on previous research papers or surveys conducted regarding virtual workplace harassment. The dissertation involves understanding the act of virtual workplace harassment and its context focusing on the workplace environment. The act has been understood in reference to Indian organizations as well as workplaces abroad like the UK, Canada, Australia, and Pakistan to understand the graveness of the act and how Governments and private organizations have formulated laws & policies to prevent as well to form a grievance redressal system for employees to approach for complaints without fear.

The study also involves a primary component in which a survey is being carried out targeting the working population in various private & Government organizations, and academic institutions to understand the sources of this act and if there are counseling services provided to deal with same.

Before embarking upon writing the completion of this research project, an initial survey revealed that it was women who majorly faced this harassment and hence a major focus will remain on understanding this concern from women's point of view and how workplaces are working to ensure that women employees have a safe experience within the organization.

The study further involves examining various campaigns and initiatives taken by some organizations to make workplaces safer and harassment-free.

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<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

Online harassment or commonly known as online bullying or cyberbullying, is the use of derogatory antics, unacceptable and inappropriate behavior displayed either publicly or on a personal front by the usage of electronic media or wireless technology and devices, targeted to harass or intimidate others.

Workplace cyberbullying occurs when employees are repeatedly subjected to unwanted or ill-treatment from coworkers via electronic means of communication such as the internet or other devices. Many employees experience high levels of stress as a result of this negativity and toxicity. Stress is a natural human response to difficult and unusual situations, but high levels of it can be harmful to an individual's physical, emotional, and mental state. It can also severely affect an individual's motivation to do a task and push down their performance levels, creating an unproductive environment for the employee to work in and resulting in a waste of resources for the organisation.

The worst disadvantage of online harassment is that it allows perpetrators to stalk their victims wherever they go, whether they are at work or at home. Cyberbullies can inflict harm on their victims at any time and from any location. They frequently target their victims with hurtful content or derogatory comments, often anonymously, in order to remain anonymous and avoid detection.

Such content spreads like wildfire, quickly goes viral, and is viewed by a massive audience in the blink of an eye, making it nearly impossible for authorities to remove the harmful content on time. Because of the nature of cybernated harassment, the perpetrators are very difficult to track down and it takes a long time to simply delete the content from all the servers. One of the reasons it is critical to take action to prevent bullying is the victim's sense of helplessness. Depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues have been observed in several of its victims, with some severe cases.
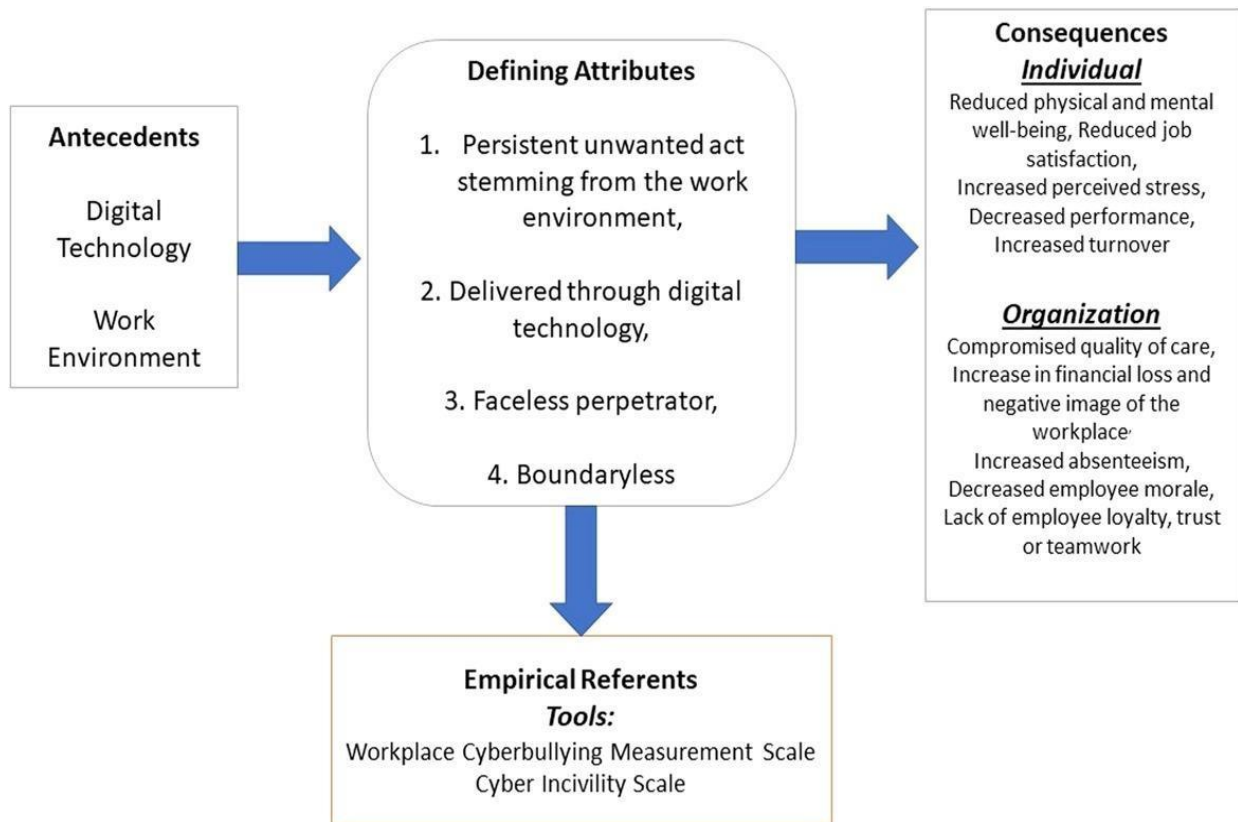
GENDER AND WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

The effects of cybernated harassment at work have harmed people of all genders, but women have been hit the hardest. The number of female victims far outnumbers the number of male victims. Several papers on cyberbullying in Indian companies have discovered that it can co-occur with lewd behavior, making the situation even worse for women, with the domineering individual attempting to ruin their reputation by hacking email and social media accounts.

The systematic exclusion of women from decision-making positions and from formal and informal expert organizations can exacerbate the situation. The fewer females there are throughout the progression, the more likely it is that an individual female will be harassed.

Females in male-dominated professions face systematized (and frequently 'invisible') sexism. While it is difficult to predict the outcomes of a work environment that harasses specific targets, researchers believe that the unfavorable outcomes and results are greater for females than for males. In general, they will leave and take less well-paid positions in other organizations. Many people have struggled with the health consequences of their experiences for a long time, without being able to find the financial resources required to address them.

They will also become more cautious at work, avoiding jobs that require high perceivability and losing faith in their abilities. As a result, it could be argued that being tormented has similar ramifications to being explicitly annoyed and necessitates comparable legal and hierarchical designs and mediations in order to establish a safe and strong workplace for representatives.

The main objective of this study is to decrypt online harassment at workplaces in India and study organizational policies and governmental laws in place to prevent theact.

Antecedents

Digital Technology

Work Environment

Defining Attributes

1. Persistent unwanted act stemming from the work environment,

2. Delivered through digital technology,

3. Faceless perpetrator,

4. Boundaryless

Consequences
Individual
Reduced physical and mental well-being, Reduced job satisfaction, Increased perceived stress, Decreased performance, Increased turnover

Organization
Compromised quality of care, Increase in financial loss and negative image of the workplace. Increased absenteeism, Decreased employee morale, Lack of employee loyalty, trust or teamwork

Empirical Referents
Tools:
Workplace Cyberbullying Measurement Scale
Cyber Incivility Scale

Figure 1.1: Introduction to Cybernated Harassment

OFFICE POLITICS, CYBERBULLYING AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE:

The success of an organisation is determined not only by its financial and strategic factors, but also by its culture and climate. To achieve the desired outcome, the organization's human capital must perform as expected. Organizational behaviour is currently being studied in order to maintain this performance. Organizational politics is an unavoidable aspect of organisational behaviour. Organizational politics refers to self-serving actions taken by a group or an individual within an organisation.One of the important determinants in the performance appraisal process is political as the result can be influenced by both, the employee and the manager.

Sometimes the behaviour of the subordinate towards the supervisor tempts the supervisor to manipulate the ratings, or they may do so to influence their position in the organisation (Karppinen, 2003). Another aspect of this research is concerned with organisational commitment. This is unquestionably a 'psychological bond' that explains an employee's workplace behaviour. It refers to an individual's attachment and identification with a job.

A committed employee is enthusiastic about his or her job and wishes to be employed by the company. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of political behaviour on the performance appraisal system and, if such behaviour is observed, practised, or felt by employees of the organisation, what impact it has on the organisational commitment of the employees. The appraisal process may be fair or politically biassed, but does it affect an employee's commitment to the organisation or does their own personal growth and goals remain a priority? This paper will address these dimensions of organisational politics, performance appraisal, and organisational commitment. Political behaviour in an organisation is very natural and obvious because different people with different goals come together to work for a single entity.

Informal, unofficial, and sometimes behind-the-scenes efforts to sell ideas, influence an organisation, increase power, or achieve other specific goals are referred to as organisational politics. Working in an organisation today necessitates the ability to

handle conflicts and shift power bases. Effective politics does not imply winning at any cost; rather, it requires the ability to maintain relationships while achieving the desired outcome. Organizational politics can either help or hurt an organisation; it all depends on whether or not the individual goals are aligned with the organisational goals.

Without a doubt, political behaviour is an everyday observable fact in every organisation. The primary motivation for political behaviour is self-interest. This self-interest may be pursued at the expense of other employees or, in some cases, the organization's goal. Employee engagement, employee satisfaction, and organisational commitment all influence how well an employee performs in his or her job. When these factors are met, the performance index rises, and employee performance suffers as a result.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research is to:

- The first and foremost objective is to study and understand what is cybernated harassment and organizational theories related to it in India.

- Briefly observe the theories and policies in other countries like Pakistan, New Zealand, etc.

- To study the awareness related to acts of cyberbullying in Indianorganizations.

- To analyze the effect of virtual-workplace harassment on employees, especially women as they are statistically more prone to it.

- To understand what measures are taken to curb these workplace harassment incidents and comment on how they could have been better handled.

Further Scope of Study

This study has a limited scope and can be extended further to understand the impact on other genders and minor communities like LGBTQA+   folks etc.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Power imbalance, gender structures and organizational position

Power, in any form, is an extremely important component of any organisation. The unevenness in power status in an organisation is a result of an individual's title in the organisation and the image and acceptance (Rayner, Hoel, & Cooper) he/she has in the organization's peer group. Bullying, in any form, most often takes a downward spiral. People at the bottom of the hierarchy are the most likely to be victims of such practices.

Cyberbullies may reveal and distribute the victims' personal data, pictures, or contact information, and then use that information to impersonate the individual and cause even more harm to their lives.

Indulging in such behaviour that can be classified as cyberbullying not only has a negative impact on the victim's life but also has a negative impact on the bully's life. It has been observed in research (Srivastava, 2012) that in cases of cyberbullying, the offenders turned out to be serial offenders and became prone to committing much more serious crimes. This is concerning and emphasises the importance of putting an end to harassment in its early stages.

Individuals with higher emotional intelligence, which means individuals who are more aware of themselves, how they react to different scenarios, and how they respond to different stimuli, are able to cope with cybernated harassment better. This is the other side of the coin; while we should focus more on preventing cyberbullying, as it occurs, we should also make employees more emotionally intelligent in order to deal with it.

Although the workplace has a negative impact on everyone, employees who have received emotional intelligence training have fewer deviant ways of dealing with such issues.

Loi, HangYue,..., and (2006, n.d.) conducted a study that looked at the relationships between employees' perceptions of justice, organisational commitment, intention to leave, and perceived organisational support. It was carried out on a sample of 514

Hong Kong practising solicitors. The statistical tool used to obtain the result was hierarchical regression analyses. The findings revealed that both procedural and distributive justice contributed to the development of perceived organisational support, and that organisational commitment and intentions to leave had mediating effects on perceived organisational support.

The covid crisis compelled organisations to require employees to work from home, which exacerbated the problem of cybernated harassment because employee surveillance is impossible, and many employees are becoming targets of cyberbullying and phishing scams (Jabeen et al., 2o21)
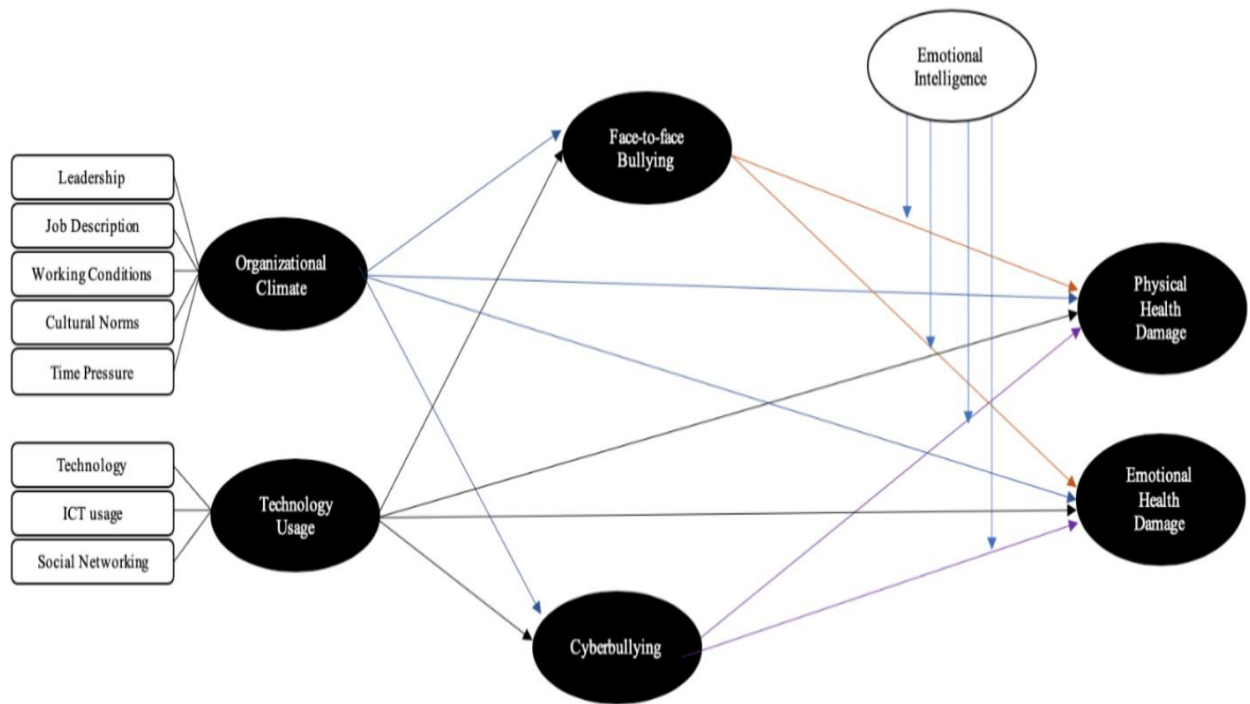
Figure 2.1: Facets of Organizational Bullying

Cyberbullying, like any other form of bullying, should be dealt with harshly. Every bullying prevention program and procedure should include it. According to ACAS, employers should keep up with technological advancements and adapt their practices accordinglyly (The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service).

Because it occurs outside of working hours or at the workplace, cybernated harassment is more difficult for employers to deal with than traditional bullying. According to the TUC, a responsible approach to dealing with this is for the employer to negotiate a fair behavior policy with employee legislatures and deduce what is expected of them in their personal lives. Employees are less likely to be surprised when they learn that their boss does not approve of their work in this manner.

Sending a crude, attacking, or menacing letter, electronic or otherwise, to another person is prohibited under the Malicious Communications Act of 1998, and sending a coarse, attacking, or menacing telephone message is prohibited under section 43 of the Telecommunications Act of 1984.

The Harassment Prevention Act of 1977 applies as well. Under this Act, engaging in recurring terrorizations of exploitation, whether intentionally or unintentionally, is criminal and illegal.

A recent study conducted in the United Kingdom focuses on British University employees and discovers that eight out of ten have experienced one of the recorded cyberbullying Behaviors on at least one occasion in the previous half year, and fourteen to twenty percent have experienced these follow up on a weekly basis. Those who have been subjected to cyberbullying also report an increase in mental injury and a decrease in job satisfaction.

2.1.1 <u>Canada</u>:

Nine semi-coordinated individual conversations with HR specialists were conducted over a two-month period, beginning in early February and ending in late March, as part of a pilot investigation (West, Foster, Levin, Edmison, and Robibero, 2014) focusing on HR specialists in Canada on existing workplace procedures and works on in regards to cyberbullying.

Respondents represented a diverse range of business and industry sectors, including cash, tutoring, retail, capable organisations, broadcast correspondences, and the non-advantage territory. The majority of respondents (8/9) are female. All respondents have a minimum of three years and a maximum of thirty years of association with a Human Resource region. Each gathering is audio-taped and lasts approximately 3o–45 minutes.

Respondents shared accounts of cyberbullying incidents at their workplaces during individual discussions. The most notable example of cyberbullying behaviour, as identified by four respondents, is labourers posting inappropriate comments online about their teammates, directors, or the relationship when in doubt.For example, one respondent remarks, "In my work, to a great extent people will send me portrayals of their specialist's postings on Facebook or offer improper comments about an accomplice on Facebook. In the chief subordinate setting, "people have posted comments about their supervisor on their own Facebook pages, getting down

on them, and that can be translated in a really skeptical way and it starts punishable and people are commenting on it.". Another respondent suggests that such leaders will overall be more ordinary among junior delegates. "In a call local area environment, that is where the greater part of these sorts of cases happen. I trust it's the possibility of the environment—it is negligible less master they are energetic; they make $15 an hour; it's definitely not a high, wanted work… there's a bit of youthfulness in that particular setting."

Numerous respondents describe the second most common type of work-related cyberbullying as an online correspondence that begins as guiltless office talks, such as a joke sent via email.

According to one respondent, "Individuals can be crushed by what has been written [on social media] about them, but when they dig deeper, they discover that it was not intended to have that heading and significance. Some of it is due to a misunderstanding of the effect versus expectation." However, when the correspondence grows to the point where at least one person accepts it as inappropriate or unwanted, it moves from the realm of online conversations to cyberbullying."I can think about a situation where we had someone messaging unseemly pictures it is one thing to get when you are sending it around, it isn't OK when someone disapproves."

The wrecked office sentiment: Two respondents describe instances of workplace sentiments that were ineffectively destroyed, resulting in cyberbullying. In such a case, one of the accomplices used either the organization's time or the organization's online correspondence framework to begin harassing the ex. "I've heard of a couple of instances of ex's following.

It's basically texting, similar to MSN, and I've heard of a few cases of badgering through here ".. Two respondents from associations, who were working in large and at times diverse groups as an assumption for their current situation, discuss circumstances in which at least one representative became unfavourable with their workgroup, which then begins the first to colleagues' utilising web-based media to post off-base, bogus, or harmful information. People are employed together, train together, work the same hours, and share the same workspaces for up to a year before

moving to different groups and locations. So, in a work environment, representatives either gel or they don't, and I came across a situation where one of the employees complained about badgering. She had been unwelcome at the gathering, and all of the employees were required to leave a comment on Facebook. The respondent acknowledges that there were also Twitter posts. It was a large-scale attack and an example of cyberbullying."

The observer of the force. In this particular case, cyberbullying occurs as a result of a toxic director-subordinate or representative-to-worker relationship in which one individual attempts to establish unjustifiable or improper authority over the other.

Two respondents describe how this type of cyberbullying manifested itself within their own organisations. "One thing I notice is that people are exhausted, so you see a lot of digital badgering cases among directors and employees because there is a lot of pressure involved... Especially in a professional administrations firm. Individuals will feel extremely fortunate to have some work that they do endure a great deal."

Canadian Laws:

Section 264 of the Code defines criminal harassment. It is primarily concerned with actual behaviour, such as following an individual more than once, conducting consistent reconnaissance on an individual at home or at work, or undermining an individual. Section 264 also defines badgering as criminally committed correspondence with an individual or someone known to them. To add up to a criminal offence, the correspondence (as well as other types of harassing behaviour) should make the victims fear for their safety or the safety of someone known to them. While most types of workplace tormenting recorded, for example, disregarding an individual's assessment or imposing irrational cutoff times, will not make an individual fear for their security, and thus will not meet the edge of criminal badgering, some types of cyberbullying, for example, electronic dangers or cautioning of savagery both actual mental and social, and misuse, may just outperform the criminal benchmark.

Bill C-13, the corrections, were introduced near the end of 2013, in part as a result

of two incidents of digital harassment of teenagers that resulted in the deaths of two small children, Reya Parsons and Amand Todd.

The Bill introduces a new pending criminal offence: "Distribution of a cosy picture without consent." Under the proposed offence, it will be a crime punishable by up to five years in prison to post, share, communicate, sell, make available, or mix a private image of an individual without that individual's consent.

A "private picture" is defined as a "visual chronicle of an individual made using any and all means" in which "the individual is naked, is uncovering their genital organs or butt-centric area or her bosoms, or is engaged in unequivocal sexual movement." The casualty should have had a reasonable assumption for protection in all of the conditions of both in the request for the offence to have been submitted.

The Bill also gives the court the authority to bar indicted guilty parties from accessing the Internet once they have completed their sentence and are released, and it extends the court's powers of approving hunt and ejection of youngster erotic entertainment to the new meaning of personal photos.

2.1.2   NEW ZEALAND

A great deal has been written about working environment torment in the nursing profession, both globally and locally, with medical caregivers experiencing a higher level of openness to harassment than other medical services labourers. Regardless of the impaired execution and efficiency, as well as the treatment of physical and psychosocial conditions,

Health outcomes for harassing targets also show high turnover costs for organisations assessed at roughly.

Significantly, workplace adversity has also been linked to risks to patient wellbeing and the quality of care. Indeed, the New Zealand Nurses Association (NZNO, 2011) believes that harassment affects nearly half of New Zealand's work environments,

and dealing with this concern has remained at the forefront of medical services associations and expert bodies. However, in this new era, being harassed by cybercrime has gained a significant amount of dominance in terms of well-being and security.

The investigation was designed to fill a basic information gap by investigating encounters of workplace cyberbullying with the nursing profession in New Zealand. All members had been working in nursing for at least a half year, and the majority were over 30.

2.1.3 PAKISTAN

The examination investigates research about the current rate, degree, and reiteration of both traditional and cyberbullying and indicators liable for causing danger among labourers of administration areas in Pakistan, using the example of 285 officials working in four assistance areas [banking, telecom, hoteling, and education]. Using devices based on layman's removed models for estimating harassing and cyberbullying presence, results revealed that 36 percent, 55 percent, half, and 59 percent of respondents were classified as harassed in general and 18 percent, 3o percent, 27 percent, and 49 percent were cyberbullied in training, banking, telecom, and hoteling administration areas individually, which is a sadly high proportion.

The overall tormented [traditionally] rate was around 5o, with 31 cyberbullied cases. A thorough PLS-SEM-based investigation revealed that various elements of the authoritative environment were discovered to be indicators of workplace harassment, while innovation [social systems administration and ICTs] is entirely associated with the presence of online harassment at work environment of administration area associations.

2.1.4 SAUDI ARABIA

An investigation (Ateyah Maha [et al.], 2018) aimed at characterising the presence

of online harassment among the staff of various divisions at a college in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and investigating the links between cyberbullying and representatives' well-being and work results. The study employed a cross-sectional study design, utilising self-directed online polls, college workers, including people, involved in jobs ranging from educator to the teaching professional's assistance. The Digital Negative Acts Questionnaire (Cyber-NAQ) actions aided in the discovery of quantitative data. The findings revealed that nearly half of the respondents had experienced some form of cyberbullying at some point in the previous six months. Aside from approximately 20% of the examples given, the goal of cyberbullying occurs multiple times per week or on a consistent basis.

Individual responses on the Cyber-NAQ revealed that respondents' openness to crazy responsibility was generally detailed, and having one's sentiments and perspectives overlooked was the second most revealed thing. According to Leymann's definition of cyberbullying, it is critical to consider the feebly (or more significant) scope of going through digital negative demonstrations. As a result, openness to unmanageable responsibility remained the most prevalent issue (20%), followed by extreme checking of respondents' work (2o percent). Likewise, on a weekly or even regular basis, 15% persevered through tenacious examination of their work, 13% had bits of gossip spread about them, 12% of the example were focuses of unrestrained annoyance, and 9% were threatened with brutality or actual maltreatment.

2.1.5 INDIA

Cyberbullying and tormenting are both illegal. It can have shocking consequences that harm others, and it can occasionally lead to violations, retribution killings, or even the death of innocent people who had nothing to do with it in the first place.

According to the Information Technology Act, regardless of or allowing anything contained in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, any cop, or any other official of the Central Government or a State Government approved by the Central Government for this benefit may enter any open spot and search and capture without warrant any individual found in that who is sensibly associated or with perpetrating or with carrying out or of being about to carry out any offence under the act.

Clarification: Unlike ordinary wrongdoings, cybercrime/tormenting/provocation is not prosecutable. Cybercrime can be reported to Cyber Crime Units in any city, regardless of where the wrongdoing occurs.

If a digital cell isn't available in a particular area, an F.I.R. can be filed at the local police station. If they encounter any difficulties in filing an F.I.R., they can also contact the city's chief or legal judge. Any police station, regardless of location, will undoubtedly   record   an   F.I.R.

S.N0	0ffences	Secti0n Under I.T Act
1	Publishing 0r transmitting 0bscene material in electr0nic f0rm	Sec 67
2	Publishing 0r transmitting a material c0ntaining sexual act in electr0nic f0rm	Sec 67 A
3	W0rd, acti0n, act intended t0 insult the m0desty 0f w0men	Sec 509 IPC
4	Sending defamat0ry messages via emails	Sec 499 IPC
5	Printing 0r gr0ssly intended matter f0r blackmailing	Sec 292A IPC
6	C0mmits the 0ffence 0f stalking	Sec 354 D
7	Punishment f0r vi0lati0n 0f privacy	Sec 66 E
8	Criminal intimidati0n by an0nym0us c0mmunicati0n	Sec 507

Table: Cyber-related crime & respective secti0ns.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sources of Data:

Primary Data: Collected through conversational interviews with 5 employees coming from different employment backgrounds.

Secondary Data: Collected from various journals, research papers, white papers, news articles, and websites.

In order to successfully complete the project, initially, I have taken the data from secondary resources to carry out the research by referring to various research papers, white papers, journals, online websites, and news articles to comprehend the actuality of workplace cyberbullying in India and various other nations.

The methodology opted for the study is qualitative research, this type of research depends on information got by the specialist from direct perception, interviews, surveys, center gatherings, member perception, accounts made in characteristic settings, archives, and curios.

To further decode the facets of cyberbullying in India and understand what the employees actually go through and how they deal with it, I've conducted a primary study by conducting conversational interviews with 5 employees coming from various workplace backgrounds. Keeping their identity anonymous for privacy reasons, they were questioned about any harassing behavior faced by them or something similar they might have witnessed in their employment tenure.

<u>INTERVIEW ANALYSIS</u>

A defined set line of questioning was prepared to create a general sense of evenness despite the interviewees being from diverse employment backgrounds. The line of questioning was as follows:

- The industry to which the subject belongs.

- Gender, if the subject consents to disclose.

- Female to male ratio in their organization.

- Hierarchical position of the subject.

- As per the subject's point of view, who is more likely to indulge in cybernated harassment; peers, upper management, customers, or temporary/ Ad hoc employees.

- The ways in which respondents feel they're most vulnerable to being targeted by a cyberbully.

- Does the subject believe that the fear of being harassed affects their performance in the organization?

- Does the fear of cyberbullying affect employees' desire to socialize via the internet with their peers?

- The severity of workplace harassment that the subject may have faced, ranging from a scale of 1 to 5; one being less severe and five being the most severe.

- Does the subject believe it was dealt with adequately by the HR and the organization?

Subject 1

The subject is a female belonging to a top consulting firm working as an IT Engineer. She has a work experience of 4 years.

45% of the employees are female in her organization.

Currently working at the senior associate level.

According to the subject, her peers may be more likely to indulge in workplace harassment.

Out of all the options expressed that may represent common harassment practices like online identity theft, unwarranted criticism via online communication, unwarranted/ offensive pictures or video; she feels that unwarranted criticism is something she is most susceptible to due to the fact that there is a degree of indirect communication in play.

Since the looming aspect of being unnecessarily criticized exists, this has also let her become overly cautious of her performance which leads to time-consuming low production yield.

The prospect of being bullied by her peers or upper management has also led her to refrain from socializing too much with them since she believes not to leave any scope for communications outside the work parameter.

According to the subject, she has experienced somewhat misogynist behavior by her peers at her previous position at another company and she rates the experience a score of 2 out of 5 in terms of severity.

The subject chose not to report the incident and rather changed the organization after feeling uncomfortable at the previous company.

Subject 2

The second subject is a female working as an HR Administrative in the education industry. She has shifted from being a teacher but believed that her acumen lies in managing people. She has a work experience of 3.5 years and has been working as an HR administrator for the past year.

Generally, there are 183 females teaching for every 100 men at the primary school level. But as we move up from the secondary school to the college level, the female to male number is 73 to 100.

According to her, her, temporary/ ad hoc employees and more than that customers (usually parents of students) are most likely to be the ones projecting bullying or harassing behavior towards them.

Out of all the options expressed that may represent common harassment practices like online identity theft, unwarranted criticism via online communication, unwarranted/ offensive pictures or video; she feels that she is most likely to receive communication via unofficial channels at inappropriate times.

Such forms of inappropriate communication come from concerned parents but it becomes emotionally draining for her to deal with on a constant base as it is likely for the parents to not respect the boundaries of the teachers and the admin department.

The subject believed that this does affect their socializing pattern negatively because of how much it leaves them emotionally drained at times.

She rates her experience a score of 3 on a severity scale due to the persistent nature of the harassment.

Being the HR admin herself she had circulated guidelines to parents and faculty emphasizing the need for appropriately timed communication and the decorum during the communication. She believes that this was a sufficient method to curb this issue as she observed positive results from this attempt.

Subject 3

Subject 3 is an IT professional at a top-level firm. He has been working in the industry for about a year and a half.

The female to male ratio is 2:3 in the organization.

According to the subject, he is most likely to receive bullying or harassing behavior from his peers.

Out of all the options expressed that may represent common harassment practices like online identity theft, unwarranted criticism via online communication, unwarranted/ offensive pictures or video; he is most likely to receive unwarranted criticism and offensive pictures and videos via unofficial communication channels.

Such forms of communication deter him from socializing with his peers.

The subject does not believe that this affects his performance at his workplace at all.

He rates this unwanted behavior a two on the severity scale.

None of this was ever reported to the management since the subject believes this behavior to be frivolous and not worth reporting.

Subject 4

Subject 4 is a working professional from the telecommunication industry. He has been working in this industry for about 9 years now.

The female to male percentage is 10% female and 90% male as his department is inherently male dominant. And the subject is currently at a senior technician position and handles a team of 7 junior technicians under him.

The subject believes that the ad/hoc or temporary employees and/or peers are more likely to engage in 'inappropriate' behavior that may lead him to feel uncomfortable.

Out of all the options expressed that may represent common harassment practices like online identity theft, unwarranted criticism via online communication, unwarranted/ offensive pictures or video; he feels he is most likely to be receiving unwarranted/ offensive pictures or videos via informal channels of communication which in his case are informal whatsapp groups.

Such forms of inappropriate communication, according to the subject makes him uncomfortable in socializing with peers.

He rates this behavior a score of 2 on a scale of severity.

Being a team lead in his department, the subject himself possesses the authority to reprimand his team against such behavior which has done and this has brought an improvement in the quality of communication between the team even on the informal communication channels.

Subject 5

This subject was a former hotel manager that does not wish to disclose any details about themselves. They have work experience of one year.

They were the direct manager of a hotel and the male-female ratio in their employment was 1:8.

The subject was engaged in a lot of direct communication with the customers and they feel they are most likely to receive harassment from the customers.

Out of all the options expressed that may represent common harassment practices like online identity theft, unwarranted criticism via online communication, unwarranted/ offensive pictures or video; they feel they are more likely to receive unwarranted calls and messages from customers.

Such harassing behavior has not deterred them from socializing with their peers but has made them vary of their customers.

The subject has personally experienced harassment from customers on various occasions and they rate this behavior a 4 out of 5 on a scale of severity.

Even after reporting this harassment multiple times to the upper management, they refused to take action against this and this was a contributing factor for the subject to leave their job and switch care.

<u>OBSERVATIONS</u>

- The interviews depict the behavioral observation of the subjects and whom they feel is more likely to indulge in harassing behavior in the organization. As the result shows, respondents feel that the peers in the organization are most likely to indulge in such behavior, as the employees need to be in regular touch with them and they have the maximum amount of access to each other's information as well as the likelihood of temporary staff is second.

- Unwanted criticism, gossip, rumors, and harassment is the most common occurrence of cyberbullying in organizations. It may be common because it is not considered severe but it does encourage the bullies to indulge in many severe forms of cyberbullying. People often put these comments by disguising them as humor but it does affect the reader's mental health and should be dealt with strictly.

- A substantial number of respondents have agreed that the fear of cyberbullying does deter them from working to their maximum potential.

- Socializing with your peers is important as an employee spends hours at their workplace and it becomes important to maintain contact with them, with internet facilities coming in and many social media platforms, employees desire to connect with their peers via internet as well, but the fear of cyberbullying deters them from doing it.

- Only 32% of the respondents have said that they have been a victim of cyberbullying, but the actual number must be higher than that, the reason behind this maybe:

1. Many respondents are too sensitive to speak or recall such incidents as they might still be traumatized from it or scared to speak about it.

2. Many respondents may not exactly understand what comes under cyberbullying and might have ignored as just another small incident or a lewd comment.

- Though most of the respondents have said that the severity level of cyberbullying that they have faced is not high, but it does not disregard the fact that these incidents are common and proper and adequate measures should be there to deal with them strictly. It might be possible that respondents were in the job role where technical or internet usage was limited and cyberbullying did not affect them.

- Majority of the respondents have reported that their HR Team dealt with the incident appropriately, which is good but still not adequate, a whopping 30% of the cases are being ignored and I believe that is a worrisome situation. This shows that organizations are not well acquitted with the norms that they need to follow for such incident.

PART 2

After a telephonic interview with Rupali Sharma, HR at Deewan International Grp., I have reported the following:

Question 1: Any experience of cyberbullying act in your previous organization:

Answer: Rupali Sharma worked as an HR Associate in the firm and helped in recruitment, onboarding and employee engagement process of the education division. During her tenure at the organization, there was an incident at the organization that culminated to a point where the employee had to leave the organization. The incident occurred in the following manner:

A female employee, Kanika (Name changed) became the victim of a cyberbullying incident, Kanika received an email from an anonymous account which contained screenshots of a few employees discussing about her health issues with excess weight gain. She immediately stopped coming to work and during her exit interview, she reported this issue to the management.

Question 2: What steps were taken by the management when the issue came to light?

Answer: The management did an in-depth inquiry of the whole incident and two employees who had initially started this prank were held completely responsible for the incident and their employment was immediately terminated, they were also asked to give a formal apology to the victim.

The management also made a special division for keeping in check these incidents and came up with strict policies against lewd comments, body shaming, and other such incidents.

According to Ms. Rupali, this was not enough and the management should also have filed police compliant and should have offered psychological help to the victim.

LIMITATIONS

☐ Sample size: The study would have been more accurate if it was conducted on a larger sample.

☐ The observations were based on interviews, which take up subjects as per convenience and thus cannot be completely unbiased.

☐ The victims were hesitant to share their incidents and the interviews, therefore, were not in-depth in nature.

☐ The previous studies done on this topic are very limited and hence the secondary research was limited to an extent.

☐ Indian penal code does not specifically describe cyberbullying as a criminal offence but it is still punishable under other acts such as the Information Technology Act of 2000.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

☐ As the study covers a variety of industries, it concludes that cyberbullying incidents are not limited to just a few sectors, they can occur almost in any industry that involves working on cyber based platforms.

☐ The fear of cyberbullying has an adverse effect on the performance of women employees and they tend to socialize less as well due to the same.

☐ The research also concluded that there is a systematic elimination of women from higher positions, and it creates unnecessary hardships in their career.

☐ According to the study, the organizations do have a redressal system for such incidents, but it is not as effective as it should be, and the measures taken are also notas serious as they need to be in such cases.

☐ The absence of psychological help or a counselor in the organizations is a worrisomeconclusion, as it is important for the victims to seek professional help in order to deal with traumatic incidents.

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