

Cyberbullying - Evidence review

Cyberbullying: where are we now? A cross-national understanding by Conor McGuckin and Lucie Corcoran

Privitera (Privitera & Campbell, 2009) surveyed 103 male members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union and found that 10.7% of them had experienced cyberbullying. Those who had been the victim of cyberbullying had all experienced face-to-face bullying too.

Piotrowski (Piotrowski, 2012) concluded that "administrators and organisational leaders may not appreciate the full extent and impact that cyberabuse may have on their employees. Moreover, the onerous impact on productivity and potential legal liability of 'bullying,' behaviours, specifically e-harassment, should be a major concern for managers and top executives."

In 2012 *Workforce Management* set out guidelines ("Guidelines for social media policies," 2012) for social-media policies viz: i) clearly define what's off-limits ii) define appropriate behaviour iii) let them know you are watching iv) define the consequence of breaking the rules v) explain why the policy exists.

Dobson (Dobson, 2012) studied 320 employees at three universities. She found that eight out of 10 had experienced some kind of cyberbullying behaviour in the last six months, while between 14% and 20% had experienced behaviour such as being harassed by emails, abusive posting, being ignored or malicious gossip at least once a week.

Giumetti (Giumetti et al., 2013) compared two groups of students completing a maths task. One group received supportive emails, the other group 'uncivil,' ones. The latter group had higher levels of negative affect and lower levels of energy. Because of these lower levels of energy they did worse on the maths task and showed less engagement with it.

Barrow (Barrow, 2014) outlines some of the ways in which cyberbullying manifests itself including being constantly monitored or interrupted by one's manager with early morning and late-night emails or texts demanding immediate responses, or finding derogatory, anonymous comments on one's Facebook page questioning one's abilities at work. "The incessant use of technology to harass and intimidate an employee or colleague can easily move on to social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter."

Cassidy (Cassidy, Faucher, & Jackson, 2014) studied 121 faculty members at one Canadian university. She found that 17% of them had experienced cyberbullying either by students (12%) or by colleagues (9%) in the last year. Women and ethnic minorities were more likely to fall victim.

Farley (Farley, Coyne, Sprigg, Axtell, & Subramanian, 2015) studied 158 trainee doctors and found that 46.2% of them had experienced at least one act of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying reduced job satisfaction and increased mental strain. Negative emotion mediated the relationship between self-blame for a cyber-bullying act and mental strain, whereas interactional injustice mediated the association between blaming the perpetrator and job dissatisfaction.

Sarkar (Sarkar, 2015) argued that the proliferation of electronic communication had made cyber-bullying rampant in workplaces and had devastating effects on some employees. She advocated creating a zero-tolerance policy against bullying, using technological help, conducting

structured interviews, providing an employee-sensitisation programme, crafting effective job design, and – from time to time – taking employees’ opinion.

Snyman (Snyman & Loh, 2015) found that optimism (or lack thereof) partially mediated the relationships between cyberbullying and stress and cyberbullying and job satisfaction.

Camp (Camp, 2016) interviewed 15 young women, between the ages of 18 and 30 about cyberbullying. Five key categories emerged from the interviews which were: i) **Becoming the target** ii) **Suffering in silence** iii) **Reaching out** iv) **Receiving support** and v) **Becoming empowered**. Trust played a key role. It was initially lost as the women became a target of bullying and then restored through the process of reaching out for help, receiving support, and becoming empowered. Being believed was the gateway to restoring trust.

Gardner (D. Gardner et al., 2016) studied 826 people finding that 15% had suffered conventional bullying and 2.8% cyberbullying within the last six months. Women were more likely to suffer conventional bullying but not cyberbullying. Worse physical health, higher strain, more destructive leadership, more team conflict and less effective organisational strategies were associated with more workplace bullying. Managerial employees experienced more cyberbullying than non-managerial ones. Poor physical health, less organisational support and less effective organisational strategies were associated with more cyberbullying.

Edwards (Edwards & Blackwood, 2017) presents a “forum theatre workshop specifically designed for application in workplace contexts where bullying is prevalent. The three-phase workshop aims to help employees critically reflect on their current work practices and is intended for use in small group teaching.”

Kim (Kim, Boyle, & Georgiades, 2017) studied 31,907 people from the Canadian General Social Survey on Victimization. Adolescents showed the highest incidence of cyberbullying (12.2%) compared to 1.7% to 10.4% among adult age groups. People who had experienced victimisation had higher odds of poor mental health, everyday limitations due to mental health, binge drinking and drug use although these links got weaker as participants got older.

Muhonen (Muhonen, Jönsson, & Bäckström, 2017) studied 3,371 people finding that social organisational climate had a mediating role in the relationship between cyberbullying and health, well-being, work engagement and intention to quit.

Green (Green, 2017) identified a number of problem behaviours including: inappropriate content and postings; crossing professional boundaries and breaching patient privacy and confidentiality.

Coyne (Coyne et al., 2017) studied bystanders’ responses to bullying at work. Bystanders were least likely to support the victim and more likely to agree with perpetrators’ actions for cyberbullying and work-related acts. However, when the target was a friend bystanders tended to be more likely to act and defend the victims and were less likely to reinforce the perpetrator.

Kowalski (Kowalski, Toth, & Morgan, 2018) studied 3,699 people. 20% had suffered most of the cyberbullying they had experienced in adulthood and 7.5% reported most offline bullying in adulthood. Overall 30% of the sample said they had been bullied at work. 321 participants took part in the second phase of the study which found that workplace face-to-face incivility and bullying were related, as were workplace cyberbullying and cyberincivility. Face-to-face incivility was more common than online incivility, face-to-face bullying or online bullying but all four

behaviours were associated with negative outcomes. Workplace face-to-face bullying was seen as the most severe and as having the greatest intent to harm.

Choi (Choi, 2018) found that social influence was more important than corporate policy in preventing workplace cyberbullying while the certainty of detection was more important than the severity of the punishment.

Gardner (D. H. Gardner & Rasmussen, 2018) studied 197 vets of whom 16.2% had been bullied at work i.e. they had experienced two or more negative acts at least weekly over the last six months and 4.6% had experienced cyberbullying. Women and non-managers were more likely to experience bullying than men and managers. Scores for workplace bullying were positively associated with scores for destructive leadership and team conflict, physical health, strain and intention to quit.

D'Souza (D'Souza, Forsyth, Tappin, & Catley, 2018) interviewed 16 nurses about their understanding of cyberbullying. Three themes emerged: i) cyber-specific features that made cyberbullying more damaging than traditional bullying ii) the importance of context and iii) the work environment factors that facilitate the occurrence of workplace cyberbullying.

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