


# Chapter 11

## Conceptualizing Causative Factors of Workplace Cyberbullying on Working Women

Karthikeyan C.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2018-8245>

*T. John College, Bengaluru, India*

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter conceptualizes workplace cyberbullying, with special reference on workplace cyberbullying perpetrated on working women. It shares various causative factors that lead to workplace cyberbullying on women. The situation across the world and with special reference to Indian situations on the social menace of workplace cyberbullying on working women and the traumatizing causatives are discussed in detail. Research reports and survey reports conducted across the world and in India related to workplace cyberbullying are discussed in detail. The psychological issues, socio-psychological triggers that induce bullying on women is discussed with the methods the bullies are inflicting on the victim across the world and with special reference to Indian working situations are analyzed in detail.*

### INTRODUCTION

Conceptualizing cyberbullying in the context of working women is gaining attention across the world (O'Neill & Dinh, 2013), and the technology, structure, technical infrastructure, and the physical proximity are inducing cyberbullying amongst women (Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2006). Workplace cyberbullying is common and it is evolving in subtle ways that makes it difficult to explain (Callaghan, Kelly, & Molcho, 2014). According to the National Crime Prevention Council (NCP) of the U.S., cyberbullying is understood as perpetrators using digital modes like the Internet, cell phones, or other digital devices to send or post text or messages to hurt or embarrass another person (Baynes, 2018, p. 138). The act of workplace cyberbullying is an act of aggression, or an act, which is intentional to harm a group or

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an individual, using electronic forms of contact repeatedly overtime against a victim (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007, pp. 319-336). According to the Department of Education and Mental Health, workplace cyberbullying is an act of unwanted physical or verbal aggression inflicted by the perpetrator on the victim, that goes repeated for a long time, and it also involves an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007, p. 89-112; National Children's Home, 2005). Workplace cyberbullying is also characterized by the bully using their higher social status over the victim to exert power to hurt (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007), harass, name-call, gossip, spreading out rumours, threats or other forms of intimidation to the victim in the workplace (Duggan, 2017). In the case of workplace cyberbullying on women, it is increasing phenomenally in the digital age, wherein the mobile phones, social media platforms, and use of digital platforms to threaten through emails, or blogs over the Internet (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). Workplace cyberbullying on women can also be understood as a situation, wherein over a period, a woman employee is purposely and repeatedly subjected to negative actions like bullying or harassing women. The act usually happens by verbally, or digitally abusing them through gadgets or e-platforms (e.g, phone, email, web sites and social media) related to their work (Farley, Coyne, Sprigg, Axtell, & Subramanian, 2016), because of this situation, the working women face difficulty in defending themselves against these actions and feel embarrassed and are broken psychologically (Farley, Coyne, Sprigg, Axtell, & Subramanian, 2016).

There are several types of workplace cyberbullying inflicted on working women by the bully, that impacts them psychologically (Hertz & David, 2008). These include verbal bullying with the use of words to hurt, harm or damage the morale of the employee (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006) and it includes name-calling or insults by making sexual or bigoted comments (Mehari, Farrell, & Le, 2014). Workplace cyberbullying also includes harsh teasing such as indirect taunting and mimicking, or verbal threats in the workplace (Lehr & Bechrakis, 2018). The mode of relational bullying is by excluding any one person, usually the targeted victim, from a peer group of working women, as well as a bully through verbal threats or spreading rumours to intimidate the victim, which brings down the morale of working women (Surdin, 2009). In the reactive bullying mode, the bully usually picks up a former victim and perpetuates the negative act of cyberbullying (Primack & Johnson, 2017). Workplace cyberbullying is highly prevalent in the context of organizations as well as in the family system across the developing countries in the world, including India, that usually victimize women victims in a subtle manner which often goes unreported. For instance, one of the unique ways of bullying women is by damaging their personal property; as a result, victims lose their property legally, even when the women own it. Also, when the property becomes damaged beyond control, it makes the women feel helpless. Another frequent mode adopted in the organizations includes cyberbullying women by taking away their organizational role, or removing their names from an important listing related to the organizational task, and, deliberately ignoring their views and opinions even in the context of work (Smyth, 2010). It also includes removing the details about them or concealing information that is important for the women employees that is sensitive to their career development, and denying vastly important official communication (Walther et al., 2010). Apart from the above, bullying by an allocation of stiff, unrealistic, and unattainable targets pushes their workload beyond manageable limits (Alexandra & Ellen, 2013). This subtle way of humiliation on the women workers by spreading malicious rumours, or intentionally delaying, or stopping promotion, or training opportunities to prevent them from their career growth is another mode that is highly prevalent across the countries in the world, including India (Deniz, 2015). The above methods are used in organizations in a very subtle manner, and the methods often go unnoticed as an official routine, where women victims may not get an opportunity to stop the behaviour, and as a result, resent it.

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