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## Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

### The Phenomenon of Cyberbullying in the Context of Workplaces

#### İş Ortamlarında Siber Zorbalık Olgusu

Ersel Ertürk<sup>a</sup> & Hamza Özçiftçi<sup>b, \*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Lect., İstanbul Esenyurt University, Vocational School, Banking and Insurance Program, 34510, İstanbul/ Türkiye

ORCID: 0000-0001-6932-1193

<sup>b</sup> Lect., PhD., İstanbul University Cerrahpaşa, Vocational School of Social Sciences, Real Estate Management Program, 34265, İstanbul/ Türkiye

ORCID: 0000-0002-2851-0040

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#### ÖZ

Bu çalışma, teknolojinin iş yaşamına entegrasyonu ile ortaya çıkan siber zorbalık olgusunu iş ortamları bağlamında ele almaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı, dijital iletişim platformları aracılığıyla çalışanlara yönelik gerçekleştirilen siber zorbalığın bireyler ve kurumlar üzerindeki etkilerini analiz ederek bu sorunun çözümüne yönelik stratejik yaklaşımlar önermektir. Siber zorbalık mağdurlarının ve tanıklarının yaşadığı psikolojik, sosyal ve mesleki sonuçlar incelenmiş, kurumsal düzeyde siber zorbalıkla mücadele stratejilerinin etkinliği değerlendirilmiştir. Elde edilen sonuçlar, siber zorbalığın çalışan refahı, işyeri etiği ve ekip iş birliği üzerindeki olumsuz etkilerini ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma, işyerinde siber zorbalıkla başa çıkmak için etkili yasal düzenlemeler ve stratejik müdahalelerin gerekliliğini vurgulamakta ve bu alandaki literatüre katkı sağlamaktadır.

#### ABSTRACT

This study examines the phenomenon of cyberbullying that has emerged with the integration of technology into workplaces. The aim of the study is to analyze the impacts of cyberbullying perpetrated through digital communication platforms on individuals and organizations, and to propose strategic approaches to address this issue. The psychological, social, and professional consequences experienced by victims and witnesses of cyberbullying have been explored, and the effectiveness of organizational strategies to combat cyberbullying has been evaluated. The findings reveal the detrimental effects of cyberbullying on employee well-being, workplace ethics, and team collaboration. The study emphasizes the necessity of effective legal regulations and strategic interventions to address workplace cyberbullying and contributes to the existing literature in this field.

## 1. Introduction

The integration of technology, which began with the Industrial Revolution and continues to accelerate today, plays a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of work environments and enhancing employee well-being. The incorporation of technology into the business world is evident in various areas such as the automation of

operational processes, facilitation of remote work arrangements, data management, and the use of digital platforms to engage with consumers. While the proliferation of online interactions has expedited and simplified company operations, it has also introduced new challenges. At the center of these challenges lies the issue of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying can be defined as a form of violence carried out through digital communication platforms (such as social

\* Sorumlu yazar/Corresponding author.

e-posta: [hamzaocziftci@gmail.com](mailto:hamzaocziftci@gmail.com)

media and electronic messaging), resulting in reduced productivity, fatigue, or psychological distress in individuals who, due to factors like fear of job loss, are at risk of harm (Palermi, Servidio, Bartolo, & Costabile, 2017). In a broader context, cyberbullying can also be considered deliberate and disruptive actions targeting individuals or groups, facilitated by the anonymity provided by modern communication technologies. It can be categorized by examining the use of communication methods that infringe on personal rights, such as the dissemination of numerous harmful comments and the exposure of personal information (Altundağ, 2016).

Understanding how cyberbullying provokes debates through new communication channels is essential. For instance, it is argued that cyberbullying requires the repetition of certain behaviors over specific time intervals. However, any content shared on social media platforms can reach a broad audience through a single act of sharing. In this context, Yaman and Peker (2012) suggest that a single post shared on social networks could be perceived as a repeated act due to its snowball effect.

The growing psychological burden experienced by victims of cyberbullying results from multiple factors. These include the higher number of witnesses to harassment in digital environments, the potential for this number to increase over time, difficulties in identifying the perpetrator, and the perpetrator's increased likelihood of exhibiting more aggressive and bold behavior compared to physical settings. In this regard, Aslan and Doğan (2017) emphasize that the focus of cyberbullying should not only be on the power dynamics between the parties but also on the disadvantages experienced by the victims.

To better understand the effects of cyberbullying on individuals and organizations, national and international legal regulations provide a critical framework. In Turkey, notable regulations include the Turkish Penal Code, the Personal Data Protection Law, and the Labor Law. Additionally, the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the International Labour Organization's Convention No. 190 establish international standards for combating cyberbullying and harassment in the workplace.

This study focuses on examining the definition, types, and presence of cyberbullying in work environments, its potential effects on individuals and organizations, and the legal and strategic measures required to address this pressing issue. Given the complex nature and multifaceted impacts of cyberbullying, the research aims to adopt a holistic perspective by integrating theoretical frameworks, real-world examples, and applied research to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

## 2. Literature review

Extensive literature reviews on cyberbullying show that academic interest and research in the field have increased

significantly in recent years. Despite this increase, most of the research on cyberbullying has focused on parents' concerns about their children or general concerns at the social level. Cyberbullying, especially among children and young adults, is a topic that is frequently discussed in literature. Despite this wide range of research, however, the number of studies on cyberbullying cases at the workplace is relatively limited. This suggests that cyberbullying at work is not sufficiently represented in the literature and requires more detailed research in this area.

The literature review conducted on the topic of cyberbullying revealed a range of theoretical frameworks and explanations that contribute to our knowledge of the underlying motivations behind the actions of those engaged in such behavior. The influence of internal elements, namely those stemming from an individual's psychological difficulties, has been determined to be significant based on the aforementioned motives. Furthermore, it has been observed that external variables exert a significant influence on these behaviors. Problems that arise from the social environment and family dynamics of people who have experienced harassment have an impact on the development of external incentives (Tan, 2020: 12).

The scholarly literature has primarily focused on examining the impacts of cyberbullying from the perspective of individuals who have been victimized. In a broad sense, the individuals affected experienced instances of cyberbullying, which subsequently resulted in their solitary experiences characterized by melancholy, social withdrawal, loneliness, despair, and discontentment. The impact is more pronounced when there is direct interaction between the victim and the perpetrator. Within this particular setting, cyberbullying has been identified as a significant contributing factor to the occurrence of suicidal ideation or attempts (Tan, 2020: 18).

Upon reviewing the existing body of literature pertaining to cyberbullying within the professional environment, it becomes evident that there is a dearth of comprehensive research conducted in this domain. The concept of "de-empowerment theory" holds significance in comprehending instances of workplace harassment. According to this theoretical framework, it is posited that when an individual interprets a specific workplace situation as a potential detriment to their personal reputation, it can result in a shift in their attitude and behavior within the workplace, subsequently eliciting negative emotional responses (Kane and Montgomery, 1998; Akt. Kanbur and Kanbur, 2018: 243). The Theory of Disqualification offers a theoretical framework to understand the potential negative outcomes that may arise from instances such as the infringement upon personal dignity or the detriment to one's professional standing within the workplace, specifically in relation to the occurrence of cyberbullying. Nevertheless, this theoretical framework lacks precise instructions for individuals' subjective interpretations of responsibility in cases of harassment, as well as the subsequent impact on one's

reputation. The extent to which an occurrence can be deemed disqualifiable and the manner in which an individual assigns significance to it are determining factors. Putting the de-authorization theory and the attachment theory together can help us understand the actions that people see as cyberbullying and how they give those actions meaning (Farley, Coyne, Sprigg, Axtell, and Subramanian, 2015). Currently, the attribution stage is assuming greater significance in enabling individuals to assess their own behavior and the behavior of others, as well as to comprehend and interpret the events they experience (Kızgın and Dalgın, 2012).

The relevant academic literature suggests that it is possible to use the "Theory of Emotional Events" as an analysis framework in the process of studying cyberbullying cases occurring in the workplace. This theory is based on the principle that certain events occurring in the workplace can cause various emotional reactions in employees. According to the Theory of Emotional Events, various emotional stimuli experienced in professional relationships (injustice, excessive pressure, or negative interactions between colleagues) can trigger intense emotional situations in employees, such as anger or fear. It is assumed that these emotional states can affect individuals' thinking processes, decision-making mechanisms, and behavioral responses, thereby causing emotionally-directed behavior. According to Kane and Montgomery's (1998) and Kanbur and Kanbur's (2018, p. 244) viewpoints, these emotional responses are factors that contribute to or may result from workplace cyberbullying. So these emotional reactions can play an important role in explaining the motivational and psychological dynamics behind an individual's inclination to aggressive behavior in the cyber environment. In this context, it is believed that studying cyberbullying incidents in the workplace from the perspective of the theory of emotional events could be critical for understanding such negative behavior and developing intervention strategies.

Several scholarly investigations have been conducted to explore the prevalence of workplace bullying, with a particular focus on its emergence as a psychosocial hazard originating from cyber settings. The aforementioned research provides evidence of a positive linear relationship between the occurrence of cyberbullying and an individual's psychological reaction to such incidents. Specifically, the findings indicate that as exposure to cyberbullying increases, the intensity of the psychological response also escalates (Jon et al., 2014). Numerous studies have provided empirical evidence indicating that adolescents who have experienced conventional manifestations of physical and verbal bullying, as well as cyberbullying, exhibit notably elevated levels of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation in comparison to their peers who have not been subjected to these adverse social interactions. Furthermore, it has been discovered that this phenomenon is associated with a notable decline in people's self-esteem and a detrimental effect on their academic achievements, as well as a fall in their rates of school attendance. The aforementioned research findings

indicate that the act of bullying can result in enduring and significant consequences for adolescents, including psychological, emotional, and educational aspects (Kowalski, Toth, and Morgan, 2017).

Research conducted in academic settings has investigated the effects of cyberbullying occurrences inside the workplace on an individual's work performance. These studies have identified noteworthy causal connections between these two variables. Coyne et al. (2017) conducted a study that observed a robust and adverse association between encounters with cyberbullying and levels of job satisfaction. There is evidence linking workplace cyberbullying and employee stress levels in a significant and positive way. Furthermore, it has been noted that instances of cyberbullying have a significant and adverse effect on people's mental well-being, leading to a decrease in their levels of self-assurance. The study by Snyman and Loh (2015) emphasizes the negative effects of cyberbullying on people's levels of optimism.

The existing literature on incidents of cyberbullying demonstrates that these behaviors have consequences not only at the individual level but also at the organizational level. Various studies reveal that cyberbullying not only leads to a decline in mental health and self-confidence among individuals but also weakens employee engagement and negatively impacts team collaboration (Didden et al., 2009; Mason, 2008; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Moreover, victims often face outcomes such as feelings of loneliness, a decline in professional performance, and inadequacy in coping with workplace challenges.

Furthermore, the study not only underscores the significant adverse effects of bullying on workplace productivity but also emphasizes the potential legal liabilities that managers may face in contemporary work settings as a result of such behaviors. Research conducted in this field has revealed that individuals who are subjected to cyberbullying in the workplace often exhibit symptoms of depression, exhibit diminished self-assurance in seeking assistance, and encounter obstacles in effectively managing work-related difficulties. Consequently, due to the increasing prevalence of cyberbullying occurrences, there is an emerging demand for the establishment of psychological intervention and support systems aimed at addressing the adverse psychological consequences associated with this phenomenon.

Numerous legal measures have been globally enacted, including inside Turkey, with the aim of mitigating the pervasive issue of cyberbullying that permeates various facets of society. In 2018, the Italian government enacted legislation that formally acknowledged the legal need for employers to safeguard the physical and moral well-being of their employees. Consequently, the provisions outlined in occupational safety laws became obligatory and enforceable. Several nations, including Turkey, France, Canada, Chile, and Australia, have implemented legislative measures within their labor laws or general labor laws to

address and manage the issue of harassment and bullying. Certain nations, such as Norway and Spain, have incorporated restrictions pertaining to this matter into their occupational health and safety legislation. Serbia, Colombia, and Macedonia have enacted specific legal provisions to address the prevalent issue of workplace harassment. Nations such as New Zealand have implemented legislation with the objective of mitigating instances of abuse within their borders, albeit with a primary emphasis on domains beyond the workplace. Collective contracts have been utilized at the national level in France and the Netherlands to address and control such concerns. The aforementioned actions serve as evidence of a growing global consciousness and a proactive approach to addressing cyberbullying, with the ultimate goal of safeguarding workers' rights and fostering a more secure and conducive work environment in response to evolving social and technological dynamics (Conn, 2010; Cowie and Colliety, 2010; Marczak and Coyne, 2010).

At the international level, regulations such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention No. 190 provide global standards for preventing violence and harassment in the workplace. GDPR specifically addresses issues such as the unauthorized disclosure of personal data in the context of cyberbullying (European Union, 2016). Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) protects individuals' privacy rights in the digital context and serves as a significant legal basis in cases of cyberbullying (European Court of Human Rights, 1950). However, these frameworks fall short in addressing the complex dynamics of workplace cyberbullying (De Stefano et al., 2020). Similarly, existing legal regulations in Turkey face comparable shortcomings, highlighting the need for more comprehensive guidance and implementation mechanisms.

The issue of addressing online harassment in Turkey is predominantly addressed through the Turkish Penal Code (TPC) and other pertinent legislation. The aforementioned statutes establish criminal offenses in the realm of the internet, encompassing behaviors such as harassment, threats, and insults. They prescribe legal consequences in the form of criminal punishments for individuals found guilty of committing such offenses:

Article 125 of the Turkish Penal Code (TPC) pertains to the regulation of the offense of insult, specifically targeting actions that undermine the honor, dignity, and reputation of an individual. Insults conveyed through online platforms might likewise be regarded within the purview of this context.

According to Article 216 of Turkish Penal Code Law No. 5237, the act of instigating or insulting the public through hate speech is considered an offense, which extends to online platforms as well.

According to Article 213 of TPC Law No. 5237, the act of

disseminating news in a manner that incites animosity among individuals is considered an offense, which can also be perpetrated through social media and online platforms.

According to Article 215 of TPC Law No. 5237, the act of encouraging the general public to engage in criminal behavior can also be perpetrated through the use of telecommunications and threats made in the virtual realm.

According to Article 226 of TPC Law No. 5237, the act of disseminating explicit material on the internet can also constitute the offense of obscenity.

The Electronic Communication Law encompasses the responsibilities imposed upon internet service providers as well as the protocols governing offenses perpetrated using online platforms. For instance, the implementation of measures to eliminate detrimental content or restrict access as deemed appropriate.

The Personal Data Protection Law is a legal framework that governs the safeguarding and handling of personal data while also criminalizing the unauthorized utilization of individuals' personal data in the digital realm.

The legislative framework in Turkey assumes a significant role in combating cyberbullying and related offenses while simultaneously striving to safeguard the rights of victims.

### 3. Position of employers concerning cyberbullying

Employers are primarily responsible for ensuring the protection and supervision of their employees, in addition to their legal obligation to pay wages in accordance with labor law and employment contracts. The employer's responsibility for oversight and protection is framed as a reciprocal measure of the employee's duty of loyalty. The employer is responsible for supervising the employees, which entails not only the duty to uphold and safeguard the personal rights of the employees but also encompasses various actions aimed at ensuring the well-being and physical safety of the workers. These actions include, but are not limited to, ensuring the workplace vehicles are safe and maintaining the confidentiality and security of employees' personal data (Mollamahmutoğlu et al., 2021, p. 197). Employers are typically held legally accountable and have a duty to fulfill their rights and obligations in ensuring the protection and supervision of their employees in response to instances of workplace violence.

Legal regulations in Turkey explicitly define employers' obligations to protect the rights of their employees. Articles 125 ("Insult") and 213 ("Threat with the Aim of Creating Fear and Panic Among the Public") of the Turkish Penal Code (TPC) impose penalties for behaviors that may disrupt workplace peace and security. The Personal Data Protection Law (PDPL) provides significant safeguards to prevent the unauthorized use of employees' personal data in digital environments. Additionally, Article 417 of the Turkish Code of Obligations (TCO) ("Protection of the Employee's Personality") and the Labor Law outline employers'

responsibilities in combating modern threats such as cyberbullying and related risks. These legal provisions demonstrate that employers are accountable not only at the individual level but also in addressing organizational risks.

In this particular context, the employer's obligation to safeguard and oversee encompasses a broad spectrum of duties that extend beyond the provision of a conducive and secure working milieu inside the organizational setting. Furthermore, the employer's accountability is heightened in light of emerging hazards associated with contemporary occupational environments, including psychosocial hazards, cyberbullying, and incidents of workplace violence. It is imperative for employers to implement proactive efforts to mitigate these risks, guarantee the well-being of their employees by preventing exposure to detrimental consequences, and establish comprehensive preventative and protective protocols accordingly. The provisions of labor law and occupational health and safety legislation, which emphasize the growing responsibilities of employers in this field, support this assertion.

At the international level, the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention No. 190 establishes global standards for preventing violence and harassment in the workplace. This convention emphasizes employers' obligations not only to protect employees from physical violence and harassment but also from threats such as cyberbullying occurring in digital environments (ILO, 2019). It promotes the creation of an inclusive and safe workplace environment to safeguard the physical and psychological well-being of employees. These standards contribute to the development of healthier work environments by supporting not only individual employee well-being but also corporate ethics and workplace safety.

In Europe, employers' obligations to protect employees from cyberbullying are framed by various legal regulations and international standards. Notably, the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) plays a critical role in safeguarding employees' rights against digital threats (European Union, 2016). In the United Kingdom, the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) mandates employers to ensure the health and safety of their employees, offering a broad framework that encompasses digital threats as well (UK Parliament, 1974). In Germany, the Arbeitsschutzgesetz (Occupational Health and Safety Act) explicitly outlines employers' responsibilities to prevent conflicts among employees and to establish a healthy working environment (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2020).

Organizations have the capacity to devise diverse ways and approaches to address the issue of cyberbullying in the workplace. These measures will contribute to the establishment of a secure and conducive working environment inside the workplace while simultaneously safeguarding the mental and social welfare of employees. One of the primary tactics is implementing preventive measures aimed at mitigating the likelihood of workers

being exposed to instances of harassment. To effectively address the issue of cyberbullying within the workplace, it is imperative for employers to grant employees the prerogative to voice their dissent against hostile behaviors. It is imperative to establish effective lines of communication in order to facilitate the expression of employee concerns around cyberbullying and the secure reporting of complaints. In this particular setting, it is imperative to establish complaint procedures that are effective in addressing employees' grievances. When confronted with an incident of cyberbullying within the workplace, it is imperative to approach complaints and reports with the utmost seriousness, promptly and impartially conducting thorough investigations. In the course of the monitoring procedure, it is essential for the involved parties to have access to an impartial mechanism that facilitates mediation, advisory, and support services. With the intention of resolving workplace issues and fostering a productive organizational culture, officials who are either appointed externally or internally undertake the task of implementing such arrangements. According to Wildhaber and Hansenberger (2016), trade union representatives or workers' representatives may be designated under the current legislative framework to fulfill this role.

The preservation of confidentiality ought to be upheld throughout the course of an inquiry, with a commitment to impartiality and the avoidance of discriminatory treatment between the victim and the suspect. To mitigate the recurrence of cyberbullying, the employer can implement measures such as modifying the victim's work environment and schedule to minimize their interaction with the perpetrator. Nevertheless, throughout the implementation of this isolation procedure, it is imperative for the employer to avoid adopting an overly stringent approach towards the employee's engagement with coworkers and their access to pertinent information pertaining to the job.

One potential strategy that businesses may adopt to address the issue of cyberbullying inside the workplace involves implementing educational initiatives and fostering more awareness regarding this phenomenon. These objectives can be accomplished by participating in stress management courses, seeking psychological counseling services, or engaging in work-life balance programs. It is imperative for employers to consistently provide employees with comprehensive knowledge on the framework, attributes, and preventive measures pertaining to cyberbullying inside the workplace. Currently, companies have the opportunity to collaborate with relevant public and private institutions in order to achieve more advantageous outcomes through the implementation of comprehensive training programs. As a consequence of undergoing this training, it is recommended that employers establish a comprehensive workplace policy that effectively communicates to both employees and employers the regulations and guidelines pertaining to cyberbullying. This policy, which is a contractual agreement between the employee and the employer, should explicitly outline the definition of bullying behavior and the

corresponding penalties to serve as an effective deterrent (Stefano et al., 2020).

Employers are in charge of paying out damages for cyberbullying-related harm. This requirement is typically incorporated into organizational policies as an advisory measure. The initial action anticipated from the employer at this juncture would involve the announcement of disciplinary consequences for employees who exhibit behavior that contradicts the established workplace protection system. The imposition of sanctions can be justified on a legal foundation, encompassing measures such as registration, salary reductions, unpaid leave, or termination of employment (Wildhaber and Hansenberger, 2016). In contrast, alternative measures can be implemented to address the aforementioned issue. These measures include offering psychological counseling to victims, granting them the option to take leave from work while receiving compensation, providing restitution for the economic harm they have endured, facilitating repatriation in appropriate cases, ensuring prompt enforcement of decisions aimed at terminating instances of harassment and violence, and assuming the financial burden of legal proceedings.

#### 4. Consequences of cyberbullying for sufferers

The prevalence of cyberbullying has been identified as a contributing factor to more severe outcomes compared to conventional forms of harassment (Dooley et al., 2009). The psychological and behavioral reactions exhibited by individuals who have been subjected to cyberbullying encompass feelings of depression, social phobia or shame, heightened arousal, a proclivity to avoid digital platforms and technological interactions, exposure to addictive substances, and a propensity to evade accountability (Mason, 2008; Morales, 2011; Schneider et al., 2012). Individuals who are consistently subjected to cyberbullying may also have negative consequences in terms of their professional advancement, as they may require extended and recurrent periods of sick leave (Privitera and Campbell, 2009). According to a study by Goebert, Else, Matsu, Chung-Do, and Chang (2011), people who experience cyberbullying have higher levels of substance use, increased risk of addiction, depressive symptoms, and suicide attempts.

Individuals who have been victims frequently struggle with depression, social isolation, and self-harming behaviors (Mason, 2008; Wong-Lo et al., 2011). According to Sourander et al. (2010), a range of challenges such as perceptual difficulties, emotional or interpersonal issues, disrupted sleep patterns, headaches, chronic abdominal discomfort, and inadequate workplace safety might contribute to the development of problems. Previous studies have indicated that individuals who experience victimization tend to exhibit diminished levels of self-confidence and self-esteem (Didden et al., 2009; Mason, 2008; Patchin and Hinduja, 2010).

According to Price and Dalgleish's (2010) research, the main

difficulties faced by those who were the targets of cyberbullying included a decline in self-confidence (78%) and self-esteem (70%), difficulties in social interactions (42%), a decline in academic performance and motivation (5%), reluctance to attend school (28%), and problems with familial relationships (19%). Furthermore, within the realm of emotional responses exhibited by the individuals affected, a significant majority of 75 percent claimed experiencing grief, while 54 percent revealed enduring severe melancholy. Additionally, 58 percent of the victims claimed to be suffering from depressive states, compared to 72 percent who expressed hostility. Furthermore, 48 percent of the respondents admitted to experiencing sensations of guilt, while a smaller proportion of 9 percent acknowledged feelings of perplexity and dread.

There are no time or space restrictions on cyberbullying, in contrast to other forms of bullying that take place through direct communication channels like face-to-face or telephone interactions. Research suggests that this unique characteristic of cyberbullying can result in more profound and enduring harm. This is primarily due to the fact that individuals subjected to cyberbullying are deprived of the immediate opportunity to provide explanations or reactions to the situations they encounter, as well as receive prompt feedback. According to the study conducted by Lim and Teo in 2009, the inherent abstractness of digital platforms, which serve as the backdrop for cyberbullying incidents, should not diminish the gravity with which such abuse is regarded in comparison to other manifestations of bullying. According to Hong et al. (2014), cyberbullying is a type of aggression that is intangible and sometimes compared to an "invisible punch." This scenario, wherein harm can be inflicted without direct physical interaction, highlights the significance of abuse's intangible repercussions and underscores that the severity and impact on victims remain unaffected. It is crucial to consider that engaging in bad behaviors within virtual worlds can have significant and lasting impacts on an individual's psychological well-being.

#### 5. Impact of cyberbullying on bystanders

Emerging scholarly investigations have revealed that instances of cyberbullying possess the capacity to exert a significant influence not only on the individuals targeted but also on those who bear witness to such acts. The core of these impacts resides in the sentiment that bystanders are incapable of intervening in the face of despair, mistreatment, or providing assistance to the individual being victimized (Zhang and Leidner, 2014). In a context characterized by the presence of harassment, the adverse consequences of such occurrences can extend beyond their immediate impact when the perpetrator has a prominent position within the workplace hierarchy, specifically one of authority. In this scenario, those who have observed instances of harassment may exhibit hesitancy in intervening due to concerns that intervening in such situations could potentially detrimentally affect their professional trajectories. There are questions regarding the potential application of institutional

sanctions to cases of abuse by people in high-ranking positions.

There exists a strong probability that individuals who have been exposed to instances of workplace abuse may undergo traumatic emotions and develop a sense of empathy for the victim, thereby perceiving themselves as potential targets of such mistreatment in the future. The experience of anxiety and terror has the potential to heighten employees' discontentment and concerns regarding their professional environment, engender feelings of insecurity inside the workplace, and elevate the likelihood of their voluntary departure from the organization.

The presence of an uncertain work environment has the potential to negatively impact the motivation and productivity of individuals, as well as disrupt interpersonal connections among colleagues and compromise their overall moral standing within the workplace. The situation at hand possesses the capacity to manifest as an issue that exerts adverse effects not only on an individual level but also on the overall performance of corporations. The issue of cyberbullying presents itself as a complex problem that warrants significant attention both at the individual and institutional levels.

## 6. Impact of cyberbullying on workplace environments

The phenomenon of cyberbullying occurring within the workplace possesses the capacity to directly influence the psychosocial well-being of employees while also potentially yielding adverse consequences at the institutional level. The phenomenon of cyberbullying has been found to have significant implications for employee retention and career trajectory, leading individuals to resign from their current positions or pursue alternative professional paths. This phenomenon is expected to result in a rise in the rate of labor mobility. Due to the additional time and money needed for the training and onboarding of newly hired employees, businesses incur significantly higher costs as a result of employee turnover.

Operational efficiency is a crucial factor in the achievement of corporate success, with labor productivity serving as a fundamental component within this efficiency framework. Nevertheless, the occurrence of detrimental conduct, such as cyberbullying, can significantly hinder employee motivation and focus, posing challenges to labor productivity as a result of several variables. Additionally, this distortion will result in a decrease in direct operating performance, thereby impacting total production efficiency. Employees that experience cyberbullying frequently encounter challenges in carrying out their professional responsibilities, resulting in increased error rates and diminished levels of workplace engagement. Consequently, the pace of workflows is decelerated, leading to an escalation in workflow disruptions that place further strain on other personnel, ultimately leading to an overall decline in operational effectiveness. Failure to address the issue of cyberbullying may result in a

diminished ability to achieve long-term strategic objectives. The potential outcome of this situation may result in a decrease in competitive advantage as well as impede the efficient utilization of labor resources. Moreover, a persistent decline in efficiency might result in a reduction in customer satisfaction and a deterioration of the company's market standing. This recurring pattern has the potential to adversely impact the financial standing of the organization and potentially result in a financial crisis or a decline in brand perception.

Instances of cyberbullying can pose a significant threat to the corporate reputation of organizations, undermining one of their most crucial assets, which extends beyond their tangible material worth. When the general public notices incidents of this nature, it may negatively affect how the public perceives the company. The presence of cyberbullying occurrences within a firm may give both prospective and current employees the perception that it can generate an atmosphere of uncertainty and tension in the workplace. This, in turn, can have a detrimental impact on their aspirations for sustained professional growth and career advancement within the organization.

The establishment of a company's brand image holds significant importance in fostering trust and cultivating a positive reputation among consumers, investors, and other stakeholders in the business realm. Negative occurrences such as cyberbullying have the potential to prompt consumers and other business partners to reassess their affiliations with the firm, thereby raising concerns regarding the organization's operational values and ethical norms. The potential consequences of this situation may have an adverse impact on customer loyalty and commercial alliances, ultimately resulting in a sustained decrease in brand value and financial performance over time.

Furthermore, it has the potential to give rise to instances of cyberbullying, impose legal responsibilities, and incur regulatory sanctions. The perception that the company has the ability to adequately safeguard its employees within the boundaries of the law may result in litigation and penalties from both current and prospective legal actions. This phenomenon has the potential to result in the distortion of business resources due to financial responsibilities such as defense and compensation, as well as the potential setback of strategic investments such as research and development or marketing efforts. Consequently, it is imperative to consider cyberbullying not solely as an internal issue within human resources but also as a significant risk element that can impact corporate reputation management and operational performance on a large scale. Therefore, it is crucial to use proactive management measures in order to prevent cyberbullying.

## 7. Conclusion

Based on the specific domains of investigation, it is evident that cyberbullying constitutes a significant concern within the corporate milieu, exerting detrimental effects on both

individuals and organizations. This study investigates the conceptualization, categorization, prevalence, and consequences of cyberbullying, along with the legal and strategic interventions that might be implemented to mitigate this issue.

Employers are perceived as having a significant role in combating the issue of cyberbullying. It is recommended that employers implement a zero-tolerance policy towards cyberbullying and effectively communicate to their employees that engaging in such conduct is deemed inappropriate. The prompt emphasizes the significance of employers promptly, effectively, and appropriately addressing complaints regarding cyberbullying while also ensuring fair implementation of disciplinary measures and safeguarding the well-being of victims. It is imperative for employers to actively promote awareness and provide comprehensive training to their staff regarding the issue of cyberbullying. The training program should encompass comprehensive guidelines for appropriate standards of conduct in digital communication, an in-depth exploration of the potential ramifications of cyberbullying, and strategies for effectively addressing and managing such behavior within the organizational context. The phenomenon of cyberbullying in the workplace necessitates a diligent and earnest approach, with the implementation of complete legal and strategic measures to effectively tackle this issue. Hence, it is possible to maintain and enhance the overall welfare of both employees and institutions. This technique is expected to yield a substantial contribution towards establishing and maintaining a healthy and productive working environment.

Legal regulations in Turkey provide a strong foundation for combating cyberbullying in the workplace. Articles 125 and 213 of the Turkish Penal Code aim to protect individuals' dignity and security, while the Personal Data Protection Law (PDPL) prevents the unauthorized use of personal data in digital environments. Additionally, relevant provisions in the Labor Law and the Turkish Code of Obligations explicitly outline employers' obligations to safeguard and protect employees' rights.

At the international level, the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention No. 190 establish global standards for addressing workplace cyberbullying. GDPR, in particular, provides robust mechanisms to protect against personal data breaches, while Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights safeguards the right to privacy in digital contexts.

The detrimental effects of cyberbullying on its victims are evident, as this behavior not only adversely affects individuals on a personal level but also hinders their professional performance and impedes their career advancement. Individuals who have been victimized frequently have emotional challenges, including but not limited to heightened levels of stress, worry, and diminished self-worth. This phenomenon has the potential to result in

heightened levels of interruption and attrition. Victims may additionally encounter challenges such as experiencing a sense of insecurity inside online contexts, enduring persistent feelings of threat, and enduring violations of their privacy. In this particular setting, it is imperative for employers to offer assistance to those who have experienced harm, furnish psychological counseling resources, and foster an atmosphere conducive to trust and assurance.

Workplace cyberbullying has a significant impact not only on the victims directly targeted but also on individuals who have been exposed to such incidents. Witnesses may experience reluctance to act in instances of harassment, as well as feelings of guilt or desperation. This phenomenon has the potential to have a negative impact on the overall ethical standards and professional atmosphere within the workplace. Witnesses may have challenges when it comes to providing assistance to victims or reporting instances of abuse, thereby compromising a workplace environment characterized by trust and openness. Hence, it is imperative for employers and politicians to take into account the ramifications of cyberbullying for individuals who observe such incidents. Raising awareness of cyberbullying in the workplace, offering advice on intervention and support for witnesses, and establishing efficient reporting systems are crucial endeavors. Comprehensive and efficacious interventions have the potential to significantly contribute to the preservation and advancement of a salubrious working environment in the workplace.

The phenomenon of cyberbullying has been observed to have a detrimental impact on the overall well-being of corporations since it leads to a decrease in employee motivation and a decline in team cooperation. Moreover, the occurrence of abuse within institutions has detrimental effects on various aspects, including business effectiveness, staff turnover, and the general reputation of the company. Additionally, it is worth noting that this could potentially result in adverse effects on consumer relationships and commercial collaborations. Hence, it is imperative for employers to duly acknowledge and address this matter by formulating efficacious measures and fostering a conducive professional milieu that provides assistance to both victims and witnesses.

Further investigation is warranted to delve into the intricate psychosocial ramifications of cyberbullying on bystanders, with particular attention to its differential impact on individuals of varying demographic backgrounds as well as on collectives operating within diverse industry sectors. These studies aim to examine the diverse range of witness responses to incidents of harassment, assess the application of intervention tactics, and evaluate the efficacy of these tactics at both the institutional and individual levels. The investigations may also encompass the assessment of witness interventions in relation to the repercussions of instances of harassment and their effects on victims. Therefore, it has the potential to contribute to the advancement of more comprehensive and efficacious



strategies for addressing cyberbullying.

Consequently, the existing body of literature and empirical research unequivocally demonstrate the significant psychological and social ramifications of cyberbullying on individuals who observe such incidents. The aforementioned consequences have the potential to exert a substantial impact on the emotional well-being of individuals inside the workplace, as well as the overall social dynamics present in that environment. In the present situation, the implementation of efficacious and all-encompassing intervention tactics can play a substantial role in fostering a salubrious, nurturing, and fruitful work milieu inside the organizational setting. It also aims to equip readers with the essential knowledge and comprehension required for designing and executing support systems for those who have witnessed instances of cyberbullying, along with intervention tactics. Moreover, the primary objective of this study is to offer a comprehensive outlook on research and practical implications in the domain, catering to the needs of those who encounter workplace cyberbullying as well as those who witness such incidents.

While this study examines the phenomenon of cyberbullying in professional work environments from various dimensions, it has certain limitations. Firstly, the data used in the research does not focus on a specific sector or geographical region, indicating the need for collecting data from diverse sectors and cultural contexts to ensure broader representation. Additionally, longitudinal studies are recommended to explore the long-term effects of cyberbullying.

Moreover, the study's reliance on quantitative methods has not been complemented by qualitative approaches, which could provide deeper insights. Future research should incorporate methods such as case studies or focus group interviews to examine individuals' personal narratives and experiences regarding the impacts of cyberbullying. Finally, comparative analyses evaluating the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding in both national and international contexts.

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