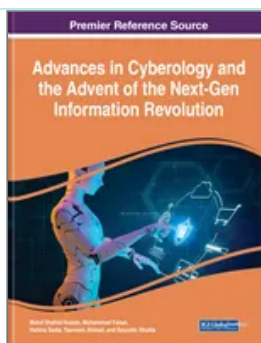


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Workplace Cyberbullying in the Remote-Work Era: A New Dimension of Cyberology

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Abstract

Information and communication technologies are being used as weapons in a combat zone created by the norm that forces individuals to work from home during this pandemic. The upsurge in workplace cyberbullying is visible in various reports. Workplace cyberbullying may appear to be a less severe form of harassment, but the shift to a more dispersed workforce has made it worse. It is the intimidation experienced by a remote or hybrid employee which results in a breakdown in communication with or mistreatment from leaders. While it makes sense to believe that because we are not at the office, occurrences of antagonism and harassment are drastically reduced, that's not the reality. Spiteful employers and demeaning coworkers might pose a virtual threat. Remote work settings are becoming toxic due to harmful, unkind workplace behavior, including derogatory language, social exclusion, and threats via phone, email, or social media. This chapter unveils a new dimension of cyberology.

Chapter Preview

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Introduction

The pandemic left all offices closed across the globe, and personal spaces transformed into office spaces, contemplating the possible upsides of the new professional conundrum felt like a means of survival. During that time a huge tumult was there, and many people thought that workplace harassment will drop as everyone became boxes on Google Meet, Zoom, Webex, or text bubbles in a chat, and physically separated from colleagues and clients. The hidden flame quickly turns the tables and rapidly went dark. The rising incidents of bullying virtually started with the adoption of video calling during COVID-19 and it has provided fertile ground for incidents of bullying to flourish not abate. According to 2023 ZogbyAnalytics polls, there was a 57% rise in the number of employees reporting face-to-face bullying since 2017, whereas 40% reported it while working remotely (ehstoday.com, 2022). In one of the surveys conducted by the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI), it was seen that bullying happened during virtual meets. It seems workplace bullies were cognizant of the risk of leaving a paper trail, as would be generated through email. Almost 50% respondents of in that survey admitted that they had experienced or witnessed mistreatment during virtual meetings – mistreatment that was the equivalent of being berated at a group meeting. Due to COVID-19 and the necessity for social isolation, businesses had to find new locations for their staff to work because offices were no longer safe. As a result, companies were able to conduct the majority of their operations utilizing mobile or other digital platforms, giving birth to remote working arrangements or work-from-home (WFH) (Kompella, 2022). Regardless of the nature of the task or the employees' skills, remote working was a must rather than a desire or an option for them. Home-based workers have to swiftly adjust to the situation and carry out their assigned tasks.