

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ONLINE WORK AND EMPLOYEE BULLYING IN ENTERPRISES

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Abstract. The rapid expansion of online and hybrid work models has changed communication patterns, management practices, and interpersonal relationships within enterprises. Remote work provides flexibility and reduces operational costs; however, it also reshapes the social environment where employees interact. The lack of direct personal contact, increased digital surveillance, limited informal communication, and reliance on electronic correspondence create conditions where misunderstandings, social isolation, and tensions may emerge. These factors increase the risk of workplace bullying manifesting in digital form. Cyberbullying in professional settings can include exclusion from communication channels, ignoring messages, excessive criticism in group chats, spreading rumors, or controlling employees through monitoring tools. The relationship between online work and bullying is therefore a relevant problem that affects employee well-being, productivity, and organizational culture.

The objective of this study is to examine how online work conditions influence the emergence and dynamics of employee bullying in enterprises and to identify organizational factors that either intensify or mitigate these negative behaviors.

The research is based on system analysis and comparison of theoretical approaches to workplace bullying and digital labor organization. Academic literature on occupational psychology, human resource management, and organizational communication is reviewed. Particular attention is paid to studies on remote communication barriers, perceived fairness, power asymmetry in digital environments, and emotional labor under

online conditions. Empirical findings from international surveys conducted during and after the COVID-19 pandemic are synthesized to identify patterns of conflict escalation in online work settings. The study also uses elements of behavioral analysis to examine how reduced social cues in digital communication influence interpersonal relationships.

The findings show that the transition to online work modifies the forms rather than the causes of bullying. Bullying behavior becomes less visible, more subtle, and often more prolonged, since digital communication leaves fewer emotional cues and delays in response times can be interpreted negatively. Managers with limited experience in remote leadership may resort to micromanagement, which increases stress and conflict potential. Power imbalance is amplified when control is exercised through digital monitoring tools without transparent justification. Social isolation contributes to the reduction of group support, which makes victims more vulnerable and less likely to report bullying. At the same time, digital environments allow certain preventive tools. Structured communication protocols, feedback channels, regular online check-ins, and clear organizational norms reduce ambiguity and support psychological safety. Organizational culture plays a decisive role. Enterprises that prioritize trust, transparency, and training in digital communication skills demonstrate lower levels of remote bullying. Conversely, organizations with competitive or authoritarian cultures experience stronger negative effects.

Online work influences the nature and prevalence of workplace bullying by changing communication structures and

altering power relations. The risk of bullying increases when organizational norms are vague and leadership practices are unadapted to online forms of interaction. Effective prevention requires managerial training, psychological support mechanisms, and explicit digital behavior standards.

Further research should investigate sectoral differences in online bullying dynamics, develop quantitative tools for early detection of digital harassment, and assess the effectiveness of organizational interventions designed to build trust and inclusion in distributed teams.

Keywords: online work; remote employment; workplace bullying; cyberbullying; organizational culture; communication barriers; psychological safety; power imbalance; digital monitoring; employee well-being; remote leadership; conflict prevention.

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