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Can exposure to indicators of cyber
incivility / cyberbullying tell us anything
about employee well-being?

Sam Farley
Institute of Work Psychology
University of Sheffield Management School

Presentation Structure

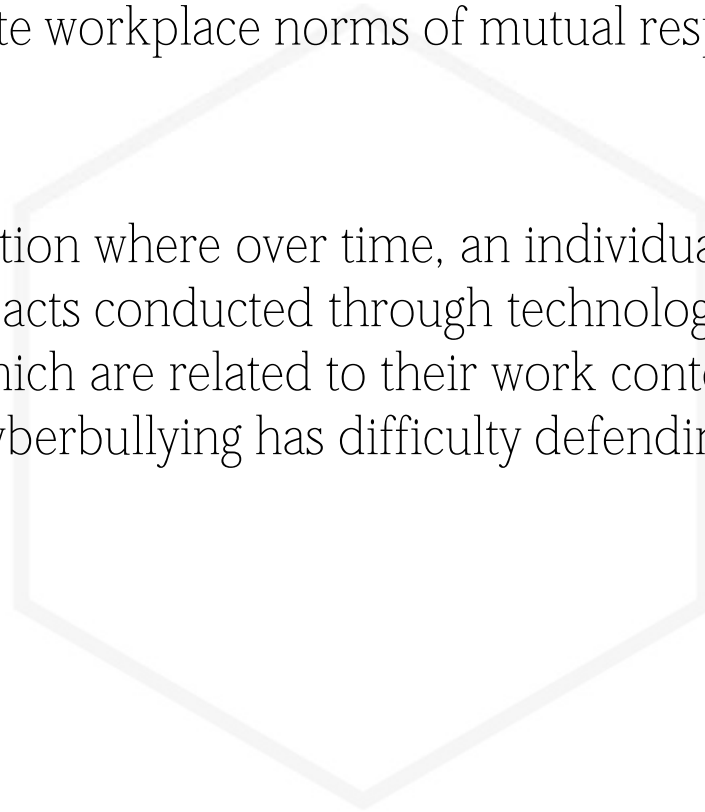


- Evidence of links between cyber incivility/ cyberbullying & wellbeing.
- An examination of the behaviours that reflect cyber incivility & cyberbullying.
- What valid indicators exist within big datasets?
- Questions / thoughts going forward.

The Salient Features



- Cyber incivility: “communicative behaviour exhibited in computer-mediated interactions that violate workplace norms of mutual respect” (Lim & Teo, 2009, p.419)
- Cyberbullying: a situation where over time, an individual is repeatedly subjected to perceived negative acts conducted through technology (e.g. phone, email, web sites, social media) which are related to their work context. In this situation the target of workplace cyberbullying has difficulty defending him or herself against these actions.



Links with Wellbeing: Cyber Incivility



- Giumetti et al. (2013) within subjects experiment found that participants who interacted with an unsupportive supervisor displayed higher negative affect, lower energy and lower task performance.
- Daily survey over 4 consecutive workdays found that cyber incivility was associated with greater distress on that work day which persisted until the following work day (Park, Fritz & Jex., 2015).
- Cross-sectional studies have linked cyber incivility to detrimental outcomes including burnout, absenteeism and job dissatisfaction (Giumetti at al., 2012; Lim & Teo, 2009).

Links with Wellbeing: Cyberbullying



- Qualitative research hints at impact “Physical and emotional distress was described by all participants, qualified with references to the relentlessness and vulnerability” (D’Cruz & Noronha, 2013).
- Headaches, sleep problems including insomnia, blood pressure, gastrointestinal problems, body fatigue and physical tiredness as well as fear, anxiety, humiliation, anger, depression and emotional exhaustion were reported.
- Cross-sectional studies have reported associations with anxiety, stress, mental strain and frustration (Baruch, 2005; Coyne et al, in press; Hong et al, 2014; Snyman & Low, 2015).

What does cyber incivility involve?



- Showing impatience by sending multiple emails about a single request
- Carbon copying another employee's supervisor to alert them to an issue
- Repeated blog postings to large audiences
- Inappropriate use of emoticons (Giumetti et al., 2013).

Lim & Teo (2009) Cyber Incivility Scale

- Used CAPS to shout at you through email.
- Not replying to your email at all.
- Used email for discussions that would require face-to-face dialogue.
- Used emails for time-sensitive messages (e.g., cancelling or scheduling a meeting on short notice).

What does cyberbullying involve?



- “Ccing people into messages to coerce them into doing more work!”
- “Not including a co-worker on an e-mail that is sent to others, so that person doesn't know the information. Also not including a co-worker in humorous e-mails. All others are laughing but the person thinks they are being laughed at.”
- “Sarcastic comments between two members of staff on Facebook about a third person (also a member of staff). The two people do not name the third person and they are not friends with them on Facebook but others reading the posts will know who they are referring to.”
- “Unreasonable work-related demands made via email, with no opportunity for discussion of feasibility or workload.”
- “Email to everyone in the organisation drawing attention to someone's actions in a negative way.”

Cyberbullying Behaviours



- Had negative rumours or gossip spread about you
- Received messages that contain abusive language aimed at you
- Received threatening messages
- Been unfairly blamed for work problems
- Had another organisational member copy people into messages that reflect negatively on you

Possible Recordable Indicators



- When an individual sends multiple messages that do not receive a reply
- Receiving emails / phone calls outside of working hours (especially during holidays)
- Being copied in to lots of messages that are not relevant to your work
- Phone calls / emails / text messages sent to non-work media.

Possible Recordable Indicators



- Had a colleague not acknowledge that he/she has received your email even when you sent a “request receipt” function.
- Excessive amounts of monitoring behaviours e.g. multiple status requests via email / text.
- Receiving messages in ALL CAPS that use excessive amounts of grammar!!!!
- Messages that contain swearing / name calling.

Challenges of identifying incivility / bullying indicators



- Researchers suggest that an agreed list of bullying behaviours may never be achieved (the same goes for cyberbullying).
- Nielsen et al (2015) bullying can be described as two-step process, whereby the first step involves repeated exposure to negative behaviours and the second step involves a subjective interpretation of bullying victimisation.
- This prompts the question, are the behaviours harmful if they are not perceived as negative/bullying/uncivil acts?
- Some researchers suggest it's the subjective interpretation of a behaviour as bullying that causes health complaints (Cooper et al, 2004; Einarsen et al, 2009).

Challenges of identifying incivility / bullying indicators



- Research has found that indicators proposed in the literature, are not always perceived as offensive (Turnage, 2008).
- Automated cyberbullying detection systems are in early phases of development and currently low precision (Van Royen et al, 2015).
- Content analysis of e-communication cannot account for power relations which affect victim status.

Challenges of identifying incivility / bullying indicators



- Cyber incivility defined as computer-mediated interactions that violate workplace norms of mutual respect. This may differ vastly across organisations and even job roles.
- How do you account for between person and between work differences? Would you have to go to each workplace to identify what does & does not violate workplace norms?
- Cyber incivility / cyberbullying have traditionally been measured from the targets perspective. Even if indicators are available, how objective are they?

Can big data predict whether an individual perceives victimisation?



- Realisation that one is being bullied unfolds over time (D’Cruz & Noronha, 2010) – victims start to become excluded.
- Initially a workplace conflict may not be interpreted as bullying, however as the conflict escalates victims are placed in an inferior position (Zapf & Gross, 2001).
- Victims are often high performers, yet as bullying unfolds they find it difficult to maintain previous high levels of performance (Baillien et al, 2009).
- Coping strategies include absenteeism, avoiding the perpetrator, retaliation, applications to transfer, seeking social support.
- Victims may try several strategies to see what works. Rumination exacerbates the negative impact of workplace harassment (Niven et al, 2013; Park et al, 2015).

Considerations



- Research indicates that increased organisational monitoring may be linked to negative consequences including reduced organisational commitment and workplace deviance (Alge et al., 2006a; Ariss, 2002; George, 1996).
- There are also ethical and moral issues to consider when utilising big data (Legault, 2014). Unanswered questions remain regarding what type of data constitutes public as opposed to private information, particularly in regard to social media (Oboler, Welsh & Cruz, 2012).
- Employees may perceive monitoring to be an infringement of their personal space, which could cause health problems that employers are trying to reduce (Coover & Thompson, 2003).

Can big data predict high risk work environments?



- Bullying has been linked to organisational change (Salin, 2003), workload (Hoel & Giga, 2006), job insecurity (Baillien, 2009), reward structures (Salin, 2003), workgroup composition, leadership behaviours and job resources (Baillien et al, 2011).
- Are there indicators that can give clues to 'at risk' work environments?



Sheffield
University
Management
School.

Questions?



sjfarley1@sheffield.ac.uk



[@Sam_Farley3](https://twitter.com/Sam_Farley3)



<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management>

