

IMPACTS OF CYBERBULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE



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.....
Miss Tanyason Singthong
Candidate

.....
Assoc. Prof. Roy Kouwenberg,
Ph.D., CFA
Advisor

.....
Asst. Prof. Winai Wongsurawat,
Ph.D.
Chairperson

.....
Asst. Prof. Duangporn Arbhasil,
Ph.D.
Dean
College of Management
Mahidol University

.....
Ronald Surachai Thesenvitz,
Ph.D.
Committee member

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Tanyason Singthong

IMPACTS OF CYBERBULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE

TANYASON SINGTHONG 6149034

M.M. (ENTREPRENEURSHIP MANAGEMENT)

THEMATIC PAPER ADVISORY COMMITTEE: ASSOC. PROF. ROY
KOUWENBERG, Ph.D., CFA, ASST. PROF. WINAI WONGSURAWAT, Ph.D.,
RONALD SURACHAI THESENVITZ, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to find the impact of cyberbullying in the workplace. This topic is very important for employees, business leaders, and companies because cyberbullying can lead to many negative consequences that can affect them. The research conducted interviews with eight participants, who have experienced cyberbullying in the workplace and live in Bangkok. The age of participants are around 26-32 years old. Qualitative method was used in this research, with 12 open-ended questions that were retrieved from previous research that did similar topic in different country.

The findings of this research show that there are many impacts that happened to victim during and after cyberbullying, such as distress, depression, loss of productivity, difficulty to work, job reputation ruin, etc. Even though the impact directly affected the victims, the side effect was on the company too. Half of participants decided to leave their jobs after being cyberbullied by the co-workers, which lead to a higher turnover rate for the company. Therefore, this study will be beneficial for readers who are employees, leaders, and owners of companies to understand more about cyberbullying in the workplace.

KEY WORDS: Cyberbullying/ Workplace/ Workplace in Thailand/ Types of bullying

34 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Statement

In this digital era, people are connected to the internet mostly all the time. They have been using the smartphone, computer, and tablets since internet has been developed and introduced to our world. Some people use internet network to communicate with one another and some people use it for their work, study, and in their daily routine. However, there are groups of people use the internet to bully other people, which is called Cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is considered to be another type of cyber threat, where only a few people know the serious effect of it. Cyberbullying often found in social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and Youtube. It also can happen in SMS (Short Message Service) or in instant message such as E-mail. Sending a harmful comment, negative posting or even sharing mean content about someone else are all included in cyberbullying. Nowadays, people tend to post or comment something very easy and without thinking about the consequences that will cause to someone's life. This kind of bullying can affect the victim by causing embarrassment, humiliation and even increase suicidal tendencies. Some cyberbullying can go overboard and crossing the line into unlawful or criminal behavior (What is cyberbullying, 2019).

Moreover, cyberbullying is not only taking place among children and teenagers, but also among adults in the workplace. Cyberbullies use modern devices technology to harass colleagues by sending direct messages to victims (Salazar, 2017) and also posting some humiliating content about other people. According to previous research by Dark (2019), she mentioned that 43 percent of 18 victims have been cyberbullied on social media in their workplace and another 43 percent experienced bullying through email (Dark, 2019). This kind of behavior online can cause a victim's lower productivity, poorer job performance and more job turnover (Schenk, 2012). It

also can lead to an impact on business operations. Another research by Keskin (2016) found that employees perform at lower productivity caused by cyberbullying in the workplace and this would affect a company negatively if they do not try to prevent it (Keskin, 2016).

1.2 Research Questions

What is the impact of cyberbullying in the workplace?

1.3 Research Objectives

To reveal the impact of cyberbullying in workplace, which can be used to raise the awareness among Thai people. Furthermore, to make a world better place to stay, the objective is to find a way to prevent this type of bullying.

1.4 Research Scope

The data collection will be using the qualitative research by interviewing 8 people who has been experiencing cyberbullying in workplace. This research will be focusing on interviewees who are young adult with the age of 26-32 years old and living in Bangkok.

1.5 Expected Benefits

There are many studies about the traditional bully in the workplace, but there are only a few researches on cyberbullying in the workplace. This research paper will show how cyberbullying has impacts on the victims and also on the business operations. The benefit of this research will help people become more vigilant about cyberbullying and will acknowledge their self-consciousness about posting, commenting, and sharing post online.

CHAPER II

LITERTURE REVIEW

2.1 The Similarities and Differences between Traditional Bullying and Cyberbullying

In workplace, there can be two types of bullying, which are traditional bullying and cyberbullying. These two types of bullying have several similarities and differences, also in their impact on the victim and other outcomes.

Bullying in general is harmful, threatening and mean behavior acted on a weaker person, where this “behavior is repeated, or has a potential to be repeated” (What is bullying, n.d.). Person who bully other people, they know what they are doing and they also have the intention to hurt another people’s feeling, as well as, or they think it is a joke or fun for them. The research from University of British Columbia (Cyberbullying and bullying are not the same: UBC research, 2012), found from their survey that 25 to 30 percent of young people is experiencing or involved with cyberbullying, and only 12 percent experienced tradition bullying. On top of it, 95 percent thought that what they did online was meant to be a joke, whereas, 5 percent intentionally want to make another person feel pain (Cyberbullying and bullying are not the same: UBC research, 2012).

The obvious differences between traditional bullying and cyberbullying is how it is carried out. Traditional bullying usually involves a bully, a victim or bystanders, and takes place where they have to face each other, making physical contact and power imbalance key aspects, which is not necessary for cyberbullying. People who cyberbully can be anonymous. They can harm or embarrass victim without anyone knowing who they are by using their own smart phone through social media and be able to reach to a bigger audience (Lazuras, Barkoukis, & Tsorbatzoudis, 2017).

Dooley, Pyzalski, and Cross (2009) conduct a study about cyberbullying versus face to face bullying. The definition of each type of bullying is the first thing that

the study was mentioned. Traditional bullying is when the bully committed an act in an aggressive, intentional, repetitive way, with power imbalance (Dooley et al., 2009). Whereas, cyberbullying is deliberate, repeated, and hostile, but not necessarily involving power imbalance as traditional bullying (Dooley et al., 2009). They mention that with the online bullying, the absence of a power imbalance does not matter (Dooley et al., 2009), which lead to the second difference apart from physical versus online.

The power imbalance will be happened when perpetrator senses the weakness of the victim, both physically and mentally, not that victim is less small or has a lower education (Dooley et al., 2009). In Aslsma and Brown's journal (2008) use the example of how sixth grader being bullied by second grader, whereas, the sixth grader should not be scared of a smaller second grader, which is not always true, but because second grader sensed the weakness of his victim. However, the perpetrator does not have to sense the weakness for cyberbullying to occur. With cyberbullying, it is easy for perpetrator to take a picture and post it online, fake a social media profile, or make themselves to be anonymous to comment and bully other people (Dooley et al., 2009).

The last difference that study mentioned is repetition. According to Patchin and Hinduja (2015), when someone was pushed by someone else in the hallway one time and that does not happen again, that is not consider to be bullying, but only if it happened repeatedly. Therefore, the perpetrator has to actually hurt someone physically or verbally continuously to count it as a bullying, whereas, cyberbullying can be just a single act that can lead to the repeated acts. When someone post pictures or videos public online, anyone can view it as many times and as long as they want to, including the victim itself. Dooley, Pyszalski, and Cross (2009) interviewed a 22 years old girl who was video recorded drunk in a party and this video was posted online. She said that "feeling like the act was being repeated as she watched the number of viewers increase (Dooley et al., 2009)." The study also mentioned that a victim's pain from experiencing cyberbullying maybe larger than face to face bullying (Dooley et al., 2009).

2.2 Types of Cyberbullying

There are several different types of bullying on online:

Harassment: With this type of cyberbullying, the perpetrator will be using the text messaging, email to embarrass or harass the victim, as well as posting the rumors on social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (Gordon, 2019).

Impersonation: This is where the perpetrator tries to steal the victim password and use it chat with other people, while other people think that they are chatting with victim itself. There also a case where perpetrator tries to create the fake account similar to the victim and posting mean remarks and pretending to be victim. (Gordon, 2019)

Exclusion: This is when someone exclude the victim, leaving them out deliberately. For example, victim is excluded from the group chat while the victim see that the rest are in the group chat, feeling left out intentionally from others (The 10 types of cyberbullying, 2018).

Cyberstalking: This is one of the serious forms of cyberbullying, which can lead to the threats of physical harm to the victim. Often, this is accompanied by offline stalking (The 10 types of cyberbullying, 2018).

Participation in Video Shaming: This is the act that includes sharing and downloading of the embarrassing video incidents of the victim (Gordon, 2019).

According to Patchin and Hinduja (2006), the research did the internet-based survey with 384 respondents and found that victims experienced similar situation when cyberbullying, which are “being ignored by others (60.4%), disrespected by others (50%), called names by others (29.9%), been threatened by others (21.4%), picked on by others (19.8%), made fun of by others (19.3%), rumors spread by others (18.8%)”.

2.3 Cyberbullying in the workplace

In today's world, there are many studies on cyberbullying among children and teenagers, but there are only a few studies available about cyberbullying in workplace (forssell, 2016). Cyberbullying is not only taking place among children and teenagers but also among adults, which extends to the workplace (Cain & O'Brien, n.d.). Results from a study in Australia (Lawrence, 2015) show that more than 300 respondents think that the organization's anti-bullying program is not effective. They also mentioned that bullying in the workplace had a negative impact on their work productivity and performance (Lawrence, 2015). According to Dark (2019), stated that both of bullying face to face and cyberbullying have the same negative impact on adults in the workplace.

According to research by Lawrence (2015), there are three elements of workplace cyberbullying, similar to traditional bullying. The first element is power. The study mentioned that cyberbullying in workplace is usually based on power environment and involved supervisors, influential colleagues, staff and clients (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011). Those perpetrators may use the work hierarchy to openly cyberbully on their targets, which can cause the target to feel defenseless (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013).

The second element is repetitive. This is similar to the traditional concept which is bullying is continually repeated and its effect on the target multiplies. With one click on online and post something on social media, it can go viral and cause the victim embarrassment. Within the workplace, the perpetrators can use the work email account and spread to a group of colleagues, resulting in humiliation of the employee, professional defamation, employee turnover, and psychological injury (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008).

Intent and intensity would be the last element of workplace cyberbullying. The intensity will depend on the how the target felt if the bully's behavior is perceived as intentional or not (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011). The study found that victim felt less offended if the bullying is uncharacteristic and directed regularly to all members of the group (Einarsen et al., 2011). These three elements are important and it help show how bullying among employees can act out in the workplace.

2.4 Theory: Maslow's hierarchy

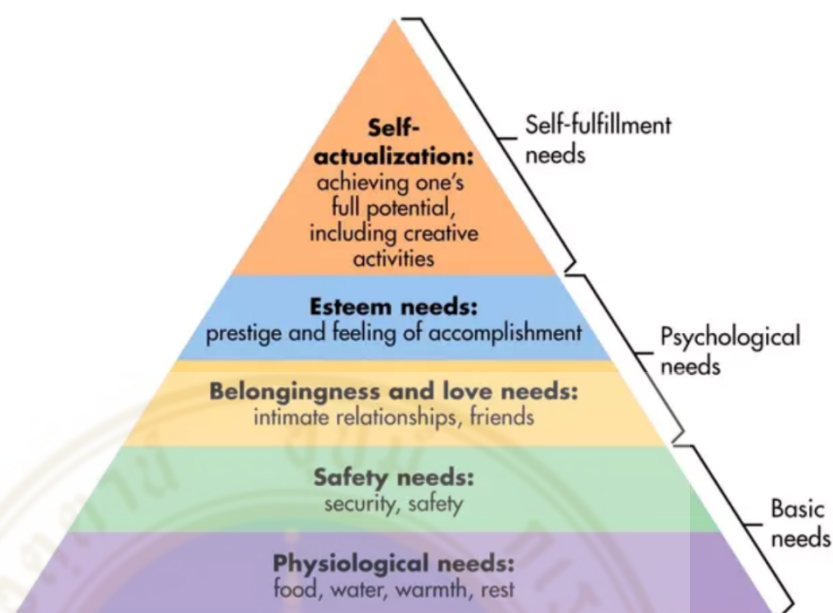


Figure 2.1 Maslow's hierarchy (McLeod, 2018)

This is a motivational theory called Maslow's hierarchy of needs that is often used in organizational research. It is a pyramid model that has five steps describing the needs of an individual. These steps must be achieved accordingly from the bottom to the top of pyramid. This framework includes Basic needs which are Physiological needs and Safety needs, Psychological needs which are Belongingness and Love needs, as well as Esteem needs. The highest level is Self-fulfillment needs, which is Self-actualization (1943, 1954).

1. Physiological needs: This basic need is a requirement for people to survive, which are air, food, drink, place to stay, clothing, and sleep. According to Maslow (1954), this first step is considered the most important one, which make other needs become secondary until these needs are met. The research from Pickens (2017) stated that "aggression and cyberbullying in the workplace threaten biological and physiological needs".

2. Safety need: This is the second step upward to the top and it considered to be the basic as well as physiological needs. It is the need that people want to feel the protection from their workplace, which include security and stability. With these kinds

of protection, it is able to comfort the victim of cyberbullying in workplace as well as reduce the negative impacts and ensure a victim for a safe workplace (Pickens, 2017).

3. Love and belonging needs: Once physiological and safety needs have been fulfilled, it is time for the third step which is love and belonging needs. In this level of need, people want to be involved in an interaction and conversation among their colleagues. With the feeling of belonging in a group, it will motivate them to come to work and provide higher productivity for the company. Among employees, they tend to build relationships through the social media when they are outside of the workplace (Pickens, 2017). According to Astrauskaite, Kern and Notelaers (2014), research mentioned that “people require social interaction, love, affection, and friendship”. However, the employee’s frustration is often happened when the bullying occurred (Astrauskaite et al., 2014).

4. Self-esteem needs: In this stage of level, human needs an appreciation and respect from their colleagues and bosses. The article the 5 levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Cherry, 2019) has mentioned that when those bottom three levels have been fulfilled, this step become more important in motivating employee’s behavior (2019). To achieve this level, people have to accomplish something and be recognized in the workplace. Therefore, this can be related to cyberbullying in the workplace. Employees who like to bully other people may find their weakness’s target among their coworkers (Astrauskaite et al., 2014). On the other hand, employee who have low self-esteem may fall to be an ease victim from cyberbullying in the workplace (Pickens, 2017).

5. Self-actualization needs: In this final level is all about self-achievement, personal growth and peak experiences (McLeod, 2018). According to Astrauskaite, Kern and Notelaers (2014), research stated that competition among employees can make a negative impact in a company. The consequences of the competition can be cyberbullying and this may affect daily business operations (Pickens, 2017).

Pickens (2017) conducted a qualitative research about experiences with cyberbullying in the workplace. The data collection was by interviewing eight individuals, who have the age of 18 years and older, employed at a university in southeastern Nebraska, who were a victim of cyberbullying in the workplace (Pickens,

2017). The researcher collects this data during January 2017 to March 2017, a totally of three months. The question interviews are all open-ended for interviewees to open up and share more of their experiences without limitations.

The design of the research questions followed from Maslow's hierarchy of need framework. The research questions were separated into 4 themes, which are 1. Stress, embarrassment, and anger, 2. Support and well-being, 3. Self-esteem and trust, and 4. Motivation and coping. The third theme was designed to understand the victim's feeling about the work environment after the bullying began, the feeling toward the ones who bully and how it affected their lives (Pickens, 2017). The main conclusions from the answers was they did not want to go to work in that department anymore. Some were saying that they do not belong there in that organization. Cyberbullying affected their lives in the workplace and outside it too. They find it hard to trust anyone among their coworkers. As a result of being cyberbullied by their colleagues, lead to the fourth theme, motivation and coping. The research found that 100% percentage of participants are having a lack of motivation to come to work (Pickens, 2017).

A strength of the Pickens's paper was that the topic was similar to this topic and it helps the reader to be more understanding about how Maslow's hierarchy of need is the suitable model for Cyberbullying in the workplace. A weakness of this paper was that the research was conducted from the same company, which reduced the variety of participants. Moreover, this research was conducted in southeastern Nebraska, which is different from this study that is focused on Bangkok, which also involves a different culture.

CHAPER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data collection method

This study selected qualitative research method to find out the impact on people who has experiencing cyberbullying in their workplace. Qualitative method will allow participants to express their deep feeling, experiences and opinion on the issue, which will provide clearer detail for understanding. With cyberbullying topic, qualitative is the most suitable method because the interviewer can ask the insight of how they feel and may lead to the answer where how it effects on their job performance. There are several steps when conducting a qualitative research should be followed. Firstly, the question that interviewer ask should be broad and open-ended question (Farber, 2006). The second step is collecting an answer in the form of words or images and analyzing the data by a group or theme (Farber, 2006). Lastly, describe the answer information by drawing on personal reflections and compare with the past research (Farber, 2006).

Here are some pros of qualitative study. The first pro is qualitative study provides more useful content for practical application (Editor in Chief, 2019). “The qualitative research process encourages social scientists to understands why people make the choices they do each day (Editor in Chief, 2019)”, which make it suitable for Cyberbullying topic research. It will provide deeper story for reader to understand how they actually feel about this type of bullying from the participants’ side of view. It is also a way to find the solution to solve the actual problems in life. Next, qualitative requires a smaller sample size than other types of methods. With a small size of sample, it can make most of qualitative research completed rapidly (Editor in Chief, 2019). This structure makes it possible for this research to find out the data quickly and it comes with a quality of the information that has been obtained from participants (Editor in Chief, 2019). The last advantage is that qualitative study turns individual experiences into usable data (Editor in Chief, 2019). With this method, it lets the unique personal

experiences turn into the potential data in variety ways (Editor in Chief, 2019). Once we know how people feel the way they feel, it becomes possible to find the answer of this paper question.

3.2 Population and Sample

This study consists of 8 participants who are young adult both male and female with the age of 26-32 years old. The location of this research is limited only in Bangkok. The participants must be experienced as victim of cyberbullying in workplace. The participants are all from different companies and field industries to see the overall point of view in every organization.

3.3 Research Questions

This research paper is used semi-structured interview format to allow flexibility in the data collection process. Open-ended questions are used to conduct the interview, which is suitable to study about cyberbullying. The participants can answer with as much detailed information as they want to and researcher can ask sub questions for the following-up (Turner, 2010).

The research question in this research is used the same questions from the previous study, which have a similar topic “The perceived effects of cyberbullying in adulthood in workplace” (Dark, 2019). The previous study was conducted by recruiting the volunteer participants, who has experienced cyberbullying in workplace with the age between 21 and 65, through the Facebook groups and a survey site titled SurveyMonkey. There are 12 questions that specifically for victim who has experience in cyberbullying in workplace (attach in Appendix A).

3.4 Data analysis

In this study, content, narrative, and discourse analysis were used to analyze the data information collected from 8 respondents. In content analysis, data information

was summarized and classified by categorized verbal and behavioral data into the main themes (Dudovskiy, n.d.). Those main themes came from often repeated word during the interview. Next is narrative analysis. In this method, the researcher is reformulated the stories given by participants into each of respondent's experience context (Dudovskiy, n.d.). Last analysis is discourse analysis, where the researcher typed the conversation or sentence said by participant into the written text (Dudovskiy, n.d.).

3.5 Informed Consent and Confidentiality

The research paper is conducted a study about cyberbullying in workplace, which is a sensitive topic for victim. Therefore, all of the participants who are involving with this research interview will kept anonymous to avoid conflict that could be occur in the future. Moreover, all of participants were signed the consent form (attach in Appendix B), agreed that the researcher can interview and use their information to write and analyze in this study.

CHAPER IV

RESEARCH FINDING

The chapter summarizes the findings from interviewing 8 participants who have experience as a victim of cyberbullying in the workplace. These participants are young adults who has the age around 26-32 years old. Each of them works in a different company and field industries for the results to give an overall point of view in every organization. Their roles in the company mostly are employee worker level.

Before beginning the interviews, participants have to answer the following questions to identify the match with this research topic.

1. Are you between the age of 26 and 32?
2. Do you ever have experience as a victim of cyberbullying in an organization?
3. Do you live in Bangkok, Thailand?

After the confirmation of matching with the topic, participants have to read and fill in the consent form (attached in Appendix B) to agree that researcher can use their information in this paper and their name and other information will be kept anonymous. The duration of interview is around 10-15 minus per participant. During the interview the researcher records conversation by recording machine and uses the record to analyze in later sections.

Table 4.1 Participants information

| Initial | Sex | Occupation | Age |
|---------|--------|---------------|-----|
| P1 | Male | Office worker | 32 |
| P2 | Female | Office worker | 30 |
| P3 | Male | Supervisor | 29 |
| P4 | Female | Sales | 28 |
| P5 | Male | Sales | 29 |
| P6 | Male | Office worker | 27 |
| P7 | Male | Manager | 26 |
| P8 | Female | Office worker | 30 |

4.1 Data analysis

The interview questions are in semi-structured format, which is allowing interviewee to express their deep feelings and experiences into the conversation. The questions are open-ended, where interviewer can ask the follow-up question according to the respondents' answer. The guiding questions for the interview consist of 12 questions (attached in Appendix A).

The data were analyzed manually, consisting of several steps to complete. The first step was to review the record of each interview. In this step, researcher had to review the record and make notes repeatedly in order not to miss out any relevant information provided by each participant. The second step was to group the common feelings and terms. In this step, researcher had to categorized participants' terms and feelings into themes, where those themes were put into an Excel spreadsheet for an easier understanding. In the last step, researcher had to prepare the participants' description to provide as example in the themes' explanation.

Based on data grouping, found that there are nine different themes that participants mention commonly, which are shown in the following table:

Table 4.2 Themes mentioned by participants

| Participants/ Themes | Colleague | Discreditable | Upset/ Depressed | Loss of Productivity/ Difficulty Working | Social Media | Line Group | Resigned | Email | Manager |
|-------------------------|------------|---------------|------------------|---|--------------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|
| P1 | X | X | | | X | | | | |
| P2 | X | X | X | X | | X | | | |
| P3 | X | | X | X | X | X | | | |
| P4 | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X |
| P5 | X | X | | X | | X | | | |
| P6 | X | | X | | X | | X | | |
| P7 | X | | X | X | X | | X | | |
| P8 | | | X | X | | | X | X | X |
| Total | 7 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| % | 88% | 50% | 75% | 75% | 63% | 38% | 50% | 25% | 25% |

However, the themes will be reduced to seven themes due to the percentage below 30 percent, which are Email (25%) and Manager (25%).

Table 4.3 Identified Themes by Highest Percentage

| Participants/ Themes | Colleague | Upset/ Depressed | Loss of Productivity/ Difficulty Working | Social Media | Discreditable | Resigned | Line Group |
|-------------------------|------------|------------------|---|--------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| P1 | X | | | X | X | | |
| P2 | X | X | X | | X | | X |
| P3 | X | X | X | X | | | X |
| P4 | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| P5 | X | | X | | X | | X |
| P6 | X | X | | X | | X | |
| P7 | X | X | X | X | | X | |
| P8 | | X | X | | | X | |
| Total | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| % | 88% | 75% | 75% | 63% | 50% | 50% | 38% |

4.1.1 Colleagues (Theme 1)

The first theme is colleague, where it got the highest percentage of participants with 88%. 7 out of 8 participants mentioned colleague to be the answer of question number 3, where it asked who, at work, did the cyberbullying come from? Question 3 was designed to gain the information about who is/are the typical perpetrator/s during cyberbullying at their workplace. For example, P2 said, “She is a senior colleague with a same position”. And P7 was saying the same thing. Moreover,

the sub-question was made to follow up the answer, what is your relationship with the perpetrator, were you close or working together all the time? The answer from P1 was different from others, he said, "I did not know the perpetrator personally, never work with her before, but I know that she is working in the same company but in different department", while other participants answered similarly that they are working together in the same department with perpetrator but they are not close.

4.1.2 Upset/Depressed (Theme 2)

Depressed and upset are the feeling that 6 out of 8 participants answer to question number 6, 7, and 9. This can be considered another major theme that participants express their feeling about being cyberbullied by others. 75% of participants felt toward the depression the most. For example, P8 answered to question number 6, that "After I received that email written in the personal attack way from my manager, I felt depressed and lost" and P8 also mentions that "she carried the feeling of depression back home and feeling down all the time, but she had to hide this feeling from her mother" answered to question number 7. Moreover, P4 said "After I know what my colleague did to me, I felt both upset and depressed at the same time". Another participant, P3, said that "I was very angry and upset at first after I found out about the post. Then I felt depressed for the first few days".

4.1.3 Loss of productivity/ Difficulty Working (Theme 3)

Loss of productivity and difficulty working theme got the same percentage as upset and depressed theme, which is 75%. 6 out of 8 participants found it very difficult to work in the unhealthy environment workplace and it made them to have low motivation to come to work and loss productivity. The result was found when participant answer to question number 6, how does the cyberbullying affect you at work? For example, P5 said, "cyberbullying did not make me feel depressed or upset but it creates a difficult environment for me to work with that person (perpetrator)". And P3 answered to the same question, "I did not want to go to work anymore, I felt lost and cannot focus on the work". Moreover, P8 said, "I lost my confident to work and did not feel like working at all". P2 also described, "it's quite difficult for me to do my work, because

sometimes, I have to work and talk with her about the project, and it make me don't want to do that project because I have to talk to her”.

4.1.4 Social Media (Theme 4)

Social media is also another major theme because it was mentioned by more than 50% of participants, 63%. The social media was mentioned by participant as answer to the question number 4, in what ways were you cyberbullied? For example, P6 said, “one of my colleagues commented on my Facebook post saying bad things in a joking way and also tagging other colleagues to involve with her joke. I felt attacked by several colleagues and I did not feel enjoy at all”. Moreover, P3 mentioned, “I was photo taken by one of the colleagues and it got posted on Facebook. It makes me felt embarrassed”. P1 also mentioned the similar incident, “I was photo taken when I was drunk at the company party by a colleague who I never worked with. She posted the picture of me on Facebook and Instagram”.

4.1.5 Discreditable (Theme 5)

Being discredited in workplace, or loss of reputation to the boss or client, is another common theme that 50% of participants mentioned. It was developed when they were asked in question number 6, how cyberbullying affect them at work and question number 4, what ways were you cyberbullied. For example, P4 answered in detail, “One of my colleagues sent an email to my manager behind my back saying that I am not a good worker, I should not be working with this customer. And she kept doing something like this to me multiple times. She was trying to dis my creditability to my boss, so that she could get my customer instant”. And P5 said, “when I sold the product out, my colleague will say that I did it not because I'm good at work but I just only I'm a good learner that's all. They tried to make me loss my creditability and my confidence”.

4.1.6 Resigned (Theme 6)

This theme came up in several interviews, where 50% of participants mentioned that they left the company already. When participants were asked in question number 11, did you take any steps to end the cyberbullying? Half of participants acted by handing in their resignation and moving to another workplace. For example, P4 said,

“cyberbullying is one of the reasons that I designed to quit from my job”. And P7 said, “I resigned from that company after several times of cyberbullying”.

4.1.7 Line Group (Theme 7)

Line group was identified by 3 out of 8 participants which converted to 38% of the participant population. When participants were asked in what ways were you cyberbullied. For example, P5 described, “I found that my colleagues created a group chat that excluded me for gossiping purpose about my work”. And P3 said, “She did not only post my picture on Facebook, but also sent my picture all over the work line group too.”

4.2 Summary of Participants' Experiences

Analyzing data from eight participants collected with open-ended interviews shows that overall participants' emotional and physical well-being got affected negatively by cyberbullying in the workplace. Most participants felt angry, upset and depressed during cyberbullying, but none of them take any action right away when it happened. They described similarly that they did not want to do anything to make it a big deal and they think it will stop by itself. Some of them even mentioned that if the cyberbullying ever stops, it has to stop by perpetrator realizing that it is wrong to do such thing to someone else. However, a few of them acted after a few times of cyberbullying by going forward and confronting the perpetrator to make him or her stop. Either ways, being angry, upset and depressed make victims lose their motivation to come to work and also find it hard to work with the perpetrator. This directly affects their job or career as half of participants decided to eventually leave the company where the cyberbullying happened. Moreover, some victims also felt that they lost their confidence in the workplace as some of them got cyberbullied by perpetrators sending an email to discredit the victim to their boss, while their boss did not want to get involved with employees' problem.

In an addition, none of 8 participants mentioned their manager, supervisor or boss in the last two questions, did you take any steps to end the cyberbullying and if so, what were they? and If the cyberbullying did end, what actions were taken and by

whom? Most of them chose to stay quietly, which can be assumed that the company did not know about cyberbullying that is happening under their roof, where they really can give a hand to support those victims.

There are many types of cyberbullying in the workplace that participants mentioned, such as by E-mail, Social media (Facebook), and Line Chat. When participant mentioned e-mail, it is about how perpetrator sent email to the boss about the victim in negative ways. For example, P4 said “One of my colleagues sent an email to my manager behind my back saying that I am not a good worker, I should not be working with this customer. And she kept doing something like this to me multiple times”.

Moreover, Facebook also is another way of workplace cyberbullying, where the co-worker comments or posts negative things about the victim without consent and have a (perceived) intention to humiliate them. As P7 was explained in detail about how he got cyberbullying through Facebook, “one of my colleagues always commented sarcastically about me on my Facebook page, and it was very surprised because that person when at work she always says something nice to me”.

Line chat is also one of the types where perpetrators can cyberbully the victim. Line is one of the applications on mobile device, which most of Thai people use nowadays to have a conversation or chat to each other. Three participants mentioned that the perpetrators created a group chat in line application that included everyone in their department, except victim. Perpetrators will have a negative conversation about how victim perform on their job or gossip about the victim repeatedly. For example, P5 described, “I found that my colleagues created a group chat that excluded me for gossiping purpose about my work”. This kind of cyberbullying made the victim feel left out and depressed at the same time.

All of information that researcher gathered from the interviews will help readers to see more clearly about how common and bad cyberbullying in the workplace in Thailand is, and that information can help to find a way to solve the problem in the next chapter.

4.3 Results and Conceptual Framework

The literature review of this research has introduced Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to help explain the impact of cyberbullying. After interviewing 8 victims of cyberbullying from different workplaces, we now try to identify the relation of cyberbullying in workplace and the framework. In order for employee to achieve highest motivation in the workplace, the step of Maslow's hierarchy of needs must be completed step by step.

The first level of Maslow's hierarchy is physiological needs, which include food, water, warmth and rest. The result shows nothing that can interfere with this level. All of participants got all the basic needs provided (indirectly) by their job company.

However, in the second step of Maslow's hierarchy, not all participants are fulfilled in this level, safety needs. Safety needs includes the secure environment that company should provide and make them feel safe while they are at the company. The result found that some of participants did not feel safe when they were working at the company. To clarify did not feel safe, in this case it means that participants feel that they have to be careful of everything they do or did, afraid that their colleague or perpetrator will bully them again like they already did, for example, by posting an inappropriate picture online. Therefore, some of the participants did not pass this level and according to the theory, they did not have a motivation to go to work, which it shows in the result that most of participants have low enthusiasm to go to work when they are bullied.

Even though the rest of participants pass the second level, they still did not pass the third level, which is belongingness and love needs. This level includes intimate relationships and friends. The result shows that all 8 participants did not have a good relationship with other co-workers or managers, because they turned out to be perpetrators. This in turn resulted in them not having the motivation to go to work and see those perpetrators every working day.

Eventually, half of the participants cannot stand to be in a bad working environment and they chose to resign from the company. This shows that cyberbullying in the workplace has a huge impact on the victim or employee. Further, it also affects the company too, which has to search for and train a new qualified employee if a good employee with relevant working experience quits due to cyberbullying.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to find the impact of cyberbullying in the workplace by interviewing eight victims, who have experienced with cyberbullying in workplace. The interview was conducted by asking 12 questions about cyberbullying to learn more about victim's perspectives based on their experience. The question used are the same as in a previous study, which has a similar topic "The perceived effects of cyberbullying in adulthood in workplace" (Dark, 2019).

The result was separated into 7 main themes, which are colleagues 88%, upset/depressed 75%, loss of productivity/ difficulty working 75%, social media 63%, discreditable 50%, resigned 50%, and line group 38%. All 7 themes were mentioned by more than 30% of total participants. After analysis and comparison to previous research, the results are similar even though research was conducted in different places and in a different country.

According to the findings, cyberbullying impacted all eight participants in the workplace. The research found several impacts on employees of cyberbullying. The first impact is the victim from cyberbullying in workplace will feel upset and depressed from the incident that occurs repeatedly and continually. Some of participants giving the statement that they don't know what to do and too afraid to confront the perpetrator, which make them really upset to themselves. Moreover, P8 mentioned that, "she carried the feeling of depression back home and feeling down all the time, but she had to conceal this feeling from her mother". In an addition, P8 carried those feeling for all 2 years while working there, still have a huge impact on her even though she is no longer in that cyberbullying situation, which lead to another impact, loss of confidence.

Either loss confidence in themselves or have no confident about their job performance, both of it has a huge impact to the victim of cyberbullying in workplace.

This feeling may slowly develop during cyberbullying and after the incident. P8 mentioned that, “I lost my confidence to work and did not feel like working at all”, which was during the cyberbullying. She also said, “when I change my job to another company, I still have no confidence to show my ability to work, I totally lost my confidence but my new boss has helped me to increase it”. Based on the interview with P8, it shows that the affect from cyberbullying may continually impact those victims even though they are no longer in that circumstance anymore.

Furthermore, loss of productivity to work, decreased ability to work and difficulty to work are another impact that participants have faced. During the cyberbullying in the workplace, employee who is the victim will have a low motivation to go to work and did not feel like working. This will lead to lower job performance because the victims cannot give all 100% to the work when they have something else bothering them in their mind. Some participants mentioned that it is hard to work with the one who cyberbullied you and its always affecting their quality of work. For example, P2 said, “it’s quite difficult for me to do my work, because sometimes, I have to work and talk with her about the project, and it make me don’t want to do that project because I have to talk to her”.

Last but not least, the impact of cyberbullying may ruin the professional reputation of the victim. Even though that bad reputation is created by the perpetrator, not the victim himself, but it still has an effect for those who did not know about the situation and may think that it is real. The job reputation is very important when it comes to work with their boss and client. Every employee will have to work hard and take times to gain their creditability and good reputation, but if it is ruined, it may cost them the work project or loss of client. The example from P4, she said, “One of my colleagues sent an email to my manager behind my back saying that I am not a good worker, I should not be working with this customer. And she kept doing something like this to me multiple times. She was trying to dis my creditability to my boss, so that she could get my customer instead”.

Nevertheless, the research has found that not only cyberbullying in the workplace has a huge impact on the victim but also on the company too. The overall negative impact is one of the reasons that made employee who suffered from cyberbullying decided to leave the company. They felt the pressure that they have to

face with cyberbullying and perpetrator every day in the company. This may create the high turnover rate to the company and lead to the bad company image too. According to the article named “The Negative Impacts of High Turnover Rate”, a high turnover rate can mean that employees are suffering from low employee moral (Markovich, 2019), and this is the case if they are struggling with cyberbullying. A high turnover rate can result in additional costs for the company to recruit and train new employees too (Gordon, 2019).

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Leaders

According to the findings of this study, it shows that business leaders should play a more active role in the preventing and managing cyberbullying. The supervisor should give as much support as he/she could to the employee who is suffering from cyberbullying in workplace. None of the participants have ever mention that they have got support from their leader during and after, or even involve their boss in this situation. There are many obvious negative impacts that have been stated above, but those impacts were unknown by their boss.

Regarding to Hofstede’s Cultural Dimension, it helps reader to understand more about cross culture differences, where it clearly shown how Thai leader have a relation with their employees. According to Hofstede Insights (n.d.), it states that Thailand got 64 scores on power distance index, which consider as a high PDI. By this it means that Thai working society accepts inequality, where each senior position has its authority and employees have to show the respect (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). There is a gap between leaders and employees, which employees will hangout among themselves and leader will not get involve with their employees’ life. This may be one of the reasons why all eight participants did not mention about support from their boss.

The suggestion for leaders is try to often talk with employees, not only about work but also about their personal life, both bad and good situations. They need to find a way for employee to trust them and be open to talk about what they are suffering from. Moreover, leaders can observe the working environment, see if any of their employee

is acting strange and should try to identify what is going right and wrong in the relations between employees.

5.2.2 Company

Some companies might already have a bullying policy to protect the employees, but that policy is typically not totally covering all types of bullying, such as cyberbullying. Therefore, the first recommendation for companies is to provide a decent policy about cyberbullying in workplace. Moreover, the company should make sure that everyone in the company practices the same rules and regulations, and enforce them to follow the policy very seriously.

At the same time, the company should provide counseling services from an expert who knows and understands how they feel about cyberbullying/bullying for both perpetrators and victims. By counseling with a professional, perpetrators may know the reason why they did what they did, and know that it is wrong to cyberbully someone else, even though they think it is just a joke. On the other hand, victims will have someone to talk to and also can express their feeling about cyberbullying to the one who understands them, because one of participants in this study mentioned she had to hide the feeling to her family, which made her even more depressed.

By providing all the suggestions, it may stop the cyberbullying to occur in workplace. The turnover rate may decrease, which may present the good reputation to the company, as well as, the company might save more cost on recruiting and training new employees. Lastly, the longer an employee stays with the company, the more loyalty company will get from their employees.

5.3 Limitations and Recommendation for Future Research

There are several limitations of this research. The first limitation is the location of conducting this study. As mentioned in the first chapter, this study gathered information only from the victim who live in Bangkok, where it could be all over Thailand. The second limitation is the period of time for doing this study, which was around 12 weeks. It might be better if this research has longer time to conduct. Due to the time limitation, this research is able to interview only 8 victims, which is considered

be small compared to the population of Thai people in Bangkok and the result cannot represent every person who have experience with cyberbullying in Bangkok. Moreover, cyberbullying in the workplace is quit a sensitive topic to those who is facing with this issue in the workplace. It is hard to find the participants, who are willing to share the information that completely affected them physically and emotionally.

Therefore, if there is a chance for developing this research topic further, the researcher should have more time conducting research and writing the paper. At the same time, the study should have more participants that are from all over Thailand, to make sure that the result is effective enough to find the best solution for those victims.

Base on the findings from this paper, most of the participants are no longer facing cyberbullying in the workplace anymore, but some of them still suffer the effect from that experience. For example, P8 mentioned, “Even though I resigned from that company year ago, but I am still afraid that someone in my current company is going to do the same thing to me. So, I try not to talk to too many co-workers to avoid cyberbullying again”. Therefore, the suggestion for future research would be the study about how victims can cope with the effect from cyberbullying even though they are no longer experiencing it anymore, but they are still facing the effects from it.

Another suggested research topic would focus on the company, how can they enforce the anti-bullying policies in workplace policy for employees to respect and follow the rules. This way it will focus on the solution and can provide information how to stop and prevent cyberbullying and other kinds of bullying in workplace to happen in our society.

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Appendix A: Workplace Cyberbullying Victim Questionnaire (Dark, 2019)

1. What is your definition of cyberbullying?
2. When did you first become aware that you were a victim of cyberbullying at work? How often?
3. Who, at work, did the cyberbullying come from? For example, was it management, a colleague, or a customer/client?
4. In what ways were you cyberbullied?
5. Why do you think you were a target?
6. How does the cyberbullying affect you at work?
7. How does the cyberbullying affect you at home?
8. How do you cope with the cyberbullying?
9. Describe an instance of cyberbullying and how you felt afterward.
10. Do these incidents make you view co-workers differently and if so, how?
11. Did you take any steps to end the cyberbullying and if so, what were they?
12. If the cyberbullying did end, what actions were taken and by whom?

Appendix B: Letter of Informed Consent

| |
|-----------------------------------|
| Letter of Informed Consent |
|-----------------------------------|

Date...../...../.....

Title of project:

Name of researcher:

Name of supervisor:

Contact information of the researcher:

Dear Sir or Madam,

You are invited to participate in the above research project, initiated at the College of Management, Mahidol University.

The objectives of this research are:

To achieve these stated objectives, I would like to request your help in (check):

- Filling out a survey form
- Participating in an interview
- Other (specify)

The risks involved in participating in this research include:

- Details

- None

In the research report, your identity (name and contact) will be (check):

- Kept confidential
- Revealed

Explanation (if necessary):

Please be aware of your rights to:

- Decline to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering
- End your participating at any time

Thank you very much!

I have carefully read and fully understand the information above.

Signature (Research participant)

(.....)

Date...../...../.....

