The Effects of COVID-19 Risk, Gender, and Self-Compassion on the Workplace Cyberbullying and Job Satisfaction of University Faculty

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine workplace cyberbullying (WPCB) in higher education. Specifically, we explore the relationship between WPCB and several important factors such as self-compassion, job satisfaction, and gender. A regression model using a sample of 179 faculty members showed that self-compassion was positively related to job satisfaction, and WPCB was negatively related to job satisfaction. The path model results showed that gender and COVID-19 risk of severe illness were related to WPCB. Additionally, we provide a new conceptual model examining gender and COVID-19 risk of severe illness as antecedents of WPCB, and the use of self-compassion as a mediator between WPCB and job satisfaction. Finally, we provide further understanding of WPCB due to risk of severe illness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theoretical Background

- **Social role theory (Eagly, 1987):** argues that prevalent gender stereotypes develop from the gender division of labor that is common in society.
- **Health stigma and discrimination theory (Stangl et al., 2019):** describes the stigmatization process that occurs across socio-ecological spectrums in regard to health.
- **Affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996):** articulates that organizational events are caused by related reactions and work environment characteristics that predispose the occurrence of certain types of affect producing events.
- **Emotion regulation theory (Gross, 2001):** argues that there are processes that influence the emotions we have, when we have them, how we experience and how we express them.

Method

Participants

- 179 faculty (42.9% male, 57.6% female)
- Average age 48.99 (*SD* = 11.85)
- 2.2% part-time instructor/adjunct, 15.7% full-time instructor, 32.6% assistant professor, 23.6% associate professor, 23% full professor, and 2.8% other.
- 35.2% at high risk of severe illness's from COVID-19.
- 92.2% got at least 1 shot of the COVID-19 in 2021
- 65.2% had virtual office hours, 32.6% mix of F2F and virtual, and 2.2% only F2F with face coverings

Procedures

- Completed 25-min online survey via Qualtrics
- Recruited using convenience sampling

Measures

- Workplace Cyberbullying (Farley et al., 2016) (α = 0.91)
- Self-Compassion (Raes et al., 2011) (α = 0.89)
- Job Satisfaction (Agho et al., 1992) (α = 0.89)
- Control Variables: Gender, faculty rank, years of teaching online, risk of severe illness from COVID-19, mask policy adherence, COVID-19 office hour policies, vaccination status, and vaccination requirement

Analysis & Results

Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis (H1-H3)

Key Findings:

1. Self-compassion positively related to faculty's job satisfaction (H1).

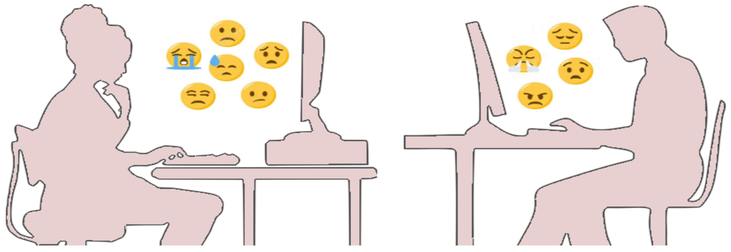
2. WPCB is negatively related to faculty's job satisfaction (H2)

3. WPCB is negatively related to faculty's self-compassion. (H3)

4. Gender can predict likelihood of experiencing WPCB. (H4)

5. Individuals at risk of severe illness from Covid-19 were more likely to experience WPCB. (H5)

6. Faculty's level of self-compassion had a mediating effect on the negative impacts of WPCB. (H6)



Path Analysis – Structural Equation Modeling (H4-H6)

➢ Examining the antecedent and mediating effects on job satisfaction

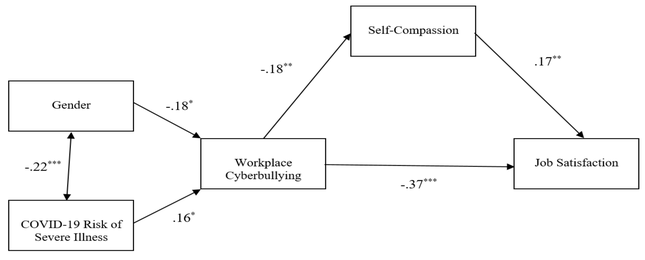


Figure 1. Final Structural Model Testing the Effects on Job Satisfaction of Faculty

Discussion

-Findings support research on WPCB and self-compassion:

- cyberbullying lowers self-compassion of adolescents
- self-compassion allows K-12 teachers to cope with job stressors
- Emotion regulation theory can explain the mediating nature of self-compassion on the negative outcomes of WPCB (self-compassion serves as a buffer to negative emotions)

-Declines in faculty's job-satisfaction from WPCB affirm previous research:

- faculty who experience WPCB note mental health strain and decreases in productivity
- research demonstrates that cyberbullying targeting professors is a frequent occurrence.
- colleges and universities often have vague and/or ineffective policies in place to address cyberbullying

-Prior research and academic theory support study's findings concerning overrepresentation of female and immunocompromised victims of WPCB:

- prior research shows that female faculty and faculty of color are disproportionately targeted in WPCB incidents.
- Social Role Theory and Social Dominance Theory provide a theoretical explanation for why women are more likely to be victims of WPCB.
- health stigmas could provide an explanation for immuno-compromised individuals being especially vulnerable to WPCB during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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