

Digitalization of Workplace Harassment Against White-Collar Women: An Investigation in Professional Online Platforms

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Abstract

Sexual harassment against women is one of the important social problems addressed all over the world. It is a fact that has existed for hundreds of years, although the place and types of it change. Harassment has been transferred to the digital environment, as everything has become digital with the Internet. It is claimed that women are subjected to harassment while working or looking for a job. To investigate the prevalence of workplace harassment and harassment on online platforms used for professional purposes and its psychological effects on victims, an online nonprobability sampling survey on 245 white-collar women aged 20-40 working in the private sector was conducted. The results suggest that the harassment that women are most exposed to is cyber harassment. It has been observed that 73 women out of every hundred have been subjected to harassment on professional digital platforms. In the types of harassment experienced, persistent online dating requests, receiving unwanted romantic messages, sexual jokes and insults are the most common types of harassment. It has been revealed that the psychological and physiological effects of physical abuse are also seen in victims of cyber harassment.

Keywords: Cybersexual harassment against women, workplace harassment, digitalization, social media, survey

Öz

Kadına yönelik cinsel taciz, tüm dünyada ele alınan önemli toplumsal sorunlardan biridir. Gerçekleştiği ortam ve türleri değişse de yüzyıllardır var olan bir gerçektir. İnternette birlikte her şeyin dijitalleştiği gibi taciz de dijital ortama taşınmıştır. Kadınların çalışırken veya iş ararken tacize uğradığı iddia ediliyor. Mesleki amaçlarla kullanılan çevrimiçi platformlarda ve işyerinde yaşanan taciz, tacizin yaygınlığını ve mağdurlar üzerindeki etkilerini araştırmak için, özel sektörde çalışan 20-40 yaş arası beyaz yakalı 245 kadın ile anket çalışması yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre kadınların en çok maruz kaldıkları taciz siber tacizdir. Her yüz kadından 73'ünün profesyonel dijital platformlarda tacize uğradığı gözlemlenmiştir. Yaşanan taciz türlerinde; ısrarlı çevrimiçi flört talepleri, mağdurun reddetmesine karşı devam eden, istenmeyen romantik mesajlar almak, cinsel ve tehdit içerikli şakalar ve hakaretler en yaygın taciz türleridir. Fiziksel istismarın psikolojik ve fizyolojik etkilerinin siber taciz mağdurlarında da görüldüğü ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadına karşı siber taciz, iş yeri tacizi, dijitalleşme, sosyal medya, anket.

Introduction

Harassment against women is one of the most important problems in the world and in Turkey. Many women of different ages and socioeconomic groups are exposed to sexual harassment. The workplace is also among the places where sexual harassment is seen. It is known that sexual harassment experienced by women in the professional working environment affects them psychologically and physically. The world has changed; almost everything has been digitalized day by day. Especially with the pandemic since the beginning of 2020, businesses have also digitalized. Many people have been working remotely since after the pandemic. Many companies work completely remotely or with a hybrid model. This strengthened the business life's connection with technology (Alhabaibeh, 2021; AlMarar et al., 2021; Muniswamy et al., 2021; Zabaniotou, 2021) and there is a need to investigate whether the problem of workplace harassment has moved online.

Cyberbullying and cyber harassment take place on social media platforms and professional platforms, which are useful for finding jobs, expanding networks, and accessing up-to-date information about their professions. Unfortunately, some malicious users use these sites for unprofessional purposes and harass women. White-collar women using these professional platforms are exposed to male users who constantly want to flirt and annoy them intentionally. Women who are exposed to these situations experience various psychological and physiological effects.

Even though there are many studies on sexual harassment against women in the workplace, there is no research that compares both harassment in business life and sexual harassment in professional life via online platforms. Previous research has been done on cyber harassment and cyberbullying (Beh & Panko, 2002; Burnham & Wright, 2012; Gobbler, 2013; Hinduja, 2010; Hutcherson, 2012; Investor, 2011; Kowalski et al., 2012; Morgensten, 2012; Rogers, 2010; Takunaga, 2010; Willard, 2007). However, in these studies, the professional social media platform was not studied. This study

addresses this gap in the literature by investigating white-collar women's experiences of sexual harassment in professional social media platforms. Furthermore, we investigate the psychological effects of cyber harassment against white-collar women by men. Therefore, the main goals of the research are to examine the prevalence and consequences of sexual harassment experienced by white-collar women between the ages of 20 and 40 in business life and on online professional social media platforms.

RQ1: How prevalent is sexual harassment of women in professional life today?

RQ2: What are the different types of online sexual harassment against women in business life in the contemporary digital media landscape?

RQ3: What are the psychological effects of offline harassment and cybersexual harassment that white-collar female employees are exposed to by men on professional social media platforms and other professional tools (email, chat programs, project management tools)?

Sexual Harassment at the Workplace

Sexual jokes, comments, touching, and intimidating are within the scope of sexual harassment (Welsh 1999). Literature investigates those workplaces as one of the places harassment is most common. Unfortunately, workers can be exposed to psychological, physical, or sexual abuse in workplaces (MacIntosh; Wuest; Gray, & Oldous, 2010). Especially women exposed to sexual abuse in workplaces. Studies suggest that regardless of the region, there is sexual harassment against women in business life around the world (Andrijauskaitė 2010; Hindustan Times, 2020; Ouedrago et al., 2017) and people with different titles experience it, as well as in different business lines. This situation is experienced in many sectors, regardless of academia, the health sector, and white or blue-collar employees (Stockdale, 1996). Four female professors participating in this research are among those who answered "yes" (Stockdale 1996). As was discussed in the 1996 book *Sexual Harassment at Workplace*, compiled by Tengri et al. in 1982, inequality in the workplace is one of the most important factors that increase

the sexual harassment of men against women. For example, it is common for a male manager to sexually abuse a female secretary. Men finding women sexy due to friendly intimacy is also one of the factors that cause sexual harassment in business life (Stockdale, 1996). One of the reasons why women are harassed at work is gender stereotypes. The duty assigned to women has always been to be a mother, to take care of the house and to please the man. Men are expected to be stronger, so macho attitudes are considered normal (Doucet & Lightle, 2010).

Sexual harassment against women in business has economic, psychological, and physical consequences. Findings showed that lost time and productivity from sexual harassment cost the government \$188,7 million over two years (Doucet & Lightle, 2010). It has been observed that sexual harassment in the workplace has the following psychological consequences: Dissatisfaction with work and co-workers, symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, dissatisfaction with life, and quitting. According to the findings, the most common is dissatisfaction in business life (Schneider; Suzanne, & Fitzgerald, 1997) According to a study conducted on kitchen workers, sexual harassment experienced by women in the workplace causes a decrease in their motivation at work and an increase in their desire to leave (Akdağ & Öz, 2020).

Given the existing studies documenting the widespread sexual harassment against women in workplaces, we ask the following question to determine the current state of the situation:

RQ1: How prevalent is sexual harassment of women in professional life today?

Digitalization of Business Life, Social Business Platforms and Cyberbullying

In the previous section, we have showcased the prevalence of workplace sexual harassment against women. Today, with the widespread use of remote work and the integration of technology with business life, online meetings, joint project management programs, and even professional social media platforms that enable job search and networking have emerged.

Matt Investor (2011) defined cyberbullying as “online harassment, verbal affronts and persecutions of challenges of people on web” (p. 95). According to him, few people are fully aware to understand cyberbullying. Kowalski, Limber and Agaston (2012) explained that people from previous generations perceive bullying as physical action. However, it has changed in this age. Digital violence can be extremely dangerous as well as physical. Considering the differences between physical and digital violence, the main dissimilarity is that cyberbullies and victims do not have to be face to face. Secondly, the effect of cyberbullying is generally emotional, unlike the physical type. The other important difference is cyberbullying can be anonymous. Moreover, cyberbullying can occur everywhere and every time, even in safe places, in contrast with real-world bullying (Rogers, 2010). Therefore, how new communication channels that emerged with internet technologies affect the extent of harassment is another issue that needs to be examined.

It is one of the necessities of our age not to be connected to the office in business life, to increase the means of communication, and to maintain communication through technology. As in every field, it is possible to discuss rapid digitalization here. Especially at the beginning of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic, which destroyed the entire economic and social order in the world, also destroyed the norms in business life. The concept of remote or hybrid working has become normal worldwide (Roźnowski & Wontorczyk, 2022).

When it comes to online communication in business life, not only people working together at the same workplace but also people who network while looking for a job or trying to create a network for work are among the elements of communication. Business social media platforms have become very popular in recent years and are used by many white-collar workers. Human resources employees are recruited in these channels. Job seekers also frequently use these channels to apply for a job. For this reason, it is a medium frequently used by new graduates (Shahani-Denning; Vidhi P. & Julie Z., 2017)

In addition, they are platforms used by over a hundred million professionals, including directors, managers, and C-level managers who want to create a network in business life (Shields 2012).

According to the results of a previous study, although remote working provides advantages such as flexibility and comfort for employees, they are more exposed to technological stress. In people exposed to cyberbullying in business, it can lead to mental problems such as stress, fatigue from work, and decreased commitment to work. This situation can cause problems for organisations and harm individuals (Celuch, Oksa, Savela, & Oksanen, 2022)

When evaluated in terms of establishment and purpose of use, these areas differ from platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tinder. The audience that uses it is a more niche audience, not a broad audience like the Instagram or Twitter audience. They are social media platforms that mainly appeal to white-collar employees. Whether or not abuses experienced in other social media channels are experienced in these environments will be expressed in the research findings.

According to the results of the research on Digital Violence in Türkiye, carried out by the Social Information and Communication Association together with KONDA Research Company and with the financial support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Türkiye, one out of every five people in Türkiye says they have been subjected to digital violence (Şener, Abınık, 2021). Women are harassed mostly because of their gender and physical appearance. 51% of women receive text, voice or video harassment messages in digital environments, and 46% are persistently followed. "When the frequency of exposure to digital violence of individuals is examined, it is seen that their exposure to digital violence has increased from 18% to 23%. This situation can be interpreted as digital violence behaviours that took place several times in the past are not considered as "violence" (Şener & Abınık, 2021; 4). Only nine per cent of women exposed to online violence have stated that they have taken legal action (Şener & Abınık 2021). According to Article 105 of the Turkish Penal

Code, sexual harassment via the Internet is also among the crimes of sexual harassment. According to the lawyers, this crime will decrease due to the complaints of the people exposed to the crime in question. Unfortunately, some people do not consider this crime as sexual assault and take it lightly (Kulaçoğlu Law Firm).

According to TBID's (Toplumsal Bilgi ve İletişim Derneği) Report on The Guide to Fight Digital Gender-Based Violence, the abuser of digital violence can be a former or current partner, neighbour, work/school friend, a relative or a stranger. Perpetrators are mostly using fake names (Şener; Dirini; Timur; Ahi & Uyanık, 2019). In workplace harassment, the harasser is not an anonymous person. Some women have been sexually harassed by salespeople-customers, hostess-passengers, or directly by their colleagues and managers. In a study of 284 women, 90% of women declared that a man at work harassed them, while half of them stated that they were harassed by their boss or manager (Maling, 2000). From here, it may not be concluded that the people who carry out online harassment are different from those who carry out workplace harassment. We, therefore, ask the following research question:

RQ2: What are the different types of online sexual harassment against women in business life in the contemporary digital media landscape?

In the literature, cybersexual harassment is called different words that have the same meaning, such as online sexual harassment, online sexual aggression, virtual rape, online sexual grooming, online abuse, and online sexism. Although there are different definitions, all of these concepts are about harassment that occurs through Internet communication technologies. Cybersexual harassment has significant negative consequences for individuals, institutions, and governments. Decreased personal cyber security, deterioration of psychology and health, the occurrence of financial loss and loss of reputation in companies where this situation is experienced institutionally; it is inevitable for the state to create negative socio-demographic results (Kuklytè, 2018).

Studies have shown that cyberbullying produces negative outcomes such as depression, anxiety, unhappiness, and low self-esteem (e.g.

Patchin and Hinduja 2006, Baker and Tanrikulu 2010, Hutcherson 2012, Mahbub 2021). According to Gabler, as in traditional violence, there is a relationship between the bully/harasser and the victim in cyberbullying. In the literature, virtual sexual harassment is also considered cyberbullying scope. Australian Human Rights Commission defined sexual harassment as "any unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour, which makes a person feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated" (Australian Human Rights Commission, nd). Sexual harassment is a form of harassment, and it is illegal according to civil rights. Bullying behaviour on the internet frequently includes sexual comments or gestures (Willard, 2007). Cybersexual harassment differs from real-life harassment in that there is no physical attack (Halder & Jaishankar, 2021). Online harassment seems harmless because it does not exist physically. However, it is a huge social problem considering the ethical rules and usability of internet platforms, especially for women (Golbeck, 2018). Our final research question investigates the consequences of offline and online sexual harassment (including experienced on online professional social media platforms):

RQ3: What are the psychological effects of offline harassment and cybersexual harassment that white-collar female employees are exposed to by men on professional social media platforms and other professional tools (email, chat programs, project management tools)?

Methodology

In order to answer the research questions, an online survey was conducted with white-collar working women between the ages of 20 and 40 in February 2022. The survey was created online with the Qualtrics platform and contains 33 questions (see Appendix for the questionnaire).

In the survey questions, questions conceptually relevant to the research questions such as the way of working (such as from the office or remotely), whether they are looking for a job, or position in business as well as demographic questions such as where they live, education status, age were asked. Survey questions were also asked to learn about

their social media use habits. Based on the literature (Kowalski 2012; Investor, 2011), different types of harassment (online and offline) that could be experienced in the workplace have been included in the questionnaire. No questions were asked about the effects of harassment to anyone who said that he or she had not been subjected to any of the forms of harassment. The psychological and physiological effects identified in the existing literature were adapted (Anjum; Muazzam; Manzoor; Visvizi; Pollock, & Nawaz, 2019).

The Cyber Negative Acts Questionnaire (CNAQ) scale in Workplace Bullying and Cyberbullying Scales: An Overview (2019) was adapted to this research. This scale was first applied to workers in Great Britain. Here, the results report harassment offline and online (via SMS and phone). In the scale, the situation related to the job and the personal questions were questioned as a post-victim dimension. The difference of the questionnaire in the research from the CNAQ scale is that it questions whether you have experienced harassment or not with the CNAQ scale 1 (daily)-5(never) for 6 months. The reported study here asked whether the harassment types were experienced or not, but with yes-no questions. While creating the survey questions, the types of harassment in the literature were taken as a basis, and yes/no questions were asked accordingly. Sexual jokes, comments, touching, and intimidating are within the scope of sexual harassment (Welsh, 1999). Rape threats, humiliation of gender, dirty emails, dirty jokes, and sexual humiliation, unwanted messages are types of cybersexual harassment that are included in the questionnaire (Barak, 2005; Citron, 2009).

In the study Measuring the Scale and "Scope of Workplace Bullying: An Alternative Workplace Bullying Scale" prepared in 2019 by Anjum, Ambreen & Muazzam, Amina & Manzoor, Farkhanda & Visvizi, Anna & Pollock, Gary & Nawaz, Raheel, the correlation between workplace harassment and stress was measured. Here, a score between 1-5 was made, and a result was obtained according to the average of the questionnaires. While investigating the effects of sexual harassment in the workplace, the expert psychologist Tarik Solmuş (2005) work on sexual

harassment and emotional bullying, written by was used. The effects of decreased self-confidence, anger, low concentration, crying often, depression and anxiety that may occur after workplace harassment mentioned here were included in the questionnaire questions. Questionnaires were asked to what extent they experienced these effects or not.

The online survey link was spread over social media and online chat programs The sample of the research consists of white-collar workers aged 20-40 who have worked in the past or are looking for a job.

White-collar workers between the ages of 20-40 are preferred because the concept of cybersexual harassment in the research appeals more to young and white-collar workers, as professional social media platforms are channels created for this target audience. In addition, email or digital project programs are platforms in this audience's life. Therefore, it was thought that the clearest answer to the research questions would come from this population.

There were posts on professional social media platforms that young white-collar women complained about "harassment" and misuse of the platform This was also effective in shaping the research and determining the sample. Furthermore, to aim the target population directly, the online survey link was also shared as a comment under professional social media platform posts made by women about cyberharrasment related problems they experienced on professional social media platforms.

Findings

The first part of the research involves the demographic characteristics of the participants and the rates of harassment in the workplace and online platforms. Table 1 summarises the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Age Groups		
	N	Percentage
20-24	38	15,2
25-30	131	52,4
31-34	44	17,96
35-40	32	12,8
Total	245	100
No Answer		5
Education Status		
	N	Percentage
High School	7	3,3
Bachelor	152	71,4
Master	49	23
Doctorate	5	2,3
No Answer	37	
Working on Private Sector		
	N	Percentage
Yes	205	96,2
No	8	3,8
No Answer		37
Working Status (Now)		
	N	Percentage
Yes	190	89,2
No	23	10,8
No Answer		37
Working Model		
	N	Percentage
Office	63	34,4
Field	9	4,9
Remote	62	33,9
Hybrid	49	26,8
No Answer		67
Position at Work		
	N	Percentage
Intern	8	4,4
Assistant Specialist/ Specialist or Equal Positions	92	50,3
Mid level manager	38	20,8
C level or director	8	4,4
Other	37	20,2

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample

No Answer	67	
<hr/>		
Searching Job Status	N	Percentage
<hr/>		
Yes	15	65,2
No	8	34,8
No Answer	227	
<hr/>		

Correlation between demographic variables and experiences of harassment and the frequencies of different types of harassment being experienced under relevant subheadings. The research also focuses on the motivation of professional social media platforms usage and compares the negative effects between harassment in the physical world and online.

305 people answered the questionnaire, but those who were not women and were not within the specified age range were excluded from the data analyses. As a result, the data obtained from 245 participants were included in the final analyses. Except for the women between the ages of 20 and 40, the study sample was excluded from the results. Among the 245 female participants aged 20-40, the 26-30 age group has the majority with 52,4 percent. The majority of the participants of the survey were in the young age bracket. Most participants are living in İstanbul (18,71%). It is not a surprising result. İstanbul is the business capital of Turkey and the most crowded city. The vast majority of employees are living in İstanbul (32,4%) (TÜİK 2021). 71,4% of the participants have a bachelor's degree. With 23%, master's graduates are in second place. 96,2 percent of the participants stated that they had worked in the private sector before, and 89,2% are currently working. Total rates of remote (26,8%) and hybrid work (33,9%) are higher than working in the office every day (34,4). This data will be important to establish the correlation between offline harassment and online harassment.

As a result, parallel to the age range, 50,3% of the participants stated that they work as assistant

specialists or specialists. In addition to those who have worked in the private sector and are currently working, the majority of the participants (65,2%) were not working during the study but in search of a job, which is also an important finding. The harassment rates encountered while looking for a job online are also within the scope of the research. These individuals were included in further data analyses.

Women's Use of Professional Social Media Platforms and Sexual Harassment Potential

While investigating whether sexual harassment in business life continues in the digital environment, examining participants' use of professional social media platforms is necessary. According to the results, 66,3% of the survey participants use professional social media platforms¹. Looking at the frequency of use of the professional social media platform, it has been determined that 36,9 percent log in to the channels at least once a day, and 18,1 percent log in at least 2-3 times a week. Therefore, it can be said that the participants use professional social media platforms frequently. It was concluded that 63% of the respondents used professional social media platforms for networking and job search purposes. It is also used for public relations activities for their companies, social media management of the company they work for and for academic purposes. These purposes have lagged far behind job searching and networking.

Sexual harassment in the workplace

Before questioning cybersexual harassment, it is crucial to understand offline harassment against women before going to a digital environment. The question to respondents was asked whether they experienced sexual innuendo, unwanted physical touches, sexually explicit jokes, persistent flirting etc. at workplaces. 37,1% of the respondents stated they were sexually harassed at work (offline).

¹ In order not to damage the reputation of any brand in the survey questions and research, the brand has not been used explicitly.

As described in the methodology chapter, respondents from different education levels, ages (between 20-40), and different jobs and positions participated in the research. Exposure to workplace harassment was tested according to different variables. The correlation between their experience of sexual harassment and age, education level, working model, and position at work was tested. The relationship between these variables and exposure to harassment was analysed with chi-square analysis. The results suggest that the rate of being exposed to harassment by a male in the working environment increases as the education level increases. The percentage of people who answered positively to the question of whether they have been harassed at work or not changed according to their educational status. Accordingly, 28,57% of high school graduates, 33,09% of undergraduate graduates, 47,8% of master's graduates and 50% of doctoral graduates answered, "I have been harassed at work" (Respondents from different educational backgrounds were not selected in equal numbers. 71,4% of the respondents in the research have a bachelor's degree).

A chi-square analysis was conducted between the age groups of the respondents and their exposure to harassment by a male in their working environment. According to the results of the analysis, 41 of the respondents aged 25-30 were harassed, while a total of 76 respondents were harassed based on the age range (37,05% of the total sample). 45% of the questionnaires between the ages of 31-34 stated that they were harassed at work. On the other hand, 44,4% of people aged 35-40 stated that they were harassed. Results were very close to each other for the 31-34 age range. No significant correlation was found between age group and being harassed offline ($p < 0,05$). However, it was found that the rate of being harassed in all age groups is over 30%.

When the relationship between online harassment and demographic variables is examined, it is seen that high-level managers (C-level or director) are exposed to online harassment at a high rate of 63%. Remote workers are the group that says they experience online harassment the most, with 47%. The fact that people working

online use digital platforms more effectively may be a factor in this. As in offline harassment, no increase was observed as the education level increased. In age groups, the 20-24 age group (42%) and the 25-30 age group (45%) are most exposed to online harassment. It can be said that young workers are more exposed to online harassment.

Table 2 summarizes the prevalence of exposure to different types of online and offline sexual harassment of participants. It is revealed that most of the respondents are exposed to cybersexual harassment (flirty messages, sexual insults, sexual threats, persistent dating requests, etc.) on professional social media platforms or online business platforms (email, joint projects, chat programs, etc.): 73% of the respondents stated that they were exposed to sexual harassment on professional social media platforms, compared to 37,1 percent of the respondents being exposed to sexual harassment in physical workplace environment, as stated above. When the relationship between online harassment and demographic data is examined, it is seen that high-level managers (C-level or director) are exposed to online harassment at a very high rate of 64%. Overall, the results suggest that sexual assault against women is more common in cyberspace than offline harassment.

Table 2. Types of Harassment Experienced by Women Who Have Been Abused

	N (Yes)	%
"Unwanted physical touches"	22	8,80
"Insistent flirting offers"	30	12,00
"Sexually explicit jokes"	29	11,60
"Physical pressure or coercion"	4	1,60
Cyber harassment (flirty messages, sexual insults, sexual threat messages, persistent flirting offers, etc.) on professional social media platforms or online Business platforms (e-mail, joint projects, and chat programs, etc.)?	184	73,60
Unsolicited flirty messages on professional social media platforms?	71	28,40
Sexual harassment and threatening jokes on professional social media platforms?	71	28,40
Despite rejecting the user on professional social media platforms, have you been	71	28,40

exposed to romantic comments and messages from the same user?		
A man's statements that insult your gender on professional social media platforms?	71	28,40
Insults about your sex life or body on professional social media platforms?	71	28,40
Sexual harassment and threatening jokes on business platforms other than professional social media platforms (e-mail programs, joint project management programs, etc.)?	71	28,40
Unsolicited flirty messages on business platforms other than professional social media platforms (email programs, joint project management programs, etc.)?	68	27,20
Despite rejecting the user (email programs, joint project management programs, etc.) on business platforms other than professional social media platforms, have you been exposed to romantic comments and messages from the same user?	68	27,20
Insults about sexual life or body on business platforms other than professional social media platforms (Mail programs, joint project management programs, etc.)	67	26,80
Exposed to a man's statements that insult your gender on business platforms other than professional social media platforms (email programs, joint project management programs, etc.)	67	26,80
Exposure to "Sexual innuendo" by a man in your physical work environment?	31	12,40

answer option, "1" being totally disagree, and "5" being totally agree to. According to Table 3, the decrease in motivation towards their work after exposure to one type of physical harassment has the highest prevalence, with an average of 3,81. It can be said that the respondents' motivation to work decreased after offline sexual abuse.

Table 3. Effects of Offline Harassment

	N	Mean	SD
Depressed mood	63	3,19	1,216
Feeling anxiety	63	3,49	1,294
Displaying aggressive behaviour	63	3,46	1,189
Crying often	63	2,35	1,034
Headaches	63	2,65	1,297
Sleeping problems	63	2,7	1,278
Feeling of tightness in my heart	63	2,67	1,231
Decreased motivation towards my work	63	3,81	1,242
Decreased productivity at work	63	3,63	1,286
Intention to leave/quit the job	63	3,67	1,308

The Effects of Offline and Online Harassment

Research question 3 investigates the psychological effects of exposure to online and offline sexual harassment of white-collar women in professional life. The question items, "How much do the following statements about the process after being exposed to offline harassment reflect your experiences?" and "What are the psychological effects of cybersexual harassment that white-collar female employees are exposed to by men on professional social platforms and other professional tools (email, chat programs, project management tools)?" were asked to measure offline and online sexual harassment, respectively. Both were responded with a 5-point Likert scale

When Table 4 is examined, the variable of feeling anxiety after being exposed to one of the online harassment situations have the highest value with a mean of 3,29. It can be said that respondents feel anxiety after an online harassment.

Table 4. *Effects of Cybersexual Harassment*

	N	Mean	SD
Depressed mood	62	3,05	0,999
Feeling anxiety	62	3,29	1,206
Displaying aggressive behaviour	62	3,23	1,108
Crying often	62	2,39	1,046
Headaches	62	2,79	1,175
Sleeping problems	62	2,74	1,085
Feeling of tightness in my heart	62	2,53	1,02
Decreased motivation towards my work	62	3,23	1,234
Decreased productivity at work	62	2,53	1,02
Intention to leave job	62	3,23	1,234

Discussion and Conclusions

The research investigated the prevalence of online and offline harassment experienced by women in Turkey as well as their psychological consequences. The results show that sexual harassment against women in the workplace still exists. As stated in the literature (Andrijauskaitė, 2019; MacIntosh, 2010; Ouedrago., 2017), this problem that women have faced since they entered working life is still among the difficulties experienced by women in working life. Our results further revealed that exposure to sexual harassment in the workplace was not related to age, position at work or working model, unlike some existing findings in the literature (Ouedraogo, Sisawo, & Huang, 2017) We did not find a statistically significant relationship between age and exposure to sexual harassment. It is seen that women of all age groups are exposed to this situation. This situation shows that women with different demographic characteristics can be exposed to harassment. Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that sexual harassment of women is still prevalent in professional life today.

One of the study's most surprising findings is that as the education level increases, the victimisation of harassment increases. Although it is difficult to understand the reason for this, it can be explained by the fact that the awareness of

exposure to harassment increases as the education level increases. Even if women are exposed to sexual harassment, they may be reluctant to express it, or they may not consider their situation as "harassment" and normalize it based on the value judgments of society. For this reason, this acceptance can be higher at the lower education level, and the higher the education level, the higher the awareness and self-expression comfort.

Unlike the others, the importance of this research is that it also investigates the harassment experienced in other online channels such as professional social platforms and email. The research results show that the type of harassment that women are most exposed to is cyberharassment. The reason for this situation can be attributed to working less in the office environment and spending more time online with the effect of digitalization. In addition, as stated in the literature (Gabler, 2013; Investier, 2011), it is known that harassers attempt to harass more easily when they are not face-to-face. This explains why the rate of online harassment is higher. Unfortunately, the results confirm that "cybersexual harassment is the new form of workplace harassment." The only positive side of this situation is that if the harassment is experienced on professional social media platforms or platforms used for business purposes such as email, it is more likely to prove because the texts and images here are recorded. If an abused woman seeks her rights, she can punish the abuser. Face-to-face harassment is difficult to prove unless there are witnesses. Likewise, most of the time, witnesses may not act bravely for fear of losing their job. As a result, the abused person may have to move on with his life or quit his job before he can prove it. However, if the intent is to punish, this may mean suspending that person's account on social media platforms, ensuring that they are prosecuted under the criminal law of the country where the harassment took place, or disciplinary action at their workplace.

When comparing professional social media platforms with other online platforms (email or project programs, etc.), it is seen that harassment is more common in professional social media platforms. The fact that some users use the

professional social media platform as different social media channels, and their purpose is not fully understood may cause this. In addition, the fact that the professional social media platform did not take sufficient measures to prevent this situation can be shown as a reason.

In the types of harassment experienced, persistent online dating requests, receiving unwanted romantic messages, sexual jokes and insults are the most common types of harassment. It was stated in the literature that the friendly attitudes of women were misunderstood by men (Stockdale, 1996). Online, it can be said that some prejudices and misunderstandings, such as "if she accepts my connection request, she is open to flirting", cause women to be harassed. Online friendships first start with "accepting a friend request." Afterwards, it usually continues with the likes and then the messages. In this context, if real-life friendly behaviours are chatting, helping, and smiling, the reflection of this in the cyber environment can be accepting requests, liking posts, and sending messages for any reason. Results showed that women generally use professional social media platforms for networking and job search purposes. For these two purposes, the user who logs in to these channels must send a connection request to men or accept requests. They will send messages for networking purposes in a place they think is professional. Just as a woman's smile or friendly chat in a business environment does not necessarily mean she wants to flirt in real life, texting and accepting a connection request online may not necessarily mean she wants to flirt online.

Considering the effects of offline harassment on victims, loss of motivation, thoughts of leaving the job, feeling anxiety and exhibiting nervous behaviours are seen as the most common effects experienced by women. In the literature, the decrease in productivity and efficiency were the prominent results of previous studies (Akdağ & Öz, 2020; Fidan & Yeşil, 2020). Here, it can be said that the thought of leaving the job is high. The reason for this may be that women are now more conscious and quit their jobs and seek their rights more. However, it is seen that the inequality between men and women mentioned in the

literature and the normality of men's macho attitudes have decreased over the years, and the place of women in society has increased. This may result in women's reactions to this type of behaviour being harsher.

Online harassment on victims, the most common effects are feeling anxiety, decreased motivation at work and exhibiting aggressive attitudes. The thought of leaving the job due to online harassment is lower than offline harassment. This means that while online harassment is more common, its effects are not as high as in-person harassment. Considering the effects experienced, it is seen that the violence and harassment online, compared to offline harassment, does not mean that it has milder effects on the victims. It has been revealed that the psychological and physiological effects of physical abuse are also seen in victims of cyber harassment.

The reported findings imply that combating cyber harassment is important. Combating cyberbullying, cyber mobbing or cyber harassment and providing training on this issue are among the responsibilities of both the government and the organisations. "Cyberbullying leaves a digital footprint; this can actually provide useful clues to stop the abuse" (UNICEF nd; 1). The institution can be held responsible for cyber harassment as much as physical violence in the workplace. Carefully selecting the employees, providing special training on this issue, and punishing those who commit cyber harassment are the measures to be taken. As Demirtaş et al. (2018) said, one of the most important issues against cyber-mobbing is to try to prevent cyber-mobbing proactively. In this context, individual and social education is important to control and manage our perceptions in the face of virtual applications.

More detailed results could have been obtained by conducting in-depth interviews in addition to the questionnaire. It has proceeded with the survey method since it is more valuable to measure the situation quantitatively in terms of research questions. However, future studies would do well to employ, focus groups or in-depth interviews with victims to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and feelings of women being harassed in workplaces and the effects. In addition,

by interviewing women from different cities, ages, professions, and positions, it is possible to learn in detail how women's professional careers and personal lives are affected and what they do to combat this situation.

In order not to damage the reputation of any brand in the survey questions and research, the brand has not been used explicitly. For the survey participants to understand the problem more clearly, passing the brand could have been more effective for the research. This was a challenge encountered during the research.

Furthermore, in this study, effects such as headaches, anxiety, and loss of motivation experienced by women were not researched comprehensively. It is crucial for scholars of psychology or psychiatry to study the effects of sexual harassment on professional social networking platforms. In research conducted by a specialist, the effects can be examined in the dimension of the disease, and then what important results will be explained based on psychology and psychiatry.

The adequacy of the current law can be investigated by conducting legal research on online sexual harassment. In addition, it can be discussed how regulations will be made. The attitudes and policies of online platforms on this issue can be examined.

Lastly, the way women deal with sexual harassment and how they deal with it or cover it up is a different research topic, which should be tackled by an interdisciplinary approach employing perspectives of communications and psychology.

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