Cyberbullying in the Workplace: Its Relationship with Self-Esteem, Stress and Job-related Affective Well-Being

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Firstly I would like to thank my supervisor Pauline Hyland for all her support and guidance during this study.

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate cyberbullying in the workplace and its relationship with self-esteem, stress and job-related affective well-being. The study used a cross-sectional correlational design. 96 participants were accessed by paper questionnaire (N=37) and by an equivalent online questionnaire (N=59). Participants were required to answer four demographic questions followed by Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) (Cohen & Williamson, 1988), The Job-related Affective Well-Being Scale (JAWS) (Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector & Kelloway, 2000) and the Cyber Negative Acts Questionnaire (Cyber NAQ) (Sprigg, Axtell, Coyne & Farley, 2012). 26% (N=25) of participants were found to be victims of cyberbullying in the workplace. Results revealed that experience of negative cyber acts in the workplace were found to be related to self-esteem, stress and job-related affective well-being. Victims and non-victims of workplace cyberbullying were found to significantly differ on levels of stress and job-related affective well-being. The results of this study highlight the issue of cyberbullying in the workplace and associated effects upon victims.
Introduction

This study investigated cyberbullying in the workplace and its relationship with self-esteem, stress and job-related affective well-being. Cyberbullying is a new social phenomenon that has come to the attention of researchers in the past decade. High profile teen suicide cases internationally and in Ireland that implicate cyberbullying as a causal factor have stimulated social commentary and investigation into the phenomenon within the adolescent context. As a result much of the research on cyberbullying is focused primarily within this context. Research into workplace bullying is more established and substantial, dating back 20 years. This field still contains unresolved issues, for instance a theory and concept definition of workplace bullying is still incomplete. Only one research article investigating cyberbullying in the workplace (Privitera & Campbell, 2009) exists in the literature to date. The aim of this study therefore is to shed some much needed light on the phenomenon of cyberbullying in the workplace in relation to self-esteem, stress and job-related affective well-being. Due to this gap in the literature this study will therefore draw upon the conceptual and theoretical foundations in the research literature on cyberbullying and traditional bullying in the adolescent context, and workplace bullying in the adult context. The focus of this study is on the victim’s experience of cyberbullying behaviour. Relevant findings and conceptual, definitional and methodological problems in each of these arenas will be discussed upon which the definitional and methodological framework for the current study will be outlined and hypotheses stated.
Cyberbullying

Definitions

Due to the fact that research has only begun looking into the phenomenon of cyberbullying in the past decade, a universally accepted definition eludes the field so far. Various definitions for cyberbullying have been offered by researchers (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Smith et al., 2008, p. 376; Tokunaga, 2010, p. 278). Researchers have borrowed from many of the core elements of traditional bullying in the conceptualisation of cyberbullying. The core elements in the concept of traditional bullying include repetition, the existence of a power imbalance between bully and victim and intention. The various definitions of cyberbullying that have been posited to date all tend to contain most if not all of these core elements that comprise the traditional bullying definition. Researchers have found difficulty in reaching a universal consensus with regards to the nature that each element of traditional bullying takes on in the cyber context.

Given that cyberbullying as an area of research has only begun to develop over the past decade, the scientific community has not fully reached a consensus on terms for the multitude of behaviours that can fall under the umbrella term “cyberbullying”. Willard (2007) delineates these various different kinds of cyberbullying behaviours as flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing & trickery, exclusion, cyberstalking & cyberthreats. Variations of terms and definitions appear in the literature used to describe types of cyberbullying behaviours. Grigg (2010) suggested using the term “cyber aggression” rather than cyberbullying. In Grigg’s conception, this term could be used to refer to a range of negative actions such as harassment,
stalking, abuse, hostility, happy slapping, outing and flaming. In the context of cyberbullying in the workplace, the term cyber mobbing has also appeared in the literature, taken from the Scandinavian workplace bullying research tradition.

Langos’ (2012) recent journal article “The challenge to define” addresses the ongoing problem of definition for cyberbullying. Langos (2012) suggests that the ordinary meanings of the words intention, power imbalance, repetition and aggression will need redefining to tailor their meanings to the cyber context in order to serve a purpose in the concept of cyerbulying.

Repetition

Tattum & Lane (1989) argued that ongoing feelings of stress about an incident of traditional bullying may be considered repetitive even though the act occurred only once. This observation is particularly relevant to the nature of cyber postings today. Indeed researchers like (Fauman, 2008, p. 780) have suggested that a single cyber act could be sufficient to be considered bullying given the wide visibility and permanence of cyber actions. Therefore, as (Langos, 2012, p. 286) put it “the nature of cyberspace alters the way in which repetition should be understood in some instances.”

Power imbalance

In consideration of the element of power imbalance in the traditional bullying context (Rigby, 2007, p. 19) noted that “Wherever there is a power imbalance whatever its source, an individual can be reduced in status.” Slonje & Smith (2008)
suggest that a key feature of cyberbullying is the inability of getting away from it due
to the 24-hour all-encompassing access that technology affords. Unlike face to face
bullying, there is no escape. This is likely to contribute to feelings of powerlessness in
the victim.

**Cyberbullying/Traditional bullying overlap**

In addition to questions of concept definition, recent research has also
concentrated on examining theoretical issues in the overlap between cyberbullying
and traditional bullying, with the majority of research focus investigating adolescents
and children. Tokunaga (p. 280, 2010) found only one study (i.e., Slonje & Smith,
2008) that included investigation into adult cyber victimsation in his meta-synthesis of
cyberbullying research. The rest of the research in his meta-synthesis concentrated
entirely on minors under the age of 18.

For the purposes of this study the definition of cyberbullying posited Smith et
al. (2008) was used as the basis for the measurement of cyberbullying in the
workplace. This definition states that cyberbullying consists of:

“An aggressive intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic
forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend
his or herself” (Smith et al., 2008, p.376).

Cyberbullying bears a close similarity to covert forms of bullying behaviours
including indirect (via third party), social (damage to social reputation) and relational
aggression (damage to peer relationships). With regards to the subject of this study and after considering these issues of concept, theory and definition in the area of cyberbullying, it can be speculated that in the workplace, cyberbullying may be the more preferred form of covert style adopted by bullies in an office type environment, taking the environment into consideration.

**Workplace bullying**

Due to the lack of research on the topic of cyberbullying in the workplace, it is useful for the purposes of this study to consider the literature on workplace bullying because of the theoretical and conceptual overlap between the two. Workplace bullying is also a relatively new field of research with interest growing in the subject area over the past 20 years. The first seeds of this modern research appeared in the late 1980’s in Scandinavia, Leymann is noted as a prominent pioneer in the field (Rayner & Hoel, 1997). Scandinavian researchers have contributed significantly to this body of research. There have been two main approaches to their research, that of investigating the incidence of bullying, and also that of attempting to understand the bullying process.

The terms and concepts used in workplace bullying research varies from the use of the term “mobbing” (Leymann, 1996) in the Scandinavian literature, “bullying” in the U.K. and Ireland (Adams & Crawford 1992; O’Moore & Kirkham, 2001), to “harassment” (Brodsky, 1976). Recently, Laura Crawshaw (2009) addresses this problem of definition and terminology within the workplace bullying context. Workplace bullying has been variously called, mobbing, harassment and
psychological abuse (Crawshaw, 2009, p.263). Although, the concept of bullying as used in English speaking countries and the term mobbing which is used in many other European countries, including Scandinavia involve some semantic differences, they largely refer to the same phenomenon. While Einarsen et al., (2011) recently noted that ‘workplace bullying’ tends to be the most consistently used term, he asserted that ‘harassment, bullying, and mobbing’ can be used interchangeably (p. 5). For the purposes of this study therefore, all of these variations and terms have been considered synonymously to represent workplace bullying. The core dimension present in all these definitions deem the victim to suffer repeated and enduring negative acts.

There is not much of a theoretical basis for studying workplace bullying, it arises more out of a social need (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012). Due to this lack of theoretical basis, researchers have built on the transactional theories of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) the Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), and the Cognitive Activation Theory of Stress (Ursin & Eriksen, 2004). Occupational stress models therefore inform the study of the outcomes of workplace bullying.

**Workplace bullying prevalence**

In a UK study of public sector union members, 14% reported having been bullied within the previous 6 months (UNISON, 1997), another study of union members found a prevalence rate of 18% during the previous 6 months (Lewis, 1999). As with the case of cyberbullying, difficulties with definition of bullying appear also in the workplace bullying literature. Researchers often choose to include their own
definition in their studies. Hoel & Cooper (2000) based their definition on a Scandinavian definition (Einarsen and Skogstad, 1996) which placed emphasis on aspects of repetition, duration and negative nature of the bullying behaviour. Hoel and Cooper’s study (2000) reported that 10.6% of respondents had been bullied during the previous 6 months. 1.4% comprised the most severely victimised group, people who had been bullied on a weekly or daily basis.

**Methodological Concerns – The Leymann Criterion**

The reliability of findings on the frequency of workplace bullying therefore depends very much on how it is measured. Researchers have variously used a cut-off point strategy (Bjorkqvist, Osterman & Hjelt-Back, 1994) while other researchers have used a criterion originally used by Leymann (1996). Leymann (1996) originally used his own measure, the Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terrorization questionnaire. More recently researchers have used the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) (Einarsen and Raknes, 1997), Negative Acts Questionnaire Revised (NAQ-R) (Einarsen and Hoel, 2001) and modifications of these (Agervold, 2007; Privitera and Campbell, 2009) while employing the Leymann criterion. These measures contain a list of negative acts that may be perceived as bullying. The Leymann criterion posits that in order to be considered a bullying victim, a response to at least one of the negative act items needs to occur with a frequency of at least on a weekly basis and over a period of at least 6 months. Using this criterion, researchers have reported frequencies of workplace bullying between 3 and 7 per cent (Mikkelson and Einarsen, 2001; O’Moore, 2000). Less severe cases with frequencies of bullying less often than weekly, higher prevalence rates between 8 and 10 per cent have been reported (Hoel
& Cooper, 2000). Workplace bullying is a relatively new construct that is not yet fully established in many parts of the world, including North America. An example of U.S. research on American Workplace bullying is Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy & Alberts’ (2007) study, “Burned by Bullying in the American Workplace” which aimed to measure the prevalence, perception and impact of workplace bullying in the U.S. The researchers used the NAQ (Einarsen and Hoel, 2001). The researchers decided to deviate from Leymann’s criterion slightly and operationalized bullying as *at least two negative acts, weekly or more often, for at least six months.* 28% of respondents met the criterion and were deemed bullied. Only 9.4% self-identified as having been bullied.

The prevalence rates reported in the literature therefore vary widely (Agervold, 2007). A review article by Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel & Vartia (2003) based on a survey of more than 30 studies, summarizes the situation in the following terms:

“between 1–4% of employees may experience serious bullying, and between 8–10% occasional bullying. Between 10 and 20% (or even higher) of employees may occasionally be confronted with negative social behaviour at work which does not correspond to definitions of bullying but which is stressful for the persons concerned nevertheless” (p. 121).

Hoel and Cooper (2000) found that 38% of the respondents in study had been exposed to at least one negative act weekly or daily during the previous 6 months, yet only 10.6% reported being victims of bullying. Hence, one of the aims this study is to
explore the extent to which using either operational criteria or subjective criteria results in disparate prevalence levels and to discuss whether one of the two methods yields more accurate estimates of the prevalence of bullying in a given sample.

**Workplace Cyberbullying**

Privitera & Campbell’s (2009) exploratory study titled “Cyberbullying: The new face of workplace bullying?” contributes to the field by highlighting the prevalence of cyberbullying & bullying in the workplace and the co-occurrence of the two. The researchers used a modified 22 item Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) version of the workplace bullying inventory (Einarsen & Hoel, 2001) and also employed Leymann’s operational definition of bullying of one incident per week over a period of at least 6 months. Of 103 respondents, 34% (n=35) of all respondents could be classified as victims of bullying behaviour because they reported experiencing at least one negative behaviour on at least a weekly basis during the previous 6 months. 25.2% (n=26) reported weekly exposure to multiple negative acts. 10.7% were victims of cyberbullying in total and all victims of cyberbullying were also victims of face to face bullying. Of the 35 who reported being subjected to negative acts on a weekly or daily basis, only 17.1% (n=6) self-reported as victims according to the given definition of bullying. The study was a cross sectional correlational design. A limitation of this study was that the survey did not include information about the respondent’s level of access to email or phones so it could not be verified whether every respondent was at equal risk of cyberbullying. Priverta & Campbell’s study investigated the prevalence rates of cyberbullying in the
manufacturing industry. The aim of this study was to sample a wider variety of workers from various different occupations.

The measure of workplace cyberbullying used in this study is the Cyber Negative Acts Questionnaire (Sprigg, Axtell, Coyne & Farley, 2012). This measure contains 20 items, including one self-report item on cyber victimisation during the previous six months. The measure is a modified version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (Einarsen & Hoel, 2001).

Self-Esteem

The Self-Esteem variable was measured using Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (1965). The term self-esteem is used to reflect a person’s overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth. This self-evaluation refers to self-concept i.e. the ideas and schemas we hold about ourselves. Our self-esteem is how we feel about our own self-concept. Current theorists (Judge, Heller & Mount, 2002) view self-esteem as one of the best dispositional predictors of job satisfaction. This study will examine the relationship between self-esteem and the emotion based measure of job-related affective well-being. Self-esteem is considered by Judge, Locke & Durham (1997) to be the most fundamental manifestation of core evaluation as it represents the overall value that one places on oneself as a person. It refers to an individual’s self-acceptance, self-liking and self-respect and has long been associated as related to mental health. Self-esteem is one of the most widely studied personality concepts in psychology and research suggests that self-esteem demonstrates short-term fluctuations but long-term stability (Costa and McCrae, 1994).
Researchers who study the correlates and consequences of self-esteem generally assume it is a stable trait that predicts future behaviour (Harter, 1990; Rosenberg, 1965). This assumption however has been questioned by researchers who emphasise the state-like nature of self-esteem. Leary and Baumeister (2000) for example argue that self-esteem is a barometer of transient beliefs about one’s worth relative to others. Consequently from this perspective, self-esteem levels are highly reactive to social evaluation and are thus continually changing in response to external feedback (Trzesniewski, Donnellan & Robins 2003), a position which this study supports. Many studies indicate a link between traditional bullying victimisation and poor self-esteem. However, it is unclear whether low self-esteem is a cause or a result of victimisation. Research by O’Moore and Kirkham (2001) indicated that traditional victims showed lower global self-esteem than non-victims.

Research conducted by Hinduja and Patchin (2010) with middle-school children in the USA revealed that children involved in cyberbullying either as a victim or an offender had lower self-esteem compared with children who had no involvement in cyberbullying. A stronger relationship was identified between victimisation and self-esteem compared with that of offending and self-esteem. Furthermore, research conducted among German students (Katzer, Fetchenhauer, & Belschak, 2009) revealed that children who displayed lower self-concept were more likely to suffer victimisation, both in school and in internet chat rooms.

Research investigating self-esteem and its relationship to victimisation in a bullying context has been examined mostly in the traditional/school bullying context,
and to a lesser extent within the adolescent cyberbullying context and traditional workplace bullying contexts. Within the traditional bullying context, victimisation has been linked with depression and low self-esteem (Salmon, James, Cassidy & Javaloyes, 2000; Vandebosch & van Cleemput, 2009).

O’Moore & Kirkham (2001) found that self-esteem is associated with being bullied in their nationwide study of 8,249 schoolchildren in Ireland. The results showed that those involved in bullying as victims, bullies or both had lower global self-esteem than did children who had neither bullied nor been bullied. The study also found the frequency with which children were victimised or had bullied others was correlated to lower levels of global self-esteem. Findings indicate that high self-esteem protects children & adolescents from involvement in bullying, either as victim or bully. This bi-directional hypotheses for self-esteem is also shared by research in the cyberbullying context (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001). Hinduja & Patchin (2008, p.616) note that the research regarding bullying and self-esteem has consistently found lower self-esteem in victims than non-victims.

Cyberbullying and its relationship with self-esteem has been researched predominantly in the adolescent/child school context. Research findings generally support and extend findings from the traditional context. In a study of 1963 school students with a mean age of 12.6 (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008), students who were cyber victims & cyber bullies reported significantly lower self-esteem that those not involved. A moderate and statistically significant relationship was found between low self-esteem & experiences with cyberbullying. Studies have found depreciated levels of self-esteem has been linked to cyber victimisation in other studies (Didden et al,
2009; Katzer et al, 2009), low self-esteem and feelings of hopelessness (Vandebosch & van Cleemput, 2009), and damage to self-esteem (Spears, Slee, Owens & Johnson, 2009).

Recent research by Brighi et al., (2012) examined self-esteem and loneliness in relation to cyberbullying in three European countries. Their study investigated victimisation in relation to traditional bullying and cyberbullying and compared results from these two forms. Within the cyberbullying context, Brighi et al., (2012) concentrated particularly on the type of attack that aimed to smear a victims reputation. This type of attack was noted as being a more indirect form of cyberbullying. Results of their study indicated as expected that lowering of self-esteem was related to the severity of bullying experienced. It also showed that self-esteem decreases as a result of severity of attacks to reputation. Frequency of victimisation was also found to be related to decreases in self-esteem. Brighi et al’s (2012) findings did not allow them to make a causal link between low self-esteem and victimisation given the study design. Olweus (2012) changed his position on the direction of the relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem to seeing low self-esteem in cyber victims as a consequence of bullying and not the other way around which has been previously argued for in (Ttofi et al; Olweus, 2010). As mentioned earlier, some researchers have debated for a bi-directional relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001; O’Moore & Kirkham, 2001).

Results of Brighi et al’s (2012) study confirmed a negative relationship between frequency of cyber victimisation and all measures of self-esteem and
loneliness. The relationship of victimisation to self-esteem is similar in cyberbullying and traditional bullying. The study also investigated cyber victimisation and its effect on self-esteem & loneliness as a function of attacks on reputation. Findings indicate that cyber victims of attacks to their reputation have lower self-esteem than other victims. Attacks on reputation consist of indirect and covert forms of cyberbullying that the current study is interested in investigating within the workplace context. These findings suggest the likelihood that the current study will find a negative correlation between cyber victimisation and self-esteem.

Using the definition of cyberbullying from Smith et al., (2008) as a theoretical basis for their study Corcoran, Connolly & O’Moore (2012) investigated cyberbullying in relation to personality and self-concept in Irish secondary schools. The study’s sample consisted of 876 students aged between 12 and 16 years of age. Cyber victimisation was measured on the basis of a duration period of the previous three months and was reported by 6.3% of participants.

In the workplace bullying research literature, employees with low levels of self-esteem have been found to be more likely targets (Einarsen, Raknes and Matthiesen 1994; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2001). However the causal direction of the relationships between both negative affect and self-esteem with bullying have been questioned because of the potential for high negative affect and low self-esteem to develop and increase as bullying persists (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002).
It is predicted in the current study that cyber victimisation in the workplace will be negatively correlated with self-esteem and that victims and non-victims will differ in levels of self-esteem.

**Stress**

Stress has been defined as “the negative feelings that occur when an individual feels unable to cope with the demands placed upon them by their environment” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This study used the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen & Williamson, 1988) which is viewed by many researchers as the best measure of stress due to the fact that people vary so much in what they perceive to be stressful. Research suggests that perceived stress predicts a broad number of health outcomes. Other psychological problems associated with stress are anxiety and depression. No known research to date has specifically investigated cyberbullying in the workplace and its relationship with stress. This study aims to address this gap in the research.

The research has investigated stress in relation to workplace bullying and to a smaller extent cyberbullying in adolescents. Stress is an important variable of investigation given the link between stress and illness (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1995). Stress is also linked to increased turnover and absenteeism (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2004). The research also often reports on associated levels of psychological distress, negative affective states such as anxiety, depression and anger and other stress related health outcomes. Victims of cyberbullying were found to experience significantly more stress than other students (Steffgen, Vandebosch, Vollink, Deboutte, Dehue, 2010). However, limited research exists on stress in the
cyberbullying context. Several studies from the workplace bullying literature have investigated the relationship between workplace bullying and stress. Brewer and Whiteside’s (2012) study focused on the relationship between workplace bullying and stress within the prison service. A standard multiple regression revealed that direct experience of bullying significantly predicted stress and experiencing dismissive bullying behaviour predicted physical, psychological and behavioural symptoms. Other studies on workplace bullying have asserted that workplace bullying impacts on stress and wellbeing (Di Rosa et al., 2009; Quine, 2001). Studies from the U.K. including (UNISON, 1997) found that 75% of participants currently being bullied at the time of survey reported some damage to their health including stress. Quine’s (1999) study into workplace bullying in the NHS found that those who had been exposed persistently to bullying behaviours were more likely to suffer from stress, anxiety and depression than those who did not suffer bullying. Furthermore workplace bullying has been identified as a major stress factor according to previous research (Bjorkvist et al., 1994; Einarsen and Raknes, 1997; O’Moore, Seigne, McGuire & Smith 1998; Zapf et al., 1996). Hansen et al. (2006) specifically investigated workplace bullying in relation to health outcomes and the physiological stress response. The study revealed that victims of bullying reported more symptoms of somatisation, depression, anxiety, negative affectivity. Agervold and Mikkelsen (2004) found employees exposed to bullying to report more mental fatigue, psychological stress and psychosomatic symptoms as compared to their non-exposed colleagues.

It is predicted in this study that cyber victimisation in the workplace will be positively correlated with stress and that victims and non-victims will differ in levels of stress.
Job-Related Affective Well-Being

The Job-Related Affective Well-Being scale (Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector & Kelloway, 2000) was chosen in this study because it consists of the positive and negative affective emotional reactions to job stressors which, following the job stress perspective mediate the effects of job stressors on strains, such as stress and self-esteem. Workplace bullying has been identified as a psychosocial stressor which can be potentially detrimental to individual health and wellbeing (e.g. poorer mental health, psychological stress, psychosomatic symptoms, depression, anxiety and negative affectivity) (Niedl 1996, Mikkelsen & Einarsen 2002, Hansen et al., 2006). Drawing from Affective Events Theory (Weiss and Cropanzano 1996) as a theoretical basis, workplace cyberbullying is conceived in this study to represent those affective events which may impact well-being including self-esteem and stress.

The Job-related Affective Well-Being (JAWS) scale was developed in order to assess a wide range of emotional reactions to work. The underlying theoretical framework is taken from a job stress perspective, in which emotions are presumed to mediate the effects of job stressors on strains. According to this view, situations that are perceived as job stressors lead to negative emotional responses, which in turn lead to various behavioural (e.g., absence), physical (psychosomatic symptoms), and psychological (e.g., job dissatisfaction) strains. Branch, Ramsay & Barker (2012) in their review of workplace bullying examined its theoretical relationship to the stress literature i.e. transactional stress model. They noted an interesting recent addition to the workplace bullying literature, the application of Affective Events Theory (Weiss
and Cropanzano 1996). This theory involves the investigation of emotions and suggests that people often react emotionally to incidents, which in turn influences their subsequent behaviours, attitudes and ultimately their well-being. Therefore workplace bullying incidents can be considered as affective events. It is the aim of this study by way of employment of the JAWS scale to investigate these affective emotional responses and their relationship with workplace cyber victimisation, self-esteem and stress.

The research literature on studies that have utilised the JAWS scale is limited however. A study by (Van Dierendonck, Haynes, Borrill & Stride, 2004) found that overall well-being was determined strongly by job-related affective well-being. Vartia (2001) found that being bullied at work is a threat to the psychological well-being of bullied employees.

Uncu, Bayram & Bilgel (2007) measured job related affective well-being among primary health care physicians. A total of 274 general practitioners from 60 primary health care centres participated in the study. The JAWS scale and depression anxiety stress scale were used. The findings revealed statistically a significant negative relationship between JAWS and depression anxiety stress scale total scores. The JAWS negative emotion subscale was also positively associated with stress levels. Their study revealed that physician’s job related negative emotions were associated with stress reactions, anxiety and depression. Job related negative emotions therefore contribute to stress, depression and anxiety. In relation to workplace bullying, findings from a study that employed longitudinal methods in two studies
(Rodríguez-Muñoz, Baillien, De Witte, Moreno-Jiménez & Pastor, 2009) suggest that bullying is a cause of job related well-being.

It is predicted in this study that cyber victimisation in the workplace will be negatively correlated with overall Job-related Affective Well-Being, positively correlated with JAWS Negative Emotion and negatively correlated with JAWS Positive Emotion. It is also predicted that workplace cyber victims and non-victims will differ significantly on levels of Job-related Affective Well-Being, JAWS Negative Emotion and JAWS Positive Emotion.

Following a review of the relevant literature, the following are the hypotheses of this study:

**Hypotheses**

1: Cyber NAQ scores will be negatively correlated with self-esteem.

2: Cyber NAQ scores will be positively correlated with perceived stress.

3. Cyber NAQ scores will be negatively correlated with job-related affective well-being.

4: Cyber NAQ scores will be positively correlated with job-related affective well-being negative emotions.
5: Cyber NAQ scores will be negatively correlated with job-related affective well-being positive emotions.

6: There will be a significant difference in levels of self-esteem between victims and non-victims of cyberbullying in the workplace*

7: There will be a significant difference in levels of stress between victims and non-victims of cyberbullying in the workplace*

8: There will be a significant difference in levels of job-related affective well-being between victims and non-victims of cyberbullying in the workplace*

9: There will be a significant difference in levels of job-related affective well-being positive emotion between victims and non-victims of cyberbullying in the workplace*

10: There will be a significant difference in levels of job-related affective well-being negative emotion between victims and non-victims of cyberbullying in the workplace*

11: Self-esteem, workplace cyber victimisation, and job-related affective well-being will predict stress.

*Victims and non-victims of cyberbullying in the workplace have been identified in this study on the basis of meeting the Leymann criterion of reporting at least one negative act on at least a weekly basis during a period of at least six months.
Methodology

Participants

The study population consisted of 96 participants. Of these participants 37.5% (n=36) were Male and 62.5% (n=60) were Female. All participants were employed either full-time or part-time. 81.3% (n=74) of the participants worked full-time and 18.8% (n=18) worked part-time. 66.7% (n=64) of the participants worked in an office type environment and 33.3% (n=32) of the participants worked in a non-office type environment. Participants were further divided into six age brackets (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64 & >65). The 25-34 age group was most prevalent and consisted of 61.5% of the participants. Data was collected by using paper questionnaire (n=37) and an online version of the questionnaire (n=59). The participants who completed the paper questionnaire consisted of 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} year part-time higher diploma psychology students from Dublin Business School. The online questionnaire was distributed to friends via email, to a survey forum on Irish boards website www.boards.ie, and to Hermes II, an online informational newsletter (http://www.somis.dundee.ac.uk/hermes/general/Hermes_II.html) that is distributed to staff and students at the University of Dundee, Scotland. The study employed a convenience method for the paper questionnaires and self-selecting sampling method for the online questionnaires. Participation was voluntary and anonymous and no incentives were offered.
Design

This study utilised a cross-sectional correlational design. The data was quantitative in nature. The aim of this study was to measure the relationship between cyber victimisation in the workplace with the variables self-esteem, stress and job-related affective well-being.

Materials

Materials consisted of paper questionnaires, pens, online questionnaires and computers. The paper questionnaire and online questionnaire consisted of an identical layout and identical questions. The paper questionnaire consisted of an informational cover page followed by an initial page of four demographic questions that included Age (one to be ticked from ranges 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64 & >65), Gender (one to be ticked from Male, Female), Job Status (one to be ticked from Working Full-Time & Working Part-Time) and Work Environment (one to be ticked from “I work in an office type environment” & “I work in a non-office type environment”). This page was followed by four measures: The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), The Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen & Williamson, 1988), The Job-related Affective Well-Being Scale (JAWS) (Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector & Kelloway, 2000) and a Cyber Negative Acts Questionnaire (Cyber NAQ) (Sprigg, Axtell, Coyne & Farley, 2012).
Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) measures self-esteem on a four point likert scale of agreement, (0: ‘Strongly Agree’, 1: ‘Agree’, 2: ‘Disagree’, 3: ‘Strongly Disagree’). The measure consists of 10 items, for example, ‘I take a positive attitude towards myself’ and ‘At times, I think I am no good at all’. The items in the measure are divided evenly between expression of positive self-esteem and expressions of negative self-esteem. Items 2, 5, 6, 8 & 9 are reverse scored. The higher the overall total of the 10 items, the greater the self-esteem. The internal reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha) of the measure is good at .88.

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) (Cohen & Williamson, 1988)

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) (Cohen & Williamson, 1988) measures “the degree to which situations in one’s life are appraised as stressful” (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983). The version of the Perceived Stress Scale used in this study consists of 10 items. The 10 items measure subjective appraisals of situations in one’s life during the previous month. Items are scored on a five point Likert type scale of frequency (0: ‘Never’, 1: ‘Almost Never’, 2: ‘Sometimes’, 3: ‘Fairly Often’, 4: ‘Very Often’). Examples of items include ‘In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?’ and ‘In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?’ The positively worded items (4, 5, 7 & 8) are reversed scored. The higher the overall total of items the greater the amount of perceived stress an individual is experiencing. The internal consistency of the PSS-10, as measured by Cronbach’s alpha was found to be .88.
*The Job-related Affective Well-Being Scale (JAWS)* (Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector & Kelloway, 2000)

The Job-related Affective Well-Being Scale (JAWS) (Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector & Kelloway, 2000) measures an individual’s emotional reactions to their job during the previous 30 days. The version of the Job-related Affective Well-Being Scale used in this study was the 20 item short version. These 20 items consist of 10 positive emotional responses and 10 negative emotional responses experienced at work. Items are scored on a five point Likert type scale (1: ‘Never’, 2: ‘Rarely’, 3: ‘Sometimes’, 4: ‘Quite Often’, 5: ‘Extremely Often’). The negative emotional response items are reverse scored in order to compute a total score with the positive emotional response items. The higher the total score is the higher the individual’s level of job-related affective well-being. The 20 item scale is further divided into two subscales, for items that consist of positive emotional responses (3, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20) and negative emotional responses (1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 14, 17). The two subscale scores are not reversed for scoring purposes. For each subscale the items are added together to give a total score. The JAWS scale and two subscales were employed in this study for descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The internal consistency of the JAWS, as measured by Cronbach’s alpha was found to be .94.

*Cyber Negative Acts Questionnaire (Cyber NAQ)* (Sprigg, Axtell, Coyne & Farley, 2012).

The Cyber Negative Acts Questionnaire (Cyber NAQ) (Sprigg, Axtell, Coyne & Farley, 2012) was received from the author. It measures exposure to negative acts typical of bullying at work that are conducted through technology over the previous
six months. The measure is a modification of the widely used Negative Acts Questionnaire Revised (NAQ-R) (Einarsen & Hoel, 2001). It is based on the adapted version of the NAQ-R used in Privitera & Campbell (2009). Participants were asked to consider the following eight types of technology when responding: Text messaging; pictures/photo or video clips; phone calls; email; chat rooms; instant messaging; websites; and social networking websites. The measure consists of 19 negative acts which may be perceived as bullying. These acts are descriptive without being explicitly labeled as bullying. Items are scored on a five point Likert scale of frequency (1: Never, 2: Now and Then, 3: Monthly, 4: Weekly, 5: Daily). There are three possible methods to analyse Cyber NAQ responses. The first method is by totaling the scores for the 20 items to give a total Cyber NAQ score. Secondly, victims & non-victims of cyberbullying in the workplace can be identified by applying Leymann’s operational definition of workplace bullying as exposure to one incident on at least a weekly basis over a period of at least 6 months. Thirdly, the final item on the questionnaire is a self-report item on cyber victimisation in the workplace. Participants were asked to report if they had been cyberbullied in the workplace during the previous six months according to the following definition:

*We define cyber-bullying as an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact contact (e.g. through text messaging; pictures/photos or video clips; phone calls; email; chat rooms; instant messaging; websites; and social networking websites), repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself. We will not refer to a one-off incident as cyber-bullying.*
The five possible responses were (1: No, 2: Yes, but only rarely, 3: Yes, now and then, 4: Yes, several times per week, 5: Yes, almost daily). All three methods were employed in this study for descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The internal consistency of the Cyber NAQ, as measured by Cronbach’s alpha was found to be .88.

Please see appendix for a full copy of the paper questionnaire.

**Procedure**

The online version of the questionnaire was created using google docs. It was an exact replica of the paper questionnaire. On the 14th February the link to the online questionnaire was distributed to friends via email. On the 15th February the link to the online questionnaire was posted to the Surveys and non-media research forum on the Irish forum website www.boards.ie. On the 26th February the link to the online questionnaire was posted by a lecturer at the University of Dundee, Scotland to Hermes II, an online informational newsletter ([http://www.somis.dundee.ac.uk/hermes/general/Hermes_II.html](http://www.somis.dundee.ac.uk/hermes/general/Hermes_II.html)) that is distributed to staff and students at the University. Online participants completed the questionnaire by pressing the submit button on the final section of the questionnaire. The facility for accepting online responses to the questionnaire was closed on the 10th March.

The paper questionnaire was distributed amongst 2nd year part-time higher diploma in arts in psychology students on March 4th and amongst 1st year part-time higher diploma in arts in psychology students on March 5th in Dublin Business School. Participants were verbally instructed regarding the subject of the study and the voluntary, anonymous and strictly confidential nature of the study. Participants were
also informed that the questionnaire would take an estimated 10-15 minutes to complete. Questionnaires were collected at the end of each class. All participants were thanked for taking part the time to complete the questionnaire. The online questionnaire and paper questionnaire included an informational page as the first page/section. This informational page stated clearly the subject of the study and the voluntary, anonymous and confidential nature of the study. Participants were reminded that they were not obliged to take part. Participants were informed that by completing and submitting the questionnaire they were giving their consent to participate in the study. Participants were also informed of the estimated time it would take to complete the questionnaire at 10-15 minutes. The informational page also included a statement that directed participants to the final page of the questionnaire that contained contact information for support services including the Samaritans, Bully4u and The Equality Authority should any of the questions have raised difficult feelings for them.

Please see the appendix for a copy of the informational page and the final page that contains contact information for support services.
Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted on all variables for mean, minimum and maximum scores and standard deviation. See Table 1.

Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that 26% (N=25) of all participants could be classified as victims of cyberbullying in the workplace as per Leymann’s criterion. 3.1% (N=3) of all participants self-reported themselves as victims of cyberbullying via the self-report item of the Cyber NAQ. See table 2. All participants who self-reported as victims of workplace cyberbullying were also identified as victims as per Leymann’s criterion. Therefore, just 12% of victims of workplace cyberbullying per Leymann’s criterion self-reported as victims.

Table 1: Research Variables Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyber NAQ Scale</td>
<td>26.54</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>7.713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>21.76</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>16.89</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-related Affective Well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being</td>
<td>65.10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>13.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAWS Positive Emotion</td>
<td>28.26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8.248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAWS Negative Emotion</td>
<td>23.16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6.692</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Cyberbullying Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cyberbullying Victims and Non-Victims</th>
<th>Victims</th>
<th>Non-Victims</th>
<th>Percentage of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyber NAQ – Leymann’s criterion applied</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Report Cyber NAQ Q.20</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*all self-report victims were also classified as victims per Leymann criterion

Inferential Statistics

Hypothesis 1 – Cyber NAQ scores will be significantly negatively correlated with Self-Esteem

The mean scores for the Cyber NAQ was 26.54 (SD=7.71) and for Self-Esteem was 21.76 (5.08). A Spearman’s rho correlation found that there was a significant moderate negative relationship between Cyber NAQ scores and Self-Esteem (rs(93) = -.30, p < .01), two tailed. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2 – Cyber NAQ scores will be significantly positively correlated with Stress

The mean scores for the Cyber NAQ was 26.54 (SD=7.71) and for Stress was 16.89 (6.67). A Spearman’s rho correlation found that there was a significant moderate positive relationship between Cyber NAQ scores and Stress (rs(91) = 0.46, p < .01), one tailed. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.
**Hypothesis 3** – *Cyber NAQ scores will be significantly negatively correlated with Job-related Affective Well-Being*

The mean scores for the Cyber NAQ was 26.54 (SD=7.71) and for Job-related Affective Well-Being was 65.10 (SD=13.74). A Spearman’s rho correlation found that there was a significant strong negative relationship between Cyber NAQ scores and Job-related Affective Well-Being ($rs(93) = -0.55$, $p < .01$), one tailed. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Hypothesis 4** – *Cyber NAQ scores will be significantly positively correlated with Job-related Affective Well-Being Negative Emotion*

The mean scores for the Cyber NAQ was 26.54 (SD=7.71) and for Job-related Affective Well-Being Negative Emotion was 23.16 (SD=6.69). A Spearman’s rho found that there was a significant strong positive relationship between Cyber NAQ scores and Job-related Affective Well-Being Negative Emotions ($rs(93) = 0.58$, $p < .01$), one tailed. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Hypothesis 5** – *Cyber NAQ scores will be significantly negatively correlated with Job-related Affective Well-Being Positive Emotion*

The mean scores for the Cyber NAQ was 26.54 (SD=7.71) and for Job-related Affective Well-Being Positive Emotion was 28.26 (SD=8.25). A Spearman’s rho found that there was a significant moderate negative relationship between Cyber NAQ scores and Job-related Affective Well-Being Negative Emotions ($rs(93) = -0.46$, $p < .01$), one tailed. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.
Table 3: Spearman’s rho Correlation table displaying the relationships between Cyber NAQ Scores and the various variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Cyber NAQ Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>-.30**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>.46**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-related Affective Well-</td>
<td>-.55**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAWS Positive Emotions</td>
<td>-.46**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAWS Negative Emotions</td>
<td>.58**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p is significant at the .01 level

Hypothesis 6 - Workplace cyber victims and non-victims will differ significantly on levels of Self-Esteem

An independent t-test was conducted to compare levels of self-esteem between victims and non-victims of cyberbullying in the workplace. Non-victims reported higher levels of self-esteem (Mean = 22.34, SD = 5.02) than victims (Mean = 20.12, SD = 4.99), however this observed difference did not reach the level of statistical significance, t(94) = 1.90, p = .06, two tailed.

Hypothesis 7 - Workplace cyber victims and non-victims will differ significantly on levels of Stress

An independent t-test was conducted to compare levels of stress between victims and non-victims of cyberbullying in the workplace. Victims reported higher levels of stress (Mean = 20.72, SD = 5.93) than non-victims (Mean = 15.49, SD = 6.40), the 95% confidence limits show that the population mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between -8.15 and -2.32. There was a statistically significant
difference between stress levels of victims and non-victims, t(91) = -3.56, p < .01, two tailed.

Hypothesis 8 - *Workplace cyber victims and non-victims will differ significantly on levels of Job-related Affective Well-Being*

An independent t-test was conducted to compare levels of job-related affective well-being between victims and non-victims of cyberbullying in the workplace. Non-victims reported higher levels of job-related affective well-being (Mean = 68.17, SD = 12.72) than victims (Mean = 56.40, SD = 12.99), the 95% confidence limits show that the population mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between 5.86 and 17.67. There was a statistically significant difference between job-related affective well-being levels of victims and non-victims, t(94) = 3.96, p < .01, two tailed.

Hypothesis 9 - *Workplace cyber victims and non-victims will differ significantly on levels of Job-related Affective Well-Being Positive Emotion*

An independent t-test was conducted to compare levels of job-related affective well-being positive emotion between victims and non-victims of cyberbullying in the workplace. Non-victims reported higher levels of job-related affective well-being positive emotion (Mean = 29.61, SD = 8.28) than victims (Mean = 24.44, SD = 7.00), the 95% confidence limits show that the population mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between 1.49 and 8.85. There was a statistically significant difference between job-related affective well-being positive emotion levels of victims and non-victims, t(94) = 2.79, p < .01, two tailed.
Hypothesis 10 - *Workplace cyber victims and non-victims will differ significantly on levels of Job-related Affective Well-Being Negative Emotion*

An independent t-test was conducted to compare levels of job-related affective well-being negative emotion between victims and non-victims of cyberbullying in the workplace. Victims reported higher levels of job-related affective well-being negative emotion (Mean = 28.04, SD = 6.79) than non-victims (Mean = 21.44, SD = 5.79), the 95% confidence limits show that the population mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between -9.40 and -3.81. There was a statistically significant difference between job-related affective well-being positive emotion levels of victims and non-victims, t(94) = -4.69, p < .01, two tailed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>20.12</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-victims</td>
<td>22.34</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>20.72</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>-3.56</td>
<td>&lt;.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-victims</td>
<td>15.49</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-related Affective Well-Being</td>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>56.40</td>
<td>12.99</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>&lt;.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-victims</td>
<td>68.17</td>
<td>12.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAWS Positive</td>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>24.44</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>&lt;.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-victims</td>
<td>29.61</td>
<td>8.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAWS Negative</td>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>28.04</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>-4.69</td>
<td>&lt;.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-victims</td>
<td>21.44</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p significant at .05 level
Hypothesis 11 - **Self-esteem, workplace cyber victimisation, and job-related affective well-being will predict stress**

A multiple regression was used to test whether self-esteem, job-related well-being negative emotion and workplace cyber victimisation were predictors of stress. The results of the regression indicated that the three predictor variables explained 46% of the variance ($R^2 = .46$, $F(3, 89) = 26.91$, $P < .01$). It was found that job-related affective well-being negative emotion significantly predicted stress ($\beta = .392$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = .214 - .563) and self-esteem inversely predicted stress ($\beta = -.396$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = -.726 - -.304). Workplace cyber victimisation was not found to significantly predict stress.

**Further statistical analysis**

A Chi-square test for association was ran to explore the relationship between the variables of workplace cyber victims and work environment. 60% of cyber victims worked in an office type environment and 40% of cyber victims worked in a non-office type environment. No significant relationship was found.

**Pearson’s correlation tests**

The mean scores for self-esteem was 21.76 (SD = 5.08) and for was stress 16.89 (SD = 6.67). A pearson’s correlation found that there was a strong negative relationship between self-esteem and stress $r(93) = -.55$, $p < .01$, two tailed. The null hypothesis was rejected.
The mean scores for self-esteem was 21.76 (SD = 5.08) and for was job-related affective well-being negative emotion was 23.16 (SD = 6.69). A pearson’s correlation found that there was a moderate negative relationship between self-esteem and job-related affective well-being negative emotion $r(96) = -.33$, $p < .01$, two tailed. The null hypothesis was rejected.

The mean scores for self-esteem was 21.76 (SD = 5.08) and for was job-related affective well-being positive emotion was 28.26 (SD = 8.25). A pearson’s correlation found that there was a moderate positive relationship between self-esteem and job-related affective well-being positive emotion $r(96) = .40$, $p < .01$, two tailed. The null hypothesis was rejected.

The mean scores for stress was 16.89 (SD = 6.67) and for was job-related affective well-being negative emotion was 23.16 (SD = 6.69). A pearson’s correlation found that there was a strong positive relationship between stress and job-related affective well-being negative emotion $r(93) = .57$, $p < .01$, two tailed. The null hypothesis was rejected.

The mean scores for stress was 16.89 (SD = 6.67) and for was job-related affective well-being positive emotion was 28.26 (SD = 8.25). A pearson’s correlation found that there was a strong negative relationship between stress and job-related affective well-being positive emotion $r(93) = -.54$, $p < .01$, two tailed. The null hypothesis was rejected.
Discussion

The aim of this research was to investigate the relationship between cyberbullying victimisation in the workplace with self-esteem, stress and job-related affective well-being. This research study focused on the effects of victim’s experience of cyberbullying in the workplace. The measure of workplace cyberbullying used in this study was the Cyber NAQ (Sprigg, Axtell, Coyne & Farley 2012). In this measure cyber victimisation was accounted for in three ways, firstly by totalling the Cyber NAQ score, secondly by applying the Leymann criterion to establish workplace cyber victim and non-victim frequency and lastly by the self-report item in the Cyber NAQ.

Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that 26% (N=25) of all participants could be classified as victims of cyberbullying in the workplace as per Leymann’s criterion. 3.1% (N=3) of all participants self-reported themselves as victims of cyberbullying via the self-report item of the Cyber NAQ. All participants who self-reported as victims of workplace cyberbullying were also identified as victims as per Leymann’s criterion. Therefore, just 12% of victims of cyberbullying in the workplace per Leymann’s criterion self-reported as victims. This finding is consistent with previous research that also found a tendency for victims to under self-report themselves as victims of workplace bullying when compared to levels of victimisation per Leymann’s style criterion (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007, Hoel & Cooper, 2000) and in the workplace cyberbullying context (Privitera & Campbell, 2009). This tendency to under self-report as victims supports the grounds for the usefulness of applying Leymann’s criterion in order to establish accurate victim frequency.
Overall the statistical analysis of the data supported all five of the hypotheses that tested the relationship of Cyber NAQ scores with the variables self-esteem, stress and job-related affective well-being and its positive and negative emotion subscales.

Statistical analysis furthermore supported four of the five hypotheses which tested differences between workplace cyber victims and non-victims on levels of self-esteem, stress and job-related affective well-being including its positive and negative emotion subscales.

The final hypothesis of this study investigated whether self-esteem, job-related affective well-being negative emotion and workplace cyber victimisation were predictors of stress. The results of the multiple regression indicated that the three predictor variables explained 46% of the variance. It was found that job-related affective well-being negative emotion significantly predicted and self-esteem inversely predicted stress. Workplace cyber victimisation however was not found to significantly predict stress.

The first hypothesis stated that Cyber NAQ scores will be negatively correlated with Self-Esteem. A significant moderate negative relationship between Cyber NAQ scores and Self-Esteem using a two tailed Spearman’s rho test was found. While there exists no research to date that has tested this relationship in a workplace cyberbullying context, this result is consistent with research findings from adolescent cyberbullying research (Brighi et al., 2012; Didden et al, 2009) and workplace bullying research (Einarsen et al., 1994; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2001; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002). A two tailed test was employed in consideration of arguments in the
literature for a bi-directional relationship between self-esteem and victimisation (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001; O’Moore & Kirkham, 2001). Future research may further investigate this bi-directional relationship.

The second hypothesis stated that Cyber NAQ scores will be significantly positively correlated with stress. A significant moderate positive relationship between Cyber NAQ scores and Stress using a Spearman’s rho test was found. There exists no research to date that has tested this relationship in a workplace cyberbullying context. This result is consistent, however, with research on adolescent cyberbullying (Steffgen et al, 2010) which found that cyber victims were found to experience significantly more stress than other students. This result is also consistent with findings from workplace bullying research (Agervold and Mikkelsen, 2004; Di Rosa et al., 2009) that have linked stress outcomes with bullying victimisation.

The third hypothesis stated that Cyber NAQ scores will be significantly negatively correlated with Job-Related Affective Well-Being. A Spearman’s rho correlation found that there was a significant strong negative relationship between Cyber NAQ scores and Job-related Affective Well-Being. No research to date that has tested this relationship in a workplace cyberbullying context. However workplace bullying research has indicated that being a victim of workplace bullying is linked to the psychological well-being of victims (Vartia, 2001) and furthermore that well-being is strongly determined by job-related affective well-being (Van Dierendonck et al., 2004).
The fourth hypothesis stated that Cyber NAQ scores will be significantly positively correlated with Job-related Affective Well-Being Negative Emotion. A Spearman’s rho found that there was a significant strong positive relationship between Cyber NAQ scores and Job-related Affective Well-Being Negative Emotions. No research to date that has tested this relationship in a workplace cyberbullying context and this result represents a new finding.

The fifth hypothesis stated Cyber NAQ scores will be significantly negatively correlated with Job-related Affective Well-Being Positive Emotions. A Spearman’s rho found that there was a significant moderate negative relationship between Cyber NAQ scores and Job-related Affective Well-Being Positive Emotions. No research to date that has tested this relationship in a workplace cyberbullying context and this result represents a new finding.

The sixth hypothesis stated that workplace cyber victims and non-victims will differ significantly on levels of Self-Esteem. An independent t-test revealed that a statistically significant difference between stress levels of victims and non-victims. No research to date that has tested this relationship in a workplace cyberbullying context. This result is consistent with research in the adolescent cyberbullying context regarding bullying and self-esteem that has consistently found lower self-esteem in victims than non-victims (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008, p.616).

The seventh hypothesis stated that workplace cyber victims and non-victims will differ significantly on levels of stress. An independent t-test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between stress levels of victims and non-
victims. No research to date that has tested this relationship in a workplace cyberbullying context. However this result is consistent with findings from the adolescent cyberbullying context (Steffgen et al, 2010).

Hypothesis eight, nine and ten stated that workplace cyber victims and non-victims will differ significantly on levels of job-related affective well-being, job-related affective well-being positive emotions and job-related affective well-being negative emotions respectively. There was a statistically significant difference between job-related affective well-being levels of victims and non-victims for all three of these hypotheses. No research to date that has tested this relationship in a workplace cyberbullying context and these results represent new findings.

Hypothesis eleven stated that self-esteem, workplace cyber victimisation, and job-related affective well-being will predict stress. Stress is an important variable of investigation given the link between stress and illness (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1995) and increased absenteeism & turnover (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2004). A multiple regression was used to test whether self-esteem, job-related well-being negative emotion and workplace cyber victimisation were predictors of stress. The results of the regression indicated that the three predictor variables explained 46% of the variance in stress levels. It was found that job-related affective well-being negative emotion significantly predicted stress and self-esteem significantly inversely predicted stress. Workplace cyber victimisation was not found to significantly predict stress. The result that job-related affective well-being negative emotion predicts stress levels is consistent with and builds upon research that found an association between job-related affective well-being negative emotion and stress levels (Uncu, Bayram &
Bilgel, 2007). The result that self-esteem inversely predicts stress also is consistent with previous research on the moderating effect that self-esteem has on stress outcomes (Shimizu & Pelham, 2004). The result that workplace cyber victimisation was found not to significantly predict stress is in contrast to findings in the workplace bullying literature (Brewer & Whiteside, 2012). These relationships may be further explained by an investigation into the mediating effects of job-related affective well-being emotions on stress (Van Katwyk et al, 2000).

The further statistical analysis that was conducted included a chi square test that was ran to establish a relationship between work environment and cyber victimisation. 60% of cyber victims worked in an office type environment and 40% of cyber victims worked in a non-office type environment. However no significant relationship was found. It was speculated that an office type environment may encourage more covert forms of bullying such as cyberbullying. Further and more detailed descriptions of the work environment would be required to establish this variable’s influence on cyber victimisation.

Pearson’s correlation tests revealed expected significant correlations between self-esteem, stress, job-related affective well-being and its two subscales of positive emotion and negative emotion.

**Limitations**

This study did not fully account for extraneous variables in the workplace which may also impact upon self-esteem, stress and job-related affective well-being.
Such variables may include job demands including levels of workload, level of job control and social support.

This study employed a single question for work environment, whether one worked in an office type environment or a non-office type environment. A more detailed description of the working environment including levels of access to and use of technology within one’s working environment would enhance the overall picture of cyberbullying in the workplace.

Another possible criticism of this study is that it employed the Leymann criterion of workplace bullying that consists of exposure to one negative act at least on a weekly basis over the previous six months. A criticism that has been levelled at this method argues that the quasi-objective Leymann criterion is too broad and that the number of required acts experienced to qualify as bullying should increase to two or three a week for a period of 6 months (Agervold, 2007).

Lastly, this study may have benefited from studying also the co-existing effects of traditional bullying alongside those of cyberbullying given the evidence of overlap in rates of the two forms of bullying in the literature. Olweus (2012) recommends that cyberbullying should be studied within an overall bullying context
**Strengths**

The cyberbullying literature to date has focused almost solely upon the adolescent school going population. This study represents an important first step into the prevalence and effects of cyberbullying in the workplace.

Previous research that has investigated cyberbullying in the workplace (Privitera & Campbell, 2009) has focused solely on prevalence rates. This study adds value to the literature by focusing on the experience of victimisation and the effects associated with it.

This study has effectively drawn from and synthesised information from previous theory and research in the cyberbullying and workplace bullying literature in order to create an effective study.

This study shines a light on the area of cyberbullying in the workplace. This study also has practical implications for employers and employees. This study’s findings on prevalence rates of workplace cyberbullying reveal this is an issue that needs to be addressed in the workplace. The findings on differences between cyber victims and non-victims and cyber victimisation with regards to self-esteem, stress and job-related affective well-being also highlight the negative effects experienced by victims of workplace cyberbullying. Organisations may use these findings in order to develop appropriate company policies and strategies to address the problem.
Future Research

Future research would benefit from studying the prevalence effects of workplace cyberbullying in conjunction with workplace bullying. Future research into cyberbullying in the workplace would also benefit from investigating the effect that work characteristics have on the prevalence and effects of cyberbullying. Future research could also account for extraneous variables that may also influence workplace cyber victims including job demands and job control. Another personality variable that research would benefit from investigating includes locus of control. And finally, future research findings would also benefit from the use of longitudinal methods in order to establish causal links between variables.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study was designed in order to investigate cyberbullying in the workplace and its relationship with the self-esteem, stress and job-related affective well-being.

This study revealed a workplace cyber victim prevalence rate of 26%. Statistical analysis results indicated significant relationships between cyber negative acts questionnaire scores and self-esteem, stress, job-related affective well-being including job-related affective well-being positive emotion and job-related affective well-being negative emotion. Results also revealed statistically significant differences between workplace cyber victims and non-victims in terms of stress, job-related affective well-being including job-related affective well-being positive emotion and
job-related affective well-being negative emotion. A multiple regression model revealed that self-esteem and job-related affective well-being negative emotion were predictors of stress.

In summary, the aims of this study have been fulfilled, with statistical analysis supporting ten out of the eleven hypotheses. This study adds value to the literature on cyberbullying in the workplace by highlighting its prevalence and the negative effects of victimisation.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Paper Questionnaire

**Cyberbullying in the Workplace: Its Relationship with Self-Esteem, Stress & Job-Related Affective Well-Being**

Cyberbullying in the Workplace: Its Relationship with Self-Esteem, Stress & Job-Related Affective Well-Being

My name is James Keappock and I am conducting research in the Department of Psychology in Dublin Business School that explores Cyberbullying in the Workplace and Its Relationship with Self-Esteem, Stress & Job Affected Well-Being. This research is being conducted as part of my studies and will be submitted for examination.

You are invited to take part in this study and participation involves completing and returning the attached anonymous questionnaire. While the questionnaire asks some questions that might cause some minor negative feelings, these questions have been used widely in research. If any of the questions do raise difficult feelings for you, contact information for support services are included on the final page.

Participation is completely voluntary and so you are not obliged to take part.

Participation is anonymous and confidential. Thus responses cannot be attributed to any one participant. For this reason, it will not be possible to withdraw from participation after the questionnaire has been collected.

Data from the questionnaires will be securely stored on a password protected computer.

It is important that you understand that by completing and submitting the questionnaire that you are consenting to participate in the study.

The survey is estimated to take 10-15 minutes max to complete.

Should you require any further information about the research or if you would like me to provide you with the overall results of my findings please contact me at: 

My supervisor is Pauline Hyland and can be contacted at: 

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
Please Tick the appropriate answer:

**Age:**
- 18-24   ____
- 25-34   ____
- 35-44   ____
- 45-54   ____
- 55-64   ____
- >65     ____

**Gender:**
- Male   ____
- Female ____

**Job Status:**
- Working Full-Time   ____
- Working Part-Time   ____

**Work Environment:**
- I work in an office type environment   ____
- I work in a non-office type environment   ____
**Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale** (Rosenberg, 1965)

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself.

If you *strongly agree* with the statement circle **SA**.
If you *agree* with the statement circle **A**.
If you *disagree* with the statement circle **D**.
If you *strongly disagree* with the statement circle **SD**.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>At times, I think I am no good at all.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I feel that I have a number of good qualities.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I am able to do things as well as most other people.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I feel I do not have much to be proud of.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I certainly feel useless at times.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I wish I could have more respect for myself.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I take a positive attitude toward myself.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)** (Cohen & Williamson, 1988)

**Instructions**

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way.

For each question circle one of the following options :
0 = never  1 = almost never  2 = sometimes  3 = fairly often  4 = very often

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>In the last month, how often have you been upset</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>because of something that happened unexpectedly?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>In the last month, how often have you felt that you</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>were unable to control the important things in your life?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stressed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>In the last month, how often have you felt confident</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about your ability to handle your personal problems?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>In the last month, how often have you felt that things</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>were going your way?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>In the last month, how often have you found that you</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>could not cope with all the things you had to do?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>In the last month, how often have you been able to control</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>irritations in your life?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>In the last month, how often have you felt that you</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>were on top of things?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>In the last month, how often have you been angered</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>because of things that happened that were outside of your</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>control?</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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**The Job-related Affective Well-Being Scale (JAWS)** (Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector & Kelloway, 2000)

Below are a number of statements that describe different emotions that a job can make a person feel. Please indicate the amount to which any part of your job (e.g., the work, coworkers, supervisor, clients, pay) has made you feel that emotion in the past 30 days.

Please check one response for each item that best indicates how often you've experienced each emotion at work over the past 30 days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Quite often</th>
<th>Extremely often</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My job made me feel angry.</td>
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<td>2. My job made me feel anxious.</td>
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<td>3. My job made me feel at ease.</td>
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<td>4. My job made me feel bored.</td>
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<td>5. My job made me feel calm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. My job made me feel content.</td>
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<td>7. My job made me feel depressed.</td>
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<td>8. My job made me feel discouraged.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. My job made me feel disgusted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. My job made me feel ecstatic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. My job made me feel energetic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. My job made me feel enthusiastic.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. My job made me feel excited.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. My job made me feel fatigued.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. My job made me feel frightened.</td>
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<td>16. My job made me feel furious.</td>
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<td>17. My job made me feel gloomy.</td>
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<td>18. My job made me feel inspired.</td>
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<td>19. My job made me feel relaxed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. My job made me feel satisfied.</td>
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</table>
**Cyber Negative Acts Questionnaire (Cyber NAQ)** (Sprigg, Axtell, Coyne & Farley, 2012).

The following behaviours are often seen as examples of negative behaviour in the workplace that may occur via the use of technology. Over the last six months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts at work through different forms of technology? When responding consider every question in relation to these eight types of technology: *Text messaging; pictures/photos or video clips; phone calls; email; chat rooms; instant messaging; websites; and social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, MySpace)*.

Please circle the number that best corresponds with your experience over the last six months:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Now and then</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work
2) Being ordered to do work through electronic means below your level of competence
3) Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks
4) Spreading of gossip and rumours about you
5) Being ignored or excluded
6) Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life
7) Being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)
8) Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job
9) Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes
10) Persistent criticism of your work and effort
11) Having your opinions and views ignored
12) Practical jokes carried out by people you don’t get on with
13) Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines
14) Having allegations made against you
15) Excessive monitoring of your work
16) Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses)
17) Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm
18) Being exposed to an unmanageable workload
19) Threats of violence or physical abuse
20) We define cyber-bullying as an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact (e.g. through text messaging; pictures/photos or video clips; phone calls; email; chat rooms; instant messaging; websites; and social networking websites), repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself. We will not refer to a one-off incident as cyber-bullying.

Using the above definition, please state whether you have been cyber-bullied at work over the last six months?

___ No.
___ Yes, but only rarely.
___ Yes, now and then.
___ Yes, several times per week.
___ Yes, almost daily.
Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.
Should any of the questions have raised difficult feelings for you I would like to refer you to the following support services and resources regarding the subject of this study:

Samaritans helpline - 1850 60 90 90

Bully4u - www.bully4u.ie

The Equality Authority - www.equality.ie