Introduction

What are Whisper Networks?

Whisper Networks are private and informal forms of communication used “to warn each other about abuse and harassment,” specifically in workplace environments. (Peters, 2020)

• The origins of Whisper Networks are ambiguous but rose to social consciousness around 2017 when the #MeToo movement grew in popularity.
• The importance of this study is that our study is a first step at defining and describing whisper network participation in the workplace.

Research Question: What is the content shared within whisper networks and how can we better understand whisper networks through the content being exchanged?

Method

Participants

• 88 participants filled out a survey through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk.
• Requirements
  • 18 years of age or over
  • English-speaking
  • Employed in the United States
  • Work at least 30 hours per week at the same job for 6 months or more
  • Able to be involved in or witness a form of a whisper network

Measures

• Questions asked regarding content
  • What information did you share/not share?
  • Demographics
    • Age
      • Mean = 36.58
      • SD = 9.51
    • Gender
      • Woman = 46.6%
      • Man = 52.3%
      • Non-binary/Third-gender = 1.1%

Results

Content

People Involved

The information shared involved specific people.

Inappropriate Actions by Management

Unprofessional actions (physical or verbal) performed by those in charge.

Office Romance

Individuals in the workplace partook in a romantic relationship.

Invitation

An individual was asked by an employee to meet outside of work hours for reasons unrelated to work.

Formal Repercussions for Behavior

Consequences set forth by upper management as a result of the unwanted behavior.

Racism

Discrimination against an individual on the basis of race or ethnicity.

Harassment

Includes actions or words directed at a person that results in discomfort, often sexual in nature.

Unspecified Harassment

Unwanted Verbal Harassment

Unwanted Physical Actions

Unwanted Sexual Attention

Sexism

Quid Pro Quo

Participants in all 3 categories reported harassment as the top code for content. Within the code of Harassment, the content most discussed included the people involved, unwanted verbal harassment and unwanted physical actions. A Qualitative analysis of our codes shows that unwanted actions, whether verbal, physical, flirting, attention, or harassment were all the main content of information shared within Whisper Networks.

Discussion

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