

The Role of Corporate Policies in Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence in the Workplace

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Abstract

Gender-based violence (GBV) in the workplace extends beyond physical spaces, with online harassment, cyberstalking, and digital abuse becoming growing concerns. This study adopts a secondary data approach to analyse corporate policies, industry reports, legal frameworks, and case studies from leading tech firms, including Google, Meta, and Microsoft. A comparative analysis of corporate initiatives, such as internal reporting mechanisms, AI-driven monitoring, and employee training, will help assess their effectiveness in protecting employees of all genders—male, female, and non-binary. The study has evaluated the extent of tech companies' accountability in fostering safer work environments and studying gaps in existing approaches. Suggestions include insights into the strengths and limitations of current workplace safety policies and recommendations for more inclusive and proactive measures. By highlighting corporate practices, this research contributes to discussions on corporate responsibility in addressing workplace GBV, urging tech companies to strengthen their policies to create safer, more equitable professional environments for all gender identities.

Keywords: Gender-based violence, workplace harassment, corporate accountability, digital safety, gender inclusivity, employee protection, online harassment, workplace policies, corporate responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

There is growing recognition of the need for comprehensive corporate policies to address GBV in recent years. (Social Development Direct et al, 2020). Organizations like Google, Meta, and Microsoft have taken steps to establish workplace safety measures, including robust reporting mechanisms, AI-driven monitoring systems, and employee training programs (Brown, 2023). The rapid advancement of digital communication and remote work has reshaped the traditional workplace, bringing new opportunities and challenges (Smith, 2020). One of the significant challenges is the increasing prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in both offline and online environments. GBV in the workplace encompasses a range of harmful behaviours, including harassment, discrimination, and violence directed at individuals based on their gender (Johnson & Williams, 2019). The digital dimension of GBV—such as cyberstalking, online harassment, and gendered disinformation—further complicates efforts to ensure workplace safety (Doe & Lee, 2021). As major employers and key players in the digital landscape, tech companies hold a unique and dual responsibility in addressing GBV. (Muluneh et al., 2020) They establish workplace policies to protect employees from gender-based harm and develop and moderate digital platforms where online harassment often occurs (Adams, 2022).

However, challenges remain, including gaps in policy enforcement, underreporting due to fear of retaliation, and the continuous evolution of online harassment tactics (Clark, 2020). This study aims to evaluate current corporate initiatives' effectiveness and identify improvement areas by analysing case studies, industry reports, and legal frameworks by examining how tech companies can implement effective strategies to mitigate the risks of GBV in both physical and digital workspaces, ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for all employees. Moreover, the intersection of technology and corporate accountability in combating GBV is also explored by assessing how tech companies can leverage artificial intelligence, content moderation tools, and regulatory collaborations to detect and prevent online GBV (Miller & Davis, 2021). Additionally, it highlights best practices in fostering workplace inclusivity, ensuring gender-sensitive policies, and strengthening organizational commitment to eradicating workplace violence (Jones et al., 2022). By identifying strengths and weaknesses in existing strategies, the

research contributes to discussions on corporate responsibility, urging tech companies to enhance their policies and create a safer, more equitable professional environment for all gender identities.

Based on this, the research aims to understand gender-based violence or GBV in the workplace. It also assesses online gender-based violence or GBV in workplace GBV at major tech firms and explores corporate policies to suggest improvements for protecting employees of all gender identities from GBV.

METHOD

This study utilizes a secondary data-based research method to explore how tech companies address gender-based violence (GBV) in the workplace. By analysing existing literature, corporate reports, and case studies, the research evaluates workplace safety measures and digital harassment policies implemented by major firms like Google, Meta, and Microsoft. These firms are the primary focus of this research due to their status as leading global technology companies that shape workplace environments and digital interactions (Johnson & Williams, 2019). The study thematically reviews corporate policies on GBV prevention, assessing the effectiveness of AI-driven monitoring systems, reporting mechanisms, and employee training programs. It also examines legal frameworks and international guidelines to understand regulatory compliance (Clark, 2020).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Understanding Gender-Based Violence in the Workplace

Gender-based violence (GBV) in the workplace is a serious issue that affects employees' safety, productivity, and overall well-being (Johnson & Williams, 2019). It encompasses various forms of violence and harassment, including physical abuse, psychological intimidation, economic discrimination, and sexual misconduct. These acts of violence can occur in both traditional workplace settings and remote or digital work environments, making it a complex and pervasive problem. GBV in professional settings has significant consequences for individuals and organizations. (Einarsen et al., 2020). Victims of workplace violence often experience psychological trauma, reduced job performance, and career stagnation due to fear of retaliation (Brown, 2023). Moreover, workplaces that fail to address GBV suffer from lower employee morale, increased absenteeism, and reputational damage, ultimately affecting organizational effectiveness (Clark, 2020). This can also be a result of persistent online exposure.

The rise of digital communication has introduced new dimensions of GBV, such as cyberstalking, online harassment, and doxxing, which extend beyond physical workspaces (Smith, 2020). Digital platforms used for professional interactions, including corporate communication tools and social media, have become spaces where gender-based harassment persists. (Cyber Misogyny, 2014) Therefore, organizations, especially tech companies, must acknowledge and address both traditional and digital forms of GBV to foster safe and inclusive work environments (Adams, 2022). Some authors argue that some of the most insidious aspects of GBV in the workplace is its intersection with power dynamics. Perpetrators often exploit hierarchies within organizations, making it difficult for victims to report incidents due to fear of losing their jobs or facing professional retaliation (Miller & Davis, 2021). Women, non-binary individuals, and marginalized groups are particularly vulnerable to such abuses, underscoring the need for proactive workplace policies and enforcement mechanisms (Jones et al., 2022).

Authors unitedly convey to combat GBV effectively, companies must implement comprehensive policies, provide training and awareness programs, and establish confidential reporting mechanisms. (Faulkner, 2018) Additionally, workplace safety initiatives must be integrated with broader corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts to ensure long-term commitment to gender equity and protection against violence (Jones et al., 2022). Understanding the multifaceted nature of GBV in the workplace is essential for developing effective solutions that protect employees and promote professional environments free from violence and discrimination.

Online Gender-Based Violence in the Workplace

Multiple researches agree online gender-based violence (GBV) in the workplace has emerged as a significant concern in the digital era. With the rise of remote work and the increasing reliance on digital communication

platforms, employees are more vulnerable to cyber harassment, doxxing, and online threats (Johnson & Williams, 2019). Cyber harassment, a prevalent form of online GBV, includes behaviours such as sending threatening messages, spreading false information, and engaging in digital stalking (Brown, 2023). These forms of abuse disproportionately affect women, non-binary individuals, and marginalized communities, creating an unsafe and hostile work environment (Doe & Lee, 2021).

Social media platforms, internal corporate communication channels, and professional networking sites have become spaces where workplace harassment extends beyond physical boundaries. Research such as Miller & Davis (2021) indicates that online abuse leads to severe psychological distress, decreased job performance, and higher employee turnover rates. Moreover, gendered disinformation—deliberate misinformation targeting individuals based on gender—can undermine professional credibility and career advancement (Jones et al., 2022). But such mannerisms do not end here. Doxxing, the public release of private information with malicious intent, is another major concern in the workplace. Employees who speak out against discrimination or workplace injustices often find themselves targeted by doxxing campaigns, leading to threats against their safety (Smith, 2020). This practice disproportionately affects female professionals, activists, and employees from underrepresented backgrounds, emphasizing the need for stronger corporate protective measures (Adams, 2022).

Tech companies, as both employers and platform providers, have a critical responsibility in addressing online GBV. The role of digital platforms in enabling harassment highlights the necessity for proactive moderation policies, AI-driven content filtering, and robust user protection mechanisms (Miller & Davis, 2021). But there is dearth of literature exploring the effectiveness of AI-driven monitoring and legal frameworks to ensure digital workspaces remain safe and inclusive for all employees. Unitedly, researchers consent companies must implement comprehensive policies to combat online workplace harassment, ensuring that digital tools do not become avenues for gender-based violence (Jones et al., 2022). As online GBV continues to evolve, organizations must adopt holistic strategies, including employee awareness programs, incident reporting systems, and collaborations with cybersecurity experts to prevent and mitigate harm.

Corporate Policies related to Gender-Based Violence at the workplace

Corporate policies and legal frameworks play a crucial role in preventing and addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in the workplace. Though tech companies are both enabling and mitigating gender-based violence (GBV) in the workplace, as digital platform providers and major employers, these companies influence the online and offline work environment. Their technologies, including social media, messaging applications, and collaboration tools, have been exploited for harassment, cyberstalking, and other forms of online GBV (Adams, 2022). Many multinational technology firms, including Google, Meta, and Microsoft, have introduced comprehensive workplace policies aimed at mitigating GBV. These policies often include clear anti-harassment guidelines, employee training programs, and dedicated reporting mechanisms to ensure that incidents are properly documented and addressed (Brown, 2023). However, despite these policies, gaps in enforcement and the underreporting of GBV cases remain major challenges.

At the same time, recent studies point that tech companies have significant potential to act as protectors by developing and enforcing robust digital safety measures. The anonymity and vast reach of digital platforms often enable perpetrators to engage in gender-based abuse without immediate consequences (Johnson & Williams, 2019). Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) have been deployed to detect and prevent GBV, particularly in online spaces where harmful content is disseminated. Content moderation tools powered by AI are increasingly used to identify abusive language, hate speech, and threats, helping reduce online harassment (Miller & Davis, 2021). Companies like Google, Meta, and Microsoft have introduced comprehensive anti-harassment policies, employee training programs, and internal reporting mechanisms to address workplace GBV (Brown, 2023). However, these technologies still face challenges in accurately distinguishing between harmful and permissible content, leading to concerns about bias and inefficacy.

Some authors justify legal frameworks addressing workplace GBV varying across jurisdictions. In the United States, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits workplace discrimination, including harassment based on gender (Smith, 2020). The European Union's Directive on Work-Life Balance and the Istanbul Convention

offer legal protections against workplace harassment and violence (Jones et al., 2022). However, enforcement mechanisms differ, leading to inconsistencies in protection for employees across different countries. Additionally, digital violence—including cyber harassment and online threats—is still inadequately covered by many existing legal frameworks, necessitating new regulatory measures. Furthermore, collaboration between tech companies, policymakers, and advocacy groups is essential for addressing GBV effectively. By working with civil society organizations and legal bodies, tech firms can contribute to the development of comprehensive legal frameworks and best practices that govern digital safety and workplace protections (Smith, 2020). Investment in gender-sensitive technology design, including algorithms that prioritize user safety and privacy, can further enhance protective measures (Doe & Lee, 2021).

Corporate accountability remains a significant concern in addressing workplace GBV. Many companies have adopted Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives to combat GBV, yet these measures often lack transparency and independent oversight (Adams, 2022). Effective accountability requires third-party audits, regular reporting on workplace safety, and collaboration with advocacy organizations to ensure the protection of all employees (Johnson & Williams, 2019). Furthermore, intersectional approaches are essential, considering that women, non-binary individuals, and marginalized groups experience workplace GBV at higher

SUGGESTIONS

Tech companies must adopt a proactive and multi-faceted approach to combat gender-based violence (GBV) in the workplace. Strengthening human resources policies and implementing clear and transparent complaint mechanisms are crucial for ensuring employees feel safe reporting incidents without fear of retaliation. These policies should include strict anti-harassment guidelines, confidential reporting structures, and zero-tolerance enforcement measures. Additionally, mandatory training programs focused on GBV awareness and prevention should be regularly conducted to educate employees at all levels on recognizing and addressing workplace violence.

Investment in AI-driven monitoring tools can help detect and mitigate online harassment in real time, ensuring that harmful content is identified and removed before it escalates. Tech companies should also collaborate with civil society organizations, policymakers, and legal bodies to develop more comprehensive regulatory frameworks that address both offline and online GBV effectively. Furthermore, prioritizing employee mental health and support programs can significantly improve workplace safety by providing survivors with access to counselling and legal assistance. By implementing these recommendations, tech companies can enhance workplace safety, foster an inclusive environment, and establish themselves as leaders in corporate responsibility for GBV prevention.

CONCLUSION

Gender-based violence (GBV) in the workplace, both online and offline, remains a pressing issue that tech companies must actively address. As key players in digital communication and workplace environments, these companies bear significant responsibility for fostering safer, more inclusive workspaces. This research highlights that while many tech firms have implemented policies and technological solutions to curb GBV, challenges persist in enforcement, transparency, and accountability. Despite efforts such as AI-driven content moderation, internal reporting mechanisms, and corporate social responsibility initiatives, gaps remain in policy effectiveness and the protection of marginalized groups. Underreporting due to fear of retaliation, inconsistencies in enforcement, and the ever-evolving nature of digital harassment continue to hinder comprehensive workplace safety.

To mitigate GBV effectively, tech companies must strengthen their policies, invest in employee education and training, and establish clearer regulatory frameworks in collaboration with governments and advocacy groups. Additionally, integrating ethical AI solutions and providing greater transparency in policy implementation will ensure a more proactive approach to mitigating workplace GBV. Ultimately, addressing GBV requires a sustained, multi-stakeholder effort that combines corporate responsibility, policy enforcement, and technological innovation. By prioritizing employee well-being and fostering a culture of accountability, tech companies can lead the way in creating safer, more equitable work environments for all gender identities.

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