

Work Life Hell in Finnish Social Media Discussions

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This article investigates social media discussions regarding a hellish work life. Relevant blogs and discussion chains are analysed in light of characteristics captured from theological models and interpretations of hell. Although the term 'hell' is used colloquially as a metaphor and swear word, this paper demonstrates that classical theological views on hell can shed new light on different aspects of work life. Identifying the classical meanings and traditional features of hell aids in recognising and analysing relevant features of a hellish work life, including the irreversible, hopeless, penalising and (pre)determined nature of hell. The social media content analysed comes from Finnish-language discussion platforms, electronic journals published online and blogs. All social media content and discussions analysed refer explicitly to work life as a hell, indicating sources of job dissatisfaction and occupational stress. Correspondingly, job satisfaction is approached in this study from the perspective of employees' attitudes to and feelings about the social reality that they perceive in their workplace. According to the results, the key features making one's work life hellish are the experiences of being mistreated by a boss or workmate and the related feeling of helplessness.

Keywords: hell, hellish, social media, work life, workplace bullying

1 Introduction

Human relations in workplaces, between superiors and subordinates and between staff and clients, are often complex and challenging. At worst, a person's experiences with other people at work can be hellish, and for many, that characterisation is no overstatement. A boss's, colleague's or client's unfriendly and inappropriate behaviour can cause great distress and discomfort. Under occupational health and safety laws around the world, workplace bullying and harassment are identified as being core psychosocial hazards for the adult population (Productivity Commission 2010: 279-288). People may also compare their workplaces to hell for a variety of other reasons: massive workloads, the complexity of work, poor working conditions, unrealistic deadlines, long commutes, low salaries, dismal job security and even having to balance multiple jobs. Such frustrating difficulties at all dimensions of work life can make a worker moan, 'This is hell!'

The purpose of this paper is to investigate social media discussions on the topic of a hellish work life. Relevant blogs and discussion chains are analysed in light of the characteristics captured from theological models and interpretations of hell found in research literature. Although the term *hell* is colloquially used as a metaphor and swear word, this paper demonstrates that theological views on hell can shed new light on different aspects of work life (Kvanvig 1993, Walls 1992). Thus, identifying the theological meanings and features of hell can aid in recognising and analysing relevant features of a hellish work

life, including the irreversible, hopeless, penalising and (pre)determined nature of hell. The analysis provided offers a philosophical insight and commentary on job dissatisfaction as reflected in social media.

2 Methods and data

The analysed social media content comes from Finnish language discussion platforms, electronic journals published online and blogs. This content was assumed to offer an authentic and blunt view into the reasons for job dissatisfaction, and the data collected confirmed this assumption. The materials were chosen based on the fact that they referred explicitly to work life as a hell. The data collection took place in December 2019 with 104 individual informants (bloggers, authors, commenters). The social media content was taken from the years 2003 to 2019. Most informants were anonymous and used aliases. No background information was available except the obvious fact that they were all employed Finnish speakers. Their gender, age, place of residence, profession and other personal details were, in most cases unknown, but in some cases implied, and thus cannot be used as a basis for comparison and classification. Further, the informants' familiarity with theological views on hell is totally unknown. Therefore, this study uses the theological views of hell only to help identify and thematise the features of a hellish work life found in the data.

The social media content collected was closely read and coded based on the characteristics captured from theological interpretations of hell. In constructing those characteristics, the analyses presented by Kvanvig (1993) and Walls (1992) appeared to be especially relevant. The constructed features of work life hell were used to identify and categorise experiences of job dissatisfaction described in social media.

Earlier studies have revealed that social media users show not only information about the issues and events that occurred but also their sentiments (Zafarani et al. 2014, Yoo et al. 2018). These shared information patterns and expressed sentiments and opinions are studied in this article in relation to the problems of work life. The focus is on informants' experiences worded in hell terms. Thus, their perceptions of job dissatisfaction are noted and analysed.

In the past, job satisfaction was mainly approached from the perspective of need fulfilment, i.e. whether or not the job met the employee's physical and psychological needs for the factors provided by work, such as a respectable salary and social status (e.g. Porter 1962, Wolf 1970). However, this approach has been de-emphasised, because today most researchers tend to focus attention on cognitive processes rather than on underlying needs. The attitudinal perspective has become predominant in the study of job satisfaction (Spector 1997: 2). The present study does not ignore the attitudinal perspective nor the perspective of need fulfilment, but focuses on categorising the internal objects of informants' hell

speech. This is assumed to reveal important reasons, both attitudinal and need-based, for job dissatisfaction. Thus, this study exploits the concept of hell as a metaphor for expressing and interpreting negative work-life experiences people have shared on social media. In order to fully exploit the potential of the metaphor, the concept of hell needs to be first presented and analysed.

When a hellish work life is discussed, the question of the theology easily comes to the fore, by way of association. To avoid misunderstandings, it is important to point out that the term ‘work’ in Christian theology primarily refers to human deeds and activity opposite God’s grace – a topic that was actively discussed by classic theologians, such as Augustine and Luther. They discussed human action especially from two perspectives. First, humans are fallen, hubris being a fundamental sin, and in need of salvation. Sinful inclinations and deeds draw humans away from God and fellow human beings, and human attempts (i.e. works) to correct this condition are hopeless. Secondly, sanctification (i.e. the process of being made holy) and good works brought about by the Holy Spirit are beneficial for fellow human beings, albeit not the basis for salvation which comes by grace alone because of Christ’s saving work. A specific issue is the role of human will in salvation. Nearly every major Christian tradition has emphasised that God is the sole agent in salvation. Thus, salvation is not based on human will. This view was endorsed by Augustine and Luther alike, and salvation by grace alone is a major topic in Lutheran theology (Ruokanen 2018). That topic is also linked with the doctrine of hell that can be characterised as the doctrine of remaining without salvation.

3 The concept of hell

Jonathan Kvanvig has presented a much-cited theological analysis of the concept of hell. He states that the traditional view of hell is composed of the following four elements (Kvanvig 1993: 19, 25):

- (1) The Anti-Universalism Thesis: Some persons are consigned to hell.
- (2) The Existence Thesis: Hell is a place where people exist, if they are consigned there.
- (3) The No Escape Thesis: There is no possibility of leaving hell, and there is nothing one can do, change, or become in order to get out of hell, once one is consigned there.
- (4) The Retribution Thesis: The justification for and purpose of hell is retributive in nature, hell being constituted so as to mete out punishment to those whose earthly lives warrant it.

According to Kvanvig (1993), these theses are compatible with several models of hell. For example, the theses fit both the view that those who have gone to hell suffer eternal torments and the view that hell is a mere separation from the blessings of heaven.

Walls (1992: 12-14) has recorded six models of hell, which in part overlap with Kvanvig’s classification:

1. *The traditional popular view*: Hell is God's eternal punishment, which falls on all who die in a state of sin. The punishment contains corporeal distress and it will be the fate of the great majority of the human race.
2. *The traditional orthodox view*: Hell is God's eternal punishment of all who refuse His grace to the end of life. The proportion of the saved to the lost and the nature of God's punishment is, however, unknown to human beings.
3. *The traditional Calvinistic view*: God has sovereignly chosen who will be saved and who will be damned.
4. *The modified orthodox view*: The eternal destiny of human beings is not sealed at death. God continues to offer grace after death. There is no end to the opportunity to receive salvation. Nevertheless, some will forever reject God's grace and experience the corresponding pain of being forever separated from God.
5. *The hopeful universalist view*: It is very probably or almost certain that all persons will eventually come to salvation by God's saving endeavours. It remains, however, logically possible that some will resist God forever.
6. *The convinced universalist view*: All persons will be saved, and the idea of eternal punishment is morally unacceptable.

These models contain different aspects and features, the counterparts of which can be found in the discussion on a hellish work life. Many aspects of one's work life can cause the feeling of a persistent, even endless, torture, involving both physical and psychological distress. The situation can be incomprehensible and mysterious in various ways. Part of the incomprehensibility is that the bad situation seems to be predetermined by external and uncontrollable forces. Some partiality is included ('some are damned and some saved') and the situation is felt to be morally unacceptable. However, there may be some hope available: a change may be possible under certain, yet undefined, conditions.

Since the Enlightenment, the doctrine has been one of the most disapproved of themes of Christian theology, having been criticised by atheists and by liberal Christians alike. The idea of hell has been evaluated negatively, partly on logical grounds, but mostly, however, on moral grounds (Walker 1964: 28). The moral criticism has especially revolved around the idea of eternal punishment, which the doctrine of hell has been seen to involve. Eternal punishment has been regarded as cruel and excessively severe punishment, especially in so far as it has been considered to involve everlasting torment for sins that were finite both in duration and in seriousness. Eternal punishment has also been considered to be in contradiction to the Christian notion of a loving God.

A modern classical example of moral criticism directed against the doctrine of hell is found in Bertrand Russell's essay 'Why I am not a Christian' (1957: 12):

There is one very serious defect to my mind in Christ's moral character, and that is that He believed in hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment. Christ certainly as depicted in the Gospels did believe

in everlasting punishment, and one does find repeatedly a vindictive fury against those people who would not listen to His preaching an attitude which is not uncommon with preachers, but which does somewhat detract from superlative excellence. You do not, for instance, find that attitude in Socrates.

Russell (1957) not only thought that eternal punishment and the belief in it were morally blameworthy, he held it particularly reprehensible that eternal punishment was used as a deterrent by which to threaten those who disagreed with a religious system, organisation, or belief.

Speaking of hell with the intent to intimidate or deter is not limited to the Biblical tradition. A short survey of the Koran shows that hell and eternal punishment are also used as a deterrent in Islam. Further, the idea of punishment in the afterlife has not been used as a constraint only in religion. In Europe, civil authorities used hell as a deterrent until the 17th century, when it began to lose its hold on people beliefs (Walker 1964: 4).

There are several Christian thinkers who have attempted to reinterpret the doctrine of hell so that it does not involve the idea of an eternal punishment imposed by God. Instead, they have held that hell is the name of the state that some human beings choose on their own accord and which consists of not reaching the greatest good. Seymour (1998: 76) calls this view, according to which hell is not a punishment at all, 'the separationist view of hell'. Regarding the topic of a hellish work life, this kind of approach is non-existent, for understandable reasons: no one chooses a work life hell. Rather, a hellish work life is always considered to be against one's will. It might be possible in principle that one remains in a hellish workplace even if a change is possible. However, this circumstance was not encountered in the analysed data.

Several classical theologians assumed that the state after this life is static in the sense that those who are in heaven cannot fall again. This view of the afterlife has been more common in Christian theology than the dynamic view in which a new Fall is possible. There are logical and psychological reasons for this. The notion of heaven is commonly associated with the idea of moral perfection; thus it does not allow a new Fall to be a viable option. This thought has been psychologically more attractive than the dynamic view. Whether the concept of heaven is static or dynamic in this way affects one's understanding of the deterrence hell is supposed to create. Walker (1964: 131) says that if it is possible to fall or to commit sin in heaven, hell can also work as a deterrent of the saved in a future life. On the contrary, Quinn (1978: 147) points out that punishment for sin in a theistic model is retributive in the first place and that the torments of hell are not believed by theists to deter human beings who have gone there from future transgressions. Kvanvig (1993:165) also claims that the justification for punishment in the traditional view of hell is retribution.

When Kvanvig's list of the main characteristics of hell is adapted to the context of work life, the following features of work life hell can be distinguished:

1. A hellish work life is a problem for some, but not all employees.
2. It is a real problem, not merely a pseudo-problem or something created in one's mind.
3. People who suffer from it share the feeling of finality and helplessness.
4. They also share the experience of mistreatment and abuse.

Further, based on the models of hell identified by Walls (1992), the characteristics of a hellish work life can be further developed by the following items:

5. One can experience persistent distress with no relief in sight.
6. People who perceive work life to be hell have both physical and psychological symptoms.
7. The workplace situation feels incomprehensible and unfathomable.
8. The hellish situation feels caused or predetermined by an external factor or actor who is, more often than not, a boss or a workmate.
9. One feels alone and isolated.
10. There may still be some hope available.

In view of these key features, I will now proceed to investigate the topic of work life hell in Finnish social media discussions. Features 1 ('the problem of some but not all employees') and 2 ('a real problem') from the above list are indicated only if a blogger or discussant explicitly mentions or emphasises them. No blogger or commenter considers a hellish work life to be a totally universal problem or a mere figment of the imagination.

4 The social media content analysed

The following section presents social media content, illustrating examples from different sources. These are discussed to an extent that enables us to draw relevant conclusions and implications. The numbers in square brackets refer to the features of work life hell listed in the above ten-point list.

Based on the social media content used in this study, some persons, but not all, consider their work life as hellish. Thus, hellish workplaces are a reality. Some people feel that it is very difficult, if not impossible for them, to get out of such hell. They should find a new job where they would be happier, or another change should take place in their workplace: a new boss should appear, some of the fellow workers should move to another job, or a fairer division of labour should be implemented. People do not consider a hellish work life as a just punishment for their own sins, but as an injustice. Moreover, they may think that those who harass or bully them at work deserve to be punished.

[Blog 1:] The blog ‘Hell at the Workplace’ (Helvetti työpaikalla) addresses bullying-related experiences by an individual employee. The blogger indicates that her writing is a means for her to deal with workplace bullying.

She wrote: ‘This is a really sensitive subject. First of all, it is really difficult to tell anyone [9] that you have been subjected [1] to mistreatment [3]. I’m also really afraid of what happens if I go ahead’. [2]

The author, an employee of the state, indicates that the key reason for her problems is a poor relationship with her new supervisor. This negative situation has already lasted for three years [5]. The author identifies the core reason to be her superiors [8] who are unskilled, poorly informed and unfriendly in their management style [4]. She also says that the workload is unequally divided. However, the main reason she does not get along with her manager is based on an old wage dispute.

‘I’ve been sick with the flu all week. I have fever that I reduce with medication. I can’t stay home from work. The reason is so simple that I dare not really call my manager. I fear him [5] so much’. [6]

The blogger also has some problems with other people at work:

‘A colleague [8] distorts my statements and rebukes me in our one-on-one meetings. Rebuking me for doing my job...and for how I make decisions about how to do my job’. [4]

The blogger thinks that her superior’s negative attitude is not only directed at her, but her whole team.

‘The supervisor has something [7] against our entire team. [1] So we’re all in the same mess. I don’t know how she treats other teams she leads. [8] At least I haven’t heard anything negative and things seem to be going well. On the other hand, I could also be completely wrong’.

The blogger describes her anxiety and physical symptoms at some length:

‘Most workdays [5] are just pain. Even in the evening, sleep does not come because work matters are spinning in my mind. On a bad night, it is no fun at all. In the morning sometimes I throw up—I really vomit. I have a squeezing feeling and a twinge in my chest on my way to work. My heart has been tested for that matter and there is nothing wrong with it. The doctor has directly stated that all my heart symptoms are due to stress’. [6]

According to Church Father Augustine (354–430), in hell the damned suffer the physical sufferings and the unfruitful remorse in their souls (*De civitate Dei*, XXI.ix). This was a

common view also among the medieval theologians. For example, Thomas Aquinas held that those who go to hell suffer physical pain and pain of conscience (*Summa theologiae*, suppl., q. 97, a. 1-2; Henberg 1990: 139). In workplace hell, the pain of conscience is replaced by anxiety caused by the behaviour of a superior or co-worker.

The same blogger continues: ‘When I arrive at the workplace, simply pressing the elevator button seems impossible. My hands shake and my heart beats fast. One day I burst into tears in an elevator because of anxiety. Then, during the lift trip, I must try to get a grip on myself. By the afternoon, a massive headache begins. The headache eases only when I get home’. [6]

The blogger related that a one-month sick leave did not help her to recover from stress and anxiety.

‘At night, if I happen to sleep, I dream about my job. And the dream is always [5] a nightmare [4]. In the morning when I wake up, I don’t know if I’ve slept at all. I am unable to distinguish between those moments when I spent the night staying awake and pondering things and those moments when I’ve slept but have had dreams about the workplace. From the very beginning of the morning, I feel really anxious’. [6]

Thus, in such a workplace hell, persistent distress and physical as well as psychological pain are key characteristics.

‘I had a long chat with an occupational nurse last week. She suggested a discussion on well-being at work, but none [5] of the previous discussions were helpful’. [3]

The blogger also refers to rude remarks and giving an incorrect [4] statement to a superior. In addition, the blogger tells she has used the services of a health and safety delegate.

The reader gets a very dim view of the situation and finally starts to consider that the blogger is deeply depressed and definitely needs help. One reason for this conclusion is that the blogger openly tells about her medication. This is a real work life hell, but that hell is very much dependent on the blogger’s psychic constitution and temperament.

[Discussion platform 3:] Under the title ‘Workplace Hell’, a discussant states, ‘I don’t know what to do anymore [3]. My co-workers interfere with my work and criticise my work [4]. All this has made me stressed’. [5] Thus, in the discussant’s opinion, the difficult situation at work is created by colleagues through their constant barrage of criticism and interference.

Another discussant says, ‘In workplace hell you won’t feel the heat, just the cold treatment you get [4]. If you make the mistake of starting to defend yourself or someone else

who is oppressed, that's where the real purgatory [5] begins [8]'. This discussant plays with the classical idea of the heat in hell associated with a punishment of torment and agony.

Another commenter says: 'We also have a workplace hell [1]. One colleague [8] does not get to work on time and leaves whenever he wants. He selects his work, and accuses others of better benefits. He supervises what others should do. Does he have something on his conscience?' [7] Thus, the characterisations of workplace hell in social media discussions differ in terms of intensity and targeting: some discussants refer to bullying as simply one person teasing another, while others refer to more general misbehaving and impoliteness.

[Electronic journal 3:] As an example of the latter, comments and messages that employees give to each other can be very rude, even aggressive, like this one directed at one's colleagues on a lunch break: 'Diners! Fuck you all and keep those food scraps out of the sewer. Damn idiots!' [4] The critic, the journal's editor, calls the tone of this comment as hellish, meaning rude and bad-tempered.

[Blog 4:] Other commenters pay attention to the important role of superiors. In a blog article, entitled 'When a Workplace is Hell', an interviewee shares: 'Who's the boss [8] who would take measures if he himself is the one whose behaviour should be changed?' A worker, who was a victim of inappropriate treatment by a supervisor in a ministry, collapses when she hears about a labour law reform related to workplace harassment. 'After all, psychopaths never see anything wrong with their behaviour. If they take any action at all [3], it means that a subordinate would probably be fired!' [4] A feeling of injustice and helplessness is strong here.

[Blog 2:] Under the title 'A Workplace from Hell', a blogger describes his/her experiences when an employer does not have trust in employees: 'But worst of all is the way the municipal sector and public administration [8] treat their employees primarily as unreliable thieves'. [4] This blogger sees grave problems in the work culture of public organisations in terms of trust and managerial skills.

[Electronic journal 2:] Based on social media discussions, bullying and harassment are a major reason why people think their job is a hell: 'The bullying left deep scars, [4]; it takes time [10] to recover [6] and I would not wish anyone [1] to experience the same hell I had to experience'. Although the terms *bullying* and *harassment* are often used interchangeably when talking about hurtful or harmful behaviour, there are important distinctions in the definition, laws and protections for employees experiencing harassment. Bullying refers to behaviour that hurts, harms or humiliates another person physically or emotionally. Harassment is defined as bullying behaviour that is based on one's race, colour, religion, sex, age, disability or national origin (Productivity Commission 2010:

282-283, 288-290). Bullying is prevalent compared to harassment, which is almost non-existent as the source of agony in the material analysed.

[Electronic journal 4:] According to an Internet article, returning to work from vacation can be particularly distressing if the workplace is such that a bully waits there to make one's workday a hell. It is estimated that over 100,000 Finns feel they have been bullied at work. Accordingly, a working day is a nightmare for a person who is bullied: 'Rather unemployed [10] than bullied [4] at work', an interviewee says.

[Blog 5:] Seeking a new job can also be a reason why work life can become a hell: 'If the boss [8] finds out [that I seek a new job], he would make my life [3] a hell'. [4] Thus, this employee is afraid and thinks that he/she has to hide the job search from the manager.

[Discussion platform 1:] A discussant titles his/her comment 'Workplace = Hell' and states: 'I work in a customer service position in a family company. I have been working there for a few weeks and gradually, I have begun to feel that my head will explode. [6] The behaviour of the family members [8] towards workers is truly inferior.' [4] Again here, the hellish features of work life are related to management. Bullying and other unfriendly behaviour by managers or co-workers are the main features of a hellish work life.

The same discussant continues: 'Going to work is now a compulsory but unpleasant task, and I am waiting for my fixed term contract to expire. I still have to make it to the end of August before I get out of hell'. [10] Thus, some hope rises from the fact that work life hell is not eternal, but will end some day.

[Electronic journal 5:] 'I still remember very closely the horrible types [8] who made every day [5] a hell [4]. I remember the individual words and things that were said about me', an interviewee recounts. Thus, the experience of bullying and harassment can be deeply wounding and can leave a permanent psycho-physical injury.

[Blog 3:] A blogger says in a post, entitled 'Your Work Community: A Heaven or a Hell', 'Heaven has an open, equitable, supportive, democratic and human-dominated culture. [...] Luckily I haven't been [1] to hell, but an organisation is going there. Just yesterday I heard scandalous stories from my own ICT organisation. Co-workers watch out for each other, and everyone is afraid of losing their job. There is no encouragement to express opinions openly [3]. There is mutual distrust and evil talk about others behind their backs [4] to lift oneself up. We are nasty to each other even when feeling sick about it ourselves'. Thus, a cold and unfriendly atmosphere among co-workers is considered a characteristic of a hellish work life.

[Discussion platform 2:] A discussant says that one of his colleagues is from hell: 'My co-worker [8] thinks that he is above everyone else, even though he is only one of us, a

worker, not a manager. His word is supposed to be the law. He is always “right”. He is offensive and rude [4]. “Fuck you” can be heard endlessly [2]. Clients and colleagues are treated in an ugly and disrespectful way. He comes to work on his own time and always complains about everything. He can’t stand criticism or negative feedback. He cultivates negativity like the plague.’ Thus, the discussant describes his colleague as a malicious person who educes a bad feeling towards others.

5 Discussion

Based on the above data presentation and analysis, the following conclusions can be made. Typically, a couple of major features make one’s work life like a hell: the experience of being mistreated by a boss or co-worker and the feeling of helplessness (Table 1). Almost all bullying cases were non-physical, mainly verbal and blame- and disparagement-related, and no serious physical violence was involved. No cases of sexual harassment were reported. The details of exactly how and why bullying took place remain rather vaguely described. Further, the data used for this study contains no comments or mention of rude or unfriendly customers. Moreover, many common problems of work life are absent from the list of hellish features recognised in this study. Not only the tools of analysis used in this study (i.e., the features captured from theological models and interpretations of hell) are unable to identify such problems, but also the informants left them untouched. Some of these unmentioned problems are, for example, massive workloads, unrealistic deadlines, long commutes and low salaries.

Relatively common features of a work life hell mentioned in the data are the physical and psychological symptoms of employees who are subject to bullying or encounter other psychosocial tribulations in their workplace. Incomprehensibility of bullying is also an often-mentioned aspect. The data included only a few references to hope and positive future outlooks for those whose work life is hell.

The metaphor of a hell has proved to be a fruitful means for analysing workplace bullying and human relations-related problems in workplaces. The metaphor offers useful features in light of which the psychosocial problems in workplaces can be identified and analysed. However, the metaphor of hell was not able to implicate the fact that the cases analysed are mainly related to a boss’s behaviour and to a lesser extent to the behaviour of other co-workers. Thus, when the hellish situation in a workplace feels caused or predetermined by an external actor, that actor is more often than not a boss. In the classical theological models of hell, the torments inflicted by the Devil and his cohorts are a kind of sideshow when compared to more abstract aspects of eternal damnation: separation from God and pain of conscience.

In literature – first in Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (ca. 1308–1320) – and visual arts, the vivid accounts of sinners tormented by demons have played an important educational role, acting as a deterrent to the masses. Especially in Catholic theology, there are specific doctrines concerning the role and power of the Devil and demons. However, the doctrine of hell as such focuses on human eternal destiny instead of the Devil’s action, whereas in work life hell, unfair and despotic bosses and co-workers play the major role. Thus, the deterring aspects of work life are immanent rather than transcendent: one’s own memories and other examples of a hellish work life can be a deterrent for those who have moved on to a better job and a more pleasant work community.

Table 1. Features of work life hell recognised in different sources of data (B1–B5: blogs, D1–D3: discussion platforms, E1–E4: electronic journals)

		B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	D 1	D 2	D 3	E1	E2	E3	E4
<i>Number of informants:</i>		1	1	1	3	1	6	30	50	10	1	1	1
1.	The problem of some but not all employees	x		x						x			
2.	A real problem	x						x					
3.	The feeling of helplessness	x		x	x	x			x				
4.	The experience of mistreatment and abuse	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
5.	Persistent distress	x							x				
6.	Physical and psychological symptoms	x					x			x			
7.	Incomprehensibility	x	x						x				
8.	Caused by an external actor	x	x		x	x	x	x	x				x
9.	The perception of being alone	x											
10.	Some hope available						x			x		x	

Fredrik Herzberg, an American psychologist and management researcher, has suggested that in terms of job satisfaction, humans have two major need systems. The first is the basic need to avoid pain, and the second is the need to grow and develop as a person. Herzberg (2008) has further divided job satisfaction into two parts involving motivational factors that increase and decrease job dissatisfaction. He states that these two types of factors are independent of one another, meaning that the opposite of job satisfaction is not job dissatisfaction but no job satisfaction, and the opposite of job dissatisfaction is not job satisfaction but no job dissatisfaction (Herzberg 2008; Robbins 2001: 157-160). With regard to the present study, the opposite of a hellish work life is not a heavenly work life, but no job dissatisfaction, meaning that employees feel neutral or simply tolerate their employment in terms of job satisfaction.

6 Conclusion

This study has investigated social media discussions on the topic of a hellish work life. Relevant blogs and discussion chains were analysed in light of the features captured from theological models and interpretations of hell. Based on analysing the concept of hell, ten main features of work life hell were distinguished. According to the results, a couple of key features make one's work life like hell: the experience of being mistreated by a boss or workmate and the related feeling of helplessness. The metaphor of hell has shown to provide a fruitful means for analysing and categorising social media discussions on bullying and other psychosocial problems in workplaces. What the metaphor of hell was not able to predict is the fact that the cases analysed are mainly related to a boss's behaviour and to a lesser extent to the behaviour of other co-workers. Based on the study, unfair and despotic bosses and co-workers play the major role in work life hell.

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