Digital Expressions of Discontent: A Computational Analysis of Anti-Work Reddit Communities and Evolving Work Narratives

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Ever since the Covid-19 pandemic, unemployment rates have steadily risen from 3.4% in April 2023 to 4.4% most recently in 2026. Amidst escalating economic inequality and worker burnout, online platforms such as Reddit have become dynamic spaces for expressing discontent. Existing studies of anti-work sentiments largely fixated on the subreddit r/antiwork during the peak of the Great Resignation—the widespread voluntary quitting of jobs that began in 2021. This study, however, posits that such a limited perspective fails to accurately shape anti-work discourse. Thus, a longitudinal computational linguistic analysis was conducted across the three most relevant anti-work subreddits: r/antiwork, r/workreform, and r/workersstrikeback, from 2019 to 2025. Valence Aware Dictionary and Sentiment Reasoner (VADER) sentiment analysis was utilized to obtain polarity and objectivity scores, while Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topics revealed underlying thematic ideas and larger discourse patterns. Results suggest that provocative, opinion-based content drives the greatest user interaction, with negative emotions acting as a central agent for sustained conversations. These insights provide news outlets and policymakers with a more holistic perspective on worker sentiment and the increasing complexity of evolving Anti-work movements.

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