
18th edition of the Conference "Risk in Contemporary Economy",
RCE2017, June 9-10, 2017, Galati, Romania

Risk in Contemporary Economy

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<https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc.rce2017.1.23>

How to cite: Bondac, G. T., Hrestic, M. L., Sinisi, I. (2017). The Mobbing Phenomene and its Impact on the Employees Activity. In S. Hugues, & N. Cristache (eds.), *Risk in Contemporary Economy* (pp. 274-283). Iasi, Romania: LUMEN Proceedings. <https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc.rce2017.1.23>

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of the conference



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The Mobbing Phenomene and its Impact on the Employees Activity

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Abstract

Mobbing is a less known phenomenon, but its effects are real and worrying. This is a form of psychological abuse encountered at work by any of the superiors or colleagues through repeated aggressive acts. This article defines the notion of mobbing, presents its conceptual delimitations and dynamics, drawing attention to its impact on the employees' activity, as well as measures to counteract this phenomenon. Organizations should pay more attention to mobbing problems at the workplace as it significantly affects the employee's performance.

Keywords: *mobbing, employee, stress, conflict.*

1. Introduction

Mobbing is a phenomenon at the border with discrimination and can only be considered as a type of discrimination. It relates only to the workplace and refers mainly to the psychological pressure actions made on the employee by an employer or a group of colleagues to cause the employee to leave the job, provided that dismissal is not possible, having no good reason, from the point of view of professionalism.

The dismissed employee has, in the long run, a series of humiliations and injustices that make him unable to perform his activities at work and whose purpose is to bring him to the point where he gives up psychically

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and quits his job on his own. The humiliations and pressures to which he is subjected cause him psychological as well as social harm, even affecting his state of health.

Mobbing can also be related to the phenomenon of classic discrimination. An employer wants to remove another employee for various reasons. Although this phenomenon is linked in many situations to the embarrassing professionalism of the employee who becomes a victim, other motives may also support mobbing (for example: reasons of sexual intercourse, moving to an improper office, hiding front papers by him, cutting access to the Internet, not communicating with him), all of which make the employee unable to carry his service activities.

As long as there is no discussion about this kind of hostile action to an employee, with the tacit consent of the other subordinates who fear the loss of the job, the employer can do the same with other employees in the future, becoming a repeat promoter of the phenomenon of mobbing in organizations.

Classical discrimination refers to unfair or unequal treatment in rapport to that applied to other colleagues or groups due to differences in age, gender, ethnicity, country of origin, etc.

The specificity of discrimination is that what is imputed is not addressed to the person who becomes the target of discrimination but to the specificity of the entire group to which he belongs. Discrimination can be either direct or indirect, or positive or negative.

Thus, there are forms of relationships existing at the workplace, which violate the principles of equal opportunity - mobbing and bullying, which are the special forms of discrimination, not the classical ones, and especially have particular forms of manifestation.

2. Theoretical Background

Mobbing is a phenomenon which has entered more and more in the organizational-managerial psychology studies. Specialists have paid special attention to the categories of behaviors that are harmful to health at work, but also the performance of employees and the organization. Exposure to such treatments is more damaging to employees than all other sources of stress at work.

The central element of the mobbing is the repeated and lasting nature of the negative behavior to which the target is exposed. Leymann considered it relevant in defining the phenomenon a minimum of 6 months of psychological aggression. There are at least four major categories of the phenomena concerned, presented in the literature:

- ❖ *Words related but not equivalent to mobbing* (aggression, persecution, domination), this category is characterized by the deliberate, targeted aspect of the aggressor's action with respect to the victim, and by highlighting the power imbalance;
- ❖ *Generic terms and expressions containing elements of the concept of mobbing* (workplace harassment, workplace violence, antisocial behavior in organizations, undesirable behavior), this category highlights the unwillingness to interact;
- ❖ *Relatively equivalent names to mobbing* (psychological violence, moral harassment, emotional abuse at work, abusive / bullying), this category underlines the systematic, cumulative, gradual nature of the phenomenon.
- ❖ *Partial manifestations of mobbing* (arrogance, mockery, stinging, abusive supervision, indirect aggressive behavioral behavior), this category reveals concrete behaviors specific to mobbing.

Specialists paid special attention to conceptual delimitation, using a series of comparative analyzes (Table 1).

Table 1. The main characteristics of the two phenomena

	BULLYING	MOBBING
The author (s)	A person, often a superior	Colleagues
Target (Targets)	Poor, humble	Qualified over average
Motivation	Getting power	Threat of power
The actions derive from	Strengthen your own position	Envy, jealousy
The trigger situation	The feeling of the author of the failure	Organizational conflict
Traceable effects	Injury of the victim (light target)	Removal from the organization
Methods	Elementary	Complex
Mapping activities	Obviously abnormal interactions,	Disguised in interactions
Attack	Inadequate	Normal, common
Protection	Direct	Indirect
Frequency	Rather informally	Rather formally
Duration	Singular or regular occurrence,	Appears regularly, at least once
When the victim crashes	Without a specific pattern	Per week
When the victim resists	Variable ranges	Long duration, at least 6 months

Management	The victim loses its efficacy	The victim leaves the organization
Consequences of the aggressor	Attackers retreat	Attackers get power
Consequences on the victim	Loss of self-confidence, anger, indisposition, frustration, doubts	
Organizational Consequences	On mental health, unemployment	
Social Consequences	Low productivity, decreased efficiency, creativity, loss	

Source: Bultena, C., Whatcott, R. B., (2008), Bushbacked at work: A Comparative Analysis of Mobbing and Bullying at work, in „Proceedings of ASBBS” (American Society of Business and Behavioral Sciences),vol. 15, p. 661

The concept of bullying implies an imbalance, an inequality in the power relationship: the person exposed to the negative action has difficulties in defending himself and is to some extent helpless in relation to the persons who harass him, consequently the term can not be used when the person holds About the same physical and psychological force in the case of aversive interactions.

Bullying is an offensive behavior conducted through vindictive, cruel, malicious or humiliating attempts to undermine a person or group of employees. Such repeated negative attacks on professional performance and personal level are usually unpredictable and unjustified.

Instead, *mobbing* is viewed as a distinct form of systematic collective violence directed against an employee subjected to psychological harassment, for example, by continually exposing negative critical remarks, isolation, launching rumors, or ridiculing the person.

According to Leymann Heinz, the use of the term mobbing instead of bullying was preferred because the phenomenon in question often refers to a subtle but less direct aggression, as opposed to the rather physical aggression identified with the term bullying, But with the same negative effects.

3. The mobbing phenomen

In a broader sense, mobbing is often associated with harassment, mockery, psychological terror of a person at work. Zlate believes that by the concept of mobbing we should refer to affair situations, verbal attacks - in a word psychological terror at work. Mobbing does not face aggressiveness (e.g., door slamming, mass fist) where acts are direct and shifted to targets other than the subject. In the following figure are presented the main

features of the mobbing phenomenon, by which it differs from other phenomena (figure 1).

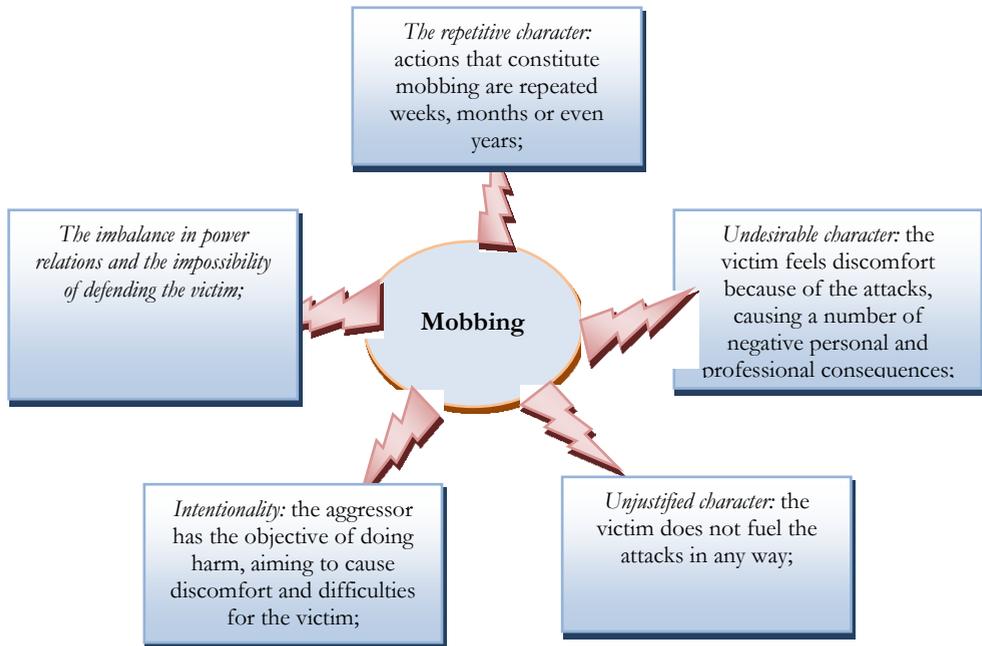


Figure 1. Main features of differentiation of mobbing

Source: elaborated by the author

We add to these features the following:

- *Harmfulness* - caused by the attack on the fundamental needs of the human being;
- *Frustrating character* - generating cognitive dissonances and emotional frustrations and alterations of interpersonal relationships;
- *Intrusive character* - the aggressor penetrates into the personal life of a victim without his / her consent;
- *The systematic nature of harmful conduct*, not accidental, passive, but repeatedly applied in accordance with a pattern of thought;
- *The subtle character*, the conduct having a somewhat indirect manifestation;
- *Incapacity of the victim to defend himself* - because of confusion, the person misunderstanding what is happening; The inadequacy of the development of coping mechanisms

- *Lack of interference from others*, the victim being left in the face of attacks and suffering;
- *The systematic nature of the phenomenon*, with effects in the adjacent relational and productive systems.

Although apparently it only includes the aggressor /aggressors and the victim, in reality this phenomenon involves a large number of employees who indirectly maintain the state of affairs and disrupt the relations through lack of intervention, avoiding involvement in defending the victim and ending the attacks.

We interpret the lack of intervention not as an absence of supportive behavior, but as a failure to fulfill responsibilities in labor relations.

4. Manifestations of mobbing

Mobbing can be found among colleagues, between their subordinates and their boss, between heads and subordinates, sometimes phenomena running at interpersonal level but usually at group level (a terrorist group of a whole group) and even organizational. It is particularly important to organize the behaviors (actions, practices) used by aggressors in relation to their victims. From Leymann's studies a series of behaviors can be extracted:

- ❖ *Of the colleagues, towards a single subject:*
 - not inviting the person to an action recognizing the membership of the team;
 - hostile, ironic remarks;
 - allusions to the physical appearance of people;
 - isolation of the individual from the team's communication network.
- ❖ *Behavior of bosses:*
 - tyranny;
 - Desires to know everything, to control everything, to the most significant details;
 - blending into all employees' actions, including their personal lives;
 - giving orders, constraining all communications in the service;
 - screaming, screaming, swearing;
 - absence of summoning at meetings;
 - relegation without foundation;
 - missions or imprecise tasks / ambiguities.

❖ *Behavior of subordinates:*

- refused to participate in a proposed action,
- malicious comments;
- lack of interest in the actions and initiatives of the person.

There have been identified 45 behaviors associated with the mobbing phenomenon. These are grouped into five categories, depending on the effects they have on the victims (Table 2).

Table 2. Systematization of behavior by categories

Behavioral categories specific to mobbing	
<i>1. Actions to prevent the victim from expressing himself</i>	a) From hierarchical superiority: the refusal to give the victim the opportunity to express himself/herself; the victim's written threat. b) From colleagues: the fact of preventing the victim from expressing himself/herself; screaming, victim's offense. c) On the part of bosses or colleagues: ignoring the presence of the victim; denial of contact with the victim; the constant interruption of the victim when he speaks; criticizing the victim's work; criticizing the victim's private life; verbal threat; terrorizing by phone calls.
<i>2. Actions to isolate the victim</i>	Lack of any discussion with the victim; Prohibition of any discussion of colleagues with the victim; Encouraging or blocking the victim's access to conversation with another person; Assigning a job that removes the victim from colleagues; Denial of the victim's physical presence.
<i>3. Actions involving the victim's disregard for colleagues</i>	Calomnia și bârfa la adresa victimei; Ridicularizarea victimei; Inventarea unei infirmități a victimei; Glume pe seama vieții private a victimei; Obligarea victimei să accepte activități umilitoare; Contestarea sau punerea sub semnul întrebării a deciziilor victimei.
<i>4. Professional victimization of the victim</i>	Slander and gossip on the victim; Lifting the victim; Inventing a victim's infirmity; Jokes about the victim's private life; Oblige the victim to accept humiliating activities; Contesting or questioning the victim's decisions.
<i>5. Compromise the victim's health</i>	Entrusting dangerous and harmful tasks to health; Threat with physical violence; Serious physical aggression without any holds.

Source: elaborated by the author

Aggressive behaviors suggest the gravity of mobbing. Critical criteria for identifying mobbing are their frequency and duration.

5. The dynamics of mobbing

Mobbing instinctively installs gradually through less aggressive and rare actions, evolving until it stabilizes as persistent and consciously organized action.

Leymann distinguishes four phases of evolution of mobbing:

- *The first phase* comprises a series of critical incidents: divergences of opinion, conflicts, struggle for power, one of which is solved by itself, but another part degenerates into mobbing.
- *The second phase* is characterized by the increased frequency of hostile behaviors, with the likelihood of multiplying the practices and even the number of aggressors. There is a gradual installation of mobbing, the psychic balance of the victim begins to shake, the symptoms of stress appear, the confidence decreases.
- *The third phase* requires leaders to be aware of the events and then to manifest attitudes ranging from non-involvement and leaving tensions to perpetuating the victim's attitude of condemnation.
- *The fourth phase* is the most traumatic and involves stigmatization, social isolation or even removal from the workplace, which diminishes its chances of joining other organizations and other jobs.

The mobbing process is often carried out in the absence of interventions by third parties with managerial or collegiate responsibilities to attenuate or stop the phenomenon, usually the victim is subjected to hostile treatment until it lands in one form or another.

6. Measures to counteract mobbing

Remedies to counteract mobbing are aimed at preventing detection, signaling, and timely intervention. Abandoning the victim is considered a major management failure.

Mobbing may currently be underdiagnosed as there is a tendency of "medical" industry practices to put stress diagnosis (professional or not) when consulting a patient affected by mobbing at work. In essence, mobbing is both a problem of organizational behavior, especially a management one. It is in the employer's interest to establish an effective policy of counteracting negative phenomena (Figure 2).

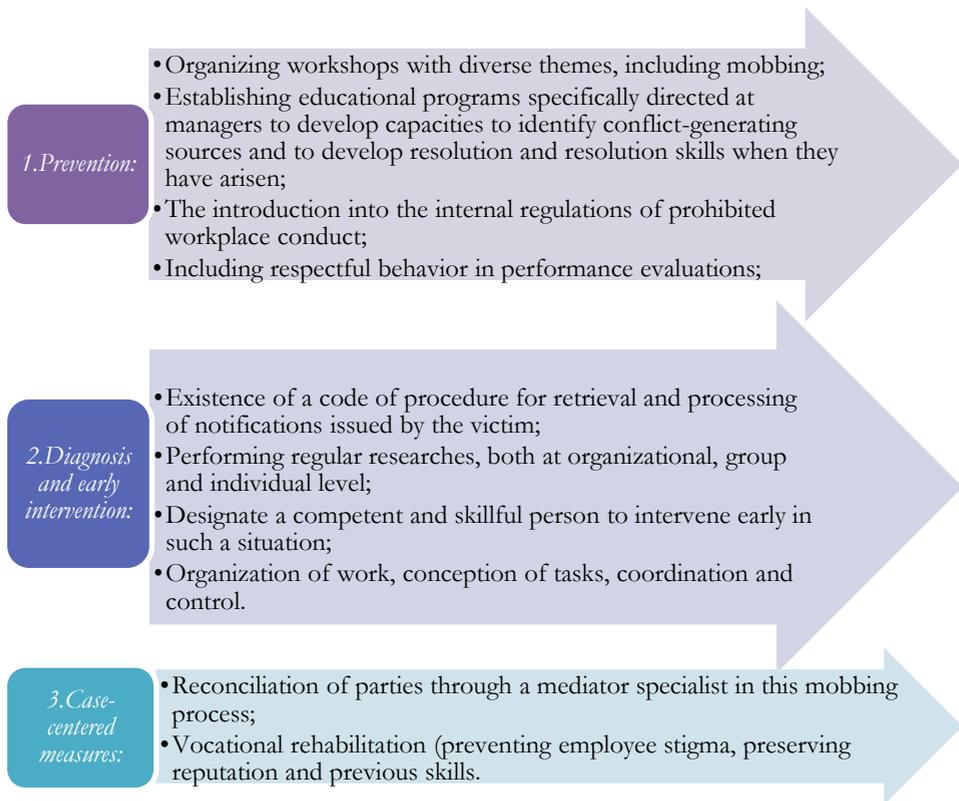


Figure 2. Measures to counteract mobbing

Source: elaborated by the author

Mobbing must have the same interest and the same preventive measures as accidents at work, as in this case it is psychosocial accidents that cause serious sequelae.

7. Conclusions

The mobbing phenomenon is the most difficult to identify, being not only an individual, professional and organizational disease but also a social one.

On the organizational level, the direct and indirect costs of mobbing are associated with the treatment of the physical and psychological disorders of the victims, the increase in the number of days of sick leave required and the increase in the fluctuation of staff.

Financial costs create frustration for organizations. In this respect, there has been a growing interest in designing a methodology for calculating

the cost of mobbing, and the conclusion of many specialists is that it would be more profitable to offer rehabilitation programs to employees, to reorganize the work environment than to continue treatment in the old manner.

At societal level, the effects of mobbing are prolongations of organizational and individual effects, affecting social and economic transactions. On the one hand, the individual's ability to maintain and conduct normal / natural relationships with family, social group and social institutions is altered.

In conclusion, organizations should pay special attention to the problems caused by the phenomenon of mobbing at the workplace, since they affect significantly the professional performance of the employees (victims).

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