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# STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF EDUCATION



BERND KÄPPLINGER, KRISTINKA OVESNI, JELENA VRANJEŠEVIĆ (EDS.)

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# STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

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# EDUCATION AND QUALITY OF LIFE AT WORK – TOWARDS THE PREVENTION AND OVERCOMING OF MOBBING<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The paper defines the current phenomenon of mobbing at work, who are primary and secondary victims, who are mobbers and what is the nature of their relationship. Also, through the description of the types of mobbing, you get an insight into the conditions, relationships, and the organizational environment in which mobbing is occurred, how it manifests and conducts. An integral part of this work is summarizing the causes of mobbing, drawing attention to the organization's responsibility for its occurrence and upkeep. In order to point out the importance of solving this problem, special area is devoted to summarize the direct and indirect consequences that mobbing leaves on employee, his/her family, friends, colleagues, superiors, the organization, but also the state and society. In this way, the insight into the complexity of this phenomenon is obtained, how and to what extent it can affect the quality of life of the victim, both at work and in private life. The worrying fact is that mobbing happens very often, at all hierarchical levels, among employees of different personality, status and power profiles, so it is difficult to prove it and therefore sanction it. There are various organizations and authors who point out the significance of this problem, its prevention, ways of overcoming and sanctioning it. This paper discusses various tools, measures and strategies to combat mobbing. It highlights and emphasizes the power of education, various types of information, awareness raising, counseling, training of all employees,

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primarily in the prevention, but also overcoming mobbing, and thus improving the quality of life at work.

**Keywords:** mobbing, victims, mobbers, causes and consequences of mobbing, prevention and overcoming mobbing, education

## Introduction

Mobbing has deep roots and a long history, but in the past thirty years Western society has begun to recognize harassment in the workplace as unacceptable, considering it as a cause of stress, illness and reduced productivity since it became an important topic of research throughout the Europe. This phenomenon becomes an actual topic. There are various governmental and non-governmental organizations, laws are passed regulating mobbing, other negative forms of behavior and violation of workers' rights. Also, there are various laws, European and international documents, institutions, strategies and action plans, researches, various actions and projects created with a purpose to prevent and solve mobbing at workplace. So far this problem has been observed from the medical, psychological and economic point of view, but we see the importance of observation from the andragogical perspective as well.

We focus on the educational measures and emphasize the power of education in helping individuals and organization in prevent and overcome mobbing. These are measures that include writing plans, programs, trainings of employees and managers, writing guides, counseling, creating an adequate job design, monitoring, evaluation, and the like.

Mobbing is a traumatic experience for an employee that leaves deep, serious and far-reaching consequences on the victim and the people in their environment by affecting the quality on their private and professional life. Work organization influences emergence and development of mobbing by fostering a culture and climate through the way of communication, cooperation and way of treatment of employees. As the organization is responsible for the emergence and maintenance of mobbing, we believe that it also can create mechanisms and find a systemic solution for prevention of mobbing through adequate and timely education and with the help of a consistent, equitable sanctions and support after mobbing.

## Definition of mobbing

The roots of researching harassment in the workplace, on the way we are doing that today, are found in the research of the theme of sexual abuse. Psychologist Brodsky in 1976. pointed out that sexual abuse was "only one of the

forms of harassment in the workplace” (Einarsen, 2000, In Čizmić, Vukelić, 2010: 64). After that, Saunders et al. (Saunders et al., 2007, In Čizmić, Vukelić, 2010: 64) stated in 2000. that employees are not exposed to sexual abuse and discrimination of race as much as to harassment in the broader sense. These findings significantly changed the image of the comprehensiveness and complexity of harassment in the workplace, expanding the field of interest and the way of researching this problem.

Although negative behaviors and harassment at work are phenomena that have existed for a long time, they have been intensively studied and explored in the last decade. Researchers, depending on the criteria they use, country and culture they come from, define and research this phenomenon differently, creating additional confusion for practitioners, institutions and the scientific world using different terminology for the same or similar phenomena.

At the beginning, term mobbing is used to describe the form of group behavior of animals, where a group of animals usually attacks the lonely animal. This term is then used to describe behavior of school children and after that, a well-known Swedish psychologist of German origin, Heinz Leymann (Čizmić, Vukelić, 2010), one of the first researchers of this phenomenon, transferred it from the school context to the field of research.

We are using the term mobbing having in mind that it is most commonly used in the scientific works of researchers in European (e.g. Germany, Italy, Poland, France, Spain), especially in the Scandinavian countries, while the term bullying is characteristic term in United Kingdom and America. In addition to these terms, also used are: harassment, psychological harassment, abusive behaviour, emotional abuse, workplace aggression, work or employee abuse, mistreatment, bossing, victimisation, intimidation, psychological terror or terrorisation, psycho-terror, psychological violence, inappropriate treatment, unwanted behaviour, harassment, workplace trauma, perry tyranny, work-related violence, workplace violence. (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, EU-OSHA, 2010; Čizmić, Vukelić, 2010; Kecap, 2013; Finneman, 2003; Duffy, Sperry, 2014; Tehrani, 2012; Leymann, 1990; Einarsen, and Hoel, 2008; Einarsen et al., 2003; Chappel, and Di Martino, 2006).

There are different terms in use, but most frequently used terms are mobbing and bullying. Some authors equate these terms, but some makes a distinction between them. Duffy and Sperry (Duffy, Sperry, 2014) as the main criteria for distinguishing these terms quote involvement of the organization itself. Workplace mobbing is “destructive social process in which individuals, groups, or organizations target a person for ridicule, humiliation, and removal from the workplace” (Duffy, Sperry, 2014: 1), which is much worse than the workplace bullying which poses “subjecting of a targeted individual to hostile and abusive acts by one or more individuals without the presence of organizational involvement.” (Duffy, Sperry, 2014: 8). But, we use the term mobbing as a synonym

term for bullying and agree with the claim of Chappel and Di Martino (Chappel, and Di Martino, 2006) because there is no “conceptual distinction between bullying (primarily referring to situations of individual harassment) and mobbing (primarily covering situations of collective harassment)” [...] and [...] “most researchers now make no distinction between bullying and mobbing with regard to the number of perpetrators or targets involved.” (Chappel, and Di Martino, 2006: 22).

We agree with the most cited definition bearing in mind all the important aspect it covered. The leading modern researcher on bullying/mobbing at work, Einarsen, and his colleagues, defined mobbing as “harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone’s work tasks. In order for the label bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process it has to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g. weekly) and over a period of time (e.g. about six months). Bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts. A conflict cannot be called bullying if the incident is an isolated event or if two parties of approximately equal ‘strength’ are in conflict” (Einarsen et al., 2003: 15). As the definition says there is an imbalance in strength, which means, imbalance in power, not only in formal, but also in fluid power among employees “who have ganged up in order to drive someone out of the organization, whether the target is of lower rank, the same, or higher rank” (Duffy, Sperry, 2014: 9).

Drawing on the above criteria, we come to the conclusion that mobbing can happened to everyone and is rooted in an organization that either supports or prevents it by its way of doing business, culture and climate. This means that the primary responsibility is within the organization (not the individual) which influences the way of communication and collaboration, prevents, treats, ignores or encourages mobbing and other forms of negative behaviors between victims and mobbers.

## Victims, mobbers and types of mobbing

The mobbing victim can be any employee, of any gender, age, level of education, occupation or position in the organization. According to their testimonies, this is an experience that can not be compared to any other. Victims of mobbing are employees and those who love the victim and/or depend on it. This phenomenon, where indirect consequences of mobbing are felt by members of the family, partners, spouses, children, friends, colleagues, and the organization itself, some authors (Duffy, Sperry, 2014: 95) call secondary victimization.

Previous researches, realized with the intention to determine the psychological profile of the victim of mobbing, failed in that, since data shows that vic-

tims of mobbing are people of different types of personality. Analyzing various works and researches (Duffy, Sperry, 2014; Einarsen, and Hoel, 2008; Čizmić, Vukelić, 2010; Finneman, 2003; EU-OSHA, 2010), we quote some characteristics and personality traits of employees who have been shown to be more often mobbed: those who openly speak for the public interest, criticize organizational policies and procedures, reveal corruption and errors in work; work to change organization and make changes; outsiders of different cultural norms, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, handicap, status, sexual preferences, etc.; immigrants with a different style of communication and practice from the dominant in the organization; persons with psychological problems; submissive, neurotic, confined and highly conscientious; workaholics; those with extremes in work performance; persons with unrealistic assessment of their potential and abilities and demands imposed on them by a certain situation; more traditional, rigid and moralistic; over-achievers who tend to have an unrealistic view of themselves and their situation; more anxious, suspicious, submissive and non-controversial; more introverted; conventional; organised; rule-bound; lower self-esteem; social anxiety; lower social competency; worse conflict managers than their colleagues, the non-victims.

Bearing in mind the results of various surveys, the diversity of possible participants and situations, and the context in which mobbing can take place, we can conclude that certain characteristics of the personality and the lack of certain skills can contribute to the person being a suitable target for mobbing, and that any diversity can give a motive to the mobber and draw his attention, but we certainly can not and must not conclude that there is a certain type of person who appears as a target or victim. This would mean that we blame the individual and his/her personal traits for mobbing, and not the mobbers or the organization who allowed such behavior to develop and maintain using formal and informal channels. They do effort to discredit and humiliate targets/victims, destroy their reputation, influence, respect, attack and deny their personality, character, way, style, and quality of work.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the victims of mobbing describe mobbers by terms such as evil, bully, tyrant and oppressor because of the way of their aggressive, harshly or unfairly behaviour. But Tehrani claims that “more useful approach would be to see their behaviour as an aberration caused by an absence of positive attributes and an arrested state of development” (Esselmont, 1980, In Tehrani, 2012: 2). If we observe this behavior as a problem and a matter of attitude and development, we leave space for the possibility of further development, changing attitudes and behavior, where education plays a major role in the prevention and suppression of mobbing.

Also, it is not possible to draw a conclusion about a certain type of personality of the mobber. Attitudes on the characteristics of the mobbers were mostly pronounced by victims of mobbing, they highlighted the motives and

the difficult personality of mobber (EU-OSHA, 2010), and there is very little researches in which mobbers are respondents. Einarsen & Hoel (2008: 164) cited research findings describing ones who consider themselves as abusers. Findings show that mainly men, managers, or superiors are declared as abusers, and they consider themselves to be aggressive with a lack of social competences. The results of the second study (Duffy, Sperry, 2014) partially confirm these allegations, where bosses appear as a abusers in 72% of cases. Such findings support the assumption that between the victim and the abuser there is a difference in power and status. However, we will see that this relation is not the only one in the relationship of the victim – mobber. It happens that those with higher status and power are mobbed by employees with a lower status and power with the help of coalitions and alliances that they form with employees of the same, lower, hierarchical level (Duffy, Sperry, 2014). This phenomenon, which is much less common in practice, Lubarda (2008) calls reverse mobbing.

Depending on who appears as a victim and who as a mobber, Lubarda (2008), lists two basic types of mobbing – horizontal and vertical. Horizontal mobbing occurs at the same hierarchical level, between employees at the same or similar jobs, where there is no relationship of subordination. He says that research shows that women are more often mobbed by women, and men by men. This type of mobbing can manifest itself in a milder form (e.g., constant jokes, laughs at the expense of speaking, walking, dressing, private life) and more difficult form (e.g., the spread of slandering in terms of professional and private life, constant interruption in speech, social life exclusion, not inviting to entertainment events, avoiding hanging out in pauses of work). It often occurs as a result of unfair competition, and “followed by envy, jealousy and similar human weaknesses” (Lubarda, 2008: 135). In the case of vertical mobbing, the initiative comes from an employer (superior, manager or director) who involves other employees in order to achieve their intentions (when vertical mobbing can be hidden behind the horizontal). It comes out in two forms, where the first form of manifestation, the “empty table”, consists of denying work or assigning jobs below the level of expertise of the victim with the intent of violating his professional dignity. In the case of a “full table” there is: excessive workload, overtime that leads to excessive fatigue; enhanced employee control; constant criticism and downplay of his/her professionalism and morality; interruptions in speech; isolation; provoking reactions or conflicts. It turned out that mobbing is more subtle, when victim is of a greater expertise, or is more qualified. Bearing in mind the subtle mobbing procedures, we would say that it is more difficult to detect it, and it is even more difficult to prove it.

If the criteria of the classification is motive of mobbing, Lubarda (2008) distinguishes strategic and emotional abuse. In the case of strategic abuse, the employer makes a list of her/his victims, with the goal of terminating employment due to unfavorable working conditions, whereby the employer manages to avoid

the payment of severance pay and other obligations. This type of mobbing is also called transitional mobbing, since it is characteristic for countries in transition. When it comes to emotional mobbing, the causes of his appearance are the characteristics of the personality of the victim and the mobber. Mobbers are often persons with a personality disorder – psychopaths who perform mobbing “because of feelings of envy, jealousy, or desire for power”, while convincing others “that the chosen victim of abuse is detrimental to the employer (institution, company, etc.)” (Lubarda, 2008: 137).

In the workplace, in addition to the psychological, there may also be physical violence that is rarely encountered. It often occurs in the form of physical intimidation (Einarsen et al., 2009, In Čizmić, Vukelić, 2010) which implies disturbing personal space (e.g., finger-pointing, pushing, blocking the path by which the individual moves). Mechanisms and methods that mobbers use, with the help of their “accomplices”, among others, are: gossip, lies, rumors, innuendo, ridicule, belittlement, disparagement, humiliation, false information, dissemination of such information, leaks of personal and confidential information, not providing information necessary for a employee to complete the requirements of hir or her job, isolating a worker, ignoring an employee, giving an employee the “cold shoulder”, excessive “writting up” of a employee by a supervisor or manager, disciplinary action and reprimands without obtaining information from all parties, inaccurate or abusive performance evaluations, withholding of job references needed by a worker to obtain other work. (Duffy, Sperry, 2014: 20).

Different motives are responsible for this behavior, as well as the ways of unethical verbal and non-verbal communication in a work environment that contributes to the maintenance of mobbing and in general to the quality of life in the workplace. Regardless of the status, position, level of education, and any other characteristic of the victim or mobber, it is evident that there is an establishment and development of unhealthy relationships and an impaired quality of the work environment. Below we will summarize the causes and consequences of this behavior.

## Causes and consequences of mobbing

With the help of the aforementioned definitions, manifestations, types and relations in which mobbing occurs, it is clear that the organization carries the bulk of responsibility for its appearance and maintenance. In order to specify the educational measures and strategies through which the organization can prevent or overcome mobbing, we have to summarize the causes and consequences of its occurrence in the organization.

As causes of mobbing, the authors (EU-OSHA, 2010; Salin, 2008, In Čizmić, Vukelić, 2010; Einarsen, and Hoel, 2008) state inadequate work design (e.g. role

conflicts); incompetent management and negative forms of leadership; negative or hostile social climate in organization; culture that permits or rewards harassment in an organisation; values and norms of the organization. Duffy and Sperry (2014) emphasize that the mobbing is caused by individual, group and organizational dynamics. Also, they summarize the causes of the emergence and maintenance of mobbing by highlighting the significance of the organization and its subsystems that comprise the structure, culture, strategies, leaders, its employees and the external environment in the form of regulations, laws and the like.

If we look at the causes it will become clear why the consequences, for all direct and indirect participants in mobbing, are so numerous, far-reaching and complex. Also, it will be clear why is priority to preventing and solving this problem. Negative effects of mobbing, according to research and analysis of the work of various authors (Einarsen, and Hoel, 2008; Finneman, 2003; Duffy, Sperry, 2014), can be: perceiving the working environment as a dangerous and insecure; loss of sense of identity and belonging; observing the world as an unjust place; serious physical, psychological, emotional and health difficulties such as anxiety, fear, depression, helplessness, insomnia, melancholy, nervousness, apathy, lack of concentration, fear of social groups, psychosomatic complaints; post-traumatic stress disorder; a deeply shocking experience; violence, suicide, even murder.

Whether the reason for that state are personality traits, level of education, the current life situation, the culture from which the person comes, the importance of keeping the job, it is evident that the victims respond in different ways to mobbing. But, mobbers often count on the inability of a helpless victim to respond in a timely and adequate manner, since it takes time for them to understand and see themselves as a victim of mobbing, and by then the problem has already gone too far. If something is not done, not only individuals, but indirectly his family, social environment, employers, society and the state suffer from the long-term consequences.

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work – EU-OSHA (2010) summarise the possible consequences of bullying in the report by ILO:

- *for the family and social network:*

“Avoiding social meetings; complaints of physical discomfort and sickness; desertion of social engagements; detachment from family ties; difficulties in qualifying for other jobs; disengagement from father, spouse, son/daughter roles and responsibilities; intolerance of family problems; litigation; loosening of friendship relations; loss of income; loss of shared projects; marital problems and divorce; medical expenses; outbursts of rage; violence; worsening of children’s performance at school” (2010: 20).

- *for employers:*

“Additional retirement costs; damage to the company image; decrease of competitiveness; decrease of product quality; disability; increase of



persons unfit for work; increased staff turnover; interpersonal climate deterioration; litigation costs; loss of qualified staff; reduced individual and group productivity; reduced motivation, satisfaction and creativity; reduction in the number of clients; repeated transfers; replacement costs; sickness absenteeism; training new staff; loss of public goodwill and reputation” (2010: 21).

- **for society (at societal level):**  
“Consequences depend upon the national health system and the available social services” (2010: 22).
- **on society:**  
Benefits and welfare costs due to premature retirement; high costs of disability; high costs of unemployment; loss of human resources; medical costs and possible hospitalisation; potential loss of productive workers (2010: 21).

Also, *individual consequences* can be minor stress reactions, long-term sick leave, displacement from work life and suicides, while *organisational consequences* of mobbing are lower job satisfaction and productivity of the victims and other employees, increased sickness absence, higher turnover, substantial economic losses (2010: 85).

All the stated consequences and reactions on mobbing significantly affect the quality of life of an individual in the work environment. However, we see that the victim is not the only one affected by the consequences, in different spheres of life, but there are also secondary victims, those who are indirectly affected by the effects of mobbing. Therefore, in addition to financial costs, we can talk about human costs, bearing in mind the health, psychological and consequences in social relations that can not be paid or compensated, which is the reason more to deal with measures and strategies of prevention and overcoming of mobbing in the next section of this work.

## Educational measures and strategies of prevention and overcoming mobbing

Different organizations have all been active in the field of work-related violence, harassment, bullying/mobbing with aim to provide information and framework to promote policy and practice of prevention and overcoming this problems through various campaigns, projects, action plans at national and enterprise level. Among others, there are the World Health Organisation, the European Parliament, the International Labour Organisation, The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, etc.

Chappel and Di Martino (2006: 192–219) suggested several strategies, by ILO, to tackle violence at work, such as:

- Involvement and participation of all stakeholders and written policy;
- Selection and identifying the right individuals for the job by the selection tools like tests and interviews;
- Training: to preventing, identifying and dealing with some threatening situations and individuals by interpersonal and communication skills;
- Available information and open communication among colleagues to reduce the risk of mobbing, sexual harassment and violence at work, defuse tension by meetings, discussions, sessions, problem-solving groups, development programmes, etc.;
- Physical environment and layout have an important role (e.g. noise level, light, ventilation, thermal control; protective systems, security screens, seating, etc.);
- Job design and work organisation: appropriate staffing levels; clearly defined tasks and assigning tasks according to experience and competence; adequate working hours; etc.;
- Preparing employees to avoid and dealing with violent incidents;
- Defusing aggression by guidelines to minimising the risk of a violent incident taking place;
- Immediate action after violent incidents: that means to record and report workplace violence, to provide trauma-crisis counseling through qualified staff or outside specialists, long-term support for some victims, rehabilitation, help in redeployment and legal assistance with compensation procedures; rehabilitation;
- Monitoring and evaluation of preventive measures taken to check their effectiveness. (Chappel and Di Martino, 2006: 192–219).

Most of the aforementioned strategies for prevention and overcoming mobbing, written by the ILO, involve some kind of education, training, informing, counseling, evaluation, assessment and monitoring. Also, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2003) proposes following prevention methods at primary, secondary, and tertiary level:

*Primary prevention* refers to adopted ways of informing, educating and training managers and other employees on mobbing and its consequences, by methods such as educate managers to resolve the conflict, implement awareness campaign, develop anti-mobbing policy; provide guidelines with information on the nature and extent of the problem and its effects on health and quality of life; encouraging the ethical behaviour by code of ethics and discouraging the improper behaviour, unethical acts and discrimination; creating a climate of trust, tolerance and freedom; this should be included in the contracts, regulating the

matter and applying sanctions for any breach of the rules. (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work – EU-OSHA, 2010: 26)

**Secondary prevention.** It is very important to recognize the person's problem and to take timely and effective measures. WHO proposes the following methods/persons in such situations:

1. A confidant/e — an employee or someone outside the company who is listening to the victim of mobbing, because it can break the denial, make a distance from the situation and take the initiative.
2. A mediator — mediation is a process in which an impartial third party offers people in conflict the opportunity to meet and find a solution by confrontation of viewpoints, to try understand each other, analyse what has happened, and “establish the terms of an arrangement in order to continue to work together or separately in a climate of greater mutual respect” (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work – EU-OSHA, 2010: 27).

**Tertiary prevention** includes the following measures:

1. Gathering group of people who have suffered from mobbing to raising awareness, sharing experiences allowing the targets to realise they are not the ones responsible; to recognise the aggression, or modify their own behaviour.

Legislation – the law should address the following points while taking into account local habits and cultures when devising strategies: encourage preventive measures; protect workers who engage in self-help; provide proper relief to targets of severe mobbing, including compensatory damages and reinstatement to his or her position; punish bullies and the employers who allow them to abuse their co-workers (Yamand, 2003, In WHO, 2003: 28).

Also, there is a policy-level European initiative, developed by several European institutes, the European framework for psychosocial risk management (PRIMA-EF) who emphasised a training as a primary element of an organisation's strategy against work-related violence (bullying). In order to prevent and reduce mobbing, training is used to empower employees to manage relationships at workplace, to give them a common understanding of how to cope with aggression and violent behaviour, to increase awareness and knowledge of the phenomenon, of the work-related antecedents and health consequences of bullying. On the other hand, in order to prevent and reduce mobbing, managers and supervisors are given training “to investigate and resolve bullying situations in the workplace”, “policy communication training, stress management training and negative behaviour awareness training” (EU-OSHA: 90).

There is an *Employee assistance programme – EAP* as a support mechanism and a mental health-related intervention in the field of workplace wellbeing.

EAP, by recognizing standards, helps organizations identify and manage problems such as work-related stress, illness, workplace improvement, mobbing, human resources management, etc., by informing, counseling, training, by early intervention strategy through mediation (Winwood, and Beer, 2008: 184–193). Also, authors propose measures of prevention like: *General Prevention Programme* (Einarsen, and Hoel, 2008: 168); *Resilience-Building and Stress Awareness*; written *Plan for Supporting the Organisation in the Aftermath of an Incident*; promoting and developing a *copying strategy* and a *culture of peer support* (Dunn, 2008: 138–139). In addition to the above-mentioned measures and strategies, there is career training and counselling. Also, it is essential to victim to socialize, participate in family activities, hobbies and creative activities. As a type of self-help, there are tutorials and applications created for tablets and mobile devices that are very useful information and first self-help tools in situation of stress or mobbing.

Quality of life at work, as Pejatović (2005: 35) states, depends on, among others, safe and healthy working conditions, social interaction in the work organization, satisfaction with the time spent at work, etc. This shows the importance of healthy communication and relationships in the workplace in order to raise the quality of working life and reduce the risk of mobbing. The degree to which the prevention or treatment of mobbing at work is possible depends on the legislation and state of awareness of a country. In addition to the law, it is necessary to conduct anti-mobbing policies within the company, but also to provide the right system and mechanism for reporting and sanctioning mobbing within companies and state institutions that are responsible for these issues. We do not see the purpose of assisting the victim of mobbing alone, because it would mean that he or she alone bears responsibility for such a situation. In this case, the context and responsibility of the organization in the conduct of mobbing would be ignored. Also, nothing will be achieved by providing assistance (medical, legal, psychological or educational) if the victim returns to the same destructive and dysfunctional working environment. So, in addition to assisting the victim, it is necessary to treat the root of the problem and act on the critical subsystems of the organization, to create a safe and healthy working environment, which is a very demanding and long process, and above all the obligation and responsibility of the employer.

Bearing in mind the cause of the problem and the consequences that the employee faces with, our focus is on promoting and implementing educational measures and strategies to prevent mobbing by informing, advising and educating all employees at all hierarchical levels in order to establish a culture of mutual respect, tolerance, respect of human rights and diversity, transparent communication and codes of conduct, in each segment and structure of the organization, which will not allow it to appear, nor develop any kind of unhealthy, unethical, inappropriate and negative form of behavior or relationship. Prevention of mobbing is a long-term process, a systemic approach is needed in solving this prob-

lem, starting with research and a good concept. It is an effort to raise awareness and give insight into this phenomenon, changing values, attitudes, communication and ways of interacting in organization.

## Final remarks

Mobbing is phenomenon that has been intensively researched in the last decade. Researchers use different terms, but most frequently used are mobbing and bullying. Some authors make a distinction between them, but there is no conceptual distinction. We are using term mobbing because it is characteristic for European researchers. In mobbing employee becomes the target of systematic negative social acts, which are repeated over a period of time. There is an imbalance in formal or/and in fluid power among employees where victim is humiliated, tortured, ridiculed, isolated by mobber/s. Victim is employee directly affected by mobbing, and also secondary victims, indirectly affected by it (those who love the victim and/or depend on them, as family members, friend, colleagues, organization itself). There is not a certain type of person who appears as a target, victim or mobber, but data shows that workers with some characteristics and personality traits are mobbed more often. Also, any diversity and the lack of certain skills can contribute to the person being a suitable target or victim of mobbing.

Depending on the criteria of the classification, there are a different types of mobbing like: horizontal and vertical mobbing (criteria: who is the victim and who is the mobber); strategic or transitional and emotional mobbing (criteria: motive of the mobber); and reverse mobbing (when those with higher status and power are mobbed by employees with a lower status and power).

In this work, we summarized the causes and consequences of mobbing and came to the conclusion that the essence of the problem lie in the organization and its subsystems, bearing in mind that authors listed causes as: inadequate work design; negative forms of leadership; negative values, norms, dynamics, social climate and culture in organization; workers; regulations; etc. The consequences are various and long-term. There are financial and human costs as well. The victims life is affected by emotional, psychological, health, social, professional, financial problems. Also, affected by mobbing are the family of the victim, her/his social network, organization and society.

To solve the problem of mobbing, it is necessary to have and implement legislation at national and enterprise level, promote policy and practice of prevention by various campaigns and projects, and rise state of awareness on this problem to improve quality of the work environment and the culture and climate of the organization. To solve this problem, we need a systemic approach, starting with researches and a good concept. Different organizations suggested measures

and strategies of prevention to tackle mobbing at workplace. We presented and summarized those by ILO, WHO and various authors. They point out and focus on prevention at primary, secondary, and tertiary level by awareness campaign, informing, counseling, education of managers and other workers, training, monitoring, evaluation, mediation, job design, etc.

We consider it necessary to create a safe and healthy work environment in organization, foster culture and a climate that supports a positive attitude, encourages tolerance and the culture of human rights. Also, it is important to consistently condemn and punish any kind of employees' rights violation, by a fair and ethical way of handling complaints and applying rules and regulations. Every organization have to build a strong supporting system and mechanism of education and other types of support for employees and superiors.

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