

MOBBING AT WORKPLACE AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Emotional abuse in the workplace is known as mobbing. It is becoming increasingly inflected concept not only abroad but also in terms of Slovak enterprises. It is a psychological pressure, which can have fatal consequences for the employee itself as well as for the whole company. The paper is aimed to clarify the issue of mobbing in the workplace and the definition of its primary types. The existence of mobbing will be highlighted through a survey conducted among employees in Slovak companies, which subsequently compared with the results obtained within the European Union. Hence, the number of bullied employees is increasing it is essential to raise awareness and prevention by the employer as well as the employee. On the basis of a survey carried out, we may conclude that large, but also small companies should pay greater attention to the issue of mobbing in the workplace, because it significantly affects the performance of the employee. Respondents were asked to identify factors which could trigger mobbing. Among the most frequently mentioned were following: superiority of the mobber, selfishness, personal problems often stemming from problems at home, complexes, jealousy, mutual dislike, achievement of career growth and psychological terror at the expense of another. On the other hand, when generalizing, one of the indirect consequences of mobbing can be that employee leaves the company.

Key words: mobbing, bossing, employee performance, types of mobbing, statistics.

JEL Classification: J 710 – Labor Discrimination; M 140 – Corporate Culture; Social Responsibility.

1. Introduction

Our subject of interest is to assess the state of mobbing among employee on account of global statistics referring to an alarming rise in the value of mobbed employees in the enterprises. Anyone of us can become a victim of mobbing, regardless of being emotionally labile nature or being ambitious and purposeful. Firstly, so-called mobber considers us as an easy prey, which succumbs without greater efforts. Secondly, rivalry and the secure of career progress are closely connected with mobbing. It is important to take into consideration the fight against mobbing in the workplace as an adequate prevention not only by an employer but also by employees. Implementation and compliance of the Code of Ethics, the creative business climate and creating the department supporting healthy interpersonal relationships in the workplace represent the basic activities being provided employees. A positive attitude to oneself and the development of personal social life accounts for a necessary preventive factor.

2. The definition of mobbing and related terms

Mobbing also known as emotional abuse, psychological terror or bullying in the workplace derives from the English word „to mob”. It can be translated as oppress, attack or to invade someone. In the literature, not only domestic but also foreign authors, we come across different definitions. Therefore, it is required to explain the exact meaning of the word. Mobbing *”means hostile and unethical communication being directed in a systematic way by one or a number of people mainly toward one individual,”* (Duffy & Sperry, 2012, p. 42). It is currently increasingly possible to encounter with this term, although it cannot be declared that it is a modern phenomenon. The Austrian scientist Konrad Lorenz described as first the concept of mobbing in connection with behavior of a group of animals in 1963. Particularly, it was a matter of geese, whose aim was to gather due to slaughter a stronger individual, in this case the fox (Teuschel, 2010, p. 3). The German-Swedish psychologist Leymann transformed

this term in today's terms. Leymann considers mobbing as „*negative communication treatment, which is directed against a person (with one or more other) occurring very often and in longer terms being identified relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.*” At the same time, this whole long process occurs in the workplace (Leymann, 1993, p. 21). The primary difference in comparison with the past lies especially in the dimension of the effect of this aggressive type of bullying in the workplace and in its deepening. The constant pressure of a society creates a space for building of a strong status and a position leading to the use of undesirable practices of mobbing. The primary basis for the existence of mobbing is the occurrence of the conflict situation, whose intensity has to be multiplied. It cannot be mistakenly interpreted that the conflict is an equivalent for mobbing.

On the one hand the Czech author Halík defines mobbing very expressive, on the other hand this expression is more appropriate. „*Mobbing is a mean manipulating, systematic humiliation, psychological terror, manoeuvre, targeted induction of stress,*” (Halík, 2008, p. 108). Based on the range of definitions proceeding from the theoretical but also practical experience, three essential features can be highlighted accompanying mobbing. First feature is represented by aggressive behavior. This behavior must be constantly in progress and for a longer period, which also represents the second character. The last attribute is given by the power and unbalance within the interpersonal relationship (Olweus, 2010). Permanent suffering from this psychological pressure induces in the victims of mobbing feelings of inferiority and hopelessness leading to the essential mobber's (the person doing the psychological terror) aim and consequence resign of the injured.

In addition to the term of mobbing, there are quite a wide range of concepts related to. That is the reason why it is necessary to point out at least the most famous ones. Mobbing is often identified with the concept of *bullying*. Taking the primary difference can be seen especially in an environment which it is used. The first named has the largest representation in the Scandinavian and German-speaking countries, while bullying is mainly used in the English-speaking countries. However, some authors (Olweus, 2010; Džuka & Jenčová, 2005) consider the term bullying only chicane among children in schools. We would not combine these two terms especially for the reason of other causes and factors leading to bullying at school and in the workplace. As long as this kind of emotional abuse takes place in the workplace and it is based on the relationship between superior – subordinate, it is distinguished a specific and also the most widespread subspecies called *bossing*. It derives again from the English word „boss“, i.e. a chief. It implies who becomes the attacker in this case. Undoubtedly it is a more aggressive form allowing strengthen the position of manager, whereas in this case the victim is very difficult to seeking justice and often ends with dismissal. Basically, it is mobbing in the direction from top to bottom.

In addition to these very similar concepts, it is possible to encounter with a term *staffing* (from the English „staff“, i.e. workforce), which representing the reverse approach to chicane compared to bossing, namely the bottom-up. Thus it starts from subordinates to superiors. The primary target is dismissal of a lead employee, respectively superior officer from his post. Nowadays, due to the expansion of internet communication and technology literacy we increasingly come across the concept of cyber-mobbing. This is a chicane via electronic media, which does not take place „*face-to-face, so in the direct contact, however, in the virtual space,*” (Grewe, 2012, p. 31), either via email, chat, social networks or via computer connection, with the help of a mobile phone or other electronic media. Cyber-mobbing is a very insidious way of mobbing because the victim is able to be mocked for a short time. Placing of ordinary videos or photos on the social network can be the cause. The cases of such types of mobbing are enough and they have often dire consequences not only for the victim but also for family members.

The causes, process and consequences connected with mobbing

Despite the fact that the causes leading to the application of inappropriate and unethical practices against an personal entity depends on our point of view of the particular situation, it may be mentioned the vital reasons leading to immoral behavior. The causes of mobbing by Rolf Meier refer mainly to the nature of the person involving also relations between co-workers, whereas the important aspect is undoubtedly the inadequate organizational conditions (*Meier, 2009, p. 116*). In addition to these causes, as the crucial one may be regarded also the actual working environment and corporate culture, which should be created on the moral foundations (*VÚBP, 2007*). At least this case could represent the prevention from creation of an area suitable for inception of mobbing.

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work defines the primary factors, respectively causes that largely affect the existence of mobbing. These include above all:

- Corporate culture that fails to adequately recognize the forthcoming issue;
- Unexpected creation of changes in the business;
- Volatility and job insecurity;
- Dissatisfaction and bad relationships in the workplace, whether among the employees themselves or between employees and supervisors;
- Excessive requirements;
- High exposure to the stressful situations;
- Conflict of interests and other (*OSHA, 2002*).

For an overview, the Figure 1 points out the possible causes and consequences. As can be seen, it is a rather broad complex of factors that interact and overlap and also act on each other. The primary causes differentiate at the hand of four factors integrating partial elements. The organization, mobber and his object and social system represent the essential causes leading to the formation of mobbing. At the first glance it might seem that the victim becomes passive, labile, or pessimistic tuned nature, however, the reality is different. Mobber's victim may be very active and purposeful co-worker, with a great deal of self-confidence, making it attractive for psychological terror in the workplace (*Kratz, 2010, p. 150*). Undoubtedly there are many reasons such as the threat of potential competition, envy, and get a better job. Otherwise, when „prey” is not very representative object, respectively he disposes of certain physical or mental imperfections and failures, the main motive can be pleasure at the suffering of others or feeling of superiority and raise the ego.

If there are already factors leading to mobbing, it can be seen as a process in progress consisting of several steps. Its formation is related to the existence of a system which can lead to the permanent exposure of a victim to a negative treatment. Literature offers several numerous phases of formation and the actual process of mobbing, while/whereas the essence of each view is practically the same. Typical is a growing mobber's activity and deepening passivity of the victim (*Hubinková, 2008, p. 213*). Heinz Leymann characterizes mobbing process through five stages, while/whereas Angelika Kallwass recognizes four primary ones:

1. Phase starting mostly with the conflict that remained unsolved not only on the side of a mobber but also on the side of a victim.
2. In the second phase, there are deepening and intensifying attacks; implementation of intrigue at this phase is not uncommon. Chicane can connect additional, previously uninvolved persons developing enormous pressure on the mental condition of the victim that is becoming so-called outsider.
3. In the penultimate phase, the victim of mobbing is under even more stress, which is almost unbearable. Under the influence of the escalation of the situation there is a space for the creation of errors and live working, which does remain the superiors. Then the victim faced constant criticism.

4. The last phase is characterized by resignation when a mobbed person gives up and leaves his, at best, department, at worst, and most likely giving notice (*Kallwass, 2007, p. 19*).

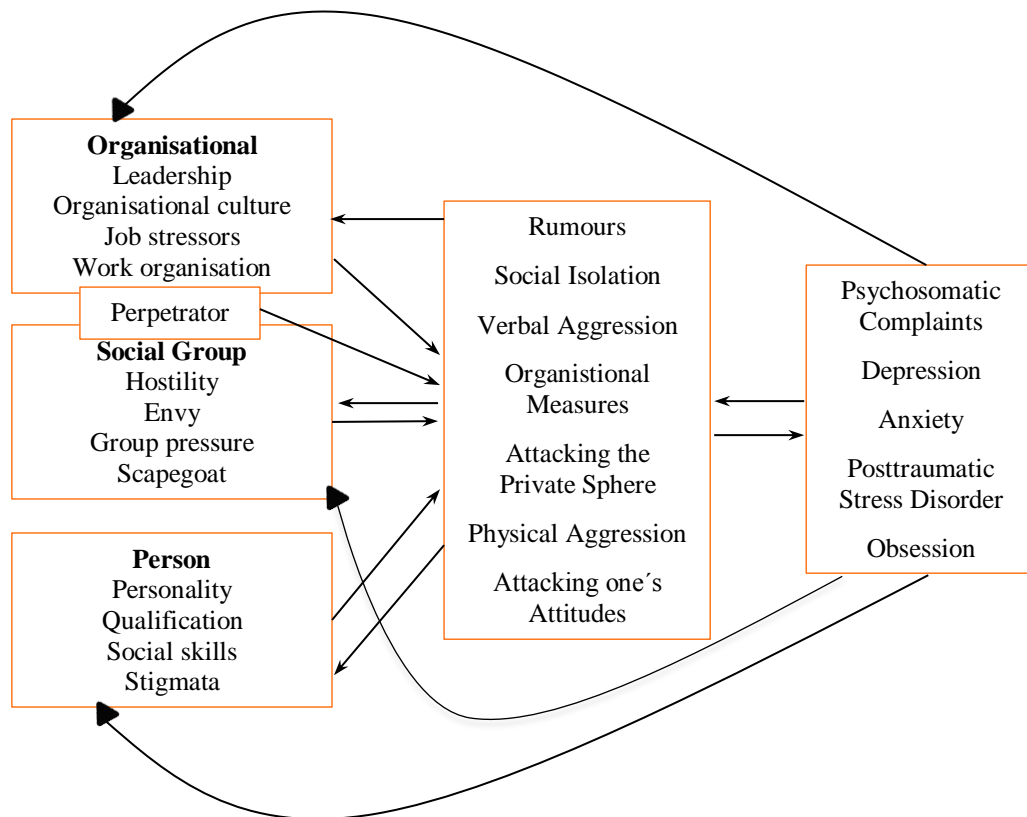


Figure 1: Causes and consequences of mobbing
 (Zapf, 1999, Organisational, work group related and personal causes of mobbing/bullying at work.
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Mobbing mostly ends with resignation of a victim who does not have a sufficient amount of force and not feel like staying in his working position. In the best case there is a change of working position within a company. In the worst case, the victim leaves the particular company. The consequences linked to this fact do not relate only to an entity of person but also to the whole business at all. These facts effect social isolation, aggression accompanied by physical or verbal abuse and entail a number of adverse consequences, whether in the form of mental or physical difficulties. Dieter Zapf points out the particular psychosomatic discomfort, depressions, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder or even obsession. How respective arrows indicate, these negative states effect on the overall working environment in order to boost the deepening of mobbing (*Zapf, 1999, p. 80*). Thus it is a vicious circle from which giving a notice is often the only way.

Daniela Pauknerová distinguishes between two types of consequences of mobbing. The first is represented by psychological consequences, which are reflected in disturbed concentration, in anxiety or depression. Headaches or problems with digestion and heart function are accompaniments' features of mobbing victims. The second group represents/stands for the economic effects which are displayed in a reduced performance of employees (*Pauknerová, 2006, p. 237*). The consequences associated with the existence of

mobbing in the workplace affect not only the proper functioning of the individual but also the functioning of the entire work team and the whole enterprise as well.

3. Forms of mobbing and factors influencing work performance

The one of the most important factors which influences mobbing behavior at workplace is way of management at workplace. The authoritarian style of management where one superior has several subordinates increases the likelihood of occurrence of mobbing at workplace. Mobbing is also fuelled where several applicants apply for one position. Effort from side of workers who try to get a job is source of competition and higher tensions. In this case we mean unhealthy competition in an effort to shut down the competition in an unfair way. This is the case when the competition crosses line of friend behavior and the effort of employees to get the new job are through emotional treatment of „their enemies”, so called other employees. The victims of mobbing are often fresh graduates who don't have enough work experience and other employees consider them as inferior. They are attacked by one or more individuals. There are several types of mobbing behavior at workplace: (Horváth, 2001, p. 102)

- a) *Gossiping*: gossiping means that one individual (or more) provides the information about other individual by aiming to destroy their reputation and to gain better position. This type of mobbing behavior is not considerate as mobbing behavior. The people who are gossiping often say that what they are telling about other people is true. The question is how they can be so sure.
- b) *Mockery* – target of ridicule may be the hairstyle, way of clothing, personal character and physical appearance (stuttering, squint, obesity, etc.).
- c) *Co-workers isolation* – isolating the worker may result from example slander and ridicule, or the result of deliberate isolation of the employee.
- d) *Withholding important information* – by withholding important information for the performance of a position, the mobbing is trying to artificially create stressful situations. People working under stress are more likely to make mistakes, make wrong decisions, thereby mobbing is trying to create an image of the enemy as an unreliable and incompetent worker, and so „mobber“ is trying to consolidate its position.
- e) *Administrative and operational measures* – used mainly by superiors. A worker is in short intervals moved to another department where he performs menial work which does not correspond to his qualification. As a result of these measures, the worker loses on assigned work.
- f) *Excessive workload* – allocation of unnecessary and senseless tasks or assignment of new and new tasks beyond the capabilities and skills of worker.
- g) *Excessive criticism* – excessive and permanent criticism frustrates the mobbed person who starts doubting his capabilities and decreases his self-confidence.
- h) *Sexual harassment*: the targets of the sexual harassment are mainly women, rarely men. It is important to distinguish between expressing compliments and real sexual harassment. This kind of mobbing behavior can have various forms, e.g. oral – gossiping, sexual proposals, conative – stroking against the will of the other person, in more serious cases, violent enforcement of sexual intercourse and the like (Romanova).

Above mentioned types are the most frequent forms of mobbing. A physical attack which belongs to group occurs only rarely at workplace due to criminal punishment.

The victims of mobbing don't usually realize that something wrong is happening. Some of them have been working without solving their problem for many years. This leads not only to deterioration of their work performance but also of their psychical and physical health. According to a study done in Germany, 98.7% of the victims of mobbing are experiencing health problems or other negative work consequences. Almost half of them (43.9%) have

health problems and in 15% of cases, mobbing was reason for suicide (*Sloan, 2010, p. 87*). To identify yourself as a victim, it is necessary to analyze your position at work and objectively assess whether the situation is normal. Of course, if someone is a victim of mobbing, it is very difficult to evaluate objectively things around, especially if the employee is under great psychological pressure (*Bullyonline, 2010*).

It is very important to be sure that we are really a victim of the mobbing before acting and starting solving this situation with superiors. Even though we may consider the situation at workplace as not appropriate, it does not mean that we are being mobbed. If for example, an employee breaches internal regulations at work, it is normal that tensions occurs and that maybe sanctions are imposed from the side of superiors. Not every day, people are in a good mood. If colleagues from time to time exhibit some irritation that is rather unique as common it also is not a manifestation of mobbing. It follows that mobbing is not a conflict but a conflict which is not being resolved may result in bullying (*Svobodová, 2008, p. 24*).

Factors influencing performance of the employees

To identify mobbing behavior is not as easy as it may look like. The reason is wrong perception of how a mobber looks like. In many cases, we imagine a mobber as a bad person but in real life people are not divided only into two categories of good and bad. A person who mobbes his colleague in many cases not even realizes that he is doing something wrong (*Field, 2011*). So far, several studies were performed which focused on unappropriated behavior among employees over the world. Result of studies can be summarized as follows:

Research done in Scandinavia showed that psychical despotism occurred more often between workers rather than between managers. An interview performed by the International Labor Organization (1996) among 15 800 employers of the 15 EU member countries showed following results: 4% of employees (6 million employees) incurred physical violence, 2% of employees (3 million employees) were victims of sexual harassment, and 8% of employees (12 million of employees) faced psychological violence (*Ofluoglu & Somunoglu, 2012, p. 100*). The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2000) discovered that mobbing is affecting more than 12 million people in Europe, i.e. 8% workers. Finland has the highest rate (15%), followed by Netherlands and the United Kingdom (14%), (*Pompili, 2008, p. 237*).

A total of 62% of the workers who were victims of mobbing received short or long term therapy. According to a research performed in Sweden, 65% of workers age 65 and over wanted to retire because of emotional despotism.

Doctor Ruth Namie, a clinical psychologist who focuses on mobbing at workplace. She came to the conclusion conclusions: 52% of victims of mobbing are women, 62% of mobbers are men, 82% of individual left their job as a consequence of mobbing, and in 98% co-workers knew mobbing at workplace (*Kohut, 2007, p. 35*).

There are many studies which confirm that chicane in the workplace has negative effects on employees and their work performance. Bilgel (2006) came to the conclusion that mobbing has the negative impact on physical health of workers and their performance. Based on his research, 55% of employees are facing mobbing (*Bano & Malik, 2013, p. 620; Bilgel, Aytac & Bayram, 2006, p. 227*).

According to a survey done by the Workplace Bullying Institute (2012) in the United States that included 1604 respondents, 39% of the individuals confirmed that they had been mobbed and 58% of the respondents reported they were currently being mobbed (*Carden & Boyd, 2013, p. 7*).

Based on a survey performed each year by European agency for safety and health (Figure 2) which deals also with stress at workplace, 59% of individuals across member

countries of European union stated that one of the factors which causes stress at workplace is inappropriate behavior of colleagues or some form mobbing. In the Slovak Republic, 56% of persons replied that mobbing is one of the factors causing stress at workplace. This percentage is similar to EU number but mobbing is ranked only as third factor causing stress at workplace.

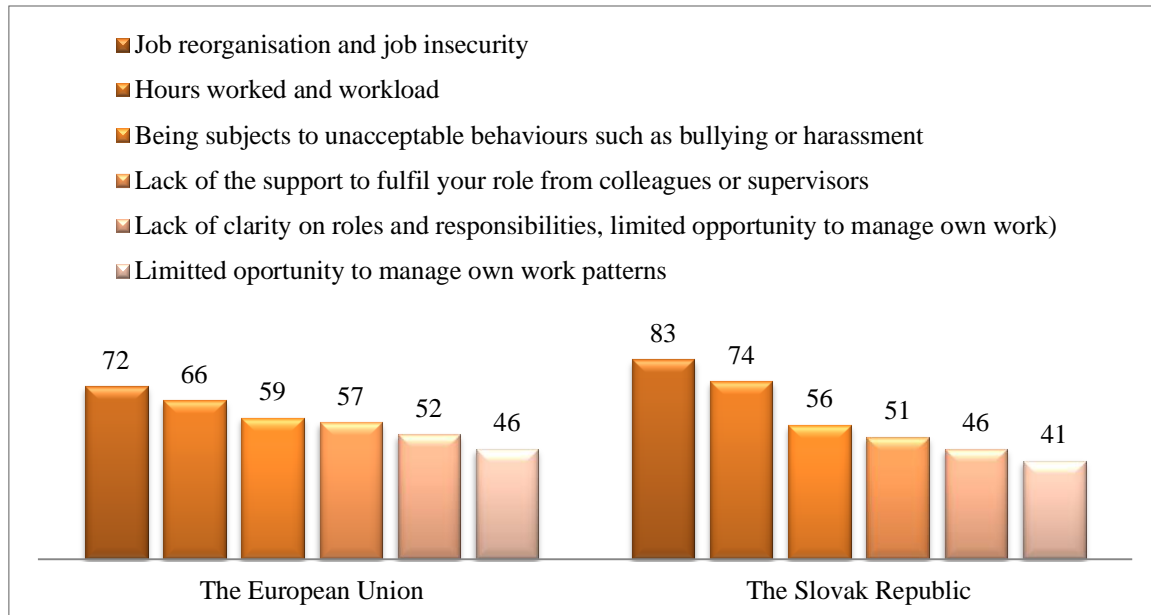


Figure 2: Important reason for addressing OSH issues (in % of companies of EU 27) (Osha.europa, 2013, Paneuropean research of public opinion on protection of health and security at work. Osha.europa.eu. <https://osha.europa.eu/sk/safety-health-in-figures>)

The Figure 2 shows the most common causes of work-related stress in European Union in 2013. Most individuals (72%) said that job re-organization and job insecurity influences the most their job in the negative way. Comparing to the results in the Slovak Republic, the most common causes with 83% were job re-organization and job insecurity. When we compare the two Figures, in the European Union the factors of stress were almost at the same level whereby in Slovak Republic, the development in the Slovak Republic was more diverse. As mentioned above, the stress factors were dominated organizational changes, followed by worked hours and workload. This can be explained that uncertainty on the Slovak labor market is higher than the average in the European Union. Often the surveys contain dissatisfaction of employees and their concerns about the job, which is due in extent reflected in this survey. The least occurred factor of stress in the workplace has been the EU and Slovakia limited opportunity to establish their own style of work.

Close related with above mentioned factors is what kind of leadership style is preferred by superiors. We distinguish 4 kinds of leadership: Authoritarian leadership, Transformational style, Transactional style and Paternalistic style. Leadership style is one of the most important factors by predicting mobbing behavior at workplace. Regarding to study of Ertureten there is relationship between leadership style and mobbing accuracy. Conclusion of this study is that transformational and transactional leadership decreased likelihood of mobbing. On the other hand, authoritarian leadership increased it (Ertureten, Cemalcilar & Aycan, 2013, p.206).

The effect of mobbing on the health and performance of the employee

Mobbing has very negative consequences for the employee, whether from the perspective of health, but also works performance. Health problems for victims of mobbing are mainly headache, stomach disorders, abdominal pains and end up in more serious mental disorders. Employee gradually stops to believe in himself, he considers himself as incapable to solve even simple assignments. Not solving of this problem leads in 20% of cases in suicide (*Kozsr, 2006*).

According to a survey carried out by Christine Pearson in 1998, which dealt with the effects of mobbing on the staff, it was found that 37% of respondents reduced their commitment to their employer, 28% left the job in an effort to avoid mobbing, 22% decreased their performance at work and 12% of respondents left work as a direct result of mobbing (*Carbo, 2010, p. 58*). According to Hoel employees, who are the target of mobbing in the workplace reduce their performance by an average of 80% compared to normal performance. This research was performed on a sample of employees in Great Britain whose average age was 43 years (*Rayner, Hoel & Cooper, 2002, p. 135*).

According to the other research performed by Pompili (2007) focused on the impact of mobbing on the physical health of workers among 102 individuals 32 subjects (31.4%) had low suicide risk, 17 subjects had a medium suicide risk (16.7%) and 4 subjects (3.9%) had high suicide risk (*Pompili, 2008, p. 237*).

In other research focused on unemployment and psychosocial adjustment in young adults there were high correlation between unemployment after graduation from school with suicidal ideation, substance abuse and criminal behavior. Regarding to these results it is very important to pay particular patience to this issue. These studies present evidence that increasing number of suicide is caused by increasing number of individual exposure to mobbing (*Ertureten, Cemalcilar & Ayca, 2013, p.206*).

The other important findings deal with issues on how mobbing influences the performance of the individual. Job satisfaction as well as effective commitment decreased in case of people who were exposed to mobbing. However, these people despite of this stay working for the company because they don't believe that they have better alternative.

Employees often consider the work environment as very uncomfortable do not consider it to be a place in which they would like to work with. There is also a problem with communication between employees. It is either too aggressive with each other or e-mail communication among employees is reserved and superior. This fact causes the isolation of the employee (*Murphy, 2013, p. 150*). Striking is that the problems associated with chicane in the workplace are solved by less than one third of the employers in the European Union. More than half of employers in the European Union informs its employees about the potential psychosocial risks in the workplace, and 69% of the organizations informs its employees, to whom they can revert in the event of psychosocial situations. However, it should be noted that this refers to predominantly large employers (*EU-OSHA, 2002*).

Vveinhardt (2010) done the research focused on how mobbing influences organizational climate in Lithuanian organizations. The conclusions of this research can be drawn as follows. There is high impact of mobbing on an employer's climate. Mobbing affects workers in the productive period rather than at the beginning of their career. The other important factor is work experience. It shows that employees with experience, who have possibility to go up in the carrier ladder, experience the discriminative actions of the colleagues, which transforms into mobbing (*Vveinhardt, 2010, p. 174*).

Some kinds of work are more affected by mobbing at others. It is known that especially in the hospitals, there appears to be more cases of mobbing from side of nurse to the patient.

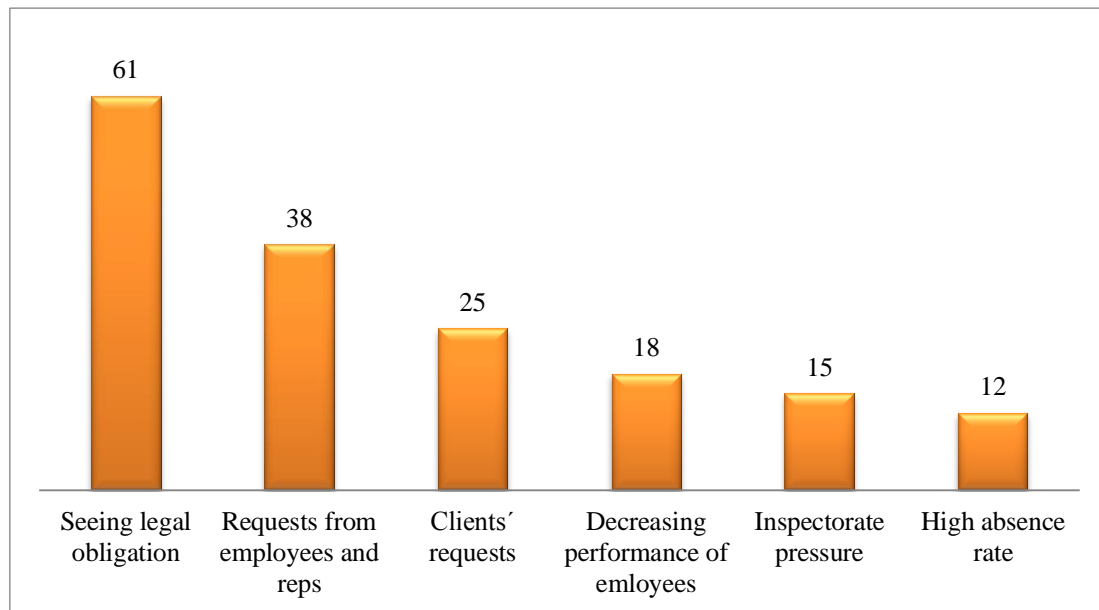


Figure 3: Important reasons for addressing OSH issues (in % of companies of EU 27) (Osha.europa, 2013, Paneurópsky prieskum verejnej mienky o ochrane zdravia a bezpečnosti pri práci. Osha.europa.eu. Available on :<https://osha.europa.eu/sk/safety-health-in-figures>)

In Figure 3, we have listed the reasons why employers tackle the problem of the psychosocial issues at the workplace, namely mobbing. Most common answer is that the employers have been trying to comply with the obligations to which are prescribed by law. We consider this answer to be negative, because we consider this that employers are missing a personal approach to their staff and a priority for them is just to comply the law. The personal approach in our view can be found under the second reason which is requirements of the employees or their representatives.

On the basis of the information from this survey, we found that almost 20% of the reasons why companies are dealing with these problems are that their existence is linked to the decrease in the productivity of employees. If we take a closer look on the respective countries, the greatest emphasis on solving these problems puts Turkey (84% of the companies), Romania (83% of companies) and Portugal (78% of companies). Conversely, Croatia, Italy and Luxembourg dedicate small attention to this problem.

Based on the results of this research mentioned above, mobbing has really negative effects on the company itself and individuals. The effects of chicane in the workplace can be low morale, resignations, high fluctuation, poor performance, increased absenteeism, decreased productivity, damage to the business' reputation, as well as costs of time spent investigating mobbing (Mills & Hall, 2014).

Prevention against mobbing

The ways of identification of defense and prevention against the occurrence of mobbing is quite demanding. For this reason, it is important to respect the laws governing relations in the workplace from the part of the employer within the Slovak law legislation and also to abide in the terms of the implemented ethics code. An essential part of employment relationships should be respect the Labour Code, non-discriminatory treatment should be based on the action of antidiscrimination law. However, this is not enough. Despite the existence of laws, regulations of the European Commission, and not least the acceptance of human rights and especially the European Social Charter, significant gap still occurs in the Slovak legislation. The absence of Antimobbing Act creates a space for non-punishable

violation of human rights by mobber. The situation in the Slovak Republic is quite polarized. The validity of the implementation of the law dealing with the issue of increasing mobbing is more than alarming, not only because of inferring legal consequences, but also the very prosaic reason, such as prevention.

Despite the fact that chicane is carried out on daily basis in the workplace and in schools in Slovakia, correctly naming through mobbing, bullying and related terms is often taboo. Therefore, it is desirable to raise awareness not only by businesses through sessions and lectures, but also from the state power through the implementation of effective Antimobbing Act.

Svobodová identifies a number of preventive measures that could be helpful in the prevention of mobbing. Emphasis should be given during the selection of an employee who should not have any inclinations to aggression and intolerable behavior. The mentor should be available for new employees. His primary aim should be to hold over the employee a kind of 'protective hand'. The inevitability in the combat against mobbing should be without a doubt the constant and permanent monitoring of relations in the workplace, including regular sessions or questionnaires. These aspects, however, represent the view of an enterprise, whereby the necessary thing is also the view of the employees. They should build their self-confidence, know their value and last but not least, think of their personal and social life, which should not remain neglected (*Svobodová, 2008, p. 90*).

Jaroslav Bobela, a member of the Department of BOZP KOZ SR points to the fact that an important prevention against the occurrence of bullying in the workplace is: *"fair, moral enterprise culture, namely a set of several, fair, positive values, norms and practices recognizing employees of company, to which they are professed publicly and in case of emergency of the important principles they are able to response with rational and sensibly respond," (Bobela, 2011)*. Thus, it is clear that preventive measures should consist in the actual selection of employee and his personality profile sequently after his integration into the corporate culture and following the monitoring and continuous monitoring of workplace relationships.

4. Methods

To determinate the state of knowledge about bullying in the workplace respectively mobbing among individual employees, we have used the questionnaire method. The anonymous questionnaire was provided in a printed as well as an electronic form to 103 employees, whereby the average age interval is between 18 to 30 years, representing up to 77.67% of all respondents. Gender of all respondents is 61.17% composed of women. 38.83% is the representation of men. A substantial proportion of respondents consist of university-educated people working mainly in the financial field.

Evaluation of survey results and discussion

After evaluation the demoFigureic structure of the respondents, we focused on the determination of the state of knowledge about the term mobbing and chicane in the workplace. The Figure 4 points this fact. As can be seen, the term mobbing was met 61.17% of respondents, but more than 38% do not know this term. Based on the acquired theoretical knowledge can be concluded that under the conditions of the Slovak Republic we often face the concept of chicane in the workplace, as shown the results of the survey. Chicane in the workplace knows up to 74.76% and 25.24% said that this concept has never met.

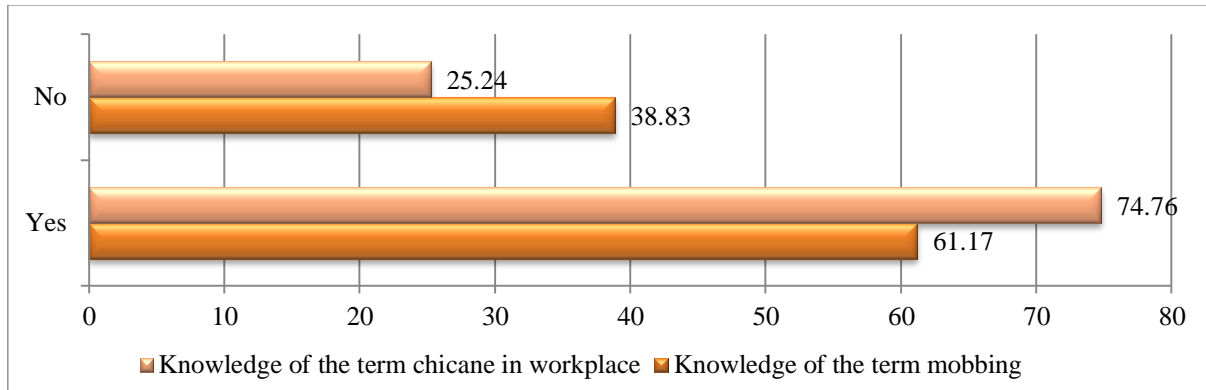


Figure 4: Knowledge of the terms mobbing and chicane in the workplace in % (own study)

Given the fact that the word mobbing is not known such as the term chicane in the workplace, the essence to the success of the employer in the prophylaxis is the realization of preventive workshops and sessions focused on relationships in the workplace. According to the responses of individual respondents, the courses focused on ethical / unethical behavior in the workplace carry out in 46.60%. In our opinion the finding is a rather surprising because we expected a smaller percentage; however, it cannot be argued that this result is sufficient.

The term mobbing, as we have already mentioned above, is known among employees. Although the respondents did not come through the signs of mobbing, when we asked to identify the types of mobbing which they have met at work (Figure 5), only 15% of them reported that they did not experience any types of mobbing. It is the clear evidence that mobbing exists in a greater degree than we think.

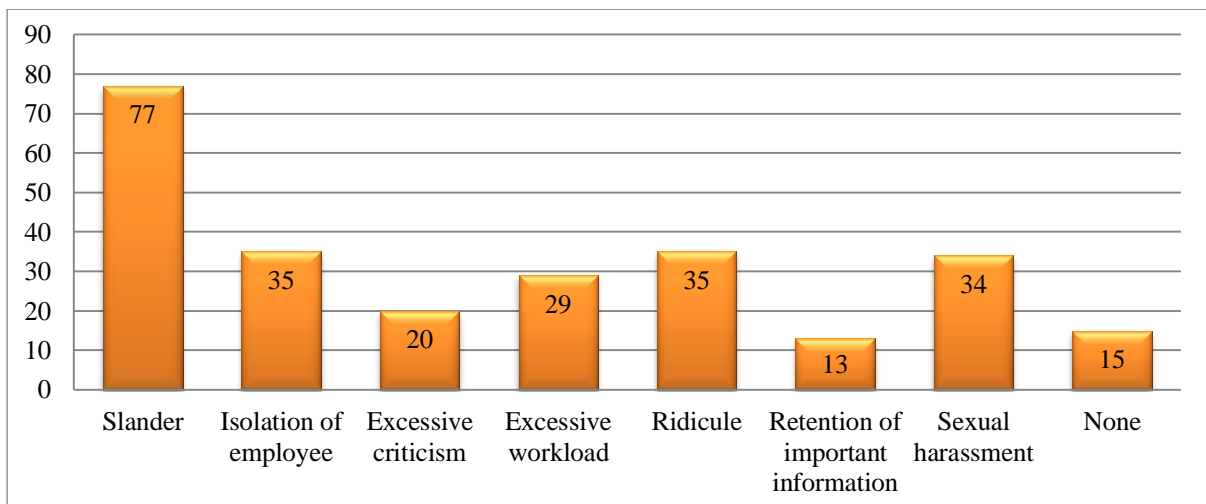


Figure 5: Types of mobbing occurring in the workplace in % (own study)

From the Figure 5 we see that 77% of respondents said that their work leads to mutual slander of colleagues. Excessive criticism, ridicule and excessive workloads were placed from second to fourth place with 65%. At least those questioned reported (13%) that the sexual harassment in their work occurs. From our perspective, this is one of the worst forms of mobbing. 13% can be already perceived as a very high percentage.

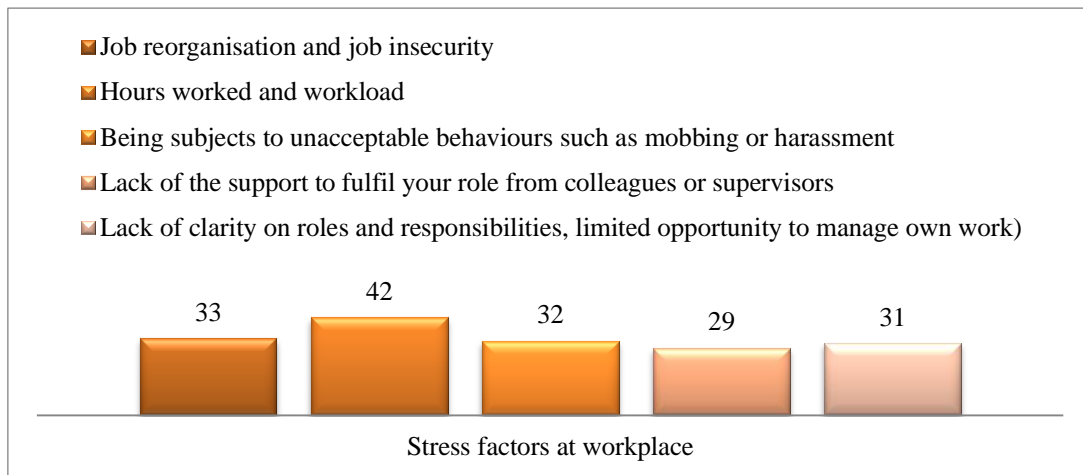


Figure 6: Stress factors at workplace (own study)

In the survey, we examined the factors of stress in the workplace. The data in Figure 6 are in percent and clearly we can see that the workload with 42% is dominant reason for stress. Compared to the research conducted by the European Union, our results approximate average especially for the European Union as a whole. In the Slovak Republic, organizational change and job insecurity were ranked on the first place. These reasons with 33% occupy second place in our survey closely followed by mobbing which 32% of respondents denoted as reason which reduces their performance.

One way how a victim of mobbing solves the unfavorable situation is leaving the job. When we asked whether respondents left the job because of mobbing, 22% of respondents answered affirmatively. Another 16% said that they are considering leaving the current job. Pearson in its survey at the turn of the 21st century found that 12% of respondents left their jobs as a direct result of bullying. When comparing these data, we can see that bullying is becoming increasingly common. We believe that this is due to constantly increasing demands on workers and high unemployment. People are increasingly worried about their jobs which results in exposed situations. Such behavior at work, however, has no place. One solution is that managers as well as employees pay more attention to their working environment and if unethical behavior is detected, respective measures shall be taken swiftly.

Another solution is workshops which should deal with mobbing and possible health and mental health consequences for the employee. Approximately 53% of respondents replied that they do not have any training. The results are quite balanced, but we consider them to be unfavorable in the prevention of mobbing. Both large and small enterprises should inform their employees about the problem and possible solutions in case of potential occurrence.

An interesting finding is whether employees know whom to contact in case mobbing occurs at their workplace. Almost exactly 65% of those interviewed knew whom to contact in case of mobbing. Among the most frequently cited responses is the human resources department, the immediate superior or the ethics line. The percentage of employees who do not have the necessary information to address inappropriate interpersonal relationships is almost 35%. Noteworthy, however, is that, given the percentage conducted courses on, for example, the mobbing within individual companies (53.40%), a larger percentage of employees knows where they can solve problems of this type (65.05%). Despite this fact, not all respondents would admit that they are being mobbed at work. This is a very sensitive issue covering psychic of the individual and depends on one's personality, and would be able to openly discuss their situation. However, according to respondents' answers 70.87% of them would talk to someone about this problem. But this is a very hypothetical answer, because it

depends on the particular situation and the severity of mobbing. Around 19% of respondents would not talk about chicane in the workplace. In this case however the expression „*to remain silent is gold*“ does not apply since isolation only enhances and deepens problems and pressure on mobbing victim. It may end up not only with quitting the job but also countless mental or physical problems.

In our research, we focused on the questions whether a person ever became a victim, witness or mobber. The victims are in this case represented 12.50%, which means that more than one in ten employees is mobbed in the workplace. Witnesses of mobbing are represented by 21.43%. Only in one case a respondent admitted to mob a colleague at work. The absolute majority (65.18%) of staff never became a victim, witness or even the mobber. From the above, it follows that almost 34% of all employees met with bad practices in the workplace, whether in the form of a witness or as a victim of mobbing.

And finally, what can be seen as the primary causes leading to chicane in the workplace? Respondents were asked to identify the underlying factors which, in their view, could trigger mobbing. Among the most frequently mentioned aspects could be, on the basis of the responses, superiority of the mobber, selfishness, personal problems often stemming from problems at home, complexes, jealousy, mutual dislike, achievement of career growth and psychological terror at the expense of another. These above factors are mainly related to the person who is mobbing while the frequent responses are also those that flow directly from the company, namely inappropriate corporate culture and climate. Finally, causes may also be the very nature of the object of mobbing, which is characterized by distinctiveness from the norm, or introverted and emotionally labile.

5. Conclusion

On the basis of a survey carried out, we may conclude that large, but also small companies should pay greater attention to the issue of mobbing in the workplace, because it significantly affects the performance of the employee. One of the indirect consequences of mobbing can be that employee leaves the company. It can be a problem when it such employee is highly qualified. In case of loss of such employee, in some cases, it may also lead to loss of competitive position, which is always accompanied by an increase in costs. It follows from this that the management should address psychosocial issues not only from an ethical point of view, but also in terms of the overall performance of the company.

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