MANAGERIAL ANALYSIS OF MOBBING AND FEAR IN THE WORKPLACE

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Abstract

The main aim of this report is to research and analyze mobbing and fear in the workplace from the managerial perspective because such behaviour is often regarded as negative or undesirable and it has various effects on the employees. The study is divided into the theoretical and the empirical part. The theoretical part describes mobbing in general and explains this phenomenon from the viewpoint of its historical development and as connected to fear. The empirical part includes the main objectives, hypotheses, and methods of investigation. The research is based primarily on the statistical analyses of mobbed persons in comparison with other employees, and the results are supported by tables, graphs, and concluding discussions.

1. INTRODUCTION TO MOBBING

According to Hirigoyenová [2001], we talk about mobbing when a person is being attacked systematically and for a long period of time. Mental terror rules where bullying and intrigues are ordinary. Mobbing means that the affected person is being attacked at least once a week and at least for a half of the year by one or more persons. Kratz [2005] describes mental abuse as inadequate behaviour in the form of verbal or written cues, expressive gestures or acts which undermine dignity and physical and mental integrity of a person, jeopardize their job performance and significantly participate in deterioration of the atmosphere in the workplace. The victim loses dignity because of inadequate behaviour of the others. Mobbing, which comes from an individual or a group, is as such often assessed as a mere misunderstanding. This makes it very difficult for the affected ones to react. First it is not easy to determine whether the given situation is only a coincidence or whether it is already a systematic conspiracy [Huberová, 1995]. In mobbing, there is often little or no time for a forewarning. Neither any argument nor open conflicts serve as a signal for the victim to prepare for the mental terror.

The Swedish sociologist Heinz Leymann [2000] talks about this problem only when the affected individual is attacked systematically at least once a week for a half of a year and

when, at the same time, the sharp remarks or comments are addressed by several persons from various occupational positions. According to Svobodová [2008], mobbing takes place only among adults and just in the workplace. It does not leave immediate traces, it is hidden and characterized by psychological attacks with lower physical threat.

Mobbing is systematic intriguing, bullying, frequent wrong kinds of behaviour and acting towards others, therefore it is a psychoterror in the workplace which is initiated and regulated by colleagues, supervisors, or subordinates with the aim to harm somebody by means of an active, permanent pressure for a longer period of time, or cause some sort of damage to a certain person. The difference between regular manifestations of behaviour, when conflicts are manifested in anger and bad mood, and mobbing is in that they appear only occasionally and the crisis is immediately followed by an apology. Mental terror is like a time bomb which needs to be deactivated as soon as possible in order to prevent it from causing extensive damage. If the mobbing activities are discovered and intentionally stopped on time, the problem is solved sooner [Provazník, 2002]. According to Beňo [2003], mobbing may represent a term covering the following situations:

- when we are recently often confronted by offensive, alarming activities;
- when the individual activities keep aggravating during the course of the time;
- when bullying harms our health, we are unable to rest after work, the feeling of own self-respect decreases, we suffer from mental or physical symptoms of mobbing;
- when one of our colleagues, supervisors, or subordinates is bullied, hassled, offended, slandered, or excluded from the team.

The word mobbing entered psychology from the world of animals. Austrian ethologist and Nobel prize holder Konrad Lorenz described it as an attack of a pack on the intruder which entered the pack's territory. The concept of mobbing was extended by the Swedish professor of psychology, Heinz Leymann, who in the 1980s found out that a similar type of behaviour appears among humans in the workplace. He studied this problem closely and observed its manifestations and signals in detail. He discovered that mobbing is not a simple conflict or a one-time action, but an intentional, systematic and particularly long-term process of destroying the chosen victim. Thanks to this author, mobbing became a very frequent term for certain ways of human behaviour in the organizational practice. It is estimated that in the developed Europe, during their work life, every fourth worker becomes a victim of mobbing [Pauknerová et al., 2006]. Huberová [1995] divides the strategies, which are used by mobbers, into these categories:

- spreading rumors (insidious gossiping, uncanny references, malicious slander, traducing in front of the superordinate, intentional „shooting");
- isolation of the colleague (locking doors, refusing cooperation, ignoring the victim, keeping important information away, abrupt ending of conversations, spatial isolation);
- sabotaging work (disappearances of work materials and tools, falsification and damaging, informational lie, blockade of cooperation, spiritual theft of ideas and proposals);
- disparagement of performance and abilities (exaggeration, permanent criticism and remorse, disgrace, questioning decisions, deceleration of motivation, trammeling competences, doubting professional skills);
- damage of privacy and personality (disparagement of appearance and looks, copying the victim, ridiculing mistakes, „irritation" of wounds, discussing private

life, terrorizing by phone, involving the victim's family in the conflict, suspecting the victim from being mentally ill);

- damage of health (threats of physical violence, physical wounds and abuse, forcing the victim into harmful work);
- sexual harassment, which is defined by Pauknerová et al. [2006] as a certain process during which a (not only) managing worker enforces a certain decision by contact, a return service in the sexual area.

Mental terror in the workplace often leads to a complete mental and physical exhaustion. Symptoms then appear, depending on the kind of mental terror and a series of personal factors: from physical and mental state, self-confidence, general respect from others, to social contacts which play an important role. The consequences of mobbing may be, in accordance with Kratz [2005], divided into two main categories:

1. Mental consequences. They begin after rumors and defamation, self-doubting, searching for the guilt within oneself, losing self-confidence and self-respect. The person is permanently exposed to great stress which negatively affects the ability to concentrate, and often depression, anxiety, insomnia, or distaste appear.
2. Psychosomatic consequences. They are manifested by heart and blood circulation failures, headaches, back pain, neck pain, skin diseases, digestive system and intestinal problems, or sleep disorder.

It may be pointed out that when a person becomes the target of such mental war in the workplace, fear emerges. Even weekends cannot wipe off the uncomfortable tension in the stomach. People who cannot bear such pressure tend to resign from their jobs and leave the companies which are therefore full of mobbers because all the creative workers are forced to leave their positions.

Studies which were conducted by means of the given methodology [for example Hoel, Cooper, Faragher, 2001; Mikkelsen, Einarsen, 2001] analyze the negative acts of behaviour and mobbing behaviour particularly in the countries of Scandinavia and Great Britain. These studies reveal that most workplaces are marked primarily by manipulative behaviour (delegation of work, mockery) rather than aggressive behaviour (threats, creaming, etc.). The concept of mobbing in the workplace is related to the situations in which an employee is systematically exposed to the negative and aggressive behaviour at work, especially one of the psychological nature [Leymann, 1996 in Einarsen, 2009] with the effect of humiliation, intimidation or punishing the object of terror. Instead of being a discreet affair, mobbing represents developing and often also escalating hostile relations in the workplace with repetition (frequency) and duration, and it involves various types of behaviour [Einarsen, et al., 2003 in Einarsen, 2009].

2. RESEARCH

2.1 Objectives

The primary objective of this research was to analyze mobbing as a certain form of negative behaviour in the workplace as related to fear in the areas of health care, production, administration, and army.

2.2 Hypotheses

Before starting the research, we made the following assumptions to serve as starting points for realization of the research on a bigger sample of respondents.

H1: We assume that in the workplace, women come across more negative activities than men.

H2: We assume that mobbing, as undesirable behaviour in the workplace, is rather the problem of younger, starting employees.

H3: We assume differences from the viewpoint of the occurrence of negative behaviour in the workplace in relation to the individual work areas.

H4: We assume differences in certain forms and degrees of fear of the mobbed persons in comparison with other employees.

2.3 Research sample

We addressed 120 respondents, out of which there were 43 men and 77 women of the age ranging from 20 to 58 years, average age being 36.8 years. There were 20 respondents from the health care, 39 from the administration, 31 from the production, and 30 from the army. Out of them, 79 were efficient workers and 41 were managers.

2.4 Methodology of the research

For the analysis of mobbing in the workplace, the NAQ – Negative Acts Questionnaire [Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen og Hellesøy, 1994], which is composed of two parts, was used. The first part includes demographic information about the respondents. The second part consists of personal experience of the employees with negative activities in the workplace. When answering the individual questions (questions 1-28), the respondents could choose one out of five points on a scale (1-never, 2-now and then, 3-monthly, 4-weekly, 5-daily) which indicate the frequency of the occurrence of negative ways of behaviour. In the problematic set of questions (questions 30-35) in the second part of the NAQ it was examined who committed these acts and how many employees became victims or witnesses of mobbing in their environment during the last six months.

By means of another questionnaire, the DOAS (QPAF – Questionnaire of Personal Analysis of Fear) [Juhás, 2009], the role of the respondents was to express the degree of their fear of 13 possible aspects on a 5-point scale, where zero fear was expressed by point 1, and absolute fear by point 5.

For the statistical elaboration of the collected data, we used the SPSS 18 program for statistics to detect the mean, frequency analysis and correlation analysis.

2.5 Results and analysis

By means of the NAQ [Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen og Hellesøy, 1994] we examined the personal experience with negative phenomena of the employees from the areas of health care, production, administration, and army. We tried to detect the occurrence of undesirable behaviour in the workplace on the basis of demographic indicators: gender (H1), age (H2), and work area (H3). We also sought connections between mobbing and fear of the respondents (H4).

Hypothesis 1: We assume that in the workplace, women come across more negative activities than men.

The following Table 1 and Graph 1 illustrate the average scores in the NAQ by the respondents according to gender.

Table no. 1 NAQ score according to gender

Gender	Number	Mean
Men	43	39.47
Women	77	41.58
Overall score	120	40.83
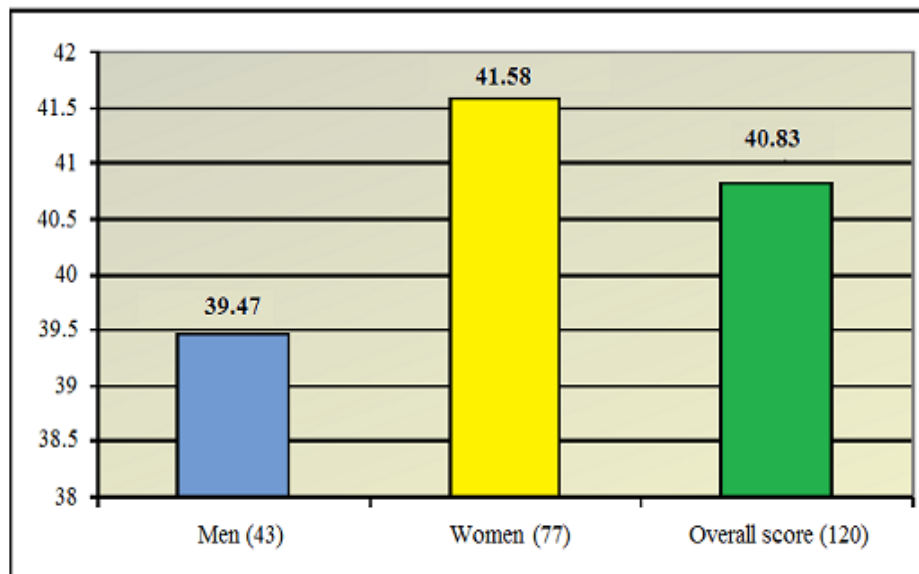
Source: Own elaboration
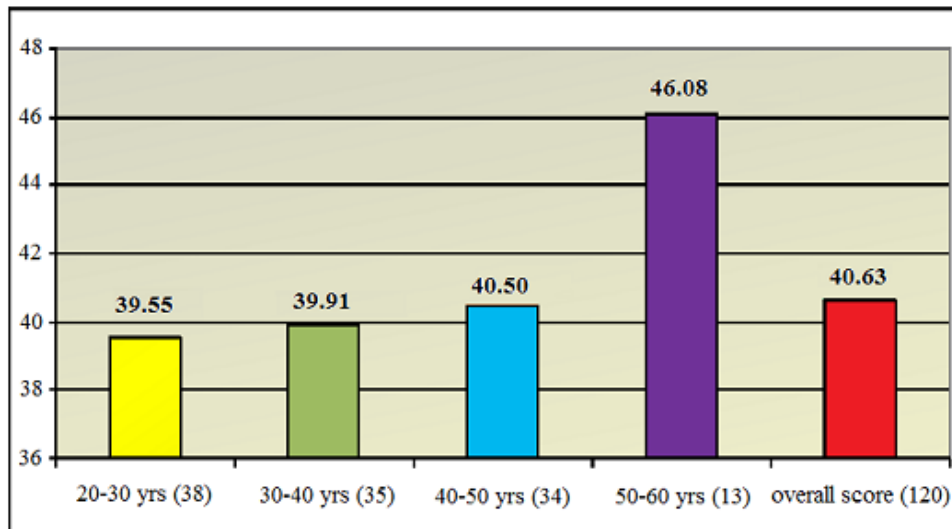**Figure no. 1 NAQ score according to gender**

Table no. 1 and Figure no. 1 demonstrate that in the workplace, women encounter mobbing behaviour more than men. The overall average of both genders is 40.83 points. Hypothesis 1 was confirmed.

Hypothesis 2: We assume that mobbing, as undesirable behaviour in the workplace, is rather the problem of younger, starting employees.

Age of the addressed respondents varies. Table no. 2 and Figure no. 2 illustrate the average score in the NAQ by the respondents according to age.

Table no. 2 NAQ score according to age

Age	Number	Mean
20-30 years	38	39.55
30-40 years	35	39.91
40-50 years	34	40.50
50-60 years	13	46.08
Overall score	120	40.63

Source: Own elaboration

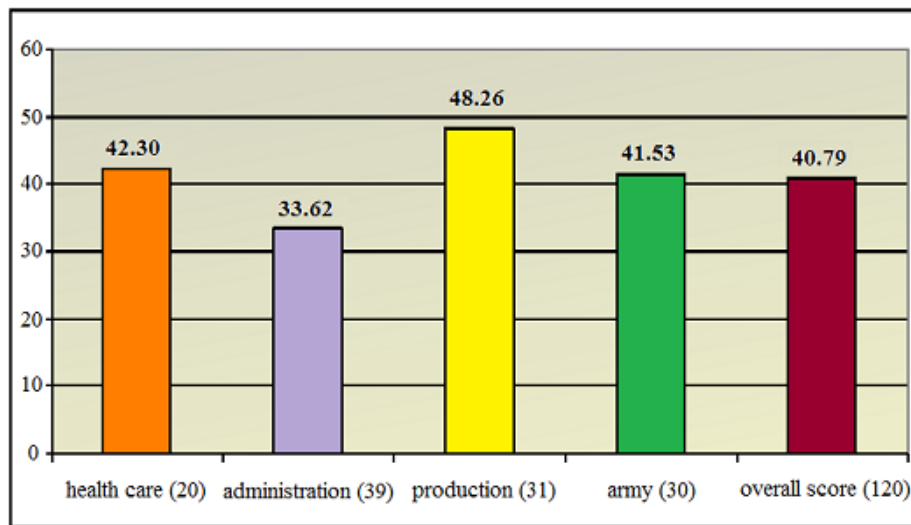**Figure no. 2 NAQ score according to age**

The presented table and graph indicate that sensitivity to mobbing behaviour increases simultaneously with age. It is most significant between the age of 50 and 60. Originally we assumed that mobbing would be the problem of rather younger, starting employees in the workplace. However, Table no. 2 and Figure no. 2 demonstrate that this assumption is wrong. The lower the age, the lower the sensitivity to undesirable behaviour. The lowest average score was reached by the respondents aged from 20 to 30. The overall average of the age groups is 40.63 points. Hypothesis 2 was not confirmed.

Hypothesis 3: We assume differences from the viewpoint of the occurrence of negative behaviour in the workplace in relation to the individual work areas.

The following table and graph include the average scores in the NAQ by the employees according to the work area.

Table no. 3 NAQ score according to work area

Area	Number	Mean
Health service	20	42.30
Administration	39	33.62
Production	31	48.26
Army	30	41.53
Overall score	120	40.79

Source: Own elaboration

Figure no. 3 NAQ score according to work area

Table no. 3 and Figure no. 3 demonstrate that the above-average negative behaviour can be found primarily in the area of production, and the below-average negative behaviour in the area of administration. Health care comes second and army reached third highest average values in the occurrence of negative activities in the workplace. We assumed differences from the viewpoint of the occurrence of negative behaviour in the workplace in relation to the individual work areas. The presented table and graph indicate that the assumption was correct. The overall average of all four tested groups is 40.79. Hypothesis 3 was confirmed.

For comparison, we made correlations between fear and the selected elements of mobbing. Table no. 4 serves as an illustration for the statistical significance between fear and mobbing by means of Pearson's correlation coefficient.

*Table no. 4 Pearson's correlation coefficient between the selected elements of fear
and the selected elements of mobbing*

| Fear / Mobbing	Of getting sick	For family	Of losing friends	Of social unrest	For the future	Of failing socially	Of violence	Of no help
Humiliation and mockery			0.183*		0.211*		0.240*	
Substitution of tasks				0.198*			0.208*	
Ignorance, exclusion from the team			0.244**					
Shouting, anger, rage	0.201*						0.180*	
Intimidation	0.194*						0.189*	
Threats		0.197*						
Ignorance of opinions	0.219*			0.307**			0.233*	
Offensive messages				0.275**				
Monitoring work								0.190*
Excessive sarcasm	0.198*			0.191*		0.229*	0.242**	
Redeployment against one's will					0.192*			

Table no. 4 shows statistically significant correlations between the variables marked with an asterisk (*) on the level of significance of 0.05, or double asterisk (**) on the level of significance of 0.01. Statistically significant is also the relationship between ignorance, exclusion from the team and loss of friends. Based to the mentioned, it may be stated that what an individual experiences in the workplace is usually transferred to their privacy as well. Fear of losing friends is related to humiliation and mockery in work. Great fear of social unrest is connected primarily to offensive messages, ignorance of opinions, and substitution of tasks in the workplace. Fear of violence is typical for those who were victims of excessive sarcasm but also those whose opinions were ignored and who were victims of intimidation, shouting, anger, substitution of tasks, humiliation and mockery in the workplace. Fear of getting sick is related to undesirable behaviour in the workplace which is

manifested particularly by excessive sarcasm, ignorance of opinions, intimidation, shouting, and anger.

Table no. 5 Forms of fear of mobbed persons N:21 and other employees N:120

Fear	Degree of fear	Absolutely not afraid		Not afraid		Don't know		Afraid		Absolutely afraid	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Of getting sick	Mobbed persons	1	4.8	2	9.5	8	38.1	8	38.1	2	9.5
	Other employees	11	9.2	23	19.2	27	22.5	49	40.8	10	8.3
Of losing job	Mobbed persons	1	4.8	4	19.0	2	9.5	6	28.6	**8**	**38.1**
	Other employees	9	7.5	26	21.7	24	20	37	30.8	24	20
Of being lonely	Mobbed persons	2	9.5	8	38.1	6	28.6	2	9.5	3	14.3
	Other employees	18	15	49	40.8	19	15.8	24	20	10	8.3
Of old age	Mobbed persons	**8**	**38.1**	4	19.0	4	19.0	3	14.3	2	9.5
	Other employees	16	13.3	41	34.2	30	25	23	19.2	10	8.3
Of being in debt	Mobbed persons	1	4.8	5	23.8	4	19.0	8	38.1	3	14.3
	Other employees	17	14.2	36	30	22	18.3	32	26.7	13	10.8
For my family	Mobbed persons	0	0	3	14.3	5	23.8	10	47.6	3	14.3
	Other employees	3	2.5	15	12.5	11	9.2	**52**	**43.3**	**39**	**32.5**
Of increasing prices	Mobbed persons	3	14.3	4	19.0	9	42.9	4	19.0	1	4.8
	Other employees	15	12.5	41	34.2	33	27.5	27	22.5	4	3.3
Of being poor	Mobbed persons	7	33.3	**9**	**42.9**	1	4.8	2	9.5	2	9.5
	Other employees	19	15.8	34	28.3	39	32.5	21	17.5	7	5.8
Of losing friends	Mobbed persons	2	9.5	8	38.1	8	38.1	2	9.5	1	4.8
	Other employees	19	15.8	**51**	**42.5**	29	24.2	14	11.7	7	5.8
Of social unrest	Mobbed persons	2	9.5	5	23.8	**10**	**47.6**	2	9.5	2	9.5
	Other employees	18	15	34	28.3	**37**	**30.8**	22	18.3	9	7.5
For the future	Mobbed persons	3	14.3	8	38.1	6	28.6	1	4.8	3	14.3
	Other employees	15	12.5	44	36.7	26	21.7	28	23.3	7	5.8
Of failing socially	Mobbed persons	4	19.0	5	23.8	5	23.8	7	33.3	0	0
	Other employees	**27**	**22.5**	42	35	31	25.8	16	13.3	4	3.3
Of violence	Mobbed persons	3	14.3	5	23.8	1	4.8	**11**	**52.4**	1	4.8
	Other employees	15	12.5	31	25.8	12	10	43	35.8	19	15.8

Source: Own elaboration
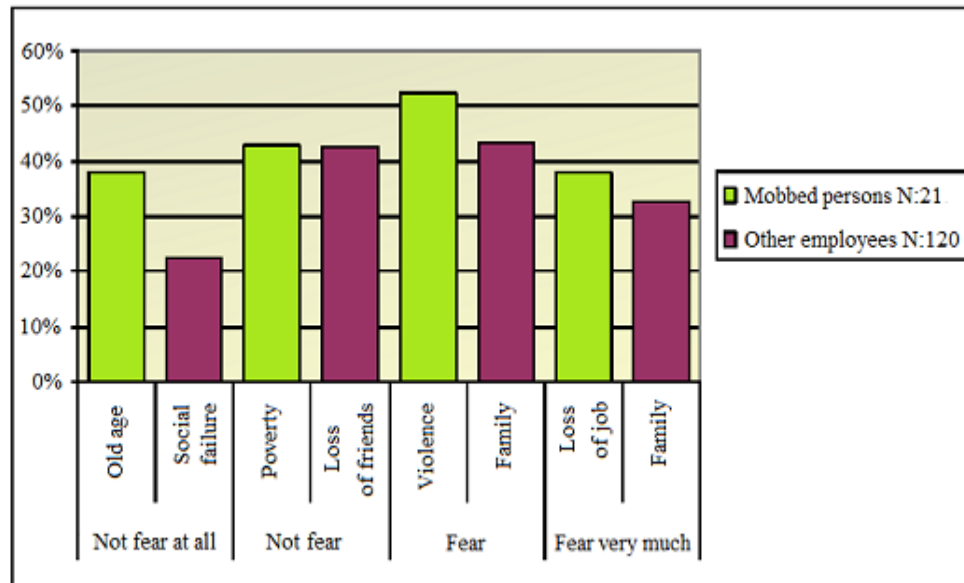
Source: Own elaboration

Figure no. 4 Forms of fear of mobbed persons N:21 and other employees N:120

The presented Figure no. 4 illustrates only those forms of fear from Table no. 5, which were in certain degrees reached by the highest percentage of respondents from the group of mobbed persons out of total number of 21 and other 120 employees. Originally we assumed differences in certain forms and degrees of fear of the mobbed persons in comparison with other employees. Table 5 and Graph 4 demonstrate that the assumption was correct. It may be claimed that certain forms of fear are in these two groups different to a certain degree. Contrarily to other employees, who do not fear failing socially nor losing their friends, the victims of mobbing feel no fear of old age or poverty at all. To compare fears, the greatest fear for family is felt by other employees, mobbed persons feel great fear of losing their jobs and of violence. It may be concluded that Hypothesis 4 was by this confirmed.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bullying in the workplace, which is known by the majority of us as mobbing, has reached such dimensions that it has become a serious social issue which daily negatively affects not only the victim of mobbing, but also the whole society.

The basic objective of the research was to analyse mobbing as undesirable behaviour in the workplace in relation to the fear of employees. Employees do encounter negative behaviour in the workplace which significantly affects their feelings and fears. We assumed that in the workplace, women would come across more negative activities than men. The reason for such assumption may be the fact that women tend to be more active in work and those who by their activity stand out from the crowd become victims of mobbing more of-

ten. We further assumed that mobbing, as undesirable behaviour in the workplace, is rather the problem of younger, starting employees. This assumption proved to be wrong and the reason for this may be that older workers have sometimes much bigger problems with adapting in a work team than younger employees. Emerging new technologies represent certain problems for the older employees and this may be the cause of the fact that they encounter negative behaviour in the workplace more frequently. Older employees are more experienced and have more knowledge of their work than younger workers, therefore they become a certain threat for the mobbers who often use undesirable behaviour to get rid of the competition. We also assumed differences from the viewpoint of the occurrence of negative behaviour in the workplace in relation to the individual work areas. This assumption proved to be correct also for the reason that in every work area, a different group of people is employed and among them there are certain friendly or unfriendly relationships. Every work area is managed by different leaders with their own organizational culture and ethics. Management style may have significant influence on whether there is bullying of employees in the workplace or not.

We also assume differences in certain forms and degrees of fear of the mobbed persons in comparison with other employees. This was confirmed also because of the fact that in order to work effectively, we have to possess three aspects: motivation, abilities, and self-confidence. When a person suffers from mental discomfort in the workplace, fear appears. This fear is the main cause of destruction of self-confidence and motivation. Such people lose their faith in having enough abilities and their job performance deteriorates because they feel great fear of losing their job. Mobbed employees are almost constantly in fear.

Wrong atmosphere and conflicts in the workplace significantly negatively influence our mood and often lead to serious consequences, such as bad working conditions.

4. CONCLUSION: PREVENTION AND ELIMINATION OF MOBBING

Provazník [2002] claims that prevention is better than therapy. It is prevention which represents the biggest chance to soften mental terror in an organization and put a stop to all mobbers. An elementary prevention step is to start talking about mobbing openly. Prevention should include informing all employees of a company about the fact that this widespread phenomenon exists and that it is possible to fight it. In this process, a significant role is played by mass media and wide publicity. It is crucial to realize that interpersonal relations can be solved only by people. Mental terror usually strikes when the victim is not ready. Generally, one person is unable to stop the course of mental terror alone. It is normally possible only with the help from others. When searching for the way out, women tend to use the help from others more. Men often treat mental terror as something trivial because they perceive it as a personal defeat.

I. Existing chance to solve the issue of mobbing:

1. Start solving conflicts thoughtfully, which is described by Huberová [1995] as follows:

a) name the conflict (who argues with whom and what is the reason for it);

b) elaborate the conflict (together with some problem settler, the issue should be discussed over and proposals for its solution should be elaborated);

c) solve the conflict (it is possible to ask the mobber openly but in privacy for a discussion – the attacker therefore does not have a feeling of being uncoverd publically, thus he/she may be willing to start cooperating).

2. After discussing the conflict, the first step must be made and there ought to be an attempt to start reconciliation.

3. Family and friends should be involved in talking about problems, the person should both complain and accept help.

4. Self-confidence and trust must be strengthened, the person should create inner stability and peace.

5. When disparaging abilities, adequate self-criticism and own standpoint should be asserted.

6. The person should not reach for the means to help release tension or painkillers (pills, alcohol, cigarettes, drugs) – it is only an apparent help.

7. When thwarting work performance, help should be sought within the company: people should be informed about their rights and bring the complaint to the employer.

II.   Non-existing chance to solve the issue of mobbing:

Mobbing is an inevitable part of our life. An effective strategy to fight mobbing actually does not exist. It is a complex issue which cannot be solved by a simple set of advice and recommendations. Since the usual targets of the tyrants are strong, independent, and talented people, employers, who are unable to fight mobbing, often fight a rapid brainwashing and decreased productivity. In relation to the threat of increasing mobbing tendencies in the workplace, greater attention is required to be paid to social atmosphere at the individual divisions and units within an organization, cooperation with doctors and psychologists. Generally, the only important requirement is a bit of understanding, human approach, and respect for people.

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