

## SECTION 2. Management in firms and organizations

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### Testing hypotheses concerning correlations between “mobbing as discrimination” in employee relations and organizational climate

#### Abstract

The primary purpose of this article is to test whether and how *mobbing* – a type of group-driven aggression in employee relations in organizations of all types – significantly correlates with organizational climate. Hypothesis-testing is conducted through corresponding forms of data analysis ranging from literature synthesis, case study, and survey questionnaire analysis to applications of descriptive and inferential statistics. Following a brief review of pertinent literature, statistical methods are applied to case survey data consistent with established theoretical propositions identified in the literature. These methods include secondary factorization, linear regression, correlation, *t*-tests, unifactor dispersion analysis, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Our own theoretical proposition following this groundwork is that mobbing is a form of systemic discrimination, arising from group ostracism of certain employees, that adversely and enduringly impacts organizational climate in specific ways. We do not find mobbing to principally occur as a manifestation of organizational culture and climate, as much of the literature suggests. In our study, an alternative causal vector (mobbing affecting organizational climate in discrete ways) has been verified using multiple statistical tests. Specific causal pathways between mobbing and organizational climate have been identified, together with very general guidelines for managerial intervention to counteract mobbing in the workplace. Differentiated forms of mobbing, for instance, those pertaining to various areas of professional activity, are identified, and distinctions between public-sector and private-sector organizations are drawn, completing the scope of this preliminary research.

**Keywords:** organizational mobbing, discrimination, diversity, cultural competence, workplace bullying, organizational climate, employee relations, managerial intervention, change management.

**JEL Classification:** M12, M14.

#### Introduction and brief literature synthesis

So-called ‘mobbing’ is workplace bullying writ large – interpersonal aggression turned into collective hostility and even violence toward individuals in organizations (for an early treatment of the connection to bullying, see Adams, 1992). Subjects linked to mobbing (such as organizational justice, conflict theory, diversity and cultural competency education, critical race theory, microaggression, and workplace dispute resolution), have become a focal point for many behavioral science, social science, and business and public administration fields, including those of organizational psychology, administrative behavior, and human resource management (see, e.g., Rivera, Johnson III & Ward, 2010; Rivera & Rogers, 2006; Sue, Capodilupo & Torino, 2007; Denenberg, Braverman & Denenberg, 2001; Korsgaard, Schweiger & Sapienza, 2001). Literature on diversity advocacy has tied mobbing to acts of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, gender, disability, and other aspects of personal identity (Agervold, 2007; Namie, 2007), while conflict theory explanations stress power imbalances between the victim and the perpetrators of workplace bias and violence (Hoel & Beale, 2006).

We contend that while (clearly) employees who experience discrimination do not always experience mobbing, those who experience mobbing always experience discrimination – i.e., they face bias and ostracism, often along one of more lines of personal identity (see also Vveinhardt, Žukauskas, 2012). The majority of authors, including many of those cited here, either exclude or downplay discrimination from the mobbing phenomenon or overlook *mobbing as discrimination* as an explanatory factor in workplace violence; however, authors who incorporate personal identity as a key variable are also prone to acknowledge the role of bias and discrimination in mobbing (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007).

Mobbing involves ‘ganging up’ on individuals, or, much less commonly, on groups in organizations. In either instance, the behavioral trigger could be the victim’s or victims’ perceived membership in unpopular or unwelcome groups, such as racial or ethnic or religious minorities or those with disabilities. Mobbing is harassment; it can have severe psychological impacts on its victims. It typically focuses on those whom the majority and (often) those in power in the organization deem to be unacceptably different. The ostracism that typically accompanies mobbing could be directed at anyone found in almost any way to be nonconformist, culturally or behaviorally or physically different,

dissident, and otherwise at odds with prevailing group values and norms. Paradoxically, mobbing is more likely to occur in workplaces where behavioral norms and constraints are relatively weak, and where managerial leadership is lacking; on the other hand, reasserted, effective leadership can restore organizational balance away from this stilted form of conflict and violence (Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007).

Our research for the present study relies heavily on case survey data drawn from Lithuania. To date, research on mobbing in Lithuania has been limited to single organizations in distinct fields of social and economic activity, such as educational organizations (see, for example, Malinauskienė et al., 2005); typically, organizational climate has been surveyed in isolation in studies conducted in Central and Eastern Europe. Without a more comprehensive and systematic perspective than the one taken by these regional studies, it is very difficult to trace connections between mobbing and therapeutics, or mobbing and corporate social responsibility in the context of public ethics, or mobbing and economics (pertaining, for instance, to economic loss connected to adverse investment climates). There are many other conceptual linkages of potential interest.

Mobbing is a very new subject in Central and Eastern Europe. As Vveinhardt (2009) suggests for Lithuania, the phenomenon is still so new that it is not widely recognized as a problem by managers, mental health professionals, and others whose expertise is required for viable solutions. Our research aims to fill this gap in extant organizational research and to suggest corrective practices that managers can take to prevent, forestall, and correct instances of mobbing.

## 1. Generating hypotheses

Our review of the literature uncovered a common proposition: The prevalence of mobbing in an organization is related to two sets of constructs: (1) employees' emotional reactions to the organization and its representatives; and (2) the organization's normative projections in the form of culture, climate, and values, especially norms relating to hierarchy and relations of power. The quality of managerial leadership as it relates to workplace conflict, including bullying and mobbing, is the causal variable intervening between individual perceptions and reactions, on the one hand, and organizational values on the other (Barker & Cheney, 1994).

Our research indicates that organizational climate is directly influenced by instances of workplace

harassment, including bullying and mobbing. While there is mutual causation between climate and this form of violence, the causal path begins with mobbing and persists much more forcefully in the direction of organizational climate than most of the disciplinary literature allows. There, climate is most often cast as the causal source – for instance, ethical climate (to take one instance of organizational climate) is taken to be a primary determinant of the quality of ethical outlooks and behaviors. However, mobbing can arise more or less spontaneously in virtually any organization at any time, irrespective of climate and even culture, values, and norms, if the enabling conditions for ostracism and harassment obtain. Once underway, however, mobbing will inevitably shape, reshape, and ultimately degrade organizational culture and climate. It will ensnare most if not all of the organization's members, including managers, directly or indirectly, whether or not they are protagonists in mobbing incidents. These conclusions reflect our working hypothesis as confirmed by our evaluative findings.

Three sub-hypotheses were formulated in the conduct of empirical research, consistent with our principal hypothesis, which may be articulated as follows: '*mobbing negatively influences organizational climate through a largely unidirectional causal vector.*' The three sub-hypotheses read as follows:

1. *Mobbing may obtain in organizations of all sorts, irrespective of activity or sector (H1);*
2. *mobbing and climate co-vary, such that climate improves after mobbing subsides (H2);*
3. *by purposefully mitigating mobbing, managers can restore the quality of climate (H3).*

## 2. The structure of the instrument and research sample

**2.1. The research instrument.** The research instrument was constructed by means of concept operationalization after a systematic research synthesis involving major works on the subjects of mobbing and discrimination (in addition to the previously cited sources, we consulted Leymann, 1990; Vartia-Vaananen, 1996, 2001, 2003; Einarsen, 1999; Zapf, 1999a, Zapf, 1999b, 2002; Žukauskas, Vveinhardt, 2009a, 2009b; Giorgi, 2009; Cemaloglu, 2011; Carnero et al., 2012; and Vveinhardt & Žukauskas, 2012). On organizational climate specifically, we consulted and synthesized numerous works as well (especially Halpin, 1967; Litwin, Stringer, 1968; James, Jones, 1974; Koys, DeCotiis, 1991; Al-Shammari, 1992; Alavi, Jahan-

dari, 2005; Vveinhardt, 2009; Nazari et al., 2011; Arora et al., 2012; Awwad, Ali, 2012; and Bamel et al., 2013).

The research instrument consists of two principal variables (mobbing as the independent variable and organizational climate as the dependent variable). The mobbing variable is further resolved into three scales, measures of traits that define mobbing under our construct: (1) features of mobbing in employee relations, (2) characteristics of mobbing actions, and (3) additional defining features of mobbing. The first of these three scales consists of six subscales, which involve the initial aggression toward a victim or victims, according to certain features that can act as a trigger for that aggression: physical features, cultural/social features, psychological features, demographic features, manifestations of social beliefs, and work-related characteristics.

The second of the three scales may be further decomposed into discrete trait measures. These pertain to traits attached to mobbing ‘attacks’: (1) ostracism and overt aggression through the organization’s social relations, (2) reactions against the victim’s or victims’ beliefs, and (3) aggressions in everyday professional activity. The third scale includes measures of managerial influence upon employee relations, unidentified discrimination in employee relations, undetected but operative discrimination, and intolerance. These sub-measures of characteristics or traits defining organizational climate are comprised of twelve scales (security and explicitness, creativity and initiative, values and traditions, qualities of organizational socialization and exit, communications, dissemination of information, employee-manager relations, employee-employee relations, control, conflict, openness and tolerance, and informal association). There are a total of 156 measures, of which 80 are attributes of organizational climate and 129 are attributes of mobbing as such.

**2.2. Research sample: cluster sampling.** The research reported here has been part of a wider research project carried out in the Republic of Lithuania (hereafter, Lithuania). A total of 22 activity fields in both public and private sectors were covered through cluster sampling. With it, a statistical population (here comprised of enterprise activity fields) is subdivided into groups called clusters: these are selected so that there is small variability within clustered groups and large variability among them. A random sample of the

groups is then chosen. Then the required data is gathered from a simple random sample of the pertinent study elements in each randomly-chosen group. The sequence may be repeated adaptively for every element or subsample of elements in these groups (Thompson, 1990).

Our cluster sampling aimed to ensure that all activity fields across both public and private sectors had equal probabilities of incorporation into the eventual analytical space. Rephrasing the definition for our purposes, clustering is a random sampling device involving the grouping of subjects into sets that reflect their proximity to each other and distance from unlike subjects in other sets, all in a common activity domain – in this case, type of organizational activity and sector category. Randomization then followed. The desired result was both representativeness and random assignment of study elements.

During the period covered by this research, there were 1.5 million registered employees in Lithuania comprising the eligible subjects for the projected universe of study. As Cohen et al. (2000) suggest, in order for study results to be reliably extrapolated for an entire population, a sample of 384 respondents per million subjects in this statistical universe would be required for survey results to fall within a 5 percent margin of error. However, following Jadov (2000), we surveyed a total of 1379 respondents corresponding to the 1.5 million figure just cited. That number of responses translates into a sample size 3.5 times greater than that required by Cohen et al. (2000). Response sizes, margins of error, and confidence intervals are reported more fully, and precisely, in the sections that follow.

### 3. Verification of hypotheses

In order to reduce the number of study variables, secondary factorization was carried out corresponding to the subscales just described. Secondary factorization is needed in the large-scale administration of questionnaires to make sure that the combinatorial treatment of large numbers of analytical factors into scales and subscales is sound.

Using secondary factorization, research results were verified by means of two focal methods: Principal components (Model of Factor 1) and Alpha factoring (Table 1). This factorization approach accounted for nearly 70 percent of the variance, as reported in table that follows.

Table 1. Secondary factorization results of mobbing within an organization

Principal components (1 factor model) F1 (Chronbach Alpha Scores)		Alpha factoring F1 (Chronbach Alpha Scores)	
Subscales of the survey questionnaire	N = 1379	Subscales of the survey questionnaire	N = 1379
Actions according to mobbing attack possibilities	0.91	Actions according to mobbing attack possibilities	0.91
Attacks due to employee's social (e.g., religious) beliefs	0.90	Attacks due to employee's social (e.g., religious) beliefs	0.90
Discrimination due to demographic features	0.89	Discrimination due to demographic features	0.89
Discrimination due to physical features	0.87	Discrimination due to physical features	0.86
Discrimination due to beliefs	0.86	Discrimination due to beliefs	0.85
Discrimination due to work features	0.86	Discrimination due to work features	0.84
Employees facing discrimination but not experiencing it	0.84	Employees facing discrimination but not experiencing it	0.83
Discrimination due to health status (e.g., disability)	0.84	Discrimination due to health status (e.g., disability)	0.83
Intolerance against people who are different	0.84	Intolerance against people who are different	0.83
Attacks in course of everyday professional activity	0.81	Attacks in course of everyday professional activity	0.80
Acting through social relations	0.81	Acting through social relations	0.79
Manager's influence upon employee relations	0.80	Manager's influence upon employee relations	0.78
Discrimination due to psychological features (e.g., mental health status)	0.74	Discrimination due to psychological features (e.g., mental health status)	0.72
Unidentified sources of discrimination in employee relations	0.74	Unidentified sources of discrimination in employee relations	0.72
Attacking in workaday health field	0.74	Attacking in workaday health field	0.71
Explained variance	69.24%	Explained variance	67.16%

It is important to ensure that the factorial weights of the subscales are high enough for the purposes of robust statistical analysis. Upon review of the estimation of factorial weights used here, it was evident that all fifteen analytical dimensions noted adequately define mobbing as manifest discrimination in employee relations.

The main hypothesis, namely 'mobbing negatively influences organizational climate' has been verified by applying the linear regression model reported in

Table 2. A simple linear regression model was used because there is only one independent variable, namely employee mobbing, and because the component dependent variables are continuous, not dichotomous. Linear regression allows not only for confirmation of stipulated causal relations but also for prediction of expected fixed-rate changes in outcomes with changes in the predictor(s), in our case changes in mobbing behaviors and defining circumstances.

Table 2. Correlation between aspects of organizational climate and mobbing (N = 1370)

Dependent variable: organizational climate					
R	R <sup>2</sup>	Corrected R <sup>2</sup>	df	F	Reliability
0.935	0.874	0.874	3	3165.931	0.000
			1367		
			1370		
Independent variables – aspects of mobbing as discrimination					
	Non-standard B coefficients		Standard Beta coefficients	Indicator t	Reliability
(Constant)	5.773			207.570	0.000
Discrimination features within an organization	-0.138		-0.136	-5.401	0.000
Discriminatory action within an organization	-0.033		-0.037	-2.051	0.040
Additional discriminatory factors within an organization	-1.018		-1.027	-48.119	0.000

Note: *R* is the coefficient of set correlation; *R*<sup>2</sup> is the cumulative certainty coefficient (determination coefficient); *F* is the observed meaning of Fisher's statistics.

Independent variables (tied to mobbing) are strongly correlated to dependent variables (organizational climate). Predictors (independent variables) account for (explain) 87.4% of variation in organizational climate variables. The explanatory value of this variance, for the total surveyed population is 87% (corrected *R*<sup>2</sup>). Regression is statistically significant, *p* < 0.001. Identified coefficients are used when writing the regression equation.

Regression equation: *Organizational climate* = 5.773 – 0.138 \* *mobbing features* – 0.033 \* *mobbing actions* – 1.018 \* *additional mobbing features*. Stated mathematically, the equation reads as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \epsilon_i, \quad (1)$$

where *Y* is the organizational climate, *x*<sub>1</sub> is discrimination features within an organization, *x*<sub>2</sub> is discriminatory action within an organization, *x*<sub>3</sub> is

additional discriminatory factors within an organization and  $\beta$  is the regression intercept.

We found that mobbing negatively influences organizational climate in discrete and enduring ways. When the features of mobbing as discrimination increase within the organization (and when other variables are held constant), organizational climate degrades correspondingly. When the actions of mobbing as discrimination in employee relations increase within the organization (and other variables are held constant), the organizational climate worsens. When additional features of mobbing as discrimination manifest more strongly (and when other variables are held constant), organizational climate worsens accordingly, and at discrete rates.

Thus, in order to maintain or restore a favorable organizational climate, management needs to focus on how to prevent, mitigate, and eliminate mobbing-enabling features of organizational life, acting preemptively on any feature of interpersonal relations that likewise prompts mobbing or makes mobbing possible. It has been noted in this essay that there are a myriad of triggers for mobbing, so that anticipating these is exceedingly difficult. However, our effort is to trace reliable pathways between antecedents of mobbing, once manifest, mobbing

itself, and mobbing's impact on organizational climate, so as to delineate possible lines of managerial intervention against mobbing and therefore against the degradation of organizational climate (including ethical climate).

**3.1. Hypothesis H1.** Mobbing as a manifestation of discrimination in employee relations (hereafter, simply 'mobbing as discrimination') obtains in all sorts of organizations, irrespective of activity fields or sector, although with possible variations by these fields, and by sector. We therefore determined not to test hypotheses according to separate fields of professional activity but to do so instead by grouping activities under public and private sectors. Proceeding from a premise that normative constraints on employee and supervisory behaviors are stronger in public sector organizations, which are typically monitored and sanctioned more closely due to statutory and regulatory limitations (for instance, as to hiring and firing in the civil service), it would be most serviceable to reformulate the principal hypothesis to read as follows: 'Mobbing as discrimination manifests itself more strongly in private-sector organizations than in public-sector organizations'. This hypothesis has been verified through Student's criterion (*t*-test) analysis (Table 3).

Table 3. Mobbing manifestation in private and public sector

Scales	Subscales of the questionnaire	In private sector (N = 998)		In public sector (N = 381)		Results of <i>t</i> -test revise	
		M	SD	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Features	Discrimination due to physical features	2.47	0.87	2.36	0.90	2.239	0.025*
	Discrimination due to health status	2.40	1.10	2.13	1.16	3.864	0.0001**
	Discrimination due to employee's social (e.g., religious) beliefs	2.37	1.18	2.22	1.20	2.198	0.028*
	Discrimination due to work features	2.74	0.98	2.65	1.08	1.386	0.166
	Discrimination due to demographic features	2.51	1.00	2.33	1.01	2.928	0.003**
	Discrimination due to psychological features	3.11	1.02	3.01	1.02	1.582	0.114
Actions	Actions according to mobbing attack possibilities	2.50	1.03	2.31	1.10	2.878	0.004**
	Acting through social relations	2.18	1.12	1.84	1.03	5.189	0.000**
	Attacks on employee's social (e.g., religious) beliefs	2.26	1.10	2.03	1.03	3.543	0.0004**
	Attacks in course of everyday professional activity	2.43	1.10	2.16	1.03	4.065	0.000**
	Attacks related to workaday health field	2.09	1.22	1.76	1.11	4.466	0.000**
Additional features	Manager's influence upon employee relations	2.73	1.06	2.48	1.15	3.839	0.0001**
	Unidentified sources of discrimination in employee relations	2.86	1.12	2.74	1.14	1.673	0.095
	Employees facing discrimination but not experiencing it	2.73	0.94	2.64	1.07	1.516	0.130
	Intolerance against people who are different	2.73	1.00	2.65	1.06	1.243	0.214

Note: \* is the level of statistical significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; \*\* is the level of statistical significance  $\alpha = 0.01$ .

Calculated means (M) and standard deviation (SD) show that H1 has been verified. When comparing the means, statistically significant sectorial differences have been identified for the scales and ranges of

mobbing *features* and *actions*, as just tabulated and as previously described. Contrary to our provisional sub-hypotheses, however, statistically-significant differences between public and private sector

organizations have not been identified for what we have designated *additional features*.

In pondering reasons for results pertaining to 'additional features', it is important to evaluate social and economic factors. The financial crisis has more heavily influenced organizations in the private sector in Lithuania – bankruptcies, job losses, significant revenue decline, and, consequently, emergent tensions in employee-management relations. In this respect, the Lithuanian public sector has suffered comparatively less adverse impact.

In addition, it is important to note that mobbing has not been institutionalized in the legal and judicial system of Lithuania, and that, in some respects, its expression and disposition in different legal/judicial frameworks and venues there have been inconsistent. However, in Lithuania as in most nations, the public sector is more strictly constrained by statutory and normative regulation, as already noted, as well as by professional standards. Additionally, there are the contextual factors of the European Union's governing frameworks and the availability of EU structural funds for employee development with respect to social and cultural competencies (including diversity and cultural competence training).

**3.2. Hypothesis H2.** Factors of organizational climate and mobbing correlate, such that climate improves as a consequence of the amelioration or elimination of mobbing factors.

Mobbing characteristics are generalized in 129 starter questions, which are combined into 15 subscales and 3 scales (Table 4, see Appendix).

It is possible to conceive of the subscales of organizational climate as a constructed space, by means of which normative and behavioral zones influenced by mobbing and the strength of these influences can become systematically evident. However, fine-grained determinations of the susceptibility of organizational climate to mobbing determinants and manifestations would exceed the limits of this study.

The results obtained are statistically significant; however, the strength of the correlations involved is distributed unevenly across the construct space. Mobbing and organizational climate are related by a statistically significant and substantive inverse relation (with mobbing prompting the degradation of an organization's climate, as previously discussed). From a macro-organizational standpoint,

workplace climate gets worse when mobbing conflicts are intensively and/or extensively on the rise. Conversely, by a causally weaker reciprocal relationship, the manifestation and influence of mobbing is reduced once organizational climate improves. The manner and sequencing of these causal loops is consistent with previous research (Zapf, 1999a, 1999b, 2002; Vartia, 1996, 2001, 2003). While the resulting model describes complex and uneven causal paths, however, our research suggests that managerial action on one or a few causal factors can substantially improve workplace climate eroded by mobbing incidents.

Most dimensions of mobbing and organizational climate we have tested and reported here are strongly related, as confirmed by our correlational analysis. The strongest – most statistically-significant – correlations were found between the 'additional features' of mobbing and the subscales of organizational climate. These additional mobbing features consist of managerial influence on employee relations, unidentified discrimination in employee relations, instances of employees facing discrimination but not experiencing it (or recognizing it for what it is), and instances of intolerance. In such cases, it is evident that mobbing and creativity, communication, information diffusion, employee relations with the manager, control, employees' relationships with one another, openness, tolerance, the operation of informal groups, and the incidence of conflicts co-vary by statistically significant to very significant correlations.

It can therefore be stated that Hypothesis H2 has been verified, even though the strength of the causal relationships involved is not constant. Since mobbing behaviors and organizational climate factors have been shown to be inversely related, in the specific ways delineated previously, the mitigation or elimination of mobbing will predictably lead to the improvement of organizational climate.

**3.3. Hypothesis H3.** Successful functioning of the organization (in the present case, maintenance or restoration of a positive organizational climate) depends on managerial decisions, so that *when a manager is able to purposefully and effectively improve organizational climate, s/he may expect that the expression of mobbing as discrimination will be reduced*. The statistically-significant differences in causation strength have been identified by applying the Student's criterion (*t*-test), as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Expression of mobbing in consequence of improved organizational climate

Scales	Subscales of the questionnaire	Worse climate (N = 689)		Better climate (N = 689)		Results of t-test revise	
		M	SD	M	SD	T	P
Features	Discrimination due to physical features	2.98	0.76	1.90	0.62	28.671	0.000**
	Discrimination due to health	2.92	1.09	1.73	0.79	23.212	0.000**
	Discrimination due to beliefs	3.01	1.14	1.65	0.79	25.662	0.000**
	Discrimination due to work features	3.46	0.69	1.97	0.67	40.767	0.000**
	Discrimination due to demographic features	3.05	0.94	1.88	0.67	26.578	0.000**
	Discrimination due to psychological features	3.63	0.83	2.54	0.90	23.266	0.000**
Actions	Actions according to attack possibilities	3.15	0.87	1.74	0.69	33.173	0.000**
	Acting through social relations	2.66	1.12	1.51	0.74	22.421	0.000**
	Attacking employee's social beliefs	2.86	1.02	1.53	0.67	28.625	0.000**
	Attacking in relation to professional activity	2.94	1.01	1.77	0.82	23.552	0.000**
	Attacking in workaday health field	2.56	1.28	1.43	0.77	19.719	0.000**
Additional features	Manager's influence upon employee relations	3.50	0.77	1.83	0.63	43.906	0.000**
	Unidentified discrimination in employee relations	3.35	1.04	2.30	0.94	19.546	0.000**
	Employees facing discrimination but not experiencing it	3.48	0.65	1.94	0.55	47.500	0.000**
	Intolerance against people who are different	3.42	0.77	1.99	0.67	36.922	0.000**

Note: \* is the level of statistical significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; \*\* is the level of statistical significance  $\alpha = 0.01$ .

The t-test results show the significant influence on organizational climate of directed changes in mobbing factors resulting from targeted managerial decisions and actions. And Hypothesis H3 was verified by still another method of statistical analysis, i.e., unifactor dispersion analysis one-way ANOVA. A one-way ANOVA is appropriate when there is one factor in a research study, with one or more factor levels that may either be correlated or uncorrelated.

Impact on organizational climate is most directly attributable to well-adapted, supportive managerial interventions. This means that the state of organizational climate directly depends upon the intensity and efficacy of managerial attempts to reduce the expression of mobbing. Both the preventive and remedial effects of such managerial interventions were thus verified (Table 6).

Table 6. The expression of mobbing behaviors as these impact organizational climate

Scales	Subscales of the questionnaire	State of low level of positivity in climate (N = 456)		State of moderate level of positivity in climate (N = 460)		State of high level of positivity in climate (N = 455)		Results of ANOVA	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	P
Features	Discrimination due to physical features	3.13	0.80	2.50	0.64	1.70	0.52	533.520	0.000**
	Discrimination due to health	3.16	1.08	2.26	0.92	1.56	0.70	351.995	0.000**
	Discrimination due to beliefs	3.20	1.20	2.34	0.90	1.44	0.67	396.869	0.000**
	Discrimination due to work features	3.69	0.64	2.74	0.61	1.71	0.57	1227.517	0.000**
	Discrimination due to demographic features	3.26	0.97	2.44	0.74	1.69	0.56	460.36	0.000**
	Discrimination due to psychological features	3.86	0.75	3.04	0.77	2.35	0.92	385.785	0.000**
Actions	Actions according to attack possibilities	3.38	0.86	2.43	0.73	1.53	0.60	711.745	0.000**
	Acting through social relations	2.84	1.14	2.10	0.95	1.32	0.59	305.004	0.000**
	Attacking employee's social beliefs	3.09	1.03	2.14	0.84	1.37	0.56	489.161	0.000**
	Attacking in relation to professional activity	3.11	1.04	2.38	0.89	1.58	0.73	331.614	0.000**
	Attacking in workaday health field	2.73	1.33	1.98	1.04	1.29	0.63	218.489	0.000**
Additional features	Manager's influence upon employee relations	3.80	0.70	2.66	0.55	1.54	0.47	1735.338	0.000**
	Unidentified discrimination in employee relations	3.55	1.05	2.79	0.88	2.14	0.96	244.525	0.000**
	Employees facing discrimination but not experiencing it	3.75	0.60	2.71	0.44	1.68	0.43	2008.390	0.000**
	Intolerance against people who are different	3.66	0.72	2.68	0.68	1.79	0.61	886.885	0.000**

Note: \* is the level of statistical significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ , \*\* is the level of statistical significance  $\alpha = 0.01$ .

According to the Tukey HSD test, the statistically significant differences have been identified among the means of all three groups; the Tukey HSD test is based on the *q*-statistic (the Studentized range distribution) and is limited to pairwise comparisons. The general finding is, once again, that in purposefully improving climate the expression of mobbing as discrimination is reduced. However,

managers are able to act upon behaviors directly, but not on climate directly, so that interventions directed at mobbing precursors and behaviors would be their most accessible, high-impact option.

In order to summarize the findings of this study, we have constructed a branching path diagram, as follows.

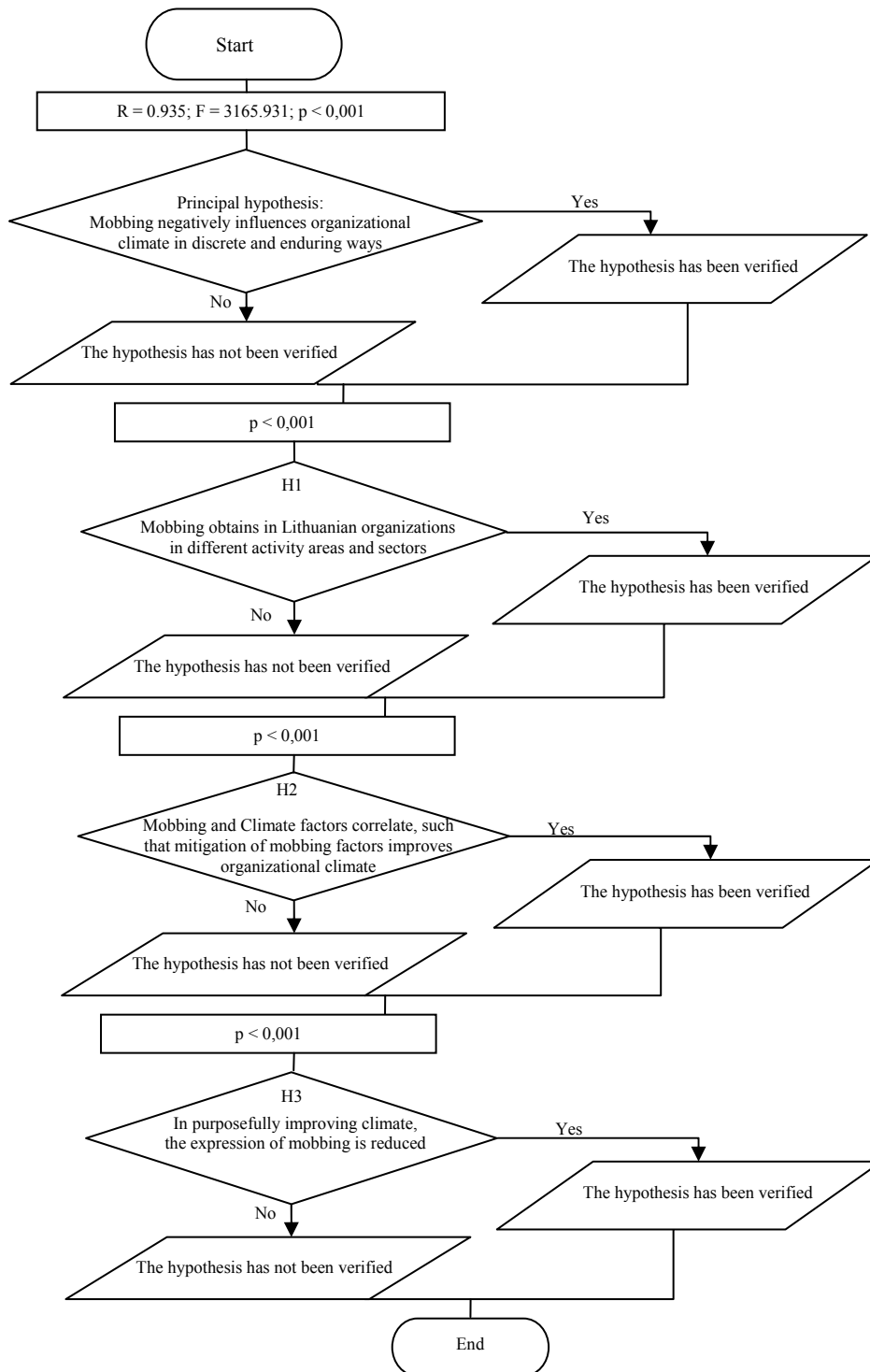


Fig. 1. Branching path diagram: sequencing hypothesis testing



## Findings: summary and discussion

**Mobbing negatively influences organizational climate.** *Regression conclusions:* when antecedent and enabling features of mobbing as discrimination are intensified (and other variables are held constant), organizational climate worsens; when mobbing actions intensify or magnify (and other variables are held constant), climate similarly worsens; when additional features of mobbing become manifest, organizational climate worsens.

**Mobbing manifests more strongly in private sector than in public sector organizations.** *T-test conclusions:* when comparing means, statistically-significant differences have been identified in regard to mobbing *features* scales. Lithuanian private sector firms have been found to be more susceptible to mobbing and its adverse effects, whereas public sector organizations appear to be less vulnerable, due to greater statutory and normative regulation, professional codes of behavior, and unique resource endowments (e.g., EU supports for the development of social and cultural competencies among public employees).

**Effective managerial intervention can mitigate or eliminate mobbing factors and therefore improve climate.** *Correlation conclusions:* statistical analysis establishes and confirms the inverse correlation of mobbing and organizational climate, significantly and very significantly, so that the mitigation of mobbing factors improves organizational climate.

**If climate is purposefully improved, expressions of mobbing are reciprocally reduced.** *Confirmatory t-test and one-way ANOVA conclusions:* all else held constant, efficacious managerial interventions bearing on mobbing features and factors as well as on additional mobbing features identified here will improve organizational climate.

## Prospects for change management in organizations

We set out on a selective synthesis of the germane social and behavioral science and managerial literature of the phenomenon of organizational mobbing – group-based workplace aggression. We found, first of all, that, with some notable exceptions, the literature lays insufficient stress on the discriminatory dimensions of mobbing. We also discovered that there was insufficient empirical testing of the causal factors connecting manifestations of mobbing in the workplace with the degradation of organizational climate. We also found great insight in the literature, for instance the proposition that mobbing is more likely to occur in workplaces where behavioral norms and constraints

are weak and where there is insufficient managerial leadership (Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007). This finding suggests, as we propose, that *effective* leadership can restore organizational balance correspondingly.

While it may be a truism in the organizational theory literature that organizational climate and culture are not amenable to direct managerial intervention, we find that precursor behaviors and operative factors involved in mobbing are in fact susceptible to managerial intervention, in other words to change management techniques focused on detecting and acting on workplace aggression.

What distinguishes the research reported here is the empirical testing of a singular proposition: Managers may so anticipate and respond to workplace mobbing factors as to mitigate these, therefore improving organizational climate. We used multiple statistical techniques to analyze large-scale, original survey research conducted in both public and private sector organizations in Lithuania. In so doing, we found statistically-significant inverse correlations between mobbing and responsive managerial decisions and actions, and between mobbing factors and healthy organizational climates.

Some of our findings may pertain most closely to the Lithuanian national context – for instance, the finding that private sector organizations there are somewhat more prone to mobbing as discrimination than are public sector organizations. Elsewhere, public organizations have suffered as acutely or more acutely than private sector ones from the economic recession traceable to 2007-2008 (for instance, in the United States, where Wall Street firms and banks enjoyed federal government bailouts not extended to similarly distressed local governments).

However, a generalized, increased awareness of the importance of workplace diversity points to a fairly universal, common theme of pressing interest: diversity management. As we have become more aware of the ethical demands of cultural sensitivity among identity and affinity groups (ethnic and racial groups, religious groupings, and others), we have also become ever more impatient with manifestations of intolerance and bias, especially in the workplace, where these can give rise to overt conflict and violence. There are concerted global efforts to improve diversity and cultural competencies in management, in particular. Our study points to research paths that may yield dividends for those wishing for greater mutual understanding, as well as reciprocity, in work and social settings of all sorts.

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## Appendix

After performing exploratory (pilot) research (Žukauskas and Vveinhardt, 2009b), an improved version of the survey questionnaire was posted to J. Vveinhardt's personal web page [www.mobingas.lt](http://www.mobingas.lt). There were 1379 respondents to the survey, representing both public and private sectors (998 private sector responses and 381 public sector ones). A link to the survey questionnaire was sent to organizations spanning 22 areas of professional activity, across both sectors.

With reference to the classification of economic activity used in the survey, the aim was to interview representatives from all areas of economic activity. Cluster sampling, as explained in the text of our study a form of purposive random sampling, was determined to be the methodological approach best suited to this aim. Some areas of economic activity were split so as to form a clearer picture of these (e.g., agriculture, forestry and fishing). Unfortunately, as is often the case with cluster and stratified random sampling, not all areas of professional and economic activity found representation in the eventual sample; when isolated cases were detected, they were combined under the rubrics of "Other business activities" and "Other service activities."

The organizations approached with the survey questionnaire were selected from the Lithuanian business directory in accordance with the area of professional activity sought. Employees of organizations of the following areas of professional activity participated in the survey. From the private sector: construction, transport, wood processing, metal processing, building materials industry, light industry, chemical industry, trade, agriculture, hotels and restaurants, information and communications, financial and insurance activities, publishing, printing and reproduction of recorded media, *electricity, gas and water supply\**, *health care and social work\**, *recreational, cultural and sporting activities\**, administrative and support activities, other service activities, and other business activities. From the public sector: forestry, education, public administration and defence, *water supply\**, *health care and social work\**, *recreational, cultural and sporting activities\**.

\* The area of electricity, gas and water supply is one area, but in this case-based survey, it was split in two parts, because water utilities and services belong to the public sector, while the supply of electricity and gas belongs to both public and private sectors. There is also a similar situation with regard to some areas of professional activity which fall within both clusters – groupings – of the public and private sectors. They are **recreational, cultural and sporting activities**, as well as **health care and social work**. Again, both private and public organizations work in these areas.

This research was conducted by Professors Jolita Vveinhardt and Pranas Žukauskas, who developed the theoretical and empirical framework for the article as well; Dr. Mario Rivera then worked with them in a full coauthoring partnership to finalize the article, its findings, and propositions.

Table 4. Correlations among subscales of organizational climate subscales and mobbing scales  
*N min* = 1364; *N max* = 1379

SUBSCALES of the questionnaire	Security, certainty	Creativity, initiative	Values, traditions	Socialization into and departure from the organization	Communication	Information diffusion	Relations with managers	Control	Employee relationships	Openness, tolerance	Informal groups	Conflicts	Organizational climate(aggregate index)
Features of mobbing as discrimination within the organization	-0.557**	-0.636**	-0.597**	-0.642**	-0.692**	-0.733**	-0.729**	-0.670**	-0.764**	-0.675**	-0.736**	-0.772**	-0.812**
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Mobbing actions as discrimination within the organization	-0.478**	-0.516**	-0.524**	-0.581**	-0.637**	-0.632**	-0.659**	-0.623**	-0.661**	-0.546**	-0.670**	-0.713**	-0.715**
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Additional factors relating to mobbing as discrimination within the organization	-0.672**	-0.768**	-0.708**	-0.740**	-0.808**	-0.865**	-0.872**	-0.774**	-0.845**	-0.760**	-0.791**	-0.846**	-0.933**
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Mobbing as discrimination (aggregate index)	-0.590**	-0.664**	-0.634**	-0.683**	-0.744**	-0.773**	-0.784**	-0.720**	-0.792**	-0.689**	-0.769**	-0.815**	-0.856**
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Note: \* Reliability 0.05; \*\* Reliability 0.01.

0.8 < x <= 0.9	very strong
0.6 < x < 0.8	strong
0.4 < x < 0.6	moderate strength