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MOBBING IN THE WORKPLACE INCORPORATING BULLYING: THEORETICAL INSIGHTS

Abstract. The problem of mobbing in the workplace incorporating bullying has been looked into for three decades, at the same time searching for ways of reducing harm to organisations and their members made by the phenomenon. In Lithuania, single cases of research into the phenomenon were started only a little more than a decade ago, so both organisations and general public still lack knowledge about the phenomenon. Besides, variations of the definition of mobbing and bullying among the definitions of Lithuanian and foreign scientists approves the need in clarification, which is particularly obvious in the works published in Lithuanian. In this research, theoretical insights into mobbing in the workplace incorporating bullying are presented, discussing the definitions of mobbing and bullying as a psychosocial stressor, and the results of studies illustrating harm from mobbing and bullying.

Keywords: mobbing, bullying, variations of definitions, stress, psychosocial stressors.

Introduction

Relevance of the research. Safety at work has been gaining new meanings recently – not limited to just physical occupational safety, more and more focus is placed on employees' relationships, which are becoming an additional source of stress. In the nowadays' society, one lives in the world full of stress, which not only has influence on productivity, but most of all affects the health situation [9]. According to S. Sonnentag and Ch. Fritz (2014), in organisations, employees face heavy workloads and increased unsafety at work. There are demands on employees to be highly qualified, competent, in an optimal physical and psychological state, so in order to maintain a high level of energy, it is important to decrease symptoms of physical and psychological stresses related to work. Mobbing and bullying are often identified as sources of tension and stress. In numerous studies, mobbing and bullying are standing out as strong stressors, adversely affecting the employee's psychological condition, health and life quality [14, 11, 20]. Nevertheless, with the growing number of mobbing and bullying research, and information dissemination about negative effects of the

phenomena to the psychological and social welfare of the employees and members of their families, the problem of timely recognition of the problem remains relevant.

Research subject: mobbing in the workplace incorporating bullying.

Research purpose. To present theoretical insights into mobbing in the workplace incorporating bullying.

For achieving the purpose, the following **objectives** were formulated:

1. To discuss the definitions of mobbing and bullying as a psychosocial stressor.

2. To analyse the results of studies illustrating harm from mobbing and bullying.

Research methods. The article is prepared using methods of systematic scientific literature analysis, logical analysis of performed theoretical research, synthesis and analysis of secondary data.

Research results

Variations of the definition of mobbing and bullying as a psychosocial stressor. Mobbing in the workplace is usually identified as harassment of the victim occurring as long lasting and periodically repeating negative actions causing psychological and physical suffering. According to H. Leymann (1996), the phenomenon of mobbing was noticed a long time ago, but it was described in more detail by scientists only in the ninth decade of last century. C. M. Brodsky (1976) paid attention to negative physical symptoms which were experienced by the victims of harassment. S. B. Matthiesen et al. (1989) defined mobbing as constant pressing the victim at work performed by one or more persons. Defining harassment of the victim, H. Leymann (1990) used the terms of mobbing and psychological terror. Distinguishing from other forms of harassment or mobbing, H. Leymann (1990) described mobbing as series of attacks lasting at least six months and occurring at least once a week, so the phenomenon is defined as a long-lasting systematic torturing the victim. The process is characterised by gradually increasing tension, increasingly stronger psychological and social suffering, fear, stigmatisation of the victim, psychosomatic health disorders, errors at work, professional burnout, which cause the victim quitting from the job or being sacked [13, 16]. H. Leymann (1990) identified 45 actions most often used in the process of mobbing, and divided them into five groups: affecting self-expression and interpersonal communication; attacking in the sphere of social relationship; attacking in the sphere of reputation; attacking in work and personal situations; attacking in the sphere of health.

Despite the fact that the term of mobbing has been used for three decades by the scientific communities and members of society, it is still a subject of discussions. In the foreign scientific literature, not only the term mobbing is used for identification of employee harassment, but also that of bullying [5] which are often thought of as synonymous [22]. Having considered different traditions, F. Lohro and U. Hilp (2001) admit that the term mobbing is more frequently used in German speaking countries, Scandinavia and Italy, while in English speaking countries bullying is a more popular term. The latter term is used to describe harassment occurring in schools between students. That is why some authors [12, 8] separate bullying from mobbing, provided that the latter is characterised by social ostracism. Thus, mobbing in an organisation

reveals to be a certain collaborators' conspiracy in order to marginalise the victim from the organisation. K. Z. Lorenz (1958), who studied animal behaviour and was one of the first to use the term mobbing in this sense, and other scientists described how an enemy or some member of the group is marginalised in a mobilised manner. In other words, mobbing can be defined as purposeful, long lasting and intensive torturing of the victim in order to marginalise him/her from the organisation. For achieving this objective, a specific long term social network with an informal leader is created [28], while in a case of bullying these features may not be exposed. That is why a definition of mobbing distinctive from bullying is necessary avoiding excessive unnecessary definitions or ambiguities.

The studies illustrating harm from mobbing and bullying. Mobbing as a process develops in a definite social space (organisation), manipulating the social relationship, negative aspects of which cause stress. Thus, it is no coincidence that D. Zapf (1999) called mobbing a subset of psychosocial stress, and in the later studies, the phenomenon is related not only to health problems of psychosomatic nature, but also to a post-trauma stress disorder. D. Zapf (1999; 2000) identified the factors specific to the phenomena of mobbing as the social system, organisation, group, harasser, and search for a victim.

K. van Heugten (2010) stressed that a full of stress and depressing atmosphere, as well as lack of employees and conflicts of roles can induce mobbing. Besides, in different studies of mobbing, corporate governance errors are rather often identified [2, 29]. Bullying along with mobbing are highlighted as particularly intense psychosocial stressors of working environment [13, 15, 10].

The authors who analysed organisational reasons of mobbing suggested improving corporate system and increasing awareness of the managing personnel about mobbing and bullying. Other authors also paid attention to improvement of the organisational system, which could decrease the employees' stress caused by unhealthy relationship. For instance, A. Milner et al. (2016) identified the following means for psychosocial stress management: the control of work, the complexity of work, work safety and fairness of pay. N. Tahseen (2015) states that in a lot of working places there are a lot of general stressors typical for jobs, but there are also "unique" stressors arising due to intense participation in others' lives and requiring careful commitments and empathic reaction.

According to data of the study by A. Beganlić et al. (2009), over a half of interviewed medical nurses-technicians experienced mobbing in a recent year, and the persons who experienced mobbing and bullying had temporary incapacity twice as often as those who did not experience that. F. N. Baran Aksakal et al. (2015) analysed occurrence of different actions of mobbing and bullying which nurses have suffered within the past 12 months. During the study, it was identified that verbal violence was used most frequently, in 41.8% cases, and physical violence was used in 13.9% cases. Occurrence of mobbing reached 17.1%. While working over 40 hours a week, the risk of physical violence increases up to 1.86 times. Majority of nurses who have experienced verbal violence and bullying were more likely to change their job, institution, even their profession. Under a fourth of the victims pointed out not reporting the incidents. Besides, it is significant that in initial stages the victims tend

not to respond to attacks hoping that they will stop [16] and men, in general, tend to report bullying at work less frequently, unlike women [23].

A. Beganlić et al. (2009) discovered that about 22 per cent of respondents used temporary incapability due to sickness, while other studies show that often the victims abuse sick notes in order to avoid contacts with the co-workers who terrorise them [28, 32]. I.e., the victims of mobbing and bullying who are feeling defenceless choose a specific denying or individual counterstrategy which has also been influenced by decreased self-esteem and experienced shame [1, 26]. All the above shows that mobbing in the working place is a disguised phenomenon, in publicity of which, firstly, the terrorising persons are not interested, and secondly, the victims choose individual strategies for solving the problem. According to V. Constantinescu (2014), the victims of mobbing are usually characterised as dedicated to their work and eager to achieve success. The victim does not notice the first indicators of mobbing and due to inadequate response evaluate the situation slightly incorrectly. All the more, the process of mobbing itself is defined as deceptive destruction [17], shaping a negative opinion about personal and professional abilities of the victim, provoking corporate errors and inadequate emotional reactions, which "confirm" the labels attached to the victim, moreover, as S. M. Litzcke and H. Schuh (2005) state, after escalating the conflict lasting for over six weeks and tiring the victim, a spontaneous aggressive reaction from the victim arises towards the persons who terrorise him/her. In that case, the victim and the persons who terrorised him/her deceptively in a way switch places in the face of the manager, and the reduced quality of victim's professional activity due to the prolonged torturing evidences not in his/her favour.

Conclusions

Although the definition of mobbing has been used in different areas for several decades, new research and discussions constantly reveal greater multifacetedness of the phenomenon. The main characteristic of mobbing distinguishing this phenomenon from other forms of bullying and harassment is a certain conspiracy of members of the organisation in order to marginalise the victim from the organisation and using periodical verbal and non-verbal attacks, which are a significant source of stress and psychological and social suffering. Corporate governance errors, in the case of mobbing, allow to form an illegal and rather stable social network (viable and effective for at least six months), which has an informal leader possessing high social competence, who is identified as the initiator or perpetrator. Bullying is part of mobbing tactics, even though the harm from mobbing is a lot more significant, but accepting of bullying signals the presence of corporate errors. All the more so, both mobbing and bullying can develop in parallel in an organisation. In the article, there was no intention to discuss the terminology of studies published in Lithuanian. However, it should be noted that the Lithuanian scientific community analysing the phenomenon should agree on the definitions used in publications in Lithuanian, since using different and polysemantic definitions can cause some confusion presenting the problem to the general public. The authors of the research, following the tradition established both abroad and in Lithuania, suggest using the definition of mobbing as

the least polysemantic one.

Having analysed the results of studies concerning mobbing and bullying, the following harms from the phenomenon were identified: the victims who experienced mobbing used temporary incapability due to sickness, abused incapability not due to sickness, the victims were more likely to change their job, institution, even their profession, due to the prolonged torturing and provoked corporate errors, results of professional activity of the victims declined.

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ИЗДЕВАТЕЛЬСТВА ИНКОРПОРИРУЮЩЕГО МОББИНГА НА РАБОЧЕМ МЕСТЕ: ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВАНИЯ

Проблема инкорпорирующего моббинга (насмешки) на рабочем месте в зарубежных странах анализируют уже три десятилетия, в тоже время ищут ответы о том, как уменьшить вред этого явления для организаций и их членов. В Литве исследования этого явления начаты только десять лет назад, так как организации, так и широкая общественность до сих пор испытывают недостаток

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знаний об этом явлении. Кроме того, в вариациях определений насмешек и моббинга как у зарубежных ученых, так и у ученых Литвы возникает потребность уточнения, которые особенно проявляются в публикациях на литовском языке. В данной статье представлены теоретические основания явлений издевательства инкорпорирующего моббинга на рабочем месте, обсуждая моббинг/издевательства как определение психосоциального стрессора и результаты исследований вреда моббинга/издевательств.

Ключевые слова: *моббинг, издевательства, вариации определения, стресс, психосоциальные стрессоры.*