

Work Environment Characteristics, mobbing, satisfaction, and absenteeism.

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To characterize the mobbing processes in a services organization, analyzing some precedent variables (organizational) and some consequence variables.

Method: Case study with 57 persons belonging to a multinational organization in the hotel and restaurant sector.

Results: The results obtained show the importance of the work environment (healthy), to prevent mobbing processes, influencing these, in turn, variables as job satisfaction or absenteeism.

Conclusions: The processes of mobbing present a series of characteristics about which it is difficult to generalize, which supports the theory that its cause cannot be found in one single factor, but in a multiplicity of factors that operate simultaneously.

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Introduction

Latest data on the incidence of psychological harassment at work-mobbing- reflect that the hotel and restaurant sector is the most affected (8.6%) (Parent-Thirion, Fernandez-Macias, Hurley and Vermeulen, 2007). This has drawn attention to a problem, although that is very old, has not aroused the interest of the scientific community until the early nineties, defined as a communication hostile and devoid of ethics that is administered in a systematic manner by one or a few individuals, mainly against a single individual who, as a result, is thrown into a situation of loneliness and helplessness prolonged, based on shares of frequent harassment and persistent (statistical definition: at least once a week) and Over a long period (statistical definition: at least six months) (Leymann, 1996).

These negative behaviors, rather than deal with the attacks against the physical integrity of the person, resulting in subtle performances such as insulation or exclusion of the group, undermining their performance or finding embarrassed situations (Einarsen, Raknes and Matthiesen, 1994; Leymann, 1996; Zapf, Knorz and Kulla, 1996).

These behaviors trigger numerous physical and psychological individual aftermaths (Björkqvist, Österman and Hjelt-Bäck, 1994; Brodsky, 1976; Niedl, 1995), resulting in a higher level of absenteeism, a decline in productivity and low job satisfaction (Einarsen and Raknes, 1997; Hoel, Einarsen and Cooper, 2003).

The seriousness of the process and its consequences has prompted many researchers to focus on the causes that stimulate them, considering so generic three causal axes (Einarsen, 2000; Salin, 2003): 1) based on the personality traits of the victim and the

harasser, 2) based on the inherent characteristics of human interaction in organizations, and 3) based on the characteristics of work and social environment.

This third axis causal, which this work is ascribed, focuses its efforts on demonstrating the existence of factors within the organization that encourage, or at least not avoided, occurring processes mobbing (Agervold and Mikkelsen, 2004; Ashforth, 1994; Einarsen et al., 1994; Leymann, 1996; Salin, 2003; Vartia, 1996; Vartia and Hyyti, 2002; Zapf et al., 1996).

Based on the literature review, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To analyze the relationship between psychosocial risk factors and mobbing identify psychosocial factors that allow better predict its onset.
2. To analyze the relationship between the processes of mobbing and job satisfaction.

Method

Design

Given the particular sensitivity that is the study of mobbing distortion problems in the response (sincerity, social desirability or lack of response) it has been designed a case study focused on a single organization which, *a priori*, has features for the best analysis of mobbing: 1) belongs to one of the sectors most affected according to the latest official surveys, and 2) has several court judgments against him for this reason.

The case studies can be used to propose a theory or generate content theorists to explain the gaps in scientific research on mobbing, allowing encapsulate real-life situations and contrasting scenarios directly related to the phenomena studied as they are developed in actual practice (Flyvbjerg, 2004; Ragin, 1992).

Participants

The target population consists of 57 employees of an organization in the field of hotel and restaurant belonging to three different workplaces (69.4% are women). The vast majority had a fixed contract and their average age was 39.6 years old (DT = 7.6), his professional experience average was 12.5 years (DT = 9.07) and the average length company was 7.4 years (DT = 7.24).

Instruments

Psychosocial Risks. Short version of the questionnaire evaluating psychosocial risks at work ISTAS21 (CoPsoQ) (Moncada, Llorens and Kristensen, 2002) which assesses the psychosocial aspects of the organization that determine the relationship of the worker with their working environment. The responses were rated by a type Likert scale ranging from 1 ("always" or "a lot") and 5 ("never" or "little"). The scale consists of the following dimensions: psychological demands ($\alpha = .70$); Social support and quality of leadership ($\alpha = .80$); Labour active ($\alpha = .81$); Insecurity ($\alpha = .80$); Considers ($\alpha = .83$); Double presence ($\alpha = .76$).

Mobbing. Scale Cisneros (Fidalgo and Piñuel, 2004) that objectively 43 mobbing behavior in which people indicate how often they suffer each (0-never-to 6-all-days). It offers three indexes of harassment: the total number of strategies harassment (NEAP), the overall rate of bullying (GIFS) and the average intensity of the strategies of harassment (IMAP). In addition, workers have responded positively or negatively to item 44 which has been formulated the following question: "Over the last 6 months, did you have been victim of at least some of the earlier forms of psychological abuse of an ongoing basis (with a frequency of more than once per week)? ". The Cronbach alpha of the original scale is .97.

Satisfaction. Satisfaction Questionnaire S10/12 (Melia and Peiró, 1989) which assesses three components of job satisfaction: satisfaction with supervision, satisfaction with the physical environment and satisfaction with the benefits received. The format is a response Likert and ranges from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied) and alpha Cronbach obtained by the authors of the scale is .89, .72 and .74, respectively.

Procedure

The study was conducted as part of a research contract between our University and the company itself (for three of their workplaces). The data collection was carried out in several phases between March and May 2007, with the company setting a timeframe to ensure the participation of maximum number of workers and interfere as little as possible in their work. The company opened rooms in workplaces and organized the workers into groups to complete the questionnaire (maximum hour and a half), seeking always to minimize the possible interaction among workers outside the courtrooms. Workers were informed of the purpose of the study and the need to complete the questionnaire in full and sincere, further absolute confidentiality in the handling of data was warranted.

Data collection was complemented by the completion of eleven in-depth interviews among a representative sample of workers chosen for their professional status, which allowed a closer and deeper into the motivational aspects of workers as well as an enrichment of findings and conclusions reached in the previous tests. Statistical analyses were conducted using the program SPSS 14.0.

Results

According to the criteria of the scale Cisneros (suffer at least one of the 43 behaviors listed with a frequency at least weekly) and the response of item 44, 21

company employees have been victims of mobbing processes, which represents an incidence of 36.8%, a rate higher than that found in other organizations in the same sector.

To investigate the relationship between the variables of interest have been applied two different strategies for data analysis. First, bivariate correlations have been discussed between the overall ratings in the variables. Secondly, in the exploratory stage has been made different multiple regression analysis in line with the theoretical approaches outlined, focusing on each of the dimensions that make up the global variables.

Analysis of correlations

The results of the bivariate correlations between the overall ratings of the variables showed a moderate relationship between psychosocial factors and mobbing ($r = -.25, p = .06$), as well as a close relationship between job satisfaction and mobbing ($r = -.44, p < .01$) (Table 1). Therefore, we can say that psychosocial factors are associated with adverse psychological harassment at work and that this in turn presents an inverse relationship to job satisfaction.

Insert Table 1

To deepen these relations a second analysis of correlations has conducted falling to the level of the dimensions that make up the variables of interest in this study (Table 2). It has found that psychological demands active work, social support and quality of leadership and esteem up all psychosocial factors that relate to the mobbing. While, for its part, NEAP and GIFS relate to all dimensions that make up the Job satisfaction.

Insert Table 2

Regression analysis

In an effort to identify psychosocial dimensions that best predict the emergence of mobbing processes in organizations, have carried out various regression analysis (Table 3). It should be noted that, in accordance with the objectives of this study, these analyses are exploratory in nature and therefore has used the method of stepwise regression.

In this sense, the results show that the NEAP can be predicted from psychological demands ($\beta = .38, p < .01$) and social support ($\beta = -.43, p < .001$) [$R^2 = .48; F(2.54) = 27.14, p < .001$]. In addition, psychological demands ($\beta = .34, p < .01$), social support ($\beta = -.25, p = .08$) and the active work ($\beta = -.26, p < .05$) predict GIFS [$R^2 = .43, F(3.53) = 15.26, p < .001$]. For his part, IMAP is predicted from psychological demands ($\beta = .44, p < .01$) [$R^2 = .17, F(1.43) = 10.20, p < .01$].

Everything indicates that psychological demands play a key role in all components of mobbing, both in terms of their frequency and intensity, so that both the workload as their characteristics can be considered excessive precursors of bullying in work. Also, when workers have a strong social support network, the chances that manifested processes bullying are minor.

Insert Table 3

Referring to the psychological consequences of harassment on the job satisfaction, regression analysis indicates that both concepts are related in a reverse (see Table 4).

Insert Table 4

Specifically, the NEAP predicts satisfaction with the oversight ($\beta = -.56, p < .01$) and satisfaction with benefits ($\beta = -.63, p < .01$). Moreover, GIFS predicts satisfaction with the physical environment ($\beta = -.64, p < .01$). All this suggests that what really affects worker satisfaction is the frequency and variety of harassment suffered rather than the intensity of it.

Discussion

Some authors advocate the idea that the personality of the victim and the harasser is related to the emergence of processes mobbing (Coyne, Seigne and Randall, 2000; Zapf and Einarsen, 2003), while others, like Leymann (1996), To have discarded that theory and a strong focus on the organization as an active part in this kind of process to consider it as a social agent "highly stressful" (Einarsen et al., 1994; Hoel and Salin, 2003; Zapf, 1999).

The results in this study indicate that there are three psychosocial factors that can predict processes of mobbing: 1) high psychological demands, 2) low social support, and 3) low development potential or active work. The psychosocial factors related to insecurity and believes the dual presence of processes are not predictors of psychological harassment at work.

Regarding the first factor and from a quantitative point of view, excessive psychological demands means that there is an imbalance between the amount of work to be done, and the time allocated to do so leading to a tension at work that can lead to mobbing processes. The pressure of time in carrying out tasks (Rodriguez-Munoz, Martinez-Gamarra, Moreno-Jimenez, and Galvez, 2006; Zapf et al., 1996) and continuous work overload (Einarsen et al., 1994; Salin, 2003) have been identified by other researchers as background processes of mobbing. In its qualitative aspect, psychological demands relate to the emotional work that exposes people to transfer emotions and feelings processes; work in contact with users, public, and clients; the cognitive work that requires great intellectual effort; and sensory or work, which involves an effort of the senses (Moncada et al., 2002).

In the context of this work, the presence of high psychological demands can be justified by the fact that workers in hotels and catering are subjected to a high workload to be carried out under the heavy pressure of time and the need to constantly interact with customers.

The second of the psychosocial factors mentioned is the degree of social support and quality of leadership that the worker enjoys. Social relations can be conceptualized in a triple strand - functional, structural and emotional - (Moncada et al., 2002), hovering around this triangle other essential aspects such as clarity of roles (definition of posts and tasks), conflict roles (tasks contrary to values), predictability (access to all information accurate and timely to deal with changes), strengthening (regular feedback on the work performed) and the quality of leadership. In this paper, the results indicate that social support is related indirectly with two rates-the number of bullying behaviors and overall index of psychological harassment. This means that low social support or leadership exercised inappropriately, predicts the emergence of processes mobbing.

Regarding the third factor, active work, there is a relationship between moderate control over the content of the work and the overall rate of psychological harassment. The control over the content of the work refers to two things: 1) the opportunities offered by working to develop professional skills, and 2) the influence, autonomy, or decision-making capacity over their own tasks. The control over the work represents a positive aspect, while its absence represents a risk factor. It is also important to consider control over the time and pace of work, as well as its meaning (Moncada et al., 2002).

Analyzing background studies on organizational mobbing, it appears that there is empirical evidence for the relationship between many factors related to social support and active work and the presence of mobbing. Specifically, the dysfunctions of clarity and role-conflict-(Agervold and Mikkelsen, 2004; Einarsen et al., 1994; Leymann, 1996; Vartia and Hyyti, 2002), lack of social support by colleagues and superiors for performance of the tasks (Quine, 1999; Zapf et al., 1996), the poor social climate (Agervold and Mikkelsen, 2004; Einarsen et al., 1994; Vartia, 1996; Vartia and Hyyti, 2002), the inappropriate style leadership or direction (Agervold and Mikkelsen, 2004; Ashforth, 1994; Einarsen et al., 1994; O'Moore, Seigne, McGuire and Smith, 1998; Vartia, 1996), lack of control or autonomy over their own tasks (Einarsen et al., 1994; Rodriguez-Munoz et al., 2006; Vartia, 1996; Vartia and Hyyti, 2002) or the meaning of the work itself (Agervold and Mikkelsen, 2004).

The conflict of roles, defined as the extent to which workers are faced with conflicting demands in their work, and the ambiguity of roles, or lack of clarity about the work they are doing, are presented as two aspects of design work that are more strongly associated with high levels of mobbing (Salin, 2003).

Vartia (1996) argues that the risk factors of mobbing can be found in the psychological environment of work and the organizational climate, also supporting the

correlation between the conflict of roles, leadership and social climate with the emergence of processes of psychological harassment at work and thus confirming the results obtained by Einarsen et al. (1994).

Unlike most investigations, Zapf et al. (1996) contradict the idea that the deficit in controlling the task involves mobbing processes. However, his study's results support the theory that mobbing is associated with low social support from colleagues and superiors. A similar conclusion comes Vartia and Hyyti (2002), who argue that unsatisfactory working conditions coupled with a poor social climate are strong drivers of the processes of mobbing.

More recently, Agervold and Mikkelsen (2004) have noted that victims of mobbing rate the work environment more negatively than people who are not psychologically harassed, particularly regarding authoritarian-style leadership, clarity of roles, climate, and the meaning of social work. The autocratic style of leadership and conflict resolution, authoritarian manner have been positively associated with the presence of mobbing by other researchers (O'Moore et al., 1998; Vartia, 1996; Ashforth, 1994). However, a non-interventionist style of command or laissez-faire can also provide a good breeding ground for mobbing, especially among colleagues (Einarsen et al., 1994).

Regarding the second objective, the results indicate that the frequency and variety of mobbing behaviors are related to job satisfaction. Specifically, the number of mobbing behaviors predicts low satisfaction with supervision and benefits, i.e., victims relate satisfaction with the quality of supervision and little recognition for their work, suffering from a large number of bullying behaviors. This result aligns with workers' perceptions of this company's leadership style and the leadership exercised by their superiors. Moreover, satisfaction with the physical environment is explained by the

variety of behaviors suffered. This fact can come provoked by the idea that workers are that there are some tasks more difficult than others due mainly to excess temperature, the accumulation of fumes or the monotony of the task.

Previous studies also confirm the relationship between mobbing and deteriorating job satisfaction (Hoel and Cooper, 2000; Keashly and Jagatic, 2000; Quine, 1999), pointing out the pernicious effect that mobbing leads to in job satisfaction of workers, which affects the commitment to the organization. The victims identified work environments as more "degraded", which adversely affects their job satisfaction.

In short, and as a result of quantitative and qualitative information handled, we note that workers in hotels and catering who participated in this study are subject to several psychosocial risks, such as low social support received from their superiors and colleagues, Poor quality of leadership, a lack of clarity about the work they are doing and about the objectives to be achieved, a poor flow of information, high psychological demands arising from having to work fast and irregularly shaped, and an excess load work. These features define an unhealthy working environment from a psychological point of view and an organizational environment that may serve as a breeding ground for phenomena such as mobbing, leading to a decline in job satisfaction in general and satisfaction with supervision, the physical environment, and benefits, in particular.

The results of this study should be discussed taking into account the methodological limitations it presents. On the one hand, the study is part of the methodology of the case, which, while presenting numerous advantages, is criticized by some researchers as a scientific method because it tends to verification, understood as the tendency to corroborate the preconceived notions of the researcher (Diamond, 1996).

On the other hand, although some have been able to establish some correlation between psychosocial factors and the perception of the person being the victim of mobbing, it is not possible to establish cause-and-effect relationships. This is mainly due to cross-cutting nature and quantity of research (Einarsen et al., 1994), being more convenient to carry out qualitative studies and longitudinal (Salin, 2003). Investigations will enable future alleviate the limitations of this study.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations among study variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1 Mobbing (0=No; 1=Si)	1.63	0.49	—		
2 Psychosocial factors	2.06	0.41	-.25 [†]	(.74)	
3 Job satisfaction	4.17	1.62	-.44*	.64*	(.94)

Note: n = 57. The diagonal shows the reliability coefficients estimated for each scale.

[†]p=.06

*p<.01

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations among study factors

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Mobbing														
1	11.88	13.36	—											
2	0.87	1.34	.89**	—										
3	2.49	1.47	.51**	.76**	—									
Psychosocial factors														
4	2.05	0.73	.60**	.55**	.44**	(.65)								
5	2.07	0.61	-.42**	-.51**	-.35*	-.32*	(.54)							
6	2.32	0.98	.21	.16	.13	.16	-.05	(.61)						
7	2.13	0.88	-.63**	-.58**	-.34*	-.53**	.61**	-.26	(.84)					
8	1.80	0.72	.09	.04	.09	.16	-.03	.25	-.06	(.54)				
9	1.83	1.06	-.60**	-.57**	-.34*	-.46**	.58**	-.16	.80**	-.04	(.86)			
Job satisfaction														
10	4.12	1.83	-.66**	-.57**	-.25	-.46**	.63**	-.22	.79**	-.06	.78**	(.94)		
11	4.31	1.54	-.66**	-.66**	-.48**	-.49**	.52**	-.19	.54**	-.12	.59**	.72**	(.78)	
12	4.08	1.96	-.69**	-.59**	-.28	-.55**	.58**	-.34**	.74**	-.19	.72**	.84**	.65**	(.85)

Note: n = 57. The diagonal shows the reliability coefficients estimated for each scale.
 1 = NEAP; 2 = GIFS; 3 = IMAP; 4 = Psychological demands; 5 = Working Assets, 6 = Insecurity; 7 = Social support and quality of leadership; 8 = Double presence; 9 = Considers; 10 = Satisfaction with supervision ; 11 = Satisfaction with the physical environment; 12 = Satisfaction with benefits.
 * p <.05. ** p <.01

Table 3
Results of regression psychosocial factors on the rates of mobbing

Variables	<i>Mobbing</i>								
	NEAP			GIFS			IMAP		
	β	<i>t</i>	ΔR^2	β	<i>t</i>	ΔR^2	β	<i>t</i>	ΔR^2
Psychosocial factors									
Psychological demands	.38	3.34**	.10	.34	2.89**	.08	.44	3.19**	.19
Working Assets				-.26	-2.01*	.04			
Insecurity									
Social support and quality of leadership	-.43	-3.82***	.39	-.25	-1.74 [†]	.34			
Double presence									
Considers									
	<i>R</i>	.71		.68		.44			
	<i>Adj R²</i>	.48		.43		.17			
	<i>F</i>	27.14***		15.26***		10.20**			
	<i>n</i>	57		57		57			

[†] $p < .05$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 4
Results of regression rates of mobbing on Job satisfaction

Variables	Job Satisfaction								
	Supervision			Physical environment			Benefits		
	β	t	ΔR^2	β	t	ΔR^2	β	t	ΔR^2
Mobbing									
NEAP	-.56	-4.43***	.31				-.63	-5.37***	.40
GIFS				-.64	-5.49***	.41			
IMAP									
	R	.56		.64			.63		
	$Adj R^2$.30		.41			.40		
	F	19.59***		30.12***			28.87***		
	n	57		57			57		

*** $p < .001$