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Mobbing and Bullying within the Organization: Socio-demographic Portrait of the Victim

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the paper is to describe the occurrence of mobbing and bullying phenomena from socio-demographic point of view, using the example of organizations in Lithuania in order to extend the knowledge about mobbing and bullying from an intercultural aspect and thus contributing to the international research base. The empirical research was carried out using the original design formatted by the authors of this article, tested by statistical methods and the approved instrument “The diagnostic questionnaire on mobbing and bullying in employee relations”.

The research involved 1231 respondents, representing 20 areas of professional activities, which have been identified on the basis of *The Classification of Economic Activities*. The sample of the research and selected statistical methods allow for the extrapolation of the results to cover the entire investigated population. The research provides empirical facts and defines socio-demographic aspects which are relevant to the organizations of the population investigated.

A statistically significant relationship between bullying/mobbing and the sphere of professional activities, position, education and the age of the victims was confirmed. The relationship between employees’ length of service and mobbing/bullying in organizations was also evaluated.

On the basis of the results of this empirical research, the directions of managerial decisions for the prevention and intervention of bullying/mobbing are pointed out, and the debate on destructive workplace intercommunion is encouraged in pursuance of closer interaction and conflict mitigation solutions.



Pranas Žukauskas, Jolita Vveinhardt

Mobbing i drwiny w organizacji: socjodemograficzny portret ofiary

STRESZCZENIE

Celem przedstawionego w artykule badania jest bliższe poznanie fenomenu zjawiska mobbingu i drwin w kontekście socjodemograficznym, na przykładzie organizacji działających na Litwie, dążąc do poszerzenia wiedzy o mobbingu i drwinach w aspekcie międzykulturowym i uzupełnienia międzynarodowej bazy badań. Badanie empiryczne zostało przeprowadzone na podstawie „Kwestionariusza diagnostycznego mobbingu i drwin w stosunkach pracowniczych”. Narzędzie to zostało samodzielnie opracowane przez autorów artykułu, sprawdzone i zatwierdzone metodami statystycznymi.

Próba badawcza (1231 respondentów, reprezentujących 20 dziedzin działalności zawodowej) oraz dobrane metody statystyczne pozwalają na ekstrapolację wyników na całą badaną populację. Badanie dostarcza empirycznej informacji o występujących w organizacjach badanej populacji procesach socjodemograficznych. Potwierdzono statystycznie istotny związek między drwinami/mobbingiem a dziedziną działalności zawodowej, stanowiskiem, wykształceniem, wiekiem ofiar. Dokonano również oceny związku między stażem pracy pracowników a występowaniem w organizacjach zjawiska mobbingu/drwin. Zaakcentowany nacisk na korelację drwin i mobbingu w aspekcie socjodemograficznym, daje podstawy do zdiagnozowania problemowych obszarów zadań kierowniczych.

Wyniki niniejszego badania empirycznego są podstawą do ustalenia kierunków podejmowanych decyzji kierowniczych, w celu prewencji drwin/mobbingu i interwencji w tym zakresie oraz do zachęcenia do dyskusji na temat destruktywnych wzajemnych stosunków w pracy. Celem tych działań jest poszukiwanie rozwiązań prowadzących do ściślejszego współdziałania oraz minimalizacji konfliktów.



1

INTRODUCTION

Mobbing in Lithuania, as well as in other Baltic countries, is still a narrowly researched area, even though this kind of research is necessary in order to develop a coherent policy directed against workplace bullying. The lack of research and focus on the problem was influenced by historical processes, which determined not only the length of transformations of the economic development, but also the integration of science into the global scientific community. Lithuania restored independence in the 1990s. The overriding task was to, not only, reform the economy but also to compete at an international level and as a consequence the focus was on the market economy. This became the main direction of economic policy and any ideas about the social market were left aside. Work regulating laws focus on the physical protection of employees, however, protection against workplace bullying and mobbing is not regulated clearly in the legal framework. It was affected by an insufficiently developed research base as well. Vytautas Magnus University was one of the first to include mobbing within a higher education study programme in 2011, and the first scientific thesis on the topic was defended only in 2010.

Although the researches on mobbing have already been carried out in the world for more than three decades, the phenomenon has received a broader attention in Lithuania only in the first decade of the 21st century. M. Kristenson et al.¹ compared the impact of mobbing on cardiovascular diseases in Lithuania and Sweden, V. Malinauskienė et al.² related the effects of terrorisation with cardiovascular diseases of teachers, P. Žukauskas and J. Vveinhardt³ extended the concept of mobbing in the aspect of discrimination and found: socio-demographic characteristics of mobbing victims in the public and private sector organisations, the relationship of mobbing

¹ M. Kristenson, Z. Kučinskienė, B. Bergdahl, K. Orth-Gomér, *Risk factors for coronary heart disease in different socioeconomic groups of Lithuania and Sweden – The LiVicordia Study*, *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 2001, Vol. 29, pp. 140–150.

² V. Malinauskienė, V. Obelenis, D. Šopagienė, *Psychological terror at work and cardiovascular diseases among teachers*, *Acta Medica Lituanica* 2005, Vol. 12, Iss. 2, pp. 20–25.

³ P. Žukauskas, J. Vveinhardt, *Socio–demographic characteristics of mobbing and discrimination in employee relations*, *Transformations in Business & Economics* 2009, Vol. 8, Iss. 3/18, pp. 128–147.

with the organisational climate, the expression of mobbing in accordance with the areas of professional field of activity, modelling managerial decisions on the prevention and intervention⁴.

In recent years, the number of transnational companies, whose managers need more precise and thorough knowledge about the culture of employees' interrelations and socio-demographic groups falling into the zone of risk of bullying and mobbing, is growing in Lithuania. However, the studies carried out do not meet the need to assess the extent of mobbing and bullying more accurately in the country, where the culture of the private and public sector and approach to employee relations are still developing. There is a lack of broader and deeper insights which would help to evaluate the role of socio-demographic criteria in the process of mobbing. In addition, studies show that there is no "identical" picture of mobbing in different cultural environments⁵, which could be unconditionally "transferred" from one culture to another. Moreover the reports on workplace bullying are also different. On average, 4.1% of the respondents in the EU-27 countries reported exposure to bullying or harassment at work. Exposure to bullying or harassment was most common in France (9.5%), in Belgium (8.6%), in the Netherlands (7.7%), Luxemburg (7.2%), Austria (7.2%), Finland (6.2%), Latvia (5.5%), and Ireland 5.5% and most uncommon in Bulgaria (0.6%), Poland (0.7%), Italy (0.9%), Slovakia (1.2%), and Turkey (1.3%)⁶.

In the researches conducted in different countries, the attention is drawn to such criteria, as the nature of professional activity, distinguished by

⁴ P. Žukauskas, J. Vveinhardt, *The model of managerial intervention decisions of mobbing as discrimination in employees' relations in seeking to improve organisation climate*, Engineering Economics 2010, Vol. 21, Iss. 3, pp. 306–314; P. Žukauskas, J. Vveinhardt, *Mobbing Diagnosis Instrument: Stages of Construction, Structure and Connectedness of Criteria*, Journal of Business Economics and Management 2011, Vol. 12, Iss. 2, pp. 400–416; J. Vveinhardt, P. Žukauskas, *Mobingas darbuotojų santykiuose: individas, organizacija, sociumas*, Monografija, Kaunas 2012.

⁵ D. Beale, H. Hoel, *Workplace bullying, industrial relations and the challenge for management in Britain and Sweden*, European Journal of Industrial Relations 2010, Vol. 16, Iss. 2, pp. 101–118; J. Loh, S.L.D. Restubog, T.J. Zagenczyk, *Consequences of Workplace Bullying on Employee Identification and Satisfaction Among Australians and Singaporeans*, Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology 2010, Vol. 41, Iss. 2, pp. 236–252; K. Fasting, S. Chroni, S.E. Hervik, N. Knorre, *Sexual harassment in sport toward females in three European countries*, International Review for the Sociology of Sport 2010, Vol. 46, Iss. 1, pp. 76–89; G. Casimir, D. McCormack, N. Djurkovic, A. Nsubuga-Kyobe, *Psychosomatic model of workplace bullying: Australian and Ugandan schoolteachers*, Employee Relations 2012, Vol. 34, Iss. 4, pp. 411–428.

⁶ *Workplace Bullying and Harassment*, JILPT Report No. 12, Tokyo 2013.

psychological tension, aggression, stress, social environment, etc.⁷. In the processes of business globalisation and national management policy it is relevant to evaluate the internal factors of organisations which give a sense to employees' contributions and organisational solutions, influenced by traditions of business culture. There is a significant observation that empirical studies on the causes of mobbing are focused on the victim's personality and the influence of psycho-social factors at work⁸. Although the phenomenon is mainly explored by psychologists and medical professionals, it is necessary to understand that mobbing is a relevant and complex problem of human resource management. Although workplace incivility has been found to negatively impact individual and organisational performance and interfere with the creation of a civil and respectful workplace, the phenomenon has been largely overlooked by the field of human resource development⁹. Management science has to deal with the increase in diversity, discrimination, and other areas. For example, N. de Cuyper et al.¹⁰ pointed out assault and social isolation experienced by persons employed on a temporary basis. This experience negatively affects their future professional career.

However, many studies carried out internationally focus on aspects such as individual professional activities, gender, position in the organisation, but underestimate the national aspects of the organisations. Studies carried out in different cultures are significant as they show the influence of socio-demographic variables on mobbing processes. Moreover, bullying, psychological harassment, mobbing are generally analysed separately. These phenomena are closely related, and the difference between them is not only methodological. If international practice is to be supplemented with national and regional studies then it becomes important that a consistent approach

⁷ D. Lewis *Workplace bullying – interim findings of a study in further and higher education in Wales*, International Journal of Manpower 1999, Vol. 20, Iss. 1/2, pp. 106–119; J. Blase, J. Blase, F. Du, *The mistreated teacher: a national study*, Journal of Educational Administration 2008, Vol. 46, Iss. 3, pp. 263–301; G. Brewer, E. Whiteside, *Workplace bullying and stress within the prison service*, Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research 2012, Vol. 4, Iss. 2, pp.76–85; G.E. Mathisen, T. Øgaard, S. Einarsen, *Individual and situational antecedents of workplace victimisation*, International Journal of Manpower 2012, Vol. 33, Iss. 5, pp. 539–555.

⁸ S. Einarsen, *The nature and causes of bullying at work*, International Journal of Manpower 1999, Vol. 20, Iss. 1/2, pp. 16–27.

⁹ B. Estes, J. Wang, *Integrative Literature Review: Workplace Incivility: Impacts on Individual and Organizational Performance*, Human Resource Development Review 2008, Vol. 7, Iss. 2, pp. 218–240.

¹⁰ N. de Cuyper, H. De Witte, H. Van Emmerik, *Temporary employment: Costs and benefits for (the careers of) employees and organisations*, Career Development International 2011, Vol. 16, Iss. 2, pp. 104–113.

is adopted to the study and definition of assault and that differentiated methodologies and organisational differences are factored into the studies. The latter research will extend the knowledge on socio-demographic variables in Lithuania as a post-communist developing economy.

2

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Studies carried out in different countries confirm that the criteria significant for mobbing and bullying are as follows: the size of the organisation (E. Baillien et al.¹¹ has found that bullying is most prevalent in small and medium-sized enterprises), areas of professional activity¹², seniority and vocational skills¹³, specificity of private and public sector¹⁴, etc.

When elaborating the studies, it should be noted that G. Brewer and E. Whiteside¹⁵ have examined the nature of the actions of the attack and the reactions of the victims in prison environments and found that one particular way of bullying is experienced. M. Vartia and J. Hyyti¹⁶ found that 20 per cent of the surveyed prison officers have identified themselves as victims of co-workers' attack. There were no significant differences in terms of gender, but women experienced sexual harassment more often and they were attacked by co-workers, while the men were attacked by senior officers. Bullying had a similar effect on stress, mental health and the sense of job

¹¹ E. Baillien, I. Neyens, H. De Witte, *Organisational correlates of workplace bullying in small – and medium-sized enterprises*, *International Small Business Journal* 2011, Vol. 29, Iss. 6, pp. 610–625.

¹² D. Lewis, op. cit.; G. Brewer, E. Whiteside, op. cit.

¹³ P. Fleming, H.D. Harvey, *Strategy development in dealing with violence against employees in the workplace*, *The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health* 2002, Vol. 122, Iss. 4, pp. 226–232; Ch. Strümpell, *'We work together, we eat together': Conviviality and modernity in a company settlement in south Orissa*, *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 2008, Vol. 42, Iss. 3, pp. 351–381; S. Mauno, N. De Cuyper, U. Kinnunen, H. De Witte, *Work characteristics in long-term temporary workers and temporary-to-permanent workers: A prospective study among Finnish health care personnel*, *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 2011, Vol. 33, Iss. 3, pp. 357–377.

¹⁴ S. Einarsen, A. Skogstad, *Bullying at work: epidemiological findings in public and private organisations*, *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology* 1996, Vol. 5, Iss. 2, pp. 185–201.

¹⁵ G. Brewer, E. Whiteside, op. cit.

¹⁶ M. Vartia, J. Hyyti, *Gender differences in workplace bullying among prison officers*, *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology* 2002, Vol. 11, Iss. 1, pp. 113–126.

satisfaction in both men and women. After the assessment of such variables as age, marital status, having children, educational level and occupation, it was found that bullying was a risk factor for occurrence of symptoms of depression in both men and women¹⁷.

Most research and discussion focus on gender aspects of employees in the organisation. S. Einarsen and A. Skogstad¹⁸ pointed out that organisations with many employees, male-dominated organisations, and industrial organisations had the highest prevalence of victimisation. Older workers had a higher risk of victimisation than younger workers. However, D. Lee¹⁹ argues that the dynamics of gender differences failed to be determined by case studies the mobbing.

M. O'Moore and N. Crowley²⁰ come to the conclusion that the size of the clinical effect is not related to a person's character, but is related to painful bullying experience. There is also no reliable data, that a person's gender may be related to both the attack itself and its consequences²¹. Although it is noted that mobbing is more frequent in the areas of professional activities, which are more popular among women²². It is relevant that women tend to talk more openly about problems at work, i.e., women accept mobbing significantly more frequently and more intensely than men²³, moreover, they take more care of their health²⁴ and tend to evaluate mobbing more strictly than men²⁵.

¹⁷ S. David, S. Degioanni, *Association between workplace bullying and depressive symptoms in the French working population*, Journal of Psychosomatic Research 2006, Vol. 61, Iss. 2, pp. 251–259.

¹⁸ S. Einarsen, A. Skogstad, op. cit.

¹⁹ D. Lee, *Gendered workplace bullying in the restructured UK Civil Service*, Personnel Review 2002, Vol. 31, Iss. 2, pp. 205–227.

²⁰ M. O'Moore, N. Crowley, *The clinical effects of workplace bullying: a critical look at personality using SEM*, International Journal of Workplace Health Management 2011, Vol. 4, Iss. 1, pp. 67–83.

²¹ Vartia, Hyyti, op. cit.; S. David, S. Degioanni, op. cit.; A. Ortega, A. Høgh, J.H. Pejtersen, O. Olsen, *Prevalence of workplace bullying and risk groups: a representative population study*, International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health 2009, Vol. 82, Iss. 3, pp. 417–426.

²² J. Vveinhardt, P. Žukauskas, op. cit.

²³ D. Zapf, K. Warth, *Mobbing: Subtile Kriegsführung am Arbeitsplatz*, Psychologie Heute 1997, Vol. 20, Iss. 25, pp. 28–29; G. Casimir et al., op. cit.; M.A. Tomić, *Mobbing: the incidence of mobbing activities and differences regarding workplace and gender*, Megatrend Review 2012, Vol. 9, Iss. 1, pp. 243–252.

²⁴ J. MacIntosh, S. O'Donnell, J. Wuest, M. Merritt-Gray, *How workplace bullying changes how women promote their health*, International Journal of Workplace Health Management, Vol. 4, 2011, Iss. 1, pp. 48–66.

²⁵ B.K. Horvat, M. Pagon, *Attitudes Toward Workplace Mobbing in Slovenian Research Organisations*, Organizacija 2012, Vol. 45, pp. 159–173.

S. Johnson et al.²⁶ questioned employees of 26 professional areas in the UK and found significant differences according to individual professions. The attack had most influence on work satisfaction, physical health, psychological well-being of ambulance workers, social workers, customer service – call centre staff, prison and police officers. It is associated with high psychological tension and stress. In Turkey, the research conducted in the education sector has shown that a large percentage (91%) of the nursing school employees who participated in this study reported that they had encountered mobbing behaviours in the institution where they work and 17% that they had been directly exposed to mobbing in the workplace. The academic staff who had been exposed to mobbing behaviours experienced various physiological, emotional and social reactions. They frequently “worked harder and were more organized” and “worked very carefully to avoid criticism” to escape from mobbing. In addition, 9% of the participants stated that they “thought about suicide occasionally”²⁷.

Not only areas of professional activities, but also education have a significant influence on the mobbing processes. S. van Eckert et al.²⁸ questioned nursing staff who have and who don't have academic education. Significant differences between these two groups have been determined. The research has shown that 8.3 percent of the respondents were terrorized in the past year, 1.6 percent of the respondents have experienced bullying on a daily basis or once a week. Most commonly the bullies were co-workers (71.5%) and managers (32.4%), and 6 percent of executives reported that they experienced bullying from their subordinates. Significant differences between the status of employees and work process variables have been identified. The highest occurrence of bullying is among ordinary employees²⁹.

Other studies also highlight the status and age of the victim. Many of the executives themselves are bullying initiators, supported by tolerant colleagues or subordinates, who bully the colleagues³⁰. It has been found that

²⁶ S. Johnson, C. Cooper, S. Cartwright, I. Donald, P. Taylor, C. Millet, *The experience of work-related stress across occupations*, *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 2005, Vol. 20, Iss. 2, pp. 178–187.

²⁷ D. Yildirim, A. Yildirim, A. Timucin, *Mobbing Behaviors Encountered By Nurse Teaching Staff*, *Nursing Ethics* 2007, Vol. 14, Iss. 4, pp. 447–463.

²⁸ S. Van Eckert, U. Gaidys, C.R. Martin, *Embitterment among German academic and non-academic nurses*, *Journal of Mental Health Training, Education and Practice* 2011, Vol. 6, Iss. 2, pp. 104–112.

²⁹ Ortega et al., op. cit.

³⁰ N. Davenport, R. Zanolli, D. Schwartz, P.E. Gail, *Mobbing: Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace*, Ames, Iowa 1999.

subordinates and seniors become victims of mobbing most frequently³¹. S. Einarsen and A. Skogstad³² emphasised that older workers had a higher risk of victimisation than younger workers. Even if men and women do not differ in prevalence of bullying, significantly more men were reported as bullies. In addition, it has been found that with the increase in the length of employment in an organisation the willingness of employees to report on the cases of mobbing decreases³³.

B. Burnes and R. Pope³⁴ have found that employees of the public health care system suffer from mobbing more often than representatives of private organisations. The research conducted by D. Lewis³⁵ in educational institutions of Wales recorded bullying, sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment, racial harassment, J. Blase et al.³⁶, whose research covered the employees of secondary and higher education institutions of the USA, stressed the influence of demographic variables on the perception of bullying, D. Riley et al.³⁷ drew attention to bullying during the employment in Australian educational institutions and negative effects of the attack of the health of employees. Comparison of staff reactions in the education systems of Australia and Uganda³⁸, established the fundamental difference: the respondents from Australia were more sensitive in their response to bullying than the respondents from Uganda. Thus, in addition to occupational variables, demographic and cultural criteria, which affect both the nature of bullying and its acceptance, are highlighted.

Hence, this review of the researches confirms that social and demographic criteria have a significant influence on occurrence of mobbing and bullying, which can be specified by researches in a particular national environment.

³¹ H. Gül, N. Alçalar, İ. Kayı, S. Özel, N. Özgülner, *Mobbing in working life and its effects on health: A cross-sectional study among privately – owned bank workers*, Türkiye Klinikleri Journal of Medical Sciences 2010, Vol. 30, Iss. 6, pp. 1917–1927.

³² S. Einarsen, A. Skogstad, op. cit.

³³ B.K. Horvat, M. Pagon, op. cit.

³⁴ B. Burnes, R. Pope, *Negative behaviours in the workplace: A study of two Primary Care Trusts in the NHS*, International Journal of Public Sector Management 2007, Vol. 20, Iss. 4, pp. 285–303.

³⁵ D. Lewis, op. cit.

³⁶ J. Blase et al., op. cit.

³⁷ D. Riley, D.J. Duncan, J. Edwards, *Staff bullying in Australian schools*, Journal of Educational Administration 2011, Vol. 49, Iss. 1, pp. 7–30.

³⁸ G. Casimir, et al., op. cit.

METHOD

The logic of the research is based on the principle formulated by H. Leymann³⁹ that mobbing is stated when bullying meets the intensity and duration criteria: attacks are more frequent than once a week and last for at least six months. The attack outside the scope of this category is named as workplace bullying (bullying). The questionnaire consists of 21 questions and 47 items (Likert's scale), which were aimed to identify what character of sneering the mobbing victims had experienced. The items of H. Leymann⁴⁰ make the basis of the items distinguished in the questionnaire (Scales 1–3). They are constructed by transforming (in linguistic sense) the items of H. Leymann presented in the LIPT inventory and formulating them in the first person. The items (in the original questionnaire's variant – in Lithuanian) have been adapted for specific cultural environment).

Out of 21 questions – 10 questions are of demographic character in order to form as vivid as possible portrait of a mobbing victim. Other 11 questions were aimed to find out harassment duration and frequency, a discriminator (a colleague, manager and so on), the reaction of the victim to harassment, the person who lent assistance, the means to stop harassment, outcomes against the discriminator and so on.

By means of concepts' operationalisation three scales of the instrument have been formed: Communication interferences in employees' relations; Formation of negative opinion and work character; Employees' physical state and outcomes.

The first scale Communication interferences in employees' relations consists of subscales of communication and isolation. The second scale Formation of negative opinion and work character consists of subscales of reputation and tasks. The third scale Employees' physical state and outcomes consists of subscales of health and harm. The subscales embrace 47 items (communication – 11, isolation – 5, reputation – 15, tasks – 8, health – 5, harm – 3 items).

³⁹ H. Leymann, *Mobbing and Psychological Terror at Workplaces*, Violence and Victims 1990, Vol. 5, Iss. 2, pp. 119–126.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

The culture, in which the instrument has been checked, distinguishes in the social-historical experience (determined by the Soviet social engineering relevant for Central and Eastern Europe. Initiatives, perception of public decisions, publicity danger, reticence, which despite political and social transformations taking place remain important socio-cultural factors that influence different researches being performed, are characteristic. In pursuing for precision the control questions that aim to evaluate openness of the respondents have been included into the questionnaire.

4

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Those who experience mobbing always experience bullying and harassment, but those who experience bullying and harassment not always experience mobbing. With the increase of awareness of mobbing in the society, any actions of harassment are often called mobbing. When filling in the questionnaire, a significant part of respondents attributed themselves to those who experience mobbing (frequency – 67.8%, duration – 74.7%), however, according to the individual steps of the test answers were filtered, distinguishing mobbing in accordance with the classic definition. Filtering the answers was based on the classic definition of mobbing, according to which mobbing is considered to be when the attacks are not less rare than once a week and last for six months or more. The analysis of the data in this aspect has shown that 17.7% (in respect of frequency) and 20.3% (in respect of duration) of the respondents fall into the risk zone of mobbing, although formally they are not considered to be victims of mobbing. Distribution of respondents according to the frequency and duration of the experienced attacks is presented in Table 1.

Thus, every third respondent has experienced attacks at least once a week. It shows a notably wide circle of victims, who are aggressively attacked, although this attack does not necessarily correspond to the classic definition of mobbing. In addition, the research has shown that there are some more practical aspects, after evaluation of which the actual occurrence of mobbing could be statistically higher.

The questionnaire requested to provide comments (presented as “other” in Table 1), which extend the boundaries of the definition of mobbing. For

example, staggered working hours (“as I am on staggered working hours, I was bullied when the working days overlapped”), depending on the victim’s reaction (“on phases, when the attacker met with a rebuff from me”, he “drew in his claws” for “some time”), depending on other circumstances (“I was bullied periodically – sometimes less, sometimes more often”, “from time to time during the entire time of my work within the enterprise”, i.e. for about 3 years”).

Table 1. Percentage distribution of respondents’ answers according to the frequency and duration of harassment, bullying

| Frequency of harassment, bullying, % | | Duration of harassment, bullying, % | |
|--------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|------|
| At least once a week | 67.8 | 6 months or longer | 74.7 |
| Less than once a week | 17.7 | Up to 6 months | 20.3 |
| Other | 14.5 | Other | 5.0 |

In other words, the substantial context of duration and intensity, constant attacks and inevitability, which forces the victim to live in the permanent state of fear and stress, is highlighted in the responses. The aim of this research was not to correct the criteria for determination of mobbing, however, the need for such a debate should be noted.

Length of employment is a significant factor, which influences occurrence of mobbing and bullying in organisations and the victims who belong to a respective group. The data of the recently conducted researches showed that in Lithuania there is a greater risk to become a victim at the beginning of a career and closer to retirement age, or being of the retirement age⁴¹. Percentage distribution of mobbing victims according to the length of employment and age is presented in Table 2.

Specificity of mobbing in Lithuanian organisations is characterized by the fact that the place of work is cherished maximally, so the attacks are suffered for years. The increase in the number of mobbing from the period of more than 20 years is explained by evaluation of strong attitudes of employees (and especially managers) directed against persons whose work

⁴¹ J. Vveinhardt, P. Žukauskas, op. cit.

activity is approaching the retirement age (as less valuable from professional point). Thus, to sum up, it can be assumed that competition and preconception have a significant impact on mobbing. Similar trends are visible when comparing the criteria of the age and length of employment of the respondents.

Table 2. Percentage distribution of respondents' answers according to the length of employment and age

| Respondents' length of employment in current organisation | Experienced mobbing, % | Experienced harassment, bullying, % | Age of respondents | Experienced mobbing, % | Experienced harassment, bullying, % |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Up to 1 year | 7.8 | 7.2 | Up to 20 years | 2.1 | 1.4 |
| 1–3 years | 26.9 | 23.6 | 21–30 years | 20.2 | 25.1 |
| 4–7 years | 27.6 | 29.2 | 31–40 years | 33.8 | 28.0 |
| 8–10 years | 9.4 | 8.2 | 41–50 years | 25.5 | 24.8 |
| 11–15 years | 4.2 | 6.7 | 51–60 years | 17.0 | 19.6 |
| 16–20 years | 7.1 | 8.7 | Retirement age | 1.4 | 1.1 |
| More than 20 years | 13.4 | 13.5 | | | |
| Other | 3.6 | 2.9 | | | |

Thus, the trends are basically unchanged, and the curve is growing. The critical line starts at the 3rd year of employment and reaches a peak at 4th–7th year of employment in the organisation. This includes the period during which the employee reaches maximum efficiency in the organisation.

Mobbing as a growing trend is recorded most markedly in groups of up to 7 years of length of employment. Other trends indicate that with the increasing age and length of employment in the organisation, the threat of mobbing is increasing, and reaches the peak during pre-retirement age. This is consistent with the provisions about the value of human resources characteristic of the national culture. In addition, it signals the problems of the internal culture of organisations: the employees who are starting their

professional career in the organisation and those employees who worked for the organisation for more than a decade experience most attacks. Hence, there is a risk that the human capital will not be fairly effectively complemented by new professionals, potentially beneficial to the organisation.

One would expect that long-working employees of the organisation are valued for loyalty and experience; they should have established stable social relationships. However, the results of the research suggest the opposite opinion. Stigmatisation, related to the age and “declining value” of the employee, to widespread stereotypes about lower competencies of the elderly persons to adapt to the changing environment, lower innovativeness, stronger conservatism, etc., has a greater influence. One should look for the roots of such provisions in the culture of the society. It can be argued that organisations are affected by culture, which supersedes (devalues) long-lived, older employees who have more experience. The existence of such a culture may adversely affect the image of the organisation and make it more difficult to attract the necessary professionals, as a secondary consequence.

It is important to compare the occurrence of harassment according to the gender of persons who experienced the attacks. According to the gender, the trends remain similar: women experience both harassment and mobbing more often. 16.9 percent men and 83.1 percent women experienced harassment, 19.0 percent men and 81.0 percent women experienced mobbing. Harassment against men can turn into mobbing more often, though the differences in indicators are not significant.

Table 3. Percentage distribution of respondents' answers according to their gender

| Gender | Experienced mobbing, % | Experienced harassment, bullying, % |
|--------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Female | 81.0 | 83.1 |
| Male | 19.0 | 16.9 |

Vulnerability to attacks may also be determined by marital status and it also offers one of the possibilities of help for the victims. Statistically significant differences between those who experienced mobbing and bullying according to the marital status have been highlighted. Among those who

experienced bullying 44.7 percent of victims live in a family, 21.3 percent are single and 34.0 percent are divorced. Similar trends remain in the case of mobbing: 41.7 percent living in the family, 24.6 percent single, 33.7 percent divorced.

Table 4. Percentage distribution of respondents' answers according to their marital status

| Marital status | Experienced mobbing, % | Experienced harassment, bullying, % |
|----------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Single | 24.6 | 21.3 |
| Married | 41.7 | 44.7 |
| Divorced | 33.7 | 34.0 |

Most of the respondents who experienced attacks (64.2%) worked in the public sector. This indicator slightly decreases to 57.8 percent when distinguishing mobbing. The situation in the private sector in respect of harassment is almost in half better than in the public sector, i.e. 35.8 percent, 42.2 percent of mobbing cases are recorded here.

As regards the reasons of mobbing, M. Rescha and M. Schubinskib⁴² emphasised the principles of leadership and organisation of work, D. Zapf⁴³ and L.J. Hauge et al.⁴⁴ stressed the importance of working conditions, D. Salin⁴⁵ emphasised organisational bullying prevention measures, M. Duffy and L. Sperry⁴⁶ drew attention to personnel management issues. Although public-sector organisations in Lithuania are distinguished by the fact that work organisation is more formalised, but descriptions of positions and division of functions are not precise and clear, that provides additional possibilities to harass the victim in the workplace. In addition, the fact that such profes-

⁴² M. Rescha, M. Schubinskib, *Mobbing—prevention and management in organisations*, European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology 1996, Vol. 5, Iss. 2, pp. 295–307.

⁴³ D. Zapf, *Organisational, work group related and personal causes of mobbing/bullying at work*, International Journal of Manpower 1999, Vol. 20, Iss. 1/2, pp. 70–85.

⁴⁴ L.J. Hauge, A. Skogstad, S. Einarsen, *Role stressors and exposure to workplace bullying: Causes or consequences of what and why?*, European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology 2011, Vol. 20, Iss. 5, pp. 610–630.

⁴⁵ D. Salin, *Organisational Measures Taken against Workplace Bullying: The Case of Finnish municipalities*, Helsinki 2006.

⁴⁶ M. Duffy, L. Sperry, *Mobbing: Causes, Consequences, and Solutions*, Oxford 2012.

sional areas as education, health care, etc. where mobbing and bullying are more expressed, belong to the public sector was significant for more marked occurrence of mobbing and bullying.

Table 5. Percentage distribution of respondents' answers according to the sector

| Sector | Experienced mobbing, % | Experienced harassment, bullying, % |
|----------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Private sector | 42.2 | 35.8 |
| Public sector | 57.8 | 64.2 |

When comparing organisations according to the size, it appears that most of the victims of mobbing worked in the medium-sized organisations where the number of employees is from 10 to 50 (36.0%) and in large organisations (33.5%).

In small-sized and large organisations the distribution of percentages was more or less even – 16.0 percent (small-sized organisations) and 14.5 percent (extra large organisations). The percentage of bullying and harassment is equivalent to the percentage of the mobbing.

Table 6. Percentage distribution of respondents' answers according to the size of the organisation

| The size of the organisation | | Experienced mobbing, % | Experienced harassment, bullying, % |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Small-sized organisations | Up to 10 employees | 16.0 | 12.5 |
| Medium-sized organisations | From 10 to 50 employees | 36.0 | 41.3 |
| Large organisations | From 50 to 250 employees | 33.5 | 32.0 |
| Extra large organisations | More than 250 employees | 14.5 | 14.2 |

The lowest level managers (36.2%) and regular employees (42.7%) suffered attacks more often than other executives. Respectively, 12.4 percent

and 8.7 percent mid-level and top-level managers experienced attacks. The lowest-level managers are often harassed and bullied by colleagues who have equal positions, only in very rare cases by subordinates, as the latter have fewer opportunities to attack the managers, but the situation changes, if they receive direct or indirect support from a senior rank manager. The hired top managers are traditionally attacked by members of the boards of the companies. In the case of mobbing, the situation remains unchanged: it is recorded that 37.3 percent of the lowest-level managers and 46.4 percent of ordinary workers experience mobbing. Thus, statistically the biggest threat that attacks can turn into mobbing is in respect of medium-level managers and subordinates (Table 7).

Table 7. Percentage distribution of respondents' answers according to positions

| Position | Experienced mobbing, % | Experienced harassment, bullying, % |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Top-level manager | 2.9 | 8.7 |
| Middle-level manager | 13.4 | 12.4 |
| Lowest-level manager | 37.3 | 36.2 |
| Subordinate | 46.4 | 42.7 |

In addition, the research has revealed that usually aggressors act jointly, with the awareness and support of managers, therefore, the victim experiences particular pressure (Table 8).

Table 8. The source of mobbing according to positions in the organisation

| Who harassed and bullied? | % |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Co-worker | 14.0 |
| Several co-workers | 22.1 |
| Manager | 31.7 |
| Both the manager and co-workers | 32.2 |

More than half (63.9%) of the attackers are managers, managers and co-workers. Hence, the victim's opportunity to defend itself by reporting to the management is significantly limited, except the cases, when the attacking managers are of the lower rank and the victim can get help from a top-level manager. Moreover, even a third of the respondents say that the aggressor is one manager.

Distribution of the victims who experienced harassment and mobbing according to the areas of professional activity is presented in Table 9. The professional areas in this research are distinguished according to Classification of Economic Activities of the Republic of Lithuania.

Table 9. Distribution of victims according to areas of professional activity

| Area of professional activity | Experienced mobbing, % | Experienced harassment, bullying, % |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Agriculture | 0.4 | 0.2 |
| Mining and quarries exploitation | 0.7 | 0.5 |
| Manufacturing | 1.8 | 1.8 |
| Electricity, gas, steam supply and air conditioning | 1.4 | 1.1 |
| Construction | 2.6 | 2.4 |
| Wholesale and retail trade | 6.2 | 5.5 |
| Transport and storage | 3.2 | 2.9 |
| Catering services | 3.5 | 2.4 |
| Information and communication | 8.6 | 8.5 |
| Financial and insurance activities | 7.6 | 7.5 |
| Real estate | 0.7 | 0.5 |
| Professional, scientific and technical activities | 4.4 | 3.5 |
| Administrative and support service activities | 12.3 | 17.5 |
| Public administration and defence | 3.5 | 2.6 |
| Compulsory social security | 2.1 | 1.4 |
| Education | 18.6 | 22.5 |

| | | |
|--|------|-----|
| Health care and social work | 10.5 | 8.1 |
| Art, entertainment and recreational activities | 4.9 | 4.3 |
| Other service activities | 6.3 | 6.3 |
| Extraterritorial organisations and bodies | 0.7 | 0.5 |

Thus, such areas as education, health care and social work, information and communication, financial and insurance activities are distinguished, in other words, a range of service providing organisations where employees often have to come into contact with clients. As in the studies conducted in Lithuania previously⁴⁷ education organisations stand out significantly, both in respect of harassment, which is beyond the mobbing scheme (according to the classic definition) and the risk of mobbing.

Mobbing is more frequent in the areas of professional activities, where bullying is frequent, although no statistically significant differences have been defined between both phenomena according to individual areas, except education and administrative and service activities (respectively: mobbing – 18.6%, bullying – 22.5%, and mobbing – 12.3%, bullying – 17.5%). It is obvious that both mobbing and bullying cases are less frequently recorded in the areas of professional activity with prevailing production nature of the activities, workers’ professions, which are subject to a lower educational qualification (Table 10).

Table 10. Victims of mobbing and bullying according to education

| Education | Experienced mobbing, % | Experienced harassment, bullying, % |
|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Secondary | 10.7 | 7.9 |
| Vocational | 4.5 | 3.4 |
| Advanced vocational | 14.9 | 13.8 |
| Higher | 69.9 | 74.9 |

⁴⁷ J. Vveinhardt, P. Žukauskas, op. cit.

Statistically significant differences between various groups of education have been identified. Cases of both bullying and mobbing are recorded exclusively among the respondents who have acquired higher education (74.9 percent bullying and 69.9 percent mobbing respectively) and advanced vocational education (13.8 percent bullying and 14.9 percent mobbing). No statistically significant differences inside the groups according to education have been found, but the trend that bullying and mobbing are closely related phenomena is confirmed and therefore they should be analysed together.

5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This is one of the first large-scale researches in Lithuania, a country with a transitional economy which demonstrates the dynamics of socio-demographic factors, draws the vectors of managerial actions and formulates the tasks for managers of organisations. The main risk groups of professional activity, education, age, length of employment and individuals who are mostly at risk of experiencing mobbing and bullying have been confirmed. Mobbing is the phenomenon accompanying bullying, therefore, when creating and developing a prevention and intervention policy it is necessary to assess the possibility of isolated cases of bullying which may develop into mobbing. While there are no comprehensive national legal acts regulating mobbing and bullying, the biggest challenge and responsibility lies in implementing the practice of regulation of employee relations which falls to the executives of the organisations.

In terms of practical, organisational management it is necessary to provide educational and improvement programs for executives on the topics of bullying and mobbing. These should pay particular attention to the most sensitive socio-demographic areas and should be so designed so as to develop the social competence of executives and employees in the area of conflict resolution and in internal communication. It is necessary to recognise and institutionalise bullying and mobbing in internal documents (codes of ethics, collective agreements) in order to change the culture of the work organisation. Clear definition of the functions of employees would be necessitated so reducing the opportunity to harass them by assigning work above their competence. This requires not only the initiative of the managerial staff of

the organisation, but also active pressure and cooperation of trade unions as stakeholders.

This study is limited by the fact that it is not intended for the analysis of causes of mobbing and bullying. The causes are actualised and evaluated more broadly with reference to the national context in the paper of J. Vveinhardt and P. Žukauskas⁴⁸. A significant observation for future research is that there is a need to clarify the traditional definition of mobbing according to the intensity and duration of the attacks, it is necessary to evaluate an individual's length of employment in the organisation (less than 6 months), objective possibilities of contact with the attacker in the processes of organisation of work, and psycho-physiological characteristics of the victim, whereas individual reactions are different. The assumptions formulated from the content of the research could be specified by qualitative researches.

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⁴⁸ Ibidem.

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