

Протиставлення мобінгу особистісній площині роботи¹

Джоанна Хвашч², Вероніка Аугустинівіч³

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²Кафедра соціальної психопривентивності, Інститут психології, Католицький університет Любліна імені Івана Павла II, вул. Ал. Рацлавівська 14, 20-950 Люблін, ПОЛЬЩА, E-mail: chwaszcz@kul.pl

³Кафедра соціальної психопривентивності, Інститут психології, Католицький університет Любліна імені Івана Павла II, вул. Ал. Рацлавівська 14, 20-950 Люблін, ПОЛЬЩА, E-mail: weronika.augustynowicz@gmail.com

У статті йдеться про роль роботи в житті людини і мобінг як заперечення особистісної площини роботи.

Коли робота стає частиною життя кожної людини, вона набуває особистісного характеру. Робота – це поклонання людини, за допомогою роботи, вона посилює почуття власної гідності і реалізує себе. Проте, існують ситуації, коли через експлуатацію, жорсткі умови праці або тиски на роботі, почуття власної гідності людини принижується. Для того, щоб людина отримувала від роботи задоволення та радість, вона повинна усвідомлювати яке добро вона приносить своєю роботою. Людина також має задовольняти свої потреби, розвивати свою особистість, керуватися цінностями і усвідомлювати свою самореалізацію. Для того, щоб людина отримувала від роботи задоволення, вона повинна знати, що її робота має сенс, приносить користь як для самого працівника, так і для інших людей, що вона не руйнує, а створює, що вона не витрачає на марне свої можливості і що вона не має соромитись продуктів своєї діяльності.

Мобінг принижує гідність людини. Мобінг є однією з форм рабства. У ситуації мобінгу існують два види робочого поневолення: перше – рабство, яке позбавляє людину прав та застосовує щодо неї насильство, яке позбавляє її будь-якого вибору в економічній або соціальній сфері; друге – поневолення, яке "створює таку соціальну, економічну чи політичну систему, за якої людина змушена виступати тим чи іншим чином або, навіть, формувати ставлення, яке суперечить її прагненням та індивідуальним виборам".

Перша частина статті – це загальний вступ. Друга – описує ту роль, яку відіграє робота і значення особистісного підходу до роботи. У наступній частині розглядається явище мобінгу як заперечення особистісного підходу до роботи. Четверта частина містить вказівки про те, як поводитись з людьми, які стали жертвами мобінгу.

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Mobbing vs. the Personalistic Dimension of Work¹

Joanna Chwaszcz², Weronika Augustynowicz³

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²Department of Social Psychoprevention, Institute of Psychology, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Al. Raclawickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, POLAND, E-mail: chwaszcz@kul.pl

³Department of Social Psychoprevention, Institute of Psychology, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Al. Raclawickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, POLAND, E-mail: weronika.augustynowicz@gmail.com

This paper describes the role of work in the human's life and mobbing as a negation of personalistic dimension of work. The first part provides a general introduction. The second part refers to the role that work plays in human life and a meaning of personalistic approach to work. The next part is an overview of the mobbing phenomenon as a negation of personalistic approach to work. The fourth part provides guidance on how to deal with people who have experienced mobbing.

Keywords – work, personalistic dimension of work, dehumanisation at work, mobbing, support for the victims of mobbing.

I. Introduction

Why is work such an important part of everyone's life? It is because work is inscribed in our nature and to a certain extent it determines our humanity.

Work is something that distinguishes us from all living creatures who receive almost everything in a ready state. Work is a value which cannot be understood without reference to the value of man. Examining the value of work from the angle of a person, one should understand that it is every person's dignity that constitutes the source of value and dignity of each man's work [12], [5]. As the Holy Father John Paul II puts it:

"Work is a good thing for man - a good thing for his humanity -because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfilment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes more a human being" [6, p. 33].

Mobbing has a very long tradition because it has existed ever since organizations in which some people had power over other people came into being. Now however, mobbing has come out of hiding. Mobbing is a moral harassment in the workplace. The choice of the word "moral" results from the fact that it forces us to adopt a particular stance whether it is bad or accepted by the society [4].

II. The Working Environment as the Setting of Human Development

In the personalistic approach, work is always examined in the context of a human. Man and work are two

interconnected and inseparable notions. Man cannot develop without work and, following on from this, work cannot exist without man. Work is more fruitful and meaningful if it translates into positive and valuable functioning, if it makes a greater contribution to man's life. When work becomes a part of each man's life, it acquires a personal character [12]. In order for man to derive satisfaction and joy from his work, he must be aware of the good he does through this work. He must also fulfil his needs, perfect his personality, be guided by values and be aware of his self-fulfilment. Work is an indispensable element of every human being's existence. It is simultaneously his right, duty and privilege. It should therefore be something that enriches our personality, gives us the possibility of self-improvement and self-fulfilment.

Workplace is one of the most important endowments of human functioning. It is because of the amount of time that he spends there as well as particular functions of work - for example as an indicator of one's competence, resourcefulness, social status, material affluence; it is an environment in which man can develop, improve himself and fulfil his different needs. Work is one of the main forms of an adult person's activity [14], [16]. It should therefore be stated that working environment is equally important for an individual's appropriate and harmonious development as his family or peer environment - especially in modern times, when the need of work has become as important as health care, education or leisure [14].

Thus important role of employment in the individual as well as social life may be distinctly seen in the face of spreading unemployment. Profound transformations happening in modern world economy have led to serious consequences in the sphere of work - the crisis of employment has been revealed and mass unemployment has transformed into a lasting structural phenomenon which brings about the accumulation of other social problems, such as: homelessness, alcoholism, crime, family life pathology and, generally speaking, the decline of morality [13, p. 217], [2], [8].

Working environment is a very important element of everybody's existence because it may constitute a support system, a source of satisfaction, possibility of self-fulfilment and a chance to establish interpersonal relations, shape one's attitudes, and receive gratification for one's good job. Unfortunately, we often realise that only when we experience problems at our workplace or when we lose our job.

III. Mobbing as a Form of Dehumanisation at Work

In 1960s, a German psychologist called Heinz Leymann observed hostile behaviours among children which were usually directed towards one of their peers. These behaviours persisted for a long period of time. He called this phenomenon with the word "mobbing" from the English verb to mob. According to Art. 943.68)§2 of the Polish labour law [15]:

Mobbing means activities or behaviours connected with the worker or directed towards the worker which consist in persistent and long-term harassment or intimidation of the worker which evoke a lowered assessment of professional usefulness, cause or are intended to cause humiliation or ridiculousness of the worker, isolating or eliminating him from the team of workers.

Two basic qualities of mobbing behaviours should be explicitly enumerated [9, p. 44]:

- regularity - happening at least once a week,
- long-term nature - happening for at least six months.

A significant contribution to the study of the phenomenon of emotional violence in the workplace was made by M. Hirigoyen, who describes mobbing as moral harassment in the workplace. The author says [4, p. 11]:

Moral harassment in the workplace is any intentional act (gesture, word, behaviour, attitude...), which through its repetitiveness and regularity infringes upon the dignity or the physical or psychical integrity of a person and which exposes him to the loss of employment or deterioration of the atmosphere at work.

This is one of the best definitions of mobbing because it considers the essential temporal factor, psychical dimension of the phenomenon as well as the effects it has on the victim. Mobbing behaviours may proceed on the three basic axes:

- 1) horizontal,
- 2) vertical,
- 3) oblique.

Re 1) Horizontal mobbing (employee against his colleague). It usually takes the form of hostile conduct taken up by a group of co-workers towards a person whose dissimilarity becomes the subject of the attacks. The employer, even when he is aware of this kind of behaviour, prefers not to interfere because he usually does not know how to react. Horizontal violence usually takes place when employees compete with one another to obtain a particular position or to get promoted. Horizontal violence often starts to be construed as coming from the employer. It is because the employer remains passive towards situations in which co-workers use violence against one another. Due to such behaviour, the employer, in the victim's eyes, becomes the co-perpetrator of the persecution.

Re 2) Vertical mobbing (subordinate against superior). This kind of mobbing does not draw too much attention because its frequency is significantly lower than in the case of the other kinds of emotional violence in the workplace. It usually develops when a person who until recently was a colleague becomes a superior. The motive for such mobbing may be envy of the other person's achievements and their faster moving up the career ladder. The situation of the person who is subject to mobbing is even more difficult because often he has no one to turn to for help.

Re 3) Oblique mobbing (superior against subordinate). The superior persecuting the subordinate - so called bossing - is, as researchers unanimously confirm, the most popular form of mobbing [11]. There are a few categories

of harassment on the part of the employer distinguished in literature [4, pp. 102-103]:

- perverse, which is practiced in order to unselfishly destroy a person or to strengthen one's position;
- strategic, whose goal is to force the employee to hand in his resignation and in this way avoid dismissal procedure;
- institutional, which is one of the tools used in personnel management.

Bossing usually assumes one of the four forms presented below [11]:

- overburdening with work,
- incessant pointing out of a person's mistakes,
- giving contradictory orders,
- ignoring and/or isolating.

Mobbing behaviours violate a person's dignity. Work loses its subjective character, ceases to give satisfaction, it becomes a "necessary evil". Different forms of mobbing damage the value of human work - it loses its moral, spiritual, aesthetic, social and economic value. If a person is subject to moral violence in the workplace, there is no free work as a form of man's creative activity. A key rule of human work is being questioned - that man is the basis of all work. When a person is subject to mobbing, work is no longer for the person but he becomes a slave to his work. [cf.4]. Work no longer gives him the joy of life and creation; it does not give man a chance to practice his natural abilities, to perfect his personality. It is no longer a place where a man can forget about minor difficulties of everyday life [12].

IV. Support for the Victims of Mobbing

Victims of psychological harassment are not able to get out of the situation of persecution, slander and insult circle by themselves. In Western Europe countries, where the problem of mobbing has been known for several years, there are a lot of institutions which provide multidimensional help for the aggrieved. In Poland one can get such help at the Human Rights Defender's Office, anti-mobbing associations (there are such associations in Gdańsk, Poznań and Wrocław), citizens advice bureaus and societies of crisis intervention.

Health centres which offer treatments of acute and/or chronic symptoms of mobbing suggest hospitalization for 6 to 8 weeks. Different kinds of individual and group psychotherapy supplemented with sports activities aim at reducing depressive states and restoring appropriate self-esteem and creativity.

In the event of mobbing it is very important how the person who is being harassed behaves. With his own attitude he can actually make his aggressor abandon this practice. The victim's attitude plays an important role also in how the emotional violence will affect his functioning and health. Below we present some tips of how to behave when a person feels that he is being harassed:

- One should determine whether the ensuing behaviours have indeed been characteristic of mobbing or whether it has only been a misunderstanding or one-time incident.

- One should very carefully control one's behaviours and not in the slightest let oneself transgress the regulations, because mobbing activities

are usually aimed at forcing an individual to make a grave mistake which could constitute the basis to dismiss such employee.

- One should be very careful with all important documents that he is responsible for and make sure that they are all safe and will not be lost. In practice it means making copies and locking the desk. Very often the harassing co-worker steals or destroys documents so that the blame is on the victim.

- One should take down any forms of provocation and acts of aggression on the part of the aggressor, keep the notes and secure himself the loyalty and help of the witnesses of mobbing. This will be extremely helpful when one needs to present and justify one's accusations to superiors or other authority.

- If possible, one should report his complaints to superiors or other authorities as soon as possible. In a big company this can be the head of the personnel department. Unfortunately it is often the case that a falsely understood loyalty towards the management of the company and anxiety towards their own jobs in a company may lead to a situation in which it is very difficult to count on the help of the workers of the personnel department.

- One can receive support also from trade unions if there are such in the company.

- Being a victim of mobbing usually means a solitary fight. Therefore, on the whole, there are three solutions for such person: 1) to give up his job, which in modern market situation can have very negative effects, 2) to try to change his post in the company, 3) to stop the fight hoping that the problem will solve itself - although in reality, it does not happen too often.

It should be emphasised that mobbing prevention in the workplace re-quires essential legal solutions. According to the legal principles it is the employer's obligation to prevent mobbing, which in practice means that neither he nor any of his employees can harass other people. If the employer neglects this duty, the consequences can be very severe for him. When his employee suffers from mobbing, he has every right to file a lawsuit against his employer for compensation. Since mobbing is not a form of discrimination, the rule of shifting the burden of proof onto the employer (as in the case of discrimination) does not apply here. This means that in case of dispute in the industrial tribunal - for example for compensation on account of terminating employment contract or on account of damage to one's health - the employee has to prove that he has been subject to mobbing [3].

The structure of the regulations on terminating the employment contract due to mobbing suggests that it is an employment contract termination with no notice (instant). However, there is no reference to the employment code which determines the employer's entitlements in case the worker unjustifiably terminates his contract with no notice. This would mean that the employer has no right to

claim compensation from the employee who has unjustly quoted mobbing in order to terminate his contract more easily. Therefore, there are only two possibilities: terminating the contract with notice or by the mutual agreement of the parties. These options are not particularly favourable in this situation as they either involve the necessity to work for a given period of time (notice) or the employer's agreement (mutual agreement of the parties), which is often unacceptable for the employee who has suffered mobbing. In this context it should be stated that (especially with reference to those who have experienced deterioration in health) that termination of the contract with no notice is a possible solution here [10].

Conclusion

Summing up the subject presented here, it should be emphasised that the development of legal solutions and the organisations supporting the victims as well as the growing awareness of this problem in society give hope that mobbing will be combated more effectively. One should not expect, however, that all kinds of harassment will disappear from the workplace because there will always be superiors and/or co-workers who, in order to get rid of an undesirable person, will resort to immoral practices and emotional violence. It is important for the victims, however, to be able to rely on appropriate help without the feeling that the actions they have taken are merely meaningless tilting at windmills.

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