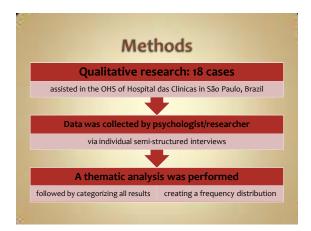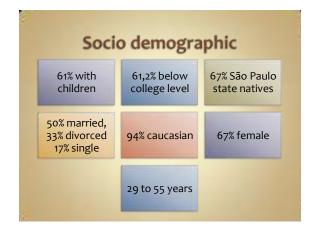**ICOH – 2012 – Cancun - Mexico**

Relation between type of mobbing behavior and triggering event

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Introduction

- Mobbing, bullying, harassment, etc. are here used as synonyms
- Mobbing is a process
- As such any attempt to categorize the actions involved might hide its dynamic nature
- Categorizing mobbing behaviors could help the design of prevention
- The aim is to discuss the relations between type of mobbing behavior and triggering event.
- **The central question posed is: do mobbing behaviors vary according to the triggering event?**

Methods

Qualitative research: 18 cases

assisted in the OHS of Hospital das Clinicas in São Paulo, Brazil

Data was collected by psychologist/researcher

via individual semi-structured interviews

A thematic analysis was performed

followed by categorizing all results | creating a frequency distribution

Socio demographic

- 61% with children
- 61,2% below college level
- 67% São Paulo state natives
- 50% married, 33% divorced 17% single
- 94% caucasian
- 67% female
- 29 to 55 years

Job characteristics

- **67% from private organizations**
- **# economic activities branches** including:
- metallurgy (metal casting)
- computer science
- health and social services
- terrestrial transport
- financial intermediation
- production of leather merchandises
- telecommunications
- public administration
- associative activities
- pharmaceutics industry
- mining
- plastics and thermal
- clothing industry

Job characteristics

- **great variability of jobs,** including:
- **blue collar workers:**
- Nurse auxiliary
- Terrestrial transport collector
- Packing auxiliary
- Chemical analyst
- Quality controller
- Laboratory technician
- Silk screen printer
- Modelist
- **white collar workers:**
- System analyst
- Doctor
- Supervisor
- Director
- Management assistant
- University teacher

Job characteristics

Time on job varied from 3 to 35 years	89% worked more than 40 hours weekly	80% were urged to do overwork
73% worked more than 10 extra hours per week	94% reported moderate to fast work pace	83% had no control over work rhythm

Type of mobbing behavior	N	%
Concerning job content (attributions, job, function, vacancy)	13	72
Concerning working place	6	33
Concerning work organization	6	33
Work pressure	13	72
Concerning working time	9	50
Concerning wages, benefits, worker's rights	12	66
Concerning law suits	4	22
Ask for urgent work unnecessarily	3	17
Taking out of infrastructure	4	22
Firing menaces	13	72
Humiliations	17	94
Discriminations and lack of equity	11	61
Exclusion	6	33
Isolation	7	39
Others	16	89

Discovery of fraud – 4 cases

- Following an organizational change which could be a promotion, change of management, etc. a fraud was discovered
- Interviews showed 2 types of employee's behaviors after discovering a fraud, each of them unleashing different consequences:
1. denounce (or threaten to denounce)
2. acknowledge and refuse to participate

Discovery of fraud: 1) denounces or threatens to denounce a fraud

- Counteroffensive aim appears to be to **neutralize employee** by:
- Isolation and exclusion;
- Changes in job content;
- Discredit employee by humiliating, discriminating
- Threaten employee (life threatens, intentionally expose to dangers, lawsuits, police reports, firing menaces)
- CADS, FMGS and CCAC are examples of this situation

Discovery of fraud: 2) refusal to participate in the fraud

- Ex.: refusal to pay propine in order to obtain privileges
- aim seems to be to **punish the employee** by:
- intentionally exposing to danger (for example assigning the driver the most dangerous bus itinerary)
- interfering with working time (assigning worst working schedules)
- damaging the employee in his wages, benefits or worker's right
- discrimination and lack of equity
- firing menaces if he complains or denounces any of the previous
- Ex.: F.M.

Management change: 4 cases

- When a new manager/supervisor/director comes into scene the aim seems to be to **put things and employees into a new frame, changing everything**:
- Ex.: MN (doctor) - new manager:
- destroyed the previous existing work organization
- took out her assistants and infrastructure
- immediately demanded double productivity,
- discredited her with the receptionists
- made diminishing comments about her capabilities
- jokes, sarcasms
- forbade her to talk to receptionists
- forged complaints against her for refusing to treat the patients
- threatened to fire her
- overtime was reduced and there were mistakes concerning her paycheck

Management change: 4 cases

- New managers normally seemed to distrust employees "inherited" from the previous one, and **wanted to get rid of them and replace them**. Ex.: A.A.S's (supervisor) – new manager:
- many employees were dismissed and substituted
- mandatory vacations
- job change
- few tasks assigned (after begging)
- humiliating or below her capabilities tasks (ex.: dust furniture, sweep the floor)
- put her in a room with glass partition to expose her situation to everybody.
- excluded from courses, trainings and meetings
- was isolated

Employee's promotion leading to more contact with supervisor– 1 case

- Supervisor is a bully, a very well related bully.
- His aim is to **humiliate** his subordinate, and he acts this way because he has a privileged position in the organization, which guarantees his impunity. Ex.: CAJ
- supervisor called him a donkey, bad mouthed, chided and humiliated him sometimes in front of other employees, sometimes in private
- Threatens to fire if he reports the bullying
- After reporting to HR was fired

3 other triggering events

1. **Accusation of beginning rumors on the administrator of the company** - 1
- In this case the aim is to **discredit the employee** and the strategy is to humiliate and firing menaces.
2. **To be transformed in a permanent worker (and the supervisor not)** – 1
- Here the aim seems to be to **punish the employee** and the strategy includes: humiliations, ask for urgent work unnecessarily, oblige the employee to work in such a fashion or sequence that could cause his dismissal or critics to his performance.
3. **Dispute over a job** - 1
- Two colleagues (university teachers) wanted to exclude KRDM in order to take over her classes. In this case, their aim was to **discredit her** (with students, colleagues and superiors) and the strategy was to defame, humiliate, exclude and open lawsuits against her.

Aggravating circumstances

- Some circumstances could aggravate mobbing in terms of number, intensity or frequency of mobbing behaviors:
- **Worker's characteristic (sex, race, socio economic level, leadership)**
- Ex.: EC
- The main problem here was a **cognitive dissonance about being an African American and an overachiever at the same time**
- the triggering event was being approved in the exam to become a public servant, hospital's employee
- Mobbing behaviors were aimed at excluding her from the job.

Aggravating circumstances

- **Worker's performance (speed, experience, quality)**
- Employees who favor quality over quantity, the slow workers, face difficult times, especially when there is a management change
- **The new manager/supervisor's aim is to obtain results or get rid of him/her**
- The main strategies are:
- work pressure
- firing menaces
- concerning wages, benefits and worker's rights
- humiliations: diminishing comments about worker's capabilities

- The same happens to employees who are learning the job, for instance a new system, or overachievers (envy)

Aggravating circumstances

- **Worker's stability – 4 cases**
1. In accordance to Brazilian legislation **civil servants** especially those who passed a very hard examination, after apprenticeship are considered stable unless a very serious offence is committed.
- Ex.: VFP - Being a stable worker in apprenticeship, her supervisor's aim was to dismiss her, and the strategy included:
- bad evaluations in performance appraisal
- exclusion from training, courses and meetings
- opening law suits against her
- work pressure
- asking her to carry equipments form one place to another and other tasks which were not part of her job description
- humiliations,
- discrimination, etc.

Aggravating circumstances

- **Worker's stability – 4 cases**

2. Another situation of stability which appeared was **being a member of the Internal Commission for the Prevention of Work Accidents**, which is a commission of in-house workers with the responsibility to prevent workplace accidents, in accordance with Brazilian legislation. In this case the worker has one year stability.
- Ex.: AAS

3. **Following a sick leave due to work-related disease or injury** recognized by the National Institute of Social Insurance, the worker has one year stability.
- Ex.: FGS – after RTW she was not working anymore in the same place and even worse, there was no work (vacancy) for her.

Conclusions

- This research pointed to the complex nature of bullying behaviors and processes.
- According to Einarsen (2000) by and large, the cross-sectional designs of most studies in this field and the extensive use of survey methods, constitutes a static approach to the study of bullying at work.
- Qualitative research can help to treat mobbing in a more dynamic way, emphasizing its nature as an escalating process.
- **More than just a sum of mobbing behaviors, bullies and organizations create strategies to deal with employees in order to attain certain aims**
- these strategies have rationality, although not flexibility, and are in accordance with the triggering event
- According to the triggering event victims characteristics can act as aggravating factors.

Obrigada!

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