 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 Clínicas 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

• 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

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 threats, 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

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 defame, humiliate, exclude and open lawsuits against her.

Aggravating circumstances

1. 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)

2. Worker’s stability – 4 cases
   - 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 from 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!