**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 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
- 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
  - 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 overtime
- 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

**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.
  - 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 criticism 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.

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 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)

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.
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.

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.

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