

# ПЕДАГОГІКА

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## THE PHENOMENON OF MOBBING IN UKRAINIAN SOCIETY: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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**Abstract.** *The current study aims to analyze modern problematicity of “mobbing” in Ukrainian society. The concept of “mobbing”, the causes of its occurrence, manifestation specifics, distinguishing characteristics, main types and methods of eradicating its negative consequences both at the level of the enterprise management and relatively any individual have been studied. It has highlighted that now in Ukraine every second Ukrainian has been mobbed and, unfortunately, Ukraine has no legislatively fixed definition of the concept of “mobbing” and, accordingly, the mechanisms for regulating this phenomenon. The study states that mobbing is a hostile and unethical communication which is directed in a systematic way by one or a number of persons mainly toward one individual and results in the humiliation, devaluation, discrediting, and degradation; loss of professional reputation; removal of the victim from the organization through termination, extended medical leave, or quitting. It also has been proved that problem of mobbing is not fully understood or studied and to eliminate this destructive phenomenon, it is advisable to use the entire arsenal of management methods, to borrow the best foreign experience, simultaneously using their managerial experience and proceeding from the development specifics of any team.*

**Key words:** *mobbing, phenomenon, psychological pressure, physical pressure, harassment, victims of mobbing, humiliation of human dignity, discrimination, mental abuse, labor relations.*

**Introduction.** The phenomenon of mobbing is inherent in any state, but especially it is becoming a growing problem in Australia, Austria, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Ukraine, which is at the stage of its social system's transformation, is accompanied by the approval of various ownership forms as well as activity types, is no exception. The phenomenon of mobbing, that is, collective psychological terror, was recognized during the early 1990 s. However, according to the experts' statistical data analysis, every year it spreads rapidly around the world, like an epidemic of a new social disease. The concept of “mobbing” is becoming more

and more widespread in modern society, where there is great competition, dangerous political games and corruption schemes.

The Constitution of Ukraine provides for the right of every citizen to respect for honor and dignity, the right to work and appropriate and safe working conditions, but labor legislation does not define a mechanism for their protection. Unfortunately, today, in the terms of a protracted social and economic crisis, the growing level of unemployment in society is increasing psychological pressure on workers. Thus, the exercise of the rights guaranteed by the Constitution to ensure decent working conditions is faced with the problem of

psychological pressure in the workplace that is, mobbing.

In Ukraine, there is increasing talk on numerous cases of mobbing in the workplace, which is a socially dangerous phenomenon, since its consequences can harm both moral and physical health of a person. According to the survey, more than 77 % of Ukrainians have faced this negative phenomenon. According to statistics in Ukraine, every second Ukrainian has been mobbed in one form or another. Numerous foreign publications have shown that this insidious phenomenon provokes resignations, lawsuits, neuroses, suicides and material losses estimated in billions. In the workplace, it affects men and women, experienced professionals and young employees as well. Mobbing thrives in government agencies as well as in private firms. Articles, books and websites are devoted to this phenomenon. For a more successful fight against it, public organizations are opening hot telephone lines and amendments are made to the legislation.

**The objective of the study** is to identify the concept's distinguishing characteristics, to analyze its types, methods of eradicating this negative phenomenon, to form approaches to its prevention as well as eradication using the most progressive states' experience.

**Methods of study.** During the study, the following methods of cognition were used: data collection and sample, measures, synthesis, analysis, induction, deduction, comparative method. To solve the above-mentioned tasks, the analysis of scientific sources concerning the phenomenon of mobbing in Ukrainian society has been applied.

**Analysis of the latest studies and publications.** The issue of mobbing has been in the focus of foreign and domestic scientists such as O. V. Kachmar [1], O. O. Korablova [3], I. V. Lahutina [4], T. V. Kolesnyk [2], L. V. Shchetinina [5], S. H. Rudakova, K. O. Drobynska [5], N. Davenport,

R. D. Schwartz, G. P. Elliott [6], M. Duffy, L. Sperry [7], H. Leymann [8, 9], Z. B. Tatar, Ş. Yüksel [10], K. Westhues [11] and others who contributed greatly to the examination and analysis of mobbing causes as well as foreign experience regarding the specifics of applying regulations against psychological terror.

**Results.** Mobbing (from the English mob – crowd) is a systematic bullying, psychological terror, a form of psychological pressure in the form of an employee's harassment in the team, usually with the aim of resigning him. The term originated in the early 1980s thanks to a psychologist and doctor, Dr. Hanke Leymann, who conducted research on this phenomenon in workplaces in Sweden. According to Leymann: "Psychical terror or mobbing in working life means hostile and unethical communication which is directed in a systematic way by one or a number of persons mainly toward one individual. These actions take place often (almost every day) and over a long period (at least for six months) and, because of this frequency and duration, result in considerable psychic, psychosomatic and social misery". Leymann [8, 9] fleshed out the above definition through his development of a multiphase model of workplace mobbing: namely, Phase 1: the precipitating conflict; Phase 2: the escalation of abusive behaviors against a target; Phase 3: the involvement of management or administration into the conflict; Phase 4: the acceleration of negative acts and labeling of the target; and Phase 5: the elimination of the target from the workplace or unit within it.

Noa Zanolli Davenport, Ruth Distler Schwartz, and Gail Pursell Elliott [6] introduced workplace mobbing via their 1999 book, *Mobbing: Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace* and defined mobbing this way: "The mobbing syndrome is a malicious attempt to force a person out of the workplace through unjustified accusations, humiliation,

general harassment, emotional abuse, and / or terror. It is a “ganging up” by the leader(s) – organization, superior, coworker, or subordinate – who rallies others into systematic and frequent “mob-like” behavior. The result is always injury – physical or mental distress or illness and social misery and, most often, expulsion from the workplace” [6, p. 40].

Maureen Duffy and Len Sperry [7] define workplace mobbing this way: “Workplace mobbing is nonsexual harassment of a coworker by a group of members of an organization for the purpose of removing the targeted individual(s) from the organization or at least a particular unit of the organization. Mobbing involves individual, group, and organizational dynamics. It predictably results in the humiliation, devaluation, discrediting, and degradation; loss of professional reputation; and, often, removal of the victim from the organization through termination, extended medical leave, or quitting. The results of this typically protracted traumatizing experience are significant financial, career, health, and psychosocial losses or other negative consequences” [7, p. 52].

The International Labor Organization (ILO) refers to mental terror in the workplace as “abusive, vindictive, cruel, malicious or degrading treatment of an individual or group of employees, involving ganging up or mobbing against a targeted individual who becomes the subject to mental tension. Mobbing involves constant negative attention or criticism, isolation of the person from public contacts, dissemination of false information” [12, p. 2].

It's worth noting that very often the victim of mobbing is the team member who stands out of the crowd. In poorly-managed organizations, exceptional employees with high intelligence, competence, creativity, integrity, accomplishment and dedication are mostly subject to mobbing. In many other mobbing cases victims could also be

underperforming employees, against whom the team gathers up with a hope of pushing them out of the game and force them remove. In organizations where **career advancement is difficult** or in cases where **the leaders are not very much confident about their own capabilities**, the senior managers might view the young talents as threats to their own positions, and might gang up against them.

Although harassment methods and their dynamics vary enormously from case to case, certain parameters can be established to help distinguish different types of mobbing that occur regularly [10].

- Horizontal mobbing is moral harassment at the level of one professional group or one structural unit. Therefore, the subjects of conflict interaction are employees of the structural unit. Moral persecution develops according to one of the schemes: “employee – employee”, “group of employees – employee”.

- Vertical mobbing is moral persecution along the vertical of personnel management. As a rule, the ideological inspirer is the immediate supervisor, the employer.

- Vertical descending mobbing is more frequent, and occurs when a superior initiates mobbing actions against a subordinate. The asymmetrical power relationship between victim and aggressor makes it difficult to defend oneself from harassment, either by communicating with peers or superiors, or by reporting, as this will most likely mean firing the harassed person.

- Strategic mobbing occurs for the benefit of the aggressor. This type of mobbing stands out for being a calculated strategy to eliminate someone from the work environment or wear them out enough to stop them from being an inconvenience.

- Perverse mobbing occurs when the instigators have no special reason to start harassing the victim. The victims of

torture enter into this type of practice of psychological abuse with the sole aim of deriving satisfaction from the tortures they have inflicted and the effect they have on their victims.

- Management mobbing occurs when supervisors agree to harass a worker. It is often an extremely unpleasant experience, due to the strong asymmetry between powers within the work environment that exists between the victim and her aggressors.

- Disciplinary mobbing occurs when the victim's personality or actions do not fit in with the work environment and because of a difference of opinions and way of doing between the victim and his aggressors.

It should be taken into account that mobbing can be conscious (intentional) and unconscious (latent). Conscious mobbing is a purposeful action that has a specific, clearly defined goal – to create such conditions for a person to remove him from his position. In this case, most often we are talking about selfish motives: to take up someone's position, to bring someone from "insiders" to it, to gain favour with the authorities. And contrary, latent mobbing is actions that a person performs without realizing that he is engaged in bullying. It's just that one of his colleagues causes him constant irritation, accumulates and eventually breaks out [3]. The reasons for mobbing as a phenomenon (at the team level) are in the distribution of roles in the team; simple reactions in communication; inherited instinct; age development peculiarities; common culture and morality, etc. [1]. Of course, the reasons of mobbing are also facilitated by shortcomings in the labor organization, staff turnover, change of leadership, the lack of a transparent system of personnel promotion and career prospects.

Conflicts are inevitable when there are no clear job descriptions, no areas of responsibility defined; the responsibilities of professionals are in some cases

duplicated, and in others they are not formally assigned to anyone at all (they are performed either by the most conscious or the most reliable). In this case, employees are increasingly faced with the most destructive question: "Why me?" (I work more; I get less; I do the most disgusting work; more / less I go on business trips). Some are overwhelmed and always unhappy, while others have enough time for gossip and intrigue. "Underperforming" employees are both catalysts for mobbing and potential victims, because "public opinion" regards them as grazers and scroungers.

Thus, mobbing in labor relations can cause a decrease in any enterprise's efficiency. Therefore, owners and management of enterprises and organizations to prevent mobbing should take a number of measures, e.g., to form a healthy organizational culture, to maintain a healthy socio-psychological climate in work collectives by a leader, to develop senior management skills, to create mechanisms for receiving employees' feedback, to clearly define job responsibilities and limits of each employee's responsibility, to ensure a clear and rational labor division between the various structural units, to eliminate the intersection and duplication of tasks, to form a clear system of personnel promotion, to give an opportunity of career growth, to ensure the openness of information flows in the enterprise and create a transparent mechanism for management decisions, to eliminate the possibility of family or intimate ties between management and subordinates, to create intolerance towards gossip and stop any intrigue at work.

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## ЯВИЩЕ «МОБІНГУ» В УКРАЇНСЬКОМУ СУПІЛЬСТВІ: ПРИЧИНИ ТА НАСЛІДКИ

С. Б. Христюк

**Анотація.** Дане дослідження присвячено аналізу сучасної проблематики поняття «мобінгу» в українському суспільстві. Досліджено поняття «мобінг», причини його виникнення, особливості прояву, відмінні характеристики, основні типи та методи боротьби з його негативними наслідками як на рівні керівництва підприємства, так і відносно будь-якої особи. В дослідженні наголошується, що наразі в Україні кожен другий українець є жертвою мобінгу в тій чи іншій формі, і, на жаль, в Україні немає законодавчо закріпленого визначення поняття «мобінг» а, відповідно, механізмів регулювання цього явища. У дослідженні зазначається, що мобінг – це вороже та неетичне спілкування, яке систематично спрямовується однією чи кількома особами переважно до однієї особи, що призводить до приниження, знецінення, дискредитації та деградації; втрати професійної репутації; звільнення потерпілого з організації шляхом припинення виконання функціональних обов'язків, продовження лікарняної відпустки або звільнення. Також було доведено, що проблема мобінгу до кінця не вивчена, і для усунення цього деструктивного явища доцільно використовувати весь арсенал методів управління, запозичувати найкращий зарубіжний досвід, одночасно використовуючи свій управлінський досвід та виходячи з особливості розвитку будь-якої організації.

**Ключові слова:** мобінг, явище, психологічний тиск, фізичний тиск, домагання, жертви мобінгу, приниження людської гідності, дискримінація, психічне насильство, трудові відносини.