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## WORKPLACE MOBBING AND ITS INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYEES

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**Abstract:** *In a diverse and often competitive environment such as the workplace, human relationships become quite complex. The presence of diversity in the workplace brings a variety of individual perspectives, approaches and values that can influence the way employees interact and work together, generating potential conflicts and tensions that can lead to mobbing. Mobbing is a complex and harmful phenomenon that often affects the work environment, having a significant impact on the well-being of employees. Despite the increasing attention paid to promoting a healthy and respectful work environment, mobbing behavior is still present among employees. This study aims to analyze the prevalence of workplace mobbing and evaluate its impact on employees. It focuses on four main objectives: assessing the degree of mobbing, analyzing the role of various factors in its manifestation, examining the link between the potential effects of mobbing on employees, and determining the role of socio-demographic variables in its occurrence in the workplace. The research utilized a quantitative approach, employing data collection through an online questionnaire distributed via social media using the snowball sampling method. The sample targeted employees from various fields, sectors, and hierarchical positions, to ensure a broader representativeness of respondents suitable for the study. Additionally, the questionnaire was developed to assess the dimensions of mobbing, both horizontal and vertical, and to directly analyze employees' experiences and perceptions. The results obtained highlight that the phenomenon of mobbing is present, but to a very small extent in the workplace. Horizontal mobbing, according to the results, is mainly manifested through communication deficiencies, unfair competition, and defective relationships among employees, while vertical mobbing is characterized by abuse of power, superiors' indifference to conflicts, and professional sabotage by superiors. It was found that mobbing is most often determined by factors related to the*



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*authoritarian leadership style of superiors and their perceived low competence. Furthermore, the results also confirmed that the presence of mobbing in the workplace increases employees' stress levels and decreases their motivation. Socio-demographic variables such as gender, education level, field of activity, sector, and tenure at the workplace were not factors influencing the degree of mobbing. Having insights of the workplace mobbing situation may be helpful for organizations, for putting in place anti-mobbing policies and processes that support victims as integral members of the organization. It is particularly crucial that management strategies avoid fostering employee rivalry, but instead have intentions to promote workplaces based on inclusion, collaboration and balance between groups*

**Keywords:** *mobbing, relationships, conflict, workplace, employees*

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## INTRODUCTION

The work team is a social group within which the activities are carried out based on norms and values shared by the group members. Within this group there is the possibility of certain dysfunctions, which can favor the manifestation of destructive behaviors at the level of group cohesion, having the effect of preventing the achievement of its objectives. Destructive behavior has received different names in social research, taking into account the nature, severity and context in which it manifested itself. Among them is mobbing (Cace et al., 2011, p. 22).

Mobbing is a complex phenomenon that often affects the work environment, having a significant impact on the well-being of employees (Popa, 2021; Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020; Gulin, 2019; Ghondea et al., 2010). Mobbing in the workplace represents a type of systematic psychological harassment, carried out by the employer or by a group of colleagues on an employee, with the aim of directing him to leave his job, having no justified reasons in terms of his professionalism to dismiss him (Popa, 2021, pp. 252-253). The employee in question ultimately endures, over time, a series of injustices and humiliations, which will hinder their ability to perform the tasks assigned to them based on their role, eventually leading them to voluntarily leave the workplace. Such humiliations and pressures to which he is subjected will bring him mental and social damage that may even affect his health (Popa, 2021, pp. 252-253).

Nowadays, mobbing is becoming an increasingly frequent phenomenon at work (Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020, p. 21). It manifests both in the form of high-intensity activities and subtle activities, more difficult to observe for those around (Gulin, 2019, p. 14). Unfortunately, research shows that in recent years, cases of mobbing in the professional environment have experienced substantial increase, and that at least one in ten employees experiences this phenomenon (Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020, p. 21).



Although mobbing is very often associated with the workplace, its presence is not limited to this environment, but similar behaviors can also occur in other social contexts, such as in the educational and health systems (Bulut, 2019, p. 2; Paicu & Garbuz, 2018, p. 22).

From a jurisprudential perspective, mobbing is regarded as an unlawful activity, involving subjecting an employee to specific actions that, when isolated, may not be considered illegal, but when combined, they become bothersome and have a persecutory intent, leading to humiliation in the course of their work (Călin, 2019, p. 17).

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of mobbing was introduced in specialized literature in the last quarter of the century, being a relatively new phenomenon in the social sciences (Bulut, 2019, p. 1). There are different definitions of the concept of mobbing (Divincová & Siváková, 2014, pp. 20-21), the term having two meanings: the moderate meaning, which refers to mobbing in the form of a warning (with a reduced intensity, which lasts until the aggrieved person gives in and accepts the values and behavior imposed by the group), and the radical one, which refers to mobbing itself and is found in the form of psychoterror or psychological torture (Paicu & Garbuz, 2018, pp. 18-19).

Leymann (1996, p. 168) says about mobbing that it is a social interaction in which an individual (rarely more) is targeted by one or more persons (rarely exceeding four), approximately daily and over several months, which makes the person occupy a position of near powerlessness and a high risk of relegation.

Sackett and Devore (2001) described mobbing as a component of deviant and counterproductive behavior, referring to intentional, illegitimate acts towards a member who is part of a group. Shallcross (2003) conceptualized mobbing as a passive-aggressive behavior of a group that uses a strategy to sabotage another member (after Andronache et al., 2012, pp. 6-7).

Mobbing is not a strictly linear process, and not all situations follow the same sequential phases. On the other hand, it is recognized when the interaction occurs consistently for at least six months. A conflict cannot be considered mobbing as long as it is an isolated incident or involves two parties of roughly equal powers (Ghondea et al., 2010, p. 119).

Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright (2018) argue that workplace mobbing involves repeated mistreatment by one or more perpetrators, harming the employee's health and manifesting through verbal abuse and offensive behavior that is humiliating, threatening, or intimidating, until the employee is no longer able to perform their duties (after Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020, p. 21).

Victims of mobbing are exceptional employees, intelligent, competent, creative, and very dedicated, even above the level found in organizations (Paicu & Garbuz, 2018, p. 22). It was found that the most important targets are people with noticeably clear principles and confidence in organizational values. Most of the time, the employee is characterized by exemplary professionalism, but also by the fact that he differs slightly from the group's norm, such as a woman in a male-dominated group or an older employee in a young collective (Andronache et al., 2012, pp. 11-12). Victims can also be young people, recent graduates new to the workplace, who are not familiar with the organization and its collective (Bulut, 2019, p. 3). Other studies have shown that people with low self-esteem and prominent levels of anxiety are more at risk of mobbing than others, because bullies see them as easier to attack and influence (Bulut, 2019, pp. 3-4).

Most studies point out that women are at a higher risk of being victims of psychological aggression, especially if the field in which they work is perceived as male. The percentage of female victims is between 54 - 60% of the total number of mobbing cases studied. The percentage of female victims is between 54 - 60% of the total number of mobbing cases studied. According to some



studies carried out in Spain, women are psychologically assaulted in most cases by women, and men are most often assaulted by men (Paicu & Garbuz, 2018, p. 22).

As for the aggressors, studies never address them directly but rather characterize them from the perspective of the victims (Paicu & Garbuz, 2018, p. 22). They generally present an image of a civilized, polite and cooperative person who acts secretly, willing to do whatever it takes to demean and undermine the professional and personal resources of the targets. They will not use physical force but will engage in heinous behavior within the legal norms and policies established by the company (Bulut, 2019, p. 4). According to researchers, there are personality traits or life experiences that predispose people to become bullies. It is considered, according to them, that people characterized by cowardice, neuroticism, with an exaggerated need to have control and power over someone, are more inclined to persecute someone in the form of mobbing (Paicu & Garbuz, 2018, p. 22).

Two types of mobbing can be distinguished, namely vertical mobbing (which describes the relationship between superior and subordinate, either from the top down (when the aggressor occupies a superior position), or from the bottom up (when the authority of the head of the organization is not recognized by the employees, who become aggressors) (Petrescu & Manghiuc, 2020, p. 276), respectively horizontal mobbing (when both the aggressor and the victim are in similar positions at the workplace).

Mobbing in the workplace has negative effects for employees, both in terms of professional performance and health. According to a study on the effects of mobbing on employees, 37% of respondents reduced their involvement with their employer, 28% quit their job in order to avoid mobbing, 22% reduced their performance in the workplace and 12% of them left their job as a direct result of the phenomenon (Divincová & Siváková, 2014, p. 27).

The effects of repeated and intentionally practiced psychological aggression on an employee are manifested in the form of cumulative damage that makes their presence felt over time. These can lead to reduced productivity, damage to health, loss of job, damage to private life, social exclusion, but can also extend to suicide attempts (Zulfıqar & et al., 2020, pp. 32-35). According to the research conducted by Pompili (2007) regarding how mobbing affects the physical health of workers, out of a sample of 120 people, 31.4% had a low risk of suicide, 16.7% had an average risk of suicide, and 3.9% had a high risk of suicide. Essentially, this study demonstrates that the rising number of suicides is linked to greater exposure to mobbing (after Divincová & Siváková, 2014, p. 27).

The presence of mobbing in the professional context compromises work capacity and an employee's ability to achieve performance and build relationships at work. It unbalances self-confidence, the joy of living and the loss of motivation towards work, all of which cause depression to set in overtime. The employee who suffers professionally is no longer able to optimally fulfill his job duties, and the professional effects include reduced productivity, inability to work or concentrate, and difficulties in decision-making, with employees who are victims of mobbing experiencing a performance decrease of up to 80% compared to normal levels (Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020, pp. 25-26). According to Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper (2002), workers subjected to workplace mobbing experience a decrease in performance by an average of 80% compared to usual levels (after Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020, pp. 25-26).

Mobbing is different from bullying, although over time the two terms have been used to some extent interchangeably in academic literature to refer to inappropriate behaviors, these being two phenomena characterized by persistent negative behaviors, having in common frequency, persistence and continuity (Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020, p. 19; Ghondea et al., 2010, p. 117; Andronache et al., 2012, pp. 18-19). However, bullying involves the use of force and power to intimidate or coerce a person and is common in schools, student communities, and military organizations. It can include



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attacks on privacy, ridicule of personal traits, physical violence or verbal aggression (Andronache et al., 2012, pp. 18-19). In contrast, mobbing is a form of subtle harassment at the organizational level, where the victims are often qualified individuals, and the attacks occur in the form of interactions disguised as normal. Unlike bullying, which is often physical and obvious, mobbing takes place silently, through unwarranted criticism and intimidation. Thus, bullying can lead to physical abuse, while mobbing aims at professional and psychological undermining (Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020, p. 19).

## METHODS

In order to carry out this research, we chose a quantitative approach, with the aim of analyzing the phenomenon of mobbing at work and its influence on employees.

The objectives that will guide the current research are:

Ob1. Evaluation of the degree of mobbing at work;

Ob2. Analysis of the factors that influence the manifestation of the mobbing phenomenon within organizations;

Ob3. Determining the link between the possible effects of mobbing on employees and the degree of mobbing perceived by them;

Ob4. Determining the role of socio-demographic variables in the manifestation of the mobbing phenomenon within organizations.

In relation to these objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1. There are statistical differences regarding the degree of mobbing depending on the management style of the superiors;

H2. There is a statistical association between the level of training of superiors perceived by employees and the degree of mobbing at work;

H3. There is a statistical difference between the employees who confirmed the presence of measures to prevent mobbing and those who did not confirm this presence in relation to the degree of mobbing;

H4. There is a statistical association between employee performance and the degree of workplace mobbing;

H5. There is a statistical association between employee productivity and the degree of workplace mobbing;

H6. There is a statistical association between the stress level of employees and the degree of workplace mobbing;

H7. There is a statistical association between employees' workplace motivation and the degree of workplace mobbing;

H8. There are statistical differences between the fields of activity regarding the degree of workplace mobbing;

H9. There are statistical differences between public and private sector employees regarding the degree of workplace mobbing;

H10. There are statistical differences between male and female employees regarding the degree of workplace mobbing;

H11. There are statistical differences regarding the degree of mobbing depending on the age of the employees;

H12. There are statistical differences regarding the degree of mobbing depending on the level of education of the employees;

H13. There are statistical differences regarding the degree of mobbing depending on the age of the employees.



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Concept	Type	Dimensions	Indicators
Workplace mobbing	Horizontal mobbing	Deficiencies in communication between employees	<b>The presence of one or more cases of:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>criticism</li> <li>ridicule</li> <li>interruption</li> <li>threat</li> <li>addressing in an inappropriate tone</li> <li>inappropriate facial-gestural language</li> </ul>
		Poor employee relations	<b>The presence of one or more cases of:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>nickname</li> <li>banter</li> <li>hostile reactions</li> <li>inappropriate jokes</li> <li>undermining personal dignity</li> <li>remembering mistakes</li> <li>devaluation of opinions</li> </ul>
		Social exclusion among employees	<b>The presence of one or more cases of:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>exclusion from the work group</li> <li>exclusion from team activities</li> <li>ignore presence</li> <li>ignoring opinions</li> <li>avoiding interaction</li> <li>exclusion from informal activities</li> </ul>
		Unfair competition between employees	<b>The presence of one or more cases of:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>spreading untrue/false rumors</li> <li>criticizing work in front of superiors</li> <li>disclosure of personal information/ breach of confidentiality</li> <li>undermining activities as a competitive advantage</li> <li>theft of ideas/projects</li> </ul>
	Vertical mobbing	Power abuse	<b>The presence of one or more cases of:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>excessive and inappropriate/absurd tasks</li> <li>workload difficult to manage</li> <li>unfair treatment</li> <li>subjectivity</li> <li>excessive monitoring of activities</li> <li>intimidating behavior</li> </ul>



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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>repeated offensive remarks</li> </ul>
		<b>Disinterest conflict</b> in	<b>The presence of one or more cases of:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>indifference to problems</li> <li>ignoring complaints</li> <li>refusal to provide support</li> <li>refusal to take action</li> <li>failure to promote a collaborative environment</li> </ul>
		<b>Hierarchical exclusion</b>	<b>The presence of one or more cases of:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>exclusion from organizational processes</li> <li>forced isolation in a workspace</li> <li>reduction of access to necessary resources</li> <li>reduction of responsibilities without justification</li> <li>unjustified repeated transfers</li> </ul>
		<b>Professional sabotage</b>	<b>The presence of one or more cases of:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>avoidance of recognition of contributions</li> <li>performance criticism</li> <li>preventing promotion/advancement</li> <li>limiting access to training opportunities</li> </ul>

**Table 1. Dimensions and indicators of workplace mobbing**  
(Source: generated by the authors)

In order to carry out our research, a questionnaire was realised and distributed through social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram). Using the snowball method, between March and April 2024, a number of 134 questionnaires were collected, completed by respondents working in different fields. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 23.

### LIMITS OF FIELD RESEARCH AND DIFFICULTIES

During the research, the difficulties encountered were mainly summarized in: the reluctance of respondents to report negative experiences at work, fearing of possible repercussions, the limited access of people who do not use social networks and the reluctance of some respondents to provide



their personal e-mail address in order to ensure the authenticity of the answers. An important limitation is the use of a small convenience sample, which does not allow generalizations at the level of the entire employed population.

## RESULTS

The data on which this analysis will be based come from a number of 134 respondents, whose socio demographic characteristics can be seen in the table below:

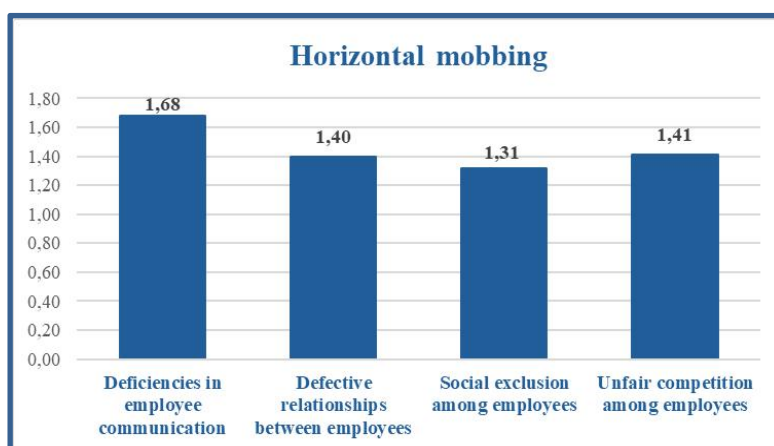
<b>Sex</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 48,5% women</li><li>• 51,5% men</li></ul>
<b>Age</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 42,5% under 25</li><li>• 37,3% between 26-35</li><li>• 9% between 36-45</li><li>• 9,7% between 46-55</li><li>• 7,5% over 56</li></ul>
<b>Education level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1,5% secondary school</li><li>• 23,1% high school</li><li>• 6% post high school</li><li>• 47,8% higher education</li><li>• 21,6% postgraduate studies</li></ul>
<b>Professional category</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 77,6% execution staff</li><li>• 22,4% management and leadership</li></ul>
<b>Sector of activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 74,6% of the private sector</li><li>• 21,6% of the public sector</li><li>• 3,8% NGOs</li></ul>
<b>Field of activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 21,6% IT</li><li>• 4,5% social services</li><li>• 7,5% education</li><li>• 6% constructions</li><li>• 6% health</li><li>• 9,7% commerce</li><li>• 11,8% industry</li><li>• 6% transportation</li><li>• 5,2% HR</li><li>• 21,7% other</li></ul>
<b>Seniority at the current job</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 32,8% less than a year</li><li>• 47% 1-5 years</li><li>• 8,2% 6-10 years</li><li>• 3% 10-15 years</li><li>• 4,5% 15-20 years</li><li>• 4,5% over 20 years</li></ul>

**Table 2. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents**

**Source: generated by the authors**

If in terms of gender distribution, we find a certain balance, despite the convenience sampling that we resorted to in our study, in terms of the age of the respondents it can be observed that the majority (79.8%) are young up to 35 years old, a somewhat explainable situation, given that the distribution of the questionnaire was carried out through social media. We can state that our observations on the mobbing phenomenon therefore reflect, in the majority, the perception and experience of young people. The level of education for most respondents is higher, 69.4% reporting university and postgraduate studies. Regarding the professional category, the majority (77.6%) hold executive positions in the private sector (74.6%). Another observation that can be derived from the analysis of the socio-demographic data is related to the fact that most respondents (79.8%) have a seniority of up to 5 years, therefore we can classify them as beginners, which could influence the experience of the respondents regarding mobbing.

In order to evaluate the degree of mobbing at the workplace, we first resorted to a frequency analysis, which resulted in the fact that within horizontal mobbing, deficiencies in communication between employees are the most frequent, reaching an average of 1.68 (SD=0.674), indicating tensions or conflicts between employees. Poor employee relations have a mean of 1.40 (SD=0.655) and unfair competition has a mean of 1.41 (SD=0.655), both suggesting difficulties in collaboration or rivalries. Social exclusion has the lowest value, being the least present, with an average of 1.31 (SD=0.667).



**Figure 1. Frequency analysis of horizontal mobbing dimensions**

As for vertical mobbing, the abuse of power is most common in the work environment, with an average of 1.81 (SD=0.831). Disinterest in conflicts is another problem, with a mean of 1.69 (SD=0.831). Professional sabotage has a mean of 1.64 (SD=0.976), and hierarchical exclusion is less common, showing a mean of 1.27 (SD=0.628).

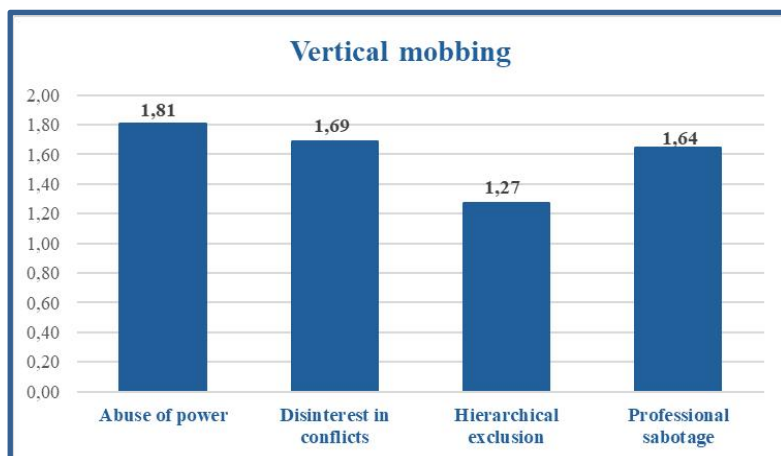


Figure 2. Frequency analysis of vertical mobbing dimensions

To identify the degree of mobbing present at the workplace, it was necessary to construct a distinct variable, named by us "Degree of mobbing", composed of the variables Horizontal Mobbing and Vertical Mobbing. To begin with, the scores for the two dimensions were calculated by summing the items corresponding to each. After the creation of the "Degree of mobbing" variable, a descriptive statistical analysis was performed to evaluate the distribution of scores and general trends. Thus, the obtained mean of the Degree of mobbing was 1.53, with  $SD=0.637$ . The minimum and maximum values recorded were between 1 and 5, indicating that there is moderate variation in employee perceptions of this phenomenon.

Thus, although mobbing is present in organizations, the data reveal that the degree of mobbing is quite low. Mobbing behaviors are not very present, but there are certain aspects that require attention and improvement, especially regarding the abuse of power and communication deficiencies.

In an attempt to analyze the factors that influence the manifestation of mobbing in the organizational context, we focused on three potential factors, mentioned in the specialized literature, namely: the leadership style of the superiors, their level of training and the steps taken at the organizational level to prevent mobbing (Gulin, 2019, pp. 16-17; Petrescu & Manghiuc, 2020, p. 275; Kecap & Mihajlović, 2018, p. 84).

In order to test the first hypothesis of our research, namely that there are statistical differences regarding the degree of mobbing at work depending on the management styles of the superiors, we resorted to an Anova analysis.

Since the hypothesis of homogeneity of variances is not verified, as shown by Levene's test ( $Sig=.000$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), we resorted to a Welch test. Following the Welch test, it was found that there are significant differences in the degree of mobbing at work depending on the management styles of the superiors ( $F(2, 79.367) = 15.418$ ,  $Sig=.000$ ,  $Sig<0.05$ )).

Applying the Howell Games Test, we found that there were significant differences between the groups "The superior exercises a dominant control over the decisions and direction of the organization" and "The superior is open to various ideas and opinions, giving employees great freedom" ( $p=.000$ , where  $p<0.05$ ), as well as between the groups "The superior consults and actively involves employees in the decision-making processes" and "The superior is open to various ideas and opinions, offering employees great freedom" ( $p=.000$ , where  $p<0.05$ ), while the differences between the groups "Superior is open to various ideas and opinions, giving employees great freedom" and "Superior actively consults and involves employees in decision-making processes" were not significant ( $p=.928$ , where  $p>0.05$ ).

In conclusion, the results of the Anova analysis and the Games Howell Post-Hoc Test indicate that the authoritarian leadership style, in which the superior strictly controls the decisions and directions of the organization, is associated with a higher degree of workplace mobbing. A strict leadership style of superiors causes the absence of employee involvement in the decision-making process and thus can create a rigid environment where professional relationships can be strained and generate conflicts. Conversely, a participative or democratic leadership style that promotes openness to ideas gives employees a sense of involvement in the organization, which reduces the presence of the phenomenon and creates a more balanced work climate.

In order to test the second hypothesis of the research, regarding the connection between the level of training of the superiors perceived by the employees and the degree of mobbing at the workplace, we first resorted to a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Its results show that the variables "Degree of mobbing" and "Level of training of the superior" are not normally distributed, because the p-values for both variables are  $p=.000$ , where  $p<0.05$ . In order to analyze the connection between the two variables, we further performed a Spearman correlation for the non-parametric variables. The results reveal a moderate negative correlation between the training level of superiors and the degree of mobbing ( $p=-.571$ ,  $N=134$ ), being statistically significant at the 0.05 level ( $p=.000$ , where  $p<0.05$ ). Thus, we can conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship between the level of training perceived by employees and the degree of workplace mobbing.

Following the statistical tests carried out, we can state that the leadership style of superiors and their level of training are factors that influence the degree of mobbing present at the workplace.

To analyze if there are differences between the employees who confirmed the presence of mobbing prevention measures and those who did not confirm this presence in relation to the degree of mobbing, we resorted to a T-Test on independent samples. The average degree of mobbing for employees who confirmed the presence of these measures is  $M=1.43$  ( $SD=0.470$ ), compared to the average  $M=1.57$  ( $SD=0.693$ ) for those who did not confirm. The Levene's test for checking the equality of variances indicated a value of  $F=2.429$ ,  $p=0.122$ , where  $p>0.05$ , suggesting that the equality of variances can be accepted. The T-test result revealed a value of  $t=1.158$ , with a significance level of  $p=.249$ , where  $p>0.05$ , which means that there are no differences between the two groups of employees.

Therefore, there are no significant differences in the degree of mobbing between the employees who confirmed and those who did not confirm the presence of measures to prevent mobbing, so we can conclude that the degree of mobbing, at least at the level of the sample used by us, is not influenced by the development of these measures in the organization.

As we could learn from studying the specialized literature, mobbing can have a series of negative effects on employees. We will further focus on the analysis of these effects, with special regard to the performance, productivity, motivation and stress level of the employees.

In order to identify the existence of a link between the degree of mobbing and the performance of the employees, we first resorted to a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which shows that the variables are not normally distributed, because the significance threshold values for all variables are  $p=.000$ ,  $p<0.05$ . Given this abnormal distribution of the variables, the Spearman coefficient specific to non-parametric variables was used in the correlation analysis. According to the Spearman correlation analysis, there is no statistically significant relationship between employee performance and the degree of workplace mobbing ( $p=-.099$ ,  $N=134$ ,  $p=0.255$ , where  $p>0.05$ ). Therefore, the performance of employees is not influenced by the presence of mobbing within the organization.

We also resorted to the Spearman correlation to analyze the link between the degree of mobbing and employee productivity. The results indicate the absence of a significant correlation

between these two variables ( $p=-.046$ ,  $N=134$ ,  $p=.599$ , where  $p>0.05$ ). The productivity of the employees is not affected by the manifestations of mobbing at the workplace.

To see if there is a statistical link between the stress level of employees and the degree of workplace mobbing, a Spearman correlation analysis was performed. The result indicates a moderate positive correlation between the two ( $p=.417$ ,  $N=134$ ), being statistically significant at the 0.05 level ( $p=.000$ , where  $p<0.05$ ). We can thus state that workplace mobbing is a stress factor for employees, but being present to a reduced degree does not affect their work performance and productivity.

A Spearman correlation analysis was conducted to assess the existence of a relationship between employees' workplace motivation and the degree of mobbing. The results indicate a moderate negative correlation between the degree of mobbing and the motivation level of employees ( $p=-.422$ ,  $N=134$ ), and this result is statistically significant at the 0.05 level ( $p=.000$ , where  $p<0.05$ ). Although present in a reduced degree at the workplace, mobbing is a factor that negatively affects the motivation of employees.

The last objective of this research endeavor was to investigate if there is a link between the socio-demographic characteristics of the employees and the degree of mobbing experienced by them. Thus, in order to test whether there are significant differences regarding the degree of mobbing depending on the fields of activity, an Anova analysis was carried out. The result showed that there are no significant differences between the fields of activity and the degree of mobbing, the value of the Anova test  $F(11,122)=.581$ ,  $p=.841$ ,  $p>0.05$ . The degree of mobbing therefore does not vary significantly depending on the field of activity.

To test statistical differences between private sector and public sector employees regarding the degree of workplace mobbing, the Independent Samples T-Test was performed. The mean of the responses of the private sector employee group is  $M=1.51$  ( $SD=0.605$ ), and the mean of the responses of the public sector employee group is  $M=1.62$  ( $SD=0.771$ ). Given the significance threshold of Levene's test  $p=.086$ ,  $p>0.05$ , we assume that the variances are equal, so the T-Test value is  $.849$ , at a significance threshold  $p=.397$ , where  $p>0.05$ . We can say that there are no statistically significant differences between the group of employees working in the private sector and the group of employees working in the public sector, the degree of mobbing being viewed similarly by the two groups.

In assessing the differences between men and women regarding the degree of workplace mobbing, we used the independent samples T-test. The mean for the male group was  $1.56$  ( $SD=0.694$ ) and the mean for the female group was  $1.49$  ( $SD=0.581$ ). Levene's test for equality of variances indicated a non-significant result ( $F=.237$ ,  $p=.627$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), which suggests that we assume the equality of variances. The T-test showed a value of  $.672$ , at a significance level of  $p=.502$ ,  $p>0.05$ , which indicates that there are no statistically significant differences between men and women in terms of the degree of workplace mobbing.

To investigate whether there are significant differences in the degree of mobbing according to the age of the employees, an Anova analysis was used. The obtained results indicated that there are no significant differences between the age categories:  $F(4,129)=1.748$ ,  $p=.143$ ,  $p>0.05$ .

The Anova analysis was used to analyze the presence of significant differences between the level of education of employees and the degree of workplace mobbing. Its results indicate the absence of significant differences between education groups and the degree of mobbing:  $F(4,129)=1.548$ ,  $p=.192$ ,  $p>0.05$ .

According to the results of the Anova analysis, there are no significant differences between the seniority of employees and the degree of workplace mobbing:  $F(5,128)=.573$ ,  $p=.720$ ,  $p>0.05$ .

Following the results of these statistical tests, we could not identify a relationship between mobbing and the socio-demographic characteristics of our group of respondents, age, gender, level of



education, or field of activity not statistically significantly influencing the answers obtained regarding the degree of workplace mobbing.

## DISCUSSION

Following the analysis carried out on the mobbing phenomenon at the workplace, it was observed that horizontal mobbing manifests itself mainly through communication deficiencies, unfair competition and faulty relations between employees, while vertical mobbing through abuse of power, disinterest in conflicts and professional sabotage on the part of superiors.

The authoritarian leadership style of superiors increases the degree of mobbing at work, an idea also confirmed by previous studies (Peker, İnandı, & Gılıç, 2018; Guliyeva & Rzayeva, 2019; Ertureten, Cemalcilar, & Aycan, 2013). Yağcı & Uluöz (2018), Erdemir et al. (2020), or Cao et al. (2023) highlighted the link between the adopted leadership style and the occurrence of mobbing in the workplace.

It was observed that there is a connection between the superiors' training level and the degree of mobbing, thus suggesting that a low level of competence on their part would contribute to an increase in the degree of mobbing.

The third hypothesis, related to the presence of measures to prevent mobbing, did not indicate notable variations in mobbing levels between employees who confirmed and those who did not confirm the presence of these measures, so we can conclude that, at least from the perspective of our respondents, the measures would not reduce the phenomenon.

It was also found that there is no connection between the employees' efficiency and the extent of mobbing, as it does not impact their performance at work. Instead, a link was highlighted between the level of stress and the motivation of employees and the degree of mobbing, suggesting that the presence of mobbing can increase the level of stress and can cause a reduction in employee motivation at work. If, following our analysis, no association was found between mobbing and productivity, the study undertaken by Durustkan, Aybar, & Sanli (2019) on a sample of 418 respondents from the academic environment in Istanbul highlighted a negative correlation between mobbing and employee productivity. And Ilieva, Stoilkovska, & Todosovski (2024) concluded that mobbing negatively influences employee productivity and motivation, while Divincová & Siváková (2014) highlighted the negative influence of mobbing on employee performance. The negative influence of mobbing on the motivation level of employees was observed in the study of Hayta & Yinal (2024), who also found a negative influence on employee commitment. The study by Ulaş, Afşaroğlu & Binbay (2018) confirms the link between the presence of mobbing and stress at work.

Regarding the role of socio-demographic variables in the manifestation of the mobbing phenomenon, our analysis did not highlight significant differences between public and private sector employees, no differences were identified between respondents with respect to gender, age, educational background, or seniority at work. Previous studies (Leymann, 1990; Leymann, 1996; Ulaş, Afşaroğlu & Binbay, 2018; Erdemir et al., 2020) highlighted the existence of gender differences, with women being much more exposed to mobbing than male employees. Minárová et al. (2020) instead found that men are more exposed to mobbing than women. Minárová et al. (2020) instead found that men are more exposed to mobbing than women. The fact that age or level of education are not factors that exert influence on the mobbing phenomenon is confirmed by Ulaş, Afşaroğlu & Binbay (2018), but is denied by Minárová et al. (2020), who found that young people and those with secondary education have a higher likelihood of experiencing mobbing compared to older people and those with higher education. Regarding the contrast between public and private sectors, the analysis conducted by Erdemir et al. (2020) on mobbing in the academic environment highlighted the fact that in private universities mobbing was more present than in public higher

education institutions. In the study of Minárová et al. (2020) instead, mobbing was more present in public organizations.

The use of a convenience sample, with small dimensions, could be an explanation for the results obtained by us.

### CONCLUSION

Our research revealed the fact that, although mobbing is present to a reduced extent at the workplace, according to the perception of our respondents, it is still a phenomenon that cannot be neglected. From the answers we received, we could conclude that mobbing most often manifests itself through communication deficiencies, unfair competition and faulty relationships with colleagues in terms of horizontal mobbing, respectively through abuse of power, disinterest in conflicts and professional sabotage in terms of vertical mobbing, the latter being maintained by factors such as authoritarian management style and poor training of superiors, with an impact on the level of stress and motivation of employees. The low level of mobbing perceived by employees influenced their answers in terms of not affecting work performance and productivity. Regarding the respondents' demographic characteristics, the statistical tests did not highlight the existence of a connection with the manifestation or degree of mobbing present, perceived at the workplace. Considering the existence of some studies that refute our results, we consider that carrying out research on an extended and representative sample, possibly using a mixed methodology, would provide a more complex and comprehensive picture of the phenomenon of mobbing in the organizational context.



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