Mobbing and emotional violence in the workplace. A psychotherapist's perspective

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1. Mobbing as we talk about it today
2. Why someone would engage in Mobbing
3. What does a psychotherapist have to say about this
4. Two clinical examples
Definitions

Mobbing or bullying at work refers to the systematic harassment of employees by one or more colleagues or superiors and may constitute a serious problem for both individual employees and organizations\(^1\).

Different authors include different aspects, but Mobbing commonly is associated with, among other things, isolation from the collective and reputational damage and that it is a form of aggression\(^2\).

\(^1\) Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2013
\(^2\) Mobbing and Its Impact on Interpersonal Relationships at the Workplace. Ana Lúcia da Silva João PhD, António Fernando Saldanha Portelada, 2016
How does mobbing influence someone?

- Lowers self esteem
- Worse health outcomes (mental, somatic, psychosomatic)
- Increased burn-out risk
- Increased sick-leave/absenteeism
- Many other negative effects...
Origins of Mobbing from a evolutionary biology standpoint

A simple definition of mobbing is an assemblage of individuals around a potentially dangerous predator.¹

(In regards to animals)

From an evolutionary standpoint:

The person who is being Mobbed is perceived as a threat

Is that person truly a legitimate threat is a valid, but different question (and has to do with our perception)
What I usually hear when people discuss these kinds of issues

- Highlighting ‘new’ ways in which you can be Bullied
- The need to change organizational thinking/culture
- Change values towards becoming more tolerant
- Educate employees to recognize when they are being Mobbed and to file formal complaints
- Zero-tolerance towards Mobbing
- Etc…
Sometimes we are asking people to stop defending themselves

- I already couldn’t:
  - use physical force
  - use ‘offensive’ language (poorly defined)

- And now I can’t even adjust my behavior or put interpersonal pressure? (obviously it’s not that bad)

- So... what am I allowed to do exactly?
N.B.

I do not condone Mobbing!

From a psychotherapist’s standpoint – it’s almost always some form of deficiency in interpersonal skills!

Both:
- For those who engage in Mobbing
- For the person/persons who are Mobbed
An unfortunate consequence of a person’s inability to maintain emotional calmness

- When someone can’t control their emotions - they start to want to control the behavior of others!!!

- That’s when there is a risk to become passively or actively aggressive

- Usually – the aggressor wants someone else to change, not themselves. And often – for some authority to do it for them!
Two main possibilities why someone is Mobbed

- The person lacks some interpersonal skills which makes them objectively unpleasant to others

- A competent, realistic threat to management/superiors
  (Mobbing ‘out of the blue for no reason’)
Clinical example 1
Unpleasant to others
Clinical example 2
Threat to management
Thank you for your attention!
Happy to answer any questions

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