

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

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Content

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 organizations¹
- 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 aggression²

¹Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2013

²Mobbing 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 an evolutionary biology standpoint

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

(In regards to animals)

¹ Dominey, Wallace J. (1983). "Mobbing in Colonially Nesting Fishes, Especially the Bluegill, *Lepomis macrochirus*". *Copeia*. 1983 (4): 1086–1088
NV Carlson, SD Healy, CN Templeton - *Current Biology*, 2018 - cell.com

- 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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