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## ARTÍCULO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

**Temas de actualidad del estudio aplicado del mobbing**  
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En la etapa actual de desarrollo de la sociedad, los fenómenos y procesos sociales que solían considerarse indeseables, negativos e incluso obscenos en fechas tan recientes como el siglo pasado, están cada vez más extendidos. El mobbing, que implica el acoso psicológico de empleados, debe reconocerse sin duda como uno de esos fenómenos. El mobbing ha alcanzado tal magnitud en muchos países del mundo que ya no puede ser ignorado. Mientras tanto, hay que admitir que la sociedad aún no ha desarrollado una visión universal del mobbing como un fenómeno o proceso puramente adverso. En este sentido, los estudios destinados a la evaluación cuantitativa y estadística de los principales parámetros del mobbing, en un momento en que la ciencia aplicada está clara y notablemente retrasada con respecto a las necesidades reales de la sociedad, son de gran interés científico y aplicado. En consecuencia, todavía no existe un sistema de indicadores de mobbing lógicamente justificado, que permita su caracterización integral, así como responder a preguntas complejas sobre la posición y el papel real de dicho fenómeno social. El estudio analiza las características específicas de una evaluación cuantitativa del mobbing, explora los posibles enfoques para la creación de un sistema de indicadores de mobbing y ofrece propuestas para la sistematización de indicadores de mobbing que permitan evaluar no sólo la escala sino también las consecuencias socioeconómicas del mobbing.

**Palabras clave:** Mobbing, Evaluación del mobbing, Sistema de indicadores de mobbing, Acoso psicológico.

**Abstract****Topical issues of the applied study of mobbing**

At the present stage of societal development, the social phenomena and processes that used to be considered undesirable, negative, and even obscene as recently as in the last century are, unfortunately, becoming increasingly widespread. Mobbing, which implies psychological harassment of individual members of the workforce, undoubtedly must be recognized as one of such phenomena. Mobbing has reached such a great scale in many countries of the world that it can no longer be ignored. Meanwhile, it has to be admitted that society has not yet developed a universal view of mobbing as a purely adverse phenomenon or process. In this regard, studies aimed at the quantitative assessment and statistical evaluation of the main parameters of mobbing at a time when applied science is clearly and noticeably lagging behind the actual needs of society are of great scientific and applied interest. As a result, there is still no logically justified system of indicators of mobbing, which would allow its comprehensive characterization, as well as answering complex questions about the actual position and role of such a social phenomenon. The study analyzes the specific features of a quantitative assessment of

mobbing, explores the possible approaches to creating a system of mobbing indicators, and provides proposals for the systematization of mobbing indicators allowing to assess not only the scale but also the socio-economic consequences of mobbing.

**Keywords:** Mobbing, Assessment of mobbing, System of indicators of mobbing, psychological harassment.

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## 1.- Introduction

Practice demonstrates that the organization and conduct of production activity objectively presuppose the formation and development of labor collectives of employees. Said collectives can vary greatly in size but necessarily involve a certain relationship between participants in the production process, which can be both positive and negative.

Regrettably, the life of any labor collective reproduces certain phenomena that are not to the pleasure of its members. For example, generally, workers who do not fit into the orbit of normal industrial relations, for a variety of reasons, have suffered harassment. A young person, a newcomer, a migrant, a representative of another nationality, a person with an unusual hairstyle, etc. very easily becomes an outcast, the object of psychological harassment by other members of the work collective.

This circumstance gave rise to a special concept or term of "mobbing". In English, mobbing means harassment, which is practically regarded as psychological violence against specific members of the workforce.

## 2. Materials and methods

Applied study of mobbing unequivocally involves the clarification of methodological approaches to the quantitative assessment of the phenomenon in question. Electronic encyclopedia of labor law defines personnel mobbing as

"Psychological harassment, mostly group harassment, of an employee by the employer or other employees, which involves constant negative statements and criticism of the employee, their social isolation within the organization, elimination of social contacts from their job activities, spreading knowingly false information about the employee, etc." (Entsiklopediia trudovogo prava, n.d.).

The study of specialized literature shows that while the understanding of the concept of mobbing is more or less uniform or similar in content, its place and role in

the lives of both a specific labor collective and society as a whole is interpreted differently:

- mobbing is a socio-psychological phenomenon that has become widespread in many organizations and labor collectives (Siabaev, 2017);
- mobbing is a psychological result of "soft" corruption in an organization (Kiselev & Ognev, 2018);
- mobbing is a negative phenomenon for any work collective without exception (Zaripova et al., 2016);
- mobbing is a fairway that leads to easily predictable destruction of the labor collective (Novikova & Novikova, 2017);
- mobbing is hazing in civilian life (Zagrafova, 2017);
- mobbing is a specific form of deviant behavior in the labor market (Kovalchuk, 2017);
- mobbing is pronounced and pure "psychological harassment" in an organization (Muzhaeva, 2013);
- mobbing is a distinctive element of social conflict (Solovev, 2007);
- mobbing is a real reason driving an employee to suicide (Tiurina, 2011);
- mobbing is a possible marker of systemic disadvantage in modern society (Koshenova, 2017).

Summarizing the methodological approaches presented above, mobbing is admittedly considered a social phenomenon of a very broad spectrum. Its negative consequences are identified not only in relation to a specific person (the object of psychological harassment), but also to a collective, organization, and even society as a whole. Moreover, the multitude of potential dysfunctional aspects (deviation, harassment, corruption, conflict, destruction, etc.) suggests that mobbing is an extremely complex, multi-layered social phenomenon, all facets of which are not yet accessible for understanding at the attained level of scientific knowledge.

The public danger of mobbing boils down to the fact that it is a double-edged blade of relations in the workplace (Kim, 2012). On the one hand, mobbing is reduced to psychological influence on a specific worker leading to their moral defeat and departure from the organization and, in extreme cases, to physical self-elimination when it comes to suicide. On the other hand, however, the same mobbing also destroys the work collective that allowed a particular employee to be harassed, damaging it on a subconscious level as an organization engaged in self-destruction.

From the historical point of view, the term "mobbing" is believed to have emerged in the early 1980s first being coined by medical scientist and psychologist Dr. H. Leymann, who conducted a special study of psychological harassment of workplace members in Sweden (Ponomareva, 2008). Over the next few decades (which is objectively a rather short chronological period), mobbing has quickly enough developed

into a social phenomenon with several characteristic and interrelated features. These include (Ganshina, 2021):

- targeted joint actions (deliberately focused on one specific person, an undesirable employee);
- the orderliness of actions which are coordinated, complemented, and interconnected;
- pronounced moral nature of actions causing deep psychological harm;
- the place of action is the workplace of the pre-selected victim;
- the end goal is to force the employee to quit their job.

### **3. Results**

The aforementioned specifics of the study of mobbing result in the fact that various publicly available statistical data characterizing various aspects of social and psychological harassment of workers in labor collectives are, unfortunately, limited and fragmentary.

For instance, Russian and foreign specialized literature provides the following quite general and superficial assessments of mobbing:

- in modern Russia, from 5 to 20% of workers become victims of office harassment (Bryntseva, 2010);
- according to a sociological survey conducted in Germany with 4,500 employees of different sectors, almost two-thirds of the workers (61%) were subjected to mobbing in the workplace (in 34% of cases by coworkers and in the remaining cases by supervisors) (Abashkina, 2009).

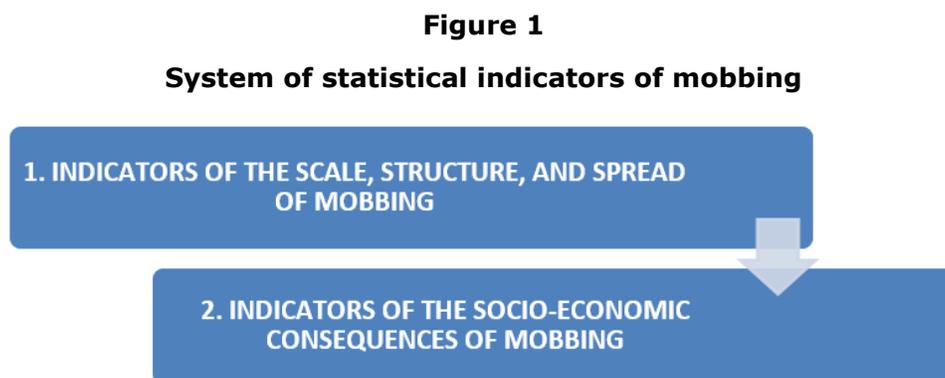
The indicated statistics paint an ambiguous picture. First of all, they give reason to state that socio-psychological harassment of employees in the workplace is international and quite widespread. At the same time, the vagueness of assessments of mobbing is very apparent. The range from 5 to 20% must be admitted to be too large to assert the real scale of mobbing more or less accurately. In addition, even when the upper limit of the interval is used, the Russian reality still appears much more benign compared to Germany.

In this regard, the share of persons who were subjected to socio-psychological harassment at work, including their structure by the direction of the outgoing negative impact is clearly not enough to derive a comprehensive characteristic of mobbing to make sense of the factually present situation. Solving such a problem is only possible by using a system of indicators which, as we believe, has to comprise the following indicators:

- the number of cases of mobbing recorded in the workplace;
- the average number of recorded cases of mobbing per company;
- the average number of recorded cases of mobbing per labor collective;

- the number of recorded cases of mobbing per 1,000 employees;
- the number of workers subjected to mobbing;
- the average number of workers involved in mobbing;
- the share of workers subjected to mobbing;
- the share of workers involved in mobbing;
- distribution of the number of recorded cases of mobbing by different characteristics (form, direction, etc.);
- distribution of workers subjected to mobbing by various characteristics (gender, age, education, nationality, place of residence, etc.);
- distribution of workers involved in mobbing by various characteristics (gender, age, education, nationality, place of residence, etc.);
- the number of employees who left the company due to mobbing;
- the share of employees who left the company due to mobbing;
- the number of employees who took suicidal actions as a result of mobbing;
- the share of employees who took suicidal actions as a result of mobbing, etc.

To summarize the semantic content of the indicators presented above, it is possible to construct the following two-link system (Figure 1).



#### 4. Discussion

The analysis of scientific and methodological literature on the studied problem has shown that when creating a system of indicators of mobbing, it is crucial to account for several aspects, among which is continuous development. Social and psychological harassment in the workplace is not static but constantly develops taking on more and more new guises.

Scientific literature customarily examines the types of mobbing from the point of two bases that have to be quantified (Ivanova, 2017):

- 1) by direction: horizontal and vertical;
- 2) by the form of manifestation: open and latent.

The need for using direction as an indicator for the classification of mobbing is due to the fact that psychological harassment of a worker can follow a variety of scenarios. In horizontal mobbing, the danger comes from colleagues and is directed toward a specific employee or victim. Essentially, production peers at the same level join forces, but not in a positive direction, for example, to improve work results, but in a negative one – to get rid of a member of the workforce like themselves. In vertical mobbing, the picture is completely different. Here the danger comes from above or it is directed from the supervisor to the subordinate. From the point of subordination, such influence is both easier and more difficult to counter: easier in the sense that the victim is confronted by a single adversary, and more difficult because they are the boss and have many levers of influence on the unwanted employee.

The form of manifestation of mobbing is of interest in the sense that socio-psychological harassment of an employee can be carried out in explicit and implicit ways. Open mobbing is considered an extreme form of the social phenomenon in question. However, in this case, the victim really sees the person opposing them. Things get much more complicated when the mobbing is carried out in a hidden form or “behind the scenes”, because, in face-to-face interaction, the employee may perceive their opponents as normal colleagues or even decent friends. This circumstance seriously aggravates the consequences of mobbing, especially when it shifts from the latent to the open form.

It is worth noting separately that, according to foreign and Russian studies, such specific forms of mobbing as institutional and virtual have recently started to surface more and more often (Skavitin, 2004), which also should not be left without proper quantitative characterization. The former type of mobbing is associated with the use of quite legal and official instruments such as various personnel attestation algorithms, qualification exam procedures, etc. to target individual members of the work collective. In this case, the above-mentioned institutions are used for unrighteous reasons to obtain seemingly “objective” arguments for the dismissal of the victim employee due to their non-compliance with the held position.

Virtual mobbing, or Internet mobbing, or cyber mobbing involves the social and psychological harassment of an employee through all available information channels (email, social networks, etc.). Its emergence is associated with the opportunity to use any technological tools provided for society by scientific progress to achieve outdated and not always positive goals.

Moreover, some researchers studying mobbing emphasize the peculiar characteristic of it that socio-psychological harassment of an employee in the workplace can take any possible and not always obvious directions. For example, in seemingly ordinary vertical

mobbing, the direction of the malevolent influence may be different and even directly opposite (Troshina, n.d.):

- from the superior (boss) to the subordinate (employee);
- from the subordinates (employees) to the superior (boss).

The specified circumstance qualitatively changes the configuration of directions for possible applied analysis and the system of indicators of mobbing, because it demands collecting more detailed information accounting for the peculiarities of the object under study (Durakova, 2017).

## 5. Conclusion

In general, it is objectively necessary to recognize that the methodology of the applied study of mobbing has not yet reached a high level of scientific development. Quantitative assessment of the scale and consequences of social and psychological harassment of employees in work collectives is admittedly not paid due attention and therefore, the actual situation in practice seems to be very far from the theoretical ideas about mobbing, which can be found in numerous educational and scientific publications on the management of organizations. The correction of the achieved status quo is most likely possible only based on a purposeful and deeply conscious development of mobbing statistics as a special direction of modern statistics.

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