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Articles

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Mobbing in the Institutional Work Environment: The Example of Polish Prosecutors' Offices

Mobbing w instytucjonalnym środowisku pracy. Przykład polskich prokuratur

ABSTRACT

The survey is part of an identified research gap, which is the issue of mobbing behavior in the environment of common organizational units of the Polish prosecutor's office. Data was collected by asking 1,891 people (which constituted 12.6% of all employees) in an anonymous survey, both prosecutors and assessors, as well as administrative staff, at all levels of the Polish prosecutor's office. This is the first study of its kind in Poland and one of the few in general that addresses the institutional legal community. The findings confirm the fact that incidents of harassment at work are more frequent in organizations where duties are routine. The phenomenon of mobbing in the Polish prosecutor's office is present and is not only of a marginal, incidental nature. Over a quarter of interviewees experienced at work behavior that falls under the statutory definition of mobbing. As expected, the predominant type of professional relationship in which mobbing occurs is a subordinate professional relationship (73% of cases), although in as many as 12% of cases mobbing occurred in equivalent relationships.

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The results also show the disturbing fact that this type of behavior is not reported (as many as 68% of the mobbed); the main reason being the lack of belief in the effectiveness of such actions and the lack of faith that formal disclosure will change anything. In the light of the facts learned, ways to overcome the identified negative phenomena are given as recommendations.

Keywords: mobbing; workplace; state institutions; prosecutors' office in Poland

INTRODUCTION

The concept of building a new prosecutor's office as an institution upholding the rule of law, respecting the constitutional rights and freedoms of the individual, effective in the implementation of its statutory tasks and competencies, and serving the citizens of the Republic of Poland cannot overlook such an important issue as the internal organization of work. The practice of recent years has shown that in the prosecutor's office, the solutions provided for in the Law on the Public Prosecutor's Office[1] have not infrequently been used in such a manner and in such cases that they have become a tool of blatant discrimination and violent behavior, in particular towards employees who have insisted that their rights be respected, both in terms of the dignified performance of their duties by prosecutors with a statutory status of independence, and the working and pay conditions of clerical and other staff employed in the prosecutor's office structures.

From the pilot observations carried out, it was indisputable that the prosecutor's office, as a workplace, is a space in which, through the number of people working, the specific nature and subject matter of the activity, and the organizational hierarchy and subordination, conditions conducive to the occurrence of various forms of violence are, as it were, automatically created. At the same time, this was accompanied by the illusion that in the prosecutor's office the phenomenon of mobbing, discrimination, and harassment in the prosecutor's office does not actually exist or is only traceable. In this context, the Team for Counteracting Mobbing, Discriminatory Practices and Harassment was established by Order of the State Prosecutor no. 41/24 of 15 April 2024. The present work contains the results of the Team's research on the subject in question, with particular emphasis on the phenomenon of mobbing.

Thus, the article aims to present the main conclusions of the authors' empirical research conducted in the Polish prosecutor's office on mobbing and discrimination, to identify the weaknesses of the existing anti-mobbing and anti-discrimination solutions, and to provide legislative and organizational recommendations.

[1] Act of 28 January 2016 – Law on the Public Prosecutor's Office (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2023, item 1360, as amended).

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SYMPTOMS OF MOBBING IN THE WORKPLACE

Neither the phenomenon of mobbing nor the ingrained and common term "mobbing" in Polish nomenclature (and language) are clearly defined or unambiguously understood in the international literature. Invoking the English-language etymology, D. Bjelić Gaćeša points out that "various terms appear in the literature to refer to mobbing-specific behavior [and] the term 'mobbing' is thus used in Swedish, German and Italian literature, while in English-speaking countries the term 'bullying' is used".[2] At the same time, authors coming from different European countries use many other terms: "psychological terror", "aggression", "victimization", "harassment".[3]

Although the first research into the phenomenon and thus the first definitions of mobbing date back to the 1980s,[4] the essence of the phenomenon is nowadays accurately captured by Swedish researcher H. Leymann's continuously updated description on his official website. The modern definition follows a concept developed back in the early 1980s.[5] According to Leymann, "Psychological terror or mobbing in working life involves hostile and unethical communication which is directed in a systematic manner by one or more individuals, mainly toward one individual, who, due to mobbing, is pushed into a helpless and defenseless position and held there by means of continuing mobbing activities. These actions occur on a very frequent basis (statistical definition: at least once a week) and over a long period of time (statistical definition: at least six months' duration). Because of the high frequency and long duration of hostile behavior, this maltreatment results in considerable mental, psychosomatic and social misery".[6] In the work of M. Omari and M. Paull, mobbing (bullying), a long extant, though newly recognized, workplace issue, involves a wide variety of negative, inappropriate and unprofessional behaviors.[7] In this context, it is natural that definitions of workplace mobbing will be many and will vary, with some

[2] D. Bjelić Gaćeša, *Mobbing in the Workplace among Respondents – Teachers Employed in Secondary Schools of the City of Pozega, Pozesko-Slavonska County, Republic of Croatia*, "Pravni vjesnik" 2022, vol. 38(3–4), p. 110.

[3] See H. Leymann, *Mobbing and Psychological Terror at Workplaces*, "Violence and Victims" 1990, vol. 5(2); K. Björkqvist, K. Österman, M. Hjelt-Bäck, *Aggression Among University Employees*, "Aggressive Behavior" 1994, vol. 20(3); S. Einarsen, *The Nature and Causes of Bullying at Work*, "International Journal of Manpower" 1999, vol. 20(1–2); S. Einarsen, B.I. Raknes, *Harassment in the Workplace and the Victimization of Men*, "Violence and Victims" 1997, vol. 12(3).

[4] D. Bjelić Gaćeša, *op. cit*.

[5] H. Leymann, U. Tallgren, *Investigation into the Frequency of Adult Mobbing in SSAB, a Swedish Steel Company Using the LIPT Questionnaire*, "Arbete, Människa, Miljö" 1989, no. 1.

[6] H. Leymann, *The Definition of Mobbing at Workplaces*, https://www.leymann.se/English/12100E.HTM (access: 26.11.2025).

[7] M. Omari, M. Paull, *'Shut Up and Bill': Workplace Bullying Challenges for the Legal Profession*, "International Journal of the Legal Profession" 2013, vol. 20(2).

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focusing on the behaviors displayed and others on the detriment to victims.[8] However, it should be underlined that there is growing acceptance of the notion that classifying certain behaviors as mobbing is profoundly subjective and requires a specific context.[9] It is also assumed that bullying is a self-supporting process functioning on the same principles as a vicious circle, in which the behavior of a perpetrator generates specific reactions of the victim, and these, in turn, determine the next moves of the perpetrator.[10]

Therefore, considering variety of approach to this phenomenon and taking into account different angles in which mobbing can be perceived, several of its essential elements could be highlighted:[11] 1) multiple repetition of the act of abuse; 2) the existence of abuse over a long period; 3) the psychological character of abuse; 4) extremely negative reflection on the abused person (victim of mobbing).

POLISH LEGAL REGULATIONS

On 1 January 2004, an amendment to the Labor Code[12] came into force, which defined and clarified the concept of mobbing. The statutory definition contains the following five conditions for it: 1) the occurrence of an action or behavior concerning an employee or directed against an employee; 2) the persistence of such action or behavior; 3) the duration of such action or behavior; 4) the action or behavior taking the form of harassment or intimidation; 5) the occurrence of an effect in the form of a lowered assessment of professional suitability or the purpose or effect of humiliating or ridiculing an employee, isolating an employee or eliminating an employee from the group of employees.[13]

The introduction of a definition of mobbing into the Polish Labor Code was therefore intended to strengthen the protection of the employee so that they do not

[8] See R.L. Cowan, *It's Complicated: Defining Workplace Bullying from the Human Resource Professional's Perspective*, "Management Communication Quarterly" 2012, vol. 26(3); P. Lutgen-Sandvik, S.J. Tracy, *Answering Five Key Questions about Workplace Bullying: How Communication Scholarship Provides Thought Leadership for Transforming Abuse at Work*, "Management Communication Quarterly" 2012, vol. 26(1).

[9] M. Omari, M. Paull, *op. cit.*; A.-K. Samnani, *Embracing New Directions in Workplace Bullying Research: A Paradigmatic Approach*, "Journal of Management Inquiry" 2013, vol. 22(1).

[10] D. Salin, *Ways of Explaining Workplace Bullying: A Review of Enabling, Motivating, and Precipitating Structures and Processes in the Work Environment*, "Human Relations" 2003, vol. 56(10).

[11] D. Bjelić Gaćeša, *op. cit*.

[12] Act of 14 November 2003 amending the Act – Labor Code and certain other acts (Journal of Laws 2003, no. 213, item 2081).

[13] K. Kędziora, K. Śmiszek, *Dyskryminacja i mobbing w zatrudnieniu*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 185–186.

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suffer a diminution of their dignity through their work, but also to ensure that they are comfortable with the work.[14] However, this does not mean that the phenomenon of psychological harassment in the workplace, aimed at removing a person from the work collective, did not previously exist, and that the victim of such harassment was – before the category of mobbing was singled out and subjected to special regulation – in principle deprived of any legal protection. Indeed, one has to share the view that, prior to the amendments to the Labor Code, the prohibition of mobbing in the workplace resulted for the employer, i.a., from the already cited obligation to respect dignity and other personal goods and to ensure safe and hygienic working conditions for employees.[15]

At the same time, in the light of the present work, in which the results of the empirical research will be presented, it has become necessary to adopt a definition of mobbing that will be presented to the interviewees as a reference point and will be fully understandable to them. Thus, it was assumed, in accordance with Article 943 of the Labor Code,[16] workplace mobbing means actions or behavior concerning an employee or directed against an employee, consisting of persistent and prolonged harassment or intimidation of an employee resulting in the employee's appraisal of their professional suitability being lowered, causing or intended to cause humiliation, ridicule, isolation or elimination from their team of co-workers (statutory definition).

THE MULTI-DIMENSION OF MOBBING RESEARCH

Mobbing behaviors are not uniform across industries and workplaces. Standards and expectations in the health sector, e.g., are different to those in mining. Within each sector, there are also different norms in various settings.[17] The evidence shows higher reported levels of workplace mobbing amongst white-collar workers and those in service industries with direct client contact.[18] This has been attributed to the pressures of balancing organizational goals and objectives with client demands. Large[19] and hierarchical[20] organizations, such as those found in the health and ed-

[14] M. Pawłowski, M. Kułakowska, Z. Piątkowski, *Mobbing jako patologia zarządzania współczesnymi organizacjami*, "Postępy Techniki Przetwórstwa Spożywczego" 2019, no. 2.

[15] A. Grządkowski, *Mobbing a znęcanie się*, "Prokuratura i Prawo" 2011, no. 112.

[16] Act of 26 June 1974 – Labor Code (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2023, item 1465, as amended).

[17] M. Omari, M. Paull, *op. cit*.

[18] M. Angeles Carnero, B. Martínez, R. Sánchez-Mangas, *Mobbing and Its Determinants: The Case of Spain*, "Applied Economics, Taylor & Francis Journals" 2010, vol. 42(29).

[19] S. Einarsen, *Harassment and Bullying at Work: A Review of the Scandinavian Approach*, "Aggression and Violent Behavior" 2000, vol. 5(4).

[20] P.M. Glendinning, *Workplace Bullying: Curing the Cancer of the American Workplace*, "Public Personnel Management" 2001, vol. 30(3).

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ucation sectors and public administration, have high reported rates of workplace bullying. At the same time, M. Drabek and D. Merecz conclude that the pattern of relationships between individual characteristics and bullying is rooted in the wider cultural context, the specificity of the company, its organizational culture, as well as its situation, and therefore it is difficult to talk about irrefutable individual correlates of bullying at work.[21]

Since, to date, there is a lack of any major research in the literature on the subject of mobbing inside Polish judicial institutions or legal professions, in this context it is worthwhile to present the results of research first relating to the legal environment (outside Poland), and then to present the results of research conducted in different professional groups and functional arrangements in Poland.

M. Omari and M. Paull report the findings of an Australian study – the first of its kind, which explored dignity and respect and workplace bullying in the legal profession.[22] The study outlines the nature of the profession and the environment in which practitioners experience workplace bullying. The types of behaviors labelled by members of the legal profession as bullying, and their perceptions of its causes and consequences, are examined. Results indicate that many of the issues arise due to negative workplace cultures brought about and perpetuated by work practices and the leadership of the firm. Often, the prevailing culture of intense competition and a win-at-all-costs mentality has negative repercussions for the security and standing of individuals. Those with passion and power use work practices such as billable hours to push others to perform at extraordinary levels, in turn adversely affecting the well-being, quality of work life, and tenure in the organization or profession. They state that a more civil workplace is likely to reduce victim vulnerability, because individuals who believe that they are being targeted feel that they are unable to complain and must "shut up and bill" for fear of losing their jobs, and not being re-employed in a closed circuit legal community. It has been argued that a key to the amelioration of bullying is the reduction of the power imbalance between bully and target and a move away from the culture of competition.[23]

In Polish literature, the issue of mobbing is currently taken up, although, as mentioned, to the best of our knowledge, there is a lack of in-depth research concerning legal environments. On the other hand, there are some review works referring to the formal and legal essence of the phenomenon in question, as well as empirical studies. An article combining both approaches is the study by M. Gamian-Wilk and

[21] M. Drabek, D. Merecz, *Job Stress, Occupational Position and Gender as Factors Differentiating Workplace Bullying Experience*, "Medycyna Pracy / Workers' Health and Safety" 2013, vol. 64(3).

[22] M. Omari, M. Paull, *op. cit*.

[23] D. Salin, *op. cit*.

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L. Grzesiuk.[24] The authors not only point out the characteristics of the phenomenon itself, but also give the typical characteristics of victims and perpetrators, in order to eventually present enumeratively the roles that different groups of employees play in the mobbing process. As a result, the most important conclusions stemming from deliberations that have been going on for more than 30 years on the criteria defining the phenomenon of mobbing in the workplace are presented.

Mobbing behavior may be perceived and assessed differently depending on gender. The results indicate that gender differences are most prominent in terms of self-labelling as bullied, with men less likely than women to self-label and men reporting stronger relationships between self-labelled bullying and mental health.[25] From the angle of women-victims, research on mobbing in the Polish state administration was embedded. It turns out that in supervisor-employee relations, one in four female respondents was a victim of various behaviors aimed at her professional position, and one in ten experienced actions aimed at her image or social relations. On the other hand, in employee-co-worker relations, one in five respondents was subjected to teasing remarks and jokes from other co-workers, disseminated in the work environment, important information was withheld from her, materials were taken away from her to hinder the use of needed resources and to show her indolence.[26] From the perspective of young people just entering the labor market, on the other hand, mobbing as a phenomenon is clearly identified, as many as 44% of respondents have noticed signs of discrimination in their workplace. The most common are omission of the employee in decision-making processes or disregarding the employee's ideas and suggestions.[27]

The review of the literature makes it possible to conclude that while there is a certain cognitive consensus on issues relating to the essence of the phenomenon of mobbing and discrimination, which is probably due to the large number of published studies, the empirical layer still lacks specific analyses referring to narrowly defined groups of employees. From this perspective, this examination fits into the identified research gap, which is the issue of mobbing behavior in the Polish prosecutor's office.

[24] M. Gamian-Wilk, L. Grzesiuk, *Mobbing w miejscu pracy. Przegląd wyników badań związanych z przejawami mobbingu, genezą i konsekwencjami*, "Psychologia Społeczna" 2016, vol. 11(3).

[25] M. Rosander, D. Salin, L. Viita, S. Blomberg, *Gender Matters: Workplace Bullying, Gender, and Mental Health*, "Frontiers in Psychology" 2020, vol. 11.

[26] A. Klim-Klimaszewska, K. Nowosad, *Mobbing in the Working Environment of Women Functioning in the State Administration versus the Organizational Culture*, "Resocjalizacja Polska / Polish Journal of Social Rehabilitation" 2023, no. 25.

[27] S. Jarosz, K. Gozdecki, M. Grosse, S. Kopta, *Mobbing wśród osób wchodzących na rynek pracy*, "Zarządzanie i Jakość / Management & Quality" 2021, vol. 3(2).

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RESEARCH AND RESULTS

The conducted study was a consequence of the provision of para. 5 of the Order of the National Prosecutor no. 41/24 of 15 April 2024 on the establishment of a Team for Counteracting Mobbing, Discriminatory Practices and Harassment in the National Prosecutor's Office. An anonymous questionnaire was used as the research tool, distributed to all employees of the common organizational units of the public prosecutor's office at all levels by official mail in the first instance on 28 June 2024; and then, due to an unsatisfactory response, again on 9 August 2024 via electronic workflow in the PROKSYS system. The closing date for submission of the surveys was 31 August 2024.

The survey consisted of 56 questions (including 5 concerning the profile of respondents), of which 47 were closed-ended, and 9 were open-ended, descriptive. The scope directly related to the phenomenon of mobbing was represented in 19 of them. The time period covered by the study was outlined from 1 January 2016 to 1 January 2024.

As of the date of sending the survey, the prosecutor's office employed a total of 15,003 people, including a total of 6,329 prosecutors and assessors and a total of 8,674 clerks, assistants and other employees. The survey was completed by a total of 1,891 people out of 15,003 employees. The descriptive statistics of respondents by type of position and level of the prosecutor's office are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of respondents

Level	Prosecutors, assessors		Clerks, assistants, other employees		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
National	9	1.16	61	5.48	70	3.70
Provincial	49	6.30	121	10.86	170	8.99
Regional	209	26.90	437	39.23	646	34.16
District	510	65.64	495	44.43	1,005	53.15
Total	**777**	100.00	**1,114**	100.00	**1,891**	100.00
Percentage	41.09		58.91		100.00	

Source: own elaboration.

In the case of prosecutors and assessors taken together, the proportions of respondents at each prosecutor's office level to the total respondents correspond to the actual employment structure. Among administrative staff, on the other hand, this is not the case – only at the provincial level the proportions of respondents correspond to the actual fraction of employees, while in the case of national and regional prosecutor's offices the proportion of respondents was higher than the proportion of actual employees, and in the district prosecutor's office correspondingly lower. The results of the fraction consistency tests carried out are included in Table 2.

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Table 2. *Z*-statistics and *p*-values for the studied fractions

Level	Prosecutors, assessors		Clerks, assistants, other employees	
	Z	*p*-value	*Z*	*p*-value
National	0.8427	0.4009	–3.6769	0.0002
Provincial	1.1022	0.2713	0.2864	0.7718
Regional	–0.8220	0.4122	–3.6119	0.0003
District	–0.0627	0.9522	4.6139	<0.00001
Total	$Z = \pm 0.9094$; $p = 0.3628$			

Source: own elaboration.

Despite the fact that the survey sample was undoubtedly very large (12.6% of the total population), it was not fully representative. With an abundance of caution, it can be assumed that the questionnaire was primarily completed by people who, for various reasons, identify the seriousness of the phenomenon under study. At the same time, the researchers also heard in private conversations, through e-mails and telephone conversations, that many employees of the public prosecutor's office did not fill in the questionnaire due to fear of its real anonymity and the professional consequences in the case of describing unfavorable phenomena occurring in the workplace.

Out of a total of 1,891 respondents, as many as 551 answered in the affirmative to the question of whether, during the period under study, they had been subjected to behavior by others involving persistent and prolonged harassment and intimidation. At the same time, actions specific to a mobbing situation require three criteria to be met: duration, repetition, and negative intent. Table 3, therefore, presents information on the length of time mobbing activities took place. However, in order to identify – according to the code approach – manifestations of mobbing understood as repetitive actions and to separate them from one-off (incidental) situations, an appropriate additional option was introduced in the survey (64 indications).

Table 3. Declared duration of mobbing behavior

Period	Number of indications	Percentage of respondents ($n = 1891$)
Up to 3 months	62	3.28
3–6 months	48	2.54
6–12 months	102	5.39
1–3 years	139	7.35
3–5 years	63	3.33
Over 5 years	73	3.86
Total	**487**	**25.75**
Incidentally	64	3.38

Source: own elaboration.

The analysis of the duration of mobbing behaviors indicates that mobbing is a long-term phenomenon in organizational units of prosecutors' offices at various levels. What should be particularly noted in the context studied is that mobbing does not cease after a relatively short period of time (due to the employer's reaction,

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the intervention of trade unions, etc.), but lasts for up to several years. Those who declared that the mobbing had lasted for more than a year accounted for more than 56% of all those who declared experiencing mobbing.

The definition of mobbing does not limit mobbing behavior to the relationship of professional subordination in terms of supervisor-employee. Thus, in practice, situations are also possible in which the mobber is a person in an equal or even subordinate position. Detailed data for the study of common organizational units of the prosecutor's office are included in Table 4.

Table 4. Mobbing due to the type of working relationship between the victim and the mobber

Type of working relationship between the mobber and the victim	Number of indications	Percentage (n = 738)
Supervisor	265	35.91
Directly supervisor	277	37.53
Equivalent position	89	12.06
Subordinate position	18	2.44
Other type of professional relationship	82	11.11
Visitor (external person)	7	0.95
Total	738	100.00

Source: own elaboration.

It should be noted that out of 1,891 respondents, only 738 people (39%) indicated (marked in the survey) the type of their work relationship with the mobber. The clear dominance of the vertical relationship, i.e. directly supervisor-victim (37.5% of indications) and supervisor-victim (36%), is noticeable. Only 12% indicated mobbing in horizontal (equal) relations. At the same time, it is important to note the matrix conditions typical of the prosecutor's office, i.e. those in which, in addition to functional subordination, there is an implicit task subordination. An example of this type of relationship is the relationship between clerks and ordinary (rank-and-file) prosecutors, as the former formally report to the heads of secretariats or heads of the unit (organizational unit) concerned, while in connection with the prosecution activities they carry out the relevant clerical and administrative support of the proceedings, with the result that they de facto carry out the instructions of rank-and--file prosecutors. Mobbing in this type of relationship was indicated in 11%.

As indicated in the literature, the purpose of mobbing is clear – to ridicule and humiliate the victim, and in the long run, to eliminate him or her from the group of co-workers.[28] So what may seem like a harmless joke or be unnoticeable to outsiders, when behavior is escalated (ridiculing, isolating, treating someone as if they don't exist, constantly transferring to new tasks, not listening to the victim, constantly interrupting in mid-sentence) can actually be an effective tool of psycho-

[28] D. Rode, *Mobbing – zjawisko negatywności wpływu społecznego*, [in:] *Wpływ społeczny. Badania i praktyka*, ed. Z. Ratajczak, Warszawa 2000.

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logical pressure. This is confirmed by the responses to the open-ended questions in the survey, in which the most common examples of mobbing activities included:

- dividing staff into better and worse;
- ridicule, mockery, humiliation, public depreciation;
- spreading rumors;
- malicious behavior, malicious instructions;
- undermining competence;
- isolation, ostracism;
- supporting the reporting of other employees;
- belittling of work done;
- rude comments about a subordinate;
- shouting, passive aggression;
- uttering vulgar and insulting words about an employee;
- uttering threats to destroy the victim of mobbing, intimidation;
- spreading lies and putting people down;
- commenting on appearance, pointing out obesity, excluding and labelling people.

From the point of view of mobbed people, the negative effects of mobbing most often concern psychosomatic symptoms. These are primarily:

- chronic, severe, prolonged stress;
- fear of coming to work, anxiety attacks, panic attacks, unwillingness to work;
- lowered mood, depression, tearfulness, apathy, suicidal thoughts;
- sleep disturbances, insomnia;
- neurosis, irritability;
- somatic symptoms: headaches, stomach aches, vomiting, lack of appetite, cardiovascular problems, blood pressure spikes, shortness of breath, tachycardia, impaired concentration, weight loss, autoimmune diseases;
- chronic fatigue;
- professional burnout;
- reduced self-esteem;
- post-traumatic stress disorder;
- pharmacological treatment, health leave;
- diagnosed adaptive-anxiety disorder.

These findings are in line with research indicating that victims of mobbing are often characterized by low self-esteem, increased anxiety, and sometimes suffer from depression. It is emphasized, however, that in the case of mobbing, there is no clear victim syndrome and that, under favorable conditions, the victim can become the persecutor and vice versa.[29]

[29] See H. Walter, *Mobbing: Kleinkrieg am Arbeitsplatz. Konflikte erkennen, offenlegen und lösen*, Frankfurt am Main–New York 1993; C. Knorz, D. Zapf, *Mobbing – eine extreme Form sozialer Stressoren am Arbeitsplatz*, "Zeitschrift für Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie" 1996, vol. 40(1).

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Of those experiencing persistent, short- or long-term harassment or bullying behavior in the workplace, 66% of people did not report it anywhere, 28% reported the behavior but only through a conversation, while only 6% made a formal report in accordance with their specific unit's anti-mobbing procedure.

The most common reasons for not reporting mobbing were:

- lack of belief in the effectiveness of such a report and belief that a report would change anything (37% of indications);
- fear of the employer's reaction (25%);
- fear of being stigmatized in the work environment (16%);
- negative experience of other employees whose situation did not change after reporting (13%);
- lack of anti-mobbing procedures (5%);
- ignorance or lack of adequate procedures in the unit (4%).

At the same time, it should be added that only 14% (27 people) of those reporting mobbing felt that the employer's final response was sufficient, satisfactory and solved the problem, such as: "I reported the mobbing to the trade unions, who responded to the situation and I have temporary peace of mind".

The described attitude towards the phenomenon may indicate an attempt by the employee to deal with the problem himself, but also a reluctance or escape from further traumatization resulting from investigations. This clearly indicates that mobbing as a phenomenon is similar in its impact and socio-psychological effects to the phenomenon of abuse in the context of domestic violence: victims remaining in a temporary relationship of dependence, where the victims, often finding themselves in a situation of helplessness, prefer to wait out the perpetrator's aggression and take actions aimed at avoiding the so-called trigger situations (quietly agreeing to mobbing) rather than seeking help from external institutions. This creates a sense of hurt, loneliness, abandonment and lack of support in such an important sphere of everyone's life as work. It also leads to the destruction of social environments, interpersonal relationships and lowers the morale of the whole establishment.[30]

It should be added that, of those who declared that they had witnessed behavior involving persistent and prolonged harassment or intimidation of another person in the workplace (n = 477), only 187 people reacted, either by directly drawing attention to the harasser (82 people), or by informing a superior (89), or by filing an official report (16). Of those respondents who did not react (n = 290), the vast majority of 88% (254) did not do so due to fear of retaliation.

It is also worth noting that the study shows that the phenomenon of mobbing is often confused with other pathological behavior in the workplace, such as a single act of psychological violence in the form of yelling, offensive gestures, lack of professionalism or personal culture of a co-worker, autocratic or liberal management

[30] A. Grządkowski, *op. cit*.

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style, interpersonal conflicts, hierarchy, feeling of discomfort in the workplace (subjective belief that the employee deserves a more creative and better paid job), stress, timeliness of tasks, violations of health and safety rules.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions of the survey conducted in common organizational units of prosecutor's offices in Poland confirm the fact that cases of harassment at work are more frequent in enterprises (organizations) where duties are of a routine nature. This, in turn, is characteristic of state offices. Therefore, civil servants rank first among victims of psychological harassment.[31]

The information contained in the questionnaires shows that the phenomenon of mobbing in the prosecutor's office as a workplace does occur and is not only of a marginal, incidental nature. It should be considered as worrying that more than a quarter of the respondents have experienced at work the behavior of others in the form of persistent and prolonged harassment and intimidation. It should be emphasized that this phenomenon has a negative impact on job satisfaction and professional effectiveness. Mobbing as psychological terror in the workplace, characterized by hostile, unethical communication, directed systematically by one or a number of persons against an individual, is a form of violence, psychological aggression resulting – as indicated by the respondents – in somatic complaints, psychological problems, professional burnout, depression, elimination from professional life and, in extreme cases, suicide attempts.

It is also worth noting that in the prosecutor's office, an additional environmental factor influencing the appearance of phenomena such as bullying or discrimination is stress, haste, timeliness of work, and excess of duties.

It is also significant that the phenomenon of mobbing not only entails serious consequences for the physical and mental health of its victims, but also negative consequences for the workplace itself, which is the prosecutor's office. Decreased efficiency, employee burnout, employee mistakes, long-term dismissal, ultimately leaving the profession, and the associated staff turnover disrupt continuity, linearity and productivity, as well as having a demotivating effect on the entire team.

In order to prevent the causes of workplace violence, it is first necessary to recognize the contributing factors. And these are:

- individual factors: age, gender, education, marital status, personality traits, behavioral differences, as well as the employee's specific place and position in the workplace;

[31] B. Hołyst, *Patologia w miejscu pracy. Mobbing i molestowanie seksualne*, "Prokuratura i Prawo" 2004, no. 1.

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- organizational factors: inadequate management, mismanagement, poor work organization, change, organizational culture, unfriendly climate, stressful working environment;
- social factors: crime rates, educational decline, the public sector, economic change and rapid social change.

The above-mentioned factors are not unfamiliar to an institution such as the prosecutor's office, so the creation of a friendly workplace with clear, legible and well-known rules for employees is a sine qua non condition for long-term organizational changes aimed at eliminating undesirable behavior. First and foremost, these should be equal remuneration, equal division of official duties, clear and legible promotion criteria, competitions for managerial positions and tenure of office.

Mobbing behavior is fostered by conflicts of interest, beliefs and ambitions. In order to eliminate mobbing, it is therefore necessary to implement communication based on good listening, recognize conflict as one of the problems to be solved by generating alternative solutions, then choosing the best one, putting it into action and finally checking the results.

Thus, overcoming negative phenomena in the common organizational units of the public prosecutor's office, such as, i.a., mobbing, should be done through the following means:

- appropriate personnel management and recruitment policy, to a large extent aimed at emphasizing the so-called soft competencies in candidates, such as the ability to work in a team, build relations, the ability to solve conflicts and problems, the ability to make decisions, the ability to cope with stress, free communication, assertiveness, empathy;
- organizing regular training, both for managers and rank-and-file employees, aimed at identifying instruments that enable counteracting and eliminating undesirable behavior;
- consideration of expanding the training system for prosecutor trainees at the National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution to include classes on the culture of organizing the work of the prosecutor's office and the aforementioned interpersonal and adaptive skills;
- building a culture of work organization on equality, mutual respect, openness, with the right to criticism and free expression of each employee;
- creation of uniform anti-mobbing and anti-discrimination procedures in the general organizational units of the prosecutor's office, known to employees, enabling a fair and just resolution of conflicts based on mobbing.

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ABSTRAKT

Badanie wpisuje się w zidentyfikowaną lukę badawczą, którą jest problematyka zachowań o charakterze mobbingowym w środowisku powszechnych jednostek organizacyjnych polskiej prokuratury. Dane zgromadzono za pomocą anonimowej ankiety, w której udział wzięło 1891 osób (12,6% wszystkich zatrudnionych), zarówno prokuratorów i asesorów, jak i personelu administracyjnego na wszystkich szczeblach prokuratury Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Jest to pierwsze tego typu badanie w Polsce i jedno z nielicznych w ogóle, odnoszące się do instytucjonalnego środowiska prawniczego. Wnioski potwierdzają fakt, że przypadki nękania w pracy są częstsze w organizacjach, w których obowiązki mają charakter rutynowy. Zjawisko mobbingu w polskiej prokuraturze występuje i nie ma wyłącznie charakteru marginalnego, incydentalnego. Ponad jedna czwarta ankietowanych doświadczyła w pracy zachowań wpisujących się w ustawową definicję mobbingu. Zgodnie z oczekiwaniami dominującym typem relacji służbowej, w której dochodzi do mobbingu, jest stosunek podrzędności

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służbowej (73% przypadków), aczkolwiek aż w ponad 12% przypadków do mobbingu dochodziło w relacjach równorzędnych. Rezultaty wskazują również na niepokojący fakt niezgłaszania tego typu zachowań (aż 68% mobbingowanych), czego głównym powodem jest brak przekonania co do skuteczności takich działań oraz brak wiary, że formalne ujawnienie cokolwiek zmieni. W świetle poznanych faktów jako rekomendacje podano sposoby przezwyciężenia zidentyfikowanych negatywnych zjawisk.

Słowa kluczowe: mobbing; miejsce pracy; instytucje rządowe; prokuratura w Polsce

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