Why Mobbing is Important

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Abstract

The concept of mobbing has been introduced to the literature in the last quarter of the century. It is relatively new phenomenon in psychology, psychiatry, business and management fields. Actually, it has merit and value to study in all of social sciences that involves human behaviors. Psychology is interested in people's mental health, well-being, job satisfaction, on the other hand business focus on mainly increasing production, profit and innovation. Thus, it seems that mobbing has a significant effect on individuals' mental health in personal level as well as companies and work places' productivity in social level. Some authorities consider mobbing as social diseases that hinders and distracts social capitals.

Keywords: Mobbing; The Effects of Mobbing; The Characteristics of Mobber; Characteristics of Mobbing Victim; Mobbing Free Workplace; The Prevalence of Mobbing

Introduction

Literature about mobbing is getting bigger and bigger every day. There are many studies done with big numbers of people, longitudinal and cross sectional studies as well as qualitative studies. Research emerged from Scandinavian countries but there are not many studies coming from all over the world. In the same vein, mobbing studies has been conducted mostly in government institutions such as; universities, schools and hospitals, but there are new studies coming from private sectors. There are mobbing seminars and educational programs offered by government or private companies to protect their workers and create awareness among them, which has been very successful. However, still there are room for progress and research.

The current literature shows that while the concept of mobbing has found its place in hospitals, educational institutions and judicial system in industrialized western countries, it is still new and waits to be discovered by involved people in developing countries.

The Concept of Mobbing

The word of Mob means organizing a group of people to do illegal acts. In English mob means, to get together with crowed in order to disrupt, harass, bother or violate people or their properties [1]. There are differences in literature among scientist in their approach to mobbing. First time, Leyman, in 1980's conducted observations and research and reported long-term hostilities and aggressive behaviors among employees and used the term of mobbing.

The term of mobbing has been conceptualized as bullying, work or employee abuse, mistreatment, emotional abuse, victimization, intimidation, verbal abuse, psychological terror, and psychological violence [2]. North American literature calls it mobbing, while the British and Australian literature prefer to say work place bullying or only [1]. Bullying terms is usually used for school age children who bully or harass each other in school settings. Therefore, mobbing is used comfortably in this paper.

According to Leyman [3] mobbing is a very tense process in which aggressive, destructive and emotionally abusive behaviors targets a person in a continues manner. In order to define a mobbing behavior, it should be continue at least 6 months and at least one occurrence in each week and targets a person's social and psychological well-being. Zapf, Knorz and Kulla [4] defines mobbing as, targeting a person or a group for a planned and systematical aggressive and hostile behaviors in social competition. Because of this, systematical way with and repeated emotional abuse or harassment, individuals may develop hopelessness, burnout, lack of job satisfaction and decrease in work productivity. There are many research reports both serious physical and psychological defects cause to the victim. Mobbing has detrimental negative effects on victim's self-esteem, confidence, anxiety, depression, digestive system problems, headaches, migraine, poor concentration, exhaustion, fatigue, insomnia, and cigarette or alcohol dependence [1,5,6].

The Nature of Mobbing

In early studies, mobbing was reported from supervisors or people who are holding managerial positions. Later, when the research grows, it appeared that mobbing could be from top to bottom, from bottom to top, or among people in equal positions [7]. A group of people can target a single person or a group, or a group can target a single person or a group of people. All it depends on the work structure and the dynamics of people in work place and work climate. Davenport, Schwarz and Elliott (1999) believed that mobbing could happen at any level of the organization, which means the mobber can be a supervisor, subordinates, collogues or co-workers that can take different forms. On the other hand, mobbing can take the form of group mobbing in which one bully can creates rumors and discredit a person's fame in the company and gets others to willingly or unwillingly join himself so that the target person eventually gives up and get out of the work place [8]. Even then, the victim resigns or quits his job; he will be described as voluntarily left the work. In a study, 81 % of bullying was reported to be done by someone in a supervisory position [8] In short, Daniel

(2006) describes the situation as a cancer beginning with a one effected cell, but it spread quickly and destroys whole system. Therefore, at the end the organizations suffer because of losing talented employee or high turnover rates. Thus, companies having these problems should consider many possibilities to re-structure their hierarchy.

Studies reported that male gender does more mobbing behavior to the female workers. In fact, the U.S. Hostile Workplace Survey [8] confirmed this notion that 84% of target victims were females. However, interestingly the survey also revealed that female employees target female's workers more often, more female do mobbing towards their colleagues than their counterparts do [8].

A web site about mobbing, Bullying.com reports that in England, one third or one-half of the stress related medical and mental illnesses are related to workplace harassments. It seems that the effect of mobbing is bigger than it appears and it has serious consequences for the economy and productivity. Because of mobbing, a quarter of the victim leaves their work eventually without providing any feedback to the company. According to the survey, 82% of mobbing victim lose their jobs and a great majority of them prefers to voluntarily leave and quit their jobs. For those who had to stay or prefer to stay in the work, they also experience negativity, decline in their productivity and decline of future opportunities for promotions.

There are also consequences for the company as well. In the long run, the health care bills increase, legal costs and consultations substitute a payment for the company, decline in productivity, lack of or short to creativity and innovation, decline in profit, loss of talented workers, and defamation of the company and brand name (Bullying.com).

Einarsen and Mikkelsen [9] classified the effects of mobbing on people's mental health in tree groups. In the first group, burn-out, constant tiredness, worn out and some identified physical pains in body. In the second category, sleep problems, lack of motivation for work, decline in self-esteem and some depressive feelings. In the third category, increased sensitivity, emotional imbalance, aggressiveness, social withdrawal, and some memory problems can appear. Similarly, Bowling and Beehr [10] argued that mobbing has negative effects on people's general life satisfaction, and significantly influence individual's mental wellbeing in a negative way.

Swedish psychiatrist Leyman [3] defined 45 separate mobbing behavior and those can happen to anyone for

any reason or for no reason. However, in order to be identified those behaviors, as mobbing it should continuously happen. He categorized those 45 behavior into 5 groups as follows; individuals want to show themselves and affect the communication, targeting social relationships and attaching social relations, attack on people honor and dignity, attach on people life quality and jobs, and direct attacks to individual's health. Similarly, Tim Field [11] listed 75 different types of bullying behaviors. Those actions includes; blame, humiliation, stealing credit form someone else work, unrealistic work expectations, setting unrealistic deadlines, social isolation, blackmail, rumor, hiding some important professional information and some similar actions which was planned and done with bed intentions. Nevertheless, the bully does their mobbing in a very sophisticated manner, they never involve in open conflict or crush they will have a hidden agenda and follow it.

Mobbing is a dynamic process and happens gradually as the involved parties negotiate it from different perspective. Leymann proposed five stages; whereas Einarsen and Mikkelsen [9] offered four stages. There are some commonalities among those classifications. At the beginning the mobbing behaviors is covert and indirectly happens. The victim does not understand the situations. Victim tends to blame himself for whatever happenings. In the second stage, the attacks become very open, clear and systematic, victim will have hard time to defend himself. Then, the victim would be label and some stereotypes will be created for the victim. In the final stage, the victim will lose their physical and psychological mental health and experience traumatic symptoms. The duration of mobbing is based on the institutions and companies policies and practices. There are reported mobbing cases continues for decades [12].

Mobbing is reported to be more common than sexual and verbal harassment [13]. Research shows that the highest mobbing happens in universities and then educational and health care systems. There are high rates of this syndrome. The highest rates come from Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries. For example in the USA, 21 % of individuals have experienced mobbing in their work place [14]. On the other hand, Göktürk and Bulut [1] reported higher rates in Turkey than Western countries. May be due to nature of mobbing and not known by ordinary people, it can be speculated that mobbing can be more common in developing countries.

Why Mobbing Happens

There are some reasons for the mobbing occurs in work place. Tınaz [15] argued that, harsh and strict competition in work place, jealousy, inapporaporate and wrong selection of personnel, and the attitudes to have control over others. The other reasons are; hierarchical structure of the company or institutions, lack of communication abilities in administrator and management, lack of abilities in problem solving and coping with stress, lack of responsibilities in work place and the tendency to blame other collogues, lack of ethical values in work, lack of socialization in work place, and lack of leaderships in administrators. Curson and Costen [16] argues that work places that are dominated by man and draws from combative military culture and competitive sport culture are ideal places in which bullies are thrive. Again, they believe that completion and a desire to control and dominate others are factors leads to flourishing mobbing. Unfortunately, those capitalistic ideas set up for a long time ago by white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant culture. Not surprisingly, many managers using bully style are found to be an effective and rewarded for their excellent leaderships [17].

Victims

There are also certain characteristics of the victims. They are usually, young, newly graduate from universities or schools, dress up or do makes-up different then their collogues, tend to be single, new in work place, hard worker, very creative and talented, slightly marginal, smart, honest, women in mostly male dominated work, or man in mostly women work place, different from the majority of them in some features such as, gender, race, religious believe, color, and ethnic origin etc. [5]. Others also reported the victim as emphatic, just, and fair people who do not wish the attention of the bully's [8]. It looks like, mobbing is a social phenomenon and social psychology place a role in deciding who should be chosen for a possible mobbing candidates. It is very interesting that children bullying actions are also very similar to adults mobbing behavior, both of them involves in lack of empathy and lack of tolerance for those who are different then the mainstream people.

There are some authors also argued that there is no specific victim profiles but there are certain characteristics that put people at risk for mobbing. For example, Peyton [18] defined victims as introverted, has an exceptional physical or intellectual abilities, young or old workers, and people from different religious backgrounds. Similarly, Matthiesen and Einarsen [19] believe that individuals with low self-esteem and high anxiety level are more at risk mobbing than the other persons. On the other hand, Randall [17] argues that peoples' experience of rising with their parents has potential to make them submissive and comply with

others orders. Interestingly enough, bullies often focus on the most talented and creative individuals because they constitute a treat for the bullies self-esteem and position. In the long run, those unique individuals are forced to resign or quit the work. Consequently, this will hinder company's productivity and innovation practices [20].

Mobber-Bullies-Target

Just like to mobbing victims it is hard to identify certain characteristics for the perpetrators of mobbing. In some cases the purpose of the mobbing can beharassing people to gain control over the person humiliation and forcing the person to resign in order to not to pay the total restitution [6].

Bullies are often very talented in their harassment business. They often present themselves as a very civil, polite and cooperative but they operate under the table. They will try everything to devalue and destroy their targets professional as well as personal resources. Bullies are using very sophisticated methods to reach their aims. For example, they will never attempt to physical force, instead, they will do their heinous actions within the established legal rules and policies of the company. They pretend they are doing the necessary things they have to [7]. Similarly, Hornstein [6] identified three major types of bully, first conquerors, performers and manipulators. Davenport et al. [17] described the mobber profiles as narcist, bigot, and the people who want to employ their personal norms to the work place. Additionally, mobber can be a person who has experienced a deep disappointment by himself, ambitious, jealous, revengeful, rude, critical, lack of anger management skills and obsessive characteristics [21].

On the other hand, [8] conducted a nationwide "US Hostile Workplace Survey" about workplace bullying. They came up with three types of bully. First type, bullies uses surprise and secrecy to control over the target person, the ones who never meet in the middle, they always want to be obeyed, and the ones who chose always a target and exercise putdowns, belittling, name-calling and criticize them. According to their results, bullies are found to be inadequate, cowards, liars and those who starts conflicts at work. Quite surprisingly, tough it is believed that most of the mobbing initiated by men, that's was not true, women and men were equal in mobbing and harassment behaviors in work settings.

Bystanders-Whiteness-Observers

There is mobber, victim and bystanders, those are witnessing the harassment and mistreatment but cannot do anything about it. Because they also feel helpless, hopeless and lack of control over what is happening. They are afraid that they also might be next victim or target; therefore, they are afraid of opposing the mobber or supporting the victim [8]. Thus, they may prefer to put a distance between the victim and themselves. In further cases, they will not be willing to go to court to provide testimony; they will not talk about the mobbing.

What Could Be Done for Prevention of Mobbing

In order to prevent mobbing in work place companies should run a mobbing awareness program. They can provide a "mobbing free" environment, a mobbing prevention and complain office, which service to prevention and mediation between parties. Companies can have a policy for their employers to participate a mobbing training seminar and get a participation certificate. They can do it, for example, every other 5 years.

Companies and institutions can conduct ananomious surveys to follow and investigate mobbing and uncivil behaviors among their employees. This can include work satisfaction survey, well-being and happiness surveys in work places. It is very surprising that some countries conduct happens survey in work place and take the necessary precautions to make their worker happy.

Even if the bullies are identified and known well, it is hard and impossible to cure them. It is impossible to stop it in personal levels; instead, the companies can adapt and develop polies at the start to hinder for the possible emerging mobbing actions.

The head of company, CEO's or the board of trustees should take the lead and not to tolerate the mobbing or uncivil behaviors in work setting. It is very imperative that the superiors set the tone and define the atmosphere in work place. Thus, they have to believe in and apply zero tolerance policy. They can develop and anti-bullying policies and make it open to everyone what are the acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. They could set up an investigation team and provide policies for reporting the cases [20].

Furthermore, governments can celebrate a mobbing awareness week or day, have a TV and newspapers cover stories, and educate their citizens. The Social Security Organizations or Employment and Work Ministries' can have a call line and take immediate action [5]. Interestingly, in some countries mobbing is considered a crime in some counties and has some punishments for that. For example, in US mobbing research is very new

and limited. However, England is leading in the topic of mobbing both in research and in juristically area [7]. France has passed some laws to prevent and rehabilitate its victims. However, due to its nature it is hard to define and prove mobbing cases in court. Many people and bystanders are unwilling to come court and testify against the mobber, they are afraid that, they may be also target of mobbing in the future.

NGO's, civic and voluntary organizations could provide counseling and social support services for victims. Similarly, Bar Associations can help the victims to get some legal helps and consul for mobbing victims. In addition, hospitals, may be psychiatric departments should initiate to open a branch specifically targets to heal and rehabilitate the mobbing victims.

Universities and schools should have some classes and training programs to cover mobbing and work place harassments in their training programs. Students should know the signs of mobbing and take some precautions against possible mobbing attach. In the same vein, individuals should be educated about how to deal with and seek help from where. They need to learn the signs of mobbing and how to make formal complains.

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