

# Psychological pressure on employees in corporate ethics: the method of mobbing

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the impact of mobbing and bullying on corporate relations, their investigation causes, and the process of drawing relevant conclusions. Mobbing refers to an ethical and psychological influence within the organization, while bullying represents a form of individual harassment. The consequences of mobbing and bullying in the workplace, their disruptions, and the associated legal and international issues are discussed, along with ways to address these problems. The importance of corporate codes, active participation of leadership, and specialized institutions in preserving employee well-being and maintaining organizational integrity is emphasized.

**Keywords:** Mobbing, bullying, corporate ethics, workplace disorders, legal rights, leadership responsibility, corporate codes, collective labor.

**Introduction:** In today's business world, interpersonal relationships and workplace dynamics play a crucial role. Issues such as physical harm, mobbing, and bullying can significantly impact employee well-being, require medical assistance, and damage the overall reputation of an organization. Addressing and resolving these problems is a priority, and international practices are being studied in this regard. Corporate ethics and human resource management have become critical factors in the success of modern organizations. However, these issues can severely undermine employee motivation and productivity.

Mobbing involves consistent psychological and moral stress experienced by employees, while bullying is often associated with misuse of authority. This article examines the key problems associated with mobbing and bullying, explores how these issues are addressed in existing legislation, and provides recommendations for their resolution.

According to foreign statistics, 3-4% of employees today experience direct or indirect psychological and moral pressure during the hiring process. Moreover, this figure only accounts for the recruitment stage; it is estimated that the percentage of individuals who become victims of such pressure during their "work"

life is significantly higher.

The term "mobbing" (derived from the English word "mobbing" – oppression, harassment, attack) began to be intensively used in Europe over a decade ago. However, the English term "mobbing" was first introduced by Swedish psychologist Dr. Heinz Leymann in the early 1980s during his studies of this phenomenon in Swedish workplaces. Previously, in the 1970s, he had used the term to describe hostile behaviors among schoolchildren. Leymann defined mobbing as "the systematic, repeated hostility and unethical behavior directed by one or more individuals against another, primarily aimed at a single individual." [1]

In European literature, there is no single definition of the term "mobbing." In addition to H. Leymann's terminology, the term "bullying," proposed by Norwegian researcher Ståle Einarsen in 2003, is also widely used today, particularly in English-language publications. Bullying is defined as "harassing, insulting, socially excluding someone, or negatively affecting someone's work." For bullying to be associated with a specific activity, interaction, or process, it must occur regularly (e.g., weekly) and repeatedly (e.g., over a period of six months). Bullying is a progressive process

in which the targeted individual is gradually placed in a subordinate position or becomes the object of systematic social actions. A conflict can only be labeled as bullying if it is not a single occurrence or a clash between two equally powerful parties.

Today, it is common to distinguish between the terms "mobbing" and "bullying" in the media and specialized literature. Mobbing refers to the deliberate and active moral harassment of an individual employee within their organization. It involves collective moral and psychological terror, where colleagues intimidate a specific employee to force them to resign.

In contrast, bullying refers to the harassment of an employee by an individual, often their superior, rather than a group of colleagues or the team. Moreover, when mobbing occurs, management often plays a role in the process, making it rare for the victim to successfully seek assistance in such cases.

In the emergence of mobbing relationships within a team, management and its poor decision-making are primarily to blame. First, managers often encourage competition in its negative sense, fostering an environment where employees criticize and target one another. Second, mobbing is frequently observed in organizations where family connections among employees dominate, unequal behavior norms are set, staff turnover is high, and career growth opportunities are limited.

Third, mobbing may result from poor personnel policies, such as failing to address issues of employee dignity, recognition, and protection during hiring processes, or the absence of institutions where moral concerns can be discussed and complaints about officials' behavior can be addressed. Even if such institutions exist, access to them is often limited. [2]

Mobbing is often directed at individuals who belong to racial, ethnic, religious, or sexual minorities, those with noticeable differences (physiological or psychological), or generally anyone who stands out and cannot defend themselves. Moral harassment can sometimes stem from gender relations. The motives that encourage mobbing vary—they can include conscious or unconscious hostility rooted in upbringing, individual or social group psychology, or cultural factors.

Additionally, mobbing may be motivated by factors such as conflicts of interest, power struggles, or efforts to attract management's attention; a manager's desire to "train" a new employee or "put a defiant worker in their place"; conflicts of interest between employees and employers, and other related reasons.

Mobbing organizers use various methods, such as isolating the victim from informal interactions—for

example, not greeting them, excluding them from lunch invitations, or not inviting them to corporate parties. They may block access to work-related information, "forget" to share important data, withhold updates, or fail to provide official communications (or deliver them too late), and even exclude the victim from meetings. They ignore the victim's achievements and successes, and management often leaves the victim without bonuses or opportunities for career advancement. Furthermore, they may attempt to tarnish the victim's personal and professional reputation by spreading rumors or gossip or even stealing critical documents from their desk.

Sometimes, such confrontations escalate into open forms of abuse, including insults and physical violence. Conflicts in workplaces where mobbing occurs are pervasive and widespread.

By its nature, mobbing can be unconscious, deliberate, or controlled. Controlled mobbing is the most aggressive form, where "a group of aggressors carries out hostile actions based on explicit or implicit directives from management or officials representing the direct interests of the employer." Controlled mobbing is often used to circumvent legal norms and regulations to dismiss employees or as part of an intentional organizational policy against staff.

However, when company management engages in mobbing, it becomes unacceptable, as employees have no other place to turn for protection and understanding. Managers are expected to act as mediators within the organization, resolving all disputes and disagreements. In cases of mobbing, however, employees cannot rely on managers for assistance, support, or understanding, further exacerbating the issue.

A constant atmosphere of tension within a team inevitably begins to negatively affect the psychological and physical health of employees. According to data from the American research organization The Workplace Bullying & Trauma Institute, in 76% of recorded mobbing cases, victims experienced stress; in 60% of cases, paranoia; 55% reported headaches; 41% felt isolated or guilty; and 38% experienced doubt and shame. These effects lead nearly half of the victims to suffer from nightmares, with almost two-thirds enduring insomnia, and some even experiencing mental breakdowns. Approximately 30% of individuals begin abusing alcohol, cigarettes, or medications. This data highlights that victims of mobbing often struggle to find adequate ways to resolve workplace conflicts. [4]

The consequences of mobbing not only harm the targeted employees but also adversely affect

organizational performance. Firstly, workplace productivity declines as employees' energy, time, and attention are diverted from their tasks to dealing with mobbing. Secondly, mobbing fosters alienation among workers, increases absenteeism (employees being absent from work without valid reasons), raises staff turnover rates, and creates a negative psychological climate in the workplace. All of these factors inevitably impact the overall performance and effectiveness of the organization.

According to A.V. Solovyov, in addition to harassment by colleagues, there is also "institutional mobbing," which involves the use of institutional mechanisms—such as certifications, qualification exams, or the review of workplace disputes—as tools for moral harassment of employees.

Today, the issue of mobbing and bullying in the workplace is actively discussed in the media and among professional communities. Researchers focusing on organizational behavior are paying increasing attention to this problem. Over the past several years, numerous studies and publications dedicated to workplace violence have appeared in scientific journals.

Efforts are being made to combat mobbing through legislation. Many Western countries have laws addressing this issue, such as the 1989 European Parliament Directive [3], which imposes significant managerial responsibility for workers' health and safety across all aspects of labor relations. In 2001, the European Parliament adopted a resolution recommending that EU member states amend their legal systems to combat mobbing and sexual harassment and establish a unified definition of "mobbing," as recent studies have highlighted the growing severity of psychological issues in formal relationships.

The European Community unanimously adopted a Restrictive Agreement on harassment and abuse in the workplace. Additionally, some European countries have enacted supplementary laws to address mobbing. For example, Sweden's National Board of Occupational Safety and Health adopted regulations on workplace harassment in 1993.

In many European countries and Australia, organizations have been established to support mobbing victims, with hotlines and contact details for counseling services on mobbing issues regularly published in the media. The increasing prevalence of mobbing cases has forced European organizations to revisit collective labor agreements and pay greater attention to ethical codes.

However, legislative measures alone, unfortunately, cannot fully resolve the ethical issues that arise in labor

relations. How can the problem of mobbing be addressed? Experts primarily recommend that mobbing victims leave their jobs, as enduring humiliation can have a profoundly negative impact on health, and it is better to experience temporary inconvenience associated with job loss than long-term harm. Organizational leaders must remain vigilant, never ignore or tolerate instances of mobbing, and take prompt action to address them. Additionally, leaders should analyze the essence of the conflict, identify the victim, the instigator, and the provocateur, and implement appropriate measures. Managers must support mobbing victims.

In his article Mobbing: Psychological Terror in the Workplace [7], A.V. Solovyov proposes the following actions for organizational leaders to prevent and combat mobbing:

1. Developing Corporate Codes of Conduct:

Create corporate codes that include behavioral rules with prohibitions against:

- ✓ Unethical actions by managers and other officials toward employees.
- ✓ Actions that demean the dignity of employees or cause moral or psychological harm.
- ✓ Encouraging competition for career advancement that could lead to various forms of mobbing.

2. Establishing Special Monitoring Structures:

Create dedicated oversight institutions (e.g., an Ethics Committee) or designate a specific role (e.g., an Ethics Commissioner) to manage and resolve mobbing cases. If forming such structures is not feasible, external specialists should be invited to prevent conflicts in corporate relations.

3. Enabling a Complaint Mechanism for Employees:

Provide conditions where employees can report cases of moral harassment by officials. This could involve establishing hotlines accessible to all employees within the organization.

4. Monitoring the Social-Psychological Climate:

Introduce organizational practices to monitor the social-psychological state of teams within specific departments and the organization as a whole.

By implementing these measures, organizations can foster a healthier work environment, mitigate the occurrence of mobbing, and support victims effectively.

After analyzing the codes of leading global corporations, it can be concluded that only a few address the issue of mobbing and bullying in their employee relationships. For instance, the Procter &

Gamble (P&G) corporate code includes provisions aimed at preventing such problems: "Any action by a P&G employee that could be considered harassment toward another employee, customer, or supplier is strictly prohibited, regardless of where such actions take place." The code further elaborates on the definition of harassment: "Harassment refers to behavior that violates the dignity of an individual or is of an offensive nature. If an individual is aware of their actions and understands that their behavior could provoke a negative reaction, it constitutes harassment." [5] This emphasis on ethical behavior demonstrates a proactive approach by some corporations in addressing and mitigating issues of mobbing and bullying in the workplace.

The review of leading global corporate codes reveals that only a few organizations address the issue of mobbing and bullying in workplace relationships. For example, the Procter & Gamble (P&G) corporate code explicitly aims to prevent such behavior: "Any action by a P&G employee that could be considered harassment toward another employee, customer, or supplier, regardless of where it occurs, is strictly prohibited." The code further explains harassment as: "Behavior that violates the dignity of an individual or is offensive in nature. If an individual is aware of their actions and understands that such behavior could provoke a negative reaction, it constitutes harassment." [5] Such behavior, as stated, can negatively impact an employee's ability to perform effectively and create a hostile workplace environment. The code also provides detailed instructions for management on how to respond if instances of harassment are detected: "If management becomes aware of a situation where harassment might occur, it must take necessary measures to eliminate or minimize the likelihood of such actions, including implementing preventive actions. Furthermore, managers should avoid any provocative actions that might escalate a conflict rather than resolve it and ensure that the professional and personal dignity of employees is safeguarded."

Shell, in its corporate code, explicitly prohibits harassment in any form, stating: "Shell does not tolerate harassment in the workplace or daily life. Shell will not accept any discriminatory, intimidating, or hostile acts, behaviors, or conduct." The code outlines key principles for employee conduct in labor relations:

1. "Do not intimidate or discriminate against others through your actions or words."
2. "Avoid inappropriate jokes or comments; if unsure whether something is appropriate, consider it unacceptable."
3. "Never distribute or display offensive or

discriminatory material, including drawings."

4. "Do not hesitate to speak openly with someone whose behavior disturbs you. Explain why you want them to stop." [8]

TNK-BP (Tyumen Oil Company – British Petroleum) provides detailed recommendations to prevent mobbing in its code of conduct:

1. "Never engage in aggressive, threatening, angry, or offensive behavior toward others."
2. "Do not tolerate sexual harassment, such as unwanted advances, requests for sexual favors, or repeated sexual invitations."
3. "Avoid actions that: a) create a hostile or intimidating environment; b) interfere with someone's work; c) violate equal labor rights."
4. "Do not spread rumors, misuse personal information, or share offensive or defamatory content through email or other communication channels."

Oracle also addresses mobbing in its corporate code: "The company's policy ensures a harassment-free workplace. While the term may refer to sexual harassment, workplace harassment can also include bullying based on race, religion, origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, or any other inappropriate or unlawful grounds. The company prohibits harassment in any form—physical, verbal, or non-verbal."

The analysis of corporate codes (including around 40 codes from Uzbekistan and leading international corporations) highlights that only a limited number of organizations explicitly address mobbing, despite its significant implications for workplace ethics and employee well-being.

Organizations where mobbing thrives often suffer from poor reputations. When seeking employment, skilled professionals prioritize not only competitive salaries but also comfortable working conditions characterized by a positive moral and psychological climate.

A well-regarded organization in the market is one where management demonstrates care for its employees. This includes formalizing codes of conduct that incorporate norms and regulations to protect employees from moral harassment. Such measures enhance the organization's reputation and make it an attractive workplace for top talent.

## CONCLUSION

Mobbing and bullying are among the key ethical challenges in the development of corporate relationships. They affect workplace well-being, the psychological climate, and the overall reputation of an organization. To address mobbing, it is essential to

develop corporate ethics codes, establish oversight institutions, and improve the social and psychological atmosphere within the workplace.

International practices show that, in addition to implementing safety measures, it is crucial to enhance organizational culture, hold leadership accountable, and provide support for recovery and resolution. Maintaining a positive corporate environment not only fosters a healthy workplace but also helps preserve and strengthen the organization's reputation.

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