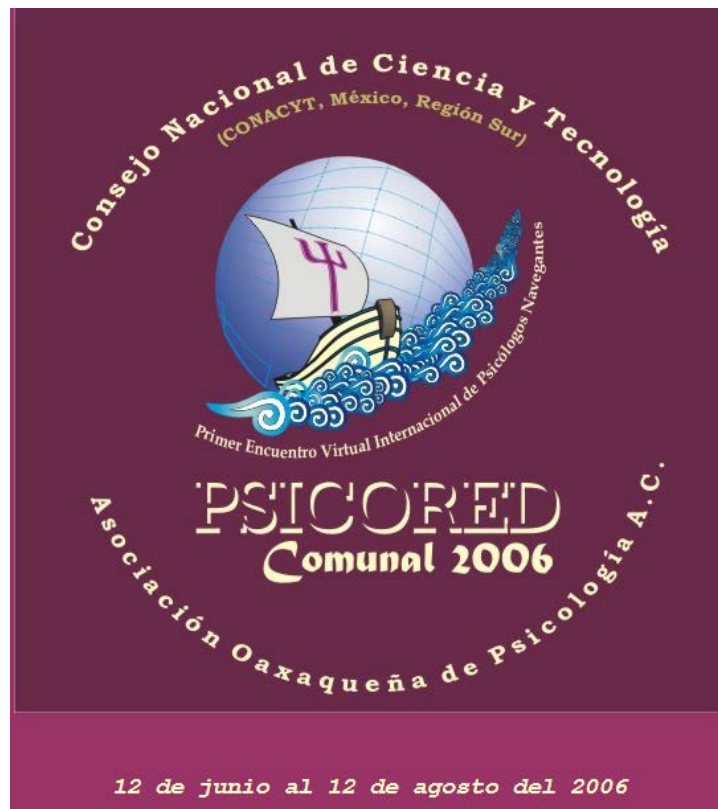


2007 - **Approach to the analysis of virtual networks as a support system against mobbing.**



Approach to the analysis of virtual networks as a support system against mobbing.

By Marina Páres Soliva. President of the European Mobbing Information Service (SEDISEM).
<http://www.sedisem.org> - <http://www.acosomoral.org>

Introduction

This communication aims at the assessment and analysis of virtual networks as a support system in novel situations whose health impact, due to its novelty, does not receive attention in the regulated system of protection to the health of states or countries; so that the affected person is unprotected and not knowing how to deal with what is happening to him.

The issue of mobbing or psychological harassment at work is an emerging topic, whose theoretical and methodological perspectives are constantly evolving, are novel and not rooted in the knowledge of most professionals, although it is good to note that more and more professionals know the subject, not always with the necessary rigor according to the gravity of the consequences, but it is a breakthrough, after all. Mobbing or workplace harassment is not in itself a disease, which is a series of psychological violence behaviours that end up affecting the victim's health. It is the consequences of the exercise of psychological violence on a human being that makes the human being sick. The novelty of the topic and the general ignorance of it, has resulted in those affected by labour harassment searching virtual networks for information and support that they did not find in the regulated system of health protection.

This communication is a summary of a previous work (1) based on the analysis of the use of virtual networks as a way of overcoming mobbing through the explanation of two concrete experiences; one of an individual nature and one of a collective nature. The experience of an individual nature exceeds the claims of this communication so I will deal exclusively with the collective experience through the discussion forums. We understand collective experience to participate in a discussion forum affected by the same topic. This being a widely used route by victims of moral harassment at work. In the communication we will analyse the beneficial and harmful aspects both group and individually. The collective aspect analysis is based on showing the experience of the Mobbing Affected Platform (P.A.M.) (2) exclusively, so it is clear that the experiences of other for a will not be used and therefore no one can be mentioned.

The goal pursued in moral harassment or mobbing is the self-elimination of the victim through breaking their psychological resistance. This is an attack on a person's dignity. Actions are: smearing, behavioural abuse, negative behaviour, and unwanted behaviour. Being the most obvious manifestations: the labour pressure, tending to make it empty, from an intimidating or offensive environment. This is intentional conduct, resulting in the loneliness and helplessness of the victim. In short, we can define moral harassment in the workplace as a series of hostile behaviours of a group against an individual with the intent to harm them.

In moral harassment, manifestations of the psychosocial harm inflicted on the victim can be diverse, as each human being will respond to the violence received differently. I do not want to focus on the health consequences of those affected by moral harassment at work because it is a widely studied subject that departs from the reason for this study. This study aims to go beyond the physical and mental consequences on health and focus on how to overcome the violence received, therefore, it is aimed at a vision of the individual being harassed as a survivor of psychological violence and not so much as a victim, so instead of putting the emphasis on injuries (psychosocial damage) we will delve into the healing processes. The use of new communication technologies, especially virtual internet networks, have often become useful tools for those affected by labour harassment or mobbing to go through these phases and thereby spontaneously find a path to healing.

The collective experience is based on the use by a large number of those affected by mobbing of virtual networks as a way of understanding the aggression suffered, and thus being able to integrate it into one's life, and thus become a survivor of psychological violence. This is manifested in the participation, by a large number of people affected by mobbing, in discussion forums on the subject of moral harassment. The hypothesis we are trying to explain in this work is concrete in the idea that it has been precisely the lack of attention in traditional prevention and health treatment systems that have motivated the massive use of new technology by those affected by occupational harassment.

The gap in the care of those affected by mobbing is motivated by the low assessment of the phenomenon of labour harassment as a situation of stressful violence and, above all, by ignorance of its serious consequences on the health of the worker. This health development has led to secondary aggression on countless occasions, understood as institutional violence. Thus, in many cases the worker subjected to psychological violence by his company (either by the hierarchy or by his own colleagues) has been subsumed by a non-existent health protection system (the mutual ones do not recognize the serious consequences on the health of workers subjected to occupational harassment), and at the same time by a health state does not know the stressful effects of psychological violence.

There are several ways to find a way out of the well of ignorance by those affected by moral harassment or mobbing, one has been to participate in discussion forums specialized in the subject. I will try to analyse the beneficial and not-so-beneficial aspects of this option.

Thematic discussion forum.

We assume that some (not all) forums on moral harassment include the conditions that make it easier for the victim of harassment to take the steps that lead to the healing of the consequences of psychological violence. This is not the case in all discussion forums, and this is because for a forum to be a healing tool it has to meet some previous premises, namely: it has to facilitate the integration of new members on the one hand and on the other hand it has to enhance the greater equality of the participating members.

In this way, forums where differences in "status" are encouraged (example: experts and clearly differentiated affected) and those in which the manifest will of the affected person is not enough to be part (i.e. the authorization of "someone superior" is the fact that they can integrate or not). These types of virtual forums will be valid according to the objectives of information, study and analysis of a phenomenon; but there are no conditions for their beneficial use by those affected by psychological violence. They will have other uses and other purposes, but we must note that they do not meet the premises to have an impact on the development of the healing stages; therefore, participation in them by victims of occupational psychoterrorism need not lead to improvements in their health. Let's look at the reasons for these preconditions; on the one hand, facilitating inclusion in a group, even though easy and voluntary integration, helps to compensate for the "exclusion" to which the victim is being subjected in his work environment, therefore, any impediment to his entry into the forum is lived as a new act of exclusion; and on the other hand, equalization among participating members distances authoritarian business identifications and distances them from the experience of abuses of power perpetrated by the labour hierarchy over the affected. That's good for the victim because overcoming trauma can be solved since "there are no bosses," and is one more member of the full-fledged "forists2.

In short, these previous premises are aimed at giving the affected person control over his role as a forum member. And it is precisely this situation of "being able to control" its inclusion or not, its participation or not, that allows the steps to overcome the trauma, almost spontaneously.

The beneficial aspect of the Discussion Forums

We have already seen that moral harassment at work or mobbing is a strategy of harassment and tearing down the victim by applying extreme psychological violence, based on rumours and slander. Before fully influencing the analysis of the therapeutic aspects of the discussion forums, it will be useful for us to name the various stages of any healing process aimed at overcoming the psychological violence suffered. These stages are: exploration, expression, comfort, compensation, perspective and forgetfulness.

A tour of the various stages of the healing process is quite evident in those affected by mobbing who participate in the forums especially the exploration phase. In particular, the exploration stage consists in the reconstruction of the facts and the stage of expression, it is the "talk" about what has been experienced and both phases are visible in the discussion forums because in the

messages of the forums all the violence received with concrete data, dates, actions, etc. is serialized.

The compensation stage consists in the repair of the suffering experienced and as is to be foreseen the recovery of control over one's life is a way of overcoming the helplessness suffered in mobbing. Often the mobbing affected uses the judicial route as the only compensation mechanism with more than questionable results. In those affected by mobbing there is a profound change of the concept of justice in the broad sense. In the victim of harassment there is a crumbling of the sense of justice and the concept of living in a safe society. This desire for justice is often betrayed by court rulings that, in most cases, does not protect the victim, in others are blamed and none of them recognize and value the beneficial role that the victim's complaint has played for society. Society does not want to see the fraud reported, and prefers to discredit the victim of harassment than protect themselves from fraudulent ones and sanction them. Those affected by harassment find in the forums the support necessary to deal with the long and strenuous judicial process. In the forum there is an exchange of experiences that is very useful for those facing the situation for the first time.

Within the healing process it should be noted that over time the person affected by harassment must take perspective on the violence suffered in order to be able to heal from it and in some messages or post of the forum it is perceived that the "forista" has taken perspective of his harassment and that he has been able to integrate it into his life through being aware and therefore of perceiving what he lost in the harassment and what he has gained.

The introspection of knowledge leads, in the long term, to question the values, both the individuals themselves, as well as the family and cultural, which until that time were accepted. This process ends with a theoretical reworking of both the personal issue of harassment and its situation in the context of the work and social culture. We will delve deeper into the beneficial aspect of the participation of those affected by moral harassment at work in the discussion forums.

Valuation of participation in internet forums

Beneficial aspects

The exploration phase includes reconstructing the facts. Thus, we can see, through the direct reading of the written messages, that those affected by mobbing in their participation in the forum usually detail the beginnings of their harassment and the development of their early stages. The mere fact of writing them, of dating them, of serializing them in time is a help. We know that the expression phase is to be able to talk all that is needed, and the members of the forums are "explaining" the future of their mistreatment, often up to the day-to-day. The possibility of being able to express yourself so widely and to the level one needs is feasible in the forum. The maintenance of anonymity (through the use of a nick or pseudonym) enhances the "to download" free of all the pain felt; even often the use of expressions that in another case of less anonymity would not be used. In the healing process, the expression phase is followed by the comfort phase and in the forums that continuity occurs spontaneously. We understand that at this stage the victim must find ways to console himself, and in the forums the comfort comes from the rest of the participants. The other "forists", in front of someone who explains their pain, have the instinctive attitude of empathizing with that person, of understanding their pain (so similar to their own), of stand in solidarity with their misadventure (so similar to their

own), of giving advice and solutions that, regardless of their adequacy, convey a real feeling of concern for the well-being of the victim. Very often, victims of workplace harassment find for the first time the understanding in the virtual environment they did not find in their real environment. This understanding helps them navigate the comfort phase, and move on to the next phase. When a person subjected to psychological violence fails to go through the comfort phase, he can become stuck in it and fail to move on to the next one. The stagnation caused by not getting the right comfort is manifested in a victimise attitude on the part of the traumatized person who is manifested in an excess of susceptibility.

After comfort, the compensation phase that is linked to the compensation phase of what he has suffered follows. Human beings need to be able to compensate for the damage suffered in order to forget it, if it is not achieved, the person affected by labour harassment will not be able to leave their role as victim. Experts call this phenomenon tertiary victimization, we'll see later. Many affected by labour harassment have sought compensation for their suffering by initiating court proceedings, which the vast majority of the time have not yielded the result expected by the victim; today the judicial path as a form of resentment is seriously questioned. Others affected hope to find resentment in the repentance of the harassers; this would be the most "normal" procedure among human beings; that is, we apologize when we have inadvertently stepped on the neighbour; and that's where the mistake lies. In workplace harassment there is a manifest willingness to harm and humiliate, therefore, expecting regret from the harassers can only generate greater frustration in the victim; because wicked personalities never apologize.

We cannot remain blind to evidence, only evil personalities can carry out situations of psychological harassment; for it is not a moment of bad mood, which we can all have, but it is a continuity in time of the manifest will to "hurt" another human being; and nothing and no one is going to make the pervert forget his victim or what's the same thing that stops "going for it."

Participation in the forum makes it possible for the victim to know that he will not be able to expect the repentance of the bullies (including the stalker and his collaborators) and therefore to seek other avenues of resentment. Often not being contaminated with the violence received and facing the situation and bullies without hatred, it can be lived by the victim of labour harassment as a way of resentment, since it differs from the harassers and their methods, finding in it the ethical reason for better self-perception. Although participating in the forums enables the victim to have knowledge and information that helps him overcome this phase, compensation must be outside the forum, in the real world.

Once the person who is victims of psychological violence has managed a way to make amends, he enters the perspective phase. Taking perspective on the traumatic situation is to get to know the things you have lost and the things you have gained as a result of workplace harassment. In this sense participation in the forums is decisive, since there is a fluid exchange of experiences, which make it possible to give perspective to the violence received and the damage caused. In the section of the damage, it may be included all physical and psychic impacts on the health of the victim (myocardial infarctions, distress crises, depressions, cancers, fibromyalgia, etc...), as well as other types of losses (loss of social status, loss of work, decrease in income, etc.); and in the section of the profits it could be included, taking into account the verbalizations of the affected themselves, a greater personal maturation, a more humanitarian view of the world, and also the opportunity to find new and true friends. Finally, to end the channelling phase that

involves integrating the situation lived and not being ashamed of it, and finally being able to forget.

Harmful aspects

The non-beneficial aspects of bullying debate forums are related to post-traumatic stress manifestations and not participation in itself. All studies confirm that workers subjected to occupational harassment end up suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome; that is to say that the repetition of acts of minor violence has the same symptomatology as a single seriously traumatic situation.

Poor resolution of the aggressions received can lead the harassed to perpetuate the cycle of violence, either directed towards others or towards himself (suicide). Interpersonal relationships are affected, both family, friendly, labour relations; and also, their participation in the forums, because it could not be otherwise. The most damaging aspects, therefore, relate to the perpetuation of the cycle of violence, so that, in another context, the aggressor can become an aggressor. Sometimes it has been given that a person harassed in his work can repeat in the forum some of the violence received. When human beings do not learn to contain evil, we perpetuate it. Undoubtedly, the detrimental aspect of participation in discussion forums needs further deeper than that of this communication.

Conclusions:

In the process of labour harassment, if not intervened in time, the three types of victimization are given, namely: primary, secondary and tertiary. We understand primary victimization, which takes place in the context of the organization and which consists in making a worker the object of mockery and vexation by managers and colleagues, in order to make a void. It's moral harassment or mobbing.

Secondary victimization is the one that is received by the person with workplace harassment, in the institutions that should ensure their protection, namely the health system and the judicial system. This is visible when the worker encounters a healthcare system that does not recognize the origin of his condition and sometimes even does not even give even an entity to his illness, not to mention when treated with inadequate drugs for a misdiagnosis. It also becomes obvious when the worker's claims in the judicial way are ignored and the consequent decline in rights that this entails.

The worker subjected to labour harassment may reach tertiary victimization, which is the one that takes place within himself. This happens when that person does not get the necessary help, so the effects of psychological violence on them can be timed. This type of victimization manifests itself in an obsessive attitude about the case itself and the violence suffered, an identification with the role of victim that prevents a hopeful future.

It is worth noting the therapeutic role of the forums to a greater extent than in the creation of personal web pages, both by bringing to a greater number of people affected and in their spontaneous facilitation in the development of the healing phases, as we have reported above; and this is because of the interactive communication that occurs in the users of the forums. In the absence of forums or non-use, the harasser becomes more difficult to get out of self-

inculcation, especially when the understanding of the family and the most immediate environment fails because the comfort phase cannot be overcome and he continues to wait for the repentance of his harasser.

It is to be hoped that a greater understanding of the phenomenon of workplace harassment and its health impact will help the harassed to find support in the state health system, as is the case with other diseases whose origin is the world of work. It is a wish to think that this communication has contributed, in part, to this.

This presentation closes with the attempt to reach conclusions that facilitate the use of new technologies in their most beneficial and useful aspect for human progress both in their individual vision and in their social aspect.

Notes:

(1) Excerpt from the presentation "Virtual Networks: S.O.S. of mobbing" presented at the Virtual Congress TICVida 05 of the Hispanic American Association of Internet Documentarians. Online. March 2005.

(2) Platform of Affected by Mobbing PAM <http://www.forosdelmobbing.info/>

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