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Economic Effects of Mobbing and Violence in the Workplace

Abstract: The aim of this research is to comprehensively determine the monetary losses caused by mobbing and violence in the workplace in Poland, based on macroeconomic data for 2017 and own investigation. After determining the scale of mobbing and the effects of mobbing on the employees, the monetary value of losses generated at the individual, organizational and social level was determined. It was found that the value of these losses ranged from 2.07% to 4.59% of the total GDP of Poland. The biggest costs of mobbing were incurred by enterprises, and their share in total costs amounted over 77%.

Key words: Mobbing, violence in the workplace, individual losses, organizational losses, social losses, economy, economic estimate

Introduction

Mobbing and violence in the workplace is a phenomenon that is extensively described in literature, starting from the defining it, reasons for occurrence, to consequences. Therefore, the detailed description of the definition of mobbing is omitted here. The emphasis is put on the effects of mobbing which can be divided into three areas: (1) individual; (2) organizational – at enterprise level; (3) social – at society and national economy level.

Mobbing at individual level

The analysis of the effects of mobbing at the individual level should be considered in the area of health deterioration of the person subjected to mobbing, which is the result of permanent stress. The literature on the subject describes a number of health effects that affect the victims of mobbing. Firstly, disorders such as confusion, anxiety, doubt, stress, isolation, body aches, eating disorders, difficulty in concentration, forgetting can

appear. These disorders are considered to be direct consequences [Erenkfeit et al. 2011; Chomczyński 2008; Warszewska-Makuch 2005; Ostrowska and Michcik 2014; Szymik and Brosz 2009; Kucharuk 2016].

Persistent mobbing causes permanent disorders in a person subjected to such mobbing, for instance: sleep problems; feeling either excessive unhealthy arousal, or total apathy. A victim may experience obsessive thoughts about the situation at work and then the desire to change the job. Victims of mobbing complain about headaches, vomiting, sleep disturbances and sexual dysfunction. There are symptoms of social maladjustment such as isolation, withdrawal, depression [Erenkfeit et al. 2011; Chomczyński 2008; Warszewska-Makuch 2005; Ostrowska 2014; Szymik and Brosz 2009; Kucharuk 2016].

Direct and indirect consequences borne by victims of mobbing affect their functioning in the workplace. An employee – a victim of mobbing – tends more often to dismiss from work and, in extreme cases, quits the job. In such case the employer bears the costs of increased personnel turnover, training of new employees, costs of treatment, even trial costs and payment of compensations for the victims. The team experiencing mobbing becomes less effective and, hence, the entire organization is less efficient.

Mobbing at enterprise level

To sum up, as previously mentioned by Warszewska-Makuch [2005; 2012b], Miedzik [2007], Chomczyński [2008], Szymik and Brosz [2009], Najda [2012], Ostrowska [2014], Kucharuk [2016] the losses incurred by the enterprise hiring an employee (affected by mobbing) include:

- costs of sick leave,
- staff turnover costs,
- compensation costs for victims of mobbing,
- reduction in work efficiency,
- reputation damage.

Mobbing at social and national economy level

The effects of mobbing occurring in the individual and enterprise levels are being transferred onto society and economy. Social and professional dysfunction of workers subjected to mobbing affects the economic situation of the whole society, and the costs affect each of us. In a nutshell, according to Warszewska-Makuch [2005], Miedzik [2007], Chomczyński [2008], Szymik and Brosz [2009], Najda [2012], Ostrowska [2014], Kucharuk [2016], the costs of mobbing incurred by the public include:

- treatment and rehabilitation of victims of mobbing,
- costs of sick leave financed from the Polish Social Insurance Institution
- fund,
- costs of transferring to a pension or retiring,
- family breakdown costs,
- costs incurred by the economy as a result of suicides.

Aim of work, material and method

The aim of the work was to assess the economic effects of mobbing on (1) an individual level; (2) enterprise level; (3) society and national economy level. The monetary value of the effects of mobbing was estimated based on literature review on the subject and the results of own research. Determining the scale of mobbing was made on the basis of bibliographic data for the period between 1993 and 2016. The ranked range of results was divided into quartiles and the average value for each quartile was determined. Determinations of individual, institutional and social effects were made on the basis of surveys of 100 people carried out in 2016. Of these, 73 people were directly affected by mobbing, or personally observed this phenomenon. The results of these studies were the basis for estimating the effects on the scale of the national economy, incurred in the three analyzed areas. In order to estimate consequences of mobbing we used macroeconomic indicators, as shown in table 4.

Table 1. Hierarchy of the health, organizational and social effects of mobbing in the workplace

Specification	Number of indications	Share (%)	Type of effect*
Depression	52	71,2	EM
Deterioration of health	51	69,9	EM
The employee was dismissed from work, he was dismissed	47	63,7	EM
The emergence of sleep problems	43	58,9	EM
The social position in the workplace has worsened	42	57,5	UE
The professional situation has worsened	38	52,1	UE
Performance dropped	34	46,6	EM
The ability to communicate with others has deteriorated	31	42,5	NE
The employee's reputation has been destroyed	29	39,7	UE

Specification	Number of indications	Share (%)	Type of effect*
The employee is on sick leave	25	34,3	EM
Invalidity pension	2	2,7	EM

*EM – economically measurable; UE – unmeasurable economically.

Source: own elaboration based on: Kucharuk M. (2016).

Table 1 presents a list of the effects of mobbing and an assessment was made as to whether it is possible to economically assess losses for each of them. The final value of economic losses as a result of mobbing was calculated based on two criteria:

- according to the principle of prudent valuation [Głębocka 2016], taking the average percentage of people affected by mobbing in quartiles I and II as a basis for the calculations,
- according to the average value of the percentage of people affected by mobbing, as shown in table 2, removing the two extreme values from lower and upper range of values.

The scale of mobbing

The analysis of research results, concerning the phenomenon of mobbing in the economy does not give a definite answer to the question as to what the actual scale of occurrence of this phenomenon in table 2 presents the results from research on the scale of occurrence of mobbing in Poland and globally.

Table 2. The scale of mobbing in Poland and in the Word in 1993–2015

Place of investigation	Year of investigation/ publication	Share off mobbing person (%)	Author of source
Finland	1993	4,3	Chomczyński, p. 219
USA	1993	19,0	NWNL, p. 16
EC countries	1996-2000	11,0	Lehto, Parnanen, pp. 1–21
Finland	1997-2003	8-11,0	Lehto, Parnanen, pp. 1–21
United Kingdom	2000	11,0	Di Martino et al., p. 109
Netherlands	2000-2002	2,0	Di Martino et al., p. 109
Norway	2001	8,6	Economic and Social Research Institute, pp. 1–3
Poland	2002	5,0	CBOS (in: Delikowska 2004), pp. 5–31
Poland	2002-2004	4,1- 7,8	Merecz et al., pp. 2–36
Spain	2003	16,0	Di Martino et al., pp. 109
Dutch	2004	17,0	Lehto, Parnanen, pp. 1–21

Place of investigation	Year of investigation/ publication	Share off mobbing person (%)	Author of source
Finland	2004	17,0	Lehto, Sutela (in: <i>Merecz</i>), pp. 1–36
Germany	2004	5,5	Lehto, Parnanen (in: <i>Merecz</i>), pp. 11–36
Poland	2004	9,0	Bechowska, Stalewski, p. 84
Poland	2004	6,8-47,2	Delikowska (2004), pp. 5–31.
United Kingdom	2004	1,4	Chomczyński, p. 219
Poland	2005	39,5	Delikowska (in Kamińska) (2005), pp. 91–99
Poland	2005	3,2	EWCS (in: Chomczyński)
25 Krajów UE	2005	5,0	Chomczyński, p. 219
Poland	2006	18,7	Miedzik, pp. 39–48
Old EEC countries	2007	7-15,0	Cewińska, Wojszczak, pp. 27–41
Poland	2010	3,3	Warszewska-Makuch (2012a), pp. 8–11
Poland	2014	17,0	Omyła-Rudzka pp. 1–17
Sweden	2015	3,5	Mazanowska, pp. 152–162
Poland	2015	56,0	Izydorczyk, Kęsa, pp. 77–104

Source: own elaboration.

Table 3: Estimation of the mobbing scale (%) in individual intervals

Specification	Range of the compartment			
	1/4	1/2	1	1 (without extreme results)
Quartile I	3,11	4,78	13,1	10,93
Quartile II	6,44			
Quartile III	11,66	20,87		
Quartile IV	28,93			

Source: Own calculation, based on table 2.

The review of data for the years 1993–2015 shows that the percentage of people who were victims of mobbing varied between 1.4% and 56%. It is worth noting that there is a large variation of this scale in individual years of research, as well as in individual countries where research was carried out. For example, the scale of mobbing in Finland ranged from 4.3% to 17%. Similar discrepancies were observed in Great Britain. The analysis of the results of Polish surveys shows that the percentage of victims of mobbing was even higher and ranged from 3.2% to 56%. This shows that in the field of research on the scale of occurrence of mobbing there is a great deal of freedom (and subjectivity) in defining the very concept of mobbing, and on the other hand – there is no understanding of this concept by the respondents. Upon analysis of results indicative of a high percentage of exposure to mobbing, it was observed that what

the respondents considered mobbing were all types of harassing and reprehensible behaviors in the workplace.

In the literature on the subject there are very few studies that can be representative for determining the scale of mobbing in Poland, and the results obtained are characterized by a large discrepancy. Therefore, in order to determine the scale of this phenomenon the values that were used were those observed in Poland, developed European countries and the USA.

Effects of mobbing on human health, organizational and social aspects

If considered at the individual level, the health effects of mobbing and the scale of their occurrence are shown in table 1. It turns out that the most common impacts on health were depression and the overall deterioration of health, and these occurred in 71,2% of people subjected to mobbing. Nearly 60% of respondents reported sleep problems. These effects are borne by employees who seek help in the health service, using professional help and spending significant amounts of money on medicines. The average annual value of outlays for this purpose was estimated at 1,200 PLN per capita, based on information provided by people active on Internet forums that were being treated for depression.

The extra costs incurred onto an employee due to changing jobs as a result of mobbing were estimated as the difference between the average wage and the amount of jobseeker's allowance over a period of 4 months [infor.pl 2018].

The primary effect contributing to generating costs at the level of the organization is a decline in labor productivity observed in people subjected to mobbing. The literature on the subject does not provide detailed data on the matter mainly because it is a very difficult aspect to examine. However, this factor cannot be omitted, as research shows that 46,6% of those subjected to mobbing admitted that their productivity decreased (table 1). For the purpose of estimating the economic effects of mobbing it was assumed that this efficiency decreased by 20% in relation to the value of annual GDP per capita.

The costs of sick leave are costs incurred by the economy and society in relation to the occurrence of mobbing. There are no detailed data on that matter, hence, it was assumed after Gałązka-Sobotka (2014, p. 45) that person subjected to mobbing is on sick leave on average 60 days a year, which is the same as for people suffering from depression. Due to the fact that depression is one of the main health disorders requiring treatment among respondents experiencing mobbing (table 1), adopting such value seems justified.

The rotation of employees is another result of mobbing. Such phenomenon well described in the literature entails the following expenses for the organization [HRownia 2017]:

- departure costs – 25% of annual salary,
- replacement costs – 50% of annual salary,
- implementation costs – 10% of annual salary.

It is estimated that the costs of turnover range from 30% to 200% of employee's annual salary, although they may amount to up to three times the salary [Philips, Edwards 2009]. For the purpose of estimating the effects of mobbing in Poland it was assumed that such a cost constitutes 85% of the annual salary in the economy.

The cost of mobbing-induced health treatments borne by the National Health Fund is quite difficult to estimate. Based on the study by Gałazka-Sobotka [2014, p. 45] it was assumed that the average cost of treating one person suffering from depression amounted to 1704 PLN in 2013. People experiencing mobbing can not only be treated for depression but also other illnesses (insomnia, gastric disorders, mental disorders, immunodeficiency, among others), hence, these expenses can be significantly higher. However, adopting the principle of prudence of valuation, the same value was assumed for the calculation of costs incurred by NFZ on this account.

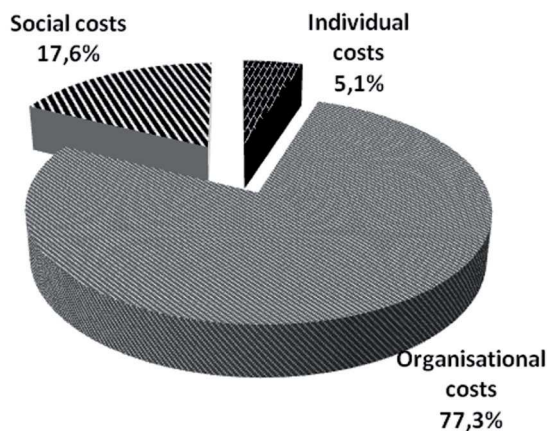
Another cost to the society is the pensions paid out from the Social Insurance Fund. 2.7% of people subjected to mobbing declared their transition to a pension due to mobbing (table 1). Benefits received based on permanent or temporary inability to work is an expense directly charging the national budget. Loss in GDP must also be included in the cost incurred upon society because a person transitioning into receiving a pension does not create a new added value.

Suicides committed as a result of mobbing are another significant social cost. The Polish National Police state that in Poland in 2017 there were 5 276 suicide attempts ended in death [Komenda Główna Policji 2018]. Although these were only two cases where direct causes of suicide were established to be mobbing and bullying, these data may not reflect the real scale of the phenomenon. In 4806 suicide cases, the official reasons reported by KGP were: mental disorders, family disagreements, loss of income and other. Analyzing the effects of mobbing in the workplace it remains clear that within a given criteria for the reasons for suicides as reported by the Polish National Police there remain reasons for suicide where mobbing could have been the likely cause. Studies by Nielsen et al. [2015, pp. 23–28] are worth citing. They carried out a research on 1850 employees in 2005–2010 in Norway. It was proved that as many as 4.9% of the people surveyed had suicidal thoughts, and these people turned out to be victims of mobbing. For the purpose of this study, it was assumed that suicides resulting from mobbing were committed by 15% of 4806 people. Considering the fact that 85.7% of all victims are men aged around 40, the annual loss for the economy is the equivalent of 25 years of GDP per capita for each person committing suicide.

Results

Analyzing the results of the research it was found that the largest losses due to mobbing in the workplace occurred at the organizational level (table 5, figure 1). In accordance with a method of prudent valuation these costs were 30 995 billion PLN and accounted for 77.3% of all costs.

Figure 1. Share (%) of individual, organisational and social costs in total costs of mobbing in the workplace



Source: own calculation.

From the organization's point of view the major costs were related to employee turnover which accounted 54.6% of the total cost (table 5). The second one in the ranking were costs related to the decline in productivity of people experiencing mobbing in the workplace which contributed 21.5%. Results show that the cost of sick leave is the smallest cost for the organization as it amounts to 0.469 billion PLN, and its share in total costs of mobbing is 1.17%.

The value of social costs of mobbing in the workplace amounted to 6.304 billion PLN which is 17.59% of the total cost (table 5). It turned out that the most severe costs, from social perspective, were the loss of GDP due to leaving labour market, and the loss of GDP due to suicides. These costs amounted to over 2.1 billion PLN which was translated to 5.27% of all costs. The third highest cost concerns the treatment of the effects of mobbing and incurs charges upon the National Health Fund with the amount of 0.957 billion PLN. Subsequently, the society bears the costs of sick leave which are charged to the Social Insurance Fund by 0.812 billion PLN. It appears that the lowest costs are disability pensions financed by ZUS as well as jobseeker's allowance costs charged to The (National) Labour Fund.

The lowest value presented in table 5 was that of the costs of individual effects of mobbing in the workplace (table 5). It amounted to 2.032 billion PLN amounting for 5.07% of total costs. The most severe effect at the individual level is the decline in income caused by the loss of employment and the search for a new one by people trying to escape mobbing as it amounts to 1.37 billion PLN. Although the health treatment costs amounted to only 0.661 billion PLN, these were almost equal to the costs of disability benefits and unemployment benefits together which are both financed from the national budget.

Assuming that mobbing affects 10.93% employees, trends in estimating costs of mobbing are very similar as for the 4.78% index. However, monetary values are more than twice as high in this case. Therefore, no detailed analysis of the second level on the mobbing scale (table 5) was conducted. It should only be mentioned that the value of losses for the economy at such level of mobbing could amount to 88.9 billion PLN.

The calculated value of losses caused by mobbing in the workplace ranged from 40.078 to 88.923 billion PLN in the conditions of Polish economy. This amount corresponds to 2.07 to 4,59 of the annual GDP of Poland. This amount is highly significant, although it should be noted that such losses are indeed incurred due to the occurrence of mobbing in the workplace. For example, Australia's economy suffers annually from 6 to 13 billion of PLN losses annually [Merecz 2005, p. 12].

Table 4. Indicators and data sources used to calculate the effects of workplace mobbing in 2017 in Poland

Specification	Unit of measure	Value	Source
Value of Polish GDP in 2017	Millions of PLN	1 936 355	GUS (2017)
Number of employees in the national economy at the end of the fourth quarter of 2017	person	16 510 000	GUS (2018)
GDP per capita	PLN	11 283.77	Own calculation
Share of people subjected to mobbing	%	1.4-56	Own calculations based on a bibliography review
Number of people subjected to mobbing	person	231 140 – 9 245 600	Own calculation
Average monthly salary in the economy at the end of the fourth quarter of 2017.	PLN by month	4516.69	Gałązka-Sobotka M. (ed) (2014)
The average time spent by a person subjected to mobbing on medical exemptions	days	60	Gałązka-Sobotka M. (ed) (2014)

Specification	Unit of measure	Value	Source
Expenses from the Social Insurance Fund for sick leave	Millions of PLN	8 400	ZUS (2017)
Expenses from the company's fund for sick leave	Millions of PLN	4 852	
The average daily amount of sickness benefit	PLN	79.11	
Number of suicides in Poland	person	5 276	Komenda Główna Policji, Raport 2016.
Probable number of suicides caused by mobbing	person	668	Own calculation
Employees rotation	share (%)	20	Own calculation
Average, annual expenses of people subjected to mobbing on medicines and treatment	PLN	1200,00	Own calculation
An average monthly invalidity pension funded by the Social Insurance Fund	PLN by month	1592.40	Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych, Departament Statystyki i Prognoz Aktuarialnych, Warszawa 2017
The average benefit for an unemployed person	PLN per person by month	741.85	Own calculation based on Zasilek dla bezrobotnych netto 2017–2018 [online], www.infor.pl.
The annual cost of treatment of a person subjected to mobbing in the NFZ	PLN/ person/ year	1704.00	Gałązka-Sobotka M. (ed) (2014)

Source: own elaboration.

Table 5. Individual, organizational and social costs of workplace mobbing

Specification	Scale of mobbing			
	Careful estimation: 4.78%		Average data; 10.93%	
	Value (PLN)	Share (%)	Value (PLN)	Share (%)
Individual costs				
Drug costs, treatment of depression and other effects of mobbing	661 963 000.00	1.65	1 513 651 000.00	1.70
Lost income due to dismissal and looking for a new job	1 370 350 000.00	3.42	3 133 456 000.00	3.52
Total	2 032 313 019.00	5.07	4 647 106 000.00	5.23

Specification	Scale of mobbing			
	Careful estimation: 4.78%		Average data; 10.93%	
	Value (PLN)	Share (%)	Value (PLN)	Share (%)
Organizational costs				
Decrease in work efficiency	8 626 384 000.00	21.52	19 725 184 000.00	22.18
Costs of sick leave financed from the enterprise fund	469 054 000.00	1.17	1 072 545 000.00	1.21
Employees rotation costs	21 900 118 000.00	54.64	50 077 049 000.00	56.31
Total	30 995 556 000.00	77.34	70 874 778 000.00	79.70
Social costs				
Costs of sick leave financed by the Social Insurance Fund	812 048 000.00	2.03	1 856 837 000.00	2.09
Costs of health care financed by the NFZ	957 435 000.00	2.39	2 189 282 000.00	2.46
Costs of suicide caused by mobbing	2 114 040 000.00	5.27	2 114 040 000.00	2.38
The costs of moving to an invalidity pension	346 846 000.00	0.87	793 100 980 000.00	0.89
Loss of GDP due to leaving the labor market	2 499 060 000.00	6.24	5 714 377 000.00	6.43
Unemployment benefit costs	320 828 000.00	0.80	733 608 000.00	0.82
Total	7 050 257 000.00	17.59	13 401 244 000.00	15.07
Total costs	40 078 126 000.00	100.00	88 923 128 000.00	100.00

Source: own calculation.

Analysis of the material contained in this work showed that the amount of losses caused by mobbing in the workplace is governed by three factors. The first of them, which has the biggest impact on determining the final result, is the scale of mobbing. It was established that every 1% of people subjected to mobbing in the workplace cause losses amounting to approximately 8.4 billion PLN annually. The second factor is losses caused by staff turnover. Every 1% of people subjected to mobbing amount for 4.58 billion PLN a year in economic losses. The third factor is the decline in work efficiency of people exposed to mobbing. Each 1% of people subjected to mobbing leads to 1.804 billion PLN losses to the economy per year. Despite a careful approach in an attempt to estimate the scale of the mobbing phenomenon, the calculated losses and their scale are indeed concerning. Perhaps this work will inspire further research that will attempt to determine the scale of the phenomenon of

mobbing, employee turnover and the decline in productivity of employees subject to mobbing in the most reliable way. Precise determination of the size of these three factors is the basis for a reliable and comprehensive calculation of losses at the level of the entire economy.

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