Executive Psychopaths. Abusive Behaviour of the Management

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The article presents the characteristics of "executive psychopaths", showing that the current business environment "predisposes" individuals with "pathological" features of personality to holding the highest posts within organisations. The most important factors that enable a diagnosis of such types of leaders have also been described. Moreover, it has been suggested that the most common behaviours demonstrated by the "executive psychopaths" involve mobbing, bullying, sexual harassment and political behaviours. A variety of forms of such abusive behaviour have been described together with their consequences for the employees.

Key words: executive psychopath, violence in the workplace, mobbing, bullying, sexual harassment, political behaviours.

Introduction

The researchers' interest in the issue of workplace aggression stems from the broad scale of this phenomenon. Its significance has been acknowledged by various organisations, e.g., the World Health Organisation[1], or the European

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[1] *World Report on Violence and Health*, Eds. E. Krug, L. Dahlberg, J. Mercy, A. Zwi, R. Lozano, World Health Organization, Geneva 2002; http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/)

Commission[2], which have not only tried to diagnose the symptoms of workplace aggression, but also proposed certain recommendations and solutions for implementation by entrepreneurs or state authorities.

The researchers indicate that numerous forms of aggression are becoming increasingly common in modern organisations. They start with relatively mild practices, for instance with varied types of rudeness and lack of sensitivity, develop through oppression and cruelty towards other people, and end with acts of aggression which may result in physical injuries or even death[3]. The abusive behaviour, which occurs in the workplace with growing frequency (its presence depends on various social, economic, organisational, financial and psychological factors)[4], relates not only to the victims of abuse, but also, indirectly, to the whole environment of an organisation (witnesses, co-workers, superiors). As a result, this situation influences the efficiency of the performed work, the social relations of the employees and their sense of quality of life[5]. People demonstrating aggressive behaviour are often the executives, who – instead of encouraging and maintaining positive attitudes of their employees and building their commitment – bring violence and terror into the workplace. Zapf and Einarsen indicate that 50–70% of all of the abusive behaviours occurring within an organisation are demonstrated by the leaders[6]. Behaviours of that kind are mainly observed among a group of executives who can be described as "corporate psychopaths" – and who are responsible for about 25% of all cases of abuse[7].

The aim of the present study is to attempt to characterise the "executive psychopaths", as well as to describe the most common forms of deviant behaviour which they demonstrate within an organisation.

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[2] R. Wynne, N. Clarkin, T. Cox, A. Griffiths, *Guidance on the Prevention of Violence at Work*, Brussels, European Commission 1997, (DG-V, Ref. CE/VI-4/97).

[3] J.L. Kisamore, I.M. Jawahar, E.W. Liguori, T.L. Mharapara, T.H. Stone, *Conflict and Abusive Workplace Behaviors. The Moderating Effects of Social Competencies*, "Career Development International" 2010, Vol. 15, No. 6, p. 583.

[4] C.M. Pearson, C.L. Porath, *On the Nature, Consequences and Remedies of Incivility: No Time for Nice? Think Again*, "Academy of Management Executive" 2005, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 7–18.

[5] *Workplace Violence and Harassment: a European Picture*; http://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/reports/violence-harassment-TERO09010ENC)

[6] D. Zapf, S. Einarsen, *Mobbing At Work: Escalated Conflicts in Organizations*, in: *Counterproductive Work Behavior*, Eds. S. Fox, P.E. Spector, American Psychological Association, Washington 2005, p. 240.

[7] C.R. Boddy, *Corporate Psychopaths, Bullying and Unfair Supervision in the Workplace*, "Journal of Business Ethics" 2011, Vol. 100, p. 367.

1. "Executive psychopaths" – who are they ?

The terms: "executive psychopath", "organizational psychopath", "industrial psychopath", or "organizational sociopath" describe a person who manages an organisation or a group of employees and who manifests deviant behaviour which is characterised by bullying, using violence, and performing passive or active acts of aggression[8]. Although "psychopath" is a classical term used in clinical psychology – where it describes dysfunctions[9] consisting in inability to observe social and legal norms, pathological lying and cheating, impulsive behaviour, aggression, lack of responsibility, or lack of feeling of guilt when hurting others – it has already been present in the studies of organisations and management for a considerable period of time[10]. Its usefulness results – as Furnham indicates – from the fact that leaders, managers, and politicians frequently demonstrate behaviours characteristic to this group of dysfunctions. The only difference is that, contrary to psychopaths/sociopaths who are diagnosed clinically, these individuals are characterised by high social status and intelligence, and their actions are not as obvious, which means that sometimes they can be difficult to discern[11]. "Organisational psychopaths" may be very charming and friendly persons, and, most of all, they may be willing to promise privileges, posts, money or other benefits more readily than the others[12]. Their actions are generally very successful, as they are able to exploit their employees even to the limits of exhaustion when their targets have to be met. Babiak and Hare indicate that today's business environment provides favourable conditions for demonstration of such behaviours. The domination of economic targets with the highest value – namely, the work efficiency – predisposes the individuals characterised by the described personality features

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[8] R.J. Pech, B.W. Slade, *Organizational Sociopaths: Rarely Challenged, Often Promoted. Why?*, "Society and Business Review" 2007, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 254–269.

[9] Psychopathy is treated as a clinical form of personality disorder (psychopathic personality) and, together with amoral, antisocial, asocial and sociopathic personality, it is perceived as the dissocial personality disorder. See: A. Jakubik, *Zaburzenia osobowości*, in: *Psychiatria*, Ed. A. Bilikiewicz, PZWL, Warszawa 1998, p. 348.

[10] A. Furnham, *Personality Disorder and Derailment at Work: The Paradoxical Positive Influence of Pathology in the Workplace*, in: *Research Companion to the Dysfunctional Workplace. Management Challenges and Symptoms*, Eds. J. Langan-Fox, C.L. Cooper, R.J. Klimoski, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK 2008, p. 27.

[11] Ibidem, p. 28.

[12] R. Hogan, J. Hogan, *Assessing Leadership: A View from the Dark Side*, "International Journal of Selection and Assessment" 2001, Vol. 9, pp. 40–51.

to holding the highest positions within the structure of an organisation[13]. In order to meet the assumed business goals, they use the methods that violate basic rules of social relations, including: bullying, acting in favour of somebody, introducing systems of rewards and punishments which are not understood by the employees, manipulating, or forcing the employees to demonstrate the desired behaviours. Anshfort[14] describes it as a form of petty tyranny and Tepper – as abusive supervision[15]. Boddy even claims that "executive psychopath" gets pleasure out of humiliating, doing harm to, manipulating and exploiting the others[16].

On the basis of their studies, Mathisen, Einarsen and Mykletun prepared personality characteristics of a leader who demonstrates the behaviours described above. The authors claim that the main predictors of abusive behaviour are low levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness, as well as high levels of neuroticism and experienced stress[17]. It can also be noticed that the manifestation of negative behaviour in a form of strong aggression is a significant factor influencing the occurrence of organisational deviations[18].

Babiak and Hare, mentioned above, have presented general characteristics of the "executive psychopath", with the following features:

1. Comes across as smooth, polished and charming.
2. Turns most conversations around to a discussion of him- or herself.
3. Discredits and puts down others in order to build up his or her own image and reputation.
4. Lies with a straight face to co-workers, customers, or business associates.
5. Considers people he or she has outsmarted or manipulated as dumb or stupid.
6. Is opportunistic; hates to lose, plays ruthlessly to win.
7. Comes across as cold and calculating.
8. Acts in an unethical or dishonest manner.
9. Has created a power network in the organisation and uses it for personal gain.

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[13] A. Furnham, *Personality Disorder and Derailment at Work…*, op. cit., p. 30.

[14] B. Anshfort, *Petty Tyranny in Organizations*, "Human Relations" 1994, Vol. 47, pp. 755–778.

[15] B.J. Tepper, *Consequences of Abusive Supervision*, "Academy of management Journal" 2000, Vol. 43, pp. 178–190.

[16] C.R. Boddy, *Corporate Psychopaths…*, op. cit., p. 369.

[17] G.E. Mathisen, S. Einarsen, R. Mykletun, *The Relationship Between Supervisor Personality, Supervisors' Perceived Stress and Workplace Bullying*, "Journal of Business Ethics" 2011, Vol. 99, p. 648.

[18] Ch.M. Berry, P.R. Sackett, V. Tobares, *A Meta-Analysis of Conditional Reasoning Tests of Aggression*, "Personnel Psychology" 2010, Vol. 63, pp. 361–384.

10. Shows no regret for making decisions that negatively affect the company, its shareholders, or employees[19].

It can be concluded from the description above that the "executive psychopaths" manifest abusive and political behaviours mainly in order to attain their targets.

2. Organisational aggression and psychopathic practises of the executives

Organisational aggression is most commonly described as a form of abuse or other intentional action demonstrated by the perpetrator in order to make damages or to do harm to other persons in the workplace, or as acts performed to the detriment of the organisation[20]. Therefore, it will include all intentional actions which are addressed to external units (people, objects) and aim at doing harm or making damage. According to Buss's typology, aggressive behaviour will be manifested through direct or indirect, physical or verbal, active or passive acts focused on hurting people (e.g., assaulting, threatening, refusing to cooperate) or through destroying the resources of the organisation (thefts, sabotage, destroying company's property)[21]. The more complex form of organisational aggression is interpersonal aggression – concerning human relations and focused on evoking negative consequences (psychological or physical) in relation to other individuals from organisational environment[22].

Although the definition of interpersonal aggression is quite clear and broad, the researchers use different terms, which have various theoretical constructs. As Hershcovis and Barling indicate, individual concepts of interpersonal aggression can be described in reference to five factors: concept, assumption, target, dimension and scope of interaction, perspective, and intentionality[23]. In reference literature we can find such terms as: abusive supervision, emotional abuse, petty tyranny, bullying, mobbing, social undermining, or workplace incivility. Individual approaches differ in terms of assumptions relating to the durability of those behaviours and their more or less destructive character; the

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[19] A. Furnham, *Personality Disorder and Derailment at Work…*, op. cit., p. 31.
[20] J.H. Neuman, R.A. Baron, *Aggression in the Workplace: A Social-Psychological Perspective*, in: *Counterproductive Work Behavior*, op. cit., p. 18
[21] Ibidem, p. 20.
[22] Ibidem, p. 16.
[23] M.S. Hershcovis, J. Barling, *Towards a Relational Model of Workplace Aggression*, in: *Research Companion to the Dysfunctional Workplace…*, op. cit., p. 269.

target can be employees or subordinates (as in the case of bullying, abusive supervision and forcing somebody to do something); the scope and power of interaction can affect the physical or the psychological sphere; and the perspective for consideration can relate to the victim or the perpetrator.

The described types of behaviour can be defined within the frame of the term "workplace violence". However, Neuman and Baron indicate that aggression is different from violence, as violence is related to significant or repetitive physical abuse, which does not have to occur in the case of aggression[24]. Yet, it seems that all negative interpersonal behaviours may be associated with a lower or higher scope of abuse manifested by perpetrators towards their victims. According to Chappell and Di Martino[25], workplace violence includes all actions of the management, incidents or behaviours, which are perceived by a target as attacks, threats, or the ones that cause potential losses, or health impairment[26].

Abusive behaviours of the executives can be manifested as violence directed towards the target or as actions that indirectly interfere with the target's environment. They can include undertaking harmful actions or intentional restraining from providing support. They can be pro-active, calculated and planned, or – as it is sometimes emphasized – reactive, emotional, or subject to provocation. Therefore, as the authors indicate, abusive behaviour does not have to occur only in the workplace (the so called internal violence), but it can also be manifested outside the workplace, or when a target is absent (the so called external violence)[27].

If we focus on the acts of aggression within the organisation, it can be concluded that the typical abusive behaviours demonstrated by the "executive

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[24] J.H. Neuman, R.A. Baron, *Aggression in the Workplace*, op. cit., p. 19.

[25] D. Chappell, V. Di Martino, *Violence at Work*, International Labour Organisation, Geneva 2006, p. 10.

[26] When analysing the perspective of a victim, it has to be emphasized that in the view of studies on **victimology** it is assumed that a victim is not chosen "accidentally". This means that some people are "predisposed" to be victims due to some personality features they possess. Such a person can become a target of a perpetrator in a certain social or environmental situation. The "victimological potential" mentioned here means the *system of features of a person, group, social macrostructure, institutional organisation, state organisation and features of living conditions, which provide a threat of becoming abused.* B. Hołyst, *Wiktymologia*, Wyd. Prawnicze PWN, Warszawa 1997, p. 31. The fields connected with such potential include, e.g., features of biological condition of a person (lower physical fitness), features of a state of mind (e.g., lack of defensive mechanisms), features of social conditions (e.g., social status, characteristics of some occupations), features of economic conditions (e.g., possession of goods). Ibidem, pp. 31–32.

[27] M.M. LeBlanck, J. Barling, *Understanding the Many Faces of Workplace Violence*, in: *Counterproductive Work Behavior*, op. cit., p. 42.

psychopaths" comprise: emotional abuse (e.g., mobbing, bullying, sexual harassment) and abusive supervision. Those behaviours can assume a form of psychological terror or physical aggression, and they can refer to single acts or long-term ones. Chappell and Di Martino claim that those acts include: homicide, bullying, rapes, oppression, harms, threats, beating, ostracism, pushing, sending aggressive messages, spatial aggressive behaviours, rude gestures, destroying things belonging to employees, shouting, insulting, harassment (including sexual), insinuations, or ignoring[28].

The typical representation of long-term relations which consist of repetitive behaviours is **emotional abuse,** which is perceived as continuous, verbal and nonverbal symptoms of hostility manifested by shouting, cussing somebody out, giving aggressive looks, avoiding contact with somebody, not disclosing necessary information or directing uncontrolled bursts of anger towards somebody. Such attacks aim at forcing the target to be submissive[29].

Generally, the cases of emotional abuse can be defined as those behaviours of an executive which meet the following criteria:

They are manifested in a form or verbal and nonverbal attacks (excluding physical contact, e.g., gesturing, violation of personal space, attacks based on eye contact);
• They are repetitive or patterned;
• They are unwelcome and unsolicited by the target;
• They constitute a violation of a standard of appropriate conduct toward others;
• They are harmful, or cause psychological or physical injury to the target;
• They are intended to harm or to control the target;
• They include behaviour related to exploiting the position or the power of the actor over the target[30].
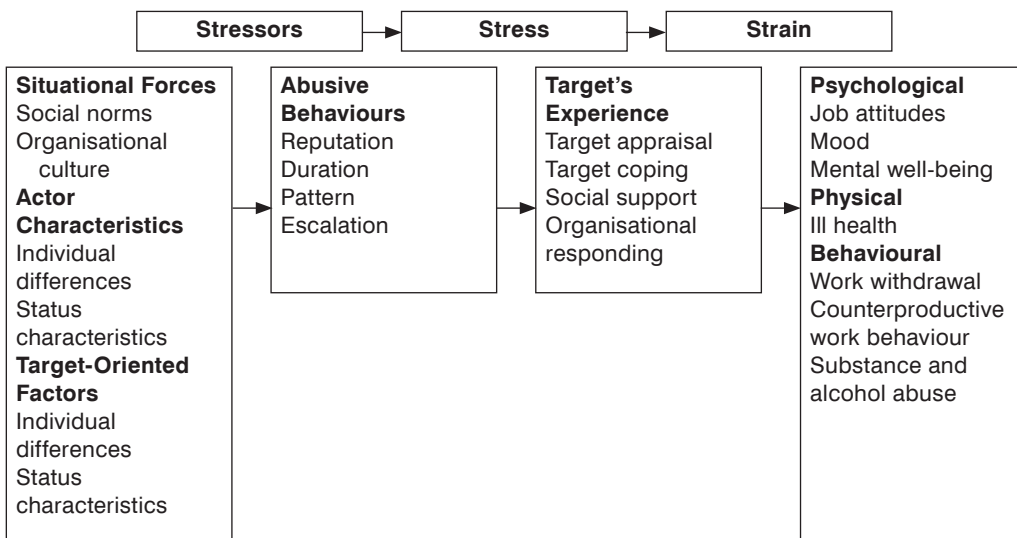
Keashly, Harley have presented in one of their studies a model of emotional abuse which includes conditions, symptoms, moderators and consequences of such abusive behaviour (Fig. 1).

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[28] D. Chappell, V. Di Martino, *Violence at Work*, op. cit., p. 16.

[29] L. Keashly, *Emotional Abuse in the Workplace*, "Journal of Emotional Abuse" 1998, Vol. 1, pp. 85–117.

[30] L. Keashly, S. Harley, *Emotional Abuse in the Workplace*, in: *Counterproductive Work Behavior*, op. cit., p. 204.

Figure 1. The model of interactions within emotional abuse process according to Keashly and Harley

| Stressors | → | Stress | → | Strain |

Situational Forces	Abusive Behaviours	Target's Experience	Psychological
Social norms Organisational culture **Actor Characteristics** Individual differences Status characteristics **Target-Oriented Factors** Individual differences Status characteristics	Reputation Duration Pattern Escalation	Target appraisal Target coping Social support Organisational responding	Job attitudes Mood Mental well-being **Physical** Ill health **Behavioural** Work withdrawal Counterproductive work behaviour Substance and alcohol abuse

Source: L. Keashly, S. Harley, *Emotional Abuse in the Workplace*, op. cit., p. 203.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the stressors (factors causing acts of emotional abuse) cover both the situational conditions (organisational culture conducive to competition and hostility, norms of a group strengthening tolerance for aggression, lack of organisational justice) and the disposition of a perpetrator (aggression, hostility, neuroticism) or of a target (submissiveness, neuroticism, being provocative). Those conditions strengthen and sometimes evoke abusive behaviours which have different scope and intensity. The act of emotional abuse is itself filtered by different (personal or social) factors, which the authors associate with the way of interpreting and controlling the acts of aggression by the victims, with the victims' ability to deal with difficult situations, the support occurring in organisational and personal environment (co-workers, family, friends), as well as with the reaction of managers and executives towards those behaviours. As a result, such a process leads to psychological (depression, self-worth, quality of life, etc.), physical (health problems) and behavioural (tendency towards counterproductive behaviours) consequences for the victim.

Although, as it was presented above, the acts of emotional abuse can assume different forms, it is worth emphasizing that their most specific and most often analysed symptoms are mobbing and bullying.

The term **mobbing**, sometimes referred to as moral abuse[31], was first coined by Leymann at the beginning of the 1980s[32]. Most commonly, it describes actions having the symptoms of emotional abuse and consisting in long-term and repetitive harassment, oppression and/or terrorising of the victim/victims in the workplace by people who are superior to them or by a group of such people. Contrary to other discussed forms of abuse, the researchers did not develop a single, uniform definition of mobbing[33]. Despite differences in defining this phenomenon, we can agree with Leymann that mobbing is a form of hostile communication between one or several employees and another employee, who becomes a victim and is forced to defend himself/herself, but, faced with the lack of support, he/she is not able to change this difficult situation due to frequent (at least once a week) and long-term (at least half a year) character of abusive behaviour directed towards him/her. Leymann emphasizes the consequences of such behaviour, which include, among others: psychological trauma, inability to defend the present workplace and inability to find new employment. Mobbing is not a single act, but it is an intentional process on the part of a perpetrator, aiming at causing negative consequences for the victim[34].

Mobbing demonstrated by the superiors can have different forms, can be connected with communication processes, social relations, and employee's reputation, and may influence work conditions, health – and, in extreme cases, can make a victim commit suicide. Leymann distinguished 45 mobbing actions and divided them into 5 groups, reflecting the following levels of emotional abuse:

• **acts interfering with the communication process** (e.g., limiting or taking away the possibility of providing an opinion, reacting to the statements of an employee with shouts and insults, constant criticising of the performed work, making oral and written threats, making allusions or providing veiled criticism, avoiding direct communication with a subordinate);

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[31] M.F. Hirigoyen, *Molestowanie w pracy*, Wydawnictwo W drodze, Poznań 2003.

[32] H. Leymann, *The Content and Development of Mobbing at Work* "European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology" 1996, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 165–184.

[33] Although general characteristics of the phenomenon are similarly perceived by most of the authors concerned with this issue, it can be observed that almost all of them define it differently, depending on the aspect of mobbing to which the attention is paid. Therefore, there are descriptive definitions, presenting this phenomenon from the psychological perspective [H. Leymann, *The Content…*, op., cit.; D. Chappel, V. Di Martino, *Vilence at Work…*, op. cit.] definitions emphasizing the sociological character of the phenomenon or code-based ones (referring to labour law).

[34] D. Zapf, S. Einarsen, *Mobbing At Work: Escalated Conflicts in Organizations*, in: *Counterproductive Work Behavior…*, op. cit., p. 240.

- **acts affecting social relations in a negative way** (e.g., physical or social isolation of an employee);
- **acts against the victim's image** (e.g., backbiting, spreading gossips, joking or laughing at the private life of an employee);
- **acts against professional position of a victim** (e.g., forcing a victim to perform work violating human dignity, questioning decisions made by an employee, not assigning employee any tasks to perform, assigning tasks below one's qualifications and competences);
- **acts against victim's health** (e.g., ordering works harmful to health, inconsistent with victim's skills and to be performed without adequate equipment, physical and emotional abuse, sex-related abusive behaviour, sexual harassment)[35].

Insofar as mobbing is defined as all acts of emotional abuse directed towards co-workers, **bullying**[36] is described as only those acts in which there is a single perpetrator who is informally or professionally superior to the victim[37]. In the case of mobbing, the subject of interest is a target experiencing aggressive behaviours (emotional and physical) from the environment, and the effects of such behaviour on health, mental condition and work efficiency are taken into consideration. In the case of bullying, the perpetrator (manager, executive) is in the centre of interest, and more specifically – the features of character he/she possesses and the acts he/she undertakes to influence the behaviour of subordinates[38].

According to Rayner and Keashly, operationalization of the term bullying should include five elements[39]:
- manifestation of negative behaviours (e.g., harassment, isolating, humiliation, preventing somebody from performing their tasks);
- durability of behaviour – regular (at least 6 months) and repetitive (at least once a week) negative behaviour in relation to an employee[40];

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[35] J. Marciniak, *Mobbing, dyskryminacja, molestowanie – zasady przeciwdziałania*, Wolters Kluwer, Warszawa 2011, p. 21–22.

[36] The term bullying appeared in reference books due to a broad scope of the definition of mobbing, in order to help distinguish the victim and the perpetrator. It is worth stressing, however, that the terms "mobbing" and "bullying" are sometimes used interchangeably, since the term "bullying" is more often employed by the English-speaking researchers, while "mobbing" is preferred by the representatives of Continental Europe.

[37] C.R. Boddy, *Corporate Psychopaths…*, op. cit., p. 367.

[38] D. Zapf, S. Einarsen, *Mobbing At Work…*, op. cit., p. 243.

[39] Ch. Rayner, L. Keashly, *Bullying at Work: A Perspective from Britain and Nord America*, in: *Counterproductive Work Behavior*, op. cit., p. 273.

[40] G.E. Mathisen, S. Einarsen, R. Mykletun, *The Relationship Between Supervisor Personality, Supervisors'…*, op. cit., p. 638.

- consequences for the victim (e.g., stress, health problems, lower quality of performed work);
- subjective perception of oneself as a victim – bullying depends on the target's perception; one person may feel as the object of attacks, others may not[41];
- formal and informal power imbalance – the situation will not be perceived as bullying if the parties of the conflict have similar life position.

Therefore, bullying can be understood as repetitive and continuous aggressive and negative activities of an executive directed towards a unit or units, which cause imbalance of relations and power, as well as create hostile environment in the workplace[42]. The repetitive character of bullying marks it as a process rather than a one-time phenomenon. Einarsen and Skogstad, after studying different forms of this type of abuse, came to a conclusion that at the beginning, the abusive behaviour of the aggressor is occasional and often context-related, and then, after development and escalation of a conflict, it takes the form of frequent assaults connected with everyday activity of a victim[43]. Bjorqvist indicates that we can distinguish three general phases of bullying[44]. In the first one, discreet actions building a hostile and discrediting environment are manifested and directed towards a victim. The second one includes direct attacks on a person, which are related to isolation and public humiliation (e.g., rude jokes). In the third phase, the direct abuse against the target occurs together with the usage of formal power.

The causes of executives' abusive behaviour can be varied. It can result from hidden anti-social tendencies and willingness to hurt others, or it may present an attempt to build the forced control over the personnel, which is then referred to as pervasive abuse. Acts of aggression can be also focused on, e.g., forcing the employees to quit their jobs, or making them plan early retirement, which forms a symptom of strategic abuse. Finally, the superior can display institutional abuse, introducing aggressive rules of employees management, based on pathological culture of the organisation[45].

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[41] J. Pate, P. Beaumont, *Bullying and Harassment: A Case of Success?*, "Employee Relations" 2010, Vol. 32, No. 2, p. 172.

[42] P. Sandvik, S. Tracy, J. Alberts, *Burned by Bullying in the American Workplace: Prevalence, Perception, Degree and Impact*, "Journal of Management Studies" 2007, Vol. 44 No. 6, p. 838.

[43] S. Einarsen, A. Skogstad, *Bullying at Work: Epidemiological Findings in Public and Private Organizations*, "European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology" 1996, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 185–201.

[44] J. Legan-Fox, M. Sankey, *Tyrants and Workplace Bullying*, in: *Research Companion…*, op. cit., p. 67.

[45] M.F. Hirigoyen, *Molestowanie w pracy*, op. cit.

Another specific symptom of abusive behaviour demonstrated by "corporate psychopaths" in the workplace is **sexual harassment**. The significance of such behaviour in the context of an organisation was first noticed over 40 years ago[46]. Currently, this issue is emphasized not only by feminist organisations[47], but also by researchers involved in the issue of equal opportunities on the labour market[48], by state authorities or by representatives of the European Parliament[49]. Sexual harassment is a demonstration of violence and discrimination by the superior, and it limits the efficiency and productivity of functioning not only on the part of the employed entities, but also of the entire organisation. The reference books provide varied definitions of this phenomenon: the formal ones – connected with the state or international regulations and often subject to sanctions (e.g., the Polish Labour Code); the colloquial ones – relating to the common ideas or beliefs concerning the issue of sexual harassment; and the socio-psychological ones – defining the specific behaviour of abuser and its most common consequences for the victim[50].

Chappell and Di Martino emphasize the third approach towards this phenomenon (i.e., socio-psychological), claiming that sexual harassment consists of a number of repetitive, undesired and unwelcome acts having sexual character, which are harmful and humiliating, and which affect the dignity of the abuser's target. These acts can include touching, a specific attitude, sexually-based jokes or messages, allusions to private life, remarks about sexual orientation or sexual abilities, about appearance and outfit, or allusions related to certain parts of the body or to the whole person[51]. The forms of sexual harassment can have different character: physical (e.g., unwanted physical contact with a victim), oral (e.g., repetitive sexually-based comments), gesture-based (e.g., sexual emblems), written (e.g., sexually-based e-mails), demanding (e.g., issuing threats concerning loss of a job if sexual demands are refused), or spatial (e.g., creating hostile and sexually tinged work environment)[52]. Bugdol notices that sexual harassment, according to the reports from the studies,

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[46] L.M. Cortina, J.L. Berdahl, *Sexual Harassment in Organizations: A Decade of Research in Review*, in: *Organizational Behavior*, op. cit., p. 469.

[47] *Gender Index. Niemoralne propozycje. Molestowanie w miejscu pracy*; http://www.femi-noteka.pl/downloads/molestowanie_broszura_internet.pdf).

[48] J. Warylewski, *Molestowanie seksualne miejscu pracy*, LEX, Sopot 1999; Gender Index. *Monitorowanie równości kobiet i mężczyzn w miejscu pracy*, Ed. E. Lisowska, EQUAL, UNDP, Warszawa 2007.

[49] See: J. Marciniak, *Mobbing, dyskryminacja, molestowanie…*, op. cit., pp. 44–91.

[50] L.M. Cortina, J.L. Berdahl, *Sexual Harassment in Organizations…*, op. cit., pp. 470–471.

[51] D. Chappell, V. Di Martino, *Violence at Work*, op. cit., p. 17.

[52] Ibidem, pp. 18–19.

relates to about 50% of women employed in organisations. However, there are studies which state that 90% of women have experienced sexual harassment[53]. This form of behaviour is not only connected with the relations between men and women, but it can also be observed in the relations within a one-sex environment. Nevertheless, the first type of relations is most common.

Bugdol further distinguishes two forms of harassment: one occurs between superior and subordinate, and the other pertains to organisational context. While the first form, similarly as in the case of bullying, is connected with work dependency, the second one includes relations not only between employees, but can also concern people indirectly associated with an organisation, e.g., clients, suppliers, petitioners, etc[54]. Marcinak indicates that the definition of sexual harassment is related to the repetitive character of this phenomenon; the process of constant and continuous deviant behaviours. It is a rare occurrence for the perpetrator to harass only one person, as most commonly such behaviour pertains to a number of targets and is connected with the context of organisation[55]. Fitzgerald et al. proposed a model, basing on which we can explain the occurrence of these counterproductive behaviours. According to the researchers, their first dimension is connected with employees' general acceptance of sexually-based unwanted acts (the so called environment for harassment); the second dimension is the attitude towards the opposite sex[56]. In their analyses, Peled, Gutek, and York also emphasize that the occurrence of this phenomenon is mainly the effect of employees' attitudes and different views on that which is allowed in the context of the organisation, and which is not[57].

It can be concluded, from the analysis above, that abuse and violence present in the practices of executives can assume different forms. Nevertheless, all of them exert similar effects – occurrence of pathology in the scope of employees' relations, and, consequently, a decrease of both the organisation functioning efficiency and quality of life of individual participants of organisation's life. It is certain, however, that it is not only the aggressive behaviours that contribute to the fact that professional relations are worsening. Another type of pathological behaviours, which – according to the typology of Babiak and Hare – are

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[53] M. Bugdol, *Gry i nieetyczne zachowania w organizacji*, Difin, Warszawa 2007, p. 85.

[54] Ibidem.

[55] J. Marciniak, *Mobbing, dyskryminacja, molestowanie…*, op. cit., p. 52.

[56] L.F. Fitzgerald, *Sexual Harassment: Violence Against Women in the Workplace*, "American Psychologist" 1993, Vol. 48, pp. 1070–1076.

[57] Y. Vardi, E. Weitz, *Misbehavior in Organizations*, Lawrence Elbaum Associates, New Jersey 2004, p. 74.

demonstrated by "organisational psychopaths" are **political behaviours**.

Despite generally expressed expectations that the aim of the organisation is to provide prosperity to all interested parties, in reality, each organisation is a place where political interests of certain groups or people are forced. Mintzberg notices that in many organisations the political needs of individual actors are emphasized by performing acts that are non-formal, apparently and truly separating, and, most of all, unsanctioned by the authority of an organisation or the competences of executives[58]. Those behaviours break the pro-efficiency norms of organisation's functioning, and thus, all the rules which generate both the economic efficiency and social integrity of every company[59]. According to Fandt and Ferris, the typical political behaviour of the "executive psychopath" includes: manipulation of information, lying about facts and occurrences, or providing incomplete information to co-workers, so that the honour and splendour is associated only with a superior[60]. This builds the fake image of an organisation, but it is not the most important issue for the manipulators, as they are focused on achieving their own targets and rewards, or gaining the feeling of satisfaction or dominance.

Some researchers state that political behaviours can also have a positive/functional side and can provide benefits for the organisation[61], e.g., through building non-formal coalitions and mutual trust during the process of organisational changes. However, most authors emphasize that those behaviours are destructive and lead to negative consequences, such as high level of stress in the workplace, professional burnout among other employees, or tendency towards quitting the job[62].

As Kacmar and Baron indicate, we can distinguish four common elements of political behaviour:
- it comprises acts that are not a part of professional duties, and which are not sanctioned by an organisation;

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[58] H. Mintzberg, *The Organization as Political Arena*, "Journal of Management Studies" 1985, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 133–154.

[59] Y. Vardi, E. Weitz, *Misbehavior in Organizations*, op. cit., p. 94.

[60] P.M. Fandt, G.R. Ferris, *The Management of Information and Impressions: When Employees Behave Opportunistically*, "Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes" 1990, Vol. 45, pp. 140–158.

[61] S.M. Goltz, *Considering Political Behavior in Organizations*, "The Behavior Analyst Today" 2003, Vol. 4, Issue 3, p. 79.

[62] M.L. Randall, R. Cropanzano, C.A. Bormann, A. Birjulin, *Organizational Politics and Organizational Support as Predictors of Work Attitudes, Job Performance, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior*, "Journal of Organizational Behavior" 1999, Vol. 20, pp. 159–174.

- it is characterised by acts that are egoistic, which make the individuals achieve their targets, but have bad influence on the organisation as the goals are achieved at the cost of others;
- true motives of such behaviour are often concealed from the others;
- it occurs in the environment where people compete for limited resources or where the regulations concerning the assignment of those resources are not clear[63].

The political or abusive behaviours, described above, manifested by the executives and directed towards the subordinates, are among the most common phenomena which can be observed in organisational environment. This statement can be proved by the collective report entitled *Workplace Violence and Harassment: a European Picture*, published in 2010 and prepared by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. The report indicates that about 5% of all employees confirm having experienced abusive behaviour in the workplace. In Poland, out of one thousand employees working in different organisations which participated in the study, 17% claim that they were subject to abusive behaviour on the part of their superiors. Durniat[64] concludes that, in a Polish organisation, approximately 24% of employees can be perceived as the victims of mobbing or bullying, and in 60% of cases the perpetrators are the superiors. Lewicka mentions a study conducted from March 2009 to May 2010, on the group of 737 people, which proved that almost 13% of employees experience mobbing, and about 27% experience "petty mobbing" in the workplace. The most commonly observed behaviours are the ones distinguished by Leymann, which include: limiting the possibility of giving an opinion, ignoring and disregarding, gossiping, ordering excessive amount of work, and employing emotional abuse[65].

Moreover, the acts of "executive psychopaths", apart from the obvious consequences to the victim (health and emotional well-being of the employees) and society (costs of treatment and hospitalization, or loss of employee's productivity), influence the economic dimension of the organisation. According to estimated calculations, the economic costs of such behaviours in the USA

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[63] K.M. Kacmar, R.A. Baron, *Organizational Politics: The State of the Field, Links to Related Processes, and an Agenda for Future Research*, "Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management" 1999, Vol. 17, pp. 1–39.

[64] K. Durniat, *Mobbing jako przejaw deficytów kompetencyjnych współczesnych organizacji*, in: *Kompetencje a sukces zarządzania organizacją*, Eds. S.A. Witkowski, T. Listwan, Difin, Warszawa 2008, p. 551.

[65] D. Lewicka, *Występowanie zjawisk dysfunkcjonalnych i patologicznych a efektywność organizacji*, in: *Efektywność zarządzania zasobami ludzkimi*, Ed. B. Urbaniak, UŁ, Łódź 2011, pp. 433–458.

alone amount to USD 4.2 – 35.4 billion annually[66]. Consequently, as the authors of the *Workplace Violence and Harassment: a European Picture* indicate, abusive behaviours and violence in the workplace can lead to the decrease of national income by 1– 3.5%[67].

Conclusion

In the recent years there has been a constant growth in reported abusive behaviour or political behaviour occurring in the workplace. Such behaviour constitutes one of the major problems affecting organisations worldwide, including Poland. Apart from group factors, or *stricte* organisational ones, these behaviours are the consequence of what can be referred to as "the dark side of leadership"; namely, unethical practices of the management. The executives, and especially the "executive psychopaths", are in most cases responsible for the occurrence of bullying, sexual harassment, or aggression demonstrated in the workplace. This conclusion is crucial for HRM, as this group of employees should be recruited with due diligence. If a candidate does not represent the highest ethical standards and adequate features of personality, the organisation is *ex ante* open to the occurrence of pathological behaviours.

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[66] H. Hoel, K. Sparks, C.L. Cooper, *The Cost of Violence/stress at Work and the Benefits of a Violence/stress-Free Environment*, Report Commissioned by the International Labour Organisation, (ILO) Geneva, University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology 2001, pp. 50–51; http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.135.244&rep=rep1&type=pdf).

[67] *Workplace Violence and Harassment…*, op. cit., p. 78.

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Резюме

Менеджеры – психопаты, насилие в действиях руководителей

В своей статье авторы проводит характеристику „менеджера – психопата", подчеркивая, что в сегодняшнем деловом окружении „патологические" личности „предрасположены" занимать высшие должности в организациях. Авторы называет также важнейшие показатели, позволяющие охарактеризовать этот тип лидеров. Отмечает также, что самые популярные виды насилия, применяемые „менеджерами – психопатами" – это моббинг, буллинг, сексуальные приставания и политические действия. В статье описан каждый из этих видов психологического давления на сотрудников с указанием на их последствия для работающих.

Ключевые слова: менеджер – психопат, насилие на работе, моббинг, буллинг, сексуальные приставания, политические действия.

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