

Prevention and prevention of harassment

(Profilaktyka i przeciwdziałanie zjawiskom mobbing)

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Abstract – Introduction. The workplace is an area where people spend many hours almost every day. Experiencing bullying in the workplace as a form of mainly psychological violence has a number of serious consequences. It should be stressed that the consequences of bullying are most severely felt by the victim of this workplace pathology. This is all the more dangerous, because it disrupts a certain order and order in the daily functioning of people in the mental, physical and social spheres.

Aim of the study. The aim of the work was to discuss prevention and anti-harassment activities.

Selection of materials. The search was carried out in the Scopus database for the period 2012-2020, using the concepts of *prevention of harassment, anti-harassment activities*. From the literature found in the Google Scholar database, studies were selected which, in the opinion of the authors, would be most useful in the preparation of this study.

Conclusions. As a result of experiencing bullying in the workplace, there is an imbalance in the personal and family lives of the victims of this pathology. The employee in question transfers the problems experienced from the workplace to family life. This creates various conflicts and misunderstandings due to frequent complaining about problems at work. Due to the occurrence of bullying, the workplace may lose its positive image, its regular clients and bear the costs of legal proceedings brought by the victims of this pathology. The employer may also be adversely affected by the frequent health absence of employees, as well as the costs associated with the recruitment and training of new candidates for work. The effects of harassment apply not only to the employee but also to the employer.

Key words - prevention of harassment, anti-harassment activities.

Streszczenie – Wprowadzenie. Miejsce pracy to obszar w którym człowiek spędza wiele godzin każdego niemal dnia. Doświadczanie mobbingu w miejscu pracy, jako formy przemocy głównie psychicznej pociąga za sobą szereg poważnych konsekwencji. Należy podkreślić, że konsekwencje mobbingu najbardziej dotkliwie odczuwa ofiara tej patologii miejsca pracy. Jest to o tyle niebezpieczne zjawisko, ponieważ zaburza ono pewien porządek i ład codziennego funkcjonowania człowieka w sferze: psychicznej, fizycznej i społecznej.

Cel pracy. Celem pracy było omówienie profilaktyki i działań antymobbingowych.

Dobór materiału. Poszukiwania przeprowadzono w bazie Scopus za okres 2012-2020, używając pojęć *profilaktyka mobbingu, działania antymobbingowych*. Ze znalezionej w bazie Google Scholar piśmiennictwa wyselekcjonowano opracowania, które zdaniem autorów byłyby najbardziej użyteczne w przygotowaniu niniejszego opracowania.

Wnioski. Wskutek doświadczania mobbingu w miejscu pracy - dochodzi do zachwiania równowagi w życiu osobistym i rodzinnym ofiary tej patologii. Taki pracownik doświadczane problemy z obszaru miejsca pracy przenosi na grunt życia rodzinnego. Powoduje to tworzenie się różnorodnych konfliktów i nieporozumień z powodu częstych narzekań na problemy w pracy. Z powodu występowania mobbingu, zakład pracy może stracić dotychczasowy pozytywny wizerunek, stałych klientów oraz ponosić koszty procesów sądowych wnoszonych przez ofiary tej patologii. Dla pracodawcy niekorzystna może stać się też częsta absencja zdrowotna pracowników, jak też koszty związane z rekrutacją i szkoleniami nowych kandydatów do pracy. Skutki mobbingu odnoszą się nie tylko do pracownika ale także do pracodawcy.

Słowa kluczowe – profilaktyka mobbingu, działania antymobbingowe.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Article 94.3 of the Labour Code defines it as follows: **A**"bullying means any act or conduct concerning or directed against an employee, consisting of the persistent and prolonged harassment or intimidation of that employee, resulting in an underestimation of his professional capacity, causing or aimed at humiliating or ridiculing the employee, isolating him or eliminating him from the team of colleagues". [1].

In this legal aspect, it is the employer, as well as the persons representing him, who are legally obliged to conduct an anti-harassment policy in the workplace. Any action taken in this area is intended to eliminate or reduce to the maximum extent possible all pathological behaviour and activities which may have the characteristics of harassment. It is also important for the employer to create favourable conditions in the workplace which do not expose employees to harassment. [2]

The legal obligation to prevent harassment by an employer under the Labour Code has a three-stage meaning[3,4]:

- prohibition of harassment by the employer ;
- eliminating bullying behaviour towards employees;
- preventing the creation of bullying in the workplace (anti-harassment policy).

According to the Labour Code, only the employee, i.e. a person who has an employment relationship with the employer under an employment contract, can become a victim of harassment. Persons employed on the basis of civil-law contracts, e.g.: contract of mandate, contract for a specific task, business activity - may also experience the phenomenon of harassment. In such a case, these persons may assert their rights in court in civil proceedings [5]. A significant obstacle in the interpretation of the provision in the Labour Code is the ambiguity of the obligation to counteract harassment by an employer in the workplace. The legislator imposes this obligation on the employer in a very general manner. It is not clearly specified in what specific way, with what methods and tools the employer is to counteract

harassment. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the employer to implement such instruments in his anti-harassment policy that will eliminate and prevent the phenomenon of harassment on the premises of the workplace, institution or enterprise.

Adopting such an attitude and manner of action is also a legal obligation of the employer [6]. In international anti-harassment policy, it is important that preventive measures in this area have become an important strategy for the employment of workers.

II. ANTIHARASSMENT MEASURES

Studies in Europe have shown that bullying is present in workers' structures and is increasingly common. It also has a negative impact on workers' health in the broad sense. Therefore, a team of workers has been set up to prevent bullying within the World Health Organisation. It has been noted that the number of cases of harassment, mental terror and violations of human dignity in the workplace is increasing. It has been decided to introduce changes and legal reforms that would make it possible to prevent as well as counteract bullying behaviour [7]. As part of the anti-harassment activities, which take into account the Labour Code, it is important to observe working conditions which are in accordance with the regulations of Health and Safety at Work. In this understanding of occupational safety, training of employees of a given company on the subject of harassment should be organised. Criteria should be applied that are fair to all employees. It is essential to shape and promote interpersonal relations among employees in such a way as to create a positive atmosphere within the given employee team. Through the shaken image, opinions about the employer, losses can be identified, which will have negative consequences for the whole company, workplace, company. This is important, especially in the era of general accessibility to the Internet and many forms of mass communication, such as social media [8].

The employer may implement his legal obligation to prevent harassment by means of measures which will be specifically targeted at aspects such as [6,7,8]:

- counteracting the appearance of mental violence in the workplace in its broadest sense;
- organising help for the person affected by the bullying;
- eliminating all forms of bullying at the workplace.

The basic tool available to combat bullying is the work regulations. The content of these regulations should in-

clude what prohibited and unacceptable behaviour and actions are, and what actions have the potential to be harassment. The content of such regulations should also include information on possible penalties for the employee in the event of non-compliance and any infringements contrary to the work regulations. Such regulations may also be introduced into collective agreements at the workplace in the form of a separate internal document. Striving to prevent harassment may also be carried out through extensive cooperation with organisations operating in the workplace, e.g.: employee representatives, institutions outside the workplace (companies providing employee training). The hospital in Puszczykowo can be mentioned as an example of undertaken activities within the framework of anti-harassment policy. Regulations on work discipline have been introduced. It is the duty of all employee groups to observe the rules of social coexistence. Training of all employee groups on the phenomenon of harassment was conducted. During a series of internal trainings, the problem of proper interpretation of interpersonal conflict between the superior and subordinate was emphasised. The essence was to equip the employees of the hospital with appropriate knowledge about harassment, as well as the ability to distinguish between interpersonal conflicts and behaviours with signs of harassment [4-6,9].

The introduction of an internal anti-bullying procedure can also be included in the scope of anti-bullying policy. Such actions are aimed at preventing the negative effects of harassment on a given organisation, as well as negative consequences for society and personal, negative emotional experiences for all employees.

Worthy of note is the example of the actions taken in internal anti-harassment policy in the Voivodship Hospital Centre of the Jelenia Góra Basin. An internal document has been introduced here, which sets out actions aimed at preventing harassment. The implementation of internal anti-harassment procedures gives an opportunity to counteract this dangerous phenomenon, even if it is already taking place in the workplace, and to counteract this pathology in the future.

These in-house procedures define [2]:

- the concept of bullying that exists in literature;
- workers' rights and obligations;
- employers;
- they determine the composition and the way in which the anti-harassment committee operates.

In the document introduced in the aforementioned health care facility, attention is focused on employer prevention, which mainly consists of systematic training in the terminology of harassment, as well as access for employees to

all materials on this issue. The document also defines the procedure for dealing with the situation of bullying [4,9].

Bullying in the workplace is undoubtedly a pathological phenomenon. In subjective feelings, it often arouses extreme emotions. This phenomenon should be opposed at the level of various areas. These areas can be individual, institutional and legal. Under no circumstances can we remain passive. The most effective way to counteract this phenomenon is to take preventive action so that this pathological phenomenon does not occur, even with the slightest sign of harassment.

According to the World Health Organisation, action to prevent workplace bullying can be taken at prevention levels [2]:

- the original one;
- secondary;
- the third row.

III. PREVENTION OF HARASSMENT

The essence of primary prevention is to shape the culture of the organisation in a given establishment, company. At the level of this prevention, attention is focused on solving and eliminating any human conflicts that may arise. It is important to establish clear and transparent forms of all employee promotions. Where there is inappropriate competition between employees, conflicts that can turn into harassment are more frequent. Proper criteria for evaluating employees are also important here. This allows for objective and fair evaluation in line with past achievements and efforts. This level of bullying prevention also includes all regular training for managers and superiors. People in such positions should have knowledge of how to manage staff. Individuals who wish to motivate their subordinates to work should also not be employed in managerial positions [5,6,9-12].

Secondary prevention of harassment focuses on systematic training of all employees of a given professional group. Nursing staff, in the specific nature of their profession, is an employee group particularly vulnerable to continuous stress and aggressive, claimant behaviour on the part of the patient and his family. Such stress factors are often the cause of anger, helplessness and fear. Regular, cyclical training in dealing with frequent stressful situations, negative emotions, etc. is extremely important and necessary. It can be helpful that such emotions do not turn into bullying behaviour towards colleagues. At this level of prevention, the Labour Code as well as internal regulations protect potential victims of harassment [1,4].

Third-rate prevention is about providing all assistance to people who have been harmed in any way by bullying. This assistance can cover the psychological, medical and legal areas. Third-country prevention deals with complaints of harassment. Anti-harassment prevention, which is implemented and consistently pursued, should include basic components. Above all, it should explain the essence of the phenomenon of harassment, present possible manifestations of this pathology in the workplace, and unequivocally prohibit the practice or duplication of unauthorised behaviour of a harassment nature. Providing employees with basic knowledge of the issue of bullying should illustrate a number of consequences which may occur in this category of workplace pathology. Behaviour which bears the hallmarks of bullying is, in fact, unethical. They are intended to socially isolate the potential victim, reduce self-esteem and awareness of one's abilities, abilities and achievements to date. It is important that people in management positions are able to make proper use of the management styles of their employees. The adoption by managers of a personnel management attitude that is respectful of human values and the standards of social coexistence - can then contribute to many benefits, not only for employees but also for the workplace as a whole [10,12,13].

IV. MENTORING AND COACHING

Helpful tools for the prevention of workplace bullying can be [2]:

- mentoring;
- coaching.

The two strategies are interconnected and based on communication principles. They will result in progress in professional development, satisfaction with the profession and continuation of work in the learned profession.

The authors of the work "mentoring and coaching" focus on modern management of nursing staff.

The concept of mentoring refers to work organisation and broadly understood professional development. A person employed in a given workplace, with many years of experience, may accompany the new employee during his or her adaptation to the new workplace [14].

Coaching, on the other hand, is a process that takes place at a certain time between a coach and a given client. It aims to strengthen and help the person in question how to use his or her potential, resources and abilities to achieve the intended action. Also in nursing, attention is paid to creating coaching programmes. New employees may have a better chance to get involved in the team work.

Coaching programmes are also aimed at improving relations between employees and management.

It can therefore be concluded that mentoring and coaching has a positive impact on reducing stress in the workplace and, consequently, on reducing aggressive behaviour towards colleagues in a particular professional group. Mentoring and coaching programmes bring many benefits not only to the whole health care sector or workplace. These programmes also have a positive impact on nursing staff. They show greater satisfaction with their profession and reduce stress during the performance of their duties. It also contributes to increased self-esteem, satisfaction with qualifications and interpersonal communication [2].

It is assumed that pursuing an anti-harassment policy is financially beneficial for the employer. This reduces the costs of absenteeism due to sick leave and the possible costs of legal proceedings brought by victims of harassment [2,14].

V.EFFECTS OF HARASSMENT

The workplace is an area where people spend many hours almost every day. Experiencing bullying in the workplace as a form of mainly psychological violence has a number of serious consequences. It should be stressed that the consequences of bullying are most severely felt by the victim of this workplace pathology. It is a dangerous phenomenon, because it disturbs a certain order and order of everyday human functioning in the mental, physical and social sphere [15,16].

The effects of bullying are divided into [15,17]:

- early (short term);
- distant.

The early effects of experiencing bullying are those that may occur within a short period of time after experiencing this form of violence. These include a number of negative emotions such as: anger, frustration, fear, discouragement, deep helplessness, depression. Such an employee comes to work reluctantly and without any motivation, fulfilling only his obligation resulting from the execution of the signed contract. Early consequences of harassment may cause the employee to develop an understated sense of self-esteem as well as lack of possibility of self-fulfilment. Disturbances in concentration may occur. In extreme cases, thoughts and suicidal attempts may occur [3,4,15,17]. Bearing in mind that every person has: a different mental structure, sensitivity, resistance to stress, such experience of psychological violence as bullying is undoubtedly a

bullying - may be the beginning of a serious bio-psycho-social dysfunction.

The distant effects of bullying relate to the prospect of a longer period of time.

This stage of the effects of harassment includes [3,4,16]:

- professional firing;
- addictions;
- somatic diseases;
- depression and other states of mental breakdown;
- conflicts within the family.

Strong stress and high, constant emotional tensions contribute to burn-out and frequent absence from work due to sick leave. There is a mutual correlation between bullying, stress and burnout. Experiencing harassment in itself causes stress. These are reactions, subjective experiences that a person experiences in an individualised manner. Thus, professional burnout occurs, among other things, through long-term situations, stressful events. By constantly experiencing a mental form of violence, mechanisms of general helplessness, discouragement and isolation are created. Such an employee, having no support from his colleagues and not seeing the prospect of another way out of this difficult situation for him, aims to terminate his employment contract quickly by mutual agreement. People experiencing frequent, regular stress usually use various types of psychoactive agents, sedatives, stimulants (e.g. alcohol). As a further consequence, this can lead to dependence on such agents [18-20].

Distant consequences of experiencing bullying at work also include: cardiovascular diseases (increased risk of coronary artery disease and myocardial infarction, hypertension), metabolism (diabetes), disorders in the functioning of the digestive system (nausea, diarrhoea, decreased appetite), sexual disorders and all states of mental breakdown.

People experiencing bullying experience a significant decrease in their motivation to work, low self-esteem, frustration, aggressive behaviour, anxiety disorders, insomnia as well as isolation from their working environment [21,22].

Attention should be drawn to the fact that as a result of experiencing bullying in the workplace, there is an imbalance in the personal and family lives of the victims of this pathology. Such an employee transfers the problems he or she experiences from the workplace to the area of family life. This creates various conflicts and misunderstandings due to frequent complaining about problems at work. Conflicts of this kind can even lead to the breakdown of a relationship or family.

Due to the occurrence of bullying, the workplace may lose its positive image, its regular clients and bear the costs

of legal proceedings brought by the victims of this pathology. The employer may also be adversely affected by the frequent health absence of employees, as well as the costs associated with the recruitment and training of new candidates for work. The effects of harassment do not only apply to the employee or employer. The whole of society also bears the consequences of this form of violence in the workplace. The costs associated with the treatment of people affected by harassment are repeatedly covered by public funds. It seems reasonable to take all possible measures to protect workers from this dangerous phenomenon [15,23].

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