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SIMILARITIES OF LEADERSHIP AND MOBBING BEHAVIORS AND THEIR NON – LEGAL CONSEQUENCES FOR EMPLOYERS

A b s t r a c t: The Purpose of the article is to find similarities between autocratic, laissez faire and transactional leadership styles and mobbing behaviors. The methods used include participant observation, shadowing and literature review. The paper found that the leadership styles and mobbing behaviors, reveal distinguishable similarities with Leymann's mobbing behaviors 1, 5, 12. Moreover, female autocratic/ authoritarian leaders, are perceived less positively than male autocratic leaders in accordance with role congruity theory. Further research into adultism at workplaces is required in Poland.

K e y w o r d s: Leadership, autocratic, authoritarian, laissez faire, transactional, mobbing, bullying, adultism, ageism, gender

J E L   C l a s s i f i c a t i o n: J24; L21

INTRODUCTION

The issue of mobbing and its non – legal consequences at workplaces are frequently neglected and misunderstood by managers, especially in SME. Leaders in smaller companies are often not trained and/or skilled in managing people, they are specialist in their fields and manage intuitively without varying their leadership styles. Larger companies offer their employees more extensive training, especially with regards to leadership. However, managers applying autocratic/ authoritarian, laissez faire and transactional leadership styles may fail to notice their similarities to mobbing behaviors, which can be interpreted as mobbing by employees. Moreover, female leaders face obstacles both achieving leadership positions and attaining them, frequently due to mobbing, gender stereotypes, ageism as well as adultism. The negligence of acknowled-

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ging the similarities between leadership and mobbing behaviors can have nega-tive influence on both male and female leaders, but also profitability, and image of employers. The non- legal consequences of either actual mobbing behaviors or leadership behaviors bearing any resemblance to mobbing can have equally or more negative consequences for employees, leaders, employers than the legal ones.

1. THE DEFINITION OF MOBBING AND BULLYING

There have been numerous attempts to either define or differentiate between mobbing and bullying. Moreover, the usage of each term frequently depends either on geographical area or scientific approach. However, a great majority of authors jointly underline their multiple dimensions and consequences in both professional and private life [Leymann, 1990, s. 119-126; Zapf, 1999, s. 1-25; Wyka & Szmidt, 2012, s. 11-12]. Heinz Leymann first used the term mobbing and his work is most often associated with mobbing behaviors. Leymann's typol-ogy includes 45 behaviors, which describe what constitutes a mobbing behavior. Additionally, the behaviors are divided into 5 categories with regards to their effect on; self-expression and communication, social contacts, personal reputa-tion, physical health, occupational situation and quality of life [https://archive. is/www.leymann.se].

Mobbing can be defined as a continuous process of recurrent events over a specific period of time, which involves showing aggressive attitudes within working environment aimed at causing harm to other co-workers [Szmidt, 2012, s. 15-29]. However, frequency of mobbing behaviors differs greatly depending on the type of organization [Zapf, 2002, s. 237 - 268].

To bully someone means „to *frighten or hurt a weaker person; to use your strength or power to make sb do sth*" [Hornby, Wehmeier, & Ashby, 2005, s. 197]. The term bullying was primarily associated with aggressive behaviors of students at school. Initially, bullying seemed to be less harmful than it was later proved to be. The reason might have been that semantically it was asso-ciated, and occasionally still is, with school children and teenagers playing tricks on one another. Obviously, this conviction couldn't be further from the truth as long term consequences of such experiences can be detrimental over the course of the entire life of a bullied victim [Olweus, 1994, s. 97-130]. The first research into mobbing was conducted by H. Leymann who noticed significant similar-ities between bullying at school and mobbing at workplaces [Leymann, 1996, s. 165-184].

The two terms are frequently used interchangeably and due to their complex-ity and various aspects of mobbing and bullying they will be treated as one for the purpose of this article.

Additionally, the similarities between mobbing and leadership behaviors will be demonstrated by Leymann's Typology of 45 mobbing behaviors grouped in the following 5 categories:

First category:
Impact on self-expression and the way communication happens.
1. Your superior restricts the opportunity for you to express yourself.
2. You are interrupted constantly.
3. Colleagues/coworkers restrict your opportunity to express yourself.
4. You are yelled at and loudly scolded.
5. Your work is constantly criticized.
6. There is constant criticism about your private life.
7. You are terrorized on the telephone.
8. Oral threats are made.
 9. Written threats are sent.
10. Contact is denied through looks and gestures.
11. Contact is denied through innuendoes.

Second category:
Attacks on one's social relations.
12. People do not speak with you anymore.
13. You cannot talk to anyone, i.e. access to others is denied.
14. You are put into a workspace that is isolated from others.
15. Colleagues are forbidden to talk with you.
16. You are treated as if you are invisible.

Third category:
Attacks on your reputation.
17. People talk badly behind your back.
18. Unfounded rumors are circulated.
19. You are ridiculed.
20. You are treated as if you are mentally ill.
21. You are forced to undergo a psychiatric evaluation/examination.
22. A handicap is ridiculed.
23. People imitate your gestures, walk, voice, to ridicule you.
24. Your political or religious beliefs are ridiculed.
25. Your private life is ridiculed.
26. Your nationality is ridiculed.
27. You are forced to do a job that affects your self-esteem.
28. Your efforts are judged in a wrong or demeaning way.
29. Your decisions are always questioned.

30. You are called demeaning names.
31. Sexual innuendoes.

Fourth category:
Attacks on the quality of one's professional and life situation.
32. There are no special tasks for you.
33. Supervisors take away assignments, so that you cannot even invent new tasks to do.
34. You are given meaningless jobs to carry out.
35. You are given tasks that are below your qualifications.
36. You are continually given new tasks.
37. You are given tasks that affect your self-esteem.
38. You are given tasks that are way beyond your qualifications, in order to discredit you.

Fifth category:
Direct attacks on a person's health.
39. You are forced to do a physically strenuous job.
40. Threats of physical violence are made.
41. Light violence is used to threaten you.
42. Physical abuse.
43. Causing general damages that create financial costs to you.
44. Damaging your home or workplace.
45. Outright sexual harassment.

2. SIMILARITIES OF LEADERSHIP AND MOBBING BEHAVIORS

Leadership styles involve specific behaviors adjusted to a specific situation, employee and workplace. Managers ought to show both concern for people and production to generate profit for their employers, who in return will guarantee stability of employment for their employees [Blake & Mouton, 1964, s. 23 -51]. In order to lead more efficiently managers apply, either consciously or subconsciously, various leadership styles [Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, s. 26-35]. Leaders may resort to directing, coaching, supporting or delegating tasks to their employees. Directing involves providing specific guidelines to follow by employees without asking for their input [Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2007, s. 179-184]. Such behaviors bear strong resemblance to autocratic / authoritarian leadership style, which is one of the most common causes of mobbing at workplaces [Szmidt, 2012, s. 15-29]. Authoritarian leadership style is one of the most frequently applied styles in Poland; approximately 40 percent of managers apply it on regular basis [Hryniewicz, 2012, s. 83-100]. However, autocratic leadership,

unlike the democratic one, increases the cost of mental health in the workplace, which results in frustration and avoidance in taking initiative among employees [Hryniewicz, 2012, s. 83-100]. Employees can interpret authoritarian style with its one-way communication and strongly directing style of communication as a mobbing behavior. Personnel might feel that their superiors limit their right of self expression and communication which is the hallmark of Leymann's typology of mobbing behaviors, precisely behavior 1 [Leymann, 1990, s. 119-126; Pilch, 2012, s. 96-98]. It is important to note that autocratic leadership style is effective and its application should not be abandoned, inter alia, when delegating not complex tasks. Transactional leaders often step in when their subordinates fail to perform their duties in accordance with the standards set by their managers [Burns, 1978, s.]. Employees recurrently faced with criticism, regardless of the fact whether they actually deserved to receive negative feedback or not, may interpret it as constant criticism of their work, which bears strong resemblance to Leymann's mobbing behaviors, in this case behavior number 5. Transformational behaviors might also be interpreted as mobbing behaviors 29, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38 [Leymann, 1990, s. 119-126; Pilch, 2012, s. 96-98]. Laissez Faire Leadership style is often characterized by infrequent feedback, passive behaviors and delayed decisions [Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland, & Hetland, 2007, s. 80-92]. Clearly, employees who rarely talk with their immediate superiors might feel rejected and assume that managers avoid them purposely, which is similar to mobbing behavior 12 and also 13, 16 [Leymann, 1990, s. 119-126; Pilch, 2012, s. 96-98]. As in the case of autocratic leadership style, laissez faire should not be abandoned as specific personality types, and more experienced employees prefer this style of leadership. Programmers and software engineers perceive laissez faire principle more positively than other leadership styles [Jemielniak, 2007, s. 491-508]

Obviously, the comparisons between leadership and mobbing behaviors might seem far-fetched at first, but the fact remains that people can interpret a specific situation in any way they see fit. Employees to manipulate facts, smear their superiors, who simply expect them to perform their duties, often abuse terms mobbing and bullying. Pilch applied a similar comparison strategy to Leymann's mobbing behaviors, but with regards to 4 case studies based on both his personal and professional experience [Pilch, 2012, s. 81-98]. This approach could easily be replicated by HR departments to raise awareness and sensitivity of their managers to similarities between leadership and mobbing behaviors. However, Leymann's 45 mobbing behaviors do not exhaust the issue of mobbing at workplaces. Another common cause of mobbing is discrimination of age [Szmidt, 2012, s. 227]. Ageism [Butler, 1969, s. 243-246] often leads to social inclusion of older people over the age of 50 [Szmidt, 2012, s. 15-29]. Leaders may perceive older employees as computer -illiterate and thus less effective and

valuable than younger ones [Szmidt, 2012, s. 15-29]. Younger employees are not free from mobbing either. On the contrary, some researchers point out that people between the ages of 21-40 become bullying victims more frequently than older employees. This could indicate that employees face mobbing at the beginning and end of their professional careers [Žukauskas & Vveinhardt, 2009, s. 5-6]. It seems that more research into adultism [Dubois, 1909, s. 357-360] and its relation to mobbing behaviors among mangers is required, as both adultism and bullying were first observed at schools. Research in this field could, for instance, decrease staff turnover and strengthen economic position of private and public institutions as well as business entities.

3. GENDER AND LEADERSHIP STYLE

Employers often neglect the research into gender. Managers turn a blind eye to this issue and claim that their workplaces are gender neutral and thus free from gender discrimination. However, a simple and logical conclusion we can draw from such attitudes is that if we attempt to undo gender, we actually do gender at our workplaces [Kelan, 2010, s. 174-194]. In terms of mobbing, women experience it twice as frequently as men [Zapf & Warth, 1997, s. 28-29]. Female leaders suffer from significant prejudice, especially with regards to their competences as leaders. Women are frequently forced to meet higher standards than men, especially in relation to effectiveness, both before and after attaining leadership roles. Moreover, H. Eagly proved that female leaders were perceived less favorably than men, particularly when they applied autocratic leadership styles [Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992, s. 3-22]. This could indicate that women in leadership roles face prejudice because they are inconsistent with female gender stereotype and social roles, which is consistent with role congruity theory [Eagly & Karau, 2002, s. 573-598]. Hofstede claimed that female social roles differ from male ones and are connected with the biological existence of sexes. In his view females are more gentle and nurturing, whilst men more assertive and competitive [Hofstede, 1991, s. 180-184]. This could explain why women in leadership roles, which are characteristic of masculine social roles, are perceived more negatively than male leaders, especially in case of autocratic leadership styles. Hence, in relation to feminine social roles, women leadership styles are more democratic than their male counterparts [Eagly & Johannesen, Schmidt, 2001, s. 781-797]. Additionally, male leaders have a higher tendency to apply laissez- faire leadership styles, which bear stronger resemblance to mobbing behaviors than the democratic ones [Leymann, 1990, s. 119-126] [Eagly & Carli, 2003, s. 807-834; Skogstad et al., 2007, s. 80-92]. It can be concluded that men have an overall tendency to apply leadership behaviors, which bear the hallmarks of Leymann's typology of mobbing behaviors.

4. NON- LEGAL CONSEQUENCES FOR EMPLOYERS

Research has confirmed that managers, especially immediate supervisors, have an enormous impact on employees. Managers attitudes towards their subordinates can either generate highly positive or negative emotions in the workplace [Lis, Glinska-Newes, & Kalinska, 2014, s. 28-45]. Studies show that in European countries approximately 50% of mobbing is applied by leaders [Zapf, 2002, s. 237 - 268]. Mobbing generates a lot of emotions, and frequently touches personal experiences. Regardless of the character of the experience, or rather a misfortune, of either witnessing or being involved in mobbing, can we fully grasp and understand what mobbing really entails [Pilch, 2012, s. 81-98]. Mobbing victims are reluctant to reveal the fact of being bullied, as they feel ashamed and disgraced. However, when they finally do, it is done with incredible emotional engagement and fury. Szmidt underlines that the emotional load is so strong that it can result in excessive criticism and even aggression [Szmidt, 2012, s. 15-29]. Employers must acknowledge that, depending on the judicial system, the non-legal consequences are frequently far more severe than the legal ones, especially with regard to financial losses, not to mention the business transactions that never happened.

Bullying results in absenteeism, as bullied employees are not willing to suffer humiliation in their workplaces. In UK employers lose approximately 19 million of working days annually, which amounts to approximately 6 billion pounds [Beardwell & Claydon, 2010, s. 598-601). In times of high unemployment employers tend to devalue employees, especially those who you can be easily replaced [Szmidt, 2012, s. 15-29]. The UK employee absenteeism should be even more alarming for Polish employers as many seem to have forgotten that unemployment rate is no longer at the level of 20 % as it was between 2002-2005 [https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/rynek-pracy/bezrobocie-rejestrowane/ stopa-bezrobocia-w-latach-1990-2017,4,1.html]. In 2011 not even 10% of 1.7 million business entities that had operated before the systemic transition in 1989 were still active. Only the ones who significantly changed their business approach were able to survive [Tyszka, Cieślik, Domurat, & Macko, 2011, s. 124-131]. The concept of a steady job is less frequently treated as privilege due to increased social care. Managers focus more on results than people, because they are convinced that they will generate more profit for the company. Employers must understand that such managers could actually be incurring financial losses instead of generating profit, as their approach might lead to absenteeism. Nowadays, managers must apply various leadership styles on daily basis. They must understand that they way the speak, words, expressions, jokes, metaphors might be interpreted in various ways by their interlocutors, not necessarily in a way they intended [Latusek & Vlaar, 2015, s. 211-232]. Rapid company expan-

sion, increased turnover with much lower margin can cause emotional distress among employers and managers, who might apply excessively strict and harsh autocratic behavior, which can result in conflicts, lack of trust, poor customer service and as a result loss of clients. Overworked leaders might simply apply laissez- faire leadership styles and limit personal contacts with their employees due to additional duties. Such behaviors clearly bear resemblances to mobbing behaviors and can be interpreted as such, regardless of the fact if any kind of mobbing behavior actually occurred. This is simply not the case here, especially if we take into consideration only the non-legal consequences.

CONCLUSIONS

Employers must bear in mind one significant factor i.e. that they have absolutely no influence on how their employees interpret a specific situation. Even though, certain leadership behaviors are not characteristic of mobbing, employees can still interpret them as bullying. In such a case managers are faced with an extremely difficult and sensitive situation. Obviously, a manager should be emotionally intelligent and notice any occurrences of such misinterpretations and try to reason with the employee. It is crucial that such issues are faced immediately as they may spiral out of control if are not dealt with adequately. However, managers might simply not notice that their leadership style was interpreted as bullying. If the behavior continues over a period of several months employees might gradually spread the news among their family, friends and colleagues. Company image could suffer and result in increased staff turnover, bad publicity, loss of clients and decreased profitability.

The humble, however bold and sincere, intention of the article is to appeal to employers to respect human dignity and root out any mobbing behaviors from their companies. However, if they are either unwilling to do so or are unable to comprehend, for various reasons, the long-term advantages of mobbing free workplaces. They should simply do it, due to one obvious and widely comprehensible reason, i.e. mobbing is simply bad for business.

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PODOBIEŃSTWA MIĘDZY ZACHOWANIAMI PRZYWÓDCZYMI A MOBBINGOWYMI ORAZ ICH POZAPRAWNE KONSEKWENCJE DLA PRACODAWCÓW

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest zidentyfikowanie podobieństw między autokratycznym, leseferystycznym i transakcyjnym stylem przywództwa a zachowaniami mobbingowymi. Zastosowane metody obejmują obserwację i przegląd literatury. Artykuł wskazuje, że style przywództwa i zachowania mobbingowe ujawniają podobieństwa z zachowaniami mobbingowymi Leymanna o numerach: 1, 5, 12. Dodatkowo, kobiety w autokratycznych / autorytarnych rolach przywódczych są postrzegane mniej pozytywnie niż męscy autokratyczni przywódcy zgodnie z teorią zgodności ról. Rekomendowane są dalsze badania nad adultyzmem w miejscu pracy w Polsce.

Słowa kluczowe: Przywództwo, kierowanie, autokratyczne, autorytarne, leseferystyczne, transakcyjne, mobbing, zastraszanie, adultyzm, ageizm, płeć