

Prevalence of mobbing in workers and factor risk associates

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Abstract

Introduction: In Mexico there is little research to know the magnitude of mobbing. **Objective:** To identify the prevalence of mobbing and characteristics associated in workers. **Material and Methods:** A cross-sectional study of 499 workers who use medical unit. A questionnaire was used to determine the presence of mobbing and various instruments to know the personality, vulnerability to stress, self-esteem and depression. Prevalence odds ratio, dispersion, chi-square and Poisson regression were calculated. **Results:** A prevalence of 36% was found; no significant differences between sex or school level in mobbing presence, 20.2%, were found. Sixty per cent women are perceived as victims of harassment high relative to men ($p = 0.04$). Workers with low self-esteem have a greater association with high mobbing ($p < 0.001$). **Conclusion:** The prevalence found is higher than reported in previous studies in Mexico, strong associations between mobbing and personality and emotional disorders were identified. (Gac Med Mex. 2016;152:407-10)

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Introduction

Recently, mobbing has acquired relevance as an emerging psychosocial risk that implies harriving or ganging up against someone in the workplace^{1,2}. Owing to hostile behavior high frequency and long duration, this harassment causes considerable psychological, psychosomatic and social suffering, where the victim is subject to a systematic and stigmatizing process, the effect of which on the individual causes job instability^{3,4}.

The mobbing victim is affected by his/her possibilities to communicate being limited, he/she is impeded to maintain social contacts, his/her possibilities to preserve his/her personal reputation are decreased and even working satisfaction and commitment decrease^{5,6}.

Mobbing causes somatic disturbances and even generates different psychopathologies⁷. Between 10 and 20% of annual suicides have been found to have in their backgrounds psychological harassment processes occurring in the workplace⁸.

Mobbing has great impact on economy; annual cost for companies adds up to 18.9 million Euros owing to yearly lost workdays⁹, whereas the International Labour Organization (ILO) places mobbing as the main stress and anxiety generator, above cases of physical violence, even when usually it is not regarded as a professional pathology¹⁰.

The ILO estimates that mobbing is present in 7% of the working environment worldwide, whereas in Latin American countries, a prevalence ranging from 3.5 to 25.37% has been reported^{11,12}, with healthcare and education sectors being the most vulnerable¹³.

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Table 1. Bivariate analysis of associated worker's characteristics according to the degree of mobbing

		Low			Intermediate			High		
		POR	95% CI	p*	POR	95% CI	p*	POR	95% CI	p*
Sex	Male	1			1			1		
	Female	0.94	0.52-1.7	0.08	1.38	0.6-3.11	0.43	1.60	1.01-2.55	0.04
Age	56-65 years	1			1			1		
	18-25 years	1.38	0.36-5.31	0.87	1.38	0.15-12.60	0.82	0.38	0.13-1.08	0.12
	26-35 years	0.73	0.19-2.78	0.93	1.24	0.14-10.42	0.76	0.50	0.19-1.26	0.22
	36-45 years	1.10	0.28-4.35	0.84	2.49	0.29-20.99	0.65	1.00	0.39-2.57	0.81
	46-55 years	0.87	0.19-3.9	0.82	1.31	0.12-13.53	0.74	1.04	0.38-2.81	0.86
Education	College degree and higher	1								
	High school	1.00	0.51-1.99	0.99	1.50	0.54-4.16	0.60	1.37	0.78-2.39	0.33
	Junior high school	1.05	0.45-2.21	0.91	2.65	0.90-8.41	0.08	1.81	0.97-3.37	0.06
	Primary and lower	1.18	ND	-	-	ND	-	2.32	0.85-6.33	0.12
Personality 1	Stability	1			1			1		
	Neuroticism	1.79	0.97-3.28	0.05	2.4	1.04-5.7	0.03	4.7	2.7-8.2	< 0.001
Personality 2	Extroversion	1			1			1		
	Introversion	1.07	0.49-2.33	0.85	1.79	0.72-4.46	0.2	1.96	1.16-3.33	0.01
Discrimination	No	1			1					
	Yes	3.28	1.64-6.59	0.000	7.53	3.27-17.32	0.000	1.26	14.61-46.36	< 0.001
Stress	None	1			1			1		
	Vulnerability	1.29	0.60-2.77	0.62	3.51	1-4.81	0.06	2.36	1.16-4.81	0.002
	Seriously vulnerable	2.49	1.05-5.88	0.03	3.92	0.94-16.32	0.1	7.84	3.73-16.46	< 0.001
	Extremely vulnerable	5.19	1.3-20.59	0.03	4.76	0.43-51.93	0.67	5.19	1.31-20.59	0.030
Perceived self-esteem	High	1			1			1		
	Intermediate	1.27	0.62-2.61	0.62	1.4	0.51-3.81	0.68	2.87	1.66-4.94	< 0.001
	Low	3.2	1.55-6.62	0.002	4.4	1.72-11.25	0.002	5.19	2.83-9.5	< 0.001
Depression	Normal	1			1			1		
	Slight disturbance	2.45	1.19-5.03	0.02	2.28	0.81-6.36	0.1	3.04	1.72-5.36	< 0.001
	Intermittent	4.87	1.51-15.63	0.01	6.33	1.51-26.46	0.02	6.63	2.59-16.99	< 0.001
	Moderate	2.02	0.76-5.3	0.25	2.9	0.87-9.7	0.15	2.92	1.41-6.05	0.005
	Serious and extreme	1.46	0.16-12.61	0.77	6.33	1.15-34.75	0.1	5.42	1.67-17.64	0.006
Burnout	No	1					1			
	Yes	2.72	0.91-8.07	0.12	8.95	3.17-25.23	0.000	5.54	2.56-11.97	< 0.001

In Mexico, a prevalence of 14% has been detected among administrative workers, with women being most affected¹⁴. Using the inventory of violence and psychological harassment inventory at work (IVAPT-PANDO) instrument, 92.3% of teachers referred suffering violence, while 8.8% referred being the victims of workplace harassment¹⁵.

The present study has the purpose to determine the prevalence of mobbing and its associated characteristics in workers who are users of a family medicine unit (UMF – *Unidad de Medicina Familiar*) in Mexico City.

Material and methods

A cross-sectional study was conducted from May through October 2013 in older than 18-year workers who were users of IMSS UMF No. 15 and who were selected by means of non-probabilistic convenience sampling.

Those who worked on their own or alone were excluded and those who didn't complete the survey were censored.

To find out about the presence of mobbing, the IVAPT-PANDO was applied, which is an instrument that has been validated in previous studies with a Cronbach's

Table 2. Multivariate analysis of mobbing-associated factors

Variable		Relative risk	95% CI	p-value
Gender	Male			
	Female	1.07	0.92-1.23	0.34
Personality 1	Stability			
	Neuroticism	1.23	1.84-1.46	0.01
Personality 2	Introversion			
	Extroversion	0.89	0.74-1.07	0.23
Vulnerability to stress	None	0.73	0.60-0.89	0.002
	Seriously vulnerable	0.83	0.66-1.07	0.15
	Extremely vulnerable	1.24	0.82-1.89	0.31
Self-esteem	High level			
	Intermediate level	0.99	0.83-1.18	0.96
	Low level	0.86	0.68-1.08	0.21
Depression	Normal			
	Slight disturbance	1.01	0.83-1.23	0.86
	Intermittent states	1.12	0.83-1.50	0.44
	Moderate	1.15	0.87-1.51	0.30
	Serious	1.92	1.12-3.28	0.02
	Severe	1.58	0.97-2.57	0.06
Emotional exhaustion	None			
	Low	0.99	0.69-1.42	0.96
	Intermediate	1.40	0.93-2.10	0.10
	High	1.33	0.89-1.99	0.12
Personal fulfillment	High			
	Intermediate	1.61	1.33-1.93	0.000
	Low	1.47	1.20-1.79	0.000
Depersonalization	None			
	Low	1.45	1.21-1.74	0.000
	Intermediate	1.54	1.22-1.95	0.000
	High	2.08	1.64-2.64	0.000

alpha of 0.91^{12,16}. Maslach inventory was used to identify burnout syndrome, as well as Beck's inventory to measure the degree of depression.

To measure the level of self-esteem among workers, Coopersmith self-esteem inventory was used. The administration of the personality questionnaire allowed for 4 types of personality of the workers to be identified, either introversion with neuroticism, extroversion with neuroticism, or introversion with stability and extroversion with stability.

Finally, level of education, sex and perception of being discrimination victim were inquired.

For data analysis, paired odds ratio (POR), chi-square and Poisson regression were calculated. A p-value ≤ 0.05 was considered to be statistically significant.

Results

An initial sample of 532 workers was obtained, out of which 33 were eliminated because they had incomplete questionnaires. A total of 499 participants were analyzed, with ages ranging from 18 to 64 years, with an average of 35.6 years.

Of the interviewed subjects, 42.3% were males and 57.7% were females; 33.8% of workers had completed high school, 31.3% had a college degree and 25.9% had completed junior high school.

The results obtained with the IVAPT-PANDO showed that 45.5% of the population has been the victim of low-intensity violence; 11.6% intermediate intensity and 10.2% high intensity violence. With regard to workplace

psychological harassment, 20.2% of workers suffered high harassment, 10.5% low and 5.4% intermediate. Workplace harassment prevalence was 36.1% (95% CI: 31.9-40.3), with the 26 to 35-year age group being the most affected.

Mobbing prevalence was higher among women (35.3%; 95% CI: 31.1-39.5), although the difference was not significant ($p = 0.13$). However, mobbing was significantly higher in women when it occurs at high level (POR: 1.60; $p = 0.04$).

Mobbing occurred from superiors to subordinates in 41.9%, 13.8% between workmates and 9.6% suffered harassment from both workmates and superiors.

A statistically significant association was found between mobbing and the presence of stress, low self-esteem, perception of discrimination, personality disturbances and burnout syndrome (Table 1).

The age-adjusted multivariate analysis did not show differences in workplace harassment between men and women ($p = 0.34$; 95% CI: 0.92-1.23; which confirms the results obtained by other authors¹⁷⁻¹⁹; those workers who suffer mobbing are more likely to have a personality where neuroticism is predominant ($p = 0.01$; 95% CI: 1.04-1.46); introversion or extroversion components do not generate any type of relationship with mobbing, as well as perceived self-esteem levels (Table 2).

Discussion

The results found show that the prevalence of mobbing is higher than previously reported in Mexico^{14,15} and in other countries^{11,13}.

The multivariate analysis showed no differences in the presence of workplace harassment between men and women, which confirms the results obtained by other authors¹⁷⁻¹⁹ and is opposed to findings published by Chiaroni²⁰.

Similar results were found to those reported by Yildirim et al., where no differences were detected according to the study subjects' level of education²¹.

The present work revealed that workers who are mobbing victims often experience emotional disturbances that can affect quality of life and reduce job performance, which is why it is important to have the required labor regulations required for its prevention²².

It is necessary to continue with investigations that allow for workplace harassment impact and magnitude to be recognized as a labor and social problem for its prevention²³.

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