Mobbing in Schools: Teachers' Experiences, Reactions and Perspectives

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Abstract

As instructors and role models, teachers play an important role in schools; it therefore matters what values they appreciate and live in school life. However, it can be asked whether teacher culture supports or even models violent behaviour by students. In this study, 223 primary- and secondary-school teachers in northeast Slovenia were surveyed to determine their experience with mobbing. The research showed that mobbing is extensive in schools and that teachers too often ignore it, not being sufficiently aware of their own responsibility for it, nor about the consequences of mobbing for students. In the future, it would be necessary to pay more attention to this problem in schools.

Introduction

In a globalized world of capital, competition and competitiveness, violence is part of everyday life, and even educational institutions are not immune. When concentrating on violence in school, bullying between pupils is often emphasised (e.g. Hamarus, & Kaikkonen, 2008; Maunder, Harrop, & Tattersall, 2010; Nabuzoka, 2003; Pšunder, 2010) while other types of violence receive less attention. One of specific type of violence is psychological violence among employees, which is called mobbing.

The consequences of mobbing can be very fateful not only for the victim but also for the institution as whole. In educational institutions, it is necessary to pay attention to mobbing for another reason, which is connected with the fact that the mission of a school is not merely intellectual development but optimal child development. In school, teachers play an important role as instructors and role models; it is therefore crucial what kind of values they promote and embody in everyday school life.

The purpose of this study was to investigate, whether teacher culture promotes or even models violent behaviour on the part of students. To find an answer to this question, we investigated teachers' experience with mobbing, their reaction to it, and perceptions about responsibility for mobbing and about its consequences in educational institutions.

Theoretical background

Today knowledge and education are priceless and have particular meaning for the life of each individual as well as for the development of society as a whole. Schools should not focus solely on developing students' intellectual abilities but should also encourage harmonious development of the physical, psychological, emotional and social aspects of an individual (Delors, 1996; Zakon o osnovni

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šoli, 2006, 2007). Academic learning is therefore "only part of the story. Schools also have a role to play in the wider socialization of their pupils" (Munn, 1999, p. 111).

The context in which everyday teaching and learning take place constitutes school culture. Most writers (Bečaj, 2005; Hargreaves, 1995; Fullan, & Hargreaves, 2000) employ an anthropological definition of school culture, which includes the knowledge, beliefs, values, customs, morals, rituals, symbols and language of a group. In short, culture means "some way of life" (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 25). In each individual school there is a culture that is owned by that school and which, in one way or another, gives children the message about how relationships among people should be formed, why life is worth the effort and what is beautiful, justified, fair, moral, etc. (Bečaj, 2005).

In the professional literature, there are many classifications of school culture. Fullan and Hargreaves (2000; Hargreaves, 1995, 1999) wrote that according to two the main dimensions – the first representing social control and achievement orientation, and the second representing social cohesion and maintenance of positive relationships – it is possible to distinguish four main types of school culture. Among these, two types perhaps stand out, which can be seen as a part of the same continuum: traditional culture and the culture of good relationships (Bečaj, 2005; Fullan, & Hargreaves, 2000). Traditional culture stresses high educational goals, high expectations, productivity, achievement, working habits and discipline. The atmosphere in this kind of culture is competitive; there is little room for interpersonal relationships, cooperation or solidarity. On the contrary, it stimulates egoistic behaviour and causes tension and conflict between the participants. The culture of good relationships, on the other hand, stresses the shaping of the community and a feeling of security for all its individuals, foregrounding cooperation, feelings of belonging, mutual respect, care for others, assistance, tolerance and morality.

Within the conception of school culture, there exist several sub-cultures: pupil culture, teacher culture, leadership culture, support staff culture, and parent culture (Hargreaves, 1999). For the present discussion, teacher culture is the most interesting, and at the same time frequently represented in the literature as the most influential in the school. Prosser, for example, explained that in the system of sub-cultures "teacher culture is just one – but one which pervades the whole institution" (1999, p. xiv). "/P/upils' cultures derive from and interact with that of teachers and of others working there" (Munn, 1999, p. 121). On this point it is not possible to overlook the fact that teachers play important roles as instructors and role models within educational systems. Their teaching is likely to influence students' attitudes and perceptions (Brophy, 1982; Pajares, 1992). Not only are teachers' personal values expressed while teaching their subject, but they also appear incidentally and automatically (Bečaj, 2005). "In fact, students are always learning social, emotional, and ethical "lessons" from teachers..." (Cohen, et al., 2009, p. 199).

Studies have confirmed that teacher culture has an impact on pupil behaviour in general as well on bullying in particular; schools high in bullying suffer from poor leadership, little professional co-operation, and low consensus about professional matters (Roland, & Gallowey, 2004). Schools in which administration and faculty lack communication have lower teacher morale and higher levels of student disorder (Gottfredson, 1989). At the same time, studies have confirmed that acceptable pupil behaviour is a necessary requirement, through not on its own sufficient, for improvement in academic achievement (Galloway et al., 1998).

A cooperative culture also has a positive effect on teachers' well-being and their work. "/W/hen teachers collaborate, and when there is a feeling of trust within the teaching team ..., then teachers feel better because they are better equipped to deal with external pressures" (Aelterman et al., 2007, p. 296). As explained by Fullan and Hargreaves (2000), a cooperative culture reduces teachers' feelings of insecurity and helplessness, has a positive influence on their self-confidence and increases their performance and efficiency. Mutual cooperation, collaboration and collegiality are also prerequisites for ongoing development of institutions and for teacher development, as well.

Among the stated priorities there is also another benefit of a supportive culture. When a supportive culture is exists within an organization, mobbing behaviour will find no ground for evolving

(see Bulutlar & Ünler Öz, 2008; Cowie et al. 2002; Leymann, 1996). Since employees within a caring, supportive culture are interested in others' wellbeing, they are not likely to behave in a way that will be detrimental to others. On the other hand, in a culture where productivity, results and competitiveness play an important role, individuals' behaviour is guided by self-interest, and they are not concerned about the consequences of their behaviour for others' well-being. This circumstance establishes a basis for mobbing behaviour to emerge.

Mobbing was first described by the Swedish working psychologist Leymann (1996), who defined it as a situation of prolonged exposure to repeated hostile and unethical communication from co-workers, which occurs for at least half a year and at least once a week, and pushes the target person into a defenceless position. Although this definition is reflected in most subsequent definitions, some later researchers use a less strict definition of mobbing with regard to the time frame – less than 6 months – , and the frequency of the bullying behaviour – less often than once a week (Zapf, & Gross, 2001).

Many varies forms of behaviour are included in the original typology of mobbing proposed by Leymann (1996; Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 2002). The author identified 45 mobbing behaviours and grouped them in the five different categories, depending on the nature of the behaviour: (1) targeting self-esteem and the means of communication (restricting possibilities for communication, preventing contact with others, criticising, etc.); (2) attacking personal social relations (limiting the possibilities for maintaining contact with others, isolating the person from others, etc.); (3) attacking a person's reputation (spreading rumours, making fun of the person, using offensive names, etc.); (4) attacking a person's professional qualifications and life situation (not assigning meaningful tasks, assigning tasks that are below the person's personal qualifications, etc.); and (5) attacking a person's health (making physical threats, offering physical abuse, sexual harassment, etc.).

Many of these behaviours are painful even if they occur only once, but if they are repeated over a longer period of time, the consequences could be even worse. Researchers confirmed that for the victims mobbing represents a severe form of social stress at work (Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996) and causes post-traumatic stress disorder (Leymann, 1996). It decreases self-respect, causes social isolation, stigmatising, social maladjustment, psychosomatic illnesses, depression, compulsions, helplessness, anger, anxiety and despair (Einarsen, 2000; Leymann, 1990).

The negative effects of harassment at work may also affect colleagues and the organization as whole: these effects are explained below. Interpersonal relations, communication and the institutional climate are becoming more and more demanding. People no longer cooperate. They are less and less motivated for work, and work satisfaction decreases. Productivity, flexibility and creativity are diminished; the quality and quantity of work are reduced. The reputation of the institution decreases, and there are many absences from work and resignations (Davenport et al., 2002; Einarsen, 2000; Leymann, 1996).

In educational institutions, it is necessary to pay attention to mobbing for yet another reason that the mission of a school involves not only intellectual development but also the optimal development of the personality of the child. Therefore, school as a social system must create a productive culture that enables students to obtain a positive social-emotional experience. An essential condition for creating a productive environment is, as stated by Kariková (2007), a sense of security for each individual; school must therefore prevent all indications of aggression. This should include an environment fostering the norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and psychically safe as well as fostering youth development and learning (Cohen et al., 2009). On the other hand, as stated by Dupper and Meyer-Adams, "not only does a culture of ... violence place students at-risk, but it also deprives them of the opportunity to benefit from the educational opportunities a school provides" (2002, p. 357).

Because teachers are the most important co-creators of school culture, it is reasonable and necessary to pose some questions: What is teacher culture? Which values do teachers epitomize in everyday school life? Does their own behaviour promote, or even model violent student behaviour? To find out if teachers "behave badly", thus providing a pattern for violent student behaviour, we were

interested in mobbing at primary and secondary schools in northeast Slovenia. Although mobbing is an increasing problem in many workplace organisations, research about this problem in the educational environment remains insufficient. There have been few studies that concentrate primarily on the extent and type of mobbing in educational institutions (e.g. Doğan Kılıç, 2009; Sağlam, 2008). The purpose of this study was not only to examine teachers' experience with mobbing behaviour, but also their reactions to mobbing, their perceptions about responsibility for it, and the consequences of mobbing in schools.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were 223 teachers from 7 randomly selected primary schools (teaching students from 6 to 14 years) and 7 randomly selected secondary schools (teaching students from 15-18 years) in northeast Slovenia. From these schools, all teachers were participated voluntarily in the survey. The majority (95.1%) of the teachers were women. The teacher sample was approximately equally divided by school type (53.4% at primary school and 46.6% at secondary school).

Survey development and procedures

Data were gathered via an anonymous individual questionnaire, which was developed specifically for this study. The questionnaire was piloted with a small group of teachers and was improved on the basis of feedback from pilot testing. Prior to distribution of the questionnaires, teachers were assured of complete anonymity. Teachers completed the survey individually and then returned it to the principal.

In the first part of the questionnaire participants were asked to provide general information, and in the second part many questions about mobbing were posed. Participants were asked about their experience with mobbing in their institutions as victims and as witnesses. Subsequently teachers reported their reactions after exposure to mobbing as victim or witness. In the first case nine alternative answers were provided and in the second, eleven (see Table 2). In both cases, teachers were allowed to choose more than one option. Participants were then given space to write down who, in their opinion, is responsible for mobbing and to elaborate on consequences of mobbing in educational institutions. In these two cases, the narrative responses were analyzed using analytic induction methods to identify common categories (Glaser, & Strauss, 1967).

Results

How often do teachers experience mobbing in their institution?

Participants were first asked if they had been exposed on a monthly basis to repeated mobbing behaviour in the last six months. According to teachers' responses less than one-fifth of teachers had been the target of repeated mobbing in the last six months. Special attention should be given to the 3.6 % of teachers, who answered "I do not want to tell". It is possible to assume that this percentage includes more teachers who were victims of violence than those who were not. For many victims, violence represents a painful experience, so it is understandable that some teachers did not want to share those experiences with others.

With the aim of getting more exhaustive information about the extent of mobbing, participants were also asked if they had ever witnessed such behaviour. In this case teachers were offered only two alternatives: "yes" or "no". This was because we believe that witnesses are usually not as personally involved in mobbing, so they would be more willing to talk about such events. As can be seen in Table 1, according to teacher responses, a scant one- third of teachers were witness to mobbing in their institution.

We were interested in the differences between teachers' answers of different school level. There were no significant differences between primary and secondary school teachers in their answers about the frequency of being victims ($X^2 = 4.023$, df = 2, $p = .134$) and about the frequency of being witnesses of repeated mobbing in their institutions in the last six months ($X^2 = 4.023$, df = 2, $p = .134$).

Table 1. Analysis of teachers regarding experience with mobbing as victims and as witnesses, by primary and secondary school teachers

	Teachers as victims			Teacher as witnesses		
	Prim.	Sec.	Total	Prim.	Sec.	Total
Yes	16.2	21.7	18.8	24.8	34.9	29.6
No	82.1	72.6	77.6	75.2	65.1	70.4
I do not want to tell	1.7	5.7	3.6	/a	/a	/a

[a] This answer was not an option.

What responses to mobbing did teachers report most frequently?

Firstly, one should examine the predominant reaction to mobbing in cases, where teachers were the victims. We were interested in the differences between primary and secondary school teachers; therefore, we calculated the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient and got r_s = .88. Statistically, the correlation is significant, $t(7)$ = 4,90, $p < .025$. Such a result means that primary and secondary school teachers gave similar answers about the predominant reactions to mobbing when they were the victims. Both groups filled the first four ranks with the same reactions (told partner (rank 1); told colleague, whom they trust (rank 2); talk with the violator (rank 3) and inform a superior person (rank 4)); differences between groups only became apparent in those reactions that were mentioned less often by either group (see Table 2). Primary and secondary school teachers also assign similar classifications for responses to mobbing when they were witnesses. The correlation is statistically significant, r_s = .83; $t(7)$ = 3.94, $p < .025$. Both groups stated most frequently that they did not react either because they lacked power or because they did not want to interfere. Other less common answers are shown in Table 2.

A closer look at Table 2 showed that all answers could be combined into three basic categories. The first one – passive reactions – comprises no reaction to mobbing that could contribute to its elimination (e.g., I did nothing, because I did not want to interfere, I lacked power, I was scared); the second one – active reactions – comprises reactions to mobbing that constitute an important direct step in it elimination (e.g., I spoke publicly about this problem, I talked with the victim/violator, I informed a superior person/school counsellors); and the third group of reactions reported looking for emotional support (I told my partner/colleagues). Teachers as victims and teachers as witnesses were not offered equal opportunities to answer; therefore, it is very difficult to compare these three categories of reaction between groups. Nevertheless, if we compare two categories of reactions – active and passive – which were options available to both groups; we can see that teacher victims most frequently reported active reactions in the highest positions, while teacher witnesses most frequently ranked passive reactions in higher positions.

Table 2. Percentage of teachers reporting reactions to mobbing as victims and witnesses [a], by school level (with the rank orders in brackets [b])

	Teachers victims			Teacher witnesses		
	Prim.	Sec.	Total	Prim.	Sec.	Total
Nothing - I did not want to interfere	/c	/c	/c	9.4 (2)	9.4 (1-2)	9.4 (2)
Nothing - I lacked power	2.6 (6)	2.8 (5-6)	2.7 (5-6)	10.3 (1)	9.4 (1-2)	9.9 (1)
Nothing - I was scared	0.9 (8-9)	2.8 (5-6)	1.8 (7)	8.5 (3)	5.7 (6)	7.2 (4-5)
I have publicly discussed this problem	1.7 (7)	0.9 (8)	1.3 (8)	1.7 (8)	1.9 (7)	1.8 (8)
I talked with the victim	/c	/c	/c	6.8 (5)	8.5 (3)	7.6 (3)
I talked with the violator	6.0 (3)	8.5 (3)	7.2 (3)	5.1 (6)	7.5 (4)	6.3 (6)
I informed a superior person	5.1 (4)	6.6 (4)	5.8 (4)	7.7 (4)	6.6 (5)	7.2 (4-5)
I informed the school counsellors	3.4 (5)	1.9 (7)	2.7 (5-6)	4.3 (7)	0.9 (8)	2.7 (7)
I told a colleague whom I trust	13.7 (2)	11.3 (2)	12.6 (2)	/c	/c	/c
I told my partner	14.5 (1)	15.1 (1)	14.8 (1)	/c	/c	/c
Other [d]	0.9 (8-9)	0.0 (9)	0.4 (9)	0.9 (9)	0.0 (9)	0.4 (9)

[a] This question was answered by teachers who were victims (n=42) and witnesses (n=66).

[b] A lower rank indicates that the teacher reaction was more frequent.

[c] In the marked examples, this answer was not provided because it made no sense for the given question.

[d] The teacher who was a victims of violence called an SOS phone-line for victims of violence, while the teacher who was the witness talked about the problem with colleagues.

In the teachers' opinion, who is responsible for the prevention and elimination of mobbing in educational institutions?

The most frequent teacher answer was "School management" which represented 35% of the total responses. In the Slovenian school system, school management means the principal and his/her assistant, and in smaller schools usually the principal alone. Therefore, these answers showed that a good third of the teachers ascribed responsibility for prevention and elimination of mobbing to only one or two persons and at the same time overlooked their own responsibility. Signs of shifting responsibility for prevention and elimination of mobbing are also shown by teachers who respond that mobbing is the responsibility of school management and school counselling staff, as well as some answers in the category "Other" (see Table 3).

All other answers are more optimistic and indicate that teachers are aware of their own responsibility for the prevention and elimination of mobbing as staff members. 30.9% of the teachers mentioned that management and employees together are responsible for the prevention and elimination of mobbing, and 24.7% of them stated that this responsibility rests on all employees. These two answers were purposely separated, because in the category "Management and employees" teachers assign extra responsibility to the role of management among employees than in the category "All employees".

The chi-square calculations showed no statistical difference between primary and secondary teachers' beliefs about responsibility for prevention and elimination of mobbing in educational institutions ($X^2 = 4.267$, df = 4, $p = .371$). Both groups most frequently assigned responsibility to school management.

Table 3. Analysis of teachers according to their opinion about responsibility for prevention and elimination of mobbing

	Prim.	Sec.	Total
School management	30.8	39.6	35.0
Management and employees	29.1	33.0	30.9
All employees	29.1	19.8	24.7
Management and school counselling staff	6.0	3.8	4.9
Other [a][b]	5.1	3.8	4.5

[a] Primary school teachers gave the following answers: "All, the entire society, also you, who read this"; "The union and all staff members"; "The principal, union and school council" (twice) and "School management and trade union representative (Ministry of Education, Institute of Education)" (twice).
[b] Secondary school teachers gave these responses: "The school management and the trade union representative" (twice); "All employees, students and parents" and "School management and state institutions (Ministry of Education, Institute of Education)".

In the teachers' opinion, what are the consequences of mobbing in educational institutions?

Table 4 shows that more than two-thirds of teachers stated that mobbing would have a personal influence on the victim – it would affect his/her personality, health and emotions (e.g., influence the physical and psychological health of the victim, induce loss of self-confidence and self-esteem, producing negative emotions, etc.). The next highest percentage reported consequences (43.06%) affecting the social behaviour and life of the victim (e.g., a negative influence on the victim's position in the institution among colleagues, bad behaviour of colleagues toward the victim, victim withdrawal and aggressive behaviour of the victim). Third on the list (22.87%) are the consequences that influence the victim's work motivation, work efficiency and productivity, then followed consequences (15.7%) connected directly with the victim's workplace (e.g., fear of job loss, fear of work position loss, loss of job, etc). The least common teacher answer was that mobbing affects a victim's private life – their family and friends (4.04%).

Among the consequences of mobbing for an institution as whole, teachers most frequently (56.5%) emphasised deterioration in the work climate and in relationships between employees (e.g., a negative impact on the work climate in the institution; worsening the atmosphere and relationships; a decline in

cooperation, etc.) The second most common consequences of mobbing are those related to decreases in efficiency and productivity in the institution as whole (27.80%), and the third, the decay of the institution's reputation (16.14%). A good tenth of the teachers noted the negative influence of mobbing on human resources (e.g., employees leaving the institution, difficulties recruiting new staff, increase in sick leave). As can be seen in Table 4 only, 2.24% of teachers specifically stressed the negative influence of mobbing on students.

Table 4. Percentage of teachers by stated consequences of mobbing for individuals and for institutions

Consequences for victims	f%	Consequences for institutions	f%
Influence on personality, health and emotions	71.75	Worsening of atmosphere and relationships	56.5
Influence on social behaviour and life at work	43.06	Decrease in motivation, efficacy and productivity	27.80
Decrease in motivation, efficacy and work productivity	22.87	Decline the institution's reputation	16.14
Consequences connected with the victims' workplace	15.7	Human resources difficulties	10.31
Influence on private life	4.04	Negative influence on students	2.24
Other [a]	0.90	Other [b]	1.79

[a] These answers were as follows: "Life-long damage" and "Changed personality".
[b] These answers were as follows: "Actions"; "Less time for real problems"; "Closing of the institution before the wider environment" and "Parental pressure".

Although in both cases – consequences for the individual and consequences for the institution – participant had the chance to state up to two consequences, they listed more unpleasant consequences of mobbing for the victim than for the institution. Primary and secondary school teachers gave 353 consequences of mobbing for the victim and 239 consequences of mobbing for the institution. The difference is statistically significant ($X^2 = 21.953$, g=1, $p < .001$). There was no statistically significant difference between primary and secondary school teachers in frequency of stated consequences for the victim and for the institution as whole ($X^2 = .029$, g=1, $p > .05$). Primary (188) as well as secondary school teachers (165) most commonly noted the consequences that mobbing has for victims and less commonly raised the consequences for institutions (129 respectively 110).

Discussion

Almost one-fifth of primary and secondary school teachers reported that they had been victims of repeated monthly mobbing in the past six months, and 3.6% did not want to talk about their experience with mobbing. At the same time, almost one-third of teachers, regardless of school level, reported that they had witnessed mobbing in their institution. These findings, which point to the fact that mobbing is also occurs in the educational sector, are consistent with other studies (Doğan Kılıç, 2009; Sağlam, 2008).

This study has shown not only that educational institutions are not immune to mobbing but also that slightly less than half of teachers, regardless of teaching level, did not acknowledge their own responsibility for the prevention and elimination of mobbing. Teachers' knowledge and beliefs directly affect their decision-making processes and teaching practice (Bennett, Wood, & Rogers, 1997; Kegan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). Therefore, it matters what ideas teachers have about who is responsible for the prevention and elimination of mobbing. If teachers do not recognise their own responsibility for the prevention and elimination of mobbing, then the question arises whether and how they will react in a case of mobbing.

Teachers, regardless of school level, most often ascribe responsibility for the prevention and elimination of mobbing to the school management. It is possible to agree that school management undoubtedly play an important role in creating a culture free from violence (Cemaloğlu & Kilinç, 2012),

but at the same time we are convinced that this is not enough. Many authors (Cohen et al. 2009; Maehr, & Midgley 1996; Pšunder, 2011) warn about the importance of a systemic approach in changing school culture, one that needs to include all school participants: pupils, teachers, parents, etc. A school management can try very hard to achieve a cooperative culture and effective prevention of violence, but its efforts will be in vain unless the cooperation and support of all employees is assured.

The responsibility of all employees in creating a cooperative culture with no room for violence is, also evident in, among other factors, appropriate measures taken in case of violence. Research has shown that the reactions of teachers who were victims of mobbing are most commonly focused on seeking emotional support from people whom the victim trusts. We agree that in the case of mobbing emotional support is extremely important to victims, but this is not enough to eliminate mobbing. All teachers, potential victims of mobbing, should be encouraged not only to report mobbing when it happens but also to react to it more deliberately and powerfully.

Teachers' answers indicated that they had more passive reactions when they were witnesses to mobbing. They most often ignored violence when they saw it, either because they lacked power or that they did not want to interfere. When asking what the optimal response is to mobbing, the answers cannot be unanimous. Because each experience of violence is individual, there is no single possible solution. Nevertheless, we can generally agree that the least appropriate response to violence is to do nothing to eliminate it. The reaction we currently display sends the message that we tolerate such actions and that perpetrators are doing nothing wrong (Pšunder, 2010). We believe that teachers active reaction against mobbing behaviours is important not only because it reinforce for students that violent behaviour is unacceptable and teaches them how to react properly to violence, but also because "bullying may go beyond colleague-on-colleague abuse and become an accepted, or even encouraged, aspect of the culture of an organisations" (Cowie et al., 2002, p. 34).

One possible intervention in the case of mobbing would be pressing charges in a court of law. Thus, the victim of mobbing would take legal action to protect his or her rights. None of the questioned teachers mentioned this solution to mobbing as an option, although they were given the opportunity to write this as an answer next to the reply "other". Filing a lawsuit might stop abusive or discriminatory behaviour, but the fact is that the victim could still suffer from lack of confidence and low self-esteem, since victims are vulnerable to loss of dignity. Last but not least, one must not forget the fact that mobbing is also difficult to prove.

The next important recognition of this study is that teachers, regardless of teaching level, recognise the consequences for the victim more frequently than the consequences for the institution. It is possible that teachers are afraid of themselves becoming victims of mobbing and therefore pay more attention to the consequences they could face as victims. At the same time, the literature often pays more attention to consequences for the victims than to consequences for the institution (Davenport et al., 2002; Einarsen, 2000). Moreover, there is almost no literature discussing the complexity of the consequences of mobbing for educational institutions.

Among the consequences of mobbing for the individual, teachers most frequently cited its influence on the victim's personality, health and feelings, followed by consequences that affect the social life of the victim. In third place they stated consequences affecting the victims' motivation, work efficacy and productivity. These answers are in accordance with the conviction that physical and psychological health as well as a teacher's wellbeing is essential for his successful functioning at work (Roffey, 2004). Among the consequences mobbing has for an institution, teachers most often cited the worsening of relationships within the institution, as well as a decline in motivation, efficiency and productivity. These consequences are also among the most commonly cited by other authors (Davenport et al., 2002; Einarsen, 2000). Although teachers mentioned a decline in work efficiency and productivity, only a small percentage of teachers (2.24%) specifically stressed the negative influence of mobbing on students. Such answers could show that teachers are insufficiently aware of the extensive negative consequences mobbing could have in educational institutions; therefore, in the future special attention must be given to educating teachers in this area.

Conclusion

To sum up, this study has shown the following: teachers are familiar with mobbing; when witnessing mobbing, teachers often take a step back rather than offer support to the victim; not all teachers see prevention and elimination of mobbing as responsibility common to all employees and pay insufficient attention to the negative consequences of mobbing for students. Such results confirmed that teacher culture is not so good that it could not be improved. Its fundamental problem is a lack of collegiality, which was also confirmed by other authors (e.g. Fullan & Hargreaves, 2000). In such circumstances, mobbing can become a prevailing and perhaps even established way of behaviour, while, on the other hand, a collaborative culture represents one of the best ways to prevent violence. It is therefore important for educational institutions to encourage a cooperative culture if their aim is to decrease all types of violence in schools. It is also important that in the future more attention be given to teachers' education about the phenomenon of mobbing. If teachers know more about mobbing, they will likely be more aware of this problem and readier to react responsibly and appropriately to it.

This study has some limitations. The sample was made up at schools from the north-eastern part of Slovenia; that reduced the possibilities for generalising our results. Further, in this study only the questionnaire method was used. Although this method has been the most common research tool for the investigation of workplace bullying (Cowie et al., 2002), future research must adopt additional methodologies that could reveal more details of information about mobbing behaviour in schools from different perspectives. Future studies should look more closely into the circumstances in which mobbing appears in schools. This information could have an important role in the prevention of mobbing. Special attention must also be given to the approaches that are used by schools in everyday practice to prevent mobbing.

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