Mobbing:
The Consequences of Empty Desk Syndrome

S. Sabroso[1] and F. Jordão[1]

[1]Psychology Center, Faculty of Psychology and Education, University of Porto, Portugal.

Mobbing appears to be rooted in organizations around the world, is practiced in the workplace of the victim and entails consequences on their physical and psychological well-being, in particular, increased levels of psychological stress and mental fatigue (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004) [1]. Einarsen (1999) [2] illustrates the severity of the consequences declaring that *mobbing* appears to be more destructive to the victims that all of the occupational stress in the world. Thus, the study of the relationship between *burnout* and *mobbing*, understood as an extreme level of occupational stress, is presented as pressing in a scientific context where little or nothing is known of the real consequences of *mobbing*.

Through critical incident technique (Chell, 2004) [3] and content analysis (Sampieri et al., 2006) [4] of 6 cases of workers who were victims of such harassment, we explored the process of *mobbing* in particular, the negative behaviors perpetrated against the victims and the situation that led to course of *mobbing*.

The results show that the start of the climb seems to have a common denominator that lies in the position of the target in relation to proceedings conducted by the management, both ideological, as political level.

Despite observing a wide dispersal of negative behaviors identified by the victims, we can verify that the attacks on the social relations of the target are the most common type, specially emptying function and assign tasks to lower qualifications.

We can conclude that *mobbing* cause serious repercussions on the physical and psychological health of the target, which appear similar to the symptoms described in the literature as a result of *burnout*. In addition to these consequences, expressed in symptoms, the interviewed presents family, social, and economic consequences, resulting from the experience of this type of psychological harassment. Although no strategy proves to be effective in the extinguishment of the course of *mobbing*, we have found *coping* strategies most frequently used, and the "problem solving" strategy proves to be more effective in reducing the perceived consequences for the victims.

References:

[1] Agervold, M. & Mikkelsen, E. G. (2004). Relationships between bullying, psychosocial work environment and individual *stress* reactions. *Work and Stress*, 18(4), 336-351.
[2] Einarsen, S. (1999). The nature and causes of bullying at work. International Journal of Manpower, 20 (1/2), 16-27.

[3] Chell, E. (2004) Critical Incident Technique In C. Cassell & G. Symon (Eds.). Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research. (pp. 45-60). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

[4] Sampieri, R. H., Collado, C. F. & Lucio, P. B. (2006). *Metodologia de Pesquisa*. São Paulo: The McGraw-Hill.