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## Mobbing in higher education institutions

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**Abstract**---Mobbing could be called the new catastrophic disease that is oppressing humanity in its different work areas and whose consequences range from leaving work to achieve liberation to the presentation of a psychosomatic condition that triggers a more serious disease, in this case, in this context, the present study determined its incidence in teachers of higher education institutions in the province of Manabí. The methodology was based on a quantitative approach, the inventory of violence and psychological harassment was used, at work by assessing 22 aspects related to mobbing, it was applied to a sample of 263 teachers. As a result, this presence was obtained in its various forms, predominating the spread of malicious rumors in the work environment and unfounded perverse criticism that affects an average of the teaching staff equivalent to 42%, exercised mainly by the authorities, colleagues and immediate bosses, In addition, the presence of this problem in higher education institutions is evident, with the predominance of the female gender as a relevant point, although one of the most frequent ways is labor criticism, what needs to be addressed is the cause of this negative value.

**Keywords**---workplace harassment, workplace harassment, psychological violence, teachers, universities.

## **Introduction**

Mobbing or workplace harassment is a phenomenon that existed historically, however, in recent times the controversy on this issue has been placed on the carpet. This kind of harassment escalated to such a degree that it began to be called a psychological crime. For this reason, it is necessary to investigate the opportunity to include it within the Ecuadorian professional functions as one of the grounds for terminating an employment relationship (Hermosa, 2017).

Mobbing has been considered the new organizational epidemic of the 21st century, given the enormous suffering it causes to those who suffer from it and the loss of potential competitiveness of the organizations in which it thus becomes one of the most important aspects of modern liability law. civilian in the world of work. Although mobbing is not a new situation, what has changed is social sensitivity to the type of behavior that has increased in parallel with the development of social rights (Escobar & & Fernández, 2012).

Mobbing is evidenced when an individual, exercising his power, exceeds the limits and begins to cause harm to another person, ceasing to think of the latter as a human being and then considering him an object susceptible to domination, all of this violates the moral integrity of the victim, generating in her psychological alterations that, depending on the circumstances, can become pathological alterations or injuries. Likewise, mobbing affects the integrity of workers and their human dignity, their quality of life, conditions, safety and health at work (Ávila, 2020).

The objective of mobbing is to intimidate, diminish, reduce, flatten, intimidate and emotionally and intellectually consume the victim, with a view to eliminating him from the organization or satisfying the insatiable need to attack, control and destroy that the harasser usually presents, taking advantage of the context provided by the particular organizational situation (reorganization, cost reduction, bureaucratization, vertiginous changes, etc.) to channel a series of psychopathic impulses and tendencies (Piñuel & Zabala, 2002).

According to Verona and Santana (2012) mobbing in labor responsibility is an ethical problem of organizations, such as: psychoterror, workplace harassment, covert persecution, psychological abuse, psychological violence, workplace harassment and moral harassment. At the time of creation of an institution, different ethical problems can arise, which must be solved for the proper functioning of the organization, since, sooner or later, they will end up affecting the good institutional name. Therefore, it is committed to providing an alternative, even if they are complex problems that involve, for example, senior managers or a considerable number of employees. And if the institution is not capable of solving them, it cannot, or else, "it considers that it is not a problem", because we are talking about ethical difficulties, which have the duty to seek the solution to the problem that arises in the community institution.

The spiral of mobbing justifies and progressively reinforces harassment, aggravating the problem to the point of making it unsustainable. In the four phases of this study, the first phase begins with psychological harassment, with disorientation being one of the main symptoms, the second phase is conflict, the third involves superiors or authorities, and the fourth phase is abandonment of work. So much so that the victim begins to lose interest in his task, precisely what has made him endure the harassment, changing this interest for concern for his health. The victim of mobbing now chooses, with increasing security, to seek solutions outside the domain of the labor organization to which he still belongs. In the event that your work history reflects a dedication of several years to your organization, your trade or your profession, or you consider that it is too late to start a new career path, your career tends to end in an acrimonious resignation from the work (Baron et al., (2003).

In relation to the hierarchical position, mobbing is classified into four types, horizontal, vertical, ascending and descending or bossing. Horizontal mobbing is characterized by the fact that the harasser and the victim are in the same hierarchical rank, that is, it usually occurs between coworkers, and the psychological repercussions for the victim can be devastating. The causes of this type of workplace harassment can be many and varied, although the most common are to force a worker to conform to certain norms, out of enmity, to attack the weakest, because of differences with the victim, or because of lack of work and boredom (Leymann, 2006), receives this name because either the harasser is at a higher hierarchical level than the victim, or is at a lower level than the victim; therefore, there are two kinds of vertical mobbing: ascending and descending. The rising mobbing occurs when a higher hierarchical level employee is attacked by one or more of his subordinates. Downward mobbing or bossing occurs when an employee of a lower hierarchical level receives psychological harassment from one or more employees who occupy higher positions in the company hierarchy (Burneo & Burneo, 2020).

The Ecuadorian Labor Code defines workplace harassment or mobbing in article 46, as: Workplace harassment should be understood as any behavior that violates the dignity of the person, repeatedly exercised, and potentially harmful, committed in the workplace or in any time against one of the parties to the employment relationship or between workers, which results in the affected person being undermined, mistreated, humiliated, or that threatens or harms their employment situation (H. Congreso Nacional, 2012).

Higher education institutions have been going through globalizing and transforming processes, displacing them to their reason for being in the construction of knowledge and placing them as providers of educational services, exemplifying public and private institutions from the perspective of organizational theories contextualized in environments of effectiveness and efficiency, denoting scenarios prone to mobbing in higher education teachers, damaging them physically, psychologically and economically (Villagrán, 2017).

In this type of institution, mobbing has become a universal pandemic that arises everywhere, affecting teachers, researchers, and administrators alike, with serious cases where the victim suffers physical, psychosomatic, and psychiatric

disorders, although they do not have the cure, since it disguises and protects itself under an ambiguous interpretation of the freedom of criticism (Pedroza, 2020), being able to become an "accomplice" of the demands, these, by their nature, generate tension and harassment causes this to increase much more (2015).

The new increasingly flat organizational structures cause teachers to feel disappointed when they find themselves with a limit, a ceiling for their development, even in some universities there is "training" according to rights, seniority, whims of certain groups politicians, or in the best of cases according to academic preparation, and thus be able to access a base, or if you already have one, wait for a promotion or a salary increase, being natural that demotivation is present.

In the academic field of higher education, mobbing happens in any area, although the university is conceived as a temple of rationality, sober and careful meditation, freedom in logic and evidence, and tolerance of discrepancy, but, although that is the ideal, and there is some truth in it, an academic does not exclusively study human groups, he constitutes a human group of disciplines, professions, departments, faculties, scientific societies, these groups are subject to the same social forces as groups in any other place of education. And even in the workplace, you belong to social categories such as sexual, racial, ethnic, tribal, religious, political, linguistic, and others, all of which affect how you shape your academic engagement (Westhues, 2011).

This being so, the fact that a teacher has problems reporting his workload, or they take away hours, subjects or have him on hold, deteriorates his state of mind, with what desire does he come to work? perhaps it does not reflect it, perhaps because they are very professional people who do not allow work problems to affect their desire to teach, but inevitably this situation sooner or later will end up eliminating their motivation. In this sense, mobbing is reflected as a work distraction, in the understanding that it diverts attention from the objective and work commitment, it would imply complex from this perspective, able to maintain an acceptable state of motivation, running the risk of falling into conformism organizational, of passively accepting everything that happens without having the strength to point out, question or propose actions for the fulfillment of said policies that currently surround the atmosphere of both public and private institutions of higher education and that to a certain extent they cause physical, psychological and economic damage to permanent teachers (Villagrán, 2017). Based on the above, the objective of this research was to determine the incidence of mobbing in teachers of higher education institutions in the province of Manabí, Ecuador.

## **Method**

The research was carried out in the public higher education institutions of the province of Manabí, as can be seen in figure 1.

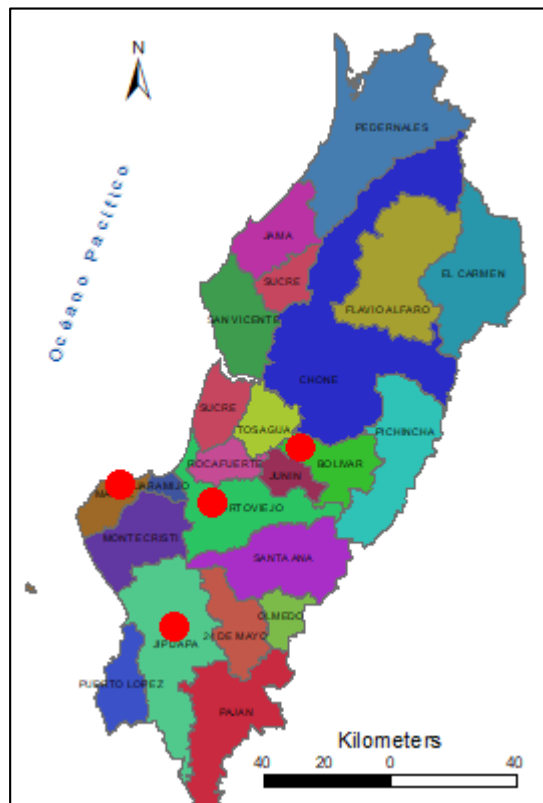


Figure 1. Location of the province of Manabí

The methodology used attends to the quantitative approach, non-experimental design, of descriptive type, through the application of the survey technique. A population of 2,668 teachers linked to a total of 6 public higher education institutions in the province of Manabí was considered, including 3 universities, 1 polytechnic college; and 2 higher technological institutes, from which we worked with a non-probabilistic sample for convenience of 263 professors who were the ones who responded to the applied instrument, taking into account that this type of sampling “allows the selection of those accessible cases that agree to be included. This, based on the convenient accessibility and proximity of the subjects to the researcher” (Otzen & and Manterola, 2017).

The sample studied comprised 35% men and 65% women who were given the survey based on the inventory of violence and psychological harassment at work questionnaire (IVAPT-PANDO) developed by Pando et al., (2006) , in a self-administered way to assess 22 aspects related to mobbing plus one, through two sections, A and B, the first (A) referring to the frequency with which what is asked occurs with structured alternatives on a Likert-type scale; and the second (B) inherent to the frequency with which that happens to him (perception) with respect to his peers. In other words, this Likert scale makes it possible to measure the intensity with which teachers perceive behaviors related to mobbing in the work environment in two dimensions, classified as follows in Table 1.

Table 1. Scale according to items A and B

A	B
4. Very often.	1. Less than my classmates
3. Frequently	2. The same as my classmates
2. Sometimes	3. More than the rest of my classmates
1. Almost never	
0. Never	

In the same way, the aspects valued in the IVAPT-PANDO inventory are detailed in table 2.

Table 2. IVAPT-PANDO

#	Questions	A	B
1	I receive attacks on my reputation.		
2	They have tried to humiliate or ridicule me in public.		
3	I receive ridicule, slander or public defamation.		
4	I am assigned jobs or projects with deadlines so short that they are impossible to meet.		
5	I am ignored or excluded from work meetings or decision-making.		
6	I am prevented from having information that is important and necessary to do my job.		
7	Work situations are manipulated to make me fall into mistakes and then accuse me of negligence or being a bad worker.		
8	Malicious or slanderous rumors spread about me in the company.		
9	My work is devalued and I am never recognized for something I have done well.		
10	My successes at work are ignored and maliciously attributed to other people or elements unrelated to them, such as chance, luck, the market situation, etc.		
11	My mistakes or small faults are punished much more harshly than the rest of my classmates.		
12	The possibilities of communicating with colleagues and/or with other areas of the company are hindered.		
13	I am continually interrupted when trying to speak.		
14	I feel that I am prevented from expressing myself.		
15	I am verbally attacked criticizing the work I do.		
16	I am avoided or rejected at work (avoiding eye contact, through gestures of explicit rejection, disdain or contempt, etc.).		
17	My presence is ignored, for example, addressing exclusively to third parties (as if I did not exist).		
18	New tasks are constantly assigned to me.		
19	The jobs or activities assigned to me require experience beyond the competencies I possess, and they are assigned to me with the intention of discrediting me.		
20	I am criticized in such a way at work that I already doubt my ability to do my tasks well.		
21	I have fewer opportunities to train or receive adequate training than those offered to other colleagues.		

22 Opportunities for a promotion or improvement in my job are blocked or prevented.

\* The person(s) that produces the above mentioned(s) for me:

My superior(s)

My co-worker(s)

My subordinates

## Discussion

In relation to the research objective and the applied instrument, the results were grouped into four categories, the first concerning attacks on reputation, humiliation, defamation and ridicule in public; a second category inherent in the assignment of jobs or projects with short deadlines that are impossible to meet, ignoring information that is important and necessary for decision making; the third corresponds to ignoring work successes and maliciously attributing them to other people or elements unrelated to work, punishing errors or small failures harshly, hindering communication with others in the institution; and the fourth related to the spread by the institution of malicious or slanderous rumors about the person, devaluing their work and the non-recognition of achievements.

In figure 2 shows the results of the first category related to attacks on reputation, humiliation, defamation, and ridicule in public.

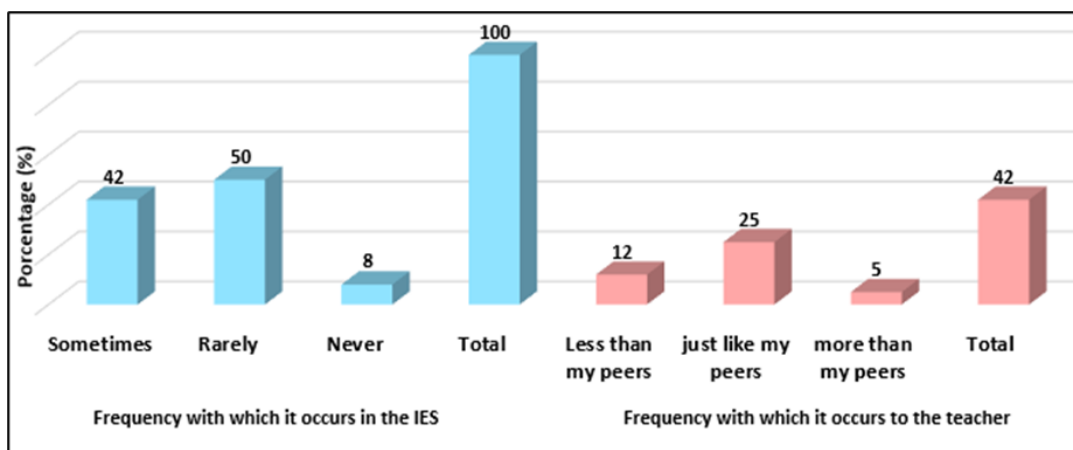


Figure 2. Attacks on reputation, humiliation, defamation, and ridicule in public

As can be seen, 42% of the HEI teachers have suffered attacks on their reputation, have experienced humiliation and defamation, and were also ridiculed before a group of people on occasion. Although a higher percentage states that they have not been harassed, the figures of having experienced some type of attack on their integrity are high.

Figure 3 details the assignment of jobs or projects with short deadlines that are impossible to meet, ignoring information that is important and necessary for decision making.

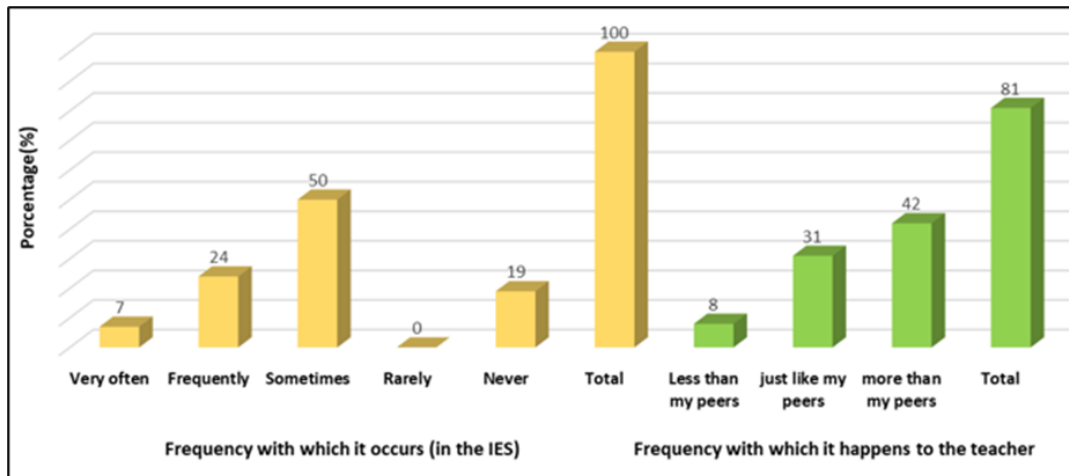


Figure 3. Assignment of works or projects with short deadlines, impossible to meet Regarding the assignment of workload to teachers, in which a very short time prevails to carry it out, 54% reveal that they have experienced it, very difficult jobs and even impossible to fulfill because they simply did not have enough time to do it, although they had to occupy their sleeping hours, they could not achieve it, this type of assignments attended by teachers implied omitting relevant information on the subject that led to decision-making within the organizational structure by superiors or mediate and immediate bosses. Figure 4 details the aspect of rumours, defamation or slander raised against teachers within the higher education institution

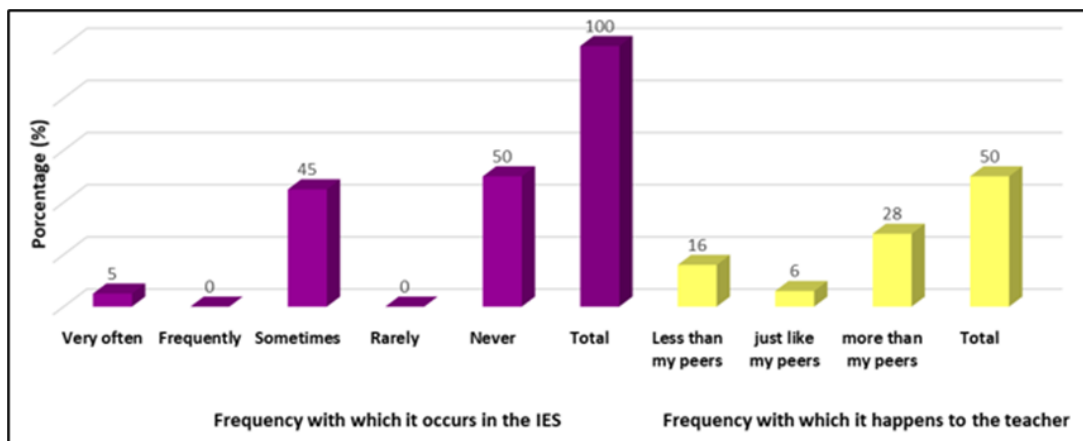


Figure 4. Spread of malicious or slanderous rumors of the person by the institution

A high percentage (45%) of the Manabi HEI faculty reveals having been the subject of slander and malicious rumors within the institution, which have affected negatively both their emotional state of mind and the relationship with their colleagues and co-workers when being observed and questioned by them; Likewise, the result of all his work has been devalued on several occasions, leaving aside the recognition of his achievements and academic contributions to



the institution. Figure 5 shows the ignorance of work successes and the malicious attribution to other people or elements outside the work.

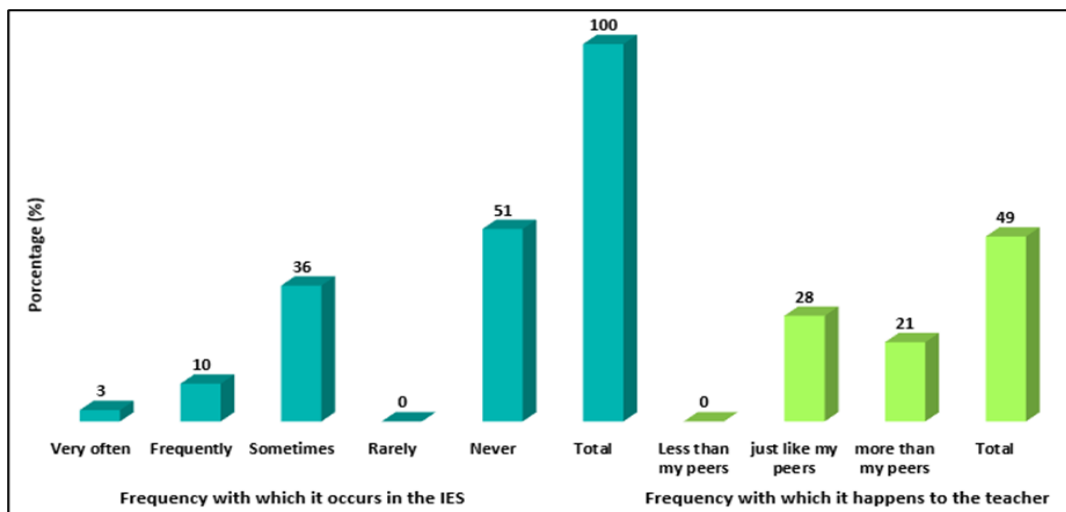


Figure 5. Ignorance of work successes and malicious attribution to other people or outside the work

The result of 36% of the teaching staff has been ignored in the scope of work successes, however these have been maliciously attributed to other people, they have even been attributed to elements outside the institution, in addition to the fact that they have been sanctioned some small failures or errors in a severe and inequitable way, unlike the rest of the teaching staff, attitudes that apart from hurting their mood and emotional state, have caused communication obstacles with their peers within the institution, producing in addition to the involuntary exclusion of work groups, little camaraderie as part of the daily work of teachers. Figure 6 shows the effects of mobbing in terms of the verbal expression of the results of the work done.

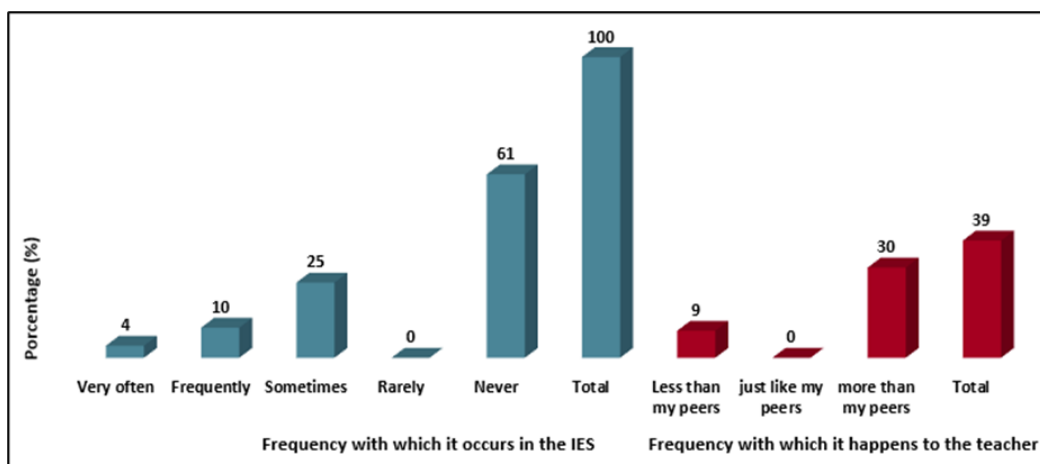


Figura 6. Interrupción continua al tratar de hablar, impidiendo expresar el trabajo realizado

Un 35% del profesorado de las IES expresa en esta gráfica, cuánto ha sido vulnerado en su intención de expresarse públicamente, ya sea por intervenir dentro de una reunión en la carrera a la que está vinculado, o de un departamento, área o eje sustantivo al que ha sido directamente asignado, e inclusive en un estamento superior como el Consejo Universitario u Órgano colegiado superior, en las cuales sencillamente está presente pero no es tomado en cuenta por sus aportaciones, ya que es impedido de expresarse, sobre todo cuando se trata de manifestar una contribución a estos niveles de la estructura organizativa institucional. Una realidad que desmotiva y desilusiona al docente, pero que sin embargo procura sobrellevar por su convicción de maestro y necesidad laboral.

En la figura 7 se observa otro aspecto del mobbing relacionado al rechazo del trabajo realizado por el docente

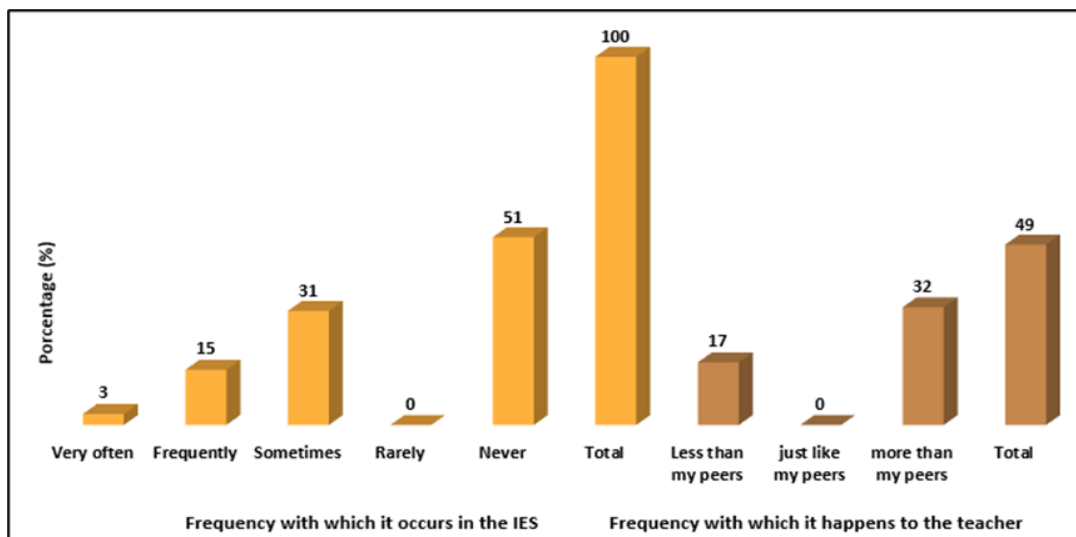


Figure 7. Avoidance, rejection, disrepute of work and assignment of new tasks

46% of the teachers surveyed evidence an avoidance or rejection in their work, manifested through explicit rejection gestures, avoiding eye contact with them, putting on headphones, whispering in a low voice, gesticulating as if to hum a song, among others; Although one of the most predominant is the assignment of new tasks, tasks in which the teacher has little or no experience, since they are not in accordance with their professional skills acquired in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, nor with the empirical or teaching training they possess, which can be deduced as an intention to discredit the teacher as a person and as an official in the work that he develops for that institution of higher education. Figure 8 shows another aspect of mobbing through criticism of the work carried out in the institution.

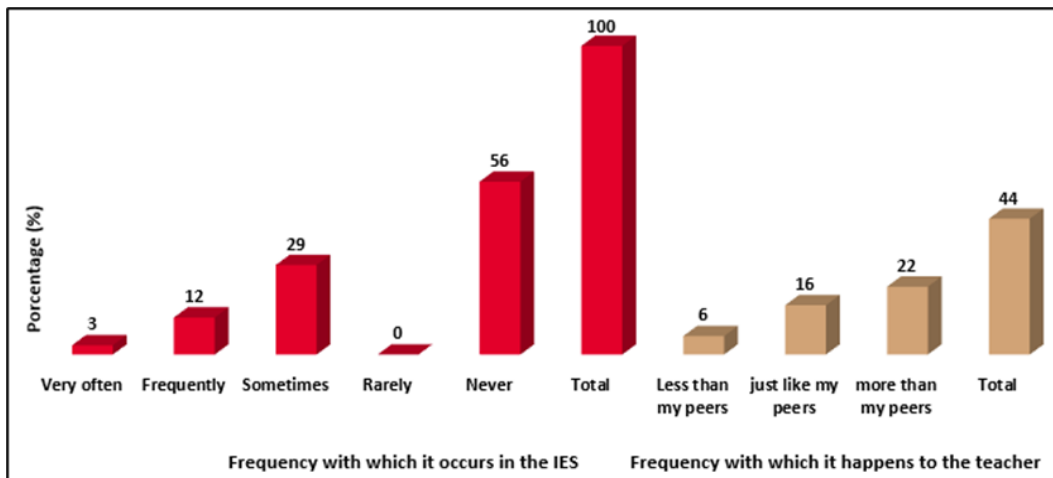


Figure 8. Criticism of the work, doubt of ability to do it, blocking of opportunities

40% of the teaching staff agree that they have been subject to very harsh criticism in the institution related to the form and results of the work they frequently carry out, this criticism is also linked to the unfounded doubt regarding the capacity that the teacher has to carry it out, as a result of which, some opportunities to participate in continuous training activities for teachers are obstructed, justified in the supposed fact of a Questionable work by the teacher, without a relevant documented rationale. Figure 9 presents the last aspect of mobbing related to that character who exercises this type of treatment of the teacher.

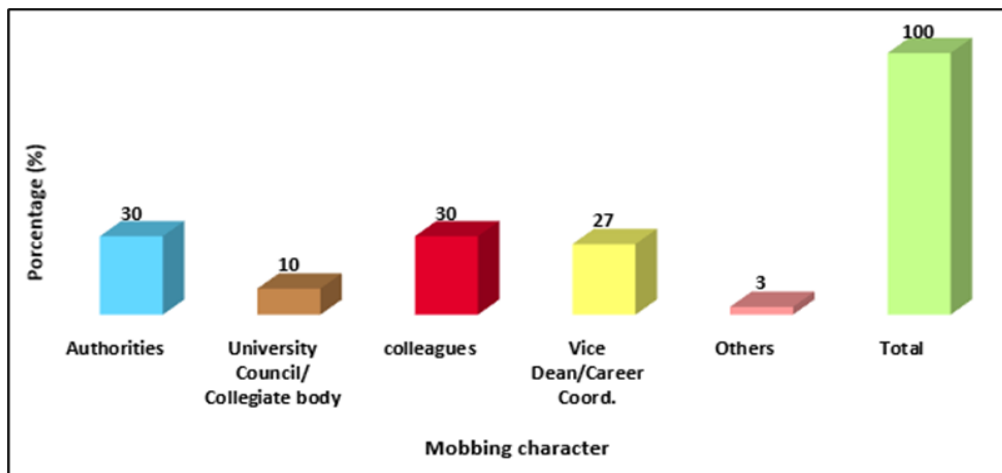


Figure 9. Person who makes this deal in the institution where he works

The entity responsible for mobbing within higher education institutions rests, by majority, both on the authorities (30%) and on the same teaching colleagues (30%), however, the sum of these characters that exercise this workplace harassment represents 73.3%, clearly visible in the graph, which involves the institutional organic structure, from the managerial level represented by the University Council or higher collegiate body, Rectors (as) and Vice Chancellors

(as), Vice Deanships, Career Coordinations, Teaching and administrative colleagues.

Zaldumbide (2020) in his study on workplace bullying of teaching and administrative staff through the application of the workplace bullying strategies questionnaire (Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terrorization) LIPT-60, evaluated 6 indices that correspond to workplace discredit (DL) whose results for the medium and high levels are equivalent to 40%; stunting of progress (PE) at medium and high levels corresponding to 80%; solitary confinement or blockage of communication (BC) 71% at medium and high levels; Covert Bullying (IE) 9% at medium and high levels; overt or direct intimidation (IM) 73% at medium and high levels; personal discredit (PD) 21% at medium and high levels, resulting in an average of 49% of teaching and administrative staff affected by mobbing at medium and high levels within that university institution, denoting medium-high levels of mobbing in staff teacher and administrator who works at the university.

Pedroza (2020) narrates his own experience at the university through an autobiography on mobbing at the university, violence and group harassment, highlighting the 4 stages of mobbing, namely: the appearance of a critical incident, systematic persecution, intervention of superiors and abandonment of work; finding that "mobbing in the university is produced by the existence of an academic culture based on inbreeding, cronyism, competition, envy and the search for power" (pp.332-333).

Quintero et al., (2020) identified workplace harassment behaviors based on the LIPT-60 index, based on the sub-scales established by González and Rodríguez (2005) through 193 applied questionnaires; Some of the behaviors that commonly occurred were loss of prestige at work, hindering progress, lack of communication or blocking of communication, covert intimidation, overt or direct intimidation, personal loss of prestige, and other items that cannot be grouped into these dimensions appropriately, but are for the characterization of workplace bullying, evidencing a social affectation with notorious differences (teachers of chair hour, occasional teachers, permanent teachers, contracted, permanent administrative personnel, personnel order of provision of services and personnel order of provision of professional services), a reality that promotes "interpersonal difficulties among the institution's officials, since according to those affected, staff with permanent contracts in many cases want to take advantage of their condition to promote acts of workplace violence."

Muñoz et al., (2019) in their study carried out in universities in the state of Hidalgo determined the presence of mobbing in teachers, who are affected to different degrees by the various manifestations, behaviors and strategies of which they have been the object in their teaching. workplace, as a result of some causes such as the lack of a managerial profile of those who lead educational institutions in that state, coupled with autocratic behavior and management under threats, in addition to the bureaucratic conformation in public organizations and the lack of humanization as essential element in the management of institutions.

Although, for (Gamero, 2011), the best way to eradicate this behavior is prevention, and the existence of a protocol through which to manage harassment

files, an instrument of voluntary implementation with the exception of sexual harassment and harassment for reasons of sex at work, a matter in which its existence is mandatory and for its full operability, it must be approved by means of the corresponding legal instrument: in the case of Universities, by means of an agreement promulgated by the Secretary or Governing Ministry of higher education policy, as well as the intervention of the University Ombudsman in the files related to workplace harassment should focus on aspects inherent to: "Provide the parties with the necessary information to avoid injuring their rights; offer extra-procedural channels for conflict resolution and promote mediation actions when the parties agree on it; and ensure the eradication of harassment behaviors" (Gamero, 2011).

Rojas et al., (2019) in their review work found incidences of workplace harassment in higher university personnel understood as any action whose motivation is to damage the physical, moral and / or psychological integrity of the victim in 30%, and in the other half, incidences of less than 20% are mentioned, the most frequent manifestations being of a sociocultural nature and, to a lesser extent, sexual; this in relation to the constant mention of the incidence of sexual aggression and its consequences. Since each study analyzed identifies different actions to refer to workplace harassment and focuses on the causal reason for these. In addition to this, the analysis by gender differences and bullying behaviors could provide more accurate information necessary to know how to address this problem, given the types of bullying behaviors and hierarchy of the perpetrator or aggressor.

The present work developed in higher education institutions in Manabí, in which an average of 42% of teachers have experienced the effects of mobbing in the development of their academic activities, is consistent with the studies of the cited authors, in terms of attacks on reputation, humiliation, defamation and ridicule in public; criticism of the job doubting the ability to do the tasks, having fewer opportunities to receive adequate training, blocking or preventing the opportunities you have for a promotion or improvement in your job; and the character who makes this deal in the institution where he works; the spread by the institution of malicious or slanderous rumors about him, devaluing his work and ignoring him; mediante el cuestionario IVAPT-PANDO, en similitud con el LIPT-60.

Mobbing is a destructive act that can end the abilities of a teacher who is above all a human being with virtues and defects, but who is primarily good; and it is one of the fundamental reasons why it is enough that one of the many forms of presentation that it has is acting to place the red alert and that situation must be dealt with immediately by the immediate competent authorities, it should not wait for the effects that cause they affect a greater number of teachers, causing the number to increase, as has been seen in the results of this work.

Likewise, regarding the assessment of other aspects grouped in the IVAPT-PANDO instrument referring to the assignment of jobs or projects with short deadlines that are impossible to meet, ignoring information that is important and necessary for decision making; ignorance of work successes and maliciously attributing them to other people or elements unrelated to work, punishing errors or small

failures harshly to the rest of the employees, which leads to hindering communication with others in the institution; the continuous interruption of the word when trying to speak, preventing expressing the work that the teacher has done; the avoidance or rejection of work by the teacher (avoiding eye contact, by means of an explicit rejection gesture, etc.) assigning new new tasks that require more experience to the competencies he possesses, with the intention of discrediting him at work; there is quite an approximation, leading to establishing similar realities in a regional environment of higher education institutions in Central and South America.

The experience of a single teacher can be that of many and become countless; the experience of having lived the negative consequences of mobbing has come to mark the life of that human being, in his virtues, in his defects as a person, as a father / mother / son / daughter, as a member of society, as a professional capable of give the best of oneself, to reconnect with a HEI, a public or private company, to undertake, in a socioeconomic reality that is becoming increasingly difficult in opportunities, in common efforts, in access to soft loans to finance and drive business; behold, the effects of this new "catastrophic disease" become a real chain reaction.

### **Conclusion**

The presence of mobbing in higher education institutions in the province of Manabi is evident in its various forms of presentation, having as a relevant point the predominance in the female gender and exercised by the immediate higher level. Although one of the most frequent forms of mobbing is labor criticism, what needs to be addressed is the cause of this negative value that causes emotional and behavioral alterations in teachers, leading to demotivation and commitment to develop their teaching work and subsequent activities. that it entails Destructive criticism does not particularize the situation, it alters and groups various situations to intentionally damage the integrity of the person, which could become a normality if it is not attended and managed from within, from each higher education institution with clear policies that detect, correct, and reinsert the teacher who practices it. At this point, the level of training, the culture and the values of each teacher play an important role in whether or not to exercise mobbing in the group and in the environment; It is very difficult for that person who maintains personal harmony, also to carry it out in his family, at home and in the work environment; however, that person who does not control his impetus, his expressions and actions, behaves in the same way at home and in his work environment.

The work of each teacher is directly related to what is stored in their mind, body and spirit, in this harmonic confluence one can act assertively or negatively to create or counter-create teamwork, harmony, solidarity leading to the achievement of institutional objectives from their various responsibilities as part of a whole called Ama M ter.

Higher education institutions demand comprehensively competent professionals, who are not only capable of being trainers in knowledge (to know), but also in being and doing in order to achieve the prosperity for which they have been

trained in higher education. This mission can be achieved when the leaders who lead these entities and the middle managers at the forefront of the careers are true leaders, with proven abilities to make equitable decisions considering the greatest well-being for the largest number of teachers based on proven facts without considering unfounded opinions, based on performance statistics that show the work carried out in accordance with the functions that each teacher must perform.

The contribution or abstention that each member of the teaching staff can make depends solely on himself/herself, it is he or she who decides how to act, if it is to serve as a true servant official, he/she does it to his/her students, to his/her classmates ( as), to your institution; or decides to be the cause of the abandonment of the job, the dismissal of the official, the breakdown of his emotional physical health, the pain and suffering of that home, and even the death of a valuable person

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