



THE PERCEPTION AND CAUSES OF MOBBING: TURKEY EXAMPLE

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Keywords: Mobbing, Bullying,
Work life, Leadership

ABSTRACT

Mobbing is an important problem which workers in both industrial societies and the new economic period face. The study carried out within this context has the characteristics of a literature review. The aim of this study is find out the relationship between mobbing and resources of mobbing. To achieve this aim we conducted a survey at a public institution in Turkey. We used SPSS 20.0 statistical package for analyses. In order to test the hypothesis, factor analyses for structure validity, correlations and regression analyses to test the hypothesis is conducted. As a result of research we found that, there is a positive relation between causes of mobbing and personal dignity, job dignity and physical pressure.

1. INTRODUCTION

Work conditions today, which are constantly changing and getting harder and excessive competitive market, bring about competition in work life. This makes pre-existing good labor relations, loyalty to the work and companies give place to new currents. One of the newest currents is the policy of emotional pressure and intimidation to employees in workplaces, which takes place in literature as mobbing. Actually, work life, which has gained a place in human life from the beginning of history, has been a witness to different types of oppression even though its name has not been known as mobbing. However, this oppression or better known as mobbing now is a complex, multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary concept that is ignored and avoided revealing due to human nature. Mobbing (psychological violence) is a fact, which has always existed in our work life but has not been named until a short time ago. The common point in which the results of international researches meet is in accordance with the fact that victims of mobbing (psychological violence) are much more than victims of other violence and harassment.(Yavuz, 2007). The concept of mobbing is a significant subject, which has been academically researched with all aspects recently.

The aim of this study is to gain a general point of view to mobbing concept and investigate the relation between causes and the perception of mobbing within the organizations. In accordance with this aim, after the definition and related terms of mobbing and the causes of mobbing we developed hypotheses and conducted the empirical study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. What is Mobbing?

The concept of mobbing etymologically derives from “mob” in English. The word “mob” means a crowd or “gang” uses violence in an illegal way. The word mobbing as a behavior pattern means psychological violence, blockade, attacking as a whole, disturbance or annoyance (Webster’s New World Dictionary).

Biologists used the concept in the 19th century for the first time. Later, in 1960s it was seen to be used by social psychologist Konrad Lorenz, who analyzed animal behavior, with the aim of expressing that small groups of animals move away the stronger and alone one by attacking as a whole or the situation experienced among covey that birds exclude the weakest bird by sending it away from food and water, make it quite weak and finally move it away from the group by killing it with physical attacks (Tınaz, 2006). Afterwards, it was defined by Heinz Leymann in order to express psychological violence which employees commit each other (Leymann, 1996) and Einarsen and Raknes (1997) defined it as a galling, annoying, disturbing behavior which is consciously or unconsciously displayed by one employee or several employees and decreases job performance/causes unpleasant job environment (Einarsen, 1999). While Özen (2007) defines mobbing as “harassing, tyrannously behaving, disturbing, socially excluding or exposing an employee to a lower position by giving disturbing tasks”, Arpacioğlu (2005) describes it as “systematic, long-term emotional torture which is practised to an employee posing a threat due to his/her success in the workplace, knowledge and positive behavior by one person or several people as a gang”.

Since mobbing is a new concept taking part in literature, there is no clear Turkish definition and there is a terminology problem in Turkish literature. The concept is used in a similar way to Western literature by experts who are doing research about the subject as “emotional tyranny/harassment” by Solmuş (2005), “psychological violence” by Tutar (2004) and “intimidation” by Yüçetürk (2003) (Bayrak-Kök, 2006). In short, when the literature is analyzed, it is seen that mobbing is expressed with similar definitions such as “harassment, tyranny, violence in the workplace, workplace terror/violence, intimidation, psychological violence, and etc.” and a problem related with terminology is confronted. We are going to use the word mobbing in the forthcoming parts of our study in order to avoid any scientific confusion.

2.2. Mobbing in the Work life

The concept of mobbing in the work life was used for the first time by Heinz Leymann, German working environment psychologist who lived in Sweeden in 1980s as a result of determination about the existence of long-term, similarly hostile and aggressive behavior among employees in a certain workplace (Tınaz, 2006).

In the work life mobbing concept states the element of psycho-social violence related with work life. From the past decade to present, mobbing has been dealt as a problem which seriously affects physical and psychological states of employees in the modern societies (Kudielka, 2004). The reasons for it are competitive pressure increased with globalization, economic instability, organizational reengineering and inequalities in power distribution. Mobbing, which has no limitations about how to be practiced on employees, is an organizational psycho-violence type (Bayrak-Kök, 2006). Mobbing, which we often face in the work life, consists of various, planned, direct and indirect, conscious, motivated, aggressive behavior. These behaviors sometimes disrupt the spiritual unity of individuals and make them turn active state into passive state. This affects the performance of the employees negatively.

On the other hand, one of the serious problems we confront about this subject is that mobbing is regarded as a workplace behavior and these behaviors are tolerated. This problem is, probably, as important as the existence of mobbing. In fact, mobbing which is defined as pressure applied by more powerful people in a systematical way (Farrington, 1993), oppression, terrorization, ganging up on someone, attacking emotionally (Baldry ve Farrington, 2000; Leymann, 1990), can produce results which no one can ignore in addition to individual, organizational and social results. When it is evaluated in the light of this information, mobbing is the process of deliberate and systematic type of behavior/behaviors which pursue(s) an attrition goal via emotional attacks by targeting certain person or people in a workplace directly or indirectly and choosing a hostile and unethical attitude and cause(s) psychological and/or physical damage on a person or people in accordance with this goal (Yavuz, 2007). It will be beneficial to have a look at mobbing concept being mentioned most often within the frame of Turkey and the World and to diversify the subject with the examples of female leaders who are exposed to mobbing in order to understand the subject better.

Mobbing concept, which people working on organizational psychology research with increasing interest in the world, is a matter of fact, which is not used so much and not thought over in Turkey (Bayrak-Kök, 2006). Although it is not known as a concept, so much, many people confront a situation in their work lives directly or indirectly. Various studies related with mobbing are available in Turkey. These studies give theoretic information about the process, extent and stages of mobbing, what must be done in order to prevent this process (Yüçetürk, 2002), characteristics being prone to mobbing and the ways to deal with mobbing (Tutar, 2004) We can make a list about mobbing studies in various business lines such as mobbing in tourism establishments (Çalışkan, 2005), mobbing in the industry sector (Kılıç, 2006), mobbing over teachers and managers at public and private schools (Gökçe, 2006). Akça and İrmış (2006), Aktop (2006), Tanoğlu (2006), Karacaoğlu, also conduct similar studies and Reyhanoğlu (2006), Tınaz (2006), Kök (2006) and Işık (2007)

As we understand from these academic studies, mobbing can be seen in many different fields and situations.

Significant steps have been taken in EU countries about mobbing which has become a significant problem all over the world. Altuntaş (2010) summarizes these studies: Mobbing is directly and legally accepted as crime in Scandinavian countries. Occupational Health and Safety Law issued in Sweden in 1994 states mobbing is crime.

In addition to physical violence, psychological violence was added to Occupational Health and Safety Law issued in 2000 in Finland. Trade Union movements were effective on legislating mobbing in Germany.

As stated above, while mobbing concept as a fact in our country and in the world has already taken place in the legislation of many countries, especially developed countries, it has not been the subject of any legal regulation so far. Although mobbing is frequently seen in Turkey indeed, even it has not been known what mobbing, which is experienced in the organizations, really means. Moreover, it is a fact, which the victim has difficulty in giving a name and a meaning to psychological harassment she/he is exposed to, even tolerates or ignores it by accepting that it is normal due to the stress and competitive environment of business life and sometimes hesitates to speak out (İlhan, 2010). As mentioned, mobbing includes a wide range and many kinds of psychological violence. We can count some of them: suppression, oppression, intimidation, threatening. According to the findings from researches, there are no distinctive qualities of mobbing victims; in other words, mobbing can happen to anyone. (Salin 2003). According to Davenport and et al. (1999), the qualities increasing the possibility of being exposed to mobbing are to disturb others via thinking creatively and independently and asserting new ideas and methods Yüçetürk (2003) draws attention that people who are smart, talented, creative, success-oriented, honest, trustworthy. It can be told that poor or strong management skills, changes in business structure, periods of downsizing and merging are the general atmosphere, which reveals mobbing. In some situations, it can cause mobbing if the target is in a different type. As is known, a person has unchangeable qualities such as color, gender, accent, class being represented, being more or less mannered and cultured in comparison with others. These qualities increase the possibility of being exposed to intimidation. (Davenport et al., 1999). Public opinion and media demonstrate that behaviors, which attract attention and cause negative impact, are displayed verbally, indirectly and deliberately rather than physically and directly. (Aquino and Bayron, 2002). According to the points of view of victims who claimed that they were intimidated, one of the important reasons for intimidation is organizational climate and problems about organizational operation. Actors of intimidation are the products of social customs and organizational culture hosting. When we have a look at what encourages the actor, it will be understood that the answer is “competitive organization” because competition is a zero-sum game. One wins, the other loses (ERQ, 2000). In that case, mobbing will continue to be a problem in today’s world where competition is getting higher and higher day by day with globalization.

2.3. Causes of Mobbing

There has been a considerable amount of research on (mobbing), no specific agreement on the causes. Researchers’ argued that some of the victims are the cause, their touchy behavior or a pre-existing disorder cause the executor to engage in bullying (Allen, 2005). Several possible causes of bullying have been accepted (Buttigieg et.al, 2011). The prevalence of bullying was connected with attributes of the bully and organizational distinctiveness; although it could be argued that, many of the supposed attributes of the bully were also related to organizational characteristics (Buttigieg et.al, 2011).

Some as being similar to those motivating interpersonal aggression have noted the incentives for encouraging the bullying and mobbing: control of others, supremacy, anger, revenge, power show, and enhanced self-image. Others investigate the organizational structures and the key that enable and encourage bullying, such as the use of valid organizational change processes or performance management procedures (Vickers, 2010).

In the fast growing competitive environment, a business is spending great effort to maintain market shares and profit margins. This pressure frequently lead organizations to downsize, reform or de-layer with the belief that less overhead will get back lost revenues. These kinds of measures are not always beneficial for the organizations (Allen, 2005). Buttigieg et.al (2011), argued that, although there were victims of mobbing caused by their personal characteristics, mobbing caused from organization-based factors were higher than personal ones. In addition, most of the participants stated that poor organizational climate was an issue at their workplace. As a result, the most important determinants of mobbing were the attributes of the mobbing and organizational characteristics, as well as the power of the doer and discrimination based on certain characteristics. Most of the participants stated that the personality or personal attributes of the doer was a significant determinant of the mobbing behavior (Buttigieg et.al, 2011). Organizations endure bullies in positions of command, because they believe that by nature the good leader possesses the characteristics of a bully. Many offenders are sitting at the leadership roles and in advantaged positions where they can impose pain on their targets (Sloan et.al, 2010). Any organization that fails to address hostile and insulting acts implies by their very effective that those behaviors are acceptable. Once employees believe that “this is how the things done here”, maltreatment becomes part of the organizational culture (Allen, 2005). Leadership can affect the chance of bullying within an organization in one of two ways; either by its nonappearance, or by the behaviors of those in positions of power. A lack of leadership creates a void whereby employees are hesitant about what is important, what is expected of them, and how they are supposed to act (Allen, 2005).

In this research, we try to investigate the relationship between the causes and the perception of mobbing within the organization.

Hypothesis

To achieve this goal we developed following hypothesis:

- H₁: There is a relation between causes of mobbing and the communication interference.
- H₂: There is a relation between causes of mobbing and the offence to personal dignity.
- H₃: There is a relation between causes of mobbing and the offence to job dignity.
- H₄: There is a relation between causes of mobbing and the physical pressure.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In this research, we aim to the relationship between the causes and the existing level of mobbing within the organization. To test the assumption one scale was conducted.

The contributors in the current study comprised 124 public sector institution employees in Turkey. The institution included nearly 200 employees completely and all of them participated to questionnaire. Questionnaires were spread by the researcher to every participant in different sessions in all of the institution.

When the returned questionnaires were examined, 4 were invalid. As a result, a total of 124 valid responses were used in the research.

Table 1: Demographics

Demographics	n	%
Age		
20-35	71	57.3
36-45	37	29.9
46-55	16	12.8
55 - ↑	-	
Gender		
Female	39	38.5
Male	85	68.5
Marital Status		
Married	41	33.1
Single	83	66.9
Education		
Elementary school	10	8.1
Junior High	41	33.1
High School	72	58.1
University	1	0.8
Tenure		
Less than 1 years	7	5.6
1-4	33	26.6
5-11	40	32.4
11- ↑	44	35.4
Sum	124	100

The samples included 39 (38.5%) female and 85 (68.5%) male volunteers. Their education level was; 10 (8.1%) elementary school. 41 (33.1%) junior high. 72 (58.1%) high school and 1 (0.8%) University. Participants had been working in their jobs; 7 (5.6%) for less than 1 year, 33 (26.6) 1-4 years, 40 (32.4%) for 5-11 years, 44 (35.4%) for 11 or more years.

Data produced in this study were collected by survey. The survey consisted of three measures.

In the first part questions about the demographic characteristics of public sector institution employees; in the other part questions designed to measure mobbing level in organization were asked. At the last part, we asked the causes of mobbing.

Mobbing was measured by the “mobbing perception scale” developed by Laymann (1993) and revised by Yavuz (2008). The measure included 23 items, each item was answered through a five-point Likert scale ranging from “1=very frequently” to “5=never.” In the present study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the scale was .73. The cause of mobbing was measured by another part of the same surveys.

The measure included 8 items, each item was answered through a five-point Likert scale ranging from “1=strongly disagree” to “5=strongly agree.” In the present study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.89.

4. RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study variables, explanatory factor analysis was conducted by using SPSS software. The mobbing measure produced four factors upon factor analysis. The first factor named “Communication interference”, explained 28.82% of the total variance. The second factor was named “Offence to personal dignity” and it explained 18.94% of the variance. The third factor “Offence to job dignity” with a variance of 14.08 %. The last factor named “Physical pressure” and it explained 18.94% of the variance. The factors all together explained 69.21% of the variance. KMO Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was 0.795.

Table 2: Mobbing Perception Factor Analysis

Mobbing Perception				
	Communication interference	Offence to personal dignity	Offence to job dignity	Physical pressure
Q 22	.894			
Q 17	.870			
Q 5	.796			
Q 4	.726			
Q 19	.631			
Q 3		.829		
Q 9		.726		
Q 2		.704		
Q 13		.628		
Q 12			.834	
Q 15			.808	
Q 20				.741
Q 6				.719

The third part of survey we used the causes of mobbing measure produced two factors upon factor analysis. The first factor named “Leader”, explained 46.86% of the total variance. The second factor was named “Management” and it explained 33.45% of the variance. The factors all together explained 80.32 % of the variance. KMO Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was 0.856.

Table 3: Causes of Mobbing Factor Analysis

Cause of Mobbing		
	Leader	Management
AS 8	.923	
AS 7	.899	
AS 6	.790	
AS 5	.717	
AS 3	.668	
AS 4	.617	
AS 2		.915
AS 1		.902

The correlations between research variables listed below in Table 4. There is a positive relationship between “Offence to Personal Dignity”, “Leader” and “Management”. There is a positive relationship between “Offence to Job Dignity” and “Management”. We also found that there were a positive correlation between “Physical Pressure” and “Leader”. We could not find any relation between Communication Interference and causes of mobbing.

Table 4: Correlation Analyses

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. CI	(.89)					
2.ODP	0.0	(.90)				
3. OJD	0.0	.00	(.91)			
4. PP	.40	-.20	.18	(.88)		
5. Leader	.,89	-.17*	.19	.,28**	(.81)	
6. Management	-.55	.,261**	.,30**	,48	0,0	(.79)

CI: Communication Interference, OPD: Offence to Personal Dignity, OJD: Offence to Job Dignity, PP: Physical Pressure, *p<0,05 **p<0,01

To explore whether the independent variables had a significant impact on the dependent variables, hierarchical regression analyzes were conducted. Table-5 shows the regression analysis results for each mobbing dimension. In the regression analysis, causes of mobbing variables (Leader, Management) were entered to control their effects, after which, CI: Communication Interference, OPD: Offence to Personal Dignity, OJD: Offence to Job Dignity, PP: Physical Pressure emotional exhaustion, personnel achievement and depersonalization. The results show that, leader had a positive significant effect on OPD and PP. Moreover, management had a positive significant effect on OPD, OJD and PP.

Table 5: Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Dependent	CI	OPD	OJD	PP
	β	β	β	β
Leader	0.89	0.178*	0.19	0.287**
Management	-0.55	0.261**	0.30**	0.48***
ΔR^2	0.89	0.188	0.70	0.145
ΔF	0.67	6.726	6.044	5.6169**

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Thus, hypotheses H₂ (There is a relation between Causes of mobbing and the Offence to personal dignity) and H₃ (There is a relation between Causes of mobbing and the Offence to job dignity), H₄ (There is a relation between Causes of mobbing and the Physical pressure) accepted H₁ (There is a relation between Causes of mobbing and the Communication interference) was rejected.

5. CONCLUSION

In recent years, mobbing practices becoming widespread especially in developed countries where intensive competition is seen considerably damages both individuals and organizations. Thus, while the performance of an organization depends on the performance of the employees, the employees must be in a healthy work environment in order to be efficient. Mobbing experienced in organizations decreases the efficiency and performance of the employees by affecting them both in the short and long run. In this regard, there is a great effort related with either preventing mobbing practices or treating the victims in the Western countries. In our country, it is seen that this process experienced intensively is being tried to be given the meaning. The aim of research is to explain the relationship between the causes and the perception of mobbing within the organization. To achieve this aim we conducted an empirical research. We conducted a survey to explain the proposed relationship. The results showed that mobbing perception consisted of four factors upon factor analysis. The first factor named “Communication interference”, second factor was named “Offence to personal dignity”, third factor “Offence to job dignity” and the last factor named “Physical pressure”. Moreover, the causes of mobbing measure produced two factors upon factor analysis. The first factor named “Leader” and second factor was named “Management”.

As a result of correlation analyses, we found that, there is a positive relationship between “Offence to Personal Dignity”, “Leader” and “Management” and positive relationship between “Offence to Job Dignity” and “Management”.

We also found that there were a positive correlation between “Physical Pressure” and “Leader”. The hierarchical regression analysis displayed that, leader had a positive significant effect on offence to personal dignity and physical pressure and management had a positive significant effect on offence to personal dignity, offence to job dignity and physical pressure.

The main finding of this research is physical pressure is the common factor that is imposed by both leader and management.

Physical pressure can be considered as, forcing the employee to achieve far reach goals by overloaded objectives. The results showed that both of the imposers agreed upon forcing the employee beyond the limits of himself/herself. The perception of employees united on this factor as a main tool of mobbing. Other findings of the current study are there is a common understanding of the causes of mobbing. The two actors of work place, leader and management is the sources of mobbing. The leaders focused on more personnel factors like offence to personnel dignity and physical pressure. As we mentioned before most of the organizations considers the leaders are powerful beings and has no limits on employees. They accepted this as a natural behavior and understandable and tolerable. The main reason why we can not stop the leader posed mobbing is this idea. We expected the poser of offence to job dignity as a leader. But surprisingly result indicated the management is the reason. Offence to job dignity can be explained by the perception of employees feelings about the position within the organization. The promotions and salary increases and the managerial changes and the reward process inside the organization are the indicators of appreciation of employee in different ways. If any other of these ways are not used and verbal or behavioral attitudes towards the employee about his or her job performance can be understand as a mobbing. Moreover, the leader won't accept the whole responsibility of this attitude and let the management handle with this issue. The work life regulations among the whole industry should be re-structured to prevent mobbing. In this study, we found that two key actors of mobbing and the effects on mobbing perception among the organization. The perceptions of employees are important because sometime perception can go beyond the facts. To prevent this effect, necessary actions should be taken. In order to achieve this, organizations can follow worldwide examples to ensure their employees they are protected by rules, laws or formal attitudes. Without any doubt, these findings are limited by the sample and the assessment instruments used in the present study. This research conducted on banking employees in Turkey; the findings might not be transferable to other organizations. Thus, it is recommended that further researches can be conducted on different sectors and also in different countries for the generalizability of the results. The fact that the present sample is composed of only 124 personnel is another drawback of this study.

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