

Mobbing Perceptions of Academic Staff

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Abstract

Mobbing is defined as psychological attack to the individuals. In this sense, mobbing behaviour is especially applied to employees in both public and private organizations and generally inferiors are exposed to these kind of attacks by their superiors/supervisors. In addition, mobbing is also a growing problem in educational organizations, especially in universities. In this sense the academicians who are exposed to emotional attacks, cannot proceed in their scholarly activities; because of the fact that mobbing creates a number of physical and psychological problems on them. Furthermore, mobbing behavior not only affects their academic success but also their private life; in the sense that they are affected psychologically and they lose their psychological and mental health, as mentioned. In this frame, the purpose of this study is to reveal the perceptions and attitudes of academic staff in universities towards mobbing. In the scope of the research, academicians that work in foundation universities in the city of Istanbul, Türkiye are defined as the sample. A total of 166 academicians have participated in the research. The gathered data is analyzed via SPSS 22.0 package programme. According to the results, there is statistically significant difference between the socio-demographic (gender, age, marital status, monthly income, academic department, academic experience) characteristics of academicians and their attitudes towards mobbing.

Keywords: Psychological Attack, Mobbing, Academic Staff.

Öz

Mobbing davranışı, bireylere yönelik psikolojik saldırı olarak ifade edilmektedir. Bu bağlamda mobbing davranışı, kamu ya da özel sektör fark etmeksizin her tür kurumda çalışan iş gücüne uygulanmakta ve bu davranış kapsamında genellikle ast pozisyondaki çalışanlar üst pozisyondaki çalışanlar ya da amirleri tarafından bu tür saldırılara maruz kalmaktadır. Buna ek olarak, mobbing davranışı eğitim kurumlarında da, özellikle de üniversitelerde, git gide büyüyen bir sorun olarak var olmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, duygusal saldırılardan oluşan mobbing davranışına maruz kalan akademisyenler bilimsel faaliyetlerine devam edememektedir. Bunun sebebi ise, mobbingin bu davranışa maruz kalan akademisyenler üzerinde bir takım fiziksel ve psikolojik problemler yaratıyor oluşudur. Buna ek olarak, mobbing davranışına maruz bırakılmak, akademisyenlerin sadece akademik başarılarını değil özel hayatlarını da olumsuz olarak etkilemektedir. Bunun sebebi ise, değinildiği üzere psikolojik olarak etkilenmeleri ve bundan dolayı psikolojik ve ruhsal sağlıklarının bozulmasıdır. Bu çerçevede bu çalışmanın amacı, üniversitelerde görev yapan akademik personelin mobbing ilişkin algılarını ve tutumlarını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Araştırma kapsamında İstanbul, Türkiye'deki vakıf üniversitelerinde çalışan akademisyenler örneklem olarak alınmıştır. Araştırmaya 166 akademisyen katılım göstermiştir. Toplanan veriler SPSS 22.0 paket programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Elde edilen bulgulara göre, akademisyenlerin demografik özellikleri (cinsiyet, yaş, medeni durum, aylık gelir, bölüm ve akademik tecrübe) ile mobbing algıları arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir farklılık bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Psikolojik Saldırı, Mobbing, Akademik Personel.

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Introduction

The concept of mobbing was developed by the scientist Konrad Lorenz in Austria in the 1960's. The methods that animals use to intimidate other animals that are not of their own kind or that they see as foreign are expressed as the origin of this term (Göktürk & Bulut, 2012). In organizational life, the concept of mobbing was first introduced as "emotional harassment" by German industrial psychologist Heinz Leymann, who lived in Sweden in the early 1980's (Leymann, 1996). Leymann not only stated the existence of emotional harassment behavior in the workplace, but also revealed the special characteristics of this behavior, the way it emerged, and the consequences that may arise for people most affected by violence. For this reason, Leymann's views and research formed the basis for research on mobbing behaviors in workplaces all over the world (Tınaz, 2011).

Mobbing is an emotional attack or harassment behavior applied to individuals working in organizations by their subordinates, superiors or colleagues. These behaviors are done consciously, regularly and systematically. After a while, it can be defined as the whole of behaviors that cause loss of morale and motivation in the organization, as well as a decrease in productivity and job satisfaction (Kaya, 2015). Mobbing is a concept that generally starts with allusive words of an individual working in the organization against another individual, continues with humiliation and results in emotional exploitation, and also includes behaviors that do not contain good intentions and cause the individuals to leave their jobs (Kehribar et al., 2017; Alhas, 2020).

Studies show that people who are exposed to mobbing are individuals with high emotional intelligence and who show many positive features such as intelligence, honesty, creativity, and success in their work lives, and they explain that it isolates the person, which is not easy to prove because there is no legal basis and it is not defined in the law (Namie & Namie, 2009; Einarsen et al., 2011). Those who practice mobbing are diagnosed as being overly controlling, coward, think that they are indispensable for their work, want to be

privileged and have a hunger for power (Perminiene et al., 2016; Tiftik, 2021).

Educational organizations on the other hand, are at the forefront of organizations that have an important role in raising qualified generations. Universities have an important place among educational organizations with their existing technical capacity and human resources (Şenerkal, 2014). Universities are organizations that produce, interpret and share information in the light of their scientific research. Therefore, universities, which are the training places of research and production, have an important place for the country. According to Karran (2009), academicians have important roles in the advancement of knowledge and science. In this sense, academicians should be free to develop existing knowledge, produce new ideas, conduct research, and be free in the education-teaching process. For this reason, they should carry out their work within the framework determined by academic freedom, without being under fear or pressure. Therefore, universities, which aim to direct society and train human power in the light of scientific research, need to protect academic and individual freedoms of academic staff and create a safe and peaceful work environment in order to achieve these goals (Marangoz, 2012; Evcen Temelli & Güven, 2021). Factors that cause mobbing in universities include academic jealousy, legislation, obstruction, management, not accepting or underestimating mobbing, election results, gender discrimination, unequal practices in financial opportunities, non-objective evaluations, contracted personnel practice, attack on academic identity, limited staff size, organizational structure, nepotism, indifference, individual differences, having an honest and questioning personality and sexual harassment (Gün, 2014; Tiftik, 2021).

In this context, the purpose of this study is to reveal the attitudes of academic staff towards mobbing. The fact that it is impossible to reach the whole population in terms of time and budget, the academicians that work in foundation universities in the city of İstanbul, Türkiye, are defined as sample. A survey form that consists demographical questions and Mobbing Scale that is developed by Aiello, Deiting, Nardella &

Bonafede (2008) and adapted to Turkish by Laleoğlu & Özmete (2013), was delivered to the potential participants via e-mail and a total of 166 responses have been gathered. The gathered data have been analyzed via SPSS 22.00 package programme. According to the results, there is a statistically significant difference between academicians' demographical characteristics and their attitudes towards mobbing.

Mobbing

The word "mobbing", is derived from the Latin word "mobile vulgus" meaning "undecided crowd" (Çobanoğlu, 2005) and it comes from the verb "to mob" in English, which means to gather and attack (Tınaz, 2011). In Türkiye, mobbing is expressed with words such as psychological terror, bullying, emotional harassment, and emotional attack in the workplace (Çobanoğlu, 2005).

The main terms used for mobbing behavior are, for the person exposed to mobbing; *victim*, for the person applying mobbing; *abuser*, *bully*, *aggressor*, and *harasser* (Çobanoğlu, 2005). For a behavior to be a mobbing behavior, first, a negative action must be perceived by the victim. In addition, this behavior should be a long-lasting behavior and should continue for a certain period of time and with certain frequencies. Finally; the victim and the aggressor should not have an equal balance of power, there should be a power difference in which the victim will feel vulnerable (Güngör, 2007). Einarsen (2000) stated that the mobbing process does not involve a physical attack, and that negative and hostile behaviors are exhibited by following a certain strategy (Gülova & Kavalcı Canbuldu, 2021).

Leymann & Gustafsson (1984), defined mobbing as "a problematic factor that threatens health in the workplace" (Vartia, 1996). Baykal (2005), defined the concept of mobbing as "trying to get rid of competitors by strengthening his own position by applying moral pressure to employees or leading employees to mistakes". Tınaz (2011), defines it as siege, harassment, inconvenience or distress. According to Davenport, Swartz & Elliot (2003), mobbing is malicious activities that aim to exclude the other person from the workplace through accusation, humiliation, harassment and

emotional torment. Based on these definitions, it can be said that mobbing; is conscious, deliberate and systematic bad behavior that affects emotional, mental and physical health of employees and reduces their productivity (Yılmaz, 2020).

In national context, the first publication about mobbing was made in 2003 with the translation of Davenport, Schwartz and Elliot's book "Mobbing: Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace" as "Mobbing: Emotional Harassment in the Workplace" by Osman Cem ÖnerToy. This publication has been followed by the books of Tutar, Çobanoğlu, Baykal and Tınaz since 2004. These publications focus on understanding mobbing, avoiding mobbing, its legal dimensions, its relationship with organizational behavior concepts, its application in various places and the fight against mobbing (Yılmaz, 2020).

Mobbing is a well-known phenomenon that has damaging effects on employees and in all organizations in all areas. Scientific and sectoral researches reveal that mobbing in the workplace causes psychological and physiological harms on employees, affects performance, causes productivity to decline in organizations and disrupts work peace. When mobbing data in European countries and Türkiye are compared, it has been concluded that Türkiye ranks third in mobbing incidents (Akın, 2009; Tiftik, 2021).

Anyone can be exposed to mobbing behavior. For example, an employee who stands out with his achievements and gains the admiration of the managers may be slandered as a result of jealousy and his work may be sabotaged (Mimaroğlu & Özgen, 2008). Subsequently, individuals are exposed to aggressive behavior. This situation causes the person exposed to mobbing behaviors to have negative thoughts about the work environment and to leave the job (Leymann, 1996). In some cases, individuals can use mobbing as a defense tool to cover their mistakes or incompetence. For this reason, it is difficult to reveal mobbing clearly. For a behavior to be mobbing, it must be continuous and systematic. In addition, the person should be harmed as a result of the behavior and become unable to cope with this situation (Erdem, 2014; Akbaşlı, Diş & Durnalı, 2020).

Mobbing can be applied *vertically* and/or *horizontally* within the organizational structure. *Vertical mobbing*, is a type of mobbing that is applied from the top to bottom or from the bottom to top. Mobbing from top to bottom, is the application of aggressive and punitive behaviors directly towards the employee by the manager arising from various reasons. Mobbing is generally practiced from superiors to subordinates, with bad, restrictive and intimidating behaviors, trying to complicate the life of the employees, reduce their productivity, and undermine their self-confidence (Yılmaz, 2020). *Horizontal mobbing*, on the other hand, is the mobbing behavior that is applied among employees that are in the same position/hierarchy.

Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott (2003) rated mobbing behaviors as first degree, second degree and third degree as a result of interviews with mobbing victims. In the first-degree mobbing, the person tries to resist and escapes in the early stages. They should be rehabilitated in a different workplace setting. In the second-degree mobbing, the person is no longer able to resist. He/She can't escape and suffers from temporary or long-lasting mental and physical discomfort and has difficulty performing the same job. As for the third-degree mobbing, the victim cannot return to the workforce. He/She suffers physical and mental damage and is not in a position to recover with rehabilitation. This individual requires a personalized treatment (Daşçı Sönmez, 2019).

Processes, Causes and Consequences of Mobbing

First of all, it is important to realize the processes of mobbing (Leymann, 1996):

Development of critical cases: The most important factor that often triggers mobbing is the occurrence of a conflict. However, the reason for the factor that turns the conflict into mobbing has not been clearly found out by the researches.

Aggressive actions: Planned, frequent and systematic negative actions and behaviors that leave deep impacts on the psychology of the victim, show that the mobbing process has started.

These behaviors are aimed at intimidating and harassing the person/victim psychologically.

Intervention of the administration: At this stage, the administration/management, which did not intervene in the first two stages, intervenes. Unfortunately, until this stage, it is seen that the majority of the employees of the organization consider the victim as problematic, maladaptive and psychologically problematic, based on the current perception. Generally, it is difficult to break this perception in terms of management. This situation makes it difficult to solve the problem.

Ensuring Exclusion from the Environment and Exposure to Stigma: At this stage, the mobbing victim receives professional help. In addition to professional help, this stage is the stage where permissions for the continuous illness are taken and reports are written by the doctors. When this situation is learned, labels such as personality with psychological problems or incompatibility, start about the victim in the organization. In this process, the victim is usually dismissed or quits the job (Arslan & Çıkmaç, 2021).

Dismissal: Emotionally, deep wounds are opened in the victim who is removed from the work environment and as a result, psychological problems and diseases occur in the victim (Tınaz, 2011).

Various studies on the causes of mobbing in the workplace divide the reasons of mobbing into three (Altuntaş, 2010; Şimşek, 2013). These reasons are listed as follows (Tunay & Kamilov, 2021):

Reasons consisting of the psychological structure of the aggressor,

Reasons arising from the psychological state of the emotionally attacked person (victim),

Reasons arising from the structure of the organization.

On the other hand, mobbing is too complex to be attributed to a single reason or just a small group of reasons. It can occur when more than one reason interacts at the same time (Akan, Yıldırım & Yalçın, 2013; Cemaloğlu, 2007).

The leadership style adopted in the organization is seen as one of the reasons for experiencing mobbing behaviors (Agervold, 2009; Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004). Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen (1994) state that mobbing behaviors are not frequently encountered in organizations whose managers have leadership skills. According to Cengiz (2010), teachers who work with administrators with a democratic management approach experience less mobbing. According to Cemaloğlu & Kılınç (2012), the incidence of mobbing is decreasing in safe and ethical workplace environments.

According to Tınaz (2011), mobbing behavior can also occur due to personal reasons such as threatening social image, age difference, favoritism, political reasons, competition, coming from a different region or city, and racism.

Mobbing, which creates a conflicting and stressful environment in the workplace, impairs organizational health. Frequent and prolonged hostile behaviors result in psychological and social unhappiness and hopelessness (Leymann, 1996). Victims experience an increase in burnout (Karakuş & Çankaya, 2012), a decrease in self-efficacy perceptions (Çelep & Eminoğlu, 2012), in organizational trust (Tetik, 2010), in organizational commitment (Ekinci, 2012), in organizational citizenship behaviors (Özcan, 2011), and they experience alienation from work (Özkul & Çarıkçı, 2010). Personally, the social image of the individual is damaged and excluded from the workplace environment (Tetik, 2010). The victim cannot explain what is going on and starts blaming himself (Sperry & Duffy, 2009). According to Tınaz (2011), one of the most severe consequences of this syndrome experienced by the employee is the loss of self-confidence and self-esteem (Daşçı Sönmez, 2019).

Among the most common physical and psychological disorders caused by mobbing behaviors on individuals are as given below (Doğan, 2012; Kaya, 2020):

- Development of stress, anxiety, worry and tension moments in employees,
- Feeling of social alienation in the work environment,
- Feeling insecure,
- Decreased prestige,

- Damage to personal relationships,
- Pain in the head-back-abdominal parts of the body,
- Psychological disorders such as depression,
- Decreased job performance in work life.

To sum up, employees who are free from stress and do not experience psychological and physical pressure in their work environment increase their organizational commitment and productivity. In organizations where there is no environment of trust, organizational commitment decreases, which causes mobbing events that disrupt the peaceful work environment of the organization, cooperation between employees, causing them to be stressed (Köse & Uysal, 2010).

Mobbing Types

The phenomenon of mobbing is one of the obstacles that hinder achieving peace and happiness in organizational life. Therefore, it needs to be constantly controlled in organizational life as in many areas of life (Göymen & Şöhret, 2020).

Mobbing behaviour can be experienced in different types in organizations (Leymann, 1996):

Superior Subordinate Attack (Top-Bottom Mobbing), is a direct attack by the victim's supervisor for various reasons. They are behaviors such as humiliating in front of their friends, limiting their authority, disrespecting their decisions and not giving them the right to speak (Işık, 2007).

Subordinate Attack on Top (Mobbing from Bottom to Top), is the mobbing behavior applied by the subordinate to the superior (Uysal & Yavuz, 2013). It starts with the subordinates questioning the position and authority of the superior. Those who exhibit this type of mobbing behavior are usually more than one. They can attack collectively, even in the form of an uprising (Işık, 2007). Mobbing, which is applied from the bottom to top, is less common and is seen in rare cases (Atman, 2012). Individuals who engage in mobbing behaviors mostly consist of people who want to take the place of the manager. Therefore, because they cannot reach their wishes, they feel jealous and argue that the current manager selection is wrong (Akgeyik et al., 2009; Kaya, 2020).

Attacking Colleagues (Horizontal Mobbing), are attacks between people of the same status. This may be due to jealousy or fear. In this case, people may perceive their job as a guarantee or a newcomer as a threat to them (Can, 2007). Mobbing is mainly related to three reasons: *competition, racism, and coming from another region*. If the victim draws attention with these features and creates a threatening situation, they may be exposed to a mobbing behavior (Tınaz, 2011; Gülova & Kavalcı Canbuldu, 2021).

In short, researches on mobbing show that victims are generally people who like to work, are honest, do their job diligently, have high performance and do not need to be liked by others, and that these people often do not have the personality structure that blames other people and can be considered compatible (Arslan & Çıkmaz, 2021).

Coping with Mobbing

The ways of coping with mobbing behaviour are generally gathered under 3 headings. These are *individual methods, social support and organizational methods*.

Individual Coping Ways with Mobbing: In order to survive in the process of mobbing, it is necessary to provide high level awareness and to try to keep the self-confidence of the person alive with this method. It is very important to increase self-confidence of individual first. Self-confidence is a skill that enables individual to participate in this process in a healthy way (Göymen, 2020). Again, at this point, the most important method of resistance that an individual should do is not to accept being a target. Because in general, the first behavior of employees who feel pressure is to be afraid, to get scared and therefore to accept being a target (Sönmeztekin, 2016). The most important coping methods in individual sense are confidence, self-confidence and awareness, controlling emotions, trying to be cool, meditating, resting, having a hobby, having a balanced and regular diet, doing sports regularly, trying to train and improve oneself (Kırel, 2008; Kara & Kaya, 2021).

Social Support by Family and Close Circle: In the process of mobbing, the victim wants the greatest support from his/her family; because the people that the victim can trust the most, include family. He/She is able to share his experience in work life with his/her family every time (Çetinkaya, 2016).

Organizational Methods: Adopting an open management approach in the organization is one of the effective methods of preventing mobbing. The management should ensure that the problems in the organization and the thoughts required to solve these problems are arranged within the framework of the subordinate relationship. In such a situation, people who experience mobbing can convey this situation to the management without hesitation. At the same time, the fact that people who are prone to attack are aware of the policy of the organization, prevents the individual from intimidation (Hogh & Dofradottir, 2001; Kara & Kaya, 2021).

In addition, it is also necessary to differentiate the understanding of leadership in order to prevent mobbing from occurring in the work environment. According to this understanding, leaders should be role models for individuals. The fact that the leader is a role model sets an example by individuals, and this situation is considered as organizational culture for employees and all individuals adapt to the same model (Resch & Schubinski, 1996). Organizational health also affects mobbing. According to Miles (1969), being healthy means an organization that not only maintains its life around it, but also constantly develops and improves its ability to cope with problems.

As for Türkiye, in order to cope with mobbing, "Alo 170 mobbing hotline" has been established. It is stated that 57% of callers to this line are men and 43% are women. The general complaint reasons of those who call this line are being forced to resign, being exposed to insults and bad words, violation of the use of legal rights, being exposed to physical violence and finally being exposed to sexual harassment (Zencirkıran & Keser, 2018; Kara & Kaya, 2021).

Academic Mobbing

Unfortunately, in recent years, academic mobbing has come to the fore as much as organizational mobbing. It has been observed that many studies have been carried out on academic mobbing in educational organizations and it is seen that the weight of academic mobbing in universities is felt more than other organizations due to the fact that universities have a slightly more autonomous structure. There are phases of academic mobbing (Arslan & Çıkmaz, 2021):

Conflict phase: These are the first signs of conflict (Title difference, emphasis on administrative authority).

Failure to resolve the conflict: This is forcing absolute academic obedience on the pretext of academic tradition.

Aggressive action phase: This is the beginning of academic mobbing (Mental and physical health are affected).

Increasing the dose of mobbing: In this phase, decreased academic performance, increased workload and as a result, desire to exclude oneself from the academic environment occur.

Intensification of mobbing: This is giving other jobs to the academicians that are not in the academic job description and not being liked at all in addition to looking for faults (Being late for work, being reluctant to come to work).

The quarrel and discussion between the mobber and the victim, or the limited expression of the problems by the victim

Continuation of problems for the victim: Other bullies are on the side of the harasser, not the victim.

Other academics being affected by the situation: Loss of time, sharing of psychological distress and emergence of workplace insecurity.

The intervention phase of the administration: This is either the desire to meet with the head of the department and reach reconciliation (this is usually rare) or to ignore the events by reminding the academic traditions (The victim feels helpless and alone).

Stigmatization with false attributions or diagnoses: Colloquially this is called "crime suppression".

Continuation of Intense Mobbing: Disease takes ahead of work.

Illness-Resignation-Expulsion etc.

Previous Studies

A limited number of studies investigating academics' perceptions and attitudes towards mobbing or their exposure to mobbing are included in the literature. In addition, there is not sufficient research on mobbing behaviour to academic staff. Therefore, this situation constitutes a limitation for the current study.

Tiftik (2021) researched the methodologies, conceptual and demographic variables and basic findings of empirical articles on mobbing that academicians are exposed to. In the context of the research, qualitative research method, content analysis and thematic analysis techniques were preferred. A total of 825 articles were found on the Dergi Park portal. According to the content analysis, contrary to the previous findings, the findings showed that mobbing in the academic organizations is very low.

Tunay & Kamilov (2021), emphasized in their research the concepts of leadership, mobbing and job attitude, and leadership theories and perceptions and attitudes towards mobbing are given in detail from past to present. Issues such as leadership styles create the basis for mobbing, how this may have an impact on the performance of employees' work attitude, and how this can have an impact on job attitude by measuring the relationship between leadership styles and perceptions and attitudes towards mobbing in the organizations. In the study, research unit was chosen as Nakhchivan Teachers Institute (NTI), located in Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. SPSS 22.0 statistical analysis program was used in order to find out the communication style and behaviors between administrators (rector, vice-rector, dean and head of department) and employees (lecturers) at Nakhchivan Teachers Institute. In addition to the demographic characteristics of the employees, the importance of leadership styles and the effects of perceptions and attitudes towards mobbing on employees' job attitude and job performance was emphasized by obtaining information. As a result of the study, it

was observed that there was a significant relationship between the behavior of mobbing and characteristics of leadership for employees and their job attitude.

Evcen Temelli & Güven (2021) aimed to find out the perceptions of university instructors about mobbing and organizational silence in their organizations. The sample consisted 52 participants. In the study qualitative research designs were used and the data was collected via a survey form with open-ended questions. In order to analyse the gathered data, content analysis method was used. According to the findings the participants believe that the organizations should take some measures against mobbing, as well as its reasons and consequences.

Akbaşı, Diş & Durnalı (2020) aimed to research the relationship between mobbing behaviour and motivation levels of the teachers that work in primary schools. 673 teachers from 59 primary schools in Yakutiye, Erzurum city were defined as population and 217 teachers were defined as sample. Demographical questions, "Mobbing Scale" (Tanhan & Çam, 2011) and "Teacher Motivation Scale" (Polat, 2010) were used as data collection tools. According to the findings, the item that has the highest level was "the prevention of professional practices" and the item that has the lowest level was "direct insult to the person". It was also found that there was a significant relationship between mobbing and motivation levels of teachers.

Erdemir, Demir, Öcal & Kondakçı (2020), aimed to investigate the relationship between workplace mobbing and academic leadership and the results indicated that the more positive leadership behaviour occurs, the less mobbing behaviors are observed.

Erdemir (2019), scrutinized the dissertations in Turkey that researched mobbing. According to her findings, while the conceptual infrastructure is discussed in most theses, the definition, direction, prevalence, causes and consequences of mobbing, legal approaches and ways of coping are included. Although three of the dissertations do not directly belong to mobbing, they indirectly mentioned conceptual and theoretical approaches to mobbing.

Cayvarlı (2013), in his dissertation researched perceptions and attitudes of 9 Eylül University academic staff towards mobbing. According to the findings, mostly women academicians feel mobbing in terms of the dimensions "expressing themselves and communication", "quality of life" and "job behavior". In terms of academic titles, the findings show that research assistants feel mobbing the most.

Bozyiğit (2013), in his dissertation research found that women academicians have more negative attitudes towards work life and the titles that feel mobbing the most are research assistants and assist. prof. dr.s.

Karakoç (2012), researched academic staff's being exposed to mobbing and their organizational commitment in his dissertation. According to the findings, there is a statistically significant and reverse relationship between mobbing and organizational commitment. In addition, as the duration of working in the same organization increases, organizational commitment increases accordingly.

Methodology

The purpose of this study, is to find out the perceptions and attitudes of academicians to mobbing behaviours in universities. In this sense, as it is impossible to reach all the universities in terms of time and budget, foundation universities in the city of İstanbul, Türkiye, are taken as sample. In the scope of the research, a survey form that consists demographical questions and Mobbing Scale that is developed by Aiello, Deitingen, Nardella & Bonafede (2008) and adapted to Turkish by Laleoğlu & Özmete (2013), is prepared and was delivered to the potential participants via e-mail. The Mobbing Scale has 48 items and 5 dimensions; but because of the fact that 10 items have negative values, they are excluded from the scale (Laleoğlu & Özmete, 2013). In this sense, a scale of 38 items is applied to the participants. 166 responds are collected and the collected data analyzed via SPSS 22.0 package programme. The reliability of the scale is found as ,803

Demographical Findings

According to demographical findings (Table 1), 41 (%24,7) participants are women, 125 (%75,3) participants are men. In terms of marital status, 99 (%59,6) participants are married and 67 (%40,4) participants are single. As for age groups, 38 (%22,9) participants are in 18-29 age group, 59 (%35,5) participants are in 30-39 age group, 32 (%19,3) participants are in 40-49 age group and 37 (%22,3) participants are in 50-59 age group. In terms of monthly income, 105 (%63,3) participants earn 5001-6500 Turkish Liras (TL), 1 (%0,6) participant earn 6501-8000 TL, 40 (%24,1) participants earn 8001-13000 TL and 20 (%12) participants earn 13000+ TL. In terms of academic department, 97 (%58,4) participants work at social sciences departments, 41 (%24,7) participants work at natural and applied sciences departments and 28 (%16,9) participants work at other academic departments. As for academic experience, 88 (%53,0) participants have 0-5 years experience, 25 (%15,1) participants have 6-10 years experience, 25 (%15,1) participants have 11-15 years experience 22 (%13,3) participants have 16-20 years experience and 6 (%3,6) participants have 20+ years academic experience.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants

Gender:	Women	Men			
	41 (27%)	125 (75,3%)			
Marital status:	Married	Single			
	99 (%59,6)	67 (40,4%)			
Age:	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	
	38 (22,9%)	59 (35,5%)	32 (19,3%)	37 (22,3%)	
Monthly Income:	5,001-6,500	6,501-8,000	8,001-13,000	13,000+	
	105 (63,3%)	1 (0,6%)	40 (24,1%)	20 (12%)	
Academic Department:	Social Sciences	Natural and applied Sciences	Other		
	97 (58,4%)	41 (24,7%)	28 (16,9%)		
Academic Experience:	0-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+
	88 (53%)	25 (15,1%)	25 (15,1%)	22 (13,3%)	6 (3,6%)

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no statistically significant difference between the socio-demographic (gender, age, marital status, monthly income, academic

department, academic experience) characteristics of academicians and their attitudes towards Mobbing. $h_0: \mu_1 > \mu_2$

H₁: There is statistically significant difference between the socio-demographic (gender, age, marital status, monthly income, academic department, academic experience) characteristics of academicians and their attitudes towards Mobbing. $h_1: \mu_1 > \mu_2$

Reliability Findings

The questionnaire form consists of two parts. The first part includes demographical questions, and the second part includes the Mobbing Scale developed by Aiello, Deitinger, Nardella & Bonafede (2008) and adapted to Turkish by Laleoğlu & Özmete (2013). According to the factor analysis, the items of the scale gather under 5 dimensions. According to the reliability analysis of the scale, the cronbach's alpha value is 0,803. The value of reliability analysis (0,804) is accepted as good ($0,70 \leq \alpha < 0,90$), with reference to the study of Kılıç (2016).

Research Findings

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics results of the Mobbing Scale show that the most important item according to the participants is item 18 with an average of 4,46, "I think no one is listening to me". Secondly, the idea of "I think my co-workers intruding on me", which is item 25 with an average of 4,39. In the third place, there is the idea of "I think my career has been blocked by management", which is item 36 with an average of 4,34.

It can be concluded that the participants feel that their co-workers display some acts that can be defined as mobbing, such as ignoring each other. In addition, it can also be concluded that the participants feel that their academic careers are hindered by the management.

On the other hand, the least important item for the participants is item 5 "My coworkers look for excuses to scold me", with an average of 1,86.

From this, it can be concluded that the participants do not face negative/insulting words from their co-workers or superiors.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Items		Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree	\bar{x}	SD
1. My coworkers act like I don't exist	fi Y.fi	62 37,3	43 25,9	29 17,5	-	32 19,3	2,379	1,466
2. My coworkers speak to me in a loud voice	fi Y.fi	69 41,6	43 25,9	21 12,7	20 12,0	13 7,8	2,186	1,305
3. My coworkers talk behind my back	fi Y.fi	63 38,0	39 23,5	7 4,2	17 10,2	40 24,1	2,590	1,633
4. I have hostile relations with my co-workers	fi Y.fi	76 45,8	32 19,3	22 13,3	15 9,0	21 12,7	2,234	1,430
5. My coworkers look for excuses to scold me	fi Y.fi	94 54,6	33 19,9	18 10,8	10 6,0	11 6,6	1,861	1,225
6. I think my co-workers are boycotting me	fi Y.fi	64 38,6	18 10,8	42 25,3	22 13,3	20 12,0	2,494	1,421
7. I feel that my co-workers reject me and approach me in an unfriendly manner	fi Y.fi	66 39,8	32 19,3	45 27,1	23 13,9	-	2,150	1,098
8. I receive written threats from my co-workers	fi Y.fi	100 60,2	30 18,1	5 3,0	20 12,0	11 6,6	1,867	1,305
9. I think I've become the target of derogatory remarks at work	fi Y.fi	105 63,3	21 12,7	13 7,8	7 4,2	20 12,0	1,891	1,401
10. I feel a hostile atmosphere around me.	fi Y.fi	76 45,8	27 16,3	40 24,1	3 1,8	20 12,0	2,180	1,354
11. I feel very anxious at work	fi Y.fi	78 47,0	27 16,3	18 10,8	13 7,8	30 18,1	2,337	1,555
12. I think I'm being watched by my co-workers	fi Y.fi	70 42,2	17 10,2	24 14,5	34 20,5	21 12,7	2,512	1,508
13. I think my coworkers are gossiping about me	fi Y.fi	53 31,9	32 19,3	30 18,1	29 17,5	22 13,3	2,608	1,426
14. I think I have become the target of disrespectful behavior	fi Y.fi	48 28,9	11 6,6	28 16,9	35 21,1	44 26,5	3,096	1,581
15. I feel like I've been scapegoated by my co-workers	fi Y.fi	-	-	32 19,3	72 43,4	62 37,3	4,180	,732
16. I get the impression that my coworkers are constantly staring at me	fi Y.fi	-	18 10,8	28 16,9	51 30,7	69 41,6	4,030	1,011
17. I stay alone during breaks	fi Y.fi	-	-	31 18,7	73 44,0	62 37,3	4,186	,727
18. I think no one is listening to me	fi Y.fi	-	-	19 11,4	50 30,1	97 58,4	4,469	,693
19. I am exposed to mild physical violence	fi Y.fi	21 12,7	11 6,6	54 38,6	27 16,3	43 25,9	3,361	1,284

20. I think I have been sexually abused	fi Y.fi	51 30,7	13 7,8	9 5,4	59 35,5	34 20,5	3,072	1,578
21. I am exposed to rude sexual jokes	fi Y.fi	9 5,4	102 61,4	21 12,7	20 12,0	14 8,4	2,566	1,052
22. My appearance is made fun of	fi Y.fi	14 8,4	109 65,7	16 9,6	25 15,1	2 1,2	2,349	,879
23. My political views become the focus of criticism	fi Y.fi	-	-	47 28,3	68 41,0	51 30,7	4,024	,770
24. Colleagues damage my personal belongings	fi Y.fi	-	-	31 18,7	69 41,6	66 39,8	4,210	,736
25. I think my co-workers are intruding on me	fi Y.fi	-	-	4 2,4	92 55,4	70 42,2	4,397	,538
26. Colleagues make unnecessary criticism about my private life	fi Y.fi	-	15 9,0	50 30,1	47 28,3	54 32,5	3,843	,984
27. My colleagues are critical of my religious beliefs.	fi Y.fi	35 21,1	67 40,4	22 13,3	20 12,0	22 13,3	2,560	1,309
28. I receive phone threats from my co-workers	fi Y.fi	1 ,6	55 33,1	33 19,9	54 32,5	23 13,9	3,259	1,083
29. Nothing is more important than work	fi Y.fi	1 ,6	40 24,1	31 18,7	48 28,9	46 27,7	3,590	1,149
30. My job comes first for me	fi Y.fi	1 ,6	4 2,4	26 15,7	79 47,6	56 33,7	4,114	,797
31. Simple jobs that do not require expertise are given to me	fi Y.fi	1 ,6	21 12,7	4 24,7	49 29,5	54 32,5	3,807	1,049
32. The tools I use for work are removed without informing me	fi Y.fi	11 6,6	13 7,8	69 41,6	28 16,9	45 27,1	3,500	1,163
33. I am given jobs that are not suitable for my area of expertise.	fi Y.fi	16 9,6	33 19,9	27 16,3	24 14,5	66 39,8	3,548	1,425
34. I am given jobs that are not suitable for the salary I receive.	fi Y.fi	-	-	26 15,7	82 49,4	58 34,9	4,192	,686
35. I am asked to work in relation to unnecessary works	fi Y.fi	-	9 5,4	19 11,4	53 31,9	85 51,2	4,289	,874
36. I think my career has been blocked by management	fi Y.fi	-	9 5,4	8 4,8	66 39,8	83 50,0	4,343	,806
37. I am given jobs that do not require talent	fi Y.fi	-	15 9,0	76 45,8	23 13,9	52 31,3	3,674	1,016
38. I think my career development has been deliberately hindered	fi Y.fi	41 24,7	59 35,5	33 19,9	31 18,7	2 1,2	2,361	1,085

*fi: Data frequency

*Y.fi: Frequency value percent

*STD: Standart deviation

Factor Analysis

According to the factor analysis (Table 3), it was seen that the Mobbing Scale was collected under 4 dimensions. These dimensions have been named

as *co-workers, work style, management and private life*. While *co-workers* dimension explains the mobbing scale with a percentage of 25,752, the dimension of *work style* explains with a percentage of 25,527. The dimension of *management* explains the scale with a dimension of 19,364 and the dimension of *private life* with a percentage of 11,799. The cumulative percentage of all 4 dimensions was found as 79,441. The fact that the explained variance is over 50% of the total variance, is an important criterion in terms of the fact that it represents the scale (Yaşlıoğlu, 2017).

Table 3. Explained Total Variance

Component	Calculated Sum of Squares		Rotated Sum of Squares	
	Total	Variance	%	Cumulative%
1	7,513	39,542	39,542	4,893 25,752 25,752
2	4,273	22,489	62,031	4,280 22,527 48,279
3	2,138	11,253	73,284	3,679 19,364 67,643
4	1,170	6,157	79,441	2,242 11,799 79,441

Comparative Statistics

The Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests were used to analyze whether there was a statistical difference in the answers given by the participants according to their socio-demographic findings regarding the dimensions obtained as a result of the factor analysis (Table 4). According to the analysis results, there is a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between gender characteristic and *work style* and *private life* dimensions, age characteristic and *all dimensions*, marital status characteristic and *co-workers* and *management* dimensions, income characteristics and *all dimensions*, department characteristic and *all dimensions* and academic experience and *all dimensions*. On the other hand, it is found out that there is not a statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between gender characteristic and *co-workers* and *management* dimensions and between marital status characteristics and *work style* and *private life* dimensions of the scale.

Hence, H_1 hypothesis, *There is statistically significant difference between the socio-demographic (gender, age, marital status, monthly income, academic department, academic experience) characteristics of academicians and their attitudes towards Mobbing $\mu_1 > \mu_2$, is accepted.*

H_0 hypothesis, *There is no statistically significant difference between the socio-demographic (gender, age, marital status, monthly income, academic department, academic experience) characteristics of academicians and their attitudes towards Mobbing $\mu_1 > \mu_2$, is rejected.*

Table 4. Comparative Statistics

Variable	Dimension	Test	Statistics	P
Gender	Co-workers	Mann-Whitney U	2441,000	,647
	Work Style		1673,500	,001
	Management	Kruskal-Wallis	2549,000	,959
	Private Life		562,500	,000
Age	Co-workers	Kruskal-Wallis	33,596	,000
	Work Style		55,800	,000
	Management		29,452	,000
	Private Life		8,823	,032
Marital Status	Co-workers	Mann-Whitney U	2724,500	,050
	Work Style		2928,000	,199
	Management	Kruskal-Wallis	1811,000	,000
	Private Life		3236,000	,783
Income	Co-workers	Kruskal-Wallis	30,420	,000
	Work Style		71,720	,000
	Management		27,553	,000
	Private Life		12,951	,005
Department	Co-workers	Kruskal-Wallis	19,478	,000
	Work Style		14,073	,001
	Management	Kruskal-Wallis	19,174	,000
	Private Life		8,112	,017
Academic Experience	Co-workers	Kruskal-Wallis	33,712	,000
	Work Style		36,824	,000
	Management	Kruskal-Wallis	33,304	,000
	Private Life		22,983	,000

Conclusion and Discussion

Mobbing is a complex phenomenon with a number of facets, which merits further academic attention (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2011; Nielsen, Indregard & Øverland, 2016) but, in any event, there are several studies that focus on the organizational perspective, with less importance placed on the possible link between harassment perceptions and a victim's personal characteristics (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Einarsen & Nielsen, 2015). In light of this, it seems crucial to understand the various factors playing a role in the association between workplace bullying perceptions and outcomes, such as having certain personal characteristics and dispositions (Djurkovic, McCormack & Casimir, 2006; Glasø, Vie, Holmfjord & Einarsen, 2011; Alfano, Ramaci, Landolfi, Presti & Barattucci, 2021).

The purpose of this study is to analyze perceptions and attitudes of academic staff towards mobbing. According to the analysis results, there is a statistically significant difference

($p < 0.05$) between gender characteristic and *work style* and *private life* dimensions, age characteristic and *all dimensions*, marital status characteristic and *co-workers* and *management* dimensions, income characteristics and *all dimensions*, department characteristic and *all dimensions* and academic experience and *all dimensions*. Therefore, it can be concluded that mobbing behaviour is perceived by the academicians in the sample organizations. In addition, it can be concluded that mobbing perception differs according to the gender especially in job-life balance. This result, shows similarity with the previous researches. On the other hand, there is not a statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between gender characteristic and *co-workers* and *management* dimensions and between marital status characteristics and *work style* and *private life* dimensions of the scale. From this, it can be concluded that co-workers and management style is affective on perception of mobbing regardless of the gender.

The fact that the sample consists 166 participants, constitutes a limitation for the current study. In this sense it is of great importance to expand these kind of researches in order to draw a general frame of the perceptions and attitudes of academicians towards mobbing. There is a number of researches in the literature, but there is a lack of researches that compares public and foundation universities. Therefore it would be beneficial to make researches that compare public and foundation universities. In this sense, this study is expected to shed light to both researchers and academic managers.

Implications

Mobbing, as tried to be explained in detail throughout the study, is a crucial problem in today's work environment. As researched in the current study and as can be seen in the previous studies, unfortunately in academic organizations mobbing is felt by academicians. In this sense, especially academic managers should carry responsibility in order to hinder mobbing behavior. This is to say that, as the previous researches put forward, academicians with specific titles, such as research assistants, feel mobbing

more than others. Therefore it should be taken into consideration that there should not be any discrimination among academicians with regard to their titles. In addition, the fact that women academicians feel mobbing more than male academicians, imply that there is mobbing with regard to gender. Therefore, gender equality should be ensured. Regulations and laws also play an important role. In this sense, firstly the state, then universities should establish specific regulations in order to provide both an equal work environment in all senses and hinder mobbing.

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