

## The Effect of Sports Club Employees' Levels of Emotional Intelligence and Compassionate Love on Mobbing Perceptions\*

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### Abstract

This research aims to reveal the effect of sports club employees' emotional intelligence and compassionate love levels on mobbing perceptions. The research study group consists of 184 personnel working in sports clubs in Izmir. The survey method was used as the data collection technique of the research. A personal information form to gather personal information of the participants, "Negative Behaviours Scale" developed by Einarsen & Raknes (1997) and adapted into Turkish by Cemaloğlu (2007) to measure mobbing perception of the participants, "Emotional Intelligence Scale" developed by Schutte et al. (1998) and adapted into Turkish by Şahin (2006), and the "Compassionate Love Scale" developed by Sprecher & Fehr (2005) and adapted into Turkish by Akın & Eker (2012) were used as data collection tools. The data gathered were analysed by using a statistical program. While the emotional intelligence levels of sports club employees were found to be a significant predictor of their perceptions of mobbing, their levels of compassionate love were found to have no significant effect.

**Keywords:** Mobbing, Emotional intelligence, Compassionate love

## Spor Kulübü Çalışanlarının Duygusal Zeka ve Duyarlı Sevgi Düzeylerinin Mobbing Algıları Üzerindeki Etkisi

### Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, spor kulübü çalışanlarının duygusal zekâ ve duyarlı sevgi düzeylerinin mobbing algılarına etkisini ortaya çıkarmaktır. Araştırmada tarama modeli kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubu, İzmir ilindeki spor kulüplerinde çalışan 184 personelden oluşmaktadır. Veri toplama araçları, katılımcıların kişisel bilgilerini öğrenmek amacıyla kişisel bilgiler formu, katılımcıların mobbing algısını ölçebilmek amacıyla Einarsen & Raknes (1997) tarafından geliştirilen ve Cemaloğlu (2007) tarafından Türkçeye uyarlanan "Olumsuz Davranışlar Ölçeği", katılımcıların duygusal zeka düzeylerini belirlemek için Schutte vd. (1998) tarafından oluşturulan ve Şahin'in (2006) Türkçeye uyarlamasını yaptığı "Duygusal Zeka Ölçeği" ve Sprecher & Fehr'in (2005) geliştirdiği ve Akın & Eker'in (2012) Türkçeye uyarladıkları "Duyarlı Sevgi Ölçeği" kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın veri toplama tekniğinde ise, anket yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Araştırma verileri istatistik programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Spor kulübü çalışanlarının duygusal zeka düzeylerinin mobbing algıları üzerinde anlamlı bir yordayıcı olduğu görülürken, duyarlı sevgi düzeylerinin önemli bir etkiye sahip olmadığı tespit edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Mobbing, Duygusal zeka, Duyarlı sevgi

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## INTRODUCTION

Individuals spend most of their daily lives in a business environment. Working individuals spend more time with their managers or colleagues than with their families, friends and loved ones. Employees will be directly affected by positive or negative situations that will occur in the working environment (Şimşek, 2013). In the studies conducted in this direction, a psychological problem originating from the workplace, the existence and extent of which was previously unknown, was discovered and this problem was named as mobbing (Leymann, 1996).

Mobbing is a situation in which one or more people perceive that they are subjected to negative behaviour by one or more people in a situation to which they are systematically and over a long period of time exposed (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007). Aggressive behaviours are frequently encountered in work environments and even some negative behaviours are often accepted as normal. However, if these behaviours are started to be done at certain intervals or frequently, they start to harm these people, and it can be said that these behaviours turn into mobbing (Toker-Gökçe, 2008). In short, mobbing involves a deliberate and planned process. Rather than a physical attack against the targeted person, there are unethical, hostile behaviours for his personality and reputation. The person feels vulnerable and helpless in the face of this situation. In his book, Schneider explains this as “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can kill my soul (Seçkin, 2017). It can be said that mobbing behaviours leave great traces on individuals. When the literature is examined, it is seen that researchers talk about the negative effects of mobbing behaviours on individuals. When individuals are exposed to mobbing behaviours, they may feel themselves at a dead end, and they may feel hopeless since they have no idea about what to do. It is even said that this despair they experience leads people to suicide. This is thought to be an indication of how serious the concept of mobbing is (Davenport et al., 2014; Gürhan, 2013; Hirigoyen, 2000; Mercanlıoğlu, 2010). At this point, the concept of emotional intelligence gains importance in reducing mobbing behaviors. Because one of the reasons that push mobbing perpetrators to psychological violence is their lack of emotional intelligence (Alparslan & Tunç, 2009). People who can manage their emotions may show the ability to find a way out despite all the negative situations they face emotion (Minibaş-Poussard & İdiğ-Çamuroğlu, 2015). Emotions were largely neglected by people in the early ages because they were thought to be irrational, primitive and dangerous (Çulha, 2022). Emotions were even thought to be a concept that harms human beings. In this direction, it is said that in order to lead a good life, reason and logic should be used, not emotions. Even if the importance of emotions was emphasised in later periods, the dominance of intelligence over emotions since the Industrial Revolution has been a fact for people that does not even need to be examined. For this reason, the idea that intelligence and reason are the solution to all problems and that emotions are an obstacle to these concepts has become settled in people's minds (Robbins, 2003). In this approach, classical intelligence and logical thinking have dominated Western society for centuries (Merlevede et al., 2006). However, emotions have an important role in understanding people's thoughts and behaviours. In recent studies, it is stated that the concept of intelligence should be expanded, and the concept of emotional intelligence should be included instead of the classically accepted cognitive intelligence. In this respect,

Salovey and Mayer were the first to mention the concept of emotional intelligence (Tuğrul, 1999). Emotional intelligence is the ability of individuals to understand their feelings and use them in a conscious way (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). In other words, emotional intelligence can be defined as the ability of individuals to observe their own and other people's emotions, to understand them, and to use them as a guide to their thoughts and actions (Çakar & Arbak, 2004). The concept of emotional intelligence helps individuals who have problems in their private lives and in their relationships with the people around them. Individuals exhibit restless behaviours in the face of problems in their relationships, and at this point, emotional intelligence is a concept that supports people to know who they are, to recognise their emotions and to use them (Soyugüzel, 2019). In short, emotional intelligence is considered to be important in understanding the behaviours of individuals and guiding their behaviours in their social lives.

One of the concepts that helps control emotions is love (Zeki, 2007). The concept of love is a universal emotion that supports the integrity and sustainability of society. Love is one of the oldest virtues experienced since the existence of people in the world (Gene, 2022). Love is a feeling that gives people peace, an emotion felt in the heart, an energy that awakens strength in people and an exchange between people. Therefore, when love is received and given, it makes people happy and enriches them (Yıldırım, 2004). While love is such an important concept, love for all humanity is also very important. At this point, the concept of compassionate love emerges. Compassionate love is a long-lasting feeling that is felt towards all humanity and requires self-sacrifice (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005). It is said that the concept of compassionate love which comes from English and is sometimes called unlimited love, is a type of love that covers all humanity with family, friends, and a close or distant community (Fehr et al., 2008). Responsive love is a set of feelings and actions that are shown in the framework of supporting and trying to understand individuals, such as caring for them, showing interest in them, or feeling a desire to support them when they are suffering (Lazarus, 1991).

Considering the relationship between the concepts of emotional intelligence and compassionate love, employees with low emotional intelligence do not care about the feelings and thoughts of people in their work environment and do not hesitate to upset other people in selfish behaviour. Employees with high emotional intelligence can increase their job performance by motivating themselves. At the same time, they help create a positive atmosphere in the environments they are in. It is an indisputable fact that emotional intelligence is important in preventing or combating mobbing behaviours (Polat, 2013). Research has shown that people with high emotional intelligence are more harmonious and balanced (Soyugüzel, 2019). When people with high emotional intelligence are faced with mobbing behaviours, they can easily understand the attacker's purpose. Without being negatively affected by this situation, he/she turns the situation in his / her favour and starts to struggle. When a person with high emotional intelligence is exposed to mobbing, he/she applies a problem-oriented coping strategy instead of applying an emotional-oriented coping strategy and accepting the situation (Güngör, 2017).

Emotional intelligence has an important role among the techniques of coping with mobbing in terms of being improvable. The management of emotions requires knowing what, why and to what extent both oneself and the other person feel and what to do in the face of which emotion (Minibaş-Poussard & İdiğ-Çamuroğlu, 2015). Being stuck in negative situations and not being able to overcome the situation quickly may cause other negativities. Therefore, individuals with high emotional intelligence who can see the glass half full tend to recover their energy even in negative situations, to be motivated to work again and to focus on higher achievements. Today, individuals working in institutional organisations may encounter situations that they do not want many times a day. If it is not easy to get rid of the mood caused by these negative situations, there may be dramatic low productivity (Çalık, 2021).

In addition to all these, emotional intelligence was thought to be a solution to various problems, ranging from bullying to the participation of employees in schools. However, it has been revealed that emotional intelligence, like traditional intelligence, can be used for both ethical and unethical purposes. Researchers have stated that some people with high emotional intelligence use their skills to selfishly influence or manipulate others (Bariso, 2019). One of the most important universal values in reducing these problems or conflicts in inter-individual relations is seen as the “love” value (Önlen, 2017). Where there is no love, there is grudge, hatred and hostility. The primary source of unity, social peace, brotherhood and happiness is love (Demirkol, 2015). As a result of all these studies, it is possible to say that the importance of emotional intelligence and sensitive love is inevitable in preventing mobbing behaviors to some extent and in managing the perceptions formed regarding this concept. In this context, it is thought that this study will be one of the pioneering studies in preventing mobbing behaviours that may occur in sports clubs or reducing these existing behaviours by investigating whether the emotional intelligence and love levels of employees in sports clubs affect mobbing perceptions.

Problem of the Research:

Do emotional intelligence and sensitive love levels have an effect on sports club employees' perceptions of mobbing?

## **METHOD**

### **Research Model**

In this study, the quantitative research method was used. In this direction, descriptive and relational screening model was used. The independent variable (emotional intelligence and sensitive love) and dependent variable (mobbing) were determined in accordance with the model of this research which aims to evaluate the effect of emotional intelligence and compassionate love levels on mobbing.

### **Research Group**

The study group of the research consists of 184 personnel, 69 women and 115 men, working in 13 public and private sports clubs in the central districts of Izmir in 2022-2023, selected by purposive sampling method. In order to determine the appropriate sample for the research, the required sample size was stated as 165 to work with a sampling error of 5% in a universe of 500 people (Yazıcıođlu & Erdođan, 2004). In this direction, 184 people represent the universe of the research. Sports club employees were categorised into 3 groups as technical team (coach, trainer, technical officer, assistant coach), administrator (manager, coordinator) and administrative staff (administrative affairs officer, financial affairs, media).

### **Data Collection Tools**

Data collection tools consist of 4 sections. In the first part, there is a "Personal Information Form". In the second section, the second part constitutes the "*NAQ - Negative Acts Questionnaire*" developed by Einarsen & Raknes (1997) and translated into Turkish by Cemalođlu (2007). This data collection tool, which measures exposure to various negative behaviours, consists of 21 items. The reliability coefficient was calculated as  $\alpha=0.904$ .

In the third section, the "*Emotional Intelligence Scale*" developed by Schutte et al., (1998) and adapted into Turkish by řahin (2006) was used. The scale consists of 33, 5-point Likert type, items. The reliability coefficient was calculated as  $\alpha=0.922$ .

In the last part of the study, the "*Compassionate Love Scale*" consisting of 21 items, developed by Sprecher & Fehr (2005) and adapted into Turkish by Akın & Eker (2012) was used. The reliability coefficient was calculated as  $\alpha=0.890$ .

### **Ethical Approval**

During the current research, the "Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions Regulation" was followed. In order to obtain the data, approval was obtained from the Manisa Celal Bayar University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee that the research was ethically appropriate (30.12.2022 date and decision number 2022/11-10). Afterwards, the necessary permissions were obtained from the sports clubs in Izmir and the surveys were applied.

## Analysis of Data

Within the scope of the research, 215 individuals who voluntarily agreed to participate in the research were reached. However, the data of 24 people were excluded from the study due to missing data and the data of 7 people were excluded due to the extreme Z value. For this reason, the data were analysed with 184 sports club employees. The data obtained from the study were analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 22 statistical program. Descriptive statistical methods (number, percentage, mean, standard deviation) were used when evaluating the data. Whether the data were normally distributed was measured by performing normality tests. In this direction, Skewness and Kurtosis values were taken into account.

**Table 1.** Normality Distribution of Scales and Dimensions Averages

	Min.	Max.	X	S	Skewness	Kurtosis
<b>Mobbing scale</b>	1,00	2,81	1,36	0,38	1,448	1,884
<b>Emotional intelligence scale</b>	2,85	5,00	3,997	0,38	-,031	,180
<b>Compassionate Love Scale</b>	1,62	5,00	3,70	0,60	-,068	,202

When the results of the normality test performed in Table 1 are examined, it is seen that the skewness values are between -.031/1.448 and the kurtosis values are between .180/1.884. George & Mallery (2010) stated that the reference values should be between +2.0 and -2.0. Accordingly, parametric tests were performed for values showing normal distribution.

## RESULTS

**Table 2.** Demographic information of the participants

Variables	Groups	N	%	Total	$\bar{x}$	S	Min.	Max.
<b>Gender</b>	Female	69	37,5	184	37,16	9,53	18	64
	Male	115	62,5					
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	93	50,5					
	Married	91	49,5					
<b>Educational status</b>	High school	53	28,8					
	Licence	115	62,5					
	Undergraduate	16	8,7					
<b>Duty in the club</b>	Technical crew	81	44,0					
	Administrator	21	11,4					
	Administrative Staff	82	44,6					
<b>Age</b>		184	100,0					
<b>Working time in the club</b>		184	100,0		5,91	5,55	1	30

As seen in Table 2, 62.5% of the participants are male and 37.5% are female. Of the sports club employees who participated in the study, 50.5% were single and 49.5% were married. Considering the educational status of the participants, it was determined that 62,5% of them were undergraduate, 28,8% were high school and 8,7% were postgraduate. According to the table,

44.6% of the participants were administrative staff, 44% were from the technical team and 11.4% were managers. The average age of the participants was found to be 37,16±9,53. When the participants' working time in the club is analysed, it is seen that it is 5,91±5,55.

**Table 3.** Pearson correlation analysis results according to the mobbing scale, emotional intelligence scale and compassionate love scale

		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1- Mobbing scale</b>	r	1	-,161*	,034
	p		,029	,651
<b>2-Emotional intelligence scale</b>	r		1	,466**
	p			,000
<b>3- Compassionate Love Scale</b>	r			1
	p			

(p<,05)

When the correlation analysis results were examined, a low-level negative correlation was found between the mobbing scale score and the emotional intelligence scale score ( $r=-,161$ ;  $p<,05$ ). No significant correlation was found between the mobbing scale score and the compassionate love scale score ( $r=,034$ ;  $p>,05$ ). There was a moderate positive relationship between the emotional intelligence scale score and the compassionate love scale score ( $r=,466$ ;  $p<,05$ ).

**Table 4.** Multiple regression analysis results for mobbing scale total score

Variables	B	S.S	$\beta$	t	p	r	R	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	1,945	,297	-	6,545	,000	-	-	-	-
Emotional intelligence	-,227	,083	-,225	-2,740	,007	-,161	-,200	,783	1,278
Compassionate Love	,088	,052	,139	1,686	,094	,034	,124	,783	1,278
<b>R= 0.202; R<sup>2</sup>= 0.041</b>									
<b>F(2,181) = 3,860 p= 0.023</b>									

Emotional intelligence and compassionate love variables show a low level significant negative relationship with mobbing ( $R=0.202$ ,  $R^2=0.04$ ,  $p<,05$ ). Emotional intelligence scale score and compassionate love scale score explain about 4% of the variance of the mobbing scale score. According to the standardised regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ), the relative importance of the predictor variables on mobbing is emotional intelligence and compassionate love. When the t-test results regarding the significance of the regression coefficient are analysed, it is seen that only the emotional intelligence variable is a significant negative predictor of mobbing. Compassionate love does not have a significant effect.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, which aims to examine the effect of emotional intelligence and compassionate love levels of sports club employees on mobbing perceptions, when the demographic information of the participants was examined, it was seen that 62.5% of the participants were male and 37.5% were female. Regarding the marital status variable, it was concluded that 50.5% were single and 49.5% were married. It was determined that 62,5% of the participants were undergraduate, 28,8% were high school and 8,7% were postgraduate. When the duties of the sports club employees in the club are examined, it is seen that 44,6% of them are administrative staff, 44% are from the technical team and 11,6% are administrators. The average age of the participants was determined as  $37,16 \pm 9,53$ . Finally, when the distribution of the working time of the sports club employees in the club is analysed, it is seen that it is  $5,91 \pm 5,55$ .

According to the research findings, it is seen that the level of compassionate love of sports club employees does not have a statistically significant effect on mobbing perception. However, when the relationship analysis was examined, a moderate positive relationship was found between emotional intelligence levels and compassionate love levels. In this context, it is reasonable to say that when the emotional intelligence levels of the participants increase, their compassionate love levels will also increase. This is because sensitive love consists of positive behaviours towards strangers on a voluntary basis, including social assistance behaviour towards the whole society and close people (Demirel, 2019). Accordingly, compassionate love is a series of feelings and actions shown within the framework of supporting and trying to understand individuals, such as valuing individuals, showing interest, or feeling the desire to support them when they suffer (Lazarus, 1991).

It is seen that the emotional intelligence levels of sports club employees are a significant predictor of their perceptions of mobbing. However, when the relationship table (Table 3) is reviewed, it is seen that there is a negative relationship between mobbing and emotional intelligence. In other words, it can be said that the mobbing perceptions of sports club employees will decrease as their emotional intelligence levels increase. Parallel to this study, Kayabaşı (2019), in his study with school psychological counsellors, concluded that there was a negative low-level relationship between the participants' mobbing perceptions and emotional intelligence levels. He stated that emotional intelligence acts as a protective shield against mobbing perception of the participants due to its structure. Makkar & Basu (2018), in a study conducted with employees in the banking sector in India, found that there was a negative relationship between mobbing perceptions and emotional intelligence levels. Similarly, Çelik (2015) concluded that there is a significant negative relationship between mobbing perceptions and emotional intelligence levels of primary school teachers.

Individuals with high emotional intelligence can be said to be more advantageous in controlling themselves and their relationships with other people. Such people appear as harmonious people who know their responsibilities and fulfil their promises and duties. Therefore, mobbing



behaviours can be prevented in an organisation where there are superiors and subordinates with emotional intelligence (Koç & Bulut, 2009). People with high emotional intelligence do not hesitate to share the situation with other people around them in case they encounter mobbing behaviours because they are social people with good relationships with others. In addition, these people can take a firm stance against the mobbing practitioner and in the face of this situation, they can intimidate the mobbing practitioner and make them take a step back (Gün, 2009). Even, individuals with high emotional intelligence are more tolerant when they are exposed to mobbing behaviours or similar aggressive behaviours (Güllüce, 2010). In addition, employees with high emotional intelligence improve their job performance by motivating themselves and contributing to the creation of a positive environment in the organisation. It is also possible to say that the importance of emotional intelligence is an indisputable fact in preventing or coping with mobbing behaviours (Polat, 2013).

As a result, emotional intelligence levels appear to be a significant predictor of mobbing perceptions, while compassionate love levels do not appear to have a significant effect. In this respect, it is possible to say that the level of mobbing will decrease as emotional intelligence increases. It is suggested that sports club employees should be provided with opportunities to develop their emotional intelligence in order to reduce mobbing, which is considered as a destructive effect for organisations. It is also recommended that questions be asked to measure the emotional intelligence levels of individuals in job interviews. This research only covers employees of sports clubs in Izmir. Other research can be conducted in different cities of Turkey. The sample size can be expanded to reach more participants. The research can be examined using other research methods such as qualitative research method or mixed research method.

**Conflict of Interest:** There are no personal or financial conflicts of interest among the authors regarding the scope of the study.

**Authors' Contribution:** Study Design–EK, ZO; Data Collection– EK; Statistical analysis– EK, ZO; Manuscript Preparation– EK, ZO

### **Ethical Approval**

**Ethics Committee:** Rectorate of Manisa Celal Bayar University, Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board

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