

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF MOBBING AND PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT AMONG TURKISH FOOTBALL TRAINERS

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the relationship between exposure to workplace mobbing and the level of professional burnout among football trainers.

For this purpose, Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) and Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) were administered to 515 football trainers who participated in the 2010-2011 Turkish trainer development seminar that was jointly organized by Football Federation of Turkey and Turkey Football Coaches Association in various regions including Ankara, Batman, Denizli, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Gaziantep, Mardin, Tokat and Samsun. T-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used for statistical purposes.

The findings of the research show that in the job sub-dimension, the trainers from the age group of 19-29 scored significantly higher than the other groups and that the trainers of 30-39 and 40-49 age groups scored significantly higher than the group of 50 years and above.

It was observed that there is a significant difference between the average emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscale scores of the trainers who were mobbed and the ones who were not. It can be said that trainers' level of exposure to mobbing was decisive in the increase of their emotional exhaustion and depersonalization levels.

The study concludes that there were instances of mobbing; however, they were not intense or systematic. Moreover, the relation between mobbing behaviors, whether experienced first-hand or merely witnessed, and the trainers' burnout levels suggests that the more mobbing the trainers were exposed to in their clubs, the higher "emotional exhaustion" and "depersonalization" levels they developed in addition to the diminishing sense of personal accomplishment.

Keywords: Football, Trainers, Mobbing, Professional Burnout

FUTBOL ANTRENÖRLERİNDE YILDIRMA VE MESLEKİ TÜKENMİŞLİK DÜZEYLERİ ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİNİN İNCELENMESİ

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı futbol antrenörlerinin yıldırma maruz kalma ve mesleki tükenmişlik düzeyleri arasındaki ilişkiyi tespit etmektir.

Araştırmada, 2010-2011 yılı Türkiye Futbol Federasyonu ve Türkiye Futbol Antrenörleri Derneği tarafından ortaklaşa düzenlenen antrenör gelişim seminerlerinin yapıldığı Ankara, Batman, Denizli, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Gaziantep, Mardin Tokat ve Samsun bölgelerinde 515 antrenöre, Olumsuz Davranışlar Anketi (NAQ) ve Maslach Tükenmişlik Envanteri (MBI) uygulandı. İstatistiksel olarak T-test, Anova -Varyans Analizi yapılmıştır.

Araştırmanın bulgularına bakıldığında, görev alt boyutunda 19-29 yaş grubu antrenörlerin diğer gruplardan anlamlı bir şekilde yüksek puan elde ettikleri, 30-39 ve 40-49 yaş grubunda olan antrenörlerinde 50 ve üstü yaş grubu antrenörlerinden anlamlı bir şekilde daha yüksek puanlar elde ettikleri tespit edildi.

Yıldırma maruz kalanlar ve kalmayanlar arasında duygusal tükenme ve duyarsızlaşma alt boyutlarının toplam puanlarının ortalaması arasında anlamlı bir fark olduğu görüldü. Antrenörlerin yıldırma davranışlarına maruz kalmaları duygusal tükenme ve duyarsızlaşma düzeylerinin artmasında belirleyici olduğu söylenebilir.

Sonuç olarak, araştırma bulguları yıldırma eylemlerinin çok yoğun ve sistematik olmamakla birlikte yaşandığını göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte yaşanan ya da tanıklık edilen bu eylemler ile antrenörlerin tükenmişlik yaşamaları arasındaki ilişki incelendiğinde, futbol kulüplerinde antrenörlere, yönelik yıldırma davranışları arttıkça, "duygusal tükenme" ve "duyarsızlaşma" düzeyinin arttığı buna karşılık kişisel başarı hissi azaldığı tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Futbol, Antrenör, Yıldırma, Mesleki Tükenmişlik

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INTRODUCTION

In the world of football, different ways of thinking, expectations, life plans, experiences and personalities come together in the same place. Working together of such diverse people from different lives may sometimes lead to undesired consequences. With the emergence of stress-inducing behaviors, whether they stem from the personality of an individual or structure of a club, mobbing might be inevitable. Mobbing is an organizational problem that initially arises as a simple disagreement or conflict later turning into a systematic pressure on an individual. In the context of a football club, it is the culmination of various psychological factors that cause tension and conflict in a team (Einarsen et al. 1998)

Factors such as lack of self-confidence, failure, economic problems, insufficient communication, competition, sports media and relations with the fans might pave the way for mobbing. In this process, the aim is to ruthlessly destroy the self-confidence and self-esteem of a person. The ultimate goal is to force the targeted person(s) to leave the club by minimizing their performance unethically, destroying their endurance and motivation through systematic pressure. According to certain studies in the field, as mobbing increases, so do the degrees of developing negative acts (Zapf 1999; Oluremi 2003; Erdogan 2012).

One of the serious upshots of mobbing is the feeling of burnout. Burnout can be defined as a physical and emotional state of collapse where an individual feels exhausted, without energy and disappointed after failing to achieve the big goals he or she sets for himself or herself (Ozen & Mirzeoglu 2007; Can 2010). Burnout is regarded as having three dimensions; namely, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminishing sense of personal accomplishment. Looking at the relationship between emotional

exhaustion, depersonalization and diminishing sense of personal accomplishment, it can be seen that these three are both different from and interrelated to or continuation of each other at the same time. Research suggests that mobbing, regarded as one of the results of stressful working environment, is more common in occupations that require face to face communication with people (Kokkinos 2006; Gezer et al. 2009; Biber et al. 2010).

In this sense, it can be said that being a trainer constitutes one of the most vulnerable risk groups to mobbing. In this context, the possibility that there could be a significant relation between mobbing and burnout makes the subject worthwhile to pursue. Following this thought, this study aims to examine the relation between the levels of mobbing and burnout in football trainers.

METHOD

Research Model

Supported by an extensive literature survey, the research aims to describe the ways how football trainers perceive mobbing. For this reason, the research can be said to be based on a descriptive survey model.

Research Group

A questionnaire was conducted on 895 participants of trainer development seminars jointly organized by Football Federation of Turkey and Turkey Football Coaches Association in regions including Ankara, Batman, Denizli, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Gaziantep, Mardin, Tokat and Samsun. After leaving out incomplete and inexact ones, the totals of 545 questionnaires were assessed. Since no football coaches participated in seminars, the research leaves them out of scope.

Tools of Collecting Data

Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ), developed by Einarsen, Raknes and Matthiesen (1994) and adapted to Turkish

by Cemaloglu (2007), was conducted in order to initially find out the demographic information of the trainers and to identify how much mobbing they had been subjected to. The sub-dimensions of Negative Act Questionnaire; Job (9 question), Intra-organizational communication (6 question Social Relations (7 question)

The second part of the questionnaire is Maslach Burnout Inventory which is made up of 22 items. The inventory was translated into Turkish by Ergin (1992) and tested for its validity and reliability by Cam (1992). The sub-dimensions of Burnout Inventory; Emotional Exhaustion (9 question), Depersonalization (5 question), Personal accomplishment (8 question).

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) yields two types of scores: total scores and sub-scale scores. Each item in the three MBI subscales is assigned points ranging from 0 to 4. The sub-scale scores are obtained after adding up all the points a participant gets from each item. Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization sub-dimensions contain positive statements while Personal Accomplishment consists of negative statements. Negative statements should be reverse-scored. High scores of the Emotion Exhaustion (EE) and Depersonalization (D) subscales and low scores of Personal Accomplishment (PA) indicates burnout.

Hence, the items for the EE and D subscales are assigned scores in the following manner: never = 0, rarely = 1, sometimes = 2, usually = 3, always = 4. On the other hand, the items for the PA

scale are reverse-scored as: always = 0, usually = 1, sometimes = 2, rarely = 3, never = 4. The subscale scores are obtained in this way. As the scores from these subscales go up, so does the burnout level. In order to determine the level of burnout, the burnout scores in the first third of the distribution are valued as low, the second third as normal and the last third as high (Isikhan 2004).

Considering the relation between these three subscales, each of them is evaluated separately, and they are not calculated as one total score (Cam 1992). While there are researchers that argue for adding up each subscale score to obtain a single burnout score, it is not common to conceptualize burnout as a variable that is "existing" or "non-existing" (Cemaloglu&Sahin 2007). Similarly, in the present study, three different scores are calculated for each participant. The medium level of burnout reflects medium level scores in each subscale. The low level reflects low scores in Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization and high scores in Personal Accomplishment.

The program SPSS 15 is used to analyze the data derived from the research. The frequency (f) and percentage (%) of the demographic information of the trainers are calculated as shown in Table 1. The t test is administered in order to determine whether there was a significant difference in the sub-dimensions of the burnout scales based on the trainers' exposure to mobbing. T-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used for statistical purposes.

4. FINDINGS

In this section, the findings about the demographics of the trainers in the

sampling are examined so as to identify its effect on their exposure to mobbing.

Table 1. Demographic information of the trainers

<i>Personal Information</i>	<i>Groups</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Age	19-29	19	3.7
	30-39	147	28.5
	40-49	233	45.2
	50+	116	22.5
Educational levels	Elementary	12	2.3
	High School	325	63.1
	Bachelor of Arts	170	33.0
	Master Degree	8	1.6
License Types	A License	139	27.0
	B License	213	41.4
	C License	146	28.3
	Goalkeeper trainer	17	3.3
Years as a trainer	1-4	151	29.3
	5-9	148	28.7
	10-14	203	39.4
	15+	13	2.5

Table 2. Burnout sub-dimensions based on age variable

Sub-dimensions	Variables	KT	Sd	KO	F	p	Sig. difference
Job	Inter-groups	8.566	4	2.855	9.345	.000	1-2, 1-3, 1-4, 2-4 3-4
	Intra-group	156.121	511	.306			
	Total	164.686	515				
Intra-organizational communication	Inter-groups	6.921	4	2.307	8.207	.000	1-2, 1-3, 1-4, 2-4 3-4
	Intra-group	143.644	511	.281			
	Total	150.565	515				
Social relation	Inter-groups	6.254	4	2.085	6.773	.000	1-2 2-4 3-4
	Intra-group	157.266	511	.308			
	Total	163.520	515				

Table 2 shows the age-based differences of the scores the football trainers gained in the sub-dimensions of mobbing. Accordingly, it was found out that the trainers in the 1st group got significantly higher scores than the ones in the other groups in the job sub-dimension, and the trainers in the 2nd and 3rd groups got significantly higher scores than those in the 4th group. [$F_{(3-511)} = 9.345$; $p < 0,001$].

In the intra-organization sub-dimension, the trainers in the 1st group gained

significantly higher scores than the other groups, and the trainers in the 2nd and 3rd groups gained significantly higher scores than the 4th group. [$F_{(3-511)} = 8.207$; $p < 0,001$].

In the social relation sub-dimension, the trainers in the 1st group gained significantly higher scores than the 2nd group, and the trainers in the 2nd and 3rd groups gained significantly higher scores than the trainers in the 4th group [$F_{(3-511)} = 6.773$; $p < 0,001$].

Table 3. Mobbing sub-dimensions of the trainers based on the license variable

Sub-dimensions Variables		KT	Sd	KO	F	p	Significant difference
Job	Inter groups	3.129	4	1.043	3.299	.020	1-3 2-3
	Intra-group	161.557	511	.316			
	Total	164.686	515				
Intra-organizational communication	Inter groups	2.821	4	.940	3.252	.022	1-3
	Intra-group	147.744	511	.289			
	Total	150.565	515				
Social relation	Inter groups	3.839	3	1.280	4.095	.007	1-3 2-3
	Intra-group	159.681	511	.312			
	Total	163.520	514				

Table 3 shows the differences of the scores that the trainers got from the sub-dimensions of mobbing based on the category of training license. Accordingly, in the job sub-dimension, it was found out that the trainers in the 1st and 2nd groups scored significantly higher than the ones in the 3rd group [$F_{(3-511)} = 3.299$; $p < 0,05$].

In the intra-organizational communication sub-dimension, it was

found that the trainers in the 1st group scored significantly higher than those in the 3rd group [$F_{(3-511)} = 3.252$; $p < 0,05$].

In the social relation sub-dimension it was found that the trainers in the 1st and 2nd groups scored significantly higher than the trainers in the 3rd group [$F_{(3-511)} = 4.095$; $p < 0,05$].

Table 4. General distribution of the participants in Negative Acts Questionnaire

The participants	n	%
I have been subjected to negative acts	78	15,1
I have not been subjected to negative acts	427	84,9
Total	515	100

Table 5. Comparison of the Burnout Levels based on Being Subjected to Mobbing: Group Statistics

Sub-dimension	Variables	N	Mean	Std. deviation	t.	p
Emotional Exhaustion	No	346	19,306	6,238	-2,968	,003
	Yes	169	21,088	6,718		
Depersonalization	No	346	10,246	4,089	-2,896	,004
	Yes	169	11,414	4,396		
Personal Accomplishment	No	346	26,537	6,181	-,063	,950
	Yes	169	26,574	6,238		

Table 6. The reliability values of NAQ

Sub-dimensions				
Cronbach's Alpha Value	All items	Job	Intra-organizational Communication	Social Relations
	0.92	0.85	0.73	0.79

Table 7. Reliability scores for the burnout questionnaire

Subscales				
Cronbach's Alpha Value	All items	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
	0.81	0.78	0.73	0.80

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings in Table 1, 45.2 % of the trainers are between 40 and 49 years old and 3.7 % are between 19 and 29. Educational levels section shows that 63.1 % have elementary level education while 1.6 % have Master degrees. Based on trainer license types, 41.4 %, 28.3 % and 27 % of the trainers have B, C and A types of license respectively. And 3.3 % of the trainers have goalkeeper trainer license. The training experience category shows that 39.4 % have 10 to 14 years, 29.3 % 1 to 4 years, 28,7 % 5 to 9 years and 2,5 % have 15 years and above work experience.

Table 4 shows that 15.1 % of the trainers have been subjected to negative acts, and 43.5 % of these acts have come from their coaches. According to this data, it can be said that mobbing manifests itself among football professionals through pecking order and hierarchy. It is assumed that there is no specific behavior mechanism among workers in the club setting. According to Pranjic et. al. (2006) working conditions, deficiency in motivation, overload of responsibility, communication problems and anxiety are other significant factors. Another possibility is that in view of pressure from the management, fans and media, football coaches may prefer to adopt a coercive, restrictive, prohibitive and threatening method. There are several studies that support this view (Kaygısız 2010; Cevik 2011).

The findings of the research also show that another group that mobs the trainers is club managers. According to Egerci (2009), weak leadership, communication problems and anxiety in managers play important roles in mobbing. Research about organizational setting points out that the way managers behave in the workplace can cause negative feelings on the part of workers. (Kul 2010; Civilidag 2011).

In Table 2, the age group-based differences of the football trainers' scores in the sub-dimensions of mobbing are presented. The finding on whether the trainers are effected by mobbing based on their age levels shows a significant difference [$F_{(3-511)}= 9.345$; $p<0,001$]. The data indicates that the most vulnerable group in the job sub-dimension is young trainers who have recently started their job. In the job sub-dimension, the trainers reported to confront "being ripped off of my responsibilities for the sake of trivial or uninteresting duties" or "being overloaded with duties that I cannot handle." One reason of this situation could be that emerging trainers are having problems in adapting to the existing group norms in their clubs. Yet another reason could be that young trainers are mobbed by experienced trainers who are rigidly task-oriented and not inclined to change. According to Erdogan (2012), in today's football world, where competition and unemployment are rampant, negative acts might also be triggered by the fact that experienced trainers view their younger

colleagues as rivals who can replace them in the future. This argument suggests that growing competition has become a source of pressure not on the success of the club but on young trainers. However, research on the issue of age has not produced consistent results. Some studies (Cevik 2011; Karslioglu 2011) state that young trainers are more susceptible to mobbing while others (Otacioglu, 2008; Balkis et. al. 2011) claim that it is the old who are subjected to more mobbing. Yet there are other studies arguing that there is no significant relation between mobbing and age (Erdogan 2012).

Another finding of the study is related to the intra-organizational dimension of mobbing. It is found out that the trainers between 19 and 25 have scored significantly higher than the other age groups, and the trainers between 26-30 and 31-40 have scored significantly higher than those 50 and above [$F_{(3-511)} = 8.207$; $p < 0,001$]. Based on this data, it is understood that as the age levels increase, so does the degree of intra-organizational communication. This can be interpreted as the lack of cooperation or communication between managers and coaches (Okcu 2011). Some research findings (Ertürk 2011) list the behaviors that lead to mobbing as “being yelled at”, “being interrupted”, “being gossiped about” and “never talking about the solutions to the problems.” This runs parallel to our findings.

As for the behaviors that fall under the social dimension of mobbing, most of the problems are considered to be concerned with face to face relations in the club setting, self-expression and not being able to use basic individual rights. According to the findings of the research, it was revealed that the trainers between 19 and 25 gained significantly higher scores than the trainers between 26 and 30; in return, the trainers between 26 and 30 got higher scores than the trainers 50 and above [$F_{(3-511)} = 6.773$; $p < 0,001$].

The results also show that the trainers have been subjected to, even if slightly, the situations such as “weakening of authority” and “being left out of the social gatherings of the club.” Mobbing becomes a threat for social relations in that it has a negative influence on the psychological/physical health and the familial relations of the trainers besides creating a tense, agitated and stressful environment in the football club. This conclusion is in line with the findings of certain studies (Ertürk 2011; Okcu 2011).

Table 3 presents the license-based differences of the scores the trainers got from the sub-dimensions of mobbing. Accordingly, it was found that the trainers with A and B types of trainer licenses have scored significantly higher than the ones with C certification [$F_{(3-511)} = 3.299$; $p < 0,05$]. Such behaviors are usually observed in traditional management styles where responsibilities and tasks are distributed accordingly. Some trainers tend to mob their colleagues who are at the same level with them in order to decrease their performance while trying to increase their own (Tiyek 2011).

In the sub-dimension of intra-organizational communication, it was found that the trainers with A type of license scored significantly higher than the ones with C type of license [$F_{(3-511)} = 3.252$; $p < 0,05$]. Among the reasons why the younger trainers with C type of certification are mobbed are the random breakdown of communication between the trainers with A certification and the ones with C and the general lack of communication which hinders C licensed trainers from articulating their criticisms and suggestions. The options that are considered by the managers and coaches to prevent mobbing behaviors should at the same time be seen as causes of those behaviors. It can be said that if the coaches could see things from the eyes of young trainers, lack of communication in clubs would highly decrease (Tiyek 2011).

It was found that the trainers with C type of license scored higher than the ones with A and B licenses in social relations sub-dimension [$F_{(3-511)} = 4.095$; $p < 0,05$]. Considering that C licensed trainers are new to their job, their high social relations scores show that they lack chances of social relation and interaction with the older trainers even though both groups live in very similar social worlds. This finding is significant in that it may prepare the ground for mobbing practices like other considerations such as whether the hierarchical structure of the management is strict or flexible, it is democratic or not, or whether the criticisms are handled fairly or not (Karslıoğlu 2011). The fact that the trainers of 50 and above scored highly in social relations can be explained by their unwillingness to effectively communicate while transmitting their knowledge and experience to younger trainers. The process of mobbing is characterized by negative behaviors such as name calling, downplaying the ideas of the mobbed, physical and social isolation and over-pressure. However, research on seniority has not produced consistent results. While some studies (Civilidag 2011) suggest that recently employed young trainers are more subjected to mobbing, others (Otacıoğlu, 2008; Balkis et al. 2011) argue that seniors suffer more from mobbing. There are yet others who conclude that there is no relation between mobbing and seniority (Yıldırım and Yıldırım 2010).

Table 5 shows that the total score of the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization sub-dimensions are higher in the trainers who have been subjected to mobbing. Mobbed trainers' experiencing burnout and depersonalization is in line with the definition of burnout syndrome. It can be said that the public opinion about football that equates the success and failure of a team directly with its trainer is another crucial factor here. If the team is successful, the trainer is seen as

successful, and if the team is unsuccessful the trainer is considered unsuccessful. The mentality of questioning the professional sufficiency of the trainer in the lack of sportive success is pervasive. Behaviors intended as drawing attention (warning) or mobbing act as a restrictive influence on the experience, ability and skills of a trainer (Tınaz 2006). If the trainer cannot solve the problems in this process, he feels insufficient and loses the emotional connection to his job, and depersonalization becomes inevitable. Research about the importance of a healthy club environment emphasizes that in the presence of job burnout, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization effects the personal accomplishment level in negative ways (Gencay 2007; Ardic&Polatçı 2008).

The means of the total scores of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization sub-dimensions show that there is a significant difference between those who have been subjected to mobbing and who have not ($p < 0.05$). It can be said that the being subjected to mobbing plays a determining role in the increase of trainers' emotional exhaustion and depersonalization levels. Emotional weariness, negative thoughts, over-sensitiveness, anger, feeling down, failing to tapping into skills and fall in performance can be thought as symptoms of burnout. The work-related stress, disappointment and depression can be seen as messengers of failure for those who show above mentioned symptoms (Soljan 2009).

According to the findings of the research, 47.6 % of the trainers said "Rarely" and 6 % "Always" to the question regarding whether they "had to handle overload of tasks and responsibility during games." This situation can be explained by the trainers' experiencing depersonalization due to high levels of stress, having difficulty in performing effectively and thus being emotionally wretched. In this case, if the trainer cannot

enjoy his job, and if he feels burnout, he might seriously consider quitting his job. That said, this inclination is less experienced by experienced trainers who can deal with burnout. The literature on the subject shows that inexperience, feeling of loneliness, lack of peace, adaptation, uncertainties about the club, the position in the club and status anxiety, intolerance towards criticism and oversensitivity are among major factors of burnout (Biber ve ark. 2010).

As to the personal accomplishment sub-dimension, there is no significant difference among the trainers. This can be explained by the idea that the trainers have been able to retain their professional passion and ideals despite unwanted problems they go through in their work settings. According to Pines&Nunes (2003), idealist people who aspire to derive meaning from their work life take up responsibilities with high motivation and expectations. Relevant findings in the literature confirm our data regarding the high level of self-esteem

(Tatlıcı&Kırımoglu 2008; Girgin 2010). In this context, burnout can be said to arise from the interaction between an individual and his or her working environment. The factors that lead to burnout can be identified as relating to work setting and personal conditions, as well as to the role and characteristics of the work one does.

In the light of this information, it is possible to view mobbing practices as preparing the ground for burnout even though there is no direct cause and effect relation between the two.

As a result, the findings of the research suggest that there have been instances of mobbing, even though not intense or systematic. Furthermore, the nature of the relation between mobbing behaviors, whether experienced first-hand or witnessed, and the trainers' burnout levels suggests that the more mobbing they have experienced, the higher "emotional exhaustion" and "depersonalization" levels they have developed in addition to diminishing sense of their personal accomplishment.

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