

Mobbing and Stress

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Abstract

Mobbing is an important construct which has impact on the numerous psychological variables. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between mobbing and stress. Participants were 436 teachers (206 (55%) were female, 230 (45%) were male) from Sakarya, Turkey. Their ages ranged from 26 to 55 years and the mean age of the participants was 35.2 years. In this study, the Mobbing Scale and the Stress subscale of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale were used. The relationships between mobbing and stress were examined using correlation analysis and the hypothesis model was tested through structural equation modeling. Data were analyzed by LISREL 8.54 and SPSS 11.5. In correlation analysis, humiliation, discrimination, sexual harassment, communication barriers sub-dimensions of mobbing were found positively associated with stress. Hypothesized model was examined via structural equation modeling (SEM). And also accounted for 11% of the stress variance. According to path analysis results, stress was predicted positively by humiliation, discrimination, sexual harassment, and communication barriers. This research shows that mobbing has a direct impact on the stress.

Keywords: Stress, mobbing, structural equation modeling

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Introduction

As a concept Mobbing is defined as emotional assaults (Yaman, 2007, 2009a, 2010) subjected to an employee working in an organization, and implemented for different reasons, by the superior(s)/colleague(s) or subordinate(s). After all, in the studies of mobbing, it is seen that although the contents are the same, different concepts are used as interchangeable. For example the terms “bullying/victimization, emotional abuse, maltreatment/mistreatment, harassment and abuse” are some of the concepts often used to define mobbing (Leymann, 2006).

Since the day it was came out, the concept of “mobbing” has attracted great attention in both theoretical and practical context, and has been the subject of quite many studies. As well as general extent studies have focused on “mobbing at work” (Casimir, 2002; Lewis & Orford, 2005; Mikkelsen, 2004; Zapf & Einarsen, 2001; Kersten, Kozak, Wendeler, Paderow, Nübling & Nienhaus, 2014; Yaman 2007, 2008), the research have also been intensified in some other fields like the psychological effects of mobbing at work (Leymann & Gustaffson, 1996; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; DiMartino, 2003; Lynch & O’Moore, 2004), causes of mobbing (Einarsen, Raknes & Matthiesen, 1994; Einarsen, 1999; Eriksen & Einarsen, 2004; Hoel, 2004; Sheehan, Barker & Rayner, 1999; Zapf, 1999) and relationship between mobbing and organization climate (Vartia, 1996; Vickers, 2006). The findings from mentioned researches showed that women academicians are more often exposed to mobbing (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994) and that who put mobbing into practice are mostly in upper stages than the victims (Yaman, 2007, 2009a). The physical effects of mobbing on victims disperse in wide fan such as: chronic insomnia, chronic tiredness syndrome, loosing/gaining too much weight, anorexia, neck/back ache, allergic reactions/irritation and rash, tachycardia, mouth dryness, dizziness, fear of loosing consciousness, muscle tenseness/cramp attacks, perspiratory/aura or cold wave, trembling/twitches, difficulty in breathing, headache/migraine, change in blood pressure, stomachache, diarrhea, alopecia/grey hair, chest ache, sickness/puking, intestines complaints, hearing loss, skin dryness, serious cuts and pitting/ deadness in hands and feet (Blase & Blase, 2003; Björkqvist, Osterman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994; Leymann, 1996; Yaman, 2007).

Among the most important psychological effects of mobbing on victims; stress, unhappiness, sadness, tension, feel of insecurity, de-motivation, unwilling to go to work, keeping the defense mechanism always on, nervousness, excessive reaction or unresponsiveness, depressive mood, lack of self-confidence, fear of loosing job, thought of resigning, crying/laughing attacks, worrying, paranoia, embarrassment, aggressiveness, feel of squashed, panic attack and chinneria can be considered (Blase & Blase, 2003; Björkqvist, Osterman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994; Bren & McNamara, 2004; Cusanck, 2000; Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 2003; Kortum, Leka & Cox, 2011; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Leymann, 1996; Lewis, 2004; Tinaz, 2006; Yaman, 2007; Zapf, 1999).

Stress has been defined as the damaging emotional and physical responses that occur when the demands of life overwhelm the resources, needs, or capabilities of an individual. It may be characterized as an emotional, chemical or physical factor that induces tension in the body or mind that play a role in disease causation and coping (Gary, 1995). Stress and its consequences have been examined by using various variables. These consequences may be examined under two categories, namely the negative and positive consequences. Stress and its negative consequences have been examined in different ways as well. Basically, in this field of literature, both physical, and psychological health status have been investigated as related concepts with stress in the literature. In other words, stress is correlated with both physical and psychological disorders (Hemenover & Dienstbier, 1998). For instance, some negative consequences are considered like involvement in peer violence and consumption of alcohol (Tschann, Flores, Pasch, & VanOss Marin, 2005). Meeks, Woodruff-Borden, and Depp (2003) argue that depression, and anxiety measures assess “unitary distress” construct since they have high inter-correlations among different samples.

The Present Study

Because research (Pranjic, Males-Bilic, Beganlic, & Mustajbegovic, 2006) on mobbing and stress is relatively new, studies that examine the relationships between mobbing and psychological variables such as stress, are needed. Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine the relationships between mobbing and stress. I hypothesized that humiliation, discrimination, sexual harassment, communication barriers, and total mobbing scores would be associated positively with stress.

Method

Participants

Participants were 436 teachers (206 (55%) were female, 230 (45%) were male) from Sakarya, Turkey. Of the teachers 168 were elementary school teachers and 268 were branch teachers. Their ages ranged from 26 to 55 years and the mean age of the participants was 35.2 years.

Measures

Mobbing Scale. The mobbing was measured by using Mobbing Scale (Yaman, 2009b). This scale has been developed on 515 public employees. This scale is a 23-item self-report inventory and consists of four sub-scales; humiliation (11 items), discrimination (4 items), sexual harassment (3 items), and communication barriers (5 items). Each item was rated on a 5-point scale (1=*strongly disagree* to 5=*strongly agree*). Results of confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the model was well fit. The goodness of fit index values of the model were RMSEA=.078, NFI=.95, CFI=.96, IFI=.96, RFI=.94, and SRMR=.074. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients of four subscales were .91, .77, .79, and .79, respectively. The test-retest reliability scores were .91, .78, .82, and .82.

The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS). Stress was measured by using a Turkish version of the Stress Subscale of DASS (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). Turkish adaptation of the DASS had been done by Akın and Çetin (2007). The DASS is a 42-item self-report inventory that provides scores on three subscales: Depression (14-items), anxiety (14-items), and stress (14-items). Each item was rated on a 5-point scale. The language validity findings indicated that correlation between Turkish and English forms was .96. Factor loadings of the subscales ranged from .39 to .88. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency alpha coefficients were found for depression, anxiety, and stress .90, .92, and .92 respectively. The test-retest reliability scores after three weeks were found .98 for three subscales. Related with the criterion-related validity of the scale, correlation coefficients between the DASS and the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996) and the Beck Anxiety Inventory (Beck, Steer, & Carbin, 1988) were computed as .87 and .84, respectively (Akın & Çetin, 2007).

Results

Descriptive Data and Inter-correlations

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, inter-correlations, and Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients of the variables used.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics, Alphas, and Inter-correlations of the variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Humiliation	1					
2. Discrimination	.74**	1				
3. Sexual harassment	.49**	.41**	1			
4. Communication barriers	.67**	.66**	.39**	1		
5. Total mobbing scores	.94**	.86**	.59**	.84**	1	
6. Stress	.27**	.23**	.11*	.22**	.27**	1
Mean	14,31	5,52	3,25	7,19	30,27	12,42
Standard deviation	4,29	2,23	1,13	2,51	8,72	8,57

** $p < .01$

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that humiliation ($r = .27$), discrimination ($r = .23$), sexual harassment ($r = .11$), and communication barriers ($r = .22$), and total mobbing scores ($r = .27$) were found positively associated with stress.

Structural Equation Modeling

Hypothesized model was examined via structural equation modeling (SEM). According to this model, stress is predicted by mobbing. Figure 1 presents the results of SEM analysis, using maximum likelihood estimations. The goodness of fit statistics showed that the model was saturated and the fit was perfect ($df = 0$, minimum fit function chi-square = 0.00 ($p = 1.00$)). And also accounted for 11% of the stress variances.

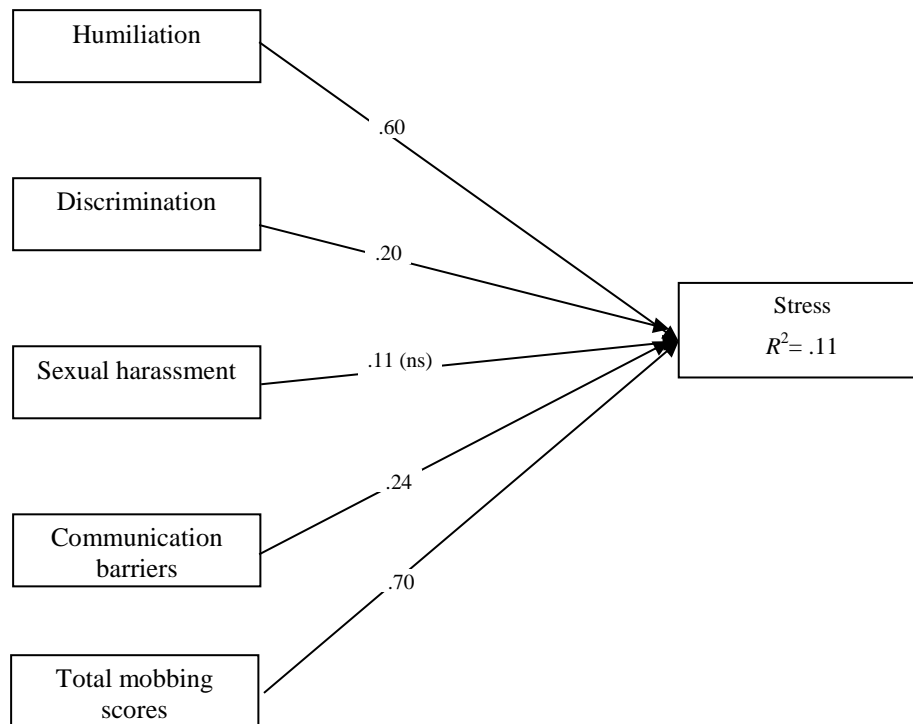


Figure 1. Path analysis between mobbing and stress

The standardized coefficients in Figure 1 clearly showed that stress was predicted positively by humiliation (.60), discrimination (.20), communication barriers, (.24) and total mobbing scores (.70). However, the path from sexual harassment to stress wasn't significant.

Discussion and Recommendations

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between mobbing and stress. Findings have demonstrated that there are significant relationships between mobbing and stress. Also the goodness of fit indexes of the path model indicated that the model was acceptable and that correlations among measures were explained by the model. According to Hu and Bentler (1999) CFI, NFI, GFI, AGFI, and IFI must be more than .95 and RMSEA and SRMR must be less than .05. Therefore the path model of this study can be viewed as had acceptable fit indexes.

As predicted, the models delineated that humiliation, discrimination, communication barriers, and total mobbing scores predicted stress in a positive way. Results from studies (Leymann & Gustaffson, 1996; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; DiMartino, 2003; Lynch & O'Moore, 2004) on the relationship between mobbing and some psychological variables proved that mobbing is positively associated with many indicators of psychological disorders. Similarly, stress was found to be positively related to various psychological symptoms (Chun-Wei & Chun-Yen, 2014; Karademas & Kalantzi-Azizi, 2004; Meeks et al., 2003; Sauter, Murphy, & Hurrell, 1990; Tschann et al., 2005). These results are consistent with the present study. Thus, it can be said that an increment in mobbing will increase stress and that there is a bi-directional causal relationship between these two variables.

This study makes several contributions. First, it demonstrates that the mobbing is associated with stress. Second, to my knowledge, this study was the first to examine the relationships between mobbing and stress. Consequently, this research shows that mobbing has a direct impact on the stress. People high in mobbing are more likely to be affected by stress. Thus, the current findings increase our understanding of the relationship between mobbing and stress.

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