



INVESTIGATING MOBBING AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to research the effects of mobbing actions on teachers' organizational commitment levels. The study is restricted with the teachers who work in the state schools in Gölcük district of Kocaeli, Turkey. Data have been collected through survey method. In this vein 325 questionnaires in total are distributed to 10 high schools in Gölcük and 258 of them have been answered. Data collected through the questionnaires are analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling through PLS Graph Program. Most of the hypothesis are accepted and results show that mobbing behaviors acted on teachers decreases their organizational commitment levels.

Keywords: Mobbing, organizational commitment, school management, teachers, organizational behavior

Mobbingin Örgütsel Bağlılık Üzerindeki Etkisinin İncelenmesi: Lise Öğretmenleri Üzerine bir Araştırma

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı, okullarda öğretmenlere yönelik uygulanan mobbing davranışlarının öğretmenlerin örgütsel bağlılıkları üzerindeki etkisini araştırmaktır. Bu araştırmanın kapsamı Kocaeli iline bağlı Gölcük ilçesi sınırları içindeki liselerde çalışan öğretmenlerle sınırlıdır. Verilerin toplanması için anket yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bu bağlamda Gölcük ilçesi sınırları içindeki 10 liseye toplamda 325 anket dağıtılmıştır. Dağıtılan bu 325 ankettan toplamda 258 öğretmenden geri dönüş alınmıştır. Anket yöntemiyle elde edilen veriler, KEKK (Kısmi En Küçük Kareler (PLS (Partial Least Square)) programı kullanılarak Yapısal Eşitlik Modeli ile ölçülmüştür. Hipotezlerin çoğu kabul edilmiştir ve sonuçlar öğretmenlere uygulanan mobbing davranışlarının onların örgütsel bağlılıklarını azalttığı görüşünü desteklemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mobbing, örgütsel bağlılık, okul yönetimi, öğretmenler, örgütsel davranış

1. Introduction

Workplace mobbing has been the subject of many studies since 1980s, which is also called “bullying” or psychological workplace terror. This workplace terror includes any psychological violence like over-criticizing a person, bothering with using negative words, gossips or physical violence and harassment. Those actions may be directed towards people by superiors, by subordinates or by peers. Mobbing is a complicated fact which can happen in any kind of organizational culture. Anybody can be exposed to mobbing but usually this fact is avoided from disclosure even ignored. While the “victim” of mobbing usually may live physical or psychological illnesses, also this behavior leads to some organizational outcomes like absenteeism, early retirement, high employee turnover and inefficiency. Mobbing finally may lead to decreases in performances, commitment and which in turn leads to a negative working environment and high turnover intentions.

The studies on workplace mobbing dates back to 1980s when Leymann first used the term in an organizational context. The term is related to many organizational and individual outcomes and the relationship between organizational commitment and mobbing has been the

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subject of few studies (e.g. Tengilimoğlu Mansur & Dziegielewska, 2010; Yüksel & Tunçsiper, 2011; Cantisano, Dominguez, & Galan 2006; Kızıloğlu & Bedük, 2015; Karcioğlu & Çelik, 2015). Organizational commitment is the strength of attachment that an employee feels towards the organization he/she works. This commitment is more than just a passive obedience to the organization. Organizational commitment is the identification of an employee with the organization's value statements, goals and feeling of responsibility without waiting for a personal gain. Higher organizational commitment leads to higher work performance presented by the employees and higher desire to stay in the organization.

This study investigates the relationship between mobbing actions of the managers at schools towards teachers and teachers' organizational commitment levels. In this context a survey is conducted on 258 teachers of the high schools in the Gölcük district of Kocaeli city, in Turkey.

2. Mobbing

The term “mob” comes from “mobile vulgus” in Latin which comes to mean “indecisive crowd”. It also means “gathering around, attacking or disturbing” (Davenport et al., 2003:3). Mobbing on the other hand comes to mean psychological violence, harassment, bothering and the like (İbicioğlu vd, 2009:26).

It can also be defined as being exposed to continuous aggressive, scaring, bad intended, oppressive behaviors including insulting (Matthiesen ve Einarsen, 2004: 336). Mobbing in the workplace is systematical, continuous unethical behavior that is exerted to an employee by one or more other employees (may be superiors, subordinates or peers). Those behaviors are also usually exerted during a long period of time. This long-lasting nature of mobbing leads to psychological, psychosomatic diseases and social disturbances. The point where conflict and mobbing distinguished from each other is not the behavior itself or how it is enacted but for how long and how frequent it is exerted (Leymann, 1990:120; 1996:168).

There are some common point of views between the researchers who study on mobbing. At first they have a common notion, that the victims of mobbing perceive this action as a negative, aggressive and hostile behavior. Second, most of the researchers reconcile on the idea that those behaviors are not just for one time and not independent of each other; the mobbing behaviors continue for a while and have some frequency. And finally, the definition of the term usually involves an imbalance of power between the parties. Because of that imbalance, victim feels that he/she cannot defend himself in an equal platform (Salin, 2003:10).

Studies on mobbing in the business organizations dates back to the 1980s when Leymann used the term in a workplace context. And together with Leymann mobbing has been the subject of many researchers since then (Leymann, 1996:165; Zapf and Einarsen, 2001:369; Agervold, 2007:161; Girardi et al.. 2007:172; Nolf et al.. 2007:67).

According to Leymann, mobbing behaviors are a kind of workplace terror. Those are systematical unethical and hostile behaviors of one person or a group of people to another person (Leymann, 1966; 166). According to Davenport et al. (2003:15), mobbing is an emotional attack which forces a person to quit job through creating an aggressive environment by lobbying people against other people in the workplace, consistently acting in bad intention behavior, innuendo, cynicism etc. In most of the studies the terms “bullying” and “mobbing” are used in the same meaning.



There have also been many studies which investigate the antecedents of mobbing like organizational culture and climate, organizational restructuring, negative management styles etc. (Beswick et al., 2004: 19-20; Vartia, 1996: 203-214, 2003: 28; Einarsen et al., 1994: 381-401; Zapf et al., 1996: 215-237; Baron et al., 1996: 161-173; Zapf, 1999: 71). For example Vartia have put forth that mobbing is related to factors like organization structure, job qualifications, leadership styles, organizational culture and group processes and that victims of mobbing usually have some indications like dissatisfaction, stress, depression, absenteeism and the like (Vartia, 2003:28). In Cantisano's study (2006) which investigates relations between mobbing and some personal and organizational outcomes, organizational commitment is found not directly effected by mobbing. While Tengilimoğlu and Mansur could not find any relation between the two variables; researches like Kızıloğlu and Bedük (2015) and Karcıoğlu and Celik (2015) have stated significant negative relationships between mobbing and organizational commitment.

3. Organizational Commitment

Mowday et al. (1979) define organizational commitment as “employees’ highest beliefs toward the organizational goals and values; showing intensive effort for the organizational goals; and a strong desire to stay as a member of the organization”. According to Grusky (1966) organizational commitment is “the strenght of the attachment of the employee to the organization”. Mostly accepted definition of organizational commitment belongs to Porter et al. (1974); in which they define organizational commitment as the employees’ acception of the organizational goals and values and showing effort in order to achieve those values and also the desire to stay as a member of the organization. Organizational commitment is not a feeling related to any individual benefit.

Mobbing negatively effects the attitudes of employees towards the organization and also decreases their organizational commitment level which in turn leads to employee dissatisfaction and turnover. Usually the studies on the relation between mobbing and organizational commitment states that there is a negative relationship between those variables as it is stated above. There are also various studies on the relationship between mobbing and organizational commitment which are conducted in schools. For example Ergener (2008) have stated that teachers are being exposed to mobbing usually by their superiors and stated also that there are significant relations between the subdimensions of mobbing and organizational commitment. Başak (2010), Okçu (2011), Ekinçi (2012), Şener (2013) and Yumuşak (2013) have also conducted survey researches at schools and all of them have stated that there is a significant relation between mobbing behavior exerted on employees and their organizational commitment attitude.

4. Methodology

Sample and Measurement

In this research a survey is conducted on 258 teachers who work in Gölcük, district of Kocaeli. The questionnaires were at first distributed to 325 teachers in total who work in 10 state high schools in Gölcük. Of the 325 questionnaires, 258 were filled by the teachers. Questionnaires are distributed to the schools through the media of school administrators.

In order to measure mobbing perceptions of teachers, Norwegian version of “Negative Acts Questionnaire” is used which was translated to Turkish by Cemaloglu (2007) and which



is composed of 21 items. It is a Likert-type measure in which 5 stands for “every day”; 4 for “once in a week”; 3 for “once in a month”; 2 for “sometimes”; and 1 for “never”.

In order to measure the teachers’ organizational commitment level, the organizational commitment scale developed by Balay (2000) is used which is especially developed for the school administrators and teachers. There are three subdimensions in the scale which are identification, internalization and consistency. The scale is composed of 27 items in total, in which consistency dimension is composed of 8 items; identification is composed of 8 items and internalization is composed of 11 items. This scale is also Likert type and 5 stands for “I completely agree” while 1 stands for I don’t agree at all”.

The hypothesis of the study is as follows:

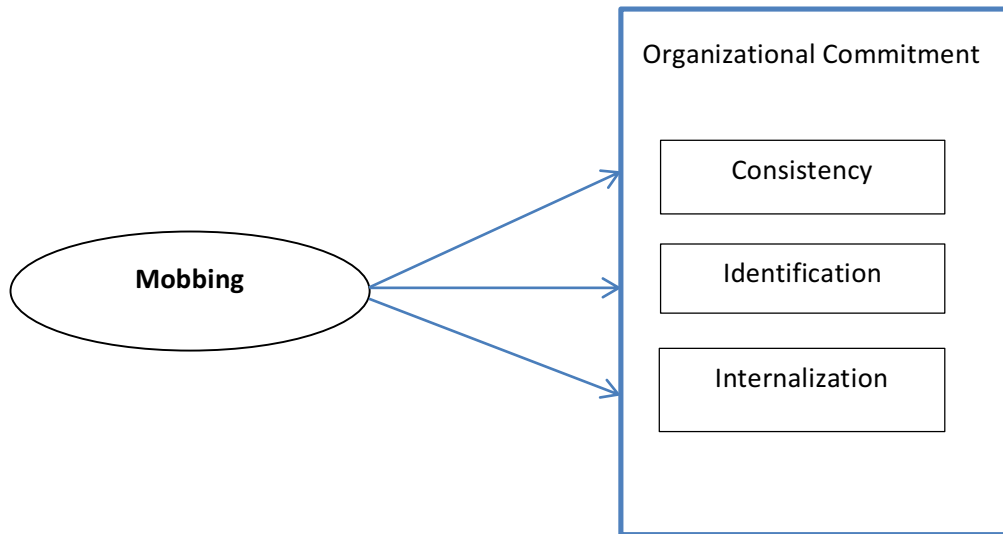
H: Organizational commitment levels of teachers are negatively effected by mobbing behaviors they are exposed to.

H1: Mobbing behaviors negatively effect internalization subdimension of OC.

H2: Mobbing behaviors negatively effect identification subdimension of OC.

H3: Mobbing behaviors negatively effect consistency subdimension of OC.

Figure 1. Research Model



5. Analysis

In order to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, factor analysis and Cronbach Alpha have been conducted. For the 21 itemed NAQ, Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett’s test results are significant (0,878; $p= ,000$ respectively) which show that the questionnaire is suitable for the factor analysis. While the original NAQ is composed of one dimension, according to our factor analysis results it is divided into 4 subdimensions, and cumulative variance is 57,6 %. Since the items 5, 10, and 12 is loaded in more than one factor and the item 14’s factor loading is below 0,50, they are extracted from the analysis. When factor analysis repeated, the cumulative variance has been 62,355%. The final factor analysis results and also Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis results are shown in Table 1 below.



Cronbach Alpha values of the factors have been found 0,793; 0,720; 0,739 and 0,758 respectively which means they are statistically significant so called reliable.

Table 1. Validity and Reliability Tests Results of Negative Acts Questionnaire

Dimensions	Item	Factor Loadings	Factor Explanation (%)	Cronbach's Alpha Value
Unreasonable negative working conditions	s21	,786	17,494	0,793
	s19	,750		
	s16	,738		
	s18	,637		
Assaults on Individual Spheres	s20	,746	15,951	0,720
	s15	,733		
	s7	,686		
	s9	,595		
Work-related assault and hypercriticism	s11	,722	15,208	0,739
	s8	,690		
	s13	,625		
	s1	,574		
Degradation	s2	,855	13,703	0,758
	s3	,824		
	s4	,654		
TOTAL			62,355	
Kaiser Meyer Olkin			0,818	
Bartlett Test of Sphericity			Ki Kare	1414,035
			sd	105
			p value	0,000

The factor 1, “unreasonable negative working conditions”, is composed of items like “there is excessive workload given to a teacher which is unreasonable or impossible to do on time” or “over-control of your work”. Factor 2, “assaults on individual spheres” includes items like “to be exposed to insulting and humiliating words about your character, attitudes and private life”. Factor 3, “work-related assault and hypercriticism” is related to be exposed to insulting, overcriticizing and yelling about the work they are doing. Sample item is: “Being yelled at or to be exposed to sudden anger”. And the final factor 4, degradation, is about task and position related assault like: “to be assigned to works that are under your capability for humiliation”.

Organizational Commitment Scale is also analyzed for its reliability and validity. KMO and Bartlett’s test results (0.928; p= ,000 respectively) show that this scale is also suitable for factor analysis. The first Factor Analysis results indicate that there are 4 subdimensions in this scale. But Cronbach Alpha reliability test showed that the fourth subdimension which is composed of 14. and 15. items are not reliable because their Cronbach Alpha value is below 0,70. So item 14 and 15 also extracted from the analysis and factor analysis reconducted. So the scale than became 3 subdimensioned as in the original scale which is composed of identification, internalization and consistency variables. Also item 10 is loaded on more than one factor so it is extracted from the analysis. The final analysis show the results indicated in the below table where the total variance is 60,157%. And the Cronbach Alpha values show that the factors are highly reliable ($\alpha = 0,928; 0,842; 0,909$ respectively).



Table 2. Validity and Reliability Test Results of Organizational Commitment Scale

Dimensions	Items	Factor Loadings	Factor (%)	Explanation	Cronbach's Value	Alpha
Internalization	oc19	,814	26,293		0,928	
	oc20	,798				
	oc18	,775				
	oc25	,761				
	oc24	,730				
	oc27	,706				
	oc23	,697				
	oc26	,669				
	oc22	,661				
	oc17	,639				
	oc21	,617				
Consistency	oc6	,807	17,356		0,842	
	oc5	,763				
	oc2	,711				
	oc7	,697				
	oc8	,673				
	oc4	,597				
	oc1	,582				
	oc3	,578				
Identification	oc11	,805	16,508		0,909	
	oc12	,780				
	oc16	,754				
	oc13	,733				
	oc9	,700				
TOTAL			60,157			
Kaiser Meyer Olkin			0,926			
Bartlett Test of Sphericity			Ki Kare		3917,946	
			sd		276	
			p value		0,000	

So after the factor analysis, the hypothesis of the study are reorganized as follows:

H: Sub-dimensions of mobbing behaviors effect sub-dimensions of organizational commitment negatively.

H1: Unreasonable negative working conditions, negatively effects internalization.

H2: Unreasonable negative working conditions, negatively effects consistency.

H3: Unreasonable negative working conditions, negatively effects identification.

H4: Assaults on individual spheres negatively effects internalization.

H5: Assaults on individual spheres negatively effects consistency.

H6: Assaults on individual spheres negatively effects identification.

H7: Work-related assault and hypercriticism negatively effects internalization

H8: Work-related assault and hypercriticism negatively effects consistency.



H9: Work-related assault and hypercriticism negatively effects identification.

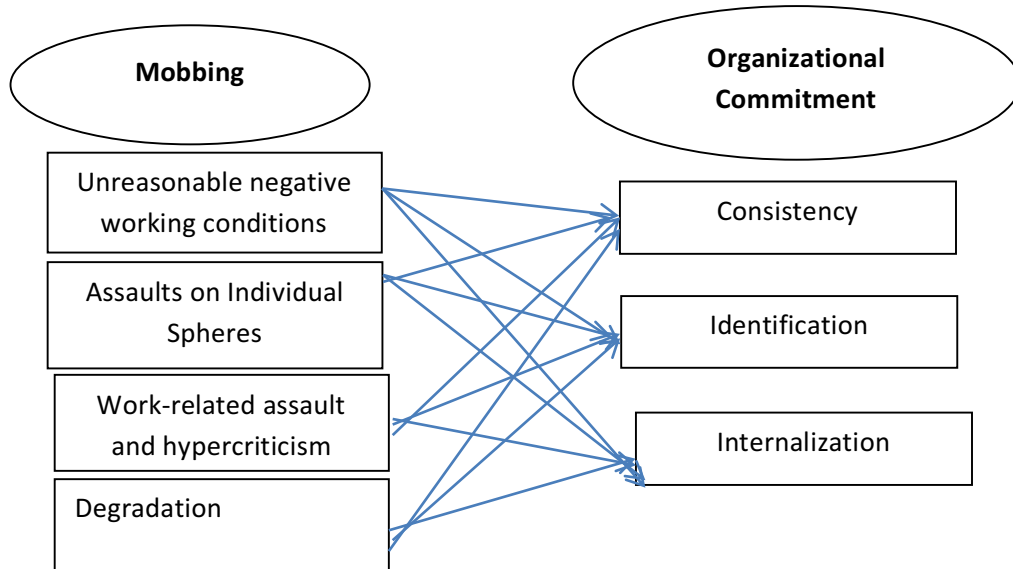
H10: Degradation negatively effects internalization.

H11: Degradation negatively effects consistency.

H12: Degradation negatively effects identification.

And the model of the study also redrawn in accordance with the new hypothesis:

Figure 2. Research Model



Finally in order to test the effects of mobbing actions on the teachers' organizational commitment behavior Structural Equation Modelling test is conducted through PLS Graph program. Table 3 below indicates the results of the PLS Analysis. According to the analysis, H1, H2, H3, H5, H7, H8, H9, H10, H11 and H12 is accepted while H4 and H6 is rejected.

The highest beta and significance levels belongs to the consistency subdimension of OC which means teachers consistency behavior is much more effected by mobbing actions than identification and internalization.



Table 3. The Results of Structural Equation Modelling using PLS Graph Analysis

Relation		Path Value (β)	Hypothesis	Result
Unreasonable negative working conditions	Internalization	-0.108**	H1	Accepted
Unreasonable negative working conditions	Consistency	-0.390**	H2	Accepted
Unreasonable negative working conditions	Identification	-0.212**	H3	Accepted
Assaults on individual spheres	Internalization	-0.018	H4	Rejected
Assaults on individual spheres	Consistency	-0.114*	H5	Accepted
Assaults on individual spheres	Identification	-0.006	H6	Rejected
Work-related assault and hypercriticism	Internalization	-0.083*	H7	Accepted
Work-related assault and hypercriticism	Consistency	-0.219**	H8	Accepted
Work-related assault and hypercriticism	Identification	-0.081*	H9	Accepted
Degradation	Internalization	-0.082*	H10	Accepted
Degradation	Consistency	-0.200**	H11	Accepted
Degradation	Identification	-0.143*	H12	Accepted
Dependent Variable		R2		
Internalization		0.043		
Consistency		0.358		
Identification		0.119		

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

6. Conclusion

In today's competitive business world employees are accepted as the most valuable assets organizations have. So they should be managed in an effective and efficient manner in order for an organization to achieve its goals. The employees are expected to act towards the achievement of the goal, mission and vision of the organization while also having good relations with the other employees and working in harmony. Mobbing is one of the many negative behaviors in the organization which is a threat to the harmony of the employees and which disrupts both formal and informal relations in an organization. Those behaviors are exerted systematically to the target people in order to psychologically damage them or even make them move away from the work.

The results of the study indicated that teachers are being subjected to a certain amount of mobbing actions and that those behaviors affect the organizational commitment level of teachers negatively. The more teachers are exposed to those kinds of mobbing behaviors, the less they are likely to identify with the organization, internalize the organizational values and goals and less likely to be consistent with the organizational goals, values and etc.



The results of the study is also consistent with the previous researches' results like; Ergener (2008), in his study on 513 teachers, have also stated negative relations between mobbing actions organizational commitment subdimensions. Ekinci (2012) have also stated a negative correlation between mobbing actions and organizational commitment behavior.

One point should be emphasized as a result of the factor analysis of NAQ. While in the other studies usually NAQ is examined as one dimension or two in some, in our analysis NAQ is divided into four factors which are reasonably explained. The one of the dimensions; “assaults on individual spheres” is notably distinguished from the other factors in that the bullying behaviors are directed to the person’s individual character and attitudes while what the other three factors have in common is that they are work or task related attitudes. All the three factors have significant negative relations with the OC subdimensions while “assault on individual spheres” factor is only related to consistency, while there is no significant effect on internalization or identification subdimensions.

Another result which is not mentioned above in the analysis is the teacher’s level of being exposed to mobbing and the relationship between mobbing and demographic variables. According to the statistics the mean of the mobbing actions in total is $\mu = 1,25$ while standart deviation is $\sigma = 0,54$ which indicates that the level of mobbing the teachers are being exposed to is not very high. When the demographic variables analyzed, no statistical difference on the level of mobbing regarding age, gender, professional working time or marital status observed, except the education level. The analysis results showed that teachers’ exposure to mobbing behaviors may differentiate regarding their educational level. The Kruskal Wallis results indicated that ($p = 0,024$; $p < 0,05$), teachers with graduate and post-graduate education are more exposed to mobbing than teachers with undergraduate degree. This situation can be the result of an intolerance and envy towards teachers with higher level of education which can be the subject of further studies on this issue.

The survey has some limits; it has been conducted only in one district of Kocaeli city in Turkey. Research is limited to one period of time for the questionnaire and private high schools are not included in this study, in order to make a more homogeneous sample only state schools are included. So the results can not be generalized.

Managerial Implications

This study aimed to contribute to the organizational behavior and management literature with the results it has put forth. The research findings are consistent with the previous researches on this issue. It can be stated that since mobbing statistically significantly reduces teachers’ organizational commitment levels, there should be some precautions in order to prevent or at least reduces the mobbing actions in the schools. There should be many recommendations to achieve this, beginning from an ethics committee, regulations about behavior rules and codes, a proper conflict management process, working on improving communication or paying attention to the equal rights for the equal jobs. But of course these solutions should be prepared after the in depth analysis of the organizations and according to every schools needs and structure.

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