



Arařtırma Makalesi

The Mobbing Process From The Victims' Perspective: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract: Mobbing is an organizational issue that is increasingly being recognized as important in today's world. In the increasingly competitive business environment, the concept of employees with job satisfaction is fading due to mobbing, and skilled workers are becoming unproductive. Regardless of culture, age, educational level, or position, every employee can fall victim to mobbing. The consequences of mobbing not only affect the employee but also the organization and the national economy. The aim of this study is to examine the entire mobbing process through the eyes of 10 different victims who have started legal action and identify the types of perpetrators perceived by the victims. In this context, the types of mobbing and attacks they were subjected to, the physical and psychological consequences of mobbing on the victims, the reactions of other employees during the mobbing process, and the evidence they collected for their mobbing cases have been examined. The study concluded that all of the victims were subjected to communication-oriented attacks. Other types of attacks included those targeting social relationships, reputation, and physical health. All the victims had experienced vertical mobbing. The trigger for mobbing was mostly conflict. Victims generally did not receive support from management or bystanders during the mobbing process. The types of perpetrators perceived by the victims were narcissistic, choleric and megalomaniac. The physical and psychological consequences of mobbing on the victims were severe. The most common physical effects were stomach disorders and eating disorders. The most common psychological effects were bruxism (teeth grinding) and insomnia, both triggered by stress. Mobbing led to an environment within the organization characterized by tension, fear, low productivity, and weak communication among employees. The evidence collected by the victims for their mobbing cases was described in detail for each case. This evidence included photocopies of official assignment documents for victims who were relocated away from their workplace, all official documents containing mobbing elements, photos showing the physical working conditions of the victims, photocopies of unanswered petitions, photocopies of unjustly received warnings or penalties, doctor's reports documenting psychosomatic disorders, and assignment letters aimed solely at assigning the victim tasks outside of their area of expertise.

Keywords: *Mobbing, mobbing cases, occupational stresses, organizational conflict, types of perpetrators, workplace victimization*

Mağdurların Gözünden Mobbing Süreci: Nitel Bir Araştırma

Özet: Mobbing günümüzde gittikçe önemi daha çok kavranan bir örgütsel sorundur. Rekabetin gittikçe arttığı iş dünyasında mobbing sebebiyle iş tatminine sahip çalışan kavramı yok olmakta, nitelikli çalışanlar verimsiz bir hale gelmektedir. Kültür, yaş, eğitim durumu, pozisyon fark etmeksizin her çalışan mobbing mağduru olabilmektedir. Mobbingin sonuçları sadece çalışmanı değil, örgütü ve ülke ekonomisini de etkilemektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı hukuksal mücadeleye başlamış olan 10 farklı mağdurun gözünden tüm mobbing sürecini mercek altına almak ve mağdurların algıladıkları fail tiplerini belirlemektir. Bu bağlamda hangi tip mobbing türüne ve hangi mobbing saldırılarına maruz kaldıkları, mobbingin mağdurlarda yol açtığı fiziksel ve psikolojik sonuçlar, mobbing süresince diğer çalışanların tepkisi, mobbing davası için topladıkları kanıtlar gibi konular incelenmiştir. Çalışma sonucunda mağdurların hepsinin iletişime yönelik saldırılara maruz kaldığı görülmüştür. Diğer saldırı tipleri ise sosyal ilişki kurmaya yönelik, itibara yönelik ve fiziksel sağlığa yöneliktir. Mağdurların hepsi dikey mobbinge maruz kalmıştır. Mobbingi tetikleyen olayın büyük çoğunlukla çatışma olmuştur. Mağdurlar genellikle mobbing sürecinde yönetimden ve izleyicilerden destek görmemiştir. Mağdurları tarafından algılanan fail tiplerini ise narsist, asabi ve megalomandır. Mobbingin mağdurlar üzerindeki hem fiziksel hem psikolojik sonuçları ağır olmuştur. En çok görülen fiziksel sonuç mide rahatsızlıkları ve yeme bozukluklarıdır. En çok görülen psikolojik sonuç ise strese bağlı olarak ortaya çıkan uyurken diş sıkma rahatsızlığı ve uykusuzluktur. Mobbing sebebiyle örgütte gergin, korkunun kol gezdiği, verimsiz, çalışanlar arasında iletişimin zayıf olduğu bir ortam oluşmuştur. Mağdurların mobbing davaları için topladıkları kanıtlar her bir vakada ayrıntılı olarak anlatılmıştır. Bu kanıtlara; çalıştığı ortamdan uzağa sürülen mağdurların resmi görevlendirme belgeleri gibi faille yapılan ve mobbing unsuru içeren tüm resmi belgelerin fotokopileri, fiziksel çalışma ortamı sağlanmayan mağdurların çalıştığı yeri gösteren fotoğraflar, cevap gelmeyen dilekçelerin fotokopileri, haksız yere alınan uyarı vb. cezaların fotokopileri, psikosomatik rahatsızlıkları belgeleyen doktor raporları, mağdurun sadece uzmanlık alanı dışında çalışması amacı güden görevlendirme yazıları örnek gösterilebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Mobbing, mobbing davaları, mesleki stresler, örgütsel çatışma, fail türleri, iş yerinde mağduriyet*

1. Introduction

Mobbing is a systematic psychological abuse process in which the aim is to drive the victim out of the organizational system through various attacks that wear down the employee. It is a significant organizational issue that can affect all employees. Throughout their working lives, many employees encounter negative behaviors, but not all of these can be categorized as mobbing, as it has distinct characteristics in terms of their causes and development. Today, mobbing can occur in any culture and industry, regardless of gender, age, experience, education, or hierarchy. The consequences of this psychological violence range from post-traumatic stress disorder to permanent personality changes and even suicide (Sezerel, 2007). Mobbing, which begins in a conflict environment, leads to social exclusion, isolation, disenchantment with work, and eventual resignation, causing a loss of an experienced and educated workforce. This loss negatively impacts society both materially and morally. In an era where the number of “happy employees” is diminishing, mobbing represents a severe blow to job satisfaction.

The purpose of this study is to examine the mobbing process from the perspective of victims, exploring all its aspects. The main focus is on the types of perpetrators as perceived by the victims, the mobbing behaviors they endured, the physical and psychological consequences of mobbing, the reactions of other employees during the mobbing process, and the evidence gathered for mobbing lawsuits. The study is unique in that the interviewed victims are either individuals who have won a mobbing lawsuit or are in the process of filing one.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. The Concept of Mobbing

The concept of mobbing in the workplace was first extensively used by German occupational psychologist Heinz Leymann, who lived in Sweden, during the 1980s. Leymann employed this term to

describe acts of pressure, violence, and intimidation in work life. Since these types of behaviors had never been identified or defined by anyone before Leymann, his work has formed the foundation for research on mobbing worldwide (Tinaz, 2011).

Leymann, who established the criterion that the action must occur at least once a week over a period of six months, defines mobbing as follows (as cited in Leymann, 1996; Zorlu, 2009):

“Mobbing is a form of psychological terror that manifests through systematically hostile and unethical communication directed by one or several individuals towards another person.”

Zapf emphasized that mobbing is the extreme end of social stress factors in the workplace. He defined mobbing as the creation of a prolonged conflict environment through persistent and discouraging behaviors aimed at the targeted individual (Zapf, 1999). The International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention Concerning the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work emphasizes everyone's right to a work environment free from violence and harassment and highlights the importance of a work culture based on respect and human dignity. It also states that violence and harassment in the workplace constitute a human rights violation and a threat to equal opportunities (Grotto-de-Souza et al., 2023).

Mobbing involves harassing, demeaning, socially excluding, or negatively impacting an individual's work performance. These harmful actions are not isolated incidents, but occur frequently, undermining both the professional and personal lives of victims (Krishna et al., 2024).

Mobbing (harassment) is not discrimination based on factors such as the employee's age, race, gender, religion, or disability. Rather, it refers to aggressive actions, such as harassment, disturbance, and mistreatment, intentionally carried out to distance the individual from work life (Davenport et al., 2003).

Mobbing can be classified into two types based on its direction: horizontal (functional) and vertical (hierarchical). Furthermore, vertical mobbing can be divided into two categories: mobbing by a superior toward a subordinate, and mobbing by a subordinate toward a superior (Karyağdı, 2007). Mobbing that occurs between employees at the same level is considered horizontal (functional), while mobbing that occurs between different hierarchical levels, either from a superior to a subordinate or vice versa, is considered vertical mobbing. Downward vertical mobbing occurs when powerful authorities, such as managers and supervisors, use the power granted to them to exert their positional power over employees in a negative or intimidating manner. Horizontal bullying, on the other hand, occurs when the perpetrator has no formal power over the victim (Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020).

2.2. Classification of Mobbing Behaviors

For negative behaviors to be classified as mobbing, they must be repeated at a certain frequency. According to Leymann, these behaviors fall into the mobbing category if they are repeated at least once a week for six months (Karavardar, 2009). Leymann identified 45 types of behaviors that could be classified as mobbing and categorized them into five groups (dimensions). Leymann's list, known as the “Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terrorization (LIPT),” is widely used in Northern European countries (Carnero et al., 2006). The categories include attacks on the victim's ability to communicate, attacks on the victim's social relationships, attacks on the victim's social status (reputation), attacks on the victim's profession, and attacks on the victim's physical health. However, it is not necessary for all of these behaviors to be present for mobbing to occur. As mentioned earlier, for such behaviors to be classified as mobbing, they must be repeated frequently over an extended period.

2.3. Perpetrators of Mobbing

According to the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI, 2017), mobbing always originates from a bully boss, and bullying inevitably escalates into mobbing (Mhaka-Mutepfa and Rampa, 2024). Leymann states that perpetrators resort to mobbing to satisfy deficiencies within themselves (Sarial,

2015). Studies show that 26% of mobbing is committed by psychopaths (Boddy, 2011). Psychopaths are reported to create destructive organizational cultures, which, in turn, foster mobbing (Boddy, 2014). Research has revealed that only slightly more than one-third of perpetrators identified as psychopaths by their colleagues actually meet the behavioral criteria for psychopathy (Blackwood & Jenkins, 2021).

Studies indicate that perpetrators cannot be fully classified within any specific personality group. Instead, their classification is based on the behaviors and attitudes they exhibit toward others. Various perpetrator typologies have been proposed in the literature (Blackwood & Jenkins, 2021). For instance, Aquino and Lamertz (2004) identified two types of bullies: “domineering perpetrators,” who use their power to control and dominate, and “reactive perpetrators,” who respond to perceived norm violations with aggression.

In the studies conducted, it has been determined that perpetrators are not fully included in any personality group. The classification of such people can only be made according to the behaviors and attitudes they exhibit to their environment. Various perpetrator typologies have been used in the literature (Blackwood & Jenkins, 2021). For example, Aquino and Lamertz (2004) defined two types of bullies: “domineering perpetrators” who use their power to control and dominate, and ‘reactive perpetrators’ who react to norm violations with aggression. Blackwood and Jenkins (2021) identified 6 perpetrator types according to their motivations for exhibiting mobbing behaviors and the nature and means of these behaviors: the bad egg (people with bad personality traits or narcissism-psychopathy tendencies), the good colleague turned bad (those who occur as a result of the organizational climate being suitable for mobbing), the abrasive performance manager (those who apply mobbing behaviors under the name of performance management), the cyberbully (those who commit mobbing through electronic communication technologies), the mob (where there is more than one perpetrator bullying a target) and the depersonalized bully (where the structure or processes of the organization compel the manager to exhibit mobbing behaviors).

Harald Ege, who started the first studies on mobbing in Italy in the early 1990s and developed Leymann's model and proposed a six-stage model suitable for the Italian society, conducted empirical studies in order to create certain perpetrator typologies and as a result of his studies, he created 14 most common perpetrator typologies. Some of these typologies are as follows (Akgeyik et al., 2009; Maran et al., 2018; Tınaz, 2011; Cimino and Marvelli, 2021; Maran et al., 2019; Bencsik et al., 2024):

- **Instigator:** A person who constantly seeks to harm others, inventing new ways to slander and provoke. This type is referred to as a “provocative perpetrator” in the literature (Bencsik et al., 2024).
- **Choleric:** An individual who cannot control their anger, struggles with internal tensions, and alleviates these by directing aggression toward others. Such individuals may test destructive strategies or attempt to drive an employee (the victim) out of the workplace, creating a dissatisfied and tense work environment (Maran et al., 2018). According to Kirel (2008), individuals who try to control their employees through fear typically possess sadistic traits and have weak social relationships. They take pleasure in the victim's withdrawal in response to their outbursts.
- **Megalomaniac:** A person with a distorted self-image, considering themselves superior, and possessing a grandiose ego that justifies attacking those perceived as inferior. According to Tetik (2010), this individual believes they are the best. They reflect their underlying lack of self-confidence through jealousy, aggression, and hatred towards other employees. They perceive themselves as the sole controllers of all resources and expect everyone to adhere to their established rules.
- **Sadist/Narcissist:** Someone who derives pleasure from harming others and refuses to let their victims escape. Such individuals deny internal conflicts and maintain their balance by inflicting pain on others. They are often arrogant, crave excessive admiration, and seek approval from

others (Bingül & Öncü-Köse, 2024). They can be ruthless towards employees who do not provide this acknowledgment. When criticized or belittled, they often feel intense anger and a desire for revenge (Can, 2007).

- **Frustrated:** An individual dissatisfied with their own life who projects this dissatisfaction onto others, creating tension. These individuals are those who have not found what they seek in their personal lives and have experienced disappointment, projecting their negativity onto their professional lives. They view individuals they believe to be happy as their enemies, constantly harboring feelings of envy and jealousy.
- **Careerist:** Someone who prioritizes personal advancement, often resorting to unethical or illegal methods to secure a position. They are willing to risk everything to achieve these goals and protect their own interests.

Marie-France Hirigoyen (2000), a French psychiatrist and researcher specializing in mobbing, examined these profiles and argued that the most dangerous type is the “deviant narcissist,” who cannot thrive without destroying others. Ascenzi and Bergagio (2000) also highlight the prevalence of deviant narcissists, noting that they are not always easily recognizable. These individuals are typically charismatic, intelligent, and persuasive, allowing them to gain power quickly. However, their charm dissipates when their authority is questioned, at which point they become destructive and target specific victims for each new problem.

2.3. Consequences of Mobbing

The consequences of mobbing can be grouped into two categories: individual and organizational (Tınaz, 2011). Mobbing leads to different outcomes for each individual based on their personality. Victims may feel unhappy, experience anger in response to their situation, or act as if mobbing does not exist (Osmanoğlu Taştan, 2015). Mobbing significantly impacts the mental and physical well-being of its victims. Researchers have consistently pointed out that extended exposure to mobbing can lead to severe psychological and physical issues, such as stress, depression, anxiety, irritability, aggression, and even violence (Ullah & Ribeiro, 2024). According to Davenport, Schwartz, and Elliot (2003), there are three degrees of impact on victims during the mobbing process. First-degree mobbing leaves the victim shocked, causing unhappiness or anger, potentially leading them to consider job change or struggle with symptoms like difficulty concentrating, crying spells, sensitivity, and sleep issues. In second-degree mobbing, persistent harassment may lead to depression, high blood pressure, sleep disturbances, digestive problems, weight changes, substance reliance, and work withdrawal. By third-degree mobbing, victims can no longer function at work, experiencing intense fear, severe depression, panic attacks, heart issues, serious health conditions, and even suicidal tendencies.

The primary organizational damage caused by mobbing is economic in nature. The departure of experienced personnel leads to increased recruitment and orientation costs for new employees. Victims of mobbing frequently take sick leave due to their desire to distance themselves from work, which raises costs. Additionally, the victim's work performance diminishes over time. The legal actions taken by victims to prove they were forced to resign due to mobbing add another economic burden to the organization. The decline in the quality of work produced by the victim, as well as the reduced performance, early retirement payments, and unemployment costs of those who retire early due to mobbing, are also part of the economic consequences (Sezerel, 2007; Zora, 2012). According to Tınaz (2011), another cost that organizations may face because of mobbing is social damage. Victims often share their experiences outside the organization, which can tarnish the organization's social image. In highly competitive industries, this can result in a damaged reputation and loss of organizational credibility.

3. Research Method

3.1. Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The primary objectives of the research are as follows:

- ✓ To identify the types of perpetrators as perceived by mobbing victims,
- ✓ To identify which attacks are more frequently used in the mobbing process,
- ✓ To closely examine the psychological state of mobbing victims through interviews,
- ✓ To encourage and guide other employees who experience mobbing by sharing the experiences of victims who have initiated legal battles.

In light of these objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

- 1) What type of mobbing (horizontal/vertical) do victims experience more frequently?
- 2) What mobbing behaviors are inflicted on the victims?
- 3) What events trigger the onset of mobbing?
- 4) What has been the attitude of management towards mobbing?
- 5) How have bystanders reacted to mobbing during the process?
- 6) What are the personality traits of the perpetrators who mob the victims, and which perpetrator type do they resemble?
- 7) What are the physiological and psychological effects of mobbing on the victims?
- 8) According to the victims, what are the organizational consequences of mobbing?
- 9) How has the victims' legal battle progressed, and what evidence have they gathered for the lawsuit?

3.2. Scope of the Research

The target population consists of all employees who believe they have been subjected to mobbing. However, the sample for this study is composed of victims reached through the Anti-Mobbing Association, the Mobbing Unit of the Eğitim-Sen Union, and the media. In line with the main questions of the research, a purposive sampling method was used to examine the mobbing process in terms of its relevance to the situation. In this method, it is essential to select a sample suitable for the purpose of the research to conduct an in-depth study. The study employed criterion sampling, a type of purposive sampling, by selecting individuals possessing elements related to the problem. The logic behind this method is to examine and evaluate all cases that meet certain predetermined importance criteria. These criteria may be created by the researcher or pre-established (Yağar & Dökme, 2018). In this context, the criterion determined for the participants was defined as follows:

- ✓ Participants must be individuals who have been confirmed as victims of mobbing through a court decision or who have taken steps in the legal struggle against mobbing.

3.3. Data Collection Tools

In the research, data were obtained from primary sources, specifically from the victims themselves. The data were obtained using the in-depth interview technique, specifically the semi-structured interview, one of the qualitative research methods. In the semi-structured interview technique, the researcher prepares the questions to be asked prior to the interview. This technique is widely preferred by researchers due to its combination of standardization and flexibility in one-on-one interviews (Türnüklü, 2000). The reason for using in-depth interviews is the belief that a questionnaire method would be insufficient for addressing a sensitive subject like mobbing, which involves personal information. Additionally, conducting a survey on mobbing requires organizational approval, and most

organizations are reluctant to acknowledge the existence of mobbing within their structures. Even with organizational permission, victims may hesitate to provide truthful answers. Moreover, in in-depth interviews, victims are afforded flexibility, allowing them to express themselves more freely. They can describe the incident in their own words, establishing cause-and-effect relationships within the narrative. This is considered beneficial for understanding the victim's perspective and events in detail. Interviews were conducted with individuals who had been directly subjected to mobbing and had initiated or decided to initiate a legal process. The names and affiliations of the victims were kept confidential. Instead of asking a standardized set of questions, victims were invited to share their experiences based on a standardized plan. The rationale for not using a fixed set of questions was to provide victims with the freedom and flexibility to articulate their experiences comprehensively. The interviews were carried out within the following framework:

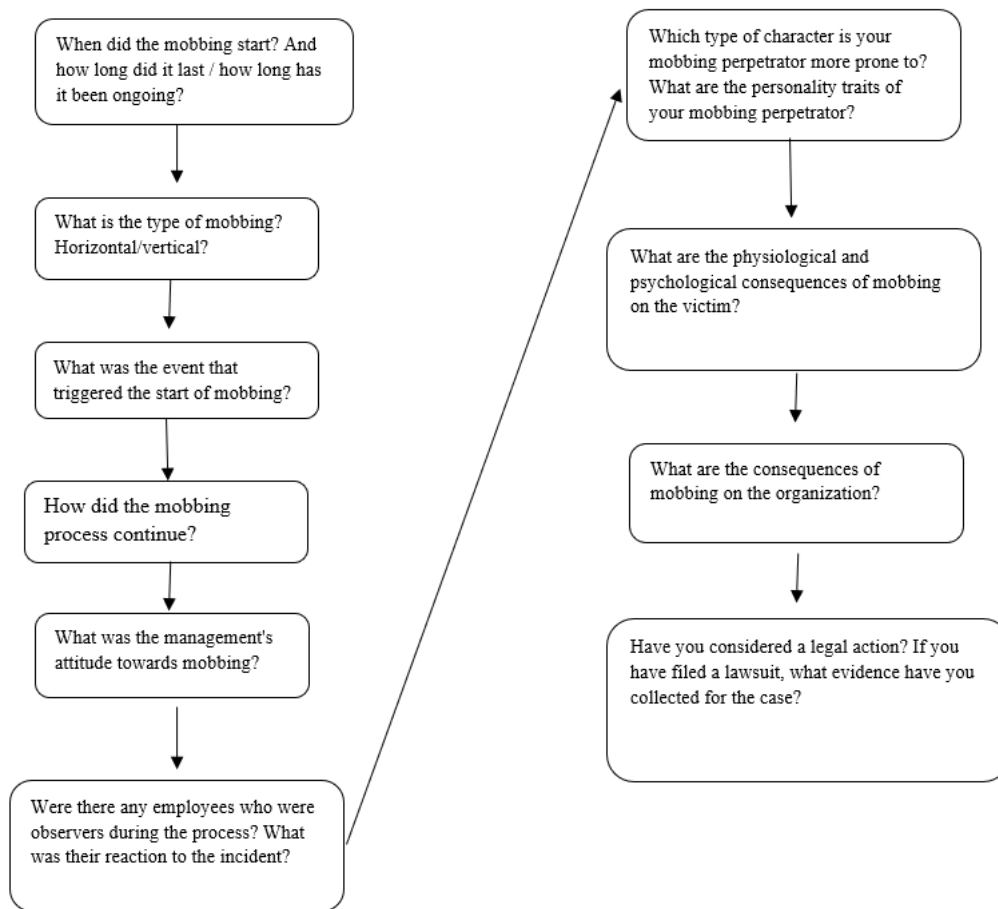


Figure 1: Structural Framework Developed for In-Depth Interviews

3.4. Method of Analysis

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with eight victims residing in various parts of İzmir, while the remaining two victims, who lived outside the province, were interviewed via telephone. The duration of the interviews ranged from one to three hours. All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed manually without the use of any software. The interviews were conducted under strict confidentiality and without interruption. No interpretations or judgments were made; the participants' statements were accepted as they were. To ensure anonymity, names were replaced with codes, and victims were numbered from V1 to V10.

The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using the descriptive analysis technique. Descriptive analysis is an inductive approach that involves interpreting data according to predetermined

themes (Patton, 2018; Akdemir & Kılıç, 2021; Çelebi & Bayrakdaroğlu, 2018). The data can be organized according to the research questions, interview questions, or dimensions used during the interview process. The primary aim of descriptive analysis is to present the organized and interpreted findings to the reader (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

In this study, themes and contents were created based on the mobbing literature (Leymann, 1990; Silva et al., 2021; Zachariadou et al., 2018; Celep & Konaklı, 2013; Romero Starke et al., 2020; Galletta et al., 2019; Hansen et al., 2006; Tınaz, 2006; Tatar & Yüksel, 2018; Akar et al., 2011; Ege, 2010; Maran et al., 2018; Cimino & Marvelli, 2021; Maran et al., 2019; Tetik, 2010). The themes and their contents are shown in Figure 2. In this framework, raw data were reorganized according to themes and conveyed to the reader through direct quotations.

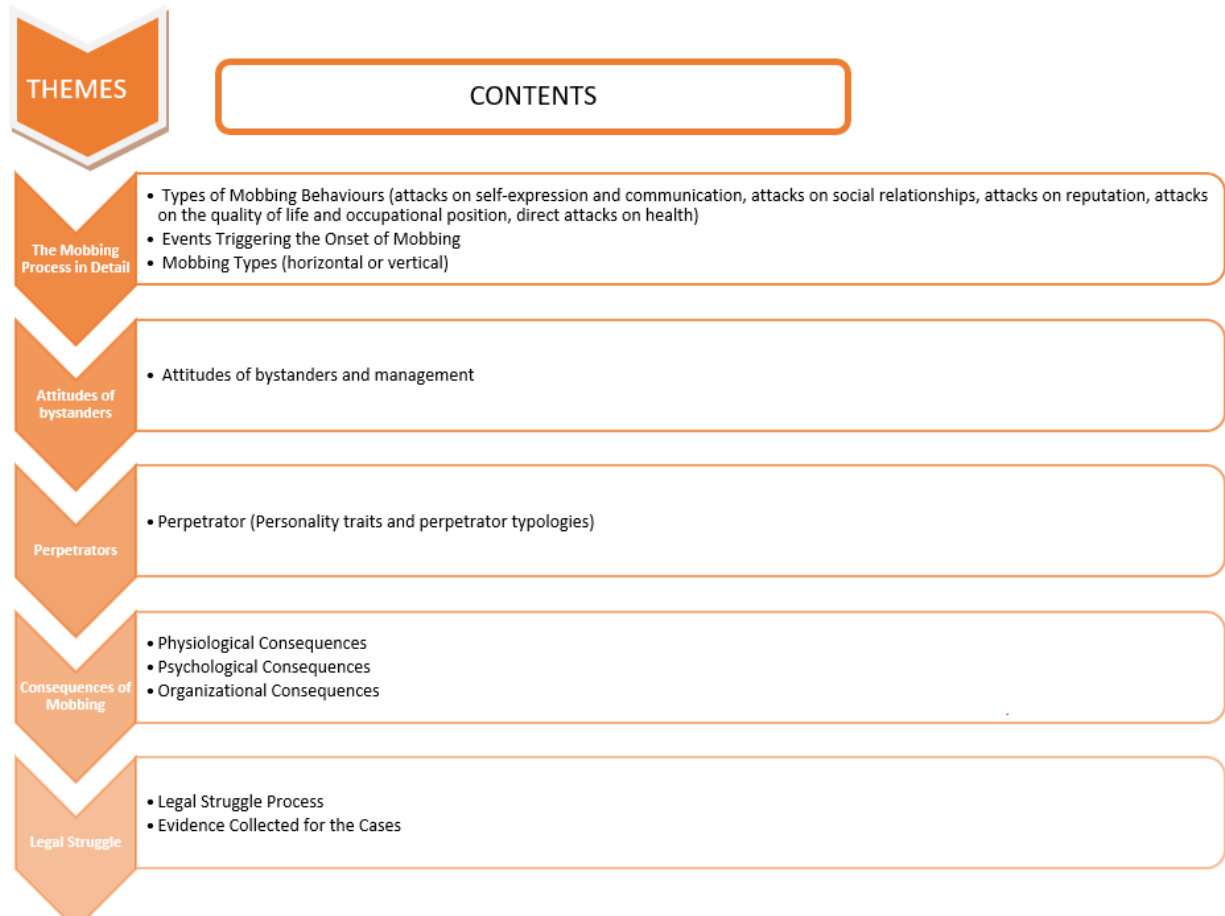


Figure 2: Themes and Content

4. FINDINGS AND EVALUATION

4.1. Demographic Findings

Each victim interviewed has a unique story. Some were subjected to mobbing due to organizational strategies, while others experienced mobbing for personal reasons. The demographic characteristics of the 10 victims who participated in the interviews are shown in the table below:

Table 1: Demographics of the Victims

	Year of Birth	Gender	Educational Status	Marital Status	Work Experience	Last Position
Victim 1	1958	Female	PhD	Single	34 years	Academic
Victim 2	1968	Female	PhD	Married	17 years	Academic
Victim 3	1982	Female	Undergraduate	Single	11 years	Teacher
Victim 4	1965	Male	Undergraduate	Single	22 years	Department Supervisor
Victim 5	1984	Female	Undergraduate	Married	8 years	Teacher
Victim 6	1960	Female	High School	Widow	37 years	District Municipality Employee
Victim 7	1960	Female	PhD	Married	28 years	Academician
Victim 8	1960	Female	Undergraduate	Married	30 years	Manager
Victim 9	1960	Male	Undergraduate	Married	33 years	Principal
Victim 10	1982	Male	Undergraduate	Single	2.5 years	Technician

As illustrated in Table 1, 70% of the interview participants are female, while 30% are male. During the recruitment of participants for the interviews, it was observed that female victims were more willing to engage in the discussions. Additionally, it is noteworthy that most of the names collected from sources within the main population pool were female. Ninety percent of the participants hold at least a bachelor's degree, with 30% having obtained a doctoral degree. This suggests that mobbing frequently affects individuals with high levels of education. However, it is essential to note that the willingness to participate in the study is directly proportional to the awareness stemming from one's educational background. The victims reported having a minimum of 2.5 years and a maximum of 37 years of work experience. Based on this data, establishing a relationship between marital status and mobbing is quite challenging. Some victims have divorced during the mobbing process while married, while others have entered marriage while being single. However, the victims indicated that there was no relationship between their marital status and the mobbing they experienced. An examination of the positions held by the victims in their workplaces reveals that, despite 70% being in high-level positions, they still experienced mobbing.

4.2. The Mobbing Process in Detail: Types of Mobbing and Mobbing Behaviors, Events Triggering the Onset of Mobbing

Table 2: Classification of Mobbing Types and Dimensions Based on Outcomes

	Duration of Mobbing	Type of Mobbing	Trigger	Attacks on Self-expression and communication	Attacks on social relationships	Attacks on reputation	Attacks on the quality of life and occupational position	Direct attacks on	Continuity in the Organization	Legal Challenge
V1	6 years	Horizontal and Vertical	Professional Conflict	X	X	X			Yes	Yes
V2	11 years	Vertical	Intergroup Conflict	X			X	X	Yes	Yes
V3	7 months	Vertical	Failure to Provide Physical Conditions	X	X	X	X		No	Yes
V4	8 years	Vertical	Political Disagreement	X	X	X	X	X	No	Yes
V5	2 years	Vertical	Individual Conflict	X	X	X	X	X	No	Yes
V6	2.5 years	Vertical	Professional Conflict	X	X	X	X		Yes	Yes
V7	3 years	Vertical	Professional Conflict	X	X	X			Yes	Yes
V8	2 years	Vertical	Personal Jealousy	X	X	X	X		Yes	Yes
V9	3 years	Vertical	Professional Jealousy	X	X		X		No	Yes
V10	2.5 years	Vertical	Personal Problems	X		X	X	X	Yes	Yes

One notable detail from the table is that all victims experienced prolonged periods of mobbing. The shortest duration of mobbing reported by a victim was 7 months, while the longest was 11 years. 100% of the victims were subjected to vertical mobbing, meaning mobbing from a superior to a subordinate. Only one victim experienced mobbing from subordinates, superiors, and colleagues at the same hierarchical level.

Conflict stands out as the primary triggering factor. An academic, V1, who was the head of a department that was a synthesis of two separate departments, received a request from the faculty members to split the departments into two distinct units. V1 firmly rejected this request, which initiated the conflict that laid the groundwork for mobbing. The events that triggered the mobbing process for V2, V6, and V7 were similar. The management at their institutions changed, and the new administration began targeting employees who adhered to the principles of the previous leadership. V6, who had worked at the municipality for 24 years, described the situation as follows: *‘After X was elected as mayor, he took a stand against those who were close to the former mayor, and that’s how the mobbing started.’* V2, an academic whose department leadership changed entirely after the heads retired, echoed similar sentiments: *‘The department was divided into two groups—those who sided with the administration and the others—and conflicts between these two groups began.’*

All the victims (100%) were subjected to “attacks on communication.” In such attacks, as defined by Leymann (1996), the victim is not allowed to express themselves, and colleagues are discouraged from speaking with them. Victims are shouted at and threatened. Experiencing these situations leads to isolation and a loss of self-confidence. It is no coincidence that all victims encountered this type of attack; attacks on communication are often the initial phase of mobbing. In the literature, nearly all victims are reported to have experienced this form of attack. Additionally, 80% of the victims were subjected to “attacks on social relationships,” where they were isolated from their surroundings and their presence was ignored. Another type of attack, also affecting 80% of the victims, involved “attacks on their professional life.” Interviews revealed that all the victims were highly dedicated to their work, and their performance ratings were high before they experienced mobbing. It is likely that the perpetrators chose this type of attack to demoralize employees who were committed to their work. The rates of “attacks on reputation” and “attacks on physical health” were lower compared to other types of attacks. This could be attributed to the more overt nature of these two forms of assault. 60% of the victims continue working in the institution where they experienced mobbing. This is closely related to the fact that 100% of the victims pursued legal action. For some victims who remained in the organization, the mobbing they faced decreased or stopped after they filed a mobbing lawsuit. Two of the victims who left the organization requested transfers and continued their teaching careers at other schools. Meanwhile, two others, who also remained at the organization, were unlawfully dismissed from their jobs and were even denied their severance pay. Below is a list of the types of mobbing behaviors experienced by the victims, along with the corresponding mobbing behavior categories according to the LIPT, accompanied by relevant quotes:

- Attacks on the victim's ability to communicate

“I had a one-on-one conversation with the Provincial Director, and he said, ‘If you don't accept the early retirement incentive, you'll either be reassigned or dismissed.’ He also said, ‘Either you comply with us, or we'll take action. You'll be reassigned.’” (V4 – Department Chief) (The victim is subjected to verbal threats.)

“When I tried to explain something, he would frequently interrupt me and say, ‘I am your superior!’” (V5 – Teacher) (The perpetrator does not allow the victim to communicate or express themselves.)

- Attacks on the victim's ability to form social relationships

“(…) When I refused to sign, they said, ‘If you won't sign, your place is ready in the mountains.’ They sent me to the garage of the transportation department. There were 3-4 subcontracted workers in undershirts and shorts watching the ducks. It was such a shabby room. I worked there for a year in a break room with 12 male drivers. My situation even made the news. Eventually, they sent me to the municipal dog shelter, and that was the final straw. I filed a lawsuit, and a stay of execution was granted.” (V6 – District Municipality Employee) (The victim is forced to work in an isolated office, far from other employees.)

“They closed the laboratory I worked hard for. I wrote a petition to learn the reason, but I received no response. I received no feedback on any of the petitions I submitted on other issues either. I was ignored.” (V7 – Academic) (The victim's physical presence is denied.)

“After they reassigned me, the Provincial Director did not speak to me. In fact, he notified the security at the general directorate to say that he was not there.” (V4 – Supervisor) (The perpetrator does not communicate with the victim.)

- Attacks on the victim's reputation

“They even accused me of suicide among the people in the department; everything was attempted.” (V1 – Academic) (Slander and lies about the victim emerge in the workplace.)

“The director spread rumors, saying: ‘She got divorced, her mind is troubled, and she’s messing with me.’” (V3 – Teacher) (Rumors are spread about the victim.)

“They forced me to clean, for example. In the aquarium section, saying that everything must be completely dry means ‘take the stick and wipe.’ Similarly, it was the same on the facility side... I was indirectly ordered through an assistant to take a car wash sponge and clean the storage facility from the floor to the highest windows, except for the ceiling.” (V10 – Aquaculture Technician) (The victim is forced to perform humiliating tasks.)

- Attacks on the victim's profession

“The rude man calls me outside of working hours, asking about the status of this and that task. I respond, ‘Mr. Director, please provide me with a computer and a chair, and I will complete what you’ve asked.’ He replies, ‘Okay, okay, don’t use those as excuses; they’ll be taken care of. Just put it on my desk tomorrow.’” (V5 – Teacher) (The victim is constantly assigned new tasks without completing the previous ones.)

“For four years, he prevented us from launching the project ship. Because of this, I received a penalty from TÜBİTAK. Would a manager say that they don’t like EU and TÜBİTAK projects? They have no say in TÜBİTAK and EU projects as management. They want to obtain revolving fund projects because they profit from them.” (V7 – Academic) (The victim's ability to engage in creative work is hindered.)

“They sent me there without assigning any tasks at all. There was no desk or chair, nothing... I had no work to do.” (V8 – Public Sector Manager) (The victim is not given any work.)

“They sent me to work alongside a lawyer in the legal consultancy and demoted my title. I was reduced from Human Resources Manager to Human Resources Specialist. There was no work I could do there.” (V9 – HR Manager) (The victim is assigned tasks outside their area of expertise.)

“He asked me to measure nearly seventy aquarium tanks five times a day. This number of measurements is an extreme figure according to the standards. I pointed this out to him, but he didn’t listen. While trying to keep up with this demand, I fell from the barriers twice.” (V10 – Aquaculture Technician) (The victim is assigned excessively challenging tasks to make them feel inadequate and unsuccessful.)

- Attacks on the victim's physical health

“They deliberately sent me to do scrap counting, which has nothing to do with my profession. A scrap piece could have fallen on my head there. It was an isolated warehouse far outside the city, at the top of a mountain, where dogs were barking and various other animals roamed around. There was no one there; it was winter. If someone had come and hit me with an axe, it would have gone unnoticed. The environment was dangerous; there were no people there.” (V4 – Supervisor) (The victim is assigned dangerous tasks.)

4.3. The Attitude of Management and Bystanders Towards Mobbing

Regarding the attitude of upper management towards mobbing, it has been observed that 70% of the victims did not receive support from the management. V2 stated that they received support from upper management after filing a lawsuit, while V3 and V5 mentioned that they received support from upper management after one of the mobbing incidents was reported in the media:

"My lawyer initially suggested filing against the rectorate, but I wanted to target individuals. Over time, I realized the rector's stance was key, as the department head was backed by the dean. The vice-rector called twice, asking me to withdraw the case and promising to change the management. I said, 'Change it first, then I'll withdraw.' Eventually, management changed, and I withdrew the case." (V2 – Academic)

"We were exhausted and stuck, so after the attack, we decided to go to the newspaper. The next day, the district office personnel manager called and, surprisingly, supported us, saying, 'Well done for your courage.' Expecting them to protect each other, we were shocked. His support was invaluable. We requested transfers and were temporarily placed closer to home, eventually moving to our chosen schools." (V5 – Teacher)

"Even though the rectorate saw all of this, they didn't speak up because I was always told, V1, you are one person, and they are three." (V1 – Academic)

The attitudes of other employees in the bystanders position during the mobbing process are summarized in Table 3 according to the victims. Only V10 received support from bystanders during the mobbing process:

Table 3. Reactions of Bystanders

Victim	Reactions of Bystanders
V1 and V2	Bystanders sometimes participated in the mobbing.
V3 and V5	Bystanders with vested interests in the perpetrator sometimes participated in the mobbing, while others remained silent in the face of it. Some Bystanders even severed communication with V3.
V4	Bystanders sometimes participated in the mobbing, and some bystanders severed communication with V4.
V6 and V7	Bystanders remained silent in the face of mobbing, and some even severed communication with V6.
V8	Bystanders remained silent in the face of mobbing, and those who did not know V8 avoided communicating with her.
V9	Some bystanders participated in the mobbing, some remained silent, while others indicated that they distanced themselves from V9.
V10	V10 received support from bystanders.

some victims have conveyed the attitudes of bystanders with the following statements:

"They supported the mobbing by remaining silent." (V3 - Teacher)

“Most of my colleagues stopped talking to me because they were afraid of being stigmatized themselves.” (V4 - Supervisor)

“No one could approach me. No one wanted me to sit next to their desk. There were remarks to my friends questioning why they were sitting with me.” (V9 - HR Manager)

4.4. Victims’ Perceptions of the Perpetrator's Personality Traits and Typology

When examining the types of perpetrators perceived by the interviewed victims, it is evident that the most frequently encountered types are the narcissistic and megalomaniac perpetrators. Victims’ responses to the question about perpetrators’ personality traits are as follows:

“Individuals who do not produce sufficiently, are dishonest, power-hungry, prone to rapidly hating others, and capable of turning that hatred into revenge, possibly suffering from an inferiority complex.” (V1)

“I believe he is a person with a serious inferiority complex. His desire to exert dominance over everyone stems from that. He is an obsessive individual... Naturally lacking in self-confidence... In that environment, he feels valuable. By dominating others, he feels important. He operates under the mindset that the more people he crushes, the more valuable he becomes.” (V3)

“They are insecure individuals (...) They are unaware of their own limitations and incompetence, which leads them to believe they are the center of the universe; they think they know everything and understand everything. They possess a kind of foolish bravado. Moreover, they admire themselves, but their ignorance reveals their narcissism.” (V4)

“He had a very high opinion of himself and was completely incapable of empathy. He sought to establish authority and exert the power he held over us. He constantly expected admiration and appreciation from us. Only his desires mattered, and he could not tolerate criticism.” (V5)

“There was also an excessive sense of self-admiration. He believed the power resided within him. He desired recognition, and he could not handle having his decisions questioned.” (V6)

“He considered himself something special, like a show-off, someone who exuded arrogance... He excessively admired himself. He attempted to establish authority and exploited those beneath him. That’s the kind of person he was... Moreover, he could not handle criticism at all; he would go into a rage.” (V8)

“He was devoid of empathy and held himself in high regard. He believed he knew everything; only his knowledge should be applied. This is why he could not tolerate criticism. I faced his cruelty for stating that what he knew was wrong.” (V9)

"He was a self-admiring individual who enjoyed establishing authority, viewing the faculty as if it were his personal estate, setting rules accordingly, and expecting obedience to those rules." (V10)

Based on the above statements, it can be seen that according to victims' perceptions, perpetrators possess personality traits such as being power-hungry, having an inferiority complex, enjoying establishing dominance/authority over others, being self-admiring, lacking empathy, seeking admiration, and being closed to criticism. According to these personality traits, it can be suggested that perpetrators belong to the sadist/narcissist perpetrator type. Nowadays, narcissism is generally considered a personality model characterized by traits such as lack of empathy, a need for admiration and approval, a desire for power and control, a mindset intertwined with an inferiority complex, and tendencies to manipulate and exploit others (Vargo, 2022; Afek, 2018; Branson & Marra, 2022). Narcissistic perpetrators are those who seek to gain power and expect subordination from their colleagues. They can be ruthless towards employees who do not exhibit such subservience. When criticized or belittled, they often feel intense anger and a desire for revenge. These perpetrators (Cihangiroğlu et al., 2015) have inflated self-esteem and lack empathy. They tend to exaggerate their achievements, and underlying this self-admiration is often a deep-seated lack of confidence. They seek admiration and constant validation from their colleagues and can be merciless towards those who do not provide it. Additionally, it can be said that perpetrators also fit the megalomaniac perpetrator type. Additionally, the "megalomaniac perpetrator," who believes they are the best and expects everyone to adhere to their self-imposed rules (Tetik, 2010), also fits this description. The essence of megalomaniac leaders lies in their extreme preoccupation with admiration for themselves. These leaders believe they can accomplish things that no one else can and possess an exaggerated sense of self-worth. They also seek societal validation of their superiority and associate it with holding a position of power. The difference between a narcissist and a megalomaniac is that a megalomaniac often feels a need for superiority over everyone, whereas a narcissist is more focused on an exaggerated sense of self-worth (Branson & Marra, 2022).

The choleric perpetrator type is the most encountered perpetrator type after the narcissist and megalomaniac perpetrator types. These individuals, who cannot control their emotions, tend to shout and create fear-based dominance for no reason (Pross, 2014):

"Sometimes he would come in, laugh, and behave nicely. Then he would scold us. Afterward, he would act as if nothing had happened. When he shouted, he expected us to withdraw. It was an attempt to assert dominance... His only concern was to get his way. Those who did not comply were subjected to mobbing." (V6)

"They were individuals who sought to instill fear among employees. They wanted their subordinates to feel frightened and submissive around them. Because I did not give them that opportunity, because I did not back down and did the opposite, they continued this behavior." (V8)

"I constantly told him, 'Look, what you are doing is wrong; you are merely satisfying your ego. You can achieve nothing through shouting. People can accomplish things by listening to each other. If you have someone knowledgeable under you, they can respond to you. You can intimidate some, you can put them under pressure, but you cannot intimidate me or put me under pressure,' I said." (V9)

“Additionally, there are their scoldings and outbursts. Then they act as if they were not the ones who shouted. They make threats to instill fear. They want the other person to be cunning and to retreat.” (V10)

4.5. The Physiological, Psychological, and Organizational Impacts of Mobbing on Victims

The physiological and psychological issues experienced by victims of mobbing, along with their access to psychological support, are presented in Table 4:

Table 3: Physical and Psychological Consequences of Mobbing on Victims and Access to Psychological Support

Victim	Physical Consequences	Psychological Consequences	Psychological Support
V1	Gastritis, rheumatism	-	No
V2	-	Crying fits, distraction	Yes
V3	Increase in chronic headaches, excessive alcohol and cigarette consumption due to stress	Crying fits, insomnia	No
V4	Stress-related nosebleeds	-	No
V5	Eating disorders, excessive alcohol and smoking due to stress	Insomnia, teeth grinding disorder while sleeping, depression	Yes
V6	Fibromyalgia	Sleeping teeth grinding disorder, depression, excessive anxiety, adjustment disorders, panic attacks	Yes
V7	-	Burnout syndrome, teeth grinding disorder while sleeping	No
V8	Stomach discomfort, eating disorders, standing edema due to circulatory disorders due to overeating	Insomnia, tendency towards violence	No
V9	Diabetes and hypertension	-	No

V10	Joint pain; neck, back, waist and arm pain; false heart pain and eczema due to stress; gastritis and allergic reflux due to stress and adverse working conditions.	Panic attack	Yes
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The effects of the implemented mobbing have manifested in victims as psychosomatic or psychological disorders. Despite efforts to maintain psychological resilience, the experiences have negatively impacted V1's physical health, resulting in exacerbation of gastritis and the onset of rheumatoid arthritis:

"My gastritis has worsened significantly, and rheumatoid arthritis unexpectedly emerged. No one in my family has rheumatoid arthritis. On some days, I couldn't even get water from the fountain." (V1)

V2 described her crying spells by saying, *"I must have become abnormal; I can't stop crying."* Meanwhile, V3 expressed that due to the stress caused by mobbing, she began to lead an unhealthy lifestyle, stating:

"We experienced such terrible things; we started living a completely absurd life—constantly drinking alcohol every couple of days, smoking excessively, crying, and having panic attacks whenever we thought about it. It was truly serious." (V3)

As a result of the mobbing, V4 experienced nosebleeds and hypertension:

"My nose bled heavily, so my spouse and I went to the clinic around 3:30-4:00 AM, then to the hospital. The doctor said this bleeding likely prevented a brain hemorrhage, as my blood pressure ranged between 16 and 22. This all resulted from the mobbing I faced over the phone. I started taking hypertension medication in 2008 and continued throughout this period." (V4)

V5's statements regarding being diagnosed with depression due to mobbing and being required to use antidepressants are as follows:

"I was diagnosed with depression after two years of systematic exposure, during which I barely knew a good night's sleep. I felt psychologically drained after meetings and suffered from irritability and teeth grinding. However, after being reassigned to a new school, these symptoms disappeared, and I was able to stop taking medication." (V5)

V6 has struggled with serious conditions such as fibromyalgia and panic attacks.

"I experienced panic attacks, depression, and adjustment disorders. Stress led to fibromyalgia, and at times, I struggled with basic tasks like dressing. I was grinding my teeth and harming myself, often crying and feeling isolated. I couldn't even enter my friend's room; seeing them triggered fear, trembling, and avoidance to protect them from any harm I might cause." (V6)

V7, an academic, reported experiencing burnout syndrome, stating that during this period, he was unable to produce as he once did:

"Burnout syndrome... It significantly reduces your effort and effectiveness from the moment you start your career. I'm not exaggerating; it decreases at least by fifty percent. There can be nothing worse than this. Additionally, I also experienced teeth grinding due to stress." (V7)

V8 expressed that he could not control his anger towards the perpetrator and described the damage caused by mobbing as follows:

"I was going to choke him in the bathroom when no one was around. Then someone else came into the bathroom, and I just let him go. I had reached that point... Stress has made me eat and drink excessively, leading to circulatory problems. My leg feels like concrete, like this one... My legs have become so stiff that I can't walk. There's also insomnia." (V8)

V9 developed stress-induced diabetes because of mobbing:

"I developed diabetes due to stress... There's no such thing in my genetic makeup. I even had genetic testing done at Hacettepe [University Hospital]. It turned out to be stress-related." (V9)

V10 had to cope with multiple psychosomatic illnesses during the mobbing process:

"I now suffer from chronic joint pain in my neck, back, waist, arm, elbow, and shoulder. I wore a wrist brace on my right hand—my work hand—for three and a half months, enduring severe pain. My wrist recently became incapacitated again. I also experienced chest pains, gastritis, eczema, and allergic reflux. At one point, I couldn't breathe for several seconds, though asthma wasn't diagnosed. I visited the ER twice for different issues, and they referred me to psychiatry." (V10)

The effects of mobbing on the organization are also reported to be highly negative by the interviewed victims. The victims reported that organizational communication within the institution had deteriorated, the organizational climate had become tense, and productivity had declined. V5, a teacher, stated that the mobbing process had negatively impacted students' education. V9 noted that there had been a high turnover due to mobbing, with their statements as follows:

"From A to Z, whether it's the management layer or the blue-collar workers, everyone has been crushed to the point that some developed illnesses while others became disheartened. Can you imagine? Out of an organization of 70,000 people, 35,000—half—transferred to other public institutions and organizations of their own accord." (V9)

4.6. Legal Actions and Collected Evidence Against Mobbing

Nearly all the interviewed victims have taken their action against mobbing to the legal arena. Some of the lawsuits are still ongoing, while others have been won. The mentioned cases have been filed against both the institution and individuals.

V1 has filed a mobbing lawsuit against the institution, and the case is currently pending in the Council of State. In this lawsuit, V1 stated that all official correspondence used as evidence has been photocopied and submitted as part of the case file.

V2 also filed a mobbing lawsuit against the institution, specifically the university where they work. After the rectorship replaced the faculty administration responsible for mobbing V2, the latter decided to withdraw their case. V2 recounts the evidence collected as follows:

"My excellent performance rating dropped to average during the mobbing process, and I included this evaluation in the case file. I was attending classes without an official assignment and didn't think this was documented, but unexpectedly found my name listed among instructors while other research assistants weren't included. Gestures like flowers or gifts, given to others during events like surgery or marriage, were withheld from me; we used these details and my medical reports as evidence."

V3, who has been able to change the institution where they experienced mobbing due to the ongoing lawsuit, expressed:

“All official correspondence, documents... Copies of all the registered and return-receipt letters to which they did not respond... In other words, there must be a copy of everything we did. Regarding the rumors, we went to the police station, and we have statements as evidence of the director's intimidation and raised hand toward me, as well as instances of slander; we reported this to the prosecutor's office, and we have examples of all of it in our file.”

V4's lawsuit became Türkiye's second successful mobbing case, lasting one year and one month. With the first case largely forgotten since 2006-2007, V4's victory gained wide attention. They were invited to speak about their mobbing experience on a national TV program. Following V4's case, mobbing lawsuits surged, with 800 cases filed against the institution that same year. V4 submitted 152 documents as evidence, including warning letters, disciplinary records, photos of their work environment and colleagues' workspaces, and medical documents related to stress-induced health issues.

V5 included numerous written documents in their lawsuit file, such as all warning letters received, registered mail receipts, unanswered petitions, and statements taken at the police station:

“I also obtained documentation from my psychiatrist, which is very important; the diagnosis made by the doctor holds significant weight. I eat excessively, have sleep problems, and I'm incredibly irritable. I struggle to open my jaw to eat, forcing myself, but it just won't open. I have a depression diagnosis and the medications I'm using because of it. Additionally, if you experience a physical attack, it is essential to report it immediately. The police records are all part of the evidence.”

V6 submitted various documents as evidence for their case, including appointment letters, photos taken from above showing the location of the assigned shelter, a petition regarding a change of assignment that received no response, and medical reports related to the illnesses that arose during the process. Additionally, V6 sought the testimony of another colleague who also experienced mobbing.

Meanwhile, V7, who is preparing to file a mobbing lawsuit, is in the process of gathering documents related to unjust investigations against them, appeals regarding a blocked TÜBİTAK project, and petitions that were not acted upon. V8, who has successfully won their mobbing case, presented photographs of the places where they were reassigned, documentation of inappropriate job assignments for which they were not responsible, an unjust inspection committee penalty, and reports related to their psychosomatic disorders in their case file.

V10, who is currently in the process of their lawsuit, specified the evidence they have gathered for their case: *“I have a detailed psychiatric report, records from my hospitalization, photos of the aquarium and lack of ventilation, documents proving my annual leave was denied, reports on allergic rhinitis and chronic pain, records showing I wasn't released during emergencies, dated documentation of being required to work overtime, and photos of disturbing messages from the cleaning staff engineer. I also listed a friend who witnessed me being yelled at.”*

V9, who has successfully won a mobbing case, offered the following advice to those considering filing a similar lawsuit: *“Documentation is essential in a mobbing case; without evidence, the lawsuit may backfire. For example, if reassigned, photograph both your former and current work areas, and only respond to reassignment orders with written documentation. Courts rely on evidence, and the judge will expect it. Organize your documents chronologically to show each stage clearly—this strengthens your case and reduces the risk of losing.”*

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to the interviews, 100% of the victims experienced attacks on communication, 80% faced attacks on social relationships, reputation, and profession, while 40% reported attacks targeting their physical health. Studies have shown that victims are predominantly exposed to communication-related and professional attacks (Zachariadou et al., 2018; Celep & Konakli, 2013).

When examining the events that triggered the onset of mobbing, it is observed that 40% of mobbing cases began with conflict, followed by jealousy at 30%. While Pšunder (2011) and Rossi & D'Andrea (2001) suggest that conflict is the trigger for mobbing, Divincová & Siváková (2014), in their study, list not only conflict but also the bully's superiority, selfishness, personal problems often stemming from issues at home, complexes, jealousy, and mutual dislike as triggers for mobbing.

An analysis of the victim interviews reveals that all victims responded to mobbing with resistance. In all cases, the perpetrators escalated the intensity of mobbing when met with resistance. According to Leymann (1996), the frequency and intensity of mobbing behaviors typically increase over time. However, it is important to note that the selected interviewees were those who had initiated legal action.

Each of the 10 victims interviewed experienced mobbing for different reasons and durations. While some were dismissed from their positions, others were reassigned, and some continued working in the same institution despite long-term mobbing. According to Wonnebauer and Hausmann (2016; as cited in Tekşen, 2023), 40% of victims exposed to mobbing (after about 6 weeks of exposure) begin to experience various health issues; 35% move to a different position within the organization, 20% resign, 15% are fired, and 7% retire.

Regarding the attitude of upper management, 70% of the victims reported receiving no support from management. V2 stated that they received support from upper management after filing a lawsuit, while V3 and V5 indicated that they received support after one of the mobbing incidents was publicized in the media.

During the mobbing period, victims did not receive support from bystanders or other employees. Only V10 reported receiving support from bystanders during the mobbing process. Research on workplace bullying bystanders reveals varied findings; although individuals occasionally take proactive steps to challenge the bully or assist the victim (e.g., Mulder et al., 2017), they frequently display a spectrum of less constructive behaviors (e.g., Wu & Wu, 2018). This situation aligns with the findings of our study. Ng and colleagues (2020) suggested that in organizational climates where group norms are more tolerant of mobbing, when there is an in-group perpetrator and/or an out-group victim, and when the perpetrator holds relatively greater power, bystanders are likely to engage in bullying by exhibiting actively destructive behaviors. In the same study, it was noted that under similar conditions, but when the perpetrator has relatively less power, bystanders tend to adopt passively destructive strategies, such as remaining silent or ignoring the situation. In our study, the perpetrator is the supervisor of the victims. In some cases, the perpetrator holds significant power, while in others, they hold relatively less power. Consequently, bystanders remained silent in some cases but participated in the bullying process in others.

One of the key topics investigated in the study is the perceived perpetrator typologies by the victims of mobbing. The most frequently encountered perpetrator type, according to the victims, is the narcissistic/sadist perpetrator. Based on the victims' perceptions, the perpetrator types are ranked as follows: narcissistic (80%), choleric (50%), and megalomaniac (50%). Both V3 and V5, who were subjected to mobbing by the same perpetrator, described the individual similarly, identifying them as both narcissistic and megalomaniacal. This consistency suggests that the identification of perpetrator types in the interviews is reliable. These findings align with Tendü Arsan's 2008 survey of 105 individuals, which identified the most common perpetrator types as "narcissistic, choleric,

megalomaniac, critical and disillusioned. The results of this study corroborate Arsan's findings, indicating a parallel in the perceived perpetrator types. Moreover, in a study conducted by Maran and colleagues (2018), perpetrator types were found to include casual, sadistic, instigator, and choleric.

All of the interviewed victims have experienced the negative consequences of mobbing. Besides facing financial losses such as attorney fees, their psychological well-being deteriorated, leading to the emergence of psychosomatic illnesses. As shown in Table 4, the impact of mobbing on victims has been severe both physically and psychologically. The most common physical symptoms reported are stomach issues and eating disorders. On the psychological side, the most frequently encountered issues are bruxism (teeth grinding during sleep) and insomnia, both stress-related symptoms. During the mobbing period, two victims were diagnosed with depression, and two others experienced panic attacks. Despite this severe picture, only 40% of the victims opted to seek psychological support. Studies confirm that mobbing can lead to serious consequences such as high levels of psychological stress and burnout, anxiety, anger, helplessness, fear, depression, shame (Leymann, 1996; Krishna et al., 2023a, 2023b), sleep difficulties (Hansen et al., 2014), stomach and digestive tract disorders, skin diseases, panic attacks, eating disorders (Meramveliotakis & Kalaitzaki, 2019) and post-traumatic stress disorder (Ege, 2010).

The victims unanimously agree on the negative organizational consequences of mobbing. Mobbing has led to an environment characterized by tension, fear, low productivity, and weak communication among employees. Victims V4 and V9 emphasized that the organization lost many qualified employees due to the intense mobbing. On the other hand, only V2 mentioned that their resistance to mobbing and filing a lawsuit encouraged employees to become more courageous and assertive in defending their rights. In the context of the literature, the organizational-level consequences of mobbing are similar to the findings, including issues such as absenteeism, employee turnover and replacement costs, decreased productivity and performance, grievance procedures, and loss of public reputation (Hoel et al., 2011).

All victims tried to communicate with the upper management about the perpetrator, but when they received no support, they turned to legal action. Additionally, some victims received support from their affiliated unions in pursuing legal measures against mobbing.

The evidence collected by victims for mobbing cases is described in detail for each case. This evidence includes photocopies of all official documents involving the perpetrator that contain elements of mobbing, such as official assignment documents of victims relocated far from their work environment, photographs depicting the workspace where victims were denied a physical working environment, photocopies of petitions that received no response, photocopies of unjustly issued warnings or similar disciplinary penalties, medical reports documenting psychosomatic disorders, and assignment letters issued solely to make the victim work outside their area of expertise.

The sample of the study is limited in size to examine whether there is a relationship between the demographic characteristics of the victims and mobbing. However, 70% of the interviewed victims are women. Additionally, most victims who volunteered for interviews during the sample collection phase were also women. Several studies have similarly found that women are more frequently subjected to mobbing and/or are more adversely affected by it (Yılmaz et al., 2008). Of the victims, 90% hold an undergraduate degree, and 30% have a doctoral degree. Furthermore, 90% of them have over 8 years of work experience, and 40% hold managerial positions in their departments. This indicates that mobbing is not only experienced by newcomers or employees in lower positions than their supervisors.

In terms of the type of mobbing, the study reveals that 100% of the victims were subjected to vertical (top-down) mobbing, while 10% experienced horizontal mobbing. This finding aligns with the results of previous studies in the literature (Tınaz, 2011). According to research, vertical mobbing is the most common form of mobbing experienced by victims.

In addition to the research questions, the following observations were noted:

- When perpetrators encounter resistance from the victim during the mobbing process, they tend to escalate the intensity of the mobbing.
- Since most of the interviewed victims are from the public sector, they have chosen not to leave their jobs.
- All victims expressed a strong love for their work without being prompted by a specific question. For many, their job is at the center of their lives, which is why 80% of the victims have faced attacks related to their profession.
- A significant portion of the perpetrators attempted to involve other employees in the mobbing process.
- Many victims reported being deprived of information during the mobbing period and received no responses to the petitions they submitted. This tactic is frequently employed by the perpetrators.
- Some victims indicated that they had not experienced any issues with the perpetrators before they became managers, but upon gaining power, the perpetrators used it to exert mobbing against their subordinates.

The interviews conducted are intended to serve as a guide for mobbing victims.

Considering the discussions, victims are advised not to succumb to mobbing, to gather all evidence containing elements of mobbing before filing a lawsuit, and to share the mobbing process with their relatives and family. They are also encouraged not to hesitate to seek psychological help when necessary and to understand that mobbing is an organizational issue, urging them not to perceive the situation as a personal failure.

Research on this topic has predominantly been analyzed through quantitative studies. Future research could benefit from employing qualitative methods similar to this study. In these qualitative analyses, the duration of interviews with victims could be shortened, allowing for a larger number of victims to be interviewed. Additionally, by dividing victims into two distinct groups—public and private sector—researchers can explore the differences in the types of mobbing attacks and the legal challenges faced by each sector.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Authors' Contribution

The authors declare that they contributed equally to the article.

Ethical Statement

The data, information, and documents presented in this study were obtained in accordance with academic and ethical standards.

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