

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK ENVIRONMENT AND MOBBING

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## Abstract

*The basic purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between the employees' perceptions about work, work environment and mobbing behaviour. In order to test the hypotheses of the study a questionnaire has been applied through face-to-face interviewing method in a state organization A. In the study, work and work environment has been analyzed in terms of the following dimensions: work load, work independence, being appreciated, cooperation, justice and favouritism. Mobbing has been handled in terms of the sub-dimension as preventing the communication and self-expression of an individual, attacks on an individual's social relations, dignity, professional and private life quality, financial and physical harm towards an individual. According to the results, the more the work load of the employees and the favouritism, the more the mobbing behaviour to which individuals are exposed. On the other hand, it has been determined that as the levels of employees' perceptions about justice, work independence, cooperation, and being appreciated increase, mobbing behaviours decrease.*

Keywords: Workload, Control, Cooperation, Justice, Favouritism and Mobbing.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Importance of organizing the workplace due to the psycho-social situation of the workers increases day by day. This is also important for the harmony of work and worker. Because, workers settle their contributions depending on the conditions provided to them by the organization. In this context, determining the conditions of work and environment and constantly improving them must be the prior duty of the organizations.

As we examine the work and environmental conditions of the organizations, main elements like workplace, workload, independence of the workers, justice, awarding, cooperation and psycho-social climate stand out. All the mentioned elements help the harmony between worker and the work. Therefore, giving convenient work to the workers ability, making them decide for themselves, awarding the workers for their innovations and spreading the cooperation habit factors are obligations. On the other hand, taking precautions against negative behaviors on the psychological climate is crucial too. Especially, measures must be taken against the mobbing case which estranges the worker to the work. Mobbing is a universal truth which affects the worker negatively even forces to quit his/her job. It is also known that the destructive effects of mobbing also affect the company. Thus, constituting work and environmental conditions due to expectations of the workers may help preventing mobbing. As a result, employers may use work and environmental conditions as a weapon against mobbing.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE: WORK ENVIRONMENT AND MOBBING

From workers view, significant inputs are needed for the organizational system to work properly (Boone and Kurtz, 2013: 7). These inputs are crucial not only for the efficiency and individual performances of the workers but constant supremacy of the organization as well. These inputs define work perception of the workers. In this context, positive perceptions lead to positive outputs. There are many researches in the literature which emphasize the workplace and its variables (Bamford et al, 2013; Vittoria, 2011; Ray et al, 2013; Hayta, 2007). In these researches mostly stress, fatigue caused by the workplace and its effects on the efficiency are emphasized. Also, Maslach and Leiter discussed the relationship between workplace and fatigue in their work. Maslach and Leiter (2008: 500-501) divided the workplace into 6 sub-demensions which are; workload, control, award, cooperation, justice and values. In our work, extents about the workplace are adapted from Maslach and Leiter's work and these extents are considered under several sub-demensions which are: workload, work autonomy and appreciation, cooperation, justice and favouritism.

*Workload:* First factor of the workplace is the workload which defines the responsibility taken and work to be completed in a certain time (Leiter, 2006). Overworking or having not enough time to finish the job may cause worker disappointment and resentment. According to Keser (2006: 105), workload is the understanding of the worker if the work given to him is over the average or not. If the worker and workload are coherent, then both individual and professional life of worker can be balanced. If an inconsistency occurs, workload of the individual cannot be controlled and prevents the worker to spare time to his/her social life. Mostly “I don’t have enough time to do the work I’m given” and “I come home after work so tired that I can’t push myself to do the things I like” answers are given to the example questions.

*Control (Work autonomy):* Control is defined as the contributions of the worker to the decisions made in the organization. Additionally, making decisions which may affect the results are also included in the control section. Any consistency in this factor shows that the individual has control over his/her area and certain responsibility sense. Any inconsistency shows exactly the opposite. Mostly “I have control over how to my work” or “I have professional autonomy/independence over my work” answers are given to the example questions.

*Award:* Awarding can be physical or moral, however the biggest contribution to this factor is being realized (Leiter, 2006). A workplace where the worker feels as his/her contributions are recognized suits this factor. Any chance of being unrecognized is inconsistent with this subject. Answers are “Others realize the value of my work” or “My work is appreciated”. *Cooperation:* Individual’s community score shows the friendship and support in the workplace. Any cohesion in this factor indicates high levels of solidarity, support, cooperation and relationship. Any inconsistency shows that the worker is not supported in the workplace and lacks relationship with others (Leiter, 2006). Example answers are “I am supported by my co-workers” or “I don’t have strong relationships with my co-workers”.

*Justice:* Justice is the concept where the organization treats everyone fair and equally (Leiter, 2006). Additionally, justice related to distributing sources to workers equally and respect between management and workers. Any coherence in this context implies that the organization is equal to every personnel. Any inconsistency shows that there are problems sharing the sources inside the organization (Leiter). Example questions are “Opportunities depend only on rank” or “Sources are distributed equally”.

*Favouritism:* Favouritism in organizations means, employing, promoting, providing better conditions than other workers, not caring about knowledge, talent, merit, ability, experience and education because the person is in good relations with the management (Karacaoğlu and Yörük, 2012: 46). There are various types of favouritism and in the literature it is considered under four subtitles which are; nepotism, partisanship, cronyism and sexual favouritism (Erdem and Meriç, 2012: 142). According to Erdem and co-workers (2013: 176) as they have directed from Ören (2007: 86), favouritism creates an insecure workplace and decreases the efficiency of the workers relatively. Mostly, “Favouritism dictates the decisions about the workplace” and “In this workplace not what you know but who you know determines your careers” answers are given to the example questions.

*Mobbing in Organizations:* Although it is very old, entry of the mobbing behavior that Leymann borrowed from Lorenz to work life has happened after 1980’s (Minibaş-Poussard and İdiğ-Çamuroğlu, 2009: 3). Mobbing concept comes from the verb “mob” which means “gathering together to damage and disturb” can be explained as illegal violent group. It comes from “mobile vulgus” which means “unstable crowd” in Latin (Davenport vd., 2003: 3). Mobbing consists of systematic events which consist of psychologically pressurizing an individual and intimidating the individual knowingly. According to Leymann (1996: 168); mobbing is destructive process which consists of repeating aggressive behaviors. During this process, the victim is abused by having his/her personal rights raped and being systematically stained. Davis (2006: 2) says that mobbing is a series of emotional and psychological abuses that directly or indirectly damages the individual by verbal abuses, threats, physical damages and socio-cultural abuses. Mobbing shows itself as negatively pressuring an individual by an individual or a group and aims to isolate or humiliate the victim (Girardi et al, 2007: 172). According to Field (1996); mobbing is righteous attacks on the self-respect and self-confidence of the individual (Quot. Yaman, 2009: 23). It is possible to list the mutual base obtained from the definitions given above as given below (Aydin and Özkul, 2007: 173; Güngör, 2008: 6; Özen Çöl, 2008: 109):

- ✓ Negative behaviors directed to victim and these behaviors being aggressive and hostile,
- ✓ Frequency and continuity of these behaviors,
- ✓ Pattern indirect or direct emotional attacks,
- ✓ Victim feels vulnerable and helpless,
- ✓ There comes a significant power derangement between two poles (victim and the bully) (Shallcross et al, 2008 :58).

Mobbing behaviors which are investigated under five subtitles by Leymann are given as below (1996: 170; Demirel, 2009: 121-122):

1. *Attacks against individual's freedom of expression*: These kinds of attacks against the victim aim to humiliate, interrupt, and shout at the individual, criticizing individual's social life and work conducted.
2. *Attacks against individual's social relationships*: Restraining individual's relationships with his/her co-workers, isolating from others, ignoring the individual are the samples under this subtitle.
3. *Attacks against the dignity of the individual*: Examples under this subtitle are imitating the individual, spreading rumors about the individual, mocking his/her social life and religious/political values, racism, humiliation.
4. *Attacks against individual's life and work quality*: Giving works out of workers area of expertise and talents, humiliation about work, piling offending works at his/her desk are the example behaviors under this subtitle.
5. *Attacks directly against individual's health*: These are the attacks which aim to damage the victim physically and psychologically. Emotional and sexual abuses towards the victim, not taking precautions for the safety and health of the victim inside the workplace are samples under this subtitle.

The process in the context of mobbing starts and goes on as given below (Shallcross et al, 2010: 28; Leymann, 1996: 171-172; Çobanoğlu, 2005: 92-94):

*Critical Events / Intended Conflict Situation*: Mostly, conflicts trigger mobbing. In this context, mobbing behavior can be seen as a soaring conflict. The identity of the victim is determined at this stage.

*Mobbing and Degradedness / Initiation of Mobbing*: This stage includes different behaviors. These behaviors overcome their daily uses and used to punish and fire the individual. These are all aggressive behaviors.

*Personnel Management / Faulty Attitude of the Management and Ignoring Mobbing*: Due to the mobbing behavior applied to the victim, management may treat a new situation as biased. With this attitude, although he/she don't expose his/her side, he is known as a fan of a pole. If the manager chooses sides in a situation like this, he/she becomes the negative effect to the psycho-social situation of the workplace.

*Getting Fired / Termination of the Labor Contract*: This stage means that the process is completed for the bully. Real effects of the mobbing on the victim are revealed after the victim is fired.

Mobbing may occur based on many different reasons. Organization culture is an intermediary variable in the context of making workers behave accordingly to certain symbols, values and behavior patterns. According to Demirel (2009: 122), mobbing mostly occurs in organizations which have low organization culture. Having weak internal communication in the office is another big cause of mobbing. Workers' lack of social skills, low performances, "tough guy" appearances and aggressive attitudes are effective on their exposure to mobbing (Cemaloğlu, 2007: 113).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Methodology of the research, aim of the research, assumptions and hypothesis that it is based on, extent and limits, sampling process and data collecting methods, results of research outputs are given below.

*Aim of the Research*: Main purpose of the research is to expose the relation between mobbing and their understanding of work and environment concept. In the direction of this main purpose, understanding of work and environment, workload, work autonomy and appreciation, cooperation of workers and justice, favoritism inside the organizations are investigated. The mobbing behaviors that workers are exposed to are investigated as behaviors against the individual and his/her communication, behaviors against the social life of the individual, dignity of the individual, life quality of the individual, professional situation and health.

*Hypothesis of the Research*: The main assumptions and hypothesis that the research is based on due to its purpose is given below.

1. H<sub>1</sub>: There is a relationship between stages of work and environment and mobbing.

2. H<sub>1</sub>: Extents of Work and Environment affects the mobbing.

*Extent and Limits of the Research*: Main crowd of this research consists of workers of company A. Including an organization and their worker to the research constitutes the main part of the research. Therefore, it is believed that the outputs obtained from this research will provide benefits to the managers, workers and researchers working in the same sectors.

*Sampling Process and Data Collection Method*: In the research during the sampling process, convenience sampling method is preferred. All the corporation works are included to the example. In the research, during data collection process, surveys are used. Surveys are executed by the pollster inside the organizations included in the research. Surveys are divided to three sections. First section includes socio-demographic properties of the

workers, second section includes work and environment and lastly third section includes Mobbing. The work and environment used in the research is based on works of Vittoria (2011) and mobbing scale is based on the work of Davenport (2003).

#### 4. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Outputs of the research are found out of the results of correlation and regression analysis and reliability – validity analysis with social-demographic properties of the participants.

*Socio-demographic Properties of the Workers:* As the distributions due to socio-demographic properties of the workers included in the research are taken into account, it is seen that %39,7 of 189 workers are females; in addition average age is 38 and their average monthly salary is 2350 TL. As the education levels of the participants are taken into account, it is stated that %11.2 are high-school graduates, %67.2 are university graduates and %21.7 have master's degree. It is seen that most of them have been working for 10 or more years and working under the same roof for 7 – 8 years in average.

*Reliability - Validity Analysis of the Scales:* Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (CAC) is used on reliability analysis of the scales used in the research. On the validity analysis, factor analysis is used. CAC of Work and Environment scale is 0.721, CAC of Mobbing scale is 0.967. Validity analysis of the results is given in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Work and Environment Factor Analysis Results

Factors	Factor Loading				
	1	2	3	4	5
Factor 1: Workload					
I don't have time to finish all the work.	,728				
I work intensely for very long hours.	,722				
I get home tired after work that I can't push myself to do the things I like.	,837				
There is so much to do about work that I can't gravitate towards my personal hobbies.	,807				
I can't find time to do the important things at my job.	,725				
Factor 2: Work autonomy and Appreciation					
I can control how to do my job.		,555			
I can affect my managers to obtain the materials and space to do my job.		,607			
I have professional autonomy/independence at my job.		,464			
I'm appreciated by others about my work.		,761			
My work is valued.		,711			
My efforts are usually recognized.		,781			
Factor 3: Cooperation					
People trust each other while executing their roles.			,605		
There is solidarity in my work group.			,804		
People in my work group have an open relationship.			,770		
I don't feel close to my colleagues			,536		
Factor 4: Justice					
Opportunities are determined by merit.				,817	
Management treats all the workers equally.				,690	
Factor 5: Favouritism					
Favouritism determines how the decisions about work will be taken.					,845

Not what you know but who you know determines your career in this company.					,822
<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	,83	,78	,72	,54	,62
<i>Explained Variance</i>	16,10	15,27	11,80	9,68	9,10
<i>Total Explained Variance</i>	61,96				
<i>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. (KMO)</i>	,777				
<i>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity- Approx. Chi-Square</i>	1102,587				

$p < 0,05$

In table 1, results of the scale to determine the understanding of the workers about work and environmental relationship included in the report analyzed due to validity analysis can be founded. It is determined that work and environment context is described by five main elements up to %61,96 total variance. Sampling sufficiency coefficient of the scale is found to be 0.94. In this context, around 0.05 levels and when all the values relative to the scale are included, it is understood that the internal consistency and validity of the scale is high.

Table 2: Mobbing Behavior Related Factor Analysis Results

Factors	Factor Loading				
	1	2	3	4	5
Factor 1: Attacks against the dignity of the individual					
19- I'm treated like I'm mentally ill.	,840				
20- I'm pushed to have a psychological evaluation/investigation	,779				
21- A flaw of mine is always mocked.	,784				
22- My walking, gestures or voice imitated to make a mockery of them.	,832				
23- My social life is mocked.	,768				
24- My nationality is mocked.	,809				
28- I'm called by bad nicknames.	,732				
29- Sexual implications.	,778				
30- My religious or political views are mocked.	,783				
38- My goods get damaged.	,590				
39- My home or my workspace gets attacked.	,691				
40- I'm forced to do physically intense works.	,585				
41- I'm threatened physically.	,787				
42- A little violence is applied to scare me.	,761				
Factor 2: Attacks against the professional situation of the individual					
32- My works get taken from me and I become unable to create my own work.		,540			
33- Meaningless works are given to me to pursue.		,682			
34- Works neglecting my talents are given to me.		,686			
35- My job description is changed constantly.		,762			
36- Works that may damage my self-confidence are given to me.		,709			
37- Works that are not in my area of expertise are given to me to reduce my dignity.		,672			
Factor 3: Attacks against the social life of the individual					

9- I get written threats.			,549		
10- My relations are ignored with gestures and looks.			,477		
11- People don't talk to me.			,555		
12- I don't talk to anyone, and reaching other people is forbidden from me.			,708		
13- I get a workspace separate from the others.			,644		
14- It is forbidden for my co-workers to speak to me.			,553		
15- They act like I'm not there.			,592		
16- People talk bad behind my back.			,491		
17- There are rumours about me.			,654		
27- My decisions are always questioned.			,514		
Factor 4: Attacks against the communication situation of the individual					
2- I'm always interrupted when I'm talking.			,451		
4- I always get shouted at.			,767		
5- My work is constantly criticised.			,787		
6- My social life is constantly criticised.			,543		
7- I get disturbed via telephone..			,490		
Factor 5: Humiliation					
25- I'm forced to do a work which damages my self-confidence.					,743
26- My efforts are judged wrongly to humiliate me.					,716
<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	,968	,923	,737	,809	,900
<i>Explained Variance</i>	30,18	14,44	13,76	9,130	6,236
<i>Total Explained Variance</i>	73,741				
<i>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. (KMO)</i>	,926				
<i>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity- Approx. Chi-Square</i>	8142,868				

p<0,05

In Table 2, validity analysis results of mobbing scale are seen. Mobbing behavior is explained with five main elements up to %73,741 variance. Reliability coefficients of the factors are also high. On the other hand, it is calculated that factor load values generally take values over 0.50. Sampling sufficiency Coefficient of the scale is calculated to be 0.926. Shortly, it is specified that the scale as a whole has a high validity level.

*Relationship between Work Environment and Mobbing:* In the research, the relationship between work and environment and mobbing is investigated and the results are given in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Work Environment and Mobbing-Mean Std. Deviation Values

Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation
<u>Work and Environment</u>		
Factor 1: Workload	3,55	,991
Factor 2: Work autonomy and appreciation	3,08	,932
Factor 3: Cooperation	3,21	,948
Factor 4: Justice	2,62	1,056
Factor 5: Favouritism	2,74	1,118
<u>Mobbing(Mobbing)</u>		
Factor 1: Attacks against dignity of the individual	1,32	,611
Factor 2: Attacks against professional situation of the individual	1,44	,770
Factor 3: Attacks against social life of the individual	1,47	,787
Factor 4: Attacks against communication situation of the individual	1,76	,825
Factor 5: Humiliation	1,39	,818
Overall Mobbing	1,33	,408

*Note: Average values, 1.....5 are calculated by taken this interval into account.*

As the table 3 is investigated, mean values and standart deviation values of the extents of work and environment and mobbing. As the workers' understanding of work and environment is taken into consideration, it is seen that their understanding of the workload is the highest and understanding of the justice is the lowest. Similarly, as the workers' understanding of the mobbing is taken into consideration, it is seen that individual's understanding of attacks against communication seems to be the highest. By looking at the average values, relationship between stages of work and environment and mobbing is given in table 4.

Table 4: Relationship between Work and Environment and Mobbing Behavior

Mobbing Work and Environment	Correlations	Factor 1: Attacks against dignity of the individual	Factor 2: Attacks against professional situation of the individual	Factor 3: Attacks against social life of the individual	Factor 4: Attacks against communication situation of the individual	Factor 5: Humiliation	Overall Mobbing
Factor 1: Workload	Correlation Coefficient	,032	,090	,002	,176**	,027	,133*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	,337	,117	,491	,009	,360	,042
Factor 2: Work Autonomy and Appreciation	Correlation Coefficient	-,294**	-,364**	-,253**	-,348**	-,297**	-,459**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	,001	,001	,001	,001	,001	,001
Factor 3: Cooperation	Correlation Coefficient	-,274**	-,272**	-,251**	-,345**	-,214**	-,374**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	,001	,001	,001	,001	,002	,001
Factor 4: Justice	Correlation Coefficient	-,259**	-,325**	-,171*	-,326**	-,235**	-,360**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	,001	,001	,011	,001	,001	,001
Factor 5: Favouritism	Correlation Coefficient	,316**	,331**	,234**	,264**	,309**	,340**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	,001	,001	,001	,001	,001	,001



When Table 4 is examined, the results of the relationship between work and environment stages and mobbing is seen. It is demonstrated that there is a meaningful relationship between mobbing and workload, work autonomy and appreciation, cooperation, justice and favoritism. As workers' understanding of workload and favoritism increase, their chances of being exposed to mobbing increases as well. On the other hand, as the understanding of work autonomy and appreciation, cooperation and justice increases the chance of being exposed to mobbing decreases. Hence, the first hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) of the research which is "There is a relationship between stages of work and environment and overall mobbing" is accepted.

In the research, in order to obtain the effects of work and environment over psychological intimidation, regression analysis is conducted and the results are given below.

Table 5: Effects of Work and Environment on Mobbing

	F	P	R	R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	t	p
Model	23,215	,001	,664	,422			
Constant Values					1,487	10,614	,001
Factor 1: Workload					,080	1,269	,206
Factor 2: Work Autonomy and Appreciation					-,195	-2,682	,008
Factor 3: Cooperation					-,209	-2,838	,005
Factor 4: Justice					-,157	-2,262	,025
Factor 5: Favouritism					,368	5,639	,001

Note: Dependent variable: Mobbing;  $p < 0,05$ . Durbin-Watson Coefficient: 1,695

As the values in table 5 are examined (Sig. = 0,001), when 17,82F value is taken into consideration it is seen that model is meaningful in all the stages as a whole. %42.2 of the dependent variable (mobbing) is explained by independent variables. When  $\beta$  Coefficients are examined, it is seen that, including workload in the model is not necessary since it won't provide any outputs like other subtitles. In the model, it is seen that as the work autonomy and appreciation, cooperation and justice factors increase, mobbing decreases. On the other hand, if the favouritism increases, mobbing exposure increases as well. In this context,  $H_1$  hypothesis: "stages of work and environment affects mobbing behavior" is partially accepted. Additionally, having a Durbin-Watson coefficient between 1.5 and 2.5 shows us that there isn't auto-correlation possible in the model. In the literature, there are many researches about the effects of work life over organization and individuals. Cemaloğlu (2007:114) indicated that negative working conditions may increase mobbing exposure. In this context, in the work Ryan and Kossek (2008: 296-298) conducted, they have analyzed the importance of creating suitable workplace over organizations and individuals.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Satisfying the company needs seems directly related with the coherence of the workplace. In the context of work and worker harmony; subfactors categorized as workload, work autonomy and appreciation, cooperation, justice and favoritism affects the organization sense of the workers. Workload understandings of the workers, being free to decide about their work, spreading the cooperation culture inside the organization, being positive about organizational justice and employing and ranking is like a reference for assessments about work and the organization. Applications which may cause workers to have a negative understanding may cause the change of mobbing exposure to increase. Especially, negativities inside the workplace may cause depression for the workers and lead them to behave aggressively against each other. As the destructive and dangerous results of mobbing are taken into account, the precautions must be taken as given below:

- Workloads must be set according to the scientific measures,
- Workers must be pushed to take initiative and responsibilities,
- Cooperation and support between workers are crucial,
- Organizations must be fair with organizational outputs about workers,
- Objective criteria must be taken into account when it comes to employing, promotions and careers, favouritism must be avoided,
- Mobbing must be treated carefully,
- Bullies who execute mobbing must be dealt with legally, organizational culture must be strengthen against mobbing,
- Effects of mobbing on worker, organization and society must be analyzed well and some coping mechanisms must be improved against it.

## AUTHORS BIOGRAPHY

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