The Relationship Between Mobbing and Job Satisfaction: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract: The objective of this study is te examine the relationship between employees' perceptions for workplace mobbing and job satisfaction by an applied research in a wheel manufacturer firm. A survey questionnaire was designed and used in this study. A total of 95 completed questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 95%. The study results indicate that there was a negative relationship between employees' (downward and horizontal) workplace mobbing perceptions and job satisfaction. About 16.7% of the variance in employee job satisfaction could be axplained by the independent variables of downward mobbing and horizontal mobbing (Adjusted R^2). Horizontal mobbing had the strongest impact on employee job satisfaction, and followed by downward mobbing. As a result, employee job satisfaction could be increased through eliminating workplace mobbing.

Introduction

Understanding and quantifying the process of mobbing is important because of its multiple consequences (Carnero, et al., 2008). At first, exposure to mobbing has severe mental and physical health poblems for those involved, variously manifesting itself in somatic symptoms, anxiety, and depression. In the most severe cases, exposure to mobbing may even produce symptoms resembling post-traumatic stress disorder (Hoel and Einarsen, 2009; Banafos et al., 2009). For example, Leyman and Gustafsson's (1996) research results of the analysis of 64 patients subjected to mobbing showed a severe degree of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), with mental effects fully comparable with post-traumatic stress disorder from war or prison camp experiences. But, not only the victim is involved in this problem but also the firm and the society as being a target of mobbing frequently leads to absenteeism, increased employee turnover, and reduced productivity (Hoel and Einarsen, 2009). For example, a study for a sample of 6500 temporary disability cases showed that, during the year 2002, 52 million Euros were lost in work compensation as a consequences of mobbing behaviours in Spain (Carnero, et al., 2008). In other words, there is a strong societal dimension of "mobbing" problem and society is left to pick up many of the long-term costs, including medical treatment, work incapacity benefits, and costs associated with premature retirement (Hoel and Einarsen, 2009). So, there are legislative and organizational attempts to prevent mobbing. For example, some countries (Sweden, The Netherlands, Belgium, France, Quebec, South-Australia) enacted legal regulations to combat mobbing in last decades. But, in order to be successful, legal interventions must be accompanied by well-informed, trained, and motivated employers and trade unions who, in collaboration, are willing to deal with the problem proactively on an organizational level (Hoel and Einarsen, 2009). So, mobbing is not a marginal fact in today's organizations and this study aims to make a contribution to the literature and actual attempts to deal with mobbing problem by investigating the relationship between workplace mobbing and employee job satisfaction.

Theoretical Grounding

Mobbing

Mobbing is accepeted as an extreme social stresser at workplaces (Leymann and Gustafson, 1996). And Vandekerckhove and Commers (2003) simply defined "mobbing" as repeated and systematic behavior of individuals or groups, which harms others with whom they work. But Browne and Smith (2008) uses an interesting example to explain "mobbing":

A flock of birds is gathered by the water, eating. A new bird approaches the established flock, hoping to gain entry. Instead of accepting the new bird, the flock of birds torments the new bird, stealing its food, driving it away. The group attack is known as "mobbing." A group of employees gathers in the office break room, chatting and enjoying the lunch hour. A newly hired employee approaches, hoping to coin the conversation. Instead of accepting the new employee, the group ignores the employee, effectively ostracizing her. Upon returning to

work, the group of employees greets the new employee with insults to her intelligence, rumors about the reasons she was hired, and total ostracization from their social circle. The group attack is known as "mobbing,"

In this type of conflict, the victim is subjected to a systematic stigmatization process and encroachment of his or her civil rights. Even, it may ultimately lead to the expulsion from the labour market if the individual in question is unable to find employement (Leymann and Gustafson, 1996). Because mobbing involves hostile and unethical communication towards an individual, who is pushed into a helpless and defenceless position. So, mobbing has been referred to different terms such as "workplace bullying," "moral harrasment," "psychological harassment," "psychological terror", and "victimization." But, Leyman (1996) distinguishes bullying from mobbing in stating that the use of the bullying concept in research on workplace aggression stems from research on bullying at school, which is very often strongly characterized by physically aggressive acts. Mobbing on the other hand, is characterized by more sophisticated behaviors, which better describes the phenomenon found at work-places, and consists of harmful treatment of or putting harmful pressure on an employee (Vandekerckhove and Commers, 2003). Also Leyman (The Mobbing Encyclopaedia, http://www.leyman.se/English/frame.html) states that mobbing must occur very frequently (statistical definition: at least once a week) and over a long period of time (statistical definition: at least six months). Because of the high frequency and long duration of hostile behavior, this maltreatment results in considerable psychological, psychosomatic, and social suffering.

The definitions stated above show that there must be four critical points to talk about mobbing; these are *frequency, duration, reaction* and *power differencies*. At first, the person who is exposed to mobbing must not have a power to defend himself. In other words, there must be a power difference in favour of mobber. So, the person exposed to mobbing is called as "victim." Second, the hostile actions, behaviors towards the victim must occur in a systematic process. So, the repetitive nature of these behaviors (at least once a week) implies the *frequency* of mobbing. Third, negative behaviors must no face an interruption. Maltreatments must last in a long time, at least six months. And the last one, the individual exposed to mobbing must be aware of all these systematic actions and suffer from these hostile behaviors. If an individual do not suffer psychologically or socially from these multreatments, it is not possible to state about mobbing (Nield, 1996; Aydın ve Özkul, 2007). Moreover, the last point makes mobbing as the vital issue for all organizations. Because researches carried out in different organizations and different countries demonstrated that mobbing was an extreme social stresser and cretaed serious mental and psyhosomatic health problems as well as undesired organizational outcomes. The most outstanding consequences of workplace mobbing for mobbed persons are a loss of income due to being sacked or leaving the job, and health hazards such as severe anxiety, unable to concentrate, sleeplesness, depression, PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) (Vandekerckhove and Commers, 2003; Leymann and Gustafson, 1996; Quine, 1999; Vanderstar, 2004). For example, a study composed of self-reports of workplace mobbing and the resulting health problems from 1000 individuals who visited the Bullying Institute's website and voluntarily filled out a questionnaire indicated that the most frequently reported symptoms were: anxiety, stress, excessive worry (reported by 76 percent of respondents); loss of concentration (71 percent); disrupted sleep (71 percent); feeling edgy, irritable, esily startled and constantly on guard (paranoia) (60 percent); stress headaches (55 percent); obsession over details at work (52 percent); recurrent memories, nightmares and flashbacks (49 percent); racing hearth rate (48 percent); needing to avoid feelings, thoughts, and situations that remind the victim of trauma or a general emotional "flatness" (47 percent); body aches-muscles or joints (45 percent); exhaustion, leading to an inability to function (41 percent); compulsive behaviors (40 percent); diagnosed depression (39 percent) (Browne and Smith, 2008; Namie, 2003). As European researchers have publicized the potentially devastating effects of mobbing in the workplace, legislators have taken action. Sweden was the first nation to pass anti-mobbing legislation, enacting *the Ordinance on Victimization at Work* in 1993 (Browne and Smith, 2008; Hoel and Einarsen, 2009). The second country to enact such legislation was France, passing the *Modernization of Employment Act of 17 January 2002*. Belgium, Quebec, and the United Kingdom have also passed workplace bullying legislation. The Swedish, French, and Quebecois approaches require employers to create a policy preventing mobbing and place the burden for preventing mobbing solely on the shoulders of the employers. The Belgian legislation goes one step further, requiring employers to hire a prevention advisor who is trained to mediate workplace relations, including recognizing, preventing, and resolving instances of both psychological and sexsual harrasment (Browne and Smith, 2008; Hoel and Einarsen, 2009).

Researches on the causes of mobbing are also being carried out. For example, Einarsen (2000a; 2000b)) collected the causes of mobbing under three titles: *personal traits* (anxious, aggressive or touchy character of the victim; or a fair, successful, hardworking victim), *interpersonal conflicts* (stemming from fears, suspicions, angers, pessimism etc.), and *social and organizational work environment* (role conflicts, leadership style, excessive work-load, lack of job control etc.). And Leyman (1996) stated two basic reasons for the prevelance of work-place mobbing: extremely poorly organised production and/or working methods, and second, an almost helpless or uninterested management. On the other hand, Vandekerckhove and Commers (2003) collect the causes of mobbing under five titles: lack of communication, lack of job control, outside influences (especially pressure to produce good revenues for shareholders), dysfunctional organizational culture (confusion and no

clear line of authority, poor leadership, little or no recognition of achievement, work hours and work load, lack of management support etc) and fear related motives (fear of being made a fool, fear of being regarded as insufficiently informed, as ignorant or as stupid, fear of giving the impression of not being able perform the task etc.). And finally, it is talked about two forms of workplace mobbing in the literature: *vertical mobbing* and *horizontal mobbing*. In the vertical form of mobbing, an employee is mobbed by a superior/superiors (downward mobbing), or an employee or a group of employees harasses his/their superior (upward mobbing). And horizontal form of mobbing consists of mobbing by employees against a colleague (Carnero, 2008; Aydın ve Özkul, 2007; Vandekerckhove and Commers, 2003; Tutar, 2004; Çobanoğlu, 2005).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction describes the feelings, attitudes or preferences of individuals regarding work (Chen, 2008). In other words, it is the degree to which employees enjoy their jobs (McCloskey and McCain, 1987). And researches indicated that dissatisfied employees are likely to leave their jobs. Thus, the understanding of employee job satisfaction and its contributing variables are important for any organization to exist and prosper (Mrayyan, 2005). And numerous researches have been going on job satisfaction for many years. It is common thought that job satisfaction influences organizational behavior, namely it positively affects employee working performance and organizational commitment, and negatively influences employee turnover (Agarwal and Ferrat, 2001; Poulin, 1994; Chen, 2008). Moreover, the relationships between job satisfaction and many variables such as motivation, stress, salary, promotion, role conflict, distributive and procedural justice, role ambiguity, autonomy, workload, leadership style, educational level, emotional intelligence are still being analyzed in different fields as an attractive and important subject of management literature (Ross and Reskin, 1992; Agho et al., 1993; Stordeur et al., 2001; Chu et al., 2003; Kafetsios and Zampetakis, 2008). For example, Sengin (2003), and Hinshaw and Atwood (1984) identify variables that influence employee job satisfaction as: (1) demographic variables: education, experience, and position in the hiererchy; (2) Job characteristics: autonomy, tasks repetetivenes, and salaries; and (3) organizational environment factors: degree of professionalization, type of unit. And Mrayyan (2005) says that the variables of encouragement, feedback, a widening pay scale and clear job description, career development oppurtunity, supportive leadership style, easy communication with colleagues and social interaction positively affect job satisfaction, whereas role stress has a negative influence on it. Similarly, the research made by Chu and his friends (2003) demonstrates that satisfaction is positively related to involvement, positive affectivity, autonomy, distributive justice, procedural justice, promotional chances, supervisor support, co-worker support, but it is negatively related to negative affectivity, role ambiguity, work-load, resource inadequacy and routinization.
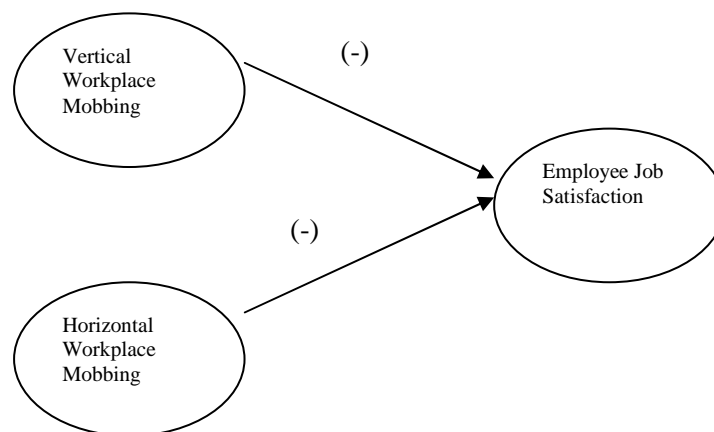
Figure 1: The Model For The Relationships Between Research Variables

On the other hand, it is known that both horizontal and vertical form of mobbing create undesired consequences for organizations such as lower productivity due to sick leave and lower motivation. In other words, researches indicate that mobbing have a negative influence on employee motivation and triggers turnovers at a workplace (Zapf, 1999a; Vandekerckhove and Commers, 2003; Aydın ve Özkul, 2007; Yücetürk and Öke, 2005). As dissatisfied eployees have not a strong positive feelings and attitudes towards their works and are likely to leave, in this study (as seen from figure 1) we propose that:

Hypothesis 1: There is a negative relationship between vertical (downward) mobbing and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: There is a negative relationship between horizontal mobbing and job satisfaction.

Research Methodology

Analyzing the relationship between employee job satisfaction and workplace mobbing was the main purpose of this study. Two forms of mobbing, horizontal and dawnward one were included in the analysis to measure their influences on employee job satisfaction. The target organization selected for this research was Turkey's largest wheel manufacturer firm, established in 1977 and employed 400 (full-time and part-time) people. Company is located in Aydın, covering an area of 100.000 square meters where annual production capacity reaches 2.000.000 wheels, of which 75% are exported to over 80 countries worlwide. After having a written permission from the firm administration, an anonymous questionnaire was distributed to 100 full-time employees. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a letter explaining the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of the data. And a total of 95 completed questionnaires were returned (95 percent response rate) from 100 employees. The responses given by the employees were anonymous and confidential. All analyses described below are based on the data from these 95 subjects. The employees were handed a demographic and a field survey questionnaire designed for this study. Demographic survey part of the questionnaire was composed of 5 variables to control the effect on employee job satisfaction and workplace mobbing. And 29 variables existed on the second part of the questionnaire to measure the degree of workplace (horizontal and downward) mobbing perceived by employees and additionally 6 variables to measure their job satisfaction. The instrument consisted of these 35 items answered on a five-point Likert scale anchored by the terms "strongly disagree/very low" (1) and "strongly agree/very high" (5). In statistical analyses, SPSS pc + version 16.0 was used. Sequentially, factor analysis "varimax rotation" to condense condense the number of items, Cronbach's alpha test for the internal consistency, Pearson rank correlation coefficient to calculate the correlation between the variables were used in the study. And multiple regression analysis was used because it provided estimates of net effects and explanatory power. The adjusted explained variance (the adjusted R^2) was used in this research to measure explanatory power.

Research Results

Several demographic variables were used to measure or control the effect on job satisfaction and workplace mobbing perceived by employees. So, demographic statistics of the respondents were presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Statistics of The Respondents

Item	Frequency	Percent (%)	Item	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender					
Male	*82*	*86.3*	*Age*		
Female	*11*	*11.6*	*18-30*	*51*	*53.7*
Missing	*2*	*2.1*			
Total	*95*	*100*	*31-40*	*35*	*36.8*
Vocational Experience					
1-5 years	*32*	*33.7*	*41-50*	*7*	*7.4*
6-10 years	*30*	*31.6*	*51 and over*	*0*	*0.0*
11-15 years	*24*	*25.3*	*Missing*	*2*	*2.1*
16-20 years	*6*	*6.3*	*Total*	*95*	*100*
21 years and over	*3*	*3.2*			
Total	*95*	*100*	*Education Level*		
			Primary School	*34*	*35.8*
Marital Status			*High School*	*28*	*29.5*
Married	*66*	*69.5*	*University*	*32*	*33.7*
Single	*29*	*30.5*	*Master*	*1*	*1.5*
Total	*95*	*100*	*Total*	*95*	*100*

As can be seen from this table, the majority of our respondents were male employees (88.3%); and 11.6% were female. And 69.5 percent of the respondents were married, 30.5 percent were single. Employees were categorized by age: 18-30 years (53.7%), 31-40 years (36.8%), 41-50 years (7.4%), and 51 years and over (0.0%). Vocational experience was also assessed using categorical brackets. 33.7 percent (majority) of the respondents indicated they were between the experience of one to five; 31.6 percent indicated they were six to ten; 25.3 percent were eleven to fifteen; 6.3 percent were sixteen to twenty and only 3.2 percent were twenty-one and over. Also as presented in Table 1, 35.8 percent of the respondents held primary school degrees, 29.5 percent high school degrees, and 33.7 percent university degrees. Only 1.5 percent held master degree.

Table 2: Factor Loadings and Reliability (Cronbach Alpha) Values of Research Items. Factor loading below 0.500 deleted.

Variables and Factor Groups	F1	F2	F3	Alpha
Vertical (Downward) Mobbing				0.955
X8	0.867			
X10	0.861			
X1	0.827			
X4	0.827			
X13	0.793			
X11	0.787			
X6	0.775			
X5	0.731			
X15	0.714			
X2	0.711			
X14	0.708			
X7	0.612			
X12	0.535			
Horizontal Mobbing				0.802
X17		0.845		
X18		0.806		
X23		0.714		
X16		0.561		
Job Satisfaction				0.829
X33			0.853	
X30			0.734	
X34			0.728	
X32			0.687	
X35			0.525	

The Results of Factor Analysis

35 items of the questionnaire were included in a factor analysis. At the end of the factor analysis, items of the questionnaire (prepared using from Carnero, et al., 2008: 1-11; Aydın ve Özkul, 2007: 169-186; Chen, 2008) were collected in three factor groups which were labelled as: vertical mobbing, horizontal mobbing, and job satisfaction.

The results (presented in Table 2) of the factor analysis show that our factor groups were rather reliable and consistent. Because 13 items of the questionnaire were deleted as their factor loadings were lower than 0.500 and alpha coefficient values of all factor groups were higher than 0.800. Furthermore, alpha coefficients of three factor groups, namely downward mobbing, horizontal mobbing, and job satisfaction were satisfactory; 0.955, 0.802 and 0.829.

Intercorrelations Among Research Variables

Intercorrelations among reserach variables and demographic (control) variables are reported in Table 3. As seen from Table 3, there was a negative relationship between employee perceptions for downward mobbing and job satisfaction (rp = -0.353, $p < 0.01$). This result provided support for our hypothesis 1: There is a negative relationship between vertical (downward) mobbing and job satisfaction. Also, there was a (support for our hypothesis 2) negative relationship between employee job satisfaction and horizontal mobbing (= -0.386, $p < 0.01$). The results in Table 3 indicated that there were no significant relationships between research variables (vertical-horizontal mobbing) and control variables: age, gender, marital status, vocational experience, and educational level.

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations Among Research Variables. *Correlation (Pearson) is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation (Pearson) is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

	(Mean)	(SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Job Satisfaction	3.267	0.770	-							
2. Downward Mobbing	1.776	0.620	-0.353**	-						
3. Horizontal Mobbing	1.974	0.644	-0.386**	0.193	-					
4. Gender	1.118	0.324	-0.108	-0.003	0.216*	-				
5. Age	1.526	0.635	0.037	0.177	0.135	-0.036	-			
6. Educational Level	2.000	0.862	-0.015	-0.169	0.183	0.227*	-0.041	-		
7. Vocational Experience	2.136	1.058	0.065	-0.060	-0.125	0.042	0.589**	-0.221*	-	
8. Marital Status	1.305	0.462	0.075	0.000	0.128	0.041	-0.451**	0.107	-0.347	-

Regression Analysis Results

As can be seen from Table 4 (adjusted R^2 = 0.167), 16.7 % of variance in employee job satisfaction could be explained by the set of research variables: sequentially horizontal mobbing and downward (vertical) mobbing. Horizontal mobbing had the strongest influence on employee job satisfaction (β = -0.277, $p < 0.05$), followed by downward mobbing (β =- 0.228, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4: Model of Intention to Stay-Simultaneous Multiple Regression. [†]R^2 = 0.186, adjusted R^2 = 0.167; dependent variable: job satisfaction, F= 9.794, p< 0.05.

Model[†]	Unstdandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	β	*SE*	β	*t*	*P-value*
(Constant)	5.183	0.564		9.186	0.000
Horizontal Mobbing	-0.318	0,125	-0.277	-2.539	0.013
Downward Mobbing	-0.277	0.132	-0.228	-2.094	0.039

On the other hand, the contribution of each variable to employee job satisfaction, using stepwise multiple regression, is presented in Table 5. By itself, horizontal mobbing explained 13.4% of the variance in job satisfaction. Entering downward mobbing also added a 3.3% explanation to the variance. Consequently, all the results told above indicate that our two hypotheses were supported. Our first hypothesis (H1) expected a negative association between employee perception for vertical (downward) mobbing and job satisfaction. And Pearson correlation and regression analysis results confirmed that there was a negative association between employee perception for horizontal mobbing and job satisfaction. Moreover, the results of regression analyses (presented in Table 4 and 5) indicate that horizontal mobbing was the first major determinant of employee job satisfaction.

Table 5: Model of Intention to Stay-Stepwise Multiple Regression. [†]R^2 = 0.144, adjusted R^2 = 0.134, dependent variable: Job satisfaction, F= 14.635, p< 0.05. [††]R^2 = 0.186, adjusted R^2 = 0.167, dependent variable: Job satisfaction F= 9.794, p< 0.05.

Model[†]	Unstdandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	β	*SE*	β	*t*	*P-value*
Model 1[†] (Constant)	4.485	0.464		9.667	0.000
Horizontal Mobbing	-0.436	0.114	-0.379	-3.826	0.000
Model 2[††] (Constant)	5.183	0.564		9.186	0.000
Horizontal Mobbing	-0.318	0.125	-0.277	-2.539	0.013
Downward Mobbing	-0.277	0.132	-0.228	-2.094	0.039

Conclusion

The study results indicate that there is a negative, but not a strong, relationship between (horizontal-vertical) workplace mobbing and employee job satisfaction. In other words, research findings show that mobbing is a non-rational organizational behavior for employee job satisfaction and also confirm many authors (for example, Zapf, 1999a; Mcmahon, 20000; Vandekerckhove and Commers, 2003; Aydın ve Özkul, 2007; Yücetürk and Öke, 2005) who state that workplace mobbing create undesired consequences for organizations such as lower productivity and lower motivation. Moreover, the study indicates that workplace mobbing is not a

marginal fact for today's organizations as well as all organizations in Turkey. In this context, we can say that the issue of workplace mobbing needs to be come under academic, administrative and legislative review in Turkey.

According to the study results, horizontal workplace mobbing is more prevalent than veritical form in the target organization. But, this result does not support previous researches. For example, Kirstner's findings (1997) show 37% mobbing by superiors and 10% mobbing with superiors involved, 44% mobbing by colleagues, and 9% mobbing up the ladder. Similarly, downward workplace mobbing makes up for 81% of all workplace mobbing in USA; it is slightly lower in Europe, but the downward form is still the most prevalent: 57% (Vandekerckhove and Commers, 2003). So, our model and workplace mobbing issue need to be tested and examined in further researches. In other words, this finding can be attributed to some limitations exist in our study. For example, the study includes the analyses of only one organization's employees and the results reflect the nature and character of this organization, not a trend for all organizations. And the model for employee job satisfaction and workplace mobbing was developed for this study, thus it requires continued validation and further applications. In other words, additional researches using the same or other instruments in other organizations or industries are needed to explore antecedents of research variables (job satisfaction and workplace mobbing) and compare all results. Because many researches indicate that the content or a level of workplace mobbing can change from sector to sector, or an organization to organization. For example, Hubert and Veldhoven (2001) found that mobbing victim percentages were 12.4% among employees of an industrial company, 4.4% among employees in the industrial/administrative organization, and only 1% among employees in the financial institution in The Netharlands. Einarsen and Skogstad (1996) determined industrial workers to be relatively more prone to mobbing, while Leymann (1993), Zapf (1999b), and Hubert and Veldhoven (2001) found that education sector was relatively more prone to mobbing. Consequently, our research results indicate that both scholars and practitioners should make periodical-researches in different sectors and organizations to explore the causes and preventions of workplace mobbing in Turkey and compare the results with all findings in the literature.

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