

## **Mobbing and Stress**

**Erkan Yaman\***  
Sakarya University

### **Abstract**

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

**Keywords:** Stress, mobbing, structural equation modeling

\* Erkan Yaman is an associate professor at the Department of Educational Science in Sakarya University, Turkey.

**Correspondence:** eyaman@sakarya.edu.tr

## Introduction

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

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

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

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

## The Present Study

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

## Method

### *Participants*

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

### *Measures*

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

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

## Results

### *Descriptive Data and Inter-correlations*

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

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

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

\*\* $p < .01$

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

### ***Structural Equation Modeling***

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

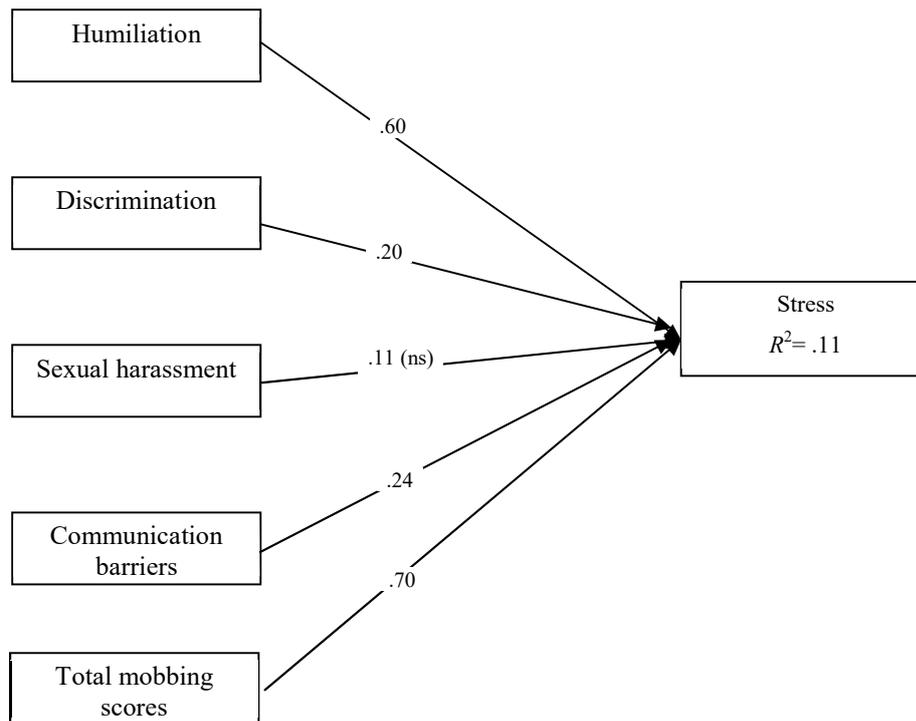


Figure 1. Path analysis between mobbing and stress

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

### Discussion and Recommendations

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

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

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

### References

- Akın, A., & Çetin, B. (2007). Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS): The study of validity and reliability. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 7(1), 241-268.
- Beck, A. T., Steer, R. A., & Garbin, M. G. (1988). Psychometric properties of the Beck Depression Inventory: Twenty-five years of evaluation. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 8, 77-100.
- Beck, A. T., Steer, R. A., & Brown, G. K. (1996). *Manual for the revised Beck Depression Inventory*. San Antonio, TX: Psychological Corporation.
- Björkqvist, K.; Österman, K. & Hjelt-Bäck, M. (1994). Aggression among university employees, *Aggressive Behavior*, 20, 173-184.
- Blase, J. & Blase, J. (2003). The phenomenology of principal mistreatment: teachers' perspectives. *Journal of Educational*, 41(4), 367-422.
- Bren, A., & McNamara, P. M. (2004). An investigation into workplace bullying and organizational culture in healthcare within an Irish hospital setting. *The Fourth International Conference On Bullying and Harassment in The Workplace*. UK: London.
- Casimir, M. M. (2002). Administrative mobbing at the university of Toronto: The trial, degradation and dismissal of a professor during the presidency of J. Robert. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 27( 4), 521.
- Chun-Wei, Y. & Chun-Yen, W. (2014). The influence of workplace bullying to job stress in Taiwan, *Economics World*, 2(2), 92-99.
- Cusanck, S. (2000). Workplace bullying: Iceberg in sight, soundings needed. *The Lancet*, 356, pp. 2118.
- Davenport, N., Schwartz, R. D., & Elliott, G. P. (2003). *İşyerinde Duygusal Taciz*. (Çev: O. C. Önertoy). İstanbul: Sistem Yayınları.
- DiMartino, V. (2003). Relationship between work stress and workplace violence in the health sector, *Symposium of Workplace Violence In the Health Sector*, Geneva.
- Einarsen, S. (1999). The nature and causes of bullying at work. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20(1-2), 16-27.
- Einarsen, S., Raknes, B. I. & Matthiesen, S. M. (1994). Bullying and harassment at work and their relationship to work environment quality -an exploratory study. *European Work and Organizational Psychologist*, 4, 381-401.
- Eriksen, W. & Einarsen, S. (2004). Gender minority as a risk factor of exposure to bullying at work: The case of male assistant nurses. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 13(4), 473-492.
- Gary, L.E. (1995). African American men's perceptions of racial discrimination: A socio-cultural analysis. *Social Work Research*, 19, 207-217.
- Hemenover, S.H., & Dienstbier, R.A. (1998). Prediction of health patterns from general appraisal, attributions, coping, and trait anxiety. *Motivation and Emotion*, 22 (3), 231-254.
- Hoel, H. (2004). Violence and harassment in European workplaces: Trends and political responses. *The Fourth International Conference On Bullying and Harassment in The Workplace*, UK: London.
- Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structural analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling*, 6, 1-55.
- Karademas, E.C., & Kalantzi-Azizi, A. (2004). The stress process, self-efficacy expectations, and psychological health. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 37, 1033-1043.

- Kersten, M., Kozak, A., Wendeler, D., Paderow, L., Nübling, M. & Nienhaus, A. (2014). Psychological stress and strain on employees in dialysis facilities: A cross-sectional study with the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire, *Journal of Occupational Medicine and Toxicology*, 9(4), 2-9.
- Kortum, E., Leka, S. & Cox, T. (2011). Perceptions of psychosocial hazards, work-related stress and workplace priority risks in developing countries, *Journal of Occupational Health*, 53(2), 144-55.
- Lewis, D. (2004). Bullying at work: The impact of shame among university and college lecturers. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 32(3), 281-299.
- Lewis, S.E. & Orford, J. (2005). Women's experiences of workplace bullying: changes in social relationship, *Journal Of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 15, 29-47.
- Leymann, H. (1996). The content and development of mobbing at work. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5(2), 165-184.
- Leymann, H. (2006). The Mobbing Encyclopaedia. Availability: Online at [www.leymann.se/English/frame.html](http://www.leymann.se/English/frame.html) (11.12. 2006)
- Leymann, H., & Gustafsson, A. (1996). Mobbing at work and the development of post-traumatic stress disorders. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5(2), 251-275.
- Lovibond, S. H., & Lovibond, P. F. (1995). *Manual for the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales*. Sydney: Psychology Foundation.
- Lynch, J., & O'Moore, M. (2004). Workplace bullying: Psychological effects, coping strategies and personality constructs of recipients of bullying behaviors. *The Fourth International Conference On Bullying and Harassment in The Workplace*, UK: London.
- Meeks, S., Woodruff-Borden, J., & Depp, C.A. (2003). Structural differentiation of self-reported depression and anxiety in late life. *Anxiety Disorders*, 17, 627-646.
- Mikkelsen, E. G. (2004). Coping with exposure to bullying at work – results from an interview study. *The Fourth International Conference On Bullying and Harassment in The Workplace*, UK: London.
- Mikkelsen, E. G. & Einarsen S. (2002). Relationships between exposure to bullying at work and psychological and psychosomatic health complaints: The role of state negative affectivity and generalized self-efficacy. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 43, 397-405.
- Pranjic, N., Males-Bilic, L., Beganlic, A., & Mustajbegovic, J. (2006). Mobbing, stress and work ability index among physicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Survey Study. *Croat Med Journal*, 47, 750-758.
- Sauter, S.L., Murphy, L.R., & Hurrell, J.J. Jr. (1990). Prevention of work-related psychological disorders. *American Psychologist*, 45, 1146-1153.
- Sheehan, M.; Barker, M. & Rayner, C. (1999). Applying strategies for dealing with workplace bullying. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20(1-2), 50-56.
- Spielberger, C.D., & Reheiser, E.C. (1995). Measuring occupational stress: The job stress survey. In R. Crandall & P.L. Perrewe (Eds.), *Occupational stress: A handbook*. (pp. 51-69). Washington D.C.: Taylor & Francis.
- Tınaz, P. (2006). *İşyerinde Psikolojik Taciz*. İstanbul: Beta Basım Yayım Dağıtım.
- Tschann, J.M., Flores, E., Pasch, L.A., & VanOss Marin, B. (2005). Emotional distress, alcohol use, and peer violence among Mexican-American and European-American adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 37, 11-18.
- Vartia, M. (1996). The sources of bullying -psychological work environment and organizational climate. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5(2), 203-214.

- Vickers, M. (2006). Writing what's relevant: workplace incivility in public administration-a wolf in sheep's clothing, *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 28(1), 69-88.
- Yaman, E. (2007). "Üniversitelerde Bir Eğitim Yönetimi Sorunu Olarak Öğretim Elemanının Maruz Kaldığı İnfomal Cezalar: Nitel Bir Araştırma", Yayınlanmamış doktora tezi, Marmara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, İstanbul.
- Yaman, E. (2008). Üniversiteler ve Etik: Baskılar ya da Psikolojik Şiddet. *İş Ahlâkı*, 1, 81-97.
- Yaman, E. (2009a). *Yönetim Psikolojisi Açısından İşyerinde Psikoşiddet*. Ankara: Nobel Yayınları.
- Yaman, E. (2009b). The Validity and Reliability of the Mobbing Scale (MS). *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 9(2), 967-989.
- Yaman, E. (2010). Perception of faculty members exposed to mobbing about the organizational culture and climate. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 10(1), 567-578.
- Zapf, D. (1999). Organisational, work group related and personal causes of mobbing/bullying at work. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20(1-2), 70-85.
- Zapf, D., & Einarsen S. (2001). Bullying in the workplace: Resent trends in research and practice- an introduction. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10(4) 369-373.