

The Relationship between Mobbing and Subjective Happiness among Teaching Staff Training Program Research Assistants*

Öğretim Üyesi Yetiştirme Programı Araştırma Görevlilerinin İş Yerinde Psikolojik Taciz Yaşantıları ve Öznel Mutluluk Düzeyleri Arasındaki İlişki*

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to examine the level of mobbing among Teaching Staff Training Program (TSTP/OYP) research assistants and to examine the relationship between subjective happiness and mobbing exposure. The sample of the study consisted of 213 OYP research assistants from all over Turkey, 115 of whom were female while 98 were of whom are male. The data collection tools of the study include the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Mobbing (NAQ) which was developed by Einarsen and Raknes (1997), and adapted into Turkish by Cemaloglu (2007); and the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) which was developed by Lyubmirsky and Lepper (1999) and adapted into Turkish by Akin and Satıcı (2011). Although study results revealed there were no significant differences in terms of gender, the mean mobbing exposure score was found to be higher in male academicians. In terms of marital status, it was found that married academicians had higher mobbing exposure scores. Also, the mobbing levels of OYP Research Assistants were found to be a significant predictor of subjective happiness.

Keywords: Teaching staff training program, Mobbing, Subjective happiness, Research assistant

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Öğretim Üyesi Yetiştirme Programı (ÖYP) araştırma görevlilerinin maruz kaldığı iş yerinde psikolojik taciz düzeyini incelemek ve öznel mutluluk ile ilişkisini araştırmaktır. Araştırmanın örneklemini, Türkiye genelinde 115'i kadın, 98'i erkek olmak üzere toplam 213 ÖYP araştırma görevlisi oluşturmıştır. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak; Einarsen ve Raknes (1997) tarafından geliştirilen, Cemaloğlu (2007) tarafından Türkçe'ye uyarlanan İş Yerinde Psikolojik Taciz Ölçeği ile Lyubmirsky ve Lepper (1999)

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tarafından geliştirilerek Akın ve Satıcı (2011) tarafından Türkçe'ye uyarlanan Öznel Mutluluk Ölçeği (1999) kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları incelendiğinde cinsiyete göre anlamlı bir farklılık görülmediği halde, iş yerinde psikolojik taciz puan ortalamalarının erkek akademisyenler lehine yüksek olduğu bulunmuştur. Medeni durum açısından bakıldığında iş yerinde psikolojik taciz puan ortalamasının evli akademisyenler arasında daha yüksek olduğu görülmüştür. Ayrıca, ÖYP araştırma görevlilerinde iş yerinde psikolojik taciz düzeyinin, mutluluk seviyesinin önemli bir yordayıcısı olduğu görülmüştür.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Öğretim üyesi yetiştirme programı, Mobbing, Öznel mutluluk, Araştırma görevlisi

INTRODUCTION

The rapidly increasing number of new universities in Turkey has created many new job opportunities for academicians. Thus, training new research assistants who form a part of academicians at universities has become a requirement. Considering this need, the Turkish Council of Higher Education (YOK) initiated a new program called the Teaching Staff Training Program (TSTP/OYP) in 2010 which includes a central appointment system. In the context of OYP, the research assistants of newly founded universities are employed temporarily at long-established universities in order for them to complete their master's and doctoral education, and then to return to work as academicians at the newly founded universities. Due to hierarchical relationships in academic life, OYP research assistants are generally solicited to lecture, so time spent on their own studies is limited, which is a well-known fact in academic life. Thereby, such negative situations have made mobbing an important issue to examine among academicians.

"Mobbing" is taken from the English root word "mob," which is associated with extreme violence and refers to illegal disrespect. Additionally, the verb "mob" means to come together in order to attack or disturb. It derives from "mobile vulgus" in Latin, and refers to a hesitant crowd. In Latin, the verb "mob" means to gather to attack or disturb (Davenport, Schwartz & Elliott, 2003). Terms such as dismay, emotional assault, emotional abuse, psychological violence, and psychological terror are used to express "mobbing" in Turkish. In professional life, the term "mobbing" was originally used by the German industrial psychologist Heinz Leymann who lived in Sweden at the 1980s and used the term in his studies to imply the long term, hostile and aggressive behaviours among employers at a workplace (Tinaz, 2006). Today, the number of studies concerning mobbing is increase day by day worldwide, whereas it remains limited in Turkey. One of the first mobbing studies in Turkey was conducted in March in 2006. The mentioned study was presented at a panel held at Marmara University, Faculty of Law, Labour Law, and Social Security Department, and the term mobbing began to be discussed in an academic platform under the titles "psychological abuse at the workplace (mobbing) and sexual harassment" (Tinaz, 2008). In addition, Dokmen (2008) defined mobbing as the abusive behaviours of one or more people towards a person in a workplace, resulting in organized and continual physical or psychological harassment inflicted on to that person.

In another definition, mobbing is seen as a phenomenon which results in any kind of negativity in the workplace. Among academicians, in particular, mobbing can restrict academic productivity, creating exasperation and causing a person to make mistakes. Additionally, the effects of mobbing gradually increase day-by-day, ultimately resulting in negative outcomes like committing suicide or quitting a job (Guveyi, 2013). As well as influencing people in various ways, mobbing is directly related to many notions, one of which is happiness (Okutan & Sututemiz, 2015). In the psychological literature, happiness is defined as subjective well-being. Subjective well-being refers to experiencing positive feelings often and negative ones less, and a high level of life satisfaction (Argyle, Martin, & Crossland, 1989; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Happiness is characterized by a high level of life satisfaction as well as doing favourable things and low level of negative feelings. Hence, it can be said that subjective well-being is commonly acknowledged as synonymous with happiness (Sahin, Aydin, Sari, Kaya, & Pala, 2012).

Considering the findings of mobbing and happiness, these two terms are perceived to have crucial importance for academicians. Studies in the literature have reported that pressure, stress, and mobbing especially in the workplace cause employees not to feel happy and good, correspondingly social lives and work performances of employees are affected negatively. With this regard, creating healthy and merit-based working environments without the risk of losing one's job for academicians in universities would help them in being happy and peaceful at their workplace and individuals contributing to their institution and society more and more. It is well known in Turkey, that the number of young academicians is quite high. However studies on the relationship between mobbing and happiness among academicians are scarce. In the light of these facts, this study aimed to examine perceptions of OYP research assistants towards mobbing and happiness in their workplace and to determine whether their perceptions concerning mobbing differs in terms of variables including gender, age, marital status and faculty/department of employment.

Accordingly, the primary goal of the study was to determine mobbing and subjective happiness levels of OYP research assistants and to examine the influence of mobbing on subjective happiness. Following these aims, the research will seek answers to the following questions: (1) What are mobbing and subjective happiness levels of OYP research assistants? (2) Do the mobbing and subjective happiness levels of OYP research assistants differ significantly in terms of gender?

(3) Do the mobbing and subjective happiness levels of OYP research assistants differ significantly in terms of marital status? (4) Do the mobbing and subjective happiness levels of OYP research assistants differ significantly in terms of age? (5) Do the mobbing and subjective happiness levels of OYP research assistants differ significantly in terms of the institutions they work at? (6) Do the mobbing and subjective happiness levels of OYP research assistants differ significantly in terms of current education status? And lastly; 7) Do the mobbing experiences research assistants are exposed to predict their subjective happiness?

METHOD

Participants

The sample of the study consisted of 213 OYP research assistants (115 females %55; 98 males %45).

Data Collection Tools

Data of the study were collected by self-report questionnaires. The “Negative Acts Questionnaire-Mobbing (NAQ)” and “Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)” were used. The Negative Acts Questionnaire-Mobbing (NAQ) was developed by Einarsen and Raknes (1997), and adapted into Turkish by Cemaloglu (2007). It contains 21 items and is answered on a 5-point Likert type scale (Everyday: 5, Once a Week: 4, Once a Month: 3, Sometimes: 2 and Never: 1). It is a one-dimensional scale and does not include any items requiring reverse coding. In terms of current working, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.954.

The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) was developed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) in order to determine the happiness levels of physical education teachers. It was adapted into Turkish and applied to university students by Akin and Satici (2011). The original form includes 4 items answered on a 7-point Likert type scale. The highest score that can be obtained from the scale is 28, and the lowest is 4. For the data analysis, answers given to the 4th question were reversed. In terms of current working, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of consistency of the scale was 0.725.

Data Collection

Data were gathered both online and delivered by hand from academicians. As online, data collected was from 150 academicians and by hands was collected from 63 academicians. The online form was emailed to the academicians, and the link was sent to a closed Facebook group consisting mostly of OYP research assistants. Other forms were delivered and gathered personally. The forms filled in incorrectly were excluded. Two hundred and thirteen questionnaires were used for the data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), Tukey's multiple comparisons post-hoc test and linear regression. Whether or not the data met the preconditions of parametric

tests was determined by examining *skewness* and *kurtosis* values (Büyüköztürk, 2012). Analysis showed that the data had normal distribution. In order to determine the internal reliability of the scales, the internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was also calculated.

RESULTS

Table 1: The Distribution of Scale Scores

| Scale | N | M. ± SD | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---------|-----|---------------|----------|----------|
| Mobbing | 213 | 47.64 ± 19.62 | 0.84 | 0.15 |
| SHS | 213 | 16.38 ± 5.01 | -0.19 | -0.41 |

The mean The Negative Acts Questionnaire-Mobbing (NAQ) score was 47.64 ±19.62 while the mean Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) scored was yielded 16.38 ±5.01. According to the skewness and kurtosis values, data showed a normal distribution (Table 1).

Table 2: The Distribution of Scale Scores in Terms of Gender

| Scale | Female (n=115) | Male (n=98) | t | p |
|----------|----------------|---------------|------|------|
| | M. ± SD | M. ± SD | | |
| Mobbingg | 45.74 ± 19.20 | 49.86 ± 19.96 | 1.53 | 0.13 |
| SHS | 16.25 ± 4.96 | 16.54 ± 5.08 | 0.42 | 0.68 |

T test results showed that both scores from NAQ (t_{NAQ}=1.53, p>0.05) and SHS (t_{SHS}=0.42, p>0.05) do not differ significantly (Table 2). For both dependent variables, the scores of males (M. NAQ=49.86, M.SHS=45.74) were higher than females' scores (M. NAQ =16.54, M.SHS =16.25).

Table 3: The Distribution of Scale Scores in Terms of Marital Status

| Scale | Married (n=72) | Single (n=141) | t | p |
|---------|----------------|----------------|-------|------|
| | M. ± SD | M. ± SD | | |
| Mobbing | 51.70 ± 20.73 | 45.56 ± 18.76 | 2.18 | 0.03 |
| SHS | 15.79 ± 4.79 | 16.68 ± 5.11 | -1.24 | 0.22 |

Additionally, t test results showed that in terms of marital status, NAQ scores differ significantly (t_{NAQ}=2.18, p<0.05) where married scored lower than single, while they do not differ in SHS (t_{SHS}=-1.24, p>0.05) (Table 3). Regarding both dependent variables, the average scores from NAQ are higher among married academicians (M. NAQ=51.70, M. SHS=45.56), while in SHS, the scores are higher among single academicians (M. NAQ=16.68, M. SHS=15.79) (Table 3).

Academicians' scores from both scales do not differentiate significantly in terms of gender variable (F-NAQ=2.31, p=0.10; F-SHS=1.00, p=0.37). The NAQ scores are higher among 31 year old and higher academicians (M. NAQ=53.20), while the scores in SHS are higher among 27-30 year old academicians (M. SHS=16.95) (Table 4).

Both NAQ and SHS scores of academicians do not differ significantly in terms of the institution they work at ($F_{\text{NAQ}}=0.66$, $p=0.52$; $F_{\text{SHS}}=2.12$, $p=0.12$). Table 5 shows that the average scores of academicians working at academies are found to be higher than the average scores of academicians working at faculties and institutions ($M_{\text{NAQ}}=51.14$, $M_{\text{SHS}}=17.64$).

The scores from both NAQ and SHS do not differ in terms of current educational status among academicians ($F_{\text{NAQ}}=0.55$, $p=0.58$; $F_{\text{SHS}}=0.87$, $p=0.42$). In NAQ, the average scores of academicians who are in the studying for master degree category are higher than academicians in the bachelors and studying for doctorate categories ($M_{\text{NAQ}}=48.77$), while for SHS, the average scores of bachelors are higher than academicians in the studying for master degree and studying for doctorate categories ($M_{\text{SHS}}=17.40$) (Table 6).

The regression analysis results suggest that the mobbing levels which OYP research assistants are exposed to, is a significant predictor of their subjective happiness levels ($R=0.50$; $R^2=0.25$; $F=69.44$; $p<0.01$). In other words, 25% of the total variance

related to the subjective happiness level can be explained by participants' mobbing levels (Table 7).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the level of mobbing among Teaching Staff Training Program (OYP) research assistants and to find out the effect of it on subjective happiness. Considering the averaged scores from both scales, and especially in NAQ, it can be inferred that academicians are exposed to a medium level of negative behaviour and attitudes ($x=47.64$). The common study of Sabanci and Yucel (2014) about discouraging behaviours also indicated low levels of psychologically discouraging behaviours.

Results in gender variable show that the mobbing (NAQ) scores of academicians do not differ significantly. Additionally, many studies are in accordance with these results. For example, in his study with teachers, Akpunar (2016) did not find a meaningful difference between male and female teachers. Hacicaferoglu and Hacicaferoglu (2014) found no statistically significant difference between male and female staff in Youth Centres. In

Table 4: The Distribution of Scale Scores in Terms of Age

| Scale | 23-26 ages (n=86) | 27-30 ages (n=88) | 31 and more (n=39) | F | p |
|---------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------|------|
| | M. \pm SD | M. \pm SD | M. \pm SD | | |
| Mobbing | 47.67 \pm 19.59 | 45.14 \pm 18.83 | 53.20 \pm 20.74 | 2.31 | 0.10 |
| SHS | 16.05 \pm 4.94 | 16.95 \pm 5.00 | 15.82 \pm 5.18 | 1.00 | 0.37 |

Table 5: The Distribution of Scale Scores in Terms of Workplace

| Scale | Faculty (n=143) | Academy (n=34) | Institute (n=36) | F | p |
|---------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------|------|
| | M. \pm SD | M. \pm SD | M. \pm SD | | |
| Mobbing | 46.82 \pm 19.55 | 51.14 \pm 19.15 | 47.58 \pm 20.50 | 0.66 | 0.52 |
| SHS | 16.38 \pm 5.06 | 17.64 \pm 4.82 | 15.19 \pm 4.79 | 2.12 | 0.12 |

Table 6: The Distribution of Scale Scores in Terms of Current Educational Status

| Scale | Bachelor (n=32) | Studying for master degree (n=85) | Studying for doctorate (n=96) | F | p |
|---------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------|------|
| | M. \pm SD | M. \pm SD | M. \pm SD | | |
| Mobbing | 44.50 \pm 13.49 | 48.77 \pm 21.22 | 47.68 \pm 19.92 | 0.55 | 0.58 |
| SHS | 17.40 \pm 4.55 | 16.03 \pm 5.29 | 16.35 \pm 4.90 | 0.87 | 0.42 |

Table 7: The Regression Analysis Results between the Scores of Mobbing and Subjective Happiness

| Scale | B | Standard Error | β | t | p |
|-----------|-------|----------------|---------|-------|------|
| Invariant | 22.44 | 0.79 | - | 28.56 | 0.00 |
| Mobbing | -0.13 | 0.02 | -0.50 | -8.33 | 0.00 |

two different studies, Hacicaferoglu (2014; 2015a) did not see any meaningful differences between male and female referees and staff. Karakale (2011) studied mobbing victims and found similar results among genders. Akan, Yildirim and Yalcin (2013) reached the same results with male and female executives and demonstrated no significant differences between genders, which are all in accordance with the current study results. However, some other researchers found significant differences between genders. For instance, Sabanci and Yucel (2014) showed this difference between male and female parents; Hacicaferoglu (2013) also defined the same findings between male and female teachers working in secondary education; in his study with academicians Cayvarli (2013) could not find any meaningful difference between male and female academicians in terms of discouraging behaviours; and Yumusak (2013) reached similar meaningful differences among primary school teachers, which is contrary to other study results. These studies show that females and males undergo mobbing behaviors.

Marital status variable shows meaningful differences among academicians' scores. In this context, Cayvarli (2013) studied the marital status and mobbing levels of academicians and found significant differences between single and married academicians; Yumusak (2013) reached similar results in his study with primary school teachers, which supports the findings of the current study. However, there are other studies showing no statistically meaningful differences between married and single academicians in terms of mobbing they are exposed to (Akpunar, 2016; Hacicaferoglu, 2013; Karakale, 2011). Hacicaferoglu (2014; 2015b) studied mobbing levels and marital status of referees and reached similar results. Thus, these findings are not in accordance with the current study results in terms of a marital status variable.

Academicians' scores from NAQ do not differ significantly in terms of age. In this sense, in his two different studies, Hacicaferoglu (2013; 2014) studied the relationships between age and mobbing levels among branch teachers and referees and found no statistically meaningful differences at any age group. This finding was supported by the study findings of Karakale (2011) and Akan et al. (2013). However, in the study examining age groups of academicians, Cayvarli (2013, s.66) found a significant difference between age groups on behalf of 29-year-old and under. Similarly, Yumusak (2013) found this difference among primary school teachers, too, which are not consistent with the current study's findings of age. Current studies showed that younger individuals underwent mobbing behaviors. The existence of hierarchy caused that young individual to face mobbing more frequent.

Considering the findings concerning the educational status of academicians, it can be seen that the scores do not differ significantly in this variable. In his two different studies, Hacicaferoglu (2013; 2014) did not find any meaningful difference among teachers and referees in terms of their educational status. Karakale (2011) reached similar results with his participants. Additionally, Akan et al. (2013) showed no significant differences among participant executives in terms of mobbing levels and educational status. Hacicaferoglu

(2015c) also studied with Youth Centre staff and did not find any meaningful difference between mobbing levels and educational status. These findings are in accordance with the current study results concerning the education status variable. However, Akpunar (2016) examined this variable and found meaningful differences between bachelor's and master's degree students. Also Sabanci and Yucel (2014) studied parents with associate's, bachelor's or master's degrees, and found a positive difference in favour of parents who had a master's degree. These results are not in accordance with the current study results. Differences in the results of the studies stem from the differences of an occupational group, work environment, and occupational conditions.

In terms of gender, SHS scores do not differ significantly. Saygin and Arslan (2009) also found no statistically meaningful differences among male and female university students. Additionally, in his study with high school students, Canbay (2010) reached similar results. These findings are in accordance with the findings of the present study. On the other hand, opposite conclusions were found in Dilmac and Bozgeyikli (2009) study with teacher candidates, who found significant differences between male and female participants in terms of gender. In terms of marital status variable, academicians' SHS scores do not differ significantly. In the study of Yazici, Caz and Tunckol (2016), there were meaningful differences among SHS scores of staff, but this difference was in favor of married staff rather than single, which in line with this study findings. It can be said that because married individuals have regular lifestyle, responsibilities and being happy with these responsibilities cause the difference between single and married individuals in terms of happiness.

CONCLUSION and SUGGESTIONS

When we examine the normality distribution of data gathered from both *the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Mobbing (NAQ)* and the *Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)*, there is a normal distribution. It can be inferred that marital status is of critical effect on mobbing levels of academicians. The significant differences and high scores especially indicate the married, which means that married academicians are exposed to higher levels of mobbing and negative behaviours.

In terms of age, the academicians at the age of 31 and higher show a low level of mobbing, which is consistent with study data and findings. The study results also suggest that the mobbing levels of participants are a determinant predictor of their subjective happiness levels. In terms of academicians' workplaces, the scores from both NAQ and SHS do not differ significantly, which means that academicians working at different faculties have similar levels of happiness and are exposed to similar rates of negative behaviours. The findings also suggest that the scores of academicians from NAQ and SHS do not differ significantly in terms of educational status. The regression analyses reveal that the mobbing levels the academicians are exposed to are a meaningful predictor of their subjective happiness levels.

The sample of the study is consisted only by OYP research assistants working at different universities in Turkey, which can be accepted as a limitation to the study. It is thought that in future studies, samples can include larger amounts of academicians. In order to prevent mobbing and negative behaviours in institutions, academicians should be given more freedom. Additionally, for a better understanding of this study's results, the number of related studies should rise.

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