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# The Relationship Between Mobbing (Psychological Violence) and Burnout in Preschool Education Institutions

Muhammed Turhan, Abdalbaki Ergel

**Abstract**— The main aim of this study is to determine the relationship between mobbing incurred by preschool teachers and their burnout level. The sample of the study is consisted of preschool teachers who work in pre-schools and nursery classes in the province of Mardin, Turkey. The study was conducted on 396 Pre-school teachers working in different schools which give preschool education. The data was collected by using the scales of “Negative Acts Questionnaires” (NAQ) [1, 2]. and “Burnout Inventory” [3, 4]. To analyze the data frequency, percentage, mean, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis techniques were used. According to research findings; it was concluded that mobbing incurred by preschool teachers is positively associated with their burnout level. Additionally, considering multiple regression analysis, mobbing is a significant predictor of burnout level of teachers.

**Keywords**— mobbing, psychological violence, burnout, preschool teachers, nursery classes.

## I. Introduction

In recent years, many studies have been conducted on “workplace bullying”, “mobbing”, “harassment” in business and management field. Especially concept of mobbing has attracted the interest of researchers. Although known by a number of different names (such as harassment, bullying, workplace bullying, workplace harassment etc.) Mobbing means “systematic mistreatment” of an individual which results in severe problems for the victim [5, 6, 7]. More specifically, mobbing is defined as emotional assaults experienced by an employee in organizations and done by different reasons, by the superior(s), colleague(s) or subordinate(s) [8, 9]. Researchers argue for different criteria to speak about mobbing. While Leyman [5] suggests that mobbing duration must continue through 6 months and occur at least once a week, Zapf and Eirnarsen [10] advocate that even though the duration of the mobbing is less than 6 months and it occurs less than once a week, it is sufficient to be exposed to the mobbing. However, there is a consensus that mobbing should be directed against a special target and that the target is or ends up in an inferior position from which it is difficult to defend him or herself [10, 11].

Studies investigating the mobbing found that mobbing in workplace disrupts organizational climate and give rise to many negative individual and organizational consequences. It was found that mobbing causes high turnover and earlier retirement [5,12], low performance and organizational

commitment of employees [13, 14, 11]. Mobbing is also an important issue in educational organizations. Studies on teachers show that teachers are exposed to mobbing by both their colleagues and managers and mobbing has some negative outcomes in schools. A research conducted by Karakuş and Çankaya [15] revealed that mobbing has positive effect on stress and burnout and has negative effect on job and life satisfaction among primary school teachers. Similarly, a study on high school [16] showed that there is a negative correlation between mobbing and organizational commitment of high school teachers.

According to Maslach and Jackson [3] concept of burnout means a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and decreasing personal accomplishment that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people-work’ of some kind. A key aspect of the burnout syndrome is increased feelings of emotional exhaustion. Mobbing improves burnout by creating a psychological pressure on victims. As mentioned above, there are several studies investigating relationship between mobbing and burnout in different sectors [17, 18]. But, mobbing in preschool educational institutions has not seen enough attention by researchers. Whereas, preschools have a different social context and characteristics compared to primary and secondary schools in terms of relationships among teachers and principals. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to determine the relationship between mobbing experienced by preschool teachers and burnout level.

## II. Methodology

### A. Research Model

This study is a correlational research that aims to examine the relationship between mobbing and burnout among preschool teachers.

### B. Participants

The sample of the study consists of 396 preschool teachers (339 Female, 57 Male) who work in preschools and nursery classes at Mardin (Turkey) province and districts.

### C. Data gathering instrument

Two scales were used to collect data in the study.

1. *Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ):*

Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ), developed by Einarsen and Raknes [19] and revised by Einarsen and Hoel [1], was used in order to determine the mobbing behaviors teachers were exposed at preschools. This scale is composed 22 items and a five point likert-type scale. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as  $\alpha=.912$ .

2. *Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)*

Maslach Burnout Inventroy, developed by Maslach and Jackson [3] and adapted into Turkish by Ergin [4] was used in order to determine the burnout levels of teachers. The Inventory consists of 22 items and three dimensions which are Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the inventory was calculated as  $\alpha=.834$ . Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient for dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment were calculated as  $\alpha=.751$ ,  $\alpha=.470$  ve  $\alpha=.618$  respectively.

D. **Dana Analysis**

Mean, correlation and multiple regression analysis techniques were used to analyze data. The gender, marital status, school type (preschool or nursery class), having children and position of teachers were re-coded as DUMMY variables to be able to include in the regression analysis.

III. **Findings and Results**

Obtained data from the study was analyzed and presented in this section.

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	SS
Mobbing	396	1.27	.36
Burnout	396	2.03	.49
<i>Emotional Exhaustion</i>	396	2.33	.69
<i>Depersonalization</i>	396	1.58	.61
<i>Personal Accomplishment</i>	396	2.01	.66

Considering descriptive statistics of variables, preschool teachers are exposed to very low level of mobbing and burnout. However, preschool teachers experience more emotional exhaustion compared to depersonalization and decreasing personal accomplishment (Table 1).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Gender (male)	1													

Correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between research variables (Table 2). According to the findings on Table 2, it was found that there was a statistically significant and positive relationship between mobbing and burnout ( $r = .31$ ,  $p <.01$ ); emotional exhaustion ( $r=.31$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and depersonalization ( $r=.34$ ;  $p<.01$ ) scores. Considering personal variables, it was found that teachers working in preschools are exposed to high level of mobbing compared to the teachers in nursery classes ( $r=.146$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Additionally, permanent teachers are also exposed to more mobbing acts than the master trainers ( $r=.09$ ;  $p<.05$ ). Teachers working in preschools experience more emotional exhaustion ( $r=.169$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and depersonalization ( $r=.11$ ;  $p<.05$ ) than teachers in nursery classes.

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine prediction level of independent variables to dependent variables. Four multiple regression models were tested.

First regression model was performed to determine whether mobbing was a significant predictor of average burnout scores of preschool teachers. Regression analysis was applied in two steps to be able to control personal variables (Table 3). In the first step, personal variables were entered into the regression model. Mobbing scores were added to regression model in the second step. According to findings obtained from the regression analysis, personal variables (sex, marital status, having children, position, school type, age, professional experience, number of teachers and the number of students) are associated with burnout scores of preschool teachers ( $R = .21$ ,  $R^2 = .04$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .04$ ;  $p <.05$ ). But, considering t and significance (p) values, only school type (preschool) was a significant predictor of burnout scores ( $\beta = .16$ ,  $p <.05$ ). Results from the second step showed that mobbing explained a significant degree of variance in burnout scores. According to this result, mobbing scores have predicted a significant proportion of burnout scores of preschool teachers. Personal variables and mobbing scores explained a total of 13% of variance in burnout scores. Mobbing scores predicted %8,4 of variance in burnout scores separately ( $R=.36$ ;  $R^2=.13$ ;  $\Delta R^2 =.08$ ;  $\beta=.29$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Considering these results, it could be said that when preschool teachers are exposed to mobbing, they are likely to experience more burnout.

2. Marital Status (married)	.076	1												
3. School Type (Preschool)	-.007	.124*	1											
4. Having a children	-.033	.644**	.034	1										
5. Position (permanent)	.093	.189**	-.058	.109*	1									
6. Age	.004	.441**	.044	.53**	.141**	1								
7. Seniority	-.012	.414**	.066	.465**	.069	.790**	1							
8. Number of teachers in school	-.038	.099	-.273**	.133**	.012	.050	.105*	1						
9. Number of students in class	-.016	.129*	.116*	.119*	.029	.084	.158**	.295**	1					
10. Mobbing	.092	-.009	.146**	.010	.099*	.025	.023	.018	.014	1				
11. Burnout (Overall)	-.018	-.038	.127*	-.077	.085	-.090	-.031	-.056	-.047	.310**	1			
12. Emotional exhaustion	.008	-.047	.169**	-.055	.089	-.068	.000	-.085	-.024	.317**	.819**	1		
13. Depersonalization	-.033	-.015	.110*	-.049	.038	-.045	.004	-.006	.008	.343**	.717**	.603**	1	
14. Personal accomplishment	-.025	-.015	.005	-.065	.049	-.079	-.062	-.015	-.070	.075	.676**	.192**	.202**	1

Second regression model was performed to determine whether mobbing was a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion of preschool teachers (Table 4). Regression analysis was applied in two steps to be able to control personal variables. In the first step, personal variables were entered into the regression model. Mobbing scores were added to regression model in the second step. According to findings obtained from the regression analysis, personal variables (sex, marital status, having children, position, school type, age, professional experience, number of teachers and the number of students) were associated with burnout scores of preschool teachers ( $R=.23$ ,  $R^2=.05$ ,  $\Delta R^2=.05$ ). However, considering  $t$  and significance ( $p$ ) values, position (regular), school type

(preschool) and seniority were a significant predictor of burnout scores. Results from the second step showed that mobbing explained a significant degree of variance in emotional exhaustion scores of preschool teachers. According to this result, mobbing scores have predicted a significant proportion of emotional exhaustion of preschool teachers. Personal variables and mobbing scores explained a total of 13% of variance in emotional exhaustion. Additionally, mobbing scores predicted %8 of variance in emotional exhaustion scores separately ( $R=.37$ ;  $R^2=.13$ ;  $\Delta R^2=.08$ ;  $\beta=.29$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Considering these results, it could be said that when preschool teachers are exposed to mobbing, they are likely to experience emotional exhaustion.

**Table 3.** Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Regarding Relationship Between Mobbing and Burnout

Independent Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change ( $\Delta R^2$ )	F Change P	B	Standard Error	$\beta$	t	p
<b>Constant</b>					52.44	5.38		9.74	.000
<b>Step 1</b>	.21	.045	.045	.04					
Gender					-.389	1.580	-.013	-.246	.805
Marital Status					-.472	1.490	-.022	-.317	.752
Having children					-1.045	1.707	-.044	-.612	.541
Position					3.681	2.150	.090	1.712	.088
School type					4.515	1.536	.161	2.940	.003*
Age					-.362	.196	-.164	-1.846	.066
Seniority					.351	.215	.137	1.627	.105
Number of teachers in school					.005	.037	.008	.141	.888
Number of students in school					-.163	.119	-.075	-1.366	.173
<b>Step 2</b>	.360	.130	.084	.000					
Mobbing					8.957	1.490	.298	6.012	.000*

**Dependent variable:** Burnout

Third regression model was performed to determine whether mobbing was a significant predictor of variance in depersonalization scores of preschool teachers (Table 5). Regression analysis results showed that mobbing explained a significant degree of variance in depersonalization scores of preschool teachers. According to this result, mobbing scores have predicted a significant proportion of depersonalization of

preschool teachers. Personal variables and mobbing scores explained a total of 13% of variance in depersonalization. Additionally, mobbing scores predicted %11 of variance in emotional exhaustion scores separately ( $R=.36$ ;  $R^2=.13$ ;  $\Delta R^2=.11$ ;  $\beta=.34$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Considering these results, it could be said that when preschool teachers are exposed to mobbing, they are likely to experience depersonalization.

**Table 4.** Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Regarding Relationship Between Mobbing and Emotional Exhaustion

Independent Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change ( $\Delta R^2$ )	F Change P	B	Standard Error	$\beta$	t	p
<b>Constant</b>					2.40	.32		7.30	.00
<b>Step 1</b>	.23	.05	.05	.00					
Gender					.02	.09	.01	.26	.78
Marital Status					-.11	.09	-.08	-1.21	.22
Having children					.01	.10	.00	.11	.90
Position					.26	.13	.10	1.99	.04*
School type					.31	.09	.18	3.40	.00*
Age					-.02	.01	.16	-1.87	.06
Seniority					.02	.01	.16	1.97	.04*
Number of teachers in school					-.00	.00	-.02	-.45	.65
Number of students in school					-.00	.00	-.04	-.81	.41
<b>Step 2</b>	.37	.13	.08	.00					
Mobbing					.545	.091	.296	5.991	.00*

**Dependent Variable:** Emotional Exhaustion

Fourth regression model was performed to estimate the effect of mobbing on personal accomplishment. Considering regression analysis results, it was found that personal variables (gender, marital status, having children, position, school type, age, seniority, number of teachers in school and number of students in class) and mobbing scores were not associated with

personal accomplishment scores of preschool teachers. According to this result, it can be said that both personal variables and mobbing scores have not significantly predicted decreasing personal accomplishment of preschool teachers ( $R=.15$ ;  $R^2=.02$ ;  $\Delta R^2=.00$ ;  $\beta=-.07$ ;  $p>.05$ ).

**Table 5.** Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Regarding Relationship Between Mobbing and Depersonalization

Independent Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change ( $\Delta R^2$ )	F Change P	B	Standard Error	$\beta$	t	p
<b>Constant</b>					1.76	.30		5.71	.00**
<b>Step 1</b>	.15	.02	.02	.47					
Gender					-.05	.09	-.03	-.63	.52
Marital Status					-.00	.08	-.00	-.10	.91
Having children					-.06	.09	-.04	-.61	.54
Position					.11	.12	.04	.89	.37
School type					.20	.08	.12	2.32	.02*
Age					-.01	.01	-.09	-1.00	.31
Seniority					.01	.01	.09	1.14	.25
Number of teachers in school					.00	.00	.03	.60	.54
Number of students in school					-.00	.00	-.02	-.42	.67
<b>Step 2</b>	.36	.13	.11	.00					
Mobbing					.587	.084	.344	6.959	.00**

**Dependent Variable:** Depersonalization

#### IV. Discussion and Conclusion

Results obtained from NAQ (Negative Acts Questionnaire) and Maslach Burnout Inventory shows that preschool teachers are exposed to very low level of mobbing and burnout. However, preschool teachers experience more emotional exhaustion compared to depersonalization and decreasing personal accomplishment. Considering together

with present study and previous research [20, 21, 22, 23], it can be claim that primary and secondary school teachers are exposed to more negative acts (mobbing) than preschool teachers. Regarding burnout, a study conducted by Peker [17] revealed that secondary school teachers experience more burnout compared to preschool and elementary school teachers.

According to findings of the study, teachers working in

preschools experience more burnout than teachers in nursery classes. This is most likely due to the structural differences of preschools and nursery classes. Nursery classes serve within a primary school while preschools are founded as a separate type of school in Turkish Education System. Hence, nursery classes have more flexible working conditions compared to preschools.

Another important finding obtained from the study is that mobbing is a significant predictor of burnout among preschool teachers. Particularly, mobbing has a positive effect on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout. Previous research supports this finding. Karakuş and Çankaya [15] found that mobbing has positive effect on stress and burnout among teachers. Similarly, Tanhan and Çam [18] have concluded that teachers who suffered from mobbing experience more emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Based on findings of the study, it could be suggested that measures should be taken against mobbing in order to decrease the burnout syndrome. Educational authorities and school administrators should not tolerate negative actions towards preschool teachers.

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