

Workplace Mobbing in Educational Institutions in Turkey: Research Literature and Judicial Decisions

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Abstract

This study examines, within a multidimensional framework, workplace mobbing as experienced in educational institutions in Türkiye. The research literature demonstrates that mobbing is not merely a problem arising from individual interpersonal conflicts; rather, it constitutes a systematic form of psychological harassment that is directly linked to organizational structure, leadership approaches, cultural dynamics, power relations, and managerial practices. Based on a review of the literature and judicial decisions, the definition, scope, perpetrators, victims, and consequences of mobbing are analyzed in detail, with particular emphasis on the structural and administrative characteristics of educational institutions in Türkiye. In the study, Leymann's mobbing classification is adopted as an analytical framework. In addition, the legal dimensions of mobbing are addressed in light of decisions of the Higher Administrative Courts. The findings suggest that mobbing is more prevalent in organizations with dominant hierarchical structures, inadequate supervisory mechanisms, and insufficiently developed ethical climates. The results further reveal that perpetrators of mobbing are predominantly academics and administrators holding managerial positions, while the level of victimization tends to decrease as academic rank increases. Moreover, variables such as gender, marital status, leadership style, and organizational silence are identified as significant factors influencing the mobbing process. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that mobbing generates serious psychological and economic costs at both individual and institutional levels. Potential solutions suggested by the study center on strengthening democratic leadership practices, enhancing the ethical climate, and establishing effective supervisory mechanisms.

Keywords: *Mobbing; psychological harassment; bullying; psychological terror*

Introduction

Workplace psychological harassment (mobbing) began to be discussed in Türkiye within academic and legal contexts in the early 2000s. Initial studies in this field primarily focused on defining the

concept of mobbing, explaining its causes, and outlining its legal framework (Leymann, 1996; Tinaz, 2006). In subsequent years, a notable increase in the number of empirical studies has been observed. Research conducted in the contexts of education (Cemaloğlu, 2007), healthcare (Yıldırım & Yıldırım, 2007), and public institutions (Özdemir & Uğur, 2013) has demonstrated the adverse effects of mobbing on employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment levels, and psychological well-being. These studies suggest that mobbing is not merely an individual-level issue, but rather a multidimensional organizational problem that directly impacts organizational efficiency, service quality, and employee well-being. Particularly in institutions providing public services, mobbing may lead not only to a decline in employee performance but also to a deterioration in the quality of services delivered, thereby producing consequences at the societal level. The emergence of mobbing in organizations is closely related to organizational structure, managerial approaches, and the individual characteristics of employees. Under the prevailing conditions in Türkiye, the cultural structure, nature of manager–employee relations, and leadership styles adopted by managers are among the key determining factors (Salin, 2003; Einarsen et al., 2011). In recent years, the concept of toxic leadership, which has gained prominence in the literature, has also become increasingly visible in the Turkish public bureaucracy. Toxic leadership creates a fertile ground for mobbing behaviors through oppressive, exclusionary, manipulative, and punitive managerial practices. This form of leadership may, over time, become normalized and embedded within an organization's culture, particularly in organizations with hierarchical structures.

Organizational staffing systems built upon closed and rigid hierarchies, along with the prevalence of appointments based on patronage rather than merit, constitute factors that facilitate the emergence of mobbing behaviors (Salin, 2003; Zapf & Einarsen, 2011). It is well established that mobbing behaviors occur more frequently in organizations where formal rules are ineffective and supervisory mechanisms are inadequate. Especially in organizations characterized by weak supervision, high power distance, and limited employee participation, mobbing may become persistent (Hofstede, 2011; Einarsen et al., 2011). In this context, the high power distance commonly observed in Türkiye makes it difficult for employees to question managerial practices and prevents mobbing behaviors from becoming visible. Limited participation in decision-making processes and a lack of trust in complaint mechanisms lead to the underreporting of mobbing, contributing to its gradual chronicization. Therefore, the prevention of mobbing cannot be achieved solely by increasing individual awareness; instead, it requires the establishment of organizational transparency, the strengthening of accountability, and the institutional adoption of democratic management principles.

What Is Mobbing?

Mobbing (workplace psychological harassment) refers to a form of psychological violence that involves long-term, systematic, and repetitive behaviors directed by one or more employees toward another employee, in which the target experiences difficulty defending themselves. Such behaviors include intimidation, exclusion, humiliation, threats, and actions aimed at damaging professional

reputation (Leymann, 1996; Einarsen et al., 2011). Superiors, subordinates, or colleagues may exhibit these behaviors at the same hierarchical level, which can negatively impact the individual's professional performance, psychological well-being, and organizational integration (Salin, 2003; Zapf & Einarsen, 2011).

Mobbing According to the Turkish High Administrative Court

In one of its decisions, the Turkish High Administrative Court defined mobbing as follows:

“It is the totality of malicious, intentional, and negative attitudes and behaviors that are systematically carried out by one or more individuals against another individual over a certain period of time in the workplace. The purpose of such behaviors is to intimidate, suppress, or force the individual out of work. Mobbing aims to harm the victim's personal values, professional status, social relationships, or health (Demirören and Şimşek, 2021, p.206)”

The Court noted that individuals exposed to mobbing gradually become unable to perform their duties and identified behaviors such as preventing self-expression, interrupting speech, being scolded loudly, humiliation, constant criticism, being treated as if invisible in the workplace, cutting off communication, spreading unfounded rumors, withholding qualified work, assigning meaningless or below-capacity tasks, frequent relocation, excessive workload, as well as all forms of ill-treatment and threats, as examples of mobbing behaviors.

This approach adopted by the High Administrative Court demonstrates that mobbing is not regarded merely as an individual conflict or a temporary disagreement, but rather as a systematic and continuous form of psychological violence. Another notable aspect of the Court's decisions is that mobbing is addressed not only as a factor that undermines an employee's professional competence and psychological integrity, but also as an element that negatively affects the effectiveness of public service delivery. In this respect, mobbing is considered not only a violation of individual rights but also a problem that disrupts institutional functioning and falls within the scope of managerial responsibility.

In the literature, there are views suggesting that a situation must persist for at least six months to be classified as mobbing, characterized by negative behaviors. Although Leymann (1996) emphasized the continuity dimension of mobbing, subsequent studies have shown that the intensity, frequency, and psychological impact of mobbing on the victim may be more decisive than its chronological duration (Einarsen et al., 2011). Similarly, in Turkish judicial decisions, the focus is not solely on the duration of events but also on their effects on the employee's mental health, professional reputation, and working life. Behaviors that may appear isolated but produce severe consequences may also be evaluated within the scope of mobbing. This approach is significant in that it demonstrates a gradual shift in legal assessments toward a victim-centered perspective.

Leymann's Classification of Mobbing

Leymann classified workplace mobbing behaviors into five main categories (Leymann, 1996): One, obstructing communication; two, obstructing social relationships; three, undermining personal reputation; four, undermining professional reputation; and five, harming health. In Leymann's theoretical model, behaviors related to "sexual harassment" are included within the third factor, which encompasses attacks on the victim's social relationships. However, a study conducted in Türkiye found that items related to sexual harassment were grouped under the fifth factor together with "physical assault" and "sexual assault." This finding indicates that, within Turkish society, the concepts of sexual harassment and sexual assault are perceived as similar and are often evaluated with closely related meanings. Nevertheless, the cultural dynamics of Turkish society sexual harassment. In particular, allegations that one of the spouses has been subjected to harassment may lead to strong and severe reactions both within the family and in organizational life. For this reason, individuals who experience harassment often refrain from sharing their experiences with third parties and prefer to keep such incidents concealed. This tendency is more pronounced as levels of education and income decrease. Conversely, in more educated and socioeconomically advantaged environments, harassment is defined more explicitly, and there is a greater tendency to seek redress through legal channels.

Conditions Required for the Occurrence of Mobbing

For a behavior to be considered mobbing, it must exhibit the following characteristics:

1. **Continuity:** Mobbing is not limited to temporary or isolated incidents; instead, it consists of behaviors that are repeated over a specific period of time. According to Leymann, such behaviors must occur for at least six months and several times per week (Leymann, 1996).
2. **Systematic Nature:** Mobbing actions are directed at the victim in an organized and planned manner. The behaviors are not random; they are deliberate and target-oriented (Leymann, 1996).
3. **Intent:** The perpetrator must have an explicit or implicit intention to harm the victim, exclude them, or force them to leave their job (Davenport et al., 2002).
4. **Harm:** Mobbing does not only cause psychological damage; it also adversely affects the victim's professional development, social relationships, and overall well-being (Davenport et al., 2002).
5. **Hierarchy:** Mobbing is not limited to behaviors perpetrated by superiors toward subordinates; it may also occur through actions carried out by individuals at the same hierarchical level or by subordinates.

Legal Basis

The Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye and the Turkish Penal Code contain various provisions aimed at preventing actions that undermine human dignity, including workplace psychological harassment. Constitutional principles such as equality before the law, personal

inviolability, and the prohibition of forced labor provide a legal framework for the protection of mobbing victims. However, in practice, these legal regulations do not always yield outcomes in favor of the victim.

It is particularly noted that criminal offenses regulated under the Turkish Penal Code—such as insult, defamation, sexual harassment, and abuse of office—may, when mobbing victims file complaints, create grounds for the opposing party to portray them as “aggressors” or “slanderers” (Tınaz, 2006; Özdemir & Uğur, 2013). The literature emphasizes that perpetrators of mobbing frequently depict the victim as a problematic or noncompliant employee in order to shift power balances in their favor (Einarsen et al., 2011). In this context, the mere existence of legal regulations is not considered sufficient; it is argued that, when judicial interpretations and institutional power relations are not adequately taken into account, mobbing victims may experience secondary victimization during legal proceedings (Yıldırım & Yıldırım, 2007).

Mobbing Practices and Consequences in Türkiye

According to existing research, mobbing practices frequently encountered in Türkiye manifest in various forms. These practices include speaking to individuals in a humiliating and degrading manner in front of others, continuously assigning meaningless and unnecessary tasks, allocating low-quality work that damages an individual’s professional reputation, and holding only the victim responsible for adverse outcomes arising from collaborative work. In addition, deliberately leaving the environment when the victim enters, ignoring the individual, and behaving as if they do not exist are among the behaviors commonly reported.

The deliberate reduction of authority and responsibilities, the dissemination of unfounded rumors regarding private life, restricting opportunities for the victim to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and obstructing promotion opportunities are also considered mobbing practices. Furthermore, the intentional withholding of information necessary for work, holding meetings on days when the victim is absent, initiating investigations without justified grounds, mocking religious and political views, withdrawing assigned duties in ways that undermine self-confidence, discrediting the individual by assigning tasks beyond their capabilities, disturbing the victim with unnecessary questions, insisting on incorrect information, and forcing the individual to work through reprimands or humiliating attitudes are also frequently emphasized in the literature as mobbing behaviors (Tınaz, 2006).

The additional costs borne by organizations as a result of mobbing are generally categorized into two main areas: psychological and economic costs (Tınaz, 2006; Ulusoy, 2013). The psychological costs of mobbing at the organizational level include an increase in interpersonal disagreements and conflicts, the emergence of a hostile organizational climate, the erosion and deterioration of institutional cultural values, and the widespread development of an atmosphere of distrust. In addition, the restriction of creativity resulting from employees’ disengagement and loss of motivation is also considered a significant psychological consequence of mobbing. From an economic perspective, increased sick leave, the resignation of qualified and well-trained personnel,

rising recruitment costs due to higher employee turnover rates, and the expansion of budgets allocated to training activities are particularly noteworthy. In addition, declines in overall performance and work quality, compensation paid to employees, unemployment-related costs, legal proceedings and court expenses, as well as early retirement payments, are among the factors that increase the economic burden of mobbing on organizations.

Mobbing in Educational Institutions in Türkiye

Studies conducted on mobbing behaviors in educational institutions in Türkiye reveal that psychological harassment constitutes a significant problem, particularly within university settings. In a study conducted at universities, approximately 75% of academics reported agreement with the presence of mobbing behaviors in the academic environment (Güven et. al., 2018). This rate reflects the level at which participants acknowledge the existence of mobbing in academic life. This finding highlights the widespread nature of mobbing in higher education institutions in Türkiye and suggests that academic work environments pose psychosocial risks.

Research conducted at different universities similarly demonstrates that a substantial proportion of academics have either been exposed to mobbing behaviors or have witnessed such behaviors (Cemaloğlu & Ertürk, 2007; Yaman, 2009). In particular, a competitive academic climate, uncertainties surrounding academic promotion and staffing processes, and the prominence of hierarchical structures are considered primary factors that facilitate the emergence of mobbing behaviors (Tınaz, 2006). Within this framework, mobbing in educational institutions in Türkiye is addressed as a systematic problem associated not with individual relationships, but with organizational structure and managerial approaches.

Perpetrators of Mobbing

Within organizations, perpetrators of mobbing may emerge across different groups within the academic and administrative hierarchy. Studies conducted among academic staff indicate that mobbing behaviors are most frequently exhibited by professors, followed respectively by associate professors, assistant professors, and other academic staff (Çevik, 2011). However, it is also noted that mobbing is not limited solely to academic rank; administrative staff, lecturers, specialists, and research assistants may also assume the role of perpetrators in various circumstances (Çögenli, 2013).

The literature particularly emphasizes that individuals holding managerial positions, such as department heads, deans, institute directors, and rectors, possess a higher potential to engage in mobbing behaviors due to their institutional authority, access to resources, and decision-making power (Cemaloğlu, 2007; Einarsen et al., 2020). In this context, mobbing is evaluated as a phenomenon closely related to organizational structure, power relations, and hierarchical positions, rather than individual personality traits. Indeed, in organizations characterized by concentrated hierarchical power, the intensification of superior–subordinate relations and the weakening of supervisory mechanisms may create conditions that allow mobbing behaviors to become persistent

(Leymann, 1996; Salin, 2003). This situation demonstrates that mobbing is not merely an individual problem, but rather a structural issue directly linked to organizational culture and managerial philosophy.

Mobbing According to Academic Rank

Research indicates that research assistants, due to their position at the lowest level of the academic hierarchy, are more likely to be exposed to attacks on reputation, communication, quality of life, and working life, as well as to behaviors involving violence and threats. It has also been determined that specialists experience significant victimization, particularly in terms of self-expression and communication processes (Aktop, 2006; Çögenli, 2013). When the findings are evaluated overall, it is concluded that mobbing can occur at all academic ranks; however, the level of exposure decreases as academic rank increases, with professors constituting the group least exposed to mobbing (Çelenk, 2015; Çögenli, 2013; Fettahlioğlu, 2008). This situation suggests that, due to the power and authority professors hold within the academic hierarchy, they are more likely to occupy the position of perpetrator or power holder rather than that of a victim in the mobbing process.

Marital Status and Mobbing

Studies show that single female academics are more frequently exposed to mobbing behaviors and that this situation is associated with sexist prejudices and an increased risk of social isolation (Bozyiğit, 2013). This exposure is reported to be particularly pronounced in the dimensions of self-expression, communication, quality of life, and work-related behaviors (Çögenli, 2013). In contrast, despite being numerically dominant within institutions, married academics have been found to experience greater victimization in terms of neglect and personality-based attacks compared to their single counterparts (Baş, 2011; Fettahlioğlu, 2008). This finding may be explained by the perception of married employees as more vulnerable due to family responsibilities, a vulnerability that may be exploited by mobbing perpetrators. In addition, the literature emphasizes that divorced individuals are more likely to be exposed to mobbing due to weakened social support networks and increased emotional vulnerability (Orhan, 2009).

Leadership and Mobbing

It is reported that there are significant and negative relationships between mobbing and leadership style as well as ethical climate variables. Mobbing behaviors are observed more frequently in academic units where unethical behaviors are tolerated, supervisory mechanisms are weak, and negative leadership styles are adopted (Erdemir, 2015). In this context, mobbing appears to be more prevalent in faculties characterized by a weak ethical climate and dominant negative leadership approaches. In particular, under laissez-faire leadership, managers' passivity and avoidance of responsibility create conditions in which organizational conflicts remain unresolved and mobbing behaviors continue unnoticed (Skogstad et al., 2007).

Studies on leadership indicate that mobbing behaviors are most often perpetrated by individuals occupying upper positions in the organizational hierarchy and holding institutional power and authority (Fettahlioğlu, 2008). Moreover, high power distance within organizations limits the ability of lower-level employees to defend themselves and facilitates the emergence of mobbing behaviors (Özen, 2009; Hofstede, 2011). It is further suggested that not holding a managerial or administrative position constitutes a significant factor increasing individuals' risk of exposure to attacks on self-esteem, personal values, quality of life, work, and health, as well as to behaviors involving violence and threats (Bingöl, 2012; Fettahlioğlu, 2008).

Mobbing in State Universities

Studies indicate that mobbing cases are reported at relatively high rates in state universities. These studies indicate that a substantial proportion of academics working in state universities report having been exposed to mobbing behaviors at various stages of their professional careers (Karahan, 2016; Çögenli, 2013). However, there are also studies identifying lower levels of mobbing in certain state universities, a difference that is explained by variations in institutional culture and managerial approaches (Durgun, 2011; Kurtbaş, 2011). The literature also suggests that this variation may be related to academics' normalization of mobbing, acceptance of such behaviors as part of academic culture, loss of hope that the problem can be resolved, or a preference for silence due to fear of being labeled as a complainant or facing retaliation (Einarsen et al., 2011). This situation suggests that the actual prevalence of mobbing may be higher than the reported rates indicate.

A Case of Mobbing

In a lawsuit filed by a faculty member before the High Administrative Court (İsbir, 2025), the following allegations were raised: The faculty member was not utilized in academic activities; no office or office equipment was provided; a windowless office measuring eight square meters was assigned; no teaching duties were assigned; requests for assignments, project participation, and unpaid leave were denied; the head of the department made statements indicating that the faculty member was not wanted at the university; attempts were made to transfer the faculty member to other institutions; written warnings regarding the same issue were sent repeatedly; the faculty member was prevented from working in the laboratory; necessary documents for annual leave and health procedures were not provided; the faculty member was removed from their position on the symposium organizing committee; finally, the faculty member was forced to resign due to psychological violence, intimidation, and harassment.

Although these practices may appear independent at first glance, upon holistic evaluation, they reveal a pattern of systematic obstruction of academic activities, institutional exclusion, and professional discrediting. Practices such as denying academic duties, restricting physical working conditions, excluding individuals from laboratory activities, and arbitrarily obstructing leave procedures are among the typical indicators of mobbing identified in the literature. As noted by Leymann (1996, p. 168), "mobbing usually emerges as a repetitive and systematic process; behaviors such as restricting work tasks, depriving individuals of work-related tools, and isolation constitute

characteristic features of this process.” Similarly, Einarsen et al. (2011, p. 22) emphasize that “mobbing should be defined not as isolated aggressive acts in the workplace, but as a set of regular and systematic psychological harassment behaviors occurring over an extended period of time.”

This case demonstrates that mobbing may often manifest not as a single overt act, but rather as an indirect process of intimidation sustained over time through administrative decisions and bureaucratic procedures. At the same time, the fact that some of the applicant’s allegations could not be sufficiently substantiated with concrete evidence highlights “the difficulty of proving mobbing claims in legal proceedings and the documentation problem arising from the fact that such behaviors are often carried out in covert and indirect ways” (Einarsen et al., 2011, p. 35). This situation indicates that victims may frequently remain unprotected due to a lack of evidence.

The Influence of the Social Environment

Environmental and managerial factors appear to create a domino effect in the development of mobbing. For example, “increased controlling attitudes and authoritarian management styles adopted by administrators restrict academic freedom and create conditions conducive to the emergence of mobbing behaviors” (Çelik, 2013, p. 156). Similarly, it has been stated that “declining tolerance levels among administrators and intolerant approaches toward employees constitute important factors that trigger mobbing” (Coşardemir, 2013, p. 89). A significant negative relationship has been identified between mobbing and job satisfaction (Baş, 2011; Çivilidağ, 2011). It has been reported that “academics who experience mobbing exhibit marked decreases in organizational commitment, and their sense of belonging to their institutions is adversely affected” (Karakoç, 2012, p. 167; Kurtbaş, 2011). A positive relationship has also been found between workplace alienation and mobbing. “By negatively affecting academics’ scientific productivity and work quality, mobbing reduces both individual and organizational performance” (Göyşen, 2015, p. 201).

The supportive attitude of the social environment is “critically important in helping victims overcome psychological trauma and recover” (Çelik, 2013, p. 178; Çivilidağ, 2011). This support becomes particularly crucial during the early stages of an academic career, such as during master’s and doctoral studies, and while waiting for permanent academic positions. Indeed, academics have reported being exposed to more frequent and intense mobbing behaviors during these periods (Çevik, 2011, p. 112; Çögenli, 2013, p. 189).

Gender

The literature suggests that men are more likely to occupy the role of perpetrator in the mobbing process (Baş, 2011; Çelik, 2013; Çevik, 2011; Çögenli, 2013). “Mobbing behaviors generally occur within the same gender; men tend to direct psychological harassment toward men, while women most often target women” (Çelik, 2013, p. 78). These findings suggest that mobbing should not be viewed solely as a gender-based phenomenon, but also as one that emerges within the same gender in the context of organizational competition. When the organizational positions of perpetrators are

examined, they are most often found to be academics holding managerial roles, such as department chairs and deans (Bozyiğit, 2013; Çelenk, 2015; Çögenli, 2013; Erdemir, 2015). As stated in the literature, “in academic environments, mobbing perpetrators frequently emerge from among academics who hold administrative positions and possess institutional power” (Çögenli, 2013, p. 145). In addition, personnel holding higher academic ranks than the victim may use positional power to engage in mobbing (Erdemir, 2015, p. 92), and colleagues at the same academic level may also display psychological harassment behaviors in the form of “horizontal mobbing” (Çelenk, 2015, p. 134).

Victims’ Responses

An examination of victims’ responses during the mobbing process reveals that they most often choose to remain silent and ignore the situation. Victims frequently report reluctance to go to work, avoidance of sharing their experiences with family members, failure to confront the aggressor, and avoidance of legal channels (Çevik, 2011; Çögenli, 2013; Fettahlioğlu, 2008). Conversely, some victims report distancing themselves from the aggressor, informing their superiors (Çögenli, 2013; Fettahlioğlu, 2008), sharing the situation with a trusted colleague within the institution (Çevik, 2011), and considering resignation (Çevik, 2011; Çögenli, 2013).

The literature indicates that coping strategies among mobbing victims can be categorized into two main types: avoidance and approach strategies (Mulder et al., 2016). Avoidance strategies include more passive responses such as taking sick leave, requesting reassignment, or leaving the organization. In contrast, approach strategies involve confronting the perpetrator, engaging in active problem-solving efforts, and seeking support (Salin et al., 2014). However, research consistently shows that victims often avoid confrontation with the perpetrator and prefer withdrawal from the situation (Hogh & Dofradottir, 2001). A study conducted by Sani et al. (2025) among Portuguese healthcare professionals found that the most commonly used coping strategies among mobbing victims were emotional venting, distraction, and behavioral withdrawal. These findings indicate that victims tend to rely more on emotion-focused rather than problem-focused coping mechanisms. In particular, female victims were found to seek social and emotional support more frequently than male victims.

At the same time, it has been noted that the effectiveness of coping strategies may alter the trajectory of the mobbing process. A qualitative study by Zapf and Gross (2001) revealed that victims who demonstrated successful coping engaged less frequently in maladaptive behaviors such as retaliating with similar tactics or exhibiting frequent absenteeism, and were more effective in recognizing and avoiding behaviors that could escalate the process. In contrast, victims who coped unsuccessfully were found to inadvertently contribute to the escalation of mobbing during their pursuit of justice.

Research by Nielsen et al. (2023) highlights the importance of workplace analysis during the treatment process for victims of mobbing. The study found that victims who received work-focused interventions alongside cognitive behavioral therapy or metacognitive therapy

showed significant improvement in mental health symptoms; however, it was emphasized that such interventions should also include workplace changes, the establishment of support systems, and gradual return-to-work plans.

On the other hand, findings indicate that managers often remain silent and take no action, and in some cases indirectly support the aggressor. In contrast, other employees generally remain silent but offer covert support to the victim (Fettahlioğlu, 2008). A study by Rosander and Nielsen (2023) showed that passive bystanders experienced three times more negative effects than those who intervened actively, with these effects manifesting as psychological distress and reduced job satisfaction. In addition, frequent exposure to mobbing among bystanders was found to increase absenteeism and presenteeism, reinforcing their passive stance (Rosander & Nielsen, 2023).

More recent research by Bastiaensen et al. (2025) highlights that structural factors, including the quality of organizational communication, the conflict management climate, and leadership support, significantly influence bystanders' decisions to intervene. In environments characterized by a culture of organizational silence, bystanders tend to hesitate to support the victim, thereby contributing to the continuation of the mobbing cycle. In contrast, a strong conflict management culture and a supportive leadership environment significantly increase the likelihood of active bystander intervention (Blomberg et al., 2025).

Recent studies further demonstrate that mobbing victims' intentions to leave the organization are strongly associated not only with their mobbing experiences but also with perceptions of organizational silence and injustice. A study by Başar and Basım (2015) found a positive relationship between organizational silence and mobbing, and showed that mobbing partially mediates the relationship between organizational silence and turnover intention. These findings suggest that, when evaluating victims' responses, both organizational climate and culture should be considered in conjunction with individual factors.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is well established that in organizational structures where democratic culture is weak and supervision and accountability mechanisms function inadequately, harmful and toxic leadership behaviors foster and perpetuate mobbing practices (Einarsen et al., 2011; Erdemir, 2015). The findings of the present study clearly demonstrate that the leadership styles adopted by individuals holding managerial authority in educational institutions play a decisive role in the emergence and persistence of mobbing. The results indicate that teachers' and academics' mobbing experiences are primarily shaped by interactions with administrators, task allocation processes, performance evaluations, and administrative practices (Çögenli, 2013; Fettahlioğlu, 2008). In particular, periods of managerial transition—such as changes in school principals, deans, or rectors—are perceived by participants as critical phases during which mobbing behaviors intensify, due to role ambiguity, redistribution of authority, and organizational uncertainty. This finding suggests that mobbing is fueled not only by individual intentions but also by organizational transition processes and structural vulnerabilities. This study does not study mobbing via direct policy interventions or

ideological orientations; instead, it evaluates the findings on mobbing within a literature-based and academic framework. Nevertheless, the results indicate that mobbing risk increases markedly in structures characterized by concentrated power and weak institutional balance mechanisms. Therefore, solutions aimed at preventing mobbing in educational institutions must extend beyond individual awareness efforts and be addressed at organizational and managerial levels.

In this context, and first, strengthening democratic and participatory leadership practices in educational institutions is of primary importance. Including teachers' and academics' views in decision-making processes, ensuring transparency, and providing reasoned decisions are considered key protective factors against the legitimization of mobbing behaviors (Einarsen et al., 2011). Leadership training programs should be structured not only to enhance managerial skills but also to focus on ethical sensitivity, conflict management, and fostering a culture of psychological safety.

Second, strengthening the ethical climate plays a critical role in preventing mobbing in educational institutions. Clearly defined ethical principles and codes of conduct must be established, made binding for all employees—including administrators—and enforced without impunity. Consistent and fair responses to ethical violations will prevent the normalization of mobbing behaviors within organizational culture (Salin, 2003).

Third, establishing independent and accessible supervisory mechanisms is crucial. Evaluating mobbing allegations not only through hierarchical superiors but also through institutionally independent ethics committees or ombuds offices will increase victims' trust in complaint processes. The presence of such mechanisms may also serve a deterrent function for potential perpetrators (Einarsen et al., 2011).

Fourth, the culture of organizational silence must be dismantled. Creating channels through which employees can express their views without fear of retaliation and safely communicate feedback and complaints will enable early detection of mobbing cycles. Given that mobbing becomes invisible and chronic in environments characterized by high organizational silence, developing a climate of psychological safety should be treated as a fundamental priority (Başar & Basım, 2015).

Finally, strengthening support mechanisms for victims of mobbing is recommended. Psychological counseling services, legal information, and guidance processes should be provided to ensure that victims do not feel isolated or unsupported. Such support mechanisms will not only enhance individual well-being but also reduce the long-term psychological and economic costs faced by organizations (Ulusoy, 2013).

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that preventing mobbing in educational institutions requires more than individual behavior change; it necessitates democratic leadership, a strong ethical climate, effective supervisory mechanisms, and a participatory organizational culture. In the absence of such a multidimensional approach, mobbing is likely to manifest in various forms within institutional structures.

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