**The Mobbing Behaviours Experienced by Academic Personnel Working in Environment**

**ABSTRACT**

**Aim:** This study was conducted to establish the frequency of mobbing behaviours encountered by academicians working in Erciyes University.

**Method:** This cross-sectional study was performed in June 2010.Of a total 850 academicians who were asked to fill in the questionnaire by mail, 450 did so. Mobbing behaviour frequency was evaluated by the Mobbing Perception Scale (MPS).

**Results:**.Of the academicians 58.2% stated that they experienced recurrent psychological violence at least once a week and 16.6% had been exposed to intentional mobbing behaviours every day in the past year.Of the academicians 76.8% had experienced mobbing as assault to their professional status. The most commonly experienced behaviour was;‘groundless talk about the person in question (52.3%).The main sources of mobbing behaviours were the managers. Of the mobbing victims 68.0% resorted to passive defence strategies.

**Conclusion:** More than half of the academicians had endured verbal mobbing and the level of intentional mobbing was substantially high. The primary source of mobbing was from managers. Most of the academicians had internalised the mobbing.

**Keywords:**Mobbing behaviours, Academicians, University

**INTRODUCTION**

Mobbing is a kind of psychological violence, commonly encountered in disorganised work places, and usually targetsbright, successful, and creative people. It is the most serious and destructive kind of violence and affects the whole of society, irrespective of age, race, language, educational level,or title. Nowadays mobbing has become an important part of daily life; it has also become a potential health and occupational risk factor in both public and private sectors.

The term mobbing was first used in 1984 byHeinz Leymann (1996) in order to summarise human behaviours in organisations, with the intention of describing ‘psychological violence at work’,or ‘workplace terror’, and today this term is used with the same meaning throughout North America, European countries, and even Japan. Mobbing in Turkey has been defined as ‘psychological violence at work’, ‘emotional harassment at work’, ‘spiritual harassment at work’, ‘emotional violence’, and ‘intimidation’ (Turkish Parliament Comission Report, 2011).

Mobbing is a continuous systematic and intentional intimidating behaviour, through psychological methods, exerted by a group or someone who has authority over others, within a hierarchically structured group, in a lower status (Turkish Parliament Comission Report, 2011; Einersan & Skogstad,1996).

The determinants of mobbing behaviour are consistency and frequency. In order to specify a behaviour as mobbing, it has to be repeated at least once a week and for at least 6 months (Tınaz et al., 2008). There are some important aspects regarding mobbing; these include communication, social relationships, social status, the quality of private and professional life, assaults targeting health, the effects of the assaults upon the victim, the amount of damage to the victim, and persistance in the behaviour (Leymann, 1996; Özkul & Çarıkcı, 2010).All kinds of bad conduct inflicted systematically to punish, isolate, control, and get the victim dismissed, threats, violence, and humiliating behaviours make the victim feel desperate, hopeless and vulnerable, and the victim`s life quality and health deteriorates. In situations where managers support those inflictingthe mobbing, due to their own misjudgements and biased attitudes, this can result in serious consequences, such as the victim leaving his/her job, or even attempting suicide (Leymann, 1996).

Mobbing can be vertical and horizontal (Hirigoyen, 2000; Tınaz, 2006).Vertical (hierarchical) mobbing: this is the psychological violence within an institution, inflicted from the top executives on people below them or vice versa. Usually the person inflicting mobbing is professionally above the victim. These people usually use mobbing as a guarantee to continue their own profession within competitive environment (Davenport et al., 2003).

Horizontal mobbingis mobbing between equals. The person inflicting the mobbing and the victim can be work friends, in similar positions, with the same opportunities (Tetik, 2010). In mobbing from below upwards, the person inflicting mobbing is in a lower professional position to the victim (Akbas&Karcioglu, 2010).

Within violent behaviours, mobbing ranks among the first, surpassing sexual harassmentin developed countries; it is usually exerted by top executives, and is accepted as an occupational disease specific to these executives (Turkish Parliament Comission Report, 2011).Continuous and systematic mobbing causes serious mental, psychosomatic and social burnout in the victims, and the chronic anxiety that gradually intensifies within the victims finally affects the whole organization, leading to a kind of “group disease” (Leymann, 1996).

Studies regarding mobbingstarted in 1990 in America and Europe, and the most remarkable and important development was the foundation of a mobbing clinic in 1992 in Germany, with the help ofLeymann (Matthiesen &Einarsen, 2004). In 2004, Westhues wrote a book about intimidation at universities (Toker, 2010).On the other hand, in Turkey, this topic was only opened to discussion with its differing dimensions and at a cognitive level around the year 2000, and the number of empirical studies have substantially increased in the past years (Tınaz et al., 2008; Palaz etal., 2008).

Usually, the mobbing behaviour exertedis aimedat qualified people and does not show any distinction in, place, time or profession. All the same, it is a known fact that it is experienced more frequently in institutions involved in the service sector, in üniversities and in the health sector, which usually adopt a more authoritarian management style. The factors that enhance the spread of mobbing can be listed as follows: The general academic hierarchical manners in universities, precarious work situation, conflicts in professional life due to limitedacademic positions, competition experienced to make progress in one’s career, unjust success evaluation, stress experienced during the process of fulfilling academic advancement criteriawhile under difficult working conditions, difficulty in attaining tennure in associate professorand professor positions andthe absolute authority granted to managers by the law. The severe power imbalance between managers and subordinates results in the acceptance by the victim of his/her role within the play, the rules of which are established by the perpetrators. Therefore, those academicians that suffocate under this authority and/or the high academic expectations of the managers in the university, either become submissive, or they helplessly internalise this mobbing, and start to see it as a natural, inevitable part of their profession. Those that cannot adopt, this attitude are the ones upon which mobbing is inflicted. According to Einersan, in academic environments with highly educated workers, the workers start to compete with each other in order to gain more status, and to attain the academic superior’s sympathy and approval, aiming to increase their chances of progressing in their careers, and finally, in this competitive environment, they start to exert psychological violence on each other (Einersan,1996).

In many countries mobbing is the most frequently encountered type of violence.It was reported that 53% of workers in the U.K, and 18% of those in Denmark were exposed to psychological violence (Tınaz, 2006; Palaz et al., 2008).Lewis (1999) stated that 18% of academicians in the U.K have been exposed to direct mobbing behaviours.Psychological violence is seen more intensely among health sector workers. The prevalence rates of verbal violence reported from the U.K, Hong Kong, and China were between 43-73%. In the ‘Work Place Violence in Health Institutions’, 2002 reports of the WHO, ILO and ICN, the rates of exposure to verbal violence were between 27-67% (ILO/ICN/WHO/PSI, 2002).

The rates of mobbing reported in studies from Turkey are similar to those in international studies. These studies show that the mobbing rates are around 42% in Turkey, and that around 70% of these victims never mentioned the problem to anyone (Turkish Parliament Comission Report, 2011).In studies performed in universities, it has been established that 17-29% of the academicians are victims of direct mobbing (ILO/ICN/WHO/PSI, 2002; Baskan&Çevik, 2010; Yildirim &Yildirim, 2010).

Apart from the losses the victim endures regarding social prestige, self-confidence, and self-respect, there are also consequences such as secondary long term severe damages to interpersonal communication, institutional structure and environment. Another social aspect of mobbing, is the increased economical cost due to work and safety loss, physical and mental health deterioration, increase in health expenses, workdays lost, decrease in productivity and performance, decrease in work quality, unemployment, early retirement, and loss of institutional respect (Tınaz, 2006).

The critical points in the struggle against mobbing and its social, personal and institutional consequences, are to improve workplace standards, and prevent social exclusion. In order to establish and guarantee an honourable and qualified academic life, all personnel should be informed about the culture and standards of the institution, and about the nature of mobbing, thus enhancing self and institutional awarenes. In addition, active defence strategies should be put into action and,in evaluating academic advancement criteria, ethical principles and worthiness should be prioritised, and the knowledge and skills of the managers regarding conflicts and communication should be increased (Yildirim & Yildirim, 2010; Isık, 2007).

In Turkey, there are various studies about mobbing that concepts is more analysed in industrial workplace before focusing in universities. So there is no sufficient information about academic mobbing in Turkish literature.We believe this paper is one of the first studies about academic mobbing in our country.The aim of this studyis to determine prevalence of mobbing behavioursexposed by academic personnel inworking environment and to developan awareness over them about this spesific subject.

**MATERIALSand METHODS**

**Subjects**

This cross-sectional, descriptive study was performed between May-June 2010, by applying a questionnaire, by mail, to 850 academic staff working in Erciyes University. Four hundred and fifty academicians replied to the questionnaire, but due to the incompletedata in 36 of the questionnaires, statistical evaluation was performed upon the data of 414 questionnaires.

Ninety nine of the participants (23.9%) were instructors working in the social sciences (economy, fine arts, education) faculties of, 147 (35.5%)werein the health sciencesfaculties (medicine, dentistry, veterinary, pharmaceutics), and 168 (40.5%) werein the engineering faculty and graduate schools offering technical programmes. Eighty four of the instructors (20.3%) were professors, 78 (18.8%) were associate professors, 114 (27.5%) wereassistant professors, and 138 (33.3%) were lecturers. The mean age of the instructors was 40.64±9.25, the mean time working in the profession was 16.70±9.22 years andthe mean working period at the same institution was 11.66±8.40years.

**Questionnaires**

The data were collected by a questionnaire comprising three parts. The first part of the questionnaire was related to socio-demographic and professional characteristics (age, gender, marital status, educational level, number of children, professional status, the time workingin the profession, status,weekly class time, management reponsibility);in the second part the mobbing behaviours which the academicians experienced and the perpetrators of these mobbing behaviours were defined with the MPS.

The Mobbing Perception Scale is a sixfold Likert type scale, with 4 subscales, comprising 33 questions. Isolation from work was covered with 11 questions, assault to professional status with 9, assault to personality with 9, and direct negative behaviours with 4. The answers to the scale were scored as follows; “never or scarcely ever” 0 points, “once” 1 point, “a few times” 2 points, “sometimes” 3 points, “often” 4 points, “always” 5 points. The participants were asked to state the frequency of exposure to the mobbing behaviours stated in the scale within the past 12 months, and to define the people who inflicted the mobbing behaviours. Answers of at least once or more than once were evalauted. The total scale score was calculated by the sum of the points from the individual items. All the items in the scale are positive items. The total score obtained from the scale is divided the number of items, and if the result is 1 and above, it is presumed that the person is exposed to intentional psychological violent behaviour at work. The reliability and validity study of the MPS for Turkish was doneby Yildirim et al., (2008).

In the third part of the questionnaire, the defence strategies used by the victims when exposed to mobbing were requested.

**Data Collection**

Data were collected between May-June 2010. The socio-demographic questionnaire prepared by the researchers and the Mobbing Perception Scale were left with department secretaries, placed in an envelope. The academicians filled in the forms within a safe environment and in privacy, and a week later the forms were collected again in an envelope. Four hundred and fifty questionnaires were answered. thirty six of them were left out of evaluation due to incomplete data.

Due to the fact that there might be some effects (e.g. the Hawthorne effect) upon the questionnaire related to the awareness of the academicians of the study being performed, they were asked not to write their names, and they were informed that the results would not be used in their professional evaluation.

**Statistical Analysis**

The data were analysed by the SPSS 18.0 (SPSS Inc.,Chicago, II., USA) program. packet.In the statistical analysis was useddistribution of percent and frequence, arithmetic mean + standard deviation, and in the evaluation of the qualitative data chi-square test. P<0.05 was accepted as statistically significant.

**RESULTS**

The response rate was 53.0%.The mean age of the academicians was 40.64±9.25, the majority being within the 31-50 age group, and 81.4% were married. Of the academicians 21.8% were professors, 20.2% associate professors, 27.8% assistant professors, and 30.2% lecturers. The mean time working in the profession was 16.09±9.22years,and more than half of them (53.9%) had been academicians for 1-10 years. Of the academicians 33.3% were in active duty (Table 1). The mean working period in the current institution was11.66±8.40years. Our findings showed that 40.6% of the academicians were working in the technical faculties(engineering, graduate school, economy-administration),35.5% were in the health faculties (medicine, pharmacy, veterinarian, dentistry),and 23.9% in the social sciences (education, communication, fine arts, law school) faculties.

**Mobbing perception among academicians**

In our study, 58.2% of the academicians stated that in the past year they had been exposed to verbal mobbing behaviour at least once. The rate of academicians who had not been exposed or almost not exposed to mobbing behaviour (mean score: 0-0.25 points) in the previous year was 47.3%, and 16.6% (mean score >1 points) were exposed to continuous intentional mobbing. The mobbing scale mean total score of the academicians exposed to mobbing behaviours was 19.51±26.92 (min:1, max:159) (Table 3), and the mean mobbing level score was 2.22±1.48 (Table 2).

**Effects of demographic and professional characteristics upon mobbing behaviours**

Age, educational level, marital status, and children had no effect upon being exposed to mobbing behaviours (P>0.05). Lecturers, academicians working in the health and technical departments, those in the first 10 years of their careers, and the heads of departmentsstated greater exposure to mobbing behaviours, but the difference was not statistically significant (p>0.05). On the other hand, those with a weekly course schedule of 12 hours and below were exposed to mobbing behaviour significantly more frequently (p=0.014).

In our study, the distribution of the mobbing behaviours the academicians were exposed to was as follows:76.8 % “assault to professional status”, 73.4% “assault to personality”, 68.5% “isolation of individual from work”, and 22.4% “direct negative behaviours”.

The most common (52.3%) mobbing behaviour experienced by the academicians was determined as ‘groundless talk about the person in question’; 58.7% of the academicians stated that this behaviour came from co-workers, 21.4% from managers, and 7.9% from their subordinates (Tables 3,4).

The second most commonly (46.5%) perceived mobbing behaviour was ‘feeling as if the person or their work is being controlled’;67.0% of the academicians reported that this behaviour came from their managers, 21.4% from their co-workers, and 7.1% from their subordinates (Tables 3,4).

The third most commonly (37.8%) perceived mobbing behaviours were‘criticizing and rejecting the person’s decisions and suggestions’ and ‘being spoken about in a belittling and demeaning manner in the presence of others’ (37.8%).These behaviours were inflicted most frequently by their managers (50.5%, 47.3%, respectively), and by their own co-workers (35.2%, 34.1% respectively) (Tables 3,4).

**Perpetratorsof mobbing**

In our study vertical mobbing was more frequent: the managers were the onesinflicting psychologically violent behaviours on subordinates in 23 kinds of behaviours, within the 4 subscales. Among the behaviours the managers inflictedon their subordinates, the first three were ‘control of the person or their work without the knowledge of the person (67.0%)’, ‘no response to the requests for talking and meeting (63.3%)’, and ‘preventing the co-workers from talking with the academician (62.2%)’. On the other hand, in 8 of the behaviours, horizontal mobbing was more frequent among equals. These were‘groundless talk about the academician (57.9%)’,‘physical violence (53.8%)’, ‘belittling behaviour towards the academician in front of other people (48.8%)’, ‘not notifying the social meetings (45.7%), ‘insinuating that the academician’s mental health is deranged (45.5%)’,‘constantly finding faults/mistakes in the work done or the results (43.3%)’,‘intentionally leaving the environment as soon as the academician arrives (41.4%)’, ‘blaming the academician for things he/she is not responsible for (36.6%)’. The mobbing behaviours inflicted by subordinates upon the academicians were‘controlling the academician that is in a higher position (10.6%)’, ‘hiding any material, documents, and knowledge needed for work (10.4%), and ‘blaming the academician for things he/she is not responsible for (9.8%)’ (Table 4).

**Defence strategies: What did you do to escape mobbing?**

From the table it is seen that37.4% of the academicians chose to talk with family and friends as a mechanism to deal with mobbing, 30.7% just tried to ignore it, 15.7% informed management in the hope of getting some help, and 2.5% referred to legalhelp. It is seen that 9.54% tried other defense strategies, such as, warning the perpetrator, and resorting to violence etc.(Table 5).

**DISCUSSION**

Mobbing has become a silent epidemic in most of the institutions in the last three decades. It has become a widespread public health issue, threatening personal and social well being, with increasing importance. What makes it more dramatic, is the fact that the psychological violence experienced is not perceived as a serious problem, it is usually regarded as a taboo, therefore is not reported as much. Another factor aggravating the problem is the fact that most institutions and personnel try to solve the psychological violence according to their own methods, therefore leading to uncontrollable situations, as violence leads to more violence (Hesketh et al., 2003).

As is the case worldwide, mobbing is also a common problem in our country. It is known that almost half of all workers (42%) are victims of mobbing (Turkish Parliament Comission Report, 2011). In both developed and developing countries, it has been revealed that mobbing is common in health institutions, in universities schools, and in nonprofit organizations, as well as the health sector and higher education institutions (Agervold, 2007). In particular, in career based academic working environments such as universities, mobbing is seen in higher rates**,** and academicians are one of the groups of professionals who are at risk of workplace violence (Tınaz, 2008).

In Turkey, studies about mobbing among academicians have recently started to be conducted. Hovewer only a few studies in Turkey have examined the prevalence of mobbing in academicians. Another problem regarding these studies is that, methodologically, differentiation between mobbing and verbal violence was not made. It is accepted that verbal violence is not a form of mobbing; although verbal violence is perceived within the category ofrude behaviour and rude talk, mobbing is defined as every type of humiliating and offensive behaviour (Tutar, 2004). To consider a behaviour as mobbing, it must occur repeatedly (at least twice a week or more within the last 6 months), and the victims should not be able to defend themselves with the aim of stopping the harassment (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007).

In this study, more than half of academicians (58.2%) stated that they were exposed to verbal mobbing behaviours once or more than once within the last 12 months. However, according to the mobbing scale, 16.6% of academicians were directly exposed to physically violent behaviours in the workplace during the same period.

Previous studies conducted in universities have reported an exposure rate to mobbing behaviours of 25% (min 18%; max; 67%), among the academicians. Baskan et al (2010) reported a rate of 29% of exposure to direct mobbing behaviours in academicians in four public universities. and Yildirim et al (2010) reported a rate of 17% of academicians who stated that they were exposed to direct mobbing behavioursin the workplace. On the other hand, in previous studiesthe prevalence of verbal violence was higher compared to the prevalence of mobbing. In their study, Yildirim et al. (2010) reported a rate of 90% of exposure to verbal psychological violent behaviours among academicians. Cogenli et al (2013) reported 82% rate of exposure to verbal mobbing behaviours among academicians in Ataturk University. These results may be due to the perception, by academicians, of mobbing as verbal violence.

In our study, exposure to psychological violence seems to be more prevalent among academicians working in healthcare and technical programmes. Aytac et al (2011) reported a higher rate of mobbing in those working in health and education programmes. In the study by Yildirim et al (2010), health sector ranked first. Some investigators have explained this to be the result of the higher amount of mobbing studies conducted in the health sector, but in studies (Aytac et al., 2011) conducted concurrently in many sectors, the health sector ranked first as the most risky one.

**Effects ofsocio-demographic and professional characteristics upon exposure to mobbing behaviours**

In our study, exposure to mobbing behaviours showed no significant difference when compared according to socio-demographic characteristics. Yildirim et al. (2010), in a study in academicians, similarly reported no difference in exposure to psychological violence when compared according to gender, educational status, and title. On the other hand, in a study byAytac et al. (2011), while there was no difference in exposure to mobbing according to age and marital status, it was reported that women were exposed to mobbing 1.7 fold, and high school and university graduates 2.4-3.5 fold. Altuntas et al. (2010) reported that, as the educational level increases, psychological harassment also increases. Some studies (Baskan & Cevik, 2010;Jackson &Ashley, 2005;Acik, et al., 2008) report a higher rate of verbal mobbing in young femaleacademicians(Aytac et al., 2011; Altuntas, 2010), in the unmarried and in those with a lower educational level (Cogenli & Barlı, 2013;Yigitbas&Deveci, 2012).

In summary, the causal relationship between socio-demographic variables and mobbing has not become clear; studies report varying results. Furthermore, studies show a large variation in the prevalence rates of mobbing according to descriptive characteristics.

Although statistically insignificant, in our study, those with work experience of 10 years and below, lecturers, and those working in the same institution for 1-10 years were more exposed to mobbing. Yigitbas et al. (2012) in a lirerature review, stated that those with less working time in the profession were exposed more to mobbing, and that as the years increase the rate of mobbing decreases. The explanation may be that academicians are under more pressure during the period in which they start to gain experience in their professional life, and there is an increase in their professional seniority burden, in the attempt to make progress in their career. Differing from our studies, Baskan et al. (2010) reported that almost half of the academicians with a professional background of 20 years and above, were still exposed to mobbing behaviour in their most productive professional years, and Aytac et al. (2011) reported that as person’s professional experience increases, the level of exposure to psychological violence also increases.

In our study academicians working in the health sector (38%)and technical education (38%) departments were more exposed to mobbing behaviours, compared to academicians working in the departments of social science faculties, but this difference was not statistically significant. Study results show that workers in the health sector are at a 16 fold risk of being exposed to mobbing behaviours compared to other sectors (Kingma, 2001), 18-37% of the health professionals are exposed to intentional mobbing behaviour in the workplace, and 74-91% were exposed to one or more than one kind of mobbing behaviour (Davenport et al., 2003).In one study (Yildirim &Yildirim, 2010)conducted on the academicians in the health sector in Turkey, it was reported that 90% of the instructors were exposed to verbal violence, and 17% to intentional mobbing behaviours.

This situation has been connected tothe fact that the occupational health and safety risks are higher in the health sector, compared to other sectors. Also, apart from students/residents education, academicians working in this sector have other complex and heavy responsibilities such as examining/treating patients, and performing academic investigations. In addition, there are some other very important key aspects that increase mobbing in this sector, such as working in a shift and night duty system, heavy bureaucratic burdens, environments lacking supervision facilities, the fact that patients’ relatives are constantly with the patient and therefore becoming a component in the patients’ treatment and care within the system, and difficulties in communication.

**Mobbing behaviours**

In our study the most commonly encountered intimidating behaviours were assault to professional status of the academic personnel (76.8%), assault to personality (73.4%), and isolation of individual from work (68.5%). In previous studies too, the most frequently encountered psychological violence behaviours were assaultive behaviours targeting profession, professional status, and personality (Yildirim &Yildirim, 2010; Rutherford & Rissel, 2004; Salin, 2003).

The essense of mobbing is the hurtful behaviours targeting a person’s personal values, and emotional and mental integrity during work. Within this context, a prejudiced negative attitude and passive-aggressive behaviours are exerted; these are aimed at damaging the social prestige of the victim, and social manipulations are applied with the aim of belittling, and challenging the person’s professional ethics and efficiency. The perpetrator usually pretends to be supportive when alone, but by disclosing the victim’s professional faults in public, causes the victim’s professional efficiency to be questioned, corroding their professional credentials, thus creating a circle of unreliability around the victim. The worker, who has become unreliable, is systematically and constantly disgraced by controlling, humiliating, and insulting behaviours. Likewise, in our study, the most commonly exerted mobbing behaviour by co-worker academicians of the same status, and also supported by the managers was ‘groundless talk about the person’. In the study by Yildirim et al. (2010) in academicians, creating rumours about a person ranked first (65%), and was especially inflicted by managers.

In our study ‘controlling the person or their work without the knowledge of the person’ was the second most common mobbing behaviour, and it was mostly exerted by managers. Atasoy (2010) in a study conductedin the health sector, established that the most common mobbing behaviour was ‘imperceptible control’.The same behaviour ranked fifth in the study by Yildirim et al.(2010).

Considering all of the above, we can argue that the psychological violence exerted upon academicians has completed the first level of mobbing that is asserting oneself (56.3%), and trying to prevent the development of communication (62-63%), and the second level of mobbing, that isassault to social relationships. It has thus reached the severe mobbing level of the third and fourth degrees. The next stage is that in which direct assault to personal health begins: threat of physical violence, physical damage and sexual harassment. In this context, the fact that 5.4% of the academicians were victims of physical violence, most perpetrators were co-workers (53.8%), and 8%had experienced damage to their personal belongings, especially from managers (42.1%), show the extent to which violence has reached.

**Perpetrators**

Mobbing behaviours were primarily exerted by managers, and secondly by co-workers. In our study vertical mobbing coming from managers was more common, but horizontal mobbing was also common among academicians. While the mobbing behaviours towards subordinates from superiors consisted mostly of controlling, preventing communication development, humiliating, damaging self-confidence, unfair evaluation of success, and correspondence, the mobbing behaviours between equals consisted of asserting oneself, preventing communication development, and direct assault to prestige, social relationships and health.

The stress involved in trying to fulfill the criteria necessary for advancement in the profession, which becomes more difficult day by day, and a professional career that is based on ambition to achieve status, creates a hidden or open competitive environment, leading to hostility, and incorrect behaviours among equals. As a matter of fact, in our study too, the hostile behaviours among equals had come to the point of direct physical violence, aimedat the victim’s health.

**Defence strategies**

In our study most of the academicians exposed to mobbing (68%) preferred a passive defence strategy against psychological violent behaviours; they either shared the issue with friends and family, or else internalised mobbing, as if nothing was happening. The results of previous studies are similar to ours; most victims (70%) did not tell anyone about what they were going through (Turkish Parliament Comission Report , 2011), or stated that sharing with friends was their most common reaction (Cöl, 2008).

Due to the traditional hierarchial good manners and for the sake of not risking their profession, academicians perceive the mobbing behaviours from their superiors as a situation related to the nature of the profession and as normal in the hierarchial structure, and thus normalise it. It is either for the above mentioned reasons that mobbing behaviour is not perceived as an important issue, or else the fact that it is hard to prove harassment, that the victim is driven to fear of not obtaining any results and fear of even being blamed for it (Aytac et al., 2011; Aydın et al., 2009). Nevertheless, in our study, approximately one in every five academicians referred to active defence mechanisms such as informing superiors about harassment, or by taking legal actions.

Active reporting rates following mobbing are quite low. Studies report different results. While the results of Yildirim et al. (2010), in a study they conducted in academicians in the health sector, showed a reporting rate of 51% in verbal mobbing, Ozcan et al. (2011) reported a disclosure rate of mobbing, including verbal mobbing, of 50% and above in a review article comprising all workers in the health sector. On the other hand, Baskan et al. (2010) established that only 5.6% of academicians sought legal redress.

**In conclusion**, more than half of the academicians in our university, mostly those working in education in health and technical departments, are victims of severe and serious mobbing. Almost one in every five academicians are victims of intentional continuous mobbing behaviours. The academician, who is placed in a questionable position through assault to professional efficiency and personality, is intentionally disheartened from the profession by mobbing behaviours such as creating rumours, controlling, humiliating and rejectful behaviours. Although the level of intentional mobbing was severe, the rate of reporting was low, and the most prominent reaction was toshare the situation with family and friends. The fact that one in every ten academicians tried to find a solution to the problem in their own way, is a substantially important issue. Also, the major sources of mobbing were managers in an academically superior position.

In order to solve horizontal and vertical mobbing, which has personal, social and institutional destructive effects, it is important that a policy of “zero tolerance to violence” should be established by creating consciousness and awareness both in managers and equals, and active defence strategies should be encouraged.

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