

A new mobbing scale for academicians (MS-A) in higher education institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study proposed and tested a new mobbing scale for academicians in higher education institutions. A two-stage methodology consisting of a qualitative approach and quantitative measuring was used in the study. First, mobbing behavior items were developed by using an in-depth interview technique on a group of Turkish academicians. Then, the developed items were formulated and applied to academicians ($n = 165$) working in eight state universities in Turkey. Both exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were used to test the construct validity of the scale. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was examined in order to determine its reliability. The results of the analysis showed high validity and reliability values and revealed a two-dimensional structure of the scale. These dimensions were labeled as "vertical/horizontal mobbing" and "vertical mobbing." The scale was labeled as the Mobbing Scale for Academicians (MS-A). As a result, MS-A is a valid and reliable instrument for measuring mobbing in the higher education environment and determines the level of mobbing behaviors. Unlike the mobbing scales in the literature, this scale is more effective because it is developed specifically for academicians. Additionally, the scale is considered to be more economical in terms of time and labor due to its brevity.

Keywords: Mobbing, scale, academician, higher education institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Low-quality relationships among employees and their negative results are a fact of work life (Oruh et al., 2019). There are many problems in the work environment based on negative relationships among employees, one of which is workplace mobbing (O'Moore et al., 1998). Workplace mobbing has received significant attention in the past few years on a scientific level. This is a relatively new concept for behavioral scientists, which illustrates in the form of unfriendly behavior of employee at the workplace (Qureshi et al., 2015).

The International Labour Organization (ILO) reported an increasing trend of negative psychological work environment related to mobbing that played an important role in workplace violence. For example, "a 1994 survey by the Canadian Union of Public Employees showed that almost 70 percent of respondents believed that verbal

aggression was the leading form of violence against them," emphasized the ILO report (<http://www.ilo.org> Retrieved September 10, 2019). Researchers revealed that mobbing at the workplace was a very widespread phenomenon, especially in European countries. In the Fifth European Working Conditions Survey 2010 by the European Foundation, in the EU-27 Member States, employees were interviewed and asked if they had been subjected to mobbing at work in the past year (<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu> Retrieved October 29, 2019). On average, 4.1% of the employees stated exposure to mobbing at the workplace.

On the other hand, Tsuno et al. (2010) reported that approximately 4 to 16% of the European workforce had been exposed to some levels of mobbing in the workplace. In a large survey conducted in the UK health

sector, it was indicated that one-third of the workers were exposed to mobbing in the previous year (Quine, 1999). Research on mobbing in the Spanish public administration showed that 22% of the officials had been subjected to this type of violence (Chappell and Di Martino, 2006). Moreover, Scandinavian researchers have also shown a variation in the frequency of mobbing. In a Norwegian study of 7,986 people, it was found that about 8.6% of the employees in a variety of workplaces had been bullied over the past six months (Einarsen and Skogstad, 1996). The Finnish Quality of Life Surveys reported that 5% of employees were exposed to mobbing in the workplace in 1997. Then, both in 2003 and 2008, this figure increased to 6% (Lehto and Sutela, 2009). According to these statistics, it is clear that mobbing is a major phenomenon that should not be ignored and should be prevented in the work environment (Crawford, 1997; Murray, 2009).

Mobbing and effects on employees

Different terminologies for mobbing (i.e., bullying, harassment, psychological terror, or ganging up on someone) have been used interchangeably in the literature (Zapf, 1999). All of these terms focus on violence against a person. Lorenz (1963), who is an Austrian ethologist, originally used the term of *mobbing behavior* as intimidating animal behavior, where a group of small animals target a single animal in various ways. Later, Heinemann (1972) applied this concept to examine children's group behavior associated with harming a group member by the other group members. Although mobbing has existed for a long time, the scientific examination of its effects in the workplace is a concept that only evolved over the last two decades.

Leymann (1996), who researches on the negative psychological effects of mobbing in the workplace, may be considered a pioneer researcher in this concept. Leymann's research focused mainly on the attributes of mobbing behavior, as well as different forms and their psychological effect on the behavior of individuals who are exposed to such behavior. He defined mobbing in the workplace as a "[...] a social interaction through which one individual (seldom more) is attacked by one or more (seldom more than four) individuals almost on a daily basis and for periods of many months, bringing the person into an almost helpless position with potentially high risk of expulsion" (p. 168). According to Jennifer et al. (2003), to consider a behavior as mobbing, the person who is subjected to bullying needs to feel that they are incapable of defending himself/herself. Einarsen et al. (2003) emphasize the mobbing as frequent harassment and social exclusion that influences negatively an individual's ability to perform. Notelaers et al. (2006) highlight that to attribute processes to mobbing; the harassments need to be repeated consistently and

frequently, leading the victim to feel inferior and a target of negative social behaviors. To sum up, researchers agree with the definition that mobbing refers to situations in which an employee is subjected to long-lasting, recurrent, and serious negative or hostile acts and behaviors that are annoying and oppressing for the purposes of degrading individual or performance outcome.

Mobbing behaviors have been classified by Leymann (1996) into five different categories:

- (1) Self-expression and communication: This includes behaviors like silencing the victims, threatening the victims verbally, constantly criticizing the victim's work performance, constantly interrupting the victims when they are speaking, preventing the victims from making contact with others, etc.
- (2) Social relationships: This includes behaviors like banning the victim from speaking to colleagues, staying away from the victim, isolating the victim in a workspace far away from colleagues, etc.
- (3) Attacks on reputation: This includes behaviors like gossiping about the victim, ridiculing the victim's private life, making fun of the victim's handicap, ethnicity, or the way the victim moves or talks, etc.
- (4) Attacks on quality of work life: This includes behaviors like giving the victim meaningless work tasks, giving the victim tasks well below their qualifications, overloading the victim with extra tasks far above their qualifications, etc.
- (5) Attacks on health: This includes behaviors like giving the victim dangerous work tasks, threatening, attacking, or sexually harassing them.

Fundamentally, Leymann's classification describes conceptualization of mobbing as a process, not just an event, and the environmental conditions in which the victim experiences the injury. Any of the above behaviors may arise under certain conditions as a one-off and/or limited. When a negative behavior alone occurs, it would not be right to call it mobbing. In order to be able to diagnose mobbing, as mentioned earlier, it is important to understand that long-term and frequent repetition of many mobbing behaviors is required.

Studies have shown that mobbing is a serious and costly phenomenon with various negative consequences in the work environment for harassed employees (Karik and Yildiz, 2015). One of them is job satisfaction. Victims exposed to mobbing have low job satisfaction (Rodriguez-Munoz et al., 2009). In the literature, there is evidence that low job satisfaction leads to low productivity of employees. Another effect of mobbing is on the psychological health of the employees. For example, mobbing creates serious stress for employees (Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2002), and chronic work stress leads to burnout syndrome of the employee. Furthermore, since one of the main objectives of mobbing is to eliminate the

targeted employee, it is argued that the employee's turnover intention will increase (Yildiz, 2018).

Many studies have stated that all the negative consequences of mobbing mentioned above will lead to poor overall service quality of the organization. Therefore, it is clear that the workplace mobbing, which causes a decrease in the overall performance of the organization, is an important phenomenon that should be prevented (Ashraf and Khan, 2014). In this context, anti-mobbing programs can be organized to prevent or reduce mobbing behavior in organizations. The effect of these programs is to create awareness of mobbing. There is evidence from various sectors in the literature regarding the decreasing mobbing behavior in organizations through these programs (Minton, O'Mahoney and Conway-Walsh, 2013; Stagg and Sheridan, 2010).

Measurement instruments for mobbing

Workplace mobbing is a common phenomenon seen in almost every sector (Yildiz, 2016). As mentioned previously, it is important to know the existence and bad effects of mobbing. First of all, it is necessary to be aware of what mobbing is. It is possible to mention the existence of mobbing in the workplace if the negative behaviors targeted to a person are systematic. In the literature, a number of researchers tried to develop the instruments of mobbing to measure the negative attitude and behavior of the bullies. Later these instruments, using different sample groups, were used in many kinds of research. For instance, a 45-item Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terror (LIPT) and a 60-item Workplace Aggression Research Questionnaire (WAR-Q) have been commonly used to measure mobbing exposure levels. But, it is difficult to apply these instruments to employees in standard organizational surveys due to their lengths (Einarsen, Hoel and Notelaers, 2009). Accordingly, Einarsen and Raknes (1997) developed a shorter version of a mobbing scale called the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ). In this research, data were collected from male employees in a Norwegian marine engineering industry. Later, Einarsen et al. (2009) introduced a revised version named the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R), which contained 22 items. In this research, data were collected from employees in 70 organizations within the private, public, and voluntary sectors across Great Britain. A much shorter measurement tool to assess mobbing was developed by Simons et al. (2011), called the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised-United States (NAQR-US). This scale, which was developed for the nursing population specifically, consists of 4 items and one dimension. Recently, a new scale was developed by Steffgen et al. (2016) called The Luxembourg Workplace Mobbing Scale (LWMS), which is a pretty short scale with one dimension and a 5 items. In this research, data were

collected from employees in organizations in Luxembourg. However, it was not mentioned in which organizations the samples worked.

Mobbing in higher education institutions and the purpose of research

Two types of mobbing in higher education institutions (HEIs) can be considered depending on the link between victims and bullies: vertical mobbing, and horizontal mobbing. Vertical mobbing occurs when an administrator harasses his subordinate, or when one or more subordinates harass their administrator. The most effective form of mobbing is the harassment by the administrator because the power of authority in organizations is higher for the administrators. When harassment occurs between colleagues at the same hierarchical level, it is called horizontal mobbing.

The literature mentions the existence of mobbing in HEIs. For instance, McKay et al. (2008) found that academic mobbing in the university environment includes top-down mobbing by those in administrative and more senior positions, and peer-to-peer mobbing. Björkqvist et al. (1994), in their study at a university in Finland, stated that psychological harassment was widespread among the employees.

Keashly and Neuman (2010) argued that the academic environment has a number of organizational and work features that increase the likelihood of hostile interpersonal behaviors. Indeed, working conditions at HEIs are different from other workplaces. For instance, HEIs are prestigious workplaces that have a reward in terms of academic titles, administrative positions, etc., for academicians. In HEIs, an academician conducts the educational activities, scientific research, and publishing activities to meet his/her need for achievement. On the other hand, he/she can demand an administrative position to meet his/her power need (Maslow, 1954; McClelland, 1961). Accordingly, it could be said that the rich award system within HEIs leads to a strong competitive environment among academicians. Therefore, we believe that the strong competitive environment within HEIs can be a source of mobbing behavior for some academicians. Since the working conditions in HEIs are different than other workplaces, we decided to develop a more specific measurement instrument for academicians. Hence, this study purposes to explore the determinants of mobbing behaviors on academicians in HEIs. As distinct from other scales mentioned earlier, this study proposes a short version measurement instrument of mobbing specifically designed for the academic population and presents the results of the empirical investigation regarding its dimensionality. Similar to the literature presented on workplace mobbing above, this paper was organized into three parts. First, the research design and methodology

are provided. Then, the study findings are presented. And finally, the contributions of this study are developed.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

In this study, we used a two-stage methodology, including qualitative approaches and a quantitative scale application. In the first stage of the study, we developed scale items to measure mobbing, and then, in the second stage, we empirically tested the developed scale using data collected from the full-time academicians of eight HEIs in Turkey.

Generation of scale items

This scale was developed on the basis of the information given by victims of long-lasting harassment. First, we used a convergent interviewing technique to reveal the information needed. Convergent interviewing is an interviewing technique that defines, quite efficiently, the most salient issues in an organization. Carson et al. (2001) describe this process as a “cyclic series of in-depth interviews,” where the researchers use an unstructured approach and begin the interview by asking broad and open questions. After several iterations, the interviewers refine their questions to reach the specific questions needed to investigate the research phenomenon.

We conducted in-depth interviews with the academicians who suffer from mobbing behaviors previously. Items representing mobbing behaviors in the higher education context were developed based on several in-depth interviews using brainstorming with ten academicians (five males and five females). Specifically, in-depth interviews were conducted to develop a conceptual framework of mobbing behaviors in HEIs. More specifically, during these in-depth interviews, participants were mainly directed to share their thoughts about various components of mobbing behaviors. Using the Carson et al. (2001) guidelines for conducting convergent interviews, participants were asked one opening question: Can you please tell me what kind of mobbing behaviors you suffered from your administrator or colleague in your work environment? After twenty interviews, a battery of mobbing behaviors was created. As a result of this process, which was referred to as a cyclic series of in-depth interviews, when the saturation point was reached, a total of 10 mobbing behaviors were generated. Later, a pilot study was administered to five academicians. The wording of the questions was further improved based on the feedback received, and it was also reviewed/examined by four field experts.

We used a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 =

never to 5 = every time to measure respondents' exposure to mobbing levels on each item.

Sample size and procedure

The data used in this study were obtained from academicians working in the faculties of sport sciences at eight state universities located in Turkey. Because of the time, labor criteria, and the easy accessibility of the researcher to participants, such sampling was preferred. A sample frame of study-eligible academicians was created, and simple random sampling used to select the desired sample size of academicians. Some of the communication was provided via e-mail, the other part was obtained via pollsters. First, the participants were informed about the purpose and content of the study and invitations were sent to 328 academicians to participate in the study. Then, 170 voluntary participants were identified (52% return rate). As a result of the investigation, 5 forms were lacking information and therefore 165 forms were found appropriate for the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sample characteristics

Descriptive analysis showed that a majority of the academicians were male (73.3%), married (71.5%), between the ages of 26-35 (41.8%), and held a doctorate degree (69.7%). With respect to the academic rank, the majority of the academicians were instructor (35.8%), followed by assistant professors (20%). Most of the participants had no administrative duties (72.1%), and a total length of working life of 6-10 (24.8%), (Table 1).

Test for validity and reliability

Both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were used to assess the construct validity of the developed scale. To test for construct validity, scale items were analyzed using the principal components method of factor analysis with Varimax rotation (Table 2). Extraction was initially set to define factors with eigenvalues above 1.0. Absolute values were suppressed to 0.30. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test for sphericity were used to establish the suitability of the data for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1970). The KMO measure was 0.924, which was evaluated as “excellent.” Bartlett's Sphericity test resulted in ($\chi^2 = 982.348$; $p < 0.001$) significant findings, indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis (Hair et al., 1995).

Results of EFA showed the existence of two clean

Table 1. Sample characteristics.

Variables	Categories	f	%	Variables	Categories	f	%
Gender	Male	121	73.3	Marital status	Married	118	71.5
	Female	44	26.7		Single	47	28.5
Age	Less than 25	2	1.2	Title	Research Assistant	32	19.4
	26-35	69	41.8		Instructor	59	35.8
	36-45	50	30.3		Assistant Professor	33	20.0
	46-55	30	18.2		Associate Professor	29	17.6
	More than 56	14	8.5		Professor	12	7.3
Degree	Undergraduate	6	3.6	Total length of working life	Less than 5 years	36	21.8
	Master	44	26.7		6 to 10 years	41	24.8
	Doctorate	115	69.7		11 to 15 years	23	13.9
Administrative duties	No	119	72.1		16 to 20 years	18	10.9
	Yes	46	27.9		21 to 25 years	24	14.5
					More than 26 years	23	13.9

Table 2. Results of factor analysis and reliability coefficients.

Scale items	M	SD	Vertical/ horizontal mobbing	Vertical mobbing
1. How often your performance is being criticized as unjustified by your colleagues or administrator	2.29	1.12	.714	
2. How often you are being ignored or subjected to teasing by your colleagues or administrator	2.02	1.16	.713	
3. How often you are being exposed to gossip and slander about you by your colleagues or administrator	2.53	1.34	.830	
4. How often you are being harassed intimidating behaviors by your colleagues or administrator	2.22	1.28	.888	
5. How often your ability is being restricted by your colleagues or administrator	2.52	1.34	.786	
6. How often you are being had allegations or accusations made against you by your colleagues or administrator	2.51	1.32	.863	
7. How often you are being obstructed in terms of self-expression and communication by your colleagues or administrator	2.32	1.30	.751	
8. How often you are being assigned absurd duties, more trivial or unpleasant tasks by your administrator	2.36	1.23		.805
9. How often you are being pressured not to claim your work rights (e.g. promotion, career advancement, holiday entitlement, etc.) by your administrator	2.30	1.30		.609
10. How often you are being exposed to high or unmanageable workload intentionally by your administrator when compared others	2.44	1.28		.878
Mean	2.36			
Standard Deviation		0.95		
Percentage of Variance Explained			47.102	21.828
Cumulative Percentage of Variance Explained			47.102	68.930
Cronbach Alpha			.923	.752
AVE			.63	.60

dimensions explaining 68.93% of the total variance. Factor loadings of the scale items were relatively large,

ranging from 0.609 to 0.888. These were significantly more than the minimum acceptable threshold for

adequately representing the construct validity of 0.30 (Hair et al., 1995; Grandzol and Gershon, 1998). The first factor had seven items and explained the largest variance (47.10%) and, considering the content of the statements, we labeled this dimension of the construct “vertical/horizontal mobbing.” The second factor contained three items, and this explained 21.82% of the total variance and, considering the content of the statements, we labeled this dimension of the construct “vertical mobbing.” Finally, we named the scale as Mobbing Scale for Academicians (MS-A) in HEIs.

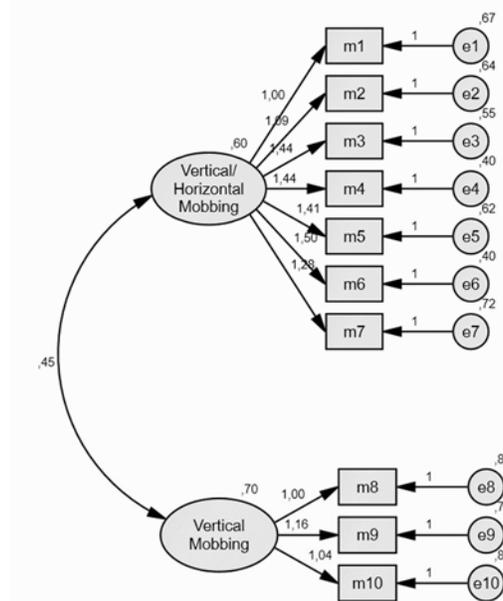
The scale represented as a latent construct had an average variance explained (AVE) value, which is higher than the minimum cutoff point of 0.50 (for the vertical/horizontal mobbing dimension it was 0.63, and for the vertical mobbing dimension it was 0.60), (Hair et al., 1995). The values of Cronbach’s alpha obtained for vertical/horizontal mobbing was 0.923 and vertical mobbing was 0.752, indicating very good reliability scores and exceeding the 0.70 threshold cited in the literature.

Confirmatory factor analysis

To further assess the proposed two-dimensional structure a measurement model was specified for MS-A, and CFA was performed. Several indices of fit were examined to

assess fit between the model and the data. The chi-square likelihood ratio test statistic, which assesses the overall model fit by testing whether the model replicates the pattern of covariations among the observed variables, was reported. A low and non-significant chi-square value indicated a good fit of the model to the data. Additional indices reported included comparative fit index (CFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), normed fit index (NFI), incremental fit index (IFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), (Browne and Cudeck, 1993; Byrne, 2001). Generally, a RMSEA value less than 0.08 is considered an acceptable fit. Values equal to or greater than 0.95 for CFI are considered acceptable. Similarly, values greater than 0.85 for AGFI, 0.90 for GFI, 0.95 for NFI, and 0.95 for IFI are considered a good fit.

For this study, the test for equality of covariances and means yields a chi-square of 62.2 with 34 degrees of freedom (p < .001). It is known that chi-square has limitations in assessing model fit due to its sensitivity to larger sample sizes. It was therefore advised to use other measures of model fit for a more pragmatic model fit evaluation process. Strong model fit indices were observed in the CFA and applied to the MS-A. These model fit values meet the criteria suggested in the literature (Browne and Cudeck, 1993; Byrne, 2001). Figure 1 shows the measurement model and the results of model fit indices.



	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	GFI	AGFI	NFI	IFI	RMSEA
Model	62.2	34	1.82	.971	.928	.884	.938	.971	.071

Figure 1. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of MS-A.

Correlation analysis

The next set of analyses involved further assessment of dimensionality of the MS-A. The sample correlation matrix of the scale items was first examined using Bagozzi's (1981) rules for "convergence" in measurement. The rules indicate that items representing a distinct dimension should correlate highly with each other. Table 3 presents that the correlations among all scale items are significant and positive ($r > 0$). The strongest correlation was found between "being harassed

intimidating behaviors" (item 4) and "being had allegations or accusations" (item 6), indicating that when the accusations increase, scary behaviors also increase. A careful examination of the correlations matrix indicated that the rules for convergence held. The first seven items represented the vertical/horizontal mobbing, second three items represented the vertical mobbing of the scale. These converged very well by exhibiting uniformly high correlations amongst themselves, thus confirming the proposed dimensionality of the MS-A.

Table 3. Inter-item correlations of the MS-A.

Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Item 1	1								
Item 2	.604**	1							
Item 3	.565**	.588**	1						
Item 4	.632**	.645**	.727**	1					
Item 5	.527**	.514**	.684**	.696**	1				
Item 6	.547**	.626**	.744**	.778**	.733**	1			
Item 7	.527**	.548**	.615**	.640**	.638**	.662**	1		
Item 8	.323**	.392**	.382**	.339**	.392**	.386**	.349**	1	
Item 9	.425**	.455**	.469**	.491**	.509**	.488**	.572**	.445**	1
Item 10	.314**	.357**	.310**	.262**	.356**	.311**	.334**	.567**	.500**

** Correlations are significant at $p < .01$.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to develop a mobbing measurement instrument for academicians in HEIs. The newly developed scale in this study, named MS-A, measures how often the academicians are exposed to harassing behaviors. We argue that this scale will present to be a valid and reliable instrument to measure mobbing in the higher education environment. Our empirical results demonstrate the existence of two clear dimensions, which are "vertical/horizontal mobbing" and "vertical mobbing". Findings of the study present strong empirical evidence regarding the validity and reliability of the scale. Both EFA and CFA yield strong support for the two-factor model of mobbing in the HEI.

Literature provides a number of mobbing scales. However, due to some shortcomings, Steffgen et al. (2016) argue that these scales can be criticized. For instance, LIPT and WAR-Q scales are criticized due to their length. In this aspect, they are rather long and therefore less economical in terms of time and labor (Einarsen et al., 2009; Steffgen et al., 2016). Similarly, Steffgen et al. (2016) criticize the NAQ-R that only limited data exist on its measures' psychometric properties. Additionally, Simons et al. (2011) assert that long scales seem to place an unnecessary burden on employees and researchers alike. Therefore, a short measurement

instrument that is efficient will facilitate better understanding of mobbing and better evaluations of the effectiveness of any interventions. Similarly, Steffgen et al. (2016) also assert that shorter measurements are more economical. Considering these criticisms, the MS-A scale with 10 items could be more efficient for academicians in HEIs.

The mobbing instruments mentioned above can also be considered in terms of their contents. For instance, NAQ-R has three dimensions: work-related bullying, person-related bullying, and physically intimidating bullying. Nevertheless, when compared with NAQ-R, it will be seen that MS-A does not include any items measuring the physically intimidating mobbing. The reason for this is that a malicious physical abuse may be considered by academicians as a forensic case. On the other hand, a recent scale, LWMS, suffers from two shortcomings: First, it is a pretty short scale with only five items, and it has not included some psychometric properties for academicians (i.e., How often your ability is being restricted by your colleagues or administrator). Second, although this scale has large samples, it does not include the academic sample. Simons et al. (2011), who developed the NAQR-US for the nursing population specifically, argue that scales developed for a specific population are more effective and efficient measurement tools. Similarly, we believe that MS-A will be an effective

and efficient scale to determine perceived mobbing behaviors for the academic population.

The literature emphasizes that short and simple scales yield important advantages in terms of administration and respondent fatigue during the data collection process and improve data quality (Yildiz and Kara, 2017; Ziegler, Kemper and Kruyen, 2014). Some studies underline that scales developed for a specific area are more effective (Yildiz and Kara, 2009). Therefore, when viewed from this perspective, we believe that MS-A is suitable for academicians.

To sum up, as distinct from other scales mentioned previously, MS-A proposes an economic and short version measurement instrument with the strong psychometric aspect of mobbing specifically designed for the HEIs. Einarsen and Mikkelsen (2002) emphasize that exposure to systematic and prolonged aggressive behaviors at the workplace are highly injurious to the victim's health. According to many researchers, mobbing is the antecedent of many problems in the workplace, such as occupational burnout (Yildiz, 2015), low job performance (Divincova and Sivakova, 2014), justice beliefs (Adoric and Kvartuc, 2007), absenteeism, and turnover intention (Yildiz, 2018), etc. Vega and Comer (2005) stated that mobbing behaviors can create a climate of psychological threat that inhibits individual and group commitment in the workplace. When mobbing takes place inside a HEI, no matter at what level, the process of education can be interrupted. Therefore, students may suffer indirectly from this process as academicians and students together grapple for educational stability (Blasé and Blasé, 2003; Lewis, 2004). Further, if mobbing is allowed to continue for a long time, the likelihood of other colleagues being involved in this situation will increase. This situation will create a more severe conflict environment (Asunakutlu and Safran, 2006). Consequently, to reduce such negative consequences in HEIs, first, the presence of mobbing behavior should be determined. At this point, we believe that MS-A will be effective to expose the mobbing. Through this instrument, potential mobbing behavior can be eliminated or reduced. These efforts can contribute to creating a healthy work environment and organizational performance.

Limitations and future research

Some limitations of this study should be noted. First, our study used a relatively small sample of academicians working in the faculties of sport sciences in HEIs in Turkey. Therefore, future studies could use more comprehensive samples and sampling methods in order to significantly improve the generalizability of the results. Second, this study was conducted in one country; thus, cultural factors in the study context could have played some role in our findings. Hence, future research should replicate the results of this study in different cultural

environments. Third, the reliability and validity, and two-factor structure of the MS-A, needs to be tested and confirmed in different contexts. Finally, future studies should investigate the relationship between mobbing (as measured with MS-A) and other important outcomes, such as employee performance, occupational burnout, organizational commitment, turnover intention, etc. We expect that such studies would confirm a significant relationship between mobbing and outcome variables in the HEIs.

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APPENDIX: Wording of Mobbing Scale for Academicians (MS-A) in Higher Education Institutions

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Every time
1. How often your performance is being criticized as unjustified by your colleagues or administrator	1	2	3	4	5
2. How often you are being ignored or subjected to teasing by your colleagues or administrator	1	2	3	4	5
3. How often you are being exposed to gossip and slander about you by your colleagues or administrator	1	2	3	4	5
4. How often you are being harassed intimidating behaviors by your colleagues or administrator	1	2	3	4	5
5. How often your ability is being restricted by your colleagues or administrator	1	2	3	4	5
6. How often you are being had allegations or accusations made against you by your colleagues or administrator	1	2	3	4	5
7. How often you are being obstructed in terms of self-expression and communication by your colleagues or administrator	1	2	3	4	5
8. How often you are being assigned absurd duties, more trivial or unpleasant tasks by your administrator	1	2	3	4	5
9. How often you are being pressured not to claim your work rights (e.g. promotion, career advancement, holiday entitlement, etc.) by your administrator	1	2	3	4	5
10. How often you are being exposed to high or unmanageable workload intentionally by your administrator when compared others	1	2	3	4	5