

# Opinions of special education teachers on mobbing

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## ABSTRACT

Mobbing is a recurring form of mistreatment of workers at work. The purpose of the study is to examine in detail the views of special education teachers on mobbing. The qualitative case study approach was used in the research to collect in-depth information from special education teachers on mobbing. The research data were collected from the special education teachers' opinions on mobbing survey, which was created using Google Documents. One hundred (100) special education teachers working in the field of special education participated in the study. The findings of the study were analyzed by two academicians who are professionals in the field, using the descriptive analysis method. The study found that special education teachers were highly subjected to mobbing by administrators, experienced high rates of mobbing, and emotions, such as anger, stress, and sadness after mobbing, and were mainly subjected to professional and verbal mobbing. It was concluded that special education teachers used techniques such as compliance, indifference and exercise of their legal rights against mobbing.

**Keywords:** Mobbing, special education, special education teacher, qualitative research.

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## INTRODUCTION

The English term "mobbing" comes from the word "mob". The word "mob" refers to rudeness, which is related to unnecessary violence and is contrary to the law. The word is derived from the Latin word *mobile vulgus*. The word *mobbing* means to surround a person, to attack or distress him/her by a group. The Turkish Language Association uses the word *bezdiri* for mobbing and the word *bezdirici* for the person who executes mobbing (TDK, 2020).

In the literature, mobbing is used with different concepts, such as intimidation, harassment, emotional abuse, violence, psychological violence, psychological aggression for intimidation, psychological terror, threat, attack, bullying, and enforcement (Tınaz, 2008). In the national literature, the term "mobbing" is used to mean emotional abuse, psychological terror, psychological violence, emotional lynching, pressure, workplace bullying, and all activities aimed at bullying employees at work (Pelit and Kılıç, 2012).

The term of mobbing was first used in the 1960s by the Austrian scientist Konrad Lorenz, who studied animal behavior. Lorenz used the term mobbing to refer to the situation where small groups of animals collectively

attack a stronger and lonely animal and discard it from the group (Westhues, 2003; Laleoğlu and Özmete, 2013). Heinz (1996) defines mobbing as "a form of psychological terror that reflects a hostile and unethical communication systematically directed at an individual by one or more persons (for various reasons, such as differences of views and beliefs, jealousy and gender discrimination)" (Çelik and Peker, 2010).

Zapf and Einarsen (2001) defines mobbing as bullying in the workplace, harassing, disturbing, socially excluding someone, or negatively affecting one's work duties. Zapf (1999) explains the concept of mobbing as abusing, harassing, hurting, excluding or harming the individual's job in a way that reduces the reputation and status of the individual (Laleoğlu and Özmete, 2013).

Namie and Namie (2003) suggest that mobbing includes types of negative behaviors in the workplace and that all kinds of such behaviors are intended to inflict pain to the target individual and are called mobbing for as long as they are effective.

Pehlivan (1993) stated that mobbing can arise from cultural, moral and material reasons, and that individuals may try to overcome their own failures, inadequacies, by

attributing meanings to their behavior by tugging others, and this situation will develop a style of miscommunication, which is often called gossip, which includes biased and purposeful interpretations. Laleoğlu and Özmete (2013) revealed a 5-stage structure in the scheme of the stages of mobbing adapted by Davenport et al. (2003). Stage 1 is the stage in which the first conflict begins and mobbing does not appear as a behavior, while stage 2 is the stage in which mobbing begins and aggressive actions increase. In stage 3, management usually begins to take part in the negative cycle and in stage 4, the individual being mobbed is labeled as a problematic person with mental problems by the environment that creates the mobbing. Dismissal or compulsory resignation is likely to occur. In stage 5, the events and trauma experienced in the process trigger stress disorder. Emotional stress and subsequent psychosomatic illnesses continue, even intensify, and consequently termination of employment occurs.

Mobbing is also an abuse of power. The bully enjoys the distress of the victim and the weakness of his/her emotions (The Harvard Mental Health Letter, 2001; Yaman, 2012). On the other hand, mobbing becomes evident as aggressive behaviors that are not reflected outward such as abuse (Fineman et al., 2005; Yaman, 2012).

According to the information included in the 1998 report of the International Labor Organization (ILO), teachers are in the group that are at high risk of being exposed to emotional violence. Mobbing, which may have negative effects on individuals, organizations and societies, can also cause undesirable effects on teachers and the organizations they work with. In educational organizations where mobbing is experienced, it may be difficult for teachers to fulfill their duties in a qualified and efficient manner. Communication and cooperation between teachers is weakened, and team spirit is lost. Teachers' commitment to the organization may decrease. In organizations where mobbing is experienced, the acceleration of personnel turnover and damage to the organizational image is an expected result (Ehi, 2011).

Daşçı-Sönmez and Cemaloğlu (2018) found that teachers being mobbed experienced chronic fear and anxiety, were exposed to physical symptoms such as fatigue, headache, abdominal pain, were absent from work, their organizational commitment levels decreased, their levels of stress and burnout increased, their job and life satisfaction levels decreased, and their self-efficacy perceptions decreased. In addition to these, it was observed that employees exposed to mobbing behavior in educational organizations tend towards organizational silence behavior based on self-protection and fear.

Special education teachers are responsible for supporting individuals with special needs. Mobbing is a destructive behavior that decreases motivation and causes mental disorders in later stages. It is crucial that the opinions of special education teachers on mobbing in terms of the quality of education are investigated. The

purpose of this study is to take the opinions of special education teachers on mobbing.

### Research problem

This study aims to investigate special education teachers' opinions on mobbing in depth. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the mobbing definitions of special education teachers?
- 2) What are the situations of special education teachers subjected to mobbing?
- 3) Who executes mobbing to special education teachers?
- 4) What types of mobbing are special education teachers subjected to?
- 5) How do special education teachers feel when they are subjected to mobbing?
- 6) What kind of path do special education teachers follow against mobbing?

## METHODOLOGY

### Research model

The method of this study, which aims to reveal the opinions of special education teachers on mobbing, is a qualitative case study.

The key feature of the qualitative case study is the in-depth investigation of one or a few situations. In other words, factors related to the situation (environment, individuals, events, processes, etc) are investigated with a holistic approach and the focus is on how they affect the relevant situation and how they are affected by the relevant situation (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). Case study research requires the investigation of a situation within the real life, current context or environment (Yin, 2009).

The case study is a design within the framework of a qualitative research that can be both the result and the focus of the research. The case study is a description of a situation in which a researcher collects detailed and in-depth information about real life, a current limited system (a situation), or multiple constrained systems (situations) in a given time through multiple information sources (for example, observations, interviews, audio-visual materials, documents, and reports) or is a qualitative approach in which a researcher puts forth the themes of the situation. The unit of analysis in the case study can be more than one situation (multi-site study) or a single situation (single-site study) (Creswell, 2013).

### Study group

The study group of the research consists of 100 special

education teachers. Purposive sampling methods were used while recruiting the study group of the research (Table 1). Demographic information of the participants, such as gender, the university they graduated, their professional experience year, and the teaching branch in

which they serve in special education were collected. The demographic characteristics of the participants of the study were formed as follows: the study group of the research consists of 31 male and 69 female teachers (Table 2).

**Table 1.** Teaching branches of participants.

Teaching branch	Mentally handicapped teaching	Hearing impaired teaching	Visually impaired teaching	Special education teaching	Elementary school teaching	Pre-school teaching
Number of participant	55	16	4	20	4	1

**Table 2.** Professional experience years of participants.

Professional experience years	0-2 year	3-6 year	7-11 year	11-20 year	21 year and more
Number of participant	26	40	17	12	5

### Data collection instruments

The data were collected through a semi-structured interview form with the special education teacher. Semi-structured interview questions consist of two parts. Part 1 includes the teachers' gender, the university/department they graduated and their professional experience year, while part 2 includes interview questions.

### Data collection and analysis

The special education teachers' opinions on mobbing survey was finalized by taking the opinions of two academicians who are experts in qualitative research methods. The data were collected from the Special Education Teachers' Opinions on Mobbing Survey created using Google Documents. The survey was sent to special education teachers through e-mail, WhatsApp and Facebook.

Demographic information of the participants such as gender, the university they graduated, and their professional experience year, and the teaching branch in which they serve in special education were collected. It aimed to increase the external reliability of the study by revealing the participant characteristics with these data. The precaution that the researcher can take with regard to external reliability is to clearly define the individuals who are the research data source (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).

The research was analyzed with the descriptive analysis method, one of the analysis methods used in qualitative research. This approach allows the obtained data to be summarized and interpreted according to previously determined themes (Yıldırım and Şimşek,

2013). The data are arranged according to the themes revealed by the research questions. Sub-themes were created by analyzing the answers to the research questions. It was created by two professionals in the field of themes and sub-themes. Consensus among experts was calculated as 85%.

## RESULTS

### Definitions

When the responses of the participants to the question of "Can you describe mobbing, what comes to mind when you say mobbing?" were analyzed, the following results were obtained.

Special education teachers defined mobbing as psychological pressure, physical and mental pressure, intentional pressure, being maligned, being threatened, being despised, psychological violence, unlawful enforcement, being offended, slow execution of work, imposition of inappropriate requests and behaviors, being under excessive control, subject to negative attitudes, pressure, bullying, lawlessness, social pressure, health deterioration, unnecessary pressure, suppression, deliberate behavior, being digested, professional and social life intervention, discrimination, intimidation, emotional pressure, exclusion, maltreatment, psychological imposition, fear, depreciation, administrative bullying, social isolation, harassment, exploitation, verbal violence, social bullying, task intervention, compulsion to unwanted work, being mocked, giving extra duty, ignoring, not giving choice, psychological war, exposure to self-esteem lowering behavior, and behaviors that reduce the will to work.

Examples of the answers given by special education teachers regarding the definition of mobbing are as follows:

K-1: *'It is all of the pressures put on an individual by managers or working groups just to satisfy their wishes and desires, and at the same time causing discomfort to the individual'.*

K-3: *'It is a form of bullying experienced in the working environment by verbal, physical or gesture-mimic'.*

K-4: *'It is being forced to do something involuntarily'.*

K-8: *'Harassment'.*

K-7: *'Pressure'.*

K-9: *'It is employer pressure or principal pressure; teachers who are not special educators attacking special education branch teachers just to prove their professional competence, is also mobbing'.*

K-11: *'Attacking, insulting, using power'.*

K-13: *'Unfair administrative pressure, forcing teachers to work outside their job descriptions; not taking our opinion in a situation that involves our decisions'.*

K-14: *'Pressure at work, psychological violence'.*

K-17: *'When your work is being underestimated by others; when you are made to look irrelevant; when others feel that their work is superior to yours or act like they know everything'.*

K-18: *'Harassment, pressure, intimidation'.*

K-19: *'Any action that will discourage work. The social, emotional and psychological pressure of administrators or teachers against their colleagues in educational institutions is also termed mobbing. Exclusion or being held responsible for jobs outside of the job description, giving responsibilities and duties above the potential of the person, leaving the teacher alone and without support in the field of work, not taking the teacher's words, advice and thoughts seriously. A set of negative, corrosive, self-esteeming behaviors that are put forward within the scope of mobbing policies specifically applied to the person'.*

K-23: *'Using power and authority to impose and enforce things'.*

K-28: *'Psychological warfare'.*

K-29: *'Being forced to do something; not given the right to*

*choose'.*

K-31: *'Segregation in the workplace; others acting as if you don't exist; unethical behavior despite it is legal, sometimes unlawful behaviors, malfeasance, giving extra tasks, making fun with words'.*

K-33: *'Being exposed to unwanted behavior'.*

K-35: *'To dominate the individual by putting the individual under pressure in psychological, social, material or spiritual aspects and to make the person feel bad'.*

K-39: *'Pressure, intervention in the workplace'.*

K-43: *'Suppression, intimidation, exploitation'.*

K-44: *'It is the direct or indirect psychological pressure and violence on a person by people who are above or equal to them'.*

K-47: *'Being right and unwillingly withdrawing from ones material or moral rights; the manager acts unfairly to the employee by using an iron hand in a velvet'.*

### **Subjected to mobbing**

When the responses of the participants to the question of "What are the situations of special education teachers subjected to mobbing?" were analyzed, the following results were obtained: mobbing victim, being under the influence of the bully who mobs, advocating for the mobbing victim, both being victimized and being a mere spectator and I did not encounter mobbing. Eighty-three (83) of the participant in the study stated that they were victims of mobbing. 6 of the participants stated that they did not encounter mobbing or that there was no mobbing in the working environment. Some of the special education teachers' opinions on the question are as follows:

K-18: *'Recently (about 5-6 years ago) I was intensely mobbed by the school principal. I was a victim and I defended the victims.'*

K-19: *'Yes, I was faced with mobbing, he was a special education teacher who mobbed, he forgot his past when he became a principal, I complained about him.'*

K-22: *'I've been subjected to mobbing at different establishments in my working life. While I was working as an untenured teacher, I was pressured to keep watch even though I was not assigned. When I objected to this, my name was written in a black box on the watch lists. I was verbally humiliated in front of my colleagues. When I started working in another institution, I encountered many*

negative attitudes. As I was the only special education teacher in my institution, I was sidelined by untenured teachers. The reason was because I queried the untenured teachers who were not regular in their classes as the head of the class. As a result of this incident, I was also mobbed by my school principal. My principal threatened me by showing other teachers inquiry files. I was made responsibility for all events. To date my school principal still mobs me by ignoring me; even throughout the school. I am expected to fix all the negativities on my own.'

K-24: 'I was exposed to mobbing for 3 months towards the end of my 2 years in the first institution I worked in. I was forced to resign. Despite this, I made a justified termination with the notary's approval without submitting, and the principal verbally threated me during this process. He said I wouldn't be able to teach again. Actually, I was not afraid. I knew my rights. Since the cases have been suspended due to the pandemic, the process has not been finalized for now. The process will continue in the future as I reserve retrospective right for five years.'

K-27: 'I think I have been mobbed since I started teaching'.

K-43: 'In the first year I worked, I was very troubled by the school principal. My salary was higher than the other staffs at that time, and because he (principal) could not handle it he entered the policy of defamation. He was constantly saying bad things and false statements about me both to my friends in the working environment and to the owners of the institution. If I said I was off the profession at that time, it would be appropriate.'

K-47: 'As a person who experienced intensive mobbing, I forced to sign or layoff a teacher in rehabilitation centers. They signed on behalf of me and now I have an accusation of filing a false report for forgery of documents in my registry. I mean, 95 of the 100 rehabilitation centers in Turkey has commercial purposes only. I intend to write scientific theses on this subject in the future and publish them. I always wish to be with good people from Allah. I hope our dear children will encounter people and institutions that have adopted professional ethics'.

K-66: 'In case of mobbing, I am experiencing withdrawal and dissatisfaction with the job. I lose my confidence in people who mob me. I have witnessed or experienced mobbing many times. Even if I am not upset or worn out, being in a mobbing environment causes tension and stress.'

K-68: 'I think I was a mobbed teacher. I'm trying to hold on psychologically'.

K-83: 'Administrators apply mobbing to all teachers rather

than a teacher. I always defended the victim. I was insulted by spoken words and when I asked why? Their response is, "I did not mean you". I guess they think that there is no mobbing in crowded places. They are not afraid of applying mobbing. Either there is a deficit in the laws or their unions support mobbing. There is no other explanation for this.'

K-87: 'I was mobbed once. My school principal personally mobbed me. For two years, he came to my class every day with school guidance counselor and he would have me inspected. The principal had my colleague with the same title inspect my plans, studies, student papers and class notebook. Every week he asked me for defense with a yellow envelope. He complained to the district national education directorate twice with slanders; however he could not prove his claims. He prevented my right to petition, tried to remove my petition from the register and sometimes tore it. I complained about him, with proofs of my complaint and he was given a salary cut. But the provincial directorate of national education reduced his penalty. I was insulted and threatened; I was unfairly scolded in front of my colleagues and walked over at school. He sent school cleaners to my class in turns every day, and then he complained to the National Education with the people he sent, presenting them as witnesses. His allegations were very humiliating and hurtful; he could not prove anything and as such I was not punished. As if that was not enough, he accused me of disrespecting the national flag, and even not participating in the Turkish National Anthem. He complained again with issues such as insulting the superior, but because he could not prove it, I was acquitted. As a result, I am a teacher who defends himself alone against provincial and district national education directorates.'

### **Who executes/executed mobbing to special education teachers?**

As a result of the data obtained from the research, 71 of the special education teachers are/were being mobbed by the administrators, 15 of them by the teachers, 10 of them by the parents and 4 of them by the external environment.

### **Types of subject to mobbing**

Special education teachers who participated in the study stated that they were subjected to verbal, physical, personal and professional mobbing. 25 of the participants were subjected to professional mobbing, 24 of the participants subjected to oral mobbing, 12 of the participants were subjected to oral and personal mobbing, 12 of the participants were subjected to oral and professional mobbing, 7 of the participants were

subjected to professional and personal mobbing, 6 of the participants were subjected to oral and personal mobbing, 4 of the participants were subjected to personal mobbing, 1 of the participants was subjected to physical and verbal mobbing, 1 of the participants was subjected to verbal, physical and personal mobbing, 2 of the participants were subjected to professional, personal, verbal and physical mobbing. 6 of the participants stated that they were not subjected to mobbing.

Some of the opinions of the participants about subject to mobbing are as follows:

K-41: *'Personal (the principal telling other teachers that I was doing things that I did not do, inciting the teachers against me), verbal and professional (the principal interfering with my job, examining my students' notebooks and finding faults etc.).'*

K-64: *'Verbal mobbing, being ignored psychologically by the administration, mobbing towards the profession. I was exposed to personal mobbing by parents of my students over my appearance.'*

K-74: *'I was subjected to verbal and professional mobbing. The same institution director physically applied physical mobbing to exactly 3 people.'*

K-24: *'Verbal threat...against my profession...Especially against special education teachers, most of the school principals are unconscious and make things difficult for us by taking away the rights given to us by the state.'*

K-36: *'I was subjected to physical, verbal, professional and personal mobbing. I was mobbed because of my marital status and health problem (I survived cancer, and I am divorced). I was mobbed about my personality, my motherhood. I was subjected to verbal molestation by the school principal, which went so far as to say let's go to dinner alone. The school principal slandered that I had psychological problems.'*

K-93: *'When I was 3 minutes late to the working hour, the school principal directly asked the on-duty teacher to keep a report about me without asking me...The on-duty teacher, regretting and saying that he had no information about me, kept a report about me by force...The principal, who made the report by force, never stayed at the school until 17:00 even though his work ended at 17:00 every day. The school closes at 16:00.'*

### Emotions after mobbing

The participants gave the following answers to the research question on how special education teachers feel when they are mobbed: angry, confused, resentful, nervous, sad, no longer willing to live, upset, suicidal,

feeling worthless, feeling revenge, disappointed, professional inadequacy, burnout, stressful, hopeless, depressed, asocial behavior, scared and resigned, reckless.

Some examples of the opinions of the participants regarding the research question are as follows:

K-25: *'Of course, first of all, resentment ... be surprised ... anger and even tried to resign ... My family has turned me off my decision many times ... This worthlessness is really intimidating people.'*

K-47: *'Resentful, angry, I had the ambition of revenge after leaving my job. I will take my right away by filing a lawsuit for moral damages.'*

K-68: *'I get angry, I can be obsessed too much, and the words spoken resonate in my mind from time to time. But after a while my anger goes away.'*

K-76: *'After systematic mobbing, I was psychologically affected and started to show panic attack symptoms. I thought the person was abusive. Worst of all, I was prevented from communicating the situation to the superiors. The district national education directorate did not accept my petition.'*

K-77: *'Sometimes I feel sad, sometimes angry. Sometimes I want revenge. In general, I feel very worthless.'*

K-82: *'I felt more upset, angry and suicidal.'*

K-29: *'I felt angry, upset, and I did not want to live.'*

K-51: *'When the school principal publicly threatened everyone, I took it personal. I got angry when a man threatened 30 people. After all, when I go to my house, it can disturb my nerves, even though I have nothing to do with the incident, by wondering whether he means me, to whom he said, why he said. As a citizen, I feel sorry for my country. If no one is opposed to these threats, it is necessary to stop and think. I think all the teachers have been mobbed at least 3 times in 5 years.'*

K-95: *'I felt a sense of burnout, professional inadequacy, despair.'*

### The way/method followed against mobbing

The participants gave the following answers to the research question asked about the ways and methods of special education teachers after being subjected to mobbing: seeking reconciliation, obeying, ignoring, seeking legal rights, opposing without suppressing anger, continuing to carry out the same duties and

responsibilities as required by law, resigning, verbal discussion, interrupting communication and fighting.

Some examples of the opinions of the participants regarding the research question are as follows:

K-1: *'I continued my duty as stated by the law and did not make requests that caused me to be subjected to mobbing.'*

K-5: *'I couldn't suppress my anger and contrasted.'*

K-6: *'I fought.'*

K-7: *'I sought a compromise, but I turned the situation in my favor by saying my rights.'*

K-8: *'I gave away.'*

K-9: *'I ignored it.'*

K-12: *'I only had verbal arguments.'*

K-14: *'In the same way I responded verbally, sought my rights and finally resigned.'*

K-16: *'I stopped communication.'*

K-18: *'I used my petition right to notify the superiors, but I could not get any results.'*

K-20: *'I sought a compromise.'*

K-22: *'I bowed because, as I was a candidate/no tenured teacher, calling my right could open a way to cancellation of the contract. I was afraid. Besides, when I was an untenured teacher, I gave in because I needed money.'*

K-23: *'I exercised my legal rights.'*

K-24: *'I learned my rights with the help of lawyers. I made a rightful termination from the notary. The lawsuit process has now stopped. The process is getting a little tedious. The administration is trying to put pressure on threats.'*

K-25: *'I talked to my union and said that I would meet with the school principal and file a lawsuit. The other party apologized.'*

K-26: *'Seeking a way of reconciliation and unfortunately ignoring it after a while, focusing on the profession.'*

K-30: *'I resigned.'*

K-36: *'I can bow down to keep things from time to time. I don't want to make a big thing of it. I don't want to deal with it any more. However, in cases where my personal values and professional rights are violated, I try to defend my rights by resorting to legal remedies on matters that*

*are important to me.'*

### **Suggestions of special education teachers to prevent mobbing**

Special education teachers gave the following answers to the research question to get their suggestions on what to do to prevent mobbing; teachers should know their legal rights and responsibilities well, ensuring the equality of the conditions of special education teachers working in rehabilitation centers and state-special education schools, personal rights such as salary and working time, ensuring awareness of special education, unionization, knowing the regulations well, being professional administrators in the field of special education, making parents' supportive education compulsory, improving personal rights, ensuring the association of special education teachers, non-field assignments should be stopped in the field of special education, employment of qualified administrators, prevention of mobbing for teachers working in rehabilitation centers due to 'signature', and use of different systems instead of 'signature', promoting and raising awareness of the special education teaching profession, carrying out works that can reach the masses such as public service announcements and brochures, abolishing untenured teaching and supervision of school administrations by a board specialized in special education.

Some examples of the opinions of the participants regarding the research question are as follows:

K-1: *'No pressure can harm someone who fulfills his/her legal rights and responsibilities. If the person is uncomfortable with the mobbing practices, he/she should defend his/her rights through all legal means without fear. After all, everyone has responsibilities and accountability places within the state order. In this context, regardless of the position, no one can do anything for the benefit or pleasure of anyone.'*

K-2: *'Supervising rehabilitation centers and school administrators, enacting teacher profession law can be provided.'*

K-3: *'When school administration, department chiefs, county/province national education directors executed mobbing, seeking the right becomes more difficult for the teacher. There are difficulties in reaching higher authorities. When it is reached, the situation reaches up to threats. There is an application like Presidency's Communication Center. But when a complaint is made, it is answered by the educational directorate of the province or county you are in. I am in favor of imposing sanctions on those who practice in mobbing in general, not specifically for special education teachers. There is bullying wherever people are, I think the way to prevent it*

*is by punishment.'*

K-4: *'I recommend that teachers working in rehabilitation centers should keep their salaries, working hours and hours as same as teachers working in public schools.'*

K-5: *'I recommend the establishment of an association whose rights will be protected and to work actively.'*

K-7: *'It is necessary to give managers a serious special education awareness seminar. The number of administrators who do not know special education is high.'*

K-10: *'I recommend that special education be known by everybody and education should be given at all levels.'*

K-12: *'It is necessary to increase the value of special education teachers in Guidance and Research Centers, as they are under pressure by guidance counselors and administrators. Special education teachers should be more involved as administrative staffs.'*

K-13: *'The teacher should know the regulations and job description well.'*

K-15: *'The school administration should have information about special education; if possible, the administrators should be special education teachers. The administration should know all legal rights regarding special education.'*

K-18: *'Merit must be achieved.'*

K-22: *'It is necessary to allocate more quotas for special education in teacher appointments. Graduate teachers who receive special education in addition to untenured teachers in institutions should not be a minority. It is necessary for the administration to take in-service trainings related to the special education field. Parents should be made aware of their approach to teachers.'*

K-23: *'Unionizing, learning about rights and reading. I would recommend reading the special education services regulation, which is 10-15 pages, rather than asking if there is something like this on Facebook to the groups if anyone has any information about it.'*

K-25: *'I recommend that people who have information about special education become administrators.'*

K-28: *'It should be made compulsory especially for parents to receive support education.'*

K-29: *'Untenured teaching should be abolished.'*

K-34: *'I recommend protecting personal rights and increasing supervision.'*

## DISCUSSION

In the study, special education teachers defined mobbing as psychological pressure, physical pressure, intentional pressure, social pressure, unnecessary pressure and emotional pressure, psychological violence, verbal violence (Pelit and Kılıç, 2012), slandering (Sloan et al., 2010), being threatened, impairment of health (Westhues, 2005; Hecker, 2007), belittlement, ridicule (Tınaz, 2006), psychological imposition, illegal enforcement, lawlessness, administrative enforcement, giving extra duty, being obliged to unwanted work, not giving choice (Hubert and Veldhoven, 2001), intervention in professional and social life, being hurt, being exposed to negative attitudes, being mistreated, being subjected to behaviors that lower self-esteem, psychological warfare, behaviors that reduce the desire to work (Leymann, 1996; Maarit, 2003; Yaman, 2007), bullying (Westhues, 2006; Koç, 2006), being suppressed and intimidated (Brodsky, 1976), intentional behavior, discrimination, exclusion, and neglection (Zapf, 1999; Namie and Namie, 2003) and harassment, intimidation, and exploitation (Akı, 2006). It was revealed that the short definitions of the participants conformed to the mobbing definitions used in studies on mobbing.

Special education teachers stated that they are the victim of mobbing, being under the influence of the bully who practices mobbing, advocating for the mobbing victim, being a mobbing victim but being a mere spectator, and not being subjected to mobbing. Tınaz (2006) categorized those who play a role in the mobbing process as those who execute mobbing (aggressors, harassers), victims of mobbing and silent mobbing spectators. In their study, Salmivalli et al. (1996) grouped the people participating in the study as people who mobbed, who helped the mobbing, who created an environment, were triggerman and supporters of the mobbed (Cemaloğlu, 2007). In this study, it was revealed that victims assume both advocate and silent spectator roles. It was also revealed in the study that the participants stated that mobbing behaviors in the community could be more easily demonstrated by those who practice mobbing. It was also observed in this study that many people could be victims of mobbing at the same time, and the victims in the community acted in advocate and silent spectator roles.

Special education teachers stated that mobbing is executed by school principals, teachers, parents and the external environment. Çivilidağ and Sargin (2011) stated that teachers are in intensive communication and interaction with their superiors, colleagues, school staff, parents and students in the school environment, and teachers may experience conflicts with people they interact with from time to time while performing their duties in an organizational environment. They found that teachers sometimes become victims of mobbing as a result of their interactions with the people around them.



Gökçe (2006), in his study on mobbing behaviors on private and public primary school teachers and administrators, found that teachers and school administrators were mobbed from time to time, and the most frequently encountered aggressive behaviors that caused intimidation were similar in both school types, both teachers and school administrators were mobbed most by school principals, the main factor causing mobbing was the personality traits of the victim and the most frequently used strategy to cope with mobbing was 'commitment' (Çelebi and Taşçı-Kaya, 2014). In this study, it was found that special education teachers were subjected to mobbing by school principals. Some participants complained that the special education teacher was not perceived as being in the same status as the other teachers, stating that they were also subjected to mobbing by their colleagues. It is among the findings obtained in this study that administrators provide insufficient or no information to special education teachers about activities and meetings at school, and this makes the special education teachers to feel excluded from the school climate.

Special education teachers stated that they were exposed to verbal, physical, personal and professional mobbing. When the results of the research were analyzed, the participants' expressing that they were subjected to professional mobbing put a question mark in the minds. Baltaş (2003) found that people who are subjected to mobbing show many characteristics such as intelligence, competence, creativity, honesty, and success in their work. Davenport et al. (2003) revealed that people who are mobbed have high emotional intelligence, review their own behaviors and correct them when they see that they are doing wrong, and they are also generally principled, logical, reasoning and self-directed people compared to others. Based on the above findings of the researchers, is the perception of special education teachers as 'potential competitors' within the school and organizational culture the reason for their subject to professional mobbing? This question has emerged as a situation to be considered. From another point of view, can special education teachers state that they are subject to professional mobbing mostly because of teacher competencies? This is considered as a situation in which research should be increased. It is suggested that more research should be done to explain the prevalence of professional mobbing on teacher competencies and communication skills.

As a result of the study, it was revealed that special education teachers who were subjected to mobbing experienced emotions such as, anger, sadness, no desire to live, grief, despair, indifference, burnout (Leymann 1990), ailment, irritability (Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2002), confusion, being suicidal (Thylefors, 1987), feeling worthless, feeling revenge, disappointment, feeling professional inadequacy, stress (Karakuş and Çankaya, 2012), depressive (Tınaz, 2006), asocial behavior, fear and acceptance. The results of the

study are in concordance, but parallel with the emotional and behavioral characteristics of other studies in the literature observed in the victims after mobbing.

Special education teachers stated that after being subjected to mobbing, they responded to mobbing by methods such as seeking a way of reconciliation, obeying, ignoring, seeking their legal rights, contradicting without suppressing anger, continuing to carry out the duties and responsibilities as required by law, resigning, verbal discussion, interrupting communication and fighting. Yıldırım and Yıldırım (2006) stated that mobbing victims prefer to work more diligently-intensively, to be organized, and to talk face to face with their superiors as a way of avoiding mobbing behaviors. Samancı (2001) concluded that victims accept mobbing, do not complain about it and prefer to avoid conflict (Altunay et al., 2014). In the study, the reactions of special education teachers after being subjected to mobbing show similarities with the literature.

Special education teachers made the following suggestions on what should be done to prevent mobbing: special education teachers should know their legal rights and responsibilities, join association and unionization, regulations on special education assignments, regulations on personal rights of special education teachers, provision of managerial competence, regulations on supervision in the field of special education, regulations on family education and awareness of special education field. Çelebi and Taşçı-Kaya (2014) made the following recommendations regarding what victims should do to avoid being subjected to mobbing behaviors: management appointment method should change, open communication, distance, holding meetings and seminars, knowing the regulations and personal rights well, subjecting managers to psychological tests.

There may be various factors that may affect the emergence of mobbing in a business environment, and organizations should be provided with trainings on this issue at certain times and support should be provided to victims of mobbing including effective coping methods. It is also suggested that programs related to mobbing should be included in the visual and print media. In the selection of administrators, skills such as personality traits, fairness, tolerance, communication skills, respect and emotional intelligence should also be taken into account in addition to profession. In order to prevent mobbing, it is necessary to develop the organizational culture and climate, not to ignore the problems between employees in the workplace and to solve the problems in the shortest time and fairly, and to ensure equality in the distribution of duties and workload in the workplace (Karahan and Yılmaz, 2014).

Daşçı-Sönmez and Cemaloğlu (2018) pointed out that school principals should be informed about possible negative situations that may be experienced in schools and should be informed about how to use their leadership skills effectively on these situations, as all these would be

beneficial to provide various pre-service and in-service trainings on this subject.

In the study, it was concluded that there are similarities between the opinions of special education teachers about the absence or prevention of mobbing and the suggestions in the literature.

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