

# Academic Mobbing in Turkey

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**Abstract**—People at workplace always face with stress and feel it in their lives. There are many factors that create stress and mobbing is one of them. Mobbing is a psychological terror, conducted systematically toward an individual by others at the same workplace. Mobbing started to become a famous subject last years in U.S and Europe. In Turkey, it is a new concept not because it does not occur, because of human nature that does not allow confessing it. Mobbing is being ignored by people, organizations and also government in our country. The focus of this study will be mobbing in Turkey by examining the workplace mobbing among Turkish academicians. There are other studies about mobbing in Turkey but none of them studied academy. Because mobbing methods change according to sectors and occupations, it is important to analyze each sector to understand the methods used in mobbing and the reactions of victims to these actions. The concept is analyzed in detail before focusing on mobbing at universities. This paper will be unique because there is no information about this specific subject in Turkish literature. In this paper, both qualitative and quantitative methods will be used to describe the mobbing at Turkish academic environment.

**Keywords**—Mobbing, Turkish academic environment, workplace problems

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE social environment in the workplace is very important for everyone, especially in nowadays because we are spending most of our time at workplaces. Being happy and comfortable in workplace is essential as much as in private life. Interpersonal relationships between colleagues and job satisfaction support and motive each individual in workplace. So, if a supportive social environment and job satisfaction are missing, this creates an unfriendly workplace and makes people stressful and unhappy especially if this situation is created by other colleagues. Although the mobbing has gained importance in recent years, it occurs frequently in any kind of organization, industry and country.

## II. DEFINITION OF MOBBING

Mobbing is the practicing of violence by a group which comes from the root of “mob” and explained as a psychological terror, emotional attack or being against to something or someone [1]. Mobbing was conceptualized as an attempt to force a person out of workplace through unjustified accusations, humiliation, general harassment, emotional abuse and terror [2]. Conceptually, mobbing is defined as psychological violence, pressure, bullying, harassment and

disturbance. So, mobbing can be anywhere in social life especially in hierarchical structure and uncontrolled organizations [3]. However Tınaz [4] contradicted to this by claiming that mobbing does not have to come from a hierarchical background, it can occur in any type of organization because it is a human action. If human is there, mobbing can be there as well. In fact, everybody can be subjected to mobbing in any organization, country or any culture.

Mobbing was used by biologists firstly in 19th century to define the behaviors of birds that are flying around their enemy to protect their nests [4]. The same term was also used by an Australian scientist, Konrad Lorenz in 1960s, who was analyzing animal behaviors. He used that concept to express the behaviors of animals that are trying to refuse enemies or hunters. In other words, mobbing was used as defining the joint attacks of small group of animals toward to a big animal to defense themselves [2]. According to Ehrlich et al. [5], mobbing starts as an individual activity but rapidly attracts other birds and suddenly becomes a group action. In many experiments, researchers observed that birds learn from and encourage each other how to mob and which predators should be attacked. After Lorenz, Peter-Paul Heinemann used mobbing as the attitudes and harmful behaviors of a group of children toward an alone child. There is only one similarity between these two definitions; mobbing is a behavior of a group not conducted by an individual. However, this is not enough to say that there is a systematical definition of this term before 1980s [6].

The concept of mobbing was used by Heinz Leymann firstly to indicate the pressure, violence and bullying behaviors in workplace. He analyzed the organizations in Sweden firstly and he pointed out that people who was thought as “difficult to work with” by others was not like that at the beginning. In other words, he indicated that these people did not have inherited personality problems instead the structure of work and culture of the organization made these people difficult to work with. Once they were thought as difficult, others were trying to find other reasons to make them fired [2]. This was the thing that Leymann defined as mobbing which includes an emotional harassment and a psychological terror, systematically practiced by an individual or a group of people toward another person with unethical and unfriendly methods. Usually, mobbing begins with one person, who thinks that he/she is threatened by a colleague and after a while, others attend this action which aims to drive the victim out of organization, like birds’ mobbing activities [7]. Leymann also claimed that mobbing, like a disease, spreads by infecting other people in workplace and he pointed

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out that mobbing is conducted as a desperate campaign to cover up the mobber's weaknesses and deficiencies [8]. However, it is not easy to clarify the effects of these actions on individuals because there is not a clear and exact definition or border of mobbing at workplace. People usually cannot be sure about an action whether it is a kind of mobbing action or not. Every one defined mobbing in a different manner and named new behaviors as mobbing actions for example Leymann included sexual allusion and harassments into mobbing behaviors.

According to Eser [9], every living being has an instinct to protect own things or places from outside effects. So, people at workplace try to protect their positions from a successful person that can be dangerous for them and start to make decisions based on this natural instinct. Many researches showed that generally people who were exposed to mobbing were honest, successful and loyal to their organizations [10]. The victims usually have strong commitment to their work and this commitment engenders loyalty and strong belief in the organizational goals [2].

It is very normal in every workplace that people can be angry to their colleagues, they can discuss, say disrespectful words to each other, or they can manipulate the situation by criticizing their colleagues in front of the manager to influence him. It would not be true to classify such current or temporary behaviors or attitudes as mobbing because these things come from human nature. To pronounce such behaviors as mobbing, they should be in a systematically and continuously practiced manner toward a person not an occasion [3]. Therefore, it is very important to state the characteristics of mobbing as Leymann identified: mobbing should be practiced consciously, systematically, repeated at least once in a week, and should be continuous, at least six months. It is a kind of process that has various dimensions and includes different psychological factors [11]. The frequently and continuously practiced mobbing behaviors harm the victim psychologically, psychosomatic, physiologically and socially. Because mobbing behaviors, which aim to keep away people from workplace, involve unfair accusations, emotional harassment, disgracing and psycho-terror [11]. These unethical and unfriendly behaviors at workplace make the individual insecure and weak [12]. However, according to Bultena and Whatcott [13], it would be a mistake to think that mobbing victims are weak, shy or passive instead they are generally good performers, intelligent, competent and creative people who can be dangerous for less successful colleagues. The researches showed that mobbing victims are generally the ones who promote human rights, whistleblowers, married women, high achievers, the minority whose religion and cultural features are different than the majority and people who do not penetrate into "group" [14].

### III. REASONS DRIVE TO MOBBING AT WORKPLACE

Tınaz [4] said that mobbing is a multi-dimensional, multi-disciplined and a complex subject which can be implemented

by the peers or less powerful individuals as well, the mobber/s can choose victim from peers, subordinates or supervisors. Mobbing which is exposed by managers on junior individuals is called as downward; by peers on the colleagues at the same level in the authority is called as horizontal and by subordinates on managers or leaders is called as upward. The last type of mobbing has different methods than others like slowing the jobs, consciously made errors, sabotaged projects, etc. It is important to cite Foucault [15] at this point who said that power never belongs to a certain class in the organization. So no matter the position or title of the individual, people can be mobbing victims by anyone at the workplace [16]. The occurrence of downward mobbing at workplace is the result of a failure of authority or failure of legitimate power. In other words, it is hierarchical abuse of power to prevent subordinates' performance and to damage the self-respect of the subordinates [17].

Leymann identified five reasons that drive mobbing either by just one of these reasons or more than one reasons with more impact. These reasons are the psychology of mobbers and conditions, the structure and culture of organizations, the conditions, psychological situation and personality of the victims, social values and norms and finally any conflict or disagreement as a motive of mobbing [18]. On the other hand, researches showed that there are various reasons such as incorrect personnel selection and hiring process, hiring seasonal employees, competition within the employees to reach limited positions in organization, lack of organizational discipline, high level of hierarchical organization structure, lack of communication within the organization, lack of or ineffective conflict resolution strategies in organization, untalented management, lack of or low level of team work, limited human resources budgeting, sudden and radical changes in organization, lack of established ethical values and emotional intelligence, stressful and monotone working environment can be the alternative reasons of mobbing activities at workplace. Some of these reasons can be created within the organization consciously by management as a strategy to decrease the number of employees to overcome financial problems, for downsizing, to replace old personnel with younger and more educated ones or just for getting rid of an unwanted employee [3].

### IV. MOBBING AS A PROCESS

Mobbing can be called as a process due to its characteristics as a disease or virus which infects others silently and insidiously and grows like a snowball over the victim in a period of time. Leymann [6] divided this process into five phases in order to analyze more detailed because as told earlier the mobbing is very complicated and difficult phenomenon to understand both by the victim and others in the organization.

*1st Phase:* This phase is not yet mobbing but can trigger it [6]. It is characterized by any kind of conflict or critical issue. If the organization has effective conflict resolution strategies

then this conflict is resolved by negotiating the colleagues to meet in a common point. However, if the organization is not effective with conflict resolution then this “consciously created” conflict, such as accusation of the victim for not doing duties or being careless and disturbing, lingers and compounds and becomes a critical issue [18]. In a short time, other colleagues start to confirm this critical issue as their steady thought about the victim and they think that something should be done to prevent this situation [19].

*2nd Phase:* In this phase, mobbing dynamics vary such as leaving the victim outside of the group, delaying or canceling certain duties of victim and assigning meaningless tasks, providing insufficient or confusing information to the victim [18]. Aggressive manipulations, assailant actions and psychological offences with increasing isolation are observed in this phase and if it is thought that the victim is subjected to these actions everyday for a period of time, it is not difficult to guess the negative effects on the victim [19].

*3rd Phase:* Management, although does not get directly involved in the second phase, goes into this phase without having full information about the situation. Due to the fact that a period of time passed until this phase and many people agreed with blaming the victim, the management will misjudge the situation and most probably will make a wrong decision. After management involved in it, the critical issue transforms into a critical problem and they need to get rid of the problem or the victim [6]. Especially, if the management is more dependent on the duties of mobbers than the victim's role in organization, information about the conflict can be biased in favor of the mobbers [20].

*4th Phase:* In this phase, the victim is blamed for incorrect personality, difficult to work with and even mentally unstable to mislead management. The process gain more speed in this step and generally concludes with firing or obligatory reassignment [6].

*5th Phase:* The process of mobbing ends with the departure of victim because although the victims prove their truths to everyone in the organization, they do not want to stay in such a negative and harmful working environment. Unfortunately, on the other side of psychological and physiological damages, the victim lives other problems after leaving or being fired from the organization. The mobbers continue to harass the victims by disturbing their reputation and image in the labor market to justify or legitimate the rightness of their own decisions [18].

## V. THE INDICATORS OF MOBBING

As it is mentioned above, the mobbing is not easy to understand since it is a cumulative group activity. Also the victim is not able to understand the situation very well because he/she is under the stress and in a traumatic occasion [18]. That is why many researchers tried to point out the indicators of mobbing at workplace to clarify the situation. For instance Westhues [21] identified 16 indicators to mobbing cases such as gossip about the victim, excluding the

victim from meetings and committees, both oral and written formal expressions of negative sentiments and the fear of victim about violence from mobbers. Although each of these activities is used negatively, they do not need to have negative meanings every time because someone can behave unconsciously. They are classified as mobbing if they are conducted systematically for a period of time.

The first researcher was Leymann [6] who identified 45 indicators or the behaviors of mobbing but these behaviors and activities can be gathered into 5 categories according to type of behavior and their effects on victim [2].

TABLE I  
FIVE CATEGORIES OF MOBBING BEHAVIOR

First Group
The Victim's Self-expression and the Way of Communication
The chances of the victim's self-expression is limited by subordinates, supervisors or peers
The victim is not allowed to talk
The work or performance of victim is criticized
The private life of victim is criticized unjustifiably
The victim is disturbed by telephone
The victim is threatened orally and written
The victim is yelled directly
The relationship with victim is rejected by mimics, sights or intimation
Second Group
The Attacks to the Victim's Social Relations
Mobbers do not talk with the victim
Others are prevented to talk with the victim
A separate working place is given to the victim
The victim is ignored
Third Group
The Attacks to the Victim's Reputations
The gossip circulates the victim
The victim is thought as mentally unstable
The victim's religious and political thoughts, private life, nationality are mocked
The victim is obliged to do jobs that damage the self-confidence
The victim's decisions and performance are always judged
The victim is called with disrespectful nicknames
The victim is tried to convince for mental treatment
The gossip circulates the victim
The Forth Group
The Attacks on the Victim's Professional and Life Quality
There is no special duties for the victim
The victim's duties are delayed or cancelled
The victim is given unimportant and unnecessary duties that do not need specific skills
The duties and responsibilities of the victim are changed continuously
The office or home of the victim can be attacked or damaged
The Fifth Group
The Attacks on the Health and Well-Being of the Victim
The victim is obliged to do difficult physical duties
The victim is threatened for physical violence
Petty harassments are subjected to the victim
The victim is subjected to the physical harm
The victim is subjected to the sexual harassments

These are the various behaviors associated with mobbing by Leymann but there is no strict rule about that each stage will happen in the same order with the same behaviors, each mobbing case can have different process and features. For many of these behaviors, victim can apply to legal authorities in many countries to protect his/her rights because there are laws for protecting the rights of mobbing victims if there are proofs of these actions. For example, in USA, some of the behaviors in the third and fifth group are illegal and banned. However, many of these behaviors are difficult to prove, so it is not possible to say that victims can protect themselves from such behaviors completely [18].

#### VI. THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF MOBBING ON THE VICTIMS AND ORGANIZATIONS

According to Tinaz [4], there are three actors in mobbing process; mobbers who start and apply the mobbing behaviors, the mobbees who are the victims that burden the most of damage and the witnesses of the mobbing. In other words, either by an active role or a passive one, everyone is inside of this process. So, dealing with mobbing is possible if all actors are aware of it because the victim can not realize the actual situation in fair and anxiety. To increase the awareness within the society and to constitute legal base for this issue are essential to struggle with mobbing.

Anyone in workplace can be potential victim of mobbing activities and the probability of a person to be mobbed can be calculated by counting the ways in which that person creates comparison with his/her colleagues for any kind of issue like specific skills, abilities, physical appearance, connections, performance scores, salary, social class, sex appeal, even age [22].

Researches showed that people who were subjected to mobbing had psychological problems like depression, nervous problems, psychomatic disabilities and physiological problems like dermatologic damages, cardiovascular diseases and they tend to more depressive than others who were not subjected to mobbing [23]. Mobbing behaviors lead to post-traumatic stress disorder which damages the social networks and marriages of the victim [24]. In other words, continuous harassments damage the victim's normal reasoning and the communication abilities. They feel insecure and doubt their own sanity and they start to behave irrationally and erratically. The mobbing behaviors are perceived by the victims as injustice and they feel anger, frustration, disappointment and aggravation. So, the victim needs to pay the cost of counseling, psychiatric care and taking anti-depressants to overcome these serious problems. The study proved that 43.9% of mobbing victims became ill, 30.8% changed their position in the same organization, 22.5% left the job and 14.8% of them were dismissed as a result of the mobbing behaviors [14]. Leymann [6] claimed that the reason of 12% of the suicides in Sweden was being subjected to mobbing and 25% of the early retirement can be sourced from the mobbing. Another study showed that 10% of suicides were derived by workplace mobbing [14]. Moreover, these problems can end

with more dramatic events like a transport worker in Ottawa who killed 4 co-workers before killing himself [25]. All of these negatively affect the position and influence of the victim in the organization [6]. After pointing out the negative effects of mobbing on individuals, it is clear why Leymann opened a mobbing clinic, in which approximately 100 mobbing victims had been treated, in Germany [26].

Mobbing destroys not only the victim but also the organization; however the effects for the each side differ. Mobbing can be applied by the organization consciously because of many reasons such as to eliminate someone for downsizing or to get rid of anyone in the organization. However, either consciously or not, mobbing influences the organizations, the society and even the national economy. The damages for the organizations are economic in usual such as absenteeism, high turnover, increasing number of sick leaves, the loss of skilled workers, the cost of new workers' training, decline in productivity, quality and motivation, compensation payments and the early retirement payment. Rather than the economic damages, mobbing destroys the social environment within the organization. According to Neidl [23], mobbing influences the working conditions and effectiveness so it is responsibility of management to prevent mobbing actions in the workplace. Because the conflicts between the employees, negative working environment, the loss of cultural values, unsafe environment and unrespectful colleagues limits the creativity and success of the employees. If the employees are not satisfied with their jobs and if they are subjected to the harassments, it is possible to tell these things to outsiders and this destroys the image and prestige of the organization [3].

#### VII. MOBBING FACTS WITH NUMBERS

After explaining the negative effects of mobbing on individuals, organizations and society as a whole, it is important to picture the dimension of mobbing with numbers. Many researches were conducted in different countries to measure the percentage of the mobbing victims at workplace to create attention for this issue and to inform the states for taking the necessary expedencies and regulations to prevent this dangerous action. In this part, we will try to get together the results of many researches to provide a better look to the subject. For instance, a research conducted in Sweden, in 1990, showed that 3.5% of the Sweden labor force which makes approximately 4.5 million workers became a mobbing victim [6]. The numbers are similar in USA as well; it is possible that over 4 million workers are subjected to mobbing [18]. Based on the study of Paoli and Merllie [27], 11% of workers in Europe are being mobbed while 16.8% of workers in U.S., approximately 1 worker out of 6 are the workplace mobbing victim and 81% of these victims were mobbed by their superiors, downward mobbing victims [28].

According to report of ILO (International Labor Organization) in 1998, the results of a study, conducted in 15 countries of EU, showed that 6 million workers were subjected to physical violence, 3 million workers to sexual

harassments and 12 million workers to mobbing in workplace in 1995. Another research, conducted in UK, showed that 53% of the labor force was subjected to mobbing and 78% of them witnessed such events. In Italy, it is known that over one million workers were subjected to mobbing. So, all of these examples from different countries show clearly that the number of people, subjected to mobbing, is higher than other kind of negative issues at workplace [4].

Leymann also identified the gender factor in mobbing activities and found that 76% of males were subjected to mobbing by male colleagues, 3% of males were mobbed by female colleagues while 21% of them were mobbed by both females and males. On the other hand, 40% of females were subjected to mobbing by females, 30% of them by males and 30% of them by both female and male colleagues [6]. Chappel and Martino [29] showed that 61% of mobbing victims are female due to their high concentration in jobs and their high potential to become successful.

#### VIII. MOBBING IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONS

Some of the occasions or jobs have higher risk of exposure to mobbing at workplace. Mobbing can be toward one or more people in any hierarchical level of the organization but it is more predominant in bureaucratic organization such as public service offices, health, education authorities [30]. Westhues [22] agreed with and added that the irrationality of bureaucratic organization endow with mobbing. Zapf et al., [20] claimed that mobbing is seen in jobs that the complexity and task control are average or good. In other words, people who work in government offices, health services, schools and general office works are more potential mobbing victims than the people who work in low complex and less task control works such as industrial workers.

According to study of Chappell and Martino [29], librarians, teachers, social service officials and healthcare workers are more being exposed to mobbing because these jobs are less stable and includes high pressure. For instance in Spain, 22% of public administration officials is estimated as mobbing victims.

A research was conducted in the Netherlands between 1995 and 1999 to identify if there is difference between the sectors in terms of being subjected to mobbing. Hubert and Veldhoven [31] asked four questions to 66,764 employees working in 11 different sectors about the occurrence of undesirable behavior and mobbing at workplace and about the people that expose aggression. As a result of this study, the occurrence of undesirable behaviors and mobbing differs between the sectors. The quality and quantity of work output is less clear in education, government and public administration and health care sectors than the sectors that are less prone to unpleasant situations such as financial institutions, transport, trade and construction industry. The interpersonal relationships with colleagues and boss play important role in evaluation and judgment of one's job and working conditions. So, for the sectors that are more restricted

about the organization structure are more tend to mobbing behaviors. For instance, the education is thought as more prone to mobbing because of the interpersonal relationship structures within these institutions.

Another important claim about mobbing is that the people whose jobs need co-operation with others are less likely to be isolated and mobbed. Jackson [32] also pointed out that people work more efficiently, quickly and motivated in workgroups, so the innovation levels increase in the organization. But this does not mean that they will not be subjected to mobbing behaviors instead the mobbers should use other ways of mobbing such as verbal aggression. However, beside of these factors another important factor is the characteristics of the mobbers because no matter what type of an organization and the job, there are people who tend to mob in each organization [20].

#### IX. MOBBING IN ACADEMIA

The main focus of this study will be the mobbing behaviors within the universities, in academic environment. Westhues [21] is one of the most important authors that researched and wrote about the mobbing in academia. After conducting many researches, he concluded that organizations, in which the job security is high, performance measures are subjective and individual and organizational goals challenge, are more prone to mobbing. He also mentioned about the bureaucratic organizations that provide mobbing behaviors more. Another issue that researches showed is that mobbing occurs more in non-profit organizations than private companies. All of these criteria match with the education sector. 14.1% of the mobbing victims of 2400 people that Leymann [6] used for his study were working in schools, universities and other educational organizations. Gravois [19] also said that most of the Leymann's studies were conducted among universities which are highly representative for workplace mobbing. Westhues [22] identified the main goals of universities as maintaining the soul of objectivity and freedom of mind; but mobbing damages these goals by creating subjective and dependent minds. He also claimed that "College and university campuses are perfect breeding grounds for the culture of mobbing". It can be said that the organization structure of education sector is preparing an utilizable base for mobbing.

Many researchers studied mobbing in academy abroad such as Raskauskas [33] who studied in New Zealand universities and observed that 65.3% of academic personnel had been mobbed. They were asked the mobbing methods and the most popular ones were diluted authority, being embarrassed in front of others, being yelled by colleagues. The reactions of the victims were reporting to an authority, union or human resource department. Another study was conducted in UK by Boynton [34]. He founded that between 12-25% academic personnel were subjected to mobbing through lowering the performance grades, gossips, verbal harassments and attacks on race and sex. The victims reacted to the mobbing by

leaving the organization or trying to leave. The Finnish study identified the difference between the males and females in terms of mobbing victims and showed that 30% of men were subjected to mobbing while 55% of women had to deal with it [35]. Finally, a Norwegian study found that 5.2% of university personnel were subjected to mobbing [36].

Westhues [21] observed that professors, who are famous, have many publications, high evaluation scores, athletic abilities, high salary, family wealth, good looking, have children, frequently complain, even the ones with different accents, are getting mobbed more. In universities, the popular methods of mobbing are blaming for plagiarism, sleeping with students or misusing the funds. Gravois [29] applied the stages of mobbing to the universities by giving examples of the used methods in each stage. In the first stage, the victim is left out of guest lists, is exposed to rolling eyes during meetings and starts to feel that people dislike him/her. In the second stage, the victim's administrative duties are being cancelled or misplaced, the class schedules are getting worse and the parking space is moved to a far away location. At the third stage, everything is going to be harsher and more harmful. The victim is blamed for disgracing things like plagiarism, making racial and sexual harassments, misusing the university funds and misbehaving toward students. All of these behaviors affect the victim's psychology and he/she starts to have angry toward colleagues and at that time the gossips become larger by using the anger of the victim as a support of their actions by convincing the others. At the next stage, the administrative level enters to the subject and the victim has to defend himself/herself to a disciplinary committee, ethics tribunal or any other judgment court of the university.

Olson [37] gave an example about an associate professor who was exposed to mobbing by his colleague who started a gossip against him about changing the evaluation results by erasing negative ones. He used students for this bad campaign by guiding them to fill complaint letters which grew the situation as a snowball. They convinced everyone about this lie and associate professor's name was damaged but at the end it was understood that he was innocent.

Another example is about a 69 year old mathematics professor working at Carbondale for 27 years who has the highest evaluation marks. His 15 colleagues complained about him by claiming that many faults such as bullying, grabbing professors to talk union issues, etc. however, the professor defended himself and proved that he is innocent. After a while, he had to defend himself again for another complaint letter which was accusing him of sexual harassment. Although he rebutted all of the accusations, his office was moved to an isolated place far away from others. This example shows that high performance, success even the seniority can not prevent to be subjected to mobbing [29].

Sutherland [38] wrote his own experiences in university about mobbing. First mobbing action, which was taken by colleagues of a junior assistant lecturer, ended with the reassignment of the assistant. The second one was a female senior colleague who had to retire early because of a new

intellectual order, imposed by new administrative staff who believed that she was old school. He also witnessed other cases which were because of jealous colleagues of successful academicians.

Cabaras and Rodriguez [39] made a research about mobbing at universities and conducted a survey on 7,432 people from administration and service personnel and educative and investigative personnel in the universities of Santiago de Compostela, Vigo and Coruna. The 54% of victims were female, 70% of them were either married or had a partner and between 38 and 42 years old. The authors claimed that the reason why females are being exposed to mobbing more is that they do not have enough protection in the workplace. According to Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee, women are the victims of 75-80% of the mobbing cases in universities [40]. Another interesting thing is that the great portion of mobbers is also women. Stokes and Klein [40] mentioned about a research stating that the mobbing techniques are sneaky and collective actions which can be taken by women in general.

The victims in university were asked which type of behaviors that they were subjected and the most frequent behaviors were hiding useful information from the victims, critics of the work, ignorance, snubbing, prevention of career development, rejection of ideas, undervaluing performance, accusation of mistakes and errors and demoralizing. Attacks on religion, race, nationality, physical appearance and physical violence are the less used ones in academic environment. The victims are being selected due to high performance and success, in other words, because of envy. Most common results of mobbing in universities were absenteeism, long illness leaves, position or profession changes and decreasing working performance [39].

## X. METHODOLOGY

**The Purpose of the Study** - The purpose of this study is to identify whether the academicians are being exposed to mobbing or not, to what extent it exists, by whom and their reactions to these mobbing behaviors in Turkish academic environment.

**Data Collection** - The population of the study is academicians working at universities in Turkey. There are 34,086 academic personnel in Turkey working in 127 universities [41]. Since it is impossible to reach all of them, a representative sample (10% precision level and 95 % confidence level) was chosen based on convenience sampling and snowball sampling was used as well. The questionnaire was distributed to 120 people who work in 3 public and 2 private universities operating in Istanbul. However, 103 of them were proper to analyze.

This study consists of two parts; in the first part the questionnaire was distributed to respondents and in the second part in-dept interviews were conducted with the specific respondents. An established and previously used questionnaire of Pranjic et al. [42] was conducted which includes 3 parts.

The first part of the questionnaire aimed to identify the degree of mobbing in academia. The degree of mobbing was measured by a likert-scale (1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree) for the given statements about 32 symptoms of mobbing. The aim of second part was to find out the mobbers positions in the organization (subordinate, peer or supervisor) by asking the respondents by whom. The demographic questions were the subject of third part.

**Data Analysis** - The collected data were analyzed by using SPSS for factor analysis t-test and one way ANOVA. However the results of these analyses were not significant. This can be resulted from the small number of people who were subjected to mobbing. Only 12 of the 103 respondents stated to be victim of different levels of mobbing. In other words, since the number of mobbing victims is small, the statistical analyses did not give any significant result. Another reason of this can be the abstention of respondents to answer the questions because 32 respondents answered most of the questions as "neutral". This can be resulted from the suspicious about whether their answers are read by their supervisors and peers.

## XI. FINDINGS

Academicians were familiar with the concept of mobbing which has been very popular for the last years. However only 12 of them assorted to be mobbed who work for both public and private universities, work as teaching assistants, assistant professor and professors. This shows that in Turkish academic environment, people can be a victim of mobbing whatever their position is.

In the second part of the research, interviews were conducted with 6 out of 12 participants who stated that they had suffered from mobbing. One of the 6 academicians who participated in the interviews was professor, 1 was assistant professor and 4 were research assistants. 2 of these participants worked in state universities and 4 of them worked in private universities.

In the research, mobbing in the setting was rated as stage 5. This rating system starts with the 1st stage which carries the lowest mobbing symptoms and ends with 5th stage which carries the highest mobbing symptoms. The symptoms of the 1st stage are usually not detected as mobbing symptoms whereas the symptoms of the last stage can easily be designated as mobbing by anybody. At the end of the interviews it was seen that all of the participants had obviously suffered from mobbing. It was found that all participants had frequently encountered 2nd, 3rd and 4th stage mobbing symptoms. Furthermore it was found that some participants had encountered much more serious mobbing behaviors. At the end of the interviews it was found that the lightest and the heaviest symptoms had not been applied many times on the participants by the mobbers. It is thought that the reason that very heavy symptoms like "Physical violence" and "Sexual Abuse" were not used was the workplace environment.

As a result of the interviews it was observed that the most

frequent symptoms that mobbers used on the participants were "making up gossips and rumors", "ignoring", "assignment of unimportant duties", "hiding important information related to the work", "undervaluation of efforts", "stealing his/her ideas", "having meetings when he/she is absent", "continuously controlling him/her" and "verbal harassment". All participants stated that most of these behaviors were conducted publicly. For example a researcher working in a private university expressed that the teachers in his/her department were calling him/her "idiot" in a half funny-half serious manner and that although he/she told them that he/she felt discomfort about that situation his/her teachers kept calling him/her as such with the reason that he/she would be highly motivated as a consequence. The professor and two assistants who participated in the interview stated that they were controlled regarding whether they attended classes, and even whether they were present in the school even if they had nothing to do in the school right then. The assistant professor in the interview explained that indecent gossips were made up about him/her and that these gossips were spread very easily even to the closest friend of him/her in the department. The interviewed professor stated that when he/she saw his/her coworkers from the same department of him/her in the lunch and he/she greeted them they ignored him/her even though they looked into each other's eyes.

The participants expressed that they were not exposed to behaviors like "teasing about personal qualifications like religion and ethnicity", "physical violence", "sexual abuse" and "harming personal belongings". Two of the participants explained that mobbers could not dare to employ these kinds of behaviors (offences) as these behaviors have heavy legal consequences. These participants stated that the absence of these kinds of mobbing behaviors was connected with the academic acquaintances of the mobber as the mobber knew very well that no one from his/her academic acquaintances would acknowledge the mentioned behaviors. According to the participants it was highly possible to encounter these symptoms in other jobs.

As a consequence of the interviews lecturers stated that they had been mobbed by other teachers, university management, assistants and students. For example the interviewed professor expressed that his/her department associates organized the students and got them to mob him/her. The same participant stated that he/she was ignored by the university management although the management was aware of his/her talents and that the duties she should have been assigned were assigned to some others. As for the assistants, they explained that they were mostly mobbed by the teachers who were working in the same department they were working in. For example, an assistant working in a state university stated that a teacher who was helping to all other assistants had not been helping to him/her and that this teacher had made up gossips about him/her.

In the literature it is shown that the incidence of psychological disorders in mobbing victims is high. It was observed that all interviewed academicians asserted that they

underwent depression because of the mobbing behaviors they had encountered. For example, the interviewed professor stated that because of mobbing he/she underwent a heavy depression, he/she could not even get out of his/her house, he/she had a major motivation problem and that he/she used medicine consequently. As for the associate professor he/she expressed that he/she had overcome this period by having undergone therapy sessions. Many of the participants stated that they had psychological disorders even up to having suffered from paranoia. For instance an assistant stated that whenever two people whispered to each other he/she thought that they talked about him/her and that he/she became paranoid.

All participants stated that when they first began to be mobbed they were not aware that they had been being mobbed, that's why they thought they themselves were responsible for what happened during mobbing period and put the blame on them consequently. They expressed that they developed counter behaviors as afterwards they became aware of mobbing. Whereas some of the participants explained that they developed aggressive behaviors against mobbers at the end of the period, some others pointed out that they only engaged in professional business relations with the mobbers and that they never communicated with them in any other ways. For example, the interviewed professor stated that at the beginning of the mobbing period he/she always put the blame on himself/herself but afterwards as he/she saw the reality he/she tried to mob the ones who had mobbed him/her before.

At the end of the interviews all participants shared that the mobbing behaviors they had been exposed to were successful and that they wanted to change their jobs when possible. For example an assistant said that he/she was looking for another job and that she would quit his/her current job as soon as he/she found a new job. As for the professor, he/she stated that he/she would enter into an agreement with another university and go abroad for a year and the only reason for this was such behaviors. It is seen that the alterations in the psychologies of the participants resulting from mobbing are very similar to psychological alterations seen in people in the literature who suffered from mobbing as well.

**Limitations of the Study** - In the interviews it was found that many mobbing behaviors had been employed on the participants. However, because the number of people interviewed was low the obtained results could not be generalized.

Since this study is trying to identify a critical issue respondents can hesitate to confess that they were mobbed or witnessed. If it is thought that the respondents are academicians, they will be more sensitive to the issue. Another problem is to find people that want to attend the survey because everyone is busy with their own works and they do not want to spend time for the questionnaire.

## XII. CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, the further research should include more interviews with academicians in order to generalize the results to Turkish academic environment. Moreover, the scope of research should be enlarged more by conducting the research in other cities of Turkey.

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