The relation between mobbing behaviors teachers in elementary schools are exposed to and their burnout levels

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Abstract

Aim of this study is to determine the relation between the mobbing behaviors teachers are exposed to and their burnout levels. With this purpose, data of the study were gathered from 451 teachers in total (230 elementary school teachers and 221 teachers from other specific fields of study) working at schools with different socio-economical levels in Van Province. Data gathered were firstly classified via clustering analysis; thereby the level of mobbing and burnout was determined. Then the relation between these two variables was determined through Spearman Rho (r_s) correlation coefficient. In brief, teachers suffer from moderate mobbing acts at schools and show a moderate level of emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, teachers have a low level of depersonalization and high level of personal accomplishment. There is also a significant and moderate relation between total scores of mobbing act and emotional exhaustion; and depersonalization and burnout. On the other hand, there is a poor relation in negative direction between personal accomplishment and mobbing act.

Keywords: Mobbing, exposure to mobbing, burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment.

1. Introduction

As is known, organizations consist of elements such as human, technology, structures and processes and the interaction of these elements has a functional role in realizing the organizational objectives. Therefore, attitudes and behaviors of individuals in an organization are affected from these elements and shaped accordingly (Balci, 2000a). Human element consists of the employees of the organization (Başaran, 2000) and relations between the employees may not always go in the expected direction (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Narrated by.; Toker-Gökçe, 2006). The individual faces communication problems and is not pleased with his work when he realizes that there are no individuals (homogenous) or groups alike himself within the organization (Memduhoğlu, 2008). This will probably have a negative impact on the individual's socialization within the organization. This may lead to individual's failure and leaving his job. So resignation may have costly results to the detriment of the organization (Balci, 2000b).
On the other hand, the individual sometimes may not be affected negatively when he does not meet homogenous groups from similar backgrounds with him. However, a conflict stemming from personal relations may arise within the organization.

In its broadest definition, a conflict is the stress an individual experiences when two or more non-compliant instincts, wishes or situations simultaneously affect the individual (Cüceloğlu, 2003). A conflict is also defined as the stress an individual experiences when his needs are not satisfied or when the individual faces a hindrance in this regard (Eren, 2001).

A conflict may be an instant and temporary situation and this process may not be a deliberate one. Consequently, conflicts might be resolved by the reconciliation of the parties (Aydın, 1994). However, in the case of deliberate and systematic attacks towards the individual, the result may not often be as positive as the resolution of the conflict. The affected individual may be severely hurt emotionally and leave the workplace as a result of being exposed to those systematic attacks (Toker-Gökçe, 2006).

2. Mobbing

The term mobbing was first used in 1960’s by the etiologist Konrad Lorenz for describing a group of animals’ intimidating behaviors and attacks towards a weaker and unguarded animal. Later, Swedish psychologists used the term mobbing in describing the tyrannical behaviors observed among school children (Davenport, Schwartz & Elliott, 2003; Leymann, 1996). Then Leymann realized that some behaviors similar to those observed among animals and children were also exhibited at workplace and used the term mobbing to describe the tyrannical behaviors observed at work place (Leymann, 1996).

At workplace, mobbing is practiced in four stages (Leymann, 1996): At the first stage, which is characterized by critical incidences, a conflict arises between individuals. This stage is described with a particularly long standing conflict. The second stage is called stigmatizing and behaviors to harm the individual are observed in this stage. The objective is to punish the individual in here. In the third stage, management is involved in mobbing process. Management is got involved in the baseless rumors that came out in the second stage against the individual and mobbing is continued to be practiced. The fourth and last stage is described as getting fired. The individual who was left vulnerable either leaves his job or is fired.

3. Burnout

The term burnout was first described by Freudenberger (1974) in the literature. Freudenberger (1974) describes burnout as the individual’s being unsuccessful, exhausted and getting burnout as a result of excessive use of energy, power and resources. Maslach et al. describe the term burnout as a factor that evolves at workplace in long term and which causes a chronic and emotional stress between individuals. Hobfoll & Shirom (2000) describe burnout as a state observed on individuals who are exposed to long term stress at workplace. It is a result of work stress according to Cooper et al. (2000) and according to Schaufeli & Enzman (1998) it is the result of a long term work stress stemming from interpersonal demands at workplace (Narrated by: Pines & Keinan, 2005).

It is stated that burnout does not occur suddenly, but is a state which evolves throughout the time. In addition, it is stated that burnout has various dimensions (Maslach & Jackson, 1986;Narrated by: Iacovides & et al., 2003). Dimensions of burnout are “Emotional Exhaustion”, “Depersonalization” and “Personal Accomplishment”. Emotional exhaustion is a state of decrease in the employee’s energy for work and running out of emotional resources throughout the time (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). In depersonalization stage, the individual who experienced emotional exhaustion in the first stage does not have energy for taking care of his job and work environment. Therefore the employee tends to protect himself. In order to do so, he will isolate himself from other employees (Iacovides, et al., 2003). Depersonalization stage is also characterized by employing and exhibiting negative, indifferent or cynical attitudes and behaviors towards other employees, job or customers (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Use of a more cynical and ruder language and longer break times are the evident indicators of depersonalization (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). In the third stage of burnout, which is Personal accomplishment, the individual starts to develop negative attitudes towards and make negative evaluations for himself (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach & Schaufeli, 2001).
Furthermore, combined with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in this stage, the individual is alienated from his job and an evident decline in his personal accomplishment is observed (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).

4. Material and Method

4.1. Sample

The sample of the study consists of 451 teachers (217 Female, 234 Male) who work at schools of various socio-economic levels within Van province municipality. 230 of the teachers in the sample are elementary school teachers and 221 of them are from other specific fields.

4.2. Instruments

4.2.1. Mobbing Scale for Teachers (MOST)

The Mobbing Scale for Teachers (MOST), developed by Tanhan & Çam (2009) was used in order to determine the mobbing behaviors teachers were exposed to at schools. This scale is composed of five dimensions and 33 items. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale calculated for the present study is 0.88.

4.2.2. Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

Maslach Burnout Inventory, developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) and adapted into Turkish by Ergin (1992) was used in order to determine the burnout levels of teachers. The Inventory consists of 22 items and three sub-dimensions which are Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (D) and Personal Accomplishment (PA). The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the Inventory calculated for the present study is 0.82 for EE, 0.62 for D and 0.85 for PA.

4.3. Statistical Analysis

In a study, testing of the data through appropriate analysis methods depends on certain conditions. They especially come up in the use of parametric methods. These conditions are 1) score distribution for the data set should show normal distribution and, 2) variants should be homogenous (equal) (Ferguson, 1981; Narrated by: Kayri, 2009). Therefore, we first checked whether data sets showed normal distribution or not. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test calculated for MOST showed that distribution was not normal \([Z \, 3.164; \, p<0.05]\). The results of the normality test for the scores obtained from MBI’s sub-scale scores showed that scores for EE dimension \([Z \, 1.664; \, p<0.05]\), D dimension \([Z \, 3.421; \, p<0.05]\) and PA dimension \([Z \, 2.464; \, p<0.05]\) did not have a normal distribution. Therefore, Spearman Rho \((r_s)\) correlation coefficient which is a non-parametric correlation method was used. In addition, two step clustering method was used in order to describe the level of burnout and the level of being exposed to mobbing and it was found that teachers fell into three groups both according to the burnout scale and the mobbing scale.
5. Results

When the results of the two step clustering analysis are examined, it can be deduced that more than half of the teachers suffer from moderately mobbing acts. Furthermore, the results of the clustering analysis for EE scores indicate that nearly half of the teachers experience a moderate emotional exhaustion. As for the depersonalization dimension, we can conclude that a great majority of teachers experience a low level of depersonalization. Again, the results of the clustering analysis for the personal accomplishment scores show that most of the teachers experience a high level of personal accomplishment. In brief, we can conclude that teachers in the sample suffer from moderately mobbing acts, show a moderate emotional exhaustion, and experience a low level of depersonalization and high level of personal accomplishment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobbing</th>
<th>Emotional Exhaustion</th>
<th>Depersonalization</th>
<th>Personal Accomplishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low (n=138)</td>
<td>Moderate (n=247)</td>
<td>High (n=66)</td>
<td>Low (n=122)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Discussion

Based on this very finding of the study, it can be stated that in elementary schools mobbing phenomenon is moderately experienced. This phenomenon may be considered to be a serious problem as far as the negative impacts of the mobbing action is concerned. In his study to determine the relation between the situations where teachers are exposed to mobbing behaviors and the leadership styles of managers, Cemaloğlu (2007) states that teachers are...
exposed to moderately mobbing acts. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Toker-Gökçe (2006), it was also found that teachers suffered from moderately mobbing acts. In their studies, Dick & Wagner (2001) also concluded that teachers suffered from moderately mobbing acts. From this perspective, it can be concluded that the finding of the present study is in parallel with findings of studies conducted by Cemaloğlu (2007), Toker-Gökçe (2006) and Dick & Wagner (2001).

The Spearman Rho ($r_s$) Correlation Coefficient was calculated in order to determine the relation between the scores of 33-item Mobbing Scale for Teachers (MOST) to determine the mobbing behaviors teachers are exposed to at schools and the scores of Sub-Scales of Maslach Burnout Inventory, Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (D) and Personal Accomplishment and the total scores obtained from Maslach Burnout Inventory. Based on the calculated correlation coefficients, the relation between the MOST and EE sub-scales, the relation between MOST and D sub-scales, the relation between MOST and PA sub-scales and the relation between MOST and MBI total score were calculated as [$r_s=0.36; p<0.01$], [$r_s=0.39; p<0.01$], [$r_s=-0.16; p<0.01$] and [$r_s=0.40; p<0.01$] respectively. The correlation coefficient found indicates a significant relation between the mobbing behaviors at work place and burnout level. According to Büyükoztürk (2007), correlation coefficients between 0.30-0.70 indicate a moderate relation between the variables. Therefore, based on the correlation coefficient between MOST total scores and emotional exhaustion, depersonalization sub-scale scores and total burnout scores, we can say that there is a significant and moderate relation between two variables. Results of the study are summarized as above. It is possible to state that results of the study match up with the findings of Agervold & Mikkelsen’s (2004) studies. In their study conducted among 186 workers, the researchers concluded that the mobbing act which arose out of the interpersonal relations at work place affected the employees’ mental exhaustion states and well beings in a negative way. In their study conducted among 109 people in public health care sector in Portugal, Sa & Fleming (2008) concluded that individuals who suffered from mobbing got higher scores from emotional exhaustion and depersonalization sub-scales compared to those who did not, and got lower scores from personal accomplishment sub-scales. The results of the present study which aimed determining the relation between mobbing and burnout are in parallel with the results of Dick & Wagner’s (2001) studies. The researchers found that there is a relation between mobbing and burnout at work place at 0.25 levels and together with work load, mobbing caused burnout on individuals.

References


