The Role of Toxic Leadership in The Relationship Between Mobbing and Employee Silence: A Conceptual Model Proposal

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Abstract: Mobbing behavior, which has become a nightmare of business life, is one of the behaviors that causes devastating results in institutions. As well as the institutions, mobbing behavior also damages to individuals. Mobbing is one of the issues that is frequently encountered in institutions and in the focus of the organizational behavior study area and it also attracts attention. In the most basic terms, mobbing behavior is repetitive, long-lasting, deliberate, planned, malicious psychological harassment and psychological violence occurred in the workplace. The conceptual model suppose that who exposed to mobbing exhibit more employee silence behavior. In addition to this positive relationship, it was supposed that toxic leadership, which we can call the poison of institutions, will have a moderator effect. As of the period of the study, the relevant literature was examined. In the relevant literature, although there are studies that deal with mobbing and employee silence together, there are no studies with these three variables in which also toxic leadership included together. In this study, it was aimed to examine the role of toxic leadership in the relationship between mobbing and employee silence and to present a general framework to this.

Key Words: Mobbing, Employee Silence, Toxic Leadership

Mobbing ve İş Gören Sessizliği Arasındaki İlişkide Toksik Liderliğin Rolü: Kavramsal Bir Model Önerisi

Özet: İş yaşamının kabusu haline mobbing davranışı, kurumlarda yıkıcı sonuçlara sebep olan davranışlardan biridir. Mobbing davranışı kurumların yanı sıra, bireylere de zarar vermektedir. Mobbing, kurumlarda çokça karşılaşılan ve örgütsel davranış çalışma alanının odağında olan ve dikkat çeken konulardan da bir tanesidir. En temel ifadeyle mobbing davranışı, iş yerinde meydana gelen tekrarı olan, uzun süren, kasıtlı, planlı, kötü niyetli psikolojik taciz ve psikolojik şiddettir. Öngörülen modelde, mobbing'e maruz kalan çalışanların daha fazla işgören sessizliği davranışı sergiledikleri ileri sürülmüştür. Buna ek olarak, bu pozitif ilişkide kurumların zehri olarak tabir edebileceğimiz toksik liderliğin düzenleyici etkisi olduğu öne sürülmüştür. Çalışmanın yapıldığı dönem itibariyle, ilgili literatür taranmıştır. İlgili literatürde değişkenlerin ikili olarak ele alındığı görülmüş, ancak üç değişkenin bir arada kullanıldığı çalışmaya rastlanmamıştır. Buna yönelik, mobbing ve işgören sessizliği arasındaki ilişkide toksik liderliğin rolünün incelenmesi ve buna yönelik çerçeve sunulması hedeflenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mobbing, İşgören Sessizliği, Toksik Liderlik

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's business life, one of the negative behaviors that increase the awareness and the sensitivity is mobbing behavior. Mobbing is a negative behavior that is widely studied in the field of organizational behavior.

Mobbing is psychological terror, psychological harassment occurred at workplace (Leymann, 1990: 120). It is an aggressive and psychological attack towards a colleague or colleagues (Sheehan, 2004: 3). Mobbing is negative repeated behaviors that systematically frighten, intimidate, humiliate, disqualify, destroy, and torture the employee (Kasper Machado et al., 2021: 1798).

In this study, a model has been proposed regarding the role of toxic leadership in the relationship between mobbing and employee silence. According to the current literature review, although there are studies that deal with mobbing and employee silence together, there are no studies with these three variables in which also toxic leadership included as well. In this context, the aim of this study is to examine the role of toxic leadership in the relationship between mobbing and employee silence. The findings of other studies in the literature were included to the study and also it was aimed to present a conceptual model proposal.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Mobbing

Mobbing behavior is one of the behaviors that the awareness has increased day by day in business life. It is also a serious problem and stressor in business life.

Mobbing behavior is one of the behaviors that the interest of researchers increase day by day. Interest to the issue has increased in recent years (Coyne vd., 2004: 301; Djurkovic vd., 2004: 469; Ayyıldız, 2020: 1).

Konrad Lorenz was the first person who handled the behavior in the 1960s. He observed animal behaviors to define the concept (Perez and Fernandez, 2012: 137). Heinz Leymann was firstly coined the concept in business life in the early 1980s (Leymann, 1996: 168; Hecker, 2007: 439). Although the past of mobbing studies in the field dates back to the 1960s, firstly the concept was explained in the 1980s for the business life.

Leymann introduced the concept of mobbing in his article in 1990. He defined mobbing as a destructive behavior to harass or psychologically terrorize someone or someone at work (Leymann, 1996: 168). Leymann expressed mobbing as a psychological terror of the workplace. When we look to the today's business life, we come across mobbing behavior too much.

There are many different definitions of mobbing behavior in the literature. Leymann (1990) defines mobbing as psychological terror, psychological harassment, and psychologically abuse at work (Leymann, 1990: 120). Mobbing is hostile behaviors and unethical communication that lasts long frequency, occurred in the workplace and push employee to vulnerable situation (Leymann & Gustaffson, 1996: 252). Mobbing is deliberate, malicious, unethical, counterproductive behavior against a targeted person in the organization (Pascu, 2015: 146). It is fearful and stressful psychological form of intimidation that harms and intimidates the target person. (Ojedokun et al., 2014: 184). It is verbal, emotional and psychological abuse (Prevost & Hunt, 2018: 1). Mobbing is also a silent problem that affects all organizations in the world. The work environment causes to this behavior (Alarcon de la Torre Ugarte, 2022: 1).

Mobbing results with serious health problem such as psychosomatic symptoms, depression, low self confidence, suicidal ideation, bad family relationships, permanent job loss and also has social harm (Szigety, 2012: 419). People who exposed to mobbing behavior, face health problems (Zapf et al., 1996: 217). According to Leymann and Gustaffson (1996), mobbing behavior causes stress in the workplace. It also causes some sleep problems, irritability and anger, concentration problems, exaggerated reactions at unexpected moments, anxiety, psychosomatic problems, and depression (Leymann & Gustaffson, 1996: 272; Matthiesen and Einarsen, 2007).

Mobbing is a common problem in the modern business world that needs to be taken seriously (Kiwimaki vd., 2000: 656; McCormack vd., 2011: 1). It is also a cost and a problem in business life that can not be ignored for organizations (Benjamin,

2015: 214). Mobbing harms both individuals and organizations. Due to the negative and hazardous effects in organizations, organizations should take some precautions to prevent it. For this purpose, the necessary awareness should be gained for both individuals and organizations.

2.2. Employee Silence

In today's rapidly changing and developing business world, the behavior of keeping silent in organizations is increasing. Employees think always and have many opinions, ideas and information about their organizations and jobs. But when employee is silent, they do not stay their opinions, comments.

Studies of Morrison and Milliken (2000) and Pinder and Harlos (2001) are pioneering studies in the field of organizational silence. Early studies reconcile silence with a loyalty. But today's researches define silence as adverse condition in organizations (Shojaie et al., 2011: 1732; Nikmaram et al., 2012: 1271).

Silence means "quieting, ..., censorship, suppression, marginalization, trivialization, exclusion (Hazen, 2006: 238). According to Pinder and Harlos (2001), silence is another way to communicate (Pinder and Harlos, 2001: 334).

In business life, individuals and employees keep silent and convey their messages to their colleagues and managers by staying silent (Erigüç, Özer, Sonğur, Turaç, 2014; 63). Employees are also transmitting messages by remaining silent.

Employee silence means that employees keep themselves work-related ideas, opinions and information (Shojaie et al., 2011: 1732). In other words, employees do not share their opinions with others, keep themselves important issues in employee silence concept (Acaray and Akturan, 2015: 473). Employee silence is a conscious and deliberate behavior (Eroğluer and Erselcan, 2017: 329). Employees deliberately do not share information (Dyne, Ang and Botero, 2003: 1360). Employee silence is an active, conscious and deliberate behavior (Pinder and Harlos, 2001: 331). Employees remain silent because they believe that speaking will not change anything, they will be perceived negatively by others and also if they speak, they will be punished (Pinder and Harlos, 2001: 334). Employees know truths, but they do not have the courage to say. Silence may be caused because of the fear of negative feedback from managers and allusive beliefs (Morrison and Milliken, 2000: 708). Employees can stay silent deliberately or undeliberately (Tan, 2014: 1192).

Employees may exhibit silence behavior consciously or unconsciously.

According to Henriksen and Dayton (2006), silence is seen on three levels. These are; (1) individual factors (prejudice, status trap, etc.), (2) social factors (suitability, distribution of responsibilities), (3) organizational factors (unchallenged behaviors) (Henriksen and Dayton, 2006: 1539).

Morrison and Milliken (2000) mentioned that silence is a serious obstacle for organizational silence and development (Morrison and Milliken, 2000: 721). It is very important that the employees express their opinions, ideas and different perspectives for the development of the organization.

Employees prefer to remain silent in case of concern, problem and also when some things go wrong. Due to the intolerance of organizations, employees may prefer remaining silent (Morrison and Milliken, 2000: 706). Silence damages to organizations (Shojaie et al., 2011: 1735). It decreases motivation and job satisfaction, increases stress (Morrison and Milliken, 2000: 718). Being silent reduces employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Nikmaram et al., 2012: 1271). Employee silence affects negatively corporate communication, performance, organizational learning, organizational trust, organizational commitment (Ghiasee, 2022: 471).

Breaking the silence is very important for the efficiency and productivity of the organization, for the increase of the employees' self-confidence and for feeling themselves important (Çakıcı, 2007: 160).

2.3. Toxic Leadership

Unfortunately, there are also leaders who exhibit negative behaviors in today's business world. Leaders who exhibit this type of behavior are toxic leaders.

Toxic leadership is the dark side of leadership (Webster et al., 2011: 1). Toxic leadership includes harmful and hostile behaviors (Akca, 2017: 287). Toxic leadership is abusive, deliberately and interpersonally malicious, and also is poison for organizations (Reed, 2004: 71).

Toxic leaders are selfish, self-interested, pessimistic, distressed persons. They scare employees and also demotivated them (Çoban, 2022: 54). They do not think well-being of employees, they are arrogant and a bully (Naeem and Khurram, 2020: 686).

Reed (2004) defines toxic leadership as a disease and like syndrome. He explained toxic leadership syndrome in 3 groups. These are; (1) they do not worry about their subordinates, (2) they affect organizational climate negatively, (3) they are motivated by self-interest rather than their subordinates (Reed, 2004: 67).

Toxic leadership defined as destructive leaders. It damages to communities, organizations and individuals (Çoban, 2022: 51). Toxic leadership is a type of leadership that affect negatively organizations and also individuals.

Toxic leaders stress and damage their followers as physically, emotionally, psychologically (Webster et al., 2011: 3). Toxic leaders decrease employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Mehta and Maheshwari, 2013: 10). Toxic leadership affects negatively employee's motivation, productivity, satisfaction, performance, creativity. It is stressor and also causes health problems such as burn out (Akca, 2017: 285). Toxic leadership also increases employee turnover, alcohol and drug abuse (Behery et al., 2018: 795). Toxic leadership is seen as like poison in the organization.

3. SCIENTIFIC STUDIES ON MOBBING, EMPLOYEE SILENCE, AND TOXIC LEADERSHIP

According to the relevant literature, scientific studies from the literature are shown as below;

Purandere and Gawande (2021) were found that there is a moderator role of workplace autonomy in the relationship between workplace bullying and employee silence (Purandare and Gawande, 2021: 632). It was determined that there is positive and moderate relationship between mobbing and organizational silence (Çavuş, 2015: 10). İmadoğlu et al. (2018) detected that there is a significant relationship between mobbing and organizational silence in their studies (İmadoğlu et al., 2018: 621). It was found that workplace bullying positively associated with employee silence (Rai and Agarwal, 2018: 226). Saeidipour et al. (2021) were determined that mobbing has a moderator role in the relationship between organizational silence and turnover intention in their studies (Saedipour et al., 2021: 67). It was found that a partial mediation effect of mobbing on organizational silence and turnover intention relationship (Elçi et al., 2014: 455). Öztürk and Cevher (2016) determined that there is positive relationship between organizational silence and mobbing (Öztürk and Cevher, 2016: 71). It was found that there is positive and significant relationship between mobbing and organizational silence (Kalay et al., 2014: 1). In

Ghiasee (2022) study, it was detected that when employees are exposed to mobbing, employee silence occurs (Ghiasee, 2022: 465). Hüsrevşahi (2015) was found that there is positive and significant relationship between mobbing and silence behavior (Hüsrevşahi, 2015: 1179). Karaman (2015) revealed that the level of mobbing increased the silence behaviors. Also, in the same study, it was found that significant relationship between mobbing and employee silence (Karaman, 2015: 90).

In the study of Saqib and Arif (2017), it was determined that there is a mediator role of employee silence in the relationship between toxic leadership behavior and organizational performance (Saqib and Arif, 2017: 1). In another study, organizational silence was determined as a result of toxic leadership (Adeoye, Egbuta and Ayeni, 2020: 37). It was found that toxic leadership behaviors are significant predictor of organizational silence (Demirtaş and Küçük, 2019: 42). It was determined that there is a significant relationship between toxic leadership and employee silence (Kaya et al., 2021: 111). Turhan (2022) determined that toxic leadership affects organizational silence (Turhan, 2022: 1213).

Malik et al. (2019) determined that toxic leadership plays a moderator role in the relationship between workplace bullying and emotional exhaustion (Malik et al., 2019: 41). Sim et al. (2021) found that toxic leadership has a significant and positive relationship with bullying (Sim et al., 2021: 181).

4. THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL PROPOSAL

Few studies have been found in the literature for examining the relationship between mobbing and toxic leadership. In addition to this, it was not found empirical researches that examines the role of toxic leadership in the relationship between mobbing and employee silence. In this direction, the conceptual framework of the model related to the issue was shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Model Proposal

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

As a result of the literature review on the subject of the study; a positive relationship was found between mobbing and employee silence (Purandere and Gawande, 2021; Çavuş, 2015; İmadoğlu et al., 2018; Rai and Agarwal, 2018).

In this study, a model has been proposed regarding the moderator role of toxic leadership in the relationship between mobbing and employee silence. It was thought that there is a positive relationship between mobbing and employee silence, and that toxic leadership, which is harmful for the organization, has a moderator role in this relationship.

In the proposed conceptual model, it was suggested that employees who expose to mobbing behavior will be stay quiet more and toxic leadership has a moderator effect on this positive relationship. As of the period of the study, the relevant literature was examined. In the relevant literature, although there are studies that deal with mobbing and employee silence together, there are no studies with these three variables in which also toxic leadership moderator role included together. In this study, it was aimed to examine the role of toxic leadership in the relationship between mobbing and employee silence and to present a general framework to this. Empirical studies can be conducted in the future with this model proposal in which includes these three variables.

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