



**THE EFFECT OF MOBBING BEHAVIOR ON ATHLETE BURNOUT:
A STUDY ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS PARTICIPATING
IN THE UNIVERSITIES FUTSAL LEAGUEⁱ**

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Abstract:

Mobbing and burnout are phenomena that can be observed in many organizations. The effect of mobbing behavior on athlete burnout in this study was examined on university students in the Universities League (UNILIG) futsal competitions. The data were obtained from futsal players (n=72) who participated in the UNILIG, East Anatolian Group Futsal Competitions, in Turkey, during the 2017-2018 season. This study used the NAQ-F (Negative Acts Questionnaire—Football) scale developed by Yildiz (2015b) to measure mobbing and the ABQ (Athlete Burnout Questionnaire) scale developed by Raedeke and Smith (2001) to measure burnout. The football terms in the NAQ-F scale and the sports terms in the ABQ scale have been converted into futsal terms. A five-point Likert scale was used for both scales. First, validity and reliability analysis of the scales were performed, then hierarchical regression analysis was used to determine the effect of mobbing behavior on burnout. Reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The values of Cronbach's alpha obtained for NAQ-F ($\alpha=0.770$) and ABQ ($\alpha=0.871$), indicating very good reliability scores and exceeding the 0.70 threshold cited in the literature. Hierarchical regression analysis indicated that mobbing behavior significantly and positively influenced burnout of futsal players ($\beta=0.489$; $P<0.001$).

Keywords: mobbing, athlete burnout, futsal, amateur sports, university students

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1. Introduction

In recent years, mobbing and burnout phenomena, which attracted a great deal of interest from researchers, are accepted as the facts of organizational life (Yildiz, 2015a). The main reason why both phenomena attract attention of researchers is serious negative effects on individuals in the organization's environment. Studies conducted to date have shown that mobbing and burnout have a significant role in reducing the performance of the individual, and indirectly the performance of the organization (Metek and Sökmen, 2016).

For the first time, Lorenz (1963) introduced the term of mobbing when describing a collective attack by group of small animals on an animal of another species. Later, Heinemann (1972) applied this concept to investigate children's group behavior associated with harassing a group member by the other group members. Mobbing behaviors in organizations, in the 1990's, have been examined by Heinz Leymann who is known as the pioneer of mobbing studies. He defined mobbing as a "[...] a social interaction through which one individual (seldom more) is attacked by one or more (seldom more than four) individuals almost on a daily basis and for periods of many months, bringing the person into an almost helpless position with potentially high risk of expulsion" (p. 168). The main aim of the mobber is to pressure the undesirable person in the organization, to destroy his power of resistance, eventually, make victim leave his job (Tetik, 2010). According to Notelaers et al. (2006), to attribute processes to mobbing, negative behaviors need to be repeated consistently and frequently. Different terminologies for mobbing are used in the literature, such as bullying, psychological terror, or ganging up on someone. Literature has many developed scales for mobbing, for instance, the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) is a well-known scale. However, the developed scale for mobbing, which is specific to the sports field, is limited. Recently a new scale was developed by Yildiz (2015b) called Negative Acts Questionnaire-Football (NAQ-F), which is measure perceived mobbing behaviors of footballer.

In the 1970s, first, Freudenberg (1974) has considered burnout as a threat to work related performance. Later, Maslach and Jackson (1981) handled the burnout as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment resulting primarily from intense involvement with people. More recently, Maslach (2003), defined burnout as "[...] a psychological syndrome that involves a prolonged response to stressors in the workplace". In the literature, researches showed that burnout is a serious phenomenon that has various negative consequences for individuals, such as low motivation, low performance (Halbesleben and Bowler, 2007; Lemyre et al., 2007; Lonsdale et al., 2009), and low job satisfaction (Şirin and Döşyılmaz, 2017). Literature has many developed scales for burnout, for instance, Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is a popular scale which is widely used. In sports field, The Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ) (Raedeke and Smith, 2001) is one of the most widely used instruments in sports to measure burnout.

In the literature, although researches on mobbing and burnout are common (Albar and Ofluoğlu, 2017; Candan and İnce, 2014; Taş et al., 2017; Taştan and Gökler,

2017; Türkan and Kılıç, 2015), researches in the field of sports are very limited. These researches are mostly about football branches. However, there are no researches on university students participating in sports organizations. When the researches are examined in the sports field, it will be observed that the effect of mobbing is positively and significantly on burnout of professional football players (Yildiz, 2015b), amateur football players (Yildiz et al., 2018), and women's basketball players (Karik and Yildiz, 2015).

The branch of futsal, which was handled in this study, is an amateur sport activity. Futsal competitions in Turkey are held under the umbrella of two organizations, one of which is Turkish Football Federation, the other is the Universities League (UNILIG) which is affiliated to Turkish University Sports Federation. UNILIG aims to increase the quality of life by contributing to the physical, spiritual and social development of university students (Yildiz, 2010). We thought in our study that the performance of the players in futsal competitions –as in other sports branches– may be affected by a number of negative situations. We believe that one of them is mobbing and the other is burnout. Because of these phenomena, the performance of the players can be negatively affected; therefore, they lose some rewards such as image, status, admiration and so on. Similarly, low performance of the players may also cause low watching pleasure for spectators (Yildiz et al., 2018). High performance of players is possible by eliminating the situations that may adversely affect them. At this point, it is possible that both mobbing and burnout may have a negative impact on the performance of futsal players. From this perspective, this study is important in terms of how mobbing will influence burnout of players in futsal context. Therefore, in this study, the effect of mobbing behaviors on burnout of university students who participated futsal competitions was investigated in order to contribute to sports literature.

2. Material and Methods

2.1. Sample Size and Procedure

The data used in this study were obtained from the futsal organization of UNILIG, which was held among six universities in East Anatolian Group, during the 2017-2018 season, in Turkey. Male players were students of Dicle, Bitlis Eren, and Munzur Universities, and female players were students of Siirt, Dicle, Mus Alparslan, and Mardin Artuklu Universities. The communication with participants was provided via pollsters. First, the participants were informed about the purpose and content of the study and were distributed to 92 players to voluntarily participate in the study. Then, 74 voluntary participants were identified (80% return rates). As a result of the investigation, 2 forms were lacking information and therefore 72 forms were found appropriate for the analysis to test the relationships between the variables identified.

2.2. Measurement Instruments

We used NAQ-F scale developed by Yildiz (2015b) to measure mobbing. For this study, “football” terms in the NAQ-F scale have been converted to “futsal” terms. This scale consists of 12 items measuring burnout in three dimensions: person related mobbing, work related mobbing, physically intimidating mobbing. Scale items were measured on a five-point Likert type scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

To measure burnout, we used Raedeke and Smith’s (2001) ABQ, which has been developed specifically for the sports field. For this study, “sport” terms in the ABQ scale have been converted to “futsal” terms. This scale consists of 15 items measuring burnout in three dimensions: reduced sense of accomplishment, emotional/physical exhaustion, and devaluation. Scale items were measured on a five-point Likert type scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

3. Analysis and Results

3.1. Sample Characteristics

Demographic analysis of the data showed that the percentage of participants was approximately equal to gender; the freshmen had the highest percentage according to class level (63.9%). On the other hand, the average age of the participants was 21.05±1.79, and the length of playing futsal was 2.23±2.31 (Table 1).

Table 1: Sample characteristics

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	35	48.6
Female	37	51.4
Class	Frequency	%
Freshmen	46	63.9
Sophomores	13	18.1
Juniors	5	6.9
Seniors	8	11.1
Other variables	X (years)	SD
Age	21.5	1.79
Length of playing futsal	3.23	2.31

3.2. Test for Validity and Reliability

Exploratory factor analysis was used to assess the construct validity of the scales. Principal components analysis with varimax rotation was used in the factor analysis of the data. For NAQ-F scale, The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.730 which was considered “moderate level”. Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity resulted in (Chi-Square=279.246; df=66; $P<0.001$) significant results indicating that the data are suitable for factor analysis. The factor analysis showed that factor loadings for all items in the NAQ-F scale ranged between .444 and .851. For ABQ, The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.764 which was considered “medium level”. Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity resulted in (Chi-Square=448.075; df=105; $P<0.001$) significant

results indicating that the data are suitable for factor analysis. The factor analysis showed that factor loadings for all items in the ABQ scale ranged between .432 and .853. These were significantly more than the minimum acceptable threshold for adequately representing the construct validity of 0.30 (Hair et al., 1995).

Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the ABQ scale indicated a high reliability score of 0.871, and 0.770 for the NAQ-F scale. These values indicate that both scales are highly reliable.

3.3. Correlation Analysis

The result of the correlation analysis in this study indicated that burnout did not have any relation with demographic variables. The other hand, there was a significant, positive and moderate level correlation between mobbing and burnout ($r=0.510$; $P<0.01$) (Table 2).

Table 2: Results of correlation analysis

Variables	M	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender	1.51	1				
2. Age	21.05	-.421**	1			
3. Class	1.65	-.004	.386**	1		
4. Length of playing futsal	2.31	.100	.098	.380**	1	
5. Mobbing	1.82	-.152	.179	.162	.135	1
6. Burnout	1.86	-.220	.150	.190	-.049	.510**

* $P<0.05$; ** $P<0.01$

3.4. Hierarchical Regression Analysis

The results of the two-stage hierarchical regression analysis are given in Table 3 where burnout was used as dependent variables one at a time and mobbing was considered as independent variable. Regression analysis results showed that burnout was positively and significantly affected by mobbing ($\beta=0.489$; $P<0.001$). On the other hand, there was no significant causal relationship between control variables and burnout (Table 3).

Table 3: The results of the hierarchical regression analysis aiming to identify the relationship between burnout and independent variables

Independent variables	Step 1			Step 2		
	Beta	t	p	Beta	t	p
1. Gender	-.217	-1.656	.102	-.154	-1.336	.186
2. Age	-.024	-.168	.867	-.063	-.506	.614
3. Class	.242	1.768	.082	.198	1.651	.104
4. Length of playing futsal	-.117	-.927	.357	-.169	-1.523	.133
5. Mobbing	-	-	-	.489**	4.663	.000
F	1.775			2.208		
R ²	.096			.320		
Adjusted R ²	.042			.268		

Note: Standardized beta values were used. ** $P<0.001$

6. Conclusion and Discussion

This study showed that mobbing had a significant and positive effect on burnout of futsal players. In addition, futsal players had a low perception of mobbing and burnout. There are researches showing that mobbing can be seen in amateur sports as seen in professional sports (Iyem, 2007; Karik and Yildiz, 2015; Yildiz et al., 2018). Because the fact that both financial gain and give status to players are functions of modern sport, these may cause players to display negative behaviors. To sum up, in professional sports earning money and in amateur sports quest for status can reveal mobbing behaviors within the team. On the other hand, burnout is also a common phenomenon among athletes. Raedeke and Smith (2001) states that athletes who experience burnout due to various reasons may experience reduced sense of accomplishment, emotional/physical exhaustion, and devaluation. As a result, athletes who are suffer from burnout are seen a general decrease in performance (Yildiz, 2011).

In the sport literature, the researches investigating the relationship between mobbing and burnout are quite limited. According to the findings of our studies, the effect of mobbing on burnout was significant and positive, and these findings coincided with other researches (Karik and Yildiz, 2015; Yildiz, 2015b; Yildiz et al., 2018). In conclusion, our study showed that mobbing behaviors in futsal teams would increase burnout of the players.

Considering the high levels of in-team competition among futsal players due to status, it is likely that certain player(s) within the same team could use various negative efforts to hinder the performance outcomes achieved by a high performing player. It is clear that, player who exposed the negative behaviors will be less likely to compete and hence mobbing might be the shortest distance to achieving goals (Yildiz, 2015b). Hence, coaches who want to improve success should prevent mobbing behaviors within the team when negative behavior occurs. For this purpose, it can be suggested to give trainings to create mobbing awareness for all members of the teams. For this purpose, it can be suggested to give trainings to create mobbing awareness for all members of the teams.

Some limitations of this study should be considered. First, our study used a relatively small sample of futsal players in a university organization. Therefore, generalizations to broader groups should not be made. Second, this study was conducted in one country; thus, similar studies should be repeated in different cultures.

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