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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNAL MARKETING AND WORKPLACE MOBBING: EMPIRICAL RESULTS FROM SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Internal marketing and workplace mobbing are among the important facts that affect the efficiency and performance of organizations. This study was carried out to investigate the relationship between internal marketing and mobbing behaviors. Data for the study were obtained from employees working at organizations providing sports services in Turkey. The study used the IM-11 scale developed by Yildiz and Kara (2017) to measure the employees' internal marketing perception and the MS-A developed by Yildiz (2020a) to measure mobbing behaviors. The validity and reliability results in this study strongly demonstrated that both scales developed for higher education institutions can be applied to employees of sports services organizations. Correlation and regression analysis showed a significant and negative relationship between internal marketing and mobbing (β=-0.471; p<0.001). While internal marketing was moderately effective on vertical mobbing (β=-0.376; p<0.001), its highest effect was on vertical/horizontal mobbing (β=-0.486; p<0.001). The results of this study showed that internal marketing practices can be highly effective in preventing possible mobbing behavior among employees. Hence, managers who want to create a work environment free of conflict and low efficiency should effectively implement internal marketing within the organization.

Keywords: Internal Marketing, Mobbing, Employee, Sports Organizations.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive environment, organizations make great efforts to sustain their existence (Ruiz-Molina; Gil-Saura, 2012). Some of these efforts are related to employees (Ubeda-Garcia et al., 2019), especially after it is better understood that the most important capital in the service sector is human resources (Boxall, 2006). Organizations with a modern management approach primarily focus on the well-being and happiness of their employees in order to achieve high performance (Edgar et al., 2017).

In the organizational context, the attitudes and behaviors of employees in the work environment affect the quality of the relationship between employees on the one hand, and service quality and customer satisfaction on the other (Yildiz, 2017). Therefore, it is emphasized that the relations between organization-employee and employee-employee should be better understood (Yu et al., 2018). The basis of this approach lies in the belief that organizational success will be largely realized through employees (Sasser, 1976). Therefore, in the past two decades, researchers have begun to be more interested in issues that affect attitudes and behaviors of employees.

Researchers emphasize that organizations must retain their successful employees for their sustainable performance (De Jonge; Peeters, 2019; Mohammad et al., 2019). Organizations need to focus more on issues that will positively affect their employees, and, on the other hand, make efforts to overcome negative situations in order to be able to produce services with stable employees for a long time. In the context of this study, internal marketing, which has a positive effect on employees, and mobbing, which has a negative effect, are discussed.

Internal marketing is considered an approach aimed to create the happiness of employees with organizational resources by focusing on the organization-employee relationship, thereby ensuring service quality and customer satisfaction through effective external marketing (Ahmed; Rafiq, 2003; Piercy, 1995). The main purpose of internal marketing is to ensure that business management takes into account the needs and expectations of employees and thus provides motivation for employees (Ewing; Caruana, 1999). By satisfying the needs of the employees, the organization integrates with its employees and, as a result, the employees become more willing to satisfy the needs of the external customers (George, 1990; Sohail; Jang, 2017). There is evidence that employees whose demands and needs have been met contribute to the organization's high performance (Al-Ghaswyneh, 2018; Kehoe; Wright, 2010). On the other hand, there are situations that are contrary to the internal marketing approach and disrupt the positive climate of the organiza-

tion, and the mobbing phenomenon is one of them. Mobbing is when an employee is exposed to some behavior involving psychological harassment from his/her manager or colleague. Mobbing causes conflicts among employees, and these conflicts cause some devastating consequences within the organization (Figueiredo-Ferraz et al., 2012). Examples of the effects of mobbing are decreased synergies in the organization, the outflow of qualified employees, and thus the disruption of service performance (Pranjic et al., 2006).

Although there are many studies in the literature on the effects of both internal marketing and mobbing on employees, only studies examining the relationship between internal marketing and mobbing are quite limited. Accordingly, we argue that a significant gap exists in the literature in terms of examining two concepts. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate and better understand the relationships between internal marketing and mobbing in the workplace. By addressing the gap in the literature, the results of this study are expected to contribute to service management literature. For the purpose of the research, this study is organized into four sections. First, it provides a literature review of the concepts under consideration, followed by research design and methodology. It then focuses on the research findings and, finally, the contributions of this study.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Internal Marketing

While the classical marketing approach focuses on customers who receive goods or services from the organization, today's modern marketing approach treats employees in an organization as a customer and sees them as an internal market (Brooks et al., 1999). Accordingly, employees working in an organization are called internal customers, and those who buy products from an organization are called external customers (Bansal et al., 2001; Berry; Parasuraman, 1991; Ladzani; Roberts-Lombard, 2019).

Internal marketing is the application of marketing tools and techniques, which were developed by an organization for external marketing, to its employees (Lings, 2004). The core of the internal marketing approach lies in the belief that employees cannot satisfy external customers unless they are well treated by their own organizations (McDermott; Emerson, 1991). Internal marketing is seen as a key element for success in external marketing and focuses on an effective internal exchange between the organization and its employees (Marshall et al., 1998).

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In the internal exchange, expectations and needs of the employees are met by the organization, and then the employees are expected to focus on the satisfaction of the external customers. In this framework, internal marketing includes activities focusing on attracting qualified employees, retaining them in the work and ensuring their loyalty by satisfying them and creating a customer focus in this process (Yildiz, 2014).

Employees are seen as the most important element of the production process of organizations (Sahibzada et al., 2019; *Tornow;* Wiley, *1991*). The reason for this is that employees play an important role in the formation of external customer satisfaction (Berry, 1995). Therefore, internal marketing points out that it is compulsory to meet the expectations and needs of employees, primarily for the satisfaction and loyalty of external customers (Tansuhaj et al., 1991). It is claimed that employees whose expectations and needs are met will have more customer focus, and this will lead to providing higher quality service to the external customer (Joseph, 1996). In the literature, factors such as attracting and retaining qualified employees in the organization (Berry, 1995), providing employee training, development (Cahill, 1995; Gummesson, 1991), and motivation (Rafiq; Ahmed, 2000), and rewarding employees (Foreman; Money, 1995) come to the fore as strategies to ensure customer orientation in the context of internal marketing.

Internal marketing can be considered as a kind of expectation based on an interaction between the organization and the employees. In this context, the relations between the parties can, in a way, be seen as a social exchange. According to social exchange, expectations are mutual and create mutual obligations between the organization and the employees. That is, when one side receives something from the other side, it is under the obligation of what it will give in exchange to the other side in the future. For instance, it can be said that some behaviors (i.e., organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors) can be taken from the employees in favor of the organization in return for meeting the needs and expectations of the employees through internal marketing practices (Yildiz, 2017). In summary, internal marketing practices will first create happy and satisfied employees in the organization, and then these employees will contribute to the overall performance of the organization by creating customers who are satisfied with the services of the organization (Akbari et al., 2019; Bin Thabet et al., 2019; Chiu et al., 2020; Duyan, 2020; Muneeb et al., 2020; Papasolomou-Doukakis; Kitchen, 2004; Santa Cruz et al., 2020).

Workplace Mobbing

Mobbing, also known as bullying, harassment, psychological terror, ganging up on someone, is today's reality (Leymann; Gustafsson, 1996, p. 252). All of these concepts include unfair acts of violence to a person. Konrad Lorenz (1963), an Austrian ethologist, originally used the term *mobbing* as an intimidating animal behavior, where a group of small animals targets a single animal in various ways. Later, Heinemann (1972), a Swedish physician, applied this concept to examine children's group behavior associated with harming a group member by the other group members. Afterward, the concept of mobbing evolved and started to be examined scientifically on employees in the workplace in the last two decades.

Mobbing is a situation that has been experienced since the existence of working life. It can be seen in all professions, and every employee can be exposed to it regardless of culture and gender. Leymann (1996, p. 168) defined mobbing as a "hostile and unethical communication in the workplace directed in a systematic manner by one or more individuals, mainly toward one individual, who, due to mobbing, is pushed into a helpless and defenseless position." Self-expression and communication (i.e., silencing the victims; threatening the victims verbally; constantly criticizing the victims' work performance), social relationships (i.e., banning the victims from speaking to colleagues; staying away from the victims), attacks on reputation (i.e., gossiping about the victims; ridiculing the victims' private life), attacks on the quality of work-life (i.e., giving the victims meaningless work tasks; giving the victims tasks well below their qualifications), and attacks on health (i.e., giving the victims dangerous work tasks; threatening; attacking). In short, the main purpose of mobbing behavior in the workplace is to push the targeted person out of the organization by psychologically wearing it.

In the literature, several scales have been developed for mobbing behaviors in the workplace. The most recent case is the Mobbing Scale for Academicians (MS-A) developed by Yildiz (2020a) for academicians in higher educational institutions. This scale has 10 items and two sub-dimensions: vertical/horizontal mobbing and vertical mobbing. Vertical/horizontal mobbing is the exposure of an employee to harassment and bullying behaviors in a workplace by a manager and his colleagues at the same status. Vertical mobbing is the exposure of the employee to harassment and bullying behaviors by his / her manager. In addition, a study conducted by Yildiz (2020b) showed that MS-A can be applied in different sectors.

The results of the research in the literature show that people exposed to mobbing behavior may have serious and harmful effects on their health and well-being (Notelaers et al., 2006). In summary, unlike "normal" stressors, mobbing should be viewed as an increasing form of conflict that involves long-term harassment actions sys-

tematically addressed to the target person (Zapf, 1999). Mobbing phenomenon, which causes economic losses by reducing both individual and organizational efficiency, is one of the most important problem groups for organizations.

Relationship between Internal Marketing and Workplace Mobbing

Since internal marketing and mobbing have a significant impact on organizational performance, these two phenomena have attracted the attention of many researchers. Although there is quite a lot of research in the literature on both internal marketing and mobbing, the studies examining the relationship of both variables are very limited. To the best of our knowledge, the only empirical study that investigated the relationship between internal marketing and workplace mobbing was presented by Coban and Nakip (2007). As a result of this research in the banking sector, positive relationships were found between the two variables.

As mentioned before, it is clear that happy and satisfied employees will show extra-role behavior in favor of the organization thanks to internal marketing. It is also likely that employees will avoid negative behaviors, such as mobbing, which disrupt the psychological climate of the working environment thanks to internal marketing practices. Therefore, we believe that more studies regarding the relationship between internal marketing and mobbing should be done in order to understand the issue better. Hence, in order to contribute to the management literature, this study focused on employees in sports organizations and developed the following hypotheses:

H_1. There is a significant and negative relationship between internal marketing and mobbing.

H_2. There is a significant and negative relationship between internal marketing and vertical/horizontal mobbing.

H_3. There is a significant and negative relationship between internal marketing and vertical mobbing.

3. METHOD

Sample Size and Procedure

The data used in this study were obtained from employees working at the Provincial Directorates of Youth and Sports, in the Western part of Turkey. Because of the time, labor criteria, and the easy accessibility of the researcher

to participants, such sampling was preferred. A sample frame of research-eligible employees was created, and simple random sampling used to select the desired sample size of employees. The communication was provided via pollsters. First, the participants were informed about the purpose and content of this study and then 218 voluntary participants were identified. Participants were given one week to complete the questionnaire. Afterward, it was determined that 165 questionnaires returned (75.6% return rate). As a result of the examination, there was a lack of information in 6 forms and therefore 159 forms were found suitable for analysis.

Measurement Instruments

In this study, the IM-11 Scale, developed by Yildiz and Kara (2017), was used to measure the employees' internal marketing perception. This instrument is unidimensional and consists of eleven items. Statement examples include: "This organization provides training/development programs to improve the knowledge and skills of its employees," and, "This organization treats its employees equally and fairly." The statements were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

To measure mobbing behaviors, the Mobbing Scale for Academicians (MS-A), developed by Yildiz (2020a), was used. Although this measurement instrument has been developed for academicians, we believe it can be used for employees in other service sectors. This instrument consists of ten items and measures mobbing in two dimensions: vertical/horizontal mobbing (1–7 items), and vertical mobbing (8–10 items). Statement examples include: "How often your performance is being criticized as unjustified by your colleagues or administrator," and, "How often you are being assigned absurd duties, more trivial or unpleasant tasks by your administrator." The statements were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ("never") to 5 ("every time").

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

Almost half of the participants, mostly male and married, are between the ages of 26 and 35. The majority of the participants has an undergraduate degree and do not have an administrative duty. Just over half of the participants are permanent staff and have an income of 503–671 USD. The total of 40.3% of the participants has been working in the current institution for five and fewer

years, and 33.3% have a general working period of 6-10 years (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Variables		f	%
Gender	Male	109	68.6
	Female	50	31.4
Marital status	Married	94	59.1
	Single	65	40.9
Age	26–35	78	49.1
	36–45	62	39.0
	46–55	18	11.3
	Over 56	1	0.6
Educational degree	Lycée	22	13.8
	Associate's	13	8.2
	Undergraduate	103	64.8
	Master's	21	13.2
Employment status	Permanent staff	82	51.6
	Fixed-term contract	77	48.4
Administrative duties	No	146	91.8
	Yes	13	8.2
Income (USD)	Under 502	22	13.8
	503–671	85	53.5
	672–839	44	27.7
	Over 840	8	5.0
Length of working life in current institution (years)	Under 5	64	40.3
	6–10	61	38.4
	11–15	22	13.8
	16–20	7	4.4
	21–25	2	1.3
	Over 26	3	1.9
Total length of working life (years)	Under 5	27	17.0
	6–10	53	33.3
	11–15	48	30.2
	16–20	15	9.4
	21–25	6	3.8
	Over 26	10	6.3

Source: Yildiz (2020)

Validity and Reliability Test

Since the sample profile used in the original scales (Yildiz; Kara, 2017; Yildiz, 2020a) and the sample profile used in this study were different, both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were used to determine the construct validity of the scales. To test for construct validity, both scale items were analyzed using the principal components method of the factor analysis with Varimax rotation. Extraction was initially set to define factors with eigenvalues above 1.0. Absolute values were suppressed to 0.30. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test for Sphericity were used to establish the suitability of the data for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1970).

The KMO measure of the IM-11 scale was 0.947 and was evaluated as "excellent." Bartlett's Sphericity test resulted in significant findings (χ^2 =1149.766; $p<0.001$), indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis (Hair et al., 1995). Results of EFA indicated the existence of a single dimensional construct explaining 62.2% of the variance. This result is consistent with the original scale (Yildiz; Kara, 2017). Factor loadings of the scale items were relatively large, ranging from 0.757 to 0.848. These were significantly more than the minimum acceptable threshold for adequately representing the construct validity of 0.30 (Hair et al., 1995; Grandzol; Gershon, 1998). On the other hand, the reliability analysis using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicated a high reliability score of 0.939 for the IM-11 scale. This value showed that the scale was highly reliable (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Results of factor analysis and reliability coefficients of IM-11 scale

Scale items	M	SD	Internal Marketing
1. This organization provides attractive physical conditions (office, tools, and equipment) to its employees.	2.64	1.22	.757
2. This organization fulfills the fundamental needs (pay, insurance, job security) of its employees.	2.69	1.11	.763
3. This organization strengthens its employees through appropriate direction, empowerment, and participation.	2.83	1.16	.800
4. This organization provides appropriate workload and support to its employees.	2.96	1.21	.785
5. This organization provides an achievable vision to its employees.	2.74	1.12	.760
6. This organization provides training/development programs to improve knowledge and skills of its employees.	2.81	1.12	.786

7. This organization provides career advancement opportunities to its employees.	2.58	1.12	.848
8. This organization treats its employees equally and fairly.	2.52	1.16	.797
9. This organization provides open and transparent communication channels to its employees.	2.85	1.18	.767
10. This organization involves their employees in the decision making process.	2.66	1.20	.824
11. This organization provides rewards to high performing employees.	2.49	1.11	.784
Mean	2.70		
Standard Deviation		0.91	
Percentage of Variance Explained			62.224
Cronbach Alpha			0.939

Source: Yildiz (2020)

The KMO measure of the MS-A scale was 0.915, which was evaluated as "excellent." Bartlett's Sphericity test resulted in (χ^2 =858.714; p<0.001) significant findings, indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis (Hair et al., 1995). Results of EFA showed the existence of two clean dimensions, explaining 66.19% of the total variance. These dimensions are consistent with the original scale (Yildiz, 2020a). Factor loadings of the scale items were relatively large, ranging from 0.607 to 0.828. These were significantly more than the minimum acceptable threshold for adequately representing the construct validity of 0.30 (Hair et al., 1995; Grandzol; Gershon, 1998). The first dimension had seven items and explained the largest variance (38.09%) and the second dimension contained three items, and this explained 28.10% of the total variance. On the other hand, the reliability analysis using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicated a high reliability score of 0.904 for the first dimension, and 0.783 for the second dimension. These values indicated that all dimensions were highly reliable (**Table 3**).

Table 3. Results of factor analysis and reliability coefficients of MS-A

Scale items	M	SD	Vertical/ Horizontal Mobbing	Vertical Mobbing
1. How often your performance is being criticized as unjustified by your colleagues or administrator.	2.60	1.12	.704	
2. How often you are being ignored or subjected to teasing by your colleagues or administrator.	2.37	1.17	.828	
3. How often you are being exposed to gossip and slander about you by your colleagues or administrator.	2.69	1.29	.800	
4. How often you are being harassed by intimidating behavior from your colleagues or administrator.	2.25	1.22	.723	
5. How often your ability is being restricted by your colleagues or administrator.	2.72	1.23	.607	
6. How often you had allegations or accusations made against you by your colleagues or administrator.	2.35	1.20	.707	
7. How often you are being obstructed in terms of self-expression and communication by your colleagues or administrator.	2.32	1.23	.640	
8. How often you are being assigned absurd duties, more trivial or unpleasant tasks by your administrator.	2.81	1.31		.825
9. How often you are being pressured not to claim your work rights (e.g., promotion, career advancement, holiday entitlement, etc.) by your administrator.	2.83	1.24		.702
10. How often you are being exposed to high or unmanageable workload intentionally by your administrator when compared to others.	2.85	1.22		.814
Mean	2.65		2.47	2.83
Standard Deviation		0.92	0.96	1.05
Percentage of Variance Explained			38.092	28.106
Cumulative Percentage of Variance Explained			38.092	66.198
Cronbach Alpha			0.904	0.783

Source: Yildiz (2020)

Additionally, we used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the unidimensionality of IM-11 scale and the dimensionality of MS-A. We ran CFA with all core variables of IM-11 Scale. CFA results provided strong model fit indices (chi-square=89.1, p<0.001; goodness-of-fit index=0.902; adjusted goodness-of-fit index=0.853; comparative fit index=0.960; root mean square error of approximation=0.81). Similarly, CFA results of the MS-A yielded good model fit indices (chi-square=71.5, p<0.001; goodness-of-fit index=0.912; adjusted goodness-of-fit index=0.857; comparative fit index=0.955; root mean square error of approximation=0.84). These values meet the criteria suggested in the literature for assessing model fit (Browne; Cudeck, 1993; Byrne, 2001).

The validity and reliability results in this study have strongly demonstrated that both the IM-11 scale and the MS-A developed in the higher education institutions can also be applied to employees of the sports services organizations.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation results showed that there was a significant and negative relationship (r=-0.486) between internal marketing and mobbing. In addition, the relationship between internal marketing and sub-dimensions of mobbing was similar. The vertical/horizontal dimension had the highest relationship level (r=-0.494). The literature provides information regarding the low, moderate, and high levels of correlation levels among constructs. If the correlation is between 0.1 and 0.3, it is considered a low correlation, from 0.3 to 0.5, it is moderate correlation,

and from 0.5 to 0.7, it is high correlation (Cohen, 1988). Therefore, although the relationship between internal marketing and mobbing seems to be medium level, this relationship was close to a high level. On the other hand, only the education level variable, which was one of the demographic variables, had a significant and positive relationship with mobbing (r=0.182). Thus, as the level of education increased, the mobbing perception of employees also increased (**Table 4**).

Hierarchical Regression Analysis

In the hierarchical regression analysis, demographic variables and internal marketing were evaluated as independent variables, and mobbing and its sub-dimensions as dependent variables. Regression coefficients (β) showed that internal marketing had a significant and negative effect on all dependent variables. The highest effect of internal marketing was on vertical/horizontal mobbing (β=-0.486; p<0.001). In addition, the significant relationship between educational degree and mobbing observed in the correlation analysis disappeared in the regression analysis (**Table 5**). As a result, statistical analysis showed that three research hypotheses were accepted.

5. DISCUSSION

There are many studies in the literature that deal with the issues of internal marketing and mobbing separately. However, studies examining the relationships between both variables are very limited. Therefore, we believe that the results of our study will contribute to this gap

Table 4. Results of correlation analysis

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gender	1					
2. Marital status	.043	1				
3. Age	-.072	-.151	1			
4. Educational degree	.069	.102	-.234**	1		
5. Employment status	.048	.244**	-.302**	-.023	1	
6.Administrative duties	.095	-.061	.122	-.002	-.105	1
7. Income	-.035	-.078	.166*	.413**	-.293**	.058
8. Length of working life in current institution	-.100	-.192*	.684**	-.226**	-.476**	.083
9. Total length of working life	-.188*	-.229**	.651**	-.115	-.439**	.071
10. Internal marketing	-.042	.047	.096	-.176*	.159*	-.045
11. Vertical/horizontal mobbing	.003	-.020	.031	.188*	-.089	-.066
12. Vertical mobbing	.024	.004	.075	.145	-.149	.010
13. Mobbing	.015	-.009	.059	.182*	-.132	-.029

Table 4. Results of correlation analysis (continued)

Variables	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender						
2. Marital status						
3. Age						
4. Educational degree						
5. Employment status						
6.Administrative duties						
7. Income	1					
8. Length of working life in current institution	.249**	1				
9. Total length of working life	.281**	.653**	1			
10. Internal marketing	-.056	-.004	-.057	1		
11. Vertical/horizontal mobbing	.116	.038	.122	-.494**	1	
12. Vertical mobbing	.095	.117	.140	-.396**	.660**	1
13. Mobbing	.115	.087	.144	-.486**	.903**	.919**

**Correlations are significant at $p<0.01$; *Correlations are significant at $p<0.05$

Source: Yildiz (2020)

in the literature. The results of our study showed that internal marketing has a significant and negative effect on mobbing. The fact that this effect was at a medium level and even close to a high level clearly showed how important internal marketing practices were in preventing mobbing. In addition, it is noteworthy that the sub-dimension where internal marketing is most effective is the vertical/ horizontal sub-dimension. According to this result, it can be said that effective internal marketing practices create satisfaction for both managers and employees, and the positive motivation and climate that occurs later reduces the possibility of mobbing in the work environment. The findings of our study are similar to a previous study in the banking sector. Coban and Nakip (2007), in their study,

Table 5. Hierarchical regression analysis among independent and dependent variables

Independent variable	Dependent variable					
	Vertical/horizontal mobbing		Vertical mobbing		Mobbing	
	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 1 β	Step 2 β
1. Gender	.026	.002	.041	.023	.037	.014
2. Marital status	-.007	.005	.039	.048	.019	.030
3. Age	-.012	.093	-.019	.062	-.017	.084
4. Educational degree	.202*	.114	.183	.115	.211	.126
5. Employment status	-.038	.036	-.090	-.032	-.071	.000
6.Administrative duties	-.080	-.099	-.010	-.025	-.048	-.067
7. Income	-.012	.028	-.050	-.020	-.035	.004
8. Length of working life in current institution	-.022	-.040	.078	.064	.033	.015
9. Total length of working life	.162	.090	.115	.059	.151	.081
10. Internal marketing	-	-.486**	-	-.376**	-	-.471**
F	1.134	5.767	1.055	3.459	1.229	5.525
R^2	.064	.280	.060	.189	.069	.272
Adjusted R^2	.008	.232	.003	.135	.013	.223

Note: Standardized beta values were used, **$p<0.001$; *$p<0.05$

Source: Yildiz (2020)

found that internal marketing practices reduce mobbing behavior by providing job satisfaction for employees.

In the emergence of mobbing in the work environment, especially the personality traits of the mobber and the victim, as well as the situational features in the work environment, are effective (Samnani; Singh, 2012). High self-esteem, jealousy, arrogance, narcissism, etc. are examples of the personality traits of mobbers (Matthiesen; Einarsen, 2007); lack of self-defense ability and introversion are examples of victims' personality traits (Nielsen; Knardahl, 2015). On the other hand, the fact that mobbers see the victim who has high work ability as an opponent (Einarsen et al., 1998), the environment of insecurity caused by weak leadership in the work environment (Leymann, 1996), and the conflict climate are the situational features that create an environment for mobbing (Zukauskas; Vveinhardt, 2010). At this point, we advocate that strong internal marketing practices will prevent possible mobbing behaviors that may be seen among employees, against the ability of mobbing to create a negative climate in the work environment. Because, thanks to the internal marketing practices, the basic needs of employees are met (Gounaris, 2006), education and development are supported (Foreman; Money, 1995), open communication channels are created (Ferdeus; Polonsky, 2014), and most importantly, an equal and fair environment is provided to employees (Yildiz; Kara, 2017). Brooks et al. (1999) argue that good relations between internal customers (employees) and internal suppliers (managers) will lead to successful exchanges and mutual gains. Thus, they emphasize that the employees whose expectations and needs are met will be satisfied and they will be better motivated for positive relationships. Therefore, such a work climate weakens the possibility of disruptive behaviors such as mobbing among employees. In summary, managers who do not want to see conflict and low-efficiency employees in the work environment should effectively implement internal marketing within the organization.

6. CONCLUSION

In this study, the relationship between internal marketing and mobbing has been examined by focusing on sports organizations. The results of the study showed that internal marketing practices affect mobbing behavior significantly and negatively. Since internal marketing is an application that satisfies employees, it is unlikely that conflict-creating behaviors, such as mobbing, will emerge in the business environment where satisfied employees are present. The findings of the study are consistent with the results of previous research on internal marketing and mobbing. Previous research highlights the negative consequences of mobbing for both organizations and employees. This study suggests that the possible conflict environment in organizations can be minimized through internal marketing practices.

Limitations and Future Research

This study focused on employees of sport service organizations and tested hypotheses in that specific context. The findings of this study should be evaluated by taking into account some of its limitations. Accordingly, the results of this study should not be generalized to dissimilar populations, and interpretations of the results should consider the statistical limitations of the small sample size used in this study. Furthermore, the fact is that the hypothesized relationships were tested using the public organizations operating in the field of sports and will limit our ability to extend these results to other service sectors, such as sports academies, sports clubs, and sport and fitness centers. Further research is needed to test the relationships identified in this study in different contexts of sports organizations. Therefore, future research should test the consistency of results by applying similar methods of data collection and analysis to other research groups and to different sports organizations, both public and private. Additionally, similar studies should be conducted in different countries and cultures, because internal marketing perception and tolerance levels of mobbing may not be similar in societies with different cultures.

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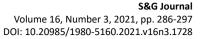
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