

Correlations Between School Principals' Toxic Leadership Characteristics and Teachers' Perceptions of Mobbing¹

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Abstract

This study mainly aims to identify the correlations between school principals' toxic leadership characteristics and teachers' perceptions of mobbing. Beside its fundamental purpose, this study also aims to identify the levels of school principals' toxic leadership characteristics and of teachers' mobbing perception and whether or not those levels differ according to demographic and occupational properties. The study uses the relational survey model and quantitative design. The sample was composed of 455 teachers teaching in schools in Çanakkale city centre and in the county of Çan in 2023-2024 academic year. The research data were collected with the Demographic Information Form, Mobbing Scale and Toxic Leadership Scale. Percentage analysis, frequency analysis, regression analysis, correlation analysis, Mann Whitney-U test, Shapiro-Wilk test, Kolmogrov-Smirnow test and Kruskal Wallis-H test were used in analysing the data. As a result, teachers' perceptions of school principals' toxic leadership characteristics and their perceptions of mobbing were generally found to be at medium level. In addition to that, teachers' perceptions of toxic leadership differed significantly according to gender, level of education and school where they taught. On the other hand, positive and significant correlations were found between principals' toxic leadership characteristics and teachers' perceptions of mobbing. As a result, school principals' behaviours and performance can be monitored and evaluated, and administrators can be offered training by giving feedback in relation to their toxic leadership and mobbing behaviours.

Keywords: Toxic leadership, mobbing, school principals, teachers

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Introduction

Leadership is a complicated phenomenon in which several important social, organisational and personal processes are interwoven. Leadership, which is a process of interaction in which individuals are encouraged to progress towards group objectives through their personal motivation without forcing, is the process of one's directing and influencing a group of people in order to attain a shared goal. It is also a process which makes others understand and accept what to do and how to do it, and it involves facilitation of individual and joint efforts. Thus, leadership means enabling individuals to contribute to group goals and regulating pursuing the goals (Khalili, 2023).

While the positive sides of leadership are emphasised, harmful types of leadership called toxic leadership also began to attract attention. Toxic leadership is a leader's influence on the employee, team or organisation in a negative way by displaying harmful and negative behaviours. This leadership contains such elements as leader's lack of empathy, inadequacy of emotional intelligence, loss of control, manipulation tendencies, excessive competitiveness and desire for power (Çelebi et al., 2015). Toxic leaders usually focus on their own benefits and do not consider their employees' needs and emotional health important. Such leadership causes harm to organisation culture, affects the potential in a negative way and can diminish the efficiency and competition advantage of an organisation substantially (Gupta and Chawla, 2024). Struggle with toxic leadership requires strategies such as leadership education, development of emotional intelligence and creating a healthy leadership culture (Yalçınsoy and Işık, 2018).

Mobbing, on the other hand, is a term which represents disturbing behaviours to which an individual is continuously and systematically exposed. It is a phenomenon generally encountered workplaces, schools and in other social environments. Mobbing can also be described as one's harassing, isolating or bullying someone else intentionally. The word was included in the literature in the 1980s as a result of Swedish psychologist Heinz Leymann's study. Leymann defines mobbing as "one's displaying hostile behaviours continuously towards somebody else and directing those behaviours to influencing the victim" (Leymann, 1996). The concept was understood and researched more comprehensively in the following years (Tetik, 2010).

Leadership in educational institutions is an issue which influences the quality of education and which concerns the society in general. School principals' leadership behaviours have direct effects on teachers' performance and motivation. Effective leadership is necessary so that teachers can work without feeling under pressure and so that they can contribute fully to education. Yet, toxic leadership observed in school settings can negatively affect teachers' psychological health and institutional commitment and can thus reduce the quality of education in general (Kırbaç and Konan, 2023; Çetinkaya and Ordu, 2017). Therefore, analysing the effects of toxic leadership on teachers is highly important in terms of improving the school culture and leadership practices (Çelebi and Kaya, 2014).

The issue needs studying because toxic leadership is capable of influencing teachers' mobbing perceptions and organisational commitment significantly (Dağlı, Elçiçek and Han, 2018).

This study aims to identify school principals' toxic leadership characteristics and teachers' levels of mobbing perception and to find whether or not the levels differ significantly according to demographic and occupational properties. Thus, the research questions formulated for this purpose are as in the following:

1. What is the level of school principals' toxic leadership characteristics and what is teachers' level of mobbing perception according to their perception?
2. Do school principals' toxic leadership characteristics and teachers' perceptions of mobbing differ significantly according to demographic and occupational properties?
3. Are there any significant correlations between school principals' toxic leadership characteristics and teachers' perceptions of mobbing?
4. What is the level of effects of school principals' toxic leadership characteristics on teachers' perceptions of mobbing?

Method

Research Design

This study was conducted in in relational survey model and in quantitative design. Bahtiyar and Can (2016: 50) describe the model as “a survey intended to identify the synchronous changes of two or more variables”. The nature of correlations between variables, whether or not the correlations change and if there is a change, the way it occurs are examined in a relational survey model. This paper examines the correlations between toxic leadership, organisational commitment and mobbing.

Population and Sample

The population in this study was 455 teachers teaching in schools located in Çanakkale city centre and in the county of Çan in 2023-2024 academic year. The number of teachers working in Çanakkale city centre was 5667 (Çanakkale Provincial Directorate of National Education) and the number of teachers working in Çan was 543 (Çan District Directorate of National Education). The group selected randomly regardless of gender, age, teaching experience, educational status and branch from the population of teachers working at any stage of education in schools located in Çanakkale and Çan in 2023-2024 academic year was included in the research sample. The participants were composed of teachers who worked in schools easy to reach and who were voluntary to join the research due to the fact that the population was too big. Thus, the type of sampling was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is defined as sampling in which the units in the population are easy to choose and are considered appropriate to represent the population (Tuna, 2016: 14).

The majority of the participants was women with 56.3%. in terms of education, 80% of the participants had a graduate degree and most of them (52.5%) were high school teachers.

Table 1. Distribution of the Participants according to their Demographic and Occupational Properties

| Variables | n | \bar{x} |
|---------------------------|-----|-----------|
| Gender | | |
| Female | 256 | 56.3 |
| Male | 199 | 43.7 |
| Total | 455 | 100 |
| Level of education | | |
| Graduate | 364 | 80.0 |
| Post-graduate/Doktorate | 91 | 20.0 |
| Stage of education | | |
| Pre-school | 14 | 3.1 |
| Primary school | 202 | 44.4 |
| High school | 239 | 52.5 |
| Total | 455 | 100 |

Data Collection Tools

The Mobbing Scale and Toxic Leadership Scale in addition to the Demographic Information Form prepared by the researcher were used for data collection. The Demographic Information Form consisted of such information as gender, educational status and the stage of education. The Toxic Leadership Scale was composed of 30 items. The scale, having done validity and reliability studies, was developed by Schmidt (2008), and it was later adapted into Turkish by Çelebi et al (2015). The scale contained 5 sub-factors labelled as “Unthankfulness”, “Selfishness”, “Sordidness”, “Negative Psychological State” and “Toxic Leadership (Total)”. It was a 32-item scale. Its validity and reliability studies were done and it was developed by Heinz Leymann (1990) and was adapted into Turkish by Mansur (2008). The sub-factors of the Mobbing scale were labelled as “Victim’s manifesting oneself and the occurrence of communication” “Attacks on social relations”, “Attacks on dignity”, “Attacks on one’s life quality and occupational status” and “Direct attacks on one’s health”. The findings for the reliability analysis of the scale are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Findings for the Reliability of the Scales Used in the Study

| Scales | Cronbach’s Alpha | Number of items |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Toxic Leadership Scale | 0.994 | 30 |
| Mobbing Scale | 0.991 | 32 |

As clear from Table 2, the reliability of the Toxic Leadership Scale is 0.994 and the reliability of the Mobbing Scale is 0.991. It became apparent that the values were adequate for the study.

Data Analysis

Microsoft Excel 2010 and IBM SPSS 22 were used for statistical analyses in this study. Percentage analysis and frequency analysis were done for categorical variables in the analysis of demographic variables whereas descriptive statistics were used for continuous variables. Test of normal distribution was done to decide on what method of analysis to use for the comparison of toxic leadership scale and mobbing scale scores according to demographic variables. In this testing- which was performed by using Kolmogorov-Smirnov ($p < 0.001$) and Shapiro-Wilk ($p < 0.001$)-it was found by evaluating the charts, histograms and variation coefficients that the distribution of scale scores did not have normal distribution.

The Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis H test were used in comparing the scores received from toxic leadership scale and from mobbing scale according to demographic and occupational properties. The Bonferroni corrected Mann Whitney U test was used in finding the source of differences. In addition to that, Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient was used to find the correlations between toxic leadership and mobbing scales.

Outliers were found and removed so as to meet the condition of independent and dependent variables' having normal distribution- the pre-requisites of regression analysis (Köklü et al., 2023)- to find the effects of school principals' toxic leadership characteristics on teachers' mobbing perception. In this context, the Z scores for the relevant scores were created, and the scores for 88 participants which were outside ± 3.00 were removed from the data set because z scores which are not in the ± 3.00 violate normal distribution according to central limit theorem (Tuna, 2016). As a result, the analyses were done with the scores of 367 participants. Five different linear regression analyses were done due to the fact that there were scores for the 5 factors in the mobbing scale. The findings concerning numerical data were tabulated and significant differences were tested at the level of $\alpha = 0.05$.

Findings

Findings for Perceived Toxic Leadership and Mobbing Levels

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the levels of toxic leadership and mobbing perceived by participants.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Scores Received from Toxic Leadership and Mobbing Scales

| Scores | Min.- Max. | Ort. \pm SS | Median (IQR) |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Toxic Leadership (Total) | 1- 5 | 2,1 \pm 1,3 | 1,5 (2,1) |
| Unthankfulness | 1- 5 | 2,0 \pm 1,2 | 1,3 (2,0) |

| | | | |
|--|------|-----------|-----------|
| Selfishness | 1- 5 | 2,2 ± 1,4 | 1,6 (2,4) |
| Sordidness | 1- 5 | 2.1 ± 1.4 | 1.3 (2.0) |
| Negative psychological state | 1- 5 | 2.3 ± 1.4 | 2.0 (2.6) |
| Victim’s manifesting oneself and occurrence of communication | 1- 5 | 1.8 ± 1.0 | 1.1 (1.3) |
| Attacks on dignity | 1- 5 | 1.6 ± 1.0 | 1.0 (1.0) |
| Attacks on social relations | 1- 5 | 1.6 ± 1.0 | 1.0 (1.0) |
| Attacks on one’s life quality and occupational status | 1- 5 | 1.6 ± 1.0 | 1.0 (1.0) |
| Direct attacks on one’s health | 1- 5 | 1.6 ± 1.0 | 1.0 (1.0) |

Accordingly, Toxic Leadership (Total) scores are between 1 and 5 and average (\bar{x}) is 2.1 ± 1.3 and the median is 1.5 (IQR=2.1). The average (\bar{x}) score in the factor of unthankfulness is 2.0 ± 1.2 and the median is 1.3 (IQR=2.0). While the average (\bar{x}) is 2.2 ± 1.4 and the median is 1.6 (IQR=2.4) in the factor of selfishness, the average (\bar{x}) is 2.1 ± 1.4 and the median is 1.3 (IQR=2.0) in the factor of sordidness. In the factor of negative psychological state, the average (\bar{x}) is 2.3 ± 1.4 and the median is 2.0 (IQR=2.6).

In the Mobbing Scale, on the other hand, the average (\bar{x}) was found as 1.8 ± 1.0 and the median as 1.1 (IQR=1.3) in the factor of victim’s manifesting oneself and the occurrence of communication. The average (\bar{x}) was 1.6 ± 1.0 and the median was 1.0 (IQR=1.0) in the factors of attacks on dignity, attacks on social relations, attacks on one’s life quality and occupational status and direct attacks on one’s health. On examining the average (\bar{x}) value, it may be said that toxic leadership and mobbing behaviours are perceived at medium level in general.

Comparison of Toxic Leadership Perceptions according to Demographic and Occupational Properties

Findings concerning the comparison of toxic leadership perceptions according to demographic and occupational properties are shown in Table 4 by using the data for “Toxic Leadership (Total)” scores.

Table 4. Comparison of Toxic Leadership Perceptions according to Demographic and Occupational Properties

| Groups | n | \bar{x} | SS | Comparison |
|--------------------|-----|-----------|------|--------------------------|
| Gender | | | | |
| Female | 256 | 1,66 | 0,95 | Z=1,934; p=0,053 |
| Male | 199 | 1,68 | 1,00 | |
| Educational status | | | | |
| Graduate | 364 | 1,67 | 1,00 | Z=1,975; p=0,048 |
| M.A/PhD | 91 | 1,65 | 0,83 | |
| Stage of education | | | | |
| Pre-school | 14 | 1,21 | 0,32 | $\chi^2=6,599$; p=0,037 |

| | | | |
|----------------|-----|------|------|
| Primary school | 202 | 1,57 | 0,93 |
| High school | 239 | 1,78 | 1,02 |

It is evident from Table 4 that there are no significant differences between female and male participants ($p=0.053$). Yet, considering the distribution of scores in the factor of “Unthankfulness”, the significant differences became apparent. Thus, the male participants were found to have higher perceptions of “Unthankfulness” than the female participants ($\chi^2=2,319$; $p=0,509$). Examination of educational status made it clear that there were no significant differences between participants holding a graduate degree and ones holding an M.A or PhD degree according to the “Toxic Leadership (Total)” scores ($p=0.078$). However, significant differences were found according to level of education on examining the distribution of scores in the factor of “Sordidness” ($Z=1.975$; $p=0.048<0.05$). Thus, it was found that the participants with an M.A or PhD degree had higher perceptions of sordidness than those with a graduate degree.

Apart from that, significant differences were also found according to stages of education at which the teachers taught ($p=0.037$). Accordingly, differences were found between pre-school, primary school, secondary school and high school teachers’ scores of toxic leadership. Bonferroni corrected Mann Whitney U test was used to find in which groups differences were available; yet no significance was found ($p>0.05$). Therefore, even though it was revealed that “Toxic Leadership (Total)” score distribution had differences according to stages of education; at which stages the differences were available could not be found.

Comparison of Mobbing Perceptions according to Demographic and Occupational Properties

The Mobbing Scale used in comparing mobbing perceptions according to demographic and occupational properties was comprised of factors labelled as “Victim’s manifesting oneself and occurrence of communication”, “Attacks on social relations”, “Attacks on dignity”, “Attacks on one’s life quality and occupational status” and “Direct attacks on one’s health”. No significant differences were found in the factors of “Attacks on social relations”, “Attacks on one’s life quality and occupational status” and “Direct attacks on one’s health”. On the other hand, significant differences were found in the factors of “Victim’s manifesting oneself and occurrence of communication” and of “Attacks on dignity” according to demographic and occupational properties.

Findings for the comparison of perceptions of “Victim’s manifesting oneself and occurrence of communication” according to demographic and occupational properties are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. The Comparison Perceptions of Victim’s Manifesting Oneself and Occurrence of Communication according to Demographic and Occupational Properties

| Groups | n | \bar{x} | SS | Comparison |
|--------------------|-----|-----------|------|------------------|
| Gender | | | | |
| Female | 256 | 1,33 | 0,51 | Z=2,217; p=0,027 |
| Male | 199 | 1,37 | 0,54 | |
| Educational status | | | | |
| Graduate | 364 | 1,33 | 0,53 | Z=2,987; p=0,003 |
| M.A/PhD | 91 | 1,44 | 0,51 | |

As clear from Table 5, there are significant differences in mobbing perceptions in relation to victim’s manifesting oneself and occurrence of communication according to gender and educational status. Accordingly, significant differences were found between female and male participants ($p=0.027$) and thus, it may be said that male teachers perceive higher mobbing than female teachers. In terms of educational status, significant differences were found between teachers who held a graduate degree and teachers who held an M.A or PhD degree ($p=0.003$) and accordingly participants holding an M.A or PhD degree may be said to have higher perceptions of mobbing than those holding a graduate degree.

Table 6 below shows the findings for the comparison of perceptions of attacks on dignity according to demographic and occupational properties.

Table 6. Comparison of Perceptions of Dignity according to Demographic and Occupational Properties

| Groups | n | \bar{x} | SS | Comparison |
|--------------------|-----|-----------|------|------------------|
| Gender | | | | |
| Female | 256 | 1,21 | 0,40 | Z=2,147; p=0,032 |
| Male | 199 | 1,21 | 0,39 | |
| Educational status | | | | |
| Graduate | 364 | 1,20 | 0,39 | Z=2,366; p=0,018 |
| M.A/PhD | 91 | 1,26 | 0,42 | |

According to Table 6, significant differences are available between perceptions of “Attacks on dignity” on the basis of gender and educational status. Thus, distribution of scores in the factor of attacks on dignity differed according to gender ($p=0.032$). Male teachers were found to have higher perceptions of attacks on dignity than female teachers. In the variable of education, significant differences were found between teachers holding a graduate degree and teachers holding an M.A or PhD degree ($p=0.018$), and teachers holding an M.A or PhD degree were found to have higher perceptions of attacks on dignity than those holding a graduate degree.

Correlations between Mobbing and Toxic Leadership Perceptions

Findings for the correlations between mobbing perceptions and toxic leadership perceptions are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Correlations between Mobbing Perceptions and Toxic Leadership Perceptions

| | Unthankfulness | Sordidness | Selfishness | Negative Psychological State | Toxic Leadership (Total) |
|--|----------------|------------|-------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Victim’s manifesting oneself and occurrence of communication | 0,851 | 0,851 | 0,826 | 0,818 | 0,849 |
| Attacks on social relations | 0,796 | 0,790 | 0,754 | 0,733 | 0,779 |
| Attacks on dignity | 0,772 | 0,765 | 0,727 | 0,709 | 0,753 |
| Attacks on one’s life quality and occupational status | 0,753 | 0,760 | 0,731 | 0,715 | 0,748 |
| Direct attacks on one’s health | 0,703 | 0,698 | 0,653 | 0,638 | 0,681 |

* All the correlations are significant at the level of $p<0.01$.

As can be seen from Table 7, all the correlations were found positive and significant at the level of $p<0.01$. Strong and positive correlations were found between victim’s manifesting oneself and occurrence of communication and unthankfulness ($r=0.851$), sordidness ($r=0.851$), selfishness ($r=0.826$), negative psychological state ($r=0.818$) and toxic leadership total ($r=0.849$). Correlations between attacks on social relations, attacks on dignity and attacks on one’s life quality and occupational status; toxic leadership and its sub-factors were also found to be strong. Correlations between direct attacks on one’s health and toxic leadership and its sub-factors were found to be mostly at medium level. These were the findings which indicated that different factors of mobbing perceptions had deep ties with toxic leadership perceptions and that the two phenomena were considerably correlated. They increased or decreased synchronously.

The Effects of School Principals’ Toxic Leadership Characteristics on Teachers’ Perceptions of Mobbing

Findings obtained in relation to the effects of school principals' toxic leadership characteristics on teachers' mobbing perceptions are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Regression Findings for the Effects of Toxic Leadership Total Scores on Mobbing Scores

| Dependent Model Variable | Model summary | Independent variable | Non-standardised coefficients | | Standardised coefficients | t | p |
|--|---|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------|---------------------------|--------|--------|
| | | | b | S. H. | β | | |
| 1 Victim's manifesting oneself and occurrence of communication | F(1-365)=491.528 p<0.001 R2=0.574 | (constant) | 0.662 | 0.036 | | 18.523 | <0.001 |
| | | Toxic leadership | 0.410 | 0.019 | 0.758 | 22.170 | <0.001 |
| 2 Attacks on social relations | F(1-365)=207.184 p<0.001 R2=0.362 | (constant) | 0.805 | 0.036 | | 22.219 | <0.001 |
| | | Toxic leadership | 0.270 | 0.019 | 0.602 | 14.394 | <0.001 |
| 3 Attacks on dignity | F(1-365)=150.538 p<0.001 R2=0.292 | (constant) | 0.843 | 0.035 | | 24.417 | <0.001 |
| | | Toxic leadership | 0.219 | 0.018 | 0.540 | 12.269 | <0.001 |
| 4 Attacks on one's life quality and occupational status | F(1-365)=180.491 p<0.001 R2=0.331 | (Constant) | 0.800 | 0.038 | | 21.270 | <0.001 |
| | | Toxic leadership | 0.262 | 0.019 | 0.575 | 13.435 | <0.001 |
| 5 Direct attacks on one's health | F(1-365)=108,987 p<0,001 R2=0,230 | (Constant) | 0.870 | 0.035 | | 24.561 | <0.001 |
| | | Toxic leadership | 0.192 | 0.018 | 0.480 | 10.440 | <0.001 |

It is clear from Table 8 that the effects of toxic leadership on victim's manifesting oneself and occurrence of communication were found positive (b=410) and statistically significant in the first model created. The score of victim's manifesting oneself and occurrence of communication increased 0.410 point in parallel to 1-point increase in the average (\bar{x}) of toxic leadership. Besides, 57.4% of victim's manifesting oneself and occurrence of communication is explained by toxic leadership. As can be seen in the second model, the effects of toxic leadership on attacks on social relations were found positive (b)270) and statistically significant (p<0.001). Score of attacks on social relations increased 0.270 point with 1-point increase in the average (\bar{x}) of toxic leadership. Additionally, 36.2% of attacks on social relations is explained by toxic leadership.

In the third model shown in Table 8, the effects of toxic leadership on attacks on dignity can be seen. These effects were also found positive ($b=219$) and statistically significant ($p<0.001$). Score of attacks on dignity increased 0.219 point with 1-point increase in the average (\bar{x}) of toxic leadership. 29.2% of attacks on dignity is explained by toxic leadership. In the fourth model, the effects of toxic leadership on attacks on one's life quality and occupational status are seen. The effects are positive ($b=262$) and statistically significant ($p<0.001$). As a result of 1-point increase in the average (\bar{x}) of toxic leadership, the score of attacks on one's life quality and occupational status increased 0.262 point. 33.1% of attacks on one's life quality and occupational status is explained by toxic leadership. And finally, in the fifth model, the effects of toxic leadership on direct attacks on one's health are seen. These effects were also found to be positive ($b=192$) and statistically significant ($p<0.001$). 1-point increase in the average (\bar{x}) of toxic leadership led to 0.192-point increase in the score of direct attacks on one's health. In addition to that, 23% of direct attacks on one's health is explained by toxic leadership.

Evaluation of the findings collectively in terms of levels of effect demonstrated that the regression coefficients showing the effects of toxic leadership on mobbing ranged between 0.192 and 0.410. In addition to that, the rate of toxic leadership to explain the different factors of mobbing ranged between 23% and 57%. Relatively the strongest effect was found on victim's manifesting oneself and occurrence of communication ($b=410$)- which was followed by attacks on social relations ($b=270$), attacks on one's life quality and occupational status ($b=262$), attacks on dignity ($b=219$) and direct attacks on one's health ($b=192$).

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Teachers' commitment to their school and the basic elements influencing their commitment are of critical importance in attaining efficiency and in sustaining it. Classical types of leadership changed due to circumstances of our time and thus, new models of leadership emerged. One of these types is toxic leadership. It is becoming more and more widespread in Turkey as in the whole world, and as a result, the number of managers displaying characteristics of toxic leadership is increasing. Therefore, it is important to investigate the concept of toxic leadership in school atmosphere and to analyse the mobbing perceptions that can arise as a result.

The findings obtained in this study showed that school principals' behaviours of toxic leadership were generally perceived at medium level by teachers. In a similar way, teachers perceived mobbing behaviours at medium level. On considering toxic leadership perceptions according to demographic and occupational properties, no differences were found in "Toxic Leadership (Total)" scores according to gender whereas significant differences were found in taking the distribution of scores in the factor of "Unthankfulness". Thus, it may be stated that male teachers' perception of toxic leadership is higher than female teachers'. Reyhanoglu and Akın (2016) also argue that male teachers perceive school

principals as toxic leaders more frequently than female teachers do. While in the variable of the level of education there were no differences according to “Toxic Leadership (Total)” scores, differences were found according to the distribution of scores in the factor of “Sordidness”. Thus, participants holding a post-graduate or doctoral degree may be said to have higher levels of toxic leadership than those holding a graduate degree. On the other hand, significant differences were found between teachers’ perceptions of toxic leadership according to stages of education they taught at; however, the groups in which the differences were available could not be found.

In terms of mobbing perceptions, significant differences were found in perceptions of victim’s manifesting oneself and of attacks on dignity according to gender and educational status. Accordingly, male teachers’ perceptions of mobbing were found to be higher than female teachers’. According to educational status, teachers holding a post-graduate or doctoral degree had higher perceptions of mobbing than those holding a graduate degree. In terms of perceptions of attacks on dignity, significant differences were found according to gender and educational status. Accordingly, male teachers and teachers holding a post-graduate or doctoral degree had higher perceptions of mobbing. In a similar vein, Ocak (2008) also found that male teachers had higher perceptions of mobbing than female teachers in the factors of “Hindering one from manifesting oneself” and “Behaviours influencing life quality and occupational dignity”. In parallel to that, Akpınar (2016) found according to the variable of educational status that teachers who held a post-graduate degree were exposed to mobbing in the process of teaching more than teachers who held a graduate degree. The researcher argued that a probable cause of it might be the jealousy of their colleagues and or being considered as a greater opponent.

On the other hand, positive and significant correlations were found between school principals’ toxic leadership characteristics and teachers’ perceptions of mobbing in this paper. High and positive correlations were found between victim’s manifesting oneself and occurrence of communication and toxic leadership characteristics. Additionally, strong correlations were also found between attacks on social relations, on dignity, on one’s life quality and occupational status and factors of toxic leadership. The correlations between direct attacks on one’s health and toxic leadership were found to be at medium level. These were the findings indicative of deep ties between mobbing perceptions and toxic leadership characteristics- which also indicated that both phenomena increased or decreased synchronously. According to the results obtained in Orunbon and Ibikunle (2023), bad examples observed in relation to humiliating behaviours towards teachers and teachers’ behaviours of retreat were found to be associated with behaviours of toxic leadership.

This current study found as a result of regression analysis that the effects of school principals’ toxic leadership characteristics on teachers’ mobbing perceptions were significant. According to the findings, toxic leadership behaviours increased teachers’ perceptions of mobbing, and this influenced teachers’ psychological health in negative ways. Among the findings, particularly the high effects of

toxic leadership on victim's manifesting oneself and occurrence of communication exhibited how dominant a role toxic leadership played in teachers' communication and self-expression skills. Thus, the negative environment created by toxic leaders can prevent teachers from expressing themselves easily and from communicating. Under such leadership, teachers may retreat with fear of being continuously criticised, being degraded or punished. This, in turn, can affect teachers' performance and job satisfaction seriously. Besides, closure of communication channels and teachers' failure to express themselves can also disrupt team work, cooperation and the scheme of things in educational institutions. On the other hand, the fact that the effects of toxic leadership on attacks on dignity, attacks on one's life quality and occupational status, attacks on social relations and on direct attacks on one's health were all positive and significant clearly demonstrated the prevalent and multidimensional negative effects of such leadership on teachers. These findings suggest that toxic leaders have negative effects not only on teachers' individual psychological and physical health, but also their social relations, dignity, life quality and occupational status. As a result, it becomes apparent that toxic leadership have important impacts on teachers' perceptions of mobbing. This situation stresses the need for identifying toxic leadership in educational institutions and for immediate interventions in order to prevent such behaviours.

These results obtained in this study are similar to the ones obtained in the literature. Çelebi and Kaya (2014) obtained results showing that mobbing incidents teachers encountered in schools had negative effects in and out of school. Gülsüm et al (2022), in a study concerning mobbing applied to teachers by school administrators, state that mobbing is applied in such ways as threatening, degrading within the crowd and demanding to perform duties outside job description. The results obtained in the study suggest that teachers work under intensive stress due to mobbing they are exposed to and that it had negative reflections on their performance. Ertuğrul (2021) concludes that teachers' perceptions of toxic leadership affect their job satisfaction and motivation significantly and thus caused negative impacts on them.

Recommendations may be made to consider important issues such as toxic leadership and mobbing in educational institutions based on the results of the current study. Comprehensive training programmes should be offered to practitioners so as to raise awareness of toxic leadership behaviours in schools. Those programmes should aim to equip both teachers and managers with ability to recognise the signs of toxic leadership and to intervene in such behaviours effectively. In addition to that, contributions should be made to school principals' personal development, they should be given feedback mechanisms and coaching services; and thus, they should be encouraged to strengthen their leadership skills.

For researchers, on the other hand, it is critically important to analyse the results of studies performed in depth with the inclusion of participants having diverse demographic properties. Larger scale studies are needed to understand particularly how toxic leadership behaviours and mobbing

tendencies are shaped in organisational, personal and social dynamics. Beside identifying the prevalence of toxic leadership, prospective studies should also examine the effective strategies to prevent and reduce such forms of leadership. A healthier culture of leadership can be created and contributions can be made to reduce negative phenomena such as mobbing in society in general by putting those recommendations into practice.

Policy Implications

Sharing the negative effects of toxic leadership in educational organizations will bring to the agenda the issues of how to take precautions regarding these processes. Toxic leadership is a subject that requires precautions to be taken because it includes examples that will cause teachers to experience professional burnout (Çetinkaya and Ordu, 2017). Making suggestions in this direction in the research is one of the issues that makes the research important.

It is possible to observe mobbing cases in schools based on factors such as gender, mission, and age (Çelebi and Kaya, 2014). Regardless of the reason, teachers are harmed by the mobbing process and this negatively affects the quality of education. The importance of the research includes making recommendations to different actors of education, from school administration to policy developers, to prevent teachers from being exposed to mobbing. The potential for toxic leadership and mobbing to directly affect teacher performance and the quality of education is within the scope of the importance of the research. Providing suggestions on what needs to be done to prevent negative effects is one of the points that the research aims to contribute. The research is also important in terms of providing information that will serve as a reference for similar studies.

The potential for toxic leadership and mobbing to directly affect teacher performance and the quality of education is within the scope of the importance of the research. Providing suggestions on what needs to be done to prevent negative effects is one of the points that the research aims to contribute. The research is also important in terms of providing information that will serve as a reference for similar studies.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest between the authors of the article.

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Ethical Statement

I hereby declare that I have obtained the data, information and documents I have presented in the article within the framework of academic and ethical rules, that I have presented all information, documents, evaluations and results in accordance with scientific ethics and moral rules, that I have cited

and referenced all the works I have used in the article, that I have not made any changes to the data used, and that the work I have presented in this article is original.

Credit Author Statement

Author 1 : Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology. Resources, Visualization, Writing – Original Draft Preparation, Writing – Review & Editing *Author 2* : Conceptualization, Data Curation, Project Administration, Supervision, Validation,

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