# The Relationship of Downward Mobbing with Leadership Style and Organizational Attitudes

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**Abstract** The present study investigates (1) the relationship of different leadership styles (transactional, transformational, authoritarian, paternalistic) with mobbing behaviors of superiors (i.e., downward mobbing) and (2) organizational attitudes (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention) of mobbing victims. Data were collected from 251 white-collar employees. Path analysis findings showed that transformational and transactional leadership decreased the likelihood of mobbing, whereas authoritarian leadership increased it. Paternalistic leadership was mildly and negatively associated with mobbing. Regarding the consequences of mobbing for employees' organizational attitudes, the same analyses suggested that higher perceptions of downward mobbing was significantly associated with lower job satisfaction, lower affective commitment, higher continuous commitment, and higher turnover intention.

**Keywords** Authoritarian leadership · Leadership style · Mobbing · Organizational attitudes · Paternalistic leadership · Transactional leadership · Transformational leadership · Turkey

## Introduction

Researchers have studied hostile behaviors in the workplace under the heading of "workplace bullying" or "mobbing" (Brodsky 1976; Leymann 1990). Specifically, mobbing has been defined as "hostile and unethical communication that is directed in a systematic way by one or more persons, mainly towards one targeted individual" (Leymann 1990, p. 120). The most common type of mobbing is "downward mobbing," in which the mobbers are superiors and victims of physical and psychological harm are the subordinates (Vandekerchove and Commers 2003, p. 42). The aim of the present study is twofold. First, it investigates the relationship of different leadership styles (i.e., transactional, transformational, authoritarian, paternalistic) with mobbing behaviors of superiors. Second, it focuses on the organizational attitudes of employees (i.e., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention) exposed to mobbing from superiors.

Leadership has been identified as one of the most important predictors of mobbing in the literature (Leymann 1996; Vartia 1996). The terms "health endangering leadership" (Kile 1990), "petty tyranny" (Ashfort 1994), "militant managers" (Elbing and Elbing 1994), "destructive leadership" (Einarsen et al. 2002; Skogstad 1997), and "abusive supervision" (Tepper 2000) are used in the literature for managers and leaders who mob their subordinates. However, the relationships between various leadership styles and mobbing behaviors have seldom been explored in the literature (cf., O'Moore and Lynch 2007). The present study fills this void by systematically examining the extent to which different leadership styles relate to the likelihood of mobbing from superiors.

Most of the previous literature on the consequences of mobbing is primarily concentrated on the harms on victim's health and well-being (e.g., post traumatic stress disorder, apathy, lack of concentration and socio-phobia, withdrawal, psychosomatic symptoms, depressions, anger, anxiety) (e.g., Bjorqvist et al. 1994; Leymann 1990; Niedl

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1996; Vartia 1996; Zapf 1999). However, there is limited literature on the relationship between mobbing and employees' organizational attitudes (Duffy et al. 2002; Einarsen 2000; Tepper 2000). Therefore, the second aim of the present study is contributing to the growing literature on the relationship between mobbing and employees' organizational attitudes.

In the literature, different terminologies have been used for mobbing such as: "psychological terror" (Leymann 1990), "harassment" (Brodsky 1976), "bullying" (Adams 1992), "workplace trauma" (Wilson 1991), "scapegoating" (Thylefors 1987), "work abuse" (Bassmann 1992), "victimization" (Olweus 1994), "petty tyranny" (Ashfort 1994), "emotional abuse" (Keashly 1998), and "workplace aggression" (Baron and Neuman 1996). Even though mobbing is often used interchangeably with bullying in the literature, Leymann (1996) suggests that the two constructs have conceptual differences; the word "bullying" includes physical aggression and threat and is generally used to describe conflicts in *school settings,* while "mobbing" includes non-sexual harassment in the *workplace.* The current study uses Leymann's (1996) definition of mobbing, as "a social interaction through which one individual is attacked by one or more individuals 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).

As Coyne et al. (2004) stated, despite the lack of an agreed upon operational definition of mobbing in the literature, there is an agreement on its basic features. These are: (1) the frequency (repeated/persistent) and duration (long-term/enduring) of the acts, (2) subjective perception of the victims of how they view these behaviors and their effects, (3) negativity of the acts that characterize the mobbing situation, and (4) imbalance of power between mobbers and victims (Hoel et al. 2001).

The first feature is focused on in several studies and state that mobbing behaviors occur on a frequent basis (Einarsen and Skogstad 1996; Hoel and Cooper 2000) and a negative act is not defined as mobbing if it occurs only *once* (Vartia 1996). In addition to frequency, a long-term pattern (more than 6 months) is considered as the most significant feature of the concept of mobbing. This enduring pattern of mobbing is observed in various studies: In Britain, 47 % of the individuals who reported being exposed to mobbing reported that it had lasted for more than one year and 30 % reported a duration of two years or more (Hoel and Cooper 2000). In Finland, local employees reported that they were exposed to mobbing for an average of 5 years or more (Vartia 1996), and in Ireland, the average exposure time of mobbing was found to be 3.4 years (Hoel and Cooper 2000).

Second, by definition, mobbing includes a subjectivity factor; which is the victims' perceptions of how they interpret the behavior they are exposed to and its consequences (Einarsen et al. 2003). Painter (1991) stated that any assessment of mobbing should take this notion of subjective evaluation into account, as what may be seen as mobbing by one person may not be perceived the same way by another (Coyne et al. 2004). Furthermore, to have a psychological effect on the individual, a potentially harassing behavior has to be perceived and evaluated by the victim. Subjective perceptions of mobbing signify both the discomfort on the part of the victim, and his/her evaluation of the characteristics relationships with others in the workplace. Hence, as Einarsen (2000) has also suggested, "subjective perception of mobbing" may actually be the only "objective measure of mobbing" (e.g., reports of the colleagues, actual evidence of mobbing) (p. 398).

Third, most definitions of mobbing emphasize negative acts (Einarsen 2000; Olweus 1991). Various typologies of mobbing acts have been identified in the literature, such as: scapegoating, name calling, physical abuse, work pressure, and sexual harassment by Brodsky (1976) or arbitrariness and self-exaggeration, underestimating subordinates, lack of consideration, a forcing style of conflict resolution, discouraging initiative, and noncontingent punishment by Ashfort (1994). In an empirical study with Norwegian mobbing victims, social isolation and exclusion, devaluation of one's work and efforts, being teased, insulting remarks and ridicule emerged as the most frequently reported negative acts (Einarsen et al. 1994). Overall, there is a considerable agreement on the types of negative acts classified as mobbing in the literature, and in these conceptualizations, physical violence and sexual harassment are mostly excluded.

Finally, imbalance of power between victims and perpetrators is viewed as the last core aspect of the definition of mobbing (Liefooghe and Davey 2001; Niedl 1995). According to Niedl (1995), the person is victimized only if she/he feels unable to defend herself/himself or escape from the situation. This inability to defend oneself may be directly related with the formal or informal power relations between the parties, unequal status of the parties, or an indirect outcome of mobbing itself (Niedl 1995). Generally, the literature supports the point that if there is an equal balance of power between two persons in a conflict state, it is not referred to as mobbing (Hoel et al. 2001). A different approach to the issue is Leymann's (1996) argument that mobbing can start with an equal power structure, but after some time an unequal power structure will eventually emerge; and the victims will be pushed into an inferior position which will limit their resources to defend themselves.

Previous research on mobbing has shown that it is a widespread phenomenon in Europe and the USA. A 2010 survey for the *European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions* showed that overall 5.2 % of workers in Europe had been exposed to mobbing over the last 12 months in both the public and private sectors (http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/smt/ewcs/ewcs2010_13_06.htm). In the same survey, some European countries reported higher rates of being subject to threats and humiliation in the workplace (e.g., France, 7.1 %; Netherlands, 7.2 %; UK 7.8 %) compared to others (e.g., Italy 2.3 %; Hungary 3.5 %). 2010 survey in the US reported a much higher rate of mobbing among employees i.e., 35 % (http://www.workplacebullying.org/wbiresearch/2010-wbi-national-survey/).

## Leadership and Mobbing

As explained above, the conceptualization of mobbing inherently includes a notion of imbalance of power between parties. In the scholarly literature, *downward mobbing* emerges as the most common form of mobbing. Therefore, it is important to study the relationships between different leadership styles and mobbing. Yet, there are only a few recent studies investigating this relationship between leadership styles (i.e., authoritarian, participative, paternalistic, laissez-faire) and mobbing (Hoel et al. 2010; O'Moore and Lynch 2007; Soylu 2011). On the basis of this limited literature, we expect different leadership styles to be differentially associated with the display of mobbing behaviors. The current study focuses specifically on four different forms of leadership, namely transformational, transactional, authoritarian, and paternalistic leadership styles and their relationships with mobbing.

*Transformational leadership* is seen when leaders stimulate interest among their followers for new perspectives, develop them to reach higher levels of their potential, generate awareness among them for the mission and vision of the group, and motivate them to look beyond their own interests and consider the good of their group (Bass and Avolio 1994, p. 2). As such, transformational leaders *transform* their employees to reach higher performance standards and they initiate growth and change in the organization (e.g., Den Hartog et al. 1997).

The relationship between transformational leadership and mobbing has not been directly investigated in the literature. However, extant research contends that transformational leadership is one of the most effective leadership styles associated with positive organizational outcomes, such as organizational commitment (Barling et al. 1996), job satisfaction, supervisory satisfaction (Hater and Bass 1988), organizational citizenship behaviors (Koh et al.

1995), and performance (Judge and Piccolo 2004). Studies have also shown that transformational leadership reduces negative organizational outcomes (e.g., Kelloway et al. 2005). Findings of such research have also demonstrated a negative association between transformational leadership and job-related stress (e.g., Sosik and Godshalk 2000) and role stress (Keegan 2004; Podsakoff et al. 1996). This makes sense since transformational leaders encourage followers to perceive stressful events and difficult situations as challenges and personal development opportunities (Bass and Avolio 1994; Shamir et al. 1993). Transformational leadership was also found to enhance empowerment and self-confidence in employees (Bass and Avolio 1997; Dvir et al. 2002). Based on these research findings, we expect employees to experience mobbing to a less extent if they report their superiors to be transformational.

**Hypothesis 1** Transformational leadership will be negatively associated with employees' experiences of mobbing from their superiors.

In contrast to transformational leadership, *transactional leadership* involves a single exchange/transaction process between the leader and the follower (Burns 1978). The leader identifies the rewards that will be given when the follower or colleague fulfills the requirements (Bass and Avolio 1994). Therefore, there is a mutual dependence between the parties in which both sides' inputs are rewarded either by "contingent reward" or "management-by-exception" (Bass and Avolio 1994). In "contingent reward," the leader assigns a goal and promises or actually rewards for satisfactory performance. In "management-by-exception," the leader actively monitors the follower's work and takes the necessary corrective actions either proactively or retroactively (Bass and Avolio 1994).

The literature quotes transactional leadership as another type of effective leadership and states that these types of leaders reward subordinates for meeting the goals, and correct them for failing to meet the goals (Eagly et al. 2003). Stress research suggests that transactional leadership, especially contingent reward behaviors, reduce job-related stress by setting clear targets and clarifying desired performance criteria, thereby decreasing uncertainty in the work environment (Sosik and Godshalk 2000). Since role ambiguity and role conflict are the major stressors for employees (Kahn et al. 1964), contingent reward behaviors decrease job-related stress (Stordeur et al. 2001). Transactional leadership also includes actively monitoring the follower's performance and taking the corrective action for unacceptable performance (Bass 1985). Therefore, it may be inferred that transactional leadership is negatively associated with abusive behaviors (e.g., threats, punishment based on unclear or unannounced standards).

**Hypothesis 2** Transactional leadership will be negatively associated with employees' experiences of mobbing from their superiors.

*Authoritarian leadership* has been previously suggested to be positively associated with mobbing at the workplace (e.g., Hoel et al. 2010; Kelloway et al. 2005). Authoritarian leadership is defined as the "behavior that asserts absolute authority and control over subordinates and demands unquestionable obedience from subordinates" (Cheng et al. 2004, p. 91). Authoritarian leaders believe they know more than others in their organizations and have the right to get things done in their own ways. As a result, they stress "personal dominance" over followers, unify the authority over themselves, and make one-sided decisions (Tsui et al. 2004). In authoritarian management, leaders exhibit strong control and authority over the group and in turn the group is forced to obey the leader (Cheng et al. 2004).

Engaging in mobbing behaviors satisfies the authoritarian leader's need for control and power over the subordinates (Aryee et al. 2007). Moreover, authoritarian leaders are unable to manage their emotions and for this reason they are more prone to display abusive behaviors at the workplace (Aryee et al. 2007; Ashfort 1997). Since previous literature suggests that authoritarian leadership is associated with leaders' use of control, power, and authority over the subordinates, authoritarian leaders are expected to show more mobbing behaviors.

**Hypothesis 3** Authoritarian leadership will be positively associated with employees' experiences of mobbing from their superiors.

One of the leadership styles most often seen in developing countries is *paternalistic leadership*, and has been found to be the dominant type in South-East, Asian, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and African countries (Aycan 2006). Paternalistic leadership has been defined in a hierarchical relationship, where "the role of the superior is to provide care, protection, and guidance to the subordinate both in work and non-work domains, while the subordinate, in return, is expected to be loyal and deferential to the superior" (Aycan 2006, p. 446). A paternalistic leader shows both autocratic and nurturant behaviors and acts like a parent to his/her followers. The basic paternalistic leadership behaviors are: creating a family atmosphere in the workplace, establishing close and individualized relationships with subordinates, getting involved in non-work domain, and expecting loyalty and deference in exchange (Aycan 2006).

The perception and effectiveness of paternalistic leadership style differs across cultures (Aycan et al. 2000). For instance, in Western cultures characterized by high individualism and low power distance, paternalistic leadership behaviors may be perceived as exploitative, repressing, authoritarian, ineffective, and immoral, and as an invasion of privacy in the context of high individualism and low power distance. However, it is perceived as desirable and effective (e.g., associated positively with employee attitudes towards the organization) in collectivistic and high power distant cultures (e.g., Cheng et al. 2004).

The relationship between paternalistic leadership and mobbing is a complex one. First, paternalistic leadership has nurturance as well as authoritarianism in its conceptualization and manifestation (e.g., Aycan 2006; Cheng et al. 2004). While the former would prevent mobbing from happening, the latter would increase its likelihood. Second, it has been recently shown that different aspects of paternalistic leadership as described by Aycan (2006) were associated differently with mobbing behaviors of managers (Soylu 2011). In specific, creating a family-like environment in the workplace was the dimension that was associated negatively with mobbing, whereas seeking loyalty and deference was associated positively with mobbing (Soylu 2011). Therefore, we do not have specific predictions, and regarding the relationship between paternalistic leadership and mobbing, and we will explore paternalistic leadership in comparison to other types of leadership in this respect.

## Mobbing and Employees' Organizational Attitudes

Despite the lack of broad evidence on organizational outcomes, there has been some research on the organizational attitudes of the mobbing victims. For instance, Quine (2001) found that victims reported lower levels of job satisfaction and higher turnover intention. Martino et al. (2003) suggested that such reactions on the part of the victim lead to a decreased inmotivation and creativity. For example, a German nationwide study showed that 72 % of the victims were de-motivated and 59 % socially withdrew. Keashly et al. (1994) found that employees who were exposed to supervisory mobbing were less satisfied with their jobs, had higher turnover and questioned their abilities. Likewise, Ashfort (1997) reported that tyrannical supervision was associated with alienation from work and low group cohesiveness. Tepper (2000) reported that victims reported greater continuance commitment, lower normative commitment, and lower affective commitment. These studies on the effects of downward mobbing suggest that abusive supervisor behaviors are negatively associated with employees' work-related attitudes (Duffy et al. 2002; Tepper 2000).

The first organizational attitude of interest in this study is commitment. We will focus on affective and continuance commitment. Normative commitment is excluded, because of its considerable overlap with affective commitment and the problems in its measurement (Meyer et al. 2002).

Since mobbing leads to negative affect on part of the victim (Taylor 1991), it is likely to decrease the victim's emotional attachment to the organization. Therefore, abusive supervisory practices are likely to lead to lower levels of affective commitment in employees. The second type of commitment is continuance commitment. Its main antecedents are the lack of availability of job alternatives and perceived costs of leaving the organization (McCormack et al. 2006; Wasti 2002). According to Meyer and Allen (1997), when leaving the organization leads to harsh outcomes for the person and/or when there are little or no alternatives, people report higher levels of continuous commitment.

**Hypothesis 4** Exposure to mobbing will be negatively related to affective commitment; and positively related to continuance commitment.

The second variable of interest is job satisfaction. Overall job satisfaction is the general feelings of employees toward their jobs (Locke 1976). Job Characteristics Theory of Turner and Lawrence (1965; cited in Hackman and Oldham 1976) suggested that task characteristics such as task identity, autonomy and feedback, job enrichment and enlargement lead to higher levels of job satisfaction in employees. Since abusive supervisory behaviors include limiting employees' communication with others, autonomy and job enrichment, mobbing is likely to decrease employees' job satisfaction levels.

**Hypothesis 5** Exposure to mobbing will be negatively related to overall job satisfaction.

Finally, we will investigate turnover intentions as affected by exposure to mobbing. Turnover intention is defined as "a conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organization" (Tett and Meyer 1993, p. 262). The relationship of job satisfaction and turnover intention has received considerable attention (George and Jones 1996). While some researchers suggest job satisfaction to be an antecedent of turnover intention (Carsten and Spector 1987; Lee and Mitchell 1994), others suggest factors other than job satisfaction such as perceived quality of work life as the main predictor of turnover intention (Huang et al. 2007). May et al. (1999) suggested that employees working in organizations with better quality of work life such as challenging tasks, supportive supervisory practices, and better organizational climate would report lower levels of turnover intention. Hom and Griffeth (1995) found that

autonomy in decision making decreased turnover intentions of employees. Another study found that employee involvement, which provide employees autonomy and empowerment and to get engaged in decision making process decreases their turnover intentions, and indicates a "healthy work place" (Grawitch et al. 2007). Since mobbing damages harmony in organizations (Vega and Comer 2005), employees are likely to report higher turnover intentions when they are exposed to mobbing.

**Hypothesis 6** Exposure to mobbing will be positively related to turnover intentions.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Data were collected from 251 white-collar employees of Turkish organizations who have been working under an immediate supervisor for at least 6 months. *European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions* (2004) has listed Turkey as one of the 13 candidate countries for the high incidence of mobbing. This is possibly due to economic instability, high unemployment rate, and high power distance in organizations (cf. House et al. 2004). Bilgel et al. (2006) found that 55 % of 877 respondents reported experiencing some kind of mobbing in the previous year, and 47 % had witnessed mobbing of others. In the Turkish health care system, 86.5 % nurses reported having faced mobbing one or more times during last year (Yıldırım and Yıldırım, in press). According to the revised law passed in January of 2011, employers are now obligated to protect all workers from psychological abuse and workplace harassment (Ozcelik 2011).

In Turkey, mobbing has only been recently identified as an occupational health issue (Bilgel et al. 2006). However, there is paucity of research about the phenomenon, where it is much needed especially because Turkey's cultural context favors high power distance and paternalism (cf., Aycan et al. 2000).

Data were collected through on-line surveys. We received 251 surveys and discarded 32 of them due to extensive missing data. Remaining 219 surveys constituted the data for this study. Respondents worked in different sectors such as education, banking, health, consulting, tourism, telecommunications, and energy. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample. Demographic variables are collected as categorical variables to ensure the anonymity of participants. Most of the respondents were females, below 33 years of age, at least university graduate and from the private sector.

**Table 1** Demographic characteristics of the participants

|  | N | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Gender |  |  |
| Female | 147 | 67.1 |
| Male | 72 | 32.9 |
| Age |  |  |
| 18–25 | 59 | 26.9 |
| 26–33 | 103 | 47 |
| Older than 33 | 57 | 26 |
| Education |  |  |
| Less than university | 28 | 12.8 |
| University | 123 | 56.2 |
| Higher than university | 68 | 31.1 |
| Organizational type |  |  |
| Public | 33 | 15.1 |
| Private | 152 | 69.4 |
| International | 21 | 9.6 |
| Family-firm | 13 | 5.9 |
| Organizational size |  |  |
| Large scale | 123 | 56.2 |
| Middle scale | 70 | 32 |
| Small scale | 26 | 11.9 |
| Position |  |  |
| Managerial | 58 | 26.5 |
| Non-managerial | 161 | 73.5 |
| Tenure |  |  |
| Less than 1 year | 62 | 28.3 |
| 1–3 years | 86 | 39.3 |
| 4–8 years | 46 | 21 |
| More than 9 years | 25 | 11.4 |

## Measures

### Transformational and Transactional Leadership

The standardized Turkish version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ–Form 5X; Avolio and Bass 2002) was used to assess *transformational leadership* (20 items) and *transactional leadership* (12 items). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "not at all," 5 = "frequently, if not always"). Sample items include "My immediate supervisor talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished" for the transformational leadership and "My immediate supervisor provides me with assistance in exchange for my efforts" for the transactional leadership. Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = .96$ and $\alpha = .71$, respectively, for the current study.

### Authoritarian Leadership

Authoritarian leadership was measured by the Turkish version of Sinha's (1995), Authoritarian Leadership Scale

adopted by Aycan and Fikret-Pasa (2003). The scale consisted of 10 items, responded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "not at all," 5 = "frequently, if not always"). Sample items include "My immediate supervisor keeps important information to himself/herself" and "My immediate supervisor thinks not all employees are capable of being an executive." Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = .84$ for the current study.

### Paternalistic Leadership

Paternalistic leadership was measured by the 5-item short version of the Paternalistic Leadership Questionnaire by Aycan et al. (2000). Sample items were "My immediate supervisor behaves like a family member (father/mother or elder brother/sister) towards his/her employees" and "My immediate supervisor places importance to establishing one-to-one relationship with every employee". Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from (1 = "not at all," 5 = "frequently, if not always"). Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = .85$ in the current study.

### Mobbing

Quine's mobbing scale comprising 20 items was used. Sample items were from "My immediate supervisor sets impossible deadlines" and "My immediate supervisor attempts to humiliate me in front of colleagues". Items were rated on a 5-point Likert type scale from (1 = "never," 5 = "always"). The scale, originally in English, was translated and back-translated into Turkish and piloted to ensure the conceptual and linguistic equivalence. Since there was a lot of missing data on one question regarding physical violence behavior in the pilot study, that item was excluded in the actual study. The remaining 19 items had high internal consistency in the present study (Cronbach's alpha $\alpha = .97$) and all items loaded on a single factor explaining 68 % of variance. High scores indicated high exposure to mobbing from the supervisor.

### Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment was measured by the Turkish adaptation (Wasti 2003) of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Allen and Meyer (1997). The questionnaire consisted of 12 items, 6 items each for affective (AC) and continuance commitment (CC). The responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree," 5 = "strongly agree"). Sample item for AC is "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization" and for CC "It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even

**Table 2** Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the study variables

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Measure | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. Transformational leadership | – | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Transactional leadership | .79 | – | | | | | | | |
| 3. Paternalistic leadership | .81 | .64 | – | | | | | | |
| 4. Authoritarian leadership | −.24 | −.39 | −.20 | – | | | | | |
| 5. Mobbing | −.67 | −.73 | −.60 | .56 | – | | | | |
| 6. Job satisfaction | .38 | .35 | .29 | −.20 | −.41 | – | | | |
| 7. Turnover intention | −.27 | −.30 | −.24 | .20 | .35 | −.45 | – | | |
| 8. Affective commitment | .42 | .40 | .38 | −.24 | −.39 | .64 | −.47 | – | |
| 9. Continuance commitment | −.15* | −.21 | −0.08 ∼ | .20 | .16* | 0.03 ∼ | −.34 | 0.11 ∼ | – |
| Mean | 2.69 | 3.04 | 2.7 | 3.2 | 2.11 | 3.44 | 2.57 | 3.04 | 2.92 |
| SD | 0.87 | 0.63 | 1.08 | 0.73 | 1.12 | 1.01 | 0.88 | 1.05 | 0.71 |

$N = 219$. All l correlations significant at the $p < .01$ level, except (*) which are significant at $p < .05$ level and (∼) which are not significant

if I wanted to." Cronbach's alpha were $\alpha = .84$ for AC and $\alpha = .66$ for CC in the current study. Negatively worded items were reverse coded and high scores indicated high commitment.

## Overall Job Satisfaction

Overall job satisfaction was measured by the Overall Job Satisfaction Questionnaire, which is a part of Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (OAQ; Cammann et al. 1983). Turkish adaptation was completed by Turnalar (2006). The scale consisted of 3 items which yielded a global indication of employee's satisfaction with his/her job. Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (5 = "strongly agree," 1 = "strongly disagree"). Sample items from the scale are "All in all, I am satisfied with my job" and "In general, I don't like my job"). Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = .74$ in the current study. Negatively worded items were reverse coded and high scores indicated high job satisfaction.

## Turnover Intention

Turnover intention was measured with 3-items from the Job Withdrawal Scale (Hanisch and Hulin 1990; Turkish adaptation by Wasti 2003). Sample item include "How often do you think about quitting your job?" Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "not at all likely," 5 = "extremely likely"). Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = .91$ in the current study.

## Demographics

Demographics measures included age, gender, education level, tenure in the organization, sector, organization's type, organizational size, position (managerial or not), and gender of the immediate supervisor. Organizational size was determined according to Turkish Institute of Statistics' general industry and workplaces counting.

## Results

An initial correlation analyses yielded no significant relationship of demographic characteristics of respondents on outcome variables (i.e., report of mobbing, organizational attitudes), hence they were not controlled for in the hypothesis testing. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among study variables are presented in Table 2.

Path analysis using AMOS 7.0 was used to test the model presented in Fig. 1. Composite scores for each variable were used in the model. Model fit was assessed using several fit indices as suggested by Bentler (1990) and Kline (1998).

The goodness of fit indices suggested that the data fits the tested model well; $\chi^2$ was 33.61, $\chi^2$/df was 2.101, GFI was .968, CFI was .983, and RMSEA was .071. Standardized path coefficients ranged from .14 to .41 which indicated a "medium" effect according to the criteria suggested by Kline (1998). The standardized path estimates are presented in Fig. 1.

An overview of path values indicated that direct paths from all the leadership paths to mobbing were significant. Transformational and transactional leadership were negatively related, and authoritarian leadership was positively related to mobbing. Therefore, Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were supported by the data. We did not propose a hypothesis regarding the relationship of paternalistic leadership with mobbing. Findings showed that paternalistic leadership was negatively and moderately related to mobbing.
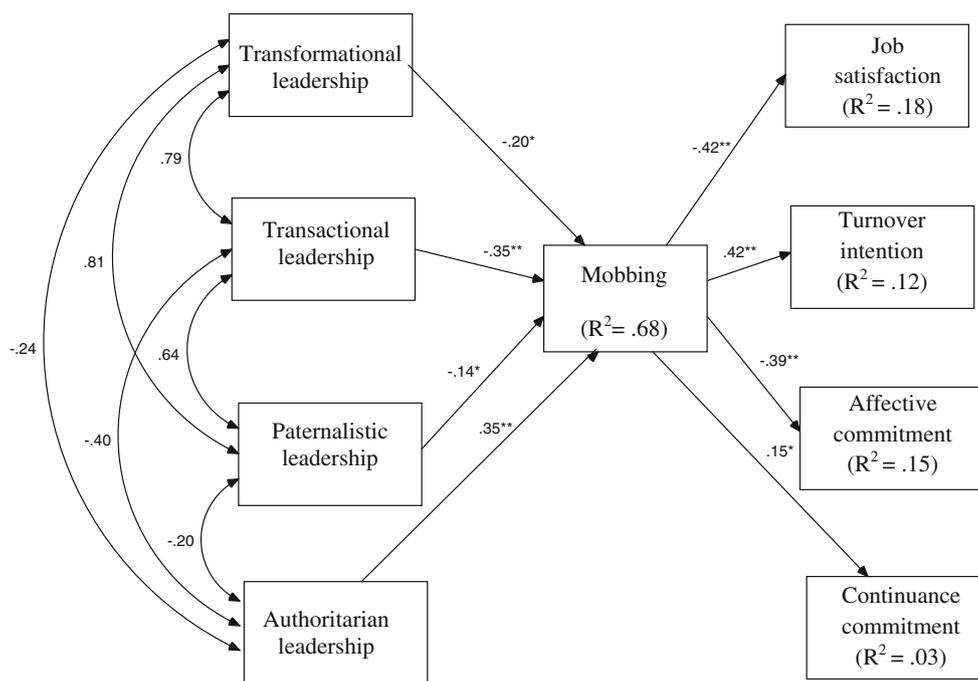
**Fig. 1** Standardized path estimates and related error terms. \**p* < .001, \**p* < .05

Leadership styles explained a total of 68 % of variance in mobbing in the model.

Paths from mobbing to affective commitment and continuance commitment were significant. Exposure to mobbing was negatively associated with AC and positively associated with CC. In other words, employees who were exposed to mobbing reported higher levels of continuance commitment and lower levels of affective commitment, providing support to Hypothesis 4.

The relationships of job satisfaction and turnover intention with mobbing were also significant. Exposure to mobbing was negatively related to job satisfaction and positively related to turnover intentions. Hence, Hypothesis 5 and 6 were supported by the data.

## Discussion

The main purpose of the study was to test the relationships of different leadership styles and work-related attitudes of employees with exposure to mobbing. The findings confirmed the predictions regarding the effects of leadership types on mobbing from supervisors (i.e., downward mobbing). The findings from the first part of our study showed that, as expected, transformational and transactional leadership decreased the likelihood of mobbing, whereas authoritarian leadership increased it. The literature presents limited and mixed findings regarding the relationship of paternalistic leadership with mobbing (REF). Therefore,

this relationship was also explored in this study, and it was found that paternalistic leadership was mildly and negatively associated with mobbing. Regarding the consequences of mobbing for employees' organizational attitudes, we found that those who reported mobbing from the supervisor also reported low job satisfaction and low affective commitment, while reporting high continuous commitment and high turnover intention. These findings supported our expectations concerning the relationship between downward mobbing and organizational attitudes.

In order to reiterate the important points from the first part of our study, transactional leadership had the strongest negative relationship with mobbing among the four leadership styles, followed by transformational and paternalistic leadership. In the literature, transformational leadership has been cited as the most effective leadership style associated with positive organizational outcomes (cf. Bass and Avolio 1990; Lowe et al. 1996). It is intriguing that in the present study, transactional leadership had a stronger relationship with low levels of mobbing ($\beta = -.35$), compared to transformational leadership ($\beta = -.20$). However, in a recent meta-analysis comparing the relationship of transformational and transactional leadership with various organizational outcomes (e.g., leader effectiveness, satisfaction with leader), Judge and Piccolo (2004) found that transactional leadership (especially, the contingent reward dimension) showed higher relationships with outcome variables than did transformational leadership for half of the criteria. The authors concluded that both

leadership styles had strong relationships with criteria, and "…superiority of one relative to the other seems to depend on the context" (p. 763). It appears that mobbing is one of the aspects in which transactional leaders fare slightly better than transformational ones. This may be due to the fact that transactional leaders reduce the uncertainty in the work environment by clarifying desired targets and performance criteria and rewarding or correcting employees on the basis of these criteria (Sosik and Godshalk 2000); as stated by Judge and Piccolo (2004) "…across the four settings (business, college, military, and public sector), contingent reward worked best in business setting. Specifically, business leaders may be better able to tangibly reward followers in exchange for their efforts" (p. 763). However, transformational leaders emphasize broad vision, rather than providing specific performance targets and conditions for reward and punishment. Transformational leadership encourages trust (Aarons 2006) and dependency on the leader (Kark et al. 2003) coupled with vague performance-outcome contingency. This may increase the vulnerability of employees. In order to sum up, clarity of roles, performance expectations, and criteria for tangible outcomes when expectations are met render transactional leadership less conducive to mobbing compared to transformational leadership.

Paternalistic leadership correlated mildly and negatively with mobbing. This is consistent with the findings in the literature (Aycan 2006; Soylu 2011). Paternalistic leadership involves a number of dualities, such as benevolence and exploitation; nurturance and authoritarianism; and empowerment and dependency (Aycan 2006). Positive aspects of paternalistic leadership (i.e., benevolence, nurturance, empowerment) seem to decrease the likelihood of mobbing, whereas negative aspects (i.e., exploitation, authoritarianism, dependency) seem to increase it. Paternalistic leadership is associated negatively, alas mildly, with mobbing in this study, probably because the sample is composed of Turkish employees who are in favor of this leadership style (Aycan et al. 2000).

Finally, authoritarian leadership showed a strong positive relationship with mobbing, consistent with our expectation. Authoritarian leadership is considered to be a poor, destructive leadership in the literature (Ashfort 1997; Aryee et al. 2007). Since authoritarian leadership includes exhibiting strong control and authority over the subordinates, and humiliating and manipulating them to get the job done in the leaders' own ways (Cheng et al. 2004; Farh and Cheng 2000; Nielsen et al. 2005), authoritarian leadership may resemble "abusive supervision," which is a type of downward mobbing. The need for control and emotional instability of authoritarian leaders is suggested to lead to abusive supervision (Ashfort 1997), therefore authoritarian leadership and mobbing are closely related.

With respect to employee-related outcomes of mobbing, we found that mobbing was most strongly associated with employees' low job satisfaction and low affective commitment. Mobbing seems to decrease one's emotional attachment to the organization and pleasure from one's job. This is in line with research stating that factors such as positive work experiences (e.g., fairness, feedback, involvement in decision making) enhance employees' job satisfaction and affective commitment (Dunham et al. 1994; Meyer et al. 2002; Wasti 2002).

The positive correlation between mobbing and continuance commitment suggests that employees exposed to mobbing prefer to stay in the organization, because they feel they do not have better alternatives. Feeling that one has no better alternatives may reflect "learned helplessness" (Seligman and Martin 1975) of employees who are exposed to mobbing. Indeed, experience of helplessness is included in the classical definition of mobbing (Leymann 1996). Employees may hear similar experiences with superiors in other workplaces and think that alternatives are not necessarily better than their current job. Interestingly, although downward mobbing was associated with elevated continuous commitment, it was also associated with high turnover intention. This may appear contradictory. However, it is possible that employees who are exposed to mobbing opt for staying in their organizations because of the perceived lack of a better alternative, and yet carry the intention to quit whenever possible.

Overall, findings of the present study suggest that different leadership styles are associated with mobbing differently. This study has the potential to contribute to the literature by filling the gap about the differential effects of four leadership styles on mobbing. Findings on the effects of mobbing on work-related outcomes also have both scientific and practical contributions. Since the organizational attitudes of employees are the main precursor of the organizational outcomes, it is crucial to demonstrate the links between mobbing and work-related outcomes and the present study is an important attempt to reveal these links.

The current study has a number of limitations. First, the study used a self-report measure and relied on a single source for report of both leadership and mobbing. Common method variance could have led to inflated correlations. Cowie et al. (2002) suggested that questionnaire formats are not adequate for measuring the dynamic process of mobbing. Future research should collect data from managers as well as victims and use multiple ways of collecting data instead of using solely questionnaires. Another limitation is that mobbing behaviors were defined as having occurred in the last 6 months. Subjects might have some recall accuracy problems since their responses rely on memory for a defined period. Third, the study was cross-sectional; therefore, it is hard to make causal inferences

about the relationships. Longitudinal studies should be conducted to establish causality between leadership and mobbing.

In addition to the four leadership styles investigated here, more research is needed to clarify the nature of leadership styles and mobbing. Indirect effects of leadership on mobbing could also be investigated along with direct effects. In conclusion, this study is an initial attempt to discover main relationships of downward mobbing with leadership and employees' work-related attitudes in the organizational context. By clarifying the nature of these relationships, proper interventions to prevent mobbing can be designed. We hope to stimulate more research on downward mobbing, as it is a crucial phenomenon for the effective functioning of organizations and also the well-being of their employees.

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