

# Workplace Creativity of Generation Xer versus Millennial Hotel Employees: The Effects of Mobbing and Sexual Harassment Perceptions a

Kivanc Inelmen, Selin Bulut, Alptug Ertinaz, Murat Karaca and Bercem Kücükler

**Abstract**— This study investigated the extent to which perceptions of mobbing and sexual harassment is widespread among employees of high-end Istanbul hotels and how these perceptions affect the employees' workplace creativity. The primary data was collected with a questionnaire and the total number of respondents was 203. When the employees perceived psychological terrorization - due to experienced or witnessed mobbing or sexual harassment-, it indeed did hamper their self-assessed workplace creativity. However, the analyses also showed that there are marked differences between the Generation Xer and Millennial employee groups. The Millennials' creativity is influenced much more strongly by such perceptions. Based on these results, human resource recommendations for management of both generational groups are provided.

**Keywords**— Workplace creativity; Generational differences, Hotel employees; Mobbing; Sexual harassment.

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the recent challenges for the hospitality industry world-wide is the changes in the workforce, as Millennials now form a larger proportion of the current labor market. There is a growing hospitality literature that points to the attitudinal and behavioral differences between Millennial employees and employees from earlier generational groups ([2]; [4]). Inelmen, Zeytinoglu and Uygur [5], drawing on a sample of Turkish employees from the five star hotels, suggested that Millennials may indeed be distinct in terms of their work behavior, values and attitudes from the X Generation. Nevertheless, Solnet and Hood [13] proposed that more empirical research is needed to verify the breadth and strength of these differences in various segments of hospitality industry. The present study aimed to compare employees from different generations, on psychological terror perceptions and

these variables' consequences on workplace creativity. In more specific terms, perceived mobbing and sexual harassment and their effect on creativity of Generation Xer and Millennial employees was investigated.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In service industries, importance and effects of mobbing and sexual harassment was assessed to be fairly high, because of the intensity of human interaction in the organizations [14]. As a matter of fact, in the hospitality enterprises where "employee motivation and performance plays the leading role, and when relations and communication among employees realizes more frequently and intensely, it shows itself in various types of negative impacts, such as experiencing mobbing in the office" [8]. Since perceptions of mobbing or sexual harassment primes psychological terror, there is a strong likelihood that it will have a negative effect on employees' creativity in the workplace, which the lodging sector managers are trying hard to increase.

Continued existence of creative employees is significant necessity for every workplace. Organizations may benefit from the creative ideas with respect to the new ways of the services, much more effective and updated service recovery processes, new ideas about the current service standards, dynamism within the organization. Thus, any person, who has the capability to generate creative ideas and take the responsibility of any related outcome of those novel ideas, has a crucial role for organizations. Workplace creativity is generally framed in the contacts of organizational products, services, processes and procedures and focuses on the production of new and useful ideas [1]. The term "creativity" was defined in several different ways in the literature, but the working definition used here describes it as a process that results in novelty, accepted as useful or satisfying at least by a certain group of others, at some time period [3].

Mobbing in the workplace is defined as an unethical communication and/or conduct towards one who is wanted to be in a defenseless position, and due to systematic and long lasting hostile behavior, mobbing results with psychological problems of the sufferer [6]. Mobbing activities includes all kinds of rude attitudes and might cause lots of negative results up to suspension of victim persons with disturbance of employees' psychological and physical health within the organization [8]. As a second variable sexual harassment, i.e. unwelcome sexual advances, requests for

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sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, is included because it is more prevalent in the hospitality industry than in society at large. Prevalence of the sexual harassment cases is partly because of extremely close contact with customers, unusual hours and conditions of work, the gendered nature of work and power within the industry [9]. While various behaviors may be perceived as mobbing or sexual harassment, someone else who treated by the same set of behaviors may not think it as mistreatment. This makes victim's situation complicated and not easily to be identified as a form of workplace incivility by others.

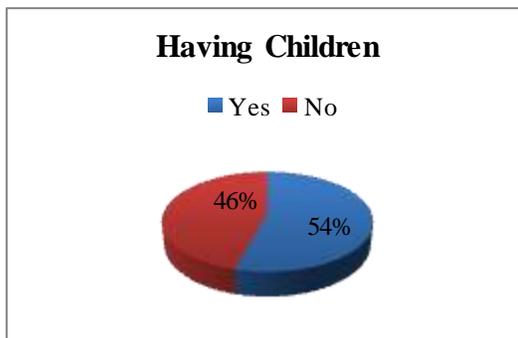
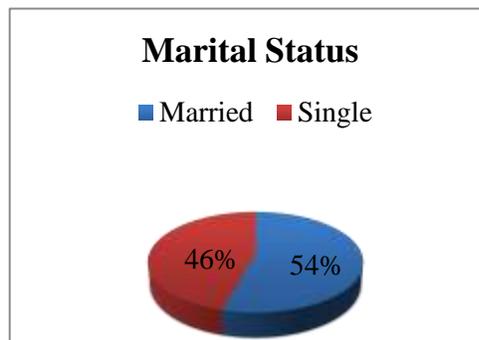
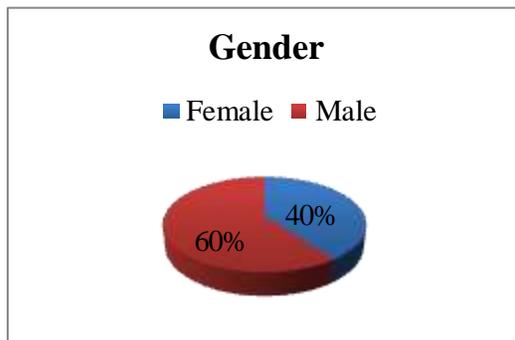
The present study investigated the employees of high-end hotels in Istanbul, as these enterprises are the flagships of the industry, and where workplace creativity -understood as creating new and useful ideas- is emphasized the most. According to Zontek [15], in order to achieve such high standards of service quality, those lodging facilities started to give more and more importance to hire creative employees. However, it also needs to be taken into account that there are differences between generational groups of employees in terms of perceptions. Inelmen et al. [5] showed this is true in terms of organizationally important work attitudes, perceptions of employees about the desired level "initiative and scope for creativity in one's work" (p. 62)[13], and characteristics such as Generation Xers being more self-reliant, expect immediate recognition, and work better in isolation, whereas Millennials more likely to believe in team work, but are also independent, self-confident, and highly expressive [4]. Whether there are

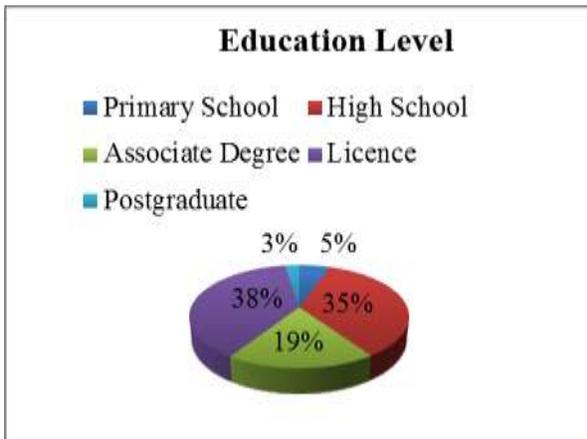
differences in terms perceptions of mobbing and sexual harassment cases between Generation Xer and Millennial employees, as well as these perceptions impact on creativity was not been investigated until recently. The study reported here did set out to fill this void.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Sample

This study targeted as its sampling universe the non-managerial employees that were gainfully employed in the high-end Istanbul hotels. Although their organizational structures could be somewhat different due to factors such as size, five-star and special class hotels have similar perspective when it comes to service excellence. Number of respondents of the questionnaire from both hotel categories totaled to 203. The questionnaires were collected from various departments to account variety in the non-managerial employees (e.g., front-of-the-house versus back-office) in order not to inflict a bias to the targeted sample. Parallel to the procedure used by Inelmen et al. [5], the respondents that were born before 1982 were categorized as Generation Xer (n1=62) and the rest were clustered as Millennials (n2=141). Demographics of the sample are shown below with respective pie-charts corresponding the characteristics that are used as controls:





**B. Measures**

To measure the impact of psychological terrorization including perceptions of mobbing and sexual harassment on the hotel employees’ self-assessed workplace creativity, a questionnaire was designed for this investigation. The questionnaire consisted of 70 questions. The data collection is completed in April 2016 and screening the sample was done to ensure they were completed by the targeted employee group. After compiling the completed questionnaires, the data was entered into SPSS 22.

The Leymann’s Inventory of Psychological Terrorization (LIPT) was employed to measure the levels of mobbing and sexual harassment perceptions (shortly referred as “perceived mobbing” from this point onwards) of the employees. The inventory investigates 45 activities to find out the presence of mobbing in five dimensions. The result of Cronbach’s Alpha (.983) showed that the scale was reliable.

Additionally, the Person-Environment Fit Scale for Creativity (PEFSC), developed by Sen, Acar and Cetinkaya [12], is employed to measure the level of employees’ own organizational creativity perceptions working in the hospitality enterprises. The PEFSC scale consists of 26 items. The result of Cronbach’s Alpha (.957) showed that this scale was also reliable.

As a first analysis, a Pearson correlation was conducted that where the aim was to see whether there was a relationship between the mobbing perceptions and self-assessed workplace creativity. The result provided support for the expectation, and there was a relatively strong and negative correlation between the two variables ( $r=-.658$ ), and this correlation was highly significant ( $p<.001$ ). This finding showed that as the perceptions of mobbing increase, the workplace creativity level of the hotel employees decreases.

Secondly, to analyze the effect of belonging to X or Millennial Generation, an Independent Samples t-test was employed. The result showed that the average perceived mobbing was higher among Millennials ( $MM=2.24$ ;  $MXer=2.08$ ) and this difference was statistically significant ( $t [134.11]= -2.53, p<.01$ ). In order to assess any possible effect of the other demographic factors, and the hotel employing the

respondent, as well as perceived mobbing, a multiple regression analysis was conducted (see Table 1). The factors of employing hotel, gender, education, marital status, having children, union membership did not show a significant effect for the whole sample. The resulting R-square shows that the relationship between the included factors and workplace creativity is 45.6, where perceived mobbing, importance of income and notably age had significant effects

TABLE 1  
THE REGRESSION OF THE FACTORS ON WORK CREATIVITY (N = 203)

| Model |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | T       | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|---------|------|
|       |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |         |      |
| 1     | (Constant) | 4,415                       | ,550       |                           | 8,027   | ,000 |
|       | Gender     | -,109                       | ,084       | -,071                     | -1,296  | ,196 |
|       | Age        | -,015                       | ,006       | -,147                     | -2,326  | ,021 |
|       | Education  | ,007                        | ,046       | ,010                      | ,160    | ,873 |
|       | Marital    | -,027                       | ,095       | -,018                     | -,288   | ,773 |
|       | Children   | -,076                       | ,083       | -,050                     | -,912   | ,363 |
|       | Incomeimp  | ,086                        | ,039       | ,137                      | 2,222   | ,027 |
|       | Union      | ,214                        | ,109       | ,116                      | 1,972   | ,050 |
|       | Hotel      | -,171                       | ,105       | -,114                     | -1,638  | ,103 |
|       | Permobbing | -,477                       | ,043       | -,641                     | -11,018 | ,000 |

It is important for the purposes of this investigation to emphasize that the analysis shows us that the self-assessed workplace creativity tends to decline as the age of employees increased ( $r=-.21, p<.01$ ), and it also proved to have a sizable effect in the regression ( $Beta=-.147, p<.05$ ). Thus, it could be suggested that the investigation of generational differences as aimed by the present study got some empirical support. Upon this result, the sample was divided as Generation Xers and Millennials. On these two sub-samples, the regression model was run twice with the same dependent variable and factors. The only exception in this case was age, as this factor could have created a confounding effect, since it was used as the grouping variable. The analysis conducted on the data collected from Generation Xer sub-sample generated a

statistically significant, but modest R-square of .269 ( $p < .05$ ) for the prediction of self-assessed creativity. Here, the main determining factors were marital status (Beta = -.349,  $p < .05$ ), perceived mobbing (Beta = -.294,  $p < .10$ ) both having negative effects, and union membership (Beta = .252,  $p < .10$ ) having a positive effect.

The data collected from Millennial sub-sample analyzed with the same regression model generated a substantial R-square of .598 result and it was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) for the prediction of self-assessed creativity. The determining factors in this case were importance of income with a positive (Beta = .169,  $p < .01$ ), and perceived mobbing with a strong negative effect (Beta = -.746,  $p < .001$ ). For the investigated groups, although the observed negative effect of perceived mobbing was expected, the magnitude of the effect was rather hefty for the Millennials. On the other hand, Generation Xers reported perceiving mobbing less as a source of decreased creativity, but other factors like being married or union membership could predict self-assessed workplace creativity as about the same levels with mobbing perceptions.

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Consequences of mobbing experience often are increased staff demoralization and declined productivity. Even the witnesses of workplace incivility suffer as well and net result is experience a lowering of staff's moral, increased absenteeism, and/or decreased creativity as also suggested by Richardson and McCord [10]. The study that is presented in this report has taken a step further to show that cohort of the employee could be among the important factors that have an influence on workplace creativity. It is hard to disagree with the fact that passing years do bring about changes in cognitive, effective and physical functioning and motivation [11] and some of these changes could possibly be related to decreased creativity. Moreover, the present study showed that the generational group the employees belong to was an important factor for the determination of self-assessed creativity.

Specifically, the Millennial high-end hotel employees' self-assessed creativity is influenced strongly by mobbing perceptions. This could be attributed to the fact that the younger and less tenured employees feeling more vulnerable when faced mobbing and were more inclined to limit their contribution in the form of workplace creativity. For these employees, income was also an important factor for workplace creativity. Thus, it could be recommended that the managers of high-end hotels should put monetary reinforcement to their agenda, to secure increased creativity from Millennials. More importantly however, considering that mobbing perceptions could be very important for this group, the managers should work diligently to generate a mobbing and sexual harassment-free work environment.

The case of Generation Xers seems to be somewhat different in respect to the sources of workplace creativity. Perceptions of mobbing were less important as an antecedent of decreased creativity here, but having other occupations like being married or union membership had some influence. Thus, it could be suggested that partly due to their longer amount of work experience, and partly because the generational groups

they belong to, it may be possible that this generation's employees may report lower levels of perceived mobbing as they get less affected by such occurrences. In future research, the model that was employed in this study needs to be complemented with other variables to assess the full range of antecedents that influence Generation Xer employees' workplace creativity. In a nut-shell, the two groups were found to be rather different, and this finding provided support for earlier academic work (e.g., Gursoy et al. [4]; Inelmen et al. [5]; Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons [7]) and the popular discourse that advocates generational differences.

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