



MESTRADO EM GESTÃO DO POTENCIAL HUMANO

**Relationship between mobbing and organizational performance:  
workplace well-being and individual performance as serial  
mediation mechanisms**

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Ao meu pai (in memoriam) e à minha mãe,  
pelo amor incondicional e por sempre terem sido o meu porto de abrigo.

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*“Thou shall not be a perpetrator;  
thou shall not be a victim;  
and thou shall never, but never, be a bystander.”*

Yehuda Bauer

## Resumo

O *mobbing*, também conhecido como assédio moral, exerce impactos significativos no comportamento dos colaboradores em contextos laborais, influenciando negativamente o desempenho organizacional. Assim, a promoção do bem-estar no ambiente de trabalho e o desempenho individual emergem como fatores cruciais para mitigar os efeitos negativos decorrentes deste fenómeno. Esta investigação visa analisar em que medida o bem-estar laboral e o desempenho individual atuam como mediadores em série na relação entre o *mobbing* e o desempenho organizacional. A pesquisa contou com a participação de 388 trabalhadores dos setores público e privado, com idades entre os 21 e os 59 anos. O estudo, de carácter transversal, foi conduzido através de uma abordagem quantitativa, utilizando uma amostra não probabilística. Para a recolha de dados utilizaram-se a *Luxembourg Mobbing Scale*, o *Job Performance Questionnaire*, o *Organizational Performance Questionnaire* e a *Workplace Welfare Scale*. Os resultados demonstraram que elevados níveis de *mobbing* estão associados a uma redução significativa do desempenho organizacional. Além disso, o bem-estar em contexto de trabalho e o desempenho individual foram identificados como mediadores em série nesta relação, indicando que ambientes laborais mais harmoniosos melhoram a eficácia individual e contribuem para aumentar o desempenho organizacional.

**Palavras-chave:** *Mobbing*, Desempenho organizacional, Bem-estar no local de trabalho, Desempenho individual, Modelo de mediação em série.

## **Abstract**

Mobbing, also referred to as workplace bullying, has significant impacts on employee behavior within organizational contexts, negatively affecting organizational performance. Consequently, promoting workplace well-being and individual performance emerges as critical factors in mitigating the adverse effects associated with this phenomenon. This study aims to examine the extent to which workplace well-being and individual performance function as serial mediators in the relationship between mobbing and organizational performance. The research involved 388 workers from the public and private sectors, aged between 21 and 59 years. This cross-sectional study was conducted using a quantitative approach and a non-probabilistic sample. Data collection was carried out using the Luxembourg Mobbing Scale, the Job Performance Questionnaire, the Organizational Performance Questionnaire, and the Workplace Welfare Scale. The findings revealed that high levels of mobbing are significantly associated with a reduction in organizational performance. Furthermore, workplace well-being and individual performance were identified as serial mediators in this relationship, indicating that more harmonious work environments enhance individual efficacy, thereby contributing to improved organizational performance. These results underscore the importance of strategic interventions focused on fostering workplace well-being to cultivate healthier and more productive organizational cultures.

**Keywords:** Mobbing, Organizational performance, Workplace well-being, Individual performance, Serial mediation.

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## **List of acronyms and abbreviations**

AVE	-	Average Variance Extracted
CFA	-	Confirmatory factor analysis
CFI	-	Comparative Fit Index
CR	-	Composite Reliability
GFI	-	Goodness of Fit Index
HI90	-	Higher 90% Confidence Interval
HRM	-	Human Resource Management
LO90	-	Lower 90% Confidence Interval
M	-	Mean
MSV	-	Maximum Shared Variance
RMSEA	-	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SD	-	Standard-deviation
TLI	-	Tucker-Lewis Index
$\chi^2/df$	-	Chi-Square/ Degrees of freedom

## **Introduction**

Mobbing, also referred to in the literature as psychological violence and terrorism, moral harassment, or emotional abuse, is defined as abusive behavior that undermines an individual's integrity and compromises their work capacity (Hewett et al., 2018). It is characterized by repeated and prolonged acts of humiliation, manipulation, defamation, and disrespect targeted at one or more individuals within the organization, which also impacts the work environment (Ayhan & Tatar, 2023). Thus, it is important to highlight that the impact of mobbing extends beyond individual experiences, as it contributes to the deterioration of the organizational climate and interpersonal relationships (Yilmaz, 2021).

A study conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2024) revealed that, globally, one in five individuals has been a victim of moral harassment in the workplace. These data underscore the breadth and severity of the issue, suggesting that organizational culture and protective mechanisms for employees need to be globally reinforced (Haydaraliyevich, 2024). Evidence increasingly indicates that no individual, organization, sector, or society can claim to be completely immune to mobbing, which underscores the significance of this research (Donald & Rivalani, 2024).

Workplace mobbing negatively impacts organizational performance because such abusive behavior fosters a toxic work environment, which reflects on productivity and the quality of work produced (Petrescu & Manghiuc, 2020). This scenario not only undermines employee morale but also compromises the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the organization (Hayat & Afshari, 2020). Furthermore, it can increase absenteeism rates, turnover intentions, and staff attrition, leading to additional costs for the organization (Krekel et al., 2022). In the long term, the organization's image can also be affected, compromising its success and sustainability (João et al., 2023).

In this context, promoting workplace well-being is essential, as it acts as a mediating factor between mobbing and organizational performance (Zhou et al., 2020). When employees are victims of mobbing, their psychological health is compromised, negatively impacting their well-being and, consequently, their ability to maintain high levels of individual performance (Couto & Paschoal, 2020). This decline in individual performance, caused by stress and demotivation, generally has a direct impact on the organization's overall performance (Altindag, 2020). Consequently, Hayat and Afshari (2020) argue that promoting a healthy work environment is crucial for mitigating the effects of mobbing, enhancing well-being levels, and, ultimately, improving both individual and organizational performance.

## **1. Literature review**

### **1.1. The negative impact of mobbing on organizational performance**

Mobbing or workplace bullying is widely recognized as a significant factor contributing to increased occupational stress (Ahmad et al., 2020). Although the specific terminology of the concept remains somewhat debated, there is a common understanding that mobbing involves hostile, repetitive, and prolonged behaviors aimed at emotionally and psychologically destabilizing the victim (Couto & Paschoal, 2020). These behaviors, characterized by humiliation and exclusion, negatively impact both the personal and professional lives of those subjected to them (Hayat & Afshari, 2020).

In the workplace context, mobbing can manifest in various ways, including the imposition of unrealistic deadlines, excessive workload, assignment of irrelevant tasks, or, conversely, task deprivation (Ahmad et al., 2020). On the interpersonal level, bullying often involves insults, rumor-spreading, intimidation, and disproportionate criticism (Bulut, 2019). The consequences of constant exposure to such behaviors are multifaceted, encompassing physical effects (e.g., digestive disorders, headaches; Farley et al., 2023), emotional impacts (e.g., distress, fear; Hussain et al., 2023), and psychological outcomes (e.g., anxiety, burnout, depression; Wu et al., 2020). Victims may also experience financial setbacks (Ayhan & Tatar, 2023) due to increased healthcare expenses and decreased income resulting from frequent absences from work (Chiabrishvili & Kropadze, 2023).

Mobbing can occur both horizontally, among colleagues holding equivalent hierarchical positions, and vertically, involving relationships between superiors and subordinates, with the latter being the most prevalent form (Busby et al., 2022; Hayat & Afshari, 2020). However, the inverse phenomenon, where subordinates bully their superiors, can also occur through means such as rumor-spreading, task sabotage, or indirect threats (Goh et al., 2022). Numerous studies (e.g., Feijó et al., 2019; Krekel et al., 2022; Rosander et al., 2020) indicate that women, as well as religious, ethnic, and sexual minorities, are particularly targeted by workplace bullying.

Aggressive behaviors typically begin subtly and indirectly, making them difficult for victims to identify. As the aggression becomes more overt, victims often struggle to defend themselves and may even blame themselves for the incidents (Farley et al., 2023). Victims are frequently hardworking individuals with strong social skills or newcomers to the workplace, seen as threats to organizational stability (Bulut, 2019). Perpetrators, on the other hand, tend to exhibit narcissistic, intolerant, and envious traits but often appear cooperative, allowing them to conceal their abusive behavior. Nevertheless, they are more likely to have low self-esteem

and fear those with greater talent, making them vengeful, deceitful, and contentious (Ayhan & Tatar, 2023).

Workplace bullying negatively influences individual performance, impacting productivity, work climate, and organizational efficiency (Petrescu & Manghiuc, 2020). When employees are subjected to abusive behaviors, they often exhibit high levels of demotivation and disengagement from their tasks, compromising both individual and collective performance (Chen et al., 2022). This decline in performance is often linked to increased absenteeism and difficulties maintaining concentration during work hours (Çetinkaya, 2021).

The presence of an organizational culture that tolerates or ignores mobbing fosters an atmosphere of fear and mistrust among employees (Hsu et al., 2019). Hostility can lead to the deterioration of interpersonal relationships, causing divisions among colleagues and hindering collaborative work (Rosander et al., 2020). This situation increases turnover rates, necessitating the recruitment and training of new employees, which not only harms organizational performance but also significantly raises operational costs (Krekel et al., 2022). Additionally, an organization's reputation is negatively impacted, as toxic work environments tend to lose their competitive edge (Hayat & Afshari, 2020). Employee demotivation and disengagement, particularly when management fails to address the root causes of bullying, have a detrimental effect on both employee performance and organizational outcomes (Couto & Paschoal, 2020).

Given the above, the first research hypothesis was developed.

*Hypothesis 1: Mobbing negatively influences organizational performance.*

### **1.2. The mediating role of workplace well-being and individual performance between mobbing and organizational performance**

Workplace well-being, besides enhancing individual performance, reduces turnover and increases employee loyalty (Hayat & Afshari, 2020). Following this idea, Srivastava and Dey (2020) state that a harmonious work environment fosters a culture of support and mutual trust, which positively impacts individual and organizational performance. Performance is closely linked to job satisfaction, which, in turn, depends on managerial support, leadership style, and organizational climate (Rufeng et al., 2023). To fully realize these benefits, it is essential that the workplace does not allow negative behaviors that compromise established harmony and trust (Singh & Ramdeo, 2023). When issues arise in the workplace context, they lead to task execution failures and hinder the achievement of proposed goals (Yilmaz, 2021).

A particularly detrimental behavior that negatively impacts the organizational climate is workplace harassment, as it triggers conflicts, reduces trust, and deteriorates the organizational culture (Durmuş, 2023; Yilmaz, 2021). Victims of mobbing often feel unable to trust the organization or colleagues for support, which negatively affects teamwork (Arifoğlu et al., 2023). João et al. (2023) further highlight that mobbing is associated with workplace accidents, absenteeism, a desire to leave the organization, and early retirement, all of which adversely affect the organization.

To mitigate the negative consequences on organizational performance, it is crucial to prevent mobbing and provide support to victims (Asik & Yinal, 2023). When workers perceive that the organization cares about their well-being, they feel respected, which reflects positively on their resilience and their approach to adversities (Haydaraliyevich, 2024). Ilieva (2024) adds that well-being acts as a buffer, reducing the harmful effects of workplace harassment on productivity and increasing engagement with the organization. A positive work environment helps ease the effects of harassment and fosters more consistent organizational performance (Nabawanuka & Ekmekcioglu, 2022). In this context, Arifoğlu et al. (2023) emphasize that organizational culture and anti-mobbing actions are critical in creating an environment where motivation and engagement thrive, even in challenging circumstances. Research conducted by Buka et al. (2024) demonstrates that workplace well-being is a central element in the relationship between workplace harassment and organizational performance.

When well-being is neglected, the negative impact of harassment intensifies, affecting individual performance and, consequently, organizational outcomes (Özveren, 2024). Along similar lines, Wilczek-Rużyczka (2024) notes that when the workplace is characterized by humiliating and degrading behaviors, psychological and emotional health is significantly compromised, leading to increased stress levels. Ardianto and Rosari (2024) complement this perspective by showing that harassment exacerbates feelings of insecurity and dissatisfaction, resulting in reduced performance. Thus, workplace well-being plays a pivotal role in the relationship between workplace harassment and organizational performance, as it mediates how employees perceive and react to hostile environments (Mehmood et al., 2024). Considering the aforementioned studies, the following hypothesis was formulated:

*Hypothesis 2: The relationship between mobbing and organizational performance is mediated by workplace well-being.*

The performance of employees in the workplace is significantly influenced by environmental and organizational conditions (Minárová et al., 2020). Based on this premise, Arifoğlu et al. (2023) highlight that dissatisfied employees tend to exhibit lower engagement with both their tasks and the organization itself, which inevitably compromises their performance. This situation is exacerbated in environments where workplace mobbing occurs. Victims of mobbing frequently develop negative behaviors (Adigüzel & Küçükoğlu, 2020), leading to substantial declines in productivity and the quality of work performed (Santos & Pamplona Filho, 2020).

Exposure to mobbing is associated with elevated levels of burnout, low psychological well-being, and reduced job satisfaction (Taşkan et al., 2022). Arifoğlu et al. (2023) emphasize that persistent mobbing practices, such as excessive criticism, humiliation, and disproportionate control, undermine individuals' self-confidence. Such a toxic environment limits creativity and innovation, thereby negatively affecting work performance (Ardianto & Rosari, 2024). Moreover, mobbing decreases employees' motivation, concentration, and focus, as victims are often overwhelmed by the stress of managing harassment episodes (Purandare & Darekar, 2021).

Given this evidence, it becomes clear that mobbing adversely impacts individual performance, which, in turn, acts as a critical mediating variable in the relationship between mobbing and organizational performance (Durmuş, 2023). Abusive practices significantly impair employees' ability to perform their functions effectively, thus jeopardizing the organization's achievement of its strategic objectives as a whole (Carvalho et al., 2024). Based on this evidence, the third hypothesis was formulated.

*Hypothesis 3: Individual performance mediates the relationship between mobbing and organizational performance.*

Individual well-being and performance can serve as mediators in the relationship between mobbing and organizational performance, mitigating the negative impact of this phenomenon (Hsu et al., 2019). Understanding this dynamic is crucial for fostering healthier and more productive work environments, highlighting the strategic and human-centered importance of addressing this issue (Yilmaz, 2021).

Minárová et al. (2020) argue that organizational performance extends beyond the quality of the final product delivered to the market. An organization's success is significantly influenced by the dynamics of its organizational culture, which should be grounded in coherent values, rules, and behavioral standards (Maran et al., 2021). However, workplace mobbing

undermines this structure, leading to diminished employee well-being and satisfaction (Purandare & Darekar, 2021). Key repercussions of reduced well-being on individual performance include difficulties in concentration, low self-esteem, and heightened anxiety levels (Minárová et al., 2020). These consequences also affect bystanders, whose negative experiences further impact organizational performance as a whole (Maran et al., 2021).

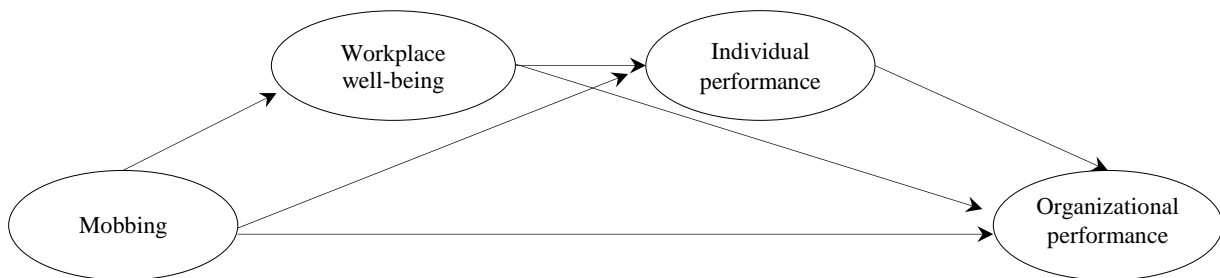
A healthy organizational culture is built on values, behavioral norms, and attitudes that encourage employees to achieve high-performance standards. Organizations that tolerate mobbing lose this positive atmosphere and inevitably suffer consequences at the level of overall performance (Minárová et al., 2020). Conversely, Hayat and Afshari (2020) suggest that a harmonious work environment not only enhances employee well-being but also tends to reduce the incidence of mobbing episodes. Support from colleagues and supervisors is crucial in mitigating the effects of mobbing; when individuals feel supported and integrated, they exhibit lower levels of depression and anxiety (Ibrahim et al., 2021). The literature review provided information that contributed to the formulation of the fourth research hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 4: Workplace well-being and individual performance act as serial mediators between mobbing and organizational performance.*

The research hypotheses are illustrated in the model presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Sequential mediation model*



Source: Authors own work

## 2. Method

This cross-sectional study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the associations between variables and empirically test the proposed hypotheses. The utilization of cross-sectional data is justified when theoretical or empirical evidence indicates that mediating effects occur instantaneously or within a short temporal window (Jose, 2018). In the context of this study, existing literature suggests that the effects of workplace mobbing on well-being –

and, consequently, on both individual and organizational performance – can emerge rapidly, thereby supporting the appropriateness of a cross-sectional analytical approach. Prior research has demonstrated that workplace harassment can exert immediate or short-term influences on psychological and behavioral outcomes, further substantiating the suitability of this methodological framework (Altindag, 2020; Zhou et al., 2020).

A combination of convenience and snowball sampling techniques was employed to facilitate the recruitment of a diverse participant pool, while acknowledging the inherent limitations of non-probability sampling methods. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant institutional review board, and informed consent was secured from all participants prior to data collection. Additionally, sex and age were included as control variables in the statistical analyses to mitigate the potential impact of common method bias.

### 2.1. Sample

The study involved 388 workers from the public (83.8%) and private (16.2%) sectors, of whom 65.5% were male. The ages ranged from 21 to 59 years ( $M = 35.82$ ;  $SD = 9.02$ ). Table 1 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents.

**Table 1**

*Characterization of participants*

<b>Sociodemographic variables</b>	<b>N = 388</b>
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	254 (65.5%)
Female	134 (34.5%)
<b>Age group</b>	
29 years or younger	126 (32.5%)
30 to 39 years	133 (34.3%)
40 years or older	129 (33.2%)
<b>Educational level</b>	
Below bachelor's degree	154 (39.7%)
Bachelor's degree	120 (30.9%)
Above bachelor's degree	114 (29.4%)
<b>Function performed</b>	
Operational/Administrative	138 (35.6%)
Technical	131 (33.8%)
Leadership	119 (30.7%)
<b>Sector where functions are performed</b>	
Public	325 (83.8%)
Private	63 (16.2%)

**Table 1**

*Characterization of participants (continuation)*

Sociodemographic variables	N = 388
<b>Last Performance Evaluation Rating</b>	
Not applicable	89 (22.9%)
Inadequate	12 (3.1%)
Adequate	153 (39.4%)
Relevant	134 (34.5%)

Source: Authors own work

## 2.2. Measures

*Mobbing.* It was measured using five items adapted from the Luxembourg Workplace Mobbing Scale (Steffgen et al., 2016; e.g., *I am criticized by my colleagues and/or my hierarchical superior*).

*Job Performance.* Three items developed by Farh et al. (1991) were used (e.g., *I do my work efficiently*).

*Organizational Performance.* Evaluated using five items developed by Wu and Wu (2014; e.g., *The organization has good production and service performance*).

*Workplace Well-being .* Ten items formulated by Zheng et al. (2015) were utilized (e.g., *In general, I feel fairly satisfied with my present job*).

All questionnaires were answered using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Never (1) to Always (5), depending on the frequency with which each statement occurred.

*Sociodemographic questions.* To characterize the sample, sociodemographic questions were also included (e.g., gender, age, job role).

*Control Variables.* Gender and age were used, as several studies indicate that women, particularly younger women, are the primary victims of workplace mobbing (Ahmad et al., 2017; Lampman et al., 2016; Prevost & Hunt, 2018; Santoro et al., 2022).

## 2.3. Procedures

The data were collected through online questionnaires. The link, which included the study's objectives, was sent via email to the contacts within the researchers' professional network. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS and AMOS software.

### 3. Results

To analyze multivariate normality, Mardia's coefficient (Mardia, 1980) was utilized, accessible via the website <https://webpower.psychstat.org/models/kurtosis/>. This tool calculates the skewness and kurtosis coefficients, as well as the p-value. The results obtained indicate that the data adhere to multivariate normality ( $Mardia_{skewness} = 2.36, p = 0.68$ ;  $Mardia_{kurtosis} = 7.78, p = 0.84$ ), since Mardia's standardized coefficient is above 5% ( $p > 0.05$ ; Mardia et al., 2024). It was also observed that the skewness and kurtosis coefficients of all variables fall within the [-2; 2] range recommended by Orcan (2020).

Additionally, Harman's single-factor test was conducted, demonstrating that the unrotated solution accounts for 31.8% of the total variance. Thus, it can be confirmed that the results were not influenced by Common Method Bias, as the explained variance is below 50.0% (Podsakoff et al., 2024).

It was also observed that the values of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.50 and the values of Composite Reliability (CR) were greater than 0.70, thereby ensuring the constructs' convergent validity (Almén et al., 2018). The Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) was lower than the AVE, confirming discriminant validity (Yalin-Uçar et al., 2023). Additionally, a significant correlation was found between all variables. However, it was observed that gender and age did not present significant associations with the main variables, indicating that they are not influenced by these two sociodemographic variables.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive statistics*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	CR	AVE	MSV	1	2	3	4
1. Mobbing	1.95 <sup>1</sup>	9.14	0.90	0.71	0.54	(0.86)			
2. Well-being	3.69 <sup>1</sup>	0.72	0.91	0.81	0.65	-0.365**	(0.89)		
3. Ind. Perf.	4.06 <sup>1</sup>	0.66	0.84	0.85	0.54	-0.165**	0.257**	(0.71)	
4. Org. Perf.	3.40 <sup>1</sup>	1.17	0.88	0.85	0.59	-0.181**	0.455**	0.252**	(0.80)
Sex <sup>2</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-0.031	0.057	-0.058	-0.040
Age	35.82	9.02	-	-	-	-0.064	0.101	0.106	-0.046

*Note.*  $N = 388$ ; \*\* $p < 0.001$ ; Ind. Perf. = Individual Performance; Org. Perf. = Organizational Performance; *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard-deviation; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; MSV = Maximum Shared Variance

<sup>1</sup>Scale ranging from 1 to 5; Cronbach's Alpha are in brackets

<sup>2</sup>Sex: 0 = Female; 1 = Male

Source: Authors own work.

To confirm whether the observed variables represented the latent factors (Alavi et al., 2020), a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. The results indicated that the model fits the sample data [ $\chi^2_{(112)} = 3.13$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , GFI = 0.90, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.07, LO90 = 0.06, HI90 = 0.08]. Subsequently, the formulated hypotheses, as outlined in the literature review, were tested.

### 3.1. Verification of research hypotheses

The research hypotheses were tested through multiple linear regression analyses and the evaluation of the serial mediation model. Initially, the objective was to examine the influence of mobbing on organizational performance. The results demonstrated that the higher the level of mobbing, the lower the organization's performance tends to be (Hypothesis 1). It was found that the model is linear and significant [ $F_{(1, 386)} = 42.169$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ] and that 9.6% of negative organizational outcomes may be attributed to the presence of mobbing ( $\beta = -0.314$ ,  $t = -6.494$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

In light of these results, it was deemed relevant to evaluate whether workplace well-being mediates the relationship between mobbing and organizational performance (Hypothesis 2). The statistical analysis revealed that when well-being is incorporated into the model as a mediating variable, the effect of workplace harassment on organizational performance becomes non-significant ( $\beta = -0.314$ ,  $p < 0.001 \rightarrow \beta = -0.030$ ,  $p = 0.375$ ). These values suggest that when there is tranquility in the workplace, mobbing does not trigger a negative impact, which is reflected in organizational performance. This situation indicates a case of full mediation.

It was found that individual performance mediates the relationship between workplace mobbing and organizational performance (Hypothesis 3). These results indicate that lower levels of mobbing are associated with better individual performance ( $\beta = -0.165$ ,  $t = -3.296$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which, in turn, reflects on organizational performance. The mediation model revealed that when individual performance is included in the model as a mediating variable, the effect of mobbing on organizational performance tends to decrease, though it remains significant ( $\beta = -0.314$ ,  $p < 0.001 \rightarrow \beta = -0.279$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, partial mediation by individual performance is observed, and there is a significant indirect effect of mobbing on organizational performance (Sobel  $Z = -2.623$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; Preacher, 2024).

It was determined that mobbing has a negative effect on well-being in the workplace (B = -0.270, SE = 0.038, IC 95% [-0.345, -0.195]) and on individual performance (B = -0.121, SE = 0.037, IC 95% [-0.193, -0.049]). Additionally, it was found that well-being positively

influences individual performance ( $B = 0.454$ ,  $SE = 0.244$ , IC 95% [0.026, 0.935]) and organizational performance ( $B = 0.231$ ,  $SE = 0.044$ , IC 95% [0.144, 0.318]).

Additionally, the PROCESS macro (Model 6) by Hayes (2018) implemented in SPSS, with 5,000 bias-corrected bootstraps and 95% confidence intervals, was employed to assess the indirect effects of well-being and individual performance separately. The results indicated that well-being mediates the relationship between mobbing and organizational performance ( $B = 0.664$ ,  $SE = 0.079$ , 95% IC [0.509, 0.819]), as well as individual performance ( $B = 0.204$ ,  $SE = 0.047$ , IC 95% [0.111, 0.298]). The results also confirmed the serial mediation effect ( $B = -0.228$ ,  $SE = 0.039$ , IC 95% [- 0.307, - 0.155]; Hypothesis 4). Paired comparisons among the three indirect effects were conducted to test whether they had equal impacts on the relationship between mobbing and organizational performance (Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Comparison of the indirect effects of mobbing through well-being and individual performance on organizational performance*

Effects	Bootstrapping CI			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Lower	Upper
<i>Total indirect effect</i>				
Model 1: Mobbing → Individual performance → Organizational performance	- 0.031	0.014	- 0.061	- 0.007
Model 2: Mobbing → Well-being → Organizational performance	-0.179	0.037	-0.255	-0.111
Model 3: Mobbing → Individual performance → Well-being → Organizational performance	-0.018	0.008	-0.035	-0.005
<i>Contrasts</i>				
Model 1 versus Model 2	0.148	0.041	0.069	0.234
Model 1 versus Model 3	-0.013	0.014	-0.042	0.015
Model 2 versus Model 3	-0.161	0.038	-0.238	-0.090

*Note.* B = Unstandardized beta; SE = Standard error; CI = Confidence intervals; \*\* $p < 0.001$

*Source.* Author's own work

The results indicated that the indirect effect of mobbing on organizational performance through well-being was significantly greater ( $B = -0.179$ ,  $SE = 0.037$ , IC 95% [- 0.255, - 0.111]) than the indirect effect through individual performance ( $B = -0.031$ ,  $SE = 0.014$ , IC 95% [- 0.061, - 0.007]), which in turn was also greater than the serial mediation effect ( $B = -0.018$ ,  $SE = 0.008$ , IC 95% [- 0.035, - 0.005]).

### 3.2. Complementary results

In light of the findings, it was deemed relevant to identify which predictor variable has the most significant impact on organizational performance. It was determined that workplace well-being is the primary predictor ( $\beta = 0.765$ ,  $t = 22.215$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, it was observed that 48.30% of organizational performance is explained by employees' perceptions of workplace well-being (Table 4). These results suggest that when an organization addresses the needs and expectations of its employees, they are more likely to reciprocate and exert greater effort to enhance organizational performance.

**Table 4**

*Influence of predictive variables on organizational performance*

Predictive variables	Organizational performance ( $\beta$ )	R <sup>2</sup> semi-partial
Mobbing	- 0.026	0.05%
Workplace well-being	0.765**	48.30%
Individual performance	0.053	0.26%
	R <sup>2</sup> 0.621	
	$F_{(3,384)}$ 212.301**	

Note.  $p < 0.001$

Source: Authors own work

During the literature review, it was observed that several authors (e.g., Ahmad et al., 2017; Prevost & Hunt, 2018; Santoro et al., 2022) report that workplace mobbing tends to be more prevalent when the direct supervisor is male. This was corroborated through data analysis. It was found that in organizations where supervisors are female ( $M = 1.88$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ), the incidence of mobbing tends to be lower compared to organizations with male supervisors ( $M = 2.15$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ). These differences are statistically significant ( $t_{(386)} = - 2.518$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

### 4. Discussion

The present study aimed to analyze how workplace mobbing affects organizational performance. Additionally, it sought to determine whether workplace well-being and individual performance serve as serial mediation mechanisms between these two constructs. The findings revealed that workplace mobbing negatively impacts organizational performance, thereby validating the first hypothesis. These conclusions align with the studies of Petrescu and Manghiuc (2020), which indicate that mobbing deteriorates organizational climate and reduces both productivity and efficiency.

The presence of hostile and repetitive behaviors in the workplace not only affects employees' mental and emotional health but also compromises the organization's ability to achieve its strategic goals (Yilmaz, 2021). Nabawanuka and Ekmekcioglu (2022) further highlight that workplace mobbing can have direct and harmful consequences for employees, negatively impacting psychological well-being and overall organizational productivity.

Additionally, Chen et al. (2022) associate abusive behaviors with high levels of demotivation and disengagement, undermining both individual and collective performance. These findings reinforce the notion that mobbing not only harms employees but also has direct repercussions on organizational performance (Ayhan & Tatar, 2023).

The data analysis demonstrated that workplace well-being mediates the relationship between mobbing and organizational performance, thereby validating the second hypothesis. These results suggest that fostering a calm and supportive work environment can mitigate the negative effects of workplace harassment. Similar findings were reported by Hayat and Afshari (2020), who observed that workplace well-being enhances individual performance, reduces turnover, and fosters employee loyalty. Likewise, Srivastava and Dey (2020) emphasized that a harmonious work environment promotes a culture of support and mutual trust, which positively impacts organizational performance. Conversely, Durmuş (2023) noted that workplace harassment triggers conflicts, undermines trust, and damages organizational culture, which adversely affects organizational performance. Haydaraliyevich (2024) further highlighted that workplace well-being acts as a buffer, alleviating the adverse effects of mobbing on productivity and increasing employees' engagement with the organization. Supporting this perspective, Mehmood et al. (2024) argued that by fostering a culture of support and trust and proactively addressing negative behaviors, organizations can create an environment conducive to improving both individual and organizational performance. These findings underscore the importance of investing in organizational practices that promote workplace well-being, as this is essential to optimizing organizational outcomes and minimizing the harmful effects of harassment (Ilieva, 2024).

The results also supported the third hypothesis, revealing that individual performance mediates the relationship between mobbing and organizational performance. This aligns with studies by Arifoğlu et al. (2023) and Minárová et al. (2020), which found that mobbing directly impacts individual performance by significantly reducing employee productivity in toxic work environments. Taşkan et al. (2022) added that the loss of motivation and increased stress levels caused by workplace harassment impair employees' focus and creativity, thereby

compromising their performance. In this vein, Yilmaz (2021) argued that the mediating role of individual performance in the relationship between mobbing and organizational performance is emphasized by employees' negative experiences, which, in turn, reflect on the organization as a whole. Durmuş (2023) further highlighted that individual performance serves as a critical mechanism that translates the effects of mobbing into the organization's ability (or inability) to achieve strategic objectives. When individual performance is compromised, the collective capacity to reach organizational goals diminishes, reinforcing the importance of this mediation in the analyzed relationship (Purandare & Darekar, 2021). Evidence indicates that, beyond being influenced by mobbing, individual performance also functions as a mediating link between the negative experiences of workplace harassment and organizational performance (Ayhan & Tatar, 2023). Consequently, interventions aimed at mitigating the effects of mobbing and promoting healthy organizational environments are essential to preserving individual performance and, by extension, organizational success (Ardianto & Rosari, 2024).

The fourth hypothesis was also confirmed, as it was determined that workplace well-being and individual performance act as mediating variables in the relationship between mobbing and organizational performance, mitigating the negative effects of this phenomenon. This finding aligns with the work of Hsu et al. (2019), who highlighted the importance of understanding the dynamics of mobbing and its influence on mediating variables to promote healthier and more productive work environments. The strategic role of well-being and individual performance is fundamental to transforming organizational culture and minimizing the detrimental impacts of harassment (Yilmaz, 2021).

The confirmation of the serial mediation effect between mobbing, well-being, individual performance, and organizational performance highlights the complexity of this relationship. Paired comparisons among the three indirect effects reinforce the relative importance of each mediation, demonstrating that well-being has the most significant impact on the link between mobbing and organizational performance. These conclusions are consistent with findings by Minářová et al. (2020), who noted that employee well-being is intrinsically linked to organizational culture and the achievement of organizational objectives. Purandare and Darekar (2021) added that mobbing directly compromises well-being, negatively affecting workers' satisfaction, self-esteem, and ability to concentrate.

The greater impact of well-being compared to individual performance can be explained by its broader scope, as it influences both employees' emotional states and their perceptions of the organizational environment. Maran et al. (2021) highlighted that reduced well-being due to

mobbing affects not only direct victims but also bystanders, thereby amplifying organizational harm. The relevance of the serial mediation effect underscores the necessity of integrating well-being and individual performance to understand the overall impacts of mobbing on organizational performance. This interaction aligns with observations by Ibrahim et al. (2021), who emphasized that peer and leadership support helps minimize the negative effects of harassment and promotes a more stable emotional environment. This balance positively impacts individual performance and, consequently, the organization's overall performance.

The results underscore the importance of organizations promoting healthy organizational cultures grounded in solid values and behavioral practices that support both employee well-being and performance. This approach is supported by studies by Minárová et al. (2020) and Hayat and Afshari (2020), which highlight the significance of a harmonious work environment for emotional health and productivity. Organizations that tolerate mobbing practices not only jeopardize the emotional health of their employees but also face severe consequences for overall performance, putting their sustainability and competitiveness at risk.

#### **4.1. Theoretical and practical contributions**

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this research underscore the importance of organizations implementing effective policies to prevent and combat mobbing, emphasizing the need for a healthy work environment grounded in mutual trust and respect. These elements are critical for mitigating the negative effects of workplace harassment and providing adequate support to victims. The study also highlights that managerial intervention in mobbing situations can significantly reduce the occurrence of such behavior, thereby contributing to the improvement of organizational performance. Additionally, it advances the integration of underexplored variables into the literature, as despite the extensive research on the subject, few studies have examined the mediating role of workplace well-being and individual performance on organizational outcomes. Furthermore, it emphasizes the necessity of integrated approaches that consider the multiple factors involved in managing workplace environments, providing valuable insights for more effective and sustainable interventions.

This investigation also identifies a set of practical measures that organizations can adopt to reduce the incidence of mobbing and foster a healthy work environment. These strategies include: (i) organizing training sessions and workshops focused on organizational violence to raise awareness about mobbing and empower leaders and employees to recognize and prevent abusive behaviors in the workplace; (ii) developing and disseminating a clear code of conduct

that promotes organizational values and enforces penalties for cases of harassment; (iii) establishing internal mechanisms to resolve conflicts before they escalate into mobbing; (iv) providing psychological support for employees who report harassment; and (v) conducting regular assessments of psychosocial risks within the organization.

Additionally, fostering positive workplace relationships is essential, encouraging diversity, tolerance, team-building activities, and social gatherings both within and outside the workplace. These proposed measures not only reduce the risk of mobbing but also contribute to improving the organizational climate, enhancing motivation, performance, and talent retention.

#### **4.2. Limitations and suggestions for future studies**

Despite the robust results and the theoretical and practical contributions of this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, while the sample was suitable for the proposed analysis, it lacks representativeness in terms of organizational and cultural diversity. The predominance of male participants may bias the findings, as women typically report higher instances of mobbing. Additionally, the majority of participants were employed in the public sector, limiting the generalizability of the results to the private sector and other types of organizations.

Another significant limitation lies in the cross-sectional nature of the research, which precludes the identification of causal relationships or the detection of changes over time. The exclusive reliance on self-report questionnaires also poses risks of bias, such as social desirability or the underreporting of negative experiences. Finally, this study focused on two mediating variables—workplace well-being and individual performance—while leaving other potentially relevant factors unexplored, such as leadership styles, organizational culture, or management practices that might interact with the relationships under investigation.

Building on these identified limitations, future research should aim to include more heterogeneous samples, encompassing various sectors and geographic regions. Additionally, greater gender balance is recommended to ensure that the experiences of both men and women are equally represented. Longitudinal studies are also warranted to evaluate changes over time and to deepen the understanding of the dynamics between mobbing, well-being, and performance.

Moreover, integrating qualitative methodologies (e.g., interviews, focus groups) would complement the quantitative data and provide richer insights. To address biases associated with

self-reports, the triangulation of methods, including observations, document analysis, and 360-degree feedback, is suggested. It is also relevant to incorporate other mediating variables, such as leadership styles, flourishing, and organizational culture. Including these dimensions would enable a broader and more integrated understanding of mobbing, as well as its causes and effects.

These proposals will pave the way for the development of a more comprehensive and multifaceted perspective on this complex phenomenon, significantly contributing to the design of effective organizational interventions and policies.

### **Conclusion**

The present study contributes to understanding the impacts of mobbing on organizational performance, emphasizing the importance of mediating variables such as workplace well-being and individual performance. The findings confirm that workplace harassment negatively affects organizational performance, both directly and indirectly, due to its repercussions on employees' psychological well-being and individual performance. These conclusions highlight the necessity of organizational approaches focused on preventing and mitigating this phenomenon.

The results revealed that workplace well-being is a central mediating variable, exerting a more significant impact than individual performance in the relationship between mobbing and organizational performance. This suggests that fostering a work environment that prioritizes employees' psychological and emotional health not only protects individuals but also enhances organizational outcomes. Furthermore, a serial mediation effect was identified, where mobbing influences well-being, which in turn impacts individual performance and, ultimately, organizational performance. These conclusions demonstrate the complexity of the relationships involved and reinforce the importance of implementing integrated strategies.

From a practical perspective, the findings underscore the need for organizations to invest in clear policies against mobbing and practices that promote a healthy organizational climate. Initiatives such as training sessions, awareness programs, and mechanisms to address conflicts before they escalate can play a pivotal role in reducing the incidence of mobbing. Moreover, providing psychological support for victims and fostering activities that enhance cohesion and well-being among employees are crucial for alleviating the adverse effects of workplace harassment.

Finally, the study reinforces the importance of understanding organizational dynamics holistically, recognizing that organizational performance is closely linked to employees' experiences. Investing in healthy and respectful work environments is not only an ethical imperative but also a strategic approach to ensuring the sustainability and competitiveness of organizations. By implementing policies and practices that prioritize well-being and inclusion, organizations can mitigate the harmful effects of mobbing and create an environment conducive to development and innovation.

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**Appendix - Proof of submission to the journal Merits**

Dear Professor Rodrigues,

Thank you very much for submitting your manuscript to Merits:

Journal name: Merits

Manuscript ID: merits-329617

Type of manuscript: Article

Title: Relationship between mobbing and organizational performance: workplace well-being and individual performance as serial mediation mechanisms

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