Psychological contact violation or basic need frustration? Psychological mechanisms behind the effects of workplace bullying.

23th ISRA World Meeting

Université Paris Descartes
Paris, France, 2018, July 12th
Workplace bullying in Europe

Note. European Working Condition Survey 2015, own calculations. Item: Over the past 12 months, during the course of your work have you been subjected to any of the following? Bullying/harassment? Answer categories: No/Yes.
Workplace bullying as a social problem

Individual
- **Attitudes**
  - Job satisfaction
  - Commitment
  - Turnover intention
- **Health and general well-being**
  - Psychological health problems
  - Physiological health problems
  - Somatization
  - Posttraumatic stress disorder
  - Burnout
  - Sleeping problems
  - Psychological strain
- **Behavior**
  - Substance use
  - Organisational deviance
  - Aggression
- **Family & partnership**
  - Satisfactions

Organisation
- **Team**
  - Efficiency
  - Norms
  - Cohesion
- **Organisation**
  - Organisational performance
  - Organisational culture
  - Absenteeism

Society
- **Unemployment**
- **Legal costs**
- **Interpersonal relationships**

Intangible Costs
- Pain and suffering
- Reduce life quality of the bullying victim

Indirect Costs
- Economic costs of productivity loss (turnover, decreased work performance, absenteeism)

Direct Costs
- Medical care expenditure (diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation)

**Bullying case:** Loss of productivity between 13.9% and 17.4%
Costs: US $4182-5236 annually.

State of the art

- Various studies regarding the link between workplace bullying exposure and well-being, work-related attitudes and behavior
- Lack of studies about psychological mechanisms
- Knowledge of the psychological mechanisms important for phase-2 interventions
Social exchange theory: psychological contract

- Psychological contract
  - informal, implicit, indirect promised resources, conditions, obligations
  - influenced by the perceptions and interpretations of the individuals

- Psychological contract breach/violation
  - Cognitiv: Awareness of an unfulfilled organisational promise
  - Affectiv: Emotional reaction (anger, betrayal)

- Workplace bullying exposure may lead to psychological contract breach/violation

Parzefall & Salin, 2010; Rousseau, 1995; Salin & Notelaers, 2017.
Self-determination theory: Basic needs

- Humans have three basic needs
  - need for autonomy
  - need for competence
  - need for relatedness

- Environments that frustrate these basic need reduce individuals' well-being and motivation

- Workplace bullying may thwart the employee's basic needs (excessive controlling, permanent criticism, social isolation)

Deci & Ryan, 2008; Trépanier et al., 2013, 2015, 2016.
Hypotheses

- **H1**: Workplace bullying is linked with feelings of psychological contract violation and frustration of basic needs

- **H2**: Workplace bullying is linked with lower well-being, job satisfaction, engagement, work performance and with higher burnout, workplace deviance, turnover intentions.

- **H3**: Feelings of psychological contract violation and basic need frustration are mediators between bullying and these negative outcomes.
Research design

- Online survey of American employees (Amazon MTurk sample)
- \( N = 1,408 \) (56.6% females, \( n = 797 \))
- Age 20-73 years (\( M = 37.3; SD = 10.3 \))

Statistical analyses

- Mediation analyses with structural equation modeling
- Effect-coding-method, phantom approach
- Percentil bootstrapping method to calculate confidence intervals
### Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>I.</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>$\omega$</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Answer categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workplace bullying exposure</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Notelaers et al., 2017</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>&quot;someone is withholding information&quot;</td>
<td>1 (= “Never”) 5 (= “Always”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological contract violation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Robinson &amp; Morrison, 2000</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>&quot;I feel betrayed by my organization&quot;</td>
<td>1 (= “Totally disagree”) 7 (= “Totally agree”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration: Autonomy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bartholomew et al., 2011 (angepasst)</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>“I feel prevented from making choices with regard to the way I do my work”</td>
<td>1 (= “Totally disagree”) 7 (= “Totally agree”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration: Competence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bartholomew et al., 2011 (angepasst)</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>“There are times at work when I am told things that make me feel incompetent”</td>
<td>1 (= “Totally disagree”) 7 (= “Totally agree”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration: Relatedness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bartholomew et al., 2011 (angepasst)</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>“At work, I feel other people dislike me”</td>
<td>1 (= “Totally disagree”) 7 (= “Totally agree”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Method (II)**
## Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>L.</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>( \omega )</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Answer categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well-Being</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>WHO, 1998</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>&quot;Over the past two weeks I have felt cheerful and in good spirits&quot;</td>
<td>1 (= “at no time”) 7 (= “all of the time”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cammann et al., 1983</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>“All in all I am satisfied with my job”</td>
<td>1 (= “Totally disagree”) 7 (= “Totally agree”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kristensen et al., 2005</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>“Do you feel that every working hour is tiring for you?”</td>
<td>1 (= “Never”) 5 (= “Always”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vigor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Schaufeli et al., 2006</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>“At my work, I feel bursting with energy”</td>
<td>1 (= “Totally disagree”) 7 (= “Totally agree”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work performance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sischka et al., 2018</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>“How does your supervisor rate your overall work performance?”</td>
<td>1 (= “Far below average”) 7 (= “Far above average”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workplace deviance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bennet &amp; Robinson, 2000</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>“Put little effort into your work”</td>
<td>1 (= “Totally disagree”) 7 (= “Totally agree”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turnover intentions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sjöberg &amp; Sverke, 2000</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>“I am actively looking for other jobs”</td>
<td>1 (= “Totally disagree”) 7 (= “Totally agree”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Results (I)

## Model fit for different measurement models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>RMSEA [CI$_{90}$]</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single factor</td>
<td>21466.251</td>
<td>1326</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.104 [.103; .105]</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.549</td>
<td>.532</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 factors</td>
<td>6236.188</td>
<td>1290</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.052 [.051; .053]</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.889</td>
<td>.882</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 factors</td>
<td>5989.793</td>
<td>1281</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.051 [.050; .052]</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.895</td>
<td>.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 factors</td>
<td>5440.175</td>
<td>1271</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.048 [.047; .049]</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.907</td>
<td>.899</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>12 factors (theory)</strong></td>
<td><strong>5123.209</strong></td>
<td><strong>1260</strong></td>
<td><strong>.000</strong></td>
<td><strong>.047 [.045; .048]</strong></td>
<td><strong>.049</strong></td>
<td><strong>.914</strong></td>
<td><strong>.905</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>13 factors</td>
<td>5273.594</td>
<td>1278</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.047 [.046; .048]</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.911</td>
<td>.904</td>
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</table>

*Notes. MLR estimator; RMSEA = root mean squared error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index.*
## Results (II)

### Latent means, standard deviations, intercorrelations and reliabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
<th>5.</th>
<th>6.</th>
<th>7.</th>
<th>8.</th>
<th>9.</th>
<th>10.</th>
<th>11.</th>
<th>12.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Workplace bullying</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Psychological contract violation</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.95</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3. Frustration: autonomy</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.83</td>
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<td>4. Frustration: competence</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.88</td>
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<td>5. Frustration: relatedness</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.84</td>
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<td>6. Well-Being</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>-.48</td>
<td>-.51</td>
<td>-.51</td>
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<td>.92</td>
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<td>7. Job satisfaction</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>-.47</td>
<td>-.73</td>
<td>-.63</td>
<td>-.61</td>
<td>-.60</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td></td>
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<td>8. Burnout</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>-.62</td>
<td>-.70</td>
<td>.92</td>
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<td>9. Vigor</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>-.50</td>
<td>-.53</td>
<td>-.52</td>
<td>-.54</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>-.70</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Work performance</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>-.29</td>
<td>-.39</td>
<td>-.32</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Workplace deviance</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>-.35</td>
<td>-.39</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>-.48</td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Turnover intentions</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>-.50</td>
<td>-.82</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>-.61</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bullying is strongly correlated with all potential mediators!
Bullying is correlated with all outcomes!
Mediators are strongly intercorrelated!
Mediators are correlated with all outcomes!

**Notes.** Bivariate correlations, McDonald’s ω in diagonal; all correlations are significant at p < .001.
Results (III)

Mediation model (Part I).

Psychological contract violation

Frustration: Autonomy

Frustration: Competence

Frustration: Relatedness

Workplace bullying exposure

Outcomes

Notes. Standardized effects;
Model fit: $\chi^2 = 5120$, $df = 1260$, $p < .001$, $RMSEA [CI_{90}] = .047 [.045; .048]$, $SRMR = .049$, $CFI = .914$, $TLI = .906$. 
Results (IV)

**Notes.** Standardized effects;
Model fit: $\chi^2 = 5120$, $df = 1260$, $p < .001$, $RMSEA \ [CI_{90}] = .047 \ [.045; .048]$, $SRMR = .049$, $CFI = .914$, $TLI = .906$.  

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**Mediation model (Part II).**
Different mechanisms are important that link workplace bullying with different outcomes

- Job satisfaction, Turnover intentions: Psychological contract violation
- Well-Being and motivation: Frustration of need for relatedness

Limitations

- Cross-sectional design / self-reports
- Convenience sample
- High multicollinearity between mediators
Discussion

- **Interventions**
  - Taking basic needs of bullying victims into account
  - Restore feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness
  - Restore employee's trust in organization → *Taking action!*

- **Outlook**
  - Possible moderators (mindfulness)
  - Same mediators for cyberbullying?
  - Longitudinal studies
Thank you for your attention!

Any questions?

Email: philipp.sischka@uni.lu


