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## Competition and Workplace Bullying. The moderating role of passive avoidant leadership style.

### 23<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Aggression

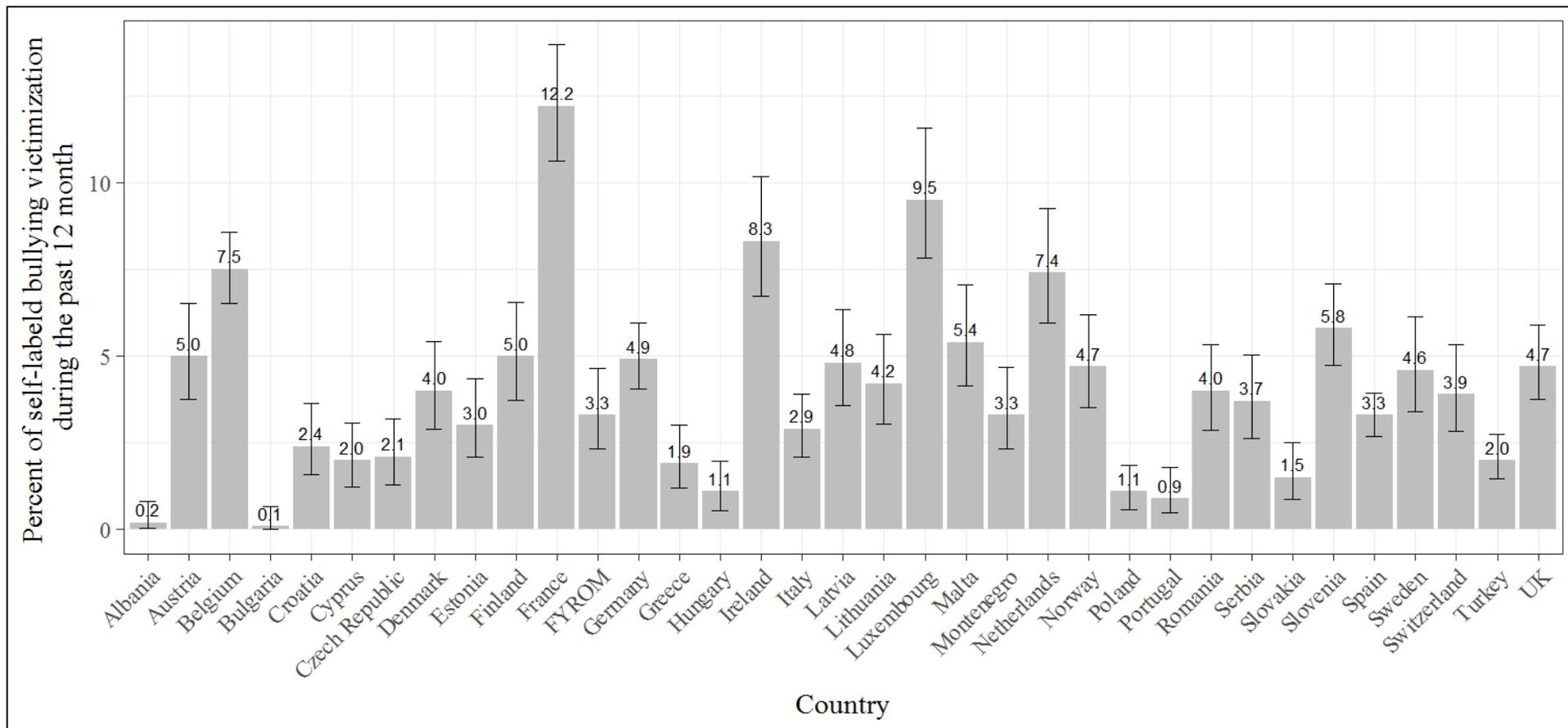
**Symposium:** Teachers' different roles in cases of traditional and cyber bullying (I. Sjursø, H. Fandrem, E. Roland)

Psychologische Hochschule Berlin  
Berlin, Deutschland, 2018, November 2<sup>th</sup>



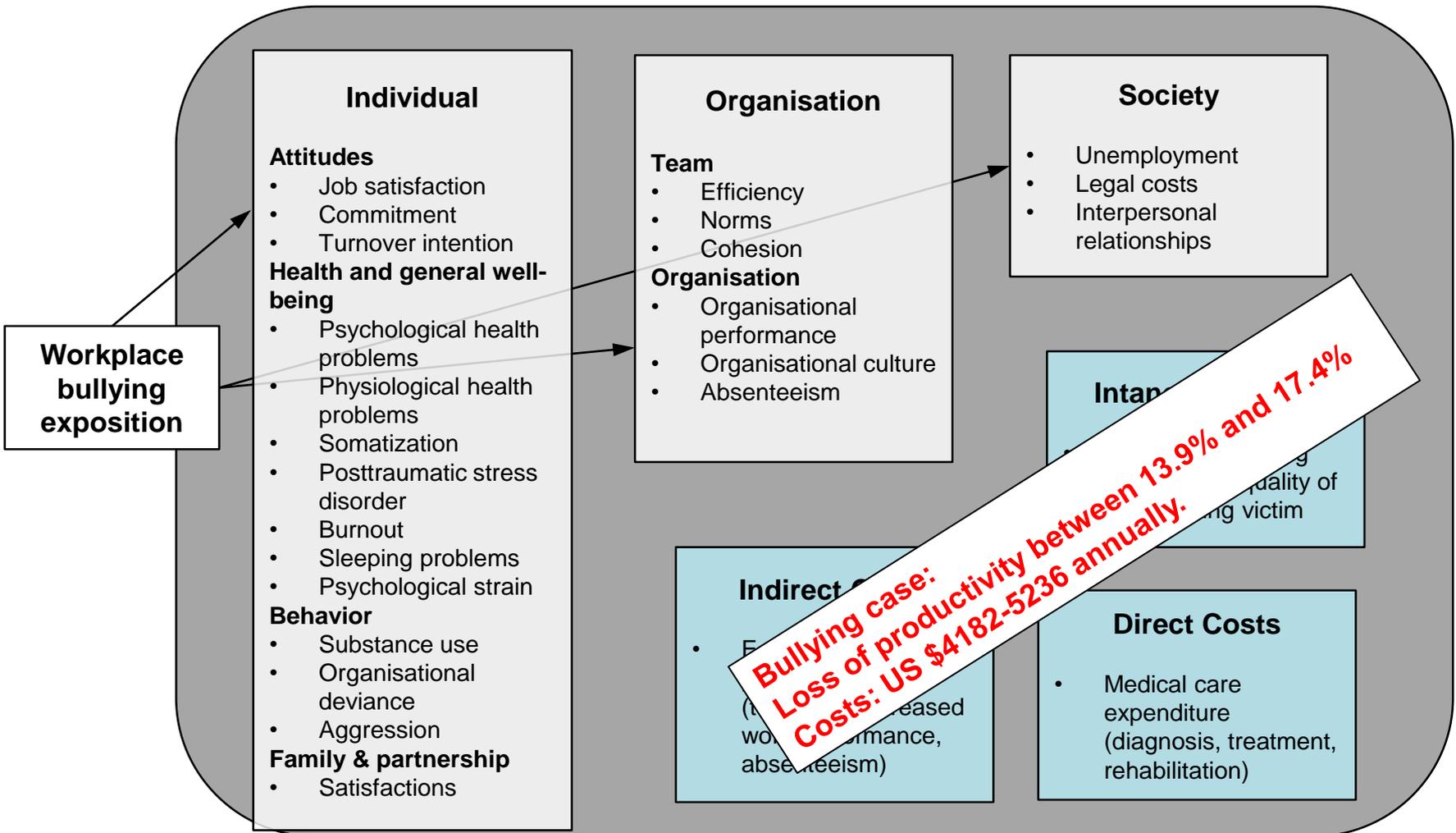
# Workplace bullying as a social problem

## Workplace bullying in Europe



Notes. European Working Condition Survey 2015, own calculations. Item: Over the past 12 months, during the course of 2 your work have you been subjected to any of the following? Bullying/harassment? Answer categories: No/Yes.

# Workplace bullying as a social problem



# State of the art

## Risk factors

- Various studies show the link between working conditions and workplace bullying exposure
- Lack of studies
  - about multiplicative effects of working environment factors
  - about risk factors of workplace bullying perpetration
  
- Knowledge of these effects important for phase-1 interventions

# Risk factors (I)

## Competition

- Organisations as areas of politic and conflict (Mintzberg, 1985)
- Moreover
  - Incentive and reward structure (Gerhart et al., 2009)
  - Organisational change (e.g., cost reduction; Bozionelos, 2001)
  - Competition through social comparison (Festinger, 1954)
- High competition in organisations
  - higher level of stress and aggression (Salin, 2003)
  - more envy (Vecchio, 2005) and hostile behavior (Duffy et al., 2012)
  - Bullying as rational behavior (Ferris et al., 2007; Samnani & Singh, 2014)

# Risk factors (II)

## Passiv-avoidant leadership style (PAL)

- Characterized by (Hoel et al., 2010)
  - avoiding decision and responsibility
  - no help, no feedback for subordinates, absent when needed, etc.
  - “not meeting the legitimate expectations of the subordinates” (Skogstad et al., 2007, p. 81)
- High prevalence (Aasland et al., 2010)
- Consequences (e.g., Barling & Frone, 2016)
  - work overload
  - role conflict
  - role ambiguity

# Risk factors (III)

## Passiv-avoidant leadership style (PAL) and competition

### ■ Moderation effects

- no rule enforcement
- no monitoring of subordinates
- no intervention in dysfunctional conflicts (Woodrow & Guest, 2017)
- competition is not embedded in rules
- PAL lowers the perceived costs of engaging in bullying behavior (Kräkel, 1997; Salin, 2003)

# Hypotheses

## Hypotheses

- *H1*: Competition is *positively related* to WB exposure and perpetration.
- *H2*: Passive avoidant leadership style is *positively related* to WB exposure and perpetration.
- *H3*: The effect of competition on WB exposure and perpetration is *moderated* by PAL, in that the effect of competition on WB is stronger for higher levels of PAL.

# Method (I)

## Research design

- Online survey of American employees (Amazon MTurk sample)
- $N = 1.411$  (56.6% females,  $n = 798$ )
- Age 20-73 years ( $M = 37.3$ ;  $SD = 10.4$ )

## Statistical analyses

- Moderation analyses within regression analytical framework
- Calculations of  $\Delta R^2$  and  $f^2$

# Method (II)

## Measures

Scale	I.	Reference	$\omega$	Example	Answer categories	
Competition	4	Fletcher & Nusbaum, 2010	.91	<i>"My coworkers are constantly competing with one another"</i>	1 (= "Totally disagree")	7 (= "Totally agree")
Passiv avoidant leadership style	5	Barling & Frone, 2016	.90	<i>"My supervisor tends to be unavailable when staff need help with a problem"</i>	1 (= "Totally disagree")	7 (= "Totally agree")
Workplace bullying exposure	9	Notelaers et al., 2017	.91	<i>"Someone is withholding information"</i>	1 (= "Never")	5 (= "Always")
Workplace bullying perpetration	9	Notelaers et al., 2017	.91	<i>"Withhold information"</i>	1 (= "Never")	5 (= "Always")
Self-labelled workplace bullying exposure		"Bullying takes place when one or more persons systematically and over time feel that they have been subjected to negative treatment on the part of one or more persons, in a situation in which the person(s) exposed to the treatment have difficulty in defending themselves against it. It is not bullying when two equally strong opponents are in conflict with each other."		<i>"using the above definition, please state whether you have been bullied at work by your colleagues/your supervisor over the last four weeks"</i>	1 (= "Never")	5 (= "Always")
Self-labelled workplace bullying perpetration				<i>"using the above definition, please state whether you have bullied others at work over the last four weeks"</i>	1 (= "Never")	5 (= "Always")

# Results (I)

## Regression analysis with bullying exposure as outcome.

	Workplace bullying exposure (WBE)		Self-labelled Workplace bullying exposure (SWBE)	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Competition	.20*** [.17; .23]	.20*** [.17; .23]	.11*** [.08; .14]	.11*** [.08; .14]
Passive avoidant leadership style	.30*** [.27; .33]	.30*** [.26; .33]	.21*** [.17; .24]	.20*** [.16; .23]
Competition x Passive avoidant leadership style		.05** [.02; .07]		.06*** [.04; .09]
$R^2$	.309	.315	.159	.171
$\Delta R^2$	.309***	.006**	.159***	.012***
$f^2$		.007		.015

### Main and interactive effects for workplace bullying exposure.

Notes. Standardized coefficients; \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; 95% confidence intervals in square brackets.

# Results (II)

## Regression analysis with bullying perpetration as outcome.

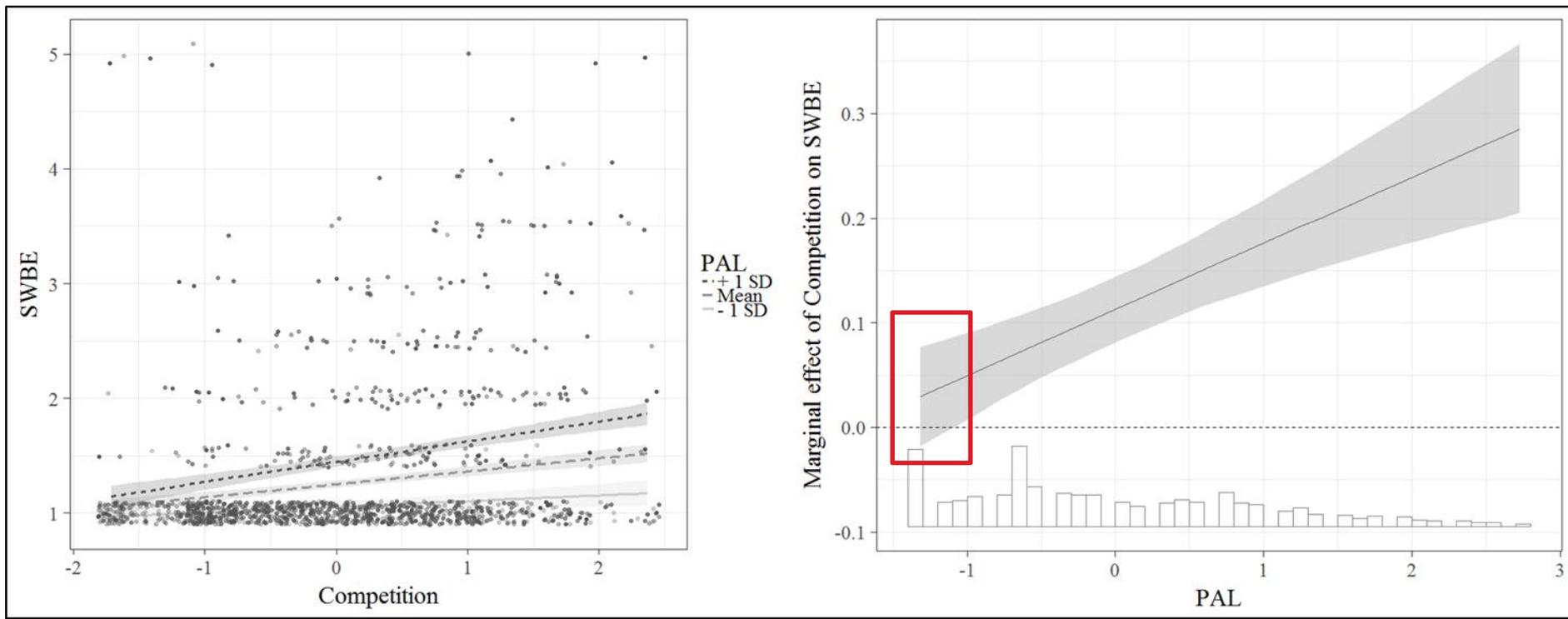
	Workplace bullying perpetration (WBP)		Self-labelled Workplace bullying perpetration (SWBP)	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Competition	.08*** [.06; .11]	.08*** [.06; .11]	.08*** [.05; .10]	.08*** [.06; .10]
Passive avoidant leadership style	.14*** [.12; .17]	.14*** [.11; .17]	.09*** [.07; .12]	.09*** [.06; .11]
Competition x Passive avoidant leadership style		.01 [-.01; .03]		.05*** [.03; .07]
$R^2$	.123	.124	.081	.096
$\Delta R^2$	.123***	.001	.081***	.015***
$f^2$		.000		.016

**Main effects for both perpetration variables. Interactive effect only for self-labelled perpetration.**

Notes. Standardized coefficients; \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; 95% confidence intervals in square brackets.

# Results (III)

## Marginal effect plot (Self-labelled workplace bullying exposure)



Notes. Use of jitter.

# Discussion (I)

## Summary

- Competition and passive-avoidant leadership style are predictors for workplace bullying exposure and perpetration
- Multiplicative effects of competition and passive-avoidant leadership style (for 3 out of 4 outcome variables)

## Limitations

- Cross-sectional design / only self-reports
- Convenience sample

# Discussion (II)

## Interventions

- Improvement of working conditions
- Training of supervisors (Kelloway & Barling, 2010)

## Outlook

- Possible moderators (trait competitiveness)
- Same risk factors for workplace cyberbullying?
- Longitudinal studies



**Thank you for your attention!**

**Any questions?**

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# Literature

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# Appendix

# Results

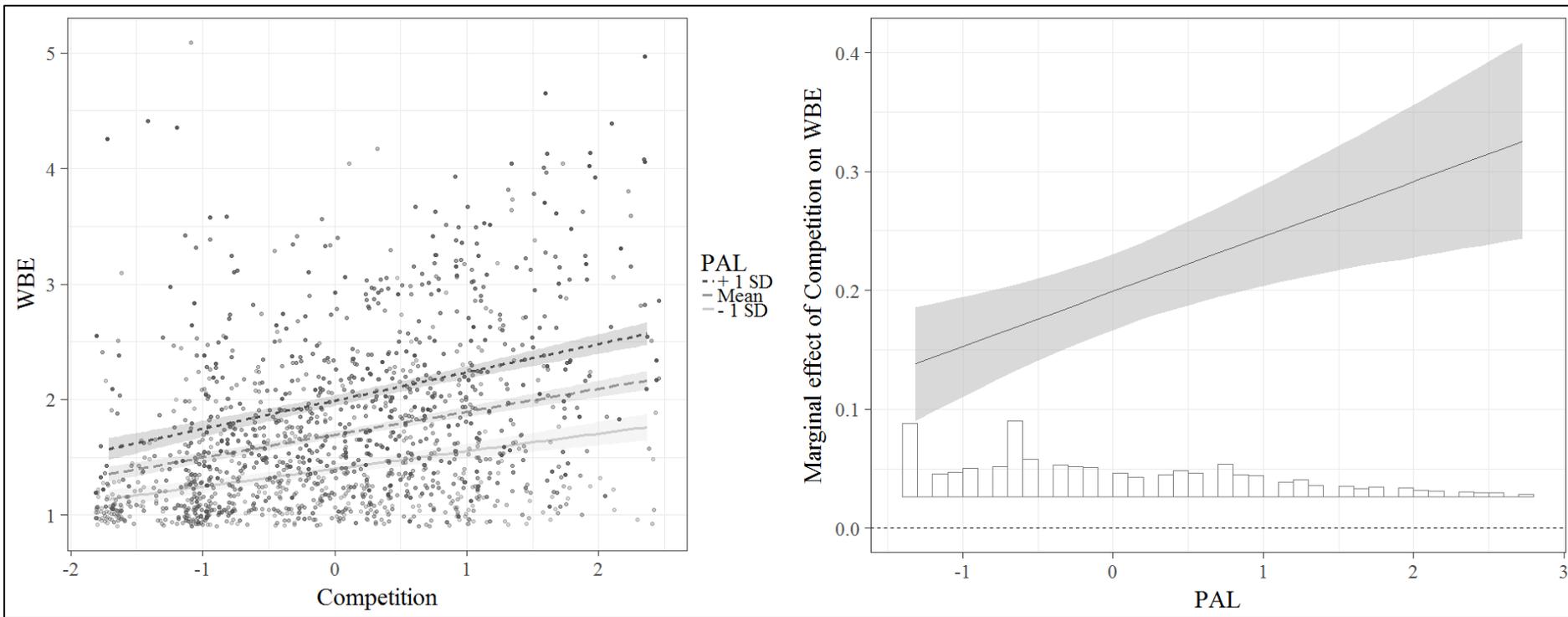
## Means, standard deviations, intercorrelations and reliabilites.

	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. Sex	43.4 % m.											
2. Age	37.3	10.3	-.08**									
3. Organization tenure	6.2	6.7	.04	.42***								
4. Permanent contract	87.6 %											
	per. cont.		.01	-.08**	.03							
5. Supervision responsibility	32 % s.											
	resp.		.11***	.07**	.15***	.09***						
6. Competition	3.5	1.5	.08**	-.05	.00	.04	.12***	.91				
7. Passive avoidant leadership	3.0	1.5	-.04	-.03	.02	-.03	.05	.23***	.90			
8. Workplace bullying exposure	1.7	0.7	.00	-.07**	.01	.01	.05*	.38***	.49***	.91		
9. Self-labeled Workplace bullying exposure	1.3	0.6	-.04	-.08**	.01	.01	.04	.25***	.36***	.68***		
10. Workplace bullying perpetration	1.3	0.5	.07**	-.10***	.03	.01	.04	.23***	.31***	.57***	.44***	.91
11. Self-labeled workplace bullying perpetration	1.1	0.5	.03	-.11***	.01	.00	.05*	.21***	.24***	.46***	.53***	.63***

Notes. Zero-order correlations, McDonald's  $\omega$  in diagonale; \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

# Results

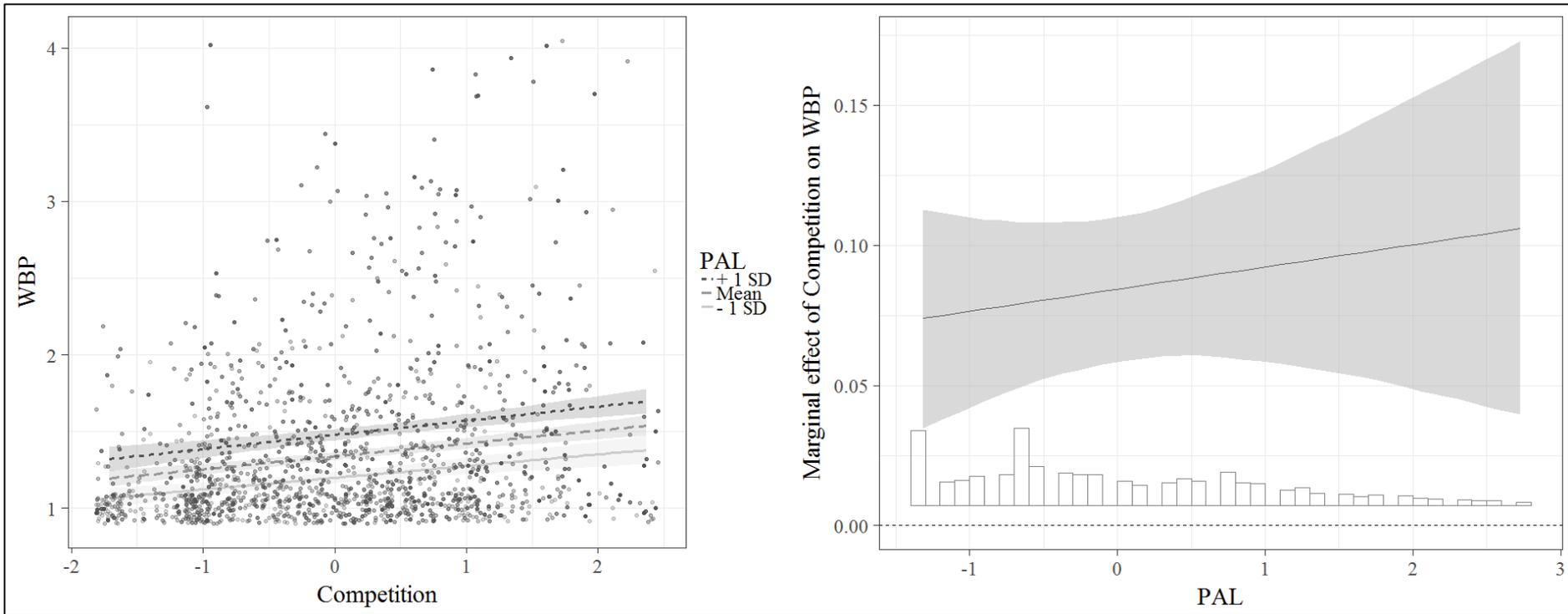
## Marginal effect plots (Workplace bullying exposure)



Notes. Use of jitter.

# Results

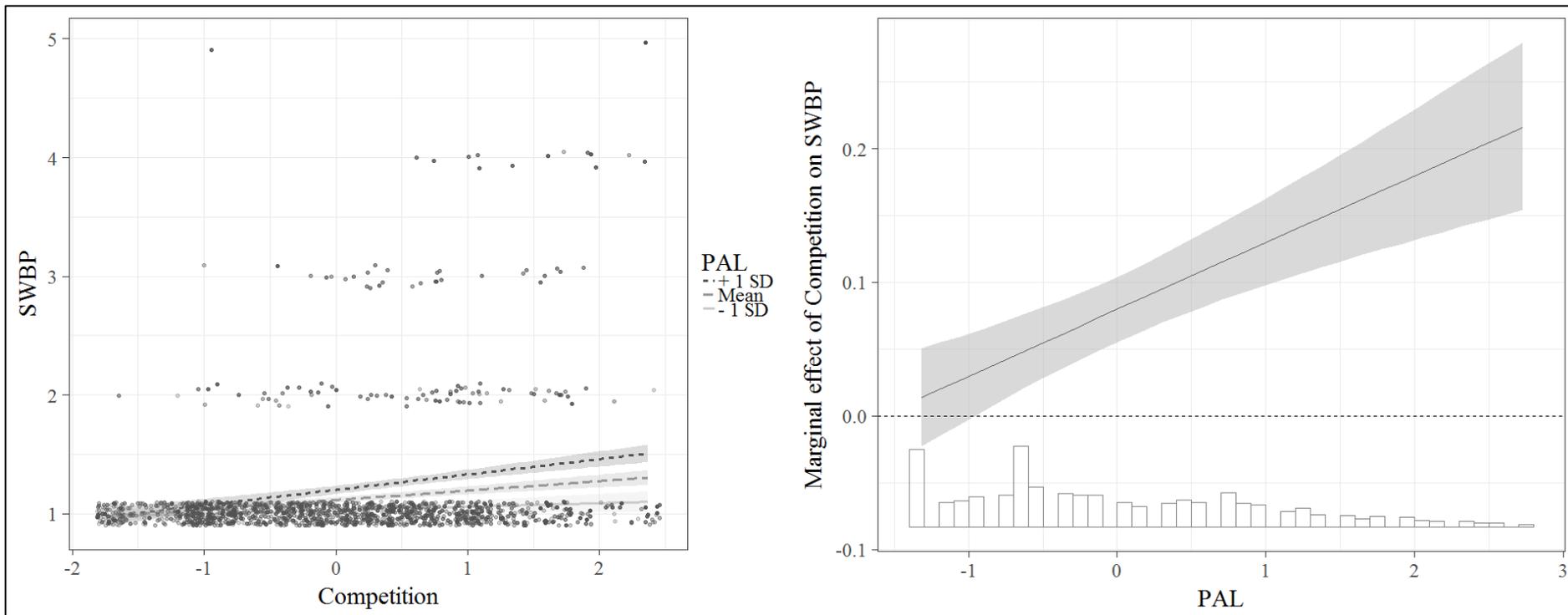
## Marginal effect plots (Workplace bullying perpetration)



Notes. Use of jitter.

# Results

## Marginal effect plots (Self-labelled workplace bullying perpetration)



Notes. Use of jitter.