Title: Injustice perceptions, workplace bullying, and intention to leave

Authors: Reknes, Iselin * [a], Glambek, Mats [b, a], & Einarsen, Ståle Valvatne [a]

[a] Department of Psychosocial Science, University of Bergen, Norway

[b] Department of Leadership and Organizational Behaviour, BI Norwegian Business School, Oslo, Norway

*Corresponding author

E-mail: Iselin.Reknes@uib.no

Address: Christies gate 12, 5015 Bergen, Norway

Abstract

Purpose: Intention to leave as an outcome of exposure to workplace bullying is well documented in previous studies, yet, research on explanatory conditions for such an association is lacking.

Design/methodology/approach: The present study investigates the relationship between injustice perceptions, exposure to bullying behaviors, and turnover intention, employing a moderated mediation analysis based on a re-analysis and extension of data gathered among a sample of Norwegian bus-drivers (N=1, 024).

Findings: As hypothesized, injustice perceptions were indirectly related to intention to leave via workplace bullying, however only under conditions of higher perceived injustice levels.

Implications: The results underscore the importance of preventing workplace bullying, and of maintaining ample levels of justice at work, where employees are treated with fairness and respect.

Originality: The study adds important knowledge to the bullying literature by focusing on the role of mechanisms and moderators in bullying situations, investigating how the combination of workplace bullying and injustice perceptions is reflected in employees' intention to leave the organization.

Keywords: Injustice perceptions, Exposure to bullying behaviors, Intention to leave, Moderated mediation analysis

Paper type: Research paper

Employment is not only financially necessary for most, but also highly important with respect to maintaining health and well-being (Creed and Macintyre, 2001). Yet, health and well-being at work is dependent on a number of psychosocial factors in the work setting generating positive or negative feelings and attitudes among employees (North et al., 1996), in particular social factors such as interpersonal conflicts (Spector and Jex, 1998). Related to this, exposure to workplace bullying, i.e. being exposed to repeated unwanted negative behaviors by peers or superiors at work, is regarded as one of the most devastating social stressors at work (Hauge et al., 2010). Bullying at work has been shown to yield severe negative outcomes for those affected (Nielsen and Einarsen, 2012). Among a range of work-related and health-related outcomes is an increased intention to leave the organization among those exposed (Glambek et al., 2014).

Among the different theoretical frameworks and concepts used to explain the effects of bullying in working life, Parzefall and Salin (2010) argue that perceptions of injustice is an essential part of the bullying experience, thus representing a well-suited starting point when assessing both antecedents and outcomes of bullying. Van den Bos and Lind (2002) similarly state that in unclear or unpredictable situations, people become especially attentive to the information they need to form fairness judgements. Hence, targets of workplace bullying, already being in a situation with little or no control over their social environment (Einarsen et al., 2011), are likely to be more severely affected when they also perceive their general work environment as unfair, at least compared with contexts denoting a safe and fair environment where respectful and reasonable treatment is to be expected, e.g. when interpersonal conflicts are handled (see also Zahlquist, Hetland, Skogstad, Bakker & Einarsen, 2019). However, studies assessing these assumptions are scarce, and in order to meet this shortcoming in the literature, we aim to investigate whether employees' injustice perceptions moderate the relationship between exposure to bullying behaviors and intention to leave, a much studied

outcome of exposure to workplace bullying. In addition, as being in a fair and just environment may also reduce the risk of being bullied in the first place, we will test this assumption in a moderated mediation analysis where the employees' perception of being treated unfairly moderates its own indirect effect on intention to leave via exposure to bullying behaviors. As such, the present study represents a novel attempt to examine the interrelationships between injustice perceptions, workplace bullying and intention to leave, possibly entailing significant practical and theoretical implications.

The harmful effects of workplace bullying

Bullying at work, in its strictest sense, is characterized by three central criteria; a) repeated and regular exposure to negative social behaviors, b) a prolonged period of exposure, and c) a real or perceived imbalance of power between the bully and the victim (Einarsen et al., 1994; Leymann, 1996). Bullying is therefore not about single and isolated episodes or events. Nor is it an either-or phenomenon, but rather a gradually escalating process (Zapf and Gross, 2001), where the target risks being increasingly victimized over time. Moreover, the behaviors involved can be either work-related or person-related (Einarsen et al., 2011), with the former including behaviors like being given unreasonable deadlines and unmanageable work tasks, and the latter involving behaviors like making insulting remarks, being socially excluded or exposed to excessive teasing.

Yet, often taking the form of a gradually escalating process, workplace bullying manifest in varying degrees of intensity (Notelaers and Einarsen, 2013; Conway et al., 2018), in which less intensive forms may be referred to as acts of incivility (Cortina et al., 2001), or as exposure to negative acts at work (Einarsen et al., 2009). In the present study, with its preventive focus, we investigate experiences across the whole range of this spectrum, from exposure to occasional negative social acts up to and including full blown cases of

victimization from bullying, here combined under the term exposure to bullying behaviors (Nielsen et al., 2011).

For employees systematically targeted, exposure to bullying behaviors is associated with numerous negative outcomes, including mental and psychosomatic health problems (Hogh et al., 2011b; Nielsen and Einarsen, 2012), sickness absence (Ortega et al., 2011; Niedhammer et al., 2013), reduced job satisfaction (Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2009), and intention to leave the organization (Glambek et al., 2014). This gross negative impact of bullying on individual level outcomes is likely to be affected by a range of individual, but also contextual factors (Nielsen and Einarsen, 2018; Rai and Agarwal, 2018). For example, the leadership style of one's nearest leader has been proposed as an important contextual factor (Hauge et al., 2011), as has climate for conflict management (Einarsen et al., 2016), with both acting as moderators on the outcomes of exposure to bullying behaviors. Related to these findings, it is theoretically plausible that injustice perceptions in targets hold a significant explanatory potential with respect to both antecedents and outcomes of bullying. In particular, injustice perceptions may affect the target's confidence in the organization's ability to adequately handle the situation. In the present study we will therefore investigate employees' injustice perceptions as a potential mechanism involved in the relationship between workplace bullying and targets´ intention to leave the organization.

Justice perceptions

Organizational justice is referred to as the "just and fair manner in which organizations treat their employees" (Greenberg, 1990), with employees' evaluative assessment of such fairness as a key factor (Tepper, 2001). Commonly, a division is made between three types of justice: Procedural, distributive and interactional (Colquitt, 2001). *Procedural justice* refers to the fairness of the processes that leads to outcomes, and is fostered through fair process criteria like accuracy and lack of bias (Leventhal, 1980). *Distributive justice* refers to the

fairness associated with distribution of resources, and is present when outcomes are consistent with norms for allocation such as equity or equality (Colquitt, 2001). Lastly, *interactional justice* refers to the interactional treatment experienced by employees as processes are enacted (see Bies, 1987). This latter form of justice has by some been further divided into interpersonal justice and informational justice (Colquitt, 2001), with interpersonal justice reflecting perceived respect and fairness with regard to interpersonal treatment, and informational justice reflecting perceived justice with respect to explanations of specific decisions relevant to the choice of procedures as well as the distribution of outcomes. In the present study we are focusing on the individual perception of the extent to which the organization and its leader(s) are being unfair and unjust in their treatment of the employees, and thereby employ a broad measure of organizational justice, focusing on the effects of perceiving one's organizational context to hold low levels of justice, referred to as individual injustice perceptions.

Having an experience of being treated justly and respectfully by the organization and its leaders may create a perception that one is regarded as a valuable member of the organization, and that the work environment is generally characterized by predictability and fairness. Experiences of being treated unfairly, on the other hand, may put into question one's feeling of being a valued member of the organization. In addition, it may reasonably deprive the employee of coping resources such as social support and self-efficacy, thus possibly affecting the employee's ability to cope with significant work stressors (see Tepper, 2001). As such, in addition to creating a negative atmosphere involving uncertainty about employees' perceived value as such, a work environment perceived as unfair and unjust makes it difficult for the employee to obtain favorable outcomes at work, thereby increasing the risk of her/him violating social norms (Wood et al., 2013). In line with this, several studies show that the employees' evaluation of fairness within the organization affects their attitudes and behavior

(Moorman, 1991; Folger and Cropanzano, 2001), as well as their proneness to take sick leave and suffer health impairment (Elovainio et al., 2004). Hence, injustice perceptions, i.e. perceiving the organization as unjust and unfair in its decisions of employees' rights and interests, seem to present sources of stress as well as fostering negative emotions at work that may involve health risks among the employees (Fox et al., 2001).

The role of injustice perceptions in bullying situations: An antecedent and a moderator

Although studies looking at workplace bullying and injustice perceptions in concerto are scarce, there is some evidence of their potential interrelationships. In one strain of evidence, injustice is understood as a general risk factor increasing the probability that workplace bullying will commence in the first place. For instance, a direct negative relationship between organizational justice and workplace aggression and workplace bullying, respectively, has been has been found in two unpublished doctoral theses (Mourssi-Alfash, 2014; Wilson, 2010). These findings are in line with the so-called work environment hypothesis, holding that bullying is the result of prevailing frustrations and problems in the psychosocial working environment, including poor leadership, role stress and an unclear and poorly organized work design more in general (Hauge et al., 2007; Leymann, 1996; Reknes et al., 2019). Included in this may off course a prevailing unfairness and injustice in many of the justice domains mentioned above. In this line of reasoning, injustice perceptions may therefore be seen as a risk factor or antecedent of perceived exposure to bullying behaviors. Additionally, in another strain of evidence, (in)justice is understood as a moderator of the relationship between workplace bullying and its consequences. For instance, in their study of 310 entry-level Taiwanese employees, Hsu, Liu, & Tsaur (2019) found that high organizational justice buffered the negative effects of workplace bullying on well-being, illustrating the potential beneficial effect of employees' fairness perceptions when bullying has already commenced. In addition, perceptions of unfairness seem to be relevant with respect to the management of

bullying complaints. In a study by Jenkins and colleagues (2013), participants who submitted a workers' compensation claim after being bullied perceived less organizational justice than those who did not submit a claim. Hence, perceptions of poor organizational justice can be regarded as a work environment stressor on the one hand, possibly increasing the risk of workplace bullying via its negative effects on behavioral, physical and psychological reactions (Elovainio et al., 2004). On the other hand, injustice perceptions may also act as a moderator, affecting the impact of workplace bullying, possibly by facilitating its detrimental effects.

Intention to leave as an outcome affected by the joint effect of bullying and injustice

According to the unfolding model of employee turnover, intention to leave the organization is the immediate precursor of actual quitting (Lee et al., 1999; Podsakoff et al., 2007). Turnover intentions may arise for a number of reasons, and according to theory, commonly develop along one of four "paths". In the first three theorized paths, the process is initiated by a so-called "shock". Such a shock comprises a jarring event that for some reason causes the employee to re-evaluate the job situation, and can involve events of a positive, neutral or negative nature, which may be internal or external to the employee, and that can be expected as well as unexpected (Lee et al., 1999; Holtom et al., 2005). The shock may initiate the turnover process either by triggering a pre-existing plan or *script* for quitting, by altering job satisfaction levels or by causing an *image violation,* where an assessment of the current work situation is compared to one or several alternatives, leading to turnover intention if the current situation is seen as the least favorable one. Alternatively, following the fourth path toward turnover, the process may be initiated by more general and long lasting job dissatisfaction.

Following the premises of the unfolding model of turnover, both injustice perceptions and workplace bullying should be relevant antecedents of turnover intentions. Perceiving one's work environment as unjust may for instance reasonably affect job satisfaction over time (Schmitt and Dörfel, 1999), and such injustice perceptions have indeed been show to increase turnover intentions among affected employees (Nadiri and Tanova, 2010). However, as pointed out by Holtom and colleagues (2005), in most of the cases, job dissatisfaction is not sufficient to predict turnover. Specifically, as described in the first three paths to turnover, a shock is most often needed to spur any actual intentions of quitting.

As previously mentioned, injustice perceptions have already been established as a precursor of intention to leave in several studies (Wilson, 2010; Nadiri and Tanova, 2010; Loi et al., 2006)). However, based on the notions outlined here, we speculate that workplace bullying, theorized to be far more prevalent where negative justice perceptions prevail, may represent the true turnover-initiating "shock" in many cases, thus acting as a mediator. Additionally, as previously reviewed, to the degree that workplace bullying is taking place in a given work situation, injustice perceptions may also be highly relevant to the manner in which the bullying situation itself is perceived and handled. Thus, we propose that a moderated mediation model may best predict the relationship between injustice perceptions, workplace bullying and intention to leave, where injustice perceptions lead to turnover intentions through exposure to bullying behaviors, while simultaneously moderating the relationship between exposure to bullying behaviors and intention to leave (see Figure 1 for an overview);
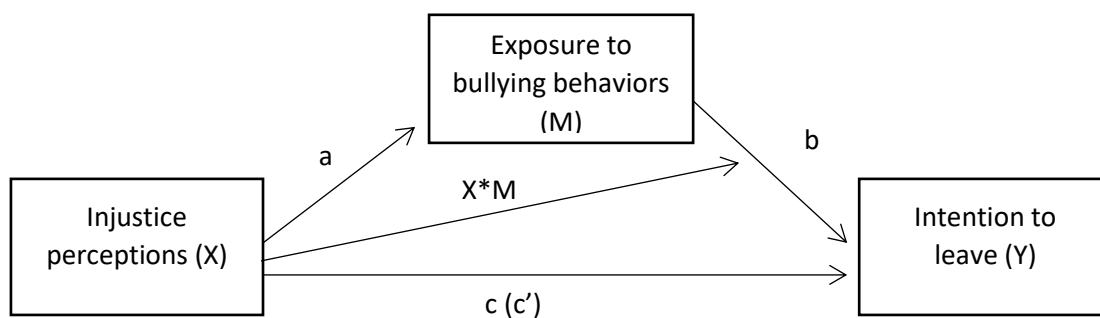
Figure 1. Conceptual model of the relationships between injustice perceptions, exposure to bullying behaviors and intention to leave

Our research assumptions are summarized in the following three hypotheses:

H1. There is a positive relationship between injustice perceptions and intention to leave

H2. Injustice perceptions have an indirect relationship with intention to leave via exposure to bullying behaviors

H3. The indirect association between injustice perceptions and intention to leave through exposure to bullying behaviors is conditionally dependent upon levels of justice perceptions, so that the relationship between exposure to bullying behaviors and intention to leave is only present under conditions of higher injustice perceptions

Methods

Design and sample

Data were gathered in 2008, via a questionnaire survey distributed through The Norwegian Postal Services to 1, 866 employees in a Norwegian transport organization, where the majority were male, and working as bus-drivers. Altogether 1, 024 employees filled out and returned the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 55%. Of these, 86.5% ($n = 877$) were male, and the mean age was 48.48 years (SD = 10.48) ranging from 21-69. In addition,

the majority of the sample (79.6%) reported to be full-time employed. The relationship between exposure to bullying by peers and subordinates and intention to leave in the current data is previously published, and the present study therefore constitute a re-analysis and extension of these results (*reference is excluded due to the double blind review process*). The primary publication focused on individual level factors in bullying situations, more specifically testing trait-anger as a moderator in the bullying-intention to leave relationship. The present study, however, focuses on individual perceptions of work environment factors (i.e. injustice perceptions), and assume that being in an unjust and unfair work environment moderates its own indirect effect on intention to leave via exposure to bullying behaviors.

Measures

Exposure to bullying behaviors was measured with a nine-item short version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (Notelaers et al., 2019). This scale is used to measure exposure to specific negative acts, both person- and work-related, yet with no reference to the phrase bullying (e.g., "Spreading of gossip and rumors about you", "Someone withholding information which affects your performance"). The respondents were asked how often they had been exposed to the behavior during the last six months, with response categories ranging from 1 (*Never)* to 5 (*About daily)*. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .84.

Intention to leave was measured with three items (Sjöberg and Sverke, 2000), examining the extent to which respondents were considering finding a new job or quitting their current position (i.e. "I am actively looking for other jobs", "If I was completely free to choose I would leave this job", "I feel that I could leave this job"). The items were measured on a response scale from 1 *(Strongly disagree)* to 5 *(Strongly agree)*. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .87.

Injustice perceptions were measured with four items assessing either to what extent the respondents perceived their supervisor as fair in his/her treatment of the employees (e.g., "the supervisors treat the employees with trust and respect")*,* or whether the respondents themselves were treated with fairness in the job (e.g., "I am treated fairly when goods and disadvantages are distributed"). Items were assessed using a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 *(Strongly disagree)* to 4 *(Strongly agree),* and reversed before calculating the sum score. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .88.

Control variables. As older workers are more likely to stay in the organization due to high organizational commitment and limited job opportunities in the labor marked (see Ajayi, 2017), age was included as a control measure in the present study (see also Glambek et al., 2014; Houshmand et al., 2012).

Statistics

Demographics and scale reliabilities (α) were investigated in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 24.0. Pearson correlation (r), ranging from -1.00 to 1.00, was used to indicate the strength of the relationship between the variables. The hypothesized mediation model and the moderated mediation model were tested with the PROCESS macro SPSS supplement, with mean centered variables (model 4 and 74, respectively; Hayes, 2013).

Ethics

Participation in the present study was voluntary, and all information obtained is confidential. The study was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) as requested by the ethical rules by the University of Bergen.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations for the included variables are presented in Table 1. The results showed that injustice perceptions were positively related to intention to leave, supporting H1. Also, injustice perceptions were positively related to exposure to bullying behaviors, while exposure to bullying behaviors was positively related to intention to leave, in line with Baron and Kenny's (1986) recommendations for mediation analysis.

Table 1. Means (M), standard deviations (SD), and inter-correlations for the key variables

Variables	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.
1.Age	48.48	10.48	-			
2.Exposure to bullying behaviors	1.25	0.38	-.10**	-		
3.Injustice perceptions	3.02	0.78	-.03	.39**	-	
4.Intention to leave	2.24	1.16	-.15**	.29**	.38**	-

Note. ** p < .01

To test H2 concerning injustice perceptions as an indirect source of intention to leave via exposure to bullying behaviors, we conducted a simple mediation analysis. When controlling for the mediator (i.e. exposure to bullying behaviors), the association between injustice perceptions and intention to leave decreased from $b = .58$ to $b = .48$ (Sobel test: $b = .09$, $p = .000$), in support of H2.

To test hypothesis 3 concerning the indirect effect of injustice perceptions on intention to leave through exposure to bullying behaviors as conditioned by the level of injustice perceptions, we conducted a moderated mediation analysis. In the dependent variable model

(see Table 2), intention to leave was predicted by injustice perceptions ($b = .48$, $p = .000$), exposure to bullying behaviors ($b = .39$, $p = .002$), as well as the interaction between these two ($b = .24$, $p = .023$). Furthermore, the index of moderated mediation was significant ($b = .04$; 95% BCa CI = .009, .084), supporting H3. The interaction is depicted in Figure 2.

Table 2. Conditional indirect effect of injustice perceptions on intention to leave through *exposure to bullying behaviors,* with injustice perceptions as moderator (N = 976; Bootstrap resamples = 5000, Unstandardized coefficients).

Predictor	b	SE	95% CI
Mediator variable model (DV = Workplace bullying)			
Age	-0.003	0.001	-0.005, -0.000
Injustice perceptions	0.18**	0.018	0.144, 0.216
Dependent variable model (DV = Intention to leave)			
Age	-0.014**	0.003	-0.020, -0.008
Injustice perceptions	0.482**	0.051	0.583, 0.381
Exposure to bullying behaviors	0.386**	0.122	0.147, 0.626
Injustice perceptions*Exposure to bullying behaviors	0.242**	0.107	0.452, 0.033
Conditional indirect effect at different values of the moderator			
Values of the moderator	b	Bootstrapped SE	95% BCa CI
1 SD below mean	0.036	0.031	-0.031, 0.096
Mean	0.070	0.022	0.029, 0.114
1 SD above mean	0.103	0.021	0.064, 0.144
Index of moderated mediation			
	0.043	0.019	0.010, 0.087

Note. **$p < .01$. DV = dependent variable. SE = standard error. CI = confidence interval.
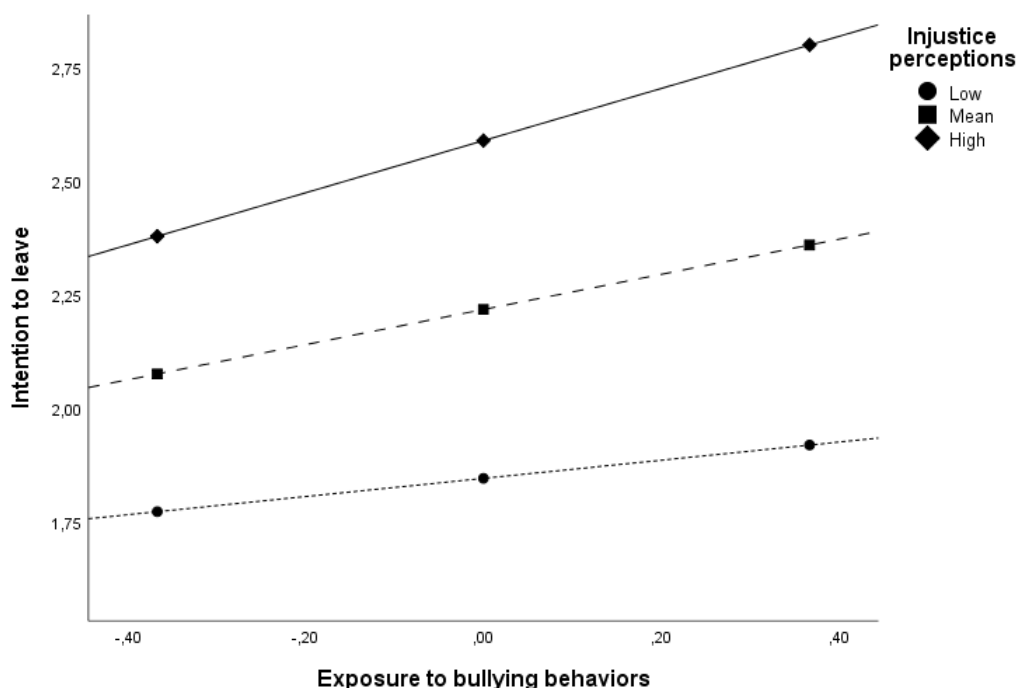
Figure 2. Injustice perceptions as moderator in the relationship between exposure to bullying behaviors and intention to leave, for low injustice perceptions (1 SD below the mean), for medium injustice perceptions (Mean), and for high injustice perceptions (1 SD above the mean).

To determine the values of the moderator at which the conditional indirect effect of bullying behaviors was significant, bootstrap confidence intervals with 5000 resamples were calculated. The indirect association between injustice perceptions and intentions to leave through bullying was significant for values at one standard deviation above the mean ($b = .10$) and at the mean ($b = .07$). As such, the strongest association between injustice perceptions and intentions to leave via bullying was found for higher levels of injustice perceptions. When

levels of injustice perceptions were low, however, bullying seemed not to mediate the relationship between injustice perceptions and intentions to leave.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the role of injustice perceptions both as an antecedent of, and as a moderator within, the relationship between exposure to bullying behaviors and intentions to leave. The results indicated that injustice perceptions were positively related to intention to leave, supporting H1. Moreover, the relationship between injustice perceptions and intention to leave was partially mediated via exposure to bullying behaviors, in support of H2, however only under conditions of higher levels of injustice perceptions, supporting H3. Hence, perceiving one's work environment as just and fair appears to protect against exposure to bullying behaviors, as well as against the otherwise significant effect of bullying on intentions to leave.

The role of justice perceptions in bullying situations

As expected, injustice perceptions were related to higher levels of intention to leave, a tendency also reported in previous studies (Loi et al., 2006; Nadiri and Tanova, 2010; Wilson, 2010). Moreover, we found a positive relationship between injustice perceptions and exposure to bullying behaviors, indicating that employees who perceive their organization as unjust and unfair in their procedures and in their treatment of employees are more likely to report exposure to bullying. This corresponds with previous findings, showing a negative relationship between organizational justice and workplace aggression and workplace bullying, respectively (Mourssi-Alfash, 2014; Wilson, 2010). Furthermore, exposure to bullying behaviors was associated with higher levels of turnover intentions, again in support of previous studies (see also Glambek et al., 2014; Quine, 1999; Glasø et al., 2011).

The main contribution of the present study, however, is evident from our findings concerning H2 and H3. Firstly, as predicted in H2, workers who perceive their organization as unfair tend to report higher levels of bullying, which in turn leads to turnover intentions. Moreover, as predicted in H3, the association between bullying and intention to leave in this mediation chain is dependent on higher injustice perceptions. Hence, perceiving one's work environment as just and fair appears to represent an organizational resource not only related to less bullying, but also to lower levels of turnover intentions among employees targeted with bullying behaviors. Possibly, employees who perceive their organization as fair and just perceive that they can trust their managers to intervene when bullying commences in the workplace, thus potentially preventing or de-escalating any possible inclination to leave the organization. This would be in line with the results reported by Einarsen and colleagues (2016), who found that climate for conflict management (CCM) moderated the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement. In their study, employees reported less bullying and more work engagement when CCM was perceived as strong, and, in parallel with the present study, showed less engagement due to bullying when CCM was poor.

Our results are also in line with the premises of the unfolding model of turnover, which holds that the turnover process is often preceded by either a general reduction of job satisfaction or a shock involving a stirring event that triggers thoughts of leaving (Lee et al., 1999; Holtom et al., 2005). Workplace bullying may reasonably comprise such a shock (Hogh et al., 2011a), even to a traumatic degree in some cases (Nielsen et al., 2015), possibly leading to increased turnover intentions as the targeted employee experience decreasing job satisfaction, possibly while assessing alternative job scenarios as ever more appealing as he or she finds it difficult, if not impossible to cope with the situation (cf. Einarsen et al., 2011). Reasonably, within such a chain of events, the target may rely on the organization's ability to handle the situation, or any future predicaments, in an afire and just manner. However, as the

results show, target's perception of the organization as unjust in its treatment of the employees' goods and rights is decisive for his or hers intention to leave the organization, both in itself and when exposed to bullying. After all, bullying is regarded as a no-control situation for those targeted, where personal resources fail to work as expected, particularly when the exposure is severe (Zapf and Einarsen, 2005; Reknes et al., 2016; Nielsen et al., 2008).

Implications

With respect to research implications, firstly, the results of the present study demonstrate the importance of including moderating and mediating factors when looking at antecedents and outcomes of bullying (Rai and Agarwal, 2018). By showing that injustice perceptions moderate its own effect on turnover intentions as partially mediated through exposure to bullying behaviors, our study suggests that the potential impact of bullying on negative outcomes may vary between individuals based perceptions of the context in which it occurs. By only examining direct associations between included variables, on the other hand, one may both misinterpret the actual impact of exposure to bullying at work as well as underestimate the significance of highly relevant contextual factors that are under the influence of the organizations themselves.

With respect to practical implications, our results suggest that management interventions should aim not only to specifically prevent workplace bullying, but also to foster and maintain positive justice perceptions among employees in general. Such an initiative may have a two-fold purpose with respect to bullying and turnover intentions. Firstly, justice perceptions seem to represent a protective factor against the commencement of bullying scenarios. In that respect, building and maintaining a milieu of fairness in the workplace may be regarded as a protective factor against any given outcome of workplace bullying, not just intention to leave. Possibly, organizations could benefit from endorsing anti-bullying policies

as a part of an overarching formal and informal ethical infrastructure in this regard, thus

taking a clear stand on the matter of destructive interpersonal processes (see also Einarsen,

Mykletun, Einarsen, Skogstad & Salin, 2017). In line with this, they should remain aware of

the impact of the fairness of their procedures, their distribution of goods and perhaps most

importantly, as well as the types of interpersonal interactions they approve of and consent to.

Explicitly setting a respectful and fair standard in these regards may foster stronger justice

perceptions, and to the degree that such standards are eventually embedded in the behavioral

norms of the organization, result in a healthier climate of tolerance and interpersonal respect,

accompanied by lower levels of workplace bullying (e.g. se Glambek, Einarsen & Notelaers,

2020). Secondly, to the degree that workplace bullying scenarios do escalate and manifest, it

appears that they will yield significantly weaker negative effects on the targeted employee if

occurring within a work environment characterized by high justice perceptions, at least with

respect to turnover intentions and acts of bullying. In particular, being part of a system able to

manage unethical and illegitimate interpersonal conduct in a legitimate manner possibly

provides some sense of security and support for such employees. This makes it all the more

important that organizations own up to their responsibility for preventing and explicitly

condoning bullying and harassment, and for creating an interpersonally just working

environment through their leadership standards, their values and their codes of ethics and

conduct, in line with the soon to be ratified ILO convention #190 on the employer

responsibilities to manage harassment at work.

Methodological considerations

The present study is based on an extension and re-analysis of a relatively large sample

of bus-drivers in a Norwegian transportation company, and the use of such an occupation

specific sample may have implications for the generalizability of the results (see also Glasø et

al., 2011). For instance, the solitude of the job as a bus driver may lower the rate of exposure to bullying behaviors and offer a means of escape from the toxic situation, possibly affecting the impact of the bullying scenario. On the other hand, social support from other colleagues may also be difficult to attain, increasing the target's feeling of dependency on responsible third parties such as the nearest manager or the organizations' HR department.

The use of self-report data should also be mentioned. With the respondents themselves providing all information about the constructs measured, there is a chance of common method biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Future studies aiming to replicate the present findings should preferably test hypotheses using several sources of data or several waves of data collection. Future studies may also profit from using a longitudinal design in order to expand on the knowledge attained from this paper with information about time-lags and the development of turnover intentions among targets of bullying.

Conclusion

The results of the present study show that injustice perceptions are related to intention to leave, partially via reports of bullying behaviors. However, this relationship is only present when the work environment and leaders are perceived as unjust and unfair in their treatment of the employees. Hence, a just and fair work environment appear important both as a hygiene factor that prevents bullying from commencing, as well as a buffer against detrimental outcomes when it has already occurred. As such, organizations should, as a core principle, strive to generate and maintain a healthy and fair psychosocial work environment involving just and respectful treatment of all employees.

References

Ajayi, M. O. 2017. Influence of gender and age on organisational commitment among civil servants in Sout-West, Nigeria. *Canadian Social Science,* 13(2)**,** pp 29-35.

Baron, R. A. & Kenny, D. A. 1986. The Moderator-Mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conseptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 51(6)**,** pp 1173-1182.

Bies, R. J. 1987. The predicament of injustice: The management of moral outrage. *In:* Cummings, L. L. & Staw, B. M. (eds.) *Research in organizational behavior.* Greenwich, CT.: JAI Press.

Colquitt, J. A. 2001. On the dimensionality of organizational justice: a construct validation of a measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 86(3)**,** pp 386-400.

Conway, P. M., Høgh, A., Nabe-Nielsen, K., Grynderup, M. B., Mikkelsen, E. G., Persson, R., Rugulies, R., Bonde, J. P. E., Francioli, L. & Hansen, Å. M. 2018. Optimal cut-off points for the Short-Negative Act Questionnaire and their association with depressive symptoms and diagnosis of depression. *Annals of work exposures and health,* 62(3)**,** pp 281-294.

Cortina, L. M., Magley, V. J., Williams, J. H. & Langhout, R. D. 2001. Incivility in the workplace: incidence and impact. *Journal of occupational health psychology,* 6(1)**,** pp 64.

Creed, P. A. & Macintyre, S. R. 2001. The relative effects of deprivation of the latent and manifest benefits of employment on the well-being of unemployes people. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology,* 6(4)**,** pp 324-331.

Einarsen, K., Mykletun, R. J., Einarsen, S. V., Skogstad, A., & Salin, D. (2017). Ethical infrastructure and successful handling of workplace bullying. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*.

Einarsen, S., Hoel, H. & Notelaers, G. 2009. Measuring exposure to bullying and harrasment at work: Validity, factor structure and psychometric properties of the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised. *Work & Stress,* 23(1)**,** pp 24-44.

Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D. & Cooper, C. L. 2011. The concept of bullying and harassment at work: The European tradition. *In:* Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D. & Cooper, C. L. (eds.) *Bullying and harassment in the workplace. Developments in theory, research and practice.* 2 nd ed. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

Einarsen, S., Raknes, B. I. & Matthiesen, S. B. 1994. Bullying and harassment at work and their relationship to work environment quality. An exploratory study. *European Work and Organizational Psychologist,* 4(4)**,** pp 381-401.

Einarsen, S., Skogstad, A., Rørvik, E., Lande, Å. B. & Nielsen, M. B. 2016. Climate for conflict management, exposure to workplace bullying and work engagement: a moderated mediation analysis. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*.

Elovainio, M., Kivimäki, M., Steen, N. & Vahtera, J. 2004. Job decision latitude, organizational justice and health: multilevel covariance structure analysis. *Social Science & Medicine,* 58(1659-1669.

Folger, R. & Cropanzano, R. 2001. Fairness theory: justice as accountability. *In:* Greenberg, J. & Copanzano, R. (eds.) *Advances in organizational justice.* Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Fox, S., Spector, P. E. & Miles, D. 2001. Counterproductive work behavior (CWB) in response to job stressors and organizational justice: some mediator and moderator tests for autonomy and emotions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 59(3)**,** pp 291-309.

Glambek, M., Einarsen, S.V., & Notelaers, G. (2020) Workplace bullying as predicted by non-prototypicality, group identification and norms: a self-categorisation perspective. *Work & Stress,* 34:3, 279-299, DOI: 10.1080/02678373.2020.1719554

Glambek, M., Matthiesen, S. B., Hetland, J. & Einarsen, S. 2014. Workplace bullying as an antecedent to job insecurity and intention to leave: a 6-month prospective study. *Human Resource Management Journal,* 24(3)**,** pp 255-268.

Glasø, L., Bele, E., Nielsen, M. B. & Einarsen, S. 2011. Bus drivers' exposure to bullying at work: An occupation-specific approach. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology,* 52(5)**,** pp 484-493.

Greenberg, J. 1990. Organizational justice: yesterday, today, and tomorrow. *Journal of Management,* 16(2)**,** pp 399-432.

Hauge, L. J., Einarsen, S., Knardahl, S., Lau, B., Notelaers, G. & Skogstad, A. 2011. Leadership and role stressors as departmental level predictors of workplace bullying. *International Journal of Stress Management,* 18(4)**,** pp 305-323.

Hauge, L. J., Skogstad, A. & Einarsen, S. 2007. Relationships between stressful work environments and bullying: Results of a large representative study. *Work & Stress,* 21(3)**,** pp 220-242.

Hauge, L. J., Skogstad, A. & Einarsen, S. 2010. The relative impact of workplace bullying as a social stressor at work. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology,* 51(5)**,** pp 426-433.

Hayes, A. F. 2013. *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis. A regression-Based Approach*, New York: The Guilford Press.

Hogh, A., Hoel, H. & Carneiro, I. G. 2011a. Bullying and employee turnover among healthcare workers: a three-wave prospective study. *Journal of Nursing Management,* 19(6)**,** pp 742-751.

Hogh, A., Mikkelsen, E. G. & Hansen, A. M. 2011b. Individual consequences of workplace bullying/mobbing. *In:* Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D. & Cooper, C. L. (eds.) *Bullying and harassment in the workplace. Developments in theory, research and practice.* 2 ed. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

Holtom, B. C., Mitchell, T. R., Lee, T. W. & Inderrieden, E. J. 2005. Shocks as causes of turnover: What they are and how organizations can manage them. *Human Resource Management,* 44(3)**,** pp 337-352.

Houshmand, M., O'Reilly, J., Robinson, S. & Wollf, A. 2012. Escaping bullying: the simultaneous impact of individual and unit-level bullying on turnover intentions. *Human Relations,* 65(7)**,** pp 907-918.

Hsu, F. S., Liu, Y. A. & Tsaur, S. H. 2019. The impact of workplace bullying on hotel employees' well-being: Do organizational justice and friendship matter? *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*.

Jenkins, M. F., Winefield, H. & Sarris, A. 2013. Perceptions of unfairness in the management of bullying complaints: exploring the consequences. *International Journal of Business Administration,* 4(4)**,** pp 16-25.

Lee, T. W., Mitchell, T. R., Holtom, B. C., McDaneil, L. S. & Hill, J. W. 1999. The unfolding model of voluntary turnover: A replication and extenxion. *Academy of Management Journal,* 42(4)**,** pp.

Leventhal, G. S. 1980. What should be done with equity theory? New approaches to the study of fairness in social relationships. *In:* Gergen, K., Greenberg, M. & Willis, R. (eds.) *Social exchange: Advances in theory and research.* New York: Plenum Press.

Leymann, H. 1996. The content and development of mobbing at work. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology,* 5(165-184.

Loi, R., Hang-Yue, N. & Foley, S. 2006. Linking employees' justice perceptions to organizational commitment and intention to leave: the mediating role of perceived organizational support. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology,* 79(1)**,** pp 101-120.

Moorman, R. H. 1991. Relationship between organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior: do fairness perceptions influence employee citizenship? *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 76(6)**,** pp 845-855.

Mourssi-Alfash, M. F. 2014. *Workplace bullying and its influence on the perception of oganizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior in higher education.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Capella University.

Nadiri, H. & Tanova, C. 2010. An investigation of the role of justice in turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior in hospitality industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management,* 29(1)**,** pp 33-41.

Niedhammer, I., Chastang, J. F., Sultan-Taïeb, H., Vermeylen, G. & Parent-Thirion, A. 2013. Psychosocial work factors and sickness absence in 31 countries in Europe. *The European Journal of Public Health,* 23(4)**,** pp 622-629.

Nielsen, M. B. & Einarsen, S. 2012. Outcomes of exposure to workplace bullying: A meta-analytic review. *Work and Stress,* 26(4)**,** pp 309-332.

Nielsen, M. B. & Einarsen, S. V. 2018. What we know, what we do not know, and what we should and could have known about workplace bullying: An overview of the literature and agenda for future research. *Aggression and Violent Behavior,* 42(71-83.

Nielsen, M. B., Matthiesen, S. B. & Einarsen, S. 2008. Sense of coherence as a protective mechanism among targets of workplace bullying. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology,* 13(2)**,** pp 128-136.

Nielsen, M. B., Notelaers, G. & Einarsen, S. 2011. Measuring exposure to workplace bullying. *In:* Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D. & Cooper, C. L. (eds.) *Bullying and harassment in the workplace.* 2nd ed. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

Nielsen, M. B., Tangen, T., Idsoe, T., Matthiesen, S. B. & Magerøy, N. 2015. Post-traumatic stress disorder as a consequence of bullying at work and at school. A literature review and meta-analysis. *Aggression and Violent Behavior,* 21(17-24.

North, F. M., Syme, S. L., Feeney, A., Shipley, M. & Marmot, M. 1996. Psychosocial work environment and sickness absence among British civil servants: the Whitehall II study. *American Journal of Public Health,* 86(3)**,** pp 332-340.

Notelaers, G. & Einarsen, S. 2013. The world turns at 33 and 45: Defining simple cutoff scores for the Negative Acts Questionnaire–Revised in a representative sample. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology,* 22(6)**,** pp 670-682.

Notelaers, G., Van der Heijden, B., Hoel, H. & Einarsen, S. 2019. Measuring bullying at work with the short-negative acts questionnaire: identification of targets and criterion validity. *Work and Stress,* 33(58-75.

Ortega, A., Christensen, K. B., Hogh, A. & Rugulies, R. 2011. One-year prospective study on the effect of workplace bullying on long-term sickness absence. *Journal of Nursing Management,* 19(6)**,** pp 752-759.

Parzefall, M.-R. & Salin, D. 2010. Perceptioins of and reactions to bullying: a social exchange perspective. *Human Relations,* 63(3)**,** pp 761-780.

Podsakoff, N. P., LePine, J. A. & LePine, M. A. 2007. Differential challenge stressor-hindrance stressor relationships with job attitudes, turnover intentions, turnover, and withdrawal behavior: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 92(2)**,** pp 438-454.

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y. & Podsakoff, N. P. 2003. Common method biases in behavioral research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 88(879-903.

Quine, L. 1999. Workplace bullying in NHS community trust: staff questionnaire survey. *BMJ,* 318(7178)**,** pp 228-232.

Rai, A. & Agarwal, U. A. 2018. A review of literature on mediators and moderators of workplace bullying. Agenda for future research. *Management Research Review*.

Reknes, I., Einarsen, S., Pallesen, S., Bjorvatn, B., Moen, B. E. & Magerøy, N. 2016. Exposure to bullying behaviors and subsequent symptoms of anxiety: the moderating role of individual coping style. *Industrial Health,* 54(5)**,** pp 421-432.

Reknes, I., Einarsen, S. V., Gjerstad, J. & Nielsen, M. B. 2019. Dispositional affect as a moderator in the relationship between role conflict and exposure to bullying behaviors. *Frontiers in Psychology*.

Rodríguez-Muñoz, A., Baillien, E., De Witte, H., Moreno-Jiménez, B. & Pastor, J. C. 2009. Cross-lagged relationships between workplace bullying, job satisfaction and engagement: Two longitudinal studies. *Work & Stress,* 23(3)**,** pp 225-243.

Schmitt, M. & Dörfel, M. 1999. Procedural injustice at work, justice sensitivity, job satisfaction and psychosomatic well-being. *European Journal of Social Psychology,* 29(443-453.

Sjöberg, A. & Sverke, M. 2000. The interactive effet of job involvment and organizational commitment on job turnover revisited: a note on the mediating role of turnover intentions. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology,* 41(247-252.

Spector, P. E. & Jex, S. M. 1998. Development of four self-report measures of job stressors and strain: Interpersonal conflict at work scale, organizational constraints scale, quantitative workload inventory, and physical symptoms inventory. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology,* 3(4)**,** pp 356-367.

Tepper, B. J. 2001. Health consequences of organization injustice: tests of main and interactive effects. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes,* 86(2)**,** pp 197-215.

Van den Bos, K. & Lind, E. A. 2002. Uncertainty management by means of fairness judgements. *In:* Zanna, M. P. (ed.) *Advances in experimental social psychology.* San Diego: CA: Academic Press.

Wilson, T. A. 2010. *Workplace aggression behaviors, organizational justice, and intention to leave among U.S. telecommunications workers.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Lynn University.

Wood, S., Braeken, J. & Niven, K. 2013. Discrimination and well-being in organizations: testing the differential power and organizational justice theory of workplace aggression. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 115(617-634.

Zahlquist, L., Hetland, J., Skogstad, A., Bakker, A. B. & Einarsen, S. V. (2019). Job Demands as Risk Factors of Exposure to Bullying at Work: The Moderating Role of Team- Level Conflict Management Climate. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, 1-11.

Zapf, D. & Einarsen, S. 2005. Mobbing at Work: Escalated Conflicts in Organizations. *In:* Fox, S. & Spector, P. E. (eds.) *Counterproductive work behavior: Investigations of actors and targets.* Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association.

Zapf, D. & Gross, C. 2001. Conflict escalation and coping with workplace bullying: A replication and extension. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology,* 10(4)**,** pp 497-522.