Exposure and reactions to workplace bullying: The role of prior victimization from bullying

Øystein Løvik Hoprekstad

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
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Scientific environment

This PhD project has been carried out at the Department of Psychosocial Science at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen, from 2016 to 2021. During the work with this thesis, I have been a member of the Bergen Bullying Research Group, also known as FALK (Forskningsgruppe for arbeidsmiljø, ledelse og konflikt). I have also benefited from being included in the larger project "Workplace bullying: From mechanisms and moderators to problem treatment", funded by the Research Council of Norway and the University of Bergen, Project number 250127. I have further been affiliated with the Graduate school of human interaction and growth (GHIG).

Professor Ståle Valvatne Einarsen, the head of FALK, has acted as main supervisor for this thesis, and Associate Professor Jørn Hetland, also a member of FALK, has acted as co-supervisor.

This thesis relies on data from three larger research projects, here referred to as the SSB study (Paper 1), the Norwegian Longitudinal Health Behaviour study (Paper 2), and the Bergen Sail Ship Study (paper 3)

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Sammendrag

Mobbing på arbeidsplassen har en rekke negative konsekvenser for den som blir utsatt for det. Det er derfor viktig å identifisere risikofaktorer for eksponering, så vel som sårbarhetsfaktorer som kan gjøre den negative innvirkningen av mobbing på arbeidstakeres helse og velvære større. En slik mulig risiko- og sårbarhetsfaktor er hvorvidt arbeidstakere selv har tidligere opplevelser med mobbing. Formålet med dette prosjektet var derfor å undersøke tidligere eksponering for mobbing som en risiko- og sårbarhetsfaktor i møte med eksponering for mobbehandlinger på jobb.

I den første studien undersøkte vi om arbeidstakere som tidligere hadde blitt utsatt for mobbing i skoleårene eller på arbeidsplassen hadde en økt påfølgende risiko for å bli utsatt for mobbing på arbeidsplassen. Vi analyserte spørreskjemadata fra et utvalg tilfeldig trukket fra det norske arbeidstakerregisteret, innhentet på to måletidspunkt med fem års mellomrom (N = 1228). Resultatene viste at tidligere mobbeeksponering hadde en indirekte positiv effekt på risikoen for å utvikle en opplevelse av å bli mobbet på arbeidsplassen på oppfølgingstidspunktet, via høyere opplevd eksponering for mobbehandlinger. I motsetning til våre forventinger, var sammenhengen mellom eksponering for mobbehandlinger og opplevelsen av å bli utsatt for mobbing ikke påvirket av hvorvidt arbeidstakeren hadde blitt mobbet tidligere i livet.

I den andre studien undersøkte vi om det å ha blitt mobbet på ungdomsskolen (13-15 år) predikerte eksponering for mobbehandlinger på jobb og depressive tendenser i voksen alder (30 år), og om det å ha blitt mobbet på ungdomsskolen styrket sammenhengen mellom eksponering for mobbehandlinger på arbeidsplassen og depressive tendenser. Vi brukte et prospektivt design som fulgte deltakerne over 17 år, med kartlegginger når respondentene var 13, 14, 15, 18 og 30 år gamle (N = 536). Resultatene viste at de som hadde blitt mobbet på ungdomsskolen opplevede noe høyere grad av eksponering for mobbehandlinger på jobb i en alder av 30 år. Det å ha blitt mobbet på ungdomsskolen var også knyttet til noe høyere nivåer av depressive tendenser ved 30 år, men bare i bivariate analyser. I motsetning til sårbarhetshypotesen, var sammenhengen mellom eksponering for mobbehandlinger

på jobb og depressive tendenser ved 30 år sterkere blant de som ikke hadde blitt mobbet på ungdomsskolen.

I den tredje studien undersøkte vi daglige variasjoner i eksponering for negative handlinger og nedstemthet. Vi undersøkte om sammenhengen mellom eksponering for negative handlinger og nedstemthet på samme dag som eksponeringen og påfølgende dager var sterkere blant de som hadde blitt utsatt for mobbing på arbeidsplassen i løpet av de siste seks månedene forut for datainnsamlingsperioden. Vi brukte et kvantitativt dagbokstudiedesign med et utvalg bestående av 110 sjøkrigsskolekadetter som ble bedt om å fylle ut spørreskjema daglig de første 33 dagene av et seilskutetokt (N = 2771 daglige observasjoner). I motsetning til sårbarhetshypotesen, var den positive sammenhengen mellom eksponering for negative handlinger og nedstemthet samme dag som eksponeringen ikke signifikant påvirket av tidligere mobbeeksponering. I tråd med sårbarhetshypotesen, var sammenhengen mellom eksponering for negative handlinger og nedstemthet en og to dager etter eksponeringen signifikant påvirket av tidligere mobbeeksponering, og var bare positiv og signifikant for de kadettene som hadde opplevelsen av at de hadde blitt mobbet de siste seks månedene forut for toktet.

Disse studiene har gitt ny kunnskap om hvilken rolle arbeidstakeres tidligere mobbeopplevelser spiller i utviklingen av og affektive reaksjoner på mobbing. Det mest konsistente funnet er at arbeidstakere som har blitt mobbet tidligere i livet har en økt risiko for å bli mobbet på arbeidsplassen. Samtidig var styrken på den økte risikoen beskjeden. Det å nylig ha blitt mobbet var knyttet til en redusert evne til å hente seg inn igjen i dagene etter å ha blitt utsatt for negative handlinger, mens det å ha blitt mobbet i ungdomsårene tilsynelatende beskyttet tidligere mobbeofre fra depressive tendenser når de ble utsatt for mobbehandlinger på arbeidsplassen. Dette kan tyde på at det å ha blitt mobbet tidligere ikke er en sårbarhetsfaktor i møte med mobbing på jobb, så lenge ens tidligere opplevelser ligger langt nok tilbake i tid. Samtidig kan de tilsynelatende motstridende resultatene tyde på at studiene bør replikeres i andre kontekster og med andre design for å fastslå hvorvidt og hvordan affektive reaksjoner på mobbing avhenger av ens tidligere mobbeeksponering.

Abstract

Workplace bullying has widespread negative outcomes for the targeted employee Consequently, it is important to identify risk factors for exposure as well as vulnerability factors that strengthen the negative impact of bullying on employees' health and well-being. One such potential risk and vulnerability factor is the extent to which employees' have prior experiences with bullying. Thus, the aim of the present thesis was to examine prior victimization from bullying as a risk and a vulnerability factor for later exposure to bullying behaviours at work.

In the first study, we examined whether employees with a history of victimization from bullying, either in school or at work, were at higher risk of later becoming victims of bullying at work. We used two-wave survey data with a five-year time-lag from a probability sample drawn from the Norwegian Central Employee Register (N = 1228). The results showed that prior victimization reported at baseline had an indirect positive effect on the likelihood of developing a perception of being a victim of workplace bullying at follow-up, via higher perceived exposure to bullying behaviours at work. In contrast to our hypothesis, the strength of the relationship between exposure to bullying behaviours at work and the perception of being a victim of workplace bullying was not affected by employees' prior victimization.

In the second study, we examined whether victimization from bullying experienced during junior high school (age 13-15) predicted both subsequent exposure to bullying behaviours at work and depressive tendencies (at the of age 30), and whether this prior victimization strengthened the concurrent relationship between exposure to bullying behaviours at work and self-reported depressive tendencies. Using a prospective design with a 17-year time-span surveying respondents at the age of 13, 14, 15, 18, and 30 (N = 536), the results showed that prior victimization was related to somewhat higher levels of exposure to bullying behaviours at work at age 30. Prior victimization was also related to higher levels of depressive tendencies at age 30, yet only in bivariate analyses. In contrast to our vulnerability hypothesis, the concurrent relationship between exposure to bullying behaviours at work and depressive

tendencies at age 30 was stronger among those who had not experienced exposure to bullying during junior high school.

In the third study, we applied a more short-term perspective and examined the relationships between exposure to negative social and depressed mood on the same day and on the days following the exposure, and tested whether these relationships were strengthened by having the perception of having been bullied during the past six months prior to the daily data collection period. We used a quantitative daily diary study design with a combined sample of 110 naval cadets who were asked to fill out a day-level questionnaire for the first 33 consecutive days of a sail ship voyage (N = 2771 daily measurements). In contrast to our vulnerability hypothesis, the positive relationship between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood on the same day as the exposure was not significantly affected by prior victimization. In support of the vulnerability hypothesis, the positive relationships between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood one and two days after the exposure was significantly affected by prior victimization, and were only significant among those who had been bullied during the six months prior to the daily diary study period.

Taken together, the findings in these studies provide new insights into the role that employees' prior victimization from bullying plays in the development of and affective reactions to workplace bullying. First, as the most consistent finding, employees with prior victimization experiences appear to have a somewhat higher risk of becoming bullied at work. Yet, the magnitude of this increased risk is modest. Second, while recent victimization from bullying was related to a reduced ability to recover from subsequent day-to-day negative social behaviours, victimization experienced during adolescence seemingly protected prior victims from depressive tendencies when facing bullying behaviours at work. This could indicate that prior victimization is not a vulnerability factor when facing later bullying situations at work if sufficient time has passed since the prior victimization. Still, given the seemingly contradictory findings, these studies should be replicated in other contexts and with other designs to further unravel whether and how current affective reactions to bullying behaviours at work depend upon an individual's prior experiences.

List of Publications

Paper 1

Hoprekstad, Ø. L., Hetland, J., & Einarsen, S. V. (2021). Exposure to negative acts at work and self-labelling as a victim of workplace bullying: The role of prior victimization from bullying. *Current Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-02453-5

Paper 2

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Paper 3

Hoprekstad, Ø. L., Hetland, J., Bakker, A. B., Olsen, O. K., Espevik, R., Wessel, M., & Einarsen, S. V. (2019). How long does it last? Prior victimization from workplace bullying moderates the relationship between daily exposure to negative acts and subsequent depressed mood. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 28(2), 164-178. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432x.2018.1564279

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1. INTRODUCTION

Workers globally spend an average of 43.1 hours per week on work activities, with as many as 36.1 % of workers exceeding 48 weekly work hours on a regular basis (the International Labour Office, 2018). As such, how these working hours are experienced has the potential to substantially impact the workers' health and well-being as well as their overall quality of life. Being an active part of the workforce is in itself associated with beneficial mental health outcomes (e.g., van der Noordt et al., 2014), and a work situation characterised by challenging job demands and ample job resources is likely to be experienced as meaningful and promote engagement and well-being (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). As such, employment is not only a source of income sorely needed to cater for the basic needs of the individual worker and their families, but also an important arena for self-fulfilment and health enrichment.

Precisely because of this value of employment, however, troublesome interpersonal relationships at work may have a severe impact on employees. In other words, the dependency inherent in the employment relationship makes negative social interactions at work potentially more potent than those experienced in other, non-work, settings. For instance, workers do not necessarily have the option to simply escape situations of interpersonal mistreatment at work, but must manage them within the rules and norms prescribed by their culture and the governing laws and regulations. In addition, merely leaving or escaping the situation is seldom an option, at least in the shorter run due one's financial dependency of one's employment. In some sense, then, employment in itself also puts employees in a vulnerable position. Recognizing this vulnerability inherent in the employment relationship, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted the Violence and Harassment Convention (2019), stating that everyone has the right to "a world of work without violence and harassment" and that such violence or harassment may constitute a human rights violation. The ILO Convention further emphasizes that harassment has detrimental effects on multiple levels, including the health and well-being of the

individual worker, their family and social environment, and the productivity of the organization. Against this backdrop, then, identifying when and why harassment at work occurs and when and for whom it is more and less detrimental remains important tasks.

In the present thesis, the main focus is on the omnipresent (León-Pérez et al., 2021) phenomenon of workplace bullying. As a specific type of interpersonal mistreatment or harassment, workplace bullying has great potential to harm targeted workers due to the systematic and repeated exposure to negative social treatment over time, in a power dynamic where the target finds it increasingly harder to defend against the mistreatment (e.g., Einarsen & Raknes, 1991; Leymann, 1987). By now, convincing empirical data demonstrate that targets of workplace bullying are worse off than non-targeted employees in terms of a range of outcomes, such as mental health problems like depression and anxiety (Boudrias et al., 2021), suicidal ideation (Leach et al., 2017) and the risk of expulsion from working life (Clausen et al., 2016; Glambek et al., 2014; Salin & Notelaers, 2017).

Because of these detrimental effects of bullying at work on those targeted, yet also on bystanders and the organisation itself, a fair share of attention has been paid towards identifying individual (e.g., O'Farrell et al., 2021; Zapf & Einarsen, 2020) and contextual risk factors (e.g., Li et al., 2018; Salin & Hoel, 2020; Trepanier et al., 2016) that may increase the likelihood of being exposed to bullying at work. Similarly, scholars have attempted to identify individual and contextual factors that may serve as protecting factors that attenuate the relationship between the exposure and its detrimental outcomes or vulnerability factors that may strengthen the observed detrimental impact of bullying on its targets (see Nielsen, Mikkelsen, et al., 2020). Yet, despite an ever-growing literature advancing our understanding of the workplace bullying phenomenon, several issues remain underexplored, particularly regarding the role of temporality (Cole et al., 2016), as exposure to bullying is an ongoing process over time with future outcomes as well as prior risk factors.

One such underexplored temporality issue is the potential role of employees' prior life experiences with bullying when facing new bullying situations. The lay understanding that we all "carry different baggage" in terms of prior life experiences that may influence how we perceive, interpret, act, and react facing various situations in life seems to be reasonably widely accepted. In keeping with this, prior victimization from bullying has been proposed as a potential risk and vulnerability factor in conceptual models of workplace bullying (e.g., S. V. Einarsen et al., 2020; Samnani & Singh, 2016). If these propositions are correct, it may very well be the case that victims of bullying experience a double penalty – they may risk both being adversely affected by their initial victimization, and subsequently be at greater risk of once again becoming victims later in life as well as being sensitized towards the detrimental impact of such negative social treatment when facing new situations. These propositions have, however, to a little extent been empirically examined in rigorous research designs, leaving practitioners, employers, counsellors, and policymakers with little knowledge about the incidence of this phenomenon and its potential implications for prevention, interventions, and treatment.

Accordingly, the main objective of this thesis is to examine whether prior experiences with victimization from bullying is a risk and vulnerability factor for later exposure to bullying behaviours at work. As such, the main objective is twofold. First, I will examine the extent to which prior victimization from bullying is a risk factor for later exposure to bullying behaviours at work and the perception of being bullied at work. Second, I will test whether prior victimization strengthens the relationship between current exposure to bullying behaviours at work and one of its most rigorously documented outcomes, namely depressed mood (Boudrias et al., 2021; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018; Verkuil et al., 2015). By doing so, I believe that this thesis adds to the existing scientific literature on workplace bullying by explicitly taking a temporal perspective that has been far apart in existing studies in the broader literature on workplace interpersonal mistreatment (Cole et al., 2016), in this instance by examining the role of prior victimization from bullying in relation to new experiences of bullying.

The main focus of this thesis is on bullying encountered by adult employees in a workplace setting. However, given the objective of examining the potential role of prior victimization from bullying for understanding employees' current experiences of negative social behaviours at work, I will also include relevant theoretical notions and empirical findings from research on bullying among children and adolescents from a school context. After all, adult employees have once been school pupils, and while the research traditions on workplace bullying and bullying in school have existed in parallel with relatively little collaboration across contexts, both traditions usually rely on the same set of assumptions about the defining features of the bullying concept (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Olweus, 1993). Importantly, as pointed out in one of the few studies examining the impact of bullying across contexts and age-groups (Nielsen, Tangen, et al., 2015), systematic exposure to negative social behaviours over time that are difficult to defend against seems to be potentially traumatic for targets both in school and at workplaces. As such, while there may be some differences in the aetiology and manifestations of bullying across contexts, the patterns emerging in the empirical evidence on mental health outcomes of exposure are strikingly similar (e.g., Reijntjes et al., 2010; Verkuil et al., 2015). Therefore, I include employees' prior victimization from bullying both from their school years as children or adolescents and at the workplace as adults when testing the role of prior victimization in understanding current exposure, in keeping with recent suggestions to have a broader perspective on bullying by integrating experiences across contexts (Boudrias et al., 2021).

The thesis is based on three studies reported in three published papers. In the first study, we use a two-wave design with a probability sample drawn from the Norwegian workforce. This enables us to examine whether prior victimization from bullying in school or at work both a) increases the likelihood of becoming a victim of bullying at follow-up five years later, and b) strengthens the concurrent relationship between exposure to negative acts and the perception of being a victim of bullying. In the second study, we use a 17-year prospective study design to test whether experiences of victimization from bullying during junior high school is a risk factor

for exposure to negative acts at work at age 30, and whether such prior victimization experiences strengthens the concurrent relationship between exposure to negative acts at work and depressive tendencies. Finally, in the third study, we rely on data from a quantitative daily diary study to examine the relationship between daily fluctuations in exposure to negative acts and same-day and next-days depressed mood, and test whether having a perception of having been bullied during the six months preceding the diary study period strengthens these day-level relationships. As such, the studies in this thesis vary substantially in the operationalization of employees' prior victimization, from very recent experiences at work (paper 3) to experiences in school that may span several decades back (paper 1). Moreover, they examine both the notion of risk of revictimization (paper 1 and 2) and increased vulnerability (paper 2 and 3) following prior victimization experiences. In this synopsis, I summarise and integrate the background for and findings from these three studies, in an attempt to answer the question of what role employees' prior victimization from bullying plays for their experiences of new bullying situations at work.

The remainder of this introduction is structured as follows. First, I will present a brief historical overview of the workplace bullying research tradition, followed by an elaboration on the conceptual properties of the bullying phenomenon. Next, I will address measurement issues and how these relate to the conceptual properties of bullying, before I briefly summarize what we know about the prevalence of workplace bullying. Then, I will give a brief overview of main antecedents and outcomes of exposure to bullying at work that have been identified in the literature. Next, I will turn the attention towards theories and models that elucidate how and why employees' prior victimization experiences may act as a risk and vulnerability factor for later exposure to bullying behaviours at work, and provide an overview of existing relevant empirical findings. Against this backdrop, I will, finally, conclude the introduction by laying out the aims of this thesis and how they are tested in the three papers.

1.1 The concept of bullying

1.1.1 A brief historical overview

The first scholarly works on what we now recognize as the concept of bullying saw the light of day about half a century ago, and the Nordic countries were well represented. In 1972, the Swedish physician Peter-Paul Heinemann published the book “Mobbning: gruppvåld bland barn och vuxna” (Heinemann, 1972), which mainly focused on case studies and social psychology explanations for understanding the occurrence of what he called mobbing among children, a concept used for bullying in the Scandinavian language as well as in some continental countries in Europa. Heinemann emphasized the role of the group of peers, and mostly described processes where the whole group ganged up on a single target. Around the same time, the late Professor Dan Olweus carried out some of his many large-scale survey studies on bullying among children and adolescents in Sweden and Norway. In contrast to Heinemann (1972), Olweus (1978) emphasized that the “mob” characteristic was not always evident in school bullying situations. As such, he argued that bullying was not always collective aggression from a mob or large group, and that the perpetrators could be smaller groups or even single individuals. Later, Olweus refined his understanding of the bullying concept and offered what is arguably generally regarded as the most influential definition of bullying (Olweus, 1992). Olweus’ work was on children and adolescents in a school setting, although he mentioned in passing that bullying may also occur among adults.

In the US, the American psychiatrist Carroll Brodsky published “The harassed worker” in 1976, detailing the various ways adult workers who claimed workers’ compensation had undergone harassment at work (Brodsky, 1976). Although Brodsky’s book has now become a highly cited “classic” for workplace bullying researchers, it did not attract much attention until the mid-1990s (e.g., Einarsen et al., 1994; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Leymann, 1996; Niedl, 1996). In Norway, Svein M. Kile published his book on “health endangering leadership” (1990), where he, based on interviews and document analyses, described different forms of harassment that employees may face from their leaders, the stages of these negative processes,

and the perceived impact on the victims' health and well-being. Around the same time, the German-born Swedish psychologist Heinz Leymann (1987, 1990) documented his work on bullying, or "mobbing", at work, provided one of the first definitions of the phenomenon, and described the different stages of bullying according to his own observations as a labour inspector in the Swedish Work Environment Authorities. Around the same time, Thylefors (1987) described how bullying at work could occur through "scape-goating" processes. Since then, studies on workplace bullying emerged in several northern European countries (e.g., Björkqvist et al., 1994; Einarsen & Raknes, 1991; Einarsen et al., 1994; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Vartia, 1996; Zapf et al., 1996), with a hallmark special issue devoted to workplace bullying in the European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology in 1996 (Zapf & Leymann, 1996). In the following years, the empirical literature on workplace bullying has grown at an ever-increasing rate, with the initial research mostly focused on issues such as the nature and prevalence of the phenomenon as well as its precursor and outcomes, followed by an increased attention to mechanisms and boundary conditions, employing ever more advanced research designs in recent years (Neall & Tuckey, 2014; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018).

1.1.2 Defining bullying

Leymann (1990, p. 120) offered an elaboration of what he termed mobbing in working life, suggesting that it should be understood as "hostile and unethical communication which is directed in a systematic way by one or a number of persons mainly toward one individual". Importantly, he also noted that the actions occur on a regular basis ("almost every day") and over a long period of time ("at least for six months"), and that it is precisely due to this repeated exposure over time that the targets are at risk of developing negative health outcomes (Leymann, 1990). He further suggested that mobbing is different from more transient and temporary conflicts, and also implied that a conflict may turn into mobbing when one party becomes the underdog, although he did not formulate this explicitly.

For the purpose of this thesis, bullying is defined as when a person is repeatedly exposed to negative social behaviours over time, and due to a pre-existing or evolving

perceived power imbalance has difficulties defending against the negative behaviours (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Olweus, 1992). Whereas a range of other definitions have been proposed (for an extensive overview, see Keashly et al., 2020; Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021), the aforementioned definition incorporates most of the aspects that workplace bullying researchers today tend to agree upon, and it is arguably the one that best unites the different attempts to define the concept of bullying in schools and at work. In the context of workplace bullying, the above definition has also been elaborated and refined over the years, with the following definition being widely adopted, at least among European researchers:

> *Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work. In order for the label bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process it has to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g. weekly) and over a period of time (e.g. about six months). Bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted may end up in an inferior position becoming the target of systematic negative social acts. A conflict cannot be called bullying if the incident is an isolated event or if two parties of approximately equal "strength" are in conflict* (S. V. Einarsen et al., 2020, p. 26).

Following the above definitions, it becomes clear that there are certain key characteristics that define bullying. First, bullying always entails exposure to negative social behaviours. These may be direct and overt, such as open ridicule and humiliation, or be more indirect and subtle acts, such as gossip and social exclusion (e.g., Einarsen et al., 2009). In a workplace setting, several other typologies or categories of bullying behaviours have been suggested based on various qualitative observations as well as factor analytical approaches to quantitative data. For instance, Leymann (1996, p. 170) suggested that bullying behaviours could be organized according to whether they affected the victim's (1) possibilities to communicate (e.g., being silenced and verbally threatened), (2) possibilities to maintain social relationships (e.g., being isolated and excluded), (3) possibilities to maintain their personal reputation (e.g., gossip and ridicule), (4) occupational situation (e.g., given

no or meaningless work tasks), or (5) physical health (e.g., set do to physically dangerous tasks, being threatened or attacked). Arriving at somewhat comparable categories after doing a principal component analysis on the items in the Negative Acts Questionnaire, Einarsen and Raknes (1997) distinguished between personal derogation, work related harassment, and social exclusion. Later, Einarsen et al. (2009) arrived at a three-factor solution distinguishing between work related, person related, and physically intimidating negative behaviours. Still, as pointed out by Notelaers, Van der Heijden, Hoel, et al. (2018), although different types of negative social behaviours exist in bulling cases, the resulting factors are very highly correlated and as such do not suggest that there are in fact different kinds of bullying. As evident by the above examples, what these acts have in common is that they have the potential to inflict harm on the targeted workers, are unwanted and resented by the recipient, often in breach with norms of decent and respectful treatment of others, and are of a mainly psychological as opposed to physical nature (S. V. Einarsen et al., 2020).

Second, there appears to be broad agreement that single incidents of exposure to such negative social behaviours are not sufficient for the label “bullying” to be applied to the situation. Leymann (1990) noted that the negative behaviours involved in bullying (or “mobbing”) cases may be relatively frequent in normal social interactions, yet gain their detrimental impact due to the behaviours being repeated systematically over time. As such, bullying is characterised by repeated exposure to negative, unwanted, and illegitimate behaviours over time. Precisely because bullying is both an episodic and a chronic stressor, its potential detrimental impact is larger than most other work stressors (Schutte et al., 2014). Yet, it is evident that certain acts may have far-reaching consequences that continue to impact the target over time, despite the acts themselves being carried out in isolation (e.g., being assigned an office away from anyone else, depriving the employee of the possibility to maintain meaningful social relationships). As a main rule, however, repeated exposure remains a key characteristic of bullying.

Third, it is clear that the early definitions of bullying that laid the foundation for later bullying research (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Olweus, 1992) both emphasized that a conflict between equally "strong" parties where both are able to defend and retaliate against the negative behaviours they are exposed to, does not fall under the category of bullying. That is, bullying is also characterized by a perceived inability to defend against the negative behaviours. This perceived power imbalance can result from structural and hierarchical positions, be based on the shared history of the parties, or result from any other factors that lead the target to experience inferiority and an inability to defend in the situation. While most studies on workplace bullying emphasize power imbalance or inability to defend in their conceptualization, many of these studies do not employ measures that explicitly measure power imbalance. Still, it has been suggested that high levels of escalation with repeated exposure over long time is in itself evidence of an inability to defend against the negative acts, with the logic being that no employee would accept or tolerate high levels of exposure to negative behaviours if they were in a position to stop the mistreatment (Nielsen, Gjerstad, et al., 2017). Yet, a perceived inability to defend or a perceived power difference seems to be a widely agreed upon characteristic of bullying, although not all operationalizations of the concept explicitly capture this aspect of the phenomenon (Nielsen, Notelaers, et al., 2020; Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021).

In addition, bullying, at least in a workplace setting, has often been conceptualized as a gradually evolving process, as opposed to a dichotomous either-or phenomenon (e.g., Einarsen, 1999a). For instance, Leymann (1996) described a process wherein some sort of critical incident, typically an interpersonal conflict that has been left unresolved, triggers subsequent mobbing and stigmatization. Leymann (1996) noted that the behaviours involved are not necessarily indicative of aggression in isolation and in "normal interaction", yet become increasingly stigmatizing and damaging as the frequency and duration of the exposure increases. Several empirical examinations support the notion that bullying can be seen as a process that develops over time, that may or may not have its origin in an interpersonal conflict (Baillien et al., 2016; Baillien et al., 2009; Notelaers, Van der Heijden, Guenter, et al., 2018; Reknes et al.,

2021; Ågotnes et al., 2018). It also seems like different patterns of exposure may occur at different stages of escalation (Rosander & Blomberg, 2019). In keeping with the notion of bullying as a process, then, studies purportedly investigating bullying may do so by focussing on different stages of the process, from the very onset of negative social behaviours from day to day (e.g., Tremmel & Sonnentag, 2017; Zhou et al., 2015; Ågotnes et al., 2020) to the long-term impact of systematic and long-term victimization (Boudrias et al., 2021; Nielsen, Tangen, et al., 2015).

Intentionality is also a debated issue when it comes to bullying, at least in a workplace setting. Interestingly, Leymann (1996, p. 171) argued that the common denominator driving enacted bullying behaviours is an intent to punish or "get at a person". As such, Leymann regarded intent to harm as a key characteristic of the bullying phenomenon. This also coincides with widely accepted conceptualizations of bullying among children and adolescents in a school setting, where intention to harm is emphasized in the elaboration of the definition (Olweus, 1992). In the workplace bullying literature, however, there seems to be a divide largely based on geographical origin. In the North American tradition, bullying is often conceptualized as being characterised by high intention to harm and high intensity (e.g., Nixon et al., 2021). In the European tradition, however, scholars tend to disregard intentionality as a defining characteristic of workplace bullying (S. V. Einarsen et al., 2020). The latter stance seems to be both pragmatic and a result of taking a target as opposed to a perpetrator perspective. After all, the intentions of an alleged perpetrator cannot be directly measured after the behaviours have been enacted, and it may be difficult to gather enough evidence to boldly infer intentionality on behalf of the perpetrator. Another argument is that systematic exposure to mistreatment at work that one has difficulties defending against should be considered bullying regardless of whether the alleged perpetrator claims they had an intention to harm the target. As such, reconciliation between the proponents and opponents of including intentionality in the definition of bullying could perhaps be fostered by considering repeated and systematic exposure towards a single employee as a proxy for intentionality. This is similar to the idea that intent does not need to be assessed by asking the alleged perpetrator, but can rather be inferred after analysing the context and reasonably

assuming that the alleged perpetrator "knows or understands that the exerted behaviour is or will be perceived as unpleasant and maybe distressing or harmful by the targeted person" (Olweus, 2013, p. 757). It is also apparent that intention may be hard to infer in cases where there is not a single bully, but rather several perpetrators of negative acts whose behaviours collectively produce the target's experience of being bullied, as seems to be the case in roughly half of bullying cases at work (Zapf et al., 2020). These disagreements notwithstanding, from a target or victim perspective, it remains relatively uncontroversial that *perceived* intentionality is likely to arise as the negative treatment intensifies, and that this perceived intention boosts the detrimental impact of the negative social behaviours on the target.

1.1.3 Construct similarities and overlap

Workplace bullying is far from the only term applied to describe and understand interpersonal mistreatment experienced by employees. Accordingly, several constructs partially overlap and share similarities with the bullying construct as applied in the European tradition. Among some of the terms that have been used to emphasize different aspects and characteristics of such mistreatment are incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), social undermining (Duffy et al., 2002), abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), victimization (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000), petty tyranny (Ashforth, 1997), mobbing (Leymann, 1987), harassment (Brodsky, 1976), and bullying (Einarsen et al., 1994). Critique has been raised that there is an unnecessary degree of construct proliferation in workplace mistreatment research (Hershcovis, 2011), where the different concepts purportedly are superfluous and just tap into an underlying experience of mistreatment at work. Similarly, concerns have been raised that bullying research has been affected by the process of "concept creep" (Haslam, 2016, p. 2), wherein semantic changes in conceptualizations leads to the inclusion of a broader range of phenomena than originally contained in a construct. Moreover, in addition to the conceptual overlap, the empirical overlap can vary from small to substantial (e.g., Nixon et al., 2021) depending on the conceptualization and measurement approach in the specific studies.

Conceptually, however, workplace bullying tends to be defined more stringently than other related constructs. For instance, incivility is defined as "low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457). The incivility construct was introduced to capture low-intensity mistreatment at work that may escalate into more intense and overtly aggressive behaviours, in a response to what the authors perceived to be a lack of focus on the less overt and intense forms of mistreatment (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Compared to bullying, then, the conceptualization of incivility points toward less intense situations, explicitly ruling out behaviours with intent to harm and not including any requirements that the behaviours are repeated over time or that a perceived power distance exists. Still, it is interesting to note that an early and a widely used tool for assessing incivility (Cortina et al., 2001) was explicitly based, in part, on the most widely used tool for assessing exposure to bullying behaviours (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997), which makes it easy to understand why the scales in their continuous form may share a substantial amount of variance. When explicitly modelling the conceptual properties of incivility and bullying, however, bullying clearly stands out as a more detrimental stressor (Nixon et al., 2021). While it is outside of the scope of this thesis to provide a more detailed elaboration, others have thoroughly documented the similarities and differences between workplace bullying and a wide range of related constructs, showing that workplace bullying is indeed a distinct concept from concepts such as interpersonal conflicts and aggression (S. V. Einarsen et al., 2020; Keashly et al., 2020; Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021), with incivility overlapping with early bullying phases and low intensity exposure to bullying behaviours (Nixon et al., 2021).

1.2 Measuring workplace bullying

As with any construct, there are several possible research approaches for studying and measuring workplace bullying. Below, I outline some of these, and especially discuss the target perspective and why it is the predominant approach in workplace

bullying research, before I briefly summarize what we know about the prevalence of workplace bullying worldwide.

Several of the first scholarly works on what we now know as workplace bullying were largely qualitative in nature, and focused on the nature of the phenomenon as it was experienced by the targets (e.g., Brodsky, 1976; Leymann, 1990, 1996). Over the years, a range of qualitative inquiries into the lived experience of workplace bullying victims have been published, generating new insights about issues such as victims' perception of the aetiology of bullying and their attempts of coping during and after their bullying exposure (e.g., Baillien et al., 2009; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2012; D'Cruz et al., 2016; Lewis, 2006; Van Heugten, 2013). Some have even carried out ethnographic field studies spanning several months to elucidate the complex processes through which bullying develops (Mortensen & Baarts, 2018). Still, qualitative studies make up a relatively small proportion of the workplace bullying literature, perhaps due to the limited generalizability and time-consuming nature of such designs.

1.2.1 A target perspective on workplace bullying

Most studies on workplace bullying have taken a quantitative approach to the issue to establish its prevalence, precursors, and outcomes. Being a cost-effective method that enables generalizations, provided that sufficient sampling considerations have been made, the cross-sectional survey design has dominated the bullying research field (Neall & Tuckey, 2014). Recent years have also seen an increase also in longitudinal studies (Boudrias et al., 2021) and experience sampling designs such as weekly or daily quantitative diary designs (e.g., Rodriguez-Munoz et al., 2020; Rodriguez et al., 2017; Ågotnes et al., 2020). As a main rule, these studies have studied workplace bullying from the perspective of the target, by asking the respondents to report on their own exposure to negative behaviours and their potential perceptions of victimization. The validity of this reliance on self-reports from a target perspective can naturally be challenged. A lack of other-reports entails that the research is largely based on categorisations of targets that are not verified by colleagues or others in the organisation, meaning that there is no certain way of determining the extent to which

the “objective” situation overlaps with the situation as it is perceived by the target and reported in the surveys (Nielsen, Notelaers, et al., 2020). Moreover, single-source reports entail a risk of artificially inflated relationships between the concepts assessed by the same person (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Nevertheless, despite the appealing idea of having a triangulation and “verification” of the target’s experiences, I would argue that self-reports from a target perspective have some especially desirable qualities in the context of measuring workplace bullying. For instance, other-reports require a fair amount of perspective-taking abilities on the side of the rater for the ratings to be valid. Other-reports also have the natural downside that far from all workers have peers that observe them throughout their whole workday. Therefore, peer reports of victimization is likely an approach that underestimates the prevalence of the problem, simply because the rater has an insufficient number of observations. Thus, it might be a too strict of a demand to require a “validation” of the target status from others than the focal employee, given that these peers likely do not have access to frequent and rich enough observations to properly assess whether the focal individual has been exposed to bullying. In addition, bullying behaviours at work are often subtle and indirect, especially in early stages of escalation, meaning that they might be difficult for observers to notice. Moreover, the theoretical conceptualisation of bullying contains elements that are inherently subjective, such as a perceived power distance or inability to defend oneself in the situation. Considering the subjective nature of the bullying phenomenon, Einarsen (2000, p. 398) even suggested that a “subjective measurement of exposure to bullying may be the only “objective” measure of bullying at work”. Indeed, even in the context of bullying in schools, where studies have often used ratings from classmates, teachers and parents, the usefulness of self-reports and the many methodological issues related to other-reports have been emphasized (Olweus, 2013; Solberg et al., 2007). Taken together, then, the benefits of using a self-report target perspective to assess workplace bullying seem to outweigh the disadvantages, at least in a research setting where the aim is to establish the prevalence, precursors and outcomes of such employee experiences of bullying. For other purposes, as in formal investigations of bullying complaints, the need for also collecting information

from witnesses, alleged perpetrators and to extract other documentation is naturally greater (Nielsen, Notelaers, et al., 2020). While there are studies relying on perceptions of observers and bystanders (Coyne et al., 2017; Einarsen et al., 1994; Nielsen et al., 2021), by far most studies use targets' self-report as their main source of data.

1.2.2 The self-labelling method

When measuring workplace bullying in surveys from a target perspective, studies typically rely on the self-labelling method or the behavioural experience method, either in isolation or in combination (Nielsen, Notelaers, et al., 2020). The self-labelling method entails explicitly asking respondents to state whether and how often they consider that they have been bullied at work, typically with reference to the last six months. As a result, the self-labelling approach has high face validity, and captures the subjective experience of being a victim of bullying at work. A potential issue with this approach, however, is the varying overlap between lay definitions and scholarly definitions of bullying (Saunders et al., 2007). One potential remedy for this issue is to present the respondents with a definition of bullying prior to asking for their evaluation of whether they have been bullied. Based on the approach taken in research on bullying in schools (Olweus, 1992; Solberg & Olweus, 2003), such a single-item self-labelling measure with a preceding definition (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996) has been used extensively in workplace bullying research. When a definition is provided, the single-item self-labelling measure explicitly taps into the key characteristics of the bullying construct, and as such is a cost-efficient and valid measure of victimization from bullying. Nevertheless, there are also some potential issues with this approach. Despite supplying the respondents with the same definition, employees may still differ in their cognitive appraisal of whether or not a situation qualifies as bullying (Salin, 2001). For instance, self-labelling as a victim of bullying may be associated with feelings of shame (Lewis, 2004), and the very notion of labelling as a victim may threaten the individual's basic assumptions about themselves and the benevolence of others and the world (Out, 2005). Consequently, solely relying on the self-labelling method also entails a risk of underestimating the prevalence of workplace bullying (Nielsen et al., 2010; Nielsen et al., 2009).

Moreover, the self-labelling method does not provide any information about the nature of the behaviours that the employee is exposed to. Therefore, also using other measures may be necessary to capture the full width of the bullying phenomenon.

1.2.3 The behaviorual experience method

The behavioural experience method entails presenting respondents with a predefined list of negative social behaviours and asking them to rate the frequency by which they have been exposed to these behaviours during a given timeframe, typically the last six months. As such, the respondents report on their perceived exposure to specific negative acts, without explicitly assessing whether they perceive that they have been bullied or not. Several scales have used the behavioural experience method, such as the Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terror (LIPT; Leymann, 1990, in Leymann, 1990), the Workplace Harassment Scale (WHS; Björkqvist, Österman & Hjelt-Bäck, 1992, in Björkqvist et al., 1994), and the Interpersonal Workplace Events Scale (Keashly et al., 1994). By far the most widely used scale, however, is the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R; Einarsen et al., 2009), a revised version of the original Negative Acts Questionnaire which was developed based on literature reviews and interviews with victims of severe workplace bullying (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997). Consisting of 22 items, the NAQ-R includes negative social behaviours that can be categorized as work-related (e.g., “excessive monitoring of your work”, “someone withholding information that effects your performance”), person-related (e.g., “being ignored or excluded”, “being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work”), or physically intimidating (e.g., “being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger; Einarsen et al., 2009, p. 32). Shorter versions of the questionnaire have also been used successfully in studies, such as the validated 9-item SNAQ that includes fewer of the work-related behaviours, as these have been criticised for being less suited as indicators of bullying (Notelaers, Van der Heijden, Hoel, et al., 2018). The term bullying is not mentioned in the NAQ-R, and so the respondents merely assess their frequency of perceived exposure to the negative social behaviours typical for bullying scenarios yet without any judgements as to whether they consider that they have been a victim of bullying.

One of the criticisms raised against the behavioural experience method is that it does not explicitly capture the perceived power imbalance that many agree is part of what defines workplace bullying. That is, it can be claimed that it may not be the optimal operationalization of our theoretical construct of workplace bullying (Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021). Paradoxically, the attempts to cover a wide range of behaviours may also pose a threat to content validity and give a "diluted" operational definition that does not necessarily fit all that well with the conceptual definitions (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Olweus, 1992) that tend to highlight the highly escalated end-stages.

This backdrop is the reason for relying on terms such as "exposure to negative acts" or "exposure to negative social acts" when referring to findings obtained using the behavioural experience method throughout this thesis, as opposed to simply referring to "exposure to bullying". The intention of doing so is to emphasize that while these findings are about the constituents of a bullying situation, they do not necessarily always exclusively capture the full-blown cases that align most clearly with the most stringent conceptual definitions of bullying. Still, it should also be noted that this remedy is not considered that fruitful by all (Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021).

The potential validity issues notwithstanding, the behavioural experience method has several compelling properties. For instance, the experience method can be argued to provide a more "objective" and detailed picture than the self-labelling method, consequently introducing less bias into the prevalence estimates. Moreover, if we were to only consider instances where the targeted employee has come to the realization that what they are experiencing is bullying, we may very well find that we are often "late to the party" and only able to identify the most extreme and escalated bullying cases, and not those cases that may be the start of a victimization process or those that are characterized by behaviours that, in isolation, are seemingly trivial. Thus, including a broad range of negative social behaviours typical for bullying situations also allows researchers to study patterns of exposure to different negative behaviours in our attempts to capture the whole width of the workplace bullying phenomenon (e.g., Notelaers et al., 2006; Rosander & Blomberg, 2019). In addition,

as the self-labelling method is more likely to capture the final stages of a victimization process, the behavioural experience method seems to be a prerequisite for studying bullying from the perspective of "shortitudinal" designs such as weekly or daily quantitative diary approaches (e.g., Ågotnes et al., 2020) that allow for exploration of the day-to-day dynamics. In other words, the behavioural experience method allows researchers to also tap into the episodic nature of the bullying phenomenon.

In the present thesis, I rely on both the self-labelling method and the behavioural experience method, in order to capture different aspects of the bullying phenomenon. Moreover, the studies included in this thesis vary substantially in their temporal focus. That is, the studies range from examining day-to-day variations in perceived exposure to negative social behaviours, that may or may not be part of an overarching bullying situation, to studying bullying as an end-state characterized by a perception of having been systematically victimized over time. As such, the studies cover a large spectrum of experiences, from day-to-day events that in the mildest form could be perceived as daily hassles (paper 3), via a continuum from not exposed to somewhat exposed to negative behaviours at work (paper 2), to severe victimization from bullying as an end-state (paper 1). In addition, the three studies in this thesis all examine a variant of the issue of whether having prior victimization experiences (i.e., prior experiences of being the target of repeated and systematic mistreatment with a perceived power imbalance, similar to bullying as an end-state) impacts the risk of future exposure or vulnerability. As such, in all the three studies, we combine the self-labelling approach, to tap into perceived prior victimization, and the behavioural experience approach, to tap into perceived current exposure.

1.2.4 Targets vs. victims

As the two methods cover somewhat different aspects of the bullying phenomenon, the decision of whether to use a self-labelling victimization item or a behavioural experience checklist partly depends on the aim of the study. If the individual's own appraisal of whether they are being bullied at work is of interest, the self-labelling method is naturally required. Nielsen et al. (2009) proposed that the self-labelling

method may be the most appropriate way to identify a *victim* of bullying, whereas the behavioural experience method can be used as a measure of whether an employee is a *target* of systematic bullying behaviours. As such, being a *target* of bullying entails satisfying the criteria of systematic exposure to negative and unwanted social acts, whereas being a victim also entails having the perception of being victimized by bullying, leading to the conclusion that all victims are targets, but not all targets are victims (Nielsen, Notelaers, et al., 2020). Despite recommendations to employ both methods when studying workplace bullying in order to capture the different aspects of the phenomenon that they tap into (Nielsen et al., 2010), recent reviews indicate that this is rarely done in practice, with very few studies using both methods and about 75 % of studies relying solely on the behavioural experience method (Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021). The distinction between self-labelled victimization as assessed using the self-labelling method and perceived exposure to negative social acts as assessed using the behavioural experience method is also important for the papers in this thesis, as will be elaborated on later.

1.3 The prevalence of bullying

Recent estimates suggest that 34 % of employees worldwide experience some form of workplace mistreatment (Dhanani et al., 2021). For bullying specifically, a prevalence of 16 % was estimated based on data from 178 598 employees across 134 samples, with the prevalence reduced to 14 % when only selecting studies that inquired about experience the last six months (Dhanani et al., 2021). Moreover, the estimated prevalence of bullying was substantially lower in studies using a self-labelling method (12 %) than in those using the behavioural experience method (28 %). These numbers correspond well with a prior meta-analysis from Nielsen et al. (2010), who estimated a global prevalence rate of 14.6 % based on 130 973 respondents across 86 samples, and also found that prevalence estimates were higher using the behavioural experience method (14.8 %) than for the self-labelling method with a preceding definition (11.3 %). Samples using the self-labelling method without a preceding definition, however, produced more liberal prevalence estimates (18.1

%), illustrating the need to include the definition to increase the validity of self-labelling item as a measure of bullying as conceptually operationalized (Nielsen et al., 2010). A more recent meta-analysis based on European studies published between 2001 and 2019 produced a comparable pattern of results, albeit with slightly lower estimates, with an estimated prevalence of 6.0 % for studies using the self-labelling method with a definition, and 11.2 % using the behavioural experience method (Zapf et al., 2020).

Naturally, the criteria used also impact the prevalence estimate when using the behavioural experience method. For instance, the prevalence estimates cited above were based on the criteria of at least weekly exposure to at least one negative behaviour during the last six months (Leymann, 1996). Comparing this to a stricter threshold of two negative behaviours during the last six months (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001) yielded estimates of the prevalence in Norway of 14.3 % and 6.2 %, respectively (Nielsen et al., 2009). More nuanced approaches, such as latent class cluster (LCC) modelling, has also been successfully applied to determine the number of underlying groups based on their pattern and intensities of exposure to negative acts, providing a very clear illustration that bullying is not an either-or phenomenon (e.g., Einarsen et al., 2009; Notelaers et al., 2006; Notelaers, Van der Heijden, Hoel, et al., 2018).

The prevalence of workplace bullying seems to vary across the globe. Northern European countries, where workplace bullying research caught on relatively early compared to other countries, seem to have a slightly lower prevalence compared to the rest of the world. For instance, based on the self-labelling method with a preceding definition, prevalence was substantially lower in Scandinavia (4.6 %) compared to other European countries (13.6 %) and non-European countries (19.8 %; Nielsen et al., 2010). Differences in prevalence across the globe have in part been explained by contextual factors such as the interaction between climatic demands and the country's wealth (Van de Vliert et al., 2013) and the extent to which the country's legal system promotes and protects workers' rights (Dhanani et al., 2021).

Given the aim in this thesis of examining the role of prior victimization, it is also useful to know something about the prevalence of bullying in schools, to get some indication of the proportion of employees that do in fact have childhood and adolescent life experiences of victimization from bullying. In these studies, global self-labelling items with a preceding definition tend to be the most frequently used method for prevalence estimation. Across the participating countries in the Health Behaviour in School aged Children (HBSC) study, 11 % of 8-year and 11-year olds, and 8 % of 15-year olds reported that they had been bullied at least twice in the past couple of months in the 2017/2018 version of the survey (Inchley et al., 2020). Moreover, in many of these countries, the prevalence of bullying among children and adolescents has been even higher in the past (Cosma et al., 2020). Thus, a substantial proportion of adult workers can be expected to have prior experiences of being a victim of bullying from their school years. Indeed, 32.9 % of the respondents in a sample of adult British workers retrospectively reported that they had been bullied in school (Smith et al., 2003). Such victimization from bullying during the school years has been shown to have a long-term detrimental impact on later health and functioning in adulthood (e.g., Arseneault, 2018), suggesting that the potential impact of prior victimization from bullying in school on subsequent social experiences at the workplace in adulthood deserves further exploration.

1.4 Outcomes of exposure to bullying behaviours at work

The negative impact of exposure to workplace bullying was acknowledged even in the earliest works on the topic (e.g., Brodsky, 1976; Leymann, 1987; Thylefors, 1987). Since then, an abundance of empirical works has investigated the links between exposure to workplace bullying and a wide range of detrimental outcomes across levels, as documented in several reviews and meta-analyses (e.g., Boudrias et al., 2021; Mikkelsen et al., 2020; Rai & Agarwal, 2018). One of the most studied outcomes are mental health complaints, and particularly so depression (Boudrias et al., 2021). Several meta-analyses have established that exposure to workplace bullying is associated with higher levels of depressive tendencies in cross-sectional

designs, and that baseline exposure to bullying predicts subsequent depression or depressive symptoms (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Nielsen et al., 2014; Theorell et al., 2015; Verkuil et al., 2015). Other well-documented outcomes of exposure to bullying include symptoms of anxiety, PTSD symptoms, burnout, suicidal ideation, diabetes type 2, pain, sickness absence, turnover intentions, and disability retirement (Boudrias et al., 2021; Leach et al., 2017; Mikkelsen et al., 2020; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Nielsen, Einarsen, et al., 2016; Nielsen, Indregard, et al., 2016; Nielsen, Tangen, et al., 2015; Verkuil et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2018).

Several theories and models have been employed in attempts to understand the detrimental impact workplace bullying may have on its target's health and well-being. For the purposes of this thesis, with its aim of understanding the role of prior victimization experiences, the conservation of resources theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll, 1991) comes across as particularly relevant. COR theory has been widely applied in scholarly attempts to understand stress at work (Hobfoll et al., 2018). A fundamental assumption in COR theory is that "people strive to retain, protect, and build resources and that what is threatening to them is the potential or actual loss of these valued resources" (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). As such, COR theory puts resources at the core of the stress process, and posits that stress occurs when individuals are faced with the threat of or actual resource loss, or when resource investments do not produce sufficient resource gains. Resources are defined as "those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies" (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). When faced with repeated exposure to negative social acts over time that are hard to defend against, it becomes apparent that the victim's resources are under attack. Showing this empirically, Tuckey and Neall (2014) concluded that exposure to workplace bullying depletes both job resources in terms of social support and personal resources in terms of optimism and self-efficacy. These processes were, at least partly, driven by depletion of emotional energy in terms of increased emotional exhaustion. Similarly, the very idea of being "a victim" may be riddled with feelings of shame and threaten the target's identity (Lewis, 2004). In support of this notion, shame has been shown to mediate the prospective

relationship between childhood victimization from bullying and psychosocial adjustment in adulthood (Strøm et al., 2018). A range of other resources have been found to be threatened by victimization from bullying, such as self-esteem, mental health, affective commitment, and performance (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Nielsen, Tangen, et al., 2015; van Geel et al., 2018; Verkuil et al., 2015).

These processes may also be understood in the light of job demands-resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001), another popular framework for understanding employee stress and well-being. JD-R theory in part builds on COR theory, yet more explicitly describes the nature and impact of the environmental demands that employees face. In JD-R theory, job demands are defined as "those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312). These job demands proposed to be the key predictors of a health impairment process, wherein they contribute to the development of negative outcomes such as exhaustion and health complaints and negatively impact performance. Importantly, chronic or sustained exposure to high job demands over time may deplete the employees' job or personal resources (Bakker, 2015), which increases the potential negative impact of subsequent stressor exposure. As such, the notion that workplace bullying may deplete the targets' coping resources as the process unfolds fits nicely within the framework of JD-R theory. Given the detrimental outcomes of exposure to bullying, it seems reasonable to describe it as a threatening demand, defined as "work-related demands or circumstances that tend to be directly associated with personal harm or loss (Tuckey et al., 2015, p. 6).

Considering the impact of workplace bullying on its targets and witnesses (Nielsen et al., 2021), it is not surprising that there may even be substantial financial costs associated with even low prevalence of workplace bullying . Attempts have been made to estimate the financial cost of bullying and other forms of workplace mistreatment, taking account factors such as depression, sickness absence, turnover,

productivity losses, and legal costs (e.g., Fattori et al., 2015; Hutton & Gates, 2008; Kline & Lewis, 2019; Lewis & Malecha, 2011; McTernan et al., 2013). While it is difficult to arrive agree on the exact cost due to the sheer number of parameters that affect the final estimates, these studies nevertheless clearly show that workplace bullying may be associated with a substantial financial burden both for the individual, the organization, and society at large (Hassard et al., 2018; Hoel et al., 2020).

1.5 Risk factors for exposure to bullying behaviours at work

Given the overwhelming empirical evidence on its negative impact, substantial efforts have been made to explore the aetiology of bullying at work. While these efforts have not resulted in a single unifying theory of workplace bullying, the empirical evidence and the existing proposed conceptual models clearly show workplace bullying to be a multicausal phenomenon that it is perhaps unrealistic to explain with a single theory (Branch et al., 2021; S. V. Einarsen et al., 2020; Samnani & Singh, 2016). In broad terms, this line of research has focused on two main explanatory mechanisms for the occurrence of workplace bullying: the work environment hypothesis, stating that bullying is the result of the subpar organization of work and poor leadership, and the individual disposition hypothesis, proposing that the development of bullying can be explained by between-person differences that increase the likelihood of perpetration or victimization. Below, these two mechanisms are described in more detail. Despite the work environment hypothesis being the seemingly most researched mechanism out of the two (Balducci et al., 2021), I devote more space to the individual disposition hypothesis below, given the focus on employees' prior experiences in this thesis.

1.5.1 Contextual risk factors for workplace bullying

According to Leymann (1996), the development of workplace bullying can be ascribed to factors in the work environment and poor conflict handling by managers. As the foundation for the "work environment hypothesis" (Einarsen et al., 1994), this notion has been the starting point for a wide range of empirical studies on leadership, work environment stressors, work characteristics and other organizational factors as

risk factors for workplace bullying. In the first quantitative study on work environment factors' impact on workplace bullying, Einarsen et al. (1994) identified role conflict as their most robust predictor of exposure to bullying at work. They offered both a frustration-aggression explanation (Berkowitz, 1989), i.e., stressful work environments cause frustrated workers to lash out on others, and a social interactionist explanation (Felson, 1992, p. 4), i.e., stressful work environments cause distressed workers that elicit negative behaviours from others because they "perform less competently, violate expectations, or annoy others". As shown in recent reviews, role conflict remains a robust predictor of workplace bullying, along with other job demands such as role ambiguity, workload, and interpersonal conflict (Balducci et al., 2021; Feijó et al., 2019; Salin & Hoel, 2020)

Echoing Brodsky's (1976) view that bullying or harassment occurs in organizations that reward or at the very least accept it, many studies have focused on the idea that leadership and organizational climate plays an important role both in the prevention, escalation and handling of bullying at work. For instance, laissez-faire leadership seems to both foster the development of work stressors such as role conflict and interpersonal conflict, to predict bullying in itself, and to strengthen the link between workplace stressors and the occurrence of bullying (Skogstad et al., 2007; Ågotnes et al., 2018; Ågotnes et al., 2020). As such, situational risk factors seem to be able to boost each other's impact on the development of bullying at work. Importantly, however, there also seem to be situational or contextual factors that have the potential to reduce the occurrence of bullying, and even to reduce the risk potential of other risk factors. As an example, climate concepts such as psychosocial safety climate (Dollard et al., 2017; Escartín et al., 2021; Law et al., 2011) and climate for conflict management (Einarsen et al., 2016) have been linked to lower occurrence of bullying at work. Recent studies even suggest that a strong conflict management climate may neutralize the development of workplace bullying over time (Hamre et al., 2021), and that having a high team-level climate for conflict management may diminish the impact of role conflict and cognitive demands on the occurrence of bullying behaviours (Zahlquist et al., 2019).

1.5.2 Individual risk factors for becoming a target of workplace bullying

In examining individual-level risk factors for workplace bullying, existing studies have largely focused on the individual characteristic of the target (for a review of studied perpetrator characteristics, see Blackwood & Jenkins, 2021; Zapf & Einarsen, 2020). While not uncontroversial due to the risk of engaging in victim blaming (e.g., Cortina, 2017), the notion of target characteristics as predictors of bullying was discussed already in the earliest scholarly works in the bullying literature. For instance, taking a somewhat controversial stance, Heinemann (1972) viewed mental health problems among victims of bullying as a predisposing factor that made them natural targets for the larger group's negative behaviours, and even explicitly suggested that health issues or disabilities are more often causes rather than potential effects of victimization from bullying. While plenty of studies have since showed that victimization from bullying does indeed seem to cause distress and health problems, using increasingly sophisticated designs (Schaefer et al., 2018; Silberg et al., 2016), individual characteristics may naturally still also contribute to later victimization as well as contributing to how one may or may not cope with the predicament one is in.

Olweus (1978) described differences between two types of victims of bullying in schools. The most common type, *passive victims*, were described as anxious, passive, and uncertain. They tended to have low self-esteem, and to be marginally physically weaker the peers. When attacked or confronted, the passive victim typically did not retaliate, but rather tended to become frightened, start to cry, and was unable to defend in the situation. In essence, the passive victim becomes an easy target as it is "safe" for others to attack without fear of retribution. *Provocative victims*, on the other hand, were much less common. These provocative victims were described as hot-tempered, often ended up in conflicts with peers, were considered annoying by their peers, and could be restless and unfocused, ultimately eliciting aggressive behaviours from many around them due to their perceived provocative behaviour.

When applied in the context of workplace bullying, the labels *vulnerable victims* and *provocative victims* have typically been used, describing similar behavioural

tendencies as outlined above (O'Farrell et al., 2021; Samnani & Singh, 2016). While the research efforts so far have, broadly speaking, concluded that individual target characteristics is far from the major predictive component in explaining the occurrence of workplace bullying (Zapf & Einarsen, 2020), links have been found between several individual characteristics and workplace bullying. A particular challenge when examining these links, however, is that it is hard to determine the causal processes that give rise to the relationships. In the context of workplace bullying and personality, Nielsen and Knardahl (2015, pp. 3-4) suggested three different theoretical mechanisms that can account for an observed relationship between the two. The "target-behaviour mechanism" suggests that targets elicit negative social behaviours from others due to their own behaviour, in accordance with the social interactionist perspective described earlier (Felson, 1992). The "negative perceptions mechanism", on the other hand, suggests that the individual characteristics are linked to reports of bullying because of a bias that makes the target more inclined to perceive, interpret, and label the behaviours as bullying. Finally, the "reverse causality mechanism" suggests that the individual characteristics are outcomes of the bullying exposure.

A much-studied individual characteristic that may be associated with a vulnerable victim mechanism, and perhaps also a viable candidate for all the three mechanisms described by Nielsen & Knardahl (2015), is negative affectivity. Across several meta-analyses, negative affectivity has indeed been shown to be a robust predictor of bullying and mistreatment at work, even in the context of vignette studies (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Dhanani et al., 2020). In a meta-analysis of cross-sectional studies on traits from the five-factor model and workplace harassment (Nielsen, Glasø, et al., 2017), robust relationships were also established between harassment and lower agreeableness and conscientiousness, and between harassment and higher neuroticism, with the latter being the strongest one. Fewer studies have examined relationships over time, however. Among the exceptions, one two-wave study only found that baseline bullying exposure predicted a decline in agreeableness at follow-up (Podsiadly & Gamian-Wilk, 2016), although with a relatively short time-lag of six

months and somewhat low number of participants (N = 190). In another study, with a two-year time-lag and 3066 participants, support was found for both baseline victimization from bullying as a predictor of lower agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness at follow-up, as well as baseline neuroticism and conscientiousness as predictors of subsequent bullying, depending on the analysis (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015).

Attempts have also been made to explore the impact of the sub-facets of different traits. In a convenience sample of 307 employees, relative weight analyses indicated that the neuroticism facets depression, anxiety and anger were significantly related to perceived exposure to mistreatment at work, whereas self-consciousness, immoderation and vulnerability were not (McCord, 2021). In an a more sophisticated design with 8 measurement waves three weeks apart, trait anger and trait anxiety predicted both baseline levels of exposure to bullying and the probability of escalation and de-escalation (Reknes et al., 2021). Specifically, both trait anger and trait anxiety were related to a higher probability of experiencing an escalation of the bullying process, while those higher in trait anger were also less likely to experience de-escalation. Consequently, the findings suggested that those with a more negative outlook on life are at higher risk of ending up and remaining in a bullying situation (Reknes et al., 2021). As such, it is also conceivable that prior victimization from bullying may predispose employees towards becoming exposed to bullying behaviours at work due to the potential impact of their prior victimization on their social schemas and basic assumptions (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002).

1.6 The potential role of prior victimization from bullying

It is fairly uncontroversial to claim that individuals' prior experiences may affect their perceptions, interpretations, actions, and reactions to the world. After all, in the opposite case, learning and development would not be possible. This idea has also been touched upon in the existing literature on workplace bullying and in the broader literature on workplace mistreatment. Yet, as will become apparent, this notion has

received little empirical attention. In the following, I briefly review the existing models of workplace bullying that specify the role of employees' prior victimization from bullying.

According to the model of workplace bullying proposed by Einarsen (2000) and later revised in S. V. Einarsen et al. (2020, p. 38), an employee's personal history may impact on the likelihood of actual exposure (i.e., "objective", as enacted by the perpetrators) and perceived exposure to bullying behaviours at work, as well as affect how these actual behaviours are perceived. That is, prior victimization is suggested to impact both the risk of being the target of negative social acts at work, and how these acts are perceived. This is in accordance with the conceptual model proposed by Samnani and Singh (2016), which includes a history of victimization from bullying as one of the many target characteristics that may increase the likelihood of workplace bullying over time. As such, if these predictions are correct, initial victimization from bullying may not only come with the risk of developing detrimental outcomes for health and well-being, but may also spark a vicious cycle of victimization by predisposing victims to later experiences of mistreatment.

Next, it is evident from the model proposed by Einarsen (2000; revised in Einarsen et al., 2020) that the personal history of employees may also impact the relationship between perceived exposure to bullying behaviours at work and immediate behavioural and affective reactions to those behaviours, as well as the extent to which those immediate reactions are sustained and have more long-term effects on the target. This basic understanding that employee's affective reactions to exposure to negative social behaviours at work may depend on their prior experiences is also evident in the critical review by Cole et al. (2016), who contended that temporality has received too little attention in the workplace mistreatment research and that employees' current experiences of mistreatment, strictly speaking, can only be fully understood in the context of their past exposure to mistreatment. The importance of prior experiences is also embedded within the conceptual understanding of workplace bullying as a gradually evolving process, where the accumulation of negative

behaviours over time "break down" the victims (e.g., Leymann, 1996), consequently increasing the impact of negative behaviours as the process progresses.

It is evident, then, that the notion that employees' prior victimization experiences may play a part in their exposure and affective reactions to negative social behaviours at work is not new in the workplace bullying literature. However, at least at the outset of this PhD project in 2016, these links had mostly just been hinted at, implied, or mentioned in passing, with little explicit conceptual reasoning and few attempts to provide conceptual elaborations of precisely how and why prior victimization may impact later experiences of workplace bullying. As such, in this thesis, I rely on notions from several different theories and models to qualify the suggestions from the broader models on workplace bullying described above. In the following, I will elaborate on the theoretical notions that elucidate how prior victimization may impact both a) the risk of becoming bullied at work, b) how negative social behaviours are interpreted, and c) the employee's vulnerability when exposed to such negative social behaviours.

1.6.1 Prior victimization from bullying and risk of revictimization from bullying at work

The concept of revictimization refers to the increased likelihood of victimization that occurs in the aftermath of initial victimization experiences. Revictimization in adulthood has been documented for exposure to various forms of violence (Strøm et al., 2019) as well as childhood sexual abuse (Walker et al., 2019). In the context of workplace bullying, then, an employees' prior victimization from bullying may be considered an individual level risk factor for future exposure to such negative acts and processes at work. As suggested in the conceptual model proposed by Einarsen (2000; Einarsen et al., 2020, p. 38), initial exposure to bullying may have the potential to start a vicious cycle of victimization due to its immediate impact on the target, which, if consolidated and sustained over time, may increase the likelihood of yet again becoming exposed to bullying at work. This potential revictimization risk can be viewed in light of the widely studied individual disposition hypothesis for understanding the development of workplace bullying. That is, known outcomes of

exposure to bullying may also act as predictors of later victimization via already studied provocative or vulnerable victim mechanisms.

For instance, a potential vicious cycle of victimization from bullying was suggested by Kivimäki et al. (2003), after finding that victimization from workplace bullying at baseline predicted subsequent onset of depression, while depression at baseline predicted new subsequent cases of victimization. This pattern has been corroborated in later meta-analyses of longitudinal studies on workplace bullying (Nielsen et al., 2014; Verkuil et al., 2015). Furthermore, prospective studies have linked prior victimization in childhood and adolescence to depressive symptoms in young adulthood (Lereya et al., 2015). As such, following the stress generation hypothesis of depression (e.g., Hammen, 2018), prior victimization may predict higher levels of depressive symptoms, which subsequently puts the individual at risk of experiencing victimization from bullying yet again.

This reasoning is naturally not restricted to depressive symptoms, but can rather be applied to any factor that is likely to both result from prior victimization experiences while also increase the risk of subsequent victimization. For instance, meta-analyses indicate that victimization in school (Tsaousis, 2016) or at work (Bowling & Beehr, 2006) can be detrimental to the victims' self-esteem. This, in turn, can put victims at risk of later being perceived as easy targets at work due to vulnerable victim mechanisms (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Samnani & Singh, 2016; van Geel et al., 2018). Meta-analytical evidence also show that victimization from bullying in school predicts enacted violence and aggression later in life (Ttofi et al., 2012), which, in turn, could put the prior victims at risk of becoming targets of bullying at work due to the mechanisms and processes described for the "provocative victim" cases (Olweus, 1978). Moreover, victimization from bullying in childhood has been prospectively linked to social relationship problems (e.g., problems making or keeping friends) and lower levels of financial and educational accomplishments in adulthood (Sigurdson et al., 2014; Wolke et al., 2013). Similarly, targets of workplace bullying have been shown to have elevated levels of interpersonal problems compared to employees not involved in bullying

(Glasø, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2009). In the same vein, dispositional hardiness is both an outcome and predictor of exposure to bullying behaviours at work (Hamre et al., 2020), and the robust relationship between victimization and rejection sensitivity, the tendency to readily perceive, anxiously expect and overreact to social rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996), is likely bidirectional (Gao et al., 2021).

At the outset of this PhD project, only a few studies had examined the links between prior victimization from bullying and later exposure to bullying at work. Most of these efforts were cross-sectional. For instance, a cross-sectional British survey with a sample of 5228 employees, showed that those who retrospectively reported having been bullied during their school years had a higher likelihood of self-labelling of victims of workplace bullying (Smith et al., 2003). Similarly, in a cross-sectional work environment survey among 2215 employees in Norway, those who reported that they had been bullied previously were more inclined to currently self-label as victims of workplace bullying (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007). In a Danish report on social and health care workers caring for the elderly, Høgh et al. (2007) found a twofold increased risk for subsequent victimization among those who had been bullied in the past. This effect was largely driven by very recent victimization experiences, however, and it is unclear whether their recent experiences were unrelated to or a continuation of the prior bullying situation. In any case, the more recent experiences appeared to pose a greater risk for revictimization compared to the more distal victimization experiences from childhood and adolescence. Interestingly, the length of the prior victimization did not seem to affect the likelihood of revictimization (Høgh et al., 2007).

As a notable exception to the above cross-sectional studies, a Danish study with a prospective design found that those who were bullied in school at age 14-15 were twice as likely to be "bullied in an unpleasant way" at work at age 17-18. Here the time-lag was rather low and the majority of respondents were still in school and only held part time jobs at age 17-18 (Andersen et al., 2015). As such, the study provided limited evidence about the prospective relationship between prior victimization from bullying and the risk of being exposed to bullying at work in a totally new and

unrelated context. In parallel with the progress of this PhD project, other relevant studies on revictimization from bullying have been published (e.g., Brendgen & Poulin, 2017; Brendgen et al., 2019; Brendgen et al., 2021), and these will be discussed in more detail in the discussion section.

1.6.2 Prior victimization from bullying and labelling of negative social behaviours at work

Besides potentially increasing the risk of subsequent exposure to bullying behaviours at work, there are theoretical reasons to expect prior victimization to affect how such negative social behaviours are perceived and interpreted. In fact, Cole et al. (2016, p. 292), emphasizing the importance of employing a temporal lens to understand mistreatment at work, proposed that "a mistreatment incident experienced in the present could be interpreted quite differently depending upon what mistreatment the individual has experienced in the past", and that "the current level of perceived mistreatment is only understood in the context of past mistreatment". Interestingly, explicitly referring to self-labelled victimization from bullying, Out (2005) suggested that whether an employee self-labels as a victim of workplace bullying in part depends on their prior experiences. In the following, I briefly describe how prior victimization experiences can impact later interpretations and appraisals of social interactions, in light of models on social schemas and social information processing.

According to the social information processing (SIP) model (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996), we rely on our social schemas when attempting to make sense of new social interactions. These social schemas are closely related to our "database" of prior experiences. Consequently, individuals with a history of frequent victimization are thought to be more likely to develop negative social schemas that entail victimization, and therefore more likely to interpret even ambiguous negative social interactions in light of their negative schemas. Building on the SIP model, the victim schema model (Rosen et al., 2007, 2009) suggests that repeated victimization experiences contribute to the establishment and consolidation of an increasingly easily available "victim schema" that guide the individual's cognitive appraisal and reactions in social situations. With a more developed and easily available victim schema, the individual

risks identifying with the victim role and is more likely to expect mistreatment and hostility from their peers.

The SIP and victim schema models are supported by findings that victimized individuals display a biased interpretation of social interactions and others' intentions, including higher hostile attributional bias and a higher propensity to engage in characterological self-blame (Guy et al., 2017). Interestingly, biases in social cognition as described in SIP have been found both to increase following victimization experiences, and to predict later victimization (van Reemst et al., 2016). In the context of negative social behaviours at work, it seems reasonable that employees who been bullied have in the past are more likely to interpret negative social interactions at work in line with their presumably more readily available victim schemas. In other words, prior victims may engage in more automated and less deliberate sensemaking processes when trying to figure out the meaning of negative or ambiguous interactions at work, and to a larger extent rely on their prior victimization experiences to make sense of the situation. If that is the case, it would presumably take less exposure to negative social behaviours at work before a previously victimized employee self-labelled as a current victim of bullying, compared to a colleague without much prior victimization experiences.

While the SIP model and victim schema model have mostly been applied by scholars attempting to understand victimization in children and adolescents, the same line of reasoning can also be applied using a framework more familiar in the workplace bullying research tradition. According to the cognitive theory of trauma (Janoff-Bulman, 1989, 1992), traumatic life events potentially impact health and well-being because they threaten to shatter individuals' cognitive schemas containing basic assumptions about the world, others, and themselves. Studies show that victimization from workplace bullying seems to be related to more negative basic assumptions, such that victims believe that the self is less worthy, the world is less meaningful, and other people are less benevolent (Glasø, Nielsen, Einarsen, et al., 2009; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Out, 2005; Rodriguez-Munoz et al., 2010). When subsequently facing negative social behaviours at work, then, this schema theory of shattered

assumptions implies that employees with prior victimization experiences may more easily develop a perception that they are being bullied, because the negative environmental information would be easier to incorporate in their social schemas which already entail a notion of vulnerability and victim status. This idea is also in accordance with the claim by Namie and Namie (2018) that employees with prior victimization experiences may be faster in recognizing mistreatment at work. Taken together, then, on the basis of the SIP model and schema theory, it seems plausible that the relationship between exposure to negative social behaviours at work and the likelihood of labelling the situation as bullying is stronger among employees who have already gone through a process of victimization from bullying in the past.

1.6.3 Prior victimization from bullying and subsequent vulnerability when facing negative acts at work

Finally, it is possible that employees' prior victimization from bullying may affect their vulnerability when later facing negative social behaviours at work. This idea is also found in the broader conceptual model of S. V. Einarsen et al. (2020). The impact of prior victimization experiences when facing negative social behaviours at work was also emphasized by Cole et al. (2016, p. 295), who contended that "individuals' reactions to present-day mistreatment are likely to be informed by their past histories of mistreatment". In the following, I discuss the theoretical and empirical foundations concerning this assumption; that employees' prior victimization may impact their affective reactions to negative acts at work.

As shown in several reviews, meta-analyses and large sample studies, exposure to workplace bullying is associated with a range of detrimental outcomes such as depression and anxiety, sleep problems, type 2 diabetes, and sickness absence (Boudrias et al., 2021; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Nielsen, Indregard, et al., 2016; Nielsen, Tangen, et al., 2015; Verkuil et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2018). Similarly, a range of negative effects have been established for victimization from bullying in school during childhood and adolescence, including mental health problems, aggression, lower educational attainment, and poorer social relationships (Benson, 2016; Day et al., 2016; Hager & Leadbeater, 2016; Pouwels et al., 2016; Sigurdson et al., 2014;

Singham et al., 2017; van Geel et al., 2016). In the context of COR theory, then, bullying can be seen as a stressor that causes resource losses (e.g., Tuckey & Neall, 2014). These resource losses, in turn, may then leave employees who have prior victimization experiences more vulnerable to the impact of subsequent exposure to negative social behaviours at work, in keeping with the notions of loss spirals in COR theory and the detrimental impact of life events associated with resource losses on subsequent vulnerability (Hobfoll et al., 2015). The same reasoning is consistent with JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), within which prior victimization from bullying can be seen as a moderator that strengthens the relationship between the demand of exposure to negative social behaviours at work and affective outcomes, due to the resource losses caused by the prior victimization. As such, the general notion that prior victimization from bullying may produce a vulnerability to subsequent social stress is supported by contemporary theories widely applied to understand employee stress and wellbeing.

Support for the importance of prior experiences when facing similar stressors later in life can also be found in models on the development of depression. For instance, a stress sensitization model has been supported by findings showing that lower levels of exposure to stressors are needed to evoke depressive reactions among individuals with a lifetime history of more adversity (Hammen et al., 2000). In other words, the strength of the relationship between a stressor, such as exposure to workplace bullying, and depressed mood is not time-invariant, but rather is affected by the individual's previous stressor exposure (Hammen, 2018). Supporting this notion, those with a history of more childhood adversity were more likely to experience depression following past-year exposure to stressful life events in large-scale study with 34 563 respondents (McLaughlin et al., 2010). Other studies report similar stress sensitization effects (Starr et al., 2017; Starr et al., 2014; Stroud et al., 2018). Especially interesting with regard to this thesis is the proposition that sensitization effects may be particularly strong when the prior and current stressors are similar (McLaughlin et al., 2010), suggesting that employees with prior experiences of being bullied may have stronger depressive reactions to subsequent bullying exposure. This is also in line with notions from the cognitive model of depression (e.g., Beck, 2008),

which proposes that negative life events can promote a cognitive vulnerability to depression due to repeated activation of negative schemas. These negative schemas, in turn, are more easily activated by subsequent exposure to stressful events, and thus lower the threshold for reacting in a negative manner with depressive cognitions. This is especially the case when the current stressors that resemble the prior adverse events (Alford & Beck, 2009). Interestingly, these notions also fit well with the SIP model described earlier (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996).

As far as I am aware, at the outset of this dissertation work, the hypothesis that prior victimization moderates the relationship between exposure to workplace bullying and negative affective reactions in the form of depressed mood had not been tested. However, there were still studies on related topics falling under the broad umbrella of interpersonal mistreatment that suggested that prior victimization may indeed be related to subsequent vulnerability, as well as a range of studies examining increased stressor vulnerability following prior adverse experiences in general. For instance, using a sample of 108 graduate students, Bollmer et al. (2003) investigated whether reactions to a teasing scenario depended on the participant's own history of being a victim of teasing during childhood. Those who had been teased frequently in the past had stronger negative reactions to the teasing scenario, in terms of becoming more self-conscious and turning their attention inwards in response to the teasing remark. Although based on a relatively small convenience sample, these findings nevertheless support the assumption that a person's prior experiences with interpersonal mistreatment may impact the perceptions of and affective reactions to later interpersonal stressors. Knack et al. (2011) provided further support for this assumption, showing that adolescents with a history of peer victimization felt less accepted and experienced greater levels of stress during a Trier social stress test (i.e., a social stress paradigm involving a public speaking exercise). Indeed, several studies have found that a history of victimization alters the HPA-axis functioning, in terms of a lowered cortisol awakening response and a blunted cortisol response following exposure to social stress (e.g., Knack et al., 2011; Ouellet-Morin et al., 2011). Similarly, Petrova et al. (2021) found that individuals with higher levels of adverse

childhood experiences experienced more negative affect following a Trier social stress test. Those with more prior adverse experiences also experienced a slower cardiovascular recovery.

There is also other evidence to suggest that prior adversity in a wider sense, yet not necessarily bullying, affects later stressor reactivity and vulnerability. In a prospective Finnish study spanning 27 years, Pulkki-Råback et al. (2016, p. 390) showed that employees with a history of childhood emotional adversities were more vulnerable to develop depressive symptoms after facing job demands, and concluded that "earlier experiences may affect vulnerability specifically to high work load or psychologically demanding aspects of the job". Nordanger et al. (2014) found that perceived life threat in relation to the 2011 Oslo terror attacks was a stronger predictor of PTSD symptoms among adolescents with a history of prior direct exposure to violence, suggesting a sensitization to subsequent trauma resulting from initial adversity. Still, they also found several non-significant interactions between other indicators of prior adversity on the one hand and proximity to the terror events and perceived life threat on the other hand, suggesting that prior adversity did not consistently act as a vulnerability factor.

Interestingly, in a study among members of two support groups for victims of bullying in Norway, one respondent reported that she did not think that the standardised survey scales measuring exposure to bullying, mental health problems and posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms enabled her to fully convey the detrimental damage the bullying had inflicted on her health (Einarsen, 1999b). Of particular relevance for this thesis, she indicated that the bullying exposure had diminished her ability to face other stressors without experiencing strain reactions. In other words, her own experience was that she had lost coping resources and become sensitized to stressors following her long-term victimization from bullying. Although such an anecdotal single case naturally cannot be taken as evidence for such a process, the idea fits well with theoretical notions of bullying as a resource depleting process that changes victims and leaves them with fewer resources and worse prerequisites for dealing with the challenges of life. Indeed, the early works on

workplace bullying emphasized that the repeated exposure over time wears down the targets (Einarsen, 1999a; Leymann, 1996), depleting them of their coping resources and subsequently sensitizing them to the impact of later instances of negative behaviours (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005). It is rather interesting, then, that a purportedly novel "repeated exposure hypothesis" concerning the impact of incivility on well-being was introduced by incivility scholars some twenty years later (Matthews & Ritter, 2019), proposing that most adults will be able to adapt to and recover from single incidents of incivility, whereas chronic and repeated incivility will be more strongly related to negative outcomes as it hampers employees' ability to adapt and recover. While the study unfortunately did not provide a convincing test of this hypothesis, it is nevertheless fascinating that the realization of such a "repeated exposure hypothesis" developed among incivility scholars seemingly unaware of the workplace bullying literature.

1.7 Aims of the thesis

Based on the above conceptual reasoning and related existing empirical work, I contend that it is reasonable to assume that employees' prior experiences of being bullied may play a part in both their risk of becoming targets of bullying behaviours at work, their cognitive appraisal of their situation, and their affective reactions. At the outset of the work with this thesis, however, empirical work concerning prior victimization from bullying as a risk and vulnerability factor was scarce.

Some studies had suggested that employees with a history of being bullied in their school years were more inclined to self-label as victims of workplace bullying (e.g., Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Smith et al., 2003). These studies had, however, solely relied on retrospective reports of prior victimization, and mainly assessed bullying at work using the self-labelling method. Moreover, the mechanism linking prior victimization to an increased propensity to subsequently label as a victim of bullying had not been explored. Based on theoretical notions derived from schema theory (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996; Janoff-Bulman, 1989, 1992), we therefore set out to test whether prior victimization both increased the likelihood of later exposure to

bullying, and affected the strength of the relationship between perceived exposure to negative acts and the likelihood of self-labelling as a victim.

Next, a fair share of the mechanisms proposed throughout this introduction rest on the assumption that victimization from bullying, be it in school or at work, is related to sustained resource losses (e.g., deterioration in mental health and vulnerability to stressors). At the outset of the work with thesis, however, few prospective studies had examined the extent to which employees' mental health was dependent upon their distal experiences of previously being a victim of bullying (i.e., more than just a couple of years ago). Adolescence has been proposed as a developmental period where victimization by peers may be especially detrimental for mental health and self-schemas, for instance due to increased depression prevalence, increased affective response to peer rejection and the increasing value placed on social status and popularity, which then may exacerbate the impact of victimization (Troop-Gordon, 2017). Thus, another aim of this thesis was to contribute with one of few estimates of the prospective relationship between victimization from bullying in adolescence and depressed mood in adulthood.

Finally, it has been proposed that employees' affective reactions to workplace mistreatment are affected by their previous experiences with such mistreatment (Cole et al., 2016). As elaborated above, this general notion fits well with basic tenets from JD-R (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) and COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), models of depression (e.g., Alford & Beck, 2009), and the general conceptualization of workplace bullying as a process that drains its targets of available resources (Leymann, 1990; Zapf & Einarsen, 2005), making them increasingly susceptible to the straining impact of stressors. Surprisingly, however, at the start of this PhD project, this potential vulnerability-increasing role of prior victimization had not been tested empirically in the context of workplace bullying. Therefore, using the well-established relationship between exposure to bullying behaviours at work and the negative affective outcome of depressed mood as our starting point (e.g., Verkuil et al., 2015), we aimed to test whether prior victimization would boost this relationship. Acknowledging the possibility that prior victimization from bullying may have a

different meaning as a distal experience (i.e., many years ago, in school, tested in paper 2) compared to a more proximal experience (i.e., the last six months, tested in paper 3), we relied on designs with very different temporal orientations to test this potential vulnerability inducing role of prior victimization. That is, while paper 2 examines the role of victimization from bullying in adolescence on subsequent experiences of bullying behaviours at work and depressed mood at age 30, paper 3 is based on a quantitative daily diary study that allowed us to examine whether recent experiences of victimization from workplace bullying impacted the subsequent day-to-day relationships between exposure to negative acts and depressed mod. As between-person relationships may differ from within-person relationships both in magnitude and direction (Maciejewski et al., 2021; Pindek et al., 2018), it is especially important to also examine stressor—strain relationships, such as between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood, at a within-person level.

Against this backdrop, the aims of the present thesis are as follows:

Aim 1: To test prior victimization from bullying as a predictor of subsequent perceived exposure to negative acts at work (paper 1 and paper 2) and the perception of being a victim of workplace bullying (paper 1)

> *Hypothesis 1:* Prior victimization from bullying at school or at work (retrospectively assessed) is positively related to subsequent perceived exposure to negative acts at work, controlling for baseline exposure to such negative acts (paper 1)
>
> *Hypothesis 2:* Victimization from bullying during junior high school (age 13-15) is positively related to subsequent perceived exposure to negative acts at work at age 30 (paper 2)
>
> *Hypothesis 3:* Prior victimization from bullying in school or at work (retrospectively assessed) is positively related to the probability of subsequently developing a perception of being a victim of workplace bullying (paper 1)

Hypothesis 4: Prior victimization from bullying in school or at work (retrospectively assessed) has an indirect effect on the probability of subsequently developing a perception of being a victim of workplace bullying, via higher perceived exposure to negative acts at work (paper 1)

Aim 2: To test whether prior victimization strengthens the relationship between subsequent exposure to negative acts at work and the perception of being a victim of workplace bullying (paper 1)

Hypothesis 5: Prior victimization from bullying in school or at work (retrospectively assessed) strengthens the relationship between subsequent exposure to negative acts at work and the likelihood of developing a perception of being a victim of workplace bullying (paper 1)

Aim 3: To examine the prospective relationship between victimization from bullying in adolescence and depressed mood in adulthood (paper 2)

Hypothesis 6: Victimization from bullying during junior high school (age 13-15) is positively related to subsequent depressed mood at age 30 (paper 2)

Aim 4: To examine whether the relationship between perceived exposure to negative acts at work and depressed mood is contingent upon employees' prior victimization from bullying as reported in adolescence (paper 2)

Hypothesis 7: The relationship between perceived exposure to negative acts at work and concurrent depressed mood at age 30 is stronger among employees who were bullied more (vs. less) during junior high school (age 13-15) (paper 2).

Aim 5: To examine whether the day-level relationships between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood is stronger among individuals who have (vs. have not) recently been victimized from workplace bullying, using a quantitative daily diary design (paper 3)

Hypothesis 8: The relationship between perceived exposure to negative acts and depressed mood the same day is stronger among cadets who have (vs. have not) a perception of having been bullied during the six months prior to the diary study period (paper 3)

Hypothesis 9: The relationship between perceived exposure to negative acts and depressed mood the days following the exposure is stronger among cadets who have (vs. have not) a perception of having been bullied during the six months prior to the diary study period (paper 3)

2. Method

The three papers included in this thesis are based on three different survey data collections. The method details are presented separately for each paper below.

2.1 Paper 1

2.1.1 Paper 1: Design, procedure and sample

Paper 1 is based on data collected by Statistics Norway on behalf of the Bergen Bullying Research Group at the Department of psychosocial science, Faculty of psychology, University of Bergen. At baseline, in 2005, 4500 individuals were drawn from the Norwegian Central Employee Register. The population of interest was defined as individuals registered as currently employed in Norway, between the ages of 18 and 65, and working a minimum of 15 hours per week. Invitations to take part in the study were sent out via mail by Statistics Norway. To increase the likelihood of participation, all those who responded were included in the draw for ten gift certificates worth 1 000 NOK and one gift certificate worth 10 000 NOK.

In total, 2539 individuals accepted the invitation to participate in the baseline survey and returned the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 56.4 % for the 2005 data collection. In 2010, those who participated at baseline were invited to answer a follow-up questionnaire, which resulted in 1613 returned questionnaires at follow-up, giving a 64.5 % response rate. Of these 1613 respondents, 1318 (81.7 %) were currently working at follow-up and were thus in a position to answer the questionnaire, which pertained to experiences at work.

Data from the same data collection has been used extensively in other studies on topics such as workplace bullying, mental health, and leadership (Einarsen & Nielsen, 2014; Nielsen, Einarsen, et al., 2016; Nielsen, Nielsen, et al., 2015; Skogstad et al., 2015), but none of these previous studies have used the data on prior victimization experiences, and the results pertaining to the hypotheses tests in in paper 1 are thus novel. Note that a follow-up data collection was also conducted in 2007, while paper 1 in the present thesis relies solely on the data collected in 2005 and 2010. For the

purpose of paper 1 and this thesis, the 2005 data collection is referred to as T1 or baseline and the 2010 data collection is referred to as T2 or follow-up.

2.1.2 Paper 1: Instruments

Exposure to negative acts at work was measured using the 22 item Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R, Einarsen et al., 2009) in paper 1, both at baseline (T1) and at follow-up five years later (T2). These items cover perceived exposure to 22 predetermined negative social behaviours at work the last six months typical for workplace bullying scenarios. Some examples are "being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work", "persistent criticism of your work and effort", and "being ignored or excluded". As the term "bullying" is not used, the NAQ-R is a measure of perceived exposure to various negative social acts at work, yet does not reveal whether the employee has the perception of being a victim of bullying at work. Response options ranged from "Never" (1) to "Daily" (5). For our analyses, we created an index by summing the responses to the NAQ-R, in line with prior studies (Nielsen, Notelaers, et al., 2020). The NAQ-R had acceptable reliability at T1 (ω = .84, 95 % CI = .82-.85) and at T2 (ω = .86, 95 % CI = .85-.87).

Self-labelled victimization from bullying at work was measured using a validated single item measure (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Solberg & Olweus, 2003) in paper 1, both at baseline (T1) and at follow-up five years later (T2). The respondents were presented with a definition of bullying highlighting commonly accepted features of bullying as a concept (i.e., repeated exposure to negative behaviours over time that the target has difficulties defending against), and then asked to state whether they had been bullied the last six months. The response options ranged from "No" (1) to "Yes, several times a week" (5). In paper 1, we categorized anyone who answered "Yes" (2-5) as victims of bullying, as we were interested in the qualitative shift in perception from not bullied to bullied.

Prior victimization from bullying was measured by two questions at baseline in paper 1. The first question was whether the respondent had been bullied at work more than six months ago, with the response alternatives "Yes" and "No". The second

question was whether the respondent had been bullied during primary or secondary school ("grunnskole" in Norwegian), and the response alternatives were "No", "Yes, in a single period", and "Yes, in several periods". As these items were presented shortly after the self-labelling item described above, the respondents had recently read the definition of bullying. For the analyses in paper 1, those who had answered "Yes" to either of the two questions were categorised as having prior experiences of being a victim of bullying, whereas those who responded "No" to both questions were categorised as not having prior experiences of being a victim of bullying.

2.1.3 Paper 1: Statistical analyses

In paper 1, we assessed whether prior victimization from bullying as measured at baseline (T1) predicted exposure to negative acts and self-labelled victimization at follow-up (T2), and whether prior victimization strengthened the relationship between exposure to negative acts and self-labelled victimization. In order to predict new cases of self-labelled workplace bullying at follow-up (T2), we excluded the 108 respondents who self-labelled as current victims of workplace bullying at baseline from our main analyses. Thus, we used data from the 1228 respondents who provided data about their prior victimization at baseline and about their exposure to negative acts and perception of being bullied at follow-up, and who were not currently bullied at baseline. We also ran supplemental analyses, using all available data (i.e., without excluding the respondents who self-labelled as current victims of bullying at baseline).

We tested the hypotheses in paper 1 using regression and path analyses, including the estimation of counterfactually defined indirect effects in the presence of an interaction term. We relied on a Bayesian framework to accommodate the skewed distributions associated with indirect effects and to enable comparison of evidence for vs. against the null hypothesis. We used non-informative or "objective" priors, and the results are therefore similar to what would have been obtained using a maximum likelihood estimator. As such, we opted for an "objective" Bayesian approach, which reduces the differences between the Bayesian analyses in paper 1 and the frequentist framework applied in paper 2 and 3. We ran the analyses in Mplus v. 8.0 and in the R

(R Core Team, 2020) packages rstanarm (Goodrich et al., 2020) and Bfpack (Mulder et al., 2021). We specified 50 000 iterations across two Markov chain monte carlo (MCMC) chains in the analyses to ensure sufficient precision in the posterior distribution. We evaluated the parameter estimates by inspecting the 95 % credibility interval, the Bayesian one-tailed p-value, and the corresponding Bayes Factor. As such, the p-values reported for paper 1 denote Bayesian one-tailed p-values, i.e., the proportion of the posterior distribution that had the opposite sign of the median estimate. We also ran a series of supplemental analyses, among them testing the hypotheses in a frequentist framework as done in paper 2 and 3.

2.2 Paper 2

2.2.1 Paper 2: Design, procedure and sample

Paper 2 is based on the Norwegian Longitudinal Health Behaviour (NLHB) study, led by researchers at the Department of health promotion and development at the Faculty of psychology, University of Bergen. The NLHB study employs a prospective design, following respondents over a 17-year time span. The study was initiated in 1990, when 1195 pupils at the age of 13 (born in 1977) attending 22 randomly selected junior high schools (the Norwegian "ungdomsskole") in Hordaland County in Norway were invited to participate in this prospective survey study. All pupils in the randomly selected schools were invited to participate. Written informed consent both from the pupil and their parent or legal guardian was required for participation in the study.

In this thesis, we use data collected at the age of 13 (N = 927), 14 (N = 958), 15 (N = 970), 18 (N = 781), and 30 (N = 536). At the first data collection (at age 13), 927 of the 1195 pupils who were invited (77.6 %) took part in the study. At age 13, 14, and 15, the respondents were junior high school pupils, and the data collection was performed in the classroom. At age 18 and 30, the questionnaires were distributed in the post and returned directly to the researchers. Given our interest in the role of prior victimization for their experiences at the workplace, we use the data from the 536 respondents who participated at the data collection at age 30 in paper 2. Among these,

52.8 % were women. More details on the sampling and design of the NLHB study are available in other publications (e.g., Birkeland et al., 2014; Holsen et al., 2000; Åstrøm & Wold, 2012)

2.2.2 Paper 2: Instruments

Exposure to negative acts at work at age 30 was measured in paper 2 using a six-item version of the Short-Negative Acts Questionnaire (the SNAQ; Notelaers, Van der Heijden, Hoel, et al., 2018), which is based in the 22-item NAQ-R (Einarsen et al., 2009) described above. The respondents were presented with six different negative social behaviours and asked to state how often they had been exposed to these behaviours the last six months. Items include "been humiliated or ridiculed" and "met with hostility or silence as response to questions". The SNAQ had acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .76$).

Depressive tendencies was measured at the age of 15 and at the age of 30 using a seven-item measure developed by Alsaker et al. (1991). The seven items cover feelings of depression, sadness, and hopelessness, but do not include any physical symptoms. Example items are "Life is mostly sad" and "Think I have nothing to look forward to", and the response options ranged from 1 (does not apply at all) to 6 (applies exactly). The scale as originally developed was suggested to measure depressed mood/depressive tendencies, and as such the term "depressed mood" can just as well be applied to describe the content of the scale (for examples, see Holsen et al., 2001; Holsen et al., 2000). The scale has been validated against the more established Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) in another study using data from the Norwegian Longitudinal Health Behaviour Study, showing a latent correlation of .82 between the two scales (Holsen et al., 2000). In paper 2, depressive tendencies had acceptable internal consistency both at age 15 ($\alpha = .87$) and at age 30 ($\alpha = .92$).

Victimization from bullying during junior high school was used as our measure of prior victimization in paper 2. When attending junior high school, the respondents were asked to report the extent to which they had been bullied during the current and

previous school term at each of the data collections that took place at age 13, 14, and 15, using a single self-labelling item from The Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Olweus, 1986, cited in Solberg & Olweus, 2003; Olweus, 1993). This single item has been used extensively, and has been thoroughly validated (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). The respondents were presented with a definition of bullying (Olweus, 1992) emphasizing that bullying is about repeated exposure to negative acts over time that it is hard to defend against, and that isolated incidents are not considered bullying. For our main analyses, we averaged the six items, one for each term of the three years of junior high school, to create an index of average victimization from bullying in junior high school. For supplementary analyses, we also applied cut-off criteria of having being bullied at least "sometimes" (Solberg & Olweus, 2003) or the more conservative "weekly" or more often for any of the six school terms in junior high school.

In addition, at the age of 18, the respondents were asked to retrospectively assess the extent to which they had been bullied during junior high school, with the response options ranging from 1 (*not bullied at junior high school*) to 5 (*bullied during most of junior high school*). As such, we have both a proximal, concurrent measure of victimization in junior high school, as described above, and a more distal, retrospective measure of victimization during the same period. For the main analyses, we classified those who at age 18 stated that they had been bullied "sometimes" (3) during junior high school as prior victims, while also testing the more conservative "for a longer period of time" (4) and the more liberal "rarely" (2) as thresholds in supplementary analyses.

2.2.3 Paper 2: Statistical analyses

In paper 2, we examined prior victimization, as experienced and reported during junior high school, as a predictor of exposure to negative acts at work and depressive tendencies at age 30, and further tested prior victimization as a moderator of the relationship between current exposure to negative acts at work and depressive tendencies. We also repeated these analyses using the retrospective measure of

victimization from bullying in junior high school answered at age 18, thus testing our hypothesis with two different assessments of prior victimization.

In confirmatory factor analyses and subsequent structural equation models, we treated depressive tendencies as a latent construct, while prior victimization from bullying and current exposure to negative acts at work were modelled as manifest variables. Thus, we were able to test the interaction hypothesis using a manifest interaction term. The proposed model was tested using structural equation modelling in Mplus v. 7.4. We used a robust means and variance adjusted weighted least squares estimator (WLSMV) to accommodate the ordinal and skewed nature of the data. We ran simple slope tests and obtained values for the interaction plot using the "model constraint" command in Mplus. The alpha level was set to .05 for all analyses.

2.3 Paper 3

2.3.1 Paper 3: Design, procedure and sample

Paper 3 is based on data from the Bergen Sail Ship Study (see also Bakker et al., 2019; Breevaart et al., 2014; Ågotnes et al., 2020), a quantitative daily diary study where new cohorts of cadets from the Royal Norwegian Naval Academy have taken part yearly since its inception in 2010. The study has been carried out in collaboration between researchers at the University of Bergen, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and the Royal Norwegian Naval Academy. As a part of their training, the naval cadets embark on a sail ship voyage from the west coast of Norway to the east coast of North America. On one of the days just prior to the voyage, the cadets received information about and were invited to participate in the study. Those who accepted the invitation completed a general questionnaire about demographics, individual dispositions, and other person-level variables. The participating cadets were then asked to complete a daily questionnaire for the first 33 consecutive days of the sail ship voyage. The resulting data was used both for research purposes, and in a survey feedback training activity for the participating cadets.

In paper 3, we combined data collected in the autumn of 2010 (54 cadets) and 2011 (61 cadets), resulting in a combined potential total sample of 115 cadets. As such, we utilized an integrative data analysis approach, which increases statistical power and is particularly useful when studying behaviours with a relatively low base-rate (Curran & Hussong, 2009). Of the 115 cadets that were invited, 110 cadets (96 %) took part in the study and completed the general questionnaire prior to embarking on the sail-ship voyage. During the course of the 33-day diary study period, the cadets provided 2771 day-level observations (76 % of the potential 110 cadets × 33 days = 3630 day-level observations).

2.3.2 Paper 3: Instruments

Prior victimization from bullying was measured the day prior to the sail ship voyage using the same validated single-item question (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Solberg & Olweus, 2003) that we used to assess self-labelled victimization from bullying in paper 1. The cadets were presented with the aforementioned definition of workplace bullying and asked to state whether they had been bullied during the last six months, with response options ranging from "No" (1) to "Yes, daily" (5). For our analyses, we dichotomized the variable by classifying the cadets who answered "No" as not bullied, and those who answered "Yes, …" (2 and above) as victims. Due to the diary design with repeated daily measures of subsequent exposure to negative acts and depressed mood, we treated this self-labelling item as a measure of prior victimization from bullying, as it was experienced prior to embarking on the sail ship voyage and thus prior to the subsequent day-level reports.

Day-level exposure to negative acts was measured using four items from the short version of the negative acts questionnaire (S-NAQ, Notelaers, Van der Heijden, Hoel, et al., 2018). The items were adapted to the daily level by asking the respondents to consider their exposure to the negative behaviours during their last work shift, and the number of items was reduced in order to limit the burden on the respondents (Ohly et al., 2010). Specifically, the cadets were asked to report the extent to which they had experienced "Been ignored or excluded", "Unpleasant reminders of errors or mistakes", "Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get along with" and "Been

shouted at or been the target of spontaneous anger". The response options ranged from "Not at all" (1) to "Several times" (4). Due to the arguably largely formative properties of the SNAQ items when applied to the day-level, we did not consider substantial inter-item covariation to be a prerequisite for the validity of the daily SNAQ measure. Nevertheless, we estimated the within-person and between-person reliability using the two-level CFA procedure described by Geldhof et al. (2014), which showed that the reliability was rather low at the within-person level ($\omega = .44$) and somewhat higher at the between-person level ($\omega = .76$). This indicates that the cadets were not necessarily exposed to several of the negative behaviours on the same day, in accordance with the reasoning that this measure may have clear formative properties when applied to a day-level of measurement.

Day-level depressed mood was measured using three items from the IWP Multi-affect Indicator (Warr, 1990; Warr et al., 2014). The cadets were asked to report the extent to which they felt "Depressed", "Dejected", and "Hopeless", with response alternatives ranging from "Not at all" (1) to "Almost all of the time" (5). Estimates using the two-level CFA procedure described by Geldhof et al. (2014) showed that the three items had acceptable reliability both at the within-person level ($\omega = .69$) and at the between-person level ($\omega = .87$).

2.3.3 Paper 3: Statistical analyses

In paper 3, we examined the day-level relationship between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood on the same day and on the days following the exposure. Further, we tested whether prior victimization, in this case over the last six months prior to the voyage, strengthened the day-level relationships between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood.

We used multilevel modelling to test our hypotheses while accounting for the nested nature of our data with days or measurement occasions nested within cadets. We computed within-person and between-person correlations, estimated within-person and between-person reliability for the daily measures, and ran multilevel confirmatory factor analyses in Mplus v. 7.4, and tested the hypotheses using

hierarchical linear models with random intercepts using a maximum likelihood estimator in MLwiN 2.36 (Rasbash et al., 2009). We used person-mean centring for the level 1 predictor (exposure to negative acts), ensuring that the coefficient for day-level exposure to negative acts strictly represented the within-person relationship between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood (Enders & Tofighi, 2007). We used grand mean-centring for our level 2 covariates (age and aggregated exposure to negative acts across the 33 days). We plotted interactions and computed simple slope tests based on the asymptotic covariance matrix using the tools provided by Preacher et al. (2006) to generate R (R Core Team, 2020) code. The alpha level was set to .05 for all analyses.

2.4 Ethical considerations

The study that generated the data used in paper 1 was approved by the Regional Committee for Medical and Health Research Ethics West. Statistics Norway carried out the data collection in accordance with the Personal Data Act, and the respondents were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that only anonymized information would be given to the researchers.

The NLHB study that generated the data used in paper 2 was approved by the Norwegian Data Inspectorate. Participation in the study required written informed consent both from the adolescent and their parent or guardian at baseline, and participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

The Bergen Sail Ship study that generated the data used in paper 3 was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data. Informed consent was obtained from participating cadets prior to the sailing ship voyage, and the cadets were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The cadets were also ensured that only the researchers would have access to their raw data, and that declining to participate in the study would not in any way impact their relationship to their superiors or to The Norwegian Armed Forces.

3. Results

3.1 Results paper 1

Hoprekstad, Ø. L., Hetland, J., & Einarsen, S. V. (2021). Exposure to negative acts at work and self-labelling as a victim of workplace bullying: The role of prior victimization from bullying. *Current Psychology*.

The aims of paper 1 were to examine whether prior victimization from bullying increased the likelihood of later labelling as a victim of workplace bullying via an increased perceived exposure to negative acts at work, and to test whether the relationship between perceived exposure to negative acts at work and the perception of being a victim of workplace bullying was stronger among those with prior victimization experiences.

Bivariate analyses showed that employees who at baseline reported that they had prior experiences of being a victim of bullying, either in their school years or at work, reported higher levels of exposure to negative acts at work at follow-up five years later (M = 27.08, SD = 6.39) as compared to employees without such prior victimization experiences (M = 25.02, SD = 3.95, p = .00, Bayes factor = 1.76×10^9). Prior victims were also more likely to develop a perception of being bullied at work at follow-up (5.6%, n = 24 of 432) compared to employees without prior victimization experiences (1.6 %, n = 13 of 796, p = .00, Bayes factor = 42.6).

Results of path modelling with standardized continuous variables, controlling for baseline exposure to negative acts at work at T1, showed that prior victims were more likely to experience higher levels of exposure to negative acts at follow-up (median estimate = 0.25, 95 % CI = [0.15, 0.36], p < .001), which was then related to a higher likelihood of developing a perception of being bullied at work at follow-up (median estimate = 0.52, 95 % CI = [0.41, 0.64]. p < .001). Accordingly, the data supported an indirect effect from prior victimization to the likelihood of self-labelling as a victim at follow-up, via higher perceived exposure to negative acts at follow-up. Specifically, the median estimate suggested that prior victims were 33 % more likely

to develop a perception of being bullied at follow-up due to the heightened perceived exposure to negative acts at follow-up (median estimate for the odds ratio = 1.33, 95 % CI = [1.17, 1.51], $p < .001$). The data did not support a direct effect from prior victimization to self-labelled victimization at follow-up in the multivariate analyses.

Finally, the path from the interaction term to self-labelled victimization from bullying at follow-up was not reliably different from zero (median estimate = -0.11, 95 % CI = [-0.35, 0.14], $p = .19$). Accordingly, Bayes factors indicated that the data provided 67 times more support for the path for the interaction term being zero compared to being positive, and 12 times more support for the path being zero compared to being negative. As such, the interaction hypothesis was not supported.

Overall, the results from paper 1 indicate that prior victimization was a risk factor for later exposure to negative social acts at work, which increased the likelihood of developing a perception of being bullied at work. However, prior victimization did not have a direct effect on later self-labelling as a victim, and the relationship between perceived exposure to negative acts and the likelihood of labelling as a victim of bullying was unaffected by prior victimization experiences. Supplementary analyses showed that the conclusions for the hypothesis tests were the same when analysing the data in a frequentist framework (i.e., what has been considered the "normal" or "traditional" approach to statistics in the field of psychology), as used in paper 2 and paper 3.

3.2 Results paper 2

Hoprekstad, Ø. L., Hetland, J., Wold, B., Torp, H., & Einarsen, S. V. (2021). Exposure to bullying behaviors at work and depressive tendencies: The moderating role of victimization from bullying during adolescence. *Journal of Interpersonal violence.*

The aim of paper 2 was to examine whether prior victimization from bullying, in this case during junior high school, predicted higher levels of depressive tendencies and higher levels of exposure to negative acts at work at age 30, and whether the

concurrent relationship between exposure to negative acts at work and depressive tendencies at age 30 was stronger among those who had been bullied during junior high school.

Using the continuous measure of victimization from bullying during junior high school, the bivariate associations showed that more frequent victimization from bullying during junior high school was associated with higher levels of subsequent exposure to negative acts at work at age 30 ($r = .15$, $p < .001$) and higher levels of depressive tendencies at age 30 ($r = .13$, $p < .001$). Victimization from bullying in junior high school was also a significant predictor of subsequent exposure to negative acts at work at age 30 in the multivariate structural equation model ($\beta = .22$, $p < .001$). Victimization from bullying in junior high school did not, however, predict an increase in depressive tendencies at age 30 when depressive tendencies measured in the final year of junior high school was included as a covariate ($\beta = -.03$, ns).

The results of structural equation modelling indicated that the strength of the relationship between exposure to negative acts at work at age 30 and depressive tendencies at age 30 was contingent upon the respondents' levels of victimization from bullying during junior high school ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .05$). However, the interaction worked in the opposite direction than we hypothesized. That is, the relationship between exposure to negative acts at work at age 30 and depressive tendencies at age 30 was stronger among those who had not reported any victimization from bullying during junior high school (slope = 0.408 , $SE = 0.075$, $p < .001$) compared to among those who had reported high ($M + 1\ SD$) victimization from bullying during junior high school (slope = 0.211, $SE = 0.048$, $p < .001$).

The above pattern of result was also found when using both the stricter and the more lenient dichotomized score to identify victims of bullying during junior high school, as opposed to using the continuous measure of victimization from bullying during junior high school. Similarly, the same pattern was found when using the retrospective measure where respondents at age 18 were asked to look back at their junior high school period and report how often they had been bullied back then,

although with a more pronounced group difference in the interaction effect. Using the retrospective measure of victimization collected at age 18, the relationship between exposure to negative acts at work at age 30 and depressive tendencies at age 30 was positive and significant among those who retrospectively reported that they had not been bullied during junior high school (slope = 0.377, *SE* = 0.066, $p < .001$), but weaker and not significant among those who retrospectively reported that they had been bullied during junior high school (slope = 0.018, *SE* = 0.064, $p = .78$).

Overall, the results of paper 2 supported the assumptions that prior victimization from bullying is linked to a lasting poorer mental wellbeing and to a higher perceived exposure to negative social behaviours at work in adulthood. Surprisingly, however, the relationship between exposure to negative acts at work and depressive tendencies was strongest among those who had not (vs. those who had) been bullied during junior high school in these data.

3.3 Results Paper 3

Hoprekstad, Ø. L., Hetland, J., Bakker, A. B., Olsen, O. K., Espevik, R., Wessel, M., & Einarsen, S. V. (2019). How long does it last? Prior victimization from workplace bullying moderates the relationship between daily exposure to negative acts and subsequent depressed mood. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology.*

The aim of paper 3 was to examine the day-level relationships between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood, and to test whether self-labelled prior victimization experienced in the six months just prior to the diary study period strengthened these relationships.

A substantial amount of the variance in exposure to negative acts (78 %) and depressed mood (64 %) observed over the 33-day study period resided at the day-level, suggesting that the main source of variance in these variables was fluctuations from day to day within persons rather than stable between-person differences.

Moreover, multilevel confirmatory factor analyses showed that day-level exposure to negative acts and day-level depressed mood were empirically distinguishable.

The results of bivariate correlation analyses showed that the day-level relationship between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood was positive and significant (r = .14, p < .001). Day-level exposure to negative acts was also a positive and significant predictor of same-day depressed mood in the multivariate multilevel analyses (B = 0.277, p < .01), controlling for gender, prior victimization status, and person-level aggregated exposure to negative acts. Thus, the cadets experienced higher levels of depressed mood on the days where they were exposed to more negative acts than usual. Moreover, the results of multilevel modelling showed that exposure to negative acts predicted depressed mood both one (B = 0.093, p < .05) and two (B = 0.074, p < .05) days after the exposure. Exposure to negative acts was not, however, a significant predictor of depressed mood three days after the exposure (B = -0.040, ns).

Interaction analyses showed that the relationship between exposure to negative acts and same-day depressed mood was not significantly affected by prior victimization status (B = 0.170, ns). Thus, these data did not suggest that the same-day relationship between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood varied systematically as a function of prior victimization.

Finally, the results of interaction analyses indicated that the relationship between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood one day (B = 0.171, p < .05) and two days (B = 0.178, p < .05) after the exposure was stronger among the cadets who just before embarking on the sailing-ship voyage had self-labelled as victims of workplace bullying the last 6 months. Simple slope tests revealed that the relationship between exposure to negative acts and next-day depressed mood was positive and significant among those with prior victimization experiences (slope = 0.22, p = .02) and nonsignificant among those without prior victimization experiences over the preceding 6 months (slope = 0.053, p = .20). Similarly, the relationship between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood two days after the exposure was

positive and significant among those with prior victimization experiences (slope = 0.21, p = .007), and nonsignificant among those without prior experiences of being victims of workplace bullying (slope = 0.035, p = .41).

Overall, the results of paper 3 suggested that daily fluctuations in exposure to negative acts during the 33-day study period was a significant predictor of depressed mood both the same day, one day, and two days after the exposure. Prior victimization experienced over the preceding six months before the diary study period did not significantly affect the same-day relationship, but exposure to negative acts was a predictor of depressed mood one and two days following the exposure only among those who had experienced victimization from workplace bullying prior to the voyage.

4. Discussion

4.1 Overall summary of findings

The main aim of the present thesis was to investigate the role of employees' prior victimization from bullying as a risk and a vulnerability factor for later exposure to bullying at work. Building on a broader conceptual model of workplace bullying (Einarsen, 2000) and incorporating notions from social information processing (SIP) theories (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996), revictimization studies (e.g., Walker et al., 2019), COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), the papers in this thesis tested whether prior victimization from bullying acted as a risk factor for later exposure to and self-labelled victimization from bullying at work, and as a vulnerability factor that enhanced the relationship between exposure to bullying behaviours at work and depressed mood.

The results of paper 1 showed that employees with prior bullying victimization experiences, be it from their school years or in working life, were more likely to experience an increase in exposure to negative acts at work during the five year study period, and were somewhat more likely to develop a perception of being victims of workplace bullying. Prior victimization did not, however, affect the relationship between exposure to negative acts at work and the likelihood of labelling as a victim of workplace bullying. In line with the revictimization risk identified in paper 1, the results in paper 2 showed that those with prior experiences as a victim of bullying, in this case ongoing during junior high school, experienced higher levels of exposure to bullying behaviours at work at age 30. Contrary to our predictions, however, the concurrent relationship between exposure to bullying behaviours at work and depressive tendencies at age 30 was weaker among those who had been bullied more (vs. less or not at all) during junior high school. As such, prior victimization seemed to attenuate rather than strengthen the relationship between exposure to bullying behaviours and depressive tendencies. Yet, those with prior victimization experiences also had somewhat higher levels of depressive tendencies at age 30. Finally, the results of paper 3, employing a within-person perspective and examining day-to-day

relationships in a quantitative diary design, showed that even daily variations in exposure to negative acts was positively related to depressed mood, both on the same day as the exposure and one and two days following the exposure. Contrary to our predictions, the relationship between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood on the same day as the exposure was not significantly affected by prior victimization from bullying. Thus, exposure to negative acts was related to higher depressed mood on the same day as the exposure, regardless of prior victimization experiences. As predicted, however, the relationships between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood one and two days following the exposure were stronger among those who had the perception that they had been bullied in the six months prior to the diary study period. Specifically, exposure to negative acts was positively and significantly related to depressed mood one and two days following the exposure only among those with prior victimization experiences.

Overall, then, the revictimization hypothesis was consistently supported across paper 1 and paper 2. The vulnerability hypothesis, however, was supported in paper 3 but not in paper 2. In the following, I will discuss these findings and their theoretical and practical implications in more detail, elaborate on the strengths and weaknesses of the research presented in this thesis, and provide some suggestions for future research.

4.2 Prior victimization from bullying and later perceived exposure to and self-labelled victimization from bullying

In accordance with related empirical work already published at the onset of this PhD project (Andersen et al., 2015; Høgh et al., 2007; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Smith et al., 2003), the results in paper 1 and 2 provided support for the revictimization phenomenon in the context of workplace bullying. That is, the findings indicated that employees with a history of victimization from bullying were at higher risk of subsequent exposure to bullying at work. In contrast to most of the studies that existed at the onset of the present project, paper 1 and 2 were based on prospective designs, and as such enabled tests of whether a personal history of victimization was related to a higher risk of ending up as a target of bullying at a

much later point in time. As such, paper 1 and 2 showed that prior and distal experiences of victimization from bullying, unrelated to one's current work situation, predicted an increased risk of reported exposure to bullying behaviours and an increased risk of developing a perception of being a victim of workplace bullying. These findings are in keeping with broader conceptual models on workplace bullying that include personal victimization history as an individual level predictor of later exposure to workplace bullying (Einarsen, 2000; Samnani & Singh, 2016), and also correspond well with notions that chronic peer victimization may beget future victimization experiences (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996).

In parallel with the work presented in the present thesis, a series of related studies have also examined the extent to which revictimization occurs at work among employees who have experienced peer victimization in their adolescence. These studies show a comparable pattern to the findings in paper 1 and paper 2 in the present thesis. Following 251 study participants from age 12 to early adulthood at age 22, Brendgen and Poulin (2017) found that exposure to a range of negative acts from peers in adolescence at age 13-17 positively predicted exposure to negative acts at work at age 22. That is, those who experienced more mistreatment as adolescents were also at higher risk of exposure to mistreatment when at work as young adults. Interestingly, and in line with arguments presented earlier, the link between mistreatment in adolescence and mistreatment at work was partially mediated by depression symptoms at age 19-20, suggesting that initial victimization may spark a vicious cycle of subsequent mental health issues that then increase the risk of new mistreatment (Brendgen & Poulin, 2017). Still, using standardized variables, the indirect effect was rather small (0.04) compared to the still significant direct effect (0.22), showing that depression symptoms only accounted for a small proportion of the total effect of prior mistreatment on current workplace mistreatment. The study also revealed that baseline anxious-withdrawal behaviour at age 12 predicted exposure to negative acts at age 13-17, although this only accounted for approximately 3 per cent of the variance, suggesting that baseline interindividual differences played a rather modest role in subsequent exposure to mistreatment. In another related study, Brendgen et al. (2021) found that different latent peer

victimization profiles in childhood and adolescence, based on seven measurement occasions from age 6 to 17, predicted exposure to mistreatment at college or at work at age 19. Specifically, those who had experienced more mistreatment during childhood and adolescence were more likely to report exposure to mistreatment at work or in college at age 19. Also in this study, personal characteristics as measured in childhood, in this case reactive aggression and anxious-withdrawal, was related to subsequent victimization profiles, resulting in significant indirect effects of these characteristics on victimization at work or college at age 19 via victimization profiles in adolescence.

This latter finding leads to a natural question of what role pre-existing characteristics play in explaining revictimization as a phenomenon. After all, it could be that revictimization is merely an expression of a latent increased victimization risk due to some stable risk or vulnerability factor(s). If that were the case, the predictions from SIP and schema theory on why revictimization occurs would be inaccurate at best. While this issue of pre-existing characteristics was not empirically examined in the present thesis, other studies provide interesting results. In a study among adolescents, Vucetic et al. (2020) sought to uncover whether victimization in two different context – by friends versus by other peers – shared common risk factors. The authors proposed two competing hypotheses: a common risk factor hypothesis, suggesting that victimization across contexts is a result of common risk factors, and a mutual influence hypothesis, postulating that victimization in one context increases the risk of subsequent victimization in another context. The results were in line with the mutual influence hypothesis and did not support the common risk factor hypotheses. As such, there may be something with the experience of victimization as such that increases subsequent victimization risk, as opposed to revictimization merely being a result of pre-existing risk factors. This assumption is also supported by the findings by Brendgen and colleagues (Brendgen & Poulin, 2017; Brendgen et al., 2021) that prior victimization remains a significant predictor when baseline personal characteristics are included in the analyses.

Although these aforementioned studies did not study bullying as such but rather employed broader measures of peer victimization, and focused on revictimization among emerging adults, these findings align well with the revictimization findings in paper 1 and 2 of this thesis. Taken together, the accumulated evidence from paper 1 and 2 in the current thesis and other relevant studies (Andersen et al., 2015; Brendgen & Poulin, 2017; Brendgen et al., 2021; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Smith et al., 2003) do indeed suggest that employees with a prior history of victimization from bullying are at somewhat higher risk of subsequently ending up in a new bullying situation at work. Still, the magnitude of this effect seems to be modest. Broadly speaking, this pattern of findings makes sense against the backdrop of theoretical models (Einarsen, 2000) and empirical findings (e.g., Blomberg & Rosander, 2021; Kivimäki et al., 2003) showing that the outcomes of victimization from bullying may also act as risk factors for subsequent victimization. Following SIP theory (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996) and the cognitive trauma theory of shattered assumptions (Janoff-Bulman, 1992), these revictimization patterns could be understood as the result of repeated victimization and rejection experiences altering the social schemas of the victims. These alterations may make victims more inclined to interpret, react and respond to subsequent situations of ambiguous or negative social interaction in a more negative manner, which at least in part may contribute to the escalation of a new bullying situation. Such distorted social information processing patterns have indeed been identified in research on victimized children and adolescents (for a review, see van Reemst et al., 2016), while there is less evidence among adult employees at work in this regard. Thus, the exact mechanisms that explain the observed increased risk of exposure to bullying at work among employees with prior victimization experiences is still unclear.

4.3 Prior victimization and subsequent interpretation and labelling of negative acts at work

One potential explanation for the revictimization observed in paper 1 and 2 may be that prior victims are more inclined to label their situation as bullying if they first perceive some exposure to negative social acts. This hypothesis, based on models of

altered social information processing following trauma (Janoff-Bulman, 1989, 1992) and peer victimization (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996; Rosen et al., 2007), may potentially explain why employees with prior victimization experiences have an increased likelihood of self-labelling as victims of workplace bullying.

The results of paper 1, however, provide evidence against this assumption, by showing that the relationship between perceived exposure to negative acts and perceived victimization from bullying was not affected by prior victimization from bullying. In other words, the results suggested that the threshold for labelling as a victim of workplace bullying when facing exposure to negative social behaviours at work was not affected by interindividual differences in prior experiences of being a victim of bullying. Notably, the Bayes factor for this interaction coefficient indicated support in favour of the null hypothesis and against the proposed interaction effect, suggesting that the data provided evidence for absence of the hypothesized effect, as opposed to merely absence of evidence for the effect. This may of course indicate that the SIP model and other schema theories are not that well suited to predict interindividual differences in interpretations and appraisals of negative social interactions at work among adult employees. After all, the majority of studies testing propositions derived from the SIP model have done so among children and adolescents (van Reemst et al., 2016), leaving the generalizability of these findings to adult employees less obvious.

However, temporality is another important factor to consider here. While "prior victimization from bullying" at first glance appears to be homogenous term, an important feature of it may of course be how distal the experience is. As also noted by Brendgen et al. (2021), more recent experiences are more readily available than distal ones. With the mere passing of time since the prior victimization, individuals presumably accumulate a range of positive peer interaction experiences that potentially reduce the potency of any prior victimization experiences. Following the assumption in the SIP model (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996) that individuals have a database of memories from social interactions that inform their interpretation of future social interactions, it is evident that such a database of past social interactions

is continuously evolving during the course of life. Given that the majority of the prior victimization experiences among the participants in paper 1 concerned victimization from bullying encountered during the school years, it is not unreasonable to assume that the adult employees that constituted the sample have had ample experiences of positive social interaction with the potential to reduce any acquired social information interpretation biases in the time following their initial victimization. As such, time passed since the prior victimization could play a part here, with more recent experiences presumably being more potent in affecting current interpretations than more distal experiences. Still, this explanation does not account for the revictimization risk identified in paper 1 and 2 and in other studies.

Another potential explanation, then, may be found in the design features of paper 1. Specifically, the design in paper 1 allows for inferences about the relationships between prior victimization from bullying and subsequent perceived accumulated exposure to bullying behaviours at work over a six month period, as well as the perception of being victimized from workplace bullying or not during this six month period. In hindsight, it is perhaps somewhat optimistic to expect large between-person variability in how an employee's retrospective evaluation of the extent to which they have been exposed to bullying behaviours during the course of half a year relates to their appraisal of this situation as constituting bullying or not. After all, a retrospective evaluation of accumulated exposure leaves plenty of room for deliberate reasoning on the meaning of the said work situation. At the end of a six month period, the experiences in the preceding months may also count as "prior experiences" that may be considered more salient for the current situation, thus leaving the distal prior experiences less important for understanding the current situation.

As such, another interesting approach to test the proposed impact of prior victimization on current appraisal of negative social interactions could be to use more short-term designs that map onto the appraisal of discrete events, as opposed to the design in paper 1 that covers appraisal and recollection of an accumulation of experiences from a six month period. This could be done using experience sampling methodology, such as the interval-contingent daily diary design used in paper 3, or

event-contingent designs that require participants to respond following a specific kind of event (Fisher & To, 2012), as employed by Baillien et al. (2017). Such specific events are presumably more ambiguous than the accumulation of events over many months, possibly leaving more room for between-person variability in prior experiences to influence the immediate appraisals. In addition, subtle behaviours occurring in the initial stages of a bullying process are a cause of confusion and misinterpretation for targets and witnesses alike (Samnani, 2013), and designs that specifically capture the initial stages of the process may be needed to fully explore the extent to which prior victimization impacts interpretations and appraisals.

Another approach could be to use scenario-based experimental vignette designs (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010), which would ensure that the participants are in fact responding to the same stimuli. Such an approach has been used successfully in other studies on bullying at work (Desrumaux et al., 2016; Longo & DeDonno, 2020; Pallesen et al., 2017). In a study with some similarities to paper 1 in this thesis, Escartín et al. (2009) examined variability in perceived severity of a range of potential bullying behaviours using a vignette design. The results showed that severity ratings made by 300 Spanish workers did not vary systematically as a function of their current or prior personal experience with workplace bullying (i.e., as a victim, witness, or perpetrator). That is, the participants' prior bullying experiences did not impact judgements of severity of the brief text-based scenarios. This corresponds with the lack of a moderating effect of prior victimization on the relationship between exposure to negative acts and the perception of being a victim of bullying seen in paper 1 in this thesis. Still, the ecological validity of such vignette designs is an obvious concern. It may also be argued that text-based short descriptions of certain negative behaviours are not sufficient to elicit differences in appraisals.

4.4 Prior victimization from bullying and later depressed mood

One of the key assumptions for several of the hypotheses tested in this thesis, is the notion that victimization from bullying may have both immediate and long-term detrimental outcomes for those targeted, with sustained resource losses that may impact their subsequent well-being, risk of exposure to bullying, and vulnerability. In study 2, we investigated one such indicator of sustained resource loss, in the form of depressive tendencies at age 30 as a function of bullying victimization experiences 15-17 years earlier, when in junior high school. As predicted, those who had been victimized from bullying as adolescents scored slightly higher on depressed mood at age 30, although the magnitude of this effect was small and did not hold up in the final multivariate model.

It is worthwhile to note that we in paper 2 controlled for depressed mood assessed in the last year of junior high school (at age 15), as opposed to the first year of junior high school (at age 13). As such, the multivariate test examined whether victimization from bullying in adolescence predicted a higher risk of developing higher levels of depressed mood, after taking the potential immediate effect of victimization in junior high school on depressed mood into account. Thus, the respondents in paper 2 may still have experienced immediate impacts from any victimization from bullying on their depressed mood in junior high school which may have been sustained over time. Yet, the results do not suggest that prior victims were more vulnerable to developing depressed mood in adulthood on top of that already developed while suffering bullying in adolescence. In addition, considering that revictimization at work (at age 22) has been shown to partially mediate the relationship between peer victimization in adolescence and depression symptoms in adulthood (at age 25) in another study (Brendgen et al., 2019), the relationship between victimization from bullying in adolescence and depressed mood at age 30 in paper 2 could perhaps be disaggregated into a direct effect and an indirect effect via exposure to negative acts at age 30. This potential indirect effect was regrettably not tested in paper 2, however, as it was not hypothesized in advance.

Overall, the findings of the present thesis are in line with a range of other prospective studies showing that exposure to bullying in adolescence is associated with poorer mental health in adulthood. Some of these studies reported that the prospective relationships between victimization from bullying in adolescence and subsequent mental health problems in adulthood have become substantially weakened and sometimes nonsignificant when controlling for baseline mental health problems and other potential confounders (e.g., Copeland et al., 2013). Yet again, several of the studies identified victimization in adolescence as a risk factor for adult adjustment and well-being even when controlling for relevant baseline variables. For instance Winding et al. (2020) found that those who had been bullied in adolescence (at age 15 and/or 18) were up to twice as likely to develop depressive symptoms at age 28 compared to their non-bullied peers, when controlling for depressive symptoms at age 15. Similarly, Östberg et al. (2017) found that victimization from bullying during adolescence (ages 10-18) predicted psychological complaints in young adulthood ten years later (ages 20-28) when controlling for baseline psychological complaints, yet only for women. In another recent study, analyses of trajectories of peer victimization between the age of 6 and 17 showed that even limited exposure to victimization predicted mental health problems at age 20, also when controlling for a range of baseline measures (Oncioiu et al., 2021).

Overall, these findings provide additional support to the notion that victimization from bullying is not simply a harmful rite of passage, but rather an experience that may subsequently put individuals at risk of mental health problems. Still, it is also worth to keep in mind that the moderate effect sizes and mixed prospective findings may be indicative of some sort of resilience among at least some prior victims of bullying. Accordingly, even early studies in the field suggested that there is substantial heterogeneity in the extent to which victims of bullying recover or suffer long-term outcomes (Olweus, 1994a, 1994b). As such, victimization from bullying need not have long-term detrimental outcomes for all victims despite significant group-level or between-person relationships, and examining individual and situational factors that may mitigate the long-term negative impact of victimization

when it first occurs is therefore an interesting avenue of research. Although some studies have investigated prospective protective factors interfering with the link between school victimization and the experience of mental health problems some years later (for a review, see Ttofi et al., 2014), we know less about the predictors of the heterogeneity in the prospective relationships between victimization from bullying in childhood and adolescence and mental health outcomes in adulthood. Hence, this seems to be a potentially important issue to address in future studies.

4.5 Prior victimization from bullying as a moderator of the relationship between current exposure to negative acts and depressed mood

In addition to proposing prior victimization as a risk factor for subsequent exposure to and victimization from bullying at work, this thesis has centred around the question of whether prior victimization experiences can be viewed as a vulnerability factor that increases vulnerability to negative affective reactions if subsequently being exposed to bullying at work. This general notion was founded in a broader conceptual model of workplace bullying (Einarsen, 2000). It was also supported by claims that research on workplace mistreatment has broadly failed to incorporate a temporal perspective that takes employees' prior experiences with related phenomena into account (Cole et al., 2016). Precisely how prior victimization experiences would play a part in predicting vulnerability if subsequently facing a bullying situation at work was not, however, explicitly formulated in these aforementioned works.

Building on contemporary theories of workplace stress, such as COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018) and JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001), and on a stress sensitization perspective on depression (Alford & Beck, 2009; Hammen et al., 2000), we predicted that employees with prior victimization experiences would be more at risk of experiencing negative affective reactions if in the future yet again being confronted with bullying behaviours, as compared to employees without such prior victimization experiences. That is, we predicted that the relationship between exposure to negative acts at work and

depressed mood would be stronger among employees with prior bullying victimization experiences.

We tested these predictions in two different studies employing widely different temporal perspectives and research designs. The results of paper 2 indicated that victimization from bullying 15-17 years ago, when in junior high school, attenuated rather than strengthened the relationship between exposure to negative acts at work and concurrent depressive tendencies at age 30. The results of paper 3, on the other hand, indicated that while the relationship between exposure to negative acts and same-day depressed mood did not vary as a result of prior victimization, the relationships between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood on following days were only significant among those with prior and recent victimization experiences, suggesting that prior victimization did indeed act as a vulnerability factor.

Overall, then, with two seemingly contradicting findings regarding prior victimization from bullying and subsequent vulnerability and reactivity, a tempting conclusion would be to simply state that more research is needed, especially given the fact that these are the first attempts to examine this hypothesis among employees in a workplace context. After all, if one were to put on a meta-analysist hat, these two studies would simply be two of many potential future data points to come. One solution could therefore be to suspend judgements until more evidence is in. On the other hand, searching for moderators in the form of study characteristics potentially explaining the heterogeneity in observed findings would also be in the spirit of a meta-analysist. Although paper 2 and paper 3 tested the same general vulnerability hypothesis, there are important distinctions between the studies that can contextualize the seemingly discrepant findings. In the following, I will discuss these findings in more detail in light of relevant study characteristics and other related empirical findings, and attempt to clarify how they contribute to our knowledge about prior experiences and later vulnerability to the impact of workplace bullying.

In paper 3, we narrowed in on the day-to-day experiences that may constitute workplace bullying and tested whether prior victimization would impact the relationship between exposure to these negative acts and same-day and next-days depressed mood. Building on COR (Hobfoll, 1989) and JD-R theory (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) and on the key conceptual assumption that workplace bullying erodes resources, making the target increasingly vulnerable and unable to withstand subsequent attacks (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005), we predicted prior victimization to strengthen the relationship between exposure to negative acts and same-day and next-days depressed mood. First, the results showed that exposure to negative acts positively predicted depressed mood on the same day as the exposure. This finding is in line with other studies showing that daily or weekly fluctuations in exposure to negative acts at work depletes resources and negatively impacts affective states among those targeted (Rodriguez-Munoz et al., 2020; Rodriguez et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2017; Tremmel & Sonnentag, 2017; Tuckey & Neall, 2014). This implies that situations do not have to amount to fully escalated bullying cases before the targeted employees experience straining reactions, and that organizations and leaders should take care to reduce even fleeting instances of negative social behaviours at work. Surprisingly, the same-day relationship between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood was not significantly affected by the study participants' prior victimization from bullying in paper 3. This is contrary to our predictions derived from our theoretical framework. This finding could indicate that exposure to negative social behaviours from one's own colleagues or supervisors is universally affectively distressing regardless of one's prior experiences of victimization. This also happens to coincide with a pattern that has emerged in a range of studies using the Cyberball paradigm used to experimentally induce social exclusion, where it has been noted that immediate responses seem to be less impacted by potential moderators, while the delayed or sustained responses are better candidates for moderation effects (Hartgerink et al., 2015). This is also in line with the finding in paper 3 that prior victimization moderated the relationship between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood one and two days after the exposure. Judging by paper 3 and other related studies (e.g., Nicholson & Griffin, 2015), it also seems evident that the impact

of isolated exposure to negative behaviours seems to dissipate over the course of days. As such, while daily fluctuations in mistreatment at work is important for understanding fluctuations in well-being, they are unlikely to lead to sustained health impairment and resource losses unless occurring in a broader context of systematic exposure over time.

On the other hand, the results in paper 3 also showed that the lagged relationship between exposure to negative acts and depressed mood one and two days after the exposure was stronger among those with prior and recent victimization experiences. Simple slope tests showed that these relationships were only significant among prior victims. That is, the vulnerability hypothesis was supported when examining depressed mood one and two days following the exposure to negative acts. As such, it seems that prior victimization, at least when relatively recent as in paper 3 (i.e., the last six months prior to the diary study period), impairs recovery from bullying incidents. This finding may help foster a lay understanding of why it is not as easy to "brush it off" if a negative event is experienced in light of a broader mistreatment experience compared to if it is a single episode in isolation. Just as it is harder to run a 100-meter sprint straight after finishing a marathon, it may very well be harder to recover from incidents of negative treatment from colleagues or supervisors if you have recently endured a process of bullying at work. Considering key notions from COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), this reduced ability to recover from episodes of exposure to negative acts among targets of bullying may be understood as a result of the resource depleting process that on-going bullying entails (Tuckey & Neall, 2014; Zapf & Einarsen, 2005). In other words, while single instances of exposure to negative acts from one's fellow workers may be universally distressing, those who have also recently gone through a process of victimization from bullying, with repeated and systematic exposure to such negative acts, seem to be more vulnerable in terms of being less able to recover. In sum, then, the vulnerability hypothesis received some support in paper 3, as prior victimization strengthened the relationship between exposure to negative acts and next-days depressed mood but did not affect the same-day relationship.

The findings in paper 2, however, showed a different pattern. In contrast to our predictions and the findings in paper 3, the vulnerability hypothesis was not supported in paper 2. That is, the relationship between exposure to negative acts at work and depressed mood at age 30 was stronger among employees who had been bullied less (vs. more) during junior high school, and prior victimization thus attenuated rather than boosted the concurrent relationship between exposure to negative acts at work and depressed mood. As such, this finding contradicts the predictions derived from COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), stress sensitization research (e.g., McLaughlin et al., 2010), and the cognitive model of depression (Beck, 2008). A pertinent question, then, is what the theoretical implications of this findings may be, and what the potential explanations may be for the inconsistent findings concerning the vulnerability hypothesis in paper 2 and paper 3. Naturally, there is always a chance that surprising results in single studies may just be due to chance – a random result of sampling variability with limited generalizability. I would argue, however, that there are several other credible explanations for these findings. Below, I discuss some of these in more detail.

As also noted by Einarsen and Raknes (1991) and further developed by Zapf and Einarsen (2005), Leymann (1987) suggested in his seminal work that bullying causes a resource depletion process that is detrimental for the victims' ability to cope with the situation. An important question, then, is how long it takes before such coping resources can be rebuilt following a process of resource depletion. In the context of prior victimization experiences that are still relatively proximal to the current situation (i.e., the preceding six months, as in paper 3), it seems plausible that prior victims have not had sufficient time to recover from their victimization, leaving them more inclined to experience sustained negative affective reactions when facing incidents of exposure bullying behaviours. Prior victimization experiences that are more distal, however, such as 15-17 years ago among 30-year-old employees, leaves substantially more time to process and to recover from the prior mistreatment. As such, a key factor for understanding the contradicting findings concerning the vulnerability hypothesis in paper 2 and paper 3 may simply be the different temporal

focus in the designs, where the mere passing of time may be a prerequisite for replenishing initially lost coping resources among prior victims. Thus, COR and JD-R theory, with their focus on resource losses following long-term stressor exposure, may still be valuable frameworks for understanding vulnerability following prior victimization, given that temporality is taken more explicitly into account.

Another interesting perspective on the vulnerability hypothesis finding can be found within the cognitive theory of trauma (Janoff-Bulman, 1989, 1992), which was also discussed in relation to the revictimization hypothesis examined in paper 1 and paper 2. According to this framework, traumatic events threaten to shatter our basic assumptions of the world as benevolent and meaningful, and the self as worthy. Existing studies have shown that victimization from bullying is indeed related to more negative assumptive schemas (Glasø, Nielsen, Einarsen, et al., 2009; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Rodriguez-Munoz et al., 2010), and Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2002) suggested that "it is the very shock of being subjected to bullying that is the primary cause of these negative schemas" (p. 99). Relatedly, shattered assumptions about the world, others and oneself has been suggested to mediate the relationship between exposure to bullying at work and its detrimental outcomes for targets (Mikkelsen et al., 2020). An interesting question, then, is whether basic assumptive schemas about the world that have previously been shattered by victimization from bullying – and then rebuilt – can be shattered yet again from a similar experience.

In the aftermath of traumatic experiences that shatter basic assumptions, individuals may engage in attempts to rebuild their assumptive world (Janoff-Bulman, 1992, 2004). These efforts can, perhaps somewhat counterintuitively, also result in reduced vulnerability. Specially, through successfully coping with and incorporating their prior experiences into their rebuilt basic schemas, victims may experience a psychological preparedness that leave them better prepared and less traumatized by any subsequent negative events (Janoff-Bulman, 2004). In fact, it has even been pointed out that the most common outcome of exposure to potential traumatic events – at least with the passing of time – is healthy adaptation and resilience (Bonanno, 2021). As also noted by others (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003; Namie & Namie,

2018), exposure to workplace bullying may have the most detrimental impact on those who initially hold the most optimistic and naïve world view. In other words, prior victims who have had the time to process their experiences may have less naïve and more realistic schemas that leave them less shocked and traumatized by potential future exposure to workplace bullying, compared to employees with intact optimistic basic assumptions.

Interestingly, recent empirical evidence suggests that at least some prior victims of bullying may have the perception that they have, one some level, benefited and grown from their prior struggles. For instance, Ratcliff et al. (2017) found support for post-traumatic growth processes following the initial victimization from bullying in a sample of visually impaired youth. Similarly, Pabian et al. (2021) found, across two Flemish and Dutch samples of young adults aged 18-24, that perceived positive effects on current life from bullying endured at age 10-18 were not uncommon. Up to a quarter of the respondents mentioned specific positive perceived effects from their prior victimization on their current social functioning (e.g., "being better at defending myself", "being more assertive", and "being better at recognizing bullying") or on their current personality or self-image (e.g., "being more resilient," "being stronger," and "having a thicker skin") (Pabian et al., 2021, p. 10). Similarly, based on interviews with some 800 adults about their experiences with bullying in childhood, DeLara (2016) described substantial heterogeneity in what prior victims perceived to be the outcomes of their experiences, with 17.5 % firmly saying that the impact was strictly negative, 47.2 % believing that they had experienced positive outcomes, and the remaining participants being unsure. Thus, it ranged from those who view their experiences as exclusively negative and damaging, to those who believe they became stronger, developed "a tougher skin", and adopted a more realistic world view. Still, these latter findings should be interpreted with caution, as limited information about the study's methodology has been made available.

Along the same lines, a qualitative study among 17 self-identified targets of workplace bullying in New Zealand reported that while all the informants had experienced some negative health consequences from their bullying victimization,

most also believed that they had experienced increased resilience in the aftermath of their victimization (Van Heugten, 2013). Similarly, a qualitatively orientated doctoral dissertation on coping among victims of workplace bullying in India concluded that victims "come out stronger and better prepared to handle similar situations in the future" (Mishra, 2019). In other words, despite the abundance of empirical work showing the negative impact of victimization from bullying, some also seem come out on the other side of their prior victimization with the experience that they have also benefited from their hardships. It is interesting to note that many of these studies reporting post-traumatic growth tendencies among prior victims of bullying use a qualitative design. As such, there is a need to follow up on these notions in studies using quantitative designs which to a larger extent allow for hypothesis testing and generalization of the results. Moreover, these existing studies rely on the participants' own perception of how they have been impacted by their prior victimization, and more studies comparing actual stressor-strain relationships among prior victims versus nonvictims thus seems to be warranted.

In parallel with this PhD project, another study provided a somewhat different test of the vulnerability hypothesis tested in paper 2. Using a sample of 251 study participants, Brendgen et al. (2019) examined whether peer victimization during adolescence (age 13 to 17) moderated the relationship between workplace victimization at age 22 and mental and physical health at age 25. Although the interaction coefficient was negative, as were the interaction coefficients in paper 2, the coefficient was deemed to be non-significant as the bootstrapped confidence interval included zero. While this can indicate a true null effect, the finding could naturally also be a false negative result resulting from low statistical power. In addition, the measure of peer victimization used by Brendgen et al. (2019) fall under the behavioural experience method (i.e., asking about exposure to specific predetermined negative behaviours). As such the results did not single out prior victimization from bullying as such. Moreover, the fact that paper 2 examined a concurrent relationship while Brendgen et al. (2019) used a 3-year time-lag is another natural explanation for the discrepant findings.

More broadly, the findings concerning vulnerability following prior victimization from bullying presented in paper 2 and 3 fit into a general discussion of whether, when, and how prior adversity can make individuals more resilient and less likely to experience affective distress in response to life stressors. Although somewhat counterintuitive in the context of the abundance of studies on bullying and other adversities as detrimental for later psychological functioning elaborated on in the introduction, some also suggest that prior adversity can bolster later resilience, depending on characteristics of the adversities. For instance, some studies have found those with a history of some as compared to no or high levels of adversity to be less vulnerable and less likely to experience depressive tendencies in response to proximal stressors (Seery et al., 2010; Shapero et al., 2015). A review of studies on the topic revealed that while it is not straightforward to determine what "optimal" adversity levels are, using curvilinear models seems like a viable approach to empirically test such "steeling effects" from prior adversities (Höltge et al., 2018). Crane et al. (2018) even proposed a systematic self-reflection model of resilience strengthening, wherein they postulated that a history of stressor exposure and adversity may be beneficial for later resilience building, to the extent that individuals are able to engage in meta-cognitive self-reflection concerning their stressor exposure and stressor response with the passing of time. This is similar to the notions of posttraumatic growth described within the context of the cognitive theory of trauma (Janoff-Bulman, 2004). Yet, Crane et al. (2018) also suggest that such resilience building is more likely to occur from daily hassles than from traumatic events, and the framework has not yet been applied to interpersonal work stressors such as workplace bullying. Still, such a perspective could nevertheless in part shed light on the seemingly conflicting findings concerning the vulnerability hypothesis in paper 2 and paper 3 in the present thesis, as a 15-17 year time-window naturally leaves more room for systematic self-reflection than a comparably shorter 6 months period. In addition, it is possible that some of the "prior victims" in paper 3 experienced any exposure to negative acts during the diary study period as a continuance of their bullying victimization rather than new and isolated events. In other words, a distal experience may be easier to

systematically process and recover from compared to a more recent or even ongoing experience of victimization.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that while there have been few studies specifically on how or why present reactions to workplace bullying may be affected by past experiences of bullying, there have been several attempts to untangle when and for whom workplace bullying is more detrimental. From this line of research, a somewhat surprising pattern of findings have emerged, where factors assumed to protect employees from the negative impact of workplace bullying have not done so. On the contrary, the relationships between exposure to bullying at work and its detrimental health and well-being outcomes have been found to be stronger among employees with higher levels of the presumed protective individual characteristics (see Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). This pattern has been found for factors such as trait optimism (Britton et al., 2012), personal resilience (Aarestad et al., 2021), sense of coherence (Nielsen et al., 2008), perceived ability to defend (Nielsen, Gjerstad, et al., 2017), coping styles (Reknes et al., 2016), and whether the employee self-labels as a victim of bullying (Hewett et al., 2016; Vie et al., 2011). Thus, a reversed buffering effects seems to exist, where those with the highest levels of the presumed protective factors appear to be the most affected by exposure to bullying at work. At the same time, the presumed protective factors have beneficial main effects, such that those with low levels of the protective factors seem to be worse of in general in terms of health outcomes. In other words, those with low scores on the presumed protective factors display somewhat elevated levels of health problems, seemingly regardless of their current levels of exposure to bullying at work. Those with higher levels of the presumed protective factors, on the other hand, seem to be better off as long as they are not experiencing workplace bullying, yet when exposed to bullying behaviours at work experience an increase in health complaints and distress, reaching similar levels as those with low levels of the protective factors.

4.6 Methodological considerations

4.6.1 Sample selection and generalizability

The samples used in the papers included in this thesis vary greatly in the extent to which they correspond with the general working population. Hence, the generalizability differs between the studies. In paper 1, we relied on data collected using a probability sampling strategy suited to gain a sample fairly representative of the Norwegian working population (Høstmark & Lagerstrøm, 2006). As such, the findings in paper 1 may reflect the prevalence of prior victimization and revictimization from bullying in the Norwegian working population, at least as it were at the times of data collection in 2005 and 2010 (see Nielsen et al., 2009). Paper 2, on the other hand, uses data collected from individuals from a specific birth cohort in randomly selected schools in what was then known as Hordaland county in the west of Norway. While this is a "typical" Norwegian county on many indicators, such as distribution of educational attainment (Statistics Norway, 2019), sampling from a specific birth cohort in a specific part of the country could naturally limits generalizability to other contexts and cohorts somewhat. This may especially be true with regards to the prevalence estimates, while it is perhaps more debatable whether the relationships studied in paper 2 should be thought of as specific to the studied cohort. Lastly, paper 3 uses data collected from a sample of predominantly male and young naval cadets who have gone through a thorough selection process. In addition, being confined to a sailing ship throughout the study period is also naturally not a typical context for the general working population, although it offers a study context that limits the influence of other factors. The somewhat peculiar context and atypical context may of course thus limit the generalizability of these findings. Nevertheless, it can also be argued that when naval cadets selected partly based on their resilience and ability to endure stressful situations experience affective distress following exposure to negative acts, these are relationships that one can expect to also exist or even be stronger in the general working population.

Finally, in a broader context, it is also evident that all papers in this thesis were carried out in what has been coined as a WEIRD society (Western, educated,

industrialized, rich and democratic; Henrich et al., 2010). Considering that workplace bullying as a phenomenon can be construed and experienced differently across different cultures (Salin et al., 2019), it is not given that the findings would be the same in other cultures differing from the Norwegian context.

4.6.2 Cross-sectional data and causality

Next, as a somewhat obvious point, it should be noted that several of the relationships studied in the papers included in this thesis were estimated without temporal ordering of the collected variables. For instance, exposure to negative acts and depressive tendencies at age 30 in paper 2 were measured concurrently, as were exposure to negative acts and self-labelled victimization at follow-up in paper 1. Strictly speaking, then, we cannot infer causality from these data alone, and so have relied heavily on conceptual reasoning and prior research when interpreting these relationships. These limitations notwithstanding, cross-sectional designs have also been advocated to be more useful than their reputation, for instance in cases where the research question includes a naturally occurring variable such as an experience that has occurred in the past (Spector, 2019). However, reversed relationships are still plausible, as indicated by recent evidence of within-person reciprocal effects of stressor exposure and physical complaints (Goldring & Bolger, 2021), and by recent studies examining when employees with poor health are at higher risk of becoming targets of bullying at follow-up (Blomberg & Rosander, 2021; Rosander, 2021). As such, our results should be interpreted with some caution. On the other hand, longitudinal studies using within-person approaches are starting to unravel the extent to which victimization by peers has a causal effect on subsequent health problems. For instance, using a longitudinal design with both monozygotic and dizygotic twins, Schaefer et al. (2018) found that victimization in childhood and adolescence (including, but not limited to, bullying) increased the risk of subsequent mental health problem at age 18 over and above the impact of baseline vulnerabilities and shared genetic and environmental factors. While not conclusive evidence of causality, this at least provides support in favour of a causal effect of victimization on subsequent health.

4.6.3 Latent versus observed interaction terms

In the papers included in this thesis, we have tested the proposed interactions using variations of moderated multiple regression analyses (MMR), either in a multilevel framework or in a path analytical or structural equation modelling (SEM) framework. The interaction hypotheses have all been tested by calculating an interaction term by multiplying the predictor variable with the moderator variable and subsequently regressing the outcome variable on the interaction term. This approach, however, disregards any measurement error in the predictor or moderator variable. Therefore, latent moderated structural equations (LMS) has been proposed as an superior option for testing interaction effects within a SEM framework (Klein & Moosbrugger, 2000). Simulation studies show that LMS may provide more accurate parameter estimates, while MMR seems to produce attenuated estimates as the true effect size of the interaction increases (Cheung et al., 2021; Cheung & Lau, 2017). On the other hand, simulation studies have also shown LMS to produce an inflated false positive (i.e., type I error) rate when the exogeneous variables are skewed and leptokurtic (Cham et al., 2012), to the extent that the LMS procedure has been proposed as being unsuited to reliably estimate interactions with skewed data (Maslowsky et al., 2015). As measures of victimization from and exposure to bullying tend to be heavily non-normal, we have therefore relied on the MMR approach for testing interactions in the papers that form the basis of this thesis. This has prevented us from incorporating any measurement error of the predictor and moderator into the model and thus possibly attenuated the interaction estimates. Thus, we have opted for a conservative approach where we accept somewhat higher type II error rates (false negatives) in exchange for lower type I error rates (false positives). That said, it is also worthwhile to consider whether it is appropriate to model exposure to bullying as a latent construct in the first place.

4.6.4 Exposure to bullying as a latent variable

In the papers included in this thesis, exposure to bullying behaviours at work has not been modelled as a latent variable in the main analyses. This has the obvious drawback of resulting in analyses that do not correct for measurement error and thus potentially attenuate effect estimates of relationships with other variables. Still, while

the latent variable model is widely used in psychology, there seems to be an increasing awareness of the importance of carefully considering the nature of the process that gives rise to the data at hand, rather than relying on a latent variable model by default (Rhemtulla et al., 2020). Simply put, a reflective indicator latent variable model assumes that some underlying latent construct gives rise to and causes changes in the observed indicators, and that these indicators are interchangeable. In contrast, a causal indicator model treats the indicators as causes of the latent construct, such that the indicators are considered causal-formative and give rise to the construct at hand, with socioeconomic status being a widely used example (Bollen, 1984; Bollen & Diamantopoulos, 2015). Given that the various experiences of negative social behaviours that together may constitute a bullying situation need not co-exist for the bullying label to be applied to the situation, it is not given that the common effect model is always the optimal way to model the items in scales designed to measure exposure to bullying. Employees do not seem to experience a simultaneous increase in all indicators of bullying in survey designs, but rather experience increases in different subset of items depending on the escalation (Rosander & Blomberg, 2019). At the extreme, then, an employee's high scores on a subset of items could in a common effect model wrongly be construed as "measurement error" that does not fit well with their otherwise low exposure. Relatedly, it may seem somewhat illogical to consider bullying as a latent construct where an increase in the latent bullying construct causes corresponding changes in all the indicator variables. This would translate to "you are exposed to humiliation and ridicule because you are bullied". This may perhaps better reflect the underlying process in severe cases where there is high agreement among members of a work group that they are faced with a "deserving victim", subsequently lowering the threshold of subjecting the victim to negative social behaviours (Einarsen, 2000). In less severe cases, however, applying the common effect model is perhaps less ideal, and the formative indicator approach may be a viable option. This could translate to "we classify you as bullied because you are exposed to sufficient levels of humiliation and ridicule", which seems to be more in line with the reasoning provided in the literature.

Some even claim that most existing measures of mistreatment at work, including bullying, are formative rather than reflective (Tarraf et al., 2017) and that reliance on reflective models is misguided given the nature of the mistreatment concepts (Tepper & Henle, 2011). On the other hand, the vast majority of studies on workplace bullying have implicitly relied on a common effects model by using measures of internal consistency and results of confirmatory factors analyses to report on the psychometric properties of the scales, including the papers in this thesis. Considering the limitations of the LMS approach to test for moderation, we have still opted to model exposure to negative acts as an observed as opposed to latent variable in the main analyses in the papers in this thesis. Again, by doing so, we also accept a potentially higher risk of Type II errors due to attenuated effect sizes caused by unmodelled measurement error.

4.6.5 The validity of retrospective measures

As noted by Spector (2019), retrospective measures of events that occurred in the past may of course come with limitations related to recall biases, but may all the same provide valuable insight into how events that occurred in the past affect the present. This is especially relevant for events or experiences that occur seldom or not at all over one´s life span, which, after all, tends to be the case for severe bullying. When studying such phenomena, it may be practically challenging to employ a fully longitudinal design.

Paper 2, however, enabled us to assess our hypotheses concerning victimization from bullying during junior high school using both a proximal, concurrent measure and a more distal, retrospective measure (i.e., during junior high school, and at age 18, looking back at the high school period overall). Although we did not set out to explicitly assess the agreement between the two measures as such, the measures were moderately related. In addition, the pattern of results was similar across the two measures, with seemingly larger effect sizes for the retrospective measure, although this difference was not statistically tested. Importantly, the conclusions for the hypothesis tests were the same. Interestingly, a prospective study on adverse childhood experiences following respondents from age 3 to 38 reported a similar

pattern of result, with both the prospective and retrospective measure predicting poor health in adulthood, with somewhat stronger effect sizes for the retrospective measure when predicting subjective outcomes (Reuben et al., 2016). Moreover, retrospective accounts of adversities predicted subjective outcomes regardless of prospective measures, which opens the possibility both for biased retrospective accounts and for underreporting in prospective measures.

Despite the reassurance from similar patterns of results across the different measures in paper 2, we cannot exclude the possibility that the results in paper 1 and 2 are affected by recall bias. In paper 3, on the other hand, we can be more confident that recall bias is less of an issue. Although participants taking part in the daily diary study strictly speaking also provided retrospective accounts, these accounts entailed their experiences on the same day and are therefore presumably less affected by recall bias.

4.6.6 Workplace bullying or minor interpersonal hassles?

Compared to global prevalence rates, workplace bullying seems to be a less frequent problem in Norwegian working life (Nielsen et al., 2009). From a humanistic perspective, this is of course nothing but good news for the health and well-being of Norwegian employees. On the other hand, when it comes to analyzing questionnaire data in order to make inferences about workplace bullying as a phenomenon, a low prevalence rate, paradoxically, becomes more problematic. The studies in the present thesis also have this "problem". Clearly, having a measure of a severe interpersonal stressor that also captures more minor hassles is not limited to the present thesis. For instance, recent papers have highlighted how studies of abusive supervision for the most part study variation from no to rare abusive behaviours (Fischer et al., 2021), and that workplace bullying research for a large part does not really capture workplace bullying as it is commonly conceptualised (Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021). Besides purposefully sampling from populations where the phenomena are more prevalent, one key implication seems to be to carefully consider the prevalence and study context when interpreting and attempting to generalize the results. Still, the abundance of studies identifying detrimental outcomes, despite a low prevalence,

may indicate that a situation need not amount to a full-blown bullying case according to strict definitional criteria for the target to suffer severe negative reactions. On the other hand, the results in paper 1 and 2 showed that it was not uncommon for adult employees to have prior victimization experiences from their school years as children or adolescents. Unfortunately for those targeted, then, low prevalence did not seem to be as big of a "problem" when examining prior victimization from bullying during childhood and adolescence.

4.6.7 When are individuals victimized "enough" to be classified as victims of bullying?

Somewhat related to the issue above regarding relatively low prevalence of bullying, is the question of when an employee is "bullied enough" to be called a victim. In all the articles included in this thesis, we rely on a measure of self-labelled victimization from bullying to identify victims of bullying. In paper 2, we make use of a well-established measure of victimization from bullying among children and adolescents (Olweus, 1993). In paper 1 and 3, we rely on measures tapping into self-labelled victimization from bullying at work that are largely based on the measure used in paper 2 (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). A key concern is the question of when an individual is bullied "enough" according to their response to these self-labelled victimization items to be classified as victims of bullying in the analyses. For the measure in paper 2, a threshold of "2 or 3 times a month" (3) has been suggested as a lower threshold (Solberg & Olweus, 2003), with a stricter threshold of "weekly" (4) or more often perhaps being more suited to capture severe victimization. According to these thresholds, then, students who report the frequency of victimization to be "only once or twice" after being presented with the definition of bullying, are classified as not bullied despite admittedly having stated that they have been bullied. Although such thresholds may be necessary for prevalence estimation and to not "dilute" the bullying concept, it can also be debated whether it is reasonable to disregards respondents' statement that they consider their own experience to be bullying. In paper 2, we reported the results of analyses using both conservative and more lenient thresholds, to ensure that the findings were not merely a result of some arbitrary categorization decision. In paper 1 and 3, using the self-labelling measure on

workplace bullying, we classified those who answered affirmative to the question of whether they had been bullied as victims, regardless of the reported frequency of exposure. While this decision could also be discussed with reference to some of the proposed thresholds for bullying (Leymann, 1996), it was guided by the research aims of paper 1 and 3, and consistent with prior studies (Hewett et al., 2016; Vie et al., 2010).

4.6.8 The meaning of "prior victimization"

Finally, it is worth acknowledging that there is some uncertainty related to the meaning of "prior victimization" in the daily diary study reported in paper 3. As we did not ask who the cadets were bullied by prior to the voyage, we cannot know for certain whether their perpetrators from the last six months prior to the voyage also took part in the sail ship voyage. The cadets operate in set teams and spend a large amount of time with their fellow team members during the first year of their training. Thus, it is possible that some of the cadets who had the perception of having been bullied the last six months prior to the voyage were then subsequently exposed to negative acts during the voyage that they considered to be part of the same bullying situation, whereas others viewed their exposure to negative acts during the voyage as unrelated to their prior victimization. In other words, while it is clear that the findings in paper 3 concern prior victimization experiences, it is less clear whether these prior victimization experiences were perceived as unrelated to the subsequent exposure to negative acts by the victimized cadets. As such, more detailed measures could be needed in replication studies to establish whether the prior victimization is in fact a closed chapter and therefor in itself unrelated to any subsequent exposure.

4.7 Ethical issues

While the data used in all the papers in the present thesis have been collected following appropriate ethical guidelines, emphasizing informed consent and confidentiality, there are several ethical issues related to this project that deserve attention. One such issue relates to the very topic of this thesis. Specifically, publishing papers and in other ways disseminating finding about revictimization from

bullying among employees is not without controversy. For instance, if one were to read certain excerpts of the papers in isolation without considering the entire context, accusations of victim blaming may result. Precisely because of this, there have even been discussions on whether organizational psychologists should abandon theoretical frameworks that emphasize the role of the targets of workplace mistreatment, and rather shift to a focus on the predator only (Cortina, 2017; Cortina et al., 2017). Others, on the other hand, note that whether individual characteristics and behaviours of the target of mistreatment should be included in theoretical models or not is an empirical question (North & Smith, 2018). I would argue that it is still defensible – and valuable – to empirically examine the potential role of targets' own characteristics and behaviours as risk and vulnerability factors, as long as it remains clear that the enactment of workplace bullying and other types of workplace mistreatment is nevertheless unacceptable, regardless of what personal characteristics studies may find to predict victimization. That is, the purpose is not to establish to what extent the blame can be put on targets, but rather to better understand the process and risks so that the knowledge generated can be used in intervention efforts, be it as primary, secondar or tertiary interventions.

Another issue is whether asking the participants about their present and prior experiences with bullying in itself can cause harm. One could, for instance, imagine that participants who have not properly dealt with any prior victimization from bullying could experience affective distress upon being specifically asked to recall whether they have been bullied earlier in their lives. Yet again, posing such questions is a prerequisite for generating knowledge on these sensitive issues. In a broader perspective, the potential inconvenience for the individual participants must be weighed against the potential knowledge gains resulting from a study and the important value of such knowledge for humanity at large and for organizations and their employees more specifically. This potential knowledge gain can naturally also benefit the participants. For instance, such studies may also affirm and generalize the experiences of individuals, which also may be experienced as healing. Because of the potential strain resulting from answering sensitive questions, all the data collection projects that the papers in this thesis is based on included the contact information of a

named researcher that could be contacted if participants had questions about or reactions to the study.

Finally, the daily diary study design used in paper 3 has its own especially interesting ethical issues. Whereas the participants in paper 1 and paper 2 also reported on their experiences of bullying on several occasions, the participants in paper 3 were first asked to report on their self-labelled victimization, and then asked to provide daily reports on their exposure to negative acts and depressed mood for a period of 33 days. Naturally, one can wonder whether asking individuals to reflect on how often they have been exposed to mistreatment daily during the course of just over a month may change their attentiveness to such behaviors, or in itself sensitizes the participants to the impact of such behaviors. In fact, this issue has already been raised by other researchers after reading paper 3 in this thesis, questioning how continuously assessing such negative behaviors may impact both the measurement as such and the involved perpetrator and target (Rosander & Blomberg, 2019). While within-person designs such as the diary approach in paper 3 are necessary to uncover the dynamics of negative interpersonal processes such as bullying, they do place a substantial burden on respondents with their repeated measures. Therefore, it may be even more important to make careful considerations when planning such studies, so that the gains from the study justifies the burden placed on the respondents. Data from the same overall data collection as employed in paper 3 has also been used to answer research questions related to the precursors of exposure to negative social acts (Ågotnes et al., 2020) and the role of leadership for daily work engagement (Breevaart et al., 2014). The participating cadets also received personalized reports. As such, the burden of participation may be easier to justify when the participants have been given something back and the overall data collection has been used to address several research questions.

4.8 Practical implications

A consistent finding in this thesis and in other related studies is that employees with a history of victimization from bullying seem to be somewhat more at risk of later

becoming targets of workplace bullying. From a practical point of view, then, preventing bullying both in schools and at work could have the positive downstream effect of not only protecting the immediate well-being of students and employees, but also potentially reducing the likelihood of an individual entering a vicious cycle of increased future victimization risk at work. In a school setting, there are many tried and tested programmes that appear to be effective (Gaffney et al., 2019, 2021; Olweus et al., 2019), and knowledge on the effectiveness of different approaches to preventing and effectively handling bullying at work is constantly evolving (K. Einarsen et al., 2020; Hamre et al., 2021; Zapf & Vartia, 2020). In addition to preventing bullying from occurring and intervening in a timely fashion when it does, it may be fruitful to provide assistance to victims in the aftermath of their victimization experience, as victims of workplace bullying have been shown to be overrepresented among patients seeking treatment for common mental disorders (Aarestad et al., 2020). Such tertiary interventions may also potentially reduce victims' risk of future revictimization. Doing so effectively, however, would presumably be easier with more detailed knowledge about the exact mechanisms that cause revictimization. Thus, while some attempts have been made to identify factors that reduce the revictimization risk among victims of peer victimization (Brendgen & Poulin, 2017), more research is still needed on the exact mechanism explaining revictimization.

However, while revictimization should be recognized as a problem as discussed above, the predictive power of prior victimization experiences in understanding employees' exposure to bullying at work is limited. That is, the accumulating empirical evidence suggests that targets of bullying are not a homogenous group in terms of their prior experiences or other individual characteristics (e.g., Glaso et al., 2007), and meta-analytical evidence show that personal characteristics explain little of the variance in workplace victimization (Dhanani et al., 2020). As such, interventions aimed at reducing workplace bullying and other related types of interpersonal mistreatment at work are presumably much more likely to be successful if they are aimed at malleable factors that explain a greater proportion of the variance in bullying, such as job demands and especially so role stressors (Salin & Hoel, 2020;

Van den Brande et al., 2016), leadership (Blomberg & Rosander, 2021; Ågotnes et al., 2018), psychosocial safety climate (Dollard et al., 2017; Escartín et al., 2021) and conflict management climate (Einarsen et al., 2017; Hamre et al., 2021; Zahlquist et al., 2019).

A common response to the reversed buffer effect reported in paper 2 has been along the lines of "well then, I suppose we should make sure that all kids are bullied a bit at school, so that they are more robust when facing bullying at work as adult employees". Although this has admittedly most often been said in jokingly fashion, this interpretation nevertheless deserves some attention. First, given the abundance of empirical work showing the deleterious impact of victimization from bullying (Arseneault, 2018; Boudrias et al., 2021; Mikkelsen et al., 2020), it is nonsensical to argue that these negative effects should be inflicted on individuals in an attempt to possibly bolster future resilience. Second, every research finding should be interpreted in light of the context of the particular study. The prevalence of exposure to bullying behaviours at work was rather low among the participants in paper 2. In light of general comments on the prevalence of workplace bullying in existing studies (Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021) and similar comments concerning concepts such as abusive supervision (Fischer et al., 2021), it may be that the role of prior victimization would be different if explored in a sample where many were currently facing highly escalated and severe cases of exposure to workplace bullying. Finally, paper 2 only examined a single outcome variable (depressive tendencies), and as such there may theoretically be a range of other outcomes that are differently affected by exposure to bullying behaviours at work among those with prior victimization experiences. Still, other studies have identified a similar reversed buffer effect with regards to the impact of workplace bullying using a range of different outcomes (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). In sum, the reversed buffer effect should not be taken as evidence for victimization from bullying being a beneficial experience as such.

In combination, the findings in this thesis show that while prior victimization may be related to a slightly increased risk of subsequent exposure to bullying at work, prior victimization may also play a part in understanding employees' affective reactions to

such bullying behaviours, although not in a consistent manner. As such, while the precise role of prior victimization is still perhaps underexplored, what seems to be very clear is that workplace bullying remains a work environment problem that may have a detrimental impact on all targeted employees, where no single individual-level variable has been shown to consistently protect employees (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). This clearly suggests that workplace interventions should be aimed at improving the organization of work and the social work climate, as opposed to attempts to increase employees' personal resources so that they develop an ability to endure mistreatment without becoming affected. Yet, bystanders play an important part in the process of workplace bullying (Ng et al., 2019; Nielsen, Mikkelsen, et al., 2020), and intervening in bullying situations at work has been shown to have beneficial effects not only for the target but also for the intervening observer (Nielsen et al., 2021). Increasing individual employees' self-efficacy as observers that intervene in a bullying situation, then, seems to be a promising individual-level intervention (K. Einarsen et al., 2020).

4.9 Future directions

The results presented in the present thesis have some important implications for future research. First, given the somewhat inconsistent findings regarding the role of prior victimization from bullying across the three papers in this thesis, prior victimization *per se* may prove to be of limited value in understanding the occurrence and reactions to current exposure to bullying behaviours at work. Naturally, all bullying experiences are specific for the individual case, and their impact may thus differ depending upon the nature and characteristics of the bullying exposure, contextual factors such as availability of social support, or pre-existing individual differences. For instance, there is notable variability in the extent to which employees think they coped well with their childhood victimization experiences and the strategies they used (Smith et al., 2003), and the short- and long-term potential impact of the prior victimization may consequently differ substantially between individuals. In support of such a perspective, a recent study found that the developmental course

of PTSD symptomology following a recent trauma was not affected by prior trauma exposure as such, but was rather predicted by the extent to which prior trauma had elicited PTSD symptomology (Gould et al., 2021).

Second, prior victimization from bullying may very well just be one of many adverse life events that have the potential to influence later exposure to, interpretation of, and reactions to negative social behaviours at work. For instance, multiple adverse childhood experiences can be combined into cumulative adverse childhood experience scores or subjected to latent class analyses to predict adult outcomes such as mental health and academic performance, where those who have experienced several adverse childhood experiences generally are worse off compared to those with no or few such experiences (Merians et al., 2019). Still, victimization from bullying seems to be particularly detrimental even after accounting for other adverse experiences (Lereya et al., 2015), and in one study 80.5 % of victims of workplace bullying reported that the bullying they had experienced was more harmful than any of the other distressing events they had endured in their life (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002). Nevertheless, in line with COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), it seems conceivable that those who have encountered several events associated with resource losses in their past – and not just events restricted to victimization from bullying – are more at risk when facing negative social behaviours from others later in life. As such, exploring a broader range of prior adverse experiences in relation to subsequent exposure to bullying behaviours at work may provide a more nuanced picture of the issue of how prior experiences affect current risk and vulnerability in the context of workplace mistreatment.

Third, the present thesis focused on prior victimization from bullying. However, we still know very little about the impact other social roles employees could have previously had in relation to bullying situations at school or at work which could affect their current interpretations and reactions to negative social behaviours at work. In addition to prior exposure to bullying, employees could have been active or passive witnesses to bullying in school or at work, perpetrators of bullying themselves, or perhaps even bully-victims (i.e., being both a target and perpetrator).

Prior experiences with bullying in other roles than a having a victim role could of course also impact interpretations of and reactions to subsequent negative social interactions, albeit presumably through other theoretical mechanisms than proposed throughout this thesis. As such, future research should explore the impact of different participant roles, as opposed to just focussing on the process of victimization as done in the present thesis. One such example used a vignette design and found that having witnessed harassment at work impacted the extent to which internal and external causal attributions about the vignette situation impacted intentions to provide emotional support and to display public support, yet not in a consistent manner (Hellemans et al., 2017). This suggests that prior experiences as a witness of workplace bullying may also affect appraisals of mistreatment situations and intentions to intervene, although the exact mechanisms remain less evident.

Fourth, with some notable exceptions (e.g., Reknes et al., 2021), studies on workplace bullying and related mistreatment constructs have not employed designs that allow for examinations of the dynamics of the process as it unfolds over time. Such efforts necessarily require repeated measurements from the same participants with many measurements point over a shorter time frame. The optimal time lag, however, is more challenging to determine, although substantially shorter time-lags than what has traditionally been applied seem to be warranted (Dormann & Griffin, 2015). Existing studies have shown that there is insights to be gained using daily (Rodriguez et al., 2017; Ågotnes et al., 2020), weekly (Tuckey & Neall, 2014) and even tri-weekly (Reknes et al., 2021) reports of exposure, and the optimal time-lag thus seems to depend largely on the research question. An alternative approach to testing the revictimization mechanisms discussed in paper 1 and 2, for instance, could be to obtain repeated measures (e.g., weekly) from participants for a long enough duration (e.g., spanning several months) to examine how long or how much it takes for employees to develop a perception of being a victim of bullying. One could then test whether this varies as a function of their prior victimization – both prior to and during the study period.

Finally, in addition to the risk of subsequent exposure to mistreatment at work, the present thesis has focused on one of the most thoroughly documented individual level outcome of exposure to workplace bullying, namely depressed mood. Despite compelling theoretical and empirical reasons to focus on depressed mood, it would of course also be interesting to explore whether similar patterns would be found for other outcomes of exposure to workplace bullying, such as work engagement, burnout, performance, or counterproductive work behaviour. As such, we have admittedly restricted our study to a specific outcome, and disregarded other affective or behavioural outcomes in our examinations. In hindsight, it would have been interesting to examine a broader range of outcomes to better capture the extent to which prior victimization from bullying impacts vulnerability to subsequent exposure to mistreatment at work.

5. Conclusion

While it is uncontroversial to propose that employees' prior experiences may impact how they perceive, interpret, and are affected by negative social interactions at work, this assumption had rarely been examined empirically at the onset of this PhD project. The findings in paper 1 and paper 2 supported the proposed revictimization hypothesis, although the fairly low explained variance also suggest that, in the broader picture, bullying at work has relatively little to do with one's prior bullying victimization experiences. Second, using designs with widely different temporal orientations, the vulnerability hypothesis was partially supported in paper 3, where recent victimization experiences seemed to reduce the ability to recover from daily episodes of exposure to negative acts. Yet, it was not supported in paper 2, where distal victimization from bullying, experienced in junior high school, seemed to buffer the relationship between exposure to negative acts at work and depressive tendencies.

Taken together, these findings contribute to our knowledge about the role of employees' prior victimization experiences in the workplace bullying process. In the greater picture, it does indeed appear that prior victimization has a rather limited predictive value in understanding employee's exposure to, interpretations of, and reactions to bullying behaviours at work. Although one could argue that it is slightly "depressing" to spend years researching this topic only to arrive at such a conclusion, it is also, in a societal perspective, rather uplifting, as it consolidates the impression from existing studies that target characteristics play a limited part in the development of workplace bullying and as such perhaps provides hope for prior victims. After all, target characteristics are hard to alter, whereas proximal contextual factors relating to the working environment that seem to play a key role in the development of bullying are much more malleable. In combination, the three studies in this thesis highlight the importance of building resilient schools and workplaces that take firm measures to prevent and properly handle bullying cases in order to protect the well-being of all students and employees, regardless of their personal history and presumed vulnerabilities.

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Exposure to negative acts at work and self-labelling as a victim of workplace bullying: The role of prior victimization from bullying

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Abstract
The present study examines employees' prior victimization from bullying in school or at work as a predictor of 1) their current exposure to negative social acts at work and 2) the likelihood of labelling as a victim of workplace bullying, and 3) whether the link between exposure to negative acts at work and the perception of being bullied is stronger among those who have been bullied in the past. We tested our hypotheses using a probability sample of the Norwegian working population in a prospective design with a 5-year time lag (N = 1228). As hypothesized, prior victimization positively predicted subsequent exposure to negative acts, which in turn was related to a higher likelihood of developing a perception of being a victim of workplace bullying. However, contrary to our expectations, prior victimization from bullying did not affect the relationship between current exposure to negative acts at work and the likelihood of self-labelling as a victim. Taken together, the results suggest that employees' prior victimization is a risk factor for future victimization, yet overall plays a rather modest role in understanding current exposure to negative acts and self-labelled victimization from bullying at work.

Keywords Bullying · Workplace bullying · Prior victimization · Self-labelling · Negative acts

Workplace bullying is a prevalent problem (León-Pérez et al., 2021; Nielsen et al., 2010) with severe negative effects on the health, well-being and productivity of targeted workers (e.g., Boudrias et al., 2021; Verkuil et al., 2015). Understanding antecedents and risk factors is therefore vital, and a prerequisite for designing effective interventions. At the individual level, interindividual differences assumed to be relatively stable over time, such as personality, have been widely studied as potential antecedents of bullying (Nielsen et al., 2017; Plopa et al., 2016; Podsiadly & Gamian-Wilk, 2016). However, we know less about the role of employees' prior experiences in explaining future perceptions of exposure to bullying at work. In line with the more general revictimization phenomenon suggesting that victimization increases the likelihood of future victimization, conceptual models of workplace bullying propose that prior victimization from bullying increases the likelihood of later exposure to bullying at work (e.g., Einarsen et al., 2020; Samnani & Singh, 2016). Following a social information processing perspective (Crick & Dodge, 1996; Rosen et al., 2007), prior victimization may also influence the interpretation of future negative social interactions (e.g., Guy et al., 2017), thereby potentially putting prior victims at greater risk of future victimization experiences due to social information processing biases. The notion that employees' personal history of victimization from bullying may influence their current perceptions and experiences of bullying at work has, however, rarely been examined empirically. Thus, the aim of the present study is to investigate the role of prior victimization from bullying in understanding employees' current experiences of bullying at work.

In this, we contribute to the literature in several ways. First, using a two-wave design with a 5-year time lag with data from a probability sample drawn from the Norwegian workforce, we examine whether employees with a history of victimization from bullying are at greater risk of subsequently becoming victims of bullying at follow-up. Thus, in contrast to existing studies on the topic, our design enables us to rigorously examine whether the likelihood of changing victimization status at work during a 5-year period varies as a function of prior victimization experiences. This is one of few studies employing a large and representative sample when testing this revictimization prediction in a workplace

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setting. Thus, practitioners can benefit from learning how common prior victimization experiences are among employees, and to what extent such prior victimization puts employees at risk of later exposure to workplace bullying. Should revictimization be a prevalent problem, this would suggest that victims of bullying risk getting caught in a vicious cycle of victimization across the lifespan, providing yet another reason to design and implement interventions against bullying in schools and workplaces and to provide effective rehabilitative measures.

Second, we test the hypothesis that prior victimization has an indirect effect on the risk of developing a perception of being bullied at work via higher perceived exposure to negative acts at work, and that it is this indirect effect, as opposed a direct effect, that accounts for potential revictimization. Accordingly, by considering workplace bullying a two-step process (Nielsen et al., 2011; Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015), we contribute to the extant literature by providing a more nuanced exploration of the revictimization phenomenon than what has previously been done, thereby increasing our knowledge about how such revictimization occurs.

Finally, as the first study to date, we test employees' prior victimization as a moderator that may strengthen the relationship between exposure to negative acts at work and self-labelled current victimization. Thus, we contribute to the literature on bullying and to the more general revictimization literature by exploring mechanisms underlying the revictimization phenomenon that are yet to be fully understood. Merely knowing that victimization in one context increases the risk of later victimization in another context may not, in itself, be all that helpful to victims or practitioners working with the prevention and handling of bullying cases. Identifying the mechanisms underlying revictimization from bullying is therefore a prerequisite for designing interventions that attenuates revictimization risk, and has potential benefits for both targeted employees, organizations, and society at large. More broadly, we respond to a call to acknowledge the importance of applying a temporal lens when studying interpersonal mistreatment at work (Cole et al., 2016), in our case by employing a prospective design to examine whether bullying experienced in the past influences the perception of current negative social acts encountered at work.

Theoretical Background

Bullying is defined as a process where an individual becomes the target of repeated negative social behaviours over time, and who, due to a pre-existing or evolving perceived power imbalance, has difficulties defending against the said negative treatment (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Olweus, 1993). Thus, at its core, bullying is about exposure to negative acts that become increasingly systematic, frequent, and difficult to defend against as the process escalates. The negative social behaviours can be person-related (e.g., negative remarks about one's person or private life) or work-related (e.g., repeated criticism of one's work efforts, or someone withholding information which affects one's performance), and take the form of direct (e.g., open ridicule) or indirect behaviours (e.g., gossip or social exclusion). Moreover, bullying is not an either-or phenomenon, and can be studied at different levels of escalation (e.g., Notelaers et al., 2006; Rosander & Blomberg, 2019), ranging from no exposure to negative acts to severe victimization where the target is frequently exposed to negative acts and has a perception of being victimized and unable to stop or defend against the negative treatment. Considerable empirical evidence has demonstrated that bullying at work has detrimental effects on factors such as health, well-being, and work participation among those targeted (for recent reviews, see Boudrias et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2020; Mikkelsen et al., 2020; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). Given the severity of these outcomes, it remains a key task to identify and understand the risk factors for exposure to bullying at work.

Existing theoretical models show that workplace bullying is a multicausal phenomenon that no single theory or perspective can account for alone (Branch et al., 2021; Einarsen et al., 2020). However, two main mechanisms for the development of workplace bullying have been frequently studied. Simply put, the work environment hypothesis states that bullying at work is a result of work environment stressors or a poor social climate, which due to deficiencies in leadership and lack of conflict management are allowed to escalate into bullying (e.g., Leymann, 1996; Salin & Hoel, 2020). On the other hand, the individual disposition hypothesis states that the development of bullying can, at least in part, be explained by inter-individual differences in how employees act, perceive and react to events at work (e.g., Zapf & Einarsen, 2020). These differences can produce vulnerable and sensitive victims, that may appear weak and as easy targets who do not retaliate when faced with aggressive behaviours from others, or provocative victims, that act in ways that annoy or provoke others (Aquino, 2000; Olweus, 1978; Samnani & Singh, 2016). Some studies and theoretical notions also look at perpetrator characteristics rather than target characteristics in this respect (Zapf & Einarsen, 2020).

In the present study, we aim to expand our knowledge about the individual disposition hypothesis relating to targets. Whereas most previous research of person-level antecedents of workplace bullying focuses on stable personality dispositions, existing theoretical frameworks of workplace bullying also postulate that prior experiences of mistreatment from bullying may serve as a risk factor for later exposure to bullying at work (Einarsen et al., 2020; Samnani & Singh, 2016). Yet, this has rarely been elaborated upon conceptually or tested empirically. Thus, in the

present study we draw on previously proposed mechanisms and empirical findings concerning individual risk factors for and outcomes of exposure to workplace bullying, to explore how prior victimization from bullying may increase the risk of later exposure to bullying at work. As has been elaborated upon elsewhere (e.g., Hoprekstad et al., 2020; Monks et al., 2009; Nielsen et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2003), widely accepted definitions of workplace bullying (e.g., Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996) and bullying in schools (e.g., Olweus, 1993) share evident similarities, and the established antecedents and outcomes of victimization across the two settings are comparable. Consequently, when exploring the impact of prior victimization from bullying among employees, we also consider prior victimization from bullying experienced in their school years. This approach aligns well with recent suggestions to take a broader perspective on bullying as a phenomenon (Boudrias et al., 2021) and to incorporate temporality and prior experiences in workplace mistreatment research (Cole et al., 2016).

Prior Victimization as a Predictor of Exposure to Bullying at Work

Revictimization refers to the phenomenon where individuals with a history of victimization have a higher risk of later becoming victims in new situations as compared to their counterparts without a history of victimization. While revictimization has been thoroughly documented in other fields, such as in the literature on childhood abuse and later sexual victimization (Walker et al., 2019), few investigations have been made into revictimization from bullying occurring among adult employees at work. Yet, several scholars have implied that employees who have been the victim of bullying previously in their lives are at higher risk of later exposure to bullying at work (e.g., Einarsen et al., 2020; Namie & Namie, 2018; Samnani & Singh, 2016; Smith et al., 2003). The basic premise for this proposed revictimization from bullying is easily derived from the conceptual model of bullying proposed by Einarsen et al. (2020). This model suggests that exposure to bullying not only has immediate and long-term detrimental effects on victims, but that these negative effects may also translate into individual characteristics that increase the risk of later victimization through mechanisms well known from the individual characteristics hypothesis of workplace bullying, such as coming across as a vulnerable or provocative victim (Olweus, 1978).

Many of the now established outcomes of exposure to bullying may indeed also serve as risk factors for later victimization. For instance, mental health problems such as depression and anxiety has been established both as an outcome of exposure to bullying at work (Boudrias et al., 2021) and in school, with effects lasting into adulthood (Lereya et al., 2015; Singham et al., 2017), and as a risk factor for later exposure to bullying at work (Nielsen et al., 2012; Rosander, 2021; Verkuil et al., 2015). Consequently, prior victims may risk getting caught in a vicious cycle of bullying where their initial victimization experiences cause sustained mental health problems, which then puts them at greater risk of experiencing victimization from bullying yet again in the future.

The same reasoning can be applied to a range of other outcomes of victimization from bullying that subsequently serve as risk factors for exposure to bullying at work, such as self-esteem (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Tsaousis, 2016; van Geel et al., 2018), dispositional hardiness (Hamre et al., 2020), aggressive behaviour (Ttofi et al., 2012), and social relationship problems (Glasø et al., 2009; Sigurdson et al., 2014). Overall, victimization from bullying seems to be related to a reduction in personal coping resources, which can predispose previously victimized employees to yet again become targets of bullying at work, for instance due to inefficient handling of work stressors (Van den Brande et al., 2016).

Existing studies have provided some empirical support for the link between prior victimization and exposure to bullying at work. In a cross-sectional study of 2215 Norwegian employees, prior victimization in school or at work was more prevalent among employees who currently self-labelled as victims of bullying, and especially among the "provocative victims" who also self-labelled as current perpetrators of bullying (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007). Similarly, those who retrospectively reported that they had been bullied in school were more likely to report that they were currently being bullied at work in a sample of 5228 British workers (Smith et al., 2003). Prospective studies have also found support for links between victimization from bullying in adolescence and subsequent higher exposure to bullying at work in young adulthood (Andersen et al., 2015; Hoprekstad et al., 2020), partially mediated by higher levels of symptoms of depression (Brendgen & Poulin, 2017).

Thus, there is some existing empirical support for the proposed link between prior victimization and later exposure to bullying at work. In the present study, we aim to test whether these results can be replicated in a probability sample of the Norwegian working population. We also extend and provide a more nuanced test of this revictimization hypothesis, by utilizing two measures capturing different aspects of exposure to bullying at work as our outcome variables. As noted by Nielsen and Knardahl (2015), workplace bullying can be considered a two-step process, where the first step involves systematic exposure to negative acts, and the second steps entails a subjective interpretation that these acts constitute bullying. This corresponds well with the two most commonly used methods for assessing bullying at work, namely the behavioural

experience method, where employees are asked to report how often they have been exposed to a range of predetermined negative social behaviours in a given time period, and the self-labelling method, where employees are explicitly asked whether they have been bullied at work, often after first being presented with a definition (Nielsen et al., 2020). Accordingly, we test whether prior victimization relates both to current perceived exposure to a wide range of negative social acts at work that may be observed at different levels of bullying escalation (i.e., the behavioural experience method), and to the perception that this constitutes bullying (i.e., the self-labelling method). In doing so, we follow the recommendations of including both the behavioural experience method and the self-labelling method when studying exposure to workplace bullying (Nielsen et al., 2020). Based on the theoretical framework and empirical background presented above, it is reasonable to expect that prior victimization has bivariate relationships both with current perceived levels of exposure to negative acts and with the risk of currently labelling as a victim of workplace bullying.

H1: Prior victimization from bullying is positively related to current perceived exposure to negative acts at work

H2: Prior victimization from bullying is related to an increased likelihood of currently labelling as a victim of workplace bullying

Moreover, we argue that insofar as prior victimization from bullying is related to a higher risk of currently labelling as a victim of bullying at work, this effect is driven by current perceived exposure to negative acts at work as a mediator. Previous studies on this topic have relied solely on the behavioural experience method (Brendgen & Poulin, 2017; Hoprekstad et al., 2020) or the self-labelling method (Andersen et al., 2015; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Smith et al., 2003) as the outcome measure, and have thus not been able to examine the relationship between prior victimization from bullying and both measures of workplace bullying simultaneously. From the above reasoning regarding potential revictimization mechanisms, it follows that higher exposure to negative social behaviours at work likely drives the relationship between employees' prior victimization from bullying and an increased probability of developing a perception of currently being a victim of workplace bullying. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Prior victimization from bullying has a positive indirect effect on the likelihood of currently labelling as a victim of bullying at work, via higher levels of current perceived exposure to negative acts at work

Prior Victimization as a Moderator of the Relationship between Exposure to Negative Acts and the Perception of Being a Victim a Workplace Bullying

There is a high degree of subjectivity involved in the perception of being bullied at work, and employees are likely to have different thresholds for labelling their exposure as bullying (Nielsen et al., 2020; Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015; Parzefall & Salin, 2010). In addition to increasing the risk of exposure to negative acts at work, we contend that prior victimization is likely to alter the way an employee perceives, interprets, and labels such negative acts. This notion is also evident in theoretical models of workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 2020), and in line with the claim that current perceptions of interpersonal mistreatment are affected by employees' retrospective mistreatment experiences (Cole et al., 2016).

This potential role of prior victimization can be understood in light of models detailing how prior life experiences affects interpretations of negative social interactions. For instance, according to the Social Information Processing (SIP) model (Crick & Dodge, 1994, p. 76), individuals' interpretation of social situations are guided by their "memory database of past experience", including social schemas. Accordingly, the model suggests that accumulated memories of prior victimization are likely to affect the interpretation of future negative social interactions. This is also a key notion of the victim schema model (Rosen et al., 2007, 2009), partly based on the SIP model, which postulates that individuals who have been frequently victimized develop a more easily accessible "victim schema" where they come to expect hostility and victimization from others, also when faced with more ambiguous situations or threats. According to the victim schema model, then, employees with a personal history of prior victimization from bullying can be expected to more easily recognize negative social behaviours as bullying and more readily have their victim schemas activated and identify with the victim role. In support of these models, prior victimization has been consistently linked to more hostile attributions and expectations of exclusion, an increased attention for negative social cues, and more negative evaluations of others and oneself (Guy et al., 2017; van Reemst et al., 2016; Ziv et al., 2013). Overall, then, previous research suggests that social information processing differences caused by prior victimization may lead to a lower threshold of labelling as a victim of bullying when faced with exposure to negative social behaviours at work.

In a similar line of reasoning, workplace bullying can be considered a traumatic experience with the potential to shatter basic assumptions and alter social schemas, in

accordance with the cognitive theory of trauma (Janoff-Bulman, 1989; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002). In the same manner as described in the SIP model, these basic assumptions or social schemas guide our interpretation of future situations, and we more readily accept and incorporate information from the environment that fits with our existing schemas. Consequently, employees who are prior victims of bullying may be more inclined to interpret exposure to negative social behaviours at work in light of their pre-existing negative basic assumptions of the world and others as malevolent, as victims of bullying at work have been shown to display more negative views about themselves, other people and the world (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Rodriguez-Munoz et al., 2010). Employees without prior victimization experiences, on the other hand, may have an 'illusion of invulnerability' typically displayed by non-victims (Janoff-Bulman, 1989, p. 169) and a more idealistic world view (Namie & Namie, 2018) that do not fit well with the notion of being a victim, consequently having a higher threshold for labelling as victims of workplace bullying.

Overall, there are convincing theoretical arguments linking prior victimization from bullying to a lowered threshold for perceiving exposure to negative social acts at work as bullying. If that is the case, such a lowered threshold could, at least in part, explain why previous studies have found that employees with prior victimization experiences are more likely to identify as victims of bullying at work. To the best of our knowledge, however, this potential moderating effect of prior victimization on the relationship between exposure to negative acts and the perception of being bullied has not yet been empirically tested.

H4: The positive relationship between current exposure to negative acts at work and the perception of currently being bullied at work is stronger among employees who have (vs. have not) been bullied in the past

Method

Design and Sample

The present study is an extension and re-analysis of data from a randomly drawn sample representative of the Norwegian working population, collected over two waves separated by 5 years (see also Einarsen & Nielsen, 2014; Glambek et al., 2016; Glambek et al., 2020, who investigated outcomes of exposure to bullying over time). At baseline (T1, in 2005), 4500 individuals randomly drawn from the Norwegian employment register were invited to participate, and 2539 individuals (56.4%) completed and returned the survey. Five years later (T2, in 2010), the individuals who had participated in the first wave were invited to participate in a follow-up survey, which resulted in returned questionnaires from 1613 (64.5%) individuals. Of these, 1318 (81.7% of those who had responded) reported that they were still in employment, and these employees were thus eligible to answer the items in the questionnaire about their current experiences at work. Thirty-seven individuals (2.3%) did not report on their current employment status. The remaining 258 individuals (16.0%) were no longer in employment (e.g., had become unemployed, students, retired or receiving disability benefits), and were therefore not in a position to answer questions about their work environment at follow-up. Statistics Norway drew the sample and carried out the data collection, and each respondent was assigned a random ID number to match their responses over time.

In the present study, we included employees who a) provided data about prior bullying experiences, b) did not identify as currently bullied at work at baseline, and c) provided data about their current exposure to negative acts and self-labelled victimization status at follow-up 5 years later, providing a sample of 1228 employees. By only including employees who did not identify as currently bullied at work at baseline, we ensured that we were able to examine whether prior experiences of bullying could predict new and unrelated cases of bullying at work at a much later stage. Thus, this exclusion ensured that our analyses predicted a shift from currently not bullied at baseline to bullied at follow-up and allowed us to examine whether the likelihood of developing a perception of being a victim of bullying at work depended on prior and unrelated victimization experiences. Moreover, by separating the measures of prior (T1) and current victimization (T2), we avoided the possibility that any ongoing victimization from bullying at work affected reports of prior victimization.

In our final sample, 53.4% were women, the mean age was 43.5 (SD = 10.3), and 20.7% had managerial responsibilities. The majority were working full-time (76.1%). Note that more details about the procedure and sample is available in previous publications based on the same overall data collection (e.g., Einarsen & Nielsen, 2014).

Instruments

Self-Labelled Victimization from Workplace Bullying Self-labelled victimization from workplace bullying was measured at baseline (T1) and at follow-up 5 years later (T2), using a validated single item (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Nielsen et al., 2020; Solberg & Olweus, 2003). The respondents first read the following definition of bullying, highlighting the conceptual properties of the phenomenon such as duration, repetitiveness of the exposure and perceived power imbalance (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Olweus, 1993), and

where then asked to state whether they had been bullied during the last 6 months according to the definition:

> Bullying (such as harassment, teasing, exclusion or hurtful jokes) is when an individual is repeatedly exposed to unpleasant, degrading, or hurtful treatment at work. For a situation to be labelled bullying, it has to occur over a certain time period, and the target has to have difficulties defending himself or herself against the actions. It is not bullying if two equally "strong" persons are in conflict or if it is a one-off incident.

The response alternatives ranged from "No" (1) to "Yes, several times a week" (5). Given our research interest in whether the respondents had a perception of being bullied, we dichotomized this item by categorizing all respondents who had answered "Yes" to this item as bullied. This approach has also been used in several previous studies (e.g., Ågotnes et al., 2018; Vie et al., 2010). In order to test prior victimization as a risk factor for developing a perception of being bullied at work at follow-up, we excluded the 108 respondents who according to themselves were bullied at baseline from further analyses. Thus, any employees left in the analyses who had the perception of being bullied at work at follow up (T2) represent new cases of bullying as compared to baseline (T1).

Prior Victimization from Bullying Prior victimization from bullying was measured at baseline (T1) using two items presented after the self-labelling item described above, and the respondents were thus familiar with the definition of bullying. The respondents were asked to state the extent to which they had been bullied in primary and secondary school, and the extent to which they had been bullied at work more than 6 months ago, with response options 'No, never' (1), 'Yes, in a single time period' (2) and 'Yes, in several different time periods' (3) for bullying at school, and 'No' (1) and 'Yes' (2) for prior bullying at work. We categorized respondents who at baseline reported that they had been victims of bullying either in school or previously at work as prior victims of bullying.

Exposure to Negative Acts at Work Exposure to negative acts at work was measured at baseline and follow-up using the 22-item Negative Acts Questionnaire–Revised (NAQ-R; Einarsen et al., 2009). This questionnaire measures exposure to a range of negative social behaviours over the last 6 months that the exposed employee may perceive as constituting a bullying situation if experienced repeatedly and over time but does not mention the term "bullying". Consequently, the NAQ-R covers exposure to a range of negative social behaviours that taken together the target may or may not interpret as constituting bullying. The NAQ-R was presented to the respondents prior to the self-labelling item and the bullying definition. Example items include "Being ignored and excluded", "Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job" and "Repeated reminders of your errors and mistakes". The response alternatives ranged from "Never" (1) to "Daily" (5). We computed a composite measure comprised of the total score of the 22 items, as has been done extensively in existing research using the NAQ-R (see Nielsen et al., 2020). Thus, a higher score on the NAQ-R represents a higher perceived frequency of exposure to negative and bullying-like acts at work over the past 6 months. The NAQ-R had acceptable reliability at baseline ($\omega = .84$, 95% CI [.82, .85]) and at follow-up ($\omega = .86$, 95% CI [.85, .87]). For the analyses, we standardized the NAQ-R total score to ease interpretation of the results.

Statistical Analyses

We tested our hypotheses within a Bayesian framework, which is especially well suited for modelling indirect effects that are typically heavily skewed, as it produces a credibility interval that allows for asymmetric distribution of parameter estimates (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2012). Moreover, the Bayesian framework enables researchers to evaluate the relative support both for and against a null hypothesis given the data at hand, thereby enabling a more informative interpretation of relationships being studied compared to a classical frequentist approach. We estimated our models using the Bayesian estimator in Mplus 8.0, which uses MCMC chains obtained using the Gibbs sampler algorithm to generate the posterior distribution of the parameters (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2012). We used the Mplus default diffuse parameter priors, and, besides allowing for asymmetrical distribution of parameter estimates, the estimates are thus close to what would have been obtained using a ML estimator (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2012). We tested the bivariate hypotheses (H1 and H2) using a simple probit (H1) and linear regression (H2) and tested our proposed indirect effect (H3) and interaction (H4) using Bayesian path analyses.

Model parameters were evaluated using the 95% credibility interval, along with Bayesian one-tailed p values denoting the probability that the effect is in the opposite direction (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2012). We also report the Bayes Factor (BF) where applicable, which provides a quantification of the relative evidence for and against a model and thus enables substantiated claims of the existence or non-existence of relationships (Kass & Raftery, 1995). The BF is a continuous measure of relative evidence, and $BF > 1$ indicates more support for the hypothesis being tested relative to the alternative, while $BF > 3$ has been suggested as a threshold between 'not worth more than a bare mention' and 'positive' or 'substantial' evidence (Kass & Raftery, 1995), comparable to the $p < .05$ threshold. It should also be noted

that many scholars advise against thresholds for the BF and argue it should simply be treated as a continuous measure of evidence and evaluated in light of the context of the analysis (e.g., Van Lissa et al., 2020). As the computation of the BF is not yet implemented in Mplus, we report BFs obtained using *BFpack* (Mulder et al., 2019) in R version 4.0.3 (R Core Team, 2020), based on Bayesian regression estimates from *rstanarm* version 2.21.1 (Goodrich et al., 2020) obtained using the No-U-Turn Sampler to generate the posterior parameter distributions and employing default priors with autoscaling enabled. *BFpack* employs a default Bayes factor methodology, and thus enables computation of the BF without requiring users to specify subjective priors. We performed attrition analyses using Bayesian chi square and t-tests in JASP v. 0.14.0 (JASP Team, 2020), using default priors.

We ran the analyses using two Markov chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) chains with 50,000 iterations in each chain to ensure sufficient precision in the posterior distribution. The first half of each chain was discarded as the burn-in phase, and in our case the posterior distribution is thus made up of a total of 50,000 iterations. We checked for convergence by using Potential Scale Reduction (PSR) values close to 1 as an indicator of small between-chain parameter variation relative to the within-chain variation and thus convergence across chains (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2012), and visually inspected the posterior parameter trace plots, which indicated good mixing for the estimated models. We evaluated overall model fit for the path model using the posterior predictive p value, with a value close to .5 and a 95% confidence interval for the difference between the observed and replicated chi-square with intervals crossing zero indicating good fit (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2012).

Whether or not the respondent had the perception of currently being bullied at work was used as the focal dependent variable in the path model testing H3 and H4. Prior victimization from bullying was entered as the main predictor of current victimization perceptions, and current exposure to negative acts as the mediator. Moreover, we included exposure to negative acts at baseline as a covariate predicting current exposure to negative acts, to test whether prior victimization predicted an increase in exposure to negative acts compared to baseline levels. We created the interaction term by multiplying prior victimization and current exposure to negative acts using the define command in Mplus and included a path from the interaction term to current victimization perceptions. We then used the MOD command in Mplus to generate estimates of counterfactually-defined causal effects, which is preferable to the conventional a × b product approach when testing indirect effects with a X × M interaction and a binary Y (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2015; Rijnhart et al., 2020). Thus, we estimate the indirect effect while incorporating X (prior victimization) as a moderator of the relationship between M (current exposure to negative acts) and Y (current perception of being bullied at work). Following the Mplus default settings for Bayesian path analyses with a binary outcome, the path model was estimated using a probit link for the binary outcome. Thus, the estimate of the path from prior victimization to current perceived exposure to negative acts is a normal regression coefficient, while the paths to current victimization from bullying are probit coefficients. To aid the interpretation of the results, we also report the Odds Ratios (ORs) for the direct and indirect effect. In the initial analyses, we included gender, age, and whether the respondent had managerial responsibilities as covariates. However, as these variables did not predict exposure to negative acts or the perception of being a victim of bullying in the multivariate analyses nor had any impact on the hypothesis tests, we report the results of the multivariate analyses without these covariates (Becker et al., 2016).

Results

Attrition Analyses

Table 1 shows the baseline characteristics of the respondents who responded at both time points compared to those who only responded at baseline (dropouts), as well as for our final sample.

Attrition analyses revealed that dropouts were younger ($M = 41.3$, $SD = 11.6$) compared to follow-up respondents ($M = 45.2$, $SD = 11.2$, $BF_{10} = 4.1 \times 10^{13}$). The evidence was inconclusive regarding the impact of gender ($BF_{01} = 1.4$) and baseline exposure to negative acts ($BF_{01} = 2.4$) on dropout, although the evidence favoured the null hypothesis of no relationship. We did not find any other reliable differences between dropouts and follow-up responders on baseline characteristics.

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for the study variables are displayed in Table 2. There was a strong, positive correlation between T2 exposure to negative acts and T2 self-labelled victimization from bullying. Moreover, T1 prior victimization had moderate, positive correlations with T2 exposure to negative acts and T2 self-labelled victimization from bullying.

Of the 1228 employees in the sample who did not identify as currently being bullied at work at baseline, 35.2% (n = 432) reported that they had been bullied previously in their life, either only in school (31.4%, n = 385), only at work (1.4%, n = 17) or both in school and at work (2.4%, n = 30). At follow-up 5 years later, 3.0% of the employees (n = 37)

Table 1 Characteristics of respondents at baseline

Variables at baseline	Baseline & follow-up ($N = 1613$)		Final sample ($N = 1228$)		Drop-outs (baseline only, $N = 927$)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender						
Male	749	46.4	572	46.6	468	50.5
Female	864	53.6	656	53.4	458	49.4
Missing	0	0	0	0	1	0.1
Age						
<30	153	9.5	126	10.3	172	18.6
30–39	392	24.3	328	26.7	251	27.1
40–49	431	26.7	372	30.3	257	27.7
50–59	456	28.3	348	28.3	183	19.7
<59	181	11.2	54	4.4	63	6.8
Missing	0	0	0	0	1	0.1
Leadership responsibility						
Yes	315	19.5	254	20.7	157	16.9
No	1213	75.2	967	78.7	697	75.2
Missing	85	5.3	7	0.6	73	7.9
Employment status						
Full time employment	1155	71.6	940	76.5	646	69.7
Part time employment	306	19	231	18.8	160	17.3
On sick leave	31	1.9	19	1.5	34	3.7
On leave of absence	32	2	28	2.3	20	2.2
Vocational rehabilitation	14	0.9	0	0	10	1.1
On disability pension	15	0.9	1	0.1	3	0.3
Unemployed	16	1	1	0.1	25	2.7
Retired	11	0.7	0	0	2	0.2
Full-time education	15	0.9	4	0.3	10	1.1
Self-employed	6	0.4	0	0	6	0.6
Missing	12	0.7	4	0.3	11	1.2
Prior victimization from bullying						
Yes	551	34.2	432	35.2	332	35.8
No	1062	65.8	796	64.8	595	64.2
Self-labelled victimization						
Yes	72	4.5	0	0	36	3.9
No	1452	90	1228	100	809	87.3
Missing	89	5.5	0	0	82	8.8
Exposure to negative acts	M = 26.8	SD = 6.4	M = 26.0	SD = 4.6	M = 27.4	SD = 7.6

reported that they had been bullied at work the past 6 months and had thus changed from not bullied to bullied during the 5-years period.

Hypothesis Tests

Employees with a history of prior victimization from bullying reported higher exposure to negative acts at work at follow-up (M = 27.08, SD = 6.39) compared to employees without prior victimization experiences (M = 25.02, SD = 3.95). Accordingly, a Bayesian simple linear regression analysis showed that prior victimization had a positive effect on subsequent exposure to negative acts (median estimate = 0.41, 95% credibility interval [0.29, 0.53], one-tailed $p = .00$, $R^2 = .038$, 95% credibility interval R^2 [.02, .06]), with a corresponding BF providing decisive support for a positive relationship compared to the coefficient being zero ($BF = 1.76 \times 10^9$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Prior victimization also had a positive effect on current exposure to negative acts (T2) when baseline exposure to negative acts (T1) was included as a covariate in the model (median estimate = 0.25, 95% credibility interval [0.15, 0.36], one-tailed

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and correlations for the study variables ($N = 1228$)

Variable	%	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Age		43.52	10.27	–					
2. Gender (female = 1)	53.4%			-.056	–				
3. Leader (leader = 1)	23.0%			-.004	.293***	–			
4. T1 prior victimization (yes = 1)	35.2%			-.124***	-.047	-.031	–		
5. T1 exposure to negative acts		26.04	4.62	-.117***	.040	-.012	.194***	–	
6. T2 exposure to negative acts		25.74	5.04	-.089**	-.015	.014	.244***	.489***	–
7. T2 victimization from bullying (yes = 1)	3.0%			.055	-.026	-.206*	.223*	.154*	.461***

Note. Bivariate correlations were obtained using the Bayesian estimator in Mplus, with 50,000 iterations across two chains. Median values from the posterior distribution are displayed for the correlations. Binary by binary correlations are tetrachoric, and binary by continuous correlations are biserial. P-values are Bayesian one-tailed and denote the likelihood that the true relationship is in the opposite direction (i.e., the proportion of the posterior distribution that is in the opposite direction)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

$p = .00$, BF = 5344), and explained 1.5% of the variance in current exposure to negative acts after adjusting for baseline exposure. Thus, prior victims were more likely to experience an increase in exposure to negative acts at work during the 5-years period from baseline to follow-up.

A higher proportion of employees with a history of prior victimization developed a perception of being bullied at work at follow-up (5.6%, n = 24 of 432) compared to employees without prior victimization experiences (1.6%, n = 13 of 796). A Bayesian simple probit regression analysis showed that employees with a history of prior victimization were over 3 times more likely to develop a perception of being bullied at follow-up (OR = 3.55, 95% credibility interval [1.52, 6.71], one-tailed $p = .00$), with a corresponding $BF_{10} = 42.6$ strongly favouring the observed difference relative to the null hypothesis of no differences between the two groups. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was also supported.

We tested the hypothesized indirect effect (H3) and interaction (H4) using Bayesian path modelling. The results are summarised in Fig. 1.

The proposed model, including the indirect effect of prior victimization on victimization status via current (T2) perceived exposure to negative acts, as well as the interaction between prior victimization and current perceived exposure to negative acts, showed acceptable fit to the data (PPI = .488, 95% credibility interval [−17.05, 17.80]). However, the posterior distribution for the path from the interaction term to current self-labelled victimization from bullying indicated that the data did not support a positive interaction effect, with a median estimate of -0.11, a credibility interval indicating a 95% probability that the true value was between -0.35 and 0.14, and a 19% probability that the interaction coefficient was positive (median estimate = -0.11, SD = 0.12, 95% credibility interval [-0.35, 0.14], one-tailed $p = .19$). Moreover, the data provided 67 times more support for the interaction effect being zero compared to being positive ($BF_{01} = 67.9$), and 12 times more support for the interaction being zero compared to being negative ($BF_{01} = 12.1$). Thus, the results indicated strong evidence against the proposed interaction between prior victimization and current exposure to negative acts as a predictor of current self-labelled victimization from bullying. Consequently, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

After removing the interaction term from the model, we reran the analyses replacing the "MOD" command with the "IND" command in Mplus to obtain estimates of counterfactually-defined direct and indirect effects without an X × M interaction. The revised model also showed acceptable fit

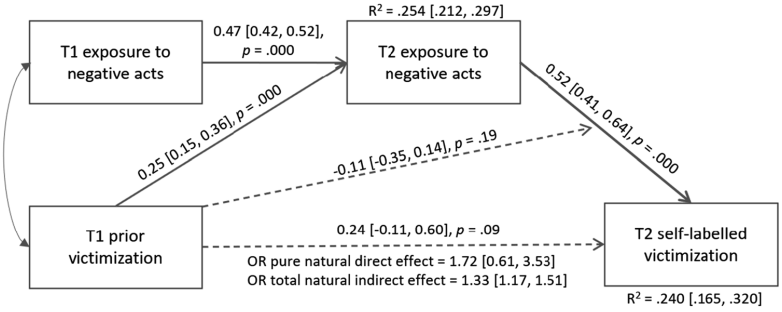

Fig. 1 Path estimates for the hypothesized model ($N = 1228$). *Note.* Median parameter estimates are displayed. Estimates are based on 50,000 MCMC samples. Numbers in brackets represent the 95% credibility interval. OR = Odds Ratio. P = Bayesian one-tailed p-values denoting the proportion of the posterior distribution in the opposite direction

to the data (PPP = 0.481, 95% credibility interval = [-14.86, 15.36]. In line with the bivariate analyses, the path analysis indicated that prior victims of bullying experienced higher levels of exposure to negative acts at work at follow-up (b = 0.25, SD = 0.05, 95% credibility interval = [0.15, 0.36], one-tailed p < .001), after adjusting for baseline (T1) exposure to negative acts. The median estimate indicated that having prior victimization experiences was related to a 0.25 SD increase in exposure to negative acts at follow-up compared to baseline levels of exposure. When considered simultaneously, the path estimates suggested that current exposure to negative acts at work (b = 0.52, SD = 0.06, 95% credibility interval = [0.41, 0.64], one-tailed p < .001), but not prior victimization from bullying (b = 0.24, SD = 0.18, 95% credibility interval = [-0.11, 0.60], one-tailed $p = .089$), was related to an increased probability of currently labelling as a victim of bulling at work. The corresponding BF for the prior victimization coefficient indicated that the data provided 7 times more support for the relationship being zero than positive ($BF_{01} = 7.9$). Similarly, the estimate for the counterfactually-defined pure natural direct effect of prior victimization on current perceptions of being bullied suggested that a direct effect was not consistently supported by the data, with a 95% credibility interval for the OR including 1 (OR = 1.73, 95% credibility interval [0.61, 3.53]). Thus, the results indicated that prior victimization did not have a direct effect on the probability of currently self-labelling as a victim of bullying when current exposure to negative acts was included in the model. Finally, the estimates for the counterfactually-defined total natural indirect effect showed that prior victimization had a positive indirect effect on the probability of developing a perception of being bullied via an increase in exposure to negative acts (OR = 1.33, 95% credibility interval [1.17, 1.51], one-tailed $p < .001$). In other words, the results indicated that there is a 95% probability that the true OR for the indirect effect was between 1.17 and 1.51, with the median estimate suggesting that prior victimization was related to a 33% increased probability of developing a perception of being bullied, via an increase in exposure to negative acts. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Supplemental Analyses

Next, we carried out several post-hoc analyses to assess the robustness of our findings, inspired by comments from reviewers. First, we tested a model where we included exposure to negative acts at baseline as one of the predictors of self-labelled victimization at follow-up. This path was not reliably different from zero and its inclusion did not impact the other estimates, and we therefore left it out of the final analyses presented above.

Second, we reran all analyses without excluding the 108 employees who self-labelled as victims of bullying the last 6 months at baseline. The results of these analyses were very similar to our original analyses, with the same conclusions for our hypotheses tests.

Third, we ran our analyses without dichotomizing self-labelled victimization at follow-up, declaring the variable as categorical in Mplus. These results were only trivially different from our main analyses and led to the same conclusions regarding our hypotheses. Next, we estimated a two-part semicontinuous model to test whether prior victimization could predict both a) whether respondents developed the perception of being bullied at follow-up (the binary part), and b) the perceived frequency of victimization at follow-up among those who labelled as victims at follow-up (the continuous part). As expected, the results for the binary part of the model were the same as for the models presented above. However, the estimates for the perceived frequency of victimization did not converge and were too unstable to be considered reliable based on the trace plots from the MCMC sampler, suggesting that we did not have sufficient new victims at follow-up to examine perceived frequency of victimization as an outcome.

Finally, to check that the results hold across different analytical strategies, we tested our models using the maximum likelihood estimator in Mplus and evaluated the indirect effect using the a × b product method. Also using this approach, H1, H2, and H3 were supported, whereas the interaction hypothesis (H4) was not. Thus, the results hold across different analytical approaches.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to examine the links between employees' prior victimization from bullying, either in school or at work, and their subsequent exposure to negative acts at work and likelihood of developing the perception of being a victim of workplace bullying. The results indicated that employees with a history of victimization from bullying had a somewhat higher risk of later reporting exposure to negative social acts at work, which fully accounted for their somewhat higher likelihood of developing a perception of being bullied at work. On the other hand, and contrary to our hypothesis, prior victimization did not affect the strength of the relationship between exposure to negative acts and the probability of developing a perception of being a victim of bullying.

Theoretical Contributions

Our findings support the proposition in broad conceptual models of workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 2020; Samnani & Singh, 2016) that employees who have a history of victimization from bullying are at increased risk

of subsequent exposure to bullying at work. As such, our findings are consistent with previous studies linking a history of victimization from bullying with an increased likelihood of later exposure to bullying-like negative acts at work (Brendgen et al., 2021; Brendgen & Poulin, 2017; Hoprekstad et al., 2020) and self-labelling as a victim of workplace bullying (Andersen et al., 2015; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Smith et al., 2003). Taken together, then, the empirical evidence now suggests that revictimization as a phenomenon, thoroughly studied in other contexts (e.g., Walker et al., 2019), is also relevant for understanding the development of bullying and other related forms of mistreatment at work.

Extending previous work, our findings indicate that prior victimization only affects the likelihood of developing a perception of being bullied via higher perceived levels of exposure to negative social acts at work. As such, following the recommendation to employ both the behavioural experience method and the self-labelling method (Nielsen et al., 2020) not only allows for testing the same hypothesis in different ways, but also allows for explicitly modelling the relationship between the two measures capturing different aspects of the bullying phenomenon. Our findings nuance the revictimization phenomenon by showing that the heightened probability of developing a perception of being bullied among prior victims does not exist without a certain level of perceived current exposure to negative social behaviours. While models of social information processing (Crick & Dodge, 1996; Rosen et al., 2007) suggest that prior victimization leads to a more accessible and more easily activated "victim schema", our results do not suggest that such mechanisms are driving the increased likelihood to develop the perception of being bullied among prior victims. Thus, there must be "something there" in terms of perceived negative behaviours from others both for employees with and without a history of prior victimization to label their current situation as bullying. Yet, considering the proposed social information processing mechanisms, it is also possible that prior victims are better at recognizing negative social acts or more inclined to ascribe hostility or negative intent to ambiguous social interactions. As such, without presenting the respondents with the same objective stimuli, we cannot rule out the possibility that interpretational biases in part explain the difference in perceived exposure to negative social behaviours between employees with and without prior victimization experiences.

In contrast to our predictions based on models highlighting the role of prior life experiences in making sense of current social interactions (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994; Janoff-Bulman, 1989; Rosen et al., 2009), the relationship between perceived exposure to negative acts at work and self-labelled victimization from workplace bullying was not moderated by prior victimization experiences. This suggests that once an employee has perceived that they are being exposed to a certain level of negative social behaviours at work, any heterogeneity in the interpretation of this situation as constituting bullying or not does not seem to stem from the employee's prior experiences with bullying. As such, our results do not correspond well with previous studies linking victimization to social information processing biases (e.g., van Reemst et al., 2016). This could, of course, indicate that the notion of prior victimization as a predictor of the perception and interpretation of future negative social interactions does not apply among adult employees in a workplace context. Combined with previous failed attempts to identify individual level moderators of the link between perceived exposure to negative acts at work and self-labelled victimization (Vie et al., 2010), our results may also suggest that more proximal contextual variables related to the exposure itself may be more important for the perception of being bullied at work.

Alternatively, our findings may be taken as a reminder of the importance and challenges of taking a critical temporal perspective in research on workplace bullying and other types of interpersonal mistreatment at work (Cole et al., 2016). Specifically, models of social information processing suggest that individuals continuously update their own "database" and social schemas after facing new social interactions (Crick & Dodge, 1994). The time passed since the prior victimization experience and the assessment of current experiences of bullying at work was at least five and a half years in the present study, and for most cases significantly longer, as they had experienced their prior victimization during their school years. Therefore, employees with prior victimization experiences in our sample are likely to have experienced plenty of positive social interactions in the substantial amount of time following their prior victimization that may balance out any social information processing biases incurred and make them fade with time (van Reemst et al., 2016). Thus, just as victimization experiences can negatively affect individuals' social schemas and expectations, so can fundamental positive assumptions and schemas about the benevolence of the world, oneself and others be rebuilt (Janoff-Bulman, 2004). In addition, individuals may differ in their temporal orientation, such that prior victimization experiences may to a larger extent be a predictor of perceptions and interpretations of current mistreatment among individuals with a temporal focus towards the past (Cole et al., 2016).

Finally, it is important to consider our design when interpreting the interaction result. Asking respondents to retrospectively assess their exposure to negative social acts the last 6 months is a common and well-established approach in research on workplace bullying (e.g., León-Pérez et al., 2021; Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021). However, it is possible that interpretational differences between employees facing negative social behaviours at work are better captured

in the heat of the moment and in the interpretation of specific events, as opposed to in retrospective aggregations of events. For instance, an employee who has had 6 months to contemplate the meaning of the situation they are in is presumably less likely to be affected by distant victimization experiences compared to an employee that in the lunch break is trying to make sense of an ambiguous comment made in a morning meeting. As such, models of altered social information processing following prior victimization (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1996; Janoff-Bulman, 1989; Rosen et al., 2007) may still be relevant for understanding the perception and interpretation of negative social acts at work if more dynamic approaches are used. Accordingly, experience sampling methods should be employed to get a better grasp of this issue, as has already been done in other aspects of workplace bullying research (e.g., Ågotnes et al., 2020; Baillien et al., 2017; Hoprekstad et al., 2019; Rodriguez-Munoz et al., 2020).

Limitations and Future Research

There are several methodological considerations that should be noted when interpreting the results of the present study. First, although using a two-wave design with a 5-year interval enabled us to clearly separate the prior victimization temporally from any current victimization and allowed sufficient time for the development of new perceptions of being bullied at work, having more frequent and time-intensive data collections could have enabled us to study the dynamics of the development of the perception of being bullied more precisely. For instance, it is possible that some of the respondents who we classified as new victims of bullying at follow-up after 5 years, developed their perception of being bullied at work earlier than this. Thus, if a respondent had the perception of being bullied already after, say, 3 years, the level of exposure to negative acts at follow-up may not be that important for their current perceived victimization status.

Second, due to the unbalanced prevalence of victimization experiences in school during childhood and adolescence (33.8%) and previously at work during adulthood (3.8%) in our sample, the category of prior victims consisted mainly of employees who were previously bullied at school rather than at work. As a result, we have not been able to examine whether the potential effect of prior victimization from bullying on current appraisals of negative social acts at work is moderated by details of the prior victimization, such as where (i.e., at school or at work) or when (i.e., relatively recently vs. several decades ago) the prior victimization took place. Additional aspects relating to the prior victimization would also be interesting to investigate in future studies, such as the number of perpetrators (Glambek et al., 2020), the type of bullying behaviours, the mental health impact of the prior victimization, or the extent to which the employee perceived that he or she coped with the prior victimization in an effective manner (Smith et al., 2003). Thus, it is possible that examining details of the prior victimization rather than prior victimization as such is a better approach for understanding the links between prior victimization and current outcomes.

Third, we estimated our indirect effect model using data collected at two measurement occasions, where our proposed mediator and outcome were measured at the same time. Strictly speaking, then, our data does not enable us to reject an alternative model in which the current perception of having been bullied the last 6 months increases the retrospectively reported exposure to negative social acts at work the last 6 months, as data generated from a X→M→Y model also tend to support an alternative X→Y→M model (Lemmer & Gollwitzer, 2017; Thoemmes, 2015). However, although we do not have sequential time-ordering of our mediator and outcome, we have a conceptual time-ordering (see Tate, 2015) of our variables due to how they were measured, as the level of exposure to specific negative acts during the last 6 months logically precedes the employees' current judgement of whether that exposure constituted bullying or not. That is, exposure to negative acts the past 6 months is less like to follow from current judgements. Still, we may need more intensive data collection strategies to fully rule out the alternative X→Y→M model.

Fourth, we relied on self-report data, which has its obvious advantages when examining employee perceptions of workplace bullying. Still, the use of self-report data does not come without its limitations and risk of inflated estimates due to common source variance. Yet, temporal separation of measurements, as in the current study, in part remedies the impact of this bias (e.g., Podsakoff et al., 2012).

Fifth, dichotomizing measures, as we have done with self-labelled victimization from bullying, is generally not considered advisable, as it removes information and potentially attenuates parameter estimates. In this instance, however, dichotomizing the self-labelling measure allowed us to investigate the qualitative shift in perception from "not bullied" to "bullied" that aligned well with the aims of this study. That said, we also had too few new victims of bullying in our sample to reliably explore whether prior victimization was linked to perceived frequency of victimization from bullying at follow-up in addition to the shift from "not bullied" to "bullied".

Sixth, as noted in the method section, this study is based on a larger project that has also provided data to previously published studies (e.g., Einarsen & Nielsen, 2014). Consequently, aspects such as sample demographics and rates of exposure to negative acts and victimization from bullying at work are not unique to this study, which should be considered by anyone doing, for instance, meta-analyses on the prevalence of workplace bullying. That said, the findings

related to our hypotheses are novel and have not been published previously, as no other publications using data from the same project have used the data on prior victimization from bullying.

Finally, the incidence of 3.0% new self-labelled victims of workplace bullying after a 5-years period corresponds reasonably well to the relatively low prevalence of bullying in Norway compared to other countries (Nielsen et al., 2009; Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021). Nonetheless, this low prevalence limits the kinds of statistical analyses that can be reliably performed using otherwise high-powered samples. For instance, it prevented us from doing reliable subgroup analyses to test whether the hypothesized moderating effect of prior victimization only exists at relatively low levels of perceived exposure to negative acts, which could be more likely to be perceived as ambiguous and thus more subject to interpretational differences. Although we had a sufficient number of new victims to test our interaction hypothesis judging by the resulting Bayes factor indicating "positive" to "very strong" support for the null hypothesis (Jeffreys, 1961; Kass & Raftery, 1995), the issue of how large the Bayes factor should be to conclude that there is sufficient data to reject or support a null hypothesis is also debatable. Thus, substantially larger samples or a more purposeful sampling of victims of bullying might be needed in future studies testing similar hypotheses in an even more exhaustive manner, in line with recent analyses showing that several studies purportedly studying bullying have not necessarily managed to sample enough victims (Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021).

Conclusion and Practical Implications

The findings of this study have several practical implications. First, our findings stress the necessity of measures to prevent and stop bullying situations in schools and at workplaces and tertiary measures to rehabilitate victims of bullying, as employees with a history of victimization from bullying continue to be at higher risk of subsequent exposure to bullying at work many years following their initial victimization. Thus, victimization from bullying appears to be harmful not only to the health and well-being of the victims in the short term, but also seems to foster a vicious cycle wherein the prior victims are at higher risk of subsequent mistreatment at work. Preventing and stopping bullying cases in a timely manner is therefore crucial for the long-term outcomes of individuals targeted.

Second, prior victimization only explained some 2-6% of the variance in exposure to negative acts, which is similar to previous estimates (Hoprekstad et al., 2020). Moreover, 94.4% of those previously bullied had not developed a perception of being bullied at work at follow-up, also in line with previous findings that the vast majority of those previously bullied are not subsequently bullied at work (Smith et al., 2003). In other words, the victimization history of employees seems to play a very modest role in the development of bullying at work. Still, findings from vignette studies indicate that witnesses' hypothetical helping behaviour and causal attributions of blame are affected by knowledge about the victim's prior victimization experiences (Desrumaux et al., 2016; Desrumaux & De Chacus, 2007). Against this backdrop, our findings suggest that managers, HR-personnel, and other practitioners responsible for preventing and handling cases of workplace bullying ought to look elsewhere than at the victimization history of employees when trying to pinpoint the major developmental causes of bullying at work. Relatedly, as our results suggest that prior victims are no more likely than others to self-label as victims of bullying given the same level of exposure to negative social behaviours, any lay perceptions of victims of bullying as being overly sensitive or dramatic when claiming victim status seem to be unwarranted.

Finally, in accordance with previous theoretical notions on the importance of individual factors in explaining workplace bullying (e.g., Zapf & Einarsen, 2020), it is important to stress that even if individual-level variables do play a role in the development of workplace bullying, it remains a managerial responsibility to address the issue in order to keep all employees safe from such harm. Thus, this line of research should not be understood as condoning any form of "victim blaming", as empirically unravelling risk factors at different levels by no means justifies mistreatment as enacted by perpetrators. On the contrary, findings about any individual level risk factors for becoming a target of bullying could serve as a starting point for systematically examining when and why some employees become perpetrators of bullying, and as such form the basis for interventions aimed at the enactment of bullying behaviours at work. This is in line with a perpetrator predation lens for understanding individual risk factors for mistreatment at work, which shifts the focus away from scrutinizing the victims, and towards the agency and responsibility of perpetrators (Cortina, 2017).

In light of recent meta-analyses emphasizing that individual differences have low predictive power in explaining mistreatment at work compared to situational factors (e.g., Dhanani et al., 2020), our findings suggest that future studies examining individual differences as antecedents of workplace bullying will do wise to adopt a person-environment fit perspective by simultaneously considering situational factors. Taking such an approach, Reknes et al. (2019) found that dispositional affect, trait anger and trait anxiety predicted exposure to bullying behaviours especially when the employee faced high levels of role conflict at work, whereas the impact of these traits diminished substantially at lower levels of role conflict. In the same vein, future studies could explore whether prior victimization acts as a moderator of

other established antecedent–bullying relationships, thereby increasing our understanding of the mechanisms driving the revictimization phenomenon.

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Data Availability The survey data that was analysed in this study are available from NSD - Norwegian centre for research data, at https://doi.org/10.18712/NSD-NSD2050-V1 and https://doi.org/10.18712/NSD-NSD1262-V1, or from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

The data collection that this study is based on was approved by the Regional Committee for Medical Research Ethics in Western Norway.

Informed Consent Informed consent was ensured by providing detailed information about study participation in the invitation letter sent to participants at each data collection wave. The invitation letter described the aim of the overall project and the details of the data management procedures, and highlighted that participation was voulantary, that only anonymized data would be made available to the researchers, and that participants could withdraw from the study at any time and demand to have their information deleted.

Conflict of Interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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Doctoral Theses at The Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen

1980	Allen, Hugh M., Dr. philos.	Parent-offspring interactions in willow grouse (Lagopus L. Lagopus).
1981	Myhrer, Trond, Dr. philos.	Behavioral Studies after selective disruption of hippocampal inputs in albino rats.
1982	Svebak, Sven, Dr. philos.	The significance of motivation for task-induced tonic physiological changes.
1983	Myhre, Grete, Dr. philos.	The Biopsychology of behavior in captive Willow ptarmigan.
	Eide, Rolf, Dr. philos.	PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS AND INDICES OF HEALTH RISKS. The relationship of psychosocial conditions to subjective complaints, arterial blood pressure, serum cholesterol, serum triglycerides and urinary catecholamines in middle aged populations in Western Norway.
	Værnes, Ragnar J., Dr. philos.	Neuropsychological effects of diving.
1984	Kolstad, Arnulf, Dr. philos.	Til diskusjonen om sammenhengen mellom sosiale forhold og psykiske strukturer. En epidemiologisk undersøkelse blant barn og unge.
	Løberg, Tor, Dr. philos.	Neuropsychological assessment in alcohol dependence.
1985	Hellesnes, Tore, Dr. philos.	Læring og problemløsning. En studie av den perseptuelle analysens betydning for verbal læring.
	Håland, Wenche, Dr. philos.	Psykoterapi: relasjon, utviklingsprosess og effekt.
1986	Hagtvet, Knut A., Dr. philos.	The construct of test anxiety: Conceptual and methodological issues.
	Jellestad, Finn K., Dr. philos.	Effects of neuron specific amygdala lesions on fear-motivated behavior in rats.
1987	Aarø, Leif E., Dr. philos.	Health behaviour and sosioeconomic Status. A survey among the adult population in Norway.
	Underlid, Kjell, Dr. philos.	Arbeidsløyse i psykososialt perspektiv.
	Laberg, Jon C., Dr. philos.	Expectancy and classical conditioning in alcoholics' craving.
	Vollmer, Fred, Dr. philos.	Essays on explanation in psychology.
	Ellertsen, Bjørn, Dr. philos.	Migraine and tension headache: Psychophysiology, personality and therapy.
1988	Kaufmann, Astrid, Dr. philos.	Antisosial atferd hos ungdom. En studie av psykologiske determinanter.

	Mykletun, Reidar J., Dr. philos.	Teacher stress: personality, work-load and health.
	Havik, Odd E., Dr. philos.	After the myocardial infarction: A medical and psychological study with special emphasis on perceived illness.
1989	Bråten, Stein, Dr. philos.	Menneskedyaden. En teoretisk tese om sinnets dialogiske natur med informasjons- og utviklingspsykologiske implikasjoner sammenholdt med utvalgte spedbarnsstudier.
	Wold, Bente, Dr. psychol.	Lifestyles and physical activity. A theoretical and empirical analysis of socialization among children and adolescents.
1990	Flaten, Magne A., Dr. psychol.	The role of habituation and learning in reflex modification.
1991	Alsaker, Françoise D., Dr. philos.	Global negative self-evaluations in early adolescence.
	Kraft, Pål, Dr. philos.	AIDS prevention in Norway. Empirical studies on diffusion of knowledge, public opinion, and sexual behaviour.
	Endresen, Inger M., Dr. philos.	Psychoimmuniological stress markers in working life.
	Faleide, Asbjørn O., Dr. philos.	Asthma and allergy in childhood. Psychosocial and psychotherapeutic problems.
1992	Dalen, Knut, Dr. philos.	Hemispheric asymmetry and the Dual-Task Paradigm: An experimental approach.
	Bø, Inge B., Dr. philos.	Ungdoms sosiale økologi. En undersøkelse av 14-16 åringers sosiale nettverk.
	Nivison, Mary E., Dr. philos.	The relationship between noise as an experimental and environmental stressor, physiological changes and psychological factors.
	Torgersen, Anne M., Dr. philos.	Genetic and environmental influence on temperamental behaviour. A longitudinal study of twins from infancy to adolescence.
1993	Larsen, Svein, Dr. philos.	Cultural background and problem drinking.
	Nordhus, Inger Hilde, Dr. philos.	Family caregiving. A community psychological study with special emphasis on clinical interventions.
	Thuen, Frode, Dr. psychol.	Accident-related behaviour among children and young adolescents: Prediction and prevention.
	Solheim, Ragnar, Dr. philos.	Spesifikke lærevansker. Diskrepanskriteriet anvendt i seleksjonsmetodikk.
	Johnsen, Bjørn Helge, Dr. psychol.	Brain assymetry and facial emotional expressions: Conditioning experiments.
1994	Tønnessen, Finn E., Dr. philos.	The etiology of Dyslexia.
	Kvale, Gerd, Dr. psychol.	Psychological factors in anticipatory nausea and vomiting in cancer chemotherapy.
	Asbjørnsen, Arve E., Dr. psychol.	Structural and dynamic factors in dichotic listening: An interactional model.

	Bru, Edvin, Dr. philos.	The role of psychological factors in neck, shoulder and low back pain among female hospitale staff.
	Braathen, Eli T., Dr. psychol.	Prediction of exellence and discontinuation in different types of sport: The significance of motivation and EMG.
	Johannessen, Birte F., Dr. philos.	Det flytende kjønnet. Om lederskap, politikk og identitet.
1995	Sam, David L., Dr. psychol.	Acculturation of young immigrants in Norway: A psychological and socio-cultural adaptation.
	Bjaalid, Inger-Kristin, Dr. philos.	Component processes in word recognition.
	Martinsen, Øyvind, Dr. philos.	Cognitive style and insight.
	Nordby, Helge, Dr. philos.	Processing of auditory deviant events: Mismatch negativity of event-related brain potentials.
	Raaheim, Arild, Dr. philos.	Health perception and health behaviour, theoretical considerations, empirical studies, and practical implications.
	Seltzer, Wencke J., Dr. philos.	Studies of Psychocultural Approach to Families in Therapy.
	Brun, Wibecke, Dr. philos.	Subjective conceptions of uncertainty and risk.
	Aas, Henrik N., Dr. psychol.	Alcohol expectancies and socialization: Adolescents learning to drink.
	Bjørkly, Stål, Dr. psychol.	Diagnosis and prediction of intra-institutional aggressive behaviour in psychotic patients
1996	Anderssen, Norman, Dr. psychol.	Physical activity of young people in a health perspective: Stability, change and social influences.
	Sandal, Gro Mjeldheim, Dr. psychol.	Coping in extreme environments: The role of personality.
	Strumse, Einar, Dr. philos.	The psychology of aesthetics: explaining visual preferences for agrarian landscapes in Western Norway.
	Hestad, Knut, Dr. philos.	Neuropsychological deficits in HIV-1 infection.
	Lugoe, L.Wycliffe, Dr. philos.	Prediction of Tanzanian students' HIV risk and preventive behaviours
	Sandvik, B. Gunnhild, Dr. philos.	Fra distriktsjordmor til institusjonsjordmor. Fremveksten av en profesjon og en profesjonsutdanning
	Lie, Gro Therese, Dr. psychol.	The disease that dares not speak its name: Studies on factors of importance for coping with HIV/AIDS in Northern Tanzania
	Øygard, Lisbet, Dr. philos.	Health behaviors among young adults. A psychological and sociological approach
	Stormark, Kjell Morten, Dr. psychol.	Emotional modulation of selective attention: Experimental and clinical evidence.
	Einarsen, Ståle, Dr. psychol.	Bullying and harassment at work: epidemiological and psychosocial aspects.

1997	Knivsberg, Ann-Mari, Dr. philos.	Behavioural abnormalities and childhood psychopathology: Urinary peptide patterns as a potential tool in diagnosis and remediation.
	Eide, Arne H., Dr. philos.	Adolescent drug use in Zimbabwe. Cultural orientation in a global-local perspective and use of psychoactive substances among secondary school students.
	Sørensen, Marit, Dr. philos.	The psychology of initiating and maintaining exercise and diet behaviour.
	Skjæveland, Oddvar, Dr. psychol.	Relationships between spatial-physical neighborhood attributes and social relations among neighbors.
	Zewdie, Teka, Dr. philos.	Mother-child relational patterns in Ethiopia. Issues of developmental theories and intervention programs.
	Wilhelmsen, Britt Unni, Dr. philos.	Development and evaluation of two educational programmes designed to prevent alcohol use among adolescents.
	Manger, Terje, Dr. philos.	Gender differences in mathematical achievement among Norwegian elementary school students.
1998 V	Lindstrøm, Torill Christine, Dr. philos.	«Good Grief»: Adapting to Bereavement.
	Skogstad, Anders, Dr. philos.	Effects of leadership behaviour on job satisfaction, health and efficiency.
	Haldorsen, Ellen M. Håland, Dr. psychol.	Return to work in low back pain patients.
	Besemer, Susan P., Dr. philos.	Creative Product Analysis: The Search for a Valid Model for Understanding Creativity in Products.
H	Winje, Dagfinn, Dr. psychol.	Psychological adjustment after severe trauma. A longitudinal study of adults' and children's posttraumatic reactions and coping after the bus accident in Måbødalen, Norway 1988.
	Vosburg, Suzanne K., Dr. philos.	The effects of mood on creative problem solving.
	Eriksen, Hege R., Dr. philos.	Stress and coping: Does it really matter for subjective health complaints?
	Jakobsen, Reidar, Dr. psychol.	Empiriske studier av kunnskap og holdninger om hiv/aids og den normative seksuelle utvikling i ungdomsårene.
1999 V	Mikkelsen, Aslaug, Dr. philos.	Effects of learning opportunities and learning climate on occupational health.
	Samdal, Oddrun, Dr. philos.	The school environment as a risk or resource for students' health-related behaviours and subjective well-being.
	Friestad, Christine, Dr. philos.	Social psychological approaches to smoking.
	Ekeland, Tor-Johan, Dr. philos.	Meining som medisin. Ein analyse av placebofenomenet og implikasjoner for terapi og terapeutiske teoriar.
H	Saban, Sara, Dr. psychol.	Brain Asymmetry and Attention: Classical Conditioning Experiments.

	Carlsten, Carl Thomas, Dr. philos.	God lesing – God læring. En aksjonsrettet studie av undervisning i fagtekstlesing.
	Dundas, Ingrid, Dr. psychol.	Functional and dysfunctional closeness. Family interaction and children's adjustment.
	Engen, Liv, Dr. philos.	Kartlegging av leseferdighet på småskoletrinnet og vurdering av faktorer som kan være av betydning for optimal leseutvikling.
2000 V	Hovland, Ole Johan, Dr. philos.	Transforming a self-preserving "alarm" reaction into a self-defeating emotional response: Toward an integrative approach to anxiety as a human phenomenon.
	Lillejord, Sølvi, Dr. philos.	Handlingsrasjonalitet og spesialundervisning. En analyse av aktørperspektiver.
	Sandell, Ove, Dr. philos.	Den varme kunnskapen.
	Oftedal, Marit Petersen, Dr. philos.	Diagnostisering av ordavkodingsvansker: En prosessanalytisk tilnærmingsmåte.
H	Sandbak, Tone, Dr. psychol.	Alcohol consumption and preference in the rat: The significance of individual differences and relationships to stress pathology
	Eid, Jarle, Dr. psychol.	Early predictors of PTSD symptom reporting; The significance of contextual and individual factors.
2001 V	Skinstad, Anne Helene, Dr. philos.	Substance dependence and borderline personality disorders.
	Binder, Per-Einar, Dr. psychol.	Individet og den meningsbærende andre. En teoretisk undersøkelse av de mellommenneskelige forutsetningene for psykisk liv og utvikling med utgangspunkt i Donald Winnicotts teori.
	Roald, Ingvild K., Dr. philos.	Building of concepts. A study of Physics concepts of Norwegian deaf students.
H	Fekadu, Zelalem W., Dr. philos.	Predicting contraceptive use and intention among a sample of adolescent girls. An application of the theory of planned behaviour in Ethiopian context.
	Melesse, Fantu, Dr. philos.	The more intelligent and sensitive child (MISC) mediational intervention in an Ethiopian context: An evaluation study.
	Råheim, Målfrid, Dr. philos.	Kvinners kroppserfaring og livssammenheng. En fenomenologisk – hermeneutisk studie av friske kvinner og kvinner med kroniske muskelsmerter.
	Engelsen, Birthe Kari, Dr. psychol.	Measurement of the eating problem construct.
	Lau, Bjørn, Dr. philos.	Weight and eating concerns in adolescence.
2002 V	Ihlebæk, Camilla, Dr. philos.	Epidemiological studies of subjective health complaints.
	Rosén, Gunnar O. R., Dr. philos.	The phantom limb experience. Models for understanding and treatment of pain with hypnosis.

	Høines, Marit Johnsen, Dr. philos.	Fleksible språkrom. Matematikklæring som tekstutvikling.
	Anthun, Roald Andor, Dr. philos.	School psychology service quality. Consumer appraisal, quality dimensions, and collaborative improvement potential
	Pallesen, Ståle, Dr. psychol.	Insomnia in the elderly. Epidemiology, psychological characteristics and treatment.
	Midthassel, Unni Vere, Dr. philos.	Teacher involvement in school development activity. A study of teachers in Norwegian compulsory schools
	Kallestad, Jan Helge, Dr. philos.	Teachers, schools and implementation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program.
H	Ofte, Sonja Helgesen, Dr. psychol.	Right-left discrimination in adults and children.
	Netland, Marit, Dr. psychol.	Exposure to political violence. The need to estimate our estimations.
	Diseth, Åge, Dr. psychol.	Approaches to learning: Validity and prediction of academic performance.
	Bjuland, Raymond, Dr. philos.	Problem solving in geometry. Reasoning processes of student teachers working in small groups: A dialogical approach.
2003 V	Arefjord, Kjersti, Dr. psychol.	After the myocardial infarction – the wives' view. Short- and long-term adjustment in wives of myocardial infarction patients.
	Ingjaldsson, Jón Þorvaldur, Dr. psychol.	Unconscious Processes and Vagal Activity in Alcohol Dependency.
	Holden, Børge, Dr. philos.	Følger av atferdsanalytiske forklaringer for atferdsanalysens tilnærming til utforming av behandling.
	Holsen, Ingrid, Dr. philos.	Depressed mood from adolescence to 'emerging adulthood'. Course and longitudinal influences of body image and parent-adolescent relationship.
	Hammar, Åsa Karin, Dr. psychol.	Major depression and cognitive dysfunction- An experimental study of the cognitive effort hypothesis.
	Sprugevica, Ieva, Dr. philos.	The impact of enabling skills on early reading acquisition.
	Gabrielsen, Egil, Dr. philos.	LESE FOR LIVET. Lesekompetansen i den norske voksenbefolkningen sett i lys av visjonen om en enhetsskole.
H	Hansen, Anita Lill, Dr. psychol.	The influence of heart rate variability in the regulation of attentional and memory processes.
	Dyregrov, Kari, Dr. philos.	The loss of child by suicide, SIDS, and accidents: Consequences, needs and provisions of help.
2004 V	Torsheim, Torbjørn, Dr. psychol.	Student role strain and subjective health complaints: Individual, contextual, and longitudinal perspectives.
	Haugland, Bente Storm Mowatt Dr. psychol.	Parental alcohol abuse. Family functioning and child adjustment.

	Milde, Anne Marita, Dr. psychol.	Ulcerative colitis and the role of stress. Animal studies of psychobiological factors in relationship to experimentally induced colitis.
	Stornes, Tor, Dr. philos.	Socio-moral behaviour in sport. An investigation of perceptions of sportspersonship in handball related to important factors of socio-moral influence.
	Mæhle, Magne, Dr. philos.	Re-inventing the child in family therapy: An investigation of the relevance and applicability of theory and research in child development for family therapy involving children.
	Kobbeltvedt, Therese, Dr. psychol.	Risk and feelings: A field approach.
2004 H	Thomsen, Tormod, Dr. psychol.	Localization of attention in the brain.
	Løberg, Else-Marie, Dr. psychol.	Functional laterality and attention modulation in schizophrenia: Effects of clinical variables.
	Kyrkjebø, Jane Mikkelsen, Dr. philos.	Learning to improve: Integrating continuous quality improvement learning into nursing education.
	Laumann, Karin, Dr. psychol.	Restorative and stress-reducing effects of natural environments: Experiencal, behavioural and cardiovascular indices.
	Holgersen, Helge, PhD	Mellom oss - Essay i relasjonell psykoanalyse.
2005 V	Hetland, Hilde, Dr. psychol.	Leading to the extraordinary? Antecedents and outcomes of transformational leadership.
	Iversen, Anette Christine, Dr. philos.	Social differences in health behaviour: the motivational role of perceived control and coping.
2005 H	Mathisen, Gro Ellen, PhD	Climates for creativity and innovation: Definitions, measurement, predictors and consequences.
	Sævi, Tone, Dr. philos.	Seeing disability pedagogically – The lived experience of disability in the pedagogical encounter.
	Wiium, Nora, PhD	Intrapersonal factors, family and school norms: combined and interactive influence on adolescent smoking behaviour.
	Kanagaratnam, Pushpa, PhD	Subjective and objective correlates of Posttraumatic Stress in immigrants/refugees exposed to political violence.
	Larsen, Torill M. B. , PhD	Evaluating principals` and teachers` implementation of Second Step. A case study of four Norwegian primary schools.
	Bancila, Delia, PhD	Psychosocial stress and distress among Romanian adolescents and adults.
2006 V	Hillestad, Torgeir Martin, Dr. philos.	Normalitet og avvik. Forutsetninger for et objektivt psykopatologisk avviksbegrep. En psykologisk, sosial, erkjennelsesteoretisk og teorihistorisk framstilling.
	Nordanger, Dag Øystein, Dr. psychol.	Psychosocial discourses and responses to political violence in post-war Tigray, Ethiopia.

	Rimol, Lars Morten, PhD	Behavioral and fMRI studies of auditory laterality and speech sound processing.
	Krumsvik, Rune Johan, Dr. philos.	ICT in the school. ICT-initiated school development in lower secondary school.
	Norman, Elisabeth, Dr. psychol.	Gut feelings and unconscious thought: An exploration of fringe consiousness in implicit cognition.
	Israel, K Pravin, Dr. psychol.	Parent involvement in the mental health care of children and adolescents. Emperical studies from clinical care setting.
	Glasø, Lars, PhD	Affects and emotional regulation in leader-subordinate relationships.
	Knutsen, Ketil, Dr. philos.	HISTORIER UNGDOM LEVER – En studie av hvordan ungdommer bruker historie for å gjøre livet meningsfullt.
	Matthiesen, Stig Berge, PhD	Bullying at work. Antecedents and outcomes.
2006 H	Gramstad, Arne, PhD	Neuropsychological assessment of cognitive and emotional functioning in patients with epilepsy.
	Bendixen, Mons, PhD	Antisocial behaviour in early adolescence: Methodological and substantive issues.
	Mrumbi, Khalifa Maulid, PhD	Parental illness and loss to HIV/AIDS as experienced by AIDS orphans aged between 12-17 years from Temeke District, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: A study of the children's psychosocial health and coping responses.
	Hetland, Jørn, Dr. psychol.	The nature of subjective health complaints in adolescence: Dimensionality, stability, and psychosocial predictors
	Kakoko, Deodatus Conatus Vitalis, PhD	Voluntary HIV counselling and testing service uptake among primary school teachers in Mwanza, Tanzania: assessment of socio-demographic, psychosocial and socio-cognitive aspects
	Mykletun, Arnstein, Dr. psychol.	Mortality and work-related disability as long-term consequences of anxiety and depression: Historical cohort designs based on the HUNT-2 study
	Sivertsen, Børge, PhD	Insomnia in older adults. Consequences, assessment and treatment.
2007 V	Singhammer, John, Dr. philos.	Social conditions from before birth to early adulthood – the influence on health and health behaviour
	Janvin, Carmen Ani Cristea, PhD	Cognitive impairment in patients with Parkinson's disease: profiles and implications for prognosis
	Braarud, Hanne Cecilie, Dr.psychol.	Infant regulation of distress: A longitudinal study of transactions between mothers and infants
	Tveito, Torill Helene, PhD	Sick Leave and Subjective Health Complaints
	Magnussen, Liv Heide, PhD	Returning disability pensioners with back pain to work

	Thuen, Elin Marie, Dr.philos.	Learning environment, students' coping styles and emotional and behavioural problems. A study of Norwegian secondary school students.
	Solberg, Ole Asbjørn, PhD	Peacekeeping warriors – A longitudinal study of Norwegian peacekeepers in Kosovo
2007 H	Søreide, Gunn Elisabeth, Dr.philos.	Narrative construction of teacher identity
	Svensen, Erling, PhD	WORK & HEALTH. Cognitive Activation Theory of Stress applied in an organisational setting.
	Øverland, Simon Nygaard, PhD	Mental health and impairment in disability benefits. Studies applying linkages between health surveys and administrative registries.
	Eichele, Tom, PhD	Electrophysiological and Hemodynamic Correlates of Expectancy in Target Processing
	Børhaug, Kjetil, Dr.philos.	Oppseding til demokrati. Ein studie av politisk oppseding i norsk skule.
	Eikeland, Thorleif, Dr.philos.	Om å vokse opp på barnehjem og på sykehus. En undersøkelse av barnehjemsbarns opplevelser på barnehjem sammenholdt med sanatoriebarns beskrivelse av langvarige sykehusopphold – og et forsøk på forklaring.
	Wadel, Carl Cato, Dr.philos.	Medarbeidersamhandling og medarbeiderledelse i en lagbasert organisasjon
	Vinje, Hege Forbech, PhD	Thriving despite adversity: Job engagement and self-care among community nurses
	Noort, Maurits van den, PhD	Working memory capacity and foreign language acquisition
2008 V	Breivik, Kyrre, Dr.psychol.	The Adjustment of Children and Adolescents in Different Post-Divorce Family Structures. A Norwegian Study of Risks and Mechanisms.
	Johnsen, Grethe E., PhD	Memory impairment in patients with posttraumatic stress disorder
	Sætrevik, Bjørn, PhD	Cognitive Control in Auditory Processing
	Carvalhosa, Susana Fonseca, PhD	Prevention of bullying in schools: an ecological model
2008 H	Brønnick, Kolbjørn Selvåg	Attentional dysfunction in dementia associated with Parkinson's disease.
	Posserud, Maj-Britt Rocio	Epidemiology of autism spectrum disorders
	Haug, Ellen	Multilevel correlates of physical activity in the school setting
	Skjerve, Arvid	Assessing mild dementia – a study of brief cognitive tests.

	Kjønniksen, Lise	The association between adolescent experiences in physical activity and leisure time physical activity in adulthood: a ten year longitudinal study
	Gundersen, Hilde	The effects of alcohol and expectancy on brain function
	Omvik, Siri	Insomnia – a night and day problem
2009 V	Molde, Helge	Pathological gambling: prevalence, mechanisms and treatment outcome.
	Foss, Else	Den omsorgsfulle væremåte. En studie av voksnes væremåte i forhold til barn i barnehagen.
	Westrheim, Kariane	Education in a Political Context: A study of Konwledge Processes and Learning Sites in the PKK.
	Wehling, Eike	Cognitive and olfactory changes in aging
	Wangberg, Silje C.	Internet based interventions to support health behaviours: The role of self-efficacy.
	Nielsen, Morten B.	Methodological issues in research on workplace bullying. Operationalisations, measurements and samples.
	Sandu, Anca Larisa	MRI measures of brain volume and cortical complexity in clinical groups and during development.
	Guribye, Eugene	Refugees and mental health interventions
	Sørensen, Lin	Emotional problems in inattentive children – effects on cognitive control functions.
	Tjomsland, Hege E.	Health promotion with teachers. Evaluation of the Norwegian Network of Health Promoting Schools: Quantitative and qualitative analyses of predisposing, reinforcing and enabling conditions related to teacher participation and program sustainability.
	Helleve, Ingrid	Productive interactions in ICT supported communities of learners
2009 H	Skorpen, Aina Øye, Christine	Dagliglivet i en psykiatrisk institusjon: En analyse av miljøterapeutiske praksiser
	Andreassen, Cecilie Schou	WORKAHOLISM – Antecedents and Outcomes
	Stang, Ingun	Being in the same boat: An empowerment intervention in breast cancer self-help groups
	Sequeira, Sarah Dorothee Dos Santos	The effects of background noise on asymmetrical speech perception
	Kleiven, Jo, dr.philos.	The Lillehammer scales: Measuring common motives for vacation and leisure behavior
	Jónsdóttir, Guðrún	Dubito ergo sum? Ni jenter møter naturfaglig kunnskap.
	Hove, Oddbjørn	Mental health disorders in adults with intellectual disabilities - Methods of assessment and prevalence of mental health disorders and problem behaviour
	Wageningen, Heidi Karin van	The role of glutamate on brain function

	Bjørkvik, Jofrid	God nok? Selvaktelse og interpersonlig fungering hos pasienter innen psykisk helsevern: Forholdet til diagnoser, symptomer og behandlingsutbytte
	Andersson, Martin	A study of attention control in children and elderly using a forced-attention dichotic listening paradigm
	Almås, Aslaug Grov	Teachers in the Digital Network Society: Visions and Realities. A study of teachers' experiences with the use of ICT in teaching and learning.
	Ulvik, Marit	Lærerutdanning som danning? Tre stemmer i diskusjonen
2010 V	Skår, Randi	Læringsprosesser i sykepleieres profesjonsutøvelse. En studie av sykepleieres læringserfaringer.
	Roald, Knut	Kvalitetsvurdering som organisasjonslæring mellom skole og skoleeigar
	Lunde, Linn-Heidi	Chronic pain in older adults. Consequences, assessment and treatment.
	Danielsen, Anne Grete	Perceived psychosocial support, students' self-reported academic initiative and perceived life satisfaction
	Hysing, Mari	Mental health in children with chronic illness
	Olsen, Olav Kjellevold	Are good leaders moral leaders? The relationship between effective military operational leadership and morals
	Riese, Hanne	Friendship and learning. Entrepreneurship education through mini-enterprises.
	Holthe, Asle	Evaluating the implementation of the Norwegian guidelines for healthy school meals: A case study involving three secondary schools
H	Hauge, Lars Johan	Environmental antecedents of workplace bullying: A multi-design approach
	Bjørkelo, Brita	Whistleblowing at work: Antecedents and consequences
	Reme, Silje Endresen	Common Complaints – Common Cure? Psychiatric comorbidity and predictors of treatment outcome in low back pain and irritable bowel syndrome
	Helland, Wenche Andersen	Communication difficulties in children identified with psychiatric problems
	Beneventi, Harald	Neuronal correlates of working memory in dyslexia
	Thygesen, Elin	Subjective health and coping in care-dependent old persons living at home
	Aanes, Mette Marthinussen	Poor social relationships as a threat to belongingness needs. Interpersonal stress and subjective health complaints: Mediating and moderating factors.
	Anker, Morten Gustav	Client directed outcome informed couple therapy

	Bull, Torill	Combining employment and child care: The subjective well-being of single women in Scandinavia and in Southern Europe
	Viig, Nina Grieg	Tilrettelegging for læreres deltakelse i helsefremmende arbeid. En kvalitativ og kvantitativ analyse av sammenhengen mellom organisatoriske forhold og læreres deltakelse i utvikling og implementering av Europeisk Nettverk av Helsefremmende Skoler i Norge
	Wolff, Katharina	To know or not to know? Attitudes towards receiving genetic information among patients and the general public.
	Ogden, Terje, dr.philos.	Familiebasert behandling av alvorlige atferdsproblemer blant barn og ungdom. Evaluering og implementering av evidensbaserte behandlingsprogrammer i Norge.
	Solberg, Mona Elin	Self-reported bullying and victimisation at school: Prevalence, overlap and psychosocial adjustment.
2011 V	Bye, Hege Høivik	Self-presentation in job interviews. Individual and cultural differences in applicant self-presentation during job interviews and hiring managers' evaluation
	Notelaers, Guy	Workplace bullying. A risk control perspective.
	Moltu, Christian	Being a therapist in difficult therapeutic impasses. A hermeneutic phenomenological analysis of skilled psychotherapists' experiences, needs, and strategies in difficult therapies ending well.
	Myrseth, Helga	Pathological Gambling - Treatment and Personality Factors
	Schanche, Elisabeth	From self-criticism to self-compassion. An empirical investigation of hypothesized change prosesses in the Affect Phobia Treatment Model of short-term dynamic psychotherapy for patients with Cluster C personality disorders.
	Våpenstad, Eystein Victor, dr.philos.	Det tempererte nærvær. En teoretisk undersøkelse av psykoterapautens subjektivitet i psykoanalyse og psykoanalytisk psykoterapi.
	Haukebø, Kristin	Cognitive, behavioral and neural correlates of dental and intra-oral injection phobia. Results from one treatment and one fMRI study of randomized, controlled design.
	Harris, Anette	Adaptation and health in extreme and isolated environments. From 78°N to 75°S.
	Bjørknes, Ragnhild	Parent Management Training-Oregon Model: intervention effects on maternal practice and child behavior in ethnic minority families
	Mamen, Asgeir	Aspects of using physical training in patients with substance dependence and additional mental distress
	Espevik, Roar	Expert teams: Do shared mental models of team members make a difference
	Haara, Frode Olav	Unveiling teachers' reasons for choosing practical activities in mathematics teaching

2011 H	Hauge, Hans Abraham	How can employee empowerment be made conducive to both employee health and organisation performance? An empirical investigation of a tailor-made approach to organisation learning in a municipal public service organisation.
	Melkevik, Ole Rogstad	Screen-based sedentary behaviours: pastimes for the poor, inactive and overweight? A cross-national survey of children and adolescents in 39 countries.
	Vøllestad, Jon	Mindfulness-based treatment for anxiety disorders. A quantitative review of the evidence, results from a randomized controlled trial, and a qualitative exploration of patient experiences.
	Tolo, Astrid	Hvordan blir lærerkompetanse konstruert? En kvalitativ studie av PPU-studenters kunnskapsutvikling.
	Saus, Evelyn-Rose	Training effectiveness: Situation awareness training in simulators
	Nordgreen, Tine	Internet-based self-help for social anxiety disorder and panic disorder. Factors associated with effect and use of self-help.
	Munkvold, Linda Helen	Oppositional Defiant Disorder: Informant discrepancies, gender differences, co-occuring mental health problems and neurocognitive function.
	Christiansen, Øivin	Når barn plasseres utenfor hjemmet: beslutninger, forløp og relasjoner. Under barnevernets (ved)tak.
	Brunborg, Geir Scott	Conditionability and Reinforcement Sensitivity in Gambling Behaviour
	Hystad, Sigurd William	Measuring Psychological Resiliency: Validation of an Adapted Norwegian Hardiness Scale
2012 V	Roness, Dag	Hvorfor bli lærer? Motivasjon for utdanning og utøving.
	Fjermestad, Krister Westlye	The therapeutic alliance in cognitive behavioural therapy for youth anxiety disorders
	Jenssen, Eirik Sørnes	Tilpasset opplæring i norsk skole: politikeres, skoleledereres og læreres handlingsvalg
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