Empirical Article

How tyrannical leadership relates to workplace bullying and turnover intention over time: The role of coworker support

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Introduction
In light of the deleterious consequences associated with workplace bullying, it is important to identify the work-related factors that can contribute to the presence of bullying behaviors over time. Up to now, most research on the topic has investigated job characteristics (presence of job demands, absence of job resources) as contributing factors of workplace bullying. Given the key role leadership plays in shaping employees' work environment, this study aims to better understand how harmful forms of leadership relate to bullying behaviors over time and, subsequently, to employee functioning.
Methods
More specifically, this longitudinal study (two data collections over a 3-month period) conducted among a sample of Canadian employees (T1 $n = 600$, T2 $n = 422$) assesses the temporal relationship between tyrannical leadership, exposure to bullying behaviors, and turnover intention, as well as the moderating role of perceived coworker support in the relationship between tyrannical leadership and bullying behaviors.
Results
Results from cross-lagged analyses show that, controlling for baseline effects, T1 tyrannical leadership positively predicts T2 exposure to bullying behaviors and that T1 bullying behaviors positively predict T2 turnover intention. T1 coworker support did not significantly buffer the relationship between T1 tyrannical leadership and T2 exposure to bullying behaviors, although it did significantly predict, negatively so, T2 turnover intention.
Conclusion
The present study provides valuable insight into the social contextual determinants of bullying behaviors and highlights the destructive nature of tyrannical leadership. Furthermore, this study illustrates the importance of fostering supportive behaviors between colleagues, as this important social resource can play a key role in reducing turnover intention over time.

Key words: Workplace bullying, tyrannical leadership, coworker support, turnover intention, longitudinal study.

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INTRODUCTION

Workplace bullying is a particularly harmful stressor at work (Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2010), with well-documented consequences over time for both individuals (e.g., depression, anxiety, burnout, psychological distress) and organizations (e.g., turnover, long-term sickness absence; see Boudrias, Trépanier & Salin, 2021, for a review of the longitudinal consequences of workplace bullying). Given such consequences, it is important to identify the work-related factors that can contribute to the presence of bullying behaviors, in order to reduce their occurrence and associated outcomes. Past research on this issue has mostly investigated the link between job characteristics and workplace bullying, revealing that the presence of job demands (e.g., workload, role ambiguity, role conflicts) and the absence of job resources (e.g., job autonomy, job recognition) create fertile ground for bullying behaviors (e.g., Baillien, De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011; Li, Chen, Tuckey, McLinton & Dollard, 2019; Notelaers, Baillien, De Witte, Einarsen & Vermunt, 2013; Notelaers, De Witte & Einarsen, 2010; Trépanier, Peterson, Fernet, Austin & Desrumaux, 2021). As leadership plays a key role in shaping employees' work environment (perceptions of job demands and resources; Fernet, Trépanier, Austin, Gagné &

Forest, 2015; Nielsen, Randall, Yarker & Brenner, 2008), it is important to better understand how harmful forms of leadership relate to bullying behaviors over time and, subsequently, to employee functioning. This is all the more important given that cross-sectional studies show that destructive leadership can predict workplace bullying over and above job characteristics (Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2007). As such, this study relies on a longitudinal design to improve our understanding of how tyrannical leadership (an active form of destructive leadership expressed through behaviors that aim to achieve organizational goals at the cost of employees' well-being and job satisfaction; Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007) relates to bullying behaviors and employee turnover intention over time. Furthermore, given that social resources have been found to help manage the stress associated with negative work-related factors, resulting in less perceived bullying behaviors (Trépanier, Peterson, Fernet, Austin & Desrumaux, 2021), we also investigate the moderating role of perceived coworker support in this longitudinal relationship.

Workplace bullying

Workplace bullying is defined as systematic exposure to negative social behaviors from others at work against which it is difficult

to defend oneself (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2020). These negative behaviors, which can be direct (e.g., verbal threats, abuse, humiliation) or indirect (e.g., social isolation, gossiping and spreading rumors), can involve (1) work-related behaviors (e.g., undervaluing one's professional abilities and skills), (2) person-related behaviors (e.g., humiliating or offensive personal remarks), or (3) intimidating behaviors (e.g., shouting, threats; Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers, 2009; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2020). Workplace bullying is inherently characterized by its temporal nature, which explains its particularly deleterious effects. Indeed, whereas a single or rare exposure to negative social behaviors may be perceived as common in workplace interactions (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2020), these behaviors become highly damaging when experienced frequently and persistently by the targeted employee (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997).

Consequences of bullying behaviors. In the past decade, mounting evidence has shown that exposure to bullying behaviors is detrimental to employee well-being and professional functioning. Consequences associated with workplace bullying include burnout, post-traumatic stress disorders, long-term sickness absence, depressive symptoms, turnover intention, and actual turnover (Boudrias, Trépanier & Salin, 2021; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). For example, in a three-wave longitudinal study, Naseer and Raja (2021) found that workplace bullying was related to burnout as well as psychological strain over time. Results further revealed that these relationships are explained (i.e., mediated) by a lack of perceived organizational support as well as emotional dissonance (i.e., tension or discomfort due to the inconsistency between the emotions felt and those portrayed). Research has also shown that exposure to bullying behaviors is detrimental to employee well-being (e.g., burnout, life dissatisfaction, turnover intention, reduced work engagement), as it undermines and actively thwarts employees' fundamental psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Trépanier, Fernet & Austin, 2013, 2015, 2016), which play a crucial role in fostering and maintaining employee health and well-being (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017). In light of the well-documented consequences of exposure to bullying behaviors, past research has also attempted to better grasp the antecedents of workplace bullying.

Antecedents of bullying behaviors. Two perspectives have guided research examining the antecedents of bullying (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018), namely the work environment hypothesis (see Salin & Hoel, 2020) and the individual-disposition hypothesis (see Zapf & Einarsen, 2020). On the one hand, the work environment hypothesis proposes that poorly designed work environments and stressful job conditions enable bullying to flourish by fostering negative affect, psychological discomfort, and frustration as well as norm-violating behaviors (Baillien, Neyens, De Witte & De Cuyper, 2009; Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2007; Notelaers, De Witte & Einarsen, 2010). On the other hand, the individual-disposition hypothesis proposes that certain individual characteristics (e.g., personality, self-esteem, social competence) may be associated with victimization or prompt individuals to engage in bullying behaviors (Zapf &

Einarsen, 2020). However, evidence suggests that, compared with individual factors, work-related factors play a stronger role in predicting workplace bullying (Balducci, Fraccaroli & Schaufeli, 2011; Bowling & Beehr, 2006). As such, much attention has been given to job characteristics as contributing factors to workplace bullying. For example, job demands (e.g., role conflict, role ambiguity, job insecurity) have been positively linked to self-reported bullying, whereas job resources (e.g., decision authority, task participation, skill utilization) have been negatively linked to self-reported bullying (Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2007; Notelaers, De Witte & Einarsen, 2010). Furthermore, Salin (2015) observed that high job demands and poor physical work environments were important risk factors of workplace bullying, from the perspectives of both the targets and observers.

In contrast to the abundant literature on job characteristics, less attention has been given to the relationships between perceived leadership in the work context and bullying. However, as leadership shapes employees' perceptions of work experiences and expectations in regard to accepted behaviors (Fernet, Trépanier, Austin, Gagné & Forest, 2015; Salin & Hoel, 2020), it is important to better understand how leadership relates to perceptions of bullying behaviors over time. This is all the more important given that individuals in positions of hierarchical authority and power are often identified as the source of bullying (Salin & Hoel, 2020). When not directly involved as perpetrators, managers and supervisors have nonetheless been identified as key actors in facilitating or hampering bullying within the work unit (see Salin & Hoel, 2020).

Leadership and workplace bullying. Past research examining how leadership relates to workplace bullying has investigated various constructive leadership forms, including transformational (Nielsen, 2013), ethical (Ahmad, 2018; Stouten *et al.*, 2010), and authentic leadership (Laschinger & Fida, 2014). Overall, research suggests that such constructive forms of leadership are negatively linked to workplace bullying, notably by fostering perceptions of safety (Nielsen, 2013), positive work conditions and job characteristics (Astrauskaite, Notelaers, Medisauskaite & Kern, 2015; Islam, Ahmed & Ali, 2019; Stouten *et al.*, 2010), and a sense of social community at work as well as organizational identification (Islam, Ahmed & Ali, 2019).

Less research has investigated the relationship between destructive forms of leadership (Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007) and workplace bullying. Nevertheless, research has shown that laissez-faire leadership, which refers to the "absence of leadership" or the avoidance of intervention (Bass, 1999), provides fertile ground for bullying behaviors. For example, in a study among 594 seafarers, Nielsen (2013) found that laissez-faire leadership was associated with bullying, from the targets' perspective (exposure to bullying behaviors and perceived victimization) as well as the perpetrators' perspective (self-reported enactment of workplace bullying). The lack of active involvement on the part of a laissez-faire leader is likely to result in ambiguous and conflicting role expectations (Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland & Hetland, 2007) as well as frustrations within the group, which are risk factors of interpersonal tensions and conflicts (Ågotnes *et al.*, 2021;

Einarsen, Raknes & Matthiesen, 1994; Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland & Hetland, 2007). Furthermore, managers' lack of response to bullying behaviors within the work unit can convey the message that such behaviors are tolerated (Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland & Hetland, 2007) and thus contribute to the maintenance and intensification of bullying behaviors.

It is important to note, however, that destructive leadership can also manifest itself through actively negative behaviors (Skogstad *et al.*, 2014). One particularly harmful form of destructive leadership is tyrannical leadership, which refers to managers or supervisors who use their power and authority in a negative, aggressive, and oppressive manner in order to fulfill the organization's goals and mission (Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007). In order to achieve their means, they tend to use forceful conflict resolution methods (Ashforth, 1994), such as threatening and shouting, and tend to belittle and manipulate employees (Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007). In this context, employees can consequently become frustrated and behave aggressively themselves (Hoel, Glasø, Hetland, Cooper & Einarsen, 2010). Although relatively little research has addressed the relationship between tyrannical leadership and workplace bullying, some cross-sectional findings suggest that this active form of destructive leadership is a particularly strong predictor of employees' self-reported bullying (Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2007). More specifically, Hauge, Skogstad, and Einarsen (2007) found tyrannical leadership to predict exposure to bullying behaviors as well as perceived victimization (self-labeling bullying) more strongly than job demands or other forms of leadership (constructive as well as laissez-faire leadership). Results also show that both targets and observers reported more tyrannical leadership by their supervisor than employees who did not experience or witness bullying. In light of this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Controlling for baseline effects, T1 tyrannical leadership positively predicts T2 exposure to bullying behaviors.

Buffering role of social support

Research shows that destructive leadership is an important stressor, associated with negative employee outcomes including job dissatisfaction (Skogstad *et al.*, 2014) and symptoms of post-traumatic stress (Nielsen, Tangen, Idsoe, Matthiesen & Magerøy, 2015) as well as burnout, reduced affective commitment and performance through psychological need frustration and poor quality work motivation (Trépanier, Boudrias & Peterson, 2019). Nevertheless, the impact of stressors on employee well-being and professional functioning varies and can be buffered by the presence of job resources (Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2023). Although no study has assessed the protective role of job resources in the destructive leadership–bullying relationship, job resources have been found to attenuate the deleterious effect of job stressors, resulting in less exposure to bullying behaviors (Li, Chen, Tuckey, McLinton & Dollard, 2019; Notelaers, Baillien, De Witte, Einarsen & Vermunt, 2013; Notelaers, De Witte & Einarsen, 2010; Trépanier, Peterson, Fernet, Austin & Desrumaux, 2021). For example, in a

longitudinal study among nurses, Trépanier, Peterson, Fernet, Austin, and Desrumaux (2021) found that workload positively predicted exposure to bullying behavior over time but only when job resources (job recognition and social support) were low.

Given the social nature of both leadership and workplace bullying, an efficient resource that can potentially buffer the negative impact of destructive leadership on the quality of the social work climate is social support from colleagues. Social support refers to "the availability of helping relationships and the quality of those relationships" (Leavy, 1983, p. 5). When confronted with hostile behaviors from the supervisor, having access to emotional (e.g., sympathy, understanding) or instrumental (e.g., tangible help, advice) support from colleagues may significantly buffer the harmful effect of such behaviors by reducing the stress they can engender. Under such conditions, employees may experience less detrimental consequences on work functioning, such as strain, tension, and frustration, which, when present, can undermine the quality of the social relationships in the work group and fuel conflicts and subsequent bullying behaviors (Einarsen, 2000). Having access to support from colleagues is also likely to engender perceptions of control and reduce perceptions of defenselessness, which play key roles in the escalation of the bullying process (Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021). In light of this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Controlling for baseline effects, T1 coworker support negatively predicts T2 exposure to bullying behaviors.

Hypothesis 3: Controlling for baseline effects, T1 coworker support moderates the relationship between T1 tyrannical leadership and T2 exposure to bullying behaviors. More specifically, T1 tyrannical leadership will positively predict T2 exposure to bullying behaviors less strongly when T1 coworker support is high.

The present study

This longitudinal study aims to gain insight into the temporal relationship between tyrannical leadership and exposure to bullying behaviors as well as the moderating role of coworker support in this relationship. Furthermore, given that past research suggests that workplace bullying has important repercussions on employees' well-being and job functioning over time (Boudrias, Trépanier & Salin, 2021), we also investigate turnover intention as an outcome of exposure to bullying behaviors over time, while controlling for the direct effects of tyrannical leadership and coworker support as well as their interaction.

Hypothesis 4: Controlling for baseline effects, T1 exposure to bullying behaviors positively predicts T2 turnover intention.

The hypothesized relationships are presented in Fig. 1.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants and procedure

A two-wave study (3-month time lag) was conducted in 2019 among a diverse sample of Canadian workers recruited via a commercial online
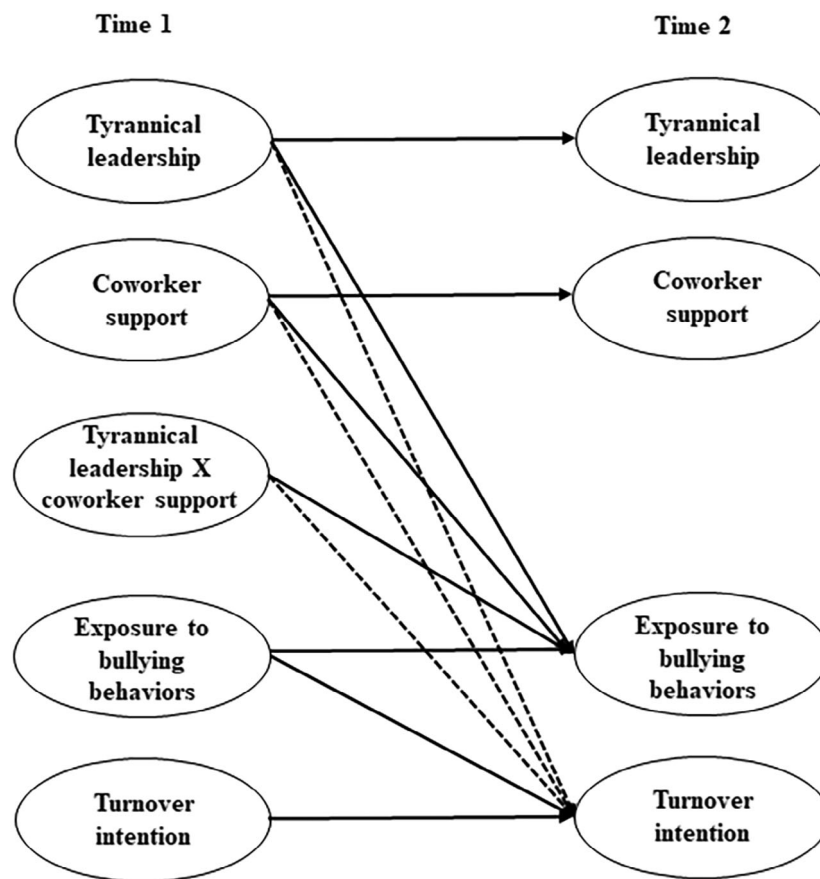
Fig. 1. The proposed model depicting the longitudinal interplay between tyrannical leadership, coworker support, exposure to bullying behaviors, and turnover intention.

panel. Participants were workers who were fully active in the labor market (e.g., not students). Of the 600 workers who took part in the study at T1, 422 also completed the questionnaire at T2 (70.3% response rate). The majority of participants were male (59.3%) and worked full-time (82.9%). Participants had a mean age of 54.62 years (*SD* = 9.14) and 17.80 (*SD* = 12.65) years of experience on average in their current jobs. The majority (72%) of participants worked in management and administration or in sales and customer service.

Measures

All measures were self-reported and administered in French (see Table 1 for the means, standard deviations, and correlations).

Leadership. The Destructive Leadership Scale (Aasland, Skogstad, Notelaers, Nielsen & Einarsen, 2010) was used to assess tyrannical leadership (four items; T1 α = 0.83; T2 α = 0.85). Using a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*), participants were asked to rate the frequency with which their supervisors had used the described behaviors in the past 6 months (e.g., "Has humiliated you, or other employees, if you/they failed to live up to his/her standards").

Coworker support. Social support from colleagues was assessed using three items (T1 α = 0.80; T2 α = 0.85) from the corresponding subscale of the Leiden Quality of Work Questionnaire (van der Doef & Maes, 1999). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the proposed statements (e.g., "If I have problems in my job, I can ask others for help") on a scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*).

Exposure to bullying behaviors. A short version (11 items; T1 α = 0.91; T2 α = 0.93) of the French version (Trépanier, Fernet & Austin, 2012) of the Negative Acts Questionnaire–Revised (NAQ-R; Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers, 2009) was used to assess workplace bullying. Consistent with past research assessing workplace bullying using the behavioral experience method and the NAQ-R, all items referred to negative behaviors at work, with no reference to the term "workplace bullying," and the source of the negative behaviors (e.g., coworker, supervisor) was not taken into account (Nielsen, Notelaers & Einarsen, 2020). On a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*every day*), participants were asked to indicate how frequently they had experienced the listed negative behaviors (work-related, person-related, and physical intimidation) at work (e.g., "Spreading gossip and rumors about you," "Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes," "Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger") during the past 6 months.

Turnover intention. Turnover intention was assessed with a single item ("I am seriously thinking about quitting my current job") adapted from O'Driscoll and Beehr (1994), rated on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*every day*).

Data analysis

To test the proposed model (Fig. 1), cross-lagged analyses were performed with robust maximum likelihood estimation (MLR) using Mplus v.8 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). In order to control for baseline levels of each variable, autoregressive effects were included and synchronous correlations between variables were allowed. The independent and moderating variables were mean centered. Four fit indices were used to

Table 1. *Means, standard deviations, and correlations between variables*

Measure	Scale	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. T1 tyrannical leadership	1–5	1.56	0.71	–						
2. T1 coworker support	1–5	3.93	0.78	−0.23*	–					
3. T1 exposure to bullying behaviors	1–5	1.39	0.56	0.45*	−0.31*	–				
4. T1 turnover intention	1–7	2.18	1.50	0.38*	−0.32*	0.43*	–			
5. T2 tyrannical leadership	1–5	1.56	0.73	0.65*	−0.24*	0.38*	0.33*	–		
6. T2 coworker support	1–5	3.92	0.80	−0.16*	0.60*	−0.31*	−0.30*	−0.33*	–	
7. T2 exposure to bullying behaviors	1–5	1.39	0.60	0.44*	−0.28*	0.68*	0.41*	0.57*	−0.32*	–
8. T2 turnover intention	1–7	2.11	1.51	0.27*	−0.31*	0.41*	0.64*	0.42*	−0.40*	0.50*

*$p < 0.01$.

determine the goodness of fit of the tested model: the comparative fit index (CFI; ≥0.90; Hoyle, 1995; Schumacker & Lomax, 1996), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI; ≥0.90; Hoyle, 1995; Schumacker & Lomax, 1996), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; ≤0.08; Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hu & Bentler, 1999), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR; ≤0.08; Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

RESULTS

Preliminary analyses

First, a MANOVA was performed to assess whether background variables (gender, job status, age) were related to the variables of interest at both time points. Given that no significant differences were observed, background variables were excluded from subsequent analyses. Next, before conducting the main analyses, a measurement model comprising three factors (tyrannical leadership, coworker support, and exposure to bullying behaviors) and turnover intention was tested for both time points. Results show that the T1 and T2 measurement models provided a satisfactory fit to the data: T1 χ^2 (*df*) = 418.557 (147), CFI = 0.914, TLI = 0.900, RMSEA = 0.056 [CI = 0.049–0.062], SRMR = 0.054 and T2 χ^2 (*df*) = 354.078 (147), CFI = 0.925, TLI = 0.912, RMSEA = 0.058 [CI = 0.050–0.066], SRMR = 0.053.

Main analyses

Results from cross-lagged analyses reveal that the proposed model (Fig. 1) provided a satisfactory fit to the data: χ^2 (*df*) = 18.565 (9), CFI = 0.983, TLI = 0.950, RMSEA = 0.042 [CI = 0.013–0.069], SRMR = 0.045. Controlling for baseline effects, results show that T1 tyrannical leadership positively predicted T2 exposure to bullying behaviors, whereas T1 exposure to bullying behaviors positively predicted T2 turnover intention (see Fig. 2). T1 coworker support did not significantly predict T2 exposure to bullying behaviors ($\beta = -0.041$, SE = 0.033, $p = 0.211$), and the moderating effect of T1 coworker support in the relationship between T1 tyrannical leadership and T2 exposure to bullying behaviors was not significant ($\beta = 0.046$, SE = 0.043, $p = 0.280$). However, T1 coworker support did significantly negatively predict T2 turnover intention. Overall, these results offer support for Hypotheses 1 and 4 but not Hypotheses 2 and 3.

Supplementary analyses

To gain better insight into the temporal relation between the investigated variables, supplementary analyses were conducted. More specifically, three models were tested and compared. In all models, baseline effects (e.g., T1 tyrannical leadership on T2 tyrannical leadership) were controlled for. The first model (M1: proposed sequence) comprised links from T1 tyrannical leadership and T1 coworker support to T2 exposure to bullying behaviors and T2 turnover intention as well as from T1 exposure to bullying behaviors to T2 turnover intention. The second model (M2: reversed sequence) comprised links from T1 turnover intention and T1 exposure to bullying behaviors to T2 tyrannical leadership and T2 coworker support as well as from T1 turnover intention to T2 exposure to bullying behaviors. Lastly, the third model (M3: reciprocal sequence) – a combination of M1 and M2 – comprised bidirectional links between all investigated variables. Results show that all models fit the data well. More specifically, results from M1 (χ^2 (*df*) = 15.107 (7), CFI = 0.985, TLI = 0.953, RMSEA = 0.044 [CI = 0.011–0.075], SRMR = 0.047) show that T1 tyrannical leadership positively predicts T2 exposure to bullying behaviors ($\beta = 0.176$, SE = 0.055, $p = 0.001$) and that T1 coworker support negatively predicts T2 turnover intention ($\beta = -0.096$, SE = 0.046, $p = 0.037$). T1 exposure to bullying behaviors also predicts, marginally so ($\beta = 0.102$, SE = 0.055, $p = 0.061$), T2 turnover intention. Results from M2 (χ^2 (*df*) = 26.006 (7), CFI = 0.965, TLI = 0.890, RMSEA = 0.067 [CI = 0.041–0.096], SRMR = 0.041) show that T1 turnover intention positively predicts T2 exposure to bullying behaviors ($\beta = 0.130$, SE = 0.042, $p = 0.002$) and negatively predicts T2 coworker support ($\beta = -0.102$, SE = 0.052, $p = 0.049$). As for M3 (χ^2 (*df*) = 4.367 (2), CFI = 0.996, TLI = 0.952, RMSEA = 0.044 [CI = 0.000–0.103], SRMR = 0.015), results show that T1 tyrannical leadership positively predicts T2 exposure to bullying behaviors ($\beta = 0.148$, SE = 0.057, $p = 0.010$) and that T1 exposure to bullying behaviors positively predicts T2 turnover intention ($\beta = 0.128$, SE = 0.055, $p = 0.020$). All other links, including those found to be significant in M1 (proposed sequence) or M2 (reversed sequence), were non-significant in M3 (reciprocal model): T1 coworker support to T2 turnover intention ($\beta = -0.083$, SE = 0.045, $p = 0.067$), T1 turnover intention to T2 exposure to bullying behaviors ($\beta = 0.074$, SE = 0.043, $p = 0.090$), and T1 turnover intention to T2 coworker support ($\beta = -0.083$, SE = 0.051, $p = 0.104$). Model comparisons show that M3 (the reciprocal sequence) did
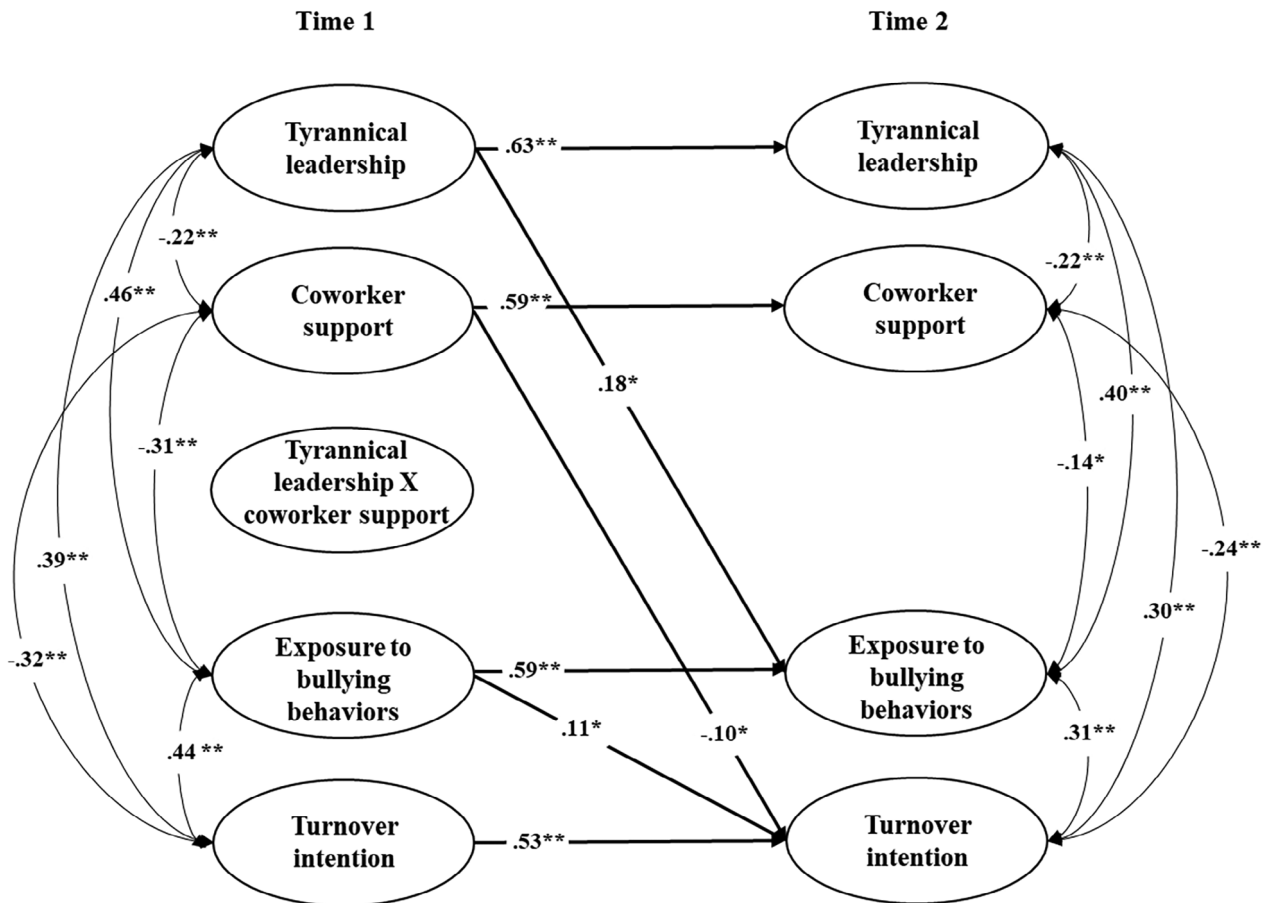
Fig. 2. The longitudinal interplay between tyrannical leadership, coworker support, exposure to bullying behaviors, and turnover intention. *Note*: For simplicity, the synchronous correlations pertaining to the interaction term between tyrannical leadership and coworker support are not shown. *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01.

not fit the data significantly better than M1 (the proposed sequence; $\Delta\chi^2$ (*df*) = 10.759 (5), *p* = 0.056) and that M3 fit the data significantly better than M2 (the reversed sequence; $\Delta\chi^2$ (*df*) = 21.216 (5), *p* = 0.001). M1 (proposed sequence) was therefore considered the best fitting model.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical implications

Most research to date on the work-related antecedents of workplace bullying has adopted a cross-sectional approach, and very little attention has been focused on how negative forms of leadership relate to bullying behaviors over time. Indeed, of the 20 reported articles in Rai and Agarwal's (2018) recent systematic review that investigated the antecedents of workplace bullying, the majority assessed job characteristics (e.g., workload, role ambiguity, role conflict), and almost all studies on the topic used a cross-sectional design (for exceptions, see Baillien, De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011; Baillien, Bollen, Euwema & De Witte, 2014; Francioli *et al.*, 2018). The few studies on leadership have either investigated its positive (e.g., ethical leadership, transformational leadership) or passive negative forms (i.e., laissez-faire leadership). However, no study has examined the longitudinal

relationship between active destructive forms of leadership and workplace bullying, or the moderators that can hamper it (Rai & Agarwal, 2018). This is an important shortcoming, because bullying is conceptualized as a dynamic process that evolves over time (Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021), and individuals in positions of power and authority can play a key role in either facilitating or hampering workplace bullying (Salin & Hoel, 2020). By revealing that tyrannical leadership positively predicts exposure to bullying behaviors over time, this study extends knowledge about how leaders can contribute to creating unhealthy work environments by facilitating the emergence and maintenance of harmful and negative behaviors at work. Indeed, destructive forms of leadership (including tyrannical leadership) engender negative employee psychological (e.g., reduced positive affectivity, stress) and behavioral (e.g., counterproductive work behaviors) outcomes (Schyns & Schilling, 2013), which can ultimately undermine the quality of the social work climate and give rise to conditions within which bullying behaviors can occur. Furthermore, tyrannical leadership – under which organizational goals are often achieved through punishment, force, and coercion at the cost of employees' well-being – may not only increase exposure to negative acts over time but also influence employees' perceptions regarding the tolerance and acceptability of negative behaviors at work (Salin & Hoel, 2020). In this context, negative

social behaviors may be more likely to occur within the work unit. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that although tyrannical leadership can be construed as bullying (Salin & Hoel, 2020) if the manifested behaviors are frequent and prolonged, the results of supplementary confirmatory factor analyses show that tyrannical leadership and bullying behaviors are best represented as distinct factors.[1]

Our results also show that exposure to bullying behaviors positively predicts turnover intention over time (i.e., 3-month time lag), contributing to the relatively scarce knowledge on the longitudinal relationship between bullying and turnover intention (Boudrias, Trépanier & Salin, 2021). Nevertheless, these findings converge with those of two studies (Glambek, Matthiesen, Hetland & Einarsen, 2014; Trépanier, Fernet & Austin, 2015) showing that exposure to bullying behaviors positively predicts turnover intention over time (i.e., 6-month time lag; Glambek, Matthiesen, Hetland & Einarsen, 2014; 12-month time lag; Trépanier, Fernet & Austin, 2015). Trépanier, Fernet, and Austin (2015) also found that psychological need frustration can be involved in this relationship. Future research is encouraged to explore this longitudinal link further, along with other mechanisms that may explain how exposure to bullying behaviors increases employees' intention to quit their current jobs. It would be particularly interesting to focus on psychological contract violation (Salin & Notelaers, 2017) and reduced well-being (Ahmad & Kaleem, 2020), which have been found to intervene in the bullying–turnover intention relationship investigated from a cross-sectional perspective.

Past research investigating social support in relation to workplace bullying has most often assessed its moderating role in the bullying-outcome relationship (e.g., Nielsen, Christensen, Finne & Knardahl, 2020; Tsuno, 2022) and generally shows that social support buffers the negative effects associated with exposure to negative behaviors at work. Contrary to expectations, in the present study, coworker support was not negatively related to exposure to bullying behaviors over time, nor did it buffer the impact of tyrannical leadership on exposure to such behaviors. It may be that individual variables (e.g., gender, personality, personal resources) influence how contextual resources (Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2023), such as coworker support (Nielsen, Christensen, Finne & Knardahl, 2020), operate in the context of stressors. Future research is encouraged to investigate these issues in greater depth by exploring the interplay between both individual and contextual variables in the longitudinal relationship between tyrannical leadership and exposure to bullying behaviors.

Furthermore, although our results show that coworker support did not offset the effect of tyrannical leadership on exposure to bullying behaviors over time, it did negatively predict turnover intention. Results from exploratory analyses reveal that the observed relationship between coworker support and reduced turnover intention appears to be more particularly driven by the instrumental component of support.[2] Such results suggest that coworker support is an important social resource that can solidify employees' ties to their current job, perhaps by facilitating goal achievement and performance as well as by generating other positive and adaptive psychological states (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, reduced burnout symptoms; Mathieu, Eschleman & Cheng, 2019).

Lastly, the present study sheds light on the temporal relation between work-related factors (tyrannical leadership and coworker support) and workplace bullying as well as employee functioning (turnover intention), for which the current state of knowledge is still incomplete (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). The results from the supplementary analyses, which compared several temporal sequences underlying the relationship between the investigated variables, revealed that tyrannical leadership is an antecedent of exposure to bullying behaviors (and not the other way around). These results align with the results of Baillien, Rodriguez-Muñoz, Van den Broeck, and De Witte's (2011) study in which job stressors (e.g., workload, role conflict, job insecurity) and lack of resources (e.g., skill utilization, social support) predicted exposure to bullying over time, while no reciprocal or reversed relations were found. Furthermore, although the results from the reversed sequence showed that turnover intention predicted exposure to bullying behaviors over time, this relation became non-significant when taking into account the effect of tyrannical leadership and coworker support (reciprocal sequence). These results reaffirm the proposition that bullying is more strongly predicted by environmental factors than individual factors (Salin & Hoel, 2020).

Limitations and directions for future research

Despite its theoretical and practical contributions, the present study has certain limitations that should be mentioned and, in doing so, pave the way for future research. First, the present study assessed workplace bullying through the behavioral experience method using items from the NAQ-R, which consists of a list of various negative behaviors that can be construed as bullying if they occur regularly and persistently over time. Although this method is commonly used in the bullying literature (Nielsen, Notelaers & Einarsen, 2020) and has several advantages (e.g., offering insight into the nature and form of the negative acts experienced), it does not capture the perceived power imbalance between the parties involved, which is a fundamental aspect of the conceptualization of workplace bullying, nor does it take into account the source of the negative behaviors (Nielsen, Notelaers & Einarsen, 2020). Future research is encouraged to delve into these issues, notably given the formal power inherent in supervisors' organizational position and the fact that supervisors, including those who use their authority in a negative and aggressive manner to fulfill the organization's goals (i.e., tyrannical leadership), may be the source of the bullying or foster conditions that facilitate the presence of negative behaviors within the work unit (Salin & Hoel, 2020). Second, as research shows that shorter, rather than longer, time frames best tap into the longitudinal impact of contextual factors (Lesener, Gusy & Wolter, 2019), the time lag utilized in the present study (i.e., a 3-month period between measurement points) may have been too long to capture the buffering effect of coworker support in the longitudinal relationship between tyrannical leadership and exposure to negative behaviors. Given that coworker emotional support has been found to buffer the daily relationship between exposure to negative acts and need frustration (Trépanier, Peterson, Ménard & Notelaers, 2023), future diary studies are encouraged to capture the short-term dynamics between tyrannical leadership, coworker support, and exposure to bullying behaviors.

Practical implications

The results of the present study highlight the importance of reducing supervisors' recourse to destructive forms of leadership as we found that tyrannical leadership positively predicted exposure to negative behaviors over time, which in turn predicted turnover intention. Furthermore, past research has linked destructive forms of leadership to various detrimental outcomes (e.g., reduced positive affectivity and job satisfaction, negative affectivity, stress; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). As such, organizations should consider implementing initiatives to increase awareness of the impact of negative forms of leadership, decrease their use, and instead foster constructive leadership behaviors. For example, initiatives (e.g., feedback process intended for development purposes that addresses both desirable and undesirable aspects, personalized coaching) aimed at increasing managers' and supervisors' self-awareness and intrapersonal and interpersonal skills as well as promoting desirable changes in behavior are encouraged (Hogan, Hogan & Kaiser, 2011). Also, as organizational norms regarding the permissibility of displaying aggressive behaviors play an important role in predicting abusive leadership (Zhang & Bednall, 2016), organizational initiatives aimed at explicitly sanctioning workplace aggression as well as promoting a culture of fairness and norms of caring (Zhang & Bednall, 2016) are encouraged to reduce the occurrence of destructive forms of leadership. Moreover, our results highlight the importance of promoting supportive behaviors between colleagues, as they negatively predict turnover intention over time. Although future research is needed to explore in greater detail the potentially distinct role of emotional and instrumental forms of support, the results of the exploratory analyses suggest that instrumental support (e.g., tangible help, advice) was more strongly related to turnover intention over time. Such findings suggest that organizational initiatives aimed at preventing turnover intention could particularly focus on this form of support. Nevertheless, as past research also shows that both emotional (e.g., sympathy, understanding) and instrumental support buffer the harmful impact of job stressors (i.e., workload) on the social work climate, resulting in fewer bullying behaviors (Trépanier, Peterson, Fernet, Austin & Desrumaux, 2021), increasing awareness of the beneficial effects of providing both forms of support to coworkers facing difficulties is encouraged.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the present study provides valuable insight into the social contextual determinants of bullying behaviors by examining the longitudinal interplay between tyrannical leadership, coworker support, and exposure to bullying behaviors. Results highlight the destructive nature of tyrannical leadership, as it is associated with exposure to bullying behaviors, and show that exposure to such behaviors undermines employee professional functioning by fostering turnover intention over time. Although coworker support did not offset the impact of tyrannical leadership, it did negatively predict turnover intention, even when the impact of tyrannical leadership and exposure to bullying behaviors was controlled for. As such, the present study identifies coworker (instrumental) support as an important social resource that can solidify employees' ties to their current jobs, despite the interpersonal difficulties encountered at work.

ETHICS APPROVAL

Approval for this study was obtained from the research ethics board of the first author's institution.

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ENDNOTES

[1] The initial measurement model (three factors [reflecting tyrannical leadership, exposure to bullying behaviors, and coworker support] as well as turnover intention) was compared with a subsequent measurement model, in which tyrannical leadership and workplace bullying were represented as one factor. The results show that, at both time points, the latter measurement model yielded a poor fit to the data (T1 χ^2 (df) = 750.137 (150), CFI = 0.810, TLI = 0.783, RMSEA = 0.082 [CI = 0.076–0.088], SRMR = 0.082. T2 χ^2 (df) = 557.569 (150), CFI = 0.851, TLI = 0.831, RMSEA = 0.080 [CI = 0.073–0.088], SRMR = 0.077) and that the former solution (tyrannical leadership and bullying behaviors as distinct factors) provided a significantly better fit to the data: T1 $\Delta\chi^2$ = 215.95 (Δdf = 3)**; T2 $\Delta\chi^2$ = 203.49 (Δdf = 3)**.

[2] Exploratory analyses were conducted in which the proposed model was retested with the individual items of coworker support (three distinct models). Although the interaction effect remained non-significant, results suggest that the negative relationship observed between coworker support and turnover intention in the main analyses were driven by the instrumental component of support by coworkers (i.e., "If I have problems in my job, I can ask others for help"; $\beta = -0.096$, SE = 0.041, $p = 0.018$). The relationship was marginally significant ("People I work with take a personal interest in me"; $\beta = -0.083$, SE = 0.043, $p = 0.054$) or non-significant ("I feel appreciated by my colleagues"; $\beta = -0.058$, SE = 0.045, $p = 0.196$) for the other items, which tap into more general manifestations of emotional support.

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