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Based on self-determination theory, this two-sample study investigates the effects of negative acts on psychological need frustration in greater depth using a within-person perspective. More specifically, through two distinct diary studies, we aim to contribute to the dearth of research on the daily effects of bullying by investigating the daily relationship between exposure to negative acts and need frustration as well as the moderating role of perceived emotional support at work in this relationship. Overall, results from both studies show that employees experience greater need frustration (perceptions of rejection, oppression, and incompetence) on days they are confronted with negative acts and that daily emotional support buffers the impact of direct negative acts (humiliation, physical intimidation) on frustration of the needs for competence and relatedness at the daily level. As such, the results of the present two-sample study provide a better understanding of the boundary conditions under which exposure to negative acts may result in psychological costs by identifying emotional support as a key resource in the workplace that can offset the immediate harmful effects of certain negative behaviors.

Keywords: workplace bullying, negative acts, need frustration, emotional support, self-determination theory

Bullying is considered as one of the most harmful social stressors in the workplace (Hauge et al., 2010). It is defined as repeated and prolonged exposure to negative acts from others at work (e.g., colleagues, supervisors) against which it is difficult to defend oneself (Einarsen et al., 2020). These acts can be person- (i.e., behaviors that undermine the quality of one's social experience at work) or work-related (i.e., behaviors that impair one's professional identity as well as impede the accomplishment of one's tasks and, ultimately, one's performance) and lie on a continuum ranging from indirect and passive (e.g., social isolation, gossiping, and spreading rumors) to direct and active (e.g., humiliation, shouting, and verbal threats; Einarsen et al., 2009, 2020). It has further been proposed that workplace bullying is an escalating process, characterized by different phases, which differ notably in terms of the type (direct or indirect) and frequency of the negative acts the employee encounters (Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021). In the first phase, the negative behaviors are subtle, infrequent, and somewhat difficult to interpret and can resemble milder forms of mistreatment in the workplace, including incivility (Einarsen et al., 2020). In the second phase, the negative acts become more direct (e.g., being ridiculed or humiliated) and occur more frequently. Subsequent phases are characterized by the fact that employees become increasingly isolated and confronted with intense and severe negative behaviors against which they are unable to defend themselves, resulting in progressively more detrimental psychological and physical consequences.

Past research has provided a clear picture of the harmful effects of workplace bullying (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018): It has been linked to various manifestations of ill-being, including depression, anxiety, burnout, and posttraumatic stress disorder (see Boudrias et al., 2021). Unfortunately, the majority of studies to date on the consequences of workplace bullying have been cross-sectional, although the number of longitudinal studies is increasing (Boudrias et al., 2021; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). Nevertheless, past longitudinal studies investigating the effects of bullying have mainly used a between-person approach (i.e., investigating the extent to which employees who are exposed to negative acts experience greater ill-being over time compared to employees who are not exposed to such acts), and very little is known regarding the intraindividual effects of bullying (i.e., investigating the extent to which employees experience greater ill-being *when* they are exposed to negative acts compared to when they are not exposed to such acts). However, observed between-person level effects do not necessarily occur at the within-person level (Wang & Maxwell, 2015), as both perspectives tap into different phenomena: The between-person level reflects more stable situations and average group effects, whereas the within-person level reflects more episodic

situations and specific individual fluctuations (Pindek et al., 2019). As such, it is important to investigate in greater depth the bullying–outcome relationship using a within-person approach to obtain a better understanding of the short-term effects of negative acts, over and above individual differences (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018; Pindek et al., 2019).

Accordingly, this two-sample diary study aims to fill these current gaps in the workplace bullying literature by exploring the daily effects of specific negative acts on a crucial mechanism liable to explain employee health in the context of job stressors, namely psychological need frustration (Deci et al., 2017). Furthermore, given that a central assumption of the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002) is that employees with access to resources are better equipped to deal with stressors at work (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) and that resources fluctuate (Halbesleben et al., 2014), the present study will also investigate how the perceived daily availability of emotional support at work moderates the relationship between exposure to negative acts and need frustration (perceptions of oppression, incompetence, and rejection). In doing so, the present study aims to contribute to the literature in three main ways. First, this study aims to contribute to the dearth of research on the short-term effects of negative acts and shed light on the boundary conditions under which these behaviors undermine employees' psychological needs on a daily basis. Second, unlike previous diary studies on workplace bullying assessing the construct in an undifferentiated manner (using a composite score), the present study aims to offer insight into the distinct effects of specific negative acts encountered at work. Although workplace bullying is characterized by a prolonged (e.g., 6 months) exposure to negative behaviors, it manifests itself during this time through daily (or weekly) behaviors. By assessing behaviors distinctly at the daily level, the present study aims to offer a close-up perspective on the bullying process and shed light on how it can manifest itself daily as well as how perceived availability of emotional support can hamper its effects. Finally, the study aims to contribute to self-determination theory by offering insight into how social factors within the work environment interact daily to create conditions that can differentially act upon employees' psychological needs, which play a central role in promoting employees' well-being and optimal functioning at work.

The Consequences of Workplace Bullying: Within-Person Perspective

Studies to date have investigated the consequences of bullying primarily using a between-person approach. In this perspective, past longitudinal and multiwave studies clearly illustrate that workplace bullying is associated with impaired psychological health over time, including psychosomatic health and sleep problems, depressive and anxiety symptoms, decreased life satisfaction, and burnout (Hansen et al., 2014; Laschinger & Fida, 2014; Nielsen et al., 2021; Raja et al., 2018; Rosander et al., 2022; Törnroos et al., 2020; Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2015). In addition to causing serious harm to employees, the presence of bullying also undermines organizational effectiveness, as it is associated with employee absenteeism, disengagement, turnover intention, and actual turnover over time (see Boudrias et al., 2021). Although the majority of studies on the outcomes of bullying have investigated bullying globally using

composite scores, some studies, including those using a latent class approach, suggest that the impact of bullying can depend not only on the frequency of the negative acts encountered (e.g., Anusiewicz et al., 2021; Astrauskaite et al., 2015; Notelaers et al., 2019), but also on their nature (i.e., work- vs. person-related) and type (i.e., indirect vs. direct; e.g., Einarsen et al., 2009; León-Pérez et al., 2014; Magee et al., 2017). For example, the Negative Acts Questionnaire–Revised (NAQ-R) validation study (Einarsen et al., 2009) illustrated, through latent class cluster analysis, that employees who experienced severe bullying (i.e., who were particularly confronted with indirect and direct person-related behaviors, including physical intimidation) experienced poorer mental and physical health, as well as lower commitment than employees who reported occasional (direct and indirect) person-related bullying, frequent (direct and indirect) work-related bullying, as well as frequent physical intimidation (direct person-related bullying behaviors).

Although past research offers valuable insight into the consequences of bullying, the method of investigation (i.e., between-person designs) assumes that employee well-being is relatively stable over time. However, certain aspects of employee functioning vary daily and depend on situational conditions (Ohly et al., 2010). Studies using diary methods can capture these individual fluctuations, therefore offering information complementary to that obtained by studies using a between-person perspective (Ohly et al., 2010), notably by tapping into the short-term (i.e., daily) outcomes of negative acts. Investigating the issue at the daily level appears all the more relevant, given that workplace bullying is conceptualized as repeated (*daily* or weekly) exposure to negative behaviors at work.

Unfortunately, to our knowledge, only five shortitudinal studies (Hoprekstad et al., 2019; Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2017, 2020, 2022; Tuckey & Neall, 2014) have investigated bullying outcomes from a within-person perspective. For example, Rodríguez-Muñoz et al. (2017) and Rodríguez-Muñoz et al. (2022) showed that daily and weekly exposure to workplace bullying predicted individual (emotional exhaustion) as well as cross-domain outcomes (conflicts at home, relationship dissatisfaction, partner social undermining) and that certain psychological mechanisms (psychological detachment and affective distress) explained these relationships. Furthermore, Hoprekstad et al. (2019) investigated the daily effects of bullying on mood and found that exposure to negative acts was related to higher levels of depressed mood.

Although these studies shed light on the consequences of workplace bullying at the within-person level, the method used to assess negative acts has certain limitations. Indeed, these daily or weekly studies assessed participants' perception of being exposed to diverse negative behaviors, which were regrouped together using a composite score, as it is commonly done in studies using a between-person approach. Tuckey and Neall (2014) used the mean score obtained on 15 behaviors (items) from the Workplace Harassment Scale (Björkqvist et al., 1994), whereas Rodríguez-Muñoz et al. (2017, 2020, 2022), and Hoprekstad et al. (2019) used the mean score of items of the Short–Negative Acts Questionnaire (Notelaers et al., 2019). While this way of assessing workplace bullying may be appropriate for studies using a between-person approach (Nielsen et al., 2020), it appears less suited for studies investigating daily exposure to negative acts. Indeed, in between-person design studies, employees indicate how frequently they have been exposed to the listed negative behaviors within a given time frame (typically in the

last 6 months). Considering that workplace bullying manifests itself through various behaviors, targets are likely to be confronted repeatedly with different types of negative behaviors over time (Notelaers et al., 2019). Aggregating all items (reflecting these various behaviors) offers an assessment of participants' overall experience (or lack thereof) of bullying. However, assessing daily exposure to negative acts using composite scores assumes that all behaviors are experienced equivalently, as all behaviors have the same weight when regrouped together within the composite score (Hershcovis & Reich, 2013), an assumption that may be incorrect (Notelaers et al., 2006, 2011). This is notably supported by the fact that combining negative acts at the within-person level has resulted in unsatisfactory reliability (e.g., .44; Hoprekstad et al., 2019). This reflects the fact that negative acts are not experienced conjointly at the daily level and that an employee may be the target of specific negative acts without necessarily being confronted with several different negative behaviors on the same day (Hoprekstad et al., 2019). As such, diary studies regrouping all behaviors into one composite score cannot properly capture employees' day-to-day experience. By assessing negative acts individually as distinct observed manifestations of the bullying process, the present study aims to capture employees' daily negative social experiences with greater precision and provide a better understanding of the distinct impact of such negative acts on a daily basis.

Bullying and Psychological Needs

Self-determination theory (SDT; see Deci et al., 2017), a central theoretical framework that sheds light on human motivation and the conditions that can promote psychological growth and well-being in various life domains, can offer insight into how and why negative acts undermine employees' psychological health. According to SDT, in order for employees to experience well-being and optimal psychological functioning, work environments must enable employees' psychological needs to be supported and fulfilled. Psychological needs refer to "psychological nutrients that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity and well-being" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 229). More specifically, SDT emphasizes on the key role of a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering high-quality motivation and well-being (Deci et al., 2017). Autonomy refers to acting with volition, self-endorsing one's behavior, in addition to perceiving a congruency between one's actions, values, and interests. Competence refers to expressing one's abilities, mastering one's environment, and attaining valued outcomes within that setting. Relatedness refers to establishing and maintaining significant interpersonal relationships and feeling connected to others. When satisfied, these needs represent important inner resources that render employees more likely to experience positive emotional (e.g., more vigor and positive affect, less burnout, and negative affect) and attitudinal (e.g., more job satisfaction and affective commitment, less turnover intention) outcomes (for a meta-analysis on the outcomes of need satisfaction in the workplace, see Van den Broeck et al., 2016). Conversely, coercive, negative, and controlling work environments undermine employees' psychological needs, resulting in perceptions of oppression, inadequacy, and rejection (i.e., need frustration). This impoverished psychological state is likely to result in maladaptive functioning, manifested notably by greater exhaustion as well as reduced well-being (see Deci et al., 2017; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). More specifically,

past research shows that psychological need frustration plays a key role in explaining how negative contextual factors influence employees' psychological health and professional functioning. For example, it has been found that job stressors (i.e., job insecurity, emotional, cognitive, and physical demands) undermine the quality of employees' work motivation (investing energy in one's work for controlled motives, such as for the financial gains or the social recognition, to boost one's sense of self-worth or to avoid feeling guilty) as well as their psychological health (e.g., emotional exhaustion, psychological distress, as well as reduced vigor and performance) by frustrating employees' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Trépanier, Forest, et al., 2015; Vander Elst et al., 2012).

With regard to workplace bullying, it has been clearly established that this social stressor is detrimental to employees' psychological needs, which in turn leads to impaired health over time (Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2015, 2016). For example, in a 12-month longitudinal study, Trépanier, Fernet, and Austin (2016) showed that workplace bullying was associated with frustration of all three psychological needs over time. Results further revealed that in the context of workplace bullying, frustration of the need for relatedness subsequently predicted life dissatisfaction, whereas frustration of the need for competence predicted psychosomatic complaints. Thus, need frustration appears to be a key mechanism that explains how exposure to workplace bullying compromises employee health over time.

Although no study has investigated the bullying–need frustration relationship using a within-person perspective, SDT-based research suggests that perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness can vary considerably on a day-to-day basis (e.g., Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Ryan, Bosch, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2011; De Gieter et al., 2018) and are highly influenced by individuals' interpersonal experiences. For example, in a study among athletes, Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Ryan, Bosch, and Thøgersen-Ntoumani (2011) found that coaches' controlling behaviors during training sessions predicted daily need frustration, which in turn predicted changes in athletes' negative affect and physical symptoms before versus after training.

Bullying can manifest itself through person-related behaviors that undermine the quality of employees' social experience at work (e.g., being ignored [indirect behavior] or intimidated [direct behavior]) against which the targeted employee perceives to have little control or options to rectify the situation (Einarsen et al., 2020). In addition to frustrating employees' sense of autonomy (Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2016), exposure to such negative acts can actively frustrate employees' sense of relatedness (Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2016), as employees on the receiving end of these behaviors are likely to feel socially isolated and vulnerable. Daily exposure to such behaviors is also likely to frustrate employees' need for competence (Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2016) by hampering employees' perception of effectiveness in interacting with their work environment as well as their ability to achieve desired outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000). As such, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Daily exposure to (direct and indirect) person-related negative acts positively predicts frustration of the need for autonomy (a), competence (b), and relatedness (c).

Bullying can also manifest itself through work-related behaviors that undermine employees' professional identity and the ability to

accomplish their work, such as not being provided the information needed to properly perform their tasks (indirect behavior) or being ridiculed in connection with their work (direct behavior; Einarsen et al., 2020). Such behaviors can not only actively thwart employees' sense of belonging and being connected at work (Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2016), but also they may directly undermine employees' sense of self-efficacy (e.g., being on the receiving end of harsh and negative feedback can decrease perceived competence; Deci & Ryan, 2000) as well as compromise their performance, leading employees to experience a sense of ineffectiveness (Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2016). Furthermore, past research shows that work-related negative acts are particularly harmful for employees' need for autonomy (Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2015), as their controlling and impeding nature results in a sense of pressure and creates working conditions that are in discordance with employees' sense of self (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In light of this, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Daily exposure to (direct and indirect) work-related negative acts positively predicts frustration of the need for autonomy (a), competence (b), and relatedness (c).

Emotional Support as a Resource That Buffers the Effect of Negative Acts

A central postulate in the organizational stress literature is that the impact of stressors may vary, depending on the contextual resources at employees' disposal, as job resources can alleviate the damaging impact of job stressors on employee health (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In the case of workplace bullying, a particularly important job resource that could alleviate its effects is social support (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Social support has been found to reduce the effect of emotional labor demands (Mathieu et al., 2019) and has been identified as a buffer in the bullying–strain relationship by past research investigating the issue using cross-sectional designs (e.g., Warszewska-Makuch et al., 2015). This support can be of an emotional (i.e., sympathy, care, and understanding) or instrumental (i.e., tangible assistance, advice, or information) nature (Fenlason & Beehr, 1994). Although the two forms of support are strongly related, their relationship with stressors can vary depending on the nature of the stressors encountered (Mathieu et al., 2019). Given, (a) the importance of matching the form of social support to the type of stressor (Jolly et al., 2021) and (b) the inherently socioemotional nature of workplace bullying, the buffering role of emotional support will be investigated in the present study. Indeed, given that exposure to negative acts is highly emotionally taxing (Tuckey & Neall, 2014), the perceived availability of emotional support at work (e.g., having someone to talk to, who provides sympathy and acceptance) is likely to be particularly helpful by providing additional resources of the same nature as those threatened, thereby compensating resource loss and protecting employees' resource reservoir (Hobfoll & Leiberman, 1987).

Past research shows that positive job characteristics are need supportive (Deci et al., 2017) and that social support is an important predictor of need satisfaction (Fernet et al., 2013; Van den Broeck et al., 2016). It is thus consistent with past research to postulate that when exposed to negative acts, the perceived availability of emotional support at work can protect employees' psychological needs. Indeed, it is likely to result in employees feeling understood and cared for (Fenlason & Beehr, 1994), which would protect their sense of relatedness. Furthermore, affective assistance (e.g., validation of one's perspective) may help employees perceive that they are equipped and able to deal with the negative behaviors encountered more effectively, protecting their sense of competence (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Fenlason & Beehr, 1994). Finally, given that emotional support enables employees to perceive the encountered stressor as less threatening (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Fenlason & Beehr, 1994), employees are likely to feel more in control (i.e., sense of autonomy). Overall, perceived availability of emotional support at work when confronted with negative acts is likely to reduce the negative psychological experiences (i.e., sense of oppression, incompetence, and rejection) generally induced by such negative behaviors. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

Hypothesis 3: Daily emotional support at work moderates the relationships between daily exposure to negative acts and need frustration (autonomy [a], competence [b], relatedness [c]), such that the relationships are weaker when daily emotional support is high.

The Present Study

This study aims to contribute to the dearth of research on the short-term effects of bullying by investigating the daily relationship between exposure to negative acts and need frustration as well as the moderating role of emotional support at work in this relationship using a within-person design. More specifically, this study assesses whether employees experience greater need frustration on days they encounter negative acts and whether emotional support can offset this effect. In accordance with past diary studies on the consequences of workplace bullying (e.g., Hoprekstad et al., 2019; Tuckey & Neall, 2014), the prolonged nature of the exposure to the negative behaviors as well as the power imbalance, which are characteristics that distinguish bullying from other forms of mistreatment (Hershcovis, 2011), are not taken into account in the present study. As such, it should be emphasized that the present study assesses exposure to negative acts, as opposed to experiences of bullying per se. Nevertheless, by investigating daily exposure to negative acts, our study will shed light on the bullying process from a complementary angle. Indeed, by focusing on the occurrence of specific behaviors at the daily level and their effects from a within-person perspective, our study will contribute to the bullying literature by offering a close-up look at how a broad and complex phenomenon that develops over time is experienced daily. Our study further contributes to the literature by providing a more precise assessment of the negative acts–outcomes relationship. As previously mentioned, past diary studies on the short-term outcomes of bullying have assessed the concept globally, using composite scores. This limits our current understanding of employees' day-to-day experience as well as the potentially differentiated effects of specific negative acts. As such, the present study will investigate specific behaviors that vary in nature (i.e., work- vs. person-related) as well as type (i.e., indirect vs. direct), to enhance our understanding of the various forms through which bullying can manifest itself on a daily basis, the immediate consequences of such manifestations on employees' key psychological resources, as well as the boundary conditions underlying these relations. In order to increase the robustness and generalisability of the findings, two diary studies were conducted among two distinct samples.

Study 1

Method

Participants and Procedure

This first study was conducted among nurses, a population that is known to be particularly at risk when it comes to workplace bullying (Spector et al., 2014; Trépanier, Fernet, Austin, & Boudrias, 2016). Nurses working in the province of Quebec (Canada) received an email inviting them to participate in a study on daily work-related issues associated with nurses' psychological health. Participants were asked to fill out a diary at the end of each day (participants did not have to complete questionnaires on days they did not work). The study took place on a 2-week period. Participants were informed that for each daily questionnaire completed, they would be entered in a draw for gift certificates valued at 25$. Approval for this study was obtained from the research ethics committee of the institution to which the first author was affiliated to at the time of data collection. A total of 46 nurses filled out at least one questionnaire (10% response rate), of which 21 completed subsequent questionnaires (total of 119 observations). While this sample size is low, it remains within the range of acceptable sample sizes for Bayesian analyses, which were conducted in the present study (see the "Statistical Analyses" section). The majority of participants were women (93.1%), and the mean age was 27.45 years (SD = 6.24). The daily questionnaire was used to assess Level 1 variables (i.e., exposure to negative acts, need frustration, perceived availability of emotional support; see Table 1), whereas sociodemographic (Level 2) variables (e.g., gender and age) were assessed in a baseline questionnaire. Scale reliability was assessed using Cronbach's α adapted for two-level analysis (Geldhof et al., 2014).

Measures

Daily Exposure to Negative Acts. Negative acts were assessed using four items taken from the French version (Trépanier et al., 2012) of the NAQ-R (Einarsen et al., 2009). Participants were asked to indicate whether they had been exposed to the listed negative behaviors during their workday on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much so*). Items reflecting both direct and indirect person- as well as work-related behaviors were included. The four specific items were chosen based on their reported occurrence in the nursing profession (Simons et al., 2011; Trépanier et al., 2013; Tsuno et al., 2010) as well as the likelihood of their daily occurrence: "Someone withholding information which affects your performance"

(indirect work-related behavior), "Being ignored or excluded" (indirect person-related behavior), "Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work" (direct work-related behavior), and "Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger" (direct person-related behavior; physical intimidation). Each behavior was investigated individually (as opposed to regrouping items into a composite score) to provide a more precise evaluation of employees' experience of negative acts and their immediate effects. In the present sample, 23 participants (50% of the sample) reported experiencing at least one negative behavior (nine participants reported one or two behavior[s], while 14 reported three or more), and a total of 91 negative behaviors were reported (i.e., participants reported experiencing the behavior at least a little; score of two or more). For participants who reported experiencing negative acts, this represents an average of four negative acts per participant.

Daily Need Frustration. Need frustration was assessed using a short version of the adapted French version (Gillet, Fouquereau, Lequeurre, et al., 2012) of the Psychological Need Thwarting Scale (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Ryan, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2011). Two items assessed each psychological need. Sample items are "I felt obliged to follow decisions made for me" (autonomy; α_{within} = .89, SD = .02; $\alpha_{between}$ = .95, SD = .06), "I was told things that made me feel incompetent" (competence; α_{within} = .83, SD = .04; $\alpha_{between}$ = .93, SD = .07), and "I felt rejected by those around me" (relatedness; α_{within} = .84, SD = .03; $\alpha_{between}$ = .87, SD = .12). Participants were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*) whether they agreed with the statements regarding what they experienced at work during that day. For each need, a mean score was calculated using its respective items.

Daily Emotional Support. Emotional support at work was assessed with a single item taken from a scale inspired by Cohen and Hoberman's (1983) measure. Participants were asked to rate on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*) their level of agreement with a statement about the emotional support available, specifically regarding the negative behaviors encountered during the day. The following statement was provided: "Today at work I felt there was someone with whom I could talk about my feelings."

Statistical Analyses

Bayesian two-level analyses were performed using Mplus (Version 8; Muthén & Muthén, 1998/2017). The Bayes estimator was used together with (default) uninformative priors (van de Schoot

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Level 1 Variables

Variable	Study 1		Study 2		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	M	SD	M	SD								
1. Direct WR behavior	1.15	.55	1.15	.55	—	.41*	.62*	.36*	.33*	.47*	.26*	−.12*
2. Indirect PR behavior	1.33	.66	1.34	.73	.34*	—	.33*	.40*	.53*	.40*	.30*	−.21*
3. Direct PR behavior	1.17	.66	1.11	.50	.75*	.24*	—	.27*	.29*	.33*	.18*	−.20*
4. Indirect WR behavior	1.53	.83	1.34	.81	.31*	.15	.32*	—	.47*	.43*	.35*	−.28*
5. Frustration—need for relatedness	1.25	.50	1.67	.94	.42*	.64*	.30*	.23*	—	.54*	.45*	−.45*
6. Frustration—need for competence	1.29	.55	1.73	.97	.40*	.35*	.27*	.25*	.38*	—	.54*	−.29*
7. Frustration—need for autonomy	1.48	.77	2.63	1.24	.16	.36*	.24*	.26*	.29*	.33*	—	−.23*
8. Emotional support	3.56	1.37	4.04	1.02	.02	.04	.10	−.04	.07	.01	−.01	—

Note. WR = work-related; PR = person-related.
* Significant estimate. Study 1 correlations are presented below the diagonal line and Study 2 correlations are presented above the diagonal line.

et al., 2014), reflecting uncertainty regarding the expected range in which the coefficient of the hypothesized relationships should lie and the degree of certainty associated with these assumptions. Convergence was assessed using the Gelman–Rubin criterion (Gelman et al., 2013), also default in Mplus. However, the cutoff value of the convergence criterion was stricter and fixed to .01 (Hox et al., 2012). The minimum number of iterations was fixed to 10,000 and the maximum at 100,000. Convergence was further assessed by comparing estimates with those obtained from a longer Markov chain Monte Carlo chain (200,000 iterations) and ensuring that there were no important discrepancies, as well as by verifying that the potential scale reduction value remained close to 1 (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2012). Missing data were handled using Mplus's default option using all available information with no data imputation (see Muthén & Muthén, 1998/2017).

There are several advantages to using Bayesian analysis. First, this type of analysis is particularly relevant given that workplace bullying, and its underlying behaviors, are skewed and usually not normally distributed (Notelaers et al., 2019). The Bayes estimator does not rely on the assumption of normality, which makes it more efficient for estimating parameters in nonnormally distributed data (van de Schoot et al., 2014). Research shows that the Bayes estimator yields results that are similar to the maximum likelihood (ML) estimator when uninformative priors are used (as is the case in the present study; van de Schoot et al., 2014), providing a suitable solution to the shortcomings of ML estimation. Second, in contrast to analyses using ML estimation, there is no sample size bias with the Bayes estimator, which also requires fewer clusters than the ML estimator (a minimum of 20 vs. 50; Muthén & Asparouhov, 2012; van de Schoot et al., 2014).

Model Fit and Credibility Intervals

Model fit was assessed using the posterior predictive *p*-value (PPP), indicating whether the model is predictively accurate with regard to the data (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2012). The PPP is the standard way of assessing model fit in Bayesian structural equation models. Although there are no consensual cutoff values for rejecting a model using PPP (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2012), low (<.05) and high (>.95) PPP values indicate a poor fit (i.e., the model should be rejected), and a model with an excellent fit should have a PPP around .5 (i.e., perfect fit; Muthén & Asparouhov, 2012). The rationale behind that criterion is that if it is likely that the pattern seen in the data can be replicated, then the PPP will not be near 0 or 1 (Gelman et al., 2013). The credibility interval (CI) for parameter estimation works similarly to the usual confidence interval insofar as a coefficient is taken as significant when its CI does not contain 0 (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2012). The CI specifies the probability that the value of the estimated parameter lies in a given range: A 95% CI means that the value of the parameter (i.e., estimate) fell into the interval in 95% of simulations, suggesting a probability of 95% that the estimate lies between the lower and upper bounds of the CI.

Results

Statistical Controls

To determine the potential effect of background variables in the relationship between daily exposure to negative acts, availability of emotional support, and need frustration, a model was tested in which two Level 2 variables (age and gender) covaried with the variables of interest. As no significant relations were found, background variables were not included in subsequent analyses.

Main Analyses

Simple moderation analyses (Hayes, 2013) were conducted to investigate the buffering role of emotional support at work in the daily relationship between negative acts and need frustration. Four models were tested (one for each behavior) in which availability of emotional support buffered the effect of the negative act on frustration of the three psychological needs simultaneously (see Table 2). The independent and moderating variables were mean centered, and significant interactions were probed +1 SD above and −1 SD under the moderator's mean.

Direct Work-Related Negative Behavior. Results (see Table 2) reveal that this negative act positively predicted frustration of the need for autonomy ($B = .53^*$ [$SD = .14$]), competence ($B = .49^*$ [$SD = .11$]), and relatedness ($B = .49^*$ [$SD = .09$]). Results also show that daily emotional support at work moderated the relationship between the direct work-related negative act and frustration of all three psychological needs (autonomy: $B = −.53^*$ [$SD = .13$]; competence: $B = −.20^*$ [$SD = .10$]; relatedness: $B = −.19^*$ [$SD = .09$]). Significant interactions were plotted simultaneously, thus synthesizing the results (see Figure 1). As can be seen in Table 2, being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with their work resulted in need frustration on days when employees perceived low availability of emotional support (autonomy: $B = 1.25^*$ [$SD = .27$]; competence: $B = .76^*$ [$SD = .21$]; relatedness: $B = .75^*$ [$SD = .17$]), whereas these relationships were significantly weaker (or nonsignificant) on days employees perceived high availability of emotional support (autonomy: $B = −.20$ [$SD = .16$]; competence: $B = .22$ [$SD = .12$]; relatedness: $B = .23^*$ [$SD = .10$]).

Indirect Work-Related Negative Behavior. Results (see Table 2) reveal that this negative act positively predicted frustration of the need for autonomy ($B = .28^*$ [$SD = .09$]), competence ($B = .15^*$ [$SD = .07$]), and relatedness ($B = .15^*$ [$SD = .06$]). Emotional support at work did not predict the frustration of the three psychological needs, and no significant interactions were found regarding this behavior.

Direct Person-Related Negative Behavior. Results (see Table 2) show that this negative act positively predicted frustration of the need for autonomy ($B = .42^*$ [$SD = .15$]), competence ($B = .46^*$ [$SD = .11$]), and relatedness ($B = .49^*$ [$SD = .09$]). Although daily emotional support at work did not predict the frustration of the three psychological needs, results show that it moderated the relationship between the direct person-related negative behavior (physical intimidation) and frustration of the needs for competence ($B = −.34^*$ [$SD = .10$]) and relatedness ($B = −.37^*$ [$SD = .08$]). Significant interactions were plotted simultaneously (see Figure 2). As can be seen in Table 2, the positive daily relationship between physical intimidation and need frustration (competence: $B = .92^*$ [$SD = .23$] and relatedness: $B = 1.00^*$ [$SD = .18$]) was only significant on days employees perceived low availability of emotional support at work. The relationship was nonsignificant on days employees perceived high availability of emotional support at work (competence: $B ≤ 0$ [$SD = .10$] and relatedness: $B = −.01$ [$SD = .08$]).

Table 2

The Moderating Effect of Emotional Support in the Relationship Between Daily Negative Acts and Need Frustration (Study 1)

Negative acts	Autonomy		Competence		Relatedness	
	B (SD)	95% CI	B (SD)	95% CI	B (SD)	95% CI
Direct work-related	.53* (.14)	[.26, .80]	.49* (.11)	[.29, .70]	.49* (.09)	[.32, .66]
Emotional support	−.05 (.05)	[−.16, .05]	−.01 (.04)	[−.09, .06]	.01 (.03)	[−.06, .07]
Interaction	−.53* (.13)	[−.78, −.28]	−.20* (.10)	[−.39, −.01]	−.19* (.09)	[−.34, −.04]
PVE	.18 (.06)	[.07, .31]	.19 (.07)	[.08, .32]	.27 (.07)	[.13, .39]
PPP = .48						
Low	1.25* (.27)	[.71, 1.79]	.76* (.21)	[.35, 1.417]	.75* (.417)	[.41, 1.408]
High	−.20 (.16)	[−.51, .12]	.22 (.12)	[−.01, .46]	.23* (.10)	[.04, .41]
Indirect work-related	.28* (.09)	[.11, .45]	.15* (.07)	[.02, .28]	.15* (.06)	[.04, .26]
Emotional support	>0 (.06)	[−.11, .11]	.01 (.04)	[−.08, .09]	.03 (.04)	[−.05, .09]
Interaction	−.07 (.06)	[−.19, .06]	.03 (.05)	[−.07, .12]	.05 (.04)	[−.03, .13]
PVE	.12 (.05)	[.03, .23]	.07 (.04)	[.01, .17]	.10 (.05)	[.03, .22]
PPP = .48						
Direct person-related	.42* (.15)	[.14, .71]	.46* (.11)	[.25, .67]	.49* (.09)	[.33, .66]
Emotional support	−.05 (.06)	[−.16, .07]	−.05 (.03)	[−.13, .03]	−.04 (.03)	[−.10, .03]
Interaction	−.18 (.14)	[−.45, .09]	−.34* (.10)	[−.54, −.14]	−.37* (.08)	[−.53, −.21]
PVE	.10 (.05)	[.02, .21]	.17 (.06)	[.06, .29]	.27 (.07)	[.14, .40]
PPP = .48						
Low			.92* (.23)	[.47, 1.36]	1.00* (.18)	[.64, 1.36]
High			<0 (.10)	[−.21, .19]	−.01 (.08)	[−.17, .15]
Indirect person-related	.30* (.12)	[.07, .54]	.34* (.09)	[.17, .52]	.46* (.07)	[.33, .58]
Emotional support	−.03 (.06)	[−.14, .09]	<0 (.04)	[−.09, .08]	.02 (.03)	[−.04, .08]
Interaction	−.13 (.11)	[−.34, .08]	−.01 (.08)	[−.17, .14]	.05 (.06)	[−.06, .16]
PVE	.08 (.05)	[.02, .19]	.14 (.06)	[.05, .27]	.35 (.07)	[.21, .48]
PPP = .46						

Note. PVE = proportion of variance explained; B = unstandardized coefficient; CI = credibility interval; PPP = posterior predictive *p*-value.
* Significant estimate.

Indirect Person-Related Negative Behavior. As with the other negative acts, results (Table 2) show that the indirect person-related negative behavior positively predicted frustration of all psychological needs (autonomy: $B = .30^*$ [$SD = .12$]; competence: $B = .34^*$ [$SD = .09$]; and relatedness: $B = .46^*$ [$SD = .07$]). Emotional support at work did not predict the frustration of any psychological need, and no significant interactions were found regarding this behavior.

Overall, results from Study 1 provide support for Hypotheses 1 and 2 as well as marginal support for Hypothesis 3, as five out of 12 interactions were significant (42%). Indeed, daily exposure to negative acts predicted need frustration, and emotional support at work only significantly buffered the effect of direct negative behaviors on psychological needs, especially the needs for relatedness and competence. The amount of variance explained in daily need frustration that is attributable to daily exposure to negative acts, emotional support, and their interaction varied from 7% to 35% (see Table 2).

In light of the small sample size and in order to strengthen the findings obtained in Study 1, a subsequent dairy study was conducted among a larger independent sample to replicate the results. Study 2 further takes into account the source of the daily emotional support. Given that employees have more frequent interactions with coworkers (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Mathieu et al., 2019) and that past meta-analytic findings (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008) and SDT-based research (Moreau & Mageau, 2012) suggest that social support and autonomy-supportive behaviors (e.g., acknowledging, taking into account and showing concern regarding employees' needs, feelings, and perspectives; Deci et al., 1989) from coworkers can have positive outcomes for employees (e.g., well-being, job involvement, and job satisfaction), over and above the support obtained from the supervisor, Study 2 focuses on the availability of emotional support, specifically from coworkers.
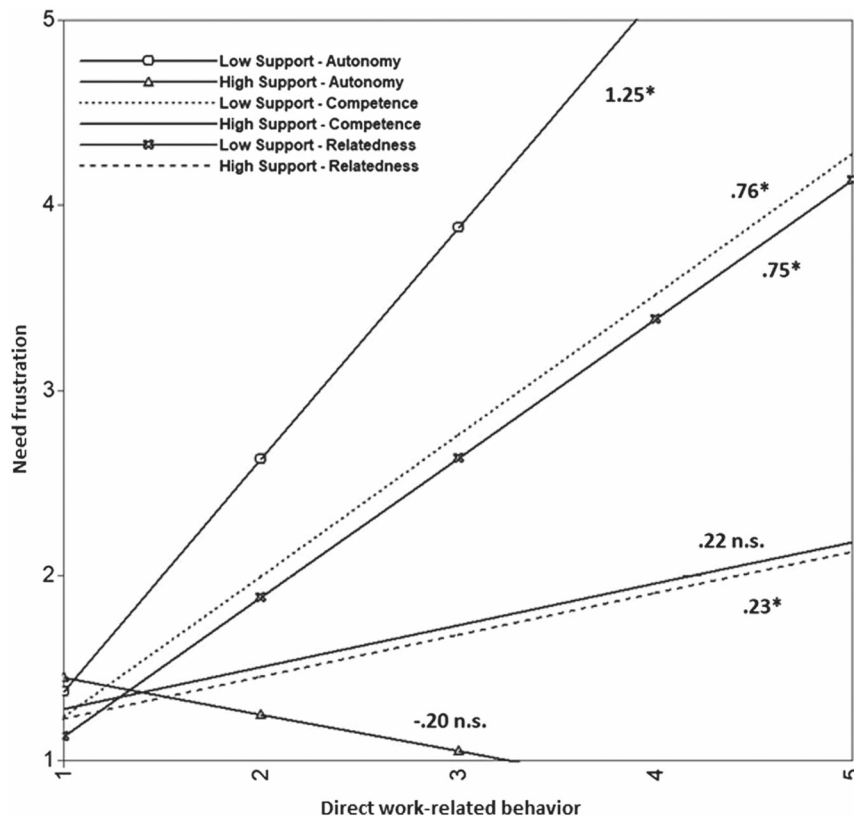
Study 2

Method

Participants and Procedure

The second study was conducted among Canadian postal workers, who received an email inviting them to participate in a large study on daily interpersonal and work-related issues associated with occupational health. Participants were asked to fill out a diary at the end of each day for a period of 10 days (whether worked or not). A total of 96 employees took part in the study (21.4% response rate). The majority of participants were women (57.3%), the mean age was 47.5 years ($SD = 9.4$), and the majority of participants were either outside workers (e.g., delivery agents, rural, and suburban mail carriers; 60.4%) or inside workers (post office clerks or plant workers; 32.3%). For the purpose of the present study, only data pertaining to days on which employees worked were taken into account: 83 participants filled out at least one electronic questionnaire, of which 75 participants filled out two or more (total of 385 observations). For each daily questionnaire completed, participants were informed that a 1$ donation would be made to a national charitable organization. Participants were also offered the possibility of receiving a research report, describing the main findings of the project. Approval for this study was obtained from the research ethics committee of the first author's institution.

Figure 1

The Moderating Effect of Daily Emotional Support in the Relationship Between Direct Work-Related Behavior and Need Frustration (Study 1)

Note. n.s. = nonsignificant.
* Significant estimate.

Measures

Daily Exposure to Negative Acts. Negative acts were assessed using the same four items from the NAQ-R as used in Study 1. Each behavior was investigated individually. In the present sample, 55 participants reported experiencing at least one negative behavior (23 participants reported one or two behavior[s], while 32 reported three or more), and a total of 220 negative behaviors were reported (i.e., participants reported experiencing the behavior at least at little; score of two or more). For participants who reported experiencing negative acts, this represents an average of four negative behaviors per participant.

Daily Need Frustration. Need frustration was assessed using the same scale as in Study 1: autonomy (α_{within} = .49, SD = .06; $\alpha_{between}$ = .84, SD = .05), competence (α_{within} = .66, SD = .04; $\alpha_{between}$ = .92, SD = .03), and relatedness (α_{within} = .72, SD = .03; $\alpha_{between}$ = .99, $SD \geq$ 0).

Daily Coworker Emotional Support. Coworker emotional support was assessed with a single item developed for the purpose of the present study. Participants were asked to rate on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*) their level of agreement with the following statement: "Today, I felt that I could count on at least one colleague to listen and understand me if I needed it."

Statistical Analyses

As in Study 1, Bayesian analyses were performed using Mplus (Version 8; Muthén & Muthén, 1998/2017). The same parameters were used to test the models as well as to assess convergence (see the description presented in Study 1).

Results

Statistical Controls

As in Study 1, a model was tested in which four Level 2 variables (age, gender, experience in the current job, and employment category [outside workers vs. others]) covaried with the variables of interest. As no significant relations were found, background variables were not included in subsequent analyses.

Main Analyses

Direct Work-Related Negative Behavior. Results (see Table 3) reveal that this negative act positively predicted frustration of the need for autonomy (B = .54* [SD = .11]), competence (B = .78* [SD = .08]), and relatedness (B = .48* [SD = .08]). Results also show that daily coworker emotional support negatively predicted need frustration and moderated the relationship between

Figure 2

The Moderating Effect of Daily Emotional Support in the Relationship Between Direct Person-Related Behavior and Need Frustration (Study 1)
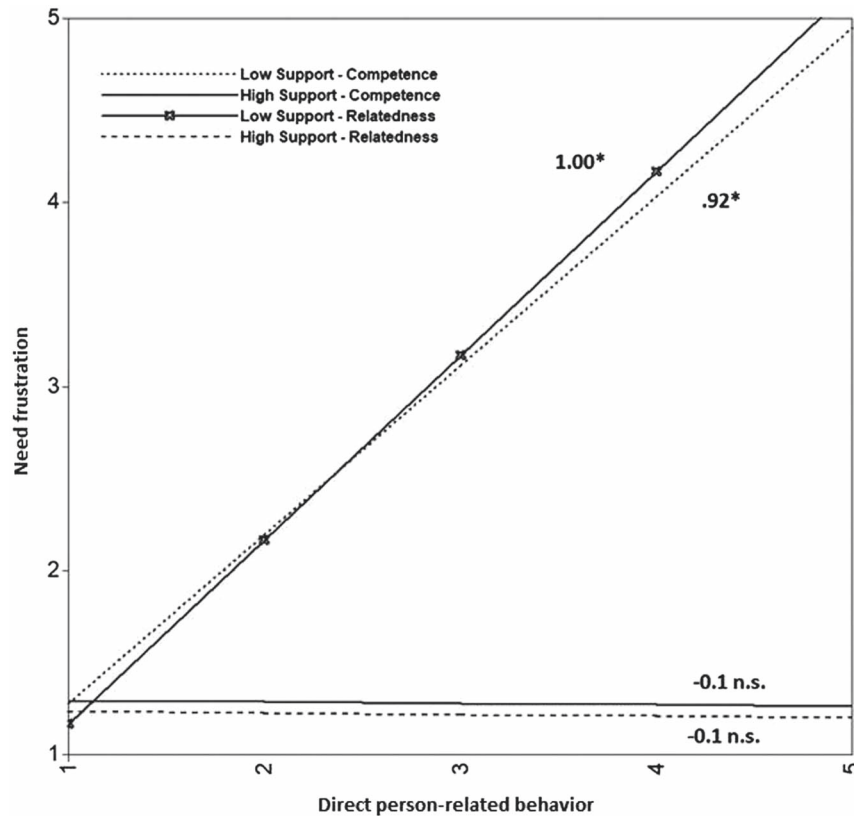
Note. n.s. = nonsignificant.
* Significant estimate.

the direct work-related negative behavior and frustration of needs for competence ($B = -.16^*$ [$SD = .05$]) and relatedness ($B = -.14^*$ [$SD = .05$]). As in Study 1, significant interactions were plotted simultaneously (see Figure 3). Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with their work resulted in frustration of the needs for competence and relatedness on days employees perceived low availability of emotional support from coworkers (competence: $B = .94^*$ [$SD = .10$]; relatedness: $B = .62^*$ [$SD = .09$]), whereas these relationships were significantly weaker on days employees perceived high availability of emotional support (competence: $B = .62^*$ [$SD = .10$]; relatedness: $B = .34^*$ [$SD = .09$]).

Indirect Work-Related Negative Behavior. Results (see Table 3) reveal that this negative act positively predicted frustration of the need for autonomy ($B = .53^*$ [$SD = .09$]), competence ($B = .47^*$ [$SD = .07$]), and relatedness ($B = .46^*$ [$SD = .06$]). Coworker emotional support negatively predicted the frustration of the three psychological needs but no significant interactions were found.

Direct Person-Related Negative Behavior. Results (see Table 3) show that this negative act positively predicted frustration of the need for autonomy ($B = .31^*$ [$SD = .14$]), competence ($B = .40^*$ [$SD = .10$]), and relatedness ($B = .29^*$ [$SD = .10$]). Coworker emotional support also negatively predicted frustration of the three psychological needs and moderated the relationship between the

direct person-related negative behavior (physical intimidation) and frustration of the needs for competence ($B = -.23^*$ [$SD = .07$]) and relatedness ($B = -.13^*$ [$SD = .06$]). Significant interactions were plotted simultaneously (see Figure 4). The positive daily relationship between physical intimidation and need frustration (competence: $B = .63^*$ [$SD = .10$] and relatedness: $B = .43^*$ [$SD = .09$]) was only significant on days employees perceived low availability of coworker emotional support. The relationship was nonsignificant on days employees perceived high availability of emotional support (competence: $B = .16$ [$SD = .15$] and relatedness: $B = .16$ [$SD = .14$]).

Indirect Person-Related Negative Behavior. As with other negative acts, results (Table 3) show that the indirect person-related negative behavior positively predicted frustration of all psychological needs (autonomy: $B = .49^*$ [$SD = .09$]; competence: $B = .44^*$ [$SD = .07$]; and relatedness: $B = .57^*$ [$SD = .06$]). Coworker emotional support negatively predicted the frustration of the three psychological needs but no significant interactions were found.

Overall, results from Study 2 align with those of Study 1, providing support for Hypotheses 1 and 2 as well as marginal support for Hypothesis 3, as four out of 12 interactions were significant (33%). More specifically, coworker emotional support significantly buffered the effect of direct negative acts on frustration of the needs for relatedness and competence. The amount of

Table 3

The Moderating Effect of Emotional Support in the Relationship Between Daily Negative Acts and Need Frustration (Study 2)

Negative acts	Autonomy		Competence		Relatedness	
	B (SD)	95% CI	B (SD)	95% CI	B (SD)	95% CI
Direct work-related	.54* (.11)	[.32, .76]	.78* (.08)	[.62, .93]	.48* (.08)	[.33, .62]
Emotional support	−.24* (.06)	[−.36,−.12]	−.20* (.04)	[−.28,−.11]	−.36* (.04)	[−.44,−.28]
Interaction	−.06 (.08)	[−.21, .10]	−.16* (.05)	[−.26,−.05]	−.14* (.05)	[−.24,−.03]
PVE	.11 (.03)	[.06, .18]	.29 (.04)	[.22, .36]	.29 (.04)	[.22, .36]
PPP = .51						
Low			.94* (.10)	[.75, 1.13]	.62* (.09)	[.44, .79]
High			.62* (.10)	[.42, .81]	.34* (.09)	[.16, .52]
Indirect work-related	.53* (.09)	[.36, .70]	.47* (.07)	[.34, .60]	.46* (.06)	[.35, .57]
Emotional support	−.21* (.06)	[−.33,−.08]	−.18* (.05)	[−.28,−.09]	−.33* (.04)	[−.42,−.25]
Interaction	.07 (.05)	[−.03, .16]	.03 (.04)	[−.04, .10]	.03 (.03)	[−.03, .10]
PVE	.15 (.03)	[.09, .21]	.21 (.04)	[.15, .28]	.33 (.04)	[.26, .40]
PPP = .49						
Direct person-related	.31* (.14)	[.03, .59]	.40* (.10)	[.19, .60]	.29* (.10)	[.11, .48]
Emotional support	−.24* (.06)	[−.37,−.11]	−.19* (.05)	[−.28,−.10]	−.36* (.04)	[−.45,−.28]
Interaction	−.06 (.09)	[−.24, .12]	−.23* (.07)	[−.35,−.09]	−.13* (.06)	[−.25,−.01]
PVE	.08 (.03)	[.03, .13]	.19 (.03)	[.12, .26]	.25 (.04)	[.18, .32]
PPP = .50						
Low			.63* (.10)	[.44, .82]	.43* (.09)	[.25, .60]
High			.16 (.15)	[−.13, .45]	.16 (.14)	[−.11, .43]
Indirect person-related	.49* (.09)	[.32, .67]	.44* (.07)	[.30, .57]	.57* (.06)	[.46, .68]
Emotional support	−.23* (.06)	[−.36,−.11]	−.19* (.05)	[−.28,−.09]	−.32* (.04)	[−.39,−.24]
Interaction	.07 (.06)	[−.04, .19]	−.06 (.04)	[−.14, .02]	−.03 (.04)	[−.10, .04]
PVE	.13 (.03)	[.07, .19]	.21 (.04)	[.14, .28]	.40 (.04)	[.33, .46]
PPP = .50						

Note. PVE = proportion of variance explained; B = unstandardized coefficient; CI = credibility interval; PPP = posterior predictive *p*-value.
* Significant estimate.

variance explained in daily need frustration that is attributable to daily exposure to negative acts, emotional support, and their interaction varied from 8% to 40% (see Table 3).

General Discussion

The present two-sample study aimed to deepen our understanding of the moderating role of emotional support at work in the relationship between negative acts and employees' psychological needs (i.e., sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness) at the daily level. Overall, results strongly support the proposition that daily exposure to negative acts is harmful and that emotional support can play a protective role against the impact of specific types of negative behaviors, as results were replicated and cross-validated in two distinct samples. More specifically, results show that daily exposure to negative acts fosters need frustration and the availability of emotional support at work can offset the negative effect of direct behaviors.

Theoretical Contributions

Daily Effects of Negative Acts

By investigating the effects of negative acts at the daily level using a within-person perspective (i.e., whether individuals report higher need frustration on days they experience negative behaviors), this study provides insight into the immediate strain responses to acutely stressful social events (Pindek et al., 2019). Indeed, it offers a complementary understanding of the outcomes of bullying, which, up to now, have been investigated almost exclusively from a between-level perspective (i.e., whether people exposed to bullying also report high need frustration). Results from both studies show

that day-to-day fluctuations in exposure to negative acts at work result in perceptions of oppression, incompetence, and rejection at the end of the day. These results align with past longitudinal studies that have shown that workplace bullying undermines employees' psychological needs over time at the between-person level (Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2015, 2016). Taken together, such results show that both episodic and persistent exposure to negative behaviors at work result in impoverished psychological states, which can consequently lead to maladaptive work motivation and professional functioning as well as ill-being (Deci et al., 2017).

Emotional Support as a Buffer in the Bullying Process

The results showed that emotional support at work buffers the effect of specific negative acts on daily need frustration: Employees who encountered direct negative behaviors, either work-related (being humiliated regarding one's work) or person-related intimidating behaviors (being shouted at) reported significantly less frustration of the needs for competence and relatedness on days they perceived that emotional support at work was available. It appears that with the necessary daily social resources, employees on the receiving end of direct negative acts may feel less vulnerable (Cohen & Wills, 1985), consequently protecting their psychological needs for competence and relatedness. Such findings align with the resource substitution hypothesis (Hobfoll & Leiberman, 1987), which proposes that when a resource is lost or inadequate, another resource can substitute for it, hampering the strain typically induced by this loss, or lack, of resource. Daily exposure to negative acts can actively threaten and undermine one's personal resources (e.g., self-esteem, optimism, and self-efficacy; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Tuckey & Neall, 2014). However, our results suggest that emotional

Figure 3
The Moderating Effect of Daily Emotional Support in the Relationship Between Direct Work-Related Behavior and Need Frustration (Study 2)
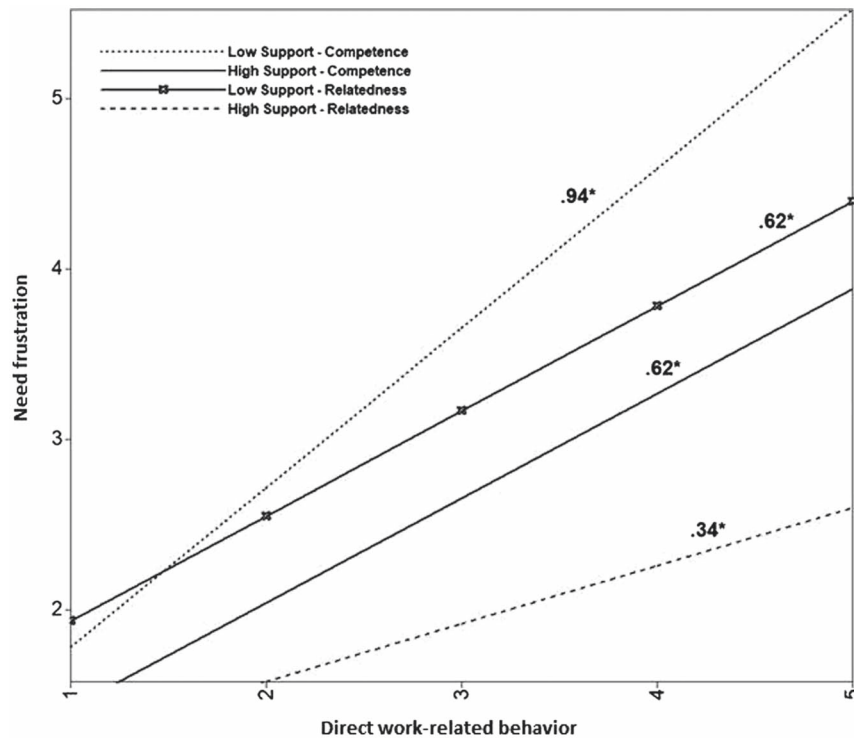
* Significant estimate.

support can compensate for such loss and counteract the threatening nature of the negative behaviors, reducing their damaging effect on employees' psychological needs for competence and relatedness.

However, this two-sample study also uncovers important distinctions concerning the boundary conditions in which negative acts undermine employees' psychological needs at the daily level. Emotional support at work appears less efficient in reducing the negative impact of indirect behaviors (withholding information, being ignored). Given that employees' reactions to bullying depend on the type of behaviors encountered (Djurkovic et al., 2005), one possible explanation for our results is that employees are more likely to seek support when on the receiving end of direct negative behaviors, compared to indirect behaviors. In many cases, the negative behaviors in the first phase of the bullying process may be characterized as indirect aggressions whose meaning may be more difficult for the individuals being targeted to fully grasp and interpret, given the subtle and discrete nature of the acts (Einarsen et al., 2020; Leymann, 1996; Notelaers & Van der Heijden, 2021). Hence, employees may be less inclined to seek support when dealing with such behaviors. The latter may perhaps not hold for direct behaviors, which typically manifest themselves in subsequent phases of the bullying process. These behaviors, and specifically those referring to being ridiculed in connection with one's work or being shouted at, may be more easily recognized as inappropriate and aggressive and thus interpreted differently than indirect behaviors. In this context, employees may be more likely to seek support from others at work and benefit more from the perceived availability

of such support. It may also be that contrary to direct behaviors, which are less subtle and more observable, indirect behaviors are more covert and thus less visible to others (Hershcovis, 2011). As such, it may be that in order for others to behave in a manner that enables employees confronted with negative acts to perceive the availability of emotional support, these behaviors must be visible and appraised by others as worthy of attention or action (Ng et al., 2020). In order words, if the encountered behaviors are not visible or are ambiguous in meaning, it might be difficult for others to interpret the behaviors witnessed as mistreatment and intervene (Ng et al., 2020) in an emotionally supportive way.

The fact that daily emotional support buffered the daily negative effect of direct negative acts on employees' needs for competence and relatedness is an important finding, as they can represent important resources that can hamper the escalation of the bullying process. Indeed, by protecting employees' sense of connectedness at work, emotional support can prevent employees from feeling socially cutoff, which characterizes the bullying experience in more advanced phases (Notelaers et al., 2011, 2019). Emotional support can also hamper the fear of being excluded and ostracized as well as the feelings of anxiousness that may arise from encountered negative behaviors, which can further fuel the bullying process (Reknes et al., 2021). Furthermore, in the context of direct negative acts, emotional support can protect employees' sense of competence. This enables them to maintain efficient interactions with their work environment as well as perform their job adequately, as past meta-analytic findings show that satisfaction of the need for

Figure 4
The Moderating Effect of Daily Emotional Support in the Relationship Between Direct Person-Related Behavior and Need Frustration (Study 2)
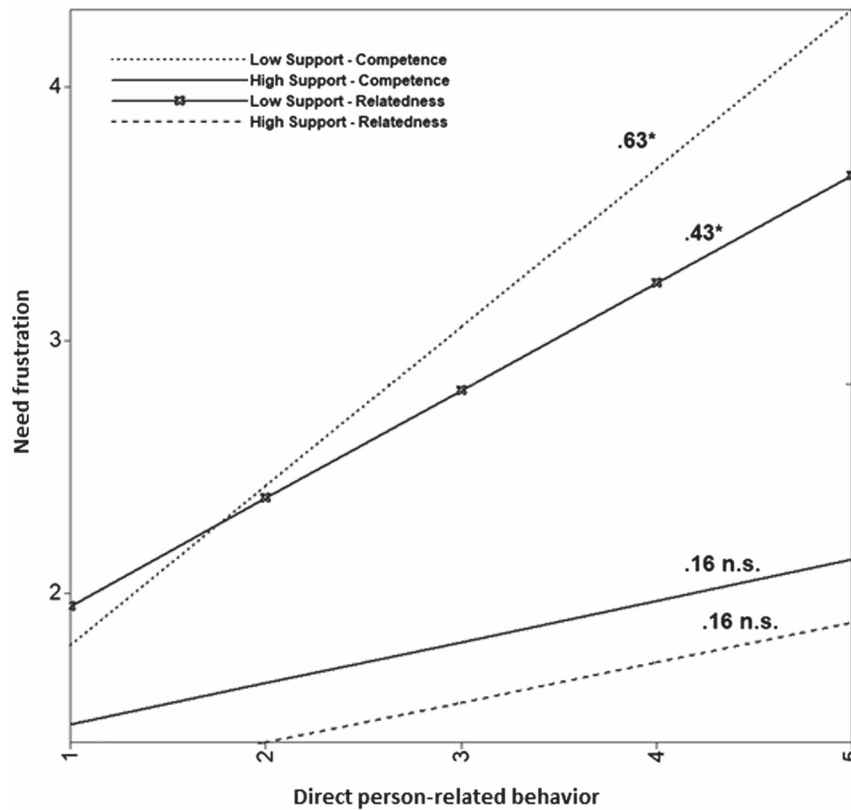
Note. n.s. = nonsignificant.
* Significant estimate.

competence is strongly related to task performance ($r = .33$; $SE = .14$; 95% CI [0.27, 0.38]; Van den Broeck et al., 2016). In this context, employees may maintain work-related expectations and thus be less vulnerable to future negative social behaviors (Baillien et al., 2009), thereby contributing to stopping, or hindering, the bullying process. The role of emotional support in regard to the need for autonomy was less salient, as only one interaction was significant in the two samples. It therefore appears that the sense of lack of control, inherent to the concept of workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 2020), results in employees feeling trapped (Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2016) and that such perception cannot be appeased by the availability of emotional support from others at work. Given that this lack of sense of control is exacerbated as the bullying process escalates, future research is encouraged to investigate whether other contextual resources could be more efficient in reducing the frustration of the need for autonomy induced by daily exposure to negative acts. Providing employees with a stronger sense of control in the earlier phases of the bullying process could also be a promising avenue to hinder further escalation.

Self-Determination Theory

Although much research has been conducted on the contextual determinants of employee need satisfaction, the literature has only recently begun to explore need frustration (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020), and little is known about the factors that can actively undermine employees' psychological needs, resulting in need frustration (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). In the studies that have aimed to pinpoint the contextual determinants of need frustration in the workplace, most attention has been focused on the direct relationship between contextual variables (e.g., job demands and resources, perceived controlling behaviors, organizational support, and autonomy support) and need frustration (e.g., Gillet, Fouquereau, Forest, et al., 2012; Trépanier, Forest, et al., 2015; Vander Elst et al., 2012). For example, Trépanier, Forest, et al. (2015) found that job demands positively predicted need frustration, which subsequently predicted low-quality (controlled) work motivation and poor psychological health (psychological distress, psychosomatic complaints, as well as less work engagement and job performance). More recently, Olafsen et al. (2021) found that frustration of the three psychological needs mediated the relationship between role conflict and employee health (burnout, somatic symptoms, and turnover intention) and that mindfulness significantly acted upon this sequence: Need frustration had a lesser influence on the role conflict–employee health relationship for employees who reported high levels of mindfulness. Very little, if no, attention has been given to the interplay between contextual factors in predicting need frustration, either at the between- or within-person level. As such, by showing that direct

negative acts have a differentiated effect on employees' psychological needs depending on the availability of emotional support, our findings make a significant contribution to the SDT literature. Indeed, our results show that social resources (availability of emotional support) can offset the detrimental effect of social stressors (negative acts) on employees' sense of competence and relatedness, thereby offering insight into how work-related factors can interact to contribute to employee need frustration on a daily basis. Furthermore, by investigating the three psychological needs distinctly, rather than through a composite score as in previous research (e.g., Gillet, Fouquereau, Forest, et al., 2012; Trépanier, Forest, et al., 2015), our results contribute to the SDT literature by shedding light on the differentiated protective role of emotional support. Indeed, results show that, contrary to employees' need for autonomy, availability of emotional support was found to be particularly helpful in buffering the harmful effect of negative acts on employees' needs for competence and relatedness: Perceiving having access to emotional support at work appears to enable employees to feel understood as well as equipped to deal with negative social experiences more effectively, protecting their sense of relatedness and competence.

Overall, results highlight the relevance of investigating negative behaviors individually (as opposed to regrouping them in an overall score) given that the pattern of results varied depending on the type (i.e., direct or indirect) of behavior considered. Future research is encouraged to assess specific negative acts separately to obtain a precise understanding of the type of negative social experiences encountered on a daily basis, the impact of such behaviors, as well as the precise moderators in these relationships.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite the contributions of the present study and the fact that the main findings were replicated in two independent samples, certain limitations should be mentioned. First, common method bias (CMB) could have influenced the results, given that all collected data were self-reported. However, the fact that moderating effects were found addresses this concern, as research suggests that interaction effects cannot be artifacts of CMB (Siemsen et al., 2010). Second, the questionnaire used in both diary studies contained a small number of items to capture the variables of interest. More particularly, few negative acts were investigated and emotional support was measured using single items that tapped into fluctuating manifestations of emotional support, while taking into account, as recommended (Jolly et al., 2021), the form (availability), the type (emotional), and source (co-worker; Study 2) of such support. Brief (including single item) measures are particularly relevant in data collections that require a considerable investment from participants, such as in diary studies, in order to reduce the burden on respondents (Matthews et al., 2022; Ohly et al., 2010) and past research shows that single-item measures can assess constructs as adequately (i.e., be as valid and reliable) as multi–item measures (Matthews et al., 2022). Future research is encouraged to explore the impact of other negative acts on daily need frustration as well as propose and rigorously validate single-item measures (Matthews et al., 2022) tapping into emotional support as well as need frustration in order to replicate and expand the obtained results, while limiting the burden on participants.

Third, the study used items from the NAQ-R, the most utilized scale in the workplace bullying literature (Nielsen et al., 2020). However, as previously mentioned, the notions of persistence

(exposure to negative behaviors over a long period of time) as well as power imbalance, inherent to the conceptualization of bullying, were not taken into account in the assessment of daily exposure to negative behaviors. As such, the results obtained in the present study reflect the daily effect of negative acts as opposed to bullying experiences per se. Future diary studies are encouraged to tackle this issue and study the notion of prolonged exposure to negative behaviors while investigating the daily effect of these behaviors as well as the perceived power imbalance between the involved parties. Fourth, participants scored relatively low on exposure to negative acts (scores ranging from 1.11 [$SD = .50$] to 1.53 [$SD = .83$]). Although this aligns with previous research using either a within-person (e.g., Hoprekstad et al., 2019; Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2017, 2022) or a between-person (e.g., Baillien et al., 2011; Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2015; Tuckey & Neall, 2014) approach, it raises the question of whether our findings mainly apply to situations where negative acts are encountered at a lower magnitude. Future research is therefore needed to investigate the protective role of emotional support in contexts of more intense and frequent exposure to indirect and direct negative behaviors. Fifth, the two diary studies were conducted during 14 (Study 1) and 10 (Study 2) consecutive days. This aligns with previous research assessing day-level predictors of employee outcomes, which generally sampled at least 5 days per participant (see Ohly et al., 2010). However, given that our current knowledge of workplace bullying from a within-person perspective is limited, future research is encouraged to adopt various methodological designs to tap into the immediate (e.g., through experience sampling methods where multiple collections per day are conducted), short-term (e.g., via daily, e.g., Hoprekstad et al., 2019; Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2017 or weekly, e.g., Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2022; Tuckey & Neall, 2014) and long-term (e.g., daily assessments interspersed with breaks of several months; e.g., Baillien et al., 2017) fluctuations in employee outcomes associated with exposure to negative acts. Building on our findings, future studies using a within-person approach and longer time frames could gain insight into how the bullying process unfolds over time and how need frustration is involved in its escalation. For example, through latent class growth modeling (e.g., Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2020), future research is encouraged to explore how employees' experience of negative acts, in terms of nature, type and frequency, evolves over time and whether changes in need frustration can result from, and contribute to, differentiated growth trajectories of bullying. Indeed, it may be that by frustrating employees' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, exposure to negative acts renders employees more vulnerable to future negative behaviors, resulting in a loss spiral (Hobfoll, 1989). As such, transition to subsequent stages of the bullying process (see Reknes et al., 2021) could subsequently be related to an increase in frustration of employees' psychological needs, reflecting an intra-individual reciprocal relationship (see Vander Elst et al., 2018, for an example of a cross-lagged dual process latent model). These future studies are also encouraged to validate our results pertaining to the protective role of emotional support as well as identify other effective resources that can successfully hamper the escalation of the bullying process by protecting employees' psychological resources in the onset of the process. Sixth, the sample was small in Study 1, and participation rate was low. However, this is not uncommon in the nursing profession (e.g., Gabriel et al., 2011; Hutchinson et al., 2010), and results were replicated in a second independent and

larger sample. Furthermore, this study used Bayesian analysis, which allowed for adequate testing of the hypotheses despite small sample sizes, and research shows that sample size at the within-level tends not to suffer from issues associated with low statistical power (Gabriel et al., 2019). Nevertheless, future research should seek to replicate our findings using larger samples from different working populations. These studies could also expand on our findings by investigating the daily interplay between negative acts and emotional support in the prediction of need frustration as well as subsequent employee health. Indeed, consistent with SDT's proposition that negative contextual factors (e.g., negative acts) undermine employee health by frustrating their psychological needs, future research is encouraged to include indicators of employee health (e.g., emotional exhaustion, negative affect, ill-being) in a moderated mediation model to investigate whether emotional support can hamper the psychological processes through which bullying impairs employees' health at the daily level. Finally, personal characteristics can influence how negative behaviors are appraised, and consequently how these behaviors affect employee outcomes, especially in situations of low exposure to negative behaviors (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). As such, future research is encouraged to investigate the role of personal characteristics (e.g., resilience, self-efficacy, past and present victimization) in the daily relationship between negative acts (especially indirect behaviors) and need frustration.

Practical Implications and Conclusion

Daily exposure to the four investigated negative behaviors was found to undermine employees' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness at the end of the day. Such results, in conjunction with past research that has linked workplace bullying to significant psychological costs over time (Boudrias et al., 2021), highlight the need to prevent the presence of such negative behaviors as they have considerable short- and long-term outcomes. Prevention strategies could aim at tackling the presence of stressful work conditions (e.g., high demands and low resources), which have been linked to bullying (Baillien et al., 2011; Notelaers et al., 2013; Trépanier et al., 2021), as well as raising awareness regarding bullying (e.g., how it can manifest itself on a daily basis and its impact). Furthermore, results show that daily emotional support at work buffered the effect of direct negative acts. However, on days employees were confronted with indirect negative behaviors, they experienced greater need frustration and emotional support did not offset this effect. As the intention of indirect negative acts can be unclear to the employee on the receiving end and are less evident to witnesses, employees may be less prone to ask for emotional support from others at work or spontaneously receive this form of support when facing such behaviors. However, as the intent underlying the negative behaviors does not alter the experience of the targeted employee (Einarsen et al., 2020), and as past research shows that exposure to negative acts is detrimental to employee health and well-being, regardless of perceived victimization (self-labeling as a victim of bullying; Trépanier et al., 2013), especially in situations of intense exposure (Vie et al., 2011), employees should be encouraged to seek emotional support when facing negative behaviors, even when such behaviors are subtle and their meaning is ambiguous. Managers and coworkers should also be informed of the importance of offering emotional support to others confronted with negative social experiences and be aware that bullying can

take the form of subtle behaviors which can nonetheless have significant repercussions on employees' psychological needs and health. As indirect and discrete negative behaviors are often experienced in the early phases of the bullying process (Einarsen et al., 2020), fostering perceptions that emotional support is available may be a vital step in preventing the escalation to more severe stages of bullying where intense and particularly harmful acts are encountered frequently (Leymann, 1996).

Overall, this study offers a close-up perspective on the bullying process by assessing how it can manifest itself daily, as well as the conditions that can offset the immediate impact of negative acts on employees' psychological needs. Results from this two-sample diary study highlight the relevance of focussing on the specific type of negative acts and identify emotional support as a key job resource that may contribute to hindering the escalation of this process by protecting employees' sense of connectedness and competence, which are crucial mechanisms liable to facilitate employee well-being and optimal functioning at work.

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