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# **Psychological contact violation or basic need frustration? Psychological mechanisms behind the effects of workplace bullying.**

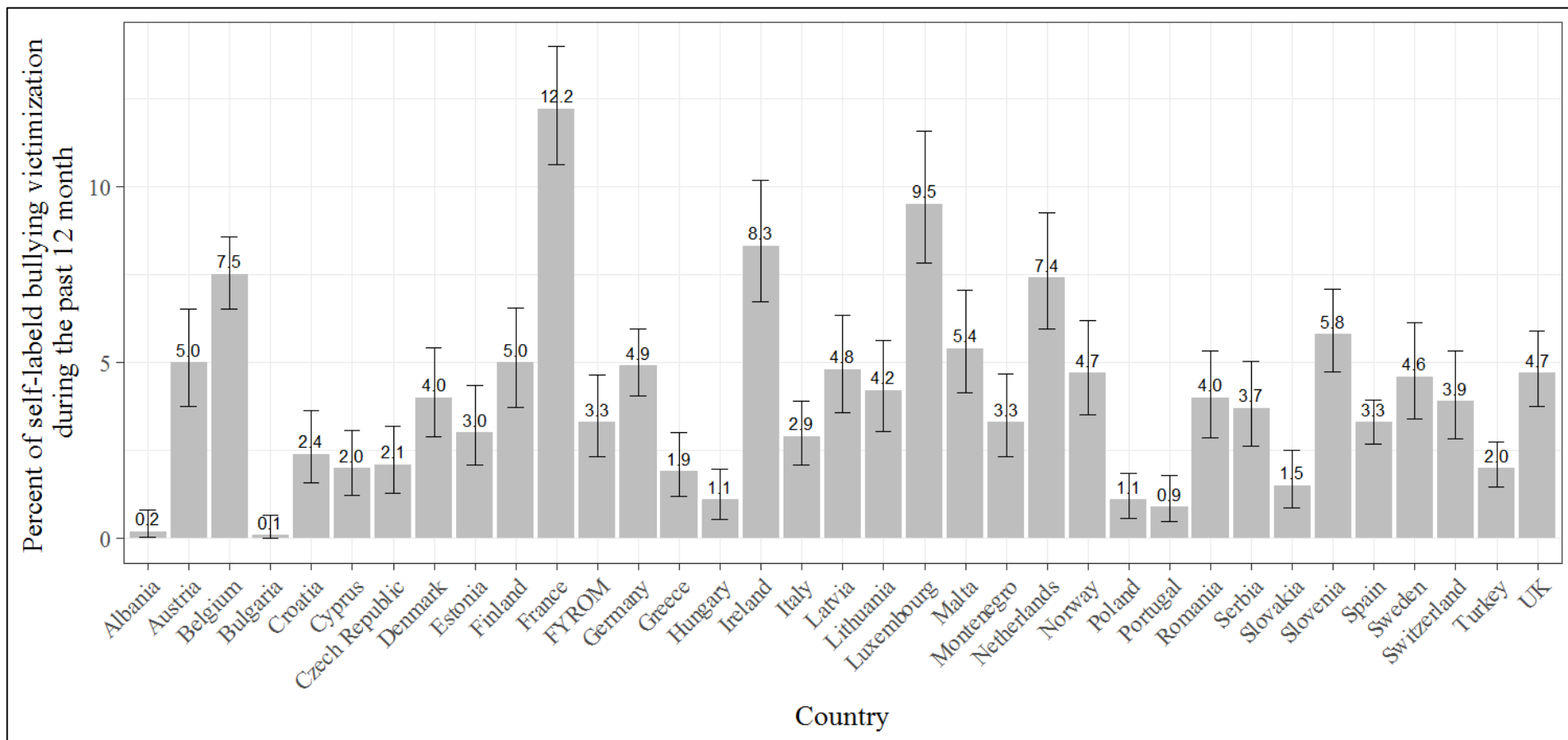
**23<sup>th</sup> ISRA World Meeting**

Université Paris Descartes  
Paris, France, 2018, July 12<sup>th</sup>



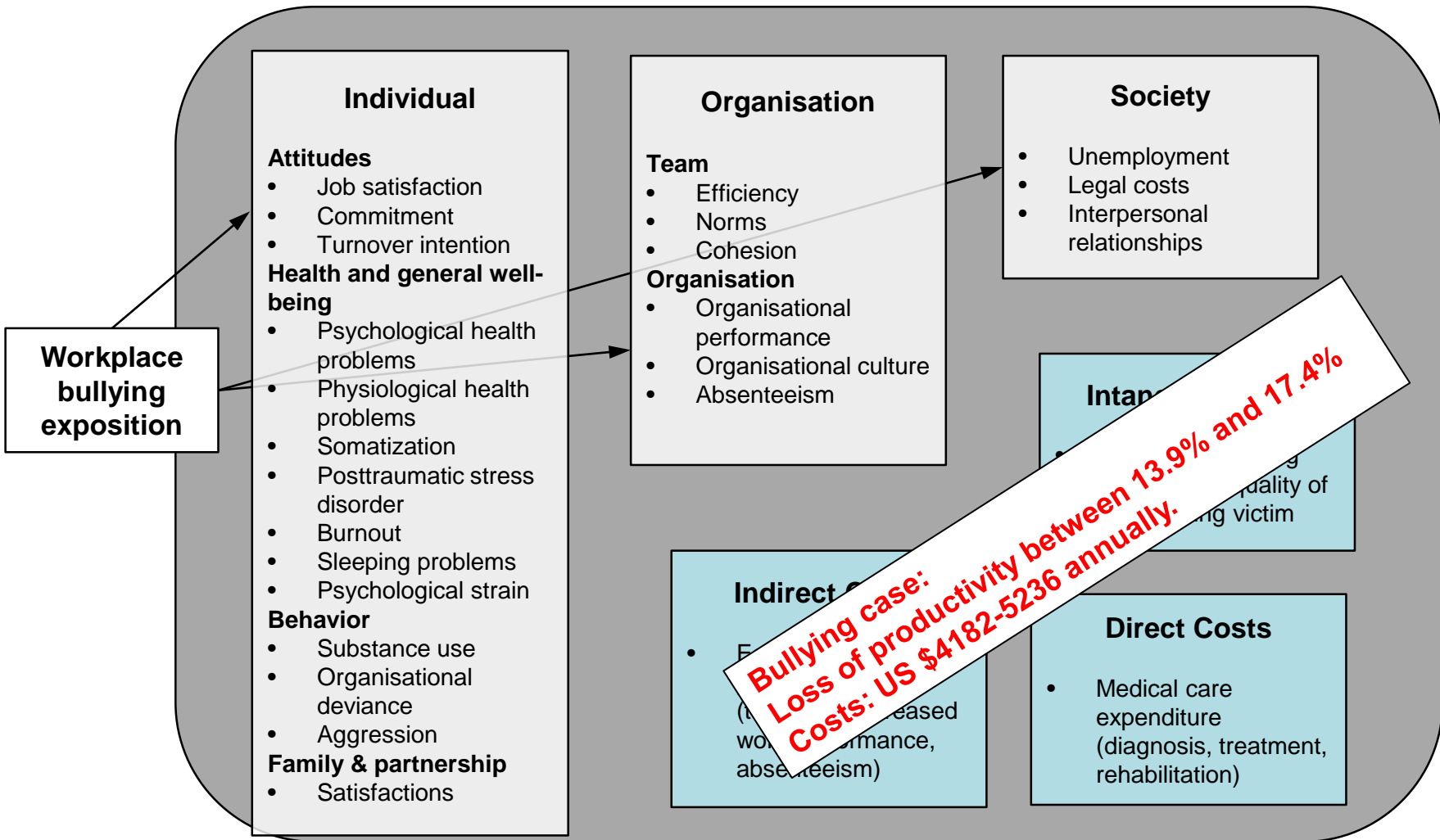
# Workplace bullying as a social problem

## Workplace bullying in Europe



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

# Workplace bullying as a social problem



# State of the art

- Various studies regarding the link between workplace bullying exposure and well-being, work-related attitudes and behavior
- Lack of studies about psychological mechanisms
- Knowledge of the psychological mechanisms important for phase-2 interventions

# Workplace bullying from a social exchange perspective

## **Social exchange theory: psychological contract**

- Psychological contract
  - informal, implicit, indirect promised resources, conditions, obligations
  - influenced by the perceptions and interpretations of the individuals
- Psychological contract breach/violation
  - Cognitiv: Awareness of an unfulfilled organisational promise
  - Affectiv: Emotional reaction (anger, betrayal)
- Workplace bullying exposure may lead to psychological contract breach/violation

# Workplace bullying and self-determination theory

## Self-determination theory: Basic needs

- Humans have three basic needs
  - need for autonomy
  - need for competence
  - need for relatedness
- Environments that frustrate these basic need reduce individuals' well-being and motivation
- Workplace bullying may thwart the employee's basic needs (excessive controlling, permanent criticism, social isolation)

# Hypotheses

- *H1*: Workplace bullying is linked with feelings of psychological contract violation and frustration of basic needs
- *H2*: Workplace bullying is linked with lower well-being, job satisfaction, engagement, work performance and with higher burnout, workplace deviance, turnover intentions.
- *H3*: Feelings of psychological contract violation and basic need frustration are mediators between bullying and these negative outcomes.

# Method (I)

## Research design

- Online survey of American employees (Amazon MTurk sample)
- $N = 1.408$  (56.6% females,  $n = 797$ )
- Age 20-73 years ( $M = 37.3$ ;  $SD = 10.3$ )

## Statistical analyses

- Mediation analyses with structural equation modeling
- Effect-coding-method, phantom approach
- Percentil bootstrapping method to calculate confidence intervals



# Method (II)

## Measures

Scale	I.	Reference	$\omega$	Example	Answer categories	
Workplace bullying exposure	9	Notelaers et al., 2017	.91	<i>"someone is withholding information"</i>	1 (= "Never")	5 (= "Always")
Psychological contract violation	4	Robinson & Morrison, 2000	.96	<i>"I feel betrayed by my organization"</i>	1 (= "Totally disagree")	7 (= "Totally agree")
Frustration: Autonomy	4	Bartholomew et al., 2011 (angepasst)	.79	<i>"I feel prevented from making choices with regard to the way I do my work"</i>	1 (= "Totally disagree")	7 (= "Totally agree")
Frustration: Competence	4	Bartholomew et al., 2011 (angepasst)	.89	<i>"There are times at work when I am told things that make me feel incompetent"</i>	1 (= "Totally disagree")	7 (= "Totally agree")
Frustration: Relatedness	4	Bartholomew et al., 2011 (angepasst)	.81	<i>"At work, I feel other people dislike me"</i>	1 (= "Totally disagree")	7 (= "Totally agree")

# Method (III)

## Measures

Scale	I.	Reference	$\omega$	Example	Answer categories	
Well-Being	5	WHO, 1998	.85	<i>“Over the past two weeks I have felt cheerful and in good spirits”</i>	1 (= “at no time”)	7 (= “all of the time”)
Job satisfaction	3	Cammann et al., 1983	.93	<i>“All in all I am satisfied with my job”</i>	1 (= “Totally disagree”)	7 (= “Totally agree”)
Burnout	7	Kristensen et al., 2005	.85	<i>“Do you feel that every working hour is tiring for you?”</i>	1 (= “Never”)	5 (= “Always”)
Vigor	3	Schaufeli et al., 2006	.91	<i>“At my work, I feel bursting with energy”</i>	1 (= “Totally disagree”)	7 (= “Totally agree”)
Work performance	2	Sischka et al., 2018	.81	<i>“How does your supervisor rate your overall work performance?”</i>	1 (= “Far below average”)	7 (= “Far above average”)
Workplace deviance	5	Bennet & Robinson, 2000	.87	<i>“Put little effort into your work”</i>	1 (= “Totally disagree”)	7 (= “Totally agree”).
Turnover intentions	3	Sjöberg & Sverke , 2000	.87	<i>“I am actively looking for other jobs”</i>	1 (= “Totally disagree”)	7 (= “Totally agree”).

# Results (I)

## Model fit for different measurement models

Model	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>RMSEA</i> [ <i>CI</i> <sub>90</sub> ]	<i>SRMR</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>TLI</i>
Single factor	21466.251	1326	.000	.104 [.103; .105]	.099	.549	.532
9 factors	6236.188	1290	.000	.052 [.051; .053]	.051	.889	.882
10 factors	5989.793	1281	.000	.051 [.050; .052]	.051	.895	.887
11 factors	5440.175	1271	.000	.048 [.047; .049]	.050	.907	.899
<b>12 factors (theory)</b>	5123.209	1260	.000	.047 [.045; .048]	.049	.914	.905
13 factors	5273.594	1278	.000	.047 [.046; .048]	.051	.911	.904

Notes. *MLR* estimator; *RMSEA* = root mean squared error of approximation; *SRMR* = standardized root mean square residual; *CFI* = comparative fit index; *TLI* = Tucker-Lewis index.

# Results (II)

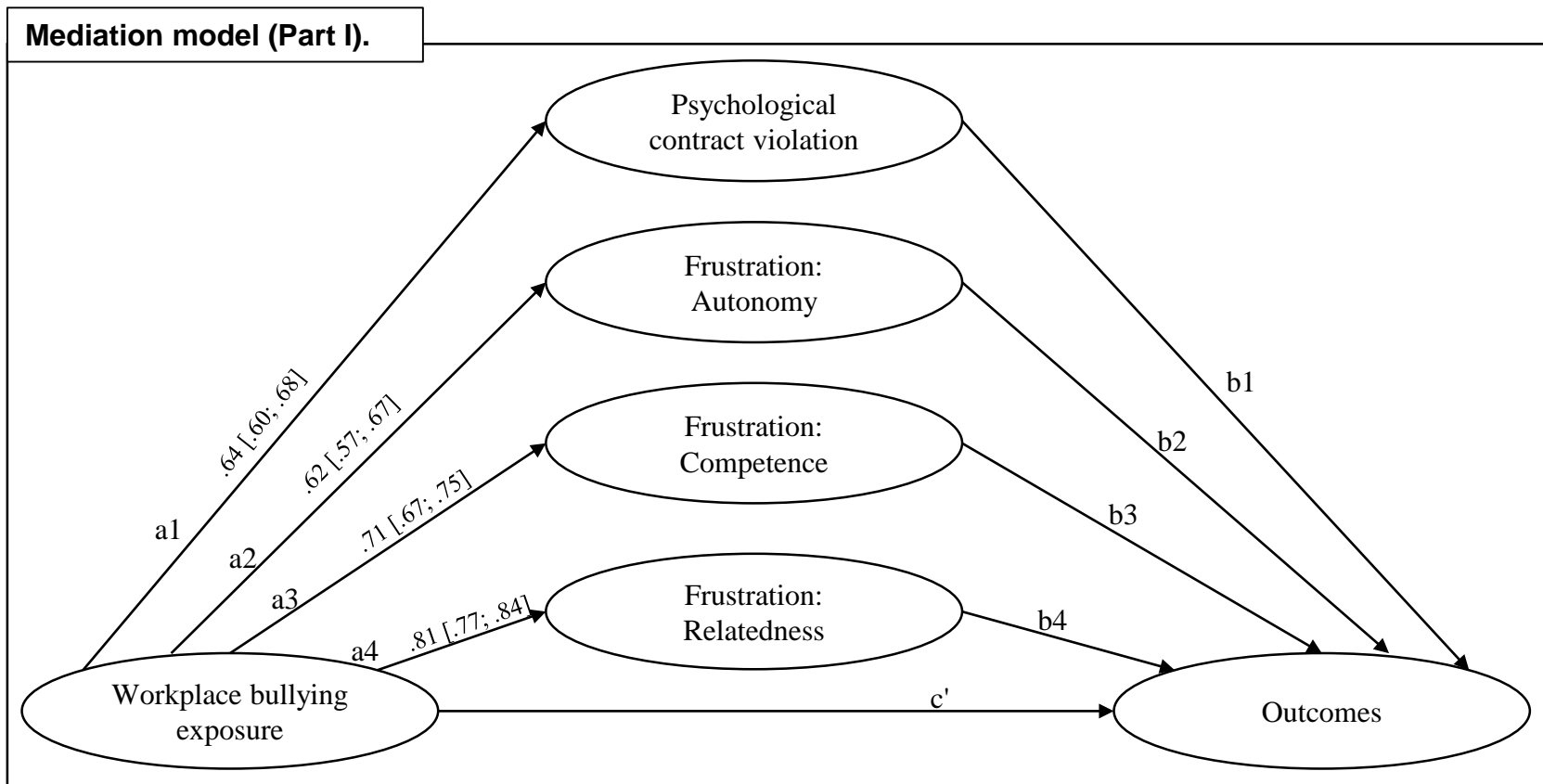
**Latent means, standard deviations, intercorrelations and reliabilities**

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. Workplace bullying	1.71	0.69	.91											
2. Psychological contract violation	2.29	1.53	.64	.95										
3. Frustration: autonomy	3.50	1.31	.62	.65	.83									
4. Frustration: competence	2.88	1.43	.71	.66	.86	.88								
5. Frustration: relatedness	2.76	1.25	.81	.70	.81	.88	.84							
6. Well-Being	3.79	1.07	-.37	-.48	-.51	-.51	-.52	.92						
7. Job satisfaction	5.00	1.54	-.47	-.73	-.63	-.61	-.60	.66	.93					
8. Burnout	3.11	0.86	.53	.60	.63	.62	.59	-.62	-.70	.92				
9. Vigor	3.82	1.49	-.37	-.50	-.53	-.52	-.54	.76	.75	-.70	.91			
10. Work performance	5.25	0.87	-.21	-.23	-.29	-.39	-.32	.33	.30	-.19	.35	.79		
11. Workplace deviance	1.79	0.63	.33	.32	.41	.42	.40	-.35	-.39	.39	-.48	-.30	.82	
12. Turnover intentions	3.52	1.68	.40	.61	.57	.52	.51	-.50	-.82	.59	-.61	-.17	.34	.87

**Bullying is strongly correlated with all potential mediators!**  
**Bullying is correlated with all outcomes!**  
**Mediators are strongly intercorrelated!**  
**Mediators are correlated with all outcomes!**

Notes. Bivariate correlations, McDonald's  $\omega$  in diagonal; all correlations are significant at  $p < .001$ .

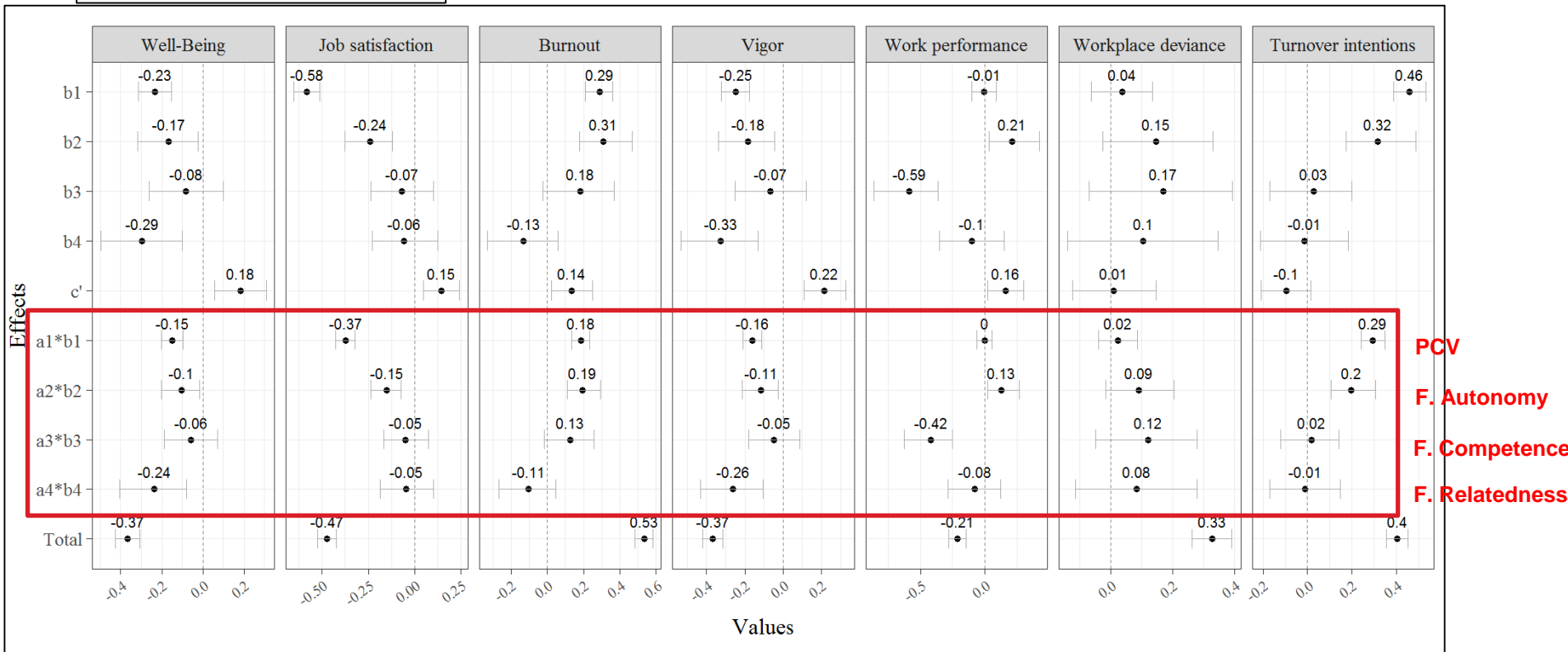
# Results (III)



Notes. Standardized effects;  
Model fit:  $\chi^2 = 5120$ ,  $df = 1260$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $RMSEA [CI_{90}] = .047 [.045; .048]$ ,  $SRMR = .049$ ,  $CFI = .914$ ,  $TLI = .906$ .

# Results (IV)

## Mediation model (Part II).



Notes. Standardized effects;

Model fit:  $\chi^2 = 5120$ ,  $df = 1260$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $RMSEA [CI_{90}] = .047 [.045; .048]$ ,  $SRMR = .049$ ,  $CFI = .914$ ,  $TLI = .906$ .

# Discussion

- Different mechanisms are important that link workplace bullying with different outcomes
  - Job satisfaction, Turnover intentions: Psychological contract violation
  - Well-Being and motivation: Frustration of need for relatedness
- Limitations
  - Cross-sectional design / self-reports
  - Convenience sample
  - High multicollinearity between mediators

# Discussion

## ■ Interventions

- Taking basic needs of bullying victims into account
- Restore feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness
- Restore employee's trust in organization → *Taking action!*

## ■ Outlook

- Possible moderators (mindfulness)
- Same mediators for cyberbullying?
- Longitudinal studies





**Thank you for your attention!**

**Any questions?**

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