

Teachers' and Social Pedagogues' Experiences with Bullying Behavior and Work-Related Psychosocial Factors

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to describe and compare teachers' and social pedagogues' experiences with bullying behavior and their perceptions of work-related psychosocial factors, such as interpersonal relations and leadership. The sample of quantitative descriptive research was composed of Estonian teachers (n = 441) and social pedagogues (n = 171), whose personal history of bullying behavior was assessed via a self-reported questionnaire. The perceptions of the psychosocial work environment were measured using eight items from the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ II) short version. Results from exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis uncovered a four-factor model focusing on interpersonal relations and leadership on four scales: predictability, role clarity, quality of leadership, and social support from supervisors. The findings demonstrated that both teachers and social pedagogues with a history of victimization—both during their school years and in their current professional lives—reported significantly lower levels of predictability, role clarity, quality of leadership, and social support compared to colleagues with no history of bullying behavior. These results highlight that teachers' and social pedagogues' victimization experiences in school and the workplace seem to have a long-lasting effect on how they perceive interpersonal relations and leadership at their workplace. The study suggests that past and present experiences of victimization have negative effects on the perceived quality of interpersonal relations and leadership in the workplace among teachers and social pedagogues, emphasizing the need for targeted support for employees with victimization histories.

Keywords

Teachers, Social Pedagogues, Personal History of Bullying Behavior, Work-Related Psychosocial Factors, Interpersonal Relations, Leadership

1. Introduction

Bullying can be considered a significant public health issue that has severe negative consequences for both learners (e.g., [Ariani et al., 2025](#)) and educators ([Qiao et al., 2026](#)). Bullying is defined using three characteristics to describe the form of aggressive behavior: intention to cause harm; repetition of the behavior; and imbalance of power in relationships ([Olweus, 1999](#)).

Educators play a key role in bullying prevention and intervention, yet one personal factor that affects their actions is a history of bullying victimization (e.g., [Thornberg et al., 2024](#); [Van Verseveld et al., 2019](#); [Van der Zanden et al., 2015](#)). Research shows that a teacher's personal history of bullying involvement negatively affects their antibullying intervention ([Maor, 2025](#)). Furthermore, findings from a meta-analysis suggest that teachers' self-efficacy is a key element in intervening in school bullying ([Van Verseveld et al., 2019](#)). There is also a link between a history of school-age bullying and workplace bullying later in life. Teachers who were victimized in childhood are more likely to experience teacher-targeted bullying by students, victimize students ([Twemlow & Fonagy, 2005](#); [Twemlow et al., 2006](#)), or experience workplace bullying ([Bradshaw et al., 2007](#); [Smith et al., 2003](#)). While victimization experience has been a frequent subject of research, a knowledge gap remains regarding perpetrators' experience.

Besides teachers, school support specialists (e.g., psychologists, social pedagogues, school counsellors, guidance counsellors) play a crucial role in bullying prevention and intervention. Namely, previous research indicates that teachers and support specialists may differ in their identification of the origins of bullying (pre-school teachers and psychologists, e.g., [Fernández-Alfaraz et al., 2023](#)), their motives to intervene (teachers and school counsellors, e.g., [Gagnon et al., 2022](#)), and handling school bullying incidents (teachers and school counsellors, e.g., [Bauman et al., 2008](#); teachers and social pedagogues, e.g., [Aia-Utsal & Kõiv, 2023](#)).

Workplace bullying is generally carried out as personal abuse (attacking the person directly or indirectly), work-related harassment (overwork and work pressure), and/or social isolation (ostracism) ([Coyne, 2011](#)). There are organizational preconditions that can lead to workplace bullying ([Coyne, 2011](#)); it often arises from organizational job design and the wider social environment ([Leymann, 1996](#); [Skogstad et al., 2011](#)), while both bullying victims and bystanders report experiencing a low-quality work environment ([Einarsen et al., 1994](#)). Workplace victimization impacts society, organizations, and individuals ([Leymann, 1996](#); [Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012](#)). At the individual level, consequences can be psychological, psychosomatic, or physiological ([Coyne, 2011](#)). Workplace victimization poses severe risks to physical and mental health, causing symptoms of post-traumatic stress, burnout, reduced job satisfaction, poorer work engagement, and increased intentions to leave ([Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004](#); [Chan et al., 2020](#); [Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012](#)).

In the educational context, workplace bullying among school staff is a signifi-

cant issue with high prevalence (e.g., Scheeler et al., 2021; Adewusi, 2021; Anjum & Muazzam, 2019; Kõiv, 2017; Riley et al., 2011). Therefore, teachers and support specialists can be bullied by other teachers, students, staff, principals, or parents (Dirzyte et al., 2024; Kõiv, 2017), but can be perpetrators themselves (e.g., Aia-Utsal & Kõiv, 2025). Workplace victimization is associated with victims' well-being-related outcomes (Herscovis & Barling, 2010), and victimized teachers report lower levels of happiness, self-esteem, control of self and events, sociability, social involvement (Portelada et al., 2024), and satisfaction with life (Dirzyte et al., 2024; Aia-Utsal & Kõiv, 2025). Qualitative studies further reveal that victimization of teachers affects victims' physical, psychological, and social health (Tolentino, 2016), leads to feelings of incompetence, emotional exhaustion, depression, and anxiety (Bernstein & Batchelor, 2022), and has a negative influence on their teaching, learning environment, and private lives (Kõiv & Aia-Utsal, 2021).

Findings from the recent meta-analysis indicate that addressing workplace bullying requires a comprehensive approach that targets both individual and systemic factors contributing to such incidents (Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2025).

2. Work-Related Psychosocial Factors: Interpersonal Relations and Leadership

While COPSOQ II has been used in educational settings to assess work-related psychosocial factors in various school settings—elementary school teachers (Boström et al., 2020), high school teachers (Ibrahim et al., 2020), primary school teachers (Ugwuanyi et al., 2022), and educators (Smith et al., 2022)—there is a lack of evidence regarding how teachers' and social pedagogues' personal history of bullying behavior (victimization and/or perpetration) may affect perceptions of workplace factors. To assess the psychosocial work environment, the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ II) (Kristensen et al., 2005; Pejtersen et al., 2010) was used in this study, focusing on the domain of interpersonal relations and leadership (dimensions: quality of leadership, social support, role clarity, and predictability) in the educational context.

The results from a systematic review about work stressors suggest that there are several factors that significantly predict workplace bullying, such as role conflict, role ambiguity, workload, and cognitive demands (Van den Brande et al., 2016). It has been found that low satisfaction with leadership, work control, social climate, and the experience of role conflict correlate with bullying in the workplace (Einarsen et al., 1994).

Granziera et al. (2021) highlight school climate, supportive leadership, and social support as teacher job resources. Therefore, supervisor support, innovativeness, information, appreciation, and organizational climate are regarded as key job resources for teachers, as they help reduce the negative effect of student misbehavior on work engagement (Bakker et al., 2007).

Previous research indicates that teachers' social relations with colleagues, parents, and school leadership predicted teachers' belonging, which was directly re-

lated to job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011), and positive relationships with colleagues were negatively related to emotional exhaustion (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014). To support novice teachers, collaborative and supportive relationships are important, since lack of them is related to burnout (Gavish & Friedman, 2010). It has been demonstrated that novice teachers' perceptions of their schools' leadership and culture were the strongest variables related to commitment to teaching (Scheopner, 2010). Positive social relationships have been proved to be a relevant aspect of teacher well-being (Hascher & Waber, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

Work organization, organizational climate, and leadership are considered possible organizational antecedents to bullying (Hoel & Salin, 2003). Ratings of workplace bullying correlated with predictors such as social climate, leadership behavior, and role demands (role conflict, role ambiguity) (Skogstad et al., 2011). Teachers' workplace bullying can be reduced by increasing job resources, such as creating a positive social climate (Ariza-Montes et al., 2016). Moreover, the relationships and communication among school staff can help to create an anti-bullying environment at the whole school level (Fischer et al., 2025).

2.1. Quality of Leadership

Educational leadership is a process needed to achieve common educational goals and refers to encouraging and coordinating the capacities and strengths of teachers, pupils, and parents (Baporikar, 2014). The leadership style of school principals can be related to teachers' job satisfaction (Shi et al., 2024), teacher commitment (Devos et al., 2014), teaching performance (Kusumaningrum et al., 2025), and teacher learning (Pan & Chen, 2021).

Meta-analysis (Shi et al., 2024) shows that ethical leadership (leaders with high moral qualities such as honesty, fairness, caring for employees, and trust) style correlates with teacher job satisfaction and employees' well-being (Ahmad et al., 2020). Also, teachers' commitment increases when they perceive their leaders as supportive, providing a clear school vision, setting directions, and providing instructional support to teachers (Devos et al., 2014). The principal's instructional leadership affects school culture (Kusumaningrum et al., 2025). On the other hand, poor leadership is associated with teacher burnout (Arvidsson et al., 2016).

2.2. Social Support

Social support can be defined as emotional, informational, and/or physical support received from other people and can be considered the opposite of social demands (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Social support is an interpersonal construct and process whose main objective is to promote the thriving of an individual (Feeney & Collins, 2015). Social support indicates resources coming from a social network and enhances a person's capacity to manage stress (Cohen, 2004) and is linked to health and well-being (Feeney & Collins, 2015). Social support can reduce the negative impact of high-strain jobs on job satisfaction (Sargent & Terry,

2000) and mediates the relationship of control on job strain (Blanch, 2016). However, the results from a meta-analysis (Halbesleben, 2006) did not find a relation between social support and different burnout dimensions, but argue that work sources of support are more strongly related to exhaustion and nonwork-related support to depersonalisation and personal accomplishment. Meta-analyses suggest that social support can reduce the negative effect of workplace bullying on work stress (Chen et al., 2026) and that supervisor support training has a moderate effect on reducing workplace bullying (Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2025).

Research in the educational context shows that social support significantly predicts teachers' psychological well-being (Ibrahim et al., 2021) and mitigates the negative impact of workload on work-family conflict among teachers (De Carlo et al., 2019). Teachers who receive low social support are more likely to experience high levels of psychological distress (Ibrahim et al., 2020).

2.3. Role Clarity

Work roles are defined as “the total set of performance responsibilities associated with one’s employment” (Murphy & Jackson, 1999: p. 335) and consist of many responsibilities which vary along two continuous dimensions: social embeddedness (to what extent tasks require coordination with other people) and formalization (specified tasks which are to be performed as a part of the employment relationship) (Murphy & Jackson, 1999). Role clarity refers to the objective availability of sufficient role-related information and the subjective perception of having as much role-relevant information as an individual wishes (Lyons, 1971). Among employees in high-skilled jobs, greater role clarity is associated with higher work ability (Kabothe et al., 2024).

Work roles characteristics are expansion, ambiguity, conflict, and flexibility (Murphy & Jackson, 1999). Role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload can be considered hindrance stressors as job demands and are negatively related to work affect (Webster & Adams, 2020). Role ambiguity occurs when individuals are unclear about the expectations they need to fulfill to perform their roles effectively, and role conflict occurs when an individual perceives that performing satisfactorily in one role (or role domain) hinders their ability to perform satisfactorily in another role (or domain) (Murphy & Jackson, 1999).

Role stress is a job demand for teachers which can lead to burnout (Granziera et al., 2021), and role ambiguity and role conflict are the two main factors of role stress that negatively impact teachers' job performance and work engagement (Rasool et al., 2024; Mérida-López et al., 2017). Perceived role ambiguity among teachers significantly influences their anxiety about school leadership and leadership self-efficacy (Ayyıldız et al., 2025). Meta-analytic evidence indicates that role ambiguity is positively associated with emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and diminished personal accomplishment (Alarcon, 2011). Higher role overload and role conflict are associated with reduced affective commitment and job satisfaction (Vandenberghe et al., 2011), and lecturer role conflict negatively affects teaching

quality (Rafsanjani et al., 2024). Workers' role conflicts predict sickness absence (Rugulies et al., 2010), and hindrance stressors have a negative impact on role-based performance (Wallace et al., 2009).

2.4. Predictability

Predictability refers to having relevant and useful information about significant upcoming events at the workplace, such as organizational changes, new technologies, or physical modifications, etc. (Nielsen et al., 2004), and is one of the psychosocial work factors in COPSQ II measured by how well employees are informed about important decisions, changes, future plans, and provided information to work well (Pejtersen et al., 2010). Predictability has been found to be correlated with quality of leadership and social support (Burr et al., 2010), decision authority (Nielsen et al., 2006), and employees with job strain reported lower levels of predictability (Burr et al., 2010). While there is limited research on predictability in educational settings, in other contexts it has been found that higher predictability significantly predicted lower absence rates among men (Nielsen et al., 2004) and lower levels of intention to leave the job (Möckli et al., 2025). For example, considering teachers, during COVID-19, lower levels of predictability emerged in educating online compared to in-person teaching (Smith et al., 2022).

Therefore, there is a need to provide insight into how teachers' and social pedagogues' personal experiences of school- and workplace bullying behavior—either as perpetrators or victims—may shape their perceptions of interpersonal relations and leadership at work.

The aim of the study was to describe and compare teachers' and social pedagogues' experiences with bullying behavior and their perceptions of work-related psychosocial factors such as interpersonal relations and leadership.

According to the research aim, a research question was proposed: What are the differences between teachers and social pedagogues with different experiences of bullying behavior and their evaluations of work-related psychosocial factors such as interpersonal relations and leadership?

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Participants and Data Collection

The data were collected between January and February 2023 using an online questionnaire. Respondents had the option to save their answers and resume filling out the questionnaire later; furthermore, they were allowed to leave any question unanswered. Data collection was anonymous, participation was voluntary, and all respondents were informed of the study's objectives. Data were stored confidentially. To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants throughout all stages of the study, background data concerning work experience were excluded from the analysis.

The teacher sample was a purposive sample involving teachers from across Es-

tonia. To form the sample, half of Estonia's counties were selected, covering diverse regions (urban and rural areas, counties with high and low population density). All schools representing primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary education in the selected counties were identified using the Estonian Education Information System, and all teachers in these schools ($N = 4324$) were invited to participate via email addresses obtained from publicly available school websites. The participation rate was 10.2% among the teachers who received the invitation. The sample of teachers ($n = 441$) consisted of 408 women (92.5%), 30 men (6.8%), and 3 others (0.7%). The teachers were distributed into five age groups: up to 29 years old (8.5%), 30 - 39 (16.6%), 40 - 49 (25.7%), 50 - 59 (29.4%), and over 60 years old (19.8%). The sample of social pedagogues was a total population sample involving all social pedagogues across Estonia who work in schools or provide social pedagogical services to general education schools across three educational levels and other educational institutions. These institutions were identified using the Estonian Education Information System and publicly available information, and invitations were distributed via publicly available email addresses. From all social pedagogues who received the invitation ($N = 462$), 37% of social pedagogues participated in the study. The sample of social pedagogues ($n = 171$) consisted of 167 women (97.6%), 2 men (1.2%), and 2 others (1.2%). The social pedagogues were distributed into five age groups: up to 29 years old (6.6%), 30 - 39 (26.8%), 40 - 49 (32.7%), 50 - 59 (23.3%), and over 60 years old (10.6%).

Experiences with bullying. To examine teachers' and social pedagogues' personal history of bullying experiences (victimization and/or perpetration), a self-reported questionnaire was used, taking into account two aspects: the participant's role in bullying—perpetrator and/or victim—and the type of bullying experience—retrospective school bullying and/or bullying at work. Retrospective reports of bullying experiences (as perpetrator and/or victim) (e.g., Valera-Pozo, 2021; Maor, 2025; Smith et al., 2003) are considered a valid research method (Deighton & Murphy, 2024; Green et al., 2018), as individuals' descriptions of bullying experiences tend to remain relatively stable over time (Rivers, 2011). Before the questionnaire was implemented, it was reviewed by experts and tested in a pilot study with teachers.

First, the participants were provided with a definition of bullying (Kõiv, 2006) as repeated, intentional aggressive behavior involving a power imbalance, followed by four questions (yes/no response options) regarding their personal history of bullying involvement: "Have you previously been a victim of bullying or other inappropriate behavior during your school years?"; "Have you previously bullied someone during your school years?"; "Have you been a victim of bullying or other inappropriate behavior by adults working at school?"; "Have you bullied other adults at work?". Table 1 presents the responses to these self-report questions for participants belonging to groups with different experiences of behavior.

Table 1. Basis for formation of study groups: personal history of bullying behavior.

Role in bullying	Bullying experience		Basis for forming study groups
	Retrospective school bullying behavior	Bullying behavior at work	
victim	no	no	not involved in bullying behavior (n = 166)
bully	no	no	
victim	yes	no	victim at school (n = 87)
bully	no	no	
victim	no	yes	victim at work (n = 91)
bully	no	no	
victim	yes	yes	victim at school and victim at work (n = 111)
bully	no	no	
victim	yes	yes	victim/bully at school and victim/bully at work (n = 107)
bully	yes	yes	
victim	no	yes	bully at school, and victim at work (n = 50)
bully	yes	no	
victim	yes	yes	victim/bully at school and victim at work (n = 5)
bully	yes	no	
victim	no	no	bully at work (n = 3)
bully	no	yes	

A total of eight mutually exclusive groups reflecting different bullying experiences emerged, with each participant assigned to one group. No additional categories emerged. The initial sample (n = 626) consisted of teachers (n = 451) and social pedagogues (n = 175), but since two groups (victim/bully in school and victim at work; bully at work) were too small and were excluded from the analysis, the final sample size is n = 612, teachers (n = 441) and social pedagogues (n = 171).

Perceptions of work-related psychosocial factors. To assess the perceptions of work-related psychosocial factors connected with interpersonal relations and leadership, the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ II) was used (Kristensen et al., 2005; Pejtersen et al., 2010). COPSOQ II has been translated into more than 25 languages and has been validated in numerous countries worldwide (e.g., Berthelsen et al., 2016; Pejtersen et al., 2010), also adapted in Estonia (e.g., Meriläinen et al., 2019). COPSOQ II validity and reliability have been tested by several studies in different contexts (e.g., Baka et al., 2022; Dicke et al., 2018; Lima et al., 2019; Thorsen & Bjorner, 2010).

COPSOQ II short version consists of 42 items. In this study, 8 items were used to assess interpersonal relations and leadership: predictability (2 items $\alpha = 0.798$, e.g., “At your place of work, are you informed well in advance concerning, for example, important decisions, changes, or plans for the future?”), role clarity (2

items $\alpha = 0.727$, e.g., “Does your work have clear objectives?”), quality of leadership (2 items $\alpha = 0.828$, e.g., “To what extent would you say that your immediate superior gives high priority to job satisfaction?”), and social support from supervisor (2 items $\alpha = 0.870$, e.g., “How often do you get help and support from your nearest superior?”). Previous evaluations of the psychometric properties of these subscales have confirmed the validity of internal consistency parameters (Baka et al., 2022). Participants responded using a 5-point Likert-type scale, assessing either intensity ranging from 1 (*to a very small extent*) to 5 (*to a very large extent*) or frequency from 1 (*never/hardly ever*) to 5 (*always*), according to the question type.

3.2. Data Analysis

Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to assess the factor structure of the “Interpersonal relations and leadership” subscale using the whole sample of respondents ($N = 612$). For EFA, factors were extracted using the minimum residual (minres) method with oblique Promax rotation, assuming correlated factors; missing values were handled using pairwise deletion to maximize the available sample size for each variable pair. For CFA, parameters were estimated using the maximum likelihood (ML) estimator, and missing responses were handled via full information maximum likelihood (FIML).

To analyze differences among study groups with different bullying experiences, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used, followed by Dunn’s post hoc test with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons; the adjusted p value is reported. For the Kruskal-Wallis and post hoc analyses, participants with missing values for the respective outcome were excluded from the corresponding analysis. Consequently, the analytical sample size varied across questionnaire items. To compare perceptions between teachers and social pedagogues, Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted. For all non-parametric analyses, participants with missing values were excluded listwise per respective item, resulting in minor variations in sample sizes across specific outcome variables.

4. Results

4.1. Experience with Bullying Behavior

When exploring teachers’ and social pedagogues’ experiences with bullying behavior (both retrospective in the past and in the workplace), a total of eight groups emerged: not involved in bullying behavior (25.72% of teachers and 28.57% of social pedagogues); victim at school (13.97% of teachers, 13.71% of social pedagogues); victim at work (15.52% of teachers and 12.00% of social pedagogues); victim at school and victim at work (16.85% of teachers and 20.00% of social pedagogues); victim/bully at school and victim/bully at work (17.52% of teachers and 16.00% of social pedagogues); bully at school and victim at work (8.20% of teachers and 7.43% of social pedagogues). Two groups, bully/victim at school and victim at work ($n = 11$), and bully at work ($n = 3$), were excluded from the latter

analysis as the total sample size was too small. Results indicate that 73.48% of teachers and social pedagogues had a personal history with bullying behavior, and 26.52% reported not being involved in bullying. The study group not involved in bullying behavior was the highest among teachers and social pedagogues. When describing the personal history of bullying involvement, the largest proportion of teachers (17.52%) were in the group victim/bully at school and victim/bully at work, and social pedagogues (20.00%) were in the group victim at school and at work.

4.2. Work-Related Psychosocial Factors

To specifically analyze perceptions of interpersonal relations and leadership, a separate model was derived from the original 42-item scale. This focused model comprises four factors (dimensions of work-related psychosocial factors): predictability (2 items), role clarity (2 items), quality of leadership (2 items), and social support (2 items). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the underlying factor structure of the selected items, and EFA results indicated a good fit of the four-factor structure to the data: $\chi^2 = 1.243$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.537$, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = 0.000 (90% CI [0.000, 0.069]), TLI = 1.004, SRMR = 0.002. Factor loadings are provided in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Factor loadings of the exploratory factor analysis of COPSOQ II.

Item content (nr)	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Uniqueness
Social support (38)	0.672				0.324
Social support (39)	0.543				0.313
Quality of leadership (25)		0.879			0.252
Quality of leadership (24)		0.663			0.311
Predictability (18)			0.869		0.308
Predictability (19)			0.733		0.334
Role clarity (23)				0.811	0.289
Role clarity (22)				0.690	0.528

Subsequently, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted, which generally supported the proposed factor structure for the sample of teachers and social pedagogues. The results were: $\chi^2 = 33.385$, $df = 14$, $p = 0.003$, CFI = 0.998, RMSEA = 0.048 (90% CI [0.027, 0.069]), TLI = 0.996, SRMR = 0.021. The model plot of the CFA is presented in **Figure 1**.

Across four factors, the mean scores and standard deviations of the dimensions of interpersonal relations and leadership among teachers and social pedagogues with different personal histories of bullying involvement are presented in **Table 3**. In all factors of interpersonal relations and leadership (predictability, role clarity, quality of leadership, social support) among both samples (teachers and social pedagogues), the assessments were highest in the group not involved in bullying

behavior and lowest in the group victimized at school and at work.

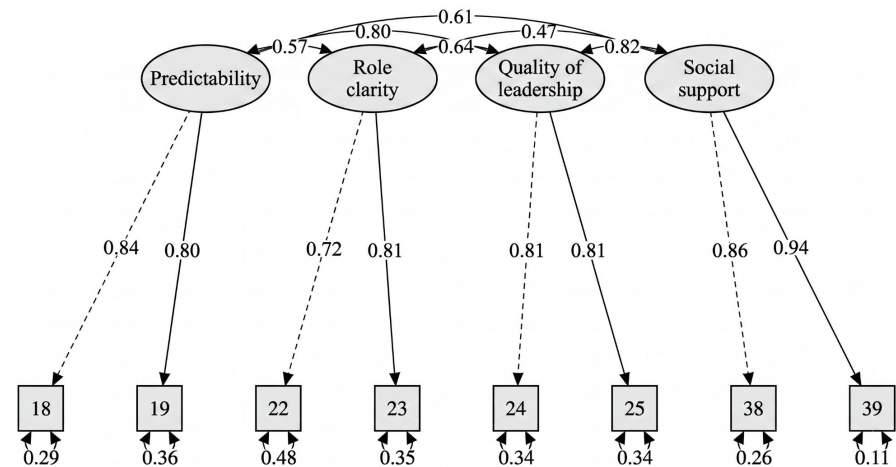


Figure 1. Model plot of confirmatory factor analysis of the relationships between factors. Note: Social support = Social support from supervisor.

Table 3. Interpersonal relations and leadership—mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of teachers (T) and social pedagogues (SP).

Study groups	Sample size	Predictability		Role clarity		Quality of leadership		Social support from the supervisor	
		T	SP	T	SP	T	SP	T	SP
not involved in bullying behavior	T N = 116	3.885	4.180	4.297	4.210	3.970	4.073	4.216	4.350
	SP N = 50	0.693	0.629	0.548	0.485	0.778	0.729	0.789	0.841
victim at school	T N = 63	3.754	3.938	4.281	4.000	3.887	3.896	4.063	4.229
	SP N = 24	0.856	0.696	0.563	0.417	0.943	0.707	1.022	0.967
victim at work	T N = 70	3.686	3.525	4.257	3.976	3.757	3.786	3.829	4.119
	SP N = 21	0.728	0.924	0.550	0.642	0.871	0.969	0.963	0.947
victim at school and victim at work	T N = 76	3.454	3.443	4.007	3.771	3.480	3.441	3.645	3.700
	SP N = 35	0.792	0.765	0.580	0.610	0.967	0.894	1.035	0.994
victim/bully at school and victim/bully at work	T N = 79	3.563	3.839	4.186	3.839	3.760	3.589	3.975	3.946
	SP N = 28	0.849	0.746	0.614	0.708	1.099	0.828	0.933	0.936
bully at school, and victim at work	T N = 37	3.743	3.923	4.194	4.000	3.764	3.808	3.959	4.154
	SP N = 13	0.847	0.703	0.551	0.577	1.186	0.805	0.946	0.966

Significant differences based on experiences of bullying behavior between study groups were found across all four work-related factors for both teachers and social pedagogues. Specifically, differences in perception of predictability (teachers: $H(5) = 15.452$, $p < 0.01$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.035$, 95% CI [0.017, 0.085]; social pedagogues: $H(5) = 22.145$, $p < 0.001$), role clarity (teachers: $H(5) = 13.325$, $p < 0.05$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.030$, 95% CI [0.015, 0.087]; social pedagogues: $H(5) = 13.499$, $p < 0.05$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.079$, 95% CI [0.030, 0.199]), quality of leadership (teachers: $H(5) = 12.179$, $p < 0.05$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.028$,

95% CI [0.013, 0.079]; social pedagogues: $H(5) = 13.219$, $p < 0.05$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.079$, 95% CI [0.038, 0.205]) and social support (teachers: $H(5) = 17.503$, $p < 0.005$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.040$, 95% CI [0.017, 0.090]; social pedagogues: $H(5) = 11.499$, $p < 0.05$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.068$, 95% CI [0.024, 0.187]).

Predictability. When comparing teachers and social pedagogues with the same bullying experience, perceptions of predictability in the current workplace differed in the group not involved in bullying behavior, whereas teachers rated perceptions of predictability lower ($n = 117$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $IQR = 0.50$) compared to social pedagogues ($n = 50$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $IQR = 0.87$), $p < 0.05$, $U = 2245.00$.

Teachers not involved in bullying rated predictability higher ($n = 117$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $IQR = 0.50$) compared to teachers who have been victims at school and at work ($n = 76$, $Mdn = 3.50$, $IQR = 1.00$), $p < 0.01$, $Z = 3.574$, $rrb = 0.302$.

Social pedagogues not involved in bullying ($n = 50$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $IQR = 0.87$) reported higher levels of predictability compared to victims at school and victims at work ($n = 35$, $Mdn = 3.50$, $IQR = 1.00$), $p < 0.001$, $Z = 4.513$, $rrb = 0.547$.

Role clarity. When comparing teachers and social pedagogues, perceptions of role clarity in the current workplace differed in groups: victim/bully at school and victim/bully at work. Teachers with the same bullying experience rated role clarity higher ($n = 78$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $IQR = 0.50$) compared to social pedagogues ($n = 28$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $IQR = 0.75$), $p < 0.05$, $U = 1414.00$.

Teachers who were victims at school and victims at work ($n = 76$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $IQR = 1.00$) reported lower levels of role clarity compared to teachers in the group not involved in bullying ($n = 116$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $IQR = 1.00$), $p < 0.05$, $Z = 3.270$, $rrb = 0.262$, and victims at school ($n = 64$, $Mdn = 4.25$, $IQR = 0.50$), $p < 0.05$, $Z = 2.999$, $rrb = 0.279$.

Social pedagogues not involved in bullying ($n = 50$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $IQR = 0.50$) reported higher levels of role clarity compared to social pedagogues who were victims at school and victims at work ($n = 35$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $IQR = 0.50$), $p < 0.05$, $Z = 3.373$, $rrb = 0.410$.

Quality of leadership. When comparing perceptions of the quality of leadership among teachers and social pedagogues with the same experience with bullying behavior, there were no statistically significant differences.

Teachers as victims at school and at work ($n = 75$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $IQR = 1.00$) reported lower levels of quality of leadership compared to teachers not involved in bullying behavior ($n = 117$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $IQR = 1.00$), $p < 0.05$, $Z = 3.261$, $rrb = 0.286$.

Social pedagogues as victims at school and victim work ($n = 34$, $Mdn = 3.5$, $IQR = 1.37$) reported lower levels of quality of leadership compared to social pedagogues not involved in bullying ($n = 48$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $IQR = 0.75$), $p < 0.05$, $Z = 3.322$, $rrb = 0.419$.

Social support from supervisor. When comparing perceptions of social support among teachers and social pedagogues with the same experience with bullying behavior, there were no statistically significant differences.

Teachers as victims at school and victims at work ($n = 76$, $Mdn = 3.75$, $IQR = 1.5$) reported lower levels of social support compared to teachers not involved in bullying behavior ($n = 116$, $Mdn = 4.5$, $IQR = 1.00$), $p < 0.005$, $Z = 3.806$, $rrb = 0.318$.

Social pedagogues not involved in bullying ($n = 50$, $Mdn = 5.00$, $IQR = 1.00$) reported higher levels of social support compared to victims at school and victims at work ($n = 35$, $Mdn = 3.50$, $IQR = 1.50$), $p < 0.05$, $Z = 3.141$, $rrb = 0.381$.

5. Discussion

The aim of the study was to describe and compare teachers' and social pedagogues' experiences with bullying behavior and their perceptions of work-related psychosocial factors such as interpersonal relations and leadership (predictability, role clarity, quality of leadership, social support). According to the JD-R model (Bakker et al., 2007), interpersonal and social relations (e.g., social support) and the organization of work (including role clarity) act as job resources that reduce job demands and help to achieve work goals, supporting personal growth and development (Bakker & Demeouti, 2007). Job demands (e.g., role conflict, overload, or ambiguity) (LePine et al., 2005; McCauley et al., 1994) are associated with costs (Demerouti et al., 2001), which consist of emotionally demanding interactions with people (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Increasing job resources, e.g., creating a positive social climate, is a way to reduce teachers' workplace bullying (Ariza-Montes et al., 2016). In the educational context, supportive workplace characteristics have been found to mediate the relationship between teacher emotional demands and job satisfaction (Yin et al., 2016).

The current study shows that for both teachers and social pedagogues, participants with no experience with bullying behavior reported the highest levels of work-related psychosocial factors across all four dimensions of interpersonal relations and leadership, whereas those victimized both in school and at work reported the lowest levels. Therefore, school climate, social support, and supportive leadership can be considered one of the key job resources for teachers (Granziera et al., 2021; Bakker et al., 2007). Teachers who were victimized only at school evaluated their current work environment more favourably than those victimized in both settings (school and work). This suggests that childhood or adolescent school bullying victimization may have less immediate impact on perceptions of the current work environment than school bullying together with experiences of workplace victimization. Nevertheless, evidence from systematic reviews clearly shows the negative long-term impacts (physical, psychosocial, and academic achievement consequences) of involvement in school bullying (e.g., Bettencourt et al., 2023; Halliday et al., 2021; Zych et al., 2015). Yet, there are individual (gender, age, externalizing/internalizing behavior, self- and other-related cognitions, academic performance, social problem-solving, social competence) and contextual (peer influence and status, community factors, school climate, family/home environment) risk and protective factors of bullying behavior (victimization and bul-

lying) (Cook et al., 2010). While school bullying is a heterogeneous experience influenced by individual characteristics interacting with contextual factors, social context can either reduce or worsen the effect of individual characteristics on bullying behavior, while also affecting the prevalence and negative outcomes of victimization (Rivara & Menestrel, 2016; Swearer & Hymel, 2015). Positive professional experiences and supportive work relationships may compensate for earlier negative experiences. Perceived support from fellow colleagues decreases the teacher victimization odds and is a protective factor against teacher victimization (Kim et al., 2025).

This study shows that teachers who had been victims in school and at work perceive significantly lower levels of predictability, role clarity, quality of leadership, and social support as work-related psychosocial factors compared to teachers without experiences with bullying behavior. However, notable differences emerged when comparing teachers and social pedagogues with no bullying experiences. Among participants who did not have experience with bullying behavior, teachers reported significantly lower predictability as a work-related psychosocial factor, as they perceived that they are less informed about important decisions, changes, future plans, and provided information than social pedagogues. Conversely, in the victim/bully group (across both school and work settings), teachers evaluated role clarity more favorably compared to social pedagogues.

The results from a previous study indicate that teachers' and social pedagogues' prevalence of personal bullying behavior history did not differ significantly (Aia-Utsal & Kõiv, 2025). Similarly to teachers, social pedagogues not involved in bullying behavior reported higher levels of interpersonal relations and leadership (predictability, role clarity, quality of leadership, social support from supervisor) compared to participants victimized both in school and at work. This aligns with prior findings showing that social pedagogues not involved in bullying behavior report higher levels of subjective well-being (satisfaction with life and work engagement) compared to victims in school and at victim work (Aia-Utsal & Kõiv, 2025).

Possible organizational antecedents to bullying include work organization, organizational climate, and leadership (Hoel & Salin, 2003). Social climate, role demands (including role conflict and ambiguity) (Skogstad et al., 2011), and leadership (Nielsen, 2013; Skogstad et al., 2011) are associated with workplace victimization. The risk of workplace victimization is higher when there is perceived poor quality of leadership (Francioli et al., 2018).

The results consistently showed that both teachers and social pedagogues with victimization experience both in school and at work reported lower levels of current work-related psychosocial factors in interpersonal relations and leadership (predictability, role clarity, quality of leadership, social support) compared to respondents with no history of bullying behavior. Workplace bullying has severe negative outcomes for both individual (health and well-being) and organizational levels (reduced job satisfaction and organizational commitment) (Nielsen &

Einarsen, 2012). Also, previous history of victimization might affect educators' perceptions and actions regarding bullying (e.g. Maor, 2025; Dawes et al., 2024; Yoon et al., 2016; Kokko & Pörhöla, 2009) and teachers' personal experience with victimization increases the likelihood of being victimized by students, and their tendency to bully students (Twemlow et al., 2006). Longitudinal evidence supports the continuity of victimization: peer victimization during the school years increases the probability of experiencing victimization also in the workplace (Brendgen & Poulin, 2018; Smith et al., 2003). Furthermore, prior research confirms the long-term negative impact of victimization: teachers and social pedagogues who had been victims in both school and the workplace reported significantly lower life satisfaction and work engagement (Aia-Utsal & Kõiv, 2025). The consequences of childhood bullying have severe negative impact on mental and physical health that continue after the bullying has stopped (Momose & Ishida, 2024; Arseneault, 2018).

These findings highlight the long-lasting impact of victimization on employees' perceptions of their current psychosocial work environment: both teachers and social pedagogues with victimization experience, both in school and at work, reported lower levels of current work-related psychosocial factors in interpersonal relations and leadership. Since positive social relationships are an important aspect of teacher well-being (Hascher & Waber, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018) and perceived ethical leadership is negatively associated with workplace victimization (Ahmad et al., 2020), interventions aimed at enhancing interpersonal relations and leadership may be particularly important for employees with a personal history of bullying behavior. As the communication and relationships among school staff can help to create an anti-bullying environment in the educational context (Fischer et al., 2025), the findings suggest that early identification of educators with different experiences of bullying behavior, both in school and at work, could inform targeted support strategies to foster a healthier and safer work environment.

6. Limitations and Further Research

The limitations of this study are primarily related to some aspects of the sample and data collection. Although the total sample size for both teachers and social pedagogues is sufficient for statistical data analysis, the groups formed in the study based on educators' bullying experiences were, as expected, disproportionate due to the prevalence of bullying behavior involvement. However, this is acceptable given the socially sensitive nature of the topic. The sample size also imposes certain limitations on the generalisability of the results. Regarding data collection, self-report methods were used; therefore, the study describes the perceptions of teachers and social pedagogues, including retrospective accounts, which may influence the results due to the recall of past (including negative) experiences. In this study, a small group of perpetrators emerged, which was not sufficient for statistical analysis. Future research should focus on investigating perpetrators' ex-

periences and perceptions, which is crucial for gaining a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of bullying behavior as a complex interpersonal phenomenon and can contribute to more effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, M.A-U. and K.K.; methodology, M.A-U. and K.K.; investigation, M.A-U.; formal analysis, M.A-U.; writing—original draft preparation, M.A-U.; writing—review and editing, M.A-U.; supervision, K.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Declaration of AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The authors declare that AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used in the writing process.

Data Availability

The data are not publicly available due to ethical and privacy considerations. The data may be available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to applicable ethical and data protection restrictions.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Institutional Review Board Statement

The research did not involve processing personal data or human intervention; the information is completely anonymous, and no personal identifiers or private details can be traced. Therefore, ethical committee approval was not required.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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