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The Bystander Typology Scale: Development and Validation of a Workplace Bullying Bystander Response Measure

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ABSTRACT

Bystanders, organizational members who witness but are not directly involved in workplace bullying, are increasingly viewed as integral in addressing bullying. However, empirical evidence about how bystanders act and why is limited, having been hampered by the lack of a validated measure to capture bystander behavior. Drawing from previous typologies and extending a sensemaking model of bystanders, we theorize that there are four main classes of bystander behavior and that individual and organizational factors influence which of these is enacted when workplace bullying is witnessed. We develop the Bystander Typology Scale (BTS) to test our propositions, validating the new measure across three studies ($N_{\text{Study 1a}} = 588$; $N_{\text{Study 1b}} = 361$; $N_{\text{Study 1c}} = 251$), which show that the BTS captures four distinctive bystander behaviors: active constructive (e.g., confronting the perpetrator), passive constructive (e.g., offering emotional support), passive destructive (e.g., ignoring the situation), and active destructive (e.g., revictimization). Our main study ($N_{\text{Study 2}} = 374$) shows that self-efficacy, dark triad traits, and organizational conflict cultures influence bystander behavior in distinctive ways. Our research contributes to a greater understanding of how bystanders behave when witnessing bullying and why, alongside a tool for researchers to examine bullying bystanders systemically and for practitioners to evaluate interventions.

1 | Introduction

How do people who witness those in their organization being subjected to acts of workplace bullying respond and what factors shape their responses? Workplace bullying, defined as repeatedly "harassing, offending, or socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work" (S. Einarsen et al. 2011, p. 22), is a harmful social issue which is documented in nearly all occupational and national contexts (León-Pérez et al. 2021). Behaviors that exemplify bullying, when accumulated over time, can include social exclusion, offensive remarks, being deprived of one's work tasks, and withholding important work information (S. Einarsen and Raknes 1997). The longevity of bullying means that its consequences can be particularly detrimental; decades of research have consistently linked workplace bullying exposure with negative individual- and organizational-level outcomes, such as worse mental and physical health, greater turnover intention, reduced productivity, and financial losses (Hoel et al. 2020; Mikkelsen et al. 2020).

As organizations are almost always social spaces, behaviors that, over time, constitute bullying often occur in the presence of others. This means that many workers are likely to have witnessed bullying at some point in their working lives and that those who witness bullying may vastly outnumber bullying targets. For example, while between 12.8% and 21.6% of workers are estimated to have been directly targeted (Pouwelse et al. 2018), studies suggest that over 80% of employees may have witnessed

workplace bullying (e.g., Chatziioannidis et al. 2018). These witnesses, known as bystanders, have been an overlooked factor in workplace bullying research, as they have traditionally been portrayed as passive entities. In recent years, however, a "paradigmatic shift" (Pouwelse et al. 2018) has acknowledged bystanders as an integral part of the bullying process. Bystanders who remain passive, in line with their traditional portrayal (e.g., some studies describe how bystanders have "turned a blind eye"; Kim et al. 2024), are reported to deeply worsen the already negative experiences of bullying for targets, making them feel even more excluded and isolated (e.g., Fahie and Devine 2014; Tye-Williams and Krone 2015). Those who become more actively involved, either by intervening to try to stop the bullying (D'Cruz and Noronha 2011), or even showing solidarity with perpetrators (Paull et al. 2012), can influence not only how targets feel, but also the progression of bullying (e.g., K. Einarsen et al. 2020; Ng et al. 2022; Nielsen et al. 2021).

However, despite an enhanced understanding that bystanders of workplace bullying can engage in a range of responses, we currently have limited insight into the full range of bystander behaviors and the conditions that contribute to bystanders enacting one response over another. Understanding the factors that hinder or promote bystander behaviors could form a promising avenue to tackling bullying and its ill consequences, as constructive bystander intervention, especially early in a bullying process, could halt its escalation (Niven et al. 2020). While theoretical work on workplace bullying (Ng et al. 2020) and empirical studies exploring adjacent processes, like abusive supervision (Chen et al. 2021; Mitchell et al. 2015; Priesemuth and Schminke 2019) or customer incivility (Hershcovis et al. 2017), have highlighted some factors that may be relevant, there has been little empirical evidence regarding bystanders of workplace bullying specifically. It is important to strengthen our understanding of the role and influence of bystanders, as workplace bullying is a uniquely damaging process for targets (Matthiesen and Einarsen 2004) and because the repeated nature and duration of bullying mean that bystanders have more opportunity to witness and respond to incidents (Ng et al. 2020), making their roles potentially more salient.

A key issue that has prevented progress in this domain is that, to date, there are no theoretically informed ways of capturing workplace bullying bystander responses. Existing research has typically used ad hoc scales that are narrow in scope, tailored specifically to a particular study, and not rooted in theory (e.g., Dal Cason et al. 2020; Mulder et al. 2017; Ng et al. 2022). Using equivalent measures from other bystander research areas also has limitations due to the distinctive nature of workplace bullying, which means such measures may not be fully suitable. For example, school bullying scales focus on behaviors that are more acceptable among children rather than adults in work contexts (e.g., the Participant Role Questionnaire references behaviors such as "catching the victim [for the bully]"; Salmivalli and Voeten 2004). Meanwhile, workplace discrimination scales often emphasize allyship and morality, characteristics that are not immediately relevant to workplace bullying, a process that does not center on protected characteristics like race or age (e.g., items from the Bystander Intervention Behavior scale include "suggesting a change to the process to make it more objective"; Griffith et al. 2021). These measurement issues mean that the empirical literature on workplace bullying bystanders so far lacks construct clarity, such that researchers may not be referencing comparable phenomena, making it difficult to synthesize knowledge and draw conclusions.

In this paper, we theorize and test propositions about the factors that shape bystanders' responses to witnessed workplace bullying. We contribute to the workplace bullying bystander literature by identifying key individual and organizational context factors that shape bystander behaviors. Drawing on earlier work on bystander sensemaking (Ng et al. 2020) and typological models of bystander behavior (Paull et al. 2012), we argue that bystander behaviors can be meaningfully grouped into four categories: active constructive, passive constructive, active destructive, and passive destructive. We frame bystander bullying responses as the result of a sensemaking process in which bystanders try to assign meaning and causality to the complex and ambiguous workplace bullying situation(s) they witness. We argue that bystanders' individual characteristics (self-efficacy and dark triad traits) and the organizational conflict cultures within which they work shape the sensemaking appraisals made by bystanders and thereby influence which of the four response categories bystanders are likely to enact.

A further key contribution of this paper is the development of a new measure, the Bystander Typology Scale (BTS), which we use to capture the four broad classes of bullying bystander behavior. We follow a rigorous scale development process and report a series of studies examining the psychometric properties of the scale. We show that the scale can be used by bystanders to self-report their behaviors and by targets of bullying to report their perceptions of how others in their organization responded to the bullying to which they were personally exposed. The BTS has value for wider research on workplace bullying bystanders, for example, for conducting more robust tests of how bystander behavior shapes the outcomes and progression of workplace bullying over time, as well as practical utility, for example, for testing the effectiveness of bullying bystander interventions.

2 | Workplace Bullying

While workplace bullying shares some characteristics with other forms of mistreatment (Hershcovis 2011), there are two features that set workplace bullying apart from similar constructs. First, workplace bullying is a long process, as opposed to an isolated act like instances of social undermining, verbal abuse, and incivility can be. Bullying typically occurs over an extended period (of at least 6 months) and targets are subjected to persistent negative acts, occurring at least weekly (Leymann 1996). These negative acts are usually not focused on people's social characteristics, meaning that workplace bullying is "conceptually distinct from category-based harassment," such as sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination (D'Cruz and Noronha 2021, p. 14).

Second, workplace bullying is dynamic in nature. Early researchers (e.g., S. Einarsen 1999) describe bullying as a process that typically escalates over time, wherein the conflict intensifies and can spread beyond the target-perpetrator dyad in a "vicious circle" (Leymann 1996). They explain that, as bullying

behaviors increase in severity and frequency, targets typically undergo behavioral changes (e.g., becoming defensive, withdrawing socially, performing more poorly) such that other colleagues (i.e., bystanders) may begin to agree with the bullying, or at least perceive the target negatively, and become less motivated to intervene on their behalf. As colleagues turn their backs on them, the target will feel even more isolated and victimized. From this earlier work, it is clear that workplace bullying must be understood beyond just the target-perpetrator dyad.

2.1 | Workplace Bullying Bystanders

Workplace bullying bystanders are organizational members (e.g., colleagues) who observe bullying at work, either directly, in person, or indirectly, via technology, and are not directly involved in the bullying relationship themselves (Ng et al. 2020). In the research that has amassed on workplace bullying, bystanders have typically been studied as distal targets of bullying; that is, bystanders are assumed to experience the same negative consequences as targets do, albeit to a lesser extent. In other words, bystanders are often seen as "victims by proxy" (Niven et al. 2020). Indeed, research indicates that workplace bullying bystanders experience increased stress, worse health, and poor work-related outcomes (Holm et al. 2023a; Vartia 2001), although some scholars have debated whether these effects remain after controlling for bystanders' own experiences of victimization (see Emdad et al. 2013; Nielsen and Einarsen 2013).

While witnessing bullying can be a stressful event, it is too simplistic to think of bystanders simply as passive agents in the bullying process. Researchers are now conceptualizing bystanders as playing "a vital role in addressing and managing bullying" (Escartín et al. 2021, p. 360). This expansion of thought is showcased in the proliferation of conceptual and empirical research examining the different responses bystanders can enact, which indicates that bystanders can respond in ways that can improve or worsen the bullying situation from the perspective of the target (for summaries, see Niven et al. 2020, or Vranjes et al. 2021).

Examples of behaviors that may improve the target's situation are reported in studies that adopt a moral perspective and focus on bystanders "punishing" perpetrators via confrontation (e.g., Hershcovis et al. 2017), reporting their wrongdoing to authorities (e.g., MacCurtain et al. 2018), or directing deviant behaviors toward them (e.g., Mitchell et al. 2015). Bystanders can also focus their attention on targets through showing targets support (e.g., D'Cruz and Noronha 2011; Hershcovis et al. 2017; Mulder et al. 2017).

Examples of behaviors that may worsen the situation for targets are seen in studies reporting that bystanders often respond passively, for example, by pretending to ignore the bullying or removing themselves from the situation (e.g., O'Reilly and Aquino 2011; Wu and Wu 2019). Researchers have also reported evidence of bystanders actively worsening the situation for targets, for example, by socially excluding them, withdrawing support (e.g., Mulder et al. 2014; Zhou et al. 2021), enacting harmful behaviors toward them (e.g., Wei et al. 2023), or encouraging the perpetrator (e.g., Chen and Park 2015; Paull et al. 2012). Although the thought of harming someone who is already being targeted violates our normative expectations, many of these studies explain that such responses come as a result of justice or blame attributions, whereby bystanders perceive that targets are somehow responsible for their mistreatment and therefore such behaviors are warranted (e.g., Mulder et al. 2017). These explanations fall in line with early conceptualizations of workplace bullying's vicious circle (S. Einarsen et al. 2011), whereby behavioral changes in the target, brought on by the bullying, alienate targets from their coworkers, who will often agree with the mistreatment.

Qualitative work has also shown that bystanders' responses can change over time. In D'Cruz and Noronha's (2011) study with Indian call center employees, bystander colleagues reported initially trying to help but eventually stopping their helping behaviors due to negative supervisory reactions, organizational constraints, or at the targets' requests. Such work highlights the uniquely dynamic nature of workplace bullying and bystander responses proposed in some conceptual work (e.g., Ng et al. 2020; Vranjes et al. 2023).

2.2 | Workplace Bullying Bystanders Typologies

Existing research clearly indicates that bystander responses to witnessed workplace bullying can vary dramatically. Most frameworks seeking to capture this variation in responses have taken a "role" perspective, focusing on the distinctive roles that bystanders can play in a bullying situation. For example, Salmivalli (1999) categorizes school bullying bystanders into defenders, outsiders, reinforcers, or assistants; this typology has recently been transposed into workplace bullying contexts (e.g., Holm et al. 2023b). Kim et al.'s (2024) work on South Korean nurses similarly categorizes bystanders within three broad roles: reinforcers, avoiders, and suppressors. A limitation of the role perspective is that placing people in discrete categories ignores the fact that people may enact a range of behaviors to a greater or lesser extent (e.g., some of a bystander's behaviors may be consistent with a defender role and others with an assistant role) and that responses to bullying may change over time (e.g., D'Cruz and Noronha 2011).

In contrast, typologies seek to describe the underlying dimensions by which bystander responses can be differentiated. They therefore enable researchers to consider the extent to which a given bystander at a given point in time enacts multiple types of bystander behaviors and, in doing so, recognize the potential complexity and multiplicity in bystander responses. A common feature of many typological frameworks is the presence of a dimension representing how actively the bystander responds to a witnessed incident. For example, Griffith and colleagues' (2021) bystander intervention behavior scale, which examines responses to workplace biases, draws on a dimension that differentiates direct responses (e.g., telling an offender that their behavior was inappropriate) versus indirect responses (e.g., discussing with colleagues what to do if an offender's behavior is repeated in the future). Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005) similarly include a dimension in their theoretical framework of observer reactions to workplace sexual harassment that they label "involvement," which concerns whether or not the observer "immerse[s] themselves" in the harassment incident (p.

290). This point of differentiation is likely to be meaningful in shaping how influential and salient a bystander's response is with relation to the potential escalation of the bullying; hence, it should be an important feature to include in a measure of bystander responses.

While these frameworks acknowledge that responses can target the witnessed event directly or indirectly, they often miss a key, potentially uncomfortable, element of bystander behavior: that they can also worsen the situation. In the school bullying literature, Salmivalli (1999) observed that some children encourage bullies or create situations for bullies to prey on targets. Similar behaviors have also been documented in adult work settings, as noted in Kim et al.'s (2024) study of nurses, in which interviewees shared stories of bystanders defending perpetrators or normalizing bullying as part of "everyday clinical life" (p. 5). As such, other research in related areas has recognized a further dimension along which bystander responses can range, based on how helpful or constructive the response is. For example, Lin and Loi's (2021) theory of third-party responses to incivility distinguishes between what they term constructive and destructive punitive actions. How constructive a bystander's response is seems likely to have implications for both the target of bullying (i.e., do they observe support from the bystander or not; Ng et al. 2022) and the perpetrator (i.e., is the behavior apparently condoned or not; Vranjes et al. 2023), and thus is also an important dimension to capture in a measure of bystander behavior.

In line with these dual dimensions, Paull et al.'s (2012) analysis of interviews with workplace bullying targets, bystanders, and perpetrators suggested that bystander roles could be categorized along two "clusters" describing the nature of bystander behaviors: active or passive and constructive or destructive. Building on this work, Ng et al. (2020) conceptualized these clusters as orthogonal dimensions along which bystander responses can vary. The first dimension is the extent to which the behavior is *active* versus *passive*, capturing whether the behavior tries to directly address the situation or not. The second dimension is the extent to which the behavior is *constructive* versus *destructive*, which concerns whether the behavior can improve or worsen the situation for the target. Crossing these two dimensions suggests a 2 × 2 typology with four types of bystander responses: active constructive (e.g., challenging the perpetrator), passive constructive (e.g., providing emotional support), passive destructive (e.g., ignoring the situation or doing nothing), and active destructive (e.g., joining forces with the perpetrator).

2.3 | Workplace Bullying Bystander Sensemaking

To better understand what drives bystanders toward or away from particular response types in response to witnessed bullying, researchers have drawn on the sensemaking perspective (Crutcher Williams and Violanti 2024; Ng et al. 2020). Sensemaking is an unconscious process in which people imbue meaning to their experiences (Weick et al. 2005); it seeks to explain how people can have different interpretations of the same event. A key characteristic of sensemaking is that it is a response to ambiguous, subjective events in which individuals must draw from past experiences and their surroundings to create meaning and to understand how to act (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2015). It is an ongoing, dynamic process whereby current sensemaking influences our perception and sensemaking of past events, which then go on to influence future sensemaking.

While there is no standard model of the sensemaking process, scholars have likened it to a series of questions that individuals unconsciously ask themselves when encountering ambiguous phenomena (e.g., Weick et al. 2005). Workplace bullying is one such phenomenon as it is characterized by its subjective nature, often due to its reliance on psychological acts and contextual information (S. Einarsen et al. 2011). Ng et al. (2020) therefore propose that individuals who witness a potential workplace bullying incident undergo a sensemaking process in which they appraise particular features of what they have observed to guide their behavioral response. An initial severity appraisal governs whether deeper, further sensemaking is initiated; events that are low in severity are not given further attention. If a threshold level of severity is met, bystanders will undergo two key appraisals to make sense of the situation, the combination of which influences the response they enact.

The first key appraisal, victim deservingness, concerns the extent to which bystanders appraise the apparent victim in a situation as being deserving of the behavior they have witnessed. Higher perceived victim deservingness is related to more destructive responses, as the bystander believes that the target is at fault, while lower deservingness is associated with constructive behaviors that seek to restore justice on behalf of the target. The second key appraisal is efficacy, regarding bystanders' perceptions of their own ability to respond to the situation in an agentic manner, wherein Ng et al. (2020) argue that greater efficacy will predict more active responses, while lower efficacy is likely to predict more passive responses.

2.3.1 | Factors Influencing Bystanders' Responses

In line with sensemaking theory (e.g., Sonenshein 2007; Weick et al. 2005), Ng et al. (2020) acknowledge that sensemaking is influenced by both individual and contextual factors. Here, we extend their framework to theorize the role of specific individual and organizational characteristics that should influence appraisals of victim deservingness and efficacy, which in turn shape bystander responses.

The appraisal process of bystanders is idiosyncratic; that is, different bystanders may perceive elements of the same witnessed bullying event in divergent ways. These divergences can be explained in part by bystanders' individual characteristics, which shape how they see the world and the meaning and causality they assign to the events they experience or observe. A particularly relevant individual characteristic likely to shape perceptions of victim deservingness is the dark triad. The dark triad describes three related personality traits, Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy (Paulhus and Williams 2002), that form a latent construct (Jonason and Webster 2010). People high on this latent construct are distinguished by low empathy, coldness toward others, and possess either flexible or "immoral" values. Researchers have often turned to the dark triad to understand why individuals attribute blame to targets, due to the lack of concern for others' well-being that characterizes those high

in this characteristic, which reduces perceptions that victims have been harmed, alongside the flexible morality, which allows people to condone perpetrator behavior as being warranted in a given situation. Supporting this notion, empirical studies have found that individuals who are high on the dark triad are more likely to blame targets for a variety of abuses, such as sexual violence (Lyons et al. 2022), fraud (Harrison et al. 2018), or online abuse (Scott et al. 2020). Given that appraisals of victim deservingness underlie destructive bystander behaviors (Ng et al. 2020), we therefore propose that bystanders' dark triad scores would be positively related to active destructive (H1a) and passive destructive bystander behaviors (H1b).

While the dark triad is expected to influence how bystanders appraise victim deservingness and thereby behaviors on the constructive–destructive dimension, the individual characteristic of self-efficacy may be more relevant to disposing appraisals of personal efficacy among bystanders. Self-efficacy describes one's belief in one's ability to handle situational demands and achieve desired outcomes (e.g., Bandura 1997). The generalized belief that one can reach intended outcomes is likely to translate into specific appraisals of self-efficacy across a range of situations, including when witnessing potential incidents of bullying. Therefore, bystanders high in self-efficacy should be predisposed toward active response types.

In line with this suggestion, self-efficacy has been considered by many practitioners and researchers to be a focal determinant in encouraging active bystander intervention in tackling social issues like school bullying (Thornberg and Jungert 2013), cyberbullying (Clark and Bussey 2020), and sexual assault (McMahon et al. 2015). As such, we hypothesize that bystander self-efficacy will be positively related to active constructive (H2a) and active destructive behaviors (H2b).

According to Gelfand et al. (2012), although individuals may have their own preferences for dealing with conflict situations they encounter, such as witnessing a potential bullying incident, organizations themselves provide strong contexts that "define socially shared and normative ways to manage conflict" (p. 1131), which shape how people evaluate and respond to such situations. This line of argument is mirrored in theoretical (Ng et al. 2020) and empirical research (e.g., Jönsson and Muhonen 2025) on workplace bullying bystanders, which argues that broader socio-contextual factors influence how bystanders appraise and respond to potential bullying events. Organizational conflict culture is a broad construct that describes these socially shared norms around mentally processing conflict events and dealing with conflict. Gelfand et al. (2008, 2012) recognize the following three key types of conflict culture: dominating, collaborative, and avoidant. We anticipate that these conflict cultures will shape the way in which bystanders appraise potential bullying events.

Dominating conflict cultures describe cultures in which employees share norms that encourage aggression and demonize weakness. The normalization of bullying-type behaviors in dominating cultures (e.g., Gelfand et al. 2012, describe behaviors like shouting, yelling, and threatening to resolve conflict) means employees within these cultures may condone harmful behaviors and see targets as deserving of mistreatment for refusing to stand up for themselves. Given the theorized link between appraisals of deservingness and destructive bystander behavior, we expect that dominating conflict cultures will be positively related to active destructive (H3a) and passive destructive bystander behaviors (H3b).

Collaborative conflict cultures promote active behaviors by "empower[ing] individuals to manage" conflict situations to maintain group harmony (Gelfand et al. 2014, p. 113). Such cultures are characterized by psychological safety, instilling confidence in employees to take interpersonal risks. They therefore breed a sense of agency, wherein members are more likely to appraise themselves as having higher efficacy in dealing with difficult situations like witnessed bullying and therefore respond in a more active manner. While collaborative conflict cultures might initially seem to dispose uniquely positive conflict responses, Gelfand et al. (2008) note that collaborative cultures can have positive and negative consequences. On the positive (constructive) side, employees feel more efficacious to intervene when they witness bullies violating norms of mutual respect and co-operation. On the negative (destructive) side, cultures that empower employees speak or act out, combined with group norms that highly value consensus building, can create groups that penalize those who are "different" from the group. Given that bullying can lead to profound and often negative changes to targets' behaviors (Einarsen et al. 2011), bystanders operating in a collaborative conflict culture may feel justified and able to speak out against a colleague who no longer fits group norms. Accordingly, we hypothesize that a collaborative conflict culture will be positively related to active constructive (H4a) and active destructive behaviors (H4b).

Conversely, avoidant conflict cultures are those in which employees are encouraged to handle conflict through evasion and "working around the source of the conflict" (Gelfand et al. 2008, p. 145) to maintain group and social harmony. In such cultures, the lack of open discussion and conversation around conflict may disempower employees to deal with difficult situations, predisposing them toward lower appraisals of efficacy in relation to witnessed bullying. Given the theorized link between low appraisals of self-efficacy and passive bystander responses, we therefore hypothesize that avoidant conflict cultures will be positively related to passive constructive (H5a) and passive destructive bystander behaviors (H5b).

3 | The Present Research

To test our propositions on the factors shaping bystander behavior, we first developed and validated a new measure of bystander behavior, the BTS. As noted, this was necessary due to the lack of robust measures of bystander behavior in relation to witnessed workplace bullying. To create a high quality, standardized scale, we followed best practice recommendations proposed by both Hinkin (1998) and MacKenzie et al. (2011). Figure 1 summarizes our scale development process. Following MacKenzie et al. (2011), we began by developing a conceptual definition of each of the four bystander responses (active destructive, active constructive, passive destructive, and passive constructive) we planned to capture in the scale. After this, we generated a set of initial items to represent the four response types and assessed

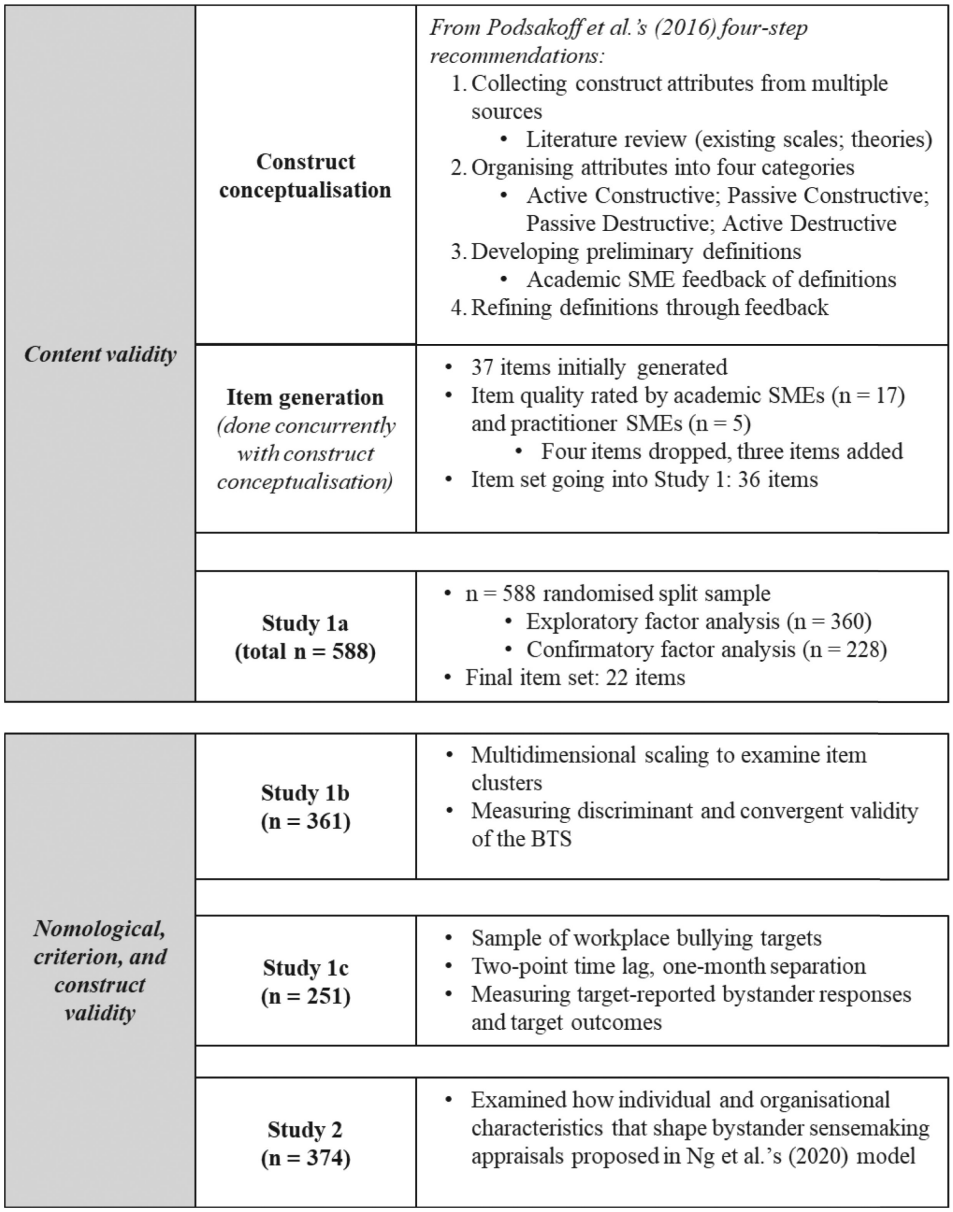

FIGURE 1 | Summary of scale development process.

their content validity by consulting both academic and practitioner subject matter experts. In Study 1a, we collected data on the BTS from a large sample to run exploratory (EFA) and confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to establish and validate its factor structure. In Study 1b, we tested the BTS's convergent and discriminant validity by comparing it to similar constructs. We also used Study 1b's dataset to further validate the BTS's structure by comparing the expected four-factor model to alternatives and by conducting multidimensional scaling to visualize item similarity. We used a sample separate from Study 1a to ensure that our findings can be replicated across different datasets, i.e., they are not "artifact[s] of [Study 1a's] survey design, data collection method, or sample" (Ferris et al. 2005, p. 140). Finally, Study 1c examined how bystander responses are differentially related to target outcomes, to demonstrate predictive validity. Together, this collection of studies provided evidence for the robustness of the new measure. We then used the measure to test our theoretical propositions in Study 2.

3.1 | Study 1: Construction and Validation of the BTS

3.1.1 | Construct Conceptualization

MacKenzie et al. (2011) note that many scales fail to adequately define their featured constructs during the development phase. We wished to strengthen our definitions of the four response types that derive from an established framework of workplace bullying bystander responses by Paull et al. (2012). To do this, we followed Podsakoff et al.' (2016) four-step process to develop strong conceptualizations and definitions. First, collecting attributes for constructs using multiple sources; second, organizing the attributes to identify key themes; third, developing a preliminary definition; and, finally, refining construct definitions through feedback. Specifically, we identified key attributes by conducting a review of literature on workplace bullying, workplace bullying bystanders, and related forms of

mistreatment in and out of the workplace (e.g., aggression, harassment). From this, one author organized findings into key themes that aligned with the four bystander response types and then developed initial definitions and items, which were presented to the other member of the research team (and, as described later, subsequently 22 subject matter experts), who provided feedback used to refine the definitions, which led to the final definitions for the bystander response types, as follows.

Active constructive bystander responses are behaviors that directly address the bullying process and can improve the situation for the target, or at least intend to do so. They reflect "typical deontic-driven responses" whereby bystanders either punish the perpetrator or defend the target (Ng et al. 2020, p. 6). *Passive constructive* responses are behaviors that do not directly address the bullying process but can improve the situation for the target, or at least intend to do so. Such behaviors likely reflect recognition that acts of bullying as unethical but entail a passive response in which the bystander does not involve themselves in the process; therefore, they may respond in ways that help manage the bullying's consequences, such as providing emotional support (e.g., D'Cruz and Noronha 2011). *Passive destructive* responses are those that do not directly address the bullying process but can worsen the situation for the target, or at least intend to do so. Classic examples of bystander apathy, such as ignoring the situation or doing nothing (e.g., Darley and Latane 1968), are typical passive destructive responses. Finally, *active destructive* responses are those that directly address the bullying process and can worsen the situation for the target, or at least intend to do so. Paull et al. (2012) describe such responses as facilitating or instigating bullying events or collaborating with the perpetrator.

3.1.2 | Item Generation

We used a deductive approach to generate items, which involved going back to the literature review to find examples of behaviors that fit our definitions. Deductive approaches are appropriate when there is a solid enough foundation to create items (Hinkin 1995). From this, we generated an initial list of 37 items (see Supplementary Materials 1), with each item reflecting one bystander behavior.

To assess face and content validity of these items, we followed Hinkin (1995) and MacKenzie et al's (2011) recommendations by asking others (i.e., subject matter experts, SMEs) to rate the extent to which items adequately represent their construct. We constructed two surveys for two sample types: academic SMEs ($n = 17$) and practitioner SMEs ($n = 5$). Our goal in targeting these distinctive groups was to obtain a varied sample of views. Academic SMEs were chosen from the research team's professional network and have previously published empirical research on workplace bullying bystanders. Of the 19 academic SMEs contacted, 17 completed the survey (89.47%). Practitioner SMEs were alumni from the lead researcher's university who identified as employed in human resources or fields related to organizational psychology. We were unable to access the prospective population of practitioner SMEs as communication was done via the university's postgraduate relations office; thus, we could not calculate a response rate.

Participants in the SME surveys were presented with the name and definition of one of the four bystander response types at the top of each page and asked to rate, on a Likert-type scale (1 = "*Very unclear*" to 5 = "*Very clear*"), the extent to which they thought the definition we gave was clear.[1] They were then presented with the list of individual items that we expected to exemplify the given definition and asked to rate the extent to which each item reflected the definition (1 = "*Not at all reflective*" to 5 = "*Very reflective*"). There was also an optional textbox at the end for comments. We averaged the scores of each item's ratings and removed any items that scored below 3.50. Items that scored between 3.50 and 4 were individually discussed among the research team to see if they need to be revised or removed, taking into account the qualitative data from the textboxes. We first surveyed the academic SMEs and removed four items from the original item set as they scored below 3.50; based on their comments, we added a further three items and edited the wording of other items for further conceptual clarity. This left us with 36 items, which we presented to the practitioner SMEs. No items scored below 3.50 among practitioners, so we retained all 36 items for initial validation (see Supplementary Materials 1, for the full results of the SME surveys).

3.2 | Study 1a: Initial Validation

Study 1a consisted of the BTS's initial validation, where we tested the scale's factor structure and further reduced the item set based on psychometric properties.

3.2.1 | Study 1a Method and Sample

As psychometric validation requires large sample sizes, we used Prolific Academic to recruit participants. Prolific is an online crowdsourcing platform popular with behavioral researchers; it has been shown to produce high quality data (Peer et al. 2017) and allows researchers to screen participants based on study criteria (Palan and Schitter 2018). For this study, we selected a Prolific screening criterion in which participants state that they have witnessed unethical acts at work to ensure that our sample comprised bystanders of workplace bullying. We believe that Prolific participants may be more honest in providing responses about a topic as sensitive as workplace bullying compared to going into whole workplaces to collect data from employees, as Prolific is completely anonymous and is not linked to any organizations.

We calculated our minimum sample size following best practice recommendations by Robinson (2018) and Costello and Osborne (2005): For EFA, Robinson (2018) recommends using at least 300 participants, while Costello and Osborne (2005) note that a *participants*:*item* ratio of 10:1 is a "rule of thumb", meaning that we should have a minimum of 360 participants to fulfil both requirements. For CFA, Robinson (2018) recommends a minimum sample of 200. Our strategy was to split the dataset randomly, so that we would test the exploratory factor structure on one segment of the sample and then confirm this structure using the remainder of the sample. This therefore meant we required a total sample of $N \geq 560$.

In total, we recruited 615 participants, with a final sample size of 588 after removing those who failed the attention check (total $n = 588$, 95.61%)[2] Of the final sample, 360 participants were used in the EFA sample and 228 in the CFA sample. The sample had an almost equal gender distribution (55.3% male) and an average age of 33.88 years (SD = 9.58). They reported an average organizational tenure of 5.20 years (SD = 5.54), with a majority working in professional services, healthcare, and education. As data were collected in 2020, during the COVID pandemic, we asked about participants' working situations, and over 53% reported working away from home for most of the time or all the time.

Participants answered demographic questions and completed an edited version of the revised Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ-R; S. Einarsen et al. 2009) as a means of validating Prolific's screening criterion about having witnessed unethical acts at work, to make sure that our sample had specifically witnessed acts of bullying. We edited items to measure the frequency that participants had *witnessed*, rather than personally experienced, bullying behaviors in the past 6 months (1 = "*Never*" to 5 = "*Daily*"). For example, "Someone withholding information which affects your performance" became "Someone withholding information which affects *someone else's* performance." This has been done in previous research (e.g., Sprigg et al. 2019) and in the present sample produced good internal reliability of 0.94. Participants had a mean score of 2.04 to the NAQ-R (SD = 0.75), with all scoring above the minimum, validating that our sample had borne witness to workplace bullying in the past 6 months.

Participants then answered the 36-item BTS. Specifically, participants were asked how likely they were to have engaged in each of the BTS's behaviors in response to the witnessed negative acts described above (1 = "*Very unlikely*" to 5 = "*Very likely*").

3.2.2 | Study 1a Results

The EFA used principal axis factoring with a Promax rotation as we expected the factors to correlate (e.g., Fabrigar et al. 1999). We examined the scree plot and eigenvalues and found a four-factor structure. Following Hinkin (1998) and Robinson (2018), we removed the 14 items that either: (i) had item-factor loadings below 0.50 or (ii) had cross-loadings that were less than twice as large on the appropriate factor than on any other. Examination of the 22 retained items suggested that the four factors represented the four bystander behavior types we had theorized (i.e., active destructive, active constructive, passive destructive, and passive constructive), with a model that explained 52.69% of total variance and most items loading > 0.60 (see Supplementary Materials 2). In Table 1, we show the final 22 items and definitions of each bystander response type.

We then ran the CFA with the second part of our sample and specified four factors, following our theoretical framework and EFA findings. We evaluated the CFA's model fit indices following conventional cutoffs (Hu and Bentler 1999). The four-factor model showed good model fit ($\chi^2(203) = 390.90$; RMSEA = 0.06; CFI = 0.90; TLI = 0.89; SRMR = 0.07), which was superior to a three-factor solution, two alternative two-factor solutions (active and passive; constructive and destructive), and a one-factor solution (see Table 2). Internal reliabilities of the specified factors were all acceptable, between 0.80 and 0.87.

Finally, we assessed discriminant validity between the four factors to show that they are conceptually distinct, using the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion. This states that the square root of each construct's average variance extracted (AVE) should exceed its correlation with other constructs. The comparison between each AVE and their correlations showed acceptable discriminant validity (see Supplementary Materials 3).

3.3 | Study 1b: Convergent and Discriminant Validity

The primary goal of Study 1b was to examine the BTS's convergent and discriminant validity in relation to scales measuring third-party reactions to adjacent phenomena in behavioral ethics, workplace mistreatment, workplace sexual harassment, and school bullying. A secondary goal was to further validate the BTS's structure by using data from this independent sample to compare our hypothesized four-factor model to other plausible alternatives and to conduct multidimensional scaling (Ferris et al. 2005).

We included three measures that we expected to be theoretically aligned with one or more BTS factors. The first was a measure of constructive punitive reactions to witnessed incivility developed by Lin and Loi (2021), drawing from earlier measures from Skarlicki and Rupp (2010) and Umphress et al. (2013). Constructive punitive reactions are morally driven responses that seek "to restore fairness by punishing the transgressor" of perceived injustices (Lin and Loi 2021, p. 900). We expected that these behaviors would be related to active constructive responses as they aim to directly address the perpetrator and stop the unethical behavior.

The second was a measure of three types of bystander behavioral intentions in response to workplace incivility used by Hershcovis et al. (2017), who adapted an unpublished measure by Fitzgerald (1990), which originally focused on sexual harassment. This measure presented three behavioral intentions: Confrontation, avoidance, and social support. Confrontation is described by the authors as constructively "fixing the problem" (p. 46)—that is, targeting the source of incivility. We expected that confrontation intentions would be related to active constructive behaviors, which we define as behaviors that "directly address the bullying process and can improve the situation for the target." Avoidance intentions, in which bystanders wish to avoid interactions with the perpetrator, should be related to passive destructive responses as they both involve bystanders ignoring, or pretending to ignore, the mistreatment situation. Finally, social support intentions are actions that provide social and emotional comfort to targets, such as showing concern or care; as such, we expected that these would be related to passive constructive responses.

The third was a measure of bystander responses to school bullying. Salmivalli and Voeten's (2004) Participant Role Questionnaire asks children to rate the extent to which they or

TABLE 1 | Definitions of bystander response types and list of final items.

Response type	Definition	Item
Active constructive	Active constructive bystander responses are behaviors that directly address the bullying process and can improve the situation for the target, or at least intend to do so.	I tell the actor to stop acting in that way
		I make it known to the actor that I will report their actions
		I alert a supervisor/manager of the actor's actions
		I encourage the receiver to alert a supervisor/manager
		I let the organization know about the situation (e.g., reporting to Human Resources, hotlines)
		I help the receiver with reporting their experiences to a supervisor/manager
Passive destructive	Passive constructive responses are behaviors that do not directly address the bullying process but can improve the situation for the target, or at least intend to do so.	When the receiver shares their experiences about the situation, I acknowledge their feelings
		I offer comfort to the receiver
		I try to offer the receiver emotional support
		I empathize with the receiver's experiences
		I listen to the receiver if they want to talk about the situation
		I try to make the receiver feel better
Active destructive	Active destructive responses are those that directly address the bullying process and can worsen the situation for the target, or at least intend to do so.	I show the actor that I am on their side
		I play along with what the actor is doing
		I encourage the receiver to keep what is going on to themselves
		I make the receiver aware that I agree with the actor
		I take action to reinforce the actor's behaviors
		I make the actor aware that I agree with them
Passive destructive	Passive destructive responses are those that do not directly address the bullying process but can worsen the situation for the target, or at least intend to do so.	I remove myself from such situations
		I focus my attention away from such situations
		I keep my feelings about the situation to myself
		I keep a low profile

Note: In Study 1a, we used "target" and "perpetrator" in the item wording, while the other studies replaced these terms with "receiver" and "actor," respectively.

their classmates have responded to bullying in alignment with the following five roles: bully, assistant, reinforcers, defenders, and outsiders. We expected that the bully, reinforcer, and assistant roles would be linked to the BTS's active destructive responses as they respectively describe bystanders who worsen the situation by joining forces with or inciting the perpetrator, or who create situations where the target and perpetrator will come into conflict. The defender role should be linked to active and passive constructive responses as it involves behaviors that both directly address the bullying (e.g., telling on the bully) and comfort targets. Finally, we expected the outsider role to relate to the passive destructive dimension as the role involves noninvolvement or "not taking sides" (p. 249).

3.3.1 | Study 1b Method and Sample

We used Prolific to recruit an initial sample of 400 working adults. Prior to clicking through to the survey link, Prolific users were presented a quick description of each study. At the time Study 1b was conducted, Prolific did not have a screening criterion related to witnessing bullying or harassment, so we first allowed users to screen themselves out for the study by stating in our study description and participant information sheet that we were only looking to recruit participants who had witnessed workplace bullying in the past 6 months. After clicking through the consent form, we asked participants if they had witnessed workplace bullying in the past 6 months. Participants who answered "no" could not proceed to the next survey page and were asked to close the window. We removed participants who participated in Study 1a. Of the 400 participants initially recruited, we obtained a final sample of 361 (90.25%) with slightly more females (54%). The average age was 37.25 years (SD = 11.47) with an average organizational tenure of 5.69 years (SD = 6.53).

Measures. As in Study 1a, participants were asked to respond to the S-NAQ (S. Einarsen et al. 2009) modified to ask about the extent that they witnessed negative acts in the past 6 months, rather than

TABLE 2 | Confirmatory factor analyses comparisons for Study 1a ($n = 228$), Study 1b ($n = 361$), and Study 1c ($n = 251$).

Study 1a							
	χ^2	**df**	χ^2/**df**	**CFI**	**TLI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**
Proposed 4-factor BTS	390.90	203	1.93	0.90	0.89	0.06	0.07
2-Factor (AC + PC; PD + AD)	1223.74	208	5.88	0.48	0.42	0.15	0.15
2-Factor (AC + AD; PC + PD)	1223.74	208	5.88	0.48	0.42	0.15	0.15
1-Factor	1257.58	209	6.02	0.47	0.41	0.15	0.14
Study 1b (BTS)							
	χ^2	**df**	χ^2/**df**	**CFI**	**TLI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**
Proposed 4-factor BTS	481.64	203	2.37	0.91	0.90	0.06	0.07
2-Factor (AC + PC; PD + AD)	1405.67	208	6.76	0.61	0.57	0.13	0.15
2-Factor (AC + AD; PC + PD)	1531.05	208	7.36	0.57	0.53	0.13	0.17
1-Factor	1911.97	209	9.15	0.45	0.39	0.15	0.16
Study 1b (discriminant validity)							
	χ^2	**df**	χ^2/**df**	**CFI**	**TLI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**
Proposed model (BTS + all measures)	2761.29	1352	2.04	0.88	0.86	0.05	0.07
3-Factor (constructive + AD + PD)	5803.19	1427	4.07	0.62	0.60	0.09	0.12
2-Factor (constructive + destructive)	7198.73	1429	5.04	0.50	0.48	0.11	0.18
2-Factor (active + passive)	5350.83	1427	3.75	0.66	0.64	0.09	0.11
Study 1c (BTS)							
	χ^2	**df**	χ^2/**df**	**CFI**	**TLI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**
Proposed 4-factor BTS	412.0	203	2.03	0.94	0.93	0.06	0.07
2-Factor (AC + PC; PD + AD)	1596.24	209	7.64	0.58	0.54	0.16	0.20
2-Factor (AC + AD; PC + PD)	1344.22	208	6.46	0.66	0.62	0.14	0.17
1-Factor	2424.93	210	11.55	0.33	0.27	0.20	0.24

Abbreviations: AC, active constructive; AD, active destructive; PC, passive constructive; PD, passive destructive.

experienced them. The survey then asked participants to recall how they responded when witnessing such acts. We provided a list of the S-NAQ's items on each new page for participants' reference. All measures referred to the perpetrator as "the actor" and the target as "the receiver," to make it easier for participants to complete the scales and to increase comparability. We retained the original response options for each scale. The *BTS* factors showed good internal consistency (active constructive = 0.87; passive constructive = 0.90; active destructive = 0.85; passive destructive = 0.81).

Constructive punitive reactions ($\alpha = 0.85$; Lin and Loi 2021) were measured with six items on a 5-point Likert type scale (1 = *Highly unlikely of me*; 5 = *Highly likely of me*). A sample item is "Warn coworkers that the actor is unfair."

Observer intentions were measured using a scale by Hershcovis et al. (2017), adapted from Fitzgerald (1990), on a 5-point Likert-like scale (1 = *Definitely unlikely*; 5 = *Definitely likely*). There were four items for each of the three factors: *Confrontation intentions* ($\alpha = 0.90$; "Confront the actor"), *avoidance intentions* ($\alpha = 0.84$; "Pretend you didn't notice"), and *social support intentions* ($\alpha = 0.89$; "Show concern for the receiver").

The *Participant Role Questionnaire* (Salmivalli and Voeten 2004) was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Extremely unlikely*; 5 = *Extremely likely*). As this is a school bullying measure, we edited the scale to replace "teacher" with "manager" as appropriate. The measure consisted of the following five three-item factors: *Bully* ($\alpha = 0.94$; "Makes the others join in the bullying"), *Assistant* ($\alpha = 0.91$; "Assists the actor"), *Reinforcer* ($\alpha = 0.72$; "Laughs"), *Defender* ($\alpha = 0.71$; "Comforts the receiver or encourages them to tell the line manager about the bullying"), and *Outsider* ($\alpha = 0.67$; "Stays outside the situation").

3.3.2 | Study 1b Results

The descriptive statistics and intercorrelations are shown in Table 3. We first conducted CFAs on the BTS scale to ensure that the proposed four-factor solution was the best option on a

TABLE 3 | Study 1b correlations and descriptives ($n = 361$).

Measure	Construct	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
BTS	Active constructive	3.33	0.89	***(0.87)***												
	Passive constructive	4.18	0.69	0.45**	***(0.90)***											
	Active destructive	1.87	0.84	0.06	−0.24**	***(0.85)***										
	Passive destructive	3.14	0.94	−0.51**	−0.36**	0.30**	***(0.81)***									
(Lin and Loi 2021)	Constructive punitive reactions	3.26	0.83	0.63**	0.37**	0.08	−0.34**	***(0.85)***								
Observer intentions (Fitzgerald 1990; Hershcovis et al. 2017)	Confrontation	3.23	0.99	0.66**	0.32**	0.09	−0.44**	0.61**	***(0.90)***							
	Avoidance	2.54	0.95	−0.58**	−0.41**	0.26**	0.62**	−0.45**	−0.56**	***(0.84)***						
	Social support	4.02	0.72	0.38**	0.77**	−0.29**	−0.36**	0.44**	0.31**	−0.37**	***(0.89)***					
Participant Role Questionnaire (Salmivalli and Voeten 2004)	Bully	1.24	0.64	0.01	−0.22**	0.46**	0.09	0.12*	0.12*	0.22**	−0.22**	***(0.94)***				
	Assistant	1.32	0.73	0.01	−0.25**	0.47**	0.11*	0.08	0.09	0.23**	−0.26**	0.84**	***(0.91)***			
	Reinforcer	1.56	0.75	−0.04	−0.26**	0.47**	0.10	0.05	0.09	0.24**	−0.26**	0.72**	0.74**	***(0.72)***		
	Defender	3.61	0.93	0.57**	0.53**	−0.16**	−0.47**	0.52**	0.61**	−0.52**	0.50**	−0.06	−0.08	−0.05	***(0.71)***	
	Outsider	3.19	0.84	−0.37**	−0.32**	0.21**	0.52**	−0.32**	−0.33**	0.49**	−0.30**	0.13*	0.12*	0.10*	−0.31**	***(0.67)***

Note: Internal reliabilities are presented in bolded italics on the diagonal.
*$p < 0.05$.
**$p < 0.01$.

unique dataset. As shown in Table 2, the four-factor solution showed better overall fit compared to alternative models.

We then conducted multidimensional scaling analysis, which allows us to understand and visualize item similarity and structure (Galbraith et al. 2002). As our framework proposes two continua of bystander responses (active vs. passive, constructive vs. destructive), items should appear along two dimensions and individual items should be grouped together so that four unique clusters form, representing each of the BTS's four response types. Figure 2's visualization, in which items were converted into z-scores, shows four clear clusters. The Stress-I score was 0.05, while the Dispersion Accounted For (DAF) and Tucker's Coefficient of Congruence (TCC) were both 0.99. The dimensions meet standard cutoff values of good fit (e.g., stress values <0.15, DAF and TCC should be close to 1; Dugard et al. 2010).

To test the BTS's convergent validity, we examined correlations between the BTS response types and our chosen constructs. We observed all of the correlations we had anticipated. Specifically, BTS active constructive responses were positively linked to constructive punitive reactions ($r=0.63$, $p<0.01$), confrontation intention behaviors ($r=0.66$, $p<0.01$), and the defender role ($r=0.57$, $p<0.01$). BTS passive constructive responses were positively related to social support intentions ($r=0.77$, $p<0.01$) and the defender role ($r=0.53$, $p<0.01$). BTS active destructive responses were positively related to the bully ($r=0.46$, $p<0.01$), assistant ($r=0.47$, $p<0.01$), and reinforcer ($r=0.47$, $p<0.01$) roles in the Participant Role Questionnaire. Finally, BTS passive destructive responses were related to the outsider role ($r=0.52$, $p<0.01$) and avoidance intention behaviors ($r=0.62$, $p<0.01$).

Further examination of the study's intercorrelations showed that several constructs were negatively associated with response types with which they ought to have opposing theoretical relations. For example, the defender role was significantly negatively related to active destructive ($r=-0.16$, $p<0.01$) and passive destructive ($r=-0.47$, $p<0.01$) responses, while confrontation intentions were negatively related to passive destructive responses ($r=0.44$, $p<0.01$). These findings provide further support for the BTS' divergent validity.

We further assessed discriminant validity by conducting the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion test, which is passed if the square root of each BTS response type's AVE is greater than the absolute value of its correlations with other constructs. The $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ for each response type was as follows: active constructive $=0.73$, passive constructive $=0.76$, active destructive $=0.71$, passive destructive $=0.72$. These square root values are all greater than correlations with constructive punitive reactions, observer intentions, and the Participant Role Questionnaire, meaning that our results support the BTS' discriminant validity.

3.4 | Study 1c: Predictive Validity

Much of workplace bullying research seeks to understand bullying from targets' perspectives. Further, a key driver of the need for more research into bystanders is the assumption that how they

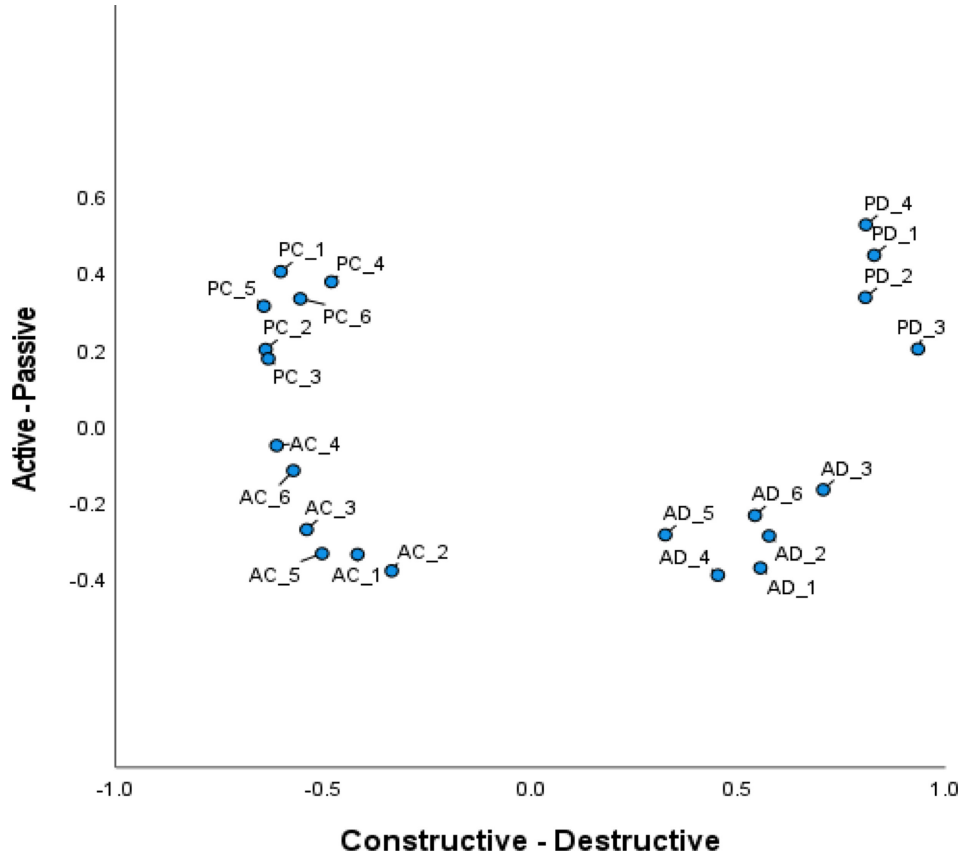

FIGURE 2 | Multidimensional scaling of BTS items from Study 1b ($n=361$).

respond when they witness bullying could shape target outcomes (e.g., Carter et al. 2013; Ng et al. 2022; Paull et al. 2012). With this in mind, Study 1c had two aims: (i) to examine the BTS from a target perspective in order to see if the factor structure holds and (ii) to test the measure's predictive validity in relation to target outcomes.

We chose to measure targets' burnout, work engagement, and job satisfaction, which are among the most common well-being measures in work and occupational health psychology. As noted in the past reviews (e.g., Boudrias et al. 2021; Farley et al. 2023), these are particularly salient and consistently evidenced outcomes of workplace bullying in the past studies. In line with previous research (e.g., Ng et al. 2022), which has adopted Bakker and Demerout's (2014) Job-Demands Resources (JD-R) theory to explain the impact of bystander behavior, we position bystander responses to witnessed bullying as either demands or resources that independently influence target well-being. According to JD-R, resources are those personal, social, or job-related factors that help one address stressors, grow, or achieve work goals, while demands are factors that require physical, psychological, or emotional effort to address (Bakker et al. 2023).

Destructive bystander responses are experienced by workplace bullying targets as demands. Both qualitative (e.g., Paull et al. 2012; Tye-Williams and Krone 2015) and quantitative research (e.g., Ng et al. 2022) suggest the harm that unhelpful or avoidant colleagues can have. Bystanders who fail to acknowledge (passive destructive) or participate in the bullying (active destructive) often make targets feel more isolated and distressed and, therefore, less satisfied and engaged with their work. Conversely, constructive bystanders can act as resources for targets by intervening (active constructive) or by providing solidarity and social support (passive constructive). In interviews, targets discussed how constructive bystanders were "tower[s] of strength" (p. 359) and made a qualitative difference to their work experiences (Paull et al. 2012). In some cases, active constructive responses may even stop the bullying from progressing, thus removing a stressor. Accordingly, we anticipated that constructive bystander responses would be positively related to work engagement and job satisfaction and negatively related to burnout, whereas destructive responses would show the opposite pattern of associations.

3.4.1 | Study 1c Sample and Method

We used Prolific to recruit 300 participants who identified as having been bullied at work in Prolific's own screening questionnaire.[3] Participants agreed to participate in a two-part, time lagged survey with a one-month temporal separation. A G*Power analysis suggested a minimum of $N = 129$ participants was needed, assuming a medium effect size (0.15) (Faul et al. 2009). Given expected attrition, we initially recruited 300 participants, 265 of whom (89.67%) completed both surveys and passed each survey's attention checks (T1: "Please select '*Not at all*'"; T2: "Please select '*Always*'"). We removed 15 participants who took part in previous studies, leaving a final sample of 251 (83.67%),[4], which was mostly female (62.2%) with an average age of 40.95 (SD = 11.17) and an average organizational tenure of 6.90 years (SD = 6.50). The three most frequently reported work sectors were educational services, health or social care, and professional services.

Measures. In the first survey, we measured *experienced workplace bullying* using the S-NAQ ($\alpha = 0.81$; Notelaers et al. 2019; T1 M = 1.58, T1 SD = 0.59) to validate Prolific's screening according to workplace bullying exposure. We also measured *bystander responses* (active constructive $\alpha = 0.92$; passive constructive $\alpha = 0.96$; active destructive $\alpha = 0.90$; passive destructive $\alpha = 0.86$) using the BTS, but we asked participants to report how their colleagues responded to the negative acts that participants had reported personal exposure to in the S-NAQ. We asked participants to summarize the responses of their colleagues as a collective, rather than asking participants to recall specific relationships or how specific people reacted, as workplace bullying is conceptualized as a group phenomenon and it is the range and prevalence of responses that will likely shape targets' well-being (e.g., Ng et al. 2022).

In both the first and second surveys, we also measured our series of outcome variables. *Burnout* was measured using the emotional exhaustion component of Maslach's Burnout Inventory (1997; T1 $\alpha = 0.94$; T2 $\alpha = 0.94$); participants were asked the extent to which nine items applied to their work experiences, such as "I feel emotionally exhausted because of my work" (1 = "*Not at all*" to 5 = "*Always*"). We measured *job satisfaction* (T1 $\alpha = 0.94$; T2 $\alpha = 0.94$) using the three-item Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Lawler et al. 1975). An example item is "All in all, I am satisfied with my job" (1 = "*Disagree very much*" to 5 = "*Agree very much*"). Finally, *work engagement* (T1 $\alpha = 0.94$; T2 $\alpha = 0.94$) was measured using the shortened Utrecht Work Engagement scale (Schaufeli et al. 2006), which consisted of nine items, such as "At my work, I feel bursting with energy" (1 = "*Never*" to 7 = "*Always*").

We controlled for age and gender as control variables, as these have previously been shown to influence these well-being outcomes (e.g., Ng et al. 2022).[5] We predicted T2 outcomes while also controlling for the same outcomes at T1 to study how perceived bystander responses predicted changes in the outcomes over time.

3.4.2 | Study 1c Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics can be found in Table 4. The CFA of the overall model showed a good model fit ($\chi^2(839) = 1682.80$; RMSEA = 0.06; CFI = 0.90; TLI = 0.89; SRMR = 0.06), as did a CFA on just the BTS ($\chi^2(203) = 420.20$; RMSEA = 0.07; CFI = 0.93; TLI = 0.92; SRMR = 0.07). We also compared our proposed four-factor model of the BTS with alternative solutions to validate its use by targets of bullying. As can be seen in Table 2, the proposed four-factor model showed substantially better fit than all plausible alternatives, suggesting that the same factors are evidenced when considering targets' perceptions of bystander behavior.

Path analyses (Table 5) showed that target-reported active constructive responses were negatively related to burnout ($B = -0.33$, $p < 0.05$) and positively related to job satisfaction ($B = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$). Target-reported passive constructive responses were significantly related only to work engagement ($B = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$). Target-reported active destructive responses were related only to burnout ($B = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$). Finally,

TABLE 4 | Study 1c descriptives and intercorrelations.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age	41.15	11.21													
2. Gender			0.06												
3. Experienced bullying	1.58	0.62	−0.13*	−0.05	***(0.82)***										
4. Active constructive (T1)	1.64	0.92	−0.06	−0.14*	0.08	***(0.91)***									
5. Passive constructive (T1)	2.7	1.21	−0.05	0.03	0.03	0.56**	***(0.96)***								
6. Active destructive (T1)	1.48	0.72	−0.15*	−0.19**	0.55**	0.41**	0.08	***(0.90)***							
7. Passive destructive (T1)	2.19	0.98	−0.03	0.02	0.44**	0.12*	0.24**	0.45**	***(0.84)***						
8. Burnout (T1)	2.96	0.94	−0.17**	0.16*	0.42**	−0.04	0.06	0.25**	0.28**	***(0.94)***					
9. Job satisfaction (T1)	3.35	1.10	0.02	−0.03	−0.39**	0.20**	0.20**	−0.16**	−0.19**	−0.60**	***(0.94)***				
10. Work engagement (T1)	4.00	1.20	0.03	−0.08	−0.22**	0.25**	0.27**	−0.08	−0.07	−0.44**	0.73**	***(0.94)***			
11. Burnout (T2)	2.99	0.96	−0.22**	0.16*	0.42**	−0.10	−0.03	0.22**	0.19**	0.84**	−0.55**	−0.43**	***(0.93)***		
12. Job satisfaction (T2)	3.33	1.14	0.06	−0.05	−0.43**	0.16**	0.16*	−0.19**	−0.22**	−0.56**	0.86**	0.66**	−0.63**	***(0.94)***	
13. Work engagement (T2)	4.02	1.19	0.08	−0.05	−0.30**	0.29**	0.26**	−0.09	−0.10	−0.43**	0.72**	0.83**	−0.51**	0.77**	***(0.93)***

Note: Cronbach's alpha values are presented along the diagonal in bold italics. $N = 265$.
Abbreviations: T1, time 1; T2, time 2.
*$p < 0.05$.
**$p < 0.01$.

TABLE 5 | Path analyses results for Study 1c ($n = 251$) and Study 2 ($n = 374$).

Study 1c			
Variables	**Burnout (T2)**	**Work engagement (T2)**	**Job satisfaction (T2)**
Active constructive	−0.10*	0.25*	0.46***
Passive constructive	0.00	0.29***	−0.03
Active destructive	0.36***	−0.19	−0.02
Passive destructive	0.10*	0.16	0.07
R^2	0.36	0.22	0.21

Study 2				
Variables	**Active constructive**	**Passive constructive**	**Active destructive**	**Passive destructive**
Dark triad traits	−0.09	−0.22***	0.44***	0.28***
Self-efficacy	0.22*	0.14*	−0.07	−0.14
Collaborative conflict culture	0.17*	−0.02	0.26***	0.05
Dominating conflict culture	−0.02	0.08	0.09	0.26***
Avoidant conflict culture	0.01	−0.01	−0.001	−0.03
R^2	0.09	0.09	0.22	0.14

Abbreviation: T2, time 2.
*$p < 0.05$.
**$p < 0.01$.
***$p < 0.001$.

target-reported passive destructive responses were not significantly related to any outcome.

Our findings broadly suggest that bystander behaviors, as perceived by targets of workplace bullying, have meaningful links with targets' subsequent work-related attitudes and well-being. Constructive behaviors, especially active constructive ones, are associated with positive outcomes. The stronger pattern of results for active constructive behaviors aligns with the suggestion that active behaviors have stronger potential than passive behaviors to shape the consequences of bullying (e.g., Ng et al. 2022), perhaps because they help prevent its escalation by the perpetrator or signal more explicit support for the target. In contrast, bystander destructive behaviors were only associated with burnout, but not work-related attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, engagement). The impact of bystanders' perceived destructive behavior on target well-being echoes descriptions from targets in the literature when reflecting on the behavior of their colleagues who witnessed their mistreatment (e.g., Lewis and Orford 2005).

4 | Study 2: Testing our Propositions

4.1 | Study 2 Method and Sample

We used Prolific to recruit an initial sample of 400. We used the same screening criteria as with Study 1b. As this study was done at around the same time as Study 1b, we used a Prolific filter to screen out any participants who took part in Study 1b and manually removed participants who had taken part in Study 1a, to ensure the independence of the sample. The final sample, accounting for manual removals and deleting responses that failed attention checks[6], was 374 (93.50%). The sample leaned slightly toward being majority female (52.10%), with an average age of 37.02 years (SD = 12.22) and average organizational tenure of 5.86 years (SD = 6.75).

Measures. We measured *bystander responses* using the BTS (active constructive $\alpha = 0.86$; passive constructive $\alpha = 0.86$; active destructive $\alpha = 0.85$; passive destructive $\alpha = 0.77$).

We captured two individual characteristics. *Dark triad traits* were measured with the Dark Triad Dirty Dozen ($\alpha = 0.88$; Jonason and Webster 2010), which includes 12 items that participants respond to using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Disagree strongly*; 7 = *Agree strongly*). An example item is "I tend to lack remorse." The Dirty Dozen is a useful measure for its brevity, compared to other dark triad scales, and because it can be used as to measure dark triad traits as a general, single composite construct, rather than three separate traits. *Self-efficacy* was measured with the 10-item General Self-Efficacy Scale ($\alpha = 0.90$; Schwarzer and Jerusalem 1995) using a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Not at all true*; 4 = *Exactly true*). An example item is "I can usually handle whatever comes my way."

Finally, we assessed organizational conflict culture using Gelfand et al.' (2008) 13-item Conflict Cultures Scale, which was measured with a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*; 5 = *Strongly agree*). The measure captures three types of culture: *Dominating conflict culture* ($\alpha = 0.86$; 5 items; e.g., "... [colleagues] push their own points of view"), *Collaborative conflict culture* ($\alpha = 0.91$; four items, e.g., "... [colleagues] examine issues until we find a solution that satisfies everyone"), and *Avoidant conflict culture* ($\alpha = 0.71$ four items; e.g., "... [colleagues] avoid openly discussing conflicts").

4.2 | Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations are presented in Table 6. The overall model showed acceptable fit ($\chi^2(1503) = 3298.38$; RSMEA = 0.06; CFI = 0.82; TLI = 0.81; SRMR = 0.08). We conducted path analyses in MPlus 8.10 (Muthén and Muthén 2017) to examine relationships between constructs, with the BTS responses as outcomes.

In relation to individual differences, most findings were in line with our expectations. As seen in Table 5, and supporting H1a and H1b, dark triad traits were positively related to active destructive ($B = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$) and passive destructive responses ($B = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$). Dark triad traits were also negatively related to passive constructive responses ($B = -0.22$, $p < 0.001$). In support of H2a, self-efficacy was positively related to active constructive responses ($B = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$). However, there was no relationship between self-efficacy and active destructive responses (H2b).

Regarding conflict cultures, dominating cultures were positively related to passive destructive responses ($B = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3b, but they were not related to active destructive responses (H3a). Supporting H4a and H4b, collaborative culture was positively related to active constructive ($B = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$) and active destructive responses ($B = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, H5a and H5b were not supported, as avoidant conflict cultures were not significantly related to any response type.

While our pattern of findings broadly supports the theorized links between individual and organizational characteristics with the BTS response types, an unexpected finding was that self-efficacy was positively related to passive constructive responses ($B = 0.14$, $p < 0.05$). We had anticipated that individuals with higher self-efficacy would be more likely to appraise themselves as efficacious in dealing with witnessed bullying incidents and so more likely to engage in active response types. However, our findings suggested that, instead, self-efficacy was a driver of constructive behaviors. In addition, our findings concerning conflict culture suggested that rather than some types of culture differentiating constructive versus destructive responses, conflict culture has more bearing on whether members of a unit engage in active versus passive bystander responses. Our findings therefore tentatively suggest that individual characteristics may be stronger predictors of the constructive/destructive nature of bystander behavior, whereas contextual factors may shape the active/passive nature of behavior.

5 | General Discussion

Given the high financial, social, and personal costs of workplace bullying, it is important for practitioners and researchers to develop a rounded understanding of the phenomenon and approach to reducing it. Such a rounded view would incorporate the notion that workplace bullying occurs in the social context of the organization, with the individuals who are indirectly involved, known as bystanders, being potential "change agents" (Van Heugten 2011) who can worsen or ameliorate the bullying process for targets. However, our understanding of the variety of bystander responses, alongside the factors that shape them, is relatively underdeveloped. In this paper, we build and test a framework seeking to explain the individual and contextual factors that shape bystander responses, creating a new measurement scale, the BTS, to capture the full range of workplace bullying bystander responses.

We propose that bystanders go through a series of sensemaking appraisals (severity, victim deservingness, efficacy) to enact one of four responses: active constructive, passive constructive, active destructive, and passive destructive (Ng et al. 2020; Paull et al. 2012). Our findings show that the characteristics of dark triad traits and self-efficacy, as well as organizational conflict climate, shape which of these responses bystanders who witness workplace bullying are more likely to enact. Our new BTS measure, which we used to test the model, followed best practices for construct conceptualization, item generation, and measure validation. Across three studies, we showed that the BTS has good psychometric qualities (Study 1a), is statistically distinct from measures of related

TABLE 6 | Study 2 correlations and descriptives ($n = 374$).

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Active constructive	3.45	0.88	***(0.86)***								
2. Passive constructive	4.25	0.61	0.35**	***(0.86)***							
3. Active destructive	1.88	0.86	0.09	−0.28**	***(0.85)***						
4. Passive destructive	3.08	0.89	−0.45**	−0.32**	0.26**	***(0.78)***					
5. Dark triad traits	2.19	0.72	−0.06	−0.25**	0.42**	0.29**	***(0.88)***				
6. General self-efficacy	3.86	0.62	0.24**	0.13*	0.05	−0.11*	−0.01	***(0.90)***			
7. Collaborative climate	3.38	0.93	0.26**	−0.04	0.24**	−0.09	0.08	0.42**	***(0.91)***		
8. Dominating climate	3.25	0.83	−0.14**	0.04	0.06	0.28**	0.20**	−0.11*	−0.44**	***(0.86)***	
9. Avoidant climate	2.96	0.76	−0.09	−0.01	−0.04	0.04	−0.04	−0.20**	−0.22**	0.23**	***(0.71)***

Note: Internal reliabilities are presented in bolded italics on the diagonal.
*$p < 0.05$.
**$p < 0.01$.

phenomena (Study 1b), and has good predictive validity (Study 1c). The BTS is therefore a promising tool for helping both researchers and practitioners to study workplace bullying bystanders in a more cohesive and systematic way, shedding light on how bystanders behave when witnessing bullying and the factors that drive such reactions, and with potential for wide future applications.

5.1 | Theoretical Contributions

This paper makes three key contributions. First, we extend our understanding of workplace bullying bystander behavior by providing insight into what makes certain people, in some contexts, more or less likely to enact particular bystander behaviors. Building on Ng et al.'s (2020) sensemaking framework, which proposes that bystander responses are the product of sensemaking appraisals, we theorized that both individual and contextual factors could shape this sensemaking process and thereby influence the likelihood of bystanders adopting particular response types. In our main study, we found that dark triadic traits were positively associated with destructive responses, in line with our explanation that bystanders with characteristics such as lower empathy, higher self-interest, and flexible morals were more likely to appraise victims of bullying as being deserving of their mistreatment and therefore respond in unsupportive ways toward them. We also found that self-efficacy was related to constructive responses. Meanwhile, the organizational characteristics we studied (Gelfand et al.'s 2012, conflict cultures) primarily differentiated between active and passive responses, with collaborative conflict cultures being positively associated with active responses and dominating conflict cultures with passive responses.

These findings contribute to our understanding of workplace bullying bystanders by offering evidence about the conditions that dispose bystanders toward different types of responses. Our findings that particular individual and contextual factors promote destructive bystander behaviors provide much-needed evidence that helps to account for the observation that in real incidents of workplace bullying, destructive responses are commonplace (Niven et al. 2020). This adds to the wider workplace mistreatment literature, in which empirical and theoretical work has typically focused on constructive responses and factors that promote them (e.g., Hershcovis et al. 2017; Hershcovis and Bhatnagar 2017; O'Reilly and Aquino 2011; Priesemuth and Schminke 2019).

The pattern of our findings also tentatively suggests that individual factors may drive the extent to which bystanders act in a constructive or destructive manner, whereas contextual factors might have greater influence over the extent to which bystanders engage actively or passively in their responses to workplace bullying. Personal characteristics may therefore have greater sway over appraisals of the bullying incident itself and who is in the right or wrong in the situation, while the broader context might serve to promote or constrain the extent to which bystanders feel able to get involved in the situation, with certain contexts curtailing bystander agency and others enhancing it. Alternatively, our findings may be a product of the specific variables we selected, such that, for example, other organizational or contextual factors beyond the conflict climate might also shape bystander constructive/destructive behavior.

Second, we develop and validate a theoretically driven measure of workplace bullying bystanders. The BTS provides a way to measure a comprehensive set of bystander responses, thereby allowing researchers to broaden their conceptualizations of *what* bystanders can do when witnessing bullying. Ad hoc or adapted scales are likely to capture some, though rarely all, bystander response types. Related, nonbullying frameworks that offer more holistic conceptualizations of bystander responses either do not have associated measures (e.g., Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly 2005) or do not wholly acknowledge that bystanders can respond in helpful and harmful ways to witnessed events (e.g., Griffith et al. 2021). The BTS's multidimensionality allows researchers to study a range of conceptually distinct bystander responses, providing good construct clarity and a basis for the advancement of workplace bullying research and practice. We show that the scale can be used not only from the bystander perspective, which is a growing area of interest, but also from the target perspective, which has been the major focus of workplace bullying research.

Third, our research validating the new BTS scale provides further empirical evidence that bystander behaviors shape target well-being and attitudes (Study 1c), contributing to the bystander and workplace bullying literatures. While researchers (and practitioners) have advocated for including bystanders in the bullying conversation, there has been surprisingly little empirical evidence on this topic and, in particular, little quantitative research, with only one such study to date (Ng et al. 2022), likely owing to the lack of a validated measurement tool to capture bystander behavior. This means that most theory and intervention work on workplace bullying bystanders have operated on the assumption that bystander behavior can change outcomes for bullying targets, without explicitly testing this proposition.

In our predictive validity study, we found that active constructive responses were associated with burnout and job satisfaction, active destructive responses only predicted targets' burnout (and not their engagement or job satisfaction), and passive constructive responses only predicted work engagement. These findings provide important evidence that bystanders can both positively and negatively affect targets' well-being through constructive and destructive behaviors, respectively. This not only highlights the potential power that bystanders can have but also calls attention to the limited scope that most research has currently taken when conceptualizing workplace bullying bystanders. Finally, our findings, which will need to be replicated, present tentative evidence of a differentiated profile of consequences for each response type, wherein constructive behaviors have a greater influence on work attitudes and destructive behaviors have a greater impact on strain.

5.2 | Practical Implications

Workplace bullying is a topical and sadly pervasive social issue, as mainstream publications and reports suggest. For example, a 2022 UK YouGov poll found that the most common arena for

bullying in adulthood is in the workplace (Morris 2022). While it may be difficult to get rid of workplace bullying completely, practitioners and managers should seek to understand how to prevent its intensification and escalation. Researchers have long theorized that bystanders may be key actors in addressing this problem, as early constructive bystander responses could stop bullying from entering its vicious circle by signaling, not only to perpetrators but, to other colleagues, that such behaviors are unacceptable (e.g., Leymann 1996; Ng et al. 2020). Therefore, practitioners should seek to include bystander perspectives in developing interventions to complement existing target- and perpetrator-focused materials.

In particular, our research shows that a range of individual and organizational factors can predict different bystander responses. Organizations may wish to address those factors that encourage constructive responses or discourage destructive ones; for example, practitioners can seek to foster collaborative conflict climates, such as by improving psychological safety and communication (Gelfand et al. 2012). While individual factors may be more difficult, or ethically inappropriate, for organizations to seek to alter, practitioners may wish to provide employees with resources to help them feel more efficacious, for example, by providing education about reporting routes and training on dealing with difficult conversations. Moreover, although it may be impractical for workplaces to screen out employees with high dark triad traits, practitioners can offer training that promotes more conscious reflection of ambiguous situations like bullying (e.g., Sonenshein 2007). For example, Mazzone et al. (2022) suggest that perspective-taking and empathy training (e.g., stopping and taking time to consider how others may be affected by bullying) can encourage bystanders to recognize and condemn bullying, which might help individuals high in dark triad traits to avoid the trap of assuming victim deservingness in situations of workplace bullying.

Practitioners may also wish to include the BTS as part of preintervention and postintervention surveys to evaluate whether their intervention has had its desired effects (most likely reducing passive and/or destructive responses, while encouraging active constructive ones). The BTS offers practitioners a validated tool to help measure a range of bystander responses when seeking to understand the "wider state" of workplace bullying in organizations and how bullying can often be a group phenomenon spreading beyond the perpetrator-target relationship. While we imagine that most practitioners will highlight the positive role that bystanders can play in constructively intervening against bullying, they should also highlight the negative role bystanders can play through inaction or facilitating bullying behaviors. Although the idea of colleagues becoming accessories to bullying may sit uncomfortably for some, it is important to acknowledge the full scope of bystander responses and to understand that group norms may facilitate destructive behaviors.

5.3 | Limitations and Future Research

While our paper has several strengths, we must also recognize its limitations. Our main study (Study 2) used cross-sectional data, which calls into question whether our data suffer from common method bias as well as our ability to draw causal relationships. Moreover, while our predictive validity study (Study 1c) used a 1-month gap to study target responses, common method bias can remain as data were collected using the same response method of self-report surveys (Kock et al. 2021); therefore, causal conclusions can only be inferred due to the correlational study design. Further research could use the BTS in experimental studies to show how, for example, different contextual factors (e.g., conflict cultures) manipulated within vignettes elicit distinctive bystander behavioral intentions.

A further limitation of cross-sectional designs is that we are unable to capture the dynamic nature of bullying (Branch et al. 2013). Given that workplace bullying is conceptualized as a dynamic phenomenon (e.g., S. Einarsen 1999) and the theoretical model we built on to derive our hypotheses proposes that bystander responses can change over time (Ng et al. 2020), it is important to explore how bystander behaviors develop over time in response to both changes in individual and contextual factors and also developments in the bullying situation itself. For example, an initially active constructive bystander may enact more passive constructive responses (e.g., if they feel that it is too risky to directly confront the perpetrator) or more passive destructive responses (e.g., if they do not wish to associate with the target anymore) over time. Alternatively, a destructive bystander may themselves be confronted with their behaviors and become less destructive over time to maintain expected norms (e.g., Vranjes et al. 2023). Future research may wish to examine not only *how* bystander responses change over time, but why and under what circumstances.

A factor that may be particularly relevant to consider within such research, especially when considering what might predict bystander withdrawal of support over time (e.g., D'Cruz and Noronha 2011), is moral disengagement. According to Ng et al.'(2020) model, bystanders may rely on mechanisms of moral disengagement to avoid moral self-sanctions when they fail to act in an active constructive manner in response to witnessed workplace bullying. They further theorize that this moral disengagement shapes the subsequent process of sensemaking in relation to future witnessed events, over time making it less likely that bystanders will constructively intervene. Given that both individual and contextual factors can shape the propensity to morally disengage (Newman et al. 2020), integrating this construct into dynamic, longitudinal research on bystander behavior may prove fruitful. The BTS may be a useful tool in future tests of these theoretical ideas.

Next, the validation studies in our paper are exclusively at the individual level, which offer a limited view of bystander responses by failing to showcase the group-based nature of the phenomenon. By studying whole teams, future research can provide a more holistic picture of how different employees respond to bullying within the same organizational context. Multisource data (e.g., from targets and bystanders) can also elucidate different ways in which bystander behaviors are perceived. While the BTS's items are worded to acknowledge the bystander's intentions, it is important to acknowledge that workplace bullying situations are by nature very subjective and perceptions may vary. For example, there may be cases where a well-intentioned (constructive) bystander's action is perceived negatively by targets. Future researchers may wish to examine

whether there are discrepancies between bystanders' intentions and targets' perceptions of those intentions, and which matters most (i.e., intentions or perceptions of intensions) in shaping outcomes for targets. This question aligns with broader debates as to whether intentionality matters when studying behaviors, as some researchers suggest that it is important to acknowledge intention (e.g., Krasikova et al. 2013), while others suggest that target perspectives and outcomes are central (e.g., Tepper et al. 2017).

A final potential avenue for future research is to examine the BTS's applicability for capturing bystander responses to other forms of mistreatment. The measure could in theory be used to examine bystander responses to similar phenomena, such as abusive supervision, incivility, or general interpersonal counterproductive work behaviors. However, we urge caution in applying the measure without carefully examining if the proposed phenomenon has any unique characteristics that the BTS's items may not be wholly suitable for or that the BTS may fail to capture. For example, certain direct and active behaviors, like threatening to report the perpetrator, may not be so relevant to low-intensity, mild forms of mistreatment like incivility. Furthermore, phenomena like sexual harassment or discrimination, which can involve protected characteristics, may feature social nuances that the BTS does not acknowledge.

6 | Conclusions

There is strong consensus that workplace bullying is damaging for targets, groups, and organizations. Researchers have increasingly turned to examining bystanders' experiences in bullying (e.g., D'Cruz and Noronha 2011; Holm et al. 2023a; Sprigg et al. 2019), including how bystanders are more than just passive entities and can influence the outcomes of workplace bullying (e.g., Mulder et al. 2017; Ng et al. 2022). However, to date, the field has produced limited insights into how bystanders respond when they witness workplace bullying and the factors that influence their responses, in part due to the lack of a standardized measure. By developing and validating the BTS and using it to elucidate the key individual and organizational factors that shape bystander behavior, we have contributed to theory on workplace bullying bystanders and offered a tool for researchers and practitioners to capture the wide variety of bystander responses to workplace bullying. Using this measure to develop a greater understanding of bystanders is an important step to reduce the prevalence and severity of workplace bullying.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Endnotes

[1] The average ratings for definitions ranged between 3.88 and 4.13 among academics, and 3.50 and 3.67 for practitioners.

[2] Attention checks are popular tools to detect careless or low effort responses without negatively affecting response validity (Kung et al. 2018). We used an instructed-response attention check for this survey: "Please select '*Very likely*'."

[3] Prolific's specific wording for the screening question used at the time of Study 1c was "I've been bullied at work (that is, I've been a victim of emotional, physical, and/or verbal abuse)" with a dichotomous yes/no response.

[4] We analyzed the dataset with the extra 15 participants included and findings were not substantially different.

[5] We ran another analysis excluding gender and age as covariates. The following differed from the in-text analysis: Passive constructive responses were positively related to burnout ($B = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$). Active destructive responses were negatively related to engagement ($B = -0.45$, $p < 0.01$ and job satisfaction ($B = 0.76$, $p < 0.001$). Passive destructive responses were negatively related to burnout ($B = -0.16$, $p < 0.05$) and positively related to engagement ($B = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$) and job satisfaction ($B = 0.26$, $p < 0.01$).

[6] The attention checks were as follows: "Please select '*Strongly agree*'" and 'Please select "*Disagree*'."

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section. **Table S1:** Initial BTS items administered in SME validations. **Table S2:** Composite reliability, average variance extracted and intercorrelations of the BTS response types (Study 1a, $n = 228$). **Table S3:** Composite reliability, average variance extracted and intercorrelations of the BTS response types (Study 1a, $n = 228$).