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Killing me softly – A collection of studies exploring moderated mediation effects on the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion:

The roles of techno-invasion and loneliness

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Theoretical framework and hypotheses development.....	6
Workplace incivility	6
Destructive leadership.....	9
Supervisor incivility	11
Supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion.....	13
Research questions and study design.....	17
The roles of technology invasion and loneliness	19
Techno-Invasion as a mediator.....	20
The moderating effect of loneliness	22
Method.....	24
Sample and procedure.....	24
Measures.....	26
Results.....	27
Descriptive statistics and correlations	27
Test of hypotheses.....	27
Discussion.....	30
General discussion	33
Practical implications.....	37
Limitations and future research.....	41
Conclusion	44
Bibliography	A

Introduction

In an unusual attempt to research supervisor incivility, we searched the streaming platform Netflix for movies or TV shows on bad supervisor behavior. Interestingly, mostly comedies, such as “The Devil Wears Prada”, “The Office”, or “Horrible Bosses”, were among the top search results.

Sadly though – Hollywood aside – workplace mistreatment is a real and substantial problem in organizations that comes in many shapes and forms (Dhanani, LaPalme, and Joseph 2021; Schyns and Schilling 2013). Various research directions have evolved over the last two decades, exploring different types of mistreatments, including mobbing, bullying, social undermining, emotional abuse, incivility or abusive supervision (Hershcovis 2011). Although many types of mistreatments overlap in specific characteristics, they vary in their source (e.g., supervisors, coworkers, customers), motivation (ambiguous intent vs intent), and severity (low intensity vs high intensity; Hershcovis 2011).

In the current study, we explore supervisor incivility, a dimension of workplace incivility, which also falls under the broad concept of destructive leadership. Supervisor incivility is uncivil behavior directed at an employee by a supervisor in the form of unpleasant remarks, gossip, or sarcasm. (Reio 2011). The low intensity and ambiguity in the intent to harm distinguish supervisor incivility from other forms of destructive leadership, such as abusive supervision (Andersson and Pearson 1999). This could be, for example, a disparaging remark, ignoring a subordinate, or spreading a rumor. Because of this ambiguity of behavior, it is difficult for victims to determine the cause of incivility and control it (Cortina 2008). Over the last years, various studies have explored the impact of supervisor incivility on employee outcomes. Some of the findings include, for example, the adverse effects on employees’ intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, task, and citizenship performance (Jawahar and Schreurs 2018; Lim and Lee 2011; Liu et al. 2020), or the positive relation to anxiety, depression, job stress, and emotional exhaustion (Han, Kim, and Hur 2021; Lim and Lee 2011). The latter is particularly worrying in a

society where burnout is on the rise, notably affecting the youth (Deloitte 2018). Job burnout is a psychological syndrome resulting from excessive job demands and interpersonal pressures at the workplace (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter 2001) and is based on three key dimensions – exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Emotional exhaustion describes the feeling of physical and emotional depletion (Halbesleben and Buckley 2004), cynicism refers to a negative, detached attitude toward several job-related aspects, and inefficacy describes a feeling of being unproductive and incompetent at work (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter 2001). Of all three factors, emotional exhaustion is the most widely reported dimension because it reflects the stress dimension of burnout that is commonly seen as the core of this complex syndrome (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter 2001). According to previous research, emotional exhaustion is stronger related to certain work-related outcome variables (e.g., turnover intentions) than the other dimensions (Lee and Ashforth 1996). Therefore, the current study looks at how supervisor incivility is linked to emotional exhaustion. Because incivility is a chronic stressor (Cortina et al. 2001), we argue that it severely impacts states of emotional exhaustion by continuously depleting individuals' emotional resources.

While various studies have found that supervisor incivility damages employee well-being, we identified several gaps that we aim to address and which we consider our contributions to existing research.

First, we address the call for further research examining potential mediators (Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez 2016), by considering negative affect, rumination, and technology invasion as mechanisms that impact the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion. We use the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll 1989) to explain this relationship. The COR model proposes that individuals possess resources to fulfil their central needs and that stress arises when those resources are threatened. This might happen due to increased job demands or a lack of resource return following considerable effort (Hobfoll 2001). We argue that

supervisor incivility, such as ongoing rude remarks or ignorance, is a process through which employees lose resources. Individuals who experience bad supervisor behavior might react with negative emotions, engage in ruminative thoughts that keep them fixated on the negative incidents, or feel their lives increasingly invaded by technology. In an attempt to control these emotions and behaviors, individuals lose further resources and burn out over time (Hobfoll 2001).

Second, we consider potential moderators to understand the nuances of the relationships mentioned above. Our moderators are related to personal and social characteristics, i.e., we seek to determine whether the mediating effects on the supervisor incivility-emotional exhaustion relationship differ among women and men, and whether loneliness and core self-evaluations make individuals more or less vulnerable to experiences of uncivil supervisor behavior. We include moderators because, based on our understanding of the most affected individuals, we can provide better recommendations for corrective and preventive actions. Understanding the mechanisms through which incivility affects work and non-work outcomes, as well as identifying resources that can alleviate the negative effects of supervisor incivility, is crucial to design better workplaces (Dedahanov, Miao, and Semyonov 2021; Jawahar and Schreurs 2018; Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez 2016).

Third, we argue that recent global events like the Covid-19 pandemic have given rise to new perspectives and insights into the existing problems of supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion, as the intensity and prevalence of both conditions may have grown. Among others, we see raising job insecurities due to economic instability, physical distance from colleagues and supervisors, and personal crisis-related concerns as factors that can increase conflict between supervisors and subordinates. We aim to provide insights into the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion at a time where we believe that Covid-19 has an ongoing strong impact on our lives. After all, it will be particularly interesting to see whether we can

observe the effects that we anticipate based on previous empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks in the current time.

To put it in a nutshell, our analyses will be guided by the following research questions: What factors mediate the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion? Who is at risk of burnout, and what characteristics make people more vulnerable or resilient in the face of incivility? Finally, in this era of heightened vulnerability, are we witnessing the patterns that we expect based on our theoretical framework and earlier empirical evidence?

We conducted three conceptually and methodologically similar studies to answer these questions, each using a separate individual sample of employed individuals, mainly recruited from Germany and Austria during September and October 2021. At that time, Covid-19 had already been present for over a year and a half, and several lockdown phases had been bridged. Though contact and travel restrictions were largely relaxed during those two months, many companies have retained their virtual workplace concepts. The report begins with a common section on the relevant theoretical frameworks and includes the hypothesis about the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion. Our results are then presented in three individual sections, each with its own set of hypotheses about mediating and moderating factors. Study 1 examined the moderating effect of core self-evaluations on the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion via negative affect. Study 2 focused on the indirect effect of supervisor incivility on emotional exhaustion via increased rumination and the conditional effects of gender on this relationship. Study 3 analyzed whether the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion via technology invasion is moderated by loneliness. Lastly, we end this report with a joint discussion, summarizing our findings across the three studies and providing final remarks for future research.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses development

Workplace incivility

Workplace mistreatment is a phenomenon that represents stressful working conditions for employees around the globe and can be defined as “interpersonal behavior aimed at intentionally harming another employee in the workplace” (Bowling and Beehr 2006, 998). The broad term “workplace mistreatment” encompasses different forms of interpersonal abuse, for example, physical violence, aggression, bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination, abusive supervision, and incivility (Dhanani, LaPalme, and Joseph 2021). In the current study, we focus on workplace incivility because it seems to affect employees on a large scale. In fact, researchers have identified incivility as the most prevalent form of harmful workplace behavior in a recent meta-analytical estimate, with prevalence rates ranging from 16% for bullying to 75% for incivility (Dhanani, LaPalme, and Joseph 2021).

Workplace incivility was first defined by Andersson and Pearson (1999) as “low-intensity deviant workplace behavior with an ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect” (1999, p. 457). In the last two decades, the construct has received great attention from researchers showing that incivility is indeed a universal problem, that affects employees around the globe, in various jobs and professions and across cultures (Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez 2016). In addition, it seems to be increasingly common in the workplace. A major study with over 14,000 participants across the United States and Canada has indicated that 98% of U.S. employees encounter incivility, and 50% experience it at least once a week (Porath and Pearson 2013).

The mild severity of incivility, as well as the lack of evident intent to harm, separate the construct from other forms of workplace mistreatment (Andersson and Pearson 1999; Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez 2016). Rather than being openly shouted at, or physically attacked, victims of workplace

incivility experience more subtle and covert mistreatment. Examples of uncivil behavior include withholding information, talking condescendingly to or about others, or paying little attention to someone's statements (Porath and Pearson 2010). Importantly, it is a subjective phenomenon because it reflects how people interpret certain actions and how these actions make them feel (Porath and Pearson 2010). This implies that two people with different characteristics may analyze the same behavior as more or less uncivil, but also that certain behavior may be interpreted as uncivil by the victim, while the instigator claims their actions were unintentional or harmless (Porath and Pearson 2010). Being confronted with such ambiguous behaviors may be extremely stressful for employees as they try to make sense of the situation, and need to decide whether or how to respond (Lim, Cortina, and Magley 2008). Furthermore, workplace incivility has been defined as a chronic stressor (Cortina et al. 2001; Lim, Cortina, and Magley 2008) – rather than an acute stressor – that occurs over an extended period combined with ambiguous onsets and offsets (Hepburn, Loughlin, and Barling 1997).

As research on the topic has evolved in recent years, different concepts have emerged to explain antecedents of incivility. One factor is organizational pressures such as major changes causing uncertainty (e.g., restructuring, mergers) or inappropriate expectations (e.g., high demands, compressed deadlines; Pearson and Porath 2005). Furthermore, uncivil behavior may be a reaction to organizational forms of power such as discipline or force (Lawrence and Robinson 2007). Higher-level members of the organization use their power to persuade their subordinates to behave in certain ways (Townley 1993), which may cause frustration among employees and ultimately result in deviant behavior (Lawrence and Robinson 2007). Aside from these organizational antecedents, experiencing workplace aggression is a potential source of uncivil behavior (Hauge, Skogstad, and Einarsen 2009). Incivility can even cause a vicious circle as victims of uncivil behavior tend to retaliate by acting uncivil themselves (Jex et al. 2010). In a

study by Gallus et al. (2014), 70% of participants indicated to be both victims and perpetrators of incivility.

Numerous studies have also demonstrated the detrimental outcomes of incivility. Those who are victims of incivility, evidently experience affective outcomes such as increased levels of stress, depression or negative emotions (Bunk and Magley 2013; Cortina et al. 2001; Lim and Lee 2011). Concretely, researchers have found that incivility positively relates to feelings of anger, guilt, sadness and fear (Bunk and Magley 2013). Attitudinal outcomes of workplace incivility include lower job satisfaction (Cortina et al. 2001) and reduced commitment to the organization (Lim and Teo 2009). Researchers argue that when employees perceive that they are not treated as desired, their trust in the organization decreases, and they may respond in ways that are detrimental to the organization (Lim and Teo 2009). Building on this, incivility is also related to counterproductive behavioral outcomes such as turnover intentions (Lim, Cortina, and Magley 2008). In addition to employee outcomes, this can commit to negative financial consequences for the employer (Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez 2016).

Although the destructive impact of incivility is evident, there have been calls to analyze the nuances of types of incivility more closely (Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez 2016). While in earlier years of incivility research, little attention was put on the distinction of workplace incivility, recent literature differentiates between different sources of workplace incivility, including supervisor, coworker, and customer incivility (Jawahar and Schreurs 2018), as well as different types of incivility, namely experienced, witnessed, or instigated incivility (Holm, Torkelson, and Bäckström 2015; Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez 2016).

Of all the types of incivility, experienced incivility is the best studied. It implies being the target of an uncivil act at the workplace (Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez 2016). For witnessed incivility, research is still developing, while some studies discovered similar impacts as for experienced incivility, such as decreased well-being and lower task performance of witnesses (Porath and Erez

2009). Lastly, instigated incivility brings the perpetrator of the misbehavior into focus. Here, research examines what causes uncivil behavior and what effects uncivil behavior has on offenders (Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez 2016).

Looking at the different sources of incivility, research has shown that supervisor, coworker, and customer incivility share equal characteristics in how incivility is enacted, but that they differ in terms of (organizational) authority (Reio 2011), perceived threat, and continuity of the situation (Walker, van Jaarsveld, and Skarlicki 2014). Concretely, there is empirical evidence that victims of workplace incivility perceive mistreatment by their superior as more unfair than mistreatment by a subordinate (Günsoy 2020), feel more embarrassed and frustrated (Lim, Cortina, and Magley 2008), and experience more discomfort (Moon et al. 2021). For this report, we focus on supervisor incivility as it seems to have the most detrimental impact on employees. Recent calls to investigate the nuances of different forms of incivility more closely reinforce our approach of focusing on one specific source of incivility (Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez 2016).

Subsequently, we look into the concept of destructive leadership, as the general perspective on leadership brings us closer to workplace incivility enacted by a supervisor.

Destructive leadership

The leader role is undoubtedly a key position that, through its particular position of power, strongly influences both the business and social context in the work environment (Einarsen, Aasland, and Skogstad 2007). Regarding literature, leadership is one of the most studied and researched topics in management and organizational behavior, as it plays a crucial role in today's management education and business success (Pandey et al. 2021; Itzkovich, Heilbrunn, and Aleksic 2020). While research on leadership has grown tremendously, many past studies and papers concentrated on constructive leadership, i.e., the positive side of leadership. Since it is evident that, amongst others, bad leadership has severe consequences on employees and business

outcomes, more and more papers on the darker side of leadership (Itzkovich, Heilbrunn, and Aleksic 2020), i.e., destructive leadership, have been published.

A widespread definition of destructive leadership goes back to Einarsen, Aarsland and Skogstad (2007), who described the issue as “the systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization’s goals, tasks, resources and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of his/her subordinates” (2007, p. 208). The authors categorize their definition as a holistic idea of destructive leadership, that covers all physical and literal forms of behavior, including physical and verbal (e.g., hitting and cursing), or passive and active (e.g., gossiping and insulting) aggression (Einarsen, Aasland, and Skogstad 2007). Since the previous idea is very broad, a subsequent definition of the concept narrows the leadership component to being “a process in which over a longer period of time the activities, experiences and/or relationships of an individual or the members of a group are repeatedly influenced by their supervisor in a way that is perceived as hostile and/or obstructive” (Schyns and Schilling 2013, p. 141). With this definition, the authors explicitly identify the supervisor as the source of the problem, which emphasizes a top-down direction of abuse (Tepper 2007).

As we can see from the last two definitions, the dividing line between two different concepts is minimal. In a summary of different forms of destructive leadership, Schyns and Schilling (2013) show that in only a few years, several versions of a somewhat equal idea have emerged in research. The summary includes “abusive supervision” (Tepper 2000), the “abusive leader” (Hornstein 1996), the “petty tyrant” (Ashforth 1994), “bullies” (Namie and Namie 2000) and “toxic leaders” (Lipman-Blumen 2006), to name only a few. Although the multitude of definitions of quite similar concepts may seem complicating at first glance, being as precise as possible is a central aspect for further research. So, having delineated the leadership component to the supervisor, the aspects of intention and intensity in destructive behavior remain to be questioned.

In the past two decades, a line of research has emerged that particularly examines negative leadership behavior in the workplace that is less intense and overt – incivility (Namie and Namie 2000). In our paper, we aim to focus our attention on this relatively new and less frequently explored addition to the field of negative leadership (Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez 2016), and examine supervisor incivility – a sub-component of workplace incivility. Thus, we aim to contribute to the growing body of research on the outcomes of uncivil supervisor behavior (Anjum et al. 2021; Kabat-Farr, Walsh, and McGonagle 2019; Shin and Hur 2020).

Supervisor incivility

Supervisor incivility is among the most harmful forms of workplace incivility (Lim, Cortina, and Magley 2008) and can be classified as destructive leadership. Building on the previously mentioned characteristics of workplace incivility, it describes uncivil behavior in the form of rude remarks, gossip, sarcasm, or else directed toward an employee by a supervisor (Reio 2011). We put our focus on this specific form of mistreatment, since even though we know that supervisor incivility has major impacts on the well-being and job performance of subordinates, as well as on the organization's outcomes (e.g., Shin and Hur 2020; Porath and Pearson 2010; Jawahar and Schreurs 2018), we only know little about this connection in the current situation influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, we concentrate on the supervisor because previous research has shown that individuals with greater power are more likely to engage in uncivil behavior than individuals with equal or less power (i.e. coworkers and subordinates) (Cortina et al. 2001). For example, respondents in a study reported that they experienced higher levels of incivility from their supervisors than from their co-workers and subordinates (Lim and Lee 2011). Similarly, 60% of all reported workplace incivility incidents involve an employee being treated poorly by a person superior to him or her (Porath and Pearson 2010). This might be due to the fact that supervisors are in a better position to treat others poorly without having to fear sanctions (compare Lim, Cortina, and Magley 2008).

Researchers suggest that it is generally difficult to cope with incivility because the intent underlying incivility is ambiguous, i.e., it is challenging for employees to determine its cause, which in turn leads to reduced perceptions of control (Cortina 2008). Also, as workplace incivility is categorized as a chronic stressor (Cortina et al. 2001; Lim, Cortina, and Magley 2008), victims of uncivil supervisor behavior are on a constant stress level (Cho et al. 2016). Since the supervisor is in a powerful position to reward or allocate resources (Günsoy 2020), incivility exerted by an authority figure puts the target in an even more stressful situation, which can result in a variety of consequences (Kabat-Farr, Walsh, and McGonagle 2019). Concretely, supervisor incivility negatively affects employees' work engagement, creativity, work ability, and task performance (Jawahar and Schreurs 2018; Kabat-Farr, Walsh, and McGonagle 2019; Liu et al. 2020).

As indicated above, some of these studies have found that outcomes of incivility are worse when the perpetrator is a supervisor vs. a coworker. For example, job satisfaction and organizational commitment among employees was lower when the perpetrator of incivility was a manager (vs. a subordinate) in a study by Moon et al. (2021). Furthermore, supervisor incivility can also lead to negative employee feelings and attitudes such as anxiety, depression, insomnia symptoms and job stress (Lim and Lee 2011; Demsky et al. 2019).

Although an increasing body of research has examined the effects of supervisor incivility on employee outcomes in recent years, some gaps remain. While numerous studies have focused on employee performance outcomes (Jawahar and Schreurs 2018; Shin, Lee, and Hur 2021; Shin and Hur 2020), only a few researchers have provided recent evidence of emotional outcomes (Fritz, Park, and Shepherd 2019). We therefore focus on burnout, concretely emotional exhaustion, as a potential outcome of supervisor incivility. Emotional exhaustion is a major factor in the development of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter 2001). Relating to its chronic nature, we argue that supervisor incivility is particularly likely to increase employees' states of feeling exhausted. Rather than having to cope with single incidents of bad behavior, employees are

repeatedly confronted with rude remarks, ignorance, or such like, which might put a constant strain on their well-being.

Supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion

According to Maslach and Jackson (1982), burnout is a syndrome that is characterized by the three components emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion represents the stress component of burnout and is the most often reported dimension. Individuals who are emotionally exhausted feel drained and deprived of their emotional and physical resources as a result of accumulated stress (Maslach and Jackson 1982). That is, they are left without the resources they need to successfully perform their job. The interpersonal context dimension of burnout is represented by the depersonalization or cynicism component which describes a negative, detached attitude toward job-related aspects (Maslach and Jackson 1982). Depersonalization is a common reaction to emotional exhaustion (Halbesleben and Buckley 2004). Lack of personal accomplishment or inefficacy is based on self-evaluation and refers to a perceived lack of productivity and incompetence at work (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter 2001). Hence, burning out is a long-term process, and symptoms are primarily mental and behavioral, rather than physical (Maslach and Schaufeli 1993).

Initially, burnout was studied almost exclusively among human services professions (Maslach and Jackson 1982). Later research indicated that burnout is a syndrome that occurs across a variety of professions (Schaufeli 2003). For example, empirical evidence has shown that job demands were significantly correlated with burnout across a group of human professionals (e.g., nurses, social workers, and teachers) and a group of other professionals (e.g., insurance agents, engineers, and technicians; Shirom and Melamed 2006). At the same time, burnout has been conceptualized as a construct that may occur outside the occupational domain, for example, couple burnout (Pines 1996; Pamuk and Durmuş 2015) or parental burnout that is characterized by a state of exhaustion and perceived ineffectiveness concerning an individual's parental role (Mikolajczak et al. 2018).

This work, however, will focus on burnout symptoms in a work-related context and define job burnout as a psychological syndrome that develops as a result of excessive job demands and interpersonal pressures at the workplace (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter 2001).

Job burnout has been on the rise in recent years. In a Gallup poll of 7,500 full-time employees (Wigert and Agrawal 2018), 23% indicated that they feel burned out at work very often or always, while almost 50% report feeling it sometimes. These high numbers are extremely alarming because the consequences of burnout are detrimental. Burnout has been found to positively correlate with turnover intentions, and negatively correlate with job satisfaction (Lee et al. 2011). Furthermore, emotional exhaustion, in particular, was found to be negatively correlated with organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (Cropanzano, Rupp, and Byrne 2003). Our study therefore aims to further explore the mechanisms linking incivility and burnout.

COR theory (Hobfoll 1989) has emerged as the most widely accepted theory for describing the mechanisms that lead to burnout (Halbesleben and Buckley 2004). The COR model proposes that individuals have limited resources which they use to fulfil their central needs, and that stress emerges when those resources are threatened (Hobfoll 2001). Resources may be classified into physical resources (e.g., personal health), cognitive resources (e.g., ability to organize things), financial resources (e.g., salary and pension), social resources (e.g., family stability) and motivational resources (Wang 2007; Hobfoll 2001). A perceived threat of resource loss may be directly linked to the workplace or the non-work environment. Related to the non-work domain, empirical evidence suggests that negative personal life events are positively related to professional burnout. Concretely, experiencing a major illness was found to be strongly associated with burnout (Dyrbye et al. 2006). Threats of resource loss in the workplace are typically linked to job characteristics (especially quantitative job demands) or organizational characteristics such as the management environment (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter 2001). An initial resource threat may

be only recognized as a stressor, but prolonged loss or threat is considered to lead to burnout (Hobfoll 2001). In the current study, we argue that supervisor incivility represents a threat to an employee's resource of a positive supervisor relationship. It is a particularly serious threat because it is a chronic stressor (Cortina et al. 2001) and because its ambiguous nature leads to reduced perceptions of control (Cortina 2008).

Another premise of the COR model is that the impact of resource losses is greater than the impact of resource gains, and that resource loss has a spiraling nature (Hobfoll 2001). When resources are lost, a protection mechanism activates, and individuals invest other resources to counter the primary resource loss. When these loss control strategies prove to be inefficient, the resources that are required to regulate emotions and behaviors deplete ever more rapidly, and a downward spiral sets off (Hobfoll 2001). Job demands, therefore, are more decisive in the development of burnout than resources are when it comes to protecting individuals against burnout (Hobfoll and Freedy 1993). For this reason, we focus on how to prevent supervisor incivility as a potential cause of resource loss, rather than identifying positive leadership styles that might promote resource gain.

In addition, researchers have identified differences in antecedents among the three key dimensions of burnout. Concretely, Lee and Ashforth's (1996) have found that work overload (i.e., job demands) was more strongly related to emotional exhaustion than social support (i.e., resources).

The cynicism and inefficacy components, in contrast, tended to be more related to resource variables than to job demand variables. Similarly, job stress and over-involvement, experienced time pressure, role conflict, and role ambiguity (job demands) have been found to be most closely associated with emotional exhaustion (Lee et al. 2011; Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter 2001).

Supervisor incivility may represent such a type of increased job demands that most strongly promotes emotional exhaustion. Previous research supports this notion (Cho et al. 2016; Rahim and Cosby 2016). In a study with restaurant frontline service employees, workplace incivility was

positively related to emotional exhaustion, which in turn negatively impacted job service performance (Cho et al. 2016).

The Covid-19 pandemic may have amplified these effects. Levels of experienced supervisor incivility may have risen due to increased fear, stress, and social isolation in the wake of the pandemic. At the same time, Covid-19 may present an additional environmental stressor to employees' resources, making them more vulnerable to further resource losses through experienced supervisor incivility, as proposed by COR theory (Hobfoll 2001). In a study with frontline service employees, the negative indirect effect of customer incivility on job performance via emotional exhaustion was significantly stronger during the pandemic than before the pandemic (Hwang, Hur, and Shin 2021). We therefore want to highlight the urgency of examining these effects in the light of a particularly vulnerable time.

Drawing on COR theory (Hobfoll 1989), we therefore argue that supervisor incivility is positively related to burnout, in particular the emotional exhaustion dimension.

H1. Supervisor incivility will be positively related to emotional exhaustion.

Even though researchers have studied the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion, we have limited knowledge of the mechanisms linking the two constructs. In the current study, we aim to extend prior research by examining *why* individuals burn out when experiencing supervisor incivility and propose emotional processes, cognitive appraisal, and overuse of technology as mediating mechanisms. Concretely, we look at negative affect, rumination, and technology invasion as such possible mediators for the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion.

In addition, we contribute to the discussion on potential moderators of the supervisor incivility-burnout relationship by examining *under which circumstances* individuals feel emotionally drained as a result of uncivil supervisor behavior. Researchers have already analyzed various

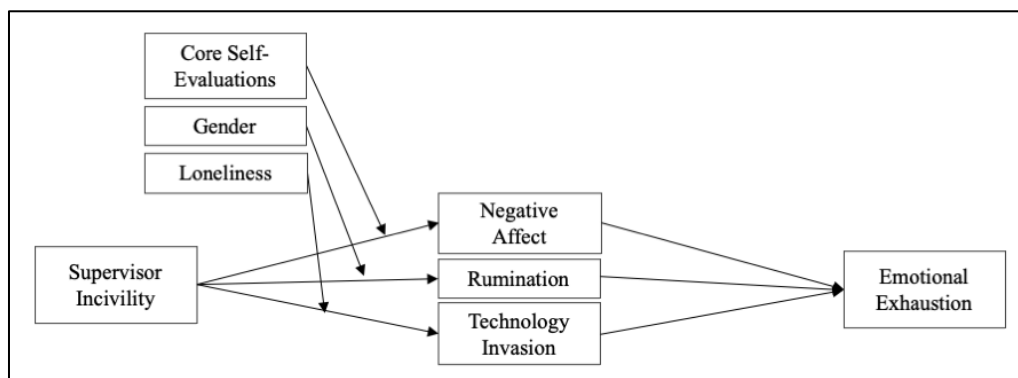
aspects to understand why some people burn out, and others do not. Demographic variables (e.g., gender, education, age), personality characteristics (e.g., big five personality characteristics), and job attitudes (e.g., high expectations regarding the likelihood of achieving success) have been suggested to be unique employee characteristics in the relationship between job demands and burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter 2001). From a resource perspective (COR theory), we aim to examine the moderating effects of variables that are related to personal and social characteristics. Employees with certain characteristics may be able to allocate more or less resources to regulate work-related emotions and behaviors while experiencing a resource loss due to uncivil treatment. Concretely, we examine the moderating effect of core self-evaluations, gender, and loneliness.

Research questions and study design

Based on our theoretical framework, we propose the following research questions to be answered by our studies: How does supervisor incivility contribute to emotional exhaustion, i.e., what are the mediators of the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion? Which characteristics make individuals more vulnerable or more resilient when facing incivility, i.e., what are the moderators of this process? And finally, are the patterns aligned with the theoretical framework and prior empirical evidence in a time that is characterized by extreme vulnerability?

Figure 1 depicts our full model.

Figure 1: Full model



In the following sections, three individual studies will be presented. Each study will first build on the existing theoretical framework and provide further context on the examined mediating and moderating variables. Then, the results of testing the respective sub-model will be analyzed.

While the three studies are based on individually collected samples, we all followed the same procedure and will use the full sample to re-test our hypotheses and give more weight to our individual findings, given the added statistical power of using a larger sample (Cohen 1992).

We all carried out a study with a time-lagged design to collect data in three moments in time, with a one-week time lag between them. Using a snowballing sampling method, we reached out to people from our personal networks and asked them to forward the survey link to their friends, colleagues, and families. In order to be able to reflect on the presence of burnout among the youth, participants recruited for our study were mainly young professionals. In fact, a study in the US revealed that burnout notably affects the youth. Compared to 77% of all respondents, 84% of millennials have experienced burnout in their current job (Deloitte 2018).

Together, we collected 609 surveys in time 1 and 446 surveys in time 2. The final matching sample (t1-t3) was 379 participants (62% of the original time 1 sample). The majority of participants were female (62%), and German (71%) or Austrian (19%), and the average age was 30.0 years (SD = 10.63; ranging from 17 to 64). Most respondents worked either in the consulting (17.8%) or in the technology (10.3%) industry, followed by banking and finance (8.2%) and education (7.5%). The sample was mostly single (73.8%) and well-educated, with 33.7% holding a master's degree or higher and 19.5% holding a Bachelor's degree.

Abstract

Across three independent studies we examined the mechanisms and boundary conditions of the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion. This study examined the moderating role of techno-invasion on the supervisor incivility-emotional exhaustion relationship via loneliness. Data was collected from 111, mainly Austrian, employees. Results showed that the moderation effect was significant for people with low levels of loneliness. People with high levels of loneliness showed high levels of techno-invasion disregarding the levels of supervisor incivility. Therefore, supervisors need to proactively tackle workplace loneliness to prevent techno-invasion. This study is part of a three-part collection. Mentions of Study 1 and Study 2 within the following document are References to the other two studies of this collection.

Keywords: Leadership, Well-being, covid-19, Burnout, Techno-Invasion, Emotional Exhaustion, Supervisor Incivility, Loneliness

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The roles of technology invasion and loneliness

Techno-Invasion as a mediator

Technostress, also often referred to as technological stress, computer stress or technophobia is a certain type of work-related mental stress that is introduced by the usage of ICT (information & communication technology) on the job (Weil and Rosen 1997). Technostress was first described by the psychotherapist Craig Brod as a modern illness caused by the inability to cope with new computer technologies in a healthy way (Brod 1984). Since the first research and clinical cases, technology has changed and acquired a more crucial role in our modern work-environment.

Despite increased popularity and interest, the rapid development of modern technologies has led to a constant delay between implementation of these technologies and the research of their impact on health. Since the discovery of the phenomena, many researchers have begun studying technostress to isolate antecedents and outcomes. Until today no widely agreed definition exists but many researchers (including recent reviews e.g., La Torre et al. (2019)) resort to Tarafdar et al 's compilation of 'technostress creators' (Tarafdar et al. 2007). Tarafdar et al. subdivided technostress into five constructs:

Techno-overload, which describes the potential situation of ICT's causing employees to work faster and longer. This, for example, can be triggered by using a variety of messenger service simultaneously which harbors the risk of receiving multiple pieces of information regarding different things at the same time making it difficult to process the received information efficiently.

Techno-complexity names the situation where users of ICT's are overwhelmed by the functionality and complexity of the ICT causing them to feel incapable. This can further be reinforced by the short development cycles of modern technology.

Techno-insecurity describes the fear of ICT users about their jobs being replaced by technology (e.g.: due to automation of processes, more tech-affine employees).

Techno-uncertainty explains the effect of the short update-cycles of modern technology and the continuous introduction of new features forcing users to continuously learn the things and adapt to the ICT's development.

Techno-invasion refers to the introduction of work-life-conflicts and the impair to recover from work by the blur of boundaries between work and other life domains caused through mobile devices (e.g.: checking mails on the smartphone during the holidays or late at night). As ICT's and their appliance have become more complex throughout the years (Tarafdar, Tu, and Ragu-Nathan 2010; Yin et al. 2018; Yu et al. 2018), research on technostress focusses mainly on how and why using ICT's leads to the observed outcomes. Therefore, little research has been done on how other influencing factors like loneliness effect the severity of technostress.

For this study, we decided to focus on Techno-invasion as we see this dimension to be the most relevant in respect of our sample especially considering the current state of a global pandemic where many people had to shift their workplace to their private home. This further blurred the lines between private-life and work-life making techno-invasion possible with non-mobile devices. Furthermore, as our sample mainly consisted of organizational employees belonging to the Millennials-Generation, techno-uncertainty, techno-complexity and techno-insecurity seemed less relevant as Millennials are known for being more "tech-savvy" struggling less with uncertainty, complexity and insecurity in regard to technology (Bannon, Ford, and Meltzer 2011).

As described before, the COR-Model (Conservation of Resources) proposes that individuals are given limited resources which if not protected and regenerated, will inevitably lead to negative outcomes such as burnout (Hobfoll 2001). A variety of research in work-family literature explains the role-conflict and how it drains the given resources of a person and subsequently causes

negative outcomes (Carlson, Thompson, and Kacmar 2019; Frone 2015; Örtqvist and Wincent 2006). As techno-invasion compromises these boundaries between personal-life and work-life we propose techno-invasion to emotional exhaustion as a possible mediator:

H6. The positive relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion will be mediated by techno-invasion.

The moderating effect of loneliness

Despite being already a serious problem today with many physical, psychological, and social effects (Alberti 2019), loneliness has drastically increased during the Covid-19 pandemic with measures like social distancing, quarantine, and lockdowns (Luchetti et al. 2020).

Loneliness is defined as an undesirable feeling or experience occurring when an individual's entity of social relationships lacks the ability of satisfying their intimate and social needs (Cacioppo et al. 2006; Perlman and Peplau 1981). This can be either caused by the quantity of relationships where "the number of existing relationships is smaller than is considered desirable or admissible" (De Jong-Gierveld 1987, p. 120) or by the quality of relationships when the desired intimacy cannot be achieved. With this understanding, Weiss (1973) formed two basic types of loneliness: social and emotional. Social loneliness describes develops through the lack of quantitative relationships (e.g., absence of a group of people or interactive social network). Emotional loneliness emerges from the absence of qualitative intimate relationships. De Jong-Gierveld et al names the dissolve of a partner relationship through widowhood or divorce as a common example that causes "intense feelings of emptiness, abandonment and forlornness" (De Jong Gierveld and Van Tilburg 2006, p. 584).

Throughout literature, loneliness is often measured using single items (e.g., "do you feel lonely (Jylhä 2004) or "Do you suffer from loneliness?" (Tilvis et al. 2012). Although this simplification is understandable and easy to answer by the respondent, it has the premise that the respondents

have thorough understanding of the term “loneliness” and the underlying concepts. Furthermore, single items cannot provide accurate information about the origin or relevance. To avoid these issues, many different scales for measuring loneliness have been developed over time (Luanaigh and Lawlor 2008). The most common scales are the DJG-scale (De Jong Gierveld scale) consisting of 11 items and the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell 1996). There are two versions of the UCLA loneliness scale, one consisting of 20 items (Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona 1980; Russell 1996) and a shorter 3-item version (Hughes et al. 2004). For our study, we used the shortened version of the De Jong Gierveld scale consisting of six items (De Jong Gierveld and Van Tilburg 2006) as the DJG scale was developed considering Weiss’s initial differentiation of emotional and social loneliness.

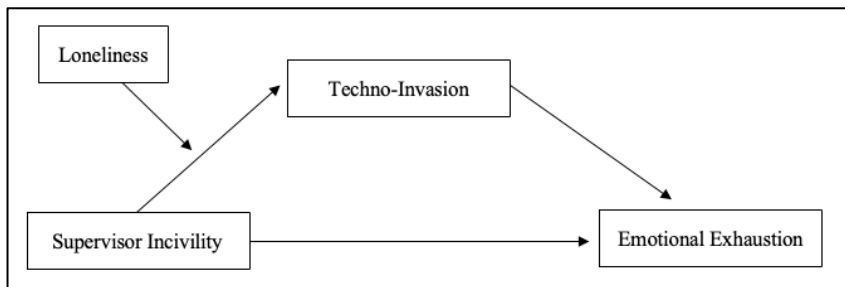
In our research, we are exploring how loneliness moderates the relationship between supervisor incivility and techno-invasion. Previous research has shown that workplace incivility is positively related with loneliness and depression (Lim and Lee 2011; Pearson, Andersson, and Wegner 2001). This can be explained through the desire of belonging which is described as a fundamental need by Baumeister and Leary (1995) and sought by individuals to avoid feelings of loneliness and alienation (R. M. Lee and Robbins 1995). This feeling of belongingness can be severely reduced or rendered inexistent by uncivil colleagues or supervisors (Gkorezis, Kalampouka, and Petridou 2013). With increased loneliness, the work-life balance of an individual worsens (Fischlmayr and Kollinger 2010). This is, because according to As technostress and in specific techno-invasion also shows a strong negative impact on work-life balance (Ma, Ollier-Malaterre, and Lu 2021), a positive correlation between loneliness and techno-invasion can be expected. Choi (2018) explains this correlation with the individuals urge to overcome their loss of personal resources, caused by the lack of belongingness, with high involvement in their jobs.

To propose how the influence of supervisor incivility on techno-invasion differs for more or less lonely people, we are again considering the COR Model. According to the COR Model,

individuals with greater resources are less vulnerable to resource loss and more capable of gaining back lost resources and vice versa, people with little resources are more vulnerable to lose resources and less capable of regaining the lost resources (Doane, Schumm, and Hobfoll 2012). Therefore, the assumption is, that people who experience high levels of loneliness (and therefore have little social resources) are less capable of protecting their other resources (e.g., energy resources) and are consequently more vulnerable for supervisor incivility causing techno-invasion. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H7: The positive relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion via technology invasion is moderated by loneliness, such that this relationship is stronger for individuals with high loneliness.

Figure 8: Conceptual moderated mediation model (Study 3)



Method

Sample and procedure

To test our model (Figure 8) we carried out a three-part survey with a one-week time-lag in between the parts to reduce the response bias. In the first part of the survey (T1) we measured supervisor incivility as well as loneliness as a mediator as well as other items concerning study 1 and 2. The second part of the survey (T2) addressed Technostress in the form of Techno-invasion. Part 3 of the Study (T3) recorded Emotional Exhaustion.

We distributed our study mainly via the personal network as well as the university network using the snowballing sampling method. The participants answered the first survey using a direct Qualtrics^{XM} link (untracked). To onboard people for the first part, we did most of our acquisition through LinkedIn as the target group was easier to target. Other distribution tools were Mail, WhatsApp, and Instagram. At the end of the T1-survey, we requested the participants email to submit their email so we could follow up with the subsequent surveys. At T1, we collected responses from 213 participants of which 204 (95,77%) left their mail to be contacted for T2 and T3. The sample from T1 included 16 different nationalities with Austria being the most common Country (61,5%) and Germany being the second most common nationality (28.6%).

To achieve a consistent participation, the distribution in T2 and T3 was done via automatized Drip-Campaigns with automatic follow-up reminders to unresponsive and incomplete participants. To better track the completion by the participants, the sent links were personalized and tracked. This allowed us to send reminders only to missing or incomplete surveys. Out of the 204 contacted people, 148 (69,5%) participated and 146 (68,5%) completed the survey in T2.

The final sample (T1-T3) consists of 111 people (52,1% of T1 sample). The age mean was with 29.94 years (S.D.=9.938; ranging from 19 to 63) slightly higher than in the T1 sample. 67 of the participants were female (60.4%), 44 male (39.6%) and 0 divers (0%). The diversity of nationalities reduced to only 6 different nationalities in the overall sample with 63.1% from Austria and 32.4% from Germany. The majority of the participants (77.4%) in the final sample completed at least a Bachelors/Undergraduate degree (Secondary School Diploma: 0.9%, High School: 9%, Bachelors/Undergraduate: 41.4%, Masters/Graduate: 33.3%, Postgraduate: 2.7%, Foreman/Fellow: 6.3%, Other: 6.3%). 75.7% of the Participants were active in the private sector, 18.9% in the public sector and 3.6% in the Third sector (ONG, Foundation). The participants worked in a variety of industries (23 different industries) with Consultancy (24.3%) forming the majority, followed by Education (10.8%) as well as Food& Beverage and Technology (8.1%

each). The distribution of types of employment was as followed: full time: 49.5%; part time: 33.3%; Internship: 13.5% (11.7% paid, 1.8% unpaid); Minor Employment: 1.8%; Other: 1.8% (passive income being the most common answer).

Measures

Supervisor Incivility (T1) included seven statements developed by Cortina et al (2001) to assess the degree of incivility experienced by the participants (e.g.: “My supervisor puts me down or was condescending to me”, “My supervisor paid little attention to my statement or showed little interest in my opinion”, “My supervisor doubted my judgement on a matter over which I have responsibility”). The participants rated their agreement on a 5-point Likert Scale. Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.83.

Loneliness (T1) was studied using six statements previously used by Gierveld & Van Tillburg (2006) measuring two dimensions of loneliness: emotional loneliness and social loneliness (e.g.: “I experience a general sense of emptiness” (emotional loneliness), “There are plenty of people I can rely on when I have problems.”(social loneliness), “There are many people I can trust completely” (social loneliness), “I often feel rejected”(emotional loneliness). We used a 5-point Likert Scale to measure the items. Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.69.

Techno-Invasion (T2) was measured with four items, using a 7-point Likert-scale developed by Ragu-Nathan and Tarafdar (2008) (e.g.: “I spend less time with my family due to mobile technologies.”, “I have to be in touch with my work even during my vacation due to mobile technologies.”, “I feel my personal life is being invaded by mobile technologies.“). Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.69.

Emotional Exhaustion (T3) was assessed with five items using a 7-item Likert-Scale by Maslach, Jackson & Leiter (2016) (e.g.: “I feel emotionally drained from my work”, “I feel used p at the end of the workday”, “I feel burned out from my work”. Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.87.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities and zero-order correlations are presented in Table 7 for Study 3.

Table 7: Correlations, means, standard deviations and reliabilities (Sample 3)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Supervisor Incivility	1.40	.57	(0.83)			
2. Techno-Invasion	3.30	1.31	.099	(0.69)		
3. Emotional Exhaustion	3.76	1.21	.358**	.171	(0.87)	
4. Loneliness	2.02	.60	.337**	.125	.402**	(0.69)

Notes: N = 111; Cronbach's α coefficients are given in brackets along the diagonal

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities and zero-order correlations for the full sample are presented in

Table 8.

Table 8: Correlations, means, standard deviations and reliabilities (Full Sample)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
5. Supervisor Incivility	1.39	.46	(0.87)			
6. Techno-Invasion	3.29	1.21	.168**	(0.69)		
7. Emotional Exhaustion	3.77	1.06	.328**	.242**	(0.88)	
8. Loneliness	2.07	.60	.243**	.167**	.350**	(0.72)

Notes: N = 379; Cronbach's α coefficients are given in brackets along the diagonal

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Test of hypotheses

To test hypothesis 1, we used a linear regression analysis. For the remaining hypotheses (H6, H7) we conducted a bootstrapping analysis with 5,000 samples using the PROCESS SPSS macro by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007). For Hypothesis 6, suggesting a mediation of techno-invasion on the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion we used PROCESS Model 4. Following, for the moderation of Loneliness (Hypothesis 7) we used Model 7. All the analyses were run using 95% confidence intervals and predictors were mean-centered.

The linear regression analysis showed that supervisor incivility was directly and positively related to emotional exhaustion ($B = 0.76$; 95% CI[0.39, 1.14]). This shows that with increased

supervisor incivility, the levels of employee's emotional exhaustion increased as well. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is supported.

To test Hypothesis 6 (H6) we first examined the relationship between supervisor incivility and techno-invasion ($B = 0.23$; 95% CI[-0.21, 0.67]) which was not significant. Following we examined the relationship between techno-invasion and emotional exhaustion ($B = 0.13$; 95% CI[-0.37, 0.29]) which was also not-significant. Therefore, the indirect effect of supervisor incivility on emotional exhaustion with techno-invasion as mediator was not significant ($B = 0.03$; 95% CI[-0.06, 1.62]) as there can be no mediation effect without the relationship between predictor and mediator or between mediator and dependent. Accordingly, Hypothesis 6 was not supported in the study sample.

To test Hypothesis 7 (H7) we ran the conditional indirect effects model. The Bootstrapping results are presented in Table 9. As already tested during Hypothesis 6, supervisor incivility is not directly related to techno-invasion, and neither is techno-invasion related to emotional exhaustion. There was also no significant correlation between loneliness and techno-invasion ($B = 0.16$; 95% CI[-0.28, 0.60]) and supervisor incivility was not related with loneliness ($B = 0.43$; 95% CI[-0.11, 0.98]). The interaction effects overall, was nearly significant ($B = -0.77$; 95% CI[-1.54, 0.008]). Looking at the interaction effects, we found, that lower level of loneliness had a significant impact on the relationship between supervisor incivility and techno-invasion ($B = 0.89$; 95% CI[0.013, 1.177]) whereas higher levels of loneliness do not ($B = -0.02$; 95% CI[-0.51, 0.47]). To support our findings, Figure 9 shows a depiction of the interaction effect.

7.48% of the variance in techno-invasion was explained through the interaction between supervisor incivility and loneliness ($R\text{-sq} = 7.48\%$).

Interaction plots for Supervisor Incivility, Loneliness and Techno Invasion

Figure 9: Sample 3, N = 111

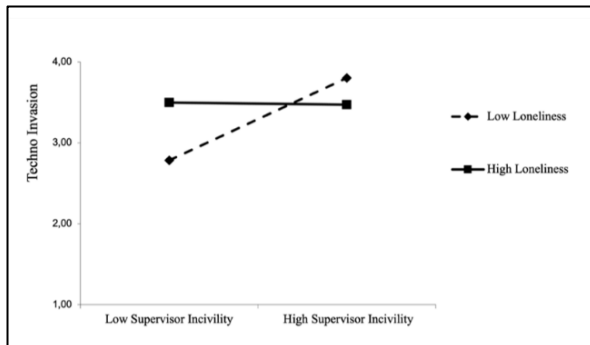
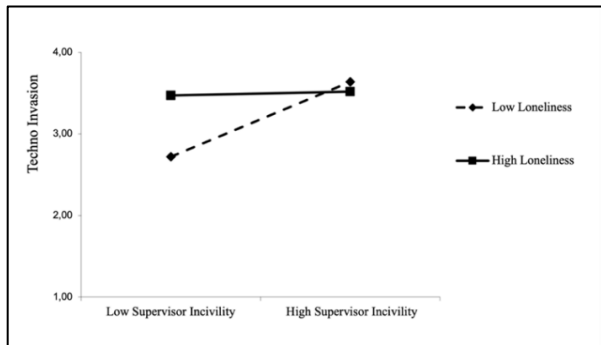


Figure 10: Full Sample, N = 379



We further analyzed the conditional indirect effects model. However, due to the lack of relationship between mediator and dependent there were no significant effects of neither low loneliness ($B = 0.11$; 95% CI[-0.07, 0.36]) nor high loneliness ($B = 0.003$; 95% CI[-0.14, 0.12]) on the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, Hypothesis 7 is not supported with the collected study sample.

Comparison with Full Sample

To review potential limitations due to the sample size, the hypotheses were also tested on the full sample which showed interesting outcomes.

The linear regression analysis on the full sample showed a more significant correlation between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion ($B = 0.76$; 95% CI[0.54, 0.98]). In the full sample the relationship between supervisor incivility and techno-invasion showed a significant positive correlation ($B = 0.44$; 95% CI[0.18, 0.71]). Furthermore, the relationship between techno-invasion and emotional exhaustion was also significant ($B = 0.17$; 95% CI[0.08, 0.25]). Testing the indirect effects of techno-invasion on the correlation between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion showed a significant positive effect ($B = 0.07$; 95% CI[0.02, 0.16]). Therefore Hypothesis 6 is confirmed for the full sample.

To retest Hypothesis 7 (H7) with the full sample, we also ran the conditional indirect effects model showing a negative significant interaction effect ($B = -0.79$; 95% CI[-1.24, -0.34]). The

Bootstrapping results are presented in Table 9. In contrast to the study sample, the full sample also showed a positive correlation between loneliness and techno-invasion ($B = 0.26$; 95% CI[-0.06, 0.47]). The conditional effect of low loneliness appears to be much stronger for the full sample ($B = 0.998$; 95% CI[0.55, 1.45]). To support those findings, Figure 10 depicts the interaction effect. Overall, when loneliness-levels were low, supervisor-incivility has an increased impact on techno-invasion which subsequently increases emotional exhaustion. With high levels of loneliness, the techno-invasion levels seem to be consistently high so no direct correlation could be observed ($B = 0.09$; 95% CI[-0.05, 0.09]). Therefore, Hypothesis 7 is not supported.

Table 9: Bootstrapping results - Model 7

	Techno Invasion				Emotional Exhaustion			
	b	t	LLCI	ULCI	b	t	LLCI	ULCI
Sample 3 (N = 111)								
<i>Main effects</i>								
Supervisor Incivility	.435	1.592	-.107	.976	.733	3.859**	.357	1.110
Loneliness	-.160	.721	-.280	.600				
Techno-Invasion					.126	1.527	-.037	.289
<i>Interaction Effects</i>								
SI x L	-.766	-1.962	-1.539	.008				
<i>Index of moderated mediation</i>								
SI x L x TI					-.096		-.318	.075
Full Sample (N = 379)								
<i>Main effects</i>								
Supervisor Incivility	.521	3.660**	.243	.807	.683	6.116**	.464	.903
Loneliness	.265	2.553*	.061	.469				
Techno-Invasion					.168	3.953**	.084	.251
<i>Interaction Effects</i>								
SI x L	-.792	-3.457**	-1.243	-.342				
<i>Index of moderated mediation</i>								
SI x L x TI					-.137		-.242	-.029

Note: LLCI = lower limit confidence interval, ULCI = upper limit confidence interval

* $\rho < 0.05$; ** $\rho < 0.01$

Discussion

In study 3, we explored the mediation of techno-invasion on the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, we examined how loneliness is moderating the relationship between supervisor incivility and techno-invasion to identify if supervisor incivility

causes techno-invasion for people with high or low loneliness and how this can cause emotional exhaustion.

In the collected study sample, our initial predictions could not be supported to the expected degree. Although we were able to examine a strong correlation between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion in line with previous research, we were, surprisingly, not able to detect any significant correlations between supervisor incivility and techno-invasion as well as techno-invasion and emotional exhaustion. As many of the study sample results, especially the missing correlation between techno-invasion and emotional exhaustion, diverge from literature findings and previous research, we must assume that this is an issue of statistical power. Therefore, we will focus this discussion on the results of the full sample.

When looking at the full sample, we were able to observe most of the expected relationships. Consistent with previous findings and in unison with the COR-Model, we observed a significant mediation effect of techno-invasion on the relationship of supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion. This observation emphasizes the relevance of a respectful work environment in context of mental health.

Surprisingly, in neither the study sample nor the full sample were we able to observe the expected effect of high loneliness on the relationship between supervisor-incivility and techno-invasion. In fact, both samples showed the opposite effect. According to our data, supervisor incivility has a stronger impact on techno-invasion for people with low loneliness in contrast to people with high loneliness. While people with high loneliness have continuously high levels of techno-invasion independent of experienced uncivil behavior from their supervisors, people with low loneliness seem to be vulnerable to supervisor incivility causing techno-invasion and subsequently emotional exhaustion.

One side of the effect can be explained through the correlation between loneliness and techno-invasion. The collected sample shows a significant positive correlation between loneliness and

techno-invasion, so people who are lonely already seem to suffer from techno-invasion without the influence of a supervisor. When someone already has little to no resources, they cannot be exploited any further. However, the other side of the effect suggests that despite possessing many social resources, that according to COR Theory should help a person to better protect their other resources (e.g., energy resources), supervisor incivility can have such a big impact that those other resources get depleted anyway (in this case by causing techno-invasion).

We assume that there could be multiple potential reasons for this phenomenon. First, supervisor incivility might cause the person to proactively invest their resources (subsequently causing techno-invasion) in fear of depleting their conditional resources (in this scenario the resource of employment causing unemployment). As the first two principles of the COR theory state, resource loss is disproportionate to resource gain and to protect resources, one must invest other resources (Doane, Schumm, and Hobfoll 2012). Therefore, to protect the depletion of their conditional resources (employment), they have to invest a disproportionate amount (using work-ICTs during non-work hours). Second, people engaging in an active social-life might be more sensitive to intrusions into their personal life and work-life balance. Therefore, although the usage pattern might not be of difference, the perception of techno-invasion might be a different one in contrast to someone with high levels of loneliness (time-wise opportunity costs might be lower for lonely people). Third, the current pandemic situation might impact the self-perception of what it means to be lonely. People who have experienced an active social life pre-covid might still perceive themselves as not being lonely despite external factors like social-distancing and curfew depleting their social resources. In combination with a “working from home” environment, which surged during covid as more than 40% of the population worked at least part-time from home (Statista 2021), techno-invasion is more difficult to identify. People who have been heavily experiencing techno-invasion might not have perceived it as such.

General discussion

The primary purpose of this research was to increase our knowledge of *why* supervisor incivility is related to emotional exhaustion (mediators), and *for whom* these effects are especially relevant (moderators). Across three studies, we found partial support for our hypotheses. Study 1 results suggest that negative affect acts as a mediator in the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion. The impact of supervisor incivility on emotional exhaustion through negative affect was found to be conditional on core self-evaluations. Generally, this indirect effect was strongest for individuals with lower levels of core self-evaluations, although a moderate effect was also visible for individuals with higher levels of core self-evaluations. In study 2, rumination acted as a mediator for the supervisor incivility-emotional exhaustion relationship in the full sample. In addition, we found that gender moderated the positive effect of supervisor incivility on emotional exhaustion through rumination. Only for men, supervisor incivility resulted in higher levels of emotional exhaustion via increased ruminative thoughts. For women, this indirect effect appeared to be non-significant. In study 3, loneliness moderated the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion via technology invasion in the full sample. The effect was significant for people with low levels of loneliness. It was not significant for individuals with high levels of loneliness.

Our research contributes to the knowledge about mediators and moderators of the impact of supervisor incivility on emotional exhaustion in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

First, we indicate that multiple mechanisms may be at play that link supervisor incivility to emotional exhaustion and thereby highlight the importance of examining this relationship from various perspectives. We lend support to COR theory by showing that employees lose or risk losing resources (Hobfoll 1989) when they face workplace stressors such as supervisor incivility. For example, supervisor incivility takes away emotional resources as it causes emotional distress that depletes an individual's positive mood. Further, it demands cognitive resources because

employees engage in ruminative thoughts when trying to make sense of the negative incidents. Finally, incivility threatens employees' work-life-balance as it causes them to feel that their lives are being increasingly invaded by technology.

In line with COR theory, we also suggest a loss spiral in which employees become sensitive to higher resource loss once they have suffered initial resource loss (Hobfoll 1989), ultimately resulting in a state where employees feel deprived of their physical and cognitive resources. Concretely, employees who experience negative affect in response to supervisor incivility may invest additional resources to cope with their negative emotions, especially when the work-related negative affect spills over to negative affect at home (Song, Foo, and Uy 2008; S. Zhou et al. 2018). Rumination itself is a maladaptive coping mechanism because it is associated with sustained cognitive activation that depletes cognitive resources (Demsky et al. 2019). Perceived techno-invasion, in turn, may require employees to invest additional resources to recover from the resource-loss through the deterioration of their work-life balance (compare Harris et al. 2021). All these mechanisms may also put a strain on employees' emotional resources which finally results in a state of feeling emotionally drained. Hence, the (in)ability to regulate negative emotions, apply effective cognitive and emotional coping mechanisms, and control connectivity to work through mobile devices seem to be crucial elements in explaining why supervisor incivility may cause emotional exhaustion.

Second, we add nuances to these mediating effects and expand the knowledge of moderating variables. COR theory posits that individuals with fewer resources are more vulnerable to resources loss (Doane, Schumm, and Hobfoll 2012). Consistently, the negative effect of stressors can be buffered when individuals are provided with resources (e.g., social, energy or personal resources). Previous research has found that trust in supervisor moderated the indirect effect between supervisor incivility and citizenship performance via work engagement (Jawahar and Schreurs 2018), and that coworker emotional support acted as a moderator of the indirect effect of

supervisor incivility on service performance via job insecurity (Shin, Lee, and Hur 2021). As many of these studies have focused on moderating effects of situational resources such as different types of work-related support (e.g., Lim and Lee 2011), our studies provide a broader picture of various resources, including personality, gender, and social resources.

We show that low levels of core self-evaluations reinforce the effect of supervisor incivility on emotional exhaustion through negative affect; that is, employees that have a less positive image of themselves lack the personal resources to buffer negative supervisor experiences, and therefore feel more negative emotions after incidents of supervisor incivility. Hence, the outcomes of supervisor incivility are especially detrimental when the victims of this type of behavior think negatively about themselves. This is particularly worrying because – in line with victim precipitation theory – people with a negative self-image are already more likely to experience abuse from their supervisor (Kluemper et al. 2019).

Furthermore, we manifest the assumption that gender differences in the reaction to supervisor incivility exist. Apparently, the loss of cognitive resources through ruminative thoughts in response to supervisor incivility is only relevant for men. Women, in turn, seem to have high and stable levels of rumination. We have already discussed possible explanations for this finding, for example, that women might be less prone to ruminative thoughts in response to supervisor incivility because they are more used to experiencing this kind of behavior than men (Loi, Loh, and Hine 2015).

Finally, we indicate that social resources play an important role in employees' reactions to supervisor incivility. Contrary to our expectations, supervisor incivility seems to be only related to emotional exhaustion via techno invasion for individuals with low levels of loneliness. Not only does this mean that people who have stable resources are at serious risk of depleting their resources due to experiences of uncivil workplace behavior, but it also shows that even with civil supervisors, techno-invasion is a serious issue for people experiencing general loneliness.

The findings of studies 2 and 3 bring an interesting nuance to the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion. Men and individuals with low levels of loneliness appear to react strongly to supervisor incivility with heightened levels of rumination or techno invasion. For others, techno invasion and rumination do not serve as linking mechanisms between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion. Indeed, women seem to have continuously high levels of rumination and individuals with high levels of loneliness seem to perceive continuously high levels of techno-invasion. It follows, that individuals with these characteristics already experience heightened levels of distress and are generally more at risk of ruminating or experiencing techno invasion, respectively. With supervisor incivility being a subtle form of mistreatment, they might simply react less strongly to uncivil behavior and remain fixated on other sources of distress.

Third, we deliver evidence for the detrimental effects of supervisor incivility in a particular vulnerable time that is characterized by job insecurity and social distancing. The present findings underscore the role of supervisors in employees' levels of emotional exhaustion and confirm that this relationship also exists during times affected by the pandemic (also see Hwang, Hur, and Shin 2021). With our sample mean age being relatively low, we also confirm that this effect exists among young professionals. During the pandemic, levels of emotional exhaustion among employees generally increased. Interestingly, this effect was strongest for younger and short-tenured employees, which might be attributable to less effective stress-coping strategies used by the youth compared to older individuals (Hwang, Hur, and Shin 2021). Another explaining factor could be a higher use of social media by the youth during the pandemic, which, as research has shown, in times of disaster adds to negative emotions and increases mental health problems (Zhao and Zhou 2020).

Nonetheless, we also indicate that the patterns we observed during the pandemic are not fully aligned with prior empirical evidence. Adapting COR theory, some researchers argue that the Covid-19 pandemic is an environmental stressor that causes a resource loss and thereby makes it

harder for individuals to cope with interpersonal stressors in the workplace. As stated before, levels of emotional exhaustion seem to have risen during the pandemic, with the increase being more pronounced for female employees than for male employees (Hwang, Hur, and Shin 2021). However, as indicated by our results, for women burnout does not seem to be triggered by ruminative thoughts in response to supervisor incivility. Rather, women may be more prone to feel more emotionally drained during the pandemic as time spent on care work increased (Hwang, Hur, and Shin 2021; Xue and McMunn 2021). Similarly, we may assume that levels of techno-invasion are already very pronounced among lonely individuals due to working from home and social distancing, as the opportunity costs might be substantially smaller and that supervisor incivility as a stressor may be of reduced relevance in this respect. We therefore argue that the Covid-19 pandemic presents circumstances that may challenge previously perceived patterns. Thus, increased attention needs to be devoted to supervisor incivility, its consequences, as well as mediating and moderating variables in the context of Covid-19.

Practical implications

Our results confirm that supervisor incivility has damaging consequences for employees. Importantly, the detrimental effects of incivility go beyond direct employee outcomes. When employees believe their employer condones mistreatment in the workplace, this can have a serious impact on the organizational culture (Pearson and Porath 2005). Organizations that do not punish uncivil behavior risk to create an organizational climate that tolerates uncivil behavior, which may result in increased withdrawal behavior (Loi, Loh, and Hine 2015). Furthermore, incivility tends to cause a spiral effect as victims often become predators themselves in order to compensate their negative experience (Jex et al. 2010). Therefore, policy makers in organizations cannot ignore bad leadership behavior, but must take preventive actions instead. Despite the low intensity of supervisor incivility, organizations must pursue zero-tolerance policies when they receive reports about recurring incidents of uncivil supervisor behavior from employees.

Previous research suggests that such interventions can be successful, but require an integrated strategy covering individual, job, organizational and societal levels due to the complex nature of workplace incivility (Hodgins, MacCurtain, and Mannix-McNamara 2014). Researchers have compared various interventions addressing workplace incivility and found the CREW (Civility, Respect, and Engagement at Work) intervention to be most effective (Hodgins, MacCurtain, and Mannix-McNamara 2014). CREW is a multi-component intervention and is designed to facilitate cultural change by fostering a change in attitudes, values, and beliefs (Leiter et al. 2011), thereby building on the link between incivility and organizational culture as described above. Concretely, CREW entails various actions such as management explicitly encouraging civility as a core value of the organization (e.g., public statements), surveys to identify baselines of incivility and organizational attitudes on work group level, and educating facilitators in methods for leading structured exercises with respective work groups (Leiter et al. 2011).

At the same time, companies should encourage positive leadership styles. Supervisor fairness and transformational leadership may help employees achieve their goals and increase well-being (Bakker and Demerouti 2007). Researchers have found that high levels of transformational leadership were associated with high levels of perceived meaningfulness of the work, and low levels of rumination, thereby decreasing depressive symptoms (Perko, Kinnunen, and Feldt 2014).

Although it is critical to prevent supervisor incivility, employees also need to be equipped with positive coping mechanisms as negative workplace experiences cannot be avoided at all costs.

Negative Affect. Our results show, that building and maintaining a positive self-image is key for the emotional well-being of employees. Even though neither a positive mindset nor a large resource buffer can serve as a guarantee to avoid emotional exhaustion or burnout, it prolongs individual's resilience to burnout. We therefore see a necessity in building on employee's personality by providing resources to develop or enhance the positive self-perception, for example, by offering psychological support (Zhu et al. 2021).

Other than that, measures can be taken, and actions encouraged to minimize negative thoughts in the workplace. One suggestion is to include contact to natural environments into the daily working life, since this works as a buffer against negative affect reactions (McMahan and Estes 2015). Organizations could support this by providing a garden, or by selecting office spaces close to parks or forests. Also, since well-being has become increasingly relevant in the workplace literature, we integrate research that proposes mindfulness as one angle to grasp the issue of negative affect (Junça-Silva, Pombeira, and Caetano 2021). Indeed, integrating mindfulness into the work environment seems to positively affect well-being, through increasing awareness for small events that shape the workday (Junça-Silva, Pombeira, and Caetano 2021).

In addition, we want to emphasize the importance of taking a holistic approach to human resources, especially teambuilding and recruiting, that promotes diversity among employees. We do not suggest, that organizations should focus on hiring employees with high core self-evaluations. Excluding individuals with a negative self-concept could violate discrimination policies, as there exists a correlation with lower socioeconomic background (Chang et al. 2012). Teams should therefore be staffed with people with more and less positive self-concepts, to provide a supportive environment for all, while avoiding marginalization.

Rumination. Furthermore, our results suggest that employees' (especially men's) tendency to ruminate in response to incivility should be addressed. Cognitive-behavioral interventions have been found to help reduce rumination. An intervention that consisted of discussions on the impact of stress on health and well-being, theoretical sessions on cognitive awareness, as well as practical sessions to review individuals' performance (e.g., time-management, communication under pressure) and recovery behaviors (e.g., sleep, diet, and social interaction) enabled participants in a study to reduce their levels of work-related rumination and chronic fatigue (Querstret et al. 2016).

In addition, psychological detachment from work may help employees to alleviate negative rumination. Researchers have found that recovery experiences moderated the negative impact of

workplace incivility on sleep via rumination, with this indirect effect being weakest for individuals with higher levels of psychological detachment from work (Demsky et al. 2019). In terms of COR theory (Hobfoll 1989), psychological detachment indicates that resources can be restored. Concretely, mindfulness practices at home and the workplace may reduce perceived stress (Roeser et al. 2013) and levels of reported burnout (Flook et al. 2013). Using daily practices to develop awareness of thoughts and emotions (Good et al. 2016) may help employees to make sense of their situation. Similarly, engagement in leisure activities after work may enable employees to mentally let go of work. Empirical evidence has shown that off-job pleasure was negatively related to levels of fatigue (van Hooff et al. 2011).

Our findings suggest that these coping mechanisms as a response to supervisor incivility are especially relevant for men. However, this in no way implies that women need less protection from supervisor incivility. Rather, our findings indicate that women generally are in need of mechanisms that help them to reduce ruminative thoughts, independent of supervisor incivility. In addition to methods for psychological detachment, programs addressing the additional burdens imposed by the pandemic may be required. Flexible time arrangements or additional time off that can be taken when unexpected family demands arise may help employees – especially women – to cope with the variety of stressors that they are exposed to (Turner et al. 2014).

Techno-invasion. One of the most efficient ways how supervisors can improve their employees work-life balance and reduce the impact of techno-invasion is by communicating and enforcing certain limitations and rules defining the usage of business devices after work (Pflügner et al. 2020). Similar to tackling rumination, the psychological detachment from work may help employees to avoid techno-invasion. Disabling access to work devices for certain times or limiting email traffic during after-work hours are some of the measures that can be implemented. Especially the last one can be highly efficient as it can be established on a technical level out of the employee's decision making and has the potential to set a certain standard of work-culture

across the whole company (Pflügner et al. 2020). Furthermore, for those in critical positions where restricting access and availability might not be a viable option, certain protective measures must be put in place to assist victims of techno-invasion in recovering their resources more quickly. According to Pflügner (2021), practicing mindfulness can significantly reduce the perception of techno-stressors, including techno-invasion. Although it will not change the factual work-life balance of an employee, the perception of techno-invasion will be lowered and therefore the ability to cope with the experienced circumstances will be improved. However, there are certain limitations as once techno-invasion is experienced, mindfulness only has a limited impact on preventing emotional exhaustion and burnout (Pflügner, Maier, and Weitzel 2021).

Furthermore, we want to highlight that techno-invasion seems to exist independent of supervisor influence. In line with previous research showing the correlation of loneliness and workaholism (Ng, Sorensen, and Feldman 2007), our study indicates that lonely people are trying to compensate their depleted social resources through being available for work outside of their work hours. However, researchers found that the personal consequences of workaholism outweigh the possible resource restoration by far (Clark et al. 2016), even causing medical health issues (Balducci, Avanzi, and Fraccaroli 2018). Although incivility does not relate to techno-invasion for these people, supervisors have the ability to reduce techno-invasion. They can proactively tackle loneliness by encouraging meaningful workplace relationships, including employees in decision-making processes, encouraging teamwork and last but not least taking a personal interest in the life of the employees.

Limitations and future research

Our collection of studies has some limitations. First, the demographics of our study participants are somewhat restricted. We lacked variability in age, with a mean age of 30.0 years in the full sample. Therefore, our findings might be limited to young workers and particularly to young females, with a proportion of 60% of the total sample. Second, most of the participants from our

studies (85%) were from German-speaking Europe (German (63%); Austrian (22%)), while we lack international spread of survey participants. Our findings might therefore not be valid for an international context. This opens a first opportunity for further research, as other cultures and nationalities might provide a different view. Also, our sample mainly includes single participants (73.8%) with a high educational level, since 34% of respondents hold a Master's degree or higher and more than half (54%) hold a Bachelor's degree or higher (even 87% in sample 2). We see a possible bias here, since we assume that for young, career-driven individuals, the likelihood to experience emotional exhaustion due to personal reasons is somewhat greater, considering that the thirties are a crucial age in family and future planning. Additionally, previous research has indicated that work-related ruminative thoughts are more common among individuals with a higher socioeconomic status (Perko, Kinnunen, and Feldt 2017; Van Laethem et al. 2015). That is, participants with higher levels of work-related rumination indicated higher levels of education than participants with lower levels of work-related rumination. Assuming that highly educated individuals work in more complex jobs than individuals with lower levels of education, we may conclude that the type of job impacts an individual's tendency to engage in ruminative thoughts (Perko, Kinnunen, and Feldt 2017). Hence, a further generational and demographic spread might serve different results regarding the connection between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion.

Generally, our results lend support to the notion that multiple mechanisms may be at play when linking supervisor incivility to negative affect, rumination, techno-invasion, and emotional exhaustion. Hence, future research should seek to determine what distinguishes those people who experience negative thoughts, rumination, technology stress, and burnout as a result of supervisor incivility from those who do not, from various angles.

Furthermore, research can further contribute to discover, if specific components of core self-evaluations contribute more or less to negative affect feelings. With this knowledge, a better approach to countering supervisor incivility, especially during times of crisis, could be developed.

Further research is also needed on the gender differences in stress response, in order to be able to provide targeted resources to protect men and women from burnout and further negative outcomes of supervisor incivility. Generally, future research should search for reasons for constantly high levels of rumination among women, especially in light of the pandemic. While role conflict might be a possible antecedent for rumination and mental health issues (Xue and McMunn 2021), researchers should aim at identifying resources that may buffer this relationship.

Building on the concept of identity-relevant stressors (Thoits 1991), future research may also examine the moderating effect of job involvement in the supervisor incivility-rumination relationship and whether gender differences exist. Additionally, goal-process theory (Martin and Tesser 1996) may build the basis for analyzing whether perceived work success, self-efficacy or organization-based self-esteem may buffer the effect of supervisor incivility on rumination.

Furthermore, as study 3 faced the problem of statistical power, further research should be conducted with a bigger sample size to confirm the observed effects. Moreover, Covid-19 might have had a significant impact on how people perceived their own levels of loneliness and their experienced techno-invasion. After working from home for nearly two years and being forced to social distance from friends, even very social people experienced loneliness and techno-invasion during Covid-19 (Walsh 2021). However, those people might still have a self-perception of not being lonely or not experiencing techno-invasion despite actually having those experiences.

Additionally, for measuring loneliness, we used one of the two industry standards, the DJG scale. However, like the UCLA scale, the DJG scale does not consider or measure a third dimension of loneliness: existential loneliness. Existential loneliness describes when a person experiences the

immediate feeling of being fundamentally separated from existence (e.g., people, the universe). In contrast to other types of loneliness, existential loneliness is described as “immediate”, so it can be a temporary feeling that is difficult to measure. As this also makes existential loneliness difficult to define, it often gets disregarded in studies (Bolmsjö, Tengland, and Rämgård 2019). Lastly, further research should look into the long-term influence of supervisor incivility on burnout during the Covid-19 pandemic. Having conducted our studies during the pandemic, we can make general statements about the investigated effects under the influence of the pandemic. However, additional research is needed to determine which specific crisis-related factors affect burnout and the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion. Future research may specifically control for surrounding factors, such as isolation phases, personal infection, or vaccination opinion, as these are currently relevant stressors to consider. Additionally, the degree of exposure to Covid-19 in the workplace, as well as general working conditions (e.g., remote vs. on-site), and job characteristics could be considered as possible moderators (Hwang, Hur, and Shin 2021).

Conclusion

This collection of studies examined the indirect effects of different moderators and mediators on the relationship between supervisor incivility on emotional exhaustion. Throughout the study, we were able to partially support our hypotheses:

First, core self-evaluations moderated the effect of supervisor incivility on negative affect, which further led to emotional exhaustion. We found the relationship to be substantial for individuals with low levels of core self-evaluations. The effect was also significant for high levels of core self-evaluations, but it was only moderately salient and only observable in the full sample.

Second, gender moderated the effect of supervisor incivility on emotional exhaustion via rumination. Contrary to our expectations, this effect was only significant for men, but not for

women. That is, when men experience uncivil behavior from their supervisor, they feel more emotionally exhausted because they increasingly engage in ruminative thoughts.

Finally, when analyzing the full sample, we found that the effect of supervisor incivility on emotional exhaustion via techno-invasion was significant for low level of loneliness, but not for high levels. The results indicate that lonely people are generally experiencing high levels of techno-invasion, and that people with stable social resources are at risk of draining their resources due to experienced supervisor incivility.

Our findings provide empirical support for the importance of mitigating supervisor incivility in the workplace and instead promoting healthy work environments. We contribute to the understanding of the links between workplace incivility and burnout, and direct attention to the differences in the experience of and reactions to supervisor incivility based on personality, gender, and social environment. We offer several practical implications, including suggestions for workplace interventions to reduce supervisor incivility and to provide employees with resources to mentally and emotionally distance from work after working hours.

... Or as Miranda Priestly from "The Devil Wears Prada" would say: "That's all."

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