

WORKPLACE INCIVILITY AMONG PORTUGUESE HOTEL EMPLOYEES: IS LACK OF RESPECT BURNING THEM OUT?

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ABSTRACT

Workplace incivility is defined as rude behaviour that violates social norms at work. It has been linked to psychological distress (burnout), mainly in healthcare and educational settings. Burnout is a serious public health concern. Studies addressing the impact of workplace incivility on employee well-being in the hospitality industry are scarce. The primary aim of this study was to examine the relationship between workplace incivility and burnout among hotel employees. Cross-sectional data for 385 Portuguese hotel employees (54% male; $M_{age} = 33.9$, $SD = 11.3$) were analysed using bootstrap regression models. Results revealed that (1) supervisor incivility was significantly more frequent than co-worker incivility; (2) supervisor and co-worker incivility were significant positive predictors of emotional exhaustion and cynicism, the core components of burnout; (3) supervisor incivility was the stronger predictor of emotional exhaustion, and co-worker incivility the stronger predictor of cynicism; and (4) severe burnout was highly prevalent in our sample. This study provides insight into the phenomena of workplace incivility and burnout among Portuguese hotel employees. Our results have practical value for management strategies aiming to prevent or reduce burnout, which in turn has the potential to enhance individual, group, customer and organizational outcomes within the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Workplace Incivility; Respect; Burnout; Hotel Employees.

JEL Classification: L83, I10

1. INTRODUCTION

Our global and highly competitive world poses a number of challenges for quality interpersonal relationships at work. The requirement to work with culturally diverse people means that we need to interact with and understand different social norms. To successfully deal with such diversity on a number of levels, clear and shared norms for respectful behaviour in the workplace are paramount (Barak, 2014). Our dependency on electronic communication can also facilitate rude behaviour (incivility), be it due to misunderstandings caused by the lack of non-verbal cues, or because physical absence can protect the instigator of negative behaviour (Pearson, Andersson & Porath, 2000).

Workplace incivility is a *subtle*, yet pervasive, form of interpersonal mistreatment (Cortina, 2008), that has shown to have deleterious effects on employees' levels of motivation (Reio & Sanders-Reio, 2011), performance (Porath & Erez, 2007) and well-being (Leiter, Peck & Gamuchian, 2015). Workplace incivility can escalate to more violent behaviour

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(Andersson & Pearson, 1999), such as bullying, that is highly prevalent in a number of industries (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2011). Poor interpersonal relationships at work are considered a psychosocial risk (Elsler, 2011), a well-known source of stress in the work environment (Day & Leiter, 2014).

The effects of prolonged exposure to work-related stress can lead to burnout, that is characterized by high levels of emotional exhaustion and cynicism (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Given its detrimental effects on workers' physical (Armon, Melamed, Shirom & Shapira, 2010; Toker, Melamed, Berliner, Zeltser & Shapira, 2012) and emotional (Ahola *et al.*, 2005, 2006; Peterson *et al.*, 2008; Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012) well-being, burnout is currently considered to be a serious public health issue (Bauer & Hämmig, 2014). Burnout can also lead to negative organizational outcomes, such as high employee turnover (Leiter & Maslach, 2009), which is a major problem for the tourism and hospitality industry (Faldetta, Fasone & Provenzano, 2013).

Tourism and hospitality is a key business sector for the Portuguese economy (Pordata, 2017a, 2017b, World Economic Forum, 2017). However, employees within this industry are exposed to a number of well-known stressors, such as long or unsociable work hours, high workload, low wages, and interpersonal conflict at work (Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007; Poulston, 2008; Kim & Jogaratnam, 2010; Elsler, 2011; O' Neill & Davis, 2011; Yavas, Karatepe & Babakus, 2013). Studies have shown that hotel employees' job satisfaction, which is inversely associated with burnout, is an important factor for promoting customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and customer willingness to recommend the hotel to others, thereby contributing to the organization's bottom line (Moura, Orgambídez-Ramos & Jesus, 2015; Borralha, Jesus, Pinto & Viseu, 2016; Melo, Moniz, Silva & Batista, 2017).

The majority of studies on workplace incivility have been conducted among North American health service providers, and a call has been made to extend incivility research to other countries and occupations (Schilpzand, Pater & Erez, 2016).

In general, research on incivility in the hotel industry is scarce, and to the best of our knowledge the relationship between incivility and burnout in the Portuguese hospitality industry has not been investigated. Thus, the principal aim of this study is to examine the relationship between workplace incivility and burnout among Portuguese hotel employees. The specific objectives of the study are to: (a) assess the frequency of workplace incivility experienced from supervisors and from co-workers; (b) examine levels of emotional exhaustion, cynicism and burnout among employees; and (c) assess the impacts of supervisor and co-worker incivility on employees' levels of emotional exhaustion and cynicism.

Insight into the phenomena, and an understanding of the nature of the relationship between, workplace incivility and burnout in the hotel industry can provide vital knowledge for the prevention or reduction of burnout, which in turn has the potential to enhance individual, group, customer and organizational-based outcomes.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Workplace Incivility

In their seminal paper, Andersson and Pearson (1999: 458) defined workplace incivility as "low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviours are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others". Indeed, it is the mild, seemingly irregular, and ambiguous nature of the behaviour that differentiates incivility from other more aggressive workplace behaviours, such as sexual harassment and bullying, that by

definition are high intensity acts, perpetrated on a regular basis, and clearly intended to cause harm to others (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Uncivil behaviour is subtle and generally covert. It can be manifested through verbal (e.g., a sarcastic comment) or non-verbal behaviour (e.g., ignoring or excluding someone, facial expressions, or not completing an assigned task and creating extra work for others), and the intention to deliberately do harm might not be clear or even exist (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). As such, an experience of workplace incivility can be the result of carelessness, oversight or indifference on the part of the instigator, and/or hypersensitivity or misunderstanding on the part of the target (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Sliter, Withrow & Jex, 2015).

Workplace incivility is shaped by cultural norms, traditions, as well as formal and informal rules. Thus, the very definition of acceptable or unacceptable social behaviour at work can vary by group, organization, industry and country (Hofstede, 1983; Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Incivility may be the result of the global, technological and multicultural economy that we live and work in. The demand for very short response times can lead people to believe that being courteous (e.g., greeting people, showing personal concern for others) is a waste of time (Pearson & Porath, 2005). Also, communicating via technology, often without knowing the person with whom we are communicating with, might be reason enough to dismiss careful and respectful treatment. Cultural differences can also facilitate misunderstandings, as what might be acceptable behaviour in one culture, could be deemed disrespectful behaviour in another culture (Hofstede, 1983; Pearson & Porath, 2005).

Although workplace incivility is often trivialized (Cortina, Magley, Williams & Langhout, 2001), its prevalence is on the rise (Porath & Pearson, 2013), and research shows that it can have detrimental effects on individual, group and organizational outcomes (Estes & Wang, 2008; Lim, Cortina & Magley, 2008; Porath & Pearson, 2010, 2013; Schilpzand *et al.*, 2016).

Workplace incivility negatively affects mutual respect at work and cooperation (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), as well as work effectiveness (Pearson, Andersson & Porath, 2000). It has also been linked to reduced work effort, productivity, performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, and increased voluntary turnover (Lim *et al.*, 2008; Pearson & Porath, 2005). Workplace incivility can jeopardize an organization's image and reputation (Porath, Macinnis & Folkes, 2010; Bavik & Bavik, 2015), and have a negative impact on an organization's financial performance (Porath & Pearson, 2013).

Workplace incivility is a negative form of interpersonal treatment that can be explained using a social interactionist perspective (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993), which takes interpersonal, situational and contextual factors into account. Uncivil behaviour may stem from the need to defend oneself or restore justice, so the behaviour should not be viewed as a discrete event, but rather as a dynamic interpersonal process that involves at least two, if not three, parties: the instigator of the behaviour, the target of the behaviour, and those who witness the behaviour (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

The extant literature on workplace incivility deals primarily with the effects of supervisor-to-employee incivility and/or co-worker-to-co-worker incivility. Nevertheless, a number of studies have shown the importance of customers' negative behaviour (incivility) for employee health and well-being (Grandey, Dickter & Sin, 2001; Rupp & Spencer, 2006; Karatepe, Yorganci & Haktanir, 2009; Sliter, Jex, Wolford & McInnerney, 2010; Han, Bonn & Cho, 2016; Cho, Bonn & Han, 2016).

2.1.1 Cycle of incivility

Despite its subtle nature and dubious intent, workplace incivility can lead to more violent behaviour, that has a clear intent to harm, thereby activating an aggression spiral (Baron & Neuman, 1996). An experience of incivility can be perceived as unfair treatment, and may trigger a desire to respond in kind as a way to restore justice (Andersson & Person, 1999).

The incivility spiral can however be interrupted, if the target chooses to overlook the behaviour, give the instigator the benefit of the doubt, or if the instigator apologizes for his/her behaviour. However, if disrespectful behaviour persists in the workplace, and if it is perceived as unfair, then at some stage a tipping point will be reached and workplace incivility may be replaced by behaviour that is considerably more violent and intentional in nature (e.g., bullying). This is especially the case when the target feels that the uncivil behaviour poses a threat to his/her identity or sense of dignity (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). In some organizations, incivility might be used as a way to gain power over others (Pearson & Porath, 2005).

Workplace incivility might be fostered by the reduced capacity for emotional self-regulation of one of the parties involved in the interpersonal behaviour, or by an informal workplace climate. Witnessing disrespectful behaviour can also promote a spiral of incivility, as witnesses might be uncivil towards others. Being the target of disrespectful behaviour can also prompt misdirected incivility towards a third party, thereby spreading this antisocial phenomenon throughout the whole organization (Foulek, Woolum & Erez, 2016).

2.2 Burnout

Maslach, Jackson and Leiter (1996) defined burnout as a psychological syndrome comprising three dimensions: (a) emotional exhaustion, refers to an overwhelming feeling of no longer being able to handle the demands of the job, when an individual feels physically and emotionally drained; (b) cynicism, refers to a state of psychological detachment, a negative attitude towards the job, the clients and the organization as a whole; and (c) professional inefficacy, which entails feelings of low levels of agency, competence and productivity.

Burnout stems from prolonged exposure to chronic work-related stress, and can manifest itself in any occupation and professional context (Leiter & Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

Burnout has been linked to a number of undesirable health outcomes, such as anxiety and depression (Ahola *et al.*, 2005, 2006; Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012; Peterson *et al.*, 2008), heart disease (Toker *et al.*, 2012), and musculoskeletal disorders (Armon *et al.*, 2010). The deleterious effects of burnout on workers' physical and emotional well-being makes it a serious public health concern (Bauer & Hämmig, 2014).

In addition, burnout reduces employee motivation and increases the likelihood of dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours at work (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). Also, at the organizational level, burnout can lead to high employee turnover (Leiter & Maslach, 2009), which is a major challenge for the tourism and hospitality industry (Faldetta *et al.*, 2013).

2.3 Workplace Incivility and Burnout

Quality social interactions and positive social support are critical factors for a demanding, yet healthy, work environment (Day & Leiter, 2014). A meta-analysis of 68 studies indicates that social support can act in different ways: it can directly reduce stressors (environmental conditions) and strains (individual responses to stressors, including burnout), and also reduce (moderate) the level of stress on strain (Viswesvaran, Sanchez & Fisher, 1999).

Although early burnout studies focused primarily on the importance of interpersonal relationships between professionals and service recipients (e.g., patients) as one precursor

of burnout, it is now recognized that the quality of relationships with other people in the work environment (e.g., co-workers) can also promote the onset of burnout (Day & Leiter, 2014). Unsupportive, disrespectful or unfair work environments are other known predictors of burnout (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004).

Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory can explain the relationship between workplace incivility and burnout. COR theory posits that individuals strive to maintain, protect and enhance valued resources, and that stress is produced whenever an individual perceives a threat of loss of, or actually losses, valued resources. Workplace incivility can activate (additional) stress as it threatens the loss of protective and valued social resources (i.e., social support at work), required for the preservation and enhancement of valued personal resources (i.e., sense of identity and dignity; health and well-being).

Workplace incivility is in itself a source of stress. However, workplace incivility can also intensify the level of stress already being generated by other work-related factors (e.g., high workload) that are predictive of poor occupational health and well-being (Oore *et al.*, 2010).

We found several studies that have addressed the relationship between incivility (from supervisors and from co-workers) and burnout (Laschinger, Leiter, Day & Gilin, 2009; Taylor, 2010; Leiter, Price & Laschinger, 2010; Leiter, Laschinger, Day & Oore, 2011; Leiter, Nicholson, Patterson & Laschinger, 2011; Leiter, Day, Oore & Laschinger, 2012; Sulea, Filipescu, Horga, Orlan & Fischmann, 2012; Giumetti, McKibben, Hatfield, Schroeder & Kowalski, 2012; Leiter, Day & Price, 2015).

The majority of the nine studies were conducted among health service providers in the North American continent, except for (a) Giumetti *et al.* (2012) and Sulea *et al.* (2012), who surveyed professionals from the education sector; (b) Taylor (2010), who studied a sample of MBA students employed in a variety of organizations; and (c) Sulea *et al.* (2012), who used a Romanian sample. Three of the nine studies (Leiter *et al.*, 2010; Leiter, Laschinger *et al.*, 2011; Leiter, Nicholson *et al.*, 2011) used a longitudinal design.

The overall results from these nine studies suggest that: (a) the level of incivility experienced from co-workers is higher than that experienced from supervisors; (b) incivility from supervisors and incivility from co-workers are positively associated with emotional exhaustion and cynicism, the core components of burnout; (c) the effect of supervisor incivility on burnout is greater than the effect of co-worker incivility on burnout; and (d) compared with emotional exhaustion, it is the cynicism dimension of burnout that has the stronger association with incivility.

However, regarding the frequency of incivility from supervisors and co-workers, recent research in the Portuguese healthcare context indicates that the level of incivility experienced from supervisors is higher than that experienced from co-workers (Laneiro, Magalhães and Nitzsche, 2016; Laneiro, Ribeiro, Queiroz, Gonçalves and Nitzsche, 2016), a finding that contradicts a result in the international studies referred to in the previous paragraph. This poses the following question: Which of the two forms of incivility (supervisor and co-worker) is higher among Portuguese hotel employees?

2.4 Tourism and Hospitality

Tourism and hospitality is a key industry for the Portuguese economy given that it represents 10% of the country's Gross Domestic Product. The industry generates almost 363,000 jobs, which equates to approximately 8% of all jobs in Portugal (World Economic Forum, 2017). In 2015, the hotel industry alone generated some 52,000 jobs (Pordata, 2017a) and a revenue of just over 2.5 billion Euros (Pordata, 2017b).

The industry relies heavily on its workers, who play a pivotal role in ensuring customer satisfaction. As with workers in other service sector jobs, employees in the tourism and

hospitality industry are especially prone to work-related stress and burnout (Karatepe, Babakus & Yavas, 2012), which can negatively affect the quality of services rendered and customer loyalty (Salanova, Agut & Peiró, 2005; Humborstad, Humborstad & Whitfield, 2007; Gracia, Salanova, Grau & Cifre, 2013; Rhee, Hur & Kim, 2016; Cho *et al.*, 2016).

It is well known that employees in this industry are exposed to a number of psychosocial risks, such as work-family conflict, unpredictable and unsociable work hours, high workload, low wages, poor communication and interpersonal conflict at work (Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007; Poulston, 2008; Blomme, Rheede & Tromp, 2010; Kim & Jogaratnam, 2010; Elsler, 2011; O' Neill & Davis, 2011; Daskin & Tezer, 2012; Yavas *et al.*, 2013).

Incivility at work has been associated with reduced levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and increased voluntary turnover (Pearson & Porath, 2005). Employee satisfaction has been shown to have a positive effect on employee retention and productivity, which benefits a hotel's bottom line (Borralha *et al.*, 2016; Moura *et al.*, 2015). Customer satisfaction, that is linked to employee satisfaction, increases customer intention to return to the hotel, as well as customer willingness to recommend the hotel to others, thereby promoting the site abroad (Melo *et al.*, 2017).

2.5 Workplace Incivility and Burnout in Tourism and Hospitality

Although most of the studies on workplace incivility and burnout have been conducted in healthcare and educational settings (e.g., Leiter *et al.*, 2010, 2015; Giumetti *et al.*, 2012; Sulea *et al.*, 2012), research on the relationship between these phenomena has started to emerge in the tourism and hospitality industry.

In their study among 239 restaurant employees in the USA, Cho *et al.* (2016) found that supervisor incivility and co-worker incivility were significantly associated with emotional exhaustion, which in turn predicted reduced service performance. Cho *et al.* did not investigate the effects of supervisor incivility and co-worker incivility on employees' level of cynicism.

In the South Korean hospitality industry, Rhee *et al.* (2016) showed that co-worker incivility had a significant negative indirect effect on job performance, through emotional exhaustion, among 215 hotel employees. The concepts of supervisor incivility and cynicism were not included in Rhee *et al.* study.

Han *et al.* (2016) investigated the relationship between customer incivility, employee burnout and turnover intention among 228 North American restaurant employees. Customer incivility was shown to be positively related to employee burnout, which fully mediated the relationship between customer incivility and employee turnover intention. Han *et al.* study did not include the concepts of supervisor incivility and co-worker incivility.

Although Torres, van Niekerk and Orlowski (2017) did not examine supervisor incivility or burnout in their study among 297 hotel employees in the USA, they found that a higher frequency of incivility between co-workers predicted increased co-worker to customer incivility.

Hur, Moon and Jun (2016) assessed the effects of co-worker incivility and customer incivility on creativity in a sample of 281 hotel employees in South Korea. Although, Hur *et al.* found no significant direct relationships between the two sources of incivility and creativity, they showed that both co-worker incivility and customer incivility significantly predicted increased emotional exhaustion, which together with intrinsic motivation predicted reduced creativity. The concepts of supervisor incivility and cynicism were not included in Hur *et al.* study.

Interestingly, Abubakar, Namin, Harazneh, Arasli and Tunç (2017) did not find a significant relationship between supervisor incivility and cynicism in their study among a

sample of 291 hotel employees in Northern Cyprus. This contradictory finding was attributed to cultural differences. The concepts of co-worker incivility and emotional exhaustion were not included in Abubakar *et al.* investigation.

Regarding the Portuguese tourism and hospitality industry, we are unaware of any studies that have specifically examined the relationship between workplace incivility and burnout. Nevertheless, studies conducted within the Portuguese tourism and hospitality industry indicate that what workers most appreciate, and regard as highly motivating and satisfying work factors, include good interpersonal relations, both with colleagues and with supervisors (Freitas, 2006; Guzmán, Cañizares & Jesus, 2009). This highlights the relevance of assessing and understanding the relationship between workplace incivility and burnout in the hospitality industry.

Also, as previously stated, incivility at work can escalate into more violent and aggressive behaviours such as sexual harassment and bullying, which are highly prevalent in the tourism and hospitality industry (Ram, 2015). A recent study on sexual harassment and bullying among male and female workers in 13 Portuguese business sectors revealed that the sector with the highest levels of sexual harassment (14.1% - 14.9%) and bullying (15.9% - 16.7%) is the hospitality industry (Torres, Costa, Sant'Ana, Coelho & Sousa, 2016). In light of this information, we expect workplace incivility to be a feature of Portuguese hotel employees' social environment.

Based on our review of the literature, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Supervisor incivility will positively predict emotional exhaustion;

Hypothesis 2: Supervisor incivility will have a positive influence on cynicism;

Hypothesis 3: Co-worker incivility will positively predict emotional exhaustion;

Hypothesis 4: Co-worker incivility will have a positive effect on cynicism.

3. METHOD

3.1 Participants

This study was conducted with a convenience sample of 385 workers in the Portuguese hotel industry, 206 (54.1%) of whom were male and 175 (45.9%) female; 1.0% ($n = 4$) of the participants did not confirm their gender. Participants' age ranged from 17 to 72 years ($M = 33.91$, $SD = 11.31$); 2.1% ($n = 8$) did not report their age. Regarding marital status, most (51.5%; $n = 195$) participants were single, and 145 (38.3%) were married; 1.6% ($n = 6$) did not disclose their marital status.

In terms of education, almost half (45.1%; $n = 171$) of the participants had attended school for up to 12 years, 102 (26.9%) held a higher degree, and 79 (20.8%) had spent a maximum of 9 years at school; 1.6% ($n = 6$) did not indicate their level of education.

The majority (87.3%; $n = 329$) of the participants worked in the Lisbon area, in 4-star hotels (51.1%; $n = 194$), and almost half (49.7%; $n = 189$) worked in reception. On average, participants had worked at their organizations for 7.07 years ($SD = 96.00$), ranging from a minimum of one month to a maximum of 45 years. The average number of hours worked per week was 41.92 hours ($SD = 7.15$), varying between a minimum of 10 hours per week to a maximum of 69 hours per week. Table 1 provides details on hotel location and category, as well as on participants' functional work areas.

Table 1. Hotel Location and Category, and Participants' Functional Work Areas

	N	%
Hotel location		
Lisbon	329	87.3
Central region	39	10.3
Northern region	4	1.2
Alentejo region	1	0.3
Algarve region	3	0.8
Madeira island	1	0.3
<i>Missing</i>	8	2.1
Hotel category		
Five stars	94	24.7
Four stars	194	51.1
Three or less stars	92	24.2
<i>Missing</i>	5	1.3
Functional work area		
Reception	189	49.7
Restaurant/bar	84	22.1
Rooms	42	11.1
Back office	34	8.8
Kitchen	31	8.2
<i>Missing</i>	5	1.3
Total	385	100

Source: adapted from Nitzsche (2016)

3.2 Instruments

Workplace incivility and burnout were assessed using the Straightforward Incivility Scale (SIS; Leiter & Day, 2013) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory - General Survey (MBI-GS; Maslach *et al.*, 1996; Schaufeli *et al.*, 1996), respectively. A sociodemographic questionnaire was also included in the survey.

3.2.1 Workplace incivility

Workplace incivility was measured by the Portuguese version of the SIS (Leiter & Day, 2013), as validated by Nitzsche (2016) in the Portuguese hospitality context. The SIS originally comprises five dimensions: supervisor incivility, co-worker incivility, subordinate incivility, client incivility, and incivility instigated by the respondent against others at work. Two of these dimensions were used for the current study: supervisor incivility and co-worker incivility, both of which consist of five items.

Respondents answered all items on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (more than once a day). The items from each dimension were then summed and averaged to create an overall rating for supervisor incivility and for co-worker incivility. A higher score indicated a higher frequency of incivility experienced from supervisors or from co-workers, in the previous month.

Regarding the internal consistency reliability (alpha coefficient) of the two incivility dimensions, Leiter and Day (2013) reported $\alpha = .90$ for supervisor incivility, and $\alpha = .95$ for co-worker incivility. In the present study, the alpha coefficient for each of the incivility dimensions was very high (supervisor incivility: $\alpha = .91$; co-worker incivility: $\alpha = .93$).

3.2.2 Burnout

Given that our sample comprised of hotel employees, and not health service providers, we used the General Survey version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-GS; Maslach *et al.*, 1996; Schaufeli *et al.*, 1996) to measure the level of burnout. The MBI is the most widely used and most validated measure of burnout (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004; Mäkikangas *et al.*, 2011).

The MBI-GS consists of 16 items distributed among three dimensions: emotional exhaustion (five items), cynicism (five items) and professional efficacy (six items). However, previous research suggests that the core components of burnout are emotional exhaustion and cynicism (Schaufeli & Taris, 2005; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Qiao & Schaufeli, 2011), whereas professional efficacy is considered to be more of a personal resource in the work context (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Thus, in this study we only measured emotional exhaustion and cynicism.

Participants' responses to the 10 items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (every day). The items from each dimension were summed and averaged to provide an overall score for emotional exhaustion and for cynicism. The higher the score, the more frequently the participant experienced feeling emotionally exhausted or cynical.

In terms of reliability, alpha coefficients reported in the literature range from .80 to .94 for the emotional exhaustion component of burnout, and between .79 and .87 for the cynicism component of burnout (Leiter, Nicholson *et al.*, 2011; Sulea, Filipescu *et al.*, 2012; Leiter *et al.*, 2015; Cho *et al.*, 2016; Han *et al.*, 2016). In this study, the alpha coefficients for emotional exhaustion ($\alpha = .87$) and cynicism ($\alpha = .81$) were high.

3.3 Procedure

Using a convenience sampling strategy, we contacted several Human Resource (HR) directors from national and international hotels and requested their permission for the participation of their employees in this cross-sectional study. Following approval from HR, data were collected using a self-report survey questionnaire that was made available in two formats: pen-and-paper and online. Participants were informed of the scope and objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, as well as the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality of individual responses.

Of the 385 questionnaires that were returned, the greater majority (97%; $n = 374$) were in pen-and-paper format, and 11 (3%) questionnaires had been completed online. Participants did not receive an incentive for their participation in this study.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed with SPSS v.22. The frequency and randomness of missing data were examined. Descriptive statistics and reliability analysis were conducted for all study variables and scales.

The effects of workplace incivility (supervisor incivility and co-worker incivility) on burnout (emotional exhaustion and cynicism) were tested using four bootstrap (1,000 samples) regression models with a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (95% CI). The multivariate assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity and independence of residuals were tested, and data were inspected for the presence of outliers. Outliers, identified as cases

with a significant ($p < .05$) studentized residual value, were removed from the regression analyses. Cohen's f^2 was used to determine effect sizes, whereby $\geq .02$, $\geq .15$ and $\geq .35$ represent small, medium and large effect sizes, respectively.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Preliminary Analysis

The frequency and randomness of missing data was assessed. Overall, the percentage of missing data was low (1.29%), and found to be missing completely at random (MCAR), $\chi^2(349) = 383.67$, $p = .10$. Missing data was imputed using the expectation-maximization technique.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Given that the possible scores for supervisor incivility and co-worker incivility range from 0 (never) to 6 (more than once a day), the levels of incivility found in our sample were generally low. We obtained an average of 0.83 ($SD = 1.18$) for incivility from supervisors and an average of 0.64 ($SD = 1.07$) for incivility from co-workers. Despite both values being low, there was a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t(384) = 3.53$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.08, .29], $d = 0.18$, with supervisor incivility being significantly higher than co-worker incivility. More than one third (37.1%) of the participants confirmed that they had experienced incivility from their supervisors during the past month, and 30.1% of all participants revealed that they had experienced incivility from their co-workers in the last month.

As previously stated, the core dimensions of burnout are emotional exhaustion and cynicism. The participants in our study reported relatively high levels of emotional exhaustion ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 1.47$), and cynicism ($M = 2.17$, $SD = 1.54$). Based on the burnout cut-off points, detailed in the MBI user manual (Maslach *et al.*, 1996), we found that almost half of our sample showed high levels of emotional exhaustion (42.9%; $n = 165$) and cynicism (47.0%; $n = 181$). Moreover, almost one third (29.1%; $n = 112$) of the participants reported a high level of emotional exhaustion together with a high level of cynicism, which is indicative of severe burnout.

4.3 Testing of Hypotheses

Four linear bootstrap (1,000 samples) regression models were used to test for: Hypothesis 1 - the positive effect of supervisor incivility on emotional exhaustion (Model 1); Hypothesis 2 - the positive effect of supervisor incivility on cynicism (Model 2); Hypothesis 3 - the positive effect of co-worker incivility on emotional exhaustion (Model 3); and Hypothesis 4 - the positive effect of co-worker incivility on cynicism (Model 4).

In terms of the assumptions related to regression analysis, linearity and independence of residuals were ensured for all four models: $F(31, 342) = 0.907$, $p = .614$; $d = 1.838$ (Model 1); $F(33, 350) = 1.335$, $p = .108$; $d = 1.761$ (Model 2); $F(31, 341) = 1.359$, $p = .101$; $d = 1.865$ (Model 3); and $F(32, 337) = 1.078$, $p = .359$; $d = 1.740$ (Model 4). The assumption of homoscedasticity was met for Model 2, $F(1, 383) = 3.216$, $p = .074$, and Model 3, $F(1, 372) = 1.409$, $p = .236$, but not for Model 1, $F(1, 373) = 7.606$, $p = .006$, and Model 4, $F(1, 369) = 6.451$, $p = .012$.

Table 2 presents the results of the regression analyses. As hypothesized, the results show significant positive links between supervisor incivility and emotional exhaustion ($b = .445$, $p = .001$), supervisor incivility and cynicism ($b = .408$, $p = .001$), co-worker incivility and

emotional exhaustion ($b = .453, p = .001$), and co-worker incivility and cynicism ($b = .570, p = .001$). Participants who perceived higher levels of incivility from supervisors and from co-workers tended to report higher levels of emotional exhaustion and cynicism. Regarding emotional exhaustion, 13% of its variance is explained by supervisor incivility, and 12% by co-worker incivility. Supervisor incivility accounts for a 10% variance in cynicism, whereas co-worker incivility, showing the highest effect size (.230; Model 4), explains 19% of the variance in cynicism.

Table 2. Effects of Supervisor Incivility and Co-Worker Incivility on Emotional Exhaustion and Cynicism

Model	Predictor → Outcome	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i> -statistic	95% CI	<i>R</i> ²	<i>f</i> ²
1	Supervisor incivility → Exhaustion	.445	.053	7.596	[.342, .555]	.134	.155
2	Supervisor incivility → Cynicism	.408	.066	6.393	[.284, .535]	.096	.106
3	Co-worker incivility → Exhaustion	.453	.060	7.130	[.345, .595]	.120	.136
4	Co-worker incivility → Cynicism	.570	.054	9.224	[.462, .677]	.187	.230

Source: adapted from Nitzsche (2016)

b = Unstandardized coefficient. *SE* = Standard error. 95% CI= 95% bias-corrected confidence interval. *R*² = Coefficient of determination. *f*² = Effect size; ≥ .02, ≥ .15 and ≥ .35 represent small, medium and large effect sizes, respectively.

Thus, our four hypotheses were confirmed. Our results indicate that supervisor incivility and co-worker incivility are significant positive predictors of emotional exhaustion and cynicism, the core components of burnout.

5. DISCUSSION

Burnout is a precursor of undesirable physical and mental health issues (Armon *et al.*, 2010; Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012), and is a serious public health concern (Bauer & Hämmig, 2014). Preventing the causes of health problems is generally thought to be more cost effective than treating existing health issues. Thus, preventing burnout could potentially decrease health-related costs, and lead to a healthier, more motivating and productive work environment.

Workplace incivility is considered to be a mild, yet insidious form of interpersonal mistreatment (Cortina, 2008) that has a spiralling effect (Baron & Neuman, 1996), meaning it can escalate into more violent workplace behaviour, such as bullying (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), which is already highly prevalent in the hospitality industry (Torres *et al.*, 2016), a key industry for the Portuguese economy. Workplace incivility is a dynamic and progressive interaction process, with a “contagious” effect. An uncivil work environment can lead to disrespectful behaviour towards customers (Torres, van Niekerk & Orlowski, 2017), thereby reducing customers’ desire to return to the site and/or to recommend the site to others, which can ultimately have a negative impact on the organization’s bottom line (Moura *et al.*, 2015; Borralha *et al.*, 2016; Melo *et al.*, 2017).

To the best of our knowledge this is the first study to investigate the phenomenon of workplace incivility in the Portuguese hospitality industry. In this study, we examined the relationship between workplace incivility and burnout among Portuguese hotel employees.

We found that levels of experienced workplace incivility, from supervisors and from co-workers, were relatively low, although generally consistent with findings reported in the literature for employees in other professions, such as university staff (Giumetti *et al.*, 2012),

healthcare service providers (Laschinger *et al.*, 2009; Leiter *et al.*, 2010; Leiter, Nicholson *et al.*, 2011; Leiter *et al.*, 2012; Leiter *et al.*, 2015), and federal court employees (Lim *et al.*, 2008). Nevertheless, and considering the high prevalence of bullying in the Portuguese hospitality industry (Torres, Costa, Sant'Ana, Coelho & Sousa, 2016), the relatively low indices of supervisor and co-worker incivility reported by our sample could reflect a certain level of unawareness of, or insensitivity to, the problem of workplace incivility. In addition to this, and for cultural reasons (Hofstede, 1983; Andersson & Pearson, 1999), Portuguese hotel employees might expect a certain level of interpersonal mistreatment at work to occur, meaning that workplace incivility is simply considered part of the job and, thus, not an issue.

Contrary to findings reported in international studies (Leiter *et al.*, 2009; Leiter *et al.*, 2010; Leiter, Laschinger *et al.*, 2011; Leiter, Nicholson *et al.*, 2011; Leiter *et al.*, 2012; Leiter *et al.*, 2015), we found that the frequency of supervisor incivility was significantly higher than co-worker incivility. However, our result is consistent with studies on this negative workplace phenomenon in the Portuguese healthcare context (Laneiro, Magalhães & Nitzsche, 2016; Laneiro, Ribeiro, Queiroz, Gonçalves & Nitzsche, 2016). Cultural norms might help to explain the difference found between Portuguese and non-Portuguese samples, as acceptable and unacceptable interpersonal behaviour can vary by group, organization, industry and country (Hofstede, 1983; Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Pearson *et al.*, 2000).

As hypothesized, our results show that supervisor and co-worker incivility account for statistically significant amounts of variance in the burnout dimensions, which is in line with past research among service providers in healthcare (Laschinger *et al.*, 2009; Leiter *et al.*, 2010; Leiter *et al.*, 2012; Leiter *et al.*, 2015; Leiter, Laschinger *et al.*, 2011; Leiter, Nicholson *et al.*, 2011), education (Giumetti *et al.*, 2012; Sulea *et al.*, 2012) and hospitality (Cho *et al.*, 2016; Hur *et al.*, 2016; Rhee *et al.*, 2016). It should be noted that our result for the relationship between supervisor incivility and cynicism is not consistent with that obtained by Abubakar *et al.* (2017) among hotel employees in Cyprus. Abubakar *et al.* did state that their finding (a non-significant relationship between supervisor incivility and cynicism) was contradictory to results in the extant literature on workplace incivility, and possibly due to cultural differences.

In our study, both supervisor incivility and co-worker incivility positively predicted emotional exhaustion and cynicism. In other words, hotel employees who perceived high levels of supervisor incivility and co-worker incivility also reported high levels of emotional exhaustion and cynicism. COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) proposes that the threat of loss, or actual loss, of valued resources can generate stress and deplete personal resources. Workplace incivility can activate stress as it threatens the loss of protective and valued social resources (i.e., social support at work), required for the preservation and enhancement of valued personal resources (i.e., sense of identity and dignity; health and well-being).

The effects of supervisor incivility and co-worker incivility on emotional exhaustion were found to be similar, although supervisor incivility did have a marginally stronger effect than co-worker incivility, which is consistent with the findings of Cho *et al.* (2016) among restaurant employees in the USA. However, we found that co-worker incivility had a substantially stronger effect on cynicism than supervisor incivility, which is inconsistent with the findings of Laschinger *et al.* (2009), Leiter *et al.* (2010), Leiter *et al.* (2012), Leiter *et al.* (2015), Leiter Laschinger *et al.* (2011), and Leiter, Nicholson *et al.* (2011) in the North American healthcare context. Again, cultural norms (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Hofstede, 1983) could help to explain this discrepancy.

The hospitality industry is characterized by a number of stressors, such as work-family conflict, long and unsociable work hours, high workload, low wages, poor communication and interpersonal conflict at work (Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007; Poulston, 2008; Blomme *et al.*, 2010; Kim & Jogaratnam, 2010; O'Neill & Davis, 2011; Elsler, 2011; Daskin

& Tezer, 2012; Yavas *et al.*, 2013), which in turn can predict burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). This study found that almost half of the participants had either a high level of emotional exhaustion or a high level of cynicism, and over a quarter of the participants reported a high level of emotional exhaustion together with a high level of cynicism, indicating severe burnout. From an organizational and public health perspective, these are very worrying results.

Workplace incivility is a stressor in its own right, but, as demonstrated by Oore *et al.* (2010), this antisocial phenomenon also intensifies the level of stress produced by other work-related factors (e.g., high workload) that predict poor occupational health and well-being. This renders workplace incivility a pivotal factor for burnout prevention. The situation is particularly sensitive considering the high levels of emotional exhaustion, cynicism and severe burnout reported in this study.

5.1 Limitations and Directions for Further Studies

Our study used a cross-sectional design, which precludes the attribution of cause and effect among the study variables. Future studies could replicate this study in a similar sample, or samples from other industries, using a longitudinal design.

Further research could clarify the issue regarding awareness of, and sensitivity to, the problem of workplace incivility among Portuguese hospitality employees, and examine the relationship between workplace incivility and bullying in this industry.

It could also be interesting to investigate the relationships between workplace incivility and several known stress factors (e.g., workload, social support, low income, work hours) that characterize the hospitality industry, and relate these to indicators of occupational health and well-being. There may also be other variables in the work context, such as civility (Osatuke, Moore, Ward, Dyrenforth & Belton, 2009; Nitzsche, 2016), that could act as buffers for stress and workplace incivility, thereby counteracting existing (and sometimes difficult to change) stress promoting conditions.

Given that the level of stress experienced depends on personal appraisal, individual variables (e.g., self-esteem, coping style, psychological capital) might also play an important role in promoting or buffering stress and incivility.

The interplay between different sources of incivility (supervisors, co-workers, clients, and incivility instigated by the participant against others at work) might enhance our understanding of stress and burnout. Our results point to a higher level of supervisor incivility than of co-worker incivility. Leadership is thus another promising avenue of inquiry for incivility in the workplace.

6. CONCLUSION

Hospitality employees are critical players for customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and customer willingness to recommend the site to others. Interaction between employees and clients can therefore impact service quality and organizational results, namely financial performance. Dissatisfied or burned out employees are impaired on the relational level (emotional resources depleted, excessive detachment), and are unable to render a high quality, customer-focused service.

The quality of interpersonal relationships, specifically respectful, courteous treatment between peers and supervisors can have a clear influence on the levels of job satisfaction and burnout (emotional exhaustion and cynicism). This study reports a concerning level of burnout among Portuguese hotel employees. The results of this study indicate that incivility from supervisors and incivility from co-workers are precursors of burnout. These interpersonal

factors, in addition to well-known stressors in the industry, such as high workload and low wages, reduce the quality of the work environment, as well as individual and organizational health.

This study provides insight into the phenomena of workplace incivility and burnout in the hotel industry. It reports a higher level of incivility from supervisors than from co-workers, which suggests that leadership is an important factor for promoting a healthy and respectful work environment. The level of incivility from supervisors was significantly higher than that of incivility from co-workers, which might be due to specific cultural norms at the country or industry level. However, cynicism, that could be described as a “couldn’t care less” attitude, potentially detrimental for the requirement to render a polite, helpful and high-quality service to customers, appears to be more affected by incivility from co-workers than from supervisors, which suggests that promoting quality interpersonal relationships at work is important at the team level also.

The results of our study are particularly important for the development of effective strategies, norms and policies, designed to foster a healthy and respectful work environment, and thus enhance a number of important individual, group, customer and organizational-based outcomes in the hotel industry.

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