



CATÓLICA
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BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Repair (in)justice or distance yourself
from it? Examining the impact of
observed incivility on target support and
organizational commitment via
perceptions of interpersonal justice and
trait mindfulness

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Dissertation written under the supervision of Professor Tatiana
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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the MSc in
Management with Specialization in Strategy & Entrepreneurship, at the
Universidade Católica Portuguesa, September 2022.

Abstract

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Besides targets and instigators, third-party observers are also commonly involved in uncivil coworker interactions. Though, to date, observers' reactions to such events have not been as thoroughly examined by researchers as those of the former two parties. The current thesis seeks to expand knowledge in this regard, by drawing on organizational justice theories in order to investigate third-parties' affective organizational commitment, as well as target-directed supportive behavior, upon observing incivility at work. Furthermore, it intends to shed light on mindfulness as a potential dispositional factor responsible for heightening observers' sensitivity towards (in)justice and propensity to engage in supportive behavior.

Two studies were conducted in order to examine observers' reactions based on controlled, hypothetical coworker interactions (Study 1, $N = 245$), as well as based on genuine interactions that participants had personally observed in their working lives (Study 2, $N = 155$). As expected, observed incivility predicted observers' perceptions of low interpersonal justice across the two studies. In terms of outcomes, the studies yielded mixed results. The proposed indirect, negative effect of observed incivility on affective commitment via perceptions of low interpersonal justice was supported in Study 1, while it was not supported in Study 2. Conversely, the proposed indirect, positive effect of observed incivility on supportive behavior was supported in Study 2, while it was not supported in Study 1. Furthermore, unexpectedly, trait mindfulness did not increase observers' sensitivity towards justice, and low—instead of high—trait mindfulness showed stronger propensity to engage in supportive behavior upon perceiving low justice.

Keywords: observed incivility, interpersonal justice, affective organizational commitment, supportive behavior, trait mindfulness

Sumário

Reparar a (in)justiça ou distanciar-se dela: O impacto da incivilidade observada no compromisso organizacional e no apoio à vítima por meio de percepções de justiça interpessoal e atenção plena

Max Peter Jüntgen

Além das vítimas e instigadores, observadores terceiros também são comumente envolvidos em interações incivis entre colegas de trabalho. No entanto, as reações dos observadores a este tipo de eventos não têm sido investigadas minuciosamente. Esta tese procura expandir o conhecimento a este respeito, valendo-se de teorias de justiça organizacional para investigar o compromisso organizacional afetivo dos observadores, bem como os comportamentos solidários para com a vítima,. Além disso, esta tese pretende clarificar o papel da atenção plena na sensibilidade dos observadores à (in)justiça e na propensão para se envolverem em comportamentos solidários.

Dois estudos foram conduzidos para examinar as reações dos observadores à incivilidade: o Estudo 1 baseou-se em interações controladas e hipotéticas entre colegas de trabalho e o Estudo 2 baseou-se em interações reais que os participantes observaram pessoalmente no seu trabalho. Como esperado, a incivilidade observada predisse as percepções de (baixa) justiça interpessoal dos observadores nos dois estudos. No que se refere às consequências, os estudos demonstraram resultados mistos. O efeito indireto e negativo da incivilidade observada no compromisso afetivo foi suportado no Estudo 1, mas não no Estudo 2. Por outro lado, o efeito indireto e positivo da incivilidade observada no comportamento solidário foi suportado no Estudo 2, mas não no Estudo 1. Além disso, a atenção plena, inesperadamente, não aumentou a sensibilidade dos observadores à (in)justiça, e os observadores com atenção plena baixa—em vez de alta—mostraram uma maior propensão para se envolverem em comportamentos solidários quando perceberam baixos níveis de justiça.

Palavras-chave: incivilidade observada, justiça interpessoal, compromisso afetivo, comportamento solidário, atenção plena

Acknowledgements

An exciting journey is coming to an end, which concludes my Master's studies at Católica Lisbon School of Business & Economics. I have been very fortunate along this way, for having been enabled to research a topic that I am personally interested in, as well as for having received such lovely support from the people that I wish to acknowledge in what follows.

First and foremost, I am immensely grateful for the comprehensive supervision provided by Professor Tatiana Marques, who has guided me along the way. Furthermore, I want to thank Professor Jingxian Yao for the valuable insights he provided during the initial stage of this project. And last but not least, I am thankful for the consistently precious support that I received from my family and friends.

Thank you to all of you!

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and problem statement

“We spoke with a man we’ll call Matt, who reported to Larry—a volatile bully who [...] was rude to customers, too. When he accompanied Matt to one client’s store, he told the owner, ‘I see you’re carrying on your father’s tradition. This store looked like sh— then. And it looks like sh— in your hands.’” – (Porath & Pearson, 2013)

Workplace incivility, a phenomenon which refers to rude, deviant behavior, is a prevalent issue in today’s business world (Porath & Pearson, 2013). In fact, survey results from thousands of participants found an overwhelming 98 percent of workers that have experienced incivility personally, while 50 percent do so at least once on a weekly basis. Given such percussive data, it is fair to assume that professional careers that do not come across workplace incivility at some point are virtually non-existent (Porath, 2016).

As in the opening example of this introduction, incidents of incivility often do not only involve the Larry’s and the store owners—the instigators and the targets—but also the Matt’s—third-party observers. 99 percent of surveyed workers reporting to have observed incivility may further contribute to this claim (Porath, 2016). Observing workplace incivility has been found to bear negative emotional and behavioral consequences for the observers (Schilpzand et al., 2016). For instance, upon observing incivility, employees may experience negative affect and subsequently resume their work less productively (Porath & Erez, 2009), or they may suffer emotionally when taking the target’s perspective of the incident (Totterdell et al., 2012). Though, despite some revealing evidence about its detrimental effects, thus far, observed incivility has constituted the research stream among workplace incivility that researchers have paid least attention to; studies on instigated and experienced incivility have been far more commonly conducted (Schilpzand et al., 2016).

Since companies may ultimately lose money due to workplace incivility—for instance, due to impaired productivity of employees who have been targeted with uncivil behavior—practitioners are seeking effective measures to counteract its prevalence and impact (Porath, 2016). One promising attempt appears to be inherent in cultivating mindfulness among employees, which has been found to reduce instigation-levels of incivility (Hülshager et al., 2021), and attenuate decreases in employee well-being following experienced incivility (Tarraf et al., 2019).

The concept of mindfulness refers to “a receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience” (Brown et al., 2007, p. 212), and it has gained substantial popularity in recent years (Van Dam et al., 2018). Its coverage in the media and scientific journals has skyrocketed, and it has found its way into various entities of Western society, including, for instance, psychotherapy, business, and education (Van Dam et al., 2018). However, some scholars have raised concerns about practitioners who sell mindfulness interventions to companies as a quick solution for diverse performance and well-being issues, and likewise exaggerate its proposed benefits (Hülshager, 2015).

Hitherto, scientific research has not studied the impact of mindfulness in cases of observed incivility, or even in any other kind of observed mistreatment at the workplace, although some researchers have called for studies to be conducted in this regard (Thoroughgood et al., 2020). This circumstance has left enticing research opportunities to the current thesis, which intends to investigate two major pathways that potentially connect observed incivility with mindfulness.

On the one hand, considering that mindful employees tend towards being pro-socially oriented (Hafenbrack et al., 2020), it could be possible that they are more sensitive towards incivility than others, and, thereby, experience negative consequences, such as reduced affective organizational commitment. Along those lines, researchers have argued that mindfulness makes employees more concerned about organizational values and identification (Qiu & Rooney, 2019), and interpersonal justice could be one such value being violated during incidents of incivility, leading the mindful self to detach itself from the organization that allows such violation.

On the other hand, on a more positive note, mindful employees could also be more likely to engage in supportive behavior towards the incivility-target in order to restore justice—as advocates of mindfulness-based trainings would promise—due to their stronger tendency towards empathic action-taking (Glomb et al., 2011).

The purpose of the current thesis is to examine how, in the first place, mindfulness influences employees' perceptions of justice when they observe incivility among coworkers, then, whether perceptions of interpersonal justice mediate between observed incivility and outcomes, and, subsequently, how mindfulness moderates observers' attitudinal and behavioral reactions. Accordingly, this study aims to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. Is observing incivility related to reduced affective commitment on the one hand, and increased target-directed supportive behavior on the other hand?
2. Do perceptions of interpersonal justice explain these relationships?
3. How does trait mindfulness moderate these mediated relationships?

The corresponding research model is depicted in Figure 1.

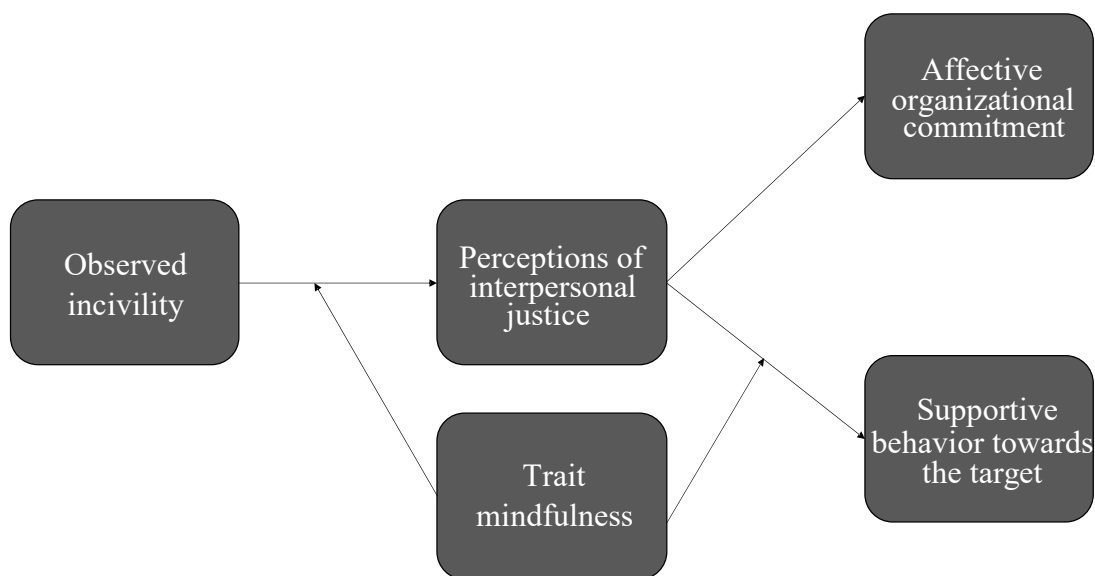


Figure 1: Research model

1.2. Relevance and contributions

This thesis aims to make valuable contributions to scientific literature and business practitioners alike. From a theoretical perspective, it intends to contribute to the third-party mistreatment literature, by drawing links between observed incivility and outcomes via interpersonal justice, and, moreover, by further exploring target-directed supportive behavior as an outcome of observed mistreatment. Regarding the latter, previous studies have yielded mixed results (Dhanani & LaPalme, 2019). On the other hand, this study may highlight potential drawbacks of mindfulness in business. Current management literature involving mindfulness mostly presents benefits of mindfulness, which might not be representative of its full impact on employees (Qiu & Rooney, 2019).

Regarding practical contributions, this research may provide another perspective on why it is worthwhile to address incivility as an issue within companies, and develop appropriate solutions. This is important because although incidents of incivility may be less memorable as compared to violence, aggression, or harassment (Caza & Cortina, 2007), they are also much more prevalent, since companies do not specifically impair or even recognize them (Porath, 2016; Pearson & Porath, 2005). Furthermore, this study may contribute to adjusting mindfulness-based trainings for business purposes regarding interpersonal consequences of mindfulness. Oftentimes, mindfulness trainings currently employed in business organizations appear to be simply shortened versions of popular trainings such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) (Bartlett et al., 2019). While such programs have originally been developed for psychotherapeutic purposes, they are currently often implemented in business without basing work-related adjustments on the appropriate scientific evidence (Good et al., 2016).

1.3. Outline

This thesis continues by reviewing the current literature that is relevant to its three main topics—incivility, justice, and mindfulness. Next, hypotheses are developed on the basis of justice theories and existing literature. Two studies are then presented: Study 1, an experimental (vignette) study ($N = 245$) and Study 2, a correlational (recall) study ($N = 155$). Finally, this thesis concludes by discussing findings in the light of the existing literature, as well as by highlighting limitations of the studies, and by drawing practical and theoretical contributions.

2. Theorization

2.1. Literature review

The following chapter outlines previous research that has been conducted with regard to the three main topics of the current thesis: incivility, justice, and mindfulness. Therein, it presents background information about the overall concepts, as well as research that is relevant to observers' relations to the topics at hand.

2.1.1. Workplace incivility

The theoretical concept of workplace incivility emerged when Andersson and Pearson (1999) identified that American organizational culture had considerably shifted from formal and distant to more casual and intimate conduct. They argued that the societal pursuit of self-expression, freedom, and individuality—which became eminent at the time—had spilled over to the business realm, thereby blurring previously unambiguous conceptions of ‘proper’ behavior at the workplace. Thus, considering the growing room for interpretation of behavior, workplace interactions became ever more complex and deviant behavior became ever more nuanced (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Consequently, they initiated the theoretical distinction between workplace incivility and other—more severe and overt—forms of workplace mistreatment which had previously been the focal points of organizational research, such as aggression or violence. Therein, they defined three essential characteristics of incivility; deviance from workplace norms of respect, low intensity of the deviant act, and ambiguity in the intent to harm the target (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). In practice, acts of incivility include, for instance, making demeaning remarks about others or showing little interest towards someone's opinion (Tarraf et al., 2019).

Although incivility appears closely related to other workplace mistreatment (Hershcovis, 2011), it does indeed represent a distinguishable construct. Yao et al. (2022), for example, argued that incivility is less persistent than bullying, that it does not carry an intent to hinder relationships as in social undermining, and that its contents are usually more generic as compared to sexual harassment or abusive supervision.

An ample amount of studies have surrounded the victims and perpetrators of workplace incivility (Schilpzand et al., 2016). Those studies have found, for instance, that incivility-victims suffer from well-being declines because they feel less satisfied with their jobs (Lim et al., 2008), and that some employees—namely women and ethnic minorities (Cortina et al., 2013), or employees whose personality is high in neuroticism or low in agreeableness (Milam et al., 2009)—are more frequently targeted by perpetrators.

On the other hand, employees may more frequently instigate incivility when they feel that the organization as a whole does not properly compensate their work-efforts (Meier & Semmer, 2013) or when they have experienced incivility themselves, as it has been found that experiencing incivility hurts a person's ego, hence reduces their self-control resources, and subsequently induces uncivil behavior (Rosen et al., 2016).

2.1.2. Vicarious exposure to workplace incivility

Beyond the target-instigator dyad, third-party observers of incivility also do not stand unaffected by such events. Intriguingly, to some extent, observing workplace incivility might indeed be beneficial for those employees who also regularly experience incivility themselves because they subsequently cease to view themselves as distinct targets of incivility (Schilpzand et al., 2016; Tong et al., 2019).

In general, however, observing incivility entails various unfavorable outcomes for the observers in terms of well-being, work attitudes, and behavioral responses. In one of the earlier and most widely cited studies of observed incivility, Lim et al. (2008) found that observing incivility entails negative outcomes that are similar to those associated with experiencing incivility personally. The strongest relationship showed that observing incivility in one's workgroup decreases an employee's job satisfaction and subsequently reduces their mental health, although the incivility-mental health relationship, understandably, was weaker, comparing observed to personal experiences of incivility (Lim et al., 2008). Still, observing uncivil interactions between coworkers can reduce bystanders' well-being, as it potentially drains their emotional resources (Totterdell et al., 2012).

Comparatively more apparent than well-being outcomes though, observing incivility induces unfavorable behavior change on part of the witnesses. On the one hand, it reduces observers' task performance, while, on the other hand, it also induces aggressive intentions and impairs their likelihood to engage in citizenship behavior (Porath & Erez, 2009).

Further considering interpersonal behaviors, observers of incivility have been found to punish instigators, as well as support victims. However, observers' punishment of instigators, oftentimes driven by negative affect, appears to be more frequent than their support towards victims (Reich & Hershcovis, 2015). Within the fewer cases in which observers support the victim, they are rather driven by feelings of guilt when they perceive some responsibility over the incivility-incident (Miranda et al., 2020); or they support the target when they hold a position of power and view the incivility-incident as a status challenge (Hershcovis et al., 2017).

Beyond its impact on subsequent behaviors, exposure to vicarious incivility also influences observers' subsequent perceptions of workplace interactions, as observing merely one uncivil interaction in the morning has been found to increase observers' subsequent perceptions of incivility throughout the workday (Woolum et al., 2017).

The variability in perceptions of incivility is indeed an important topic, as it appears that not all employees react in the same manner to observing incivility. Whereas, per definition, incidents of incivility violate norms of respect, these norms may not necessarily be shared among all members of a workgroup (Montgomery et al., 2004). In this regard, it has been found that personality differences lead to varying perceptions of incivility, such that observers who are higher in trait positive affect, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and trait anger perceive uncivil interactions as more severe (Sliter et al., 2015).

Moreover, observers of incivility may deem such incidents more or less inappropriate according to their social identification with the target or instigator in terms of ethnicity (Montgomery et al., 2004), or sex (Miner & Eischeid, 2012; Montgomery et al., 2004). The explanation for this could be that social identification with the target or instigator may facilitate observers' perspective taking with either of those parties. Perspective taking has been found to determine which party observers blame for the uncivil interaction and which party they empathize with (Reich et al., 2021).

Lastly, notwithstanding differences in the perception of incivility, multiple studies have shown that observing incivility affects both women and men, and causes well-being and attitudinal detriments, despite women being more frequent targets of incivility than men (e.g., Lim et al., 2008; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004).

2.1.3. Organizational justice

Justice represents a concept that has accompanied human contemplation ever since the groundbreaking journeys of ancient Greece's eminent philosophers, such as Plato and Socrates. Through generations, philosophers and thinkers have been concerned with what a person ought to do and what is righteous to do. Meanwhile, organizational research has identified that justice-related concerns of organizations' members can be categorized into a number of distinct constructs, namely, concerns related to the distribution of outcomes, and concerns related to the procedures that define the distribution of outcomes (Colquitt et al., 2001).

Justice in the distribution of outcomes was the first concern that took organizational researchers' interest, and it was first conceptualized as distributive justice among Adams' (1965) equity theory. According to Adams (1965), individuals adhere to the norms of social exchange when they evaluate the fairness of distribution of outcomes in their organization. Specifically, they evaluate distributive justice by weighing their perceptions of personal inputs against their perceptions of rewards provided by the organization (Adams, 1965).

Later on, researchers determined that organizational procedures related to the distribution of outcomes were another important concern for individuals within an organization (Konovsky, 2000). Leventhal et al. (1980) theorized that, in an organizational context, individuals determine procedures as fair when they perceive them to be consistent, unbiased, accurate (in terms of information collection and processing), revisable (in order to overhaul potential inaccuracy), representative (in terms of allowance for individuals to voice their opinions), and ethical (in terms of adherence to common norms of respect).

In the further development of procedural justice research, Bies & Moag (1986) highlighted that any procedure implemented to make distributive decisions necessarily entails communication of such procedures towards individuals who are affected by those. Consequently, they introduced specific criteria that individuals may utilize in determining the fairness of such communication, and labeled the resulting concept as interactional justice. They outlined that interactional justice concerns were related to four communication criteria: truthfulness (i.e., honesty and candidness), respect (i.e., non-attacking and non-discourteous communication), propriety (i.e., appropriate contents of communication), and justification (i.e., communication of understandable criteria for decisions made) (Bies & Moag, 1986).

Nowadays, researchers have made even further distinctions among these criteria. Specifically, the latter criteria—justification—has often been referred to as informational justice, while the former three criteria—truthfulness, respect, and propriety—have been referred to as interpersonal justice (Colquitt et al., 2001).

2.1.4. Vicarious exposure to low interpersonal justice

On a broader scale, the concept of justice entails a seemingly unattainable quest of laying out universal norms that everyone ought to obey, and this quest, regardless of who embarks on it, is essentially laden with some predefined ideological standards (Bies, 2001). Therefore, unlike ancient Greece's philosophers, most conventional humans are usually not concerned with universal conceptions of justice, but rather with the justice-violations they encounter during their everyday lives (Bies, 2001). Along those lines, past research has shown that such violations do not only comprise those that personally befall someone, but also those that someone is vicariously exposed to; and researchers have shown that, in a vicarious context, bystanders are particularly concerned with low interpersonal justice that they observe, as compared to distributive and procedural justice (O'Reilly et al., 2016).

Similarly to differing perceptions in workplace incivility, past research has found that one's perceptions of justice are also substantially biased. One such bias, as in workplace incivility, results from individuals' social identification with the parties involved in an incident of questionable justice (Schiller et al., 2014; Blader et al., 2013).

In terms of observers' reactions, as in workplace incivility, observers commonly tend to react to justice-violations by developing negative emotions towards the violators, regardless of the violation being of interpersonal (Umpress et al., 2013), or procedural nature (De Cremer et al., 2008). On the other hand, Lotz et al. (2011) found that observers of low justice may also support the victim. Finally, vicarious exposure to interpersonal justice also shapes employees' work attitudes, as researchers have found that an organization's fair treatment of external parties, such as customers, increases their employees' likelihood of identifying with their organization (Dunford et al., 2015).

2.1.5. Mindfulness

The origins of today's Western understanding of mindfulness can be traced back to ancient Eastern traditions, such as Buddhism, in which it was anchored as one cornerstone to an individual's journey of seeking to be liberated from suffering. Within such traditions, mindfulness constitutes a mode of bringing awareness to the present moment, being receptive towards, and accepting of, any experience that any particular moment may entail (Bishop et al., 2004). In addition, these spiritual traditions emphasize the notion of cultivating mindfulness through various meditation techniques (Brown et al., 2003).

This idea was picked up and transferred to the West first and foremost through clinical psychology as an alternative means of treating chronic pain (Bishop et al., 2004). As such, its popularity grew particularly through the introduction of the mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) programs, which nowadays persist among many other mindfulness-based trainings in order to cure an array of mental disorders (Hülshager et al., 2013).

Along with the progress of mindfulness research in psychology, academic studies further revealed the potential for benefits of mindfulness practice among healthy subjects, ranging from decreases in stress perceptions to increases in well-being (Egan et al., 2018). Those findings, in turn, sparked interest in mindfulness outside of psychology (Egan et al., 2018), and eventually pathed way for its adoption in business organizations (Hülshager et al., 2013). The most prominent integration of mindfulness practice in business has taken place at Google with its "Search Inside Yourself" program that has attracted thousands of participants to date (Hafenbrack et al., 2020).

Despite its connection to contemplative practices, mindfulness can also occur organically (i.e., through an interplay of a person's genes, environment and experiences, (Davidson, 2010)), given that all humans naturally have the capacity to be aware of the present (Brown et al., 2003). Therefore, it is important to differentiate mindfulness research and determine whether it investigates the effects of trait(/dispositional) or state mindfulness, and whether mindfulness interventions are of interest (Davidson, 2010). State mindfulness research may entail experiments investigating the effects of short meditation exercises (Davidson, 2010), or day-levels of mindfulness (Hülshager et al., 2013); mindfulness interventions research may test the results of engaging in a mindfulness program; and trait mindfulness research may examine participants without testing for results of any meditation training (e.g., by means of the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale) (Davidson, 2010).

With regard to business-related research, researchers have gathered promising evidence for benefits of mindfulness in terms of performance, well-being, and interpersonal relationships (Good et al., 2016). Those studies have, for instance, found that trait mindfulness reduces declines in motivational control (and subsequently performance) throughout the workweek (Dust et al., 2022).

On the other hand, well-being benefits have been documented such that employees higher in trait/state mindfulness are better able to psychologically detach from work during breaks or spare time (Chong et al., 2020; Hülshager et al., 2014). Well-being benefits of mindfulness have also been related to workplace mistreatment, for instance, such that trait mindfulness attenuates stress responses when employees are the targets of uncivil behaviors (Tarraf et al., 2019).

The amount of studies centered around interpersonal outcomes of mindfulness has been growing at a particularly rapid pace, and most of it has found very promising results (Good et al., 2016). For instance, mindfulness appears to increase prosocial behavior. Especially state mindfulness has been found to foster helping behavior among employees via a number of mechanisms. On the one hand, it facilitated employees' ability to empathize with and take perspective of their colleagues (Hafenbrack et al., 2020), on the other hand, it also promoted gratitude and prosocial motivation (Sawyer et al., 2022); all of which translated to increased prosocial behavior. Lastly, researcher have found that high trait mindfulness among coworkers led to lowered enactment of uncivil behaviors, as well as more stable levels of enacted incivility throughout a workweek (Hülshager et al., 2021).

2.2. Concluding remarks about the current literature

Both vicarious exposure to incivility and low justice carry negative outcomes for observers in the form of diminished work attitudes and ignited retaliatory intentions. Though, while retaliatory intentions have been far more commonly pronounced among organizational research, supportive behavior towards the target has been a rather inconsistent finding (Dhanani & LaPalme, 2019), which warrants further exploration of potential moderators and mediators. Moreover, it is clear that observers' perceptions of justice or incivility are substantially biased. Along those lines, researchers have called for shedding further light on potential dispositional moderators, which may influence observers' perceptions of mistreatment incidents (Dhanani & LaPalme, 2019). Trait mindfulness appears worthy of such an investigation, for instance, due to its proposed effects regarding instigated and experienced mistreatment, as well as interpersonal relationships. Finally, although detrimental work attitudes have been determined as negative outcomes of incivility and low justice, it should be interesting to explore whether these are also formed by perceptions of low justice, rather than hostile emotions; again, with dispositional moderators in mind.

2.3. Overarching theories

The current thesis draws upon three justice-related theories in order to outline a theoretical rationale for its research model: Fairness Theory (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001), the Group Engagement Model (Tyler & Blader, 2003), and Fairness as deonance (Folger, 2001). Essentially, Fairness Theory provides a rationale for observers' evaluation of uncivil coworker interactions as events of low justice. Subsequently, the Group Engagement Model explains observers' attitudinal reactions to incivility, such that events of low justice should interfere with observers' identity judgements towards their social group/organization. Meanwhile, Fairness as deonance explains observers' behavioral reactions to incivility based on observers' moral virtues in the light of low justice events.

2.3.1. Fairness Theory (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001)

Fairness Theory by Folger and Cropanzano (2001) suggests that individuals assess an incident as unjust when they identify another person to be held accountable for the occurrence of the unjust incident. Therein, the mechanism that enables a person's assignment of accountability entails cognitive appraisal of counterfactual scenarios in contrast to the factual event that has occurred in reality. While this mechanism may work either heuristically—immediately during the incident, or deliberately—during reappraisal after the incident, it, in any case, consists of three elements, namely *would*, *could*, and *should* scenarios. Specifically, a person assessing an unjust incident may ask themselves whether well-being of those involved *would* be better if the incident had not occurred, whether the person to be held accountable *could* have behaved in a different manner, and whether the person to be held accountable *should* have behaved differently according to the assessor's own set of moral principles (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001).

Since workplace incivility, by definition, consists of rude behavior that violates norms of respect (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), all of the three elements may apply to observers' appraisal of uncivil events, thereby allowing observers to assess incidents of incivility as incidents of low justice. Accordingly, an observer of incivility may determine that (1) well-being of those affected *would* be better if there had been no uncivil behavior by the perpetrator, that (2) the perpetrator *could* have behaved differently considering that they had disposable feasible alternatives—for instance, behaving in a respectful manner, and that (3) the perpetrator *should* have behaved differently considering the observer's own moral principles concur with common norms of respect.

2.3.2. Group Engagement Model (Tyler & Blader, 2003)

According to Tyler and Blader (2003), one's identity judgments towards a group consists of pride—perceptions of the status of the group in terms of prestige, respect—perceptions of one's standing within a group, and, ultimately, identification—the degree to which a person defines their own identity with being part of the group. Preceding such identity judgements are, in turn, perceptions of justice associated with that group, wherein interpersonal justice plays an important role, just as procedural justice (Tyler and Blader, 2003).

In the light of workplace incivility, this theory explains why observers of incivility may reduce their engagement towards their organization upon observing incivility. Observers may assess that incivility constitutes low-quality interpersonal treatment within their organization, which diminishes the pride—and subsequently their identity judgements—that observers take in being part of their organization.

2.3.3. Fairness as deonance (Folger, 2001)

Folger (2001) suggested that a person may, in some cases, act upon justice-violations not because it is in their self-interest (e.g., for economic or social benefits), but rather because they view it as their moral obligation to do so. He argued that experiencing or observing low justice may fuel a person's eagerness to restore justice, according to their moral principles, in order to satisfy the moral need that all individuals shall be granted freedom as long as they do not interfere with the rights of others.

Thus, in the context of workplace incivility, observers may engage in compensatory behavior upon observing incivility. In turn, compensatory behavior may take the form of support towards the target. Observers may assess that targets of incivility have themselves behaved fairly while having received unfair treatment by the incivility-perpetrator. Therefore, observers may, based on their moral principles, compensate for the disrespectful treatment of the perpetrator by supporting the target in return.

2.4. Hypothesis development

The following chapter connects the three justice theories previously outlined to existing literature relevant to the focal variables of the current thesis: observed incivility, perceptions of interpersonal justice, affective commitment, supportive behavior towards the target, and trait mindfulness. In conjunction, the reasoning outlined in the following presents testable hypotheses that suggest substantial relationships between the focal variables.

2.4.1. Observed incivility and perceptions of interpersonal justice

In accordance with Fairness Theory (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001), the notion that targets, as well as third-parties, evaluate events of mistreatment as justice violations has found empirical support. For instance, targets of incivility reported perceptions of low justice preceding a number of unfavorable outcomes, such as psychological distress, dissatisfaction, and disengagement (Caza & Cortina, 2007).

From a third-party perspective, customers have been found to make justice evaluations about employees and their respective organizations upon observing mistreatment (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al., 2013), and incivility (Porath et al., 2011) among employees. Furthermore, employees who experience incivility and observe incivility towards their coworkers perceive a low interactional justice climate at their organization (Griffin, 2010). Moreover, in the light of the mildness of workplace incivility compared to other mistreatment-types, it is worth noting that observers draw low justice perceptions even from incidents in which they only perceived a perpetrator's to intent to cause low justice, in spite of observing no justice-violation in reality (Umphress et al., 2013).

Consequently, the current thesis argues that perceptions of low interpersonal justice will be present among employee observers of uncivil interactions among coworkers.

H1: There is a negative relationship between observed incivility and perceptions of interpersonal justice among the observers of uncivil interactions, such that the higher the observed incivility, the lower the perceptions of interpersonal justice.

Considering the ambiguous nature of incivility behaviors (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), differences in perceptions of uncivil events play an important role in determining observers' reactions to those events (Montgomery et al., 2004). While some observers may deem certain uncivil behaviors are not more than a mere faux-pas, others may perceive them as severe mistreatment (Montgomery et al., 2004). For instance, observers with a strong moral identity

(O'Reilly et al., 2016), or those who are high in positive affect and conscientiousness (Sliter et al., 2015), have been found to perceive uncivil interactions as more inappropriate than others. In accordance with fairness theory, such individual differences should account for an alert appraisal of counterfactual scenarios among respective employees.

Trait mindfulness may increase observers' perceptions of low interpersonal justice upon observing incivility for a few reasons. First, trait mindfulness is related to psychological mindfulness, which involves heightened awareness not only of oneself, but also of others (Beitel et al., 2005) and should, therefore, make mindful observers of uncivil interactions more sensitive towards low justice. Furthermore, trait mindfulness is related to both positive affect and conscientiousness (Hanley, 2016; Giluk, 2009), and people high in trait mindfulness also tend to uphold higher moral standards as compared to their counterparts (Ruedy & Schweitzer, 2010), all of which have been linked to increased sensitivity towards even mildly severe mistreatment, such as incivility (Sliter et al., 2015; O'Reilly et al., 2016). Further support for this hypothesis relates to the finding that employees perceive higher interpersonal justice under leadership of managers who are high in trait mindfulness (Reb et al., 2019); thus, supporting the notion that mindful individuals themselves are at least sub-consciously concerned about fair treatment of others, and potentially to a higher extent than individuals who are low in mindfulness.

H2: Trait mindfulness moderates the negative relationship between observed incivility and perceptions of interpersonal justice, such that the relationship is stronger among observers who are high in trait mindfulness.

2.4.2. Observed incivility and affective organizational commitment

Multiple studies have investigated the effect of observing mistreatment at the workplace in relation to attitudinal outcomes for the observers. For instance, observing bullying at work has been found to decrease observers' affective commitment (Houshmand et al., 2012; Salin & Notelaers, 2020), which has also been found for observing sexual harassment (Dionisi & Barling, 2018), and workplace aggression (Dupré et al., 2014). Even though incivility represents a milder form of mistreatment, observers' affective commitment may still suffer due to the more frequent occurrence of such mistreatment.

In light of the Group Engagement Model (Tyler & Blader, 2003), the present study argues that perceptions of interpersonal justice act as a mechanism that should link observing incivility to affective commitment, since affective commitment involves an employee's identification with their organization based on work experiences (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Previous studies have documented the positive relationship between interpersonal justice and affective commitment (Simons & Roberson, 2003).

Moreover, perceptions of interpersonal justice have also been found to mediate between experienced workplace mistreatment and attitudinal outcomes, for instance, between experienced undermining and lowered turnover intent (Duffy et al., 2006), or between experienced abusive supervision and lowered affective commitment (Tepper, 2000; Ogunfowora, 2012).

However, also the notion that perceptions of interpersonal justice can be the mechanism linking observed mistreatment and outcomes is not entirely new. Albeit in fewer studies, perceptions of interpersonal justice and related concepts, such as perceived permissiveness of mistreatment behaviors, have been found to mediate between observed incivility towards women (Miner & Cortina, 2016), or observed harassment (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007, Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004), and attitudinal outcomes, such as job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

H3a: Perceptions of interpersonal justice mediate the negative relationship between observed incivility and affective organizational commitment, such that the higher the observed incivility, the lower the perceptions of interpersonal justice, and the lower the affective organizational commitment.

2.4.3. Observed incivility and supportive behavior towards the target

According to the Deontological Model of Justice (Folger, 2001), there has been ample empirical evidence for retributive behavior upon observing mistreatment at work, albeit oftentimes perpetrator-focused (e.g., Hershcovis & Bhatnagar, 2017; Reich & Hershcovis, 2015). Still, third-parties have also been found to engage in supportive behavior towards the target upon observing mistreatment, either due to social bonds with the target (Coyne et al., 2019; Priesemuth, 2013), or via negative emotions in the form of anger or guilt (Miranda et al., 2020; Hershcovis & Bhatnagar, 2017).

Furthermore perceptions of interpersonal justice should act as a mediating mechanism between observed incivility and supportive behavior. For instance, low justice has been found to induce target-compensation following unfair distribution of monetary means (Lotz et al., 2011). Consistent with Folger's Deontological Model of Justice, such compensation was driven by moral outrage on part of the observers. Albeit linked to distributive justice in their study (Lotz et al., 2011), moral outrage has also been shown linked to low interpersonal justice and incivility in another study (Lin & Loi, 2021).

H3b: Perceptions of interpersonal justice mediate the positive relationship between observed incivility and target-directed supportive behavior, such that the higher observed incivility, the lower the perceptions of interpersonal justice, and the higher the supportive behavior towards the target.

O'Reilly and Aquino (2011) theorized that not all employees are equally likely to intervene upon observing mistreatment, but those who are more likely may do so due to morally-grounded motivations, in accordance with Folger's (2001) Deontological Model. The role of morality has found empirical support in retributive behavior (Lin & Loi, 2021), as well as in target-directed supportive behavior (Mitchell et al., 2015; Rupp & Bell, 2010), upon observing mistreatment at work.

Since trait mindfulness has been associated with high moral standards (Ruedy & Schweitzer, 2010), and because it has been shown to increase prosocial responses towards mistreated individuals (Berry et al., 2018), the current thesis hypothesizes that the link between perceived low interpersonal justice and target-directed supportive behavior will be stronger for employees high in trait mindfulness.

H4: Trait mindfulness moderates the mediated relationship between observed incivility and target-directed supportive behavior via interpersonal justice at the second stage, such that the negative relationship between perceptions of interpersonal justice and target-directed supportive behavior is stronger for higher levels of trait mindfulness among observers.

The conceptual framework for the current thesis, which results from the hypotheses presented, is depicted in Figure 2.

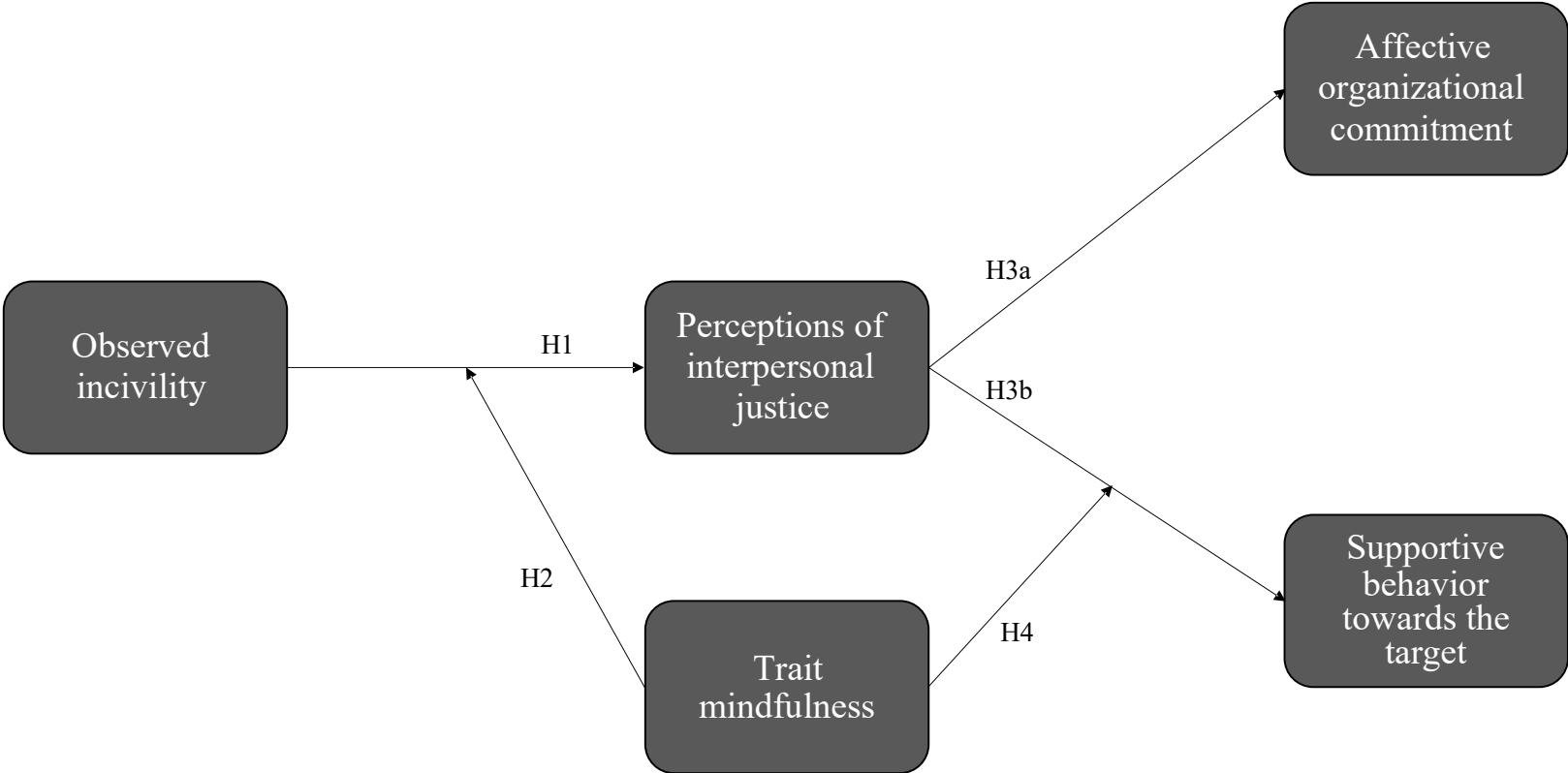


Figure 2: Conceptual framework and hypotheses

3. Overview of studies

Two studies were conducted in the scope of the current thesis in order to establish internal and external validity of resulting findings. Study 1 was an experimental study, which was designed to address internal validity, while Study 2 was a correlational study, which was designed to pursue external validity. Both studies tested all hypotheses.

4. Study 1

4.1. Method

Study 1 was an experimental (vignette) study. Vignette studies are a popular means among behavioral research, and have been shown to serve well in order to determine attitudes and behavioral intentions of research participants towards a given situation (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014).

In this thesis, the applied vignette study represented a one-factor, between-person experiment. The vignettes were adapted from Reich et al. (2021). In the manipulation condition, participants read about a hypothetical, uncivil interaction between two coworkers, and that they were an attending observer of this interaction. Specifically, in the scenario of this condition, one coworker—Christian—joined a presentation of another coworker—Sam—late, and proceeded to rudely interact with the presenter. In the control condition, the coworker interaction included the same background, though, after joining the presentation late, Christian proceeded to interact politely with Sam. The complete vignettes can be found in Appendix A. Participants were randomly and evenly assigned to one of the two conditions.

By exposing all participants to a common scenario—which varied solely by the degree of incivility of the late-joining coworker—the current vignette study especially pursued to ensure that any resulting findings would be produced based on a consistent, dependable manipulation of participants, thus pursuing internal validity of the research findings (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). On the other hand, one common challenge entailed by vignette studies lies in the sacrifice of external validity while establishing internal validity, for instance, by presenting vignette scenarios to participants who have no experience with the baseline situation of the scenario (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). This was addressed by pilot-testing the vignette scenarios with five full-time working employees, in order to ensure that the scenarios described in both conditions were realistic in terms of simulating workplace interactions.

4.1.1. Sample and procedure

A total of 250 participants were recruited via Prolific in exchange for GBP 1.34 each, which was the monetary amount suggested by Prolific in order to ensure fair compensation for the ten-minute survey. Prolific is an online crowdsourcing platform designed for recruitment of participants for research studies (Palan & Schitter, 2018). While the utilization of crowdsourcing platforms has been on the rise among behavioral research in general, Prolific has been shown to provide comparatively reliable, naïve, and honest respondents among the most popular crowdsourcing platforms (Peer et al., 2017).

To ensure that participants would be able to fully comprehend the survey, as well as to possess relevant work experience, participants were prescreened for full-time employment and residence in an English-speaking country (i.e., Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, UK, US).

After giving consent for their participation and providing their unique Prolific ID (which was needed to pay participants), participants read the vignette according to their condition, and answered two manipulation check questions. Subsequently, participants first answered questions related to the vignette, which were corresponding with the mediator, independent, and dependent variables. Next, they answered questions unrelated to the vignette, corresponding with the moderator and control variables. Finally, they provided demographic data. In the course of answering the survey questions, participants also responded to two attention check questions. Answers were forced for all questions in order to avoid missing data.

From the 250 responses gathered, five respondents failed one or both attention check questions, resulting in a final sample of 245 participants. The final sample consisted of 118 female (48.2%) and 127 male (51.8%) respondents. Furthermore, participants had, on average, 37.2 years of age ($SD = 10.7$), 16.4 years of work experience ($SD = 10.7$), 6.4 years of tenure at their current organization ($SD = 6.6$), and 39.6 work hours per week ($SD = 5.7$). Moreover, the majority of participants originated from the United Kingdom (75.1%), followed by Canada (9%), the United States (6.9%), other nationalities (5.3%), Ireland (2.9%), and Australia (0.8%). Regarding their level of education, the majority of participants reported holding a University Bachelor's degree (45.3%), while further participants held a graduate degree (e.g., MA, MS, MBA, PhD; 23.3%), attended university but obtained no degree (17.1%), graduated high school (9.8%), or held an associates/technical degree (3.7%).

Lastly, participants reported working in a variety of professions, most commonly in educational services (16.7%), health care (15.5%), and professional, scientific, or technical services (13.5%).

4.1.2. Measures

For all study variables, this thesis exclusively relied on pre-existing and validated scales. All variables were measured on seven-point Likert-type scales.

Manipulation checks. Successful implementation of the experimental manipulation was checked with two items. Participants were asked to rate the appropriateness of Christian's behavior (1 = *Very inappropriate*; 7 = *Very appropriate*), and they were asked to rate the severity of the incident (1 = *Not severe at all*; 7 = *Extremely severe*). The first item was reverse-coded prior to analysis so that high scores would represent high incivility.

Perceptions of interpersonal justice. Perceptions of interpersonal justice were measured with the four-item interpersonal justice sub-scale of Colquitt's (2001) Justice Measure Items. Sample items included "Has Christian treated Sam in a polite manner?" (1 = *Not at all*; 7 = *To a great extent*).

Affective organizational commitment. Affective organizational commitment was measured with the eight-item affective commitment sub-scale of the Organizational Commitment Scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). Sample items included "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization." (1 = *Strongly disagree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*).

Supportive behavior towards the target. Supportive target-directed behavior was measured with the five-item affective support sub-scale of Ducharme and Martin's (2000) Social Support items. Sample items included "I would really care about Sam." (1 = *Not at all*; 7 = *To a great extent*).

Trait mindfulness. Trait mindfulness was measured with the 15-item Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) developed by Brown and Ryan (2003). Sample items included "I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until some time later." (1 = *Never*; 7 = *Always*). Items were reverse coded so that high scores would represent high trait mindfulness. Reverse coding this scale was according to instructions by the authors who developed it (Brown & Ryan, 2003), and it is common practice in mindfulness research (e.g., Hülshager et al., 2013).

Control variable. Previous research has found empirical support for the substantial, positive relationship between personally experienced workplace mistreatment and increased sensitivity towards observed mistreatment (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2013). Thus, experienced incivility was controlled for in this study in order to ascertain that justice perceptions of respondents were not contaminated by personal experiences of incivility. Experienced incivility was measured by means of the seven-item Workplace Incivility Scale (Cortina et al., 2001). After the question-stem alike “[...] how frequently [...] have you been in a situation where any of your superiors or coworkers engaged in the following:”, sample items included “Put you down or was condescending to you.” (1 = *Never*; 7 = *Almost always*).

4.1.3. Analysis

The statistical analysis and hypothesis-testing were carried out in IBM SPSS Statistics 28. This included (1) verifying the implementation of the experimental manipulation via independent sample *t*-test, (2) computing descriptive statistics and correlations related to all study variables, as well as (3) reliability-testing of all scales via Cronbach’s Alpha, and (4) testing of the two moderated mediation models—one for each dependent variable—via PROCESS macro v4.1. In accordance with the theoretical framework of this thesis, the hypothetical path from observed incivility to affective commitment was tested via Model 7—moderated mediation at the first stage. The second path, from observed incivility to supportive behavior, was tested via Model 58—moderated mediation at the first and second stage (Hayes, 2017).

Moreover, since this study consisted of a vignette experiment, the independent variable within regression analyses, observed incivility, resulted from dummy coding of the two vignette conditions (1 = *manipulation*; 0 = *control*). Furthermore, all product-defining variables were mean-centered prior to analysis. Lastly, the impact of control variables was analyzed separately by conducting the PROCESS analyses without control variables.

4.2. Results

The independent sample *t*-test verified that the experimental manipulation was implemented successfully, since the participant-rated severity of the incident ($t(243) = -38.05, p < .001$), as well as appropriateness of Christian's behavior ($t(243) = -18.29, p < .001$), showed significant differences along the two conditions. Participants in the manipulation condition rated the severity of the incident higher ($M = 5.00, SD = 1.39$) than participants in the control condition ($M = 2.13, SD = 1.04$). Also, participants in the manipulation condition rated the behavior of the perpetrator more inappropriate ($M = 6.71, SD = 0.75$) than participants in the control condition ($M = 1.87, SD = 1.06$).

Descriptive statistics, as well as reliabilities for all variables used in Study 1, except the dummy variable, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities of Study 1 Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skew</i>	<i>Kurt</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	Cronbach's <i>α</i>
Perceptions of interpersonal justice	3.82	2.53	0.03	1.81	1.00	7.00	.98
Affective organizational commitment	3.99	1.08	0.06	0.00	1.25	7.00	.84
Supportive behavior towards the target	5.21	1.12	0.41	0.16	1.80	7.00	.91
Trait mindfulness	4.53	1.01	0.00	0.35	2.07	7.00	.90
Experienced incivility	2.18	1.16	1.17	1.03	1.00	7.00	.93

Note: $N = 245$.

Notably, Cronbach's alpha analysis revealed high internal consistency of all study variables by resulting in coefficients above .80 and around .90 (Hair et al., 2011). However, the alpha coefficient for perceptions of interpersonal justice far exceeded .90, which points towards redundancy among the scale items (Hair et al., 2012).

The correlations between all variables used in Study 1 are presented in Table 2. Notably, correlations with the dummy variable—observed incivility—were calculated via Spearman’s Rho instead of Pearson’s r , while the latter was used for all other correlation analyses.

Table 2
Correlations of Study 1 Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Observed incivility ^a						
2. Perceptions of interpersonal justice	-.88***					
3. Affective organizational commitment	-.63***	.64***				
4. Supportive behavior towards the target	.12	-.08	.07			
5. Trait mindfulness	-.10	.09	.12	-.04		
6. Experienced incivility	.12	-.06	-.02	-.02	-.40***	

Note: $N = 245$.

^a Correlation analysis carried out via Spearman's Rho.

*** $p < 0.001$.

The results show a strong, negative correlation between observed incivility and affective commitment ($r_s = -.63, p < .001$), and a strong, positive correlation between perceptions of interpersonal justice and affective commitment ($r = .64, p < .001$). Furthermore, the correlation between observed incivility and perceptions of interpersonal justice was extremely high ($r_s = -.88, p < .001$), which might indicate excessive similarity in the study measures of these two constructs. Nevertheless, these correlations suggest preliminary evidence for the indirect effect of observed incivility on affective commitment. Lastly, trait mindfulness and experienced incivility also showed a strong, negative correlation ($r = -.40, p < .001$)

The results of the PROCESS Model 7 analysis for Study 1 are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Study 1 Regression results - Moderated mediation predicting affective organizational commitment

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	Boot LL CI	Boot UL CI
Mediator variable model: Perceptions of interpersonal justice ^a					
Constant	3.75***	0.11	32.88	3.524	3.973
Observed incivility (a)	-4.81***	0.10	-48.12	-5.011	-4.617
Trait mindfulness (b)	0.01	0.05	0.27	-0.092	0.121
a x b	0.03	0.10	0.35	-0.160	0.230
Experienced incivility	0.03	0.05	0.67	-0.061	0.124
Dependent variable model: Affective organizational commitment ^b					
Constant	2.72***	0.28	9.64	2.165	3.278
Observed incivility	0.27	0.35	0.78	-0.413	0.959
Perceptions of interpersonal justice	0.32***	0.07	4.69	0.188	0.459
Experienced incivility	0.01	0.05	0.31	-0.077	0.105
Bootstrapping results for test of conditional indirect effect at specific level (first stage) of the moderator (trait mindfulness) on affective organizational commitment					
-1 <i>SD</i> (-1.01)	-1.57	0.33		-2.238	-0.939
M (0.00)	-1.56	0.32		-2.195	-0.940
+1 <i>SD</i> (1.01)	-1.54	0.31		-2.153	-0.933

Note: *N* = 245. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. LL = lower limit; CI = confidence interval (95%); UL = upper limit.

^a $R^2 = .91^{***}$

^b $R^2 = .41^{***}$

*** $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 1 stated that observed incivility would predict perceptions of low interpersonal justice, which was supported by the regression results ($B = -4.81, p < .001$). However, hypothesis 2 was not supported, as trait mindfulness did not moderate the relationship between observed incivility and perceptions of interpersonal justice ($B = 0.03, p = .726$). On the other hand, the regression results supported hypothesis 3a ($B = 0.32, p < .001$), such that, in conjunction with the support of hypothesis 1, there was an indirect, negative effect of

observed incivility on affective organizational commitment via perceptions of low interpersonal justice.

The results of the PROCESS Model 58 analysis for Study 1 are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Study 1 Regression results - Moderated mediation predicting supportive behavior towards the target

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	Boot LL CI	Boot UL CI
Mediator variable model: Perceptions of interpersonal justice ^a					
Constant	-0.07	0.11	-0.59	-0.292	0.157
Observed incivility (a)	-4.81***	0.10	-48.12	-5.011	-4.617
Trait mindfulness (b)	0.01	0.05	0.27	-0.092	0.121
a x b	0.03	0.10	0.35	-0.160	0.230
Experienced incivility	0.03	0.05	0.67	-0.061	0.124
Dependent variable model: Supportive behavior towards the target ^b					
Constant	5.32***	0.16	32.50	5.002	5.647
Observed incivility	0.84	0.47	1.80	-0.080	1.769
Perceptions of interpersonal justice					
(c)	0.12	0.09	1.34	-0.058	0.308
Trait mindfulness (b)	-0.05	0.08	-0.65	-0.203	0.103
c x b	-0.01	0.03	-0.43	-0.066	0.043
Experienced incivility	-0.05	0.07	-0.78	-0.186	0.081
Bootstrapping results for test of conditional indirect effects at specific levels (first and second stage) of the moderator (trait mindfulness) on supportive behavior towards the target					
-1 <i>SD</i> (-1.01)	-0.66	0.50		-1.725	0.247
M (0.00)	-0.60	0.50		-1.643	0.301
+1 <i>SD</i> (1.01)	-0.54	0.53		-1.638	0.459

Note: *N* = 245. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. LL = lower limit; CI = confidence interval (95%); UL = upper limit.

^a $R^2 = .91$ ***

^b $R^2 = .02$

*** $p < .001$.

Consistent with the results of the moderated mediation model predicting affective commitment, hypothesis 1 was also supported in the moderated mediation model predicting supportive behavior ($B = -4.81, p < .001$). On the other hand, the moderation effect of trait mindfulness, as according to hypothesis 2, was, again, not supported ($B = 0.03, p = .726$). Furthermore, hypothesis 3b—that perceptions of low interpersonal justice would mediate the relationship between observed incivility and supportive behavior—did not find support either ($B = 0.12, p = .180$). Hypothesis 4, which stated that mindfulness would moderate the positive effect of perceptions of low interpersonal justice on supportive behavior, was also not supported ($B = -0.01, p = .671$). In any case, the dependent variable model was overall not significant ($R^2 = 0.02, p = .346$).

5. Study 2

5.1. Method

Study 2 utilized the Critical Incident Technique (CIT), which attempts to have participants recall and describe a specific, personally experienced situation upon pre-defined frame conditions (Flanagan, 1954). This technique has been shown suitable for research of attitudinal and behavioral reactions related to workplace mistreatment, as it stimulates a vivid and highly relatable reference point for participants before letting them answer respective survey questions (e.g., Priesemuth & Schminke, 2019; Hershcovis et al., 2018).

In this thesis, in order to implement the CIT, participants were instructed to recall and describe a situation that they experienced during the last year while employed at their current organization, in which they observed one of their coworkers or superiors behaving uncivilly towards another coworker or superior. Uncivil behavior was subsequently defined along the seven scale items of the Workplace Incivility Scale (Cortina et al., 2001), in order to support participants with frame conditions during their recall. Furthermore, in order to resurrect detailed memories of participants, they were instructed to recall the circumstances leading to the situation and the incident itself, as well as their emotions and responses to the event. The complete recall instructions can be found in Appendix B.

By utilizing the CIT in this study, the inherent challenge of diminished external validity of Study 1 was addressed to a further extent. Specifically, by drawing on participants' reactions from situations that they personally experienced, research findings were ensured to be based on a realistic, generalizable research design.

5.1.1. Sample and procedure

For this study, a total of 200 participants were recruited via Prolific in exchange for GBP 1.34 each. Participants were, again, prescreened for full-time employment and for residence in the same English-speaking countries as in Study 1. Furthermore, to secure naivety about the study measures, participants from Study 1 were excluded from the available participants pool for Study 2. Lastly, to enhance the likelihood of reliable and honest incident descriptions, participants were also prescreened for a minimum 99% approval rating on Prolific.

Study 2 was structured similarly to Study 1. After giving consent for their participation and providing their Prolific ID, participants read the CIT instructions and provided their descriptions of recalled incidents. Furthermore, participants also provided initials of the target and perpetrator of their respective incidents, which were subsequently piped through the relevant survey questions. Thereafter, participants responded to questions related to the incident (mediator, independent, and dependent variables), then answered questions unrelated to the incident (moderator and control variables), and, finally, provided demographic data. In order to verify attentive responding, the same attention check questions as in Study 1 were used. Again, answers were forced for all questions in order to avoid missing data.

Two respondents were removed prior to analysis due to failure on one or both attention checks. Furthermore, participants were also excluded prior to analysis whose incident descriptions did not fit the concept of observed incivility that was instructed beforehand. Specifically, participants were removed, who provided no recall of any situation ($n = 2$), provided recalled situations in which they were personally targeted ($n = 11$), or provided situations not recalled from their current organizations ($n = 4$). Moreover, participants were excluded whose incident descriptions reported observed incidents of overt aggression ($n = 15$; i.e. physical threats, $n = 3$, or shouting, $n = 12$), or who reported other mistreatment that does not fit the incivility construct, namely bullying/undermining ($n = 7$) and sexual harassment ($n = 1$). Lastly, one participant reported an incident in which a customer was the incivility-target, one participant reported mistreatment without any detail, and one participant reported mistreatment, but then proceeded to rate items on the Observed Incivility Scale (described in chapter 5.1.2. *Measures*) as if no mistreatment had occurred (i.e. by selecting 1 = *not at all* for each item), signaling careless responding; all three were excluded accordingly. After removal of these participants, the final sample totaled 155 participants.

Within the final sample, 75 respondents were female (48.4%) and 79 respondents were male (51.0%), while one respondent did not specify their gender (0.6%). Participants had, on average, 36.7 years of age ($SD = 10.6$), 16.0 years of work experience ($SD = 10.7$), 7.3 years of tenure at their current organization ($SD = 10.1$), and 38.9 work hours per week ($SD = 5.0$). Moreover, the majority of participants, again, originated from the United Kingdom (77.4%), followed by the United States (11.6%), Canada (5.8%), other nationalities (3.2%), and Ireland (1.9%). With regard to their highest level of education completed, the majority of participants reported holding a University Bachelor's degree (40.6%), while further participants held a graduate degree (26.5%), attended university but obtained no degree (18.7%), graduated high school (7.7%), or held an associates/technical degree (5.2%). Again, participants reported working in a variety of professions, most commonly in health care (18.1%), manufacturing (10.3%), professional, scientific, or technical services (10.3%), and educational services (10.3%).

5.1.2. Measures

As in Study 1, Study 2 relied on pre-existing scales in order to utilize reliable measures. Furthermore, most scales that were used in Study 1 were also used in Study 2. Differences in the measures used accounted for the methodological differences among Study 1 and Study 2. Again, all variables were measured on seven-point Likert-type scales.

Observed incivility. Since Study 2 employed the CIT—hence, investigated the relationships of the theoretical framework based on differing reference points for uncivil interactions—the level of observed incivility that participants experienced was measured. Therefore, the Workplace Incivility Scale (Cortina et al., 2001) was adapted to measure the degree of incivility within the respective incident, instead of measuring frequencies of incivility. Following the question stem “*during the incident you described, to what extent did you think the following?*”, sample items included “[*perpetrator*] put [*target*] down or was condescending to [*target*].” (1 = *Not at all*; 7 = *To a great extent*). As mentioned before, the initials that participants provided after describing their incident were piped through such questions.

Perceptions of interpersonal justice. Measured with the same items as in Study 1.

Affective organizational commitment. Measured with the same items as in Study 1.

Supportive behavior towards the target. Measured with the same items as in Study 1.

Trait mindfulness. Measured with the same items as in Study 1.

Control variables. Again, Study 2 controlled for experienced incivility by the same means as in Study 1. Additionally, Study 2 also controlled for perceived coworker support from the target. Perceived coworker support was measured with the same scale as supportive behavior towards the target, though the scale was adapted to reflect perceived support from the target, and participants were instructed to think of their work relationship towards the target at the time of the incident—not during the incident specifically. Sample items included “[target] really cared about me.” (1 = *Not at all*; 7 = *To a great extent*). This measure was added as a control variable because previous research has provided empirical evidence for the positive relationship between reception of and distribution of supportive behavior. For instance, Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) stresses that one’s prosocial actions towards another individual are largely due to the reciprocity of prosocial actions among both individuals’ mutual relationship. Empirical work on observers’ reactions of workplace bullying, specifically, has documented that observers were more likely to defend the target of bullying when they were friends with the target (Coyne et al., 2019). Conversely, this measure was not added in Study 1, since, due to the hypothetical nature of the vignettes, participants were assumed to display no variance in their perceived support by the target.

5.1.3. Analysis

The statistical analysis in Study 1 followed the same procedure as in Study 1, except for dummy-coding and manipulation-checking. As opposed to Study 1, the independent variable, observed incivility, was measured as previously mentioned.

5.2. Results

Descriptive statistics, as well as reliabilities for all variables used in Study 2 are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities of Study 2 Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skew</i>	<i>Kurt</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	Cronbach's <i>α</i>
Observed incivility	4.52	1.09	0.40	0.48	1.86	7.00	.66
Perceptions of interpersonal justice	2.24	1.20	1.31	2.22	1.00	7.00	.87
Affective organizational commitment	3.78	1.41	0.11	0.61	1.00	7.00	.90
Supportive behavior towards the target	4.78	1.43	0.52	0.35	1.00	7.00	.92
Trait mindfulness	4.61	1.08	0.36	0.03	1.40	7.00	.92
Perceived coworker support	4.31	1.47	0.40	0.58	1.00	7.00	.94
Experienced incivility	2.39	1.13	0.88	0.49	1.00	6.71	.91

Note: N = 155.

Resulting from Cronbach's alpha analysis, most variables used in this study showed excellent internal consistency. However, the scale for observed incivility showed an alpha coefficient between .60 and .70, which is still acceptable in the context of exploratory research, however can be deemed questionable (Hair et al., 2011).

The correlations between all variables used in Study 2 are presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Correlations of Study 2 Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Observed incivility	1						
2. Perceptions of interpersonal justice	-.54***	1					
3. Affective organizational commitment	.04	.09	1				
4. Supportive behavior towards the target	.37***	-.30***	.07	1			
5. Trait mindfulness	.01	.03	.16*	.00	1		
6. Perceived coworker support	.32***	-.19*	.09	.79***	-.05	1	
7. Experienced incivility	.21**	-.14	-.25***	.22**	-.38***	.19*	1

Note: $N = 155$.

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Notably, results for Study 2 also provided a significant, negative correlation between observed incivility and perceptions of interpersonal justice ($r = -.54, p < .001$). However, as opposed to Study 1, the respective correlation coefficient was not exceptionally high in Study 2. On the other hand, in Study 2, supportive behavior towards the target and perceived coworker support were highly correlated ($r = .79, p < .001$), which might, again, indicate excessive similarity among the measures used to measure the two constructs. Furthermore, regarding hypothesized relationships of the current thesis, correlation results provided tentative evidence for the indirect effect of observed incivility on supportive behavior towards the target, resulting from the negative correlations between observed incivility and perceptions of interpersonal justice ($r = -.54, p < .001$), and between perceptions of interpersonal justice and supportive behavior towards the target ($r = -.30, p < .001$).

The results of the PROCESS Model 7 analysis for Study 2 are presented in Table 7.

Table 7
Study 2 Regression results - Moderated mediation predicting affective organizational commitment

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	Boot LL CI	Boot UL CI
Mediator variable model: Perceptions of interpersonal justice ^a					
Constant	2.28***	0.21	10.66	1.856	2.700
Observed incivility (a)	-0.59***	0.08	-7.56	-0.749	-0.439
Trait mindfulness (b)	0.03	0.08	0.33	-0.139	0.195
a x b	0.00	0.07	0.05	-0.131	0.138
Experienced incivility	-0.02	0.08	-0.21	-0.180	0.146
Dependent variable model: Affective organizational commitment ^b					
Constant	4.21***	0.36	11.69	3.500	4.925
Observed incivility	0.23	0.12	1.89	-0.010	0.468
Perceptions of interpersonal justice	0.17	0.11	1.57	-0.044	0.382
Experienced incivility	-0.34***	0.10	-3.40	-0.534	-0.141
Bootstrapping results for test of conditional indirect effects at specific level (first stage) of the moderator (trait mindfulness) on affective organizational commitment					
-1 <i>SD</i> (-1.08)	-0.10	0.08		-0.266	0.044
M (0.00)	-0.10	0.07		-0.248	0.041
+1 <i>SD</i> (1.08)	-0.10	0.08		-0.255	0.039

Note: $N = 155$. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. LL = lower limit; CI = confidence interval (95%); UL = upper limit.

^a $R^2 = .29^{***}$

^b $R^2 = .09^{**}$

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$.

Regression results supported hypothesis 1, which stated that observed incivility would negatively predict perceptions of interpersonal justice ($B = -0.59, p < .001$). On the other hand, the moderation effect of trait mindfulness, stated in hypothesis 2, did not find support ($B = 0.00, p = .961$). Moreover, regression results also did not support hypothesis 3a ($B = 0.17, p = .119$), such that there was no indirect effect of observed incivility on affective commitment via interpersonal justice perceptions.

The results of the PROCESS Model 58 analysis for Study 2 are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Study 2 Regression results - Moderated mediation predicting supportive behavior towards the target

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	Boot LL CI	Boot UL CI
Mediator variable model: Perceptions of interpersonal justice ^a					
Constant	0.08	0.32	0.27	-0.548	0.718
Observed incivility (a)	-0.59***	0.08	-7.15	-0.752	-0.427
Trait mindfulness (b)	0.03	0.08	0.33	-0.139	0.195
a x b	0.00	0.07	0.04	-0.132	0.137
Perceived coworker support	-0.01	0.06	-0.19	-0.130	0.108
Experienced incivility	-0.02	0.08	-0.19	-0.180	0.149
Dependent variable model: Supportive behavior towards the target ^b					
Constant	1.50***	0.26	5.79	0.986	2.006
Observed incivility	0.06	0.08	0.82	-0.089	0.215
Perceptions of interpersonal justice (c)	-0.17*	0.07	-2.53	-0.299	-0.037
Trait mindfulness (b)	0.12	0.07	1.79	-0.013	0.257
c x b	0.14*	0.06	2.50	0.030	0.259
Perceived coworker support	0.72***	0.05	14.79	0.621	0.812
Experienced incivility	0.08	0.07	1.15	-0.056	0.212
Bootstrapping results for test of conditional indirect effects at specific levels (first and second stage) of the moderator (trait mindfulness) on supportive behavior towards the target					
-1 <i>SD</i> (-1.08)	0.19	0.06		0.085	0.322
M (0.00)	0.10	0.04		0.029	0.177
+1 <i>SD</i> (1.08)	0.00	0.06		-0.107	0.124

Note: $N = 155$. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. LL = lower limit; CI = confidence interval (95%); UL = upper limit.

^a $R^2 = .29^{***}$

^b $R^2 = .68^{***}$

*** $p < .001$., * $p < .05$.

The support of hypothesis 1 was, as in Study 1, consistent in both moderated mediation models of Study 2 ($B = -0.59, p < .001$). However, again, trait mindfulness did not moderate the relationship between observed incivility and perceptions of interpersonal justice, thereby warranting rejection of hypothesis 2 ($B = 0.00, p = .971$). On the other hand, the regression analysis did depict an indirect effect of observed incivility on supportive behavior via perceptions of interpersonal justice, even after controlling for perceived coworker support ($B = -0.17, p = .013$), hence, providing support for the indirect effect predicted in hypotheses 1 and 3b.

Lastly, the testing of hypothesis 4, that trait mindfulness would moderate the relationship between interpersonal justice perceptions and supportive behavior, did produce significant results, however in the opposite direction as compared to hypothesis 4 ($B = 0.14, p = .013$); the relationship between interpersonal justice perceptions and supportive behavior was not stronger for observers who were high in trait mindfulness as predicted, but it was stronger for observers who were low in trait mindfulness. Therefore, hypothesis 5 was not supported.

Figure 3 depicts the interaction between perceptions of interpersonal justice and trait mindfulness predicting supportive behavior towards the target. The interaction effect was plotted at one *SD* above and below the mean.



Figure 3: Study 2 Interaction Between Perceptions of interpersonal justice and trait mindfulness on supportive behavior towards the target

The moderation effect was further analyzed via a simple slopes test, which showed that the moderation in the low condition of trait mindfulness was significant ($B = -0.31, p < .001$), while the moderation in the high condition of trait mindfulness was not significant ($B = -0.02, p = .784$).

6. Discussion

Study 1 intended to investigate the indirect and moderated effects of observed incivility on affective commitment and target-directed supportive behavior based on hypothetical coworker interactions. Results for Study 1 supported the notion that observed incivility predicts low interpersonal justice perceptions among observers. Furthermore, the indirect, negative effect of observed incivility on affective commitment via perceptions of interpersonal justice was supported, as well. On the other hand, results did not support the indirect effect of observed incivility on supportive behavior towards the target. Moderation effects of trait mindfulness were not supported either.

Study 2 sought to complement the investigation of Study 1 based on recalls of genuine coworker interactions. Results for Study 2 also supported the predicted, negative relationship between observed incivility and perceptions of interpersonal justice. Moreover, contrary to Study 1, results of Study 2 supported the proposed indirect effect of observed incivility on supportive behavior towards the target (even after controlling for perceived coworker support), while the indirect effect of observed incivility on affective commitment was not supported. Lastly, while moderation effects of trait mindfulness at the first stage were, again, not supported, trait mindfulness did moderate the indirect effect of observed incivility on supportive behavior at the second stage. However, unexpectedly, observers who were low—instead of high—in trait mindfulness showed a stronger increase in supportive behavior along with a decrease in justice-perceptions.

6.1. Theoretical implications

The current thesis contributes to the third-party mistreatment and organizational justice literatures in a number of ways. First, the findings support Fairness Theory (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001) by showing that observed incivility preceded observers' interpersonal justice concerns across the two studies. Thus, findings resonate with the notion that incivility-observers employ counterfactual thinking in fast, heuristic evaluations of justice as in Study 1 (in which participants were confronted with unexpected coworker interactions), as well as in slow, deliberate evaluations as in Study 2 (in which participants reappraised their own, previous experiences).

Second, the current thesis suggests that even comparably milder forms of observed mistreatment negatively shape observers' work attitudes via perceptions of interpersonal justice. Thereby, it extends previous research findings that have found similar effects when

incivility was specifically directed towards women (Miner & Cortina, 2016). Even though results did not support this finding when singled-out experiences of observed incivility were linked to observers' attitudes towards their real employer, the indirect effect *was* significant when a single incident of observed incivility accounted for all information that observers could associate with their hypothetical organization.

These results suggest two important considerations. On the one hand, in the light of the Group Engagement Model (Tyler & Blader, 2003), it appears that when employees associate low interpersonal justice with their organization, it does indeed diminish the pride they take in being part of it. Hence, it is plausible that repeated experiences of vicarious incivility increase employees' likelihood of turning away from their organization in terms of affective commitment, as they potentially associate progressively lower interpersonal justice with their organization along with the accumulation of such experiences. This possibility entails an important caveat, considering that incivility is said to occur in organizations more frequently than other mistreatment-types (Caza & Cortina, 2007). On the other hand, one should consider that affective commitment is a holistic concept (Allen & Meyer, 1990), wherein observed mistreatment—especially when it is less severe—may only constitute one of many components that shape this work attitude. So, when observed incivility is the exception rather than the norm, employees' commitment may not be affected.

Third, the current thesis suggests that third-party observers do engage in supportive behavior towards the targets of incivility via perceptions of interpersonal justice, not only when they maintain affirmative relationships with the targets anyways, but also beyond such boundary conditions. Therefore, it supports Folger's (2001) deontic view that mistreatment-observers do support mistreatment-victims for the sake of restoring justice that had been violated beforehand, even if the mistreatment is less severe. While this support was found based on real third-party experiences, it is possible that the experimental study, Study 1, did not replicate such findings due to the study's hypothetical nature. This might have affected participants' self-assessment of supportive behavior in the manipulation condition, such that the mechanisms that have been previously linked to supportive behavior (e.g., perspective taking, empathic concern, feelings of guilt) possibly did not function as according to real-life circumstances. Indeed, previous research has found that employees' reactions to incivility varied according to their level of involvement in the incident, such that their reactions were stronger when they observed incivility first hand, in contrast to learning about incivility-incidents from colleagues (Totterdell et al., 2012).

Lastly, the current thesis contributes to third-party mistreatment, as well as workplace-related mindfulness literatures by showing that mistreatment-observers who were high in trait mindfulness were not overly sensitive towards justice concerns associated with mistreatment. Thus, it suggests that trait mindfulness does not represent a previously covered dispositional factor responsible for influencing sensitivity towards mistreatment. Additionally, in the current thesis, it appeared that trait mindfulness also did not carry any prosocial value that would have enabled stronger tendency towards providing target-support upon perceiving low interpersonal justice.

Two considerations may shed light to these findings. First, previous research has found that the impact of mindfulness on prosocial motivation is indeed twofold (Poulin et al., 2021). Depending on whether individuals identify their self as rather independent, or rather interdependent of their social surroundings, mindfulness may indeed reduce, or heighten prosocial motivation, respectively. Considering that participants for the current thesis predominantly originated from the UK, a country associated with highly individualistic culture (Spector et al., 2001), the former condition, independent self-construal, could have placed boundaries on the proposed effect of trait mindfulness on heightened sensitivity towards (in)justice. Second, considering that mindfulness facilitates individuals' psychological detachment from stressful events (Tarraf et al., 2019), mindfulness may also inhibit emotions that are associated with increased tendency towards supportive behavior upon observing mistreatment, such as feelings of guilt (Miranda et al., 2020).

6.2. Practical implications

The current thesis also provides implications for managerial practice. First, considering that observing incivility at work affects observers' perceptions of interpersonal justice, incivility interventions in organizations, such as the CREW-intervention (i.e., Civility, Respect, and Engagement in the Workplace; Leiter et al., 2012) could be complemented with justice as a central topic of discussion. Considering that justice norms in organizations are socially constructed according to shared beliefs of organizational members (Colquitt et al., 2001), organizational members should be guided to find common ground in the interpersonal dimension of justice, such that the polite, respectful, dignified, and proper treatment of others should be held as a valuable and desirable good among them (Skarlicki & Latham, 2005).

Beyond incivility interventions, managers should, in general be cautious about incivility in their organization, considering that observing incivility may leave observers less committed to their organization. Therefore, managers should aim to establish mechanisms of holding

incivility-perpetrators accountable, for instance, by introducing zero-tolerance policies for incivility and establishing reporting channels related to incivility through human resource management. Such policies should be accompanied by training employees regarding which interpersonal behaviors are tolerated and which are not. Lastly, for the case that incivility still occurs, managers should provide forums for affected parties to engage in constructive resolution of incivility-incidents, which may, again, intend to reach consensus regarding fair interpersonal treatment norms.

Lastly, managers should consider that mindfulness-based trainings for organizations are often essentially stress-reduction trainings (Bartlett et al., 2019). Though, besides reducing participants' stress perceptions, mindfulness interventions have also been shown to increase participants' trait mindfulness (Kiken et al., 2015). Since trait mindfulness, in itself, did not translate to prosocial behavior in the current thesis, managers should be cautious to not overestimate proposed interpersonal benefits of such trainings, at least with regard to mindful responses towards observed mistreatment.

6.3. Limitations and future research directions

Certainly, there are limitations that have accompanied the current thesis—with regard to its methods and samples—that are worth noting. First, there are limitations inherent to the methodological approaches of the two studies—the vignette experiment, as well as the recall study.

Regarding the experiment, some prevalent limitations of using vignettes—namely realism and relevance for participants (Hughes & Huby, 2004)—were addressed by pilot-testing the vignettes with full-time employees and distributing them to full-time employees, as well. Though, other limitations remain. For instance, since participants were guided to put themselves in the shoes of the observer—rather than adopting the observers' perspective based on pre-defined character traits—this could have led participants to assume socially desirable responses, especially in terms of helping behavior, which would not represent their intentions in a real-life context (Hughes & Huby, 2004).

Regarding the Critical Incident Technique used, it must be considered that the human capacity to recollect accurate memories is fairly limited (Bott & Tourish, 2016). This circumstance could have misrepresented participants' reactions to observed incivility, despite the support that was provided to participants according to the recall instructions of the current thesis. Along those lines, it is also worth noting that the time horizon of one year,

which participants were allowed to rely on during their recall, is at the upper limit of what is recommended for studies that use the CIT (Bott & Tourish, 2016).

To account for the methodological issues that go along with vignettes and critical incidents, future research should consider testing relationships between observed incivility and outcomes by conducting field studies and diary studies, preferably in conjunction. Such an approach should reduce concerns of social-desirability or memory recall, since participants would be enabled to rely on comparably accurate information of very recent and real experiences (Bolger et al., 2003).

Furthermore, regarding the measurement of study variables, the current thesis exclusively relied on self-reported measures, such that findings are prone to common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Even though self-reported measures were essential when assessing observers' perceptions of justice, other-reported measures could well be considered for commitment (e.g., reported by superiors/coworkers) or supportive behavior (e.g., reported by targets). Further susceptibility for common method bias results from the correlational research design of the recall study (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Notwithstanding, the experimental design of the vignette study complemented the recall study in that regard, such that it did allow for implying causality in the relationships between observed incivility and dependent variables, since levels of observed incivility were controlled in it. Still, in order to expand implications for causal relationships among the variables tested, further research must also be conducted applying longitudinal research designs.

The second concern that poses limitations to the current thesis lies in the samples that have been gathered for the two studies. Specifically, these have represented highly educated employees (over 65% held at least a University Bachelor's degree in both studies), who mainly originated from the UK (around 75% in both studies), and mainly worked in the service sector (at least 65% in both studies). Considering the proposal for investigating relationships between observed incivility and outcomes in field and diary studies, such research should consider recruiting participants who obtained less than university education, originated from countries other than the UK, and work in industrial or agricultural sectors. Doing so could bolster the generalizability of the current findings and account for any alternative explanations for them.

At last, the current thesis has left questions unanswered, as well as contributed to forming new questions that warrant future investigation. One unanswered question relates to the fundamental concept of incivility, which should encompass breach of norms of respect, deviant behavior, and, importantly, ambiguous intent to harm the target (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). The former two criteria have arguably enjoyed thorough attention in the current thesis, such that in the vignette study, observed incivility and perceptions of interpersonal justice were very highly correlated, and in the recall study, participants likely described rather severe incidents of incivility given that more severe incidents should be more memorable. On the other hand, the latter criteria, ambiguous intent, could be examined more comprehensively in future research, for instance, by measuring perceived intent reported by observers, as well as by other parties related to incivility.

Finally, it will be important to assess whether the accumulation of exposure to vicarious mistreatment does indeed inhibit employees' affective commitment over time, as tentatively suggested by the current thesis. Again, such research should encompass longitudinal research designs that record the frequencies by which observers experience such exposure. On the other hand, since trait mindfulness did not exhibit the hypothesized effects of the current thesis, it will be enticing to investigate how other dimensions of mindfulness research—such as related to state mindfulness or mindfulness interventions—will hold up in this regard.

7. Conclusion

From the observer's perspective, acts of incivility do not simply represent deviant slip-ups from foolish perpetrators, but rather violations of interpersonal justice. The current study suggests that observers may indeed intend to repair such (in)justice by supporting the target in return. However, they may also distance themselves from it, such that when perceived justice violations infect their view on their organization, they may become less attached to it. Thus, managers should be cautious about conceding incivility within their organizations, and implement mechanisms that refrain its prevalence, for instance, by making justice a central topic of discussion among incivility-resolutions.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Study 1 Vignette – manipulation condition

You are a member of a project management team responsible for improving your company's marketing strategy. You are currently attending a regularly scheduled meeting with the team, while one of your colleagues, Sam, is presenting an idea to everyone. During the presentation, another one of your colleagues, Christian, joins the meeting late. As Christian enters the meeting room, you witness the following interaction between Sam and Christian:

Christian: **While looking at the phone** "Hey everyone, what's going on?"

Sam: "Hello Christian, I am presenting my idea for the project implementation at the moment."

Christian: **Still looking at the phone** "Oh wow, everyone here must feel enlightened."

Sam: "I can give you a short summary of what I have been presenting."

Christian: **Puts phone away** "Um ... let's not waste everyone's time, just keep going."

Sam: "I have put a lot of effort into this idea, and I think it's important that we're all on the same page."

Christian: "Well, your input hasn't been very inspiring lately. I'll wait for ideas from the others."

Study 1 Vignette – control condition

You are a member of a project management team responsible for improving your company's marketing strategy. You are currently attending a regularly scheduled meeting with the team, while one of your colleagues, Sam, is presenting an idea to everyone. During the presentation, another one of your colleagues, Christian, joins the meeting late. As Christian enters the meeting room, you witness the following interaction between Sam and Christian:

Christian: "Hello everyone, please excuse me for being late."

Sam: "Hello Christian, I am presenting my idea for the project implementation at the moment."

Christian: "Okay. I'm sorry to have interrupted you."

Sam: "I can give you a short summary of what I have been presenting."

Christian: "That is kind of you, and I am curious about your idea."

Sam: "I have put a lot of effort into this idea, and I think it's important that we're all on the same page."

Christian: "I agree, thank you for taking the time to summarize your idea for me."

Appendix B

Study 2 Recall instructions

Please recall and describe a situation that you experienced during the last year at work at your *current* organization, in which you *witnessed* one of your coworkers or superiors behaving rudely/disrespectfully towards another coworker or superior. Rude/disrespectful behavior may be one of, or a combination of, the following:

- to put someone down
- to pay little attention to someone's opinion
- to make demeaning or derogatory remarks about someone
- to address someone in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately
- to ignore someone or exclude someone from professional camaraderie
- to doubt someone's judgement on a matter over which they have responsibility
- to make unwanted attempts to draw someone into a discussion of personal matters

Please try to describe what were the circumstances that led to the situation and what happened during the situation. Then, try to describe how you felt about this situation and how you responded to it.