# COPING WITH ORGANIZATIONAL DEVIANT BEHAVIORS: THE ROLE OF POLITICAL SKILLS, EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE, AND TURNOVER INTENTION

Dissertação apresentada à Universidade Católica Portuguesa para obtenção do grau de mestre em Psicologia e Desenvolvimento de Recursos Humanos

*Maria Francisca de Gusmão Bandarra Costa Marques*

Porto, julho 2023

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Trabalho efetuado sob a orientação da

Professora Catarina Morais

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# Resumo

A forma como os indivíduos experienciam o seu quotidiano nas organizações é crucial na decisão das suas respostas emocionais e atitude face ao próprio local de trabalho, principalmente quando as vivências são marcadas por comportamentos que quebram a norma de respeito. Desta forma, o objetivo deste estudo consistiu em analisar o modo como os indivíduos lidam com comportamentos desviantes no local de trabalho. Mais especificamente, testou-se o papel do nível de competências sociopolíticas na predição da experiência de exaustão emocional e intenção de saída das organizações, sendo esta relação mediada pela autorregulação. Foram recolhidos dados de 89 participantes que já haviam experienciado pelo menos uma situação de incivilidade em contexto laboral. Foi-lhes pedido que recordassem essa experiência enquanto se avaliava a sua autorregulação através de um sensor de atividade eletrodérmica e cardíaca. Os participantes preencheram também medidas de autorrelato relativamente às suas competências sociopolíticas, exaustão emocional e intenção de saída da organização. Os resultados deste estudo mostraram que as competências sociopolíticas não predizem a adaptação dos participantes à experiência de incivilidade. No entanto, a exaustão emocional é um preditor da intenção de saída, o que reforça a importância da aposta em estratégias eficazes para combater comportamentos desviantes nas organizações.

*Palavras-Chave:* comportamento desviante; competências sociopolíticas; exaustão emocional; intenção de saída; autorregulação emocional.

**Abstract**

The way the individuals live their daily life within the organizations is absolutely crucial on deciding their emotional responses and attitude towards their workplace, especially when their experiences are marked by uncivil behaviors who lack mutual respect. The goal of this study was to analyze the way individuals cope with deviant behaviors on their workplace. Specifically, how their political skills level predicts their feeling of emotional exhaustion and turnover intention, being this relation mediated by self-regulation. The data was collected from 89 participants, who have suffered at least one workplace incivility situation. It was asked to the participants to recall this situation, simultaneously to the self-regulation measurement using an electrodermal activity and heart-rate sensor. Accordingly, were used questionnaires aiming to measure political skills, emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. The results of this study showed that political skills did not predict the participants adaptability to their uncivil workplace experience. However, emotional exhaustion is a predictor of turnover intention which highlight the relevance to create effective coping mechanisms regarding deviant behaviors on organizations.

*Keywords:* Deviant behaviors; political skills; emotional exhaustion; turnover intention; self-regulation.

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## Introduction

Workers' relationship with the organization they work differs among employees and varies depending on the nature of the behaviours that shape their experience, whether they are positive or negative. Negative interactions in organizations are commonly referred to workplace incivility, a deviant behaviour defined by a low intensity breach in the mutual respect norm with possible unclear intention to harm (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) – for example, incidents such as eagerly leaning against the desk while a co-worker is engaged onto a phone call, ranting about a broken tool, having no gratitude over extra hours, or hurling negative comments to a colleague are frequently acknowledged as workplace incivility illustrations (Pearson et al,. 2001).

According to Porath and Pearson (2013), 98% of workers on a 14,000 sample throughout the United States and Canada have experienced workplace incivility at least one time per week. This translates into serious consequences to both individuals and the organization: individuals who face workplace incivility tend to feel discomfort, unhappiness, and dissatisfaction with their colleagues and overall stress due to the difficulty to decide how to respond to such ambiguous situations (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). On the other hand, the presence of a hostile attitude can reflect on the organizational climate, affecting individuals and their groups by raising their mental and physical stress, and triggering negative emotional responses to a situation, specially fostering their desire to leave (Lim et al., 2008; Rahim & Cosby, 2016). Other consequences of workplace incivility also include employee's negative job satisfaction, poor job performance and turnover intentions (Hur et al., 2015; Mahfooz et al., 2017). However, some recent research has investigated mitigating factors of such consequences. Specifically, Karatepe and colleagues (2019) suggested that employees' political skills can play such a role. Political skills are defined by the capacity to influence others to

perform in ways that advance personal and/or organizational aims by effectively understanding people at work (Ferris et al., 1999). Thus, possessing strong political skills gives employees a sense of personal reassurance, which enables them to interpret a stressful situation (such as workplace incivility) as less threatening, diminishing their experience of workplace stress which, in turn, provides them with a more positive perception of the organization and a stronger will to remain in the company (Moon & Morais, 2022; Munyon et al., 2015).

In this study, it is proposed that one possible explanation for this phenomenon is related to individuals' self-regulation abilities: workers with high levels of political skills are more likely to create self-regulation strategies which enables them to deal with high job demands and to not experience emotional exhaustion. Contrarily, individuals who lack the ability to self-regulate are less capable to select an effective coping mechanism towards a stressful situation, raising their feeling of emotional exhaustion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In this study, we test the idea that self-regulation helps reduce the impact of workplace incivility on employees. Specifically, we argue that employees who have strong political skills are more likely to develop self-regulation abilities and, therefore, workplace incivility has a lower impact on their emotional exhaustion and, consequently, they are more willing to remain in the organization. The value-added contribution of this study is that even though it allows us to determine the association between political skills, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention, it also allows us to establish the self-regulation mediating effect and its role.

## Theoretical background and hypotheses

### Workplace incivility and its consequences

Workplace incivility has been a research topic for several years and was first proposed by Andersson and Pearson (1999), who defined it as the violation of workplace standards, including the breach of mutual respect and an unclear intention to harm an individual. More

recently, Martin and Hine (2005) argue that the intention to harm is a non-negotiable aspect of the definition of the concept. Thus, workplace incivility includes behaviours such as hostile verbal or non-verbal interactions (Tepper, 2000).

The consequences of workplace incivility for both the organization where it occurs and for the individual are well documented. For instance, workplace incivility can cause organizational discomfort, unhappiness, and dissatisfaction with colleagues and with work in general, as well as negative emotional responses and outcomes (e.g., Hur et al., 2015; Rahim & Cosby, 2016; Slitter et al., 2010). One of the main negative outcomes related to workplace incivility refers to employees' turnover intention; that is, the thought of a co-worker to leave an organization, which increases organization instability and lack of productivity (Lv et al., 2012). Additionally, when co-workers not only express their desire to leave but actually leave the organization, it accretes the responsibility to search for a new employee (Barak et al., 2001; Ducharme et al., 2007; Lum et al., 1998). In sum, experiencing negative social interactions is one of the main source of employees' turnover intention (Tricahyadinata et al., 2020).

Despite that fact, there are some factors that might help attenuating workplace incivility consequences. Specifically, some authors argue the role of political skills on diminishing the experience of emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. Political skilled employees, when facing behaviours such as workplace incivility are more capable of developing personal connections, fostering a better social environment understanding and consequently, developing a higher perception of their organization (Ferris et al., 2007; Perrewé et al., 2004).

**Workplace incivility: The importance of political skills**

Political skills have been defined as the ability to influence, persuade, manipulate, and negotiate on organizational context (Mintzberg, 1985). Ferris and colleagues (2007) suggest that political skills comprise four different dimensions: social astuteness, interpersonal

influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity. According to the authors, social astuteness is the ability to observe and comprehend social interactions, as well as having a strong sense of self on social domains. On the other hand, interpersonal influence is known as the skill to influence others, empowering their adaptability to diverse situations, and assuring they elicit the desired responses, while networking ability refers to the individual potential to create numerous contacts with other people, as well as, fostering relationships (Ferris et al, 2007). Lastly, apparent sincerity is the capacity to appear sincere and genuine towards any situation, having a special relevance when it comes to influencing other individuals by enabling them with trust (Ferris et al., 2007).

Consequently, individuals who possess political skills have a major ability to adjust to the various situations according to their environment, simultaneously stimulating the feeling of support and trust and being able to exert an influence on their surroundings (Ferris et al., 2005). The same authors also state that individuals strong on political skills are one step ahead of individuals who lack such skills, since they are able to solve any situation without exposing their objectives and seeming genuine about them. Additionally, individuals who hold strong political skills usually take control of any social situation on an organizational domain, as they have better self-confidence, being less likely to interpret a situation as stressful, which results in two positive consequences (Perrewé et al., 2000). Firstly, it means that these individuals are less exposed to physiological strains and, secondly, possessing political skills functions as a possible coping mechanism in order to influence stressful situations (Perrewé et al., 2000). Ferris and colleagues (1999) also claim that political skills transform social interactions into expected scenarios, reducing the ambiguity and enabling a major control perception. In concordance to this statement, Perrewé et al. (2005) seem to believe that facing emotional overload triggers less strain in politically skilled individuals due to their expectation to find solutions for every problem. Other studies show that possessing political skills help individuals

deal with psychological conflict, anxiety, somatic complaints, and blood pressure, allowing them to unlock their better performance (e.g., Perrewé et al., 2004; Zhao et al., 2013).

Furthermore, according to Munyon and colleagues (2015) the presence or absence of political skills, when facing behaviours like workplace incivility, influences individuals' reaction towards the organization. This happens due to the fact that their individual perception of work predicts the way employees view the organization. Specifically, it is argued that the lack of political skills diminishes their probability to put up with this type of occurrence. For example, an individual who suffers from a lot of stress and is not gifted with political skills, is more likely to have a more negative appraisal regarding the organization (Munyon et al., 2015). This statement can indicate that people who are not politically skilled, when facing workplace incivility, have lower ability to face such adverse conditions causing them to experience emotional exhaustion and consequently expressing their desire to leave. This is motivated by their negative perception allied to their lack of adaptability (Ferris et al., 2007; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). On the other hand, possessing higher political skills allows employees to better manage their emotions. Consequently, they are less likely to achieve the felling of tiredness, which enhances their likelihood to stay in the organizations.

*Hypothesis 1: When facing workplace incivility, individuals with higher political skills will report lower emotional exhaustion and, consequently, lower turnover intention.*

**Self-regulation as mediator and its impact on emotional exhaustion**

There are several work characteristics that, when combined, have several damaging consequences for the individuals. Therefore, it becomes essential to create strategies, able to avoid this type of risks (Bakker and de Vries, 2021). In this section, the role of self-regulation as a mediator of the relation between political skills, emotional exhaustion and turnover intention is discussed. Baumeister et al. (2002) define this concept as the capacity to alter a

behaviour, including emotional responses, or even stimulus. According to Martin and colleagues (2003) there are several advantages originated by the power to self-regulate such as the ability to improve an individual's learning skills, social behaviour, and their compromise towards the future. This can be associated with better job performance, job satisfaction, and better relationships between co-workers (Martin et al., 2003). Additionally, self-regulation refers to the individuals' ability to manage and control their emotions, which enables them to better tolerate the pain and to better control their mental processes (e.g,, persisting on a chore, controlling impulses and the ability to define and pursue their goals; cf. Baumeister et al., 2002).

Good and colleagues (2016) state that the ability to self-regulate its simplified regarding normal situations. However, in front of demanding situations (such as facing workplace incivility), managing to self-regulate becomes more difficult. This could indicate that an individual who experiences high job demands allied with strong self-regulation strategies is more likely to interpret a stressful situation as resolvable by choosing an effective coping mechanism able to match the great need request. Adversely, individuals who face demanding situations and lack of self-regulation strategies struggle to select a successful response and are less likely to create a triumphant strategy as a coping mechanism (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Jawahar et al., 2007). This will make these individuals more likely to experiencing emotional exhaustion and, consequently, keener to leave their organization (turnover intention), since working in a hostile work environment is a trigger (Deng et al., 2017; Parke et al., 2015; Rahim & Cosby, 2016).  Thus, employees who face difficulties in self-regulation will be unable to select an adequate response towards a stressful situation, finding more difficult to handle their job demands (Bakker & de Vries, 2021; De Clercq et al., 2021). Antagonistically, individuals who are able to stay calm towards stressful situations can diminish their negative feelings about the organization and, consequently, reduce their experience of emotional exhaustion and desire to leave (De Clercq et al., 2021).

In sum, individuals who have stronger political skills will be more proficient in self-regulating, since they are more confident in themselves and in their surroundings (Perrewé et al., 2000) and, therefore, will be more capable of commanding their impulses and choosing the wiser option when facing an emotional demanding situation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Consequently, these individuals will be less likely to experience a feeling of tiredness provoked by high emotional demands (i.e., emotional exhaustion; cf. Jackson et al., 1986). Workplace incivility increases one's feelings of emotional exhaustion (Hur et al., 2015), which can be attenuated by possessing mechanisms who help individuals to cope with these unwanted situations. Taken together, it is argued that, when facing workplace incivility, politically skilled individuals are more efficient in selecting the most adequate response regarding a stressful situation (i.e., self-regulation; cf. Xu et al., 2018), which leads to lower feelings of emotional exhaustion and, consequently, lower turnover intentions (cf. Figure 1).

*Hypothesis 2: When facing workplace incivility situations, employees' self-regulation mediates the relationship between political skills, emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. Specifically, it is expected that, when facing workplace incivility, individuals with stronger political skills will be more proficient in self-regulation, leading to lower emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions.*

**Figure 1**

*Proposed conceptual model*
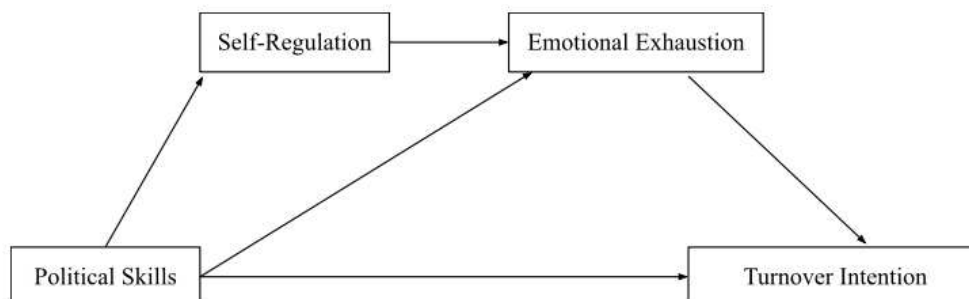


**Method**

**Procedure**

The aim of the study was to test the mediating role of self-regulation on the relationship between political skills, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention when facing deviant behaviours. In order to do so, the following inclusion criteria were considered when recruiting participants: (1) a minimum age of 18 years old, (2) at least one negative workplace experience, (3) company seniority superior to one year. Participants were recruited based on the personal contacts of the research team (convenience sample). When the study was approved by the Ethics Committee, participants were contacted by telephone to confirm that the inclusion criteria were met, to explain the study procedure and, if they provided consent, to schedule the data collection. Data collection took place in different settings, depending on participants' availability and convenience (e.g., at their workplace or at a different arranged facility).

On the day of data collection, participants were asked to fill in the informed consent, and the researcher explained the study and answered any questions that participants may have. Then, they were asked to complete an initial questionnaire including their demographic information and their self-assessment of their political skills. Subsequently, a biometric sensor

was placed on the non-dominant hand of each participant, as well as a bracelet capable of measuring the heart rate on the forearm. Then, participants were asked to sit comfortably and do nothing for 2 minutes (during this period, their heart rate and skin conductance level was being recorded for establishing their baseline values). Then, participants were asked to complete the following tasks:

*Neutral task.* Participants were asked to recall a neutral interaction with a colleague in the workplace (e.g., write an email to that person, talk to that person about a daily topic...): "Try to think in as much detail as possible (what happened in the situation, colleague/boss involved in the situation, what was being said or written, how you felt). You must remember for 1 minute. If you finish before my warning, please repeat the reminder until I tell you to stop. Please, always keep your eyes closed".

*Positive task:* Participants were asked to recall a positive interaction with a colleague in the workplace (e.g., someone was nice to you, had a special gesture, received a nice email, got promoted): "Try to think in as much detail as possible (what happened in the situation, colleague/boss involved in the situation, what was being said or written, how you felt). You must remember for 1 minute. If you finish before my warning, please repeat the reminder until I tell you to stop. Please, always keep your eyes closed".

*Negative task:* Participants were asked to recall a negative interaction with your colleague in the workplace (e.g., a colleague/boss was rude to you, tried to sabotage your work, wrote you a pejorative email, etc.): "Try to think in as much detail as possible (what happened in the situation, colleague/boss involved in the situation, what was being said or written, how you felt). You must remember for 1 minute. If you finish before my warning, please repeat the reminder until I tell you to stop. Please, always keep your eyes closed".

Overall, participants completed the neutral task and the positive task once, and the negative task three times making sure that recalling positive and neutral experiences would not

affect or sooth the way participants view their negative experiences. Therefore, one of the repetitions of the negative task was always completed last. The order of the remaining tasks as repetitions was counterbalanced. After completing each task, participants completed a manipulation check in order to assess if their perspectives of negative experiences were in fact negative, when compared to positive and neutral recalls. After completing the tasks, participants were asked to fulfil a questionnaire regarding emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. Figure 2 summarizes the procedure, which took on average about thirty-one minutes per participant.

**Figure 2**

*Procedure Illustration*
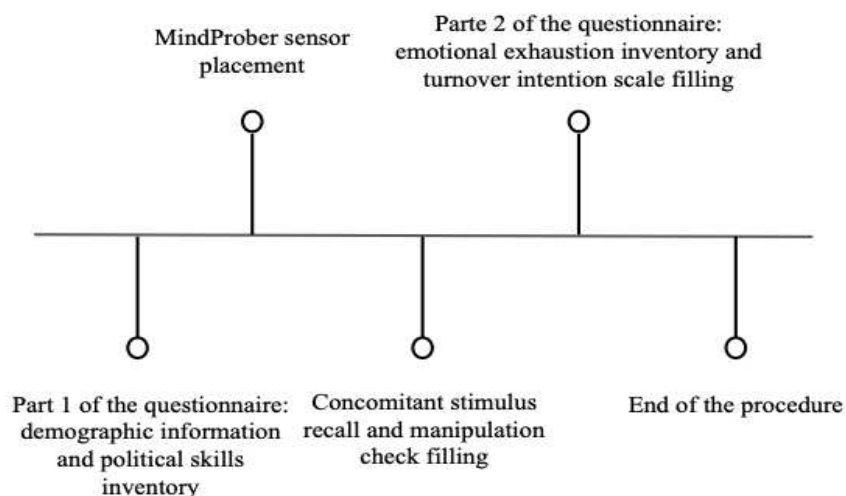


**Sample**

A sample of 89 employees who met the inclusion criteria was considered. The sample included 29 male and 60 female participants (33% and 67%, respectively) whose ages were between 19 and 70 years old ($M = 44.44$, $SD = 14.81$). At the time of data collecting, they were working mainly at large companies (53%), followed by medium-sized companies (20%), small

companies (18%) and micro-companies (9%). Concerning their seniority, they were employed at that company for an average of 14 years ($SD = 13.63$). The majority of the sample completed a Bachelor (52%) or a Masters' degree (23%), while 19% of participants completed high school diploma, 5% completed a post-doc, and only 1% of the participants detained the basic education. In terms of professional occupation, a wide variety was registered, but managers ($n = 5$), engineers ($n = 7$) and teachers ($n = 30$) were the most common.

**Measures**

*Manipulation Check*

A manipulation check similar to the one who was already used by Pasion and colleagues (2018) was included to assess the efficacy of the experimental procedure. Specifically, the manipulation check aimed to test if their recalled workplace incivility experience was indeed negative when compared to their positive and neutral recalls. After each task, participants assessed on a 5-point Likert scale how the recall made them feel in terms of happiness (*1 = unhappiness, 5 = happiness*), excitement (*1 = excitement, 5 = calmness*), and control (*1 = lack of control, 5 = control*). They also judged whether the situation they just recalled regarding their severity (*1 = not severe, 5 = very severe*) vividness (*1 = not vivid, 5 = very vivid*) and acceptability (*1 = not acceptable, 5-very acceptable*).

*Political Skills*

To evaluate political skills, Political Skill Inventory (PSI; Ferris et al., 2005; Portuguese version validated by Martins et al., 2014) was used. Using a 7-point Likert scale (*1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree*), participants were asked to rate their agreement with 18 statements, divided into four factors: (1) social astuteness (e.g., "I have good intuition or savvy about how to present myself to others"; 5 items, α = .79); (2) apparent sincerity (e.g., "It is important that people believe I am sincere in what I say and do"; 3 items, α = .81); (3)

interpersonal influence, (e.g., "I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around me"; 4 items, α = .78); and (4) networking ability, (e.g., "I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others"; 6 items, α = .87). Each dimension was calculated using the average of participants' responses. A global index of Political Skills was also computed (α = .77).

### Self-regulation

Self-regulation was measured through the participants' level of their IBI (interbeats interval) and skin conductance levels (phasic component). To measure IBI, a bracelet capable of measuring participants' heartrate was used, and the biometric sensor James Two by MindProber® was used to measure the skin conductance by capturing electrodermal activity through the sweat glands of the eccrine system producing perspiration (Moreira et al., 2019). High levels of skin conductance (phasic component) are synonyms of what is known to be an increased arousal or low ability to self-regulate (Sanches et al., 2019). Additionally, to measure the heart-rate, IBI was used. According to Keene and colleagues (2017) IBI is known as a reliable measure. IBI is measured in milliseconds and has an antagonist relation with beats per minute: the higher the IBI, the lower the beats per minute. For instance, a high IBI is an indicator of the higher ability to allocate more cognitive resources and consequently, to better self-regulate (Keene et al., 2017).

### Emotional Exhaustion

The Portuguese Version Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) validated by Marques-Pinto (2002) was used to measure emotional exhaustion. Participants were asked to rate how frequently (*0 = never, 6 = every* day) they experienced each of the 5 statements (e.g., "I feel emotionally drained from my work") related to the emotional exhaustion dimension of the scale. An emotional exhaustion score was computed by averaging their responses (α = .88), where higher scores indicate higher emotional exhaustion.

*Turnover Intention*

To evaluate turnover intention the Portuguese Version Mobley et al., (1978) scale validated by Gonçalves (2013) was used. Participants were asked to rate how frequently (*1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree*) they experienced each of the 3 statements (e.g., "I often think about quitting my current job", α = .87). A turnover intention score was computed by averaging their response, with higher score indicating a higher intention to leave the organization.

## Results

**Manipulation Checks**

Manipulation checks were used to establish whether participants' negative experiences were indeed negative, and more negative when compared with their positive and neutral experiences. A repeated-measures ANOVA with Bonferroni post-hoc correction was conducted (cf. Table 1). As expected, participants reported stronger unhappiness, vividness, activation and severity, and lower acceptability and control when compared to the positive and neutral tasks. Thus, it can be concluded that the tasks implemented were effective, and, therefore, participants recalled a negative experience when they were asked to do so.

Moreover, participants' self-regulation in terms of heart-rate (IBI) and skin conductance level (Phasic component). Results are also displayed on Table 1. It can be concluded that no differences on the phasic component were found for the different tasks (neither when compared to the baseline). Regarding the IBI component, lower levels were registered when the participants recalled positive experiences when compared to their negative and neutral recalls, which means that the participants tend to feel more alert regarding their IBI, when recalling positive experiences. A low IBI corresponds to faster heart-rate, bigger activation regarding emotional resources and consequently, a lower ability to self-regulate.

**Table 1**

*Manipulation checks and self-regulation average and standard deviations according to the different tasks.*

| Measures | Negative stimulus | Positive stimulus | Neutral stimulus | Baseline | $F$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **DV: Manipulation checks** | | | | | |
| Happiness | $1.80(0.70)^a$ | $4.39(0.79)^b$ | $3.56(0.81)^c$ | | $F(2,86) = 243.53, p < .001, \eta p^2 = .74$ |
| Activation | $3.54(1.0)^a$ | $2.69(1.53)^b$ | $2.38(1.15)^b$ | | $F(2,83) = 20.55, p < .001, \eta p^2 = .20$ |
| Control | $2.83(1.18)^a$ | $4.30(0.81)^b$ | $4.14(0.98)^b$ | | $F(2,84) = 62.29, p < .001, \eta p^2 = .43$ |
| Vividness | $3.88(0.89)^a$ | $3.70(1.14)^a$ | $3.16(1.15)^b$ | | $F(2,87) = 120.42, p < .001, \eta p^2 = .58$ |
| Severity | $3.81(1.01)^a$ | $1.69(1.13)^b$ | $1.61(1.03)^b$ | | $F(2,87) = 13.45, p < .001, \eta p^2 = .13$ |
| Acceptability | $1.90(0.92)^a$ | $4.52(0.81)^b$ | $4.16(1.01)^c$ | | $F(2,86) = 201.54, p < .001, \eta p^2 = .70$ |
| **DV: Self-regulation** | | | | | |
| Phasic | 704.09(396.21) | 749.54(604.32) | 643.65(464.10) | 722.39(471.28) | $F(3,85) = 1.34, p = .261$ |
| IBI | $844.62(129.67)^a$ | $831.46(128.36)^b$ | $852.65(131.98)^{a,}$ | $851.74(129.17)^{a,}$ | $F(3,69) = 10.51, p < .001, \eta p^2 = .13$ |

Note: The letters indicate if the average differences are significant when using pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction

Regarding correlations among variables (cf. Tabel 2), the different political skills are positively correlated among each other, although moderate. Participants' networking ability is negatively correlated with self-regulation (IBI component), which means that higher levels of networking ability are moderately associated with lower levels of IBI. That is, the higher participants perceived their networking abilities, the lower their ability to self-regulate. The phasic component of self-regulation is not correlated with any other variable of the study. Moreover, emotional exhaustion and turnover intention are positively and moderately correlated, meaning that higher the emotional exhaustion levels, higher the turnover intention levels (vice-versa).

**Table 2**

*Correlation Matrix among variables of the study.*

|            | 1.       | 2.       | 3.       | 4.      | 5.       | 6.     | 7.     |
|------------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|--------|--------|
| 1. AS      |          |          |          |         |          |        |        |
| 2. II      | .394***  |          |          |         |          |        |        |
| 3. SA      | .252*    | .616***  |          |         |          |        |        |
| 4. NA      | .323**   | .616***  | .608***  |         |          |        |        |
| 5. TI      | -.134    | -.071    | .028     | -.175   |          |        |        |
| 6. EE      | .091     | -.001    | .074     | -.036   | .406***  |        |        |
| 7.Phasic   | -.040    | .024     | .152     | .060    | -.091    | .084   |        |
| 8. IBI     | -.116    | .047     | -.069    | -.039   | -.129    | -.129  | -.031  |

*Note: *p < .05; ** p < .01, ***p < .001. Label:* AS = Apparent Sincerity, II = Interpersonal Influence, SA= Social Astuteness, NA= Networking Ability, TI = Turnover Intention, EE = Emotional Exhaustion

## Descriptive analysis and preliminary analyses

Preliminary analyses were conducted to test the normality assumptions. Skewness and kurtosis of all variables were between the expected results ($-3 > sk < 3$ e $-10 > ku < 10$; respectively; cf. Kline, 2010; cf. Table 3) meaning that there were no serious deviations from the normal distribution and, therefore, parametric tests could be performed.

## Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics for all variables of the study.*

| Variable | Min. | Max. | Mean (SD) | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political Skills Index | 3.48 | 6.63 | 5.60(0.59) | -0.92 | 1.32 |
| Social Astuteness | 2.00 | 6.60 | 5.32(.86) | -1.07 | 2.00 |
| Apparent Sincerity | 4.00 | 7.00 | 6.31(0.62) | -1.06 | 1.70 |
| Interpersonal Influence | 4.00 | 7.00 | 5.87(0.65) | -0.52 | .302 |
| Networking Ability | 2.17 | 6.67 | 4.98(.90) | -0.77 | 0.50 |
| Emotional Exhaustion | 1.40 | 7.00 | 4.21(1.44) | 0.10 | -1.00 |
| Turnover Intention | 1.00 | 5.00 | 2.60(1.22) | 0.45 | -0.79 |
| Self-Regulation (Phasic) | 11.06 | 2181.00 | 701.17(394.84) | 0.90 | 1.28 |
| Self-Regulation (IBI) | 589.09 | 1293.17 | 841.03(128.79) | 0.87 | 1.80 |

## Hypotheses Testing

According to H1, it was expected that, when facing workplace incivility, individuals with higher political skills would report lower emotional exhaustion and lower turnover intention. Linear regressions were conducted, including political skills' dimensions as

predictors, and emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions as dependent variables. The results showed that the regression models were not statistically significant for either emotional exhaustion [$F(4,88) = 0.61$, $p =.657$] nor turnover intentions [$F(4,88) = 1.54$, $p = .198$]. In conclusion, H1 was not supported.

H2 stated that employees' self-regulation regarding workplace incivility mediates the relationship between political skills, emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. Specifically, it is expected that, when facing workplace incivility, individuals with stronger political skills will be more proficient in self-regulation, leading to lower emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions. This mediation was conducted using PROCESS (Hayes, 2017; model 4, with 5000 bootstraps). The results regarding self-regulation as a mediator showed that neither emotional exhaustion [$F(1,71) = .005$, $p =.942$, $F(1,71) = 1.194$, $p =.278$] nor turnover intention [$F(3,69) = 6.65$, $p =.320$, $F(3,69) = 6.65$, $p =.197$] were mediated by the individuals ability to self-regulate, when analysing phasic component and IBI, respectively. This means that self-regulation did not act as a mediator on the relation between political skills, emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. Nevertheless, the results showed that the direct effect of emotional exhaustion on turnover intention was significant [$F(1,71) = 17.18$, $p < .001$, $R^2=.19$, $b=2.509$, $SE=.093$, $t =3.953$], IC 95% [.181, .550], which means that, when facing an experience of incivility, the more individuals felt emotionally exhausted, the higher their desire to leave the organization, which was consistent with the expected conceptual model.

One possible explanation for participants' political skills not predicting emotional exhaustion nor turnover intention can be related to the fact that a ceiling effect was detected on this variable. A ceiling effect occurs when the major part of the participants' scores are at the higher end of the measurement scale (French et al., 2018) which seemed to happen, as participants evaluated themselves very positively in terms of their political skills (*Min* = 3.48,

*Max* = 6.63, cf. Table 3). Therefore, exploratory analyses were conducted splitting participants into two categories (forcing the differences).

**Exploratory Analysis**

Participants were divided into two groups whose division was based on the group median. Group 1("High") included participants whose values were equal or below the median, and group 2 ("Very High") those whose values were higher than the median (cf. Table 4).

**Table 4**

*Median values used to split the sample into two groups for each variable. The "high group" included all participants below or equal the median point, and the "very high group" all participants above the median point.*

| Variable | Median | "High" Group | | "Very High" Group | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *n* | M(SD) | *n* | M(SD) |
| Apparent Sincerity | 6.30 | 51 | 5.91(0.50) | 38 | 6.87(0.17) |
| Social Astuteness | 5.40 | 52 | 4.72(0.72) | 37 | 5.97(0.34) |
| Interpersonal Influence | 6.00 | 60 | 5.53(0.49) | 29 | 6.56(0.25) |
| Networking Ability | 5.00 | 45 | 4.27(0.69) | 44 | 5.70(0.35) |
| Political Skills Index | 5.70 | 45 | 5.15(0.48) | 44 | 6.06(0.24) |

An independent-sample *t* test was conducted to test if participants reported different levels of self-regulation, emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions based on their political skills group. Results are summarized on Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Independent-sample t tests results, comparing the different dependent variables based on*

*participants' political skills group (High vs. Very High).*

| DV | SA | AS | II | NA | PS Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EE | **$t(87) = -1.29,$** **$p = .023$** | **$t(87) = -1.36,$** **$p = .089$** | $t(87) = -1.04,$ $p = .151$ | **$t(87) = 1.56,$** **$p = .062$** | $t(87) = -0.06,$ $p = .476$ |
| TI | $t(87) = -2.02,$ $p = .100$ | $t(87) = 0.34, p = .368$ | $t(53) = 0.71,$ $p = .234$ | $t(87) = 0.23,$ $p = .408$ | $t(87) = 0.96,$ $p = .169$ |
| Self-Regulation (Phasic) | $t(85) = 0.05, p = .482$ | $t(85) = -0.88,$ $p = .192$ | $t(85) = 0.77, p = .223$ | $t(85) = 0.23,$ $p = .466$ | $t(85) = 0.14,$ $p = .446$ |
| Self-Regulation (IBI) | $t(71) = 0.52, p = .304$ | $t(71) = -0.14,$ $p = .443$ | $t(71) = 1.09, p = .140$ | $t(87) = 0.23,$ $p = .253$ | $t(71) = 0.44,$ $p = .330$ |

No statistically significant differences were found for turnover intention, nor for self-regulation. However, participants reported different emotional exhaustion levels based on their political skills' group. Regarding social astuteness, participants with "very high" social astuteness present higher levels of emotional exhaustion ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 1.41$) than those of the "high" group (M = 3.96, $SD = 1.42$). Although the apparent sincerity and networking ability are only marginally statistically significant, it is important to highlight that their results are still worth analysing. Concerning apparent sincerity, individuals who belonged to the "very high" group ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.47$) reported a stronger experience of emotional exhaustion than individuals who only assessed themselves as "high" ($M= 4.04$, $SD = 1.40$). The opposite pattern was found for networking ability, as individuals who belonged to "very high" group ($M = 4.18$,

*SD* = 1.37) experienced less emotional exhaustion than those part of the "high" group (*M* = 4.25, *SD* = 1.52).

**Discussion**

The goal of this study aimed to test the assumption that, when facing workplace incivility behaviours, politically skilled employees would be more capable of self-regulating and, therefore, would experience lower emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. The results did not support this assumption, showing that only the feelings of emotional exhaustion predicted employees' turnover intention.

Opposing to what was expected, employees' levels of political skills did not predict their self-regulation, emotional exhaustion, nor turnover intention. These results were not consistent with the literature. According to Ferris and colleagues (2005), individuals with political skills should be more likely to adjust to multiple situations with more ease, rather than individuals with lack of political skills. This propensity is due to the fact that political skills work as coping mechanisms, allowing individuals to have a bigger sense of control and the ability to command their impulses in stressful situations (Bakker & Demerouti 2017; Perrewé et al., 2000). Nevertheless, emotional exhaustion predicted participants' turnover intention, as expected. Indeed, previous literature has consistently demonstrated that when individuals experience emotional exhaustion as a consequence of facing regular deviant behaviours, it has negative consequences to their relationship with the organisation where it occurs, such has increasing their turnover intentions (e.g., Lv et al., 2012; Jackson et al., 1986).

These unexpected may be explained by different reasons. First, it is important to note that a ceiling effect was detected, as participants rated themselves as possessing very high political skills. Additionally, the better-than-average effect can also be an explanation for the previous results, since according to Guenther and Alicke (2010), individuals tend to rate themselves higher. To further explore this result, an exploratory analysis was conducted,

splitting participants into two groups based on these ratings. This procedure showed that participants with very high networking ability reported lower emotional exhaustion. This result is consistent with what was initially expected. Individuals with high networking ability are defined by Ferris and colleagues (2007) for their potential to create numerous contacts. Their ease on fostering relationships arises from their ability to take proper advantage of opportunities and wisely manage their resources (Shi et al., 2011). For this reason, it is expected that individuals with high levels of this political skill's dimension might manage their emotional assets better and consequently present a higher ability to self-regulate. In contrast, employees' who rated themselves as very high on apparent sincerity and social astuteness more emotional exhaustion when facing workplace incivility. In order to interpret this result, it is important to note that social astuteness has been portrayed as positively related to altruism (cf. Shi et al., 2011), as it consists on the fully understanding of their peers, increasing their allocation of resources to help the other and making them more likely to feel exhausted themselves (Ferris et al., 2005).

A second explanation may rely on methodological issues related to the study's procedure. Specifically, participants were asked to recall a negative memory of workplace incivility, but *when/ how long* it occurred was not controlled for, which could have affected their physiological activity, since participants had no criteria concerning on how much time has passed since that particular experience. Even though the manipulation checks showed that overall the negative recall was vivid, Salgado and Kingo (2019) showed that physiological arousal depends on the memory of the event. As stated from Peng and colleagues (2013) the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve demonstrates the gradual decline of memory retention over time for general learning. Consequently, the same pattern can be applied to the recalling of negative experiences. Initially, this recall is strong, but throughout the time, there is a gradual loss of the

negative memory which might have affected the emotions associated with those experiences. Therefore, this factor should be controlled for in future studies.

Moreover, there were also some constraints regarding the electrodermal activity (phasic component of the self-regulation measure), since it was not possible to capture all the signals issued by the participant (either by the presence of sweat on the participants hands or the loss of contact with the device). However, during the procedure the recalling was counterbalanced, and the negative tasks were repeated in order to assure a bigger reliability.

Finally, recruitment process of the sample should be discussed. The recruitment of a convenience sample comprises several limitations, including lower generalization power and higher exposure to biases (Jagger et al., 2017). Indeed, the sample was not a good representation of the Portuguese population, as it was highly-educated (80% of the participants completed a bachelor or higher degree). Previous research (e.g., Twenge & Campbell, 2002) has showed that highly educated individuals tend to be more confident on themselves, which can also help explaining the ceiling effect found on the political skills self-evaluation. In addition, in future studies the inclusion of an extra self-report measure for self-regulation would ensure the gap filling when the physiological signals are missing.

**Conclusion and Practical Implications**

One of the main conclusions of this study stands on the role of experiencing emotional exhaustion as a strong predictor of turnover intention. In addition, even though political skills did not predict emotional exhaustion, it is still relevant to highlight their importance on the way individuals experience emotional exhaustion. The practical implications are consequently, the promotion of greater awareness regarding workplace incivility and its impact on experiencing emotional exhaustion. Therefore, organizations should make their priority to take actions

aiming to attenuate this practice, as well as, endow their employees with coping mechanisms efficient enough to ensure the lack of impulsive responses production to deviant behaviours.

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