Workplace Incivility in a Swedish Context

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated workplace incivility in a Swedish context. The first aim was to assess how common the phenomenon is and the second was to study which groups (gender, age, ethnicity, and power position) are most targeted by workplace incivility and are more prone to act in an uncivil way. Additionally, the relationships between experienced and witnessed incivility and well-being as well as instigated incivility were investigated. An online survey was administered by SIFO (the national public opinion poll agency). The collected data consist of a stratified sample whose composition is identical to the working population in Sweden (N = 3001). The results show that almost three quarters of the respondents had been the target of coworker incivility and 52% of supervisor incivility at least one to two times in the past year. Of the respondents, 75% had witnessed coworkers and 58% witnessed a supervisor treating others in an uncivil way. Furthermore, 66% had instigated uncivil acts toward others. The results also show that female and younger employees are slightly more targeted by incivility from coworkers and younger employees and supervisors are slightly more prone to instigate incivility. Moreover, it was found that that experienced incivility was the strongest predictor of low well-being and that witnessed incivility was the strongest predictor of instigated incivility.

Introduction

Over the years, scholars have dedicated much attention to the occurrence of workplace aggression and deviant behavior (Robinson et al., 2014). Studies have to a large extent included overt forms of aggression such as workplace bullying, which subsequently has been tied to detrimental effects such as symptoms related to post-traumatic stress, burnout (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012), and lower well-being (Lovell &

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Lee, 2011; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Sloan, 2012). In the study of workplace aggression, less overt behaviors, such as workplace incivility, have not been approached to the same extent despite that it is reported to be an increasing phenomenon (Estes & Wang, 2008) and research demonstrating that workplace incivility has consequences comparable to those of workplace bullying (Hershcovis, 2011). Pearson et al. (2005) point out that reports of workplace incivility might increase in modern working life, as traditional norms may become eroded in the changing nature of work, with a blurred line of what constitutes appropriate behavior. Shifted psychological contracts may result in less retention and loyalty as well as increased informal conduct in the workplace as organizations become increasingly casual. Workplace incivility has been defined as: 'low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others' (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457). This could refer to behaviors such as interrupting others, not responding to them, or belittling them or their opinions (Estes & Wang, 2008). Since it was published, Andersson and Pearson's (1999) definition has been most frequently used for workplace incivility in research (Hutton, 2006). Andersson and Pearson (1999) theorized about an incivility spiral, where incivility is spread throughout the organization as a result of a social process. When individuals engage in reciprocal exchanges of incivility against each other, the risk is high that the negative behavior will escalate into more severe conflicts. In accordance with this social process, research has investigated workplace incivility from a target (Cortina et al., 2001), witness (Porath et al., 2010), and instigator perspective (Reio & Ghosh, 2009). Although workplace incivility and workplace bullying carry similarities and to some extent are comparable (Hershcovis, 2011), incivility is demarcated from other constructs of workplace aggression (Fritz, 2009; Hershcovis, 2011), as it includes factors such as low intensity and ambiguous intent to harm. Recent definitions of workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 2003, 2011) lack the inclusion of harmful intent when describing accounts of workplace bullying making it difficult to distinguish workplace bullying from incivility. However, Martin and Hine (2005) conclude that despite certain overlap with other constructs of workplace mistreatment, workplace incivility remains a milder form of workplace aggression due to the lack of power difference and that incivility not necessarily occurs systematically in the workplace. Leiter et al. (2015) argue that incivility provides a distinct focus of workplace mistreatment in the way that it is greater in frequency, due to its low-intensity, and as it reflects the social culture in the workplace. The focus is on workplace norms rather than on the shortcomings of individuals.

Although workplace incivility is a phenomenon that in recent years has attracted increasing attention in international research on contemporary working life (Cortina, 2008; Lim & Lee, 2011), a review by Schilpzand et al. (2014) shows that no studies have been conducted in Scandinavia. Incivility has previously been studied in the United States (Cortina et al., 2001), Singapore (Lim & Lee, 2011), Australia (Griffin, 2010), China (Chen et al., 2013), and Canada (Pearson & Porath, 2009). In order to increase the knowledge of workplace incivility, it is advantageous to expand this research to different countries and explore the prevalence and eventual variability in how incivility impacts the individual and the organization.

In the case of workplace bullying, risk groups to the exposure of bullying have been explored. In relation to social demographics, employees between the ages of 35 and

54 years, public servants, blue collar workers, as well as food manufacturing industry employees were pointed out as particularly prone to exposure of bullying (Notelaers et al., 2011). The research on risk groups for workplace incivility is not as extensive; however, some studies have indicated specific groups of employees to be more targeted by incivility, such as females (Cortina et al., 2011), younger individuals (Leiter et al., 2010), ethnic minorities (Cortina, 2008), and employees in low power position (Pearson & Porath, 2009). Studies also show specific groups to report more instigated incivility, such as men (Reio & Ghosh, 2009) and higher-status employees (Estes & Wang, 2008; Pearson & Porath, 2009), which further emphasizes the importance of studying the different groups of which an organization consists, in order to establish whether some groups are more subject to this behavior and to identify which groups are more prone to act in an uncivil way.

Workplace incivility has been shown in earlier studies to be closely associated with negative outcomes such as lower well-being (Lim et al., 2008) as well as instigated workplace incivility (Gallus et al., 2014). As some scholars have highlighted the risk that because incivility might be the precursor to more severe forms of aggression in the workplace (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), it is important to explore whether being exposed to incivility is related to the onset of further uncivil behaviors in the workplace. Recent research (Foulk et al., 2016) has also supported the contagion effect of low-intensity negative behaviors in organizations.

Aims of the Study

The present study aimed to build upon research on workplace incivility and explore the phenomenon in a Swedish context. In order to expand on the existing literature of workplace incivility, the first aim was to investigate how common the phenomenon of experienced, witnessed, and instigated workplace incivility is. This is an addition to previous studies on workplace incivility that has been conducted in different countries, however not in Scandinavia. A second aim was to investigate which groups (gender, ethnicity, age, power position) are most targeted by workplace incivility and are more prone to act in an uncivil way. The results could aid in future work of organizing and planning interventions against incivility. Finally, the present study aimed to explore the relationships between incivility (experienced and witnessed) and well-being as well as instigated incivility.

Prevalence of Incivility

The prevalence of workplace incivility has been the focus of many studies and it is clear that incidence reports of incivility vary across samples. Recent measures in the US have shown reports of 78% experiencing supervisor incivility, and 81% being subjected to coworker incivility over the past year (Reio Jr & Sanders-Reio, 2011). Pearson and Porath (2009) found that 10% had witnessed workplace incivility from coworkers daily. Additionally, 20% claim to be targeted by incivility at least once a week (Pearson & Porath, 2005). In another study, 54% of the participants responded that they had instigated incivility in the past year, 12% reported instigated incivility several times, and 3% daily, in the United States (Reio & Ghosh, 2009).

In Canada, 99% reported witnessing incivility in the workplace (Pearson & Porath, 2009). Further studies show that 25% of Canadian employees witnessed incivility daily, and that 50% of them reported being targeted by incivility at least once a week (Pearson & Porath, 2005). In Singapore, figures as high as 91% have been reported, when considering incivility experienced over the past 5 years (Lim & Lee, 2011) and in a further study on Asian populations (China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, and Singapore), rates of 77% over the past year have been issued (Yeung & Griffin, 2008).

In the comprehensive European Working Conditions Survey (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2010), including over 44,000 participants from 34 countries (27 member states of the EU, as well as Norway, Croatia, Macedonia, Turkey, Albania, Montenegro, and Kosovo), it was shown that the prevalence harassment and bullying amounted to 4% among European workers. In studies by Hoel and Cooper (2000), it was found that in UK supervisors, more often than subordinates were the perpetrators of bullying. The opposite was found in a Danish population (Ortega et al., 2009). Scandinavian countries generally score higher on the dimension of femininity, in addition to having a lower degree of power difference than countries like the UK and USA (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007), which potentially makes adverse behavior in Scandinavia less tied to hierarchical position. In order to delineate the incidence of workplace incivility across cultures, an expansion of various samples is crucial, such as sourcing a Scandinavian population. Therefore, we investigated the prevalence of workplace incivility in Sweden.

Gender, Age, Ethnic Minority, and Position of Power in Relation to Workplace Incivility

Cortina et al. (2002, 2011) found that women more often than men report being targeted by workplace incivility, but this relationship was reversed when it comes to acting uncivilly. Pearson et al. (2000) pointed out that the likelihood for a man to instigate incivility was seven times higher than for a woman. Men were found to report uncivil behavior more often, both on an interpersonal level and also on an organizational level (Reio & Ghosh, 2009). Consistent with this, Gallus et al. (2014) found that men were more likely than women to engage in uncivil conduct.

Reio and Ghosh (2009) showed that young men were the most likely instigators of workplace incivility. Conversely, in other studies, reports have been issued of older perpetrators acting uncivilly toward younger colleagues who more often become the target of incivility (Leiter et al., 2010; Pearson & Porath, 2009). In relation to other demographic factors and their association with incivility, being part of an ethnic minority has been discussed as a risk factor for being treated uncivilly in the workplace (Cortina, 2008).

Being in a position of power has been shown to be related to workplace incivility. The perpetrator is often found higher up in the hierarchy of an organization according to Estes and Wang (2008). Cortina et al. (2001) applied the Social Power Theory as an interpretative framework. Within this framework, incivility is interpreted as a tool for the perpetrator to assert power. Furthermore, Pearson and Porath (2009) noted that in around 60% of all reports of workplace incivility, the behavior was instigated by a person of higher rank toward a coworker of lower rank. The study also showed that

incivility instigated from the bottom of the organizational hierarchy manifests in different ways, for instance in the shape of a subtle sabotage. In addition, employees tend to experience incivility as more severe if treated uncivilly by an individual with higher status (Cortina & Magley, 2009).

Superiors may also function as role models for employees, and signal incivility as either acceptable or unacceptable. The leaders' actions and assumptions, which encourage or discourage incivility in working life, can become the basis of norms in the organizational culture (Estes & Wang, 2008). In organizations wherein superiors accept uncivil behavior, the process runs a higher risk of being reproduced. In addition, power positions can provide access to different resources to individuals when it comes to resist uncivil behavior (Pearson et al., 2001). In higher positions with more influence, it is easier to attain control over the occurrences of incivility (Cortina & Magley, 2009). The opposite applies to employees with lower levels of influence, as they become more vulnerable to workplace incivility, when situations that are not perceived as controllable become increasingly threatening and stressful.

Workplace incivility can also target certain groups in the form of selective workplace incivility (Cortina, 2008). As workplace incivility is a subtle form of antisocial behavior, it is harder to detect (Lim et al., 2008), and can therefore continue to exist as a form of modern discrimination against some groups, such as women and ethnic minorities (Cortina, 2008). Cortina (2008) recognized that research on workplace incivility directed at certain ethnic groups is scarce; however, one study showed a higher frequency in reports of uncivil behavior for people belonging to an ethnic minority (Cortina et al., 2004). In research on workplace bullying, some studies likewise support that ethnic groups are more targeted by bullying behaviors in the workplace (Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Lewis & Gunn, 2007). Ridgeway and England (2007) suggest that discrimination can start on an interpersonal level within the organization, where shared beliefs about, for example, gender are reproduced through social processes of everyday work. These beliefs may be important components in the discrimination process, and can become stored in the organization's culture (Glick & Fiske, 2007).

Cortina (2008) emphasizes the importance of understanding workplace incivility in combination with interpersonal relationships, in order to prevent and combat the processes that create discrimination, which circumvents the legislation in society. Selective incivility can in this context be seen as one of the barriers that prevent women, and ethnic minority groups, from reaching higher positions in society, according to Cortina.

On the basis of the literature on risk groups of workplace incivility of Cortina et al. (2002, 2011), Cortina (2008), Pearson and Porath (2009), and Leiter et al. (2010), we investigated which groups concerning gender, age, ethnicity, and power position are most targeted by workplace incivility and are more prone to act in an uncivil way.

Negative Outcomes of Experienced and Witnessed Incivility

The negative effects of bullying on targets and bystanders are well documented (Branch et al., 2013; Hoel et al., 2004; Samnani & Singh, 2012). Similarly, experienced workplace incivility has been closely associated with lower levels of physical well-being (Lim et al., 2008; Reio & Ghosh, 2009), and psychological well-being (Lim et al., 2008). In a study within the health care sector (Laschinger et al., 2009), incivility from supervisors

was associated with lower commitment, lower job satisfaction, and increased turnover intention. Smith et al. (2010), however, found incivility from colleagues to be a stronger predictor of lacking commitment than incivility from supervisors in the same sector.

Another outcome of relevance, considering Andersson and Pearson's (1999) spiral of incivility, is instigated incivility as a result of either being a target or witnessing incivility in the workplace. As Andersson and Pearson (1999) theorize about a spiral of negative actions in the workplace, where behavior becomes contagious in a 'tit for tat' manner and employees retaliate and reciprocate uncivil behavior, a more concrete exploration of this theoretical frame is warranted. Some support has been shown for this theory, as Porath and Pearson (2012) found that being targeted by aggressive behavior relate, indirectly via anger and fear, to negative behaviors aimed at the instigator. One study directly ties incivility experiences to incivility perpetration among both men and women (Gallus et al., 2014). However, Pearson et al. (2001) found support for the hypothesis that merely witnessing incivility is related to a need to retaliate on behalf of the target, indicating that uncivil conduct can reach beyond the victim. Along the same lines, Ferguson and Barry (2011) found that individuals were more likely to adopt uncivil behavior if witnessing it in the workplace. Considering these studies, the associations between incivility (experienced and witnessed) and well-being as well as instigated incivility were explored.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of a stratified selection representing the Swedish working population, with 3001 (1461 male and 1540 female) completed surveys. Of those who received the invitation to the study, 21% responded. The mean age among participants was 43.7 years (SD = 12.3). A large share of the sample, 2869, was born in Sweden, while 132 were not born in Sweden, and 438 had a parent who was born elsewhere than Sweden. Of the respondents, 2467 had permanent employment, 181 had part-time employment, and 173 ran their own businesses (entrepreneurs). Of the respondents, 762 had a supervisor or managerial position, whereas 2239 did not.

Procedure

An Internet survey was administrated by SIFO (the national public opinion poll agency). SIFO drew its sample from a panel of participants, initially recruited through nationally representative surveys. The survey was thus collected from a population that mirrors a representative sample of Swedish work life. Four to five reminders were sent out to the participants, depending on which age group they belonged to. As young people tended not to participate in the survey, a relatively larger group of young people were approached to get a more representative sample. Despite increased efforts with reminders to younger participants, these groups remained slightly smaller than the older groups. In order to counter these measures, a weight-variable was included in the dataset. This variable was based on the size of the subpopulations in Sweden (the information was taken from Statistics Sweden, the official body of Swedish statistical analysis). People

who were not currently employed were excluded from the study. Participating took roughly 10 to 15 minutes.

Materials

The Internet survey consisted of demographic variables, scales measuring experienced, witnessed, and instigated workplace incivility as well as a scale measuring well-being.

Demographic Variables

Demographic questions concerned information about gender, age, permanent/temporary, employment/entrepreneurship, and supervisor/nonsupervisor position. In addition, following Ingvarsdotter (2011), ethnicity was included with two questions, 'Are you born in Sweden' and 'Is one or both of your parents born abroad.'

Experienced Workplace Incivility (from Coworker and Supervisor)

The seven-item Workplace Incivility Scale WIS (Cortina et al., 2001) was used to measure experienced incivility from supervisors and coworkers, in the form of a Swedish translation (Schad et al., 2014). Incivility from supervisors and incivility from coworkers were rated separately in accordance with the proposition of Smith et al. (2010). The scale measured the frequency of experienced incivility during the last year, a shorter time frame than that originally used by Cortina et al. (2001). Response alternatives were 0 (never), 1 (one to two times), 2 (sometimes), 3 (often), and 4 (most of the time). Sample items are: 'During the past year while employed in the current organization have you been in a situation where any of your superiors – made demeaning or derogatory remarks about you?', '– put you down or was condescending to you', and '– doubted your judgment on a matter over which you have responsibility?' Cronbach's alpha for experienced incivility from colleagues was 0.87 and from supervisors 0.90.

Witnessed Workplace Incivility (from Coworker and Supervisor)

The WIS scale was adapted to measure witnessed workplace incivility consistently with Ferguson and Barry's (2011) alteration of the Interpersonal Deviance Scale (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). The scale consisted of seven items, with the response alternatives 0 (never), 1 (one to two times), 2 (sometimes), 3 (often), and 4 (most of the time). Employees were asked to rate how often they had witnessed behavior for each of the seven items in the WIS scale. Witnessed behaviors of supervisors and coworkers were rated separately. Sample items are: 'During the past year while employed in the current organization, have you been in a situation where you have observed any of your superiors – making demeaning or derogatory remarks about others?', '– put others down or was condescending towards them', and '– doubted others judgment on a matter over which they have responsibility?' Cronbach's alpha for witnessed incivility from coworkers was 0.93 and from supervisors 0.93.

Instigated Workplace Incivility

The WIS scale was modified to measure instigated workplace incivility, in line with Blau and Andersson's (2005) modification. The scale consisted of seven items, with the response alternatives 0 (never), 1 (one to two times), 2 (sometimes), 3 (often), and 4 (most of the time). The employees were asked to rate their behavior on each item. Sample items are 'During the past year while employed in the current organization, how often have you – made demeaning or derogatory remarks about others?', '– put others down or was condescending towards them', and '– doubted others judgment on a matter over which they have responsibility?' Cronbach's alpha was 0.78.

Well-being

To measure well-being, the WHO-Five Well-Being Index (Bech et al., 2003) was used. WHO-Five is designed to measure levels of well-being, instead of focusing on any negative affect such as psychological distress. The instrument was used in a Swedish version (Psykiatric Center North Zealand, 2014). A sample item is: 'Over the last two weeks: I have felt active and vigorous.' The scale consists of five items, rated on a 6-point Likert scale, from 0 (never) to 5 (all of the time). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.87.

Statistical Analyses

Statistical analyses were conducted using the SPSS, version 23. Reliability analyses, descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, frequencies analyses, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and regression analyses were conducted. The regression analyses were based on weighted least regression analysis corroborated by estimates from weighted robust regression analyses. The hierarchical regression analyses were performed using two blocks, either we started with experienced incivility and added witnessed incivility, or the other way around. In this way, it was possible to find what kind of incivility contributed to the prediction of the dependent variables.

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved (reg. no. 2012/626) by the Regional Board of Ethical Review (EPN) (www.epn.se/sv/lund) in Lund, Sweden. In order to assure confidentiality, actions were taken to preserve the integrity of each participant. Participants received information about the purpose of the study and consented to take part. The opportunity to withdraw from the survey at any point was also offered. All data were handled separately from any information that linked it to the participants, and securely held for analysis.

Results

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for the study variables are presented in Table I.

Table 1 Means, standard deviations, and correlations (Spearman's rho) for the measured variables (N = 2828–3001)

	Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	Gender	—												
2	Age	-0.04*	—											
3	Ethn1	-0.04*	-0.05**	—										
4	Ethn2	-0.03	0.02	0.44**	—									
5	Super	-0.12**	0.08**	0.01	-0.01	—								
6	Perm	-0.05**	0.18**	0.03	0.02	0.10**	—							
7	Entrep	-0.09**	0.10**	-0.02	0.03	0.32**	—	—						
8	ITC	0.07**	-0.13**	-0.03	-0.01	0.04*	-0.02	-0.10**	—					
9	ITS	-0.01	-0.04*	-0.03	-0.01	0.01	0.03	-0.13**	0.51**	—				
10	IWC	0.08**	-0.07**	-0.04*	-0.03	0.04*	0.01	-0.14**	0.63**	0.40**	—			
11	IWS	-0.01	-0.03	-0.03	-0.02	0.03	0.04*	-0.13**	0.45**	0.70**	0.54**	—		
12	II	-0.04*	-0.09**	-0.04*	-0.03	0.11**	0.02	-0.03	0.54**	0.43**	0.59**	0.49**	—	
13	WB	-0.14**	0.16**	0.02	0.01	0.10**	0.04*	0.06**	-0.23**	-0.21**	-0.17**	-0.16**	-0.14**	—
	Mean	0.51	43.68	0.96	0.85	0.25	0.93	-0.06	3.64	2.26	5.36	3.28	2.13	15.11
	SD	0.50	12.26	0.21	0.35	0.44	0.24	0.23	4.15	3.85	5.22	4.64	2.68	5.18

Note. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01. Gender (0 = male, 1 = female), Ethn 1 (0 = not born in Sweden, 1 = born in Sweden), Ethn 2 (0 = one or both parents born abroad, 1 = one or both parents born in Sweden), Super (0 = no supervisor position, 1 = supervisor position), Perm (0 = not permanent employment, 1= permanent employment), Entrep (0 = not entrepreneur; 1 = entrepreneur) ITC = experienced incivility from coworkers, ITS = experienced incivility from superiors, IWC = witnessed incivility from coworkers, IWS = witnessed incivility from superiors, II = instigated incivility, WB = well-being.

The Prevalence of Being Targeted by, Witnessing, and Instigating Workplace Incivility

The results show that it is more common to be targeted by workplace incivility from coworkers than supervisors (see Table II). Almost three quarters (73%) of the respondents had been the target of some form of coworker incivility, and 52% of some form of supervisor incivility at least one to two times in the past year. The results also show that 75% had witnessed coworkers and 58% supervisors treating others in an uncivil way. The most frequently reported form of both experienced and witnessed workplace incivility was that a supervisor or coworker paid little attention to the respondents' or others' opinions. Of the respondents, 66% admitted that they themselves had instigated uncivil acts toward others at least one to two times the past year. The most frequently reported instigated act was to doubt others' judgments.

Table II Percentage of participants being targeted, having witnessed, and instigated workplace incivility (N = 3001)

	Being targeted by a coworker	Being targeted by sa upervisor	Witnessed coworker	Witnessed supervisor	Instigated
Never	27.0	48.0	25.0	42.0	34.0
1–2 times	32.0	24.8	30.0	24.7	33.1
Sometimes	23.6	12.4	28.3	15.7	14.3
Often	3.9	3.7	5.5	4.3	2.2
Most of the time	0.5	1.0	0.6	0.5	0.1

Note. The highest proportions of respondents reporting '1–2 times', 'sometimes', 'often', and 'most of the time' on any of the seven items of workplace incivility. 'Never' represents the proportion of participants who did not report any workplace incivility on any of the seven items.

Gender, Age, Ethnicity, and Position of Power

In order to test which groups (concerning gender, age, ethnicity, and manager position) are most targeted by or instigating workplace incivility, four separate one-way ANOVAs were conducted. The means and standard deviations of the incivility variables as well as their relationships to each group are presented in Table I. In addition, separate means and standard deviations for women and men, five groups of age, and supervisors and nonsupervisors are summarized in Table III to clarify the differences. The results revealed that female employees $F(1, 2999) = 12.355$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.004$, and younger persons $F(4, 2996) = 11.684$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.015$ are somewhat more targeted by coworker incivility. There were no significant gender, age, ethnicity differences, or differences in managerial position concerning being targeted by the supervisor. Slightly more younger employees, $F(4, 2996) = 8.627$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.011$ and supervisors $F(1, 2999) = 31.009$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.010$, reported that they had instigated workplace incivility in the last year.

Table III Means and standard deviations of gender, age, and manager position regarding workplace incivility (N = 3001)

	Experienced coworker incivility	Experienced supervisor incivility	Instigated incivility
	Means (*SD*)	Means (*SD*)	Means (*SD*)
Gender			
Female	3.90 (4.17)	2.20 (3.68)	1.97 (2.33)
Male	3.37 (4.11)	2.32 (4.02)	2.30 (3.01)
Age			
19–29 years old	4.57 (4.63)	2.82 (4.34)	2.50 (3.15)
30–39 years old	3.83 (4.10)	2.14 (3.78)	2.44 (2.79)
40–49 years old	3.56 (4.09)	2.01 (3.41)	1.99 (2.58)
50–59 years old	3.28 (3.92)	2.31 (3.81)	1.86 (2.38)
60–67 years old	2.85 (3.81)	2.10 (4.07)	1.77 (2.37)
Manager position			
Yes	3.95 (4.24)	2.34 (3.98)	2.60 (3.08)
No	3.54 (4.11)	2.23 (3.81)	1.98 (2.52)

Experienced and Witnessed Incivility in Relation to Well-Being and Instigated Incivility

To explore the relationships between incivility (experienced and witnessed) and well-being as well as instigated incivility, hierarchical regression analyses were conducted (see Table IV).

When well-being was the dependent variable, experienced incivility explained 8.89% of the variance, adding witnessed incivility added only 0.15% explained variance. The change was not significant, $\Delta F(2, 2996) = 3.90$, $p>0.001$. Witnessed incivility explained 5.50% of the variance, adding experienced incivility added 3.60% variance, $\Delta F(2,2996) = 58.56$, $p<0.001$. These analyses showed that well-being was better predicted by experienced incivility than by witnessed. The best single predictor of well-being was experienced incivility from coworkers. When the models were tested with Robust regression, the only significant difference was that B for the experienced incivility variables were somewhat higher.

In the next step, instigated incivility was the dependent variable. First, only the two variables of witnessed incivility were used as predictors; this model explained 30.98% of the variance in instigated incivility. Adding experienced incivility added 2.72% explained variance, $\Delta F(2,2996) = 29.42$, $p<0.001$. Experienced incivility alone explained 24.00 % of the variance, adding witnessed incivility added 9.42% explained variance, $\Delta F(2,2996) = 216.02$, $p<0.001$. In other words, witnessed incivility was not only a better predictor of instigated incivility than experienced incivility but also experience incivility contributed to instigated incivility. The models were tested with Robust regression and it was found that experienced incivility from superior was somewhat weaker using this estimation model.[1]

Table IV Descriptive data from the regression analysis with well-being and instigated incivility as dependent variables (N = 3001)

Independent	B	Std Err B	Std B	Robust B coeff	t	p
Dependent = Well-being: $R^2 = 0.09$						
ITC	–0.21	0.03	–0.18	–0.23	7.10	<0.001
ITS	–0.16	0.04	–0.12	–0.17	4.47	<0.001
IWC	–0.06	0.02	–0.06	–0.06	2.72	>0.001
IWS	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.49	>0.001
Dependent = Instigated incivility: $R^2 = 0.33$						
ITC	0.13	0.01	0.21	0.12	9.62	<0.001
ITS	–0.01	0.02	–0.01	–0.01	–0.30	>0.001
IWC	0.14	0.01	0.27	0.14	13.21	<0.001
IWS	0.13	0.01	0.23	0.09	9.64	<0.001

Note. ITC = experienced incivility from coworkers, ITS = experienced incivility from superiors, IWS = witnessed incivility from coworkers, IWS = witnessed incivility from superiors.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate workplace incivility in a Swedish context. The participants consistently rated a lower frequency of experienced workplace incivility on every item of the scale, as compared with the data collected by Reio Jr and Sanders-Reio (2011) in an American sample. Despite the lower ratings, the results show that workplace incivility is prevalent in Sweden, and can be considered a fairly common phenomenon. The higher frequency of coworker incivility than supervisor incivility in the present study is interesting in relation to the research on workplace bullying. Studies have previously shown that managers or supervisors are reported to be the perpetrator in a majority of the cases (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). However, in a study of a representative Danish population, coworkers, more often than supervisors, were reported as bullies (Ortega et al., 2009). Similarly, in the present work, the high occurrence of coworker incivility could be due to the less hierarchical structure of Swedish organizations, and a lesser power distance to supervisors. The results show that supervisors experienced coworker incivility at least equally often as the nonsupervisors did. Being in a managerial position does not seem to protect supervisors from incivility in the same way as in the case of bullying (Salin, 2001). A reason for this could be the lesser power distance making individuals more comfortable acting uncivilly toward their superiors. Another possible explanation for this is the legislative norms in Sweden. Legislation in Sweden grants employees job security, as compared with countries in North America, where there is less job security. As Swedish employees seldom run the risk of being fired for acting uncivilized, they might be less afraid of behaving this way toward superiors. It is interesting that supervisors are targeted equally often as nonsupervisors by incivility, as workplace bullying implies a power difference between the perpetrator and target. This does not seem to be the case for workplace incivility in Sweden. Additionally, 66%

admitted that they themselves had instigated uncivil acts toward others at least one to two times the past year. The most frequently reported instigated act was to doubt others' judgments. The present work additionally shows that not only being targeted but also witnessing incivility at work is common. Comparing these figures to the occurrence of adverse social behavior at work, such as harassment and workplace bullying, where 4% of a European population reported to be exposed to bullying (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2010), incivility in the workplace is reported to be a lot more frequent. It is possible that the differences in prevalence of incivility in the present study compared with work carried out in northern America (e.g., Pearson & Porath, 2005; Pearson & Porath, 2009; Reio & Ghosh, 2009; Reio Jr & Sanders-Reio, 2011) or Asia (Lim & Lee, 2011; Yeung & Griffin, 2008) can be explained by cultural differences. Considering Asia, USA, and Sweden, the thresholds for uncivil behaviors may vary, as well as workplace norms. Scandinavian countries have previously been associated with a lower degree of power difference, and a propensity for higher scores on the dimension of femininity, a dimension that is said to value inter-personal relationships and reduce interpersonal abuse (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). This could account for the lower frequency of incivility in Sweden than in the United States. Additionally, the US culture is more individualistic carrying more competitive organizational cultures, which is believed to be a possible cause of bullying situations as individuals might try to surpass others by weakening their competition (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). This could be a possible explanation to why reports of incivility are more prevalent in northern America than in Sweden. In order to compare whether differences in reports of incivility are due to cultural differences, or differences in organizational policies or practices in the present studies various samples, nationally representative data from northern America are needed and cross-cultural studies.

The present study shows that females and younger employees are somewhat more targeted by incivility from coworkers and younger employees and managers are slightly more prone to instigate incivility. These findings are in line with the research of Cortina et al. (2002, 2011). The results showing that instigated incivility was reported to a some-what higher extent by the young group and that the same group report higher levels of experienced incivility is not, however, consistent with the studies by Pearson and Porath (2009) and Leiter et al. (2010). They found older employees more likely to act uncivilly toward their younger peers. Contrary to this, the present study indicates that young people are slightly more likely to both act and be targeted by incivility, suggesting that they are more involved in the social process of incivility than their older peers. This result is interesting in comparison to workplace bullying where employees younger than 25 years of age have been reported to be less exposed to bullying (Notelaers et al., 2011). Estes and Wang (2008) claimed that being in a position of power is related to a higher degree of instigated incivility. This claim appears to be supported by the present study, as supervisors reported being somewhat more prone to instigate incivility. However, there were no differences in either age or gender for being targeted by incivility from the supervisor, indicating that supervisor incivility is not specifically directed toward any specific group. Cortina (2008) has suggested that selective incivility may be seen as a form of discrimination in the workplace toward particular targeted groups. Therefore, it is interesting to note that the results of the present study did not find any significant ethnicity differences and differences in power position in experienced incivility and that the gender differences as well as the differences between various age groups revealed

very small effect sizes. The small differences between groups could indicate that incivility patterns in Sweden are not the same as in the United States. A possible explanation of the results based on Cortina's reasoning of selective incivility is that females and younger people are more targeted by incivility as a form of subtle discrimination against these groups. In addition to this, Pearson et al. (2005) have suggested that changing norms in society blur the line between appropriate and inappropriate behavior, which could be the cause of increased reports of incivility in modern working life. It is possible that this explains why younger people are more involved in the incivility process, as they might behave according to newer and less formal norms. Yet, caution should be used when drawing conclusions about workplace discrimination against particular groups on the basis of these results, as the response rate is low in the present study. More research is certainly warranted to test differences between countries.

Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that experienced workplace incivility, primarily from coworkers, best explained well-being. The finding that experiencing workplace incivility is related to lower well-being is consistent with previous work by Lim et al. (2008) and by Reio and Ghosh (2009). It can be noted that similar relationships have been found in bullying research (Branch et al., 2013). Previous work has shown that experiencing bullying has a stronger association with lower mental and physical health than merely witnessing bullying (Hoel et al., 2004). Moreover, the results of the present study show that instigated incivility had the highest correlation with witnessed incivility, primarily from coworkers. This is in line with Ferguson and Barry (2011) who found that individuals report being both witnesses and perpetrators. The relationship between witnessing incivility and instigating incivility indicates that these incivility variables are components of a social process in the organization. Witnessing incivility may thus contribute to erode the norms of the workplace, and create an organization where incivility is more accepted. In other words, workplace incivility may contribute to a social process, reciprocal in nature, that change the social climate of an organization, making uncivil behavior more common. It can be concluded that the results support the findings by Foulk et al. (2016) showing the contagion effect of low-intensity negative behaviours in organizations.

Limitations

As cross-sectional data were used in the study, no causal relationships can be established. This makes it impossible to draw any conclusions regarding casual directions of the relationships in the study, which should be considered when interpreting the results. The incivility variables all correlated with each other (see Table I), making their individual contribution more problematic to isolate in the analyses. Additionally, in the study, workplace incivility (experienced, witnessed, and instigated) was measured over the last year, a narrower time-span than the original scale, which measures experiences of incivility over the past 5 years (Cortina et al., 2001). This could to some degree constitute a problem when comparing the prevalence of workplace incivility, as past studies (e.g., Cortina et al., 2001; Lim & Lee, 2011) measure experiences over 5 years rather than one. To remedy this problem, the study conducted by Reio Jr and Sanders-Reio (2011) was primarily used as a comparison, as they, in order to reduce recall bias, also measured the prevalence of incivility experiences over the past year. The present study aimed at selecting a representative sample of the Swedish laboring population, but the

fact that the samples of previous studies were not representative of the general working population of their respective country makes direct comparisons more difficult. It should also be mentioned that a limitation was that no data were collected on differences in occupational sectors. Gathering information about incivility in different sectors could have given more insight in the prevalence of incivility in different groups. Although the present study consists of a stratified sample mirroring the composition of the Swedish population, some limitations should be mentioned concerning the low response rate. The prevalence of incivility, for instance, those being subjected to incivility could have a lower or higher response rate. It is of course not possible to know in which direction since we do not have any information about the drop-out group, it may seem likely that the prevalence in the population is slightly lower. On the contrary, the prevalence in Sweden was lower than what has been reported in other countries. Regarding relations, for example, to well-being and differences between groups, if the sample was somewhat restricted in range, having higher number of affected participants, then this could have attenuated the reported relations. Generally, restriction in range has this influence on relations except in cases where there is an interaction between some drop-out factor influencing the relationships, for example, that only for those affected by incivility there is a relation to well-being. We regard this as rather unlikely and it being more likely that the strength of the relationships was somewhat attenuated.

A possible limitation is also that there is a considerable overlap between workplace aggression constructs. For instance, workplace bullying and workplace incivility share similarities and whether there is a need for separate constructs have been called into question by Hershcovis (2011). Some items of the Workplace Incivility Scale (Cortina et al., 2001) are similar to the Negative Acts Questionnaire (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997), which is frequently used to measure workplace bullying. This could make it difficult to capture a specific construct with the existing instruments of today. However, the NAQ involves several more severe items focused on more overt types of aggression and violence, as well as utilizes a shorter time frame of measurement in order to capture the systematic nature of bullying. The Workplace Incivility Scale differentiates in the way that it does not measure intentionality and systematic occurrence of the negative behavior. It does thus not measure workplace bullying in accordance with the definition offered by Einarsen (2000), suggesting that it is measuring a milder type of workplace aggression. To better capture the phenomenon workplace incivility, the scale could however benefit from being further developed.

Future Research

The present study has illustrated the prevalence of workplace incivility in a Swedish context, and highlighted the importance of the phenomenon, as it is related to lower levels of well-being and higher levels of instigated incivility. Future studies of workplace incivility in Scandinavia should be conducted including studies in the other countries. Special focus could be directed toward antecedents of incivility as well as groups at risk of becoming targeted by workplace incivility. Additionally, longitudinal studies should be considered to establish what long-term consequences workplace incivility could have for well-being at work. Future studies could additionally more comprehensively explore the relationships between different forms of workplace incivility, such as experienced,

witnessed, and instigated incivility. The results of the present study show that more focus can be turned to risk groups of workplace incivility as a means of developing intervention strategies in the future. That instigated incivility was associated with witnessed incivility also underlines that future intervention studies can focus on how coworkers model their behavior after each other, in order to prevent a social process of incivility from activating and escalating to more serious conflicts over time.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that workplace incivility is a relatively common phenomenon in Sweden. It can also be concluded that female and younger employees are somewhat more targeted by workplace incivility and that slightly more supervisors and younger employees are prone to act in an uncivil way. In addition, the results clearly show that incivility is related to lower levels of well-being and more instigated workplace incivility. Well-being was best predicted by experienced incivility, and instigated incivility was best predicted by witnessed incivility. The results can provide a basis for interventions aimed at preventing incivility in an organization to linger and to potentially escalate into more aggressive forms of misbehavior. In addition, the results may serve as a ground for future research in the area of workplace incivility, especially in a Swedish context.

Acknowledgment

Note

[1] We also performed the analyses with standard regression analysis (unweighted), the results were very similar.

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