

Abstract

Based on Role Congruity Theory, we tested the hypothesis of gender bias by examining gender differences in observers' evaluations of the awareness and acceptability of workplace incivility gender-dyad interaction. Four-hundred Spanish high school students (55.8% female) read one scenario of overt incivility (publicly humiliates and openly doubts the employee's judgment) or covert (omits and pays little attention) from a leader (female vs. male) toward a subordinate (female vs. male) in engineering. Results indicated gender differences among observers. From the leader actor of incivility, males were more aware and accepted less the incivility when performed by a female leader in a male domain; whereas females were more aware and accepted less incivility than males in all cases. Regarding the subordinate target of incivility, only females were more aware and accepted less incivility, and both males and females were more aware and accepted less covert incivility. Our results reveal practical implications for interventions from a gender perspective.

Keywords: Gender bias; masculine domain; role congruency; observers; workplace incivility.

Introduction

In 1999, Andersson and Pearson conceptualized workplace incivility as a “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 other” (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457). Despite its psychological or subtle nature, incivility is a precursor of more severe forms of aggression through the spiraling effect, which may trigger further antisocial dynamics at work. From its definition until now, huge evidences documented the adverse outcomes of experiencing incivility (Garrosa, Carmona-Cobo, Moreno-Jiménez, & Sanz-Vergel, 2015; Miner et al., 2017; Tremmel & Sonnentag, 2017). Due to the fact that incivility occurs in the presence of others, there has been an emerging interest in third party observations in order to shed light on the dynamic of incivility (Chui & Dietz, 2014; Miner & Cortina, 2016; Reich & Hershcovis, 2015). Considering that observers could constitute the first step to prevent future episodes (Miranda, Oriol, & Amutio, 2019; Trach & Hymel, 2019), it is necessary to know the specific conditions in which they are aware of incivility, and show their intolerance to this dysfunctional behavior.

Workplace incivility emerges as subtle aggression that represents a modern way of gender discrimination against women. The actors are often men, and the victims are frequently women (Cooper, Paluck, & Fletcher, 2013; Loi, Loh, & Hine, 2015; Porath & Pearson, 2013). Nonetheless, a recent study shows that women receive more incivility from other women than from men, to a higher extent when women are more agentic at work (Gabriel, Butts, Yuan, Rosen, & Sliter, 2018). Similarly that it occurs in bullying, gender is a relevant variable in the process of incivility that can emerge from different actors, against different targets (Hellström

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3 & Beckman, 2019; Salin & Hoel, 2013). A related point is the pertinence of
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5 exploring observed workplace incivility from a gender perspective. Gender
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7 differences among observers
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10 have also shown a different pattern of incivility evaluations that encourage to better
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12 explore its effects (i.e., Carmona-Cobo, Garrosa, & Heilman, 2013; Carmona-Cobo,
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14 Garrosa, Moreno-Jiménez, & del Barrio, 2014; Miner & Cortina, 2016). In this
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16 sense, the present study builds in whom, male or female observers are more likely to
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18 perceive incivility regarding to the gender dyad interactions. Thus, the aim of the
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20 present study was to examine gender differences in observers' evaluations of the
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22 awareness and acceptability of workplace incivility gender-dyad interaction.
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26 **1. Workplace incivility and role congruency**

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28 Regarding the emphasis on the social dynamics of incivility according to gender,
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30 little is known about how the actor-target interactions of incivility are perceived
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32 among observers in typical male domains. Literature indicated that a deviation from
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34 the gender role produces a mismatch between social norm and the typical gender
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36 behavior, triggering social penalties towards women who deviate from gender-
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38 normative prescriptions, especially in typically male contexts (Caleo & Heilman,
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40 2014; Gartzia, Ryan, Balluerka, & Aritzeta, 2012; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007;
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42 Lopez-Zafra & Garcia-Retamero, 2012). Similarly, being a female leader who
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44 perpetrates incivility in a masculine sex-typing domain could be more penalized than
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46 when the same uncivil behavior is performed by a male leader in identical
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48 circumstances. As a result, since incivility is a dysfunctional behavior, observers'
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50 evaluations could vary depending on who is the leader actor of incivility and also to
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52 whom incivility is performed, in a male-dominated field.
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We base on the Role Congruity Theory by Eagly and Karau (2002) to explain observers' evaluations towards incivility exercised by a female or male leader. This theory explains prejudice against female leaders by means of women being perceived as less favorably than men to play a leadership role, and evaluations of a leadership role are less favorably when leaders are women, compared to men in identical positions. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that incivility could be less perceived and more tolerated -and thus go unnoticed- when it is performed by a male leader because of the congruence between the aggressive behavior (incivility) with the agentic characteristics of men and leadership role. In contrast, the identical incivility behavior (aggressive) could be more perceived and less tolerated -and therefore more easily detected- when it is performed by a female leader because of the incongruence between the communality of women with the agentic characteristics of incivility and leadership role.

2. Expression of incivility

Despite incivility is conceptualized to be a subtle nature, it may be manifested through a varied range of behaviors (DeMarco, Fawcett, & Mazzawi, 2018; Porath & Pearson, 2013). In an attempt to analyze the expression of incivility, a differentiation ranging from overt to covert expression is observed, with specific consequences for the victims (Carmona-Cobo et al., 2013; Carmona-Cobo et al., 2014). Frequent everyday examples of overt incivility are: making disrespectful comments, gossiping, making hostile gestures based on personal characteristics, asking questions about personal matters in professional settings, disrupting meetings, emotional put-downs, public reprimands, insulting colleagues, making accusations about professional competence or undermining a subordinate's credibility in front of others. Diary subtle or covert incivility include, for example, ignoring or not

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3 listening to colleagues, overlooking sharing in a collaborative work, texting,
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5 emailing, or talking during a presentation at meetings (Johnson & Indvik, 2001;
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7 Porath & Pearson, 2013).

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10 Based on the definition of workplace incivility by Andersson and Pearson
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12 (1999) and the workplace incivility scale (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout,
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14 2001), the present study proposes the existence of overt and covert incivility as
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16 different expressions of incivility that may be related to role congruency (Eagly &
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18 Karau, 2002). Episodes of *overt incivility* are present when a leader publicly
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20 humiliates a subordinate at a meeting or when the leader openly doubts the worker's
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22 judgment in a matter of the subordinate's responsibility. This is an overt expression
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24 of aggression in which uncivil behavior is actively carried out. Based on Role
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26 Congruity Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), this way of overt incivility could be
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28 expected to be more congruent with the male agentic stereotype because of the direct
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30 aggression of the gender role for men typically. On the other hand, episodes of
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32 *covert incivility* are present when a subordinate is excluded or receive little attention
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34 by the leader or colleagues. In this case, these are indirect aggressive behaviors
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36 where covert incivility acts silently or subtly which could be expected to be more
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38 congruent with the female communal stereotype.
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44 **3. Role congruency in leader actors of incivility**

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46 Incivility represents a silent manifestation of gender bias. Superiors are frequently
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48 sources of incivility, while subordinates are generally victims due to the power
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50 asymmetry where superior positions in work settings are commonly held by men,
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52 and women are employees (Cooper et al., 2013). Thus, exploring the incivility
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54 dynamics about women leader's perpetrators is an early station in the prevention of
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56 gender bias (Bosak, Eagly, Diekman, & Sczesny, 2018; Bosak & Sczesny, 2011). In
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3 that case, gender differences among observers could be explained by the congruency
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5 with their gender role (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In the same way that occurs penalties
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7 towards women who deviate from gender-normative prescriptions in male contexts
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9 (Caleo & Heilman, 2014; Gartzia et al., 2012; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Hollander
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11 & Yoder, 1980; Lopez-Zafra & Garcia-Retamero, 2012), we could assume that
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13 males could higher penalize female leaders due to the agency of the male-dominated
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15 field. As a consequence, they can be less tolerant towards female leaders acting
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17 uncivil, in comparison with male leaders working in male sex-typed roles in identical
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19 conditions. Thus, males could be more aware of incivility and they could show a
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21 lower acceptability when incivility is performed by a female leader in comparison to
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23 a male leader in a male-dominated domain. Based on this idea, we propose:

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28 *Hypothesis 1:* Male observers will show higher awareness and lower
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30 acceptability for female leader's incivility than for male leader's incivility.

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33 On the contrary, research systematically evidence that women tend to be
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35 more aware of discrimination than men in general (i.e., Basford, Offermann, &
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37 Behrend, 2014), probably because of the influence of gender role beliefs that are
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39 acquired by socialization processes (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). In addition, research
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41 shows that women are more aware than men of the psychosocial problems in
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43 workplace settings, in particular identifying incivility or harassing at work as more
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45 offensive, inappropriate, or insulting (Carmona-Cobo et al., 2013; Carmona-Cobo et
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47 al., 2014; Chui & Dietz, 2014). Although the incivility is a dysfunctional behavior
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49 regardless who performs it, we postulate that female observers could be more aware
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51 of incivility and highly detect this uncivil behavior at work than males when it is
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53 performed by a male leader in a male domain, as usually do. In this sense, female
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observers could tend to highlight the standard way of workplace mistreatment.

Consequently, we expect:

Hypothesis 2: Female observers will show higher awareness and lower acceptability of a male leader's incivility than male observers.

4. Role congruency in employee targets of incivility

Selective Incivility (Cortina, 2008; Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013) argues that incivility is not always generally performed, but sometimes it constitutes a disguised expression of social exclusion of female workers and ethnic minorities, promoting an underlying dysfunction in relationships among colleagues and work teams. This means that women may suffer more consequences of incivility and experience these episodes to a greater extent than their male counterparts in male domains (Cortina et al., 2001; Porath & Pearson, 2013). This manifestation of sexism within the organization turns incivility into an instrument of oppression of female workers (Callahan, 2011), influenced by female employees' greater lack of power. In this sense, being female and occupying a lower level position in the organization, sometimes accompanied by unstable labor contracts, shows a vulnerable scenario for the female worker (Cooper et al., 2013; Gartzia & Lopez-Zafra, 2016).

Victims' reactions vary considerably depending on the manifestations of the uncivil behavior, ranging from ignoring the incident to revenge (Chui & Dietz, 2014). These reactions are subjected to expression of incivility, as the magnitude of the harm changes according to the evaluation of the aggressive action (DeMarco et al., 2018; Porath & Pearson, 2013). Relations of power and gender at work underlie episodes of incivility (Cortina, 2008; Cortina et al., 2013), and gender influences the perception of the severity of the episodes of incivility. From the subordinate target

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3 perspective, recent evidences reveal that men perceive worse consequences of covert
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5 incivility because the victim is excluded from work-related issues (Carmona-Cobo et
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7 al., 2013; Carmona-Cobo et al., 2014). Regarding this finding, what is considered
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9 uncivil or not varies across gender and the power position. Thus, the loss of power
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11 involved in a subordinate victim who received covert incivility could cause men to
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13 consider a greater detection of covert incivility when the target is a male subordinate
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15 in a male domain. Consequently, we propose that the degree of detection in men
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17 could depend on the specific expression of incivility in a male domain and the
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19 gender of the victim. In case of male observers, covert incivility toward a male
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21 victim could be highly detected because exclude them from work-related issues:
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26 *Hypothesis 3:* Male observers will show higher awareness and lower
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28 acceptability when covert incivility is performed toward a male subordinate than a
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30 female subordinate.
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33 While this may be the case in males, we expect to find different evaluations
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35 in female observers. Women may highly detect both overt and covert incivility
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37 because they used to rate interpersonal mistreatment in a greater extent than men
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39 (Basford et al., 2014; Chui & Dietz, 2014). Hence, females could highlight the
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41 dysfunctionality of incivility much more than males. Additionally, we marked that
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43 the degree of female observers will be higher when incivility is performed against
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45 female subordinates, as occurs in the majority of episodes (Cortina, 2008; Cortina et
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47 al., 2013). Thus, we posit that female observers may be more perceptive in the
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49 awareness and acceptance of incivility:
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54 *Hypothesis 4:* Female observers will show higher awareness and lower
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56 acceptability when both overt and covert incivility is performed toward a female
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58 subordinate than male observers.
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Our study intends to expand the knowledge about the mechanisms of gender bias that could explain the incivility dynamics. The final goal of this research focuses in the prevention of incivility as a psychosocial risk for the occupational health of female workers (Miranda et al., 2019; Cifre, Vera, & Signani, 2015; Cortina et al., 2013; Trach & Hymel, 2019). In analyzing our hypothesis in future workers in order to detect early incivility that could be reproduced upon their incorporation into the labor market, we could propose the implementation of intervention measures from a gender perspective (Gartzia & Fetterolf, 2016). Thus, examining young people's degree of tolerance towards incivility and its consequences is an adequate strategy to approaching this problem.

In addition, some authors point out the differentiation between the way of expression of incivility (Porath & Pearson, 2013) which range from passive to active expressions, triggering specific reactions in the victims (Chui & Dietz, 2014) and gender differences in observers' appraisals (Carmona-Cobo et al., 2013; Carmona-Cobo et al., 2014). In this line, we introduce the role of expressions of incivility which could have different effects. It should be noted that, regardless of its expression, incivility is a dysfunctional behavior with negative consequences for the victims and the organization, although with different specific effects.

Method

Participants and procedure

The participants were four hundred high school students (55.8% female, 44.3% male) with a mean age of 18.08 ($SD = 3.45$; Range from 15 to 50 years old, 58.3% of them were from 16 to 17 years old), mostly single (93.8%) without children (98%).

Participants were recruited from different high school institutes in Spain.

Researchers contacted to the head of six educational centers, and then sent a letter

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3 introducing the study, indicating its goal and the inclusion criteria: (a) to be student
4 of the secondary level –not mandatory¹- prior to university or employment (i.e.,
5 diploma and/or professional studies), and (b) to not have working experience. A total
6 of four high school institutes agreed to participate in the study. After that,
7 researchers had a meeting with each high school supervisor to explain the procedure
8 of the study and to schedule the collection of data. To assure the ethical committee
9 guidelines, centers organized a meeting with the legal responsible (mostly parents)
10 of the students who were younger than eighteen years old. During the meeting, a
11 written letter with the explanation of the study was given to the minors' legal
12 responsible. Finally, students over 18 years old who agreed to participate in the
13 research received and signed a consent form describing the purpose and procedure of
14 the study and instructions to complete the online questions. For all of them
15 anonymity and confidentiality of the data were assured. Students who reject to
16 participate in the study abandoned the procedure and informed the center.

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Consistent with similar studies (i.e., Chui & Dietz 2014; Lopez-Zafra & Garcia-Retamero 2012; Heilman & Okimoto 2007; Hershcovis, Cameron, Gervais, & Bozeman, 2018), researchers instructed the participants to read one online scenario describing an episode of workplace incivility by a leader toward a subordinate in the male dominated field of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). In engineering, women are underrepresented and young people's stereotypical gender beliefs about this occupation emerge (Heilman & Eagly, 2008; Sáinz, Meneses, López, & Fàbregues, 2016). Female and male participants were randomly assigned to one experimental condition in which the leader's gender, the subordinate's gender, and the expression of incivility were manipulated in the ICT

¹ In Spain, this non-mandatory level of studies is coursed by students who are from 16 years old and up.

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3 engineering male domain, resulting in a 2 (Leader's gender: Female leader vs. Male
4 leader) x2 (Subordinate's gender: Female subordinate vs. Male subordinate) x2
5 (Expression of incivility: Overt incivility vs. Covert incivility) between-subject
6 design. Conditions simulated identical scenarios except for the experimental
7 manipulation.

14 **Manipulation check**

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16 We followed the definition of workplace incivility proposed by Andersson and
17 Pearson (1999) and the measurement guidelines of Cortina et al. (2001) to represent
18 episodes of both overt and covert incivility (see Appendixes). Female and male
19 participants were asked to play an observer role in which they read a vignette
20 describing an incivility episode in which a leader (Leader's gender: Female leader
21 vs. Male leader) responsible of a group publicly humiliates and openly doubts the
22 subordinate's judgment (overt incivility) or omits and pays little attention (covert
23 incivility) to a subordinate (Subordinate's gender: Female subordinate vs. Male
24 subordinate) in the specific masculine domain of engineering.

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26 To simulate the *overt incivility* episode we represent these situations: (a) the leader
27 said that the subordinate always talks too fast and never seems to get to the target,
28 stood up and said in front of everyone that all that was explaining was already
29 known (the leader publicly humiliates subordinate); and (b) the leader doubted the
30 subordinate's capacity to complete tasks correctly and did not sufficiently trust their
31 work method, asking to check in together about work plans daily (the leader openly
32 doubts the subordinate's judgment in a matter under the subordinate's responsibility).

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34 In contrast, to simulate the *covert incivility* episode the scenario included (a) the
35 leader ignored a subordinate in the hallway and when they take a coffee break with
36 colleagues (the subordinate is omitted or excluded by the leader), and (b) the leader
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remained looking through some papers at a meeting, not paying attention to subordinate intervention, and turning away to talk to someone else while the subordinate was still talking (the subordinate interventions received little attention).

After reading the episode, participants were asked to evaluate the above incivility episodes through the following dependent variables: degree of awareness of incivility and the degree of acceptability.

Measures

Awareness. Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they perceived the supervisor (female vs. male) was performing incivility (overt or covert) toward the employee (female vs. male) in the ICT engineering male domain. Ten adjectives, rated on 4-point scales, ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*), were used to evaluate the incivility characteristics based on Andersson and Pearson (1999) definition. Examples of adjectives include rude, deviant, and uncivil. Thus, lower scores nearly to 1, indicated a higher awareness of incivility (i.e., "I totally agree that the supervisor's behavior is rude, deviant, uncivil") whereas higher scores, nearly to 4, indicated a lower awareness of incivility (i.e., "I totally disagree that the supervisor's behavior is rude, deviant, uncivil"). Thus, the ratings of awareness were on a scale ranging from 1 (high awareness of incivility) to 4 (low awareness of incivility). Alpha coefficient was .89.

Acceptability. On a 7-point scale, participants rated the degree of their acceptance of a supervisor's (female vs. male) incivility (overt or covert) toward an employee (female vs. male) in an ICT engineering male domain. Using eight adjectives, they rated whether the episode was "1 = tolerable/7 = intolerable" or "1 = appropriate/7 = inappropriate". In sum, the ratings of acceptability were on a scale ranging from 1 (high acceptability of incivility) to 7 (low acceptability of incivility).

Lower scores, nearly to 1, indicated more acceptability (i.e., "In my opinion, this workplace situation is or is likely to be tolerable or appropriate"); in contrast, higher scores, nearly to 7, reflect less acceptability (i.e., "In my opinion, this workplace situation is or is likely to be intolerable or inappropriate"). The scale had a significant alpha ($\alpha = .77$).

Results

Participants' ratings of the dependent measures for the leader's gender conditions (see Table 1), and for the subordinate's gender conditions (see Table 2) are presented below. To test gender differences in the participants' awareness and acceptance of incivility (Hypotheses 1 to 4) we conducted analyses of variance (ANOVAs) on each dependent variable. Results of the univariate analyses of variance of awareness and acceptability by the leader's gender (Hypotheses 1 and 2) conditions are presented in Table 3, and results by the subordinate's gender conditions (Hypotheses 3 and 4) are presented in Table 4.

Table 1

Table 2

Awareness and acceptability of incivility by the leader's gender conditions

Results indicated interaction effects between participant's gender and leader's gender on awareness, $F(1, 392) = 8.64, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .02$, and acceptability, $F(1, 392) = 4.28, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .01$, supporting Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 (see Table 3). In accordance with Hypothesis 1, male participants showed higher awareness, $F(1, 392) = 11.16, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$, and lower acceptability, $F(1, 392) = 4.39, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .01$, for female leader's incivility than for male leader's incivility. These

significant interactions supported Hypothesis 2. Results indicated that female participants showed higher awareness, $F(1, 392) = 16.33, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$, and lower acceptability, $F(1, 392) = 18.37, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$, of a male leader's incivility than male participants. Related to Hypothesis 1, there was a main effect of leader's gender on awareness, $F(1, 392) = 4.21, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .01$, indicating that both male and female participants showed higher awareness for female leader's incivility than for male leader's incivility. Furthermore, there was a main effect of participant's gender on awareness, $F(1, 392) = 7.91, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .02$; and on acceptability, $F(1, 392) = 16.26, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$, for the leader's gender conditions. In accordance with Hypothesis 2, female participants showed higher awareness and lower acceptability of incivility compared to male participants. In addition, there was a main effect of expression of incivility (overt vs. covert) on awareness, $F(1, 392) = 4.98, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .01$, and on acceptability $F(1, 392) = 16.91, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$, for the leader's gender conditions indicating that both male and female participants showed higher awareness and lower acceptability for covert than for overt incivility.

Please, insert Table 3

Awareness and acceptability of incivility by the subordinate's gender conditions

There were no significant participant's gender x subordinate's gender x expression of incivility interactions on awareness, $F(1, 392) = 1.18, p = .28, \eta_p^2 = .003$, and acceptability, $F(1, 392) = .05, p = .82, \eta_p^2 = .000$, and thus, results did not support Hypothesis 3 and 4 (see Table 4). However, in relation to our prediction of Hypothesis 4, main effects of participant's gender on awareness, $F(1, 392) = 7.35, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .02$, and acceptability, $F(1, 392) = 15.02, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$, indicated

gender differences by means of female participants showed higher awareness and lower acceptability of both overt and covert incivility than males. Hence, on the basis of these main effects female participants showed the highest awareness and the lowest acceptability of incivility in male domain, regardless the subordinate target (male or female employee). Moreover, there were main effects of expression of incivility on awareness, $F(1, 392) = 4.45, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .01$, and acceptability, $F(1, 392) = 15.92, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$, indicating that both female and male participants showed higher awareness and lower acceptability of covert than overt incivility. These main effects revealed that participants were less tolerant with covert incivility instead of overt forms, regardless their gender.

Please, insert Table 4

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to examine gender differences in observers' evaluations of the awareness and acceptability of workplace incivility gender-dyad interaction. We found gender differences between male and female observers. First, focusing on the leader actor of incivility, males were more aware and accepted less the incivility when performed by a female leader in a male domain; whereas females were more aware and accepted less incivility than males, in all cases. Second, regarding the subordinate target of incivility, observers' evaluations varied. Only females were more aware and accepted less incivility in all cases. Moreover, both males and females were more aware and accepted less covert incivility. These findings support the need to examine gender differences in young observers' evaluations, showing that it is relevant to promote education from a gender perspective in future workers (Gartzia & Fetterolf, 2016) to prevent gender bias of

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3 female workers' occupational health in the future (EASHW, 2016; ILO, 2018). The
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5 episodes of incivility in this study were represented in the male-dominated field of
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7 engineering, where women are underrepresented emerging young people's
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9 stereotypical gender beliefs (Sáinz et al., 2016).
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12 We interpret gender differences among male and female observers in relation
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14 to gender role congruency (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Congruent with Hypothesis 1,
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16 male observers showed higher awareness and lower acceptability for female leader's
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18 incivility than for male leader's incivility. That is, the dysfunctional dynamic of
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20 incivility is unmarked in males, probably because of its agentic characteristics.
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22 Consistent with the Role Congruity Theory by Eagly and Karau (2002), the
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24 acquiescence of the male observers punishes the female leader because, in the face
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26 of the same negative behavior at work, incivility is more easily identified when
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28 performed by a female leader, whereas men are more acquiescent because, in
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30 identical conditions, it is perceived less if it is performed by a male. Thus, from the
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32 leader actor of incivility point of view, males are more permissive when incivility is
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34 performed by another male in a masculine context such as engineering. In contrast,
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36 the results show that when faced with identical episodes of incivility, women are
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38 systematically more aware than men, probably because of the socialization process
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40 which makes them to be more conscious about its dynamic. In particular, female
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42 observers showed higher awareness and lower acceptability of a male leader's
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44 incivility than male observers. Incivility could go unnoticed in male domains when it
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46 is performed by a male leader because of the congruence between the aggressive
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48 behavior (incivility) with the agentic characteristics ascribed to men and to
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50 leadership role. However, when testing gender differences results indicate a higher
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52 discrimination in females. According to previous studies, women can better
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3 distinguish incivility in its different expressions, and consider both covert and overt
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5 incivility to be offensive, inappropriate, or insulting (Carmona-Cobo et al., 2013;
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7 Carmona-Cobo et al., 2014; Chui & Dietz, 2014).
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10 A significant contribution of this study is to increase our knowledge of the
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12 various observers' evaluations which are produced according to the expression of
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14 incivility (overt vs. covert), showing that the degree of incivility perception could
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16 depend on its expression (Caza & Cortina, 2007; DeMarco et al., 2018; Porath &
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18 Pearson, 2013). Taking into account that incivility is a progressive and dynamic
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20 phenomenon where social interaction characterizes episodes of incivility (Meier &
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22 Gross, 2015; Taylor, Bedeian, Cole, & Zhang, 2017), not all uncivil behaviors have
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24 the same effects. In accordance with our assumptions, Role Congruity Theory (Eagly
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26 & Karau, 2002) can explain these results indicating an incongruence pattern in
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28 female leaders by the incongruence between the expression of incivility expected in
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30 a woman (covert) and the masculine leadership role, especially in male domains. On
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32 the other hand, our results show a congruence pattern in males who relate covert
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34 incivility as typical in the female gender role. In line with previous research, this
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36 distinction attempts to provide clarity and a more comprehensive analysis of the
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38 complexity that characterizes the uncivil work dynamics (Escartin, Salin, &
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40 Rodriguez-Carballeira, 2013), that are the precursors of more severe forms of labor
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42 aggression (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).
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49 From the point of view of the employee target of incivility, results again
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51 indicated that females are more discriminative to incivility compared to males rating
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53 interpersonal mistreatment in a greater extent than men (Basford et al., 2014; Chui &
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55 Dietz, 2014), also probably due to frequency with which they may experience them
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57 (Cooper et al., 2013; Cortina, 2008; Cortina et al., 2001). As a consequence,
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Hypothesis 4 was not supported. When women evaluate the degree of awareness and acceptability of incivility, they do not distinguish it depending on who receive incivility, however, they notice it in all conditions higher than men do. Gender and power relations of incivility underlie this evidence, showing power asymmetry in female workers (Callahan, 2011; Cooper et al., 2013; Gartzia & Lopez-Zafra, 2016).

Practical implications

The results of this study expand our knowledge about gender differences in the prediction of the effects of the expression of incivility in relation to role congruency, an aspect scarcely studied in the literature so far. The study provides interesting results on this aspect, specifically about response patterns in the evaluation of incivility according to gender congruence, with negative effects for the victims.

Workplace incivility is a selective mechanism that triggers gender bias at workplace (Cortina, 2008; Cortina et al., 2013), and the distinction between overt and covert incivility shows that it is relevant to measure it considering the gender perspective.

In a male domain, covert incivility is considered more severe because it excludes the target from work. From this point of view, there are specific preventive proposals based on the expression of incivility, where gender is not a secondary variable.

Note that the study was conducted with Spanish high school students with a final idea to prevent students from reproducing incivility upon their incorporation into work (Gartzia & Fetterolf, 2016; Miranda et al., 2019; Trach & Hymel, 2019).

As derived from the results, it is necessary to be aware of the existence of stereotyped beliefs—which are probably underlying the evaluations carried out—and the mechanisms of tolerance of incivility. Attending to the indications of international organizations, the first step in prevention is the initial detection of risk factors that have negative consequences for the health of female workers (Cifre et

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2
3 al., 2015; Cortina et al., 2013). This is the approach used to develop the study, whose
4
5 results may benefit the knowledge and implementation of preventive measures from
6
7 the gender perspective at early stages, prior to the incorporation into work (EASHW,
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9 2016; ILO, 2018). For example, educational centers could implement
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11 psychoeducational interventions in order to promote civility behaviors among
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13 women and men as future workers, fostering a positive way of relationships in
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15 organizations.
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18 19 **Limitations and future research**

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21 Despite the above contributions, the study has limitations. Incivility is evaluated in
22
23 simulated situations (not an episode with real victims) through vignettes that
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25 describe the work situation, following the procedure of previous studies (i.e., Chui &
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27 Dietz, 2014; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Lopez-Zafra & Garcia-Retamero, 2012). In
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29 this sense, the generalizations of the results are limited to the evaluation of the
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31 observers. Furthermore, the dependent variables are evaluated using ad hoc
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33 questions and not standardized instruments, seeking to capture the degree of
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35 specificity required to assess the effect of the independent variables. However, the
36
37 range of scale values differs and could be unified for a better comprehension of the
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39 responses. Additionally, we recommend exploring the participants' gender
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41 stereotypes, which appear to be underlying their responses. In a future study, we
42
43 could examine whether overt incivility is masculine/agentive characterized whereas
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45 covert incivility is associated to feminine/communal stereotype, as we suspect from
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47 our results. Moreover, this experiment focused on a male domain, thus, we
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49 recommend extending the study to the female domain to compare the effects in both
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51 gender domains. Introducing these measures in future research on incivility and
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53 gender could provide greater control to the experimental design.
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Conclusions

This study offers an analysis that extends our current knowledge about the appraisals of incivility from a gendered perspective. It shows that incivility may be more socially tolerated by a male in a male domain even in future workers, triggering adverse consequences on well-being and professional performance. The experiment analyzes the work dynamics of incivility (i.e., overt and covert) that lead to acts of sexism, and the psychosocial processes that explain its appearance. The study makes a series of contributions to empirical knowledge: (1) It connects the Role Congruity Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) with the expression of incivility, revealing a lower tolerance of episodes of covert incivility in male domains; (2) It analyzes incivility viewed from the aggressor against the victim, an aspect that has received little attention (Meier & Gross, 2015; Reich & Hershcovis, 2015); (3) It provides continuity to the knowledge in the literature on gender differences among observers through experimental manipulation as a function of the object of study, following the perspective of previous studies (Caleo & Heilman, 2014; Garrosa & Gálvez, 2013; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Ryan & Branscombe, 2013); (4) It evaluates the degree of awareness and acceptance in young observers, which has practical implications in the prevention of work discrimination by gender, according to international agencies (EASHW, 2016; ILO, 2018). In short, the experiment offers a novel line of research that is achieving significant findings about the complexity of incivility from a gender perspective, a relevant aspect in the field of work health, to implement preventive actions, and with important consequences for women's professional development.

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Running head: OBSERVERS' REACTIONS TO INCIVILITY

2

Table 1.*Participants' ratings of awareness and acceptability by the leader's gender conditions*

	Overt Incivility						Covert Incivility									
	Female leader			Male leader			Female leader			Male leader						
	Female	Male		Female	Male		Female	Male		Female	Male					
	(<i>n</i> = 52)	(<i>n</i> = 48)		(<i>n</i> = 58)	(<i>n</i> = 42)		(<i>n</i> = 54)	(<i>n</i> = 46)		(<i>n</i> = 59)	(<i>n</i> = 41)					
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Awareness	1.46	(.42)	1.53	(.46)	1.42	(.35)	1.77	(.73)	1.43	(.46)	1.35	(.31)	1.38	(.32)	1.59	(.67)
Acceptability	5.86	(1.09)	5.67	(.99)	6.01	(.86)	5.40	(1.13)	6.27	(.67)	6.09	(.87)	6.31	(.58)	5.79	(1.14)

Note. The ratings of awareness are on a scale ranging from 1 (high awareness of incivility) to 4 (low awareness of incivility). The ratings of acceptability are on a scale ranging from 1 (high acceptability of incivility) to 7 (low acceptability of incivility).

Table 2.

Participants' ratings of awareness and acceptability by the subordinate's gender conditions

	Overt Incivility						Covert Incivility									
	Female subordinate			Male subordinate			Female subordinate			Male subordinate						
	Female	Male		Female	Male		Female	Male		Female	Male					
	(<i>n</i> = 52)	(<i>n</i> = 48)		(<i>n</i> = 58)	(<i>n</i> = 42)		(<i>n</i> = 48)	(<i>n</i> = 52)		(<i>n</i> = 65)	(<i>n</i> = 35)					
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Awareness	1.38	(.32)	1.69	(.55)	1.50	(.43)	1.58	(.67)	1.37	(.33)	1.45	(.56)	1.43	(.44)	1.49	(.46)
Acceptability	5.90	(1.07)	5.53	(.95)	5.97	(.88)	5.56	(1.19)	6.23	(.58)	5.96	(1.10)	6.33	(.66)	5.93	(.88)

Note. The ratings of awareness are on a scale ranging from 1 (high awareness of incivility) to 4 (low awareness of incivility). The ratings of acceptability are on a scale ranging from 1 (high acceptability of incivility) to 7 (low acceptability of incivility).

Running head: OBSERVERS' REACTIONS TO INCIVILITY

3

Table 3.*Results of the univariate analyses of variance of awareness and acceptability by the leader's gender conditions (N = 400)*

Dependent variables	Scale	Participant's gender x Leader's gender		Participant's gender x Expression of incivility		Participant's gender x Leader's gender		Participant's gender x Expression of incivility		Participant's gender x Leader's gender		Participant's gender x Expression of incivility			
		F	P value	F	P value	F	P value	F	P value	F	P value	F	P value		
Awareness	1 - 4	.000	.99	.001	.97	2.10	.15	8.64	.00**	7.91	.00**	4.21	.04*	4.98	.03*
Acceptability	1 - 7	.04	.85	.13	.72	.09	.77	4.28	.04*	16.26	.00***	1.13	.29	16.91	.00***

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

Appendixes

Example of overt incivility scenario used in Experimental Condition 1

Paco is an engineer and has worked as an employee of an IT company for five years.

His job consists of resolving incidents and technical problems for computer equipment. Since he began, he has shown himself to be good with computers, and he solves the problems that arise day to day.

Four months ago, a new supervisor, Luis, started to work for the company. On several occasions, Luis the supervisor has told Paco that he doubted his capacity to complete tasks correctly and that he did not sufficiently trust his way of working. In addition, Luis said he would like Paco to check in with him about his work plans daily.

At the last meeting, Paco was explaining how to retrieve data that a virus had erased on all the company computers. Once Paco started to speak, his supervisor Luis turned to a nearby colleague saying that Paco always talks too fast and never seems to get to the point. At this moment, Paco was speaking to his supervisor Luis to explain how he would solve the problem of the virus. His supervisor Luis stood up and told everyone that Paco was not telling them anything they didn't already know. Then, he changed the subject of conversation, and the meeting went smoothly.

Example of covert incivility scenario used in Experimental Condition 2

Paco is an engineer and has worked as an employee of an IT company for five years. His job consists of resolving incidents and technical problems for computer equipment. Since he began, he has shown himself to be good with computers, and he solves the problems that arise day to day.

Four months ago, a new supervisor, Luis, started to work for the company. On several occasions, the supervisor Luis has ignored Paco when he found him in the hallway. In addition, when they coincide on coffee break, the supervisor Luis talks with Paco's colleagues, leaving Paco out of the conversation.

At the last meeting, Paco was explaining how to retrieve data that a virus had erased on all of the company computers. Once Paco started to speak, his supervisor Luis began looking through some papers he had with him, not paying attention to Paco.

At this moment, Paco was speaking to his supervisor Luis explaining how he would solve the problem of the virus. His supervisor Luis turned away to talk to someone else while Paco was still talking, not paying attention to what he was saying. Then, he changed the subject of conversation, and the meeting went smoothly.