ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The moderating role of behavioral controls in the relationship between incivility and creativity

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to analyze the (moderating) role of behavioral controls (BCs) in the relationship between incivility and creativity. This study fills a research gap by investigating how management controls can affect the relationship between incivility and individual creativity. Given that unpleasant interactions in the organizational environment hinder the proliferation and execution of ideas, it is up to organizations to provide environments that stimulate creativity, which is naturally achieved with the presence of controls. The findings indicate that top managers should pay close attention to the BCs used, as they can circumvent the negative effects of incivility and generate a positive effect on middle managers' creativity. A survey was conducted with middle managers from 86 companies listed on the B3 S.A. – Brasil, Bolsa, Balcão (B3). To test the hypotheses, the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) technique was used and, as an additional analysis, the fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) technique. The results show that supervisor and coworker incivility positively influence the instigated incivility of managers. In turn, instigated incivility negatively influences the creativity of these managers. To mitigate these effects, the results suggest that organizations should use BCs to moderate the effects of instigated incivility on managers' creativity. The conclusion is that BCs absorb and circumvent the negative effects of instigated incivility, favoring the proliferation of creativity. Thus, theoretical contributions on the role of management controls in the context of incivility and creativity emerge, as well as practical contributions on how organizations can use controls to circumvent incivility and make better use of individuals' creativity.

Keywords: management control, behavioral controls, incivility, creativity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations are dynamic environments that require quick responses as they face volatility, risks, and uncertainties, and consequently direct a sense of pressure toward individuals, which can affect their professional and personal lives (Jiang et al., 2019; Schilpzand et al., 2016). A work environment that is constantly pressurized, challenging, and full of stress tends to increase the competitive spirit, provoking envy and unethical attitudes (Porath et al., 2015). Therefore, work environments with higher levels of incivility are associated with increased stress, harming the mental health of organizational actors and negatively impacting other individual behaviors (Hitt et al., 2013). When there is incivility, which is defined as actions and words that violate conventional norms of workplace behavior, cooperation and enthusiasm decrease, contributing to increased stress (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). On the other hand, civility occurs when actions are guided by mutual respect and members feel comfortable sharing information and ideas (Porath & Pearson, 2010).

The presence of incivility in the workplace, evoked by superiors or peers, is associated with the development of instigated incivility (in the individual themselves) and other problems such as reduced well-being and satisfaction and increased turnover (Holm et al., 2015). Because it is difficult to notice when it occurs at low intensity, top managers should be aware of or seek guidance in identifying these behaviors in their subordinates. Some antecedents of incivility that contribute to anger and stress can be identified, such as increased workload, insecurity, and organizational changes (Sharifirad, 2016). Rather than treating incivility as a harmless nuisance or a private matter to be resolved individually, organizations should actively discourage it (Lim et al., 2008), because neglecting incivility can allow organizational norms to be overshadowed, leading to self-interest and organizational deterioration (Lim & Lee, 2011).

Since a significant portion of creative initiatives and activities are promoted by middle-level organizational actors, it is important for top managers to know how to observe what factors can stifle their creativity (Davila et al., 2009; Nuhu et al., 2022). Incivility is a factor that can limit creative performance (Sharifirad, 2016). Therefore, organizations should establish policies to eliminate incivility in the workplace and thereby preserve the creative behavior of employees (Mehmood et al., 2023). In this sense, management controls provide stable and adaptable structures that facilitate communication between top and middle managers so that new information

can be responded to quickly, in addition to providing flexible discipline for the freedom that creativity requires (Davila et al., 2009).

Although they are often seen as conflicting, creativity and control are important for organizations (Frare & Beuren, 2021; Speklé et al., 2017). Top managers' use of behavioral controls (BCs) guides middle managers' demands to meet task requirements and organizational norms. BCs serve to regulate subordinates' actions in the organization and analyze whether they are in line with what is proposed by top managers; for example, feedback is a corrective tool for possible deviations (Snell, 1992). BCs do not meet the control needs of the organization as a whole, but rather their object of control is directed toward the specific needs of top managers who need to supervise middle managers (Ouchi & Maguire, 1975).

Recent studies have addressed incivility in organizational contexts and discussed its effects on the work environment and individuals, such as reduced creative performanç (Sharifirad, 2016), emotional exhaustion (Cho et al., 2016), decreased work performance (Jiang et al., 2019), negative dispositional attitudes (Islam & Bowling, 2022), social categorization (Liu et al., 2022), and silence of organizational actors (Srivastava et al., 2023). Consequently, being in a work environment with a climate of incivility is detrimental to creativity (Pearson & Porath, 2005; Porath & Pearson, 2010; Porath et al., 2015). In this sense, the literature includes studies on how higher levels of incivility negatively affect creativity. On the other hand, there is also research that examines the use of controls and creativity (Adler & Chen, 2011; Boedker & Chong, 2022; Bollinger, 2019; Chen, 2017; Coelho et al, 2021; Frare, Beuren, & Silva, 2022; Frare, & Beuren, 2021; Grabner & Speckbacher, 2016; Lill et al., 2021; Sitepu et al., 2020; Speckbacher, 2017; Speklé et al., 2017; Su et al., 2022; Tucker et al., 2021).

Despite the existing literature on incivility and creativity and on controls and creativity, little is known about the role of controls in the context of incivility. In particular, the literature is unclear about the use of controls to moderate (mitigate) the effects of incivility on creativity. It can be seen that the cited studies on management controls and creativity focus on the direct or indirect effects of certain controls on creativity, but do not contemplate the possible moderating effects of controls in certain contexts, such as between incivility and creativity. This is particularly interesting and timely, as there is an emerging body of literature that seeks to understand how

management controls can positively shape (moderate) certain relationships between phenomena that occur in organizations [e.g., Grabner et al. (2022), Lopez-Valeiras et al. (2016)]. To fill these gaps, this study aims to analyze the moderating role of BCs in the relationship between incivility and creativity of middle managers of companies listed on the B3 S.A. – Brasil, Bolsa, Balcão (B3).

Unpleasant interactions in the workplace damage the engagement, creativity, productivity, and performance of organizational actors (Forbes, 2023, January 10). Thus, this study aims to make a practical contribution by highlighting the role of BCs in minimizing the effects of incivility in the workplace, thereby contributing to the continued creativity of middle managers. In addition, with the use

of BCs, there is greater standardization of management processes, minimizing possible signs of incivility between job levels (Snell, 1992). In terms of social contribution, it is important to improve management mechanisms as the organization grows and aims to remain competitive in the market. A civilized environment provides well-being for employees and promotes creativity, which improves the organization's results. As mentioned above, there is research that relates controls and creativity, but there is no knowledge of studies that analyze the effects of controls on incivility in work environments. Therefore, the theoretical contribution of this study is to add to the literature on the use of BCs to mitigate the effects of incivility on organizational creativity.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

2.1 Incivility in the Workplace

Aggression in the workplace has attracted increasing interest in the social and organizational sciences (Lim et al., 2008). Uncivil behavior is characterized by rudeness and disrespect and demonstrates a lack of consideration for others (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Unlike aggression and other forms of mistreatment in organizations, such as violence and sexual harassment, it is characterized by an ambiguous intention to harm, to a lesser extent, and includes behaviors that are generalized and non-sexual in nature (Lim & Lee, 2011). Uncivilized behaviors are of lesser magnitude, occur in everyday activities, and are subtle, verbal, passive, and indirect (Raza et al., 2023).

Incivility consists of low-intensity deviant behavior with the intention of harming a target (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), i.e., violating norms in a way that can harm cooperation and motivation (Porath & Pearson, 2010). On the other hand, civility in the workplace is a behavior that upholds the norms of mutual respect, based on creating empathy and behaviors that are essential for maintaining positive relationships with others (Porath & Pearson, 2010). Cortina et al. (2001) point out that the definitions of incivility overlap with psychological aggression when there are clear intentions and expectations to harm the target or the organization, and highlight violence, aggression, bullying, tyranny, harassment, deviance, and injustice as forms of interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace. Lim et al. (2008) add sarcasm, derogatory tones and comments, hostile looks, and contempt as some examples of uncivil conduct.

Incivility is a costly and widespread behavior in the workplace that has negative affective, cognitive, and behavioral consequences for its targets, witnesses, and instigators (Schilpzand et al., 2016). When it spreads inside and outside the boundaries of the organization, it can damage organizational interactions, tarnish the company's reputation, and create side effects that reduce satisfaction and ultimate goals. By ignoring the presence of incivility, the organization is likely to suffer from a lack of cooperation due to a lack of individual interest, thus damaging its standards (Pearson & Porath, 2005).

There are three main sources of incivility: supervisor incivility and coworker incivility, which refer to internal perpetrators, and customer incivility, which refers to an external perpetrator (Srivastava et al., 2023). Incivility differs not only in its source, but also in its type: it can be experienced, witnessed, or instigated (Schilpzand et al., 2016). Instigated incivility refers to the act of engaging in uncivil behavior toward colleagues in the workplace (Blau & Andersson, 2005). Holm et al. (2015) found that instigated incivility can largely be explained by incivility witnessed from superiors and coworkers.

Discourteous behavior among coworkers negatively affects the individuals involved and those who witness the incident (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). However, an instigator's higher position can become a shield for incivility, as their words or actions intimidate employees in lower positions, since few people will risk their jobs to tell the instigator that their attitudes are disrupting the well-being of the organization (Pearson & Porath, 2005).

In situations where subordinates are reprimanded by their superior, employees accept or ignore the incivility

because they would be ridiculed if they reacted, which causes the victims to reciprocate this behavior, perpetuating incivility in the workplace (Pearson & Porath, 2005). Therefore, being in a subordinate position increases vulnerability to mistreatment, and the instigator is likely to have a relatively higher status than the target in the organization (Lim & Lee, 2011). Because superiors control important organizational resources and opportunities, victims of incivility may find it more difficult to meet work demands, which may also reduce their time or ability to meet family demands (Lim & Lee, 2011).

Negative leader behaviors represent potential motives that lead employees to react negatively toward individuals and the organization. Eliminating these employee reactions is crucial for the well-being of members in general and for the future of the organization (Aydinay et al., 2021). Employees who are subjected to uncivil behavior are much more likely to be dissatisfied with their supervisors and coworkers than with their work in general (Lim et al., 2008). They pay considerable attention to the behavior of superiors, which makes them more sensitive and susceptible to uncivil behavior such as that of their superiors (Lim & Lee, 2011). Therefore, the research hypothesis is as follows:

H_{1a}: superior incivility positively influences instigated incivility.

Supervisor incivility is likely to be more damaging than coworker incivility because the employees who are the targets of the behaviors depend on their supervisors for appraisals and rewards (Schilpzand et al., 2016). However, incivility can be perpetrated not only by people in higher positions, but also by coworkers (Schilpzand et al., 2016), and it takes on a greater proportion when they share a history with each other (Pearson & Porath, 2005).

Unlike superior incivility, when it is initiated by a coworker, employees are more likely to feel that they are being treated unfairly, more concerned about the need to seek redress at work, and are more likely to think about uncivil incidents and become increasingly depressed (Lim & Lee, 2011). The consequences associated with incivility vary depending on the instigator, whether it is a superior, coworker, or subordinate (Lim & Lee, 2011). Lim and Lee (2011) found that incivility initiated by a coworker was associated with decreased satisfaction in the other party, increased perceptions of unfair treatment, and increased depression.

Organizations that have less cooperation and support among coworkers, lower levels of job insecurity, and more organizational changes instigate a higher level of incivility (Torkelson et al., 2016). In fact, being the target

of incivility from coworkers is one of the main drivers for individuals to also commit uncivil acts (Torkelson et al., 2016).

Uncivil behavior is capable of creating a situation of unequal power where the victim feels unfairly subjected to embarrassment or humiliation; therefore, the uncivil conduct of coworkers can create feelings of discomfort and distress that contribute to a sense of unhappiness and dissatisfaction (Lim et al., 2008). According to Torkelson et al. (2016), there is a strong relationship between incivility experienced by coworkers and instigated incivility. This leads to the following research hypothesis:

H_{1b}: coworker incivility positively influences instigated incivility.

2.2 Incivility and Creativity

Being creative requires concentration and extensive exploration of possibilities in order to be able to develop and interact with new opportunities (Porath & Pearson, 2010). Old information must be retrieved from long-term memory and compared with new information stored in short-term memory, which requires mental agility. In contrast, incivility blocks these cognitive resources by decreasing attention and overloading working memory (Porath & Pearson, 2010).

The lack of essential resources often causes frustration, limits initiative, and creates barriers to creative thinking. In addition, the behavior of managers influences the behavior of other members of the organization, thereby affecting the climate for creativity and change (Isaksen et al., 2001). Incivility is a counterproductive behavior among individuals, so the behavior of leaders plays a significant role in fostering or stifling creativity. In addition, abusive supervision, including incivility, can cause emotional exhaustion and lead to a lack of feedback, i.e., when employees are faced with uncivil supervisors, they prefer to remain silent as a strategy to avoid confrontation (Sharifirad, 2016).

Exposure to workplace incivility is a type of work stressor that can be experienced on a personal level and as a characteristic of the work environment that can manifest itself among managers and coworkers (Lim et al., 2008). Subordinates who suffer incivility from their supervisors and consequently experience instigated incivility are more likely to be reluctant to share knowledge, and as a result, this response further decreases creative performance (Sharifirad, 2016). Incivility in the workplace can stifle creative performance by blocking knowledge sharing among members. Therefore, top

managers should have plans to combat incivility and strive to create a climate of collaboration and trust among employees (Sharifirad, 2016).

Employees who suffer incivility reduce their commitment to the organization, stop volunteering, or reduce the amount of time they spend at work to avoid interacting with the people who have harmed them. Not only do these behaviors impose significant costs on the organization, but they may also become more aggressive (Lim & Lee, 2011; Pearson et al., 2000). If, on the one hand, a highly collaborative climate can mitigate the impact of supervisor incivility on knowledge sharing (Sharifirad, 2016), on the other hand, employees who work in the presence of negative emotions and perceptions are unable to confidently transfer their skills to their work, and the organization does not achieve the productivity and efficiency expected from its human resources (Aydinay et al., 2021). In this sense, incivility damages people's working memory and cognitive resources, which negatively affects creativity, i.e., working in organizations with a climate of incivility can harm workers' creativity (Porath et al., 2015).

Empirical evidence suggests that experiencing incivility impairs participants' ability to perform complex tasks and reduces their creativity, as people exposed to incivility also have a reduced ability to solve complex problems and are much less creative (Porath et al. 2015). Thus, the following research hypothesis emerges:

H₂: instigated incivility negatively influences creativity.

2.3 Controls, Creativity, and Incivility

Control is defined as a process that helps align the actions of employees with the interests of the company (Snell, 1992). Snell (1992) examined the relationship between the strategic context and executive management's use of human resource management control systems, considering the input, output or outcome, and behavioral controls that involve one of the controls chosen to conduct this research. BCs take into account the unpredictable and emergent nature of creative processes (Speckbacher, 2017). The BC regulates transition processes by ensuring incentives through close supervision and, to a lesser extent, by articulating operational measures to facilitate subordinates' ability to perform their tasks. In other words, it regulates the behavior of subordinates in the workplace (Snell, 1992). In addition, the use of BCs can help reduce ambiguity and uncertainty because the formalization of rules and procedures and frequent observation provide

employees with information about what to do and how to complete tasks (Su et al., 2013).

Management controls have long been discussed by scholars because they seem to conflict with the pursuit of creativity (Boedker & Chong, 2022). In this sense, organizations that rely heavily on employee creativity face the dilemma that creative production requires the intensive use of formal controls that undermine employee creativity (Grabner & Speckbacher, 2016).

Creativity is the generation of new and suitable answers, products, or solutions to an open task and it must be appropriate to the task to be performed or the problem to be solved, i.e. it must be valuable, correct, viable, or in some way suitable for a specific purpose (Amabile, 2012). Su et al. (2022) defend creativity as the involvement of employees in creative activities, generating new ideas or promoting new processes, i.e. it is a strategic activity that permeates the entire company (Bollinger, 2019).

Controls and creativity can coexist, and more specifically, management controls can promote creativity when used autonomously (Boedker & Chong, 2022). Adler and Chen (2011) point out that it is important to understand how companies can effectively use management control systems to support uncertain and creative tasks without risking damaging the necessary motivation of employees. Su et al. (2022) add that creativity is considered desirable and beneficial for organizations and represents a positive employee behavior that facilitates the influence of input, behavioral, and output controls on employee and organizational performance.

Speklé et al. (2017) concluded that there is no conflict between control and creativity, but rather that creativity can develop in the presence of control, which is important for managers because it suggests that they do not have to choose between wanting a creative organization and one characterized by control. Chen (2017) highlights the different roles of controls for creativity and documents their positive role in creative activities. Bollinger (2019) adds that control tools are important for stimulating the generation of ideas and collecting and storing them for future use. According to Frare and Beuren (2021), there is no single solution for managers to be creative; different configurations between performance measurement systems, role clarity, and strategic flexibility are sufficient, depending on the individual or organizational profile. Overall, the study suggests that financial and non-financial controls can facilitate creativity. Coelho et al. (2021) found that management guidelines and control mechanisms can guide creativity.

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According to Su et al. (2022), Snell's (1992) control model is considered highly relevant for examining creativity. The authors aimed to broaden the understanding of the relationship between controls and creativity by examining how the three types of controls, input, behavioral, and output, affect employee creativity. Overall, their results show that organizations should strive to introduce initiatives that enhance employee creativity. BCs consist of a set of formal rules and procedures about how tasks should be performed and focus on observing the ongoing behavior of employees, regulating how tasks are completed. Employee creativity facilitates the relationship between BCs and job performance (Su et al., 2022). For organizations that rely on BCs to improve their organizational performance, it is crucial that they understand the positive impact of the BCs themselves on creativity (Su et al., 2022).

Uncivil behavior creates feelings of discomfort, distress, and negative perceptions about one's work and coworkers, and has the potential to reduce motivation to stay at work. Job dissatisfaction is likely to mediate the effect of incivility on turnover intentions (Lim et al., 2008). In organizations where incivility is prevalent, job satisfaction and organizational loyalty decrease, and many uncivil behaviors stem from the incivility of the leader (Pearson & Porath, 2005). Therefore, improving individual skills through conflict resolution, negotiations, stress management, and training is one way to mitigate the effects of the spread of incivility in the workplace. These skills should be linked to performance and career progression, because in an environment where employees' contributions are stifled, incivility is reproduced (Pearson & Porath, 2005).

As BCs standardize the processes of a job, they reduce the discretion imposed on subordinates, leading to more rigid and cautious behavior (Snell, 1992). Meanwhile, paying continued attention to civility issues in the organization can help minimize the possible negative impacts of incivility, such as on creativity. In fact, controls used appropriately by senior management can ensure that negative aspects of individuals (such as incivility) are circumvented and that creativity is not hindered, but actually favored (Grabner et al., 2022). Evidence such as this suggests that controls can absorb and circumvent the limitations caused by incivility in such a way as to have a positive impact on creativity. In this context, the use of BCs by top managers can positively shape (moderate) the relationship between incivility and the creativity of managers at lower hierarchical levels. Therefore, the following hypothesis emerges:

H_3: behavioral controls positively moderate the relationship between incivility and creativity.

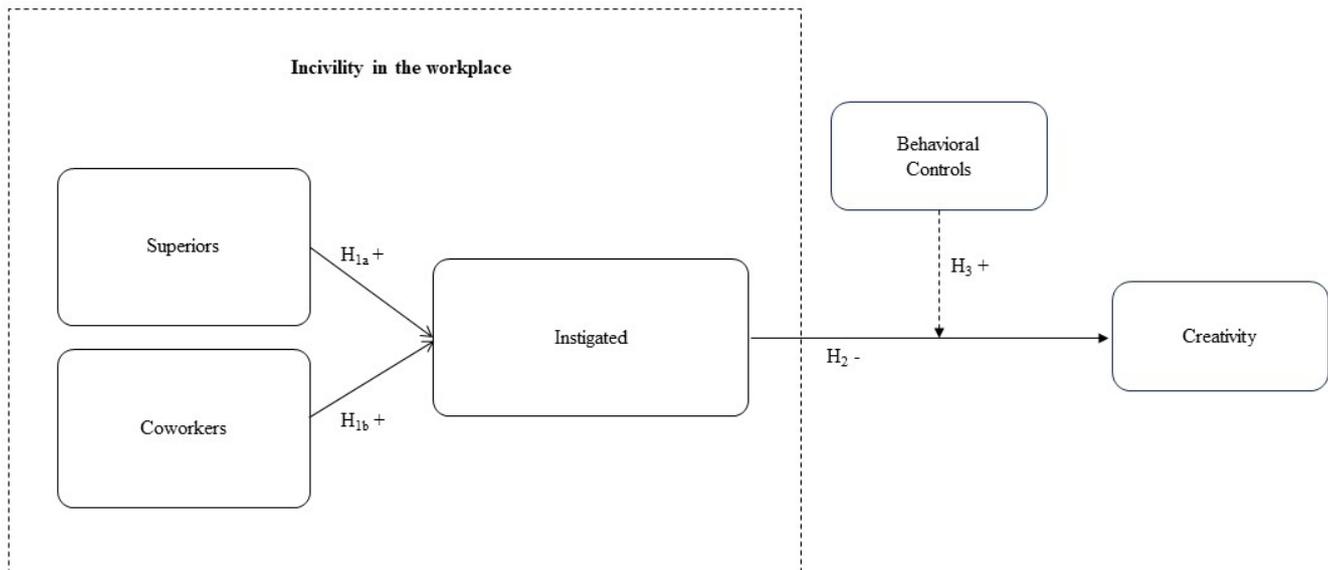Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical model of the research.

Figure 1 *Theoretical model*
Source: *Prepared by the authors.*

3. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

3.1 Population and Sample

In order to analyze the moderating role of BCs between incivility and manager creativity, a survey was conducted. The population included middle managers from the 456 publicly traded companies listed at the end of 2022 in the various economic sectors of the B3. Considering a sample of middle managers meets the objectives of the research, since the aim is to analyze the effects of the controls used by top managers and how this use actually affects the target population (Baird et al., 2022; Frare, Colombo, & Beuren, 2022), especially the relationship between incivility and creativity of these middle managers. To this end, data were collected using an electronic questionnaire.

The respective managers were searched on the professional network LinkedIn, a strategy similar to comparable studies [e.g. Mannes et al. (2021)]. Up to five invitations were sent per company, totaling approximately 2,300 invitations to registered middle managers linked to companies listed on the B3. The data collection took place in January and February 2023, with 86 valid responses returned. Ethical procedures were carefully followed, paying due attention to common method bias (CMB). A cover letter containing an informed consent form was used, ensuring respondent anonymity, as well as clear and concise information about the potential benefits and risks of voluntary participation (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

As for the profile of the respondents, they are between 23 and 64 years old and 67.4% are male. The majority have an academic degree at specialization/master in business administration (MBA) level (69.8%) and hold managerial and coordinator positions. With regard to length of employment, 50% have been with their company for at least 5 years, 29.1% for more than 10 years, and 20.9% for between 5 and 10 years. Most of the companies operate nationally (69.8%) and 47.7% have been in the market for over 50 years. The profile of the respondents indicates that they meet the necessary conditions to answer the survey instrument.

3.2 Research Variables

The constructs adopted follow previous literature and are faithful to the original instrument. All the items were collected on a 7-point Likert scale. To ensure the quality of the adaptation of the instrument, a pre-test was carried out with two master's students in management accounting and two mid-level managers. After the pre-test, specific adjustments were made to refine the instrument (Bellora-Bienengräber et al., 2022).

"Creativity" was measured using the eight items from Moulang (2015), and the respondents indicated their agreement with each statement by marking a number from 1 to 7 (1 = almost never and 7 = almost always) based on the frequency with which the mentioned acts and situations occur. The moderating variable "behavioral control" was measured using six items based on Snell's (1992) study and extracted from the version adapted by Su et al. (2013). The respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with each statement by marking a number from 1 to 7 (1 = not at all and 7 = to a large extent), based on how often they perceive and experience the mentioned acts and situations. "Incivility" was adopted from Portoghese et al. (2015) and included five items for each type of incivility, namely "supervisor," "coworker," and "instigated." The respondents indicated their agreement with each statement by marking a number from 1 to 7 (1 = never and 7 = always), based on how often the mentioned acts and situations had occurred in the last few months.

In addition to the aforementioned constructs, three individual-level control variables were included in the model to test the hypotheses more precisely. These were age (continuous variable in years), gender (0 = female and 1 = male), and tenure (continuous variable in years). These three variables are commonly controlled for in creativity studies (Frare & Beuren, 2021; Grabner et al., 2022; Su et al., 2022).

To ensure the quality of the scale used, the study used tests to check for the possible presence of two biases. On the one hand, the study applied Harman's single factor test to check whether CMB was a problem. The test showed that a single factor explains 24.14% of the total variance of the instrument, which is below the 50% threshold (Podsakoff et al., 2003). On the other hand, the study checked whether non-response bias (NRB) was a problem. A simple test of means of the constructs between the first and last respondents indicated that there are no significant differences between them (p-values > 0.10). Therefore, CMB and NRB are not issues in this research.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 3 software was used for the data analysis. PLS-SEM is an analysis technique that allows us to understand latent phenomena, such as

perceptions, attitudes, or intentions, considering complex and simultaneous models with multiple mediating, moderating, and dependent variables (Hair et al., 2017). The choice of the PLS-SEM method stems from the characteristics of the data, such as sample size and non-normal data, as well as its wide acceptance in business research (Hair et al., 2017). Furthermore, according to calculations in the G*Power 3.1 software, the sample size meets the minimum assumptions for the model [power $(1 – \beta\ prob\ err) \geq 0.80$], considering an effect size of 0.35, α prob *err* of 0.05, a total sample size of 86, and five predictors (Mucci et al., 2020).

To complement the use of PLS-SEM, the study used a data analysis technique called fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA). This technique is appropriate when there is a desire to explore different combinations of relevant conditions to produce a particular result (Ragin, 2008). In other words, it is used to describe real situations and establish relationships between combinations of antecedents and their respective outcomes (Huarng & Yu, 2017). Therefore, this study used fsQCA to analyze the combinations between superior incivility, coworker incivility, instigated incivility, and BCs that lead to high creativity.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 PLS-SEM Analysis

First, the measurement model was evaluated, as shown in Table 1. To ensure the reliability of the items, the factor loadings must be greater than 0.60 (Hair et al., 2017). Thus, one item from the creativity construct and one item from the BC construct were excluded for the model fitting, and after exclusion, the remaining items showed adequate factor loadings.

Table 1
Measurement model

Panel A – Factor loadings, reliability, and convergent validity					
	Factor loadings	α	rho_A	CR	AVE
1. Superior incivility	[0.796; 0.869]	0.896	0.900	0.924	0.708
2. Coworker incivility	[0.804; 0.876]	0.904	0.915	0.928	0.720
3. Instigated incivility	[0.701; 0.898]	0.887	0.941	0.914	0.683
4. Creativity	[0.611; 0.788]	0.850	0.866	0.886	0.527
5. Behavioral controls	[0.629; 0.867]	0.818	0.838	0.874	0.583

Panel B – Discriminant validity according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Superior incivility	**0.841**							
2. Coworker incivility	0.315	**0.849**						
3. Instigated incivility	0.481	0.434	**0.826**					
4. Creativity	-0.245	0.006	-0.126	**0.726**				
5. Behavioral controls	-0.249	-0.093	-0.031	0.360	**0.764**			
6. Age	0.123	-0.035	0.044	0.092	0.083	-		
7. Gender	-0.168	-0.091	0.164	0.121	0.036	0.153	-	
8. Tenure	0.008	0.051	0.018	0.204	0.136	0.418	0.136	-

Panel C – Discriminant validity according to the HTMT criterion								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Superior incivility								
2. Coworker incivility	0.342							
3. Instigated incivility	0.504	0.458						
4. Creativity	0.294	0.128	0.185					
5. Behavioral controls	0.279	0.186	0.114	0.413				
6. Age	0.052	0.242	0.382	0.203	0.078			
7. Gender	0.129	0.037	0.051	0.107	0.095	0.035		
8. Tenure	0.174	0.092	0.195	0.162	0.107	0.014	0.153	

Note: *Values in bold on the diagonal of Panel B represent the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE).*
CR = composite reliability; HTMT = heterotrait-monotrait.
Source: *Prepared by the authors.*

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Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR), which attest to reliability with values above 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017). Convergent validity was analyzed using average variance extracted (AVE) values above 0.50 (Hair et al., 2017). Discriminant validity was interpreted using the Fornell-Larcker and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) criteria (Hair et al., 2017). Fornell-Larcker was supported (square root of AVE > correlations) according to Panel B.

The HTMT criterion was supported by values below 0.90 according to Panel C (Hair et al., 2017). In this sense, the measurement model is adequate.

4.2 Structural Model

In this stage, Table 2 details the analysis of the structural model.

Table 2
Hypothesis testing

Panel A – Direct effects	f²	Beta	*p-value*
Superior incivility → Instigated incivility	0.194	0.382	0.000***
Coworker incivility → Instigated incivility	0.130	0.313	0.001***
Instigated incivility → Creativity	0.054	-0.221	0.018**
Behavioral controls → Creativity	0.139	0.331	0.006***
Incivility * Behavioral controls → Creativity	0.064	0.315	0.057*
Age → Creativity	0.001	-0.006	0.951
Gender → Creativity	0.022	0.133	0.269
Tenure → Creativity	0.015	0.121	0.282
Panel B – Indirect effects		**Beta**	***p-value***
Superior incivility → Instigated incivility → Creativity		-0.085	0.088*
Coworker incivility → Instigated incivility → Creativity		-0.069	0.119
Panel C – Quality criteria	**R²**	**Q²**	**VIF max.**
Instigated incivility	0.303	0.176	1.110
Creativity	0.170	0.069	1.252

Notes: *One-tailed test when the sign is predicted, two-tailed otherwise. Effect size (f^2) classification for direct relationships: small (0.02), medium (0.15), and large (0.35); f^2 for moderation relationships: small (0.005), medium (0.01), and large (0.025) (Hair et al., 2021).*
VIF = variance inflation factor.
*, **, *** = p < 0.10, p < 0.05, and p < 0.01, respectively.
Source: *Prepared by the authors.*

The statistical analysis presented in Panel A provides support for not rejecting the research hypotheses. However, since none of the control variables (age, gender, and tenure) were statistically significant, they are not considered to be determinants of individual creativity for the sample in question. In addition, there is a negative and significant indirect effect between superior incivility and creativity through instigated incivility (Panel B). As shown in Panel C, the quality criteria are all satisfactory. The variance inflation factor (VIF) was used to assess the presence of multicollinearity in the model. The highest values found for incivility (1.110) and creativity (1.252) indicate the absence of multicollinearity as the values are less than 3 (Hair et al., 2019). The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates that instigated incivility accounts for 30.3% and creativity for 17%. According to Cohen (1988), the explanatory power of the R^2 can vary from small (2%), medium (13%), to large (26%). Therefore, instigated incivility has a large explanatory power, while creativity has a medium explanatory power. The predictive relevance of the variables was determined by the Stone-Geisser indicator (Q^2), which obtained values above 0 for incivility (17.6%) and creativity (6.9%).

4.3 Additional Analysis – fsQCA

In a further analysis, the study uses fsQCA to understand which conditions are necessary and/or sufficient to achieve high levels of creativity. First, the data were calibrated according to theoretical anchors (Cruz et al., 2022; Frare, Colombo, & Beuren, 2022), namely full membership (7), crossover point (4), and full non-membership (1). After calibration, the necessary conditions (consistencies above 0.9) and almost always

necessary conditions (consistencies above 0.8) were analyzed to obtain a certain result (Ragin, 2008), in this case, high creativity. It was found that the absence of the three types of incivility is necessary (superior – consistency = 0.914; coworker – consistency = 0.923; and instigated – consistency = 0.958) and the presence of BCs is almost always necessary (consistency = 0.861) for managers to achieve high levels of creativity. Next, the analysis of sufficient conditions was carried out. A truth table was drawn up, listing the logically possible combinations of conditions for achieving the same result, i.e. high levels of creativity, based on a consistency cut-off of 0.80 (Ragin, 2008). The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Solutions that lead to high levels of creativity

Constructs	Solutions (S)			
	S1	**S2**	**S3**	**S4**
Superior incivility	⊗		⊗	⊗
Coworker incivility	⊗	⊗		⊗
Instigated incivility	⊗	⊗	⊗	
Behavioral controls		●	●	●
Raw coverage	0.846	0.785	0.786	0.775
Unique coverage	0.091	0.031	0.031	0.020
Consistency	0.902	0.944	0.949	0.953
Overall coverage of the solution		0.928		
Overall consistency of the solution		0.899		

Note: *A black circle (●) represents the presence of the condition, a white circle with x (⊗) represents the absence of the condition, and no circles means that the condition is indifferent to the solution.*
Source: *Prepared by the authors.*

From the data analysis, four possible solutions (S) for high levels of creativity were found. S1 indicates that in order to have high levels of creativity, the absence of superior, coworker, and instigated incivility is sufficient, and the presence of BCs is indifferent. It can be seen that this solution (S1) covers the largest number of cases, 84.6% in a raw form and 9.1% exclusively. Solutions 2, 3, and 4 reveal that the presence of BCs and the absence of at least two types of incivility are useful means to achieve high creativity. In sum, all four solutions lead to the same result, i.e. high creativity.

4.4 Discussion of the Results

Hypothesis H_{1a} states that supervisor incivility positively influences instigated incivility. This hypothesis was statistically supported ($\beta = 0.382$, p < 0.01). This finding corroborates Pearson and Porath (2005), who showed that subordinates usually accept or ignore incivility caused by their superior because they would be demoralized if they reacted to these situations and, as a result, the victims of incivility reciprocate this uncivil behavior in the organization. In the same vein, Porath and Pearson (2010) explain that there is a natural tendency to adopt behavior that is rewarded, because if people in the highest positions in the company are rude and this behavior is accepted, those below them will be likely to imitate this behavior.

Hypothesis H_{1b} proposes that coworker incivility positively influences instigated incivility. This hypothesis was statistically accepted ($\beta = 0.313$, p < 0.01). This finding supports the study by Lim and Lee (2011), who point out that although employees suffer less incivility from coworkers, these experiences can be more damaging to the victim than incivility from supervisors because the victim feels wronged due to being on the same social level as the coworker and seeking the need for comparison (Lim & Lee, 2011). Similarly, the findings of Torkelson et al. (2016) partially support the hypothesis that being the target of incivility from coworkers contributes to instigating incivility. The authors add that the fact that the direct relationship with perpetrated incivility occurred only with coworkers, and not with supervisors, is an interesting addition in relation to positions of power.

H_{1a} and H_{1b} show that supervisor and coworker incivility positively influence instigated incivility. This finding is relevant because it contributes to the results of Lim and Lee (2011), who explain that employees tend to pay more attention to the behavior of their superiors (compared to their coworkers), making them more susceptible to their uncivil behavior. As a result, individuals who provoke uncivil behavior should be held accountable regardless

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of their hierarchical level in the organization (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

H$_2$ indicates that instigated incivility negatively influences creativity and was statistically accepted (β = -0.221, p < 0.05). This finding is in line with the results of Porath et al. (2015), who propose that being exposed to incivility impairs the performance of complex tasks and reduces creativity, given that incivility impairs working memory and affects performance and creativity. Similarly, Sharifirada (2016) concluded that incivility can negatively affect individuals, as creativity is stifled when employees are reluctant to participate in knowledge sharing activities. The results are also supported by Motro et al. (2021), who found that the uncivil behavior of an organizational member can create a destructive tone for the creative process, i.e., the creativity of the organization depends on the climate, which must be positive and welcoming in order to contribute to the reduction of incivility.

Although incivility can be low intensity, its results are quite substantial, which can damage the creative output of the organization as a whole (Motro et al., 2021).

H$_3$ posits that BCs moderate the influence of incivility on creativity and is statistically supported (β = 0.315, p < 0.10). This finding is consistent with the literature. Sharifirad (2016) explains that victims of incivility tend not to want to share knowledge with their coworkers, which may result in lower creative performance in the organization. In this sense, Adler and Chen (2011) advocate the effective use of management control systems to help with uncertain and creative tasks without damaging employee motivation. In doing so, behavioral systems serve to standardize work processes, leading to more rigid and cautious behavior (Snell, 1992) to circumvent the negative effects of incivility and generate positive effects on creativity. Figure 2 shows the effect of the combination of BC as a moderator of incivility and creativity.
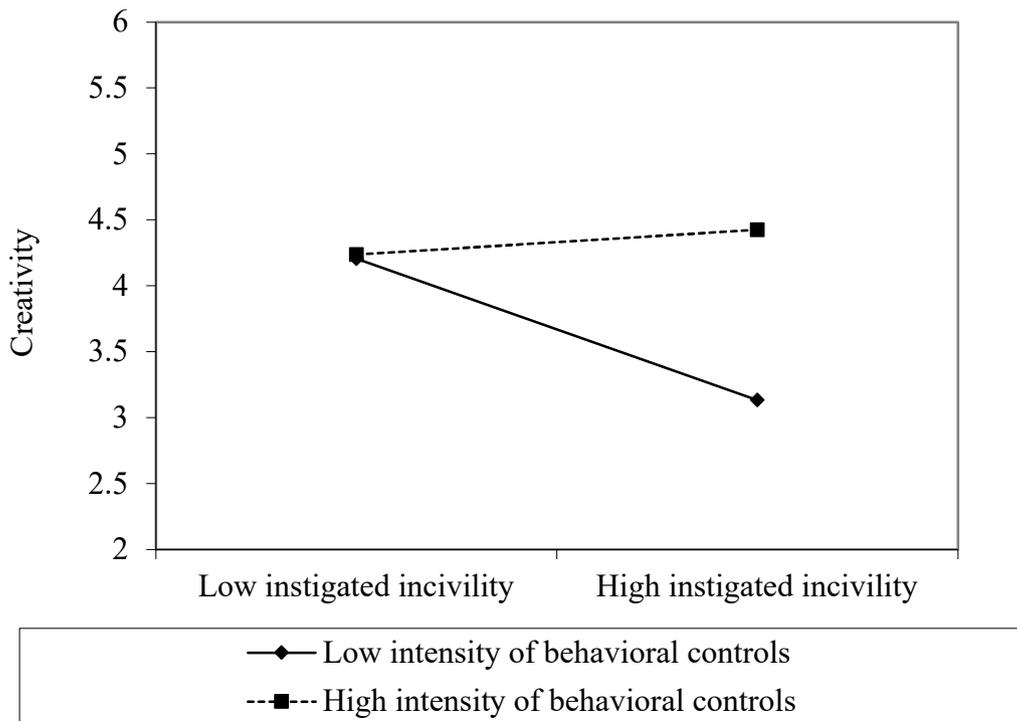

Figure 2 *Moderating effect of behavioral controls*
Source: *Prepared by the authors.*

When there are low levels of instigated incivility, a low or high intensity of control similarly affect creativity, keeping it above average (Figure 2). However, when there are high levels of incivility, the perspective is different. Increasing the intensity of BCs leads to higher levels of creativity; decreasing the intensity of controls leads to a considerable drop in creativity levels. With increasing levels of instigated incivility, there are higher levels of

creativity when the intensity of BCs increases. The use of these controls regulates the behavior of subordinates in the workplace (Snell, 1992) and contributes to the reduction of uncertainty, as the formalization of procedures provides information on how to perform tasks (Su et al., 2013). In this sense, the importance of creativity in the execution of non-standardized tasks and formal controls in complex and interdependent tasks is emphasized (Adler & Chen,

2011). As the BC standardizes the processes of a job, it reduces the discretion imposed on subordinates, leading to rigid and cautious behavior (Snell, 1992).

Therefore, with the additional fsQCA analysis, it was found that there are four possible solutions for achieving high levels of creativity. From this finding, it can be concluded that (i) in the presence of any of the forms of incivility (superior, coworker, and/or instigated), there is no way to achieve high levels of creativity; (ii) similarly, the absence of BCs also inhibits the achievement of high levels of creativity; (iii) there are four possible combinations of conditions that lead the respondents in the sample to high levels of creativity, so there is no single path that promotes success in terms of fostering creativity.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzed the moderating role of BCs in the relationship between incivility and creativity among mid-level managers of companies listed on the B3. With regard to the causes of incivility, the evidence supports the view that superior and coworker incivility influence the instigated incivility of the managers in the sample. Thus, the evidence allows us to conclude that the use of BCs by top managers moderates the relationship between instigated incivility and the creativity of middle managers, i.e., BCs are able to shape (circumvent and absorb) the negative effects caused by instigated incivility and thus create a context conducive to individual creativity.

The moderating effect of BCs generates additional conclusions from different perspectives. High levels of instigated incivility lead to higher levels of creativity when the intensity of BCs is increased, but high levels of instigated incivility lead to a considerable decrease in creativity levels when the intensity of controls is decreased. On the other hand, when there are low levels of incivility, a low or high intensity of control affects creativity in a similar way, keeping it above average. Thus, it can be concluded that the use of BCs mitigates the incidence and impact of incivility and even promotes the creativity of organizational actors. Furthermore, the complementary findings of the study allow us to understand that high levels of creativity cannot be achieved in the presence of workplace incivility and/or in the absence of BCs.

5.1 Implications and Contributions

The study presents implications for the literature by addressing the use of BC as a means of moderating the effect of incivility on managers' creativity, filling the gap in a still relatively neglected topic on incivility and controls, thus advancing the literature focused on individual behavior and performance (Cho et al., 2016; Islam & Bowling, 2022; Jiang et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2022; Sharifirad, 2016; Srivastava et al., 2023).

In terms of managerial implications, it is important for managers to understand that superior and coworker incivility influence instigated incivility. As a result, it can be seen that high levels of instigated incivility in the workplace lead to a reduction in employees' creativity levels; however, the use of BCs acts to moderate this relationship. With the use of BCs, there is an increase in creativity levels and a decrease in instigated incivility. In addition, the importance of managing good relationships in the workplace is highlighted so that the organization does not suffer and can remain competitive in the market. The results can serve as a basis for organizations to develop intervention initiatives to prevent incivility in the workplace from turning into negative impacts (Torkelson et al., 2016).

5.2 Limitations and Suggestions

The limitations of this study allow for new research opportunities. The first would be to broaden the perspective of the controls that shape the relationship between incivility and control by considering input and output controls, also discussed by Snell (1992), which are suitable for certain organizational priorities. Second, the sample includes companies listed on the B3, making them organizations that are constantly audited and governed by codes of conduct and compliance. Studies with other samples are recommended to allow comparisons between the findings and especially with other levels of incivility. Research could replicate this theoretical model by comparing family and non-family firms, low-tech and high-tech firms, and different sized firms.

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FUNDING

Rev. Contab. Finanç. – USP, São Paulo, v. 34, n. 93, e1886, 2023

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