Hybrid Leadership and Incivility in Healthcare

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With a rise in incivility in the workplace, leadership is critical for today's healthcare organizations. There are many leadership styles to consider for healthcare leaders. This research focuses on nine leadership and hybrid leadership styles to determine significant relationships to incivility among healthcare employees. We used the Vannsimpco Leadership Survey and Chung et al.'s Work Group Incivility scale to survey 174 healthcare employees. Our study found that managers need to know that one leadership style may not be the best and that a combination of styles may be needed in varying situations. We found that transformational and autocratic-transformational leadership styles reduced incivility between healthcare employees. Our study indicated that when a manager uses transformational leadership or a hybrid form of autocratic-transformational leadership, healthcare employees have less incivility.

Keywords: leadership, hybrid leadership, incivility

INTRODUCTION

Reports of incivility are on the rise, as evidenced by a survey that asked more than 2,000 people in more than 25 industries in various roles across the globe in every major region except Antarctica (Porath, 2022). These industries included healthcare, protective services (police officers), retail, food production and processing, maintenance, agriculture, transportation, hospitality, and education. Incivility presents in many ways, from simply ignoring someone to purposefully undermining them to mocking, teasing, and disparaging them. This kind of incivility results in negative outcomes for workers who are on the direct receiving end to those who are witnesses of the behavior that also harms businesses and society (Porath, 2022). Leadership is needed to address the causes and incidents of incivility in the workplace.

One of the unique aspects of this study is its inclusion of multiple and hybrid leadership styles. This departure from previous research, which often focused on a single style, allows for a more comprehensive examination of the impact of leadership on workplace incivility in healthcare organizations. The study aims to identify the styles that are most effective in promoting workplace civility.

Our research adopted hybrid leadership, as conceptualized by Vann and colleagues, recognizing leadership's dynamic and multifaceted nature, transcending rigid categorizations and embracing adaptability (Vann et al., 2014). Leadership is studied from diverse disciplinary perspectives, including business, education, community development, and sociology. The Vannsimpco Leadership Survey (VLS) recognizes that most organizations are managed through hybrid leadership approaches (Vann et al., 2014).

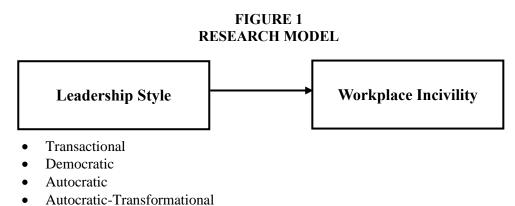
Autocratic, democratic, transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire factors are all considered in the VLS (Vann et al., 2014). The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) is a widely used measure of hybrid leadership. Still, it has limitations, including stereotypical portrayals of transformational and transactional leaders, often from a leader's perspective (Bass & Avolio, 2003).

We adopted the definition of workplace incivility as "low-intensity deviant behavior with an ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457). Cortina et al. (2001) explained that workplace incivility included disrespect, condescension, and degradation. Workplace incivility can overlap with psychological aggression (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). However, workplace incivility differs from psychological aggression because incivility lacks clear, conscious intentionality (Cortina et al., 2001). The uncivil actions can be attributed to the instigator's ignorance, misrepresentation, or hypersensitivity (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Cortina et al. (2001) examined incivility and developed a workplace incivility scale administered to 1,662 employees, excluding judges in the U.S. Eighth Circuit federal court system. They received 833 responses examining condescending remarks, ignoring opinions, making derogatory remarks, acting unprofessionally, excluding professional camaraderie, and doubting judgment. We adopted Andersson and Pearson's (1999) definition of workplace incivility and Cortina et al.'s (2001) scale for this study.

This research examines the impact of different leadership styles on workplace incivility in healthcare organizations to determine which ones promote less workplace incivility. This study is unique because it includes multiple and hybrid leadership styles, whereas previous studies only addressed a single leadership style. We adopted Buchen's (2011) definition that envisions hybrid leadership as blending the qualities and abilities needed to lead in a global and hybrid work environment exemplified by rapid change. Our research question is:

What leadership styles reduce workplace incivility in healthcare organizations in the United States? Figure 1 shows the research model that includes five leadership and four hybrid leadership styles.



- Autocratic-Transactional
- **Democratic-Transformational**
- **Democratic-Transactional**
- Transformational
- Laissez-faire

THEORETICAL BASIS FOR STUDY

This research is based on Kurt Lewin's Social Interactionist Theory, developed in 1936, a psychological framework that focuses on the dynamic relationships between individuals and their social environment. Lewin promoted Herbert Blumer's symbolic interactionism perspective of 1937 as an alternative to the nature versus nurture debate of the time (Cervone, 2008; Kuper et al., 2021). Lewin suggested that both nature and nurture are needed to account for an individual's behavior and personality that interact to shape each person (Cervone, 2008; Kuper et al., 2021). Managers in organizations may seek to nurture their employees as part of their leadership style.

The key component of Lewin's interactionist theory includes the formula B = f(P, E), where behavior (B) is a function of the person and their environment (Cervone, 2008; Kuper et al., 2021). This equation expresses that an individual's behavior is influenced by internal (P personal) factors and external (E environmental) factors (Cervone, 2008; Kuper et al., 2021). In addition, "life space" encompasses the totality of psychological influences on an individual and the idea of psychological forces driving or restraining behavior (Cervone, 2008; Kuper et al., 2021). Lewin emphasized the role of conflict in creating tension and the potential for change within an individual's life space. The theory is often expressed through force field analysis, a method for understanding the factors influencing a particular behavior (Cervone, 2008; Kuper et al., 2021). Lewin's model highlights the reciprocal relationship between individuals and their environment, providing insights into the factors that shape human behavior and the potential for change (Cervone, 2008; Kuper et al., 2021). For our study, we considered leadership style as an environmental factor that had the potential to change incivility (behavior) in healthcare employees.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND INCIVILITY

Deviant workplace behaviors, like mistreatment, bullying, and incivility, cause damage to individuals and organizations alike (Murad et al., 2021). According to Aryati et al. (2018), deviant workplace behaviors have some negative impacts, such as reducing or minimizing the organization's productivity, negatively impacting employee morale and the organization's working environment, thus increasing employee turnover. The practice of transformational leadership can reduce the impact of negative factors because it moderates the turnover intention of the organization. Qi et al. (2022) discovered that transformational leadership has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between the intention of turnover and workplace bullying and incivility but was insignificant between turnover intention and workplace mistreatment.

Kaiser (2017) discovered four key themes identified in transformational leadership: (1) creating a shared vision, (2) educating self and others, (3) fostering accountability, and (4) supporting others that positively impact civility. Mikaelian and Stanley (2016) found that the transformational leadership style has been widely proposed to enable change and promote civility. Transformational leaders also foster growth in followers by fostering interpersonal relationships (Kaiser, 2017). Transformational leadership is a higher-order leadership style whereby leaders enable their followers and pay attention to their individual needs, fostering the growth of their followers' inherent leadership abilities (Bass et al., 2003; Islam et al., 2021).

Thus, based on the research, we hypothesize the following about transformational leadership and the healthcare employee workplace in the current study:

H1: There is a negative relationship between transformational leadership style and workplace incivility. (The more transformational leadership style is used, the less workplace incivility there is.)

TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND INCIVILITY

Richards (2020) defines transactional leadership as a task-focused leadership style that involves short-term goals and focuses on contingent reward involving management by exception, where the leader intervenes only when necessary. In changing clinical situations, transactional leadership in nursing and healthcare may provide certainty for employees because roles, expectations, and standards are clarified, reducing the possibility of incivility.

Transactional leadership rests on the interactions between leaders and subordinates, emphasizing the facilitation of trade between leader and employee. The leader must first explain the conditions under which the other participants must act and the benefits they would get if they met the requirements (Farahnak et al., 2020). Another aspect of active constructive leadership, contingent reward, exemplifies the core of transactional leadership, the degree that the leader establishes constructive transactions with followers by

clarifying expectations and establishing the rewards for meeting expectations (Wang et al., 2011). Contingent reward is the base of transformational leadership, where transformational leadership builds on the transactional foundation that contributes to the extra effort and performance of employees (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 1997).

Given these theoretical and empirical foundations, we hypothesize that the transactional leadership style will lessen healthcare employees' workplace incivility.

H2: There is a negative relationship between transactional leadership style and workplace incivility. (The more transactional leadership style used, the less workplace incivility.)

DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP AND INCIVILITY

The democratic leadership style includes actively consulting, supporting, developing, and mentoring followers (Yukl, 1998). According to House (1996), democratic leadership is also called participative leadership. Those leaders with an active, democratic leadership orientation allow their followers to influence decision-making processes by consulting with followers and considering their opinions before making final decisions and acting (Li et al., 2018). Empowering leadership represents a more passive approach to democratic leadership that more deeply empowers followers to take responsibility for personal behaviors, tasks, and decision-making processes (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; Cheng & Huang, 2019).

Given these theoretical and empirical foundations, we hypothesize that democratic leadership will reduce workplace incivility:

H3: There is a negative relationship between democratic leadership style and workplace incivility. (The more democratic leadership style used, the less workplace incivility.)

AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP AND INCIVILITY

Autocratic leaders have a direct negative impact on health security and create adverse political and economic conditions that only complicate the crisis further (Burkle, 2020). In healthcare, autocratic leadership is often associated with micromanaging, negative reinforcement, and punishment to enforce the rules. Often, autocratic leaders withhold information from healthcare professionals to retain power. When mistakes are made, leaders tend to blame individuals rather than a faulty process (Burkle, 2020).

An overpowering leadership or autocratic leadership style can be detrimental to the growth and productivity of a team and the organization. Overpowering leadership occurs when a leader engages in active and autocratic leadership behaviors. This type of leadership is labeled "overpowering" because it often has an overwhelming effect, resulting in submissive, dependent, and compliant followers (Stewart et al., 2011). The overpowering leader is characterized by certain behaviors, including instruction and command, coercion, intimidation, and non-contingent reprimand (Pearce et al., 2003). Followers tend to respond with fear-based compliance (Manz & Sims, 2001). Empirical research findings have provided evidence supporting a relationship between overpowering, autocratic leadership, and workplace bullying (e.g., Hoel et al., 2010).

Given these theoretical and empirical foundations, we hypothesize that an autocratic leadership style will increase workplace incivility:

H4: There is a positive relationship between autocratic leadership style and workplace incivility. (The more autocratic leadership style used, the more workplace incivility.)

HYBRID LEADERSHIP STYLES AND INCIVILITY

According to Vann et al. (2014), in leadership research today, there is a bias towards transformational leadership and the rigid, one-style-only understanding of leadership methods. However, real-world leadership application employs a hybridization of the various forms of leadership.

Leadership is strongly connected to workplace aggression, both negatively and positively. Organizational leadership can prevent workplace aggression or at least reduce its occurrence. Both transactional and transformational leadership styles can positively impact organizational outcomes. Unfortunately, the extant literature does not provide a comprehensive understanding of the association between leadership and workplace aggression (Cao et al., 2023).

Thus, based on a gap in the leadership literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: There is a negative relationship between autocratic-transformational leadership and workplace incivility. (The more autocratic-transformational leadership style used, the less workplace incivility.)

H6: There is a negative relationship between democratic-transformational leadership and workplace incivility. (The more democratic-transformational leadership style used, the less workplace incivility.)

H7: There is a positive relationship between autocratic-transactional leadership and workplace incivility. (The more autocratic-transactional leadership style used, the more workplace incivility.)

H8: There is a negative relationship between democratic-transactional leadership and workplace incivility. (The more democratic-transactional leadership style used, the less workplace incivility.)

LAISSEZ-FAIRE LEADERSHIP AND INCIVILITY

Harold and Holtz (2015) examined experienced incivility and behavioral incivility, where experienced incivility was measured using Cortana et al.'s (2001) scale. Behavioral incivility was defined and measured by how frequently employees experienced incivility, and supervisors assessed how often employees exhibited incivility. Harold and Holtz (2015) used Andersson and Pearson's (1999) framework and found "support for an interactive effect between passive leadership and experienced incivility" (p. 32). They found that employee-reported passive leadership had significant positive relationships with behavioral incivility. Salin et al. (2022) stated that laissez-faire leadership has also been associated with poorer employee attitudes and decreased well-being. Laissez-faire/passive leadership is an antecedent of interpersonal problems, such as conflicts, incivility, and other forms of mistreatment.

Given these theoretical and empirical foundations, we hypothesize that a laissez-faire leadership style will increase workplace incivility:

H9: There is a positive relationship between laissez-faire leadership and workplace incivility. (The more laissez-faire leadership style used, the more workplace incivility.)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We used a web-based survey and Amazon MTurk to recruit participants employed in the healthcare industry in the United States who were at least 18 years old. To determine the sample size, we used G*Power 3.1.9.7 for an a priori linear regression with an effect size of .15, power of .80, and α = .05 (Faul et al., 2009). One hundred seventy-four healthcare professionals employed in the United States completed the survey, exceeding the recommended sample size. Leadership styles were measured with the 27-item Vannsimpco Hybrid Leadership Survey developed by Vann et al. (2014). The statements included three items for each leadership style. Participants evaluated the items on a five-point Likert scale with (1) strongly

disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. The instrument was reliable, with all Cronbach alpha values exceeding 0.70.

Workplace incivility was measured using a single-factor construct developed by Cortina et al. (2001). The seven items were measured using a five-point Likert scale with (1) never, (2) seldom, (3) sometimes, (4) often, and (5) almost always. The items asked about how often the employees perceived that their superiors and peers were condescending to them, ignored or showed little interest in their opinions, made demeaning remarks, addressed them unprofessionally, ignored or excluded them from professional camaraderie, doubted their professional expertise, and attempted to discuss personal matters (Cortina et al., 2001).

The researchers administered the survey using a link from Amazon MTurk to the QuestionPro webbased survey. Participants who completed the survey received a \$1.25 reward through Amazon MTurk. The researchers did not know the participants' identities, and payment was made to participants by Amazon MTurk, which the researchers funded. The first page of the survey was a consent form. If the participant declined consent, the survey closed. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the participants.

TABLE 1 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

	N	%
Gender		
Male	86	49.4
Female	88	50.6
Age		
18-24	19	10.9
25-34	60	34.5
35-44	60	34.5
45-54	23	13.2
55-64	6	3.4
Above 64	6	3.4
Occupation		
Nurse	30	17.2
Nursing Manager	14	8.0
Physician	26	14.9
Administration	63	36.2
Other	41	23.6
Total Participants	174	

We used Harmon's single-factor test to check for common method bias. The test showed that the first factor explained 29.1% of the total variance, below the recommended 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

ANALYSIS

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations for incivility and leadership style predictor variables.

TABLE 2 CORRELATIONS FOR INCIVILITY AND LEADERSHIP STYLE

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Incivility	2.21	0.85	28**	17*	03	18*	47**	21**	15*	05	.05
Predictor Variables											
1 Transformational	4.04	0.59	-	.49**	.47**	.52**	.54**	.62**	.47**	.54**	.18*
2 Transactional	4.01	0.59	.49**	-	.50**	.47**	.57**	.54**	.62**	.44**	.23**
3 Democratic	4.01	0.62	.47**	.50**	-	.50**	.45**	.59**	.40**	.49**	.23**
4 Autocratic	3.89	0.62	.52**	.47**	.50**	-	.49**	.53**	.50**	.51**	.36**
5 Autocratic - Transformational	4.00	0.62	.54**	.57**	.45**	.49**	-	.61**	.48**	.43**	.05
6 Democratic - Transformational	4.02	0.68	.62**	.54**	.59**	.53**	.61**	-	.41**	.52**	.13
7 Autocratic – Transactional	4.01	0.62	.47**	.62**	.40**	.50**	.48**	.41**	-	.55**	.23**
8 Democratic – Transactional	4.04	0.57	.54**	.44**	.49**	.51**	.43**	.52**	.55**	-	.27**
9 Laissez-faire	3.51	0.80	.18*	.23**	.23**	.36**	.05	.13	.23**	.27**	-

^{**}p < .01 *p < .05

We performed a multiple regression analysis using SPSS 28.0.1.1 with the dependent variable incivility and the nine leadership styles as independent variables. Table 3 shows the regression analysis summary. A significant regression equation was found (F (9,164) = 7.54, p < .001) with an R of 0.54 and R² of 29%. Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples indicated that the regression coefficients did not change from those obtained in the initial multiple regression analysis.

TABLE 3
REGRESSION ANALYSIS SUMMARY FOR LEADERSHIP STYLES AND INCIVILITY

Variable	В	SE B	β	t	p
Transformational	28	.13	20	-2.12	.04
Transactional	.14	.14	.10	1.00	.32
Democratic	.24	.12	.18	2.03	.04
Autocratic	06	.12	04	46	.65
Autocratic -Transformational	79	.13	58	-6.12	.00
Democratic - Transformational	.06	.13	.04	.43	.67
Autocratic – Transactional	00	.13	00	03	.97
Democratic – Transactional	.25	.13	.17	1.86	.07
Laissez-faire	.01	.08	.01	.17	.86

Note: $R^2 = .29$ (N=174, p < .001).

We examined the conditions for multiple regression using SPSS version 28.0.1.1 and considered the Likert scale variables as numerical. All predictors had non-zero variances and VIFs ranging from 1.25 to 2.45. Using Myers' (1990) criteria of VIFs of 10 or greater demonstrating multicollinearity, there was no

cause for concern. The Durbin-Watson test statistic can be between 0 and 4, with 2 meaning the residuals are uncorrelated. The conditions are met if the values are between 1 and 3 (Durbin & Watson, 1951). The Durbin-Watson test statistic for this study was 1.91, indicating the condition was met. The standardized predicted values of incivility based on the model and plot of standardized residuals are random, normally distributed variables with a mean of 0. We checked the condition for homogeneity of variance with a plot of standardized residuals versus predicted values and found no evidence of heteroscedasticity.

We used the regression analysis for hypothesis testing. Our results are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4 HYPOTHESIS TESTING RESULTS

Hypothesis	Findings
H1: There is a negative relationship between transformational leadership style and workplace incivility. (The more transformational leadership style used, the less workplace incivility.)	Accept ($\beta =20, p < .05$)
H2: There is a negative relationship between transactional leadership style and workplace incivility. (The more transactional leadership style used, the less workplace incivility.)	Reject ($\beta = .10, p > .05$)
H3: There is a negative relationship between democratic leadership style and workplace incivility. (The more democratic leadership style used, the less workplace incivility.)	Reject ($\beta = .18, p < .05$)
H4: There is a positive relationship between autocratic leadership style and workplace incivility. (The more autocratic leadership style used, the more workplace incivility.)	Reject (β =04, $p > .05$)
H5: There is a negative relationship between autocratic-transformational leadership and workplace incivility. (The more autocratic-transformational leadership used, the less workplace incivility.)	Accept ($\beta =58, p < .01$)
H6: There is a negative relationship between democratic-transformational leadership and workplace incivility. (The more democratic-transformational leadership style used, the less workplace incivility.)	Reject ($\beta = .04, p > .05$)
H7: There is a positive relationship between autocratic-transactional leadership and workplace incivility. (The more autocratic-transactional leadership style used, the more workplace incivility.)	Reject ($\beta =00, p > .05$)
H8: There is a negative relationship between democratic-transactional leadership and workplace incivility. (The more democratic-transactional leadership style used, the less workplace incivility.)	Reject ($\beta = .17, p > .05$)
H9: There is a positive relationship between laissez-faire leadership and workplace incivility. (The more laissez-faire leadership style used, the more workplace incivility.)	Reject ($\beta = .01, p > .05$)

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

For our analysis, we coded low scores as less incivility and high scores as more incivility. For leadership styles, higher scores meant more perceived use of the leadership style. Therefore, based on our literature review, the relationship was negative if the use of a leadership style indicated that less incivility might occur. When the literature indicated that the leadership style could result in more incivility, the relationship

was hypothesized as positive. Based on our hypotheses testing in Table 4, we found that the more transformational and autocratic-transformational leadership styles leaders use, the less incivility occurred in our healthcare employees' sample. We hypothesized that more incivility would result when a more laissez-faire leadership style occurred. However, we did not find a significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and incivility in healthcare employees.

Based on our literature review, we hypothesized that when a democratic leadership style was used, less incivility occurred. However, the regression analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between democratic leadership and incivility, causing us to reject the hypothesis since the relationship meant that more democratic leadership resulted in more incivility. As Li et al. (2018) explained, a democratic leadership style results in consultation with others as part of the decision-making process. Healthcare employees work in high-stress environments that often are in a state of crisis. Due to the nature of the environment, employees may exhibit incivility to other employees when participating in the decision-making process due to the added stress.

A transformational leadership style for this research was characterized as a leader who relied on personal influence and relationship-building with employees, developed staff competence and commitment, and looked for ways to develop staff members' strengths (Vann et al., 2014). While the transformational leadership style seems to align with reduced incivility, the autocratic-transformational leadership style is an interesting finding. Burkle (2020) explained that autocratic leaders attempt to retain power and blame others. Those actions would seem to promote more incivility in the workplace. However, autocratic leaders punish those breaking the rules. If a healthcare organization has strict policies about employee behavior in the workplace, an autocratic leader may be diligent in enforcing the rules, resulting in reduced incivility. When autocratic leadership is combined with transformational leadership, the positive aspects of transformational leadership, along with the policy-enforcing characteristics of autocratic leadership, may result in less incivility, as indicated by our healthcare employees' sample.

Management Implications

As cases of incivility rise (Porath, 2022), managers must be aware of how leadership styles can prevent incivility among healthcare employees. Incivil actions such as being condescending, showing little interest in another's opinion, making demeaning remarks, ignoring, excluding from camaraderie, and addressing another employee unprofessionally can lead to negative outcomes for the individual and the organization. Our study indicated that if a manager uses transformational leadership or a hybrid form of autocratic-transformational leadership, healthcare employees have less incivility.

Healthcare organizations should train managers in transformational leadership to promote its use. In healthcare, managers may be promoted into leadership positions after being successful as nurses or doctors and may not have formal leadership training. By developing leadership programs, healthcare professionals can become familiar with using different styles based on the situation.

Managers must also know that one leadership style may not be the best. Vann et al. (2014) explained that managers use hybrid leadership styles. Knowing how to blend leadership styles is important in healthcare due to the constantly changing environment and potential crises.

Future Research and Conclusions

We recommend further research on hybrid leadership styles in all industries and occupations. Our exploratory research found that transformational and autocratic-transformational leadership styles reduced incivility among healthcare employees. Qualitative and quantitative studies are needed to examine the causes of incivility so that leaders can better address them.

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