

# WORKPLACE INCIVILITY: UNCIVIL ACTIVITIES, ANTECEDENTS, CONSEQUENCES; AND LEVEL OF INCIVILITY

\*Ghulam Abid<sup>1</sup>, Binish Khan<sup>1</sup>, Zeeshan Rafiq<sup>2</sup>, Alia Ahmed<sup>1</sup>

National College of Business Administration & Economics<sup>1</sup>

The University of Edinburgh<sup>2</sup>, U. K

\*Corresponding author's email: [dr.ghulamabid@gmail.com](mailto:dr.ghulamabid@gmail.com),

**ABSTRACT:** *This study provides an insight into the incivility literature by providing the uncivil activities, its causes and consequences. Researchers conducted survey questionnaire across different service sectors organizations to explore the perception of unbearable uncivil behavior. The results based on the actual sample of 114, shows that almost every individual is victims of any form of incivility at workplace. However, there is no significant difference among participated organizations on the basis of incivility.*

**Key Words:** Workplace Incivility, Uncivil Activities, Causes, Consequences

## INTRODUCTION

Workplace incivility has been widely considered as an important workplace stressor in the social sciences [1-2-3-4]; and a relatively new area for scholarly debate [5] in workplace mistreatment literature [6]. It is a rising threat for human resource development specialists, since it's happening leads to a toxic work atmosphere [7]. Recent studies describe uncivil behavior as a specific type of workplace deviance [8], frequently experienced as a workplace mistreatment [9]; but distinguished from aggression [10]. It is defined as a "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect" [8-11-12]. According to various scholars, low intensity behavior means that the uncivil acts are less intense; do not carry transparent intent [10]; and often are of lower magnitude in terms of force or high-intensity behaviors such as violence or physical aggression [1-6-13].

According to a study [8], incivility is a minor form of mistreatment, but can significantly impact an employee's attitudes and behaviors towards the organization. In general, incivility is recognized as a kind of psychological harassment and emotional aggression that disrupts the ideal workplace norm of mutual respect [14]. It is characterized by rude; discourteous and impolite behaviors that exhibit an absence of respect for others [8-9-15]. Rudeness is an important characteristic of incivility that leads to reduced support at workplace; which subsequently decreases performance [16-17].

Workplace incivility has received a considerable attention in organizational research [18]; mainly due to its high prevalence; and its harmful effects on employees as well as on organizations [19-20]. A review of the applied psychology literature indicates a rise in the uncivil behaviors at workplace [1-21]; and various survey findings of incivility incidents have been found to range from 71 [see 19: 1180 private sector employees are victim] to 100 percent [see 4]. The finding of researcher [see 22] indicates about 86 percent of employees had experienced some form of incivility at workplace.

Incivility is regarded as a form of everyday trouble and a chronic stressor [1-19]. Sometimes it leads to psychological aggression when the instigator's intention is to harm the targeted employee or organization [15]. Uncivil behaviors generally come under mistreatment, in the form of: insulting; bullying; physical and/or verbal abusing; causing emotional injuries; violent and aggressive interactions; deviant and antisocial behaviors; and behaviors that breed a sense of injustice [5-23]. The more frequent workplace incivility that have recently been observed are the gender; and racial/ethnic

harassment [1-15]. Each of these behaviors is antagonistic; and insults, degrades, or threatens, and violates the values of social respect. With incivility around, the employees normally display a lack of regard for other colleagues through uncivil activities at workplace; and intentionally disengage from assigned tasks, citizenship behavior and workplace commitment. Furthermore, workers are not as creative as they are supposed to be when they feel disrespected at workplace; and the majority of them get fed up and stay absent and/or permanent leave [24]. However, few researchers argue that uncivil behaviors are not intentional or malicious [9-25]. Different types of uncivil behaviors at workplace (see Table 1), that normally lead to the creation of an unfriendly workplace, paranoid, cliquey, stressful and rude [5].

Workplace incivility is a reflection of social exchange relationships among workers and between workers and top management or owners [8-26]. Presence of uncivil activities has been perceived as problematic across industries; including but not limited to law enforcement, healthcare, education; including public and private sectors in different regions [22-27-28-29-30-31-32-33].

### Consequences of Workplace Incivility

Although, the uncivil acts are inherently mild, however, these cost organizations millions of dollars [23] in shape of: low performance and absenteeism [34]. Due to its mild and ambiguous nature, incivility is quite challenging for organizations; particularly when it comes to developing strategies or plans for prohibiting the same. Workplace incivility has been found to be associated with increased absenteeism [9-11], reduced satisfaction [7-32-35-36-37-38], tardiness [9], end-of-work negative affect [2-20-37], higher turnover intention [30-32-36-37], high actual turnover [19-21] decreased productivity [11-33-38], adverse effect on citizenship behavior [26], performance [9-16-38], reduced commitment [11-15-19-32], negatively affect employee's psychological and physical health [7-36-39], counterproductive behavior [2], and depression, anxiety and work-to-family conflict [10-35].

These unfavorable outcomes have financial implications for management. An organization has to bear the cost of workers' distraction and discontentment; sick leave; conflict between workers; productivity loss; and turnover [40]. The Table 2 shows the cost of incivility at workplace. Researchers and practitioners are keen to detect the underlying reasons that give rise to discourteous and rude behavior in order to minimize its happening [3].

**Table 1: Types of Uncivil Behavior**

Sending nasty and demeaning notes	Giving colleagues the silent treatment
Undermining a coworker's credibility	Treating others like a child
Taking credit for another's work	Speaking condescendingly to others
Avoiding to say "please" or "thank you"	Ignoring others
Giving public reprimands	Making groundless blames, complaints
Spreading gossip	Refusing to work collaboratively
Making inflammatory remarks	Ignoring raised voice (constructing voice, whistleblowing)
Avoiding to greet somebody	Cutting individuals off while they are speaking
Leaving mobile phone "ON" during meetings	Addressing someone inappropriately or unprofessionally
Leaving mess at workplace	Eavesdropping; Listening to others' conversation and calls
Exclusion from important work activities	Withholding important information
Leaving a jammed photocopier or printer for another to fix	Using demeaning or derogatory language or voice tone
Sleeping or not paying attention	Damaging coworkers reputation
Interrupting others	Excluding someone from a meeting
Cursing others	Bringing children to work
Expressing little concern on employee's opinion	Yelling, screaming and verbal attacks
Not keeping scheduled appointments	Acting superior and arrogant
Leaving early or arriving late	Ignoring colleague's requests
Hostile stares	Disrupting meetings

[See 1-5-11-12-14-19-21-22]

**Table 2: The Consequences of Uncivil Behavior (in terms of employees when they face uncivil behavior)**

Deliberately reduce their work effort	Purposely lower the quality of their work
Deliberately reduce the time spent at work	Feelings of Dissatisfaction
Lost work time avoiding the offender	High turnover intention
Reduced commitment to the organization	Declined their own performance intentionally
Productivity loss	Work- -family conflict
Take frustration out on customers	Reported job related stress, distraction
Low creativity and cooperation	Lost work time worrying about the incident
Show greater psychological distress	Increased burnout
Sense of Job insecurity	Anxiety
Reduced health satisfaction (mental and physical)	Reduced worker integrity and dignity
Increased anxiety and depression	Negatively affect learning at workplace
Group disregard	

[See 10-15-24-32-35-38-40]

The findings from incivility research suggests that the incivility has very harmful effects, not only at workplace; but also outside of work. However, extant research has yet to investigate the level of incivility at workplace. The current study aims to investigate the occurrence of incivility at different organizations in service sector of Pakistan. Therefore, our study aims to answer the important question addressed by researchers [35]; does incivility prevail in specific industrial sector? Furthermore, the study aims at determining the level of severity of incivility at workplace.

**Hypothesis:** Incivility prevailing in the majority of the organizations.\

## METHOD

### Context and Sample

Mainstream research on workplace incivility has been conducted mostly in the West, specifically in the United States. The western nations are considered more individualistic than the non-western nations, such as those in Asia. According to Markus & Kitayama (1991) [as cited by

35], independence; personal distinctness and individual gains are more valued in the western cultures; and conformity to the social norms is not an important consideration. This leads us to investigate the generalizability of previous research findings of incivility, by examining the extent to which such rude and disrespectful behaviors exist in the Asian context. Previous work on incivility is completely based on one or two organizations [36].

In the current study, responses were obtained from the employees working in various sectors, including: educational institutions; banks; insurance companies; and hospitals located in the Lahore region. Collection of data from a wide variety of organizations sampled is a plus point; as results gleaned are not biased to a certain type of organization. To approach our respondents, we recruited MPhil and PhD candidates enrolled in a management program; who were working in various organizations and industries.

**Table 3: The Antecedents of Workplace Incivility**

Factors	Sources
Job stress	[34-41]
Asserting power on other colleagues	[19-35]
Perception of distributive, procedural and interactional injustice	[41-42]
Job dissatisfaction	[3741]
Lack of professional, respectful environment	[43]
Power and social status	[16]
Job exhaustion	[41]
High stress environment	[43]
Job insecurity	[41]
Interest Conflict and status-based social closure	[23]
Gender harassment	[38]
Emotional Exhaustion	[44]
Gender diversity (misunderstanding)	[41]
Job demands	[44]
Sexualized harassment	[38]
Organizational Chaos (enhanced through downsizing, outsourcing, and most centrally)	[23]
Customer incivility	[44]
Workload	[29]
Workplace adaptation	[7]
Hostile workplace	[14]
Affective experience	[7]

Participating organizations and working adults were selected via the recruited candidates’ personal and professional contacts; in order to enhance the response rate; which implies the use of convenience sampling. A number of previous studies have adopted this approach for data gathering from different organizations and industries [35-45]; and have proven to be quite effective in gathering data of comparable quality; as compared to the traditional procedure. We chose to survey the highly educated individuals, who had no problem in understanding the English version of our research questionnaire. Their participants in the study was voluntary; and we also ensured them of the confidentiality of the information. Participants’ job types varied, and they primarily included: Administrative position holders, such as the relationship officers, relationship managers, credit officers, management trainees, and regional coordinators; along with the professors, assistant professors and lecturers of various institutions;. The actual sample consisted of 114 participants.

**Measures**

**Workplace Incivility**

Workplace incivility was measured through the Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS) developed by Cortina and her associates [19]. The scale was specifically developed for gauging the frequency of respondents’ experience of disrespect and rude behavior from superiors or coworkers; during the past year. The scale consists of seven-items and

responses ranged from 1 = never to 5 = frequently. Workplace incivility of each employee was assessed by calculating the mean of responses to all the seven items, with higher mean scores indicating high workplace incivility. Sample item from this measure includes: “Made demeaning or derogatory remarks about you”.

**RESULTS**

The objective of this study is to check whether there is any significant difference among the different service organizations on the basis of incivility or uncivil behaviors. In order to see this difference among the organizations, we have to apply the parametric or non-parametric test which entirely depends on four assumptions. In order to apply the ANOVA-one way which is parametric test; a) the sample should be independent, b) sample should be random, c) sample should be normal, and d) homogeneity of variance should exist.

**Reliability of Data**

**Table 4: Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
<b>.882</b>	7

The first step in analysis is entirely depends on the reliability of data. The above Table 4 depicts the reliability statistics, Cronbach’s alpha for the incivility scale is 0.882 which is more than 0.70. This shows that the data is reliable for further analysis.

In the next step (3rd condition) we checked whether the data is normal or non-normal which provides the basis for the application of parametric or non-parametric tests.

**Normality of Data**

**Table 5: One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test**

	Incivility	
N	114	
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	2.3008
	Std. Deviation	.88704
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.132
	Positive	.132
	Negative	-.071
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	1.410	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.038</b>	

- a. Test distribution is Normal
- b. Calculated from data

When we have applied Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z test (Table 5) for normality, we found that our data does not follow the normal distribution. We note that the P value of the incivility is P = 0.038 <0.05. Therefore, we can say that we are 95 % confident that data of incivility is non-normal. The results also show the mean of incivility is 2.3 ± 0.887.

Since the p value of the homogeneity of variance (4<sup>th</sup> condition) test is less than 0.05, therefore, the condition for the equality of variance is not met. We may not apply Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) technique (parametric test) to find out whether there is any difference between all six groups on the basis of incivility. The above results of conditions will leads us to apply non-parametric test i.e. Kruskal-Wallis test.

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Incivility**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95 % Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1.00	14	2.5102	1.07449	.28717	1.8898	3.1306		
2.00	12	1.8810	.73813	.21308	1.4120	2.3499	1.00	3.14
3.00	17	2.2437	.91858	.22279	1.7714	2.7160	1.00	3.86
4.00	28	2.6276	1.12441	.21249	2.1915	3.0636	1.00	4.57
5.00	34	2.0336	.49495	.08488	1.8609	2.2063	1.29	3.57
6.00	9	2.6349	.61075	.20358	2.1655	3.1044	2.14	3.57
Total	114	<b>2.3008</b>	<b>.88704</b>	.08308	2.1362	2.4653	1.00	4.57

**Table 7: Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Incivility**

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
6.773	5	108	<b>.000</b>

**Table 8: Hypothesis Test Summary**

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1 The distribution of Incivility is the same across categories of S #	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.077	<b>Retain the null hypothesis</b>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

The above statistics (Table 8) results show that there is no significant difference between all the six groups

On the basis of incivility. However, the mean rank (Table 9) shows that the organization # 6 shows the high incivility followed by the organization # 4 and organization # 1 respectively.

**Table 9: Ranks**

	S #	N	Mean Rank
Incivility	1.00	14	<b>64.25</b>
	2.00	12	42.25
	3.00	17	56.56
	4.00	28	<b>65.50</b>
	5.00	34	49.04
	6.00	9	<b>76.17</b>
Total		114	

**Table 10: Test Statistics<sup>a,b</sup>**

	Incivility
Chi-Square	9.929
Df	5
Asymp. Sig.	<b>.077</b>

a. Kruskal-Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variables: S #

The above Table 10 shows that there is no significance difference in the all six type of organizations in term of incivility.

**DISCUSSION**

The existing literature on organizational behavior, has traditionally focused on explicit antisocial behaviors; which are of greater intensity like aggression, violation and sexual harassment. There is lack of our understanding about the lower-level on interpersonal stressors [36]. This study advances our knowledge in the workplace mistreatment literature by highlighting the uncivil activities, causes and consequences. We extend prior work on incivility by focusing on uncivil behavior at non-western culture across wide range of service sectors. The

results show that almost every individual at workplace is a Victim of workplace incivility. Furthermore, the findings also show that there is no significant difference between all six organizations and demographic characteristics on the basis of uncivil behaviors. The results are consistent with the viewpoints of researchers [1]; who have argued that ought to be conceptualized as a general phenomenon; because it is not based on characteristics of the target, such as gender or race. However, other researchers [40] have a differing opinion and find incivility to be selective; by frequently being directed towards women and racial/ethnic minorities.

**REFERENCES**

- [1]. Miner, K. N., Settles, I. H., Pratt-Hyatt, J. S., & Brady, C. C. (2012). Experiencing Incivility in Organizations: The Buffering Effects of Emotional and Organizational Support1. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 42*(2), 340-372.
- [2]. Penney, L. M., & Spector, P. E. (2005). Job stress, incivility, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB): The moderating role of negative affectivity. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 26*(7), 777-796.
- [3]. Roberts, S. J., Scherer, L. L., & Bowyer, C. J. (2011). Job stress and incivility: What role does psychological capital play? *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 18*(4), 449-458. 1548051811409044.
- [4]. Sliter, M. T., Jex, S., Wolford, K. A., & McInnerney, J. (2010). The relationship between customer incivility and stress, burnout and performance: Emotional labor as a moderator. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 15*, 468-481.
- [5]. Vickers, M. H. (2006). Writing what's relevant: Workplace incivility in public administration-A wolf in sheep's clothing. *Administrative Theory & Praxis, 28*(1), 69-88.
- [6]. Hershcovis, M. S. (2011). "Incivility, social undermining, bullying... oh my!": A call to reconcile constructs within workplace aggression research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 32*(3), 499-519.
- [7]. Reio, T. G., & Ghosh, R. (2009). Antecedents and outcomes of workplace incivility: Implications for human resource development research and practice. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 20*(3), 237-264.

- [8]. Andersson, L. M., & Pearson, C. M. (1999). Tit for tat? The spiraling effect of incivility in the workplace. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(3), 452-471.
- [9]. Sliter, M., Sliter, K., & Jex, S. (2012). The employee as a punching bag: The effect of multiple sources of incivility on employee withdrawal behavior and sales performance. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 33(1), 121-139.
- [10]. Ferguson, M. (2012). You cannot leave it at the office: Spillover and crossover of coworker incivility. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 33(4), 571-588.
- [11]. Pearson, C. M., Andersson, L. M., & Porath, C. L. (2000). Assessing and attacking workplace incivility. *Organizational Dynamics*, 29(2), 123-137.
- [12]. Pearson, C. M., Andersson, L. M., & Wegner, J. W. (2001). When workers flout convention: A study of workplace incivility. *Human Relations*, 54(11), 1387-1419.
- [13]. Neuman, J., & Baron, R. (1998). Workplace violence and workplace aggression: Evidence concerning specific forms, potential causes, and preferred targets. *Journal of Management*, 24, 391-419.
- [14]. Felblinger, D. M. (2008). Incivility and bullying in the workplace and nurses' shame responses. *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing*, 37(2), 234-242.
- [15]. Cortina, L. M., Kabat-Farr, D., Leskinen, E. A., Huerta, M., & Magley, V. J. (2013). Selective incivility as modern discrimination in organizations: evidence and impact. *Journal of Management*, 39(6), 1579-1605.
- [16]. Estes, B., & Wang, J. (2008). Workplace incivility: Impacts on individual and organizational performance. *Human Resource Development Review*, 7(2), 218-240.
- [17]. Porath, C. L., & Erez, A. (2007). Does rudeness really matter? The effects of rudeness on task performance and helpfulness. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(5), 1181-1197.
- [18]. Griffin, R. W., & Lopez, Y. P. (2005). "Bad behavior" in organizations: A review and typology for future research. *Journal of Management*, 31(6), 988-1005.
- [19]. Cortina, L. M., Magley, V. J., Williams, J. H., & Langhout, R. D. (2001). Incivility in the workplace: Incidence and impact. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 6(1), 64-80.
- [20]. Zhou, Z. E., Yan, Y., Che, X. X., & Meier, L. L. (2015). Effect of workplace incivility on end-of-work negative affect: Examining individual and organizational moderators in a daily diary study. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 20(1), 117-130.
- [21]. Johnson, P. R., & Indvik, J. (2001). Slings and arrows of rudeness: Incivility in the workplace. *Journal of Management Development*, 20(8), 705-714.
- [22]. Trudel, J., & Reio, T. G. (2011). Managing workplace incivility: The role of conflict management styles—antecedent or antidote? *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 22(4), 395-423.
- [23]. Roscigno, V. J., Hodson, R., & Lopez, S. H. (2009). Workplace incivilities: the role of interest conflicts, social closure and organizational chaos. *Work, Employment & Society*, 23(4), 747-773.
- [24]. Porath, C., & Pearson, C. (2013). The price of incivility. *Harvard business review*, 91(1-2), 115-121.
- [25]. Milam, A. C., Spitzmueller, C., & Penney, L. M. (2009). Investigating individual differences among targets of workplace incivility. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 14(1), 58-69.
- [26]. Taylor, S. G., Bedeian, A. G., & Kluemper, D. H. (2012). Linking workplace incivility to citizenship performance: The combined effects of affective commitment and conscientiousness. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 33(7), 878-893.
- [27]. Cortina, L. M., & Magley, V. J. (2007). Patterns and profiles of response to incivility in organizations. Working paper, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- [28]. Cortina, L. M., & Magley, V. J. (2009). Patterns and profiles of response to incivility in the workplace. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 14(3), 272.
- [29]. Gilin Oore, D. E. B. R. A., Leblanc, D., Day, A., Leiter, M. P., Spence Laschinger, H. K., Price, S. L., & Latimer, M. (2010). When respect deteriorates: Incivility as a moderator of the stressor-strain relationship among hospital workers. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 18(8), 878-888.
- [30]. Griffin, B. (2010). Multilevel relationships between organizational-level incivility, justice and intention to stay. *Work & Stress*, 24(4), 309-323.
- [31]. Leiter, M. P., Price, S. L., & Spence Laschinger, H. K. (2010). Generational differences in distress, attitudes and incivility among nurses. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 18(8), 970-980.
- [32]. Spence-Laschinger, H. K., Leiter, M., Day, A., & Gilin, D. (2009). Workplace empowerment, incivility, and burnout: Impact on staff nurse recruitment and retention outcomes. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 17(3), 302-311.
- [33]. Strasser, P. B., Hutton, S., & Gates, D. (2008). Workplace incivility and productivity losses among direct care staff. *AAOHN journal*, 56(4), 168-175.
- [34]. Roberts, S. J., Scherer, L. L., & Bowyer, C. J. (2011). Job stress and incivility: What role does psychological capital play?. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 18(4), 449-458. 1548051811409044.
- [35]. Lim, S., & Lee, A. (2011). Work and nonwork outcomes of workplace incivility: Does family support help?. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 16(1), 95-111.
- [36]. Lim, S., Cortina, L. M., & Magley, V. J. (2008). Personal and workgroup incivility: Impact on work and health outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(1), 95-107.
- [37]. Miner-Rubino, K., & Reed, W. D. (2010). Testing a moderated mediational model of workgroup incivility: The roles of organizational trust and group

- regard. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 40(12), 3148-3168.
- [38]. Pearson, C. M., & Porath, C. L. (2005). On the nature, consequences and remedies of workplace incivility: No time for “nice”? Think again. *The Academy of Management Executive*, 19(1), 7-18.
- [39]. Lim, S., & Cortina, L. M. (2005). Interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace: the interface and impact of general incivility and sexual harassment. *Journal of applied psychology*, 90(3), 483.
- [40]. Cortina, L. M. (2008). Unseen injustice: Incivility as modern discrimination in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 33(1), 55-75.
- [41]. Blau, G., & Andersson, L. (2005). Testing a measure of instigated workplace incivility. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 78(4), 595-614.
- [42]. Caza, B. B., & Cortina, L. M. (2007). From insult to injury: Explaining the impact of incivility. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 29(4), 335-350.
- [43]. Clark, C. M., & Springer, P. J. (2007). Thoughts on incivility: Student and faculty perceptions of uncivil behavior in nursing education. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 28(2), 93-97.
- [44]. Van Jaarsveld, D. D., Walker, D. D., & Skarlicki, D. P. (2010). The role of job demands and emotional exhaustion in the relationship between customer and employee incivility. *Journal of Management*, 36(6), 1486-1504.
- [45]. Eddleston, K., Veiga, J. F., & Powell, G. N. (2006). Explaining sex differences in managerial career satisfier preferences: The role of gender self-schema. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91, 437-445.