

Investigating the Effect of Workplace Incivility on Innovative Behavior: The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

Workplace incivility, characterized by low-intensity deviant behaviors such as rudeness and disrespect, has become a universal issue in modern organizations, negatively impacting employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. This study investigates the impact of workplace incivility on innovative work behaviors (IWB), with self-efficacy as a mediating variable. Drawing on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, the research explores how self-efficacy employees' belief in their ability to perform tasks can mitigate the adverse effects of incivility on innovation. Using a cross-sectional design, data were collected from 299 employees in the education and healthcare sectors of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan through structured questionnaires. The findings reveal that workplace incivility significantly reduces both self-efficacy and innovative work behaviors. However, self-efficacy partially mediates this relationship, suggesting that employees with higher self-efficacy are more resilient to the negative effects of incivility and are better able to maintain their innovative behaviors. The study highlights the importance of fostering self-efficacy through training and supportive workplace policies to respond to the harmful effects of incivility. These results are relevant for organizations interested in facilitating innovation by confronting incivility at the workplace and strengthening workers' psychological resilience. The study enriches existing work on workplace dynamics and presents groundwork for further investigation on resilience and innovation under a problematic work environment.

Keywords: Workplace Incivility, Employee Innovative Work Behaviors, Self-Efficacy

Introduction

The occurrence of workplace incivility is increasing and has not only harmful impacts on employees' health and well-being (Liu et al., 2019) but also workplace incivility is a common phenomenon that has received much attention in organizational behavior studies in the last two decades. Additionally, leadership styles and collective culture have been found to strongly predict incivility in the workplace (Nurhayati & Sari, 2023). In contrast to more overt types of workplace aggression or harassment, incivility tends to go unobserved and unpremeditated, resulting in a slow

and insidious decay of workplace culture and employee health. The impacts of such actions go beyond direct interpersonal contact, and they could further erode organizational effectiveness and employee performance. One of the more alarming effects of workplace incivility is its influence on employee innovation work behaviors. Innovation plays a key role in organizational competitiveness and responsiveness in the current dynamic business environment. Moreover, the economic pressures in the industry frequently force businesses to prioritize short-term financial gains over long-term innovation (Hao et al., 2023). In order for these behaviors to be enacted by employees, a positive work environment that supports psychological safety and good interpersonal relationships must exist. Self-efficacy, which is a person's perception of their ability to perform required behaviors needed to bring about certain performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is a concept that describes a person's ability and knowledge about how to do a specific task within a particular subject area (Elrayah, 2022). In another way, the term refers to one's certainty that he/she will accomplish an assigned task competently (Bandura, 2011). Self-efficacy is a critical factor that influences one's decisions, duties, thoughts, actions, behaviors, practices, motivation, and competences (Bandura, 2006). It is distinguished from two comparable terms, namely self-concept and self-esteem. Self-concept is a person's overall perspective on his/her ability to complete a task, based on past experience. In contrast, self-esteem relates to an individual's perceived value (Han & Wang, 2021).

Workplace Incivility and Self-Efficacy

Workplace incivility is defined as low-intensity negative workplace behaviors, including actions with the purpose of hurting coworkers or creating a hostile work environment (Hoang Nguyen Tran, 2023). Such behaviors, while low in intensity, can have high cumulative impacts. Examples are condescending comments, ignoring coworkers, gossiping, and other low-key displays of disrespect. Incivility may also be expressed in the form of mistreatment, bullying, abuse, or undermining behavior, affecting employees' well-being and job performance (Pandey et al., 2023). Empirical evidence suggests that incivility in the workplace can result in a poisonous work environment, lowering overall morale and productivity, and such negative behaviors may be shaped through positive leadership because positive leaders through their behaviors can change followers' mindsets (Islam and Asad, 2024; Islam et al., 2024). In accordance with Bandura's social cognitive theory (1997), which postulates that workers learn their belief by their perception. Thus, when they perceive a discourteous interaction that violates norms of mutual respect such as exclusionary from meeting and decision making, and unsupportive environment will decrease individual self-efficacy. This is a critical omission because worsening job insecurity (Hur et al., 2024; Kang et al., 2024) leads to Financial Self-efficacy experiencing increasing instability and uncertainty in their careers (Karatepe et al., 2024). Based on the theoretical and literature reviews above, we hypothesized that:

H1: There is negative relationship between workplace incivility and self-efficacy.

Workplace Incivility and Innovative Work Behaviors

Innovative work behaviors are essential for the growth and adaptability of organizations. IWB is defined as the introduction and implementation of novel ideas to improve job performance (kessel et al., 2020). Implementing innovative work behaviour (IWB) improves learning outcomes and provides ideas for cultivating an environment of innovation among employees in higher education institutions (Budur et al., 2024). Employees who engage in innovative work behaviors contribute to the development of new products, services, and processes, thereby enhancing organizational competitiveness. Researchers have investigated employee engagement as a significant factor in employees' behavioral outcomes, positively correlated with employees' working performance and organizational outcomes (Hasanati & Karima, 2024). A supportive and inclusive work environment

is crucial for fostering innovation, as it encourages employees to take risks, share ideas, and collaborate effectively. However, the presence of workplace incivility can stifle innovation. Incivility undermines psychological safety, making employees less likely to voice new ideas or challenge the status quo (Reina et al., 2018). In today's interconnected, digital and competitive work environments, workplace incivility, aggression and reduced well-being are not merely individual concerns but organizational threats (Bodhi, 2024). Innovation comes about when employees generate, promote and implement new ideas that are strategic factors of IWB (Hameed et al., 2024). The SEM analysis revealed that incivility in the workplace is associated with decreased job productivity. The research supports the notion that incivility can hinder employees' ability to perform their job tasks effectively. Based on the theoretical and literature reviews above, we hypothesized that:

H3: There is negative relationship between workplace incivility and innovative work behavior

Self-Efficacy and Innovative Work Behaviors

Self-efficacy is knowledge about one's capabilities that influences an individual's actions in achieving goals. An individual's level of self-efficacy contributes to their ability to face challenges and predict potential outcomes of their actions (Ali et al., 2024). Whereas, Cao et al. (2023) highlighted that Self-Efficacy, is the belief in one's capabilities to execute tasks successfully. Sociopreneurs foster self-efficacy by creating an environment that encourages learning, growth, and empowerment. They provide training programs, mentorship, and opportunities for professional development, which enhance employee's confidence in their abilities and motivate them to achieve higher performance levels (Moscato & Jason, 2023). This is highly relevant in an organizational setting as it affects how employees tackle complex and challenging tasks. High self-efficacy can spur employees to take initiative, face greater challenges, and persevere through difficulties, while low self-efficacy may lead to reluctance to commit to more ambitious goals. In the context of the workplace, self-efficacy affects how employees approach challenges and opportunities. This statement confirms that self-efficacy significantly influences creative actions in the workplace. (Setiyowati & Santosa 2025). Accordingly, employees would interchange their behavior and positively contribute to their firms in return (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023). Kanjanakan et al. (2023) stated that psychologically empowered employees express positivity toward themselves, their jobs, and their firms. AlEssa and Durugbo (2022) stated that generating innovative ideas is a complex behavior. It was, thus, hypothesized:

H2: There is positive relationship between self-efficacy and innovative work behavior

Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy

The mediating effect of self-efficacy on the link between workplace incivility and innovative work behaviors is a central concern of this study. Self-efficacy may act as a buffer against the adverse effects of incivility by strengthening the resilience and coping mechanisms of employees. Work-related self-efficacy is the belief in peoples' capabilities to perform successfully and achieve goals at work (Van Hootegem et al., 2022). It has been found by research that not just the employee reaction to incivility, but also perception regarding their potential for innovation, is affected by self-efficacy. A high level of self-efficacy generally leads to success-proportional behaviors, including perseverance, creative problem-solving, learning from failure, visioning success, and reduced stress (Ali et al., 2024). This intervening effect points toward the promise of self-efficacy as a point of intervention for cultivating innovation in incivility-tainted work settings (Liu et al., 2020). This study used Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) as underpinning theory developed by Albert Bandura. This theory focuses on the contribution of observational learning, social experience, and reciprocal determinism to personality development. Self-efficacy is at the core of SCT and is a belief that a person holds in his or her ability to perform behaviors required to bring about particular

performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1997).

H4: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between workplace incivility and innovative work behavior.

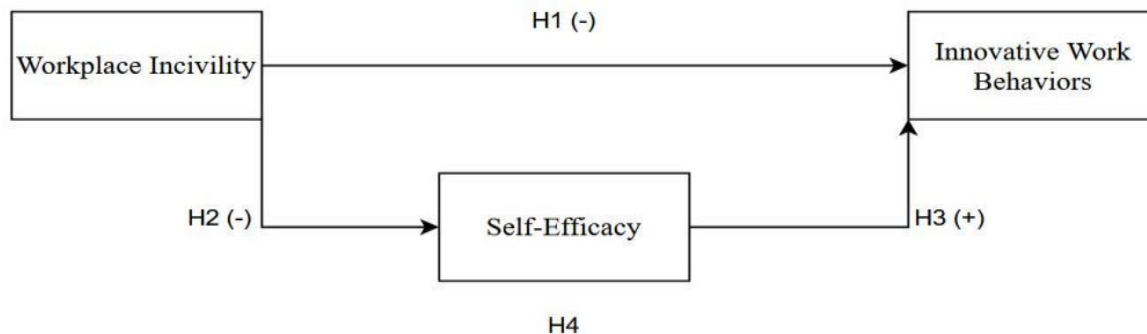


Figure 1: Research Model

Methodological Design Research Design

A cross-sectional research design was designed to explore workplace incivility and its impacts on employee innovation work behavior, with self-efficacy serving as a mediator. Data were gathered for this research through questionnaires that were distributed via Google Forms and hard copies of questionnaires. Analyses for the present study were done on SPSS 22, a powerful research statistical software used across various studies. The platform was used to conduct various analyses, such as descriptive statistics, correlation, and mediation analysis to examine the relationships between self-efficacy, employee innovation work behavior, and workplace incivility.

Population

The sample of this study involves employees from the Pakistani education and healthcare sectors. The sectors were selected because they play a vital role in society and have distinctive workplace cultures, which tend to expose workers to different levels of workplace incivility.

Sample

The population for this research comprises staff from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab provinces. Geographical diversity in the sample enables an in-depth capture of workplace incivility in various cultural and organizational settings within Pakistan.

Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling method was used, which is a non-probability sampling technique that enables the selection of participants according to their willingness and availability.

Reliability Metrics for Constructs

Cronbach's alpha is one of the measures of internal consistency that has broad acceptance, where values above 0.7 are good indicators of reliability, and above 0.9 are indications of excellent reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Hair et al., 2019).

Table 1 Reliability Analyses

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Workplace Incivility (IV)	07	.622
Self-Efficacy (Med)	10	.593
Innovative Work Behavior (DV)	10	.820

Data Analysis and Interpretation Demographics

Descriptive statistics provide an in-depth overview of data and simplify the interpretation of different characteristics of datasets via measures like the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation (Mertler et al., 2021), (Jubber et al., 2023), (Azen & Walker, 2021).

Table 2 Demographics

Gender	Frequency percent	Cumulative percent
Male	156	52.2
Female	143	47.8
	299	100
Age		
Below 30 years	18	6.0
30-40	135	45.2
40-50	83	27.8
Above 50 years	63	21.1
	299	100
Qualification		
MS	218	72.9
Ph.D.	81	27.1
	299	100
EXPERIENCE		
Less than 5 years	4	1.3
5-10	24	8.0
10-15	88	29.4
Above 15 years	183	61.2
	299	100

The information from the data shows a significant gender disparity among the respondents with the males making up approximately 52.2% and females making up 47.8%. Most of the respondents are aged 30-40 years, making up 45.2% of the population. The second largest group is 40-50 years old at 27.8%. The age brackets less than 30 years and more than 50 years are smaller, each representing 6.0% and 21.1% of respondents, respectively. In terms of educational background, most (72.9%) possess an MS degree, and 27.1% possess a PhD. Looking at professional experience, more than half (61.2%) have more than 15 years of experience. With 10-15 years of experience, 29.4% is the percentage, and with 5-10 years and less than 5 years of experience, 8.0% and 1.3% respectively.

Table 3 Correlations

Variables	WPI	SE	IWB
WPI	1		
SE	-.282**	1	
IWB	-.182**	.421**	1

WPI= Workplace incivility, SE= self-efficacy, IWB= Innovative Work Behavior, n= 299. * p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01

These correlations reveal interesting relationships between three variables in a sample of 299 participants. WPI shows significant negative correlations with both SE ($r = -0.282$, $p < 0.001$) and IWB ($r = -0.182$, $p = 0.002$), though both relationships are relatively weak. The strongest relationship observed between SE and IWB ($r = 0.421$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that as SE increases, IWB tends to increase as well. All correlations are statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$.

Regression Analysis

Regression demonstrates the degree to which a variable depends on another, independent variable on which it is being regressed.

Table 4 Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.182 ^a	.033	.030	.55946
a. Predictors: (Constant), WPI_MEAN				

The model shows an R value of 0.182, which suggests a weak positive linear relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The R Square value is 0.033, meaning that only 3.3% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the model. The Adjusted R Square, which adjusts for the number of predictors, is 0.030, indicating that the model's explanatory power remains low even when accounting for the number of variables.

Table 5 Anova

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.181	1	3.181	10.162	.002
	Residual	92.961	297	.313		
	Total	96.141	298			

Independent Variable: Workplace Incivility (WPI)

Dependent Variable: Innovative Work Behaviors (IWB)

The results of the ANOVA indicate that the regression model is statistically significant. The regression sum of squares is 3.181, with 1 degree of freedom, and the mean square for the regression is also 3.181. The F- value of 10.162, with a p-value of 0.002, suggests that the independent variable included in the model explains a significant portion of the variance in the dependent variable. The residual sum of squares is 92.961, with 297 degrees of freedom, and the residual mean square is 0.313. The total sum of squares is 96.141, with 298 degrees of freedom. Overall, the low p-value (less than 0.05) indicates that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is statistically significant, meaning the model is useful in explaining the variance in the data.

Table 6 Coefficients

		Unstandardize d Coefficients	Standardize d Coefficient s			
Model		β	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.678	.159		16.851	.000
	WPI	-.168	.053	-.182	-3.188	.002

Dependent Variable: IWB

The regression analysis results show that the model is significant, with the constant term having a coefficient of 2.678 ($p < 0.001$). This means that when the independent variable (WPI) is zero, the dependent variable (IWB) is expected to have a value of 2.678. The coefficient for WPI is -0.168 with a standard error of 0.053. This negative coefficient indicates that as WPI increases, the IWB decreases. The standardized coefficient (Beta) for WPI is -0.182, suggesting a moderate negative relationship between these two variables. The t-value for WPI is -3.188, with a significance level of 0.002, indicating that this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Therefore, WPI is a significant predictor of IWB, with a negative impact on the dependent variable.

Table 7 Mediation Analysis

Mediation of self-efficacy between workplace incivility and innovative work behaviors

Effect of IV on M		Effect of M on DV		Direct effect of IV on DV in presence of M		Total effect of IV on DV		Bootstra p results for indirect effects	
								LL 95 % CI	UL 95 % CI
β	T	B	t	B	T	β	t		
-.2119***	-5.0714	.4953***	7.3307	-.0633***	-1.2490	-.1683***	-3.1877	-.2722	-.0644

IV= Workplace incivility, M= self-efficacy and DV= Innovative work

behaviors n= 299,

*** P <.001

The mediation analysis reveals that self-efficacy plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between workplace incivility and innovative work behaviors. Workplace incivility has a strong negative impact on self-efficacy ($\beta = -.2119$, $p < .001$), and self-efficacy, in turn, positively influences innovative work behaviors ($\beta = .4953$, $p < .001$). When self-efficacy is included as a mediator, the direct effect of workplace incivility on innovative work behaviors becomes smaller but remains significant ($\beta = -.0633$, $p < .001$), indicating a partial mediation. The total effect of workplace incivility on innovative work behaviors is also negative ($\beta = -.1683$, $p < .001$), and the bootstrap results confirm the significance of the indirect effect (95% CI: -.2722 to -.0644). Overall, these findings suggest that workplace incivility reduces employees' self-efficacy, which subsequently diminishes their innovative work behaviors, though there is still a small direct negative effect of incivility on innovation.

Conclusion

This research explored the effects of workplace incivility on innovative work behaviors, with self-efficacy as a mediating factor. The results verify that workplace incivility reduces innovative work behavior, since workers under exposure to incivility are less inclined towards creative problem-solving and idea generation. The presence of incivility in the workplace generates a hostile and demotivating climate, which has far-reaching effects on employees' confidence, psychological safety, and inclination to take initiative. The research also points out that self-efficacy is essential in resolving or minimizing the ill effects of incivility at work. High self-efficacy employees exhibit resilience against incivility and are more likely to maintain their innovation initiatives. This reaffirms Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that people's beliefs regarding

their own ability have a major influence on their motivation and performance. The mediation analysis in this study confirms the hypothesis that self-efficacy mediates the influence of workplace incivility on innovative work behavior to some extent.

Recommendations

Organizations need to actively strive to create a culture of respect and inclusion by creating clear policies against workplace incivility, holding awareness sessions, and encouraging ethical behavior. Since the mediating role of self-efficacy has been established in this study, organizations also need to work on enhancing employees' confidence in their abilities. This can be done through training programs, mentorship, and skill development opportunities. Challenging employees to establish and accomplish difficult goals can also reinforce their confidence in themselves. In addition, human resource departments need to adopt rigid anti-incivility policies, with anonymous reporting options where employees can report without fear of retribution. Offering counseling and support programs can facilitate employees in dealing with the adverse consequences of incivility and staying productive. Since managers and supervisors have an influence on work behavior, organizations ought to invest in leadership development programs to ensure that managers lead with professionalism, fairness, and empathy. This positive and positive approach to leadership can greatly minimize incivility and create an innovative culture.

Future Research Directions

Future work should also attempt to build on this study by examining other mediating or moderating variables such as emotional intelligence, organizational support, and leadership styles. Furthermore, longitudinal studies can help to shed more light on how workplace incivility affects employees in the long run. Research can also be broadened to include other industries and cultural contexts to determine if the results are generalizable across work contexts. Furthermore, qualitative research using in-depth interviews may offer more nuanced insights into how employees actually experience workplace incivility and its consequences for their innovation potential.

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