

Chapter 63

Workplace Incivility and Job Satisfaction: Mediating Role of Emotion Management

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ABSTRACT

Workplace incivility is common in organizations across the world and can have negative effects on individuals and organizations. The purpose of the reported study is to examine the effects of supervisor and coworker incivility on job satisfaction and examines emotion management as a mediator of these relationships. Data from 268 working adults were collected by survey battery and analyzed via a number of multivariate techniques. The model was supported in that both supervisor and coworker incivility had strong direct negative effects on emotion management and job satisfaction, and emotion management partially mediated the incivility-job satisfaction relationship. With supervisor and coworker incivility, the participants reported lower levels of job satisfaction. However, the participants' emotion management mitigated the negative effect of incivility on job satisfaction partially. The findings suggest that organizations need to be aware of the unfavorable consequences of incivility. Organizations need to discover ways to reduce incivility and implement efforts to help employees develop positive emotional management strategies. These actions may help reduce the negative influences of incivility on important organizational outcomes like job satisfaction.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Emotion management is a process used to modify one's emotional expressions, experiences, and physiology and the circumstances eliciting the emotions to produce appropriate responses to environmental and organizational demands (Aldao, 2013; Hochschild, 1990). The use of emotion management is especially true in the service industry, where there are rules for emotional expression (Diefendorff, Richard, & Croyle, 2006) and the workplace will govern when and how specific emotions should be expressed. The process of emotion management typically involves two practices: behaviors suppressing any negative emotions one is feeling and faking positive emotions that one is not truly feeling (Glomb & Tews, 2004; Sliter, Jex, Wolford, & McInnerney, 2010).

One reason an employee may have the need to engage in behaviors where faking positive emotions is required is when dealing with rudeness and incivility, a growing problem that can have notable consequences at the individual, group and organization level (Porath, 2018). Researchers (e.g., Pearson Anderson, & Porath, 2000; Sears & Humiston, 2015) have found that nearly half of workers report having been treated rudely at work weekly, while Reio and Ghosh (2009) discovered that 54% of respondents in their study admitted to instigating uncivil behaviors, such as saying something hurtful towards someone in the workplace, once a year or more. Workplace incivility is defined as low-intensity deviant behavior that departs from norms of mutual respect, with ambiguous intentions to harm (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Workplace incivility can come from a number of sources, ranging from supervisors and coworkers (Reio & Sanders-Reio, 2011) to customers and vendors (Hochschild, 1990). Importantly, it has been shown to have negative influences on those who either witness, directly experience, or instigate it (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Languh, 2001; Reio & Ghosh, 2009). As posited by Andersson and Pearson's Tit-for-Tat Theory of Incivility, isolated instances of uncivil behavior can lead to responses-in-kind to instigators. For example, Rosen, Koopman, Gabriel, & Johnson, (2016), using an experience-sampling design, found experiencing incivility earlier in the day was linked to decreased self-control (ego depletion), which in turn was linked to instigated behavior later in the day. Overall, these responses-in-kind from targets to instigators can lead to the escalation of more intentional, harmful patterns of behavior like bullying, and eventually physical violence, as predicted by incivility theory (Andersson & Porath, 1999; Cortina et al., 2001).

Incivility has been associated with many negative occupational, psychological, and organizational outcomes, as well as issues with physical health (Lim & Cortina, 2005; Sears & Humiston, 2015). Regulating emotion is associated with stress, emotional exhaustion and negative physical symptoms (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000) that can dampen job satisfaction (Welbourne Gangadharan, & Esparza, 2016).

This paper contributes to the research literature in two ways. First, while prior research indicates that being the target of supervisory and coworker incivility is negatively associated with a number of organizational outcomes (Porath, 2018; Rosen et al., 2016), little research has examined the effects of both supervisory and coworker incivility in one study on job satisfaction. This research employs a structural modeling equation approach to examining these links and provides evidence that each type of experienced incivility has a negative effect on job satisfaction. Second, this study sheds light on the mechanism through which incivility influences job satisfaction. Prior research suggests that experiencing incivility can elicit negative emotional reactions (e.g., Porath & Pearson, 2012), and these emotional reactions can dampen job satisfaction (e.g., Penney & Spector, 2005). To our knowledge, no research has examined whether employing strategies to manage one's emotions (i.e., emotion management) mediates the effect of both supervisor and coworker incivility on job satisfaction. Therefore, the purpose of this study was

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