



A Meta-Analysis of the Antecedents and Outcomes of Workplace Incivility

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Abstract

We meta-analyzed the relationships between incivility and antecedents and outcomes. Results showed that incivility was associated with dispositional and situational antecedents, but relationships were stronger for situational predictors. Incivility additionally had a stronger relationship with many employee outcomes in comparison to the relationships found for other forms of mistreatment.

Introduction

Project Aims

- The first aim of the current study is to empirically examine the relative predictive power of situational and dispositional correlates of incivility.
- The second aim is to understand the comparative relationships between incivility and employee outcomes relative to other forms of mistreatment.

Antecedents of Incivility

- Victim precipitation models maintain that victim traits play a role in the mistreatment process such that certain victim tendencies may directly or indirectly contribute to mistreatment (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000).
- The victim precipitation model has seen increased popularity in the organizational sciences despite its sordid history in other fields and has recently been criticized for victim blaming (Cortina, 2017).

Outcomes of Incivility

- Although incivility theoretically differs from other forms of mistreatment in that it is characterized by low intensity behaviors with an ambiguous intent to harm, it is unclear if the relationships between incivility and outcomes differ from those found for other forms of mistreatment.
- Whereas some argue that incivility may be less harmful than other manifestations, others argue that it may actually be more damaging.

Method

- Studies were located by searching psycINFO, Business Source Premier, MEDLINE, and ProQuest using the search terms *incivility* and *rudeness*.
- Studies were included if they measured perceived incivility that occurred in a work context and reported necessary quantitative information.
- A total of 91 independent samples were eligible for inclusion ($N = 38,743$). Composite correlations were computed for studies that reported multiple, nonindependent effect sizes.
- Analyses were conducted using formulas taken from Hunter and Schmidt (2004).
- Current estimates were compared to estimates for other forms of mistreatment using formulas taken from Raju and Brand (2003).

Table 1: Antecedents of Workplace Incivility

Variable	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	ρ_{xy}	<i>SD</i> ρ	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	80% CV Lower	80% CV Upper
Role ambiguity	3	1,164	.42	.05	.35	.49	.36	.48
Role overload	4	2,242	.25	.00	.23	.27	.25	.25
Job control	6	5,480	-.35	.03	-.38	-.32	-.39	-.31
Job demands	3	2,951	.36	.02	.32	.40	.33	.39
Climate	5	1,347	-.54	.22	-.72	-.37	-.83	-.26
Neuroticism	11	4,134	.22	.07	.17	.27	.12	.31
Extraversion	3	813	.09	.11	-.04	.21	-.05	.23
Conscientiousness	8	1,577	-.08	.10	-.16	-.01	-.22	.05
Agreeableness	8	3,013	-.11	.04	-.15	-.06	-.16	-.05
Openness	2	306	-.06	.00	-.12	.00	-.06	-.06

Table 2: Outcomes of Workplace Incivility

Variable	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	ρ_{xy}	<i>SD</i> ρ	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	80% CV Lower	80% CV Upper
Job satisfaction	33	18,966	-.47	.10	-.50	-.43	-.60	-.34
Organizational commitment	18	9,899	-.39	.07	-.43	-.36	-.48	-.30
Turnover intentions	35	14,808	.39	.12	.35	.43	.24	.54
Withdrawal behavior	8	1,753	.23	.02	.19	.28	.21	.26
Task performance	11	2,716	-.34	.11	-.41	-.28	-.48	-.21
OCB	4	839	-.18	.27	-.43	.07	-.53	.17
CWB	9	4,543	.41	.14	.33	.50	.23	.59
Instigated incivility	11	7,125	.36	.43	.15	.58	-.19	.92
Burnout	22	9,275	.41	.12	.36	.46	.26	.56
Job stress	14	5,912	.25	.28	.12	.38	-.11	.61
Mental health	14	7,214	-.39	.07	-.43	-.36	-.48	-.31
Physical health	11	5,442	-.33	.13	-.39	-.26	-.49	-.16

Table 3: Comparison of Incivility and Workplace Harassment

Variable	Incivility			Harassment			Z-value
	ρ_{xy}	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	ρ_{xy}	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	
Job satisfaction	-.47	33	18,966	-.39	42	19,871	11.87*
Organizational commitment	-.39	18	9,899	-.36	16	9,224	3.16*
Turnover intentions	.39	35	14,808	.35	24	13,961	5.23*
Task performance	-.34	8	2,716	-.08	5	976	15.84*
OCB	-.18	11	839	-.03	5	1,493	8.79*
CWB	.41	9	4,543	.37	9	2,584	2.52*
Burnout	.41	4	9,275	.39	9	5,633	1.81
Mental health	-.39	9	7,214	-.34	16	5,625	4.44*
Physical health	-.33	11	5,442	-.31	33	13,878	1.96*

Results

Antecedents

- Supporting the importance of situational antecedents of incivility, role ambiguity ($\rho = .42$), role overload ($\rho = .25$), job control ($\rho = -.35$), job demands, and civility climate ($\rho = -.54$) were significantly associated with incivility ($\rho = .36$).
- Incivility was significantly related to neuroticism ($\rho = .22$), conscientiousness ($\rho = -.16$), and agreeableness ($\rho = -.11$). However, incivility was not significantly related to extraversion ($\rho = .09$) or openness ($\rho = -.06$).
- The inconsistency and low magnitude of the dispositional correlates do not appear consistent with predictions forwarded by victim precipitation models.

Outcome Comparisons

- Results showed that incivility had a significantly stronger relationship with job satisfaction ($z = 39.60, p < .05$), organizational commitment ($z = 4.41, p < .05$), turnover intentions ($z = 9.73, p < .05$), task performance ($z = 9.66, p < .05$), OCB ($z = 4.91, p < .05$), and CWB ($z = 2.58, p < .05$) when compared to workplace harassment.
- Incivility additionally had stronger relationships with burnout ($z = 2.35, p < .05$) and mental health ($z = 5.35, p < .05$) than workplace harassment.
- However, incivility and workplace harassment did not demonstrate significant differences in their relationships with physical health ($z = 1.90, n.s.$).
- When compared to specific forms of mistreatment, incivility demonstrated consistently stronger outcome relationships in comparison to bullying, sexual harassment, and discrimination.

Discussion

- Situational antecedents demonstrated more substantive relationships with incivility in comparison to dispositional antecedents, which suggests that environmental factors may contribute more strongly to the occurrence of incivility than individual differences.
- This finding aligns with recent criticisms of the victim precipitation model and argues in favor of focusing on identifying contexts, not people, that provoke uncivil treatment (Ashforth, 1997).
- Incivility was at least equally as harmful as other forms of workplace mistreatment, and, in many cases, incivility had stronger relationships with outcomes than workplace harassment, bullying, sexual harassment, and discrimination.
- This finding dispels the notion that the subtlety and ambiguity of incivility make it innocuous and illuminates the importance of taking measures to discourage even seemingly minor forms of mistreatment.
- Encouragingly, one effective path to reducing incivility appears to be fostering a positive climate that establishes norms for respectful treatment.