

Supervisor Incivility and Turnover Intentions with the Mediating Role of Job Burnout and Moderation of Job Performance

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Abstract

This paper aims at studying the relationship between supervisor incivility and turnover intention while taking job burnout as a mediator and job performance as a moderator. Data have been collected through an adapted questionnaire from 325 employees of public and private banking sector based in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Results confirmed the positive association of supervisor's incivility with turnover intentions and burnout, and a negative relationship between incivility and job performance. Mediation of burnout has also been confirmed between supervisor incivility and turnover intention and job performance moderates the association of supervisor incivility and turnover intention. Respondents suffering from incivility, confirmed job burnout, turnover intentions and poor job performance. Practical, along with the theoretical implications of the study at hand are discussed at the end.

Keywords: Supervisor incivility; Job burnout; Turnover intention; Job performance.

Introduction

Workplace incivility by a supervisor is the uncivil or unfair behavior faced by an employee which negatively affects their mental health and job performance (Laschinger *et al.*, 2013; Rai, 2015). Supervisor incivility is a multi-faceted subject that has recently generated much interest among academicians, practitioners, regulators, and global press (Cortina *et al.*, 2001; Ghosh, Dierkes, & Falletta, 2011). Porath (2011) and Pearson (2013) confirmed a very high percentage of around 98% employees who faced incivility at their workplace, of which 78% further reported their strong turnover intentions. Supervisor incivility and turnover intention is an important issue in contemporary international debates (Rahim *et al.*, 2016). Deep rooted standing of supervisor's incivility has been confirmed by past researches in different industrial and service sectors like higher education institutions (Cortina and Magley, 2009; Sakurai and Jex, 2012), sectors of financial institutions (Lim and Teo, 2009) and court of laws at federal level (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004). Keeping in view the organizational outcomes of lower engagement (Trudel & Reio, 2011), affective commitment (Hershcovis, 2011) and higher levels of job dissatisfaction coupled with intentions to withdraw (Itzkovich, 2015) and practical withdrawals from organizations (Porath & Pearson, 2012).

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In the recent past, research studies indicate an increasing trend towards supervisors' incivility and explore the real causes of their uncivil behavior, with the negative consequences of such behaviors (Cortina *et al.*, 2001; Ghosh *et al.*, 2011; Miner-Rubino & Reed, 2010). A huge amount of past research on supervisors' incivility and its negative consequences remained limited to the culture of USA, UK and Canada. Past research on supervisor or workplace incivility has also been conducted on a small scale in Korea, New Zealand, China, Singapore and India (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Griffin, 2010; Kim & Stoner, 2008; Lim & Lee, 2011; Yeung & Griffin, 2008). A similar trend was also witnessed in Norway where 75% engineers suffered from uncivil behaviors exercised by their supervisors once every six months (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997), and in Asia, by 77% of the respondents. Surveys conducted in China, India, Korea and other Asian countries confirmed uncivil behavior issues faced by almost 77% of respondents at least once in the last working year (Yeung & Griffin, 2008). Due to regular and high amount of uncivil behavior, employees disengaged themselves from efficient work practices, leading to job burnout and turnover intention with negative and damaging end results of poor levels of job performance (Rahim *et al.*, 2016).

Research Gap/Problem Statement

Supervisor incivility mechanisms consist of internal and external systems and procedures used to ensure that management should run the firm for the benefit of the shareholders (Rafferty *et al.*, 2010; Tepper, 2007). For example, individuals who suffered incivility from employees and supervisors reacted negatively. Alternatively, so does a particular coping style lead to a decrease in the frequency of incivility over time and addressing such questions should merit research attention because incivility is not only harmful to target accomplishment but also causes counterproductive work behaviors. A previous study demonstrated that there are individual differences in coping orientations to incivility, as well as the degree of perceived threat (Cortina & Magley, 2009). Targeted with wide incivility, staff eventually leave their organizations frequently (Cortina *et al.*, 2001; Cortina *et al.*, 2002; Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008). Civilized behavior is a set of customs, process, laws, policies, and institutions that directly affect the corporation's performance (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Lim & Teo, 2009; Porath & Pearson, 2010; Reio & Ghosh, 2009).

Link between supervisor incivility, turnover intentions, and job burnout and job performance has become largely unquestioned (Rahim *et al.*, 2016). The relationship among supervisor's incivility and turnover intentions, while considering job burnout as a mediator and job performance as a moderator is missing from the point of view of the research conducted in the banking sector of Pakistan, and to fill this huge research gap, this empirical research has been undertaken.

Significance of the Study

The value-added contribution of this study would be to develop and test a model of supervisor incivility and turnover intentions with the mediating role of job burnout and job performance taken as a moderator, in the context of the banking industry of Pakistan, based in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. This is considered to be among the early researches conducted on these variables in the service sector of Pakistan.

Objectives of the Research

The main research objectives of this study are given below;

- 1) To investigate the impact of supervisor's incivility on turnover intentions
- 2) To investigate the impact of supervisor's incivility on job burnout
- 3) To investigate the impact of supervisor's incivility on job performance
- 4) To investigate the role of job burnout as a mediator among the relation of supervisor's incivility and turnover intentions
- 5) To investigate the role of job performance as a moderator among the relation of supervisor's incivility and turnover intentions

Literature Review

Turnover Intention and Supervisor Incivility

According to Mobley (1979), turnover intentions are an individual's behavioral intention to leave the organization. Leaving an organization voluntarily is referred to as employee turnover (Shaw *et al.*, 2005). It becomes negative and costly for an employee and the organization when an individual decides to leave the organization (Lee *et al.*, 2004). Cascio (2000) stated that the separation cost, the training cost and the replacement cost are the three basic components when computing the overall general cost of employee turnover to an organization. In the United States of America, on average the turnover intention rate is about 15%, which varies in different sectors of manufacturing and service-oriented organizations (Steel *et al.*, 2002). Some past researches confirmed that facing unethical behavior at the workplace may bring the organization to a set of destructive consequences, like strong intentions of turnover intent coupled with voluntary turnover intentions (Pearson *et al.*, 2000). As stated by Hogh, Hoel and Carneiro (2011), a recent research was conducted in Denmark which discovered that the probability of changing or leaving the organization went up by thrice among the employees who suffered from uncivil behavior. The probability of changing or leaving the organization also rose up among the bullied respondents in contrast to those employees who remained unaffected by any sort of unethical workplace behavior. Abbasi & Hollman (2000) stated that in the United States of America, it had been found that different industries in US bore a cost of \$11 billion yearly due to the turnover intentions of employees, in addition to \$1 million for about every ten employees who decided to quit. Lim *et al.* (2008) has

also confirmed a strong and significant relationship among supervisor's incivility, turnover intention and employees' health. Due to workplace incivility, hindrance in total work effort had been noted by employees besides the inefficient use of time on job and overall poor job performance. It even resulted in the employees leaving their jobs, with turnover intentions in the remaining workforce (Pearson & Porath, 2005).

Incivility has been stated as the rude behavior from supervisors and colleagues towards the fellow members or staff, with the intention to harm him or her (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). For many decades, researchers have confirmed widespread existence of uncivil behaviors in organizations globally, for instance, Cortina (2001) discovered that about three-fourth of the participants disclosed experiencing unethical behavior at their work once over the past 5 years in a study conducted in the United States. In addition, it was also confirmed that more than half of the participants accepted to suffer from uncivil and rude behavior, like something personal and painful from different employees at the workplace, about at least once every year (Reio & Ghosh, 2009). Einarsen and Raknes (1997) stated in another study, conducted in the central European country of Norway, that about 75% of the engineering staff working in the manufacturing sector suffered from uncivil behavior once every six months at their workplaces. Yeung and Griffin (2008) stated that about 77% of the respondents surveyed from different manufacturing and service sector organizations from Asian countries, including India, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea and Japan confirmed suffering uncivil or rude behaviors and attitude from their bosses, supervisors or even from their co-workers about at least once every year. So, it means that supervisor incivility and rude behavior is a universal issue that needs to be addressed carefully and urgently from a human resource development professional's point of view (Ghoshb, 2011).

However, if it's not controlled, supervisor incivility will negatively influence important outcomes of every organization such as job satisfaction (Ghosh *et al.*, 2009), workers' physical health (Lim *et al.*, 2008), organizational commitment (Lim & Teo, 2009) and job performance (Porath & Pearson, 2010). In addition, Porath *et al.* (2010) disclosed that those individuals who experienced uncivil behavior, their work quality and performance reduced gradually. It also negatively affects their effort and commitment. They further discovered that 12% of the individuals who tolerated uncivil attitude, had to leave their organization due to the uncivil environment. Lim *et al.*, (2008) also discovered that cyber incivility, which includes unethical e-messages, proved to be positively associated with turnover intention, as well as negatively correlated to the organizational commitment.

Many studies have been conducted on supervisor incivility which show that it has a negative impact on the organizations outcome. Some studies indicate that facing uncivil

or rude behavior at the workplace could bring unexpected and negative consequences like high turnover intentions, coupled with strong intentions of initiating voluntary turnover (Pearson, 2000). Unison (1997) and Vartia (1993) stated on the basis of some studies conducted in the Ireland and Britain that 46% to 60% of targeted people experiencing incivility think of leaving their organizations and industries. Porath and Pearson (2005) stated on the basis of a study conducted in the Canada and the USA, that almost about one out of every eight respondent tries to leave his or her job in order to escape the uncivil and rude workplace situation. The following hypothesis has been developed on the basis of above discussion:

H₁: Supervisor's incivility is positively associated with turnover intentions

Job performance and Supervisor Incivility

Job performance means to achieve a goal within a job, or organization. Due to the hurdles of data collection on job performance from supervisors, past studies based on self-reported measures remained unable to explore the relationship between the supervisor's incivility and employee's job performance. Many past studies confirmed the negative correlations among the supervisor's incivility and employee's work-related performance. It was stated that a supervisor's uncivil behavior leads to poor and limited job performance by an employee. Another study has also confirmed that people who see their colleagues as civil and decent would be more active in their work (Porath *et al.*, 2015). In addition, they observed that persons with better leadership qualities seemed more civil to their colleagues in the organization which positively impacted their performance

Supervisor incivility is an important issue which will continuously decrease the job performance of many employees in the organization. Moreover, Pearson *et al.* (2005) also discovered that individuals who suffered from unethical or uncivil behavior at work, intentionally reduced the quality of their work. It was further confirmed by another study that workplace incivility negatively affected and declined the overall job performance and job satisfaction of many workers (Cortina *et al.*, 2001). On the basis of this brief discussion, the following two hypotheses have been developed:

H₂: Supervisor's incivility is negatively associated with job performance

H₃: Job performance moderates the relationship between supervisor incivility and turnover intention.

Job burnout and Supervisor Incivility

Burnout is a state in which the employee cannot take any further pressure from the job and feels totally discouraged due to stress (Pines & Kafry, 1978). As per Maslach and Leiter (2008), and Maslach *et al.* (2001), job burnout is the combination of three different aspects of depersonalization, emotional exhaustion and the final aspect of

minimal personal level achievement. Emotional exhaustion, usually considered to be the situation of the lowest amount of one's emotional resources and depersonalization, deals with a negative response to employees or other common people; reduced personal achievement deals with the reduction of job capability and output (Fernet, Gagne, & Austin, 2010). Porath and Pearson (2012) stated that incivility has deep rooted association with sadness, anger, fear and absenteeism at duty and workplace, coupled with burnout and dissonance (Kim *et al.*, 2013; Welbourne *et al.*, 2015) Different research scholars have quoted a negative association between burnout and work engagement (Schaufeli 2002, 2008; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Furthermore, it has been found that burnout will lead to depression (Ahola & Hakanen, 2007; Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008). Moreover, job burnout results in poor performance, negatively affects the health of employees, and raises the threat of absenteeism (Hobfoll & Shirom, 1993). Therefore, it can be concluded that job burnout has negative outcomes for both; the individuals who suffer directly and, the other individuals working in the organization (Kahn *et al.*, 2006). Supportive work environment interacts with job burnout for turnover intentions (Kim & Stoner, 2008)

H₄: Supervisor's incivility is positively associated with burnout

H₅: Job burnout mediates the relationship between supervisor incivility and turnover intention

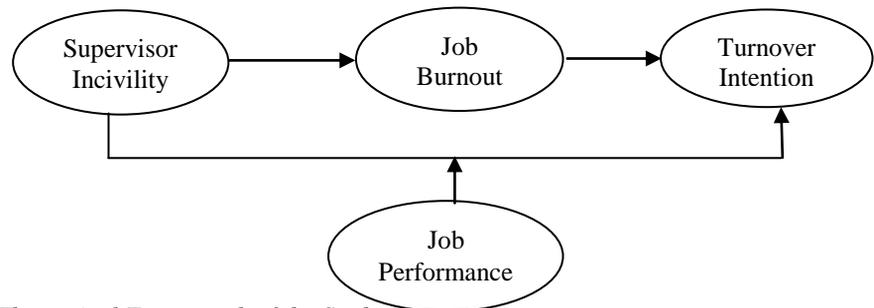


Fig. 1: Theoretical Framework of the Study

Methodology

Sampling and Data Collection Method

For this study data was collected with the help of convenience sampling strategy from 325 bank officials working at supervisory level of different public and private sector banks based in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. 380 questionnaires were distributed to the targeted population and 325 usable questionnaires were received, with the response rate of 85.52%. The questionnaires were distributed through emails and by hand. Out of the total selected population, 60% of the respondents were male, and the remaining 40% were females. Thirty percent respondents were between the age group of twenty to twenty-five, and about forty percent respondents were between the age group of twenty-

seven to thirty, and about thirty percent of respondents were among the age group of forty-five to fifty years.

Measures

All the study variables were measured on the five-point Likert’s scale, where 1 represented “Strongly disagree”, and 5 represented “Strongly agree” for each question statement.

Supervisor incivility

This variable was measured with the use of a 15-item scale from Tepper (2000). The Cronbach’s alpha of this variable was .80 for this study, which meant the variable was highly reliable.

Job burnout

This research variable was measured with the help of a 21-item scale, developed by Maslach and Jackson (1982). The Cronbach’s alpha of this variable was .67 for the present study.

Turnover intention

This variable was measured using a 5-item scale developed by Wayne *et al.* (1997). The Cronbach’s alpha reliability was .66.

Job Performance

This research variable of the study was measured with the help of a 9-item scale of Podsakoff and Mackenzie (1989) and the Cronbach’s alpha of this variable was .80.

Results and Findings

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistic, correlations, and estimates of reliability (coefficient α) for all the measures.

Table 1: *Descriptive, Correlations and Reliabilities*

	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1.Supervisor incivility	3.28	.53	(.80)			
2.Turnover intention	3.30	.67	.91	(.70)		
3.Job burnout	3.41	1.74	.80*	.53*	(.80)	
4.Job performance	3.28	.63	.94*	.94*	.29*	(.80)

Note. $N = 325$; alpha reliabilities are presented in brackets. * $p < .05$

Results in Table 1 display the Cronbach’s alpha values in brackets, the mean, the standard deviation and the correlation values. All the reliability values are in the acceptable range, showing that the scales deployed to the constructs are reliable. The standard deviation values are also acceptable, except for job burnout, which has a higher standard deviation. As far as the correlations are concerned, turnover intention and supervisor incivility are highly correlated. Job performance is also highly correlated with supervisor incivility and turnover intention. Job burnout is also highly correlated with supervisor incivility. On the flip side, job burnout is not highly correlated to job

performance, which probably is an effect of the context in which this relation is presented.

Table 2: *Results of Regression Analysis*

Relationship	β	R ²	ΔR^2
Incivility → Turnover Intention	.67**	.21**	
Incivility → Job Performance	-.94**	.42**	
Incivility+Job Performance	.71*	.53*	.32*
+IncivilityxJob Performance	-.62*		
→ Turnover Intention	.11		
Incivility → Job Burnout	.80**	.36*	
Job Burnout → Turnover Intention	.53*	.24*	
Incivility+Job Burnout → Turnover	.10	.43*	.22*
Intention	.64*		

Note. N=325; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Based on the results of Table 2, it was found that the supervisor incivility has a positive effect on turnover intention, which is in line with the hypothesis H₁. It was also hypothesized that supervisor’s incivility is associated negatively to the job performance. Based on the results showed in Table 2 it was found that supervisor incivility has a negative association with job performance, which is in line with the hypothesis H₂. It was also hypothesized that supervisor incivility is positively associated with burnout. Based on the results given in Table 2, it is confirmed that supervisor incivility is positively associated with burnout, which is in line with the hypothesis H₄. Results also suggest that job performance does moderate the relationship between supervisor incivility and turnover intention, as there is a statistically significant change in R². This is in line with developed hypothesis H₃. It is also clear from the results that the variable of job burnout does mediate the relationship among supervisor’s incivility and overall turnover intention. This result is aligned with hypothesis H₅.

Discussion & Analysis

On the basis of the data analysis, the first hypothesis, that supervisor incivility in any organization has an impact on turnover intention, is supported. The findings of the earlier studies are not in contradiction to these findings. Mobley (1979) stated that the level of supervisor incivility increases with time length and experience, and results in turnover intentions. However, Cortina (2001) stated that supervisor incivility increases when supervisor have more authority in the organization.

When it comes to the role of supervisor in any organization, most studies confirm that educated and experienced supervisors are ruder in comparison to junior ones. Reio and Ghosh (2009), and Porath (2015) stated with empirical proof that experienced supervisors are more rude and harsh than less experienced supervisors. However, this study shows a slightly higher mean value for less experienced supervisors as compared to

experienced supervisors. The difference is statistically significant. So, the study shows significant difference in supervisor incivility between less educated and experienced supervisors, and otherwise. The main hypotheses of the study at hand stated that the mediating role of job burnout with supervisor's incivility and employee turnover intention are relevant and are in line with the generalized relations stated by Welbourne *et al.* (2015) and Kim *et al.* (2013). Moreover, the conceptualization hypothesizing a moderating role of job performance in the relationship between supervisor incivility and turnover intention is proven through the results of this study. This is in line with the studies of Pearson *et al.* (2005) and Cortina *et al.* (2001).

Conclusion

Data analysis of the current study showed that supervisor incivility causes a higher incidence of turnover intention in employees. The study by Tepper (2000) has also shown that supervisor incivility increases as more authority is given to them, resulting in employees' fearing their supervisors, and gradually developing turnover intentions. Current study findings confirm that with a decrease in supervisor incivility, job performance improves.

The third hypothesis of this study states that supervisor incivility is positively associated with burnout, and data analysis of the current study is in support of this hypothesis. The fourth hypothesis of this study was related to the mediating role of job burnout in the association of supervisor's incivility and employee turnover intention. The fifth hypothesis of this study was about the moderating role of job performance in the association of supervisor's incivility and turnover intention. Fernet, Gagne and Austin (2010) stated that burnout increases when supervisors are more uncivil. This study also suggests that burnout increases when supervisors behave unethically, mediating the relationship of supervisor incivility and turnover intentions.

Practical and Theoretical Implications

The implications of the current study suggest appropriate interventions to enhance supervisors' ethical manners and social skills, which are associated with one's ability to speak in a clear and convincing manner, by knowing what to say, when to say and how to say it, to the employees in an organization. Rahim (2014) stated and suggested to utilize the pool of social skill in developing, maintaining and sustaining healthy and positive relationships among the employees, to behave appropriately for strengthening human relations and to tackle and solve the issues of employees with respect and without demeaning any representative of the organization. A pool of social skills will help the supervisor in interacting appropriately with the influences of internal and external environment to uplift employees' performance and satisfaction. Previous studies have also suggested that different entrepreneurial initiatives, taken while utilizing

social skills, helps in effective interaction, and in creating a winning situation in the organizations. Training for supervisors is essential in the areas of social intelligence and social skills, in order to reverse the trend of supervisor's incivility and to minimize the employee turnover intentions.

Limitations & Future Research Directions

One of the limitations of this study is the usage of convenience sampling technique with a large sample size. The data is collected from only one sector - the banking industry of Pakistan through survey questionnaire, which is always criticized due to the generalization problem. The responses are limited for this study, and the respondents may be biased in their responses which may lead to inaccurate results. Therefore, the results are totally dependent on the respondents' honesty and fairness.

On the basis of the findings of the current study, it is suggested that further research may be conducted to enhance the understanding of the relationships of supervisor's incivility and its impact on employee turnover intentions. For future research, other criteria variables could include different aspects of organizational justice, like distributive ones and employee citizenship behavior. Another aspect of research in the future could be the well-designed approach of training the supervisors for the development of positive and civil working attitudes. Field experiments could become more beneficial in collecting the consequences of positivity and civility training modules for employee and organizational end results. It could also be suggested, regarding the future research, to use scenario driven and laboratory-oriented research studies that could probably regulate the observed extraneous variables for the improved understanding of the negative effects of rude behavior and supervisors' incivility.

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