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TITLE: From incivility to tranquillity: A horizon of workplace harmony and solutions

TRACK: ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY TRACK

SUMMARY: This study investigates supervisor incivility (SI), which negatively impacts employee well-being, performance, and workplace relationships. Using a systematic literature review, the research identifies personal, relational, and organizational buffering mechanisms that mitigate SI's harmful effects. In addition, this paper offers a conceptual model in which few major buffering mechanisms are discussed in depth. The key factors include self-compassion, workplace humor, and workplace friendships, which help minimize emotional numbness, aggression toward family, and quiet quitting intentions. The study offers a theoretical framework integrating Social Exchange and Spillover-Crossover theories. It highlights the importance of organizational policies, stress management programs in the workplace, and coping strategies to promote a respectful workplace environment. The findings offer practical and theoretical insights for mitigating SI's adverse effects and guiding future research.

From incivility to tranquillity: A horizon of workplace harmony and solutions

Abstract

Supervisor incivility (SI) is a ubiquitous workplace issue that adversely impacts employee well-being, performance, and interpersonal relationships. Grounded in the roots of dark leadership, SI manifests through rude remarks and public defamation, leading to emotional numbness and various withdrawal behaviors. This study systematically reviews personal, relational, and organizational-level buffering mechanisms that mitigate the adverse effects of SI, including self-compassion, workplace humor, and workplace friendships. Our findings highlight the role of organizational policies, stress management programs, and personal coping strategies in fostering a dignified and harmonious work environment. This review offers a foundation for future research and provides practical interventions to neutralize SI's detrimental effects.

Introduction

The concept of dark leadership majorly encompasses negative and harmful behaviors, including ignoring, abusing, or even exploiting the employees in the workplace. The consequencess associated with these forms of leadership style can be to say not the least, destructive and catastrophic for employees' mental and emotional health. A study conducted by Andersson and Pearson (1999) contends that one of the forms of dark leadership is supervisor incivility, which is lower in intensity than other forms of aberrant leadership styles (deviant or negative approaches to leadership) but can still have serious repercussions both for employees and organizations. Supervisor incivility (SI) can be defined as uncivil behaviors initiated by the managers in the workplace, which includes practices such as publicly slandering employees, passing derogatory comments on them, intentionally ignoring them, and behaving rudely with them (Shin and Hur, 2021). Enveloped in the darkness of supervisor incivility, employees find themselves entangled in the threads of anxiety and hopelessness. Experiencing incivility from supervisors is strongly associated with psychological distress (Abubakar, 2018), counterproductive work behaviors (Naeem *et al.*, 2024), revenge intentions (Akgunduz *et al.*, 2023), withdrawal behaviors, and higher turnover intentions (Serenko and Abubakar, 2022; Jiang *et al.*, 2023) among employees. Despite the existing literature lacks a collated review emphasizing on buffering mechanisms that can shield employees from such harmful effects. Past investigations have explored individual-level constructs separately, but a multifaceted framework still remains unexplored. Given the destructive outcomes extensively discussed in the prior studies, it is now imperative to shift the focus towards mitigation strategies that can effectively address the severe consequences. Thus, to curb the negative effects of supervisor incivility on employees' overall psychological, physical, and emotional health, we have investigated various boundary conditions that would help mitigate the overall impact of supervisors' mistreatment. To fulfill the purpose of this study, we have conducted an extensive search strategy over different databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest, Emerald, Taylor and Francis, Elsevier, and Google Scholar. A total of 200 papers were identified in which around 150 papers were filtered out which did not match the scope of our study. We established certain inclusion and exclusion criteria, which allowed us to systematically select and retain relevant studies while excluding those that did not meet the specific criteria (see Table 1). The total number of papers finalized for review was 33. This

review not only distinguishes mitigation strategies but also offers the groundwork for building various conceptual propositions for empirical testing and validation.

Criterion	Inclusion Criterion	Exclusion Criterion
Type of Study	Journal article- empirical investigation in peer-reviewed journals which includes supervisor incivility as either independent or dependent variable	Review paper, conference proceedings, book chapters; and studies where SI is considered as a moderator

Table I: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The prominent buffering mechanisms used in the past research were further classified into personal (individual-focused), relational (group/community-focused), and organizational-level (industry-focused) strategies to better understand how different categories aid in alleviating the impact.

Personal level buffering mechanism	Relational level buffering mechanism	Organizational-level buffering mechanism
Big five personality	coworker support	Organizational Support
Job involvement	Social job crafting	
Grit		
emotion regulation ability		
Perceived Insider Status		
Core self-evaluation		
Moral identity		
Political skill		
Cognitive reappraisal		
locus of control		

Table II: Table showing the buffering mechanisms used in prior studies

Findings of Review- The findings of past studies have been summarized in Table. 2, wherein the majority of these studies have proposed personal-level moderators to curb the harmful effects on employee creativity (Liu *et al.*, 2019; Anjaly and Nemat, 2024), service performance (Cho *et al.*, 2016), job satisfaction (Alola *et al.*, 2018), organizational citizenship behavior

(Karatepe *et al.*, 2019), employee engagement, work-to-family conflict, and so on. At the personal level, boundary conditions such as core self-evaluation, moral identity, grit, and locus of control play a crucial role in mitigating the adverse effects of SI. Employees who develop emotion regulation ability and engage in their job practices are better equipped to handle the stress associated with SI. The relational moderators, which include social job crafting (Naeem *et al.*, 2024) and co-worker support, enhance employees' ability to endure and overcome challenging phases of SI incidents. The organizational level boundary condition, such as the presence of organizational support (Rodriguez and Zhou, 2023), significantly buffers the negative incivility outcome relationship. When employees in the organization begin to support each other, the adversity disappears, and happiness prevails. Additionally, these levels do not frequently work together to create an interactive environment where organizational and personal supports enhance resilience mechanisms. These boundary conditions, if channeled properly by the organizations, can serve as intervention strategies to curb the effects of SI. We aim to provide various intervention strategies for future scholars to cross-validate the concepts, and for the organizations to practice these intervention strategies to provide a better workplace experience to their employees. Thus, this review lays the groundwork for theory-driven propositions for further empirical investigations that would examine multi-level resilience pathways in organizational contexts.

Theoretical Framework and Proposition of the current study

As this investigation purports to bridge the conceptual gaps by presenting a multi-level theoretical perspective, we offer three distinct yet interconnected spheres of mitigation: personal, interpersonal, and organizational.

Intrapersonal mitigating factor related to incivility

Experiencing incivility at the workplace has been found to be associated with emotional depletion, which in turn contributes to decreased employee performance (Jawahar and Schreurs, 2017). Building on this, we assert that supervisor incivility can also lead to emotional numbness, wherein employees become completely disengaged and unresponsive to workplace interactions as a coping mechanism. This withdrawal might serve as a defense mechanism but can also diminish employee engagement and well-being. However, to buffer this negative association, we posit that self-compassion might serve as a protective mechanism that alleviates this impact by instigating emotional resilience and self-kindness. Self-compassion has been recognized as a valuable personal resource linked to a wide range of psychological outcomes, including lower levels of depression, stress, and burnout as well as higher well-being (Dev *et al.*, 2020). In addition, individuals with higher self-compassion are better able to regulate negative emotions and maintain psychological balance (Neff, 2003), reducing the possibility of experiencing emotional numbness in response to incivility. Thus, self-compassion moderates the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional numbness, weakening its adverse effects. Grounded on these findings, we expect that self-compassion will intervene against the durability of incivility on employees' emotional well-being. Thus we propose that:

P1: Supervisor incivility is positively related to emotional numbness.

P2: Self-compassion buffers the relationship between supervisor incivility and emotional numbness in such a manner that individuals with higher self-compassion experience lower emotional numbness in response to incivility.

Interpersonal buffers related to incivility

The repercussions associated with supervisor incivility can transcend organizational boundaries, leading to displaced anger toward family members. As employees find it difficult to regulate the stress, frustration, and agony caused by workplace mistreatment, they consider it more convenient to shift their emotions towards easy targets i.e. family members. This phenomenon can be understood through the lens of the spillover-crossover model, which states that negative workplace experiences can shift into personal life, impacting interpersonal relationships (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013). However, we assert that positive workplace humor moderates this relationship by serving as a psychological buffer that aids employees manage their emotional distress. Individuals engaging in humor facilitate positive reappraisal and diminish the probability of carrying workplace frustration into family dynamics (Cooper, 2008). Studies suggest that humor at workplace can attenuate the harmful effects of workplace stress by helping in promoting relaxation (Lippitt, 1982) and enhancing effective communication (Sherman, 1988). Therefore, workplace humor moderates the link between supervisor incivility and carrying aggression toward family members, mitigating its negative impact. Thus we propose that:

P3: Supervisor incivility is positively associated with aggression toward family members.

P4: Workplace humor moderates the association between supervisor incivility and aggression toward family members, such that employees who indulge in workplace humor are less likely to express aggression at home.

Organizational level buffers associated with incivility

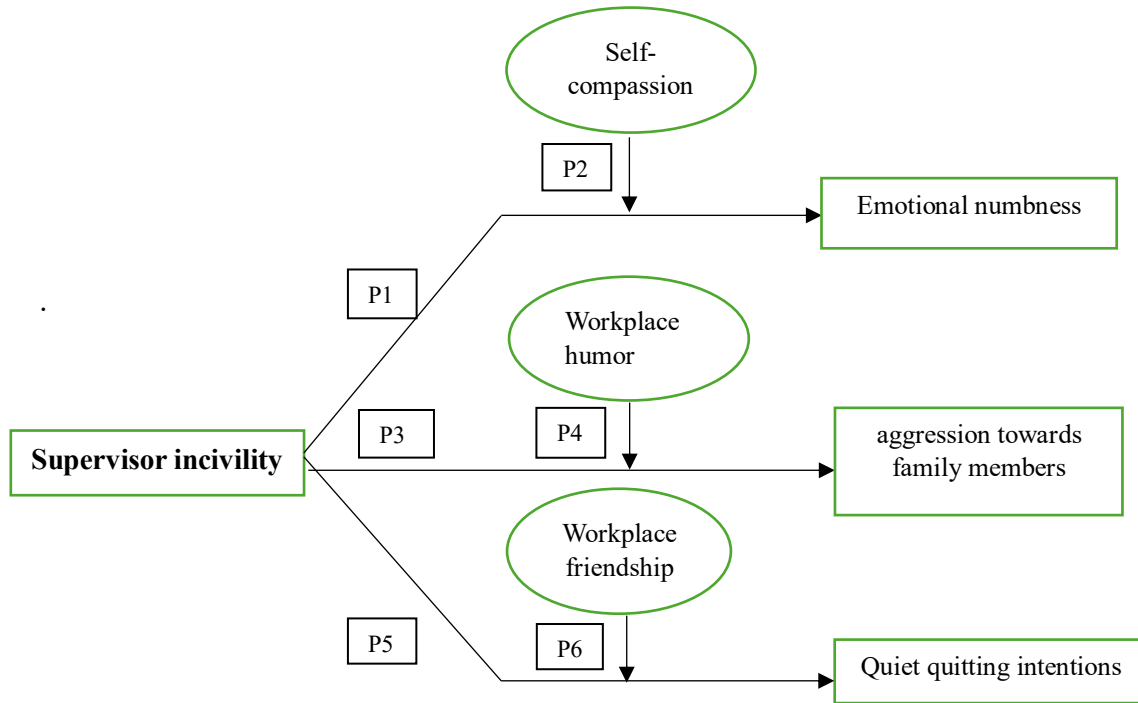
Supervisor incivility fosters a negative work environment which leads to employees engaging in quiet quitting intentions which can be defined as “fulfilling the minimal demands of one's work and exerting no more energy, time, or passion than is absolutely essential” (Serenko, 2023). Rooted in Social Exchange Theory, workplace dynamics function on the principle of reciprocity; when individuals experience mistreatment, they tend to retaliate by minimizing their efforts (Blau, 1964). Thus, to disrupt this cycle we propose that workplace friendship might neutralize the negative effects associated with incivility. Positive interactions in the workplace creates an empowering work culture, by fostering a sense of attachment that helps mend the negative consequences of supervisory mistreatment, Based on these findings, we propose that:

P5: Supervisor incivility is positively associated with quiet quitting intentions.

P6: Workplace friendship acts as a moderator in the link between supervisor incivility and quiet quitting intentions, such that individuals with stronger workplace friendships show lower quiet quitting tendencies despite being prone to incivility.

Proposed research framework

The visual representation below integrates the proposed associations and moderators across micro, meso, and macro levels, offering an integrated framework to guide future empirical investigations.



Conclusion

This study emphasizes on the often-overlooked consequences of supervisor incivility and presents key mitigation strategies across micro, meso, and macro levels. By noting self-compassion, workplace humor, and workplace friendships as potential buffering mechanisms, we present a structured and cohesive framework for addressing SI's adverse impacts on employee well-being, interpersonal relationships, and workplace productivity. Our findings highlight the need for immediate implementation of organizational policies that promote safe feedback channels, stress management initiatives, and supportive workplace culture to curb incivility. This work provides the first comprehensive review of the literature that focuses exclusively on SI mitigation strategies and offers a foundation for future scholars to empirically validate these strategies. By integrating these insights, both organizations and scholars can advance in fostering healthier more respectful workplaces where employees flourish. Lastly, to help the victims through this research we also suggest that individuals experiencing deviant behaviors of the supervisors must engage in activities like meditation and gratitude journaling. Meditation aids in cultivating awareness of the mind and soul, which in turn helps in reducing anxiety related to the past. Gratitude journaling is a popular writing exercise that helps individuals process their negative emotions and emphasize positive memories thereby improving well-being (Ruini and Mortara, 2022). These individual practices can serve as effective tools to regain emotional stability.

To put it briefly, our study contributes fresh perspectives and practical solutions to address this expanding issue. It encourages the professional and academic communities to acknowledge the gravity of supervisor rudeness and take decisive action to lessen its occurrence in contemporary settings. This study creates new avenues for theoretical development and practical implementation by emphasizing healing, resilience, and constructive organizational behaviors.

Development Plan

This paper is currently in the development phase, with the purpose of fully refining the theoretical model by the time of final submission. To further strengthen the framework, a systematic literature review of incivility research is planned. Constructive feedback and comments would be highly valuable in shaping the model. Additionally, we welcome specific suggestions, such as potential constructs that may have been overlooked, to enhance the robustness of the paper.

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