

Linking workplace incivility to citizenship performance: The combined effects of affective commitment and conscientiousness

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Summary

Although all human relationships are believed to generally adhere to the basic tenets of social exchange theory, recent research suggests that exchange processes may vary as a function of individual differences. We tested this possibility by examining whether the effects of uncivil workplace exchanges on employee attitudes and behavior were moderated by conscientiousness. Using matched data from 190 job incumbents and their supervisors, we found (i) the effect of workplace incivility on citizenship performance to be transmitted through affective commitment and (ii) the strength of this effect to depend on individual differences in conscientiousness. As such, the overall pattern of relationships supported moderated mediation, in that, the indirect effect of workplace incivility on citizenship performance through affective commitment was stronger for individuals high (as compared with those low) in conscientiousness. These findings broaden the focus of prior research by illustrating that, in addition to the mediating effects of cognitive and stress-based factors, social exchange processes are important for understanding incivility's adverse effects on citizenship performance and that such exchanges are moderated by individual differences in conscientiousness. Copyright © 2011 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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In the same way that positive social relationships are necessary for the smooth functioning of society in general (Diener & Seligman, 2004), a failure to observe “basic rules of interpersonal demeanor” and to act with “social intelligence” can contribute to a toxic work environment (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000, p. 123). Within an employment setting, this may involve “putting down” colleagues, making demeaning comments to subordinates, excluding coworkers from friendship networks, and addressing others in a disrespectful or unprofessional manner. Such behaviors, what Andersson and Pearson (1999) have dubbed “workplace incivility,” undermine social relationships, as they not only violate norms for mutual respect but also conflict with the fundamental human need for positive social bonds. In doing so, workplace incivility adversely affects employee attitudes and behaviors, including job performance. Targeted employees may respond, for instance, by intentionally disengaging from assigned tasks, refraining from activities that go beyond their job specifications (i.e., citizenship behaviors), and reducing their workplace commitment (Pearson et al., 2000; Porath & Pearson, 2009).

Beyond confirming these direct effects, the underlying mechanisms through which workplace incivility negatively affects employee attitudes and behaviors have been largely unexplored. The few studies that have investigated the pathways by which incivility affects employee attitudes and behavior have focused on cognitive and stress-based

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factors (Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008; Porath & Erez, 2007). Given that incidents of workplace incivility have been conceptualized as a reflection of the social exchange relationships that develop among employees and between employees and an employer (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999), there is reason to believe that other factors beyond cognitive processes and individual stress reactions are important for understanding incivility's adverse consequences. Accordingly, drawing on the social exchange literature, as well as related research on interpersonal mistreatment and citizenship behaviors, we believe affective commitment—a relational construct indicative of social exchanges (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007)—plays a key role in understanding the mechanisms through which workplace incivility produces negative effects. To this end, we argue that adopting a relational view can complement justice-based and stress-based theories of incivility (e.g., Cortina, 2008; Cortina & Magley, 2009). The essence of this perspective is the idea that mistreatment of “one person by another is a relational phenomenon involving their mutual role behaviors vis-à-vis each other” and that such behavior “must be understood as a function of a relationship that develops between a victim and a perpetrator rather than solely by their individual attributes” (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004, pp. 1024–5). In this respect, we believe that a consideration of the underlying mechanisms through which workplace incivility may have its effects—when combined with other research investigating individual differences in reactions to negative workplace events—will further the development of an integrated model that explores the full impact of incivility's adverse consequences.

Thus, in addition to believing affective commitment may *mediate* the impact of workplace incivility, we draw on research suggesting that the effects of incivility may be shaped by a victim's dispositional characteristics (e.g., Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001; Pearson & Porath, 2004). In doing so, we answer the recent call to consider individual differences beyond simple demographics in explaining the consequences of workplace incivility. Penhaligon, Louis, and Restubog (2009), in particular, have questioned whether responses to workplace provocations are influenced by an individual's personality. Reason, as well as emerging findings on how targeted individuals' characteristics provoke incivility (Milam, Spitzmueller, & Penney, 2009), suggests that the performance of some employees may be less affected by workplace events, including incivility, depending on their personality. Such research would be especially welcome given the limited empirical work on how experiencing workplace incivility affects specific aspects of performance (Porath & Erez, 2007). We therefore examined whether conscientiousness plays a *moderating* role in influencing employees' responses to workplace incivility.

Theoretical Background

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) is one of the most robust and widely used perspectives in organizational research (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In essence, social exchange theory proposes that interpersonal interactions are guided by an underlying norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). Within a work setting, this norm would include returning favorable treatment by superiors and coworkers in kind. Whereas most research has focused on positive exchanges, social relationships may also be characterized by negative reciprocity (Perugini, Gallucci, Presaghi & Ercolani, 2003), whereby incidents of unfavorable treatment by superiors or coworkers prompt employees to reciprocate the treatment they receive. Such interactions are described in the incivility literature as “tit-for-tat” exchanges of social resources (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Although Gouldner (1960) believed that, in general, the basic tenets of social exchange theory were universal, recent research suggests that exchange processes may vary as a function of individual differences (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Shore, Coyle-Shapiro, Chen, & Tetrick, 2009). Indeed, individuals may vary in their beliefs about the appropriateness of negative reciprocity or in their ability to otherwise reciprocate (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Pearson & Porath, 2004, 2005). In this regard, research further suggests that personality is an important predictor of how an individual reacts to imbalanced social exchanges and unfavorable work perceptions (Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, & Barrick, 2004; Cullen & Sackett, 2003). As Kamdar and Van Dyne (2007) note, however,

personality and social exchange relationships have been considered as predictors of employee performance in two largely separate literatures.

To this end, this study draws on these literatures to demonstrate that reactions to workplace incivility vary according to individual differences in conscientiousness. In that incidents of workplace incivility are hostile exchanges that develop among employees and between employees and an employer (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), the norm of reciprocity that is central to social exchange theory is particularly relevant to this study. Moreover, negative reciprocity has been shown to be associated with conscientiousness (Perugini et al., 2003). Thus, guided by research that suggests that reactions to perceived mistreatment may be affected by characteristics of a focal target (Pearson & Porath, 2004; Pearson et al., 2001; Tepper, 2007), we examined whether the effects of uncivil workplace exchanges on employee attitudes and behavior are moderated by individual differences in conscientiousness.

Study Hypotheses

Citizenship performance

Citizenship research has often viewed such discretionary actions, in which employees are willing to go beyond their prescribed duties, from a social exchange perspective. As noted, building on the norm of reciprocity, social exchange theory suggests that employees will reciprocate favorable treatment from their superiors or coworkers (e.g., Bowler & Brass, 2006). Conversely, employees who experience unfavorable exchange relationships are prone to be unwilling to exceed minimal performance standards or extend effort beyond their specified role requirements (Lynch, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 1999). Further, employees who encounter hostility in dealing with others in their work environment have been shown to be more inclined to withhold these extra-role behaviors (Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002). At the same time, incidents of workplace incivility have likewise been viewed through a social exchange lens as a form of negative reciprocity that influences an individual's actions toward others (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Past studies have similarly drawn on social exchange theory to explain the effects of negative workplace interactions on citizenship behavior (Aryee, Sun, Chen, & Debrah, 2007; Parzefall & Salin, 2010).

We chose to examine the effects of experienced workplace incivility on organization-directed citizenship behaviors because such mistreatment may originate from any member of an organization, regardless of a target's status or position. Prior research has shown that unfavorable treatment from organization members can influence employees' feelings toward the organization and their performance (Eisenberger et al., 2010). As such, workplace incivility can permeate throughout an organization and create a hostile or otherwise negative environment (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Lim, Cortina and Magley, 2008). It has been observed that when employees view workplace incivility as stemming from their employing organization, they are likely to reduce "their contributions to the organization as a whole" (Pearson et al., 2000, p. 128).

The mediating role of affective commitment

Within a workplace context, affective commitment is indicative of an employee's positive emotional attachment to an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Noting that "social exchange relationships emphasize the obligations, attachments, and identification that employees feel toward their employers," Cropanzano, Rupp, and Byrne (2003, p. 161) have used affective commitment to operationalize employees' social exchange relationships with their employing organization. Further, several studies have suggested that high levels of employee commitment signify high-quality social exchanges and influence citizenship behaviors (Lavelle, 2010; Zellars & Tepper, 2003). Accordingly, we propose that, to the extent that affective commitment is a manifestation of employees' social exchange

relationships with their employing organization, it will mediate the relationship between workplace incivility and citizenship performance.

Our reasoning is based on the notion that, to the degree employees experience workplace incivility that is either allowed or condoned, or in some instances even encouraged, by their employing organization, this will be seen as an act of negative reciprocity and erode their sense of affective commitment. It is, thus, logical to expect a negative relationship between experienced workplace incivility and affective commitment. A link between workplace incivility and affective commitment is further suggested by social exchange theory, which holds individuals' emotional attachment to their employing organization is a function of their perceived interpersonal treatment. In this connection, it is believed that as long as the norm of reciprocity is not violated, individuals will maintain an emotional attachment to their employing organization (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Indeed, Shore, Tetrick, Lynch, and Barksdale (2006) reported finding that the quality of employee–employer social exchanges tends to be positively correlated with affective commitment. Although it has been suggested (e.g., Lavelle et al., 2007) that exchange processes may function more strongly when employee responses to social exchanges are directed toward a focal individual, other research (e.g., Kamdar, McAllister, & Turban, 2006; Levinson, 1965; Liden, Bauer, & Erdogan, 2004) demonstrates that “employees tend to attribute the actions of organizational representatives to the intent of the organization rather than solely to the personal motives of its representatives” (Eisenberger, 2009; Eisenberger et al., 2010). It may be argued, then, that individuals hold an organization responsible for allowing workplace incivility because, as observed earlier, such mistreatment is deemed acceptable (Aryee et al., 2007; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). Such “cross-level” or “spillover” effects (Lavelle et al., 2007) are illustrative of workplace incivility's far-reaching impact.

Along these same lines, research has shown that citizenship behavior may be adversely affected when employees experience negative exchange-based relationships (e.g., Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007; Erdogan & Liden, 2002; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). These unbalanced relationships create unfavorable perceptions of a work environment, prompting employees to feel anguish or indignation. Evidence suggests that such feelings, which can be shaped in part by workplace incivility, encourage employees to decrease their formal task effort and citizenship performance (Pearson & Porath, 2005; Zellars et al., 2002). Thus, drawing on models of workplace behavior in which employee attitudes immediately precede (and have a direct causal impact on) job performance (Riketta, 2008; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006), we predicted that affective commitment would mediate the relationship between experienced workplace incivility and citizenship performance. In this regard, affective commitment is not only reflected in a positive emotional attachment to an organization but also in the internalization of work-related problems and a willingness to “go the extra mile” (Meyer et al., 2002). To this end, we reasoned that declines in affective commitment will prompt employees to engage in fewer citizenship behaviors. To date, there has been no prior research concerning the mediating role of affective commitment vis-à-vis workplace incivility and citizenship performance. Affective commitment, however, has been established as an outcome (negative) of workplace incivility (Kain & Jex, 2008) and as an antecedent (positive) of citizenship performance (Meyer et al., 2002). We, therefore, hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 1: Affective commitment will mediate the relationship between experienced workplace incivility and citizenship performance.

The moderating role of conscientiousness

In addition to hypothesizing that affective commitment would mediate the link between workplace incivility and citizenship performance, we further expected that the first stage of this mediated or indirect effect would be conditional on the interactive influence of conscientiousness. This expectation reflects an overall pattern of moderated mediation (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). As explained in the succeeding paragraphs, we anticipated a stronger indirect effect (of workplace incivility on citizenship performance through affective commitment) among employees high in conscientiousness in comparison with their counterparts low in conscientiousness.

We were interested in conscientiousness for several reasons. Conscientious individuals are organized, efficient, systematic, and dependable (McCrae & John, 1992). They value the “diligent performance of role behavior” and emphasize focusing on the task at hand (Hofmann & Jones, 2005, p. 513). Because they set high standards for themselves and others, the conduct and effort of conscientious individuals are associated with expectations and norms that support and reinforce behavior that is critical to performance. To the degree that conscientiousness reinforces norm adherence (Marcus & Schuler, 2004), these qualities would be expected to heighten their displeasure with behaviors (incidents of incivility) that violate workplace norms and do not necessarily focus on performance (Hofmann & Jones, 2005). Moreover, to the extent conscientious individuals feel that their employing organization tolerates incivility among employees, we believe their positive emotional attachment to the organization will be negatively influenced, and their tendency to take ownership of work-related problems will diminish (Meyer et al., 2002), thus, prompting a decline in affective commitment.

Collateral research provides support for this reasoning. Crow, Hartman, Hammond, and Fok (1995) found that individuals who tend to be dutiful, responsible, and hardworking (i.e., conscientious) are more sensitive to sexual and non-sexual harassment, two constructs closely related to incivility (Lim & Cortina, 2005). Flaherty and Moss (2007) have likewise suggested that because they value success and the benefits their workplace contributions afford (e.g., appropriate or favorable treatment), conscientious individuals are especially sensitive to violations of the implicit rules underlying social exchanges (p. 2553). Stronger negative reactions are also likely among conscientious individuals because they seek to develop and maintain long-term relationships with their employing organizations and because they value relational obligations (Raja, Johns, & Ntalianis, 2004). Moreover, given the propensity of conscientious individuals to follow rules, choose their words with care, and prefer order and regularity (Goldberg, 1999), we further reasoned that, to the extent workplace incivility is viewed as violating expectations relating to diligent role performance (Hofmann & Jones, 2005), individuals high (versus low) in conscientiousness would react more negatively to behavior they perceive as disruptive and not focused on the task at hand. Such unfavorable reactions to unbalanced and valued social exchanges would naturally be expected to work against heightened affective commitment.

In extending our logic to the downstream consequences of workplace incivility as they relate to citizenship performance, we reasoned as follows: Among highly conscientious employees, the indirect effect of workplace incivility on citizenship performance would be transmitted more strongly through its impact on affective commitment. Owing to their heightened sensitivity to negative social exchanges (i.e., incidences of workplace incivility), we expected the attachment individuals high in conscientiousness feel for their employing organization—and, thus, their citizenship performance—to be affected more strongly than their less conscientious counterparts. For these counterparts, negative social exchanges are less likely to affect their attitudes (i.e., affective commitment) or behaviors (i.e., citizenship performance) because they are less likely to feel that individuals have an obligation or duty to their colleagues or employers to adhere to the norm of reciprocity by responding to others in kind (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Given their indifference to norms relating to fair treatment, mutual respect, and the fulfillment of work expectations (Cullen & Sackett, 2003), we expected that the indirect effect of incivility on citizenship performance (through affective commitment) would be weaker for this group. Thus, on the basis of the available literature and reasoning discussed earlier, we hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 2: Affective commitment will mediate the effect of workplace incivility on citizenship performance, and the (first stage of this) effect will be moderated by conscientiousness.

Method

Sample

The study sample consisted of 221 job incumbents who were attending classes at a land-grant university located in a large urban area of the southeastern USA. The sample was approximately two-thirds male (64 per cent), with an

average age of 22 years (range 19–46 years); worked on average 23.9 hours per week; and had on average 5.7 years of work experience. The participants were employed in a diverse range of for-profit and not-for-profit industries, organizations, and jobs (thereby, increasing the generalizability of our results), including foreman, accounting clerk, account services representative, bank teller, data analyst, sales associate, editor, project manager, pharmacy technician, computer technician, and food server.

Procedure

In an effort to reduce common method variance, we obtained our data from multiple sources and at multiple points in time. Specifically, we developed separate online surveys and administered them to job incumbents and their supervisors. We assured both job incumbents and supervisors of confidentiality and provided informed consent. We obtained conscientiousness scores from job incumbents in an initial round of data collection and workplace incivility and affective commitment scores in a second round one month later. Temporally separating measures of focal variables has been shown to decrease common method variance by reducing consistency motifs, item demand characteristics, and item priming effects (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

We collected citizenship performance ratings from supervisors. To match job incumbents' responses with their supervisors' assessment of citizenship, we asked job incumbents to provide their own name, as well as the name and contact information for their direct supervisor. We emailed supervisors a link to an online citizenship-performance rating form; the accompanying message contained the name of the employee to be rated. As an additional check, we asked supervisors to enter the name of the employee they had been asked to rate on the companion form. We sent reminder follow-up emails approximately two weeks later. We then emailed non-respondents a printed copy of the individualized citizenship-performance rating form and a postage-paid return envelope. If, after two weeks, they had not responded, we contacted them by telephone. Our efforts achieved an 86 per cent supervisor response rate, as the final study sample consisted of 190 subordinate–supervisor dyads.

Measures

Incivility

We measured incivility using the Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). The WIS consists of seven items that gauge the frequency with which the respondents experienced workplace incivility in dealing with superiors or coworkers during the past year (0=*never*; 4=*frequently*). Sample items include “Put you down or was condescending to you” and “Made demeaning or derogatory remarks about you.” We averaged the responses to the seven items such that high scores reflect higher levels of workplace incivility.

Conscientiousness

We measured conscientiousness using 30 items from the (IPIP; Goldberg et al., 2006). The respondents indicated the extent of agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree*; 5=*strongly agree*). Sample items include “I am always prepared” and “I do things according to a plan.” We computed the scores by averaging across items, with higher scores indicative of higher levels of conscientiousness.

Affective commitment

We used Allen and Meyer's (1990) 8-item measure to assess affective commitment. The respondents indicated the extent of agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree*; 5=*strongly agree*). Sample items include “I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own” and “I do not feel ‘emotionally attached’ to this organization” (reverse scored). We averaged the responses to the eight items such that high scores reflect higher levels of affective commitment.

Citizenship performance

Supervisors rated job incumbents' citizenship performance with five items from Lee and Allen's (2002) organization citizenship behavior measure. Supervisors indicated the extent of agreement with each item on a 5-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree*; 5=*strongly agree*). Sample items include "Offers ideas to improve the functioning of the organization" and "Demonstrates concern about the image of the organization." We coded the ratings so that high scores indicate a higher level of agreement.

Control variables

Research suggests female and minority employees experience incivility and other types of harassment more frequently than their male and Caucasian counterparts (Cortina et al., 2001, 2002). We therefore controlled for gender and race in our analyses. Moreover, we also included neuroticism and agreeableness as controls because neurotic and disagreeable individuals are more likely to experience incivility (Milam et al., 2009). We scored both measures of personality, which were taken from the IPIP (Goldberg et al., 2006), on a 5-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree*; 5=*strongly agree*) so that high scores indicate higher levels of the respective characteristics.

Data analysis strategy

To test Hypothesis 1, we examined a mediation model in which the effects of experienced workplace incivility on citizenship performance are transmitted through affective commitment. Given drawbacks associated with Baron and Kenny's (1986) traditional multistep procedure for testing mediation (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002; MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Shrout & Bolger, 2002), we bootstrapped the sampling distribution of the indirect effect [defined in Figure 1 as the product of the $X \rightarrow M$ path (a) and the $M \rightarrow Y$ path (b), or ab] by employing an SPSS (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL) macro developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008). To test Hypothesis 2, we used two separate techniques to assess moderated mediation. First, we utilized an SPSS macro developed by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007) to estimate the indirect effect ab with a bootstrap approach and, in doing so, derived a confidence interval for the population value of ab at conditional levels of the hypothesized moderator. In addition, we followed procedures outlined in Edwards and Lambert (2007) to compute the indirect effect ab with reduced form equations and then used a constrained nonlinear regression (CNLR) module to estimate the associated coefficients from 1000 bootstrap samples. We likewise determined whether the indirect effect ab differed at select values of the hypothesized moderator. To illustrate the results, we plotted the indirect effect at values plus or minus one SD from the mean of the hypothesized moderator variable and conducted simple slope analyses based on procedures described by Edwards and Lambert (see also Aiken & West, 1991).

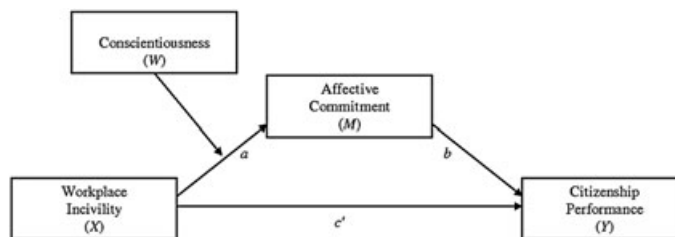


Figure 1. Path diagram of hypothesized model. Note: The indirect effect ab is defined as the product of the $X \rightarrow M$ path (a) and the $M \rightarrow Y$ path (b). The total effect, denoted by c , equals the direct effect (c') plus the indirect effect

Results

Means, standard deviations, alpha reliability coefficients, and zero-order correlations for all study variables appear in Table 1. We conducted all hypothesis tests with and without control variables. Because results were essentially identical with and without controls, we followed Becker’s (2005) recommendation to report results without covariates. We did so not only to reduce the number of parameters to be estimated and, thus, provide maximum power for the following statistical tests but also because analyses that include unnecessary control variables can yield biased parameter estimates (Becker, 2005).

Preliminary analyses

To evaluate the discriminant validity of the study’s focal variables, we first conducted a construct-level confirmatory factor analysis. The results of the proposed four-factor structure (conscientiousness, workplace incivility, affective commitment, and citizenship performance) demonstrated a good fit to the data ($\chi^2=2159$, $df=1169$, comparative fit index=0.91, root mean square error of approximation=0.070) and a significantly better fit ($ps < .05$) than three-factor models in which any two of the constructs were combined into one factor. The results of nested model comparisons, which are available from the first author upon request, confirmed that conscientiousness, workplace incivility, affective commitment, and citizenship performance were distinct constructs.

Tests of mediation

Hypothesis 1 proposed that affective commitment would mediate the relationship between workplace incivility and citizenship performance. As Table 2 illustrates, workplace incivility was negatively associated with citizenship performance ($B = -.17$, $p < .01$) and affective commitment ($B = -.22$, $p < .01$). Additionally, consistent with Hypothesis 1, the relationship between affective commitment and citizenship performance was significant when controlling for workplace incivility ($B = .18$, $p < .01$). Finally, workplace incivility had a unique negative effect on citizenship performance when controlling for affective commitment ($B = -.13$, $p < .05$). The Sobel (1982) test (two-tailed), which assumes a normal distribution under the null hypothesis, demonstrated that the (unstandardized) indirect effect ($-.04$) was significant (Sobel $z = -2.02$, $p < .05$). Bootstrapping, which makes no assumptions about the shape of a sampling distribution, corroborated this finding (yielding an identical indirect value, $-.04$), as bootstrapped 95

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among study variables.

Variable	M	SD	r							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1 Citizenship	4.09	0.65	(.82)							
2 Incivility	1.95	0.76	-.19	(.89)						
3 Affective commitment	3.17	0.71	.23	-.23	(.79)					
4 Conscientiousness	3.78	0.45	.05	.02	.09	(.93)				
5 Neuroticism	2.69	0.56	-.02	.24	-.07	-.18	(.92)			
6 Agreeableness	3.52	0.38	.04	-.03	.07	.54	-.03	(.84)		
7 Gender	0.64	0.48	.02	-.01	-.04	.07	.22	.11	-	
8 Race	1.15	0.36	-.09	.04	-.06	-.20	.02	-.08	.04	

Note: $n=190$. Gender was coded 0=female; 1=male. Race was coded 1=White; 2=non-White. Correlations $\geq |.171|$ are significant at $p < .05$ (two-tailed). Values in parentheses are alpha reliability coefficients.

Table 2. Regression results for simple mediation.

Variable		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	
Direct and total effects						
Citizenship performance regressed on workplace incivility		-.17	0.06	-2.72	.007	
Affective commitment regressed on workplace incivility		-.22	0.07	-3.23	.002	
Citizenship performance regressed on affective commitment, controlling for workplace incivility		.18	0.07	2.71	.007	
Citizenship performance regressed on workplace incivility, controlling for affective commitment		-.13	0.06	-2.07	.040	
	Value	<i>SE</i>	L 95% CI	U 95% CI	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Indirect effect and significance using normal distribution						
Sobel	-0.04	0.02	-0.08	-0.00	-2.02	.044
	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	L 95% CI	U 95% CI		
Bootstrap results for indirect effect						
Effect	-0.04	0.02	-0.08	-0.01		

Note: $n=190$. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size=1000. L, lower limit; U, upper limit; CI, confidence interval; SE, standard error.

per cent confidence intervals around the indirect effect ab did not contain zero ($-.08, -.01$). Taken together, these results support Hypothesis 1.

Tests of moderated mediation

To assess our overall model, in which the effect of workplace incivility on citizenship performance through affective commitment was conditional on employees' conscientiousness, we estimated the conditional indirect effects from bootstrapping results with two different techniques (Table 3). Following Preacher et al. (2007), we computed the indirect effect at three values of conscientiousness: the mean (3.78), one SD below the mean (3.33), and one SD above the mean (4.23). Bootstrap results indicated that one of the three conditional indirect effects (i.e., +1 SD) was negative and significantly different from zero. Adopting procedures outlined in Edwards and Lambert (2007), we constructed bias corrected 95 per cent confidence intervals around the indirect effect. As likewise shown in

Table 3. Moderated mediation: testing the indirect effect at select values of conscientiousness.

Conscientiousness	Bootstrapped indirect effect	Boot <i>SE</i>	Boot <i>z</i>	Boot <i>p</i>
Preacher et al. (2007)				
-1 SD	-.01	0.02	-0.60	.551
Mean	-.03	0.02	-1.93	.054
+1 SD	-.05	0.02	-2.22	.027
Edwards and Lambert (2007)				
	Bootstrapped indirect effect		Bias corrected 95% CI	
		Lower		Upper
-1 SD	-.01	-0.05		0.02
+ 1 SD	-.05	-0.10		-0.01
Difference	-.04	-0.11		-0.01

Note: $n=190$. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size=1000. CI, confidence interval.

Table 3, results revealed that the indirect effect was significantly different from zero at high (i.e., +1 *SD*) but not at low (i.e., -1 *SD*) levels of conscientiousness. Figure 2 illustrates the nature of the conditional (i.e., moderated) indirect effect, and Figure 3 depicts the simple mediated effects at high and low values of conscientiousness. In sum, findings from both techniques support Hypothesis 2, in that, the indirect and negative effect of workplace incivility on citizenship performance through affective commitment was observed when levels of conscientiousness were high but not when employees possessed lower levels of conscientiousness.

Discussion

We tested and found support for a moderated mediation framework in which affective commitment mediated the relationship between experienced workplace incivility and citizenship performance, and, at the same time, conscientiousness moderated (the first stage of) this mediated relationship. In doing so, we expected the indirect effect of workplace incivility on citizenship performance through affective commitment to be conditional on the interactive influence of conscientiousness. The finding that workplace incivility exerts indirect effects on citizenship performance through affective commitment extends prior research that has shown how unfavorable treatment from superiors or colleagues can influence employees' feelings of obligation and attachment to an organization and, subsequently, their performance (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 2010). Our results concerning the moderating role of conscientiousness likewise inform the incivility literature by showing that personality traits, beyond simply moderating the effects of perceived mistreatment (Colquitt, Scott, Judge, & Shaw, 2006; Tepper, 2007), can influence employees' responses to such mistreatment with respect to both their attitudes (i.e., affective commitment) and behavior (i.e., citizenship performance).

Theoretical and practical implications

Scant research has investigated the intervening mechanisms that explain workplace incivility's adverse effects. The few studies to do so have explored how incivility influences employees through its impact on individual stress levels and cognitive processing (Lim et al., 2008; Porath & Erez, 2007). Although workplace incivility has been conceptualized as a dynamic social interaction involving the exchange of negative behaviors (Andersson & Pearson, 1999),

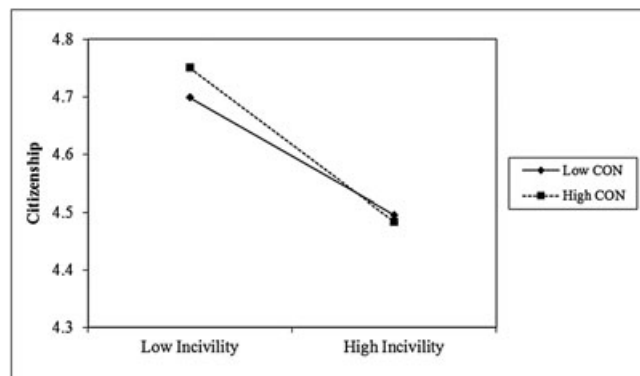


Figure 2. The indirect effect of workplace incivility (via affective commitment) on citizenship performance at conditional values of conscientiousness. Note: The slope of the indirect effect is significantly different from zero for individuals high (i.e., +1 *SD*) in conscientiousness but not for those low (i.e., -1 *SD*) in conscientiousness

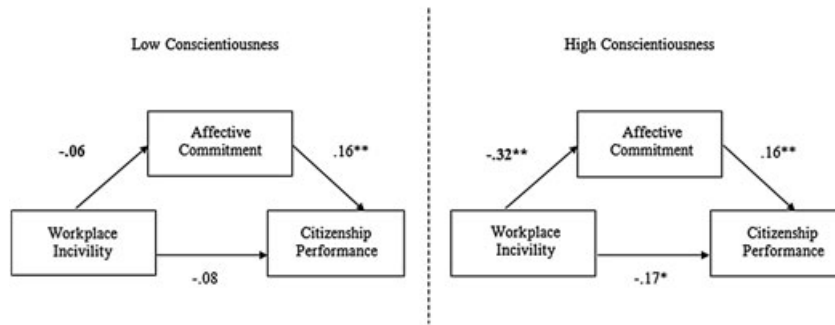


Figure 3. Simple effects at high and low levels of conscientiousness. Note: Unstandardized coefficients in bold were significantly different ($p < .05$) across levels of the moderator variable (conscientiousness)

its relational influences have gone relatively unexamined. To this end, this study extends contemporary thinking on workplace incivility by illustrating factors besides cognitive processes, and stress reactions can serve as intervening mechanisms through which incivility produces adverse effects. Thus, our finding that affective commitment mediates the relationship between workplace incivility and citizenship performance demonstrates that a relational perspective can complement justice-based and stress-based theories of incivility (e.g., Cortina, 2008; Cortina & Magley, 2009). Given that this study demonstrated one operationalization of social exchange relations, affective commitment, as a mediating mechanism, a logical next step for future research would be to assess the relative importance of justice, stress, and exchange-based mediators in explaining the effects of workplace incivility (LeBreton & Tonidandel, 2008; Tonidandel, LeBreton, & Johnson, 2009).

The results from Hypothesis 2 provide evidence for the notion that the effects of workplace incivility depend on an individual's conscientiousness. Reason would suggest that when individuals experience incivility at work, they are more prone to reduce their emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement with an employing organization, as well as their willingness to exert effort beyond their specified job roles (Rego, Souto, & Cunha, 2009). Our results, however, qualify this logic by indicating that the aftereffects of workplace incivility on affective commitment and citizenship performance will be stronger for individuals high (as compared with those low) in conscientiousness. As such, our findings substantiate claims that targeted employees' personality traits serve as boundary conditions governing the negative impact of workplace incivility (e.g., Pearson et al., 2001).

Our finding that individual responses to workplace incivility are influenced by targeted employees' personality traits also has important implications for managers. Specifically, our results suggest that previous recommendations (e.g., Pearson & Porath, 2005) to develop organization-wide policies prescribing appropriate workplace conduct may not suffice. In this connection, our findings highlight the importance of tailoring remedies to the prevailing situation and the individuals involved. Managers may, for instance, expect conscientious employees to react more strongly to incivility than their less conscientious colleagues. Research has shown that other Big 5 personality traits (*viz.*, neuroticism, agreeableness) also affect how employees respond to continuous hassles and other workplace events perceived as negative (Colbert et al., 2004; Hutchinson & Williams, 2007). Thus, interventions customized to various personality profiles may help predict a focal target's attitudinal and behavioral reactions to incivility (Coyne, Seigne, & Randall, 2000) and, in doing so, assist managers in anticipating a targeted employee's likely response.

Workplace incivility represents a "substantial economic drain on American business" (Porath & Pearson, 2010, p. 64), as it costs organizations millions of dollars each year (Johnson & Indvik, 2001; Pearson & Porath, 2009). Such costs reflect increases associated with employee turnover, absenteeism, lowered productivity, and litigation (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2005). With respect to this study, our results suggest that in organizations where workplace incivility is common, employees engage in fewer discretionary acts that go beyond their prescribed duties, thereby affecting the organization's bottom line (Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009).

Limitations and future research

Although this study offers a novel perspective on the role of workplace incivility in influencing employee attitudes and behavior, we are mindful of certain limitations that may have affected our results. These limitations should be viewed as opportunities for further research into the dynamics underlying workplace incivility. First, the moderated mediation framework we tested does not include other factors that may contribute to citizenship performance. Aside from conscientiousness, other individual and workplace characteristics may interact with incivility to affect employee attitudes or behavior (e.g., Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006; Witt & Ferris, 2003). It is also possible that there are work settings in which incivility does not violate workplace norms (Pearson et al., 2001). As Tepper and Henle (2011) recently observed, it is generally assumed that “norms of mutual respect are invariant across organization contexts” (p. 491). To test the validity of this assumption, future researchers may wish to consider whether differences in normative expectations influence perceived incivility and its impact in various work settings.

A second opportunity for future research centers on employees’ perceptions of why they have been targeted for mistreatment by a perpetrator. Building on the relational perspective incorporated in this study, an appreciation of the reasons for a perpetrator’s actions would offer potential insights into understanding why workplace incivility occurs (Bunk, Karabin, & Lear, 2011). With respect to the current results, as well as those of other studies, experiences of incivility reside in the eye of the beholder (Pearson & Porath, 2005) and, thus, are experienced and reported as real. As such, regardless of a perpetrator’s justification (e.g., pressures at work, “necessary toughness,” or to simply demonstrate one’s power), the effects of incivility on the attitudes and behavior of targeted employees are still the same (Leiter, Laschinger, Day, & Gilin-Oore, 2010).

A further limitation concerns the measurement of workplace incivility. Because Cortina et al.’s (2001) WIS does not distinguish between coworker and supervisor incivility, the identities of specific perpetrators cannot be known. In this respect, it may be of value to consider inferences from social networks theory on employee mistreatment (e.g., Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Venkataramani & Dalal, 2007). A social network perspective would allow researchers to investigate mistreatment between particular dyads of individuals and to examine patterns of mistreatment within a larger network of relationships. Doing so may clarify how the links described in social networks influence workplace incivility within the context of a unique relationship and, consequently, disentangle the effects of supervisor and coworker mistreatment. Lim et al. (2008) echo this sentiment, stating that a refinement of the WIS “to include separate questions for uncivil behaviors from supervisors versus coworkers could also provide interesting insights into the effect of power relations on the experience of incivility” (p. 105).

A related concern involves the extent to which our results were confounded because of the supervisor-rated measure of citizenship we employed. Although we asked supervisors to rate job incumbents’ citizenship performance in an effort to reduce concerns about common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003), it is possible that halo effects (or the reverse, horn effects) may have influenced our results in a positive (or negative) direction. Thus, future researchers may wish to assess citizenship performance by using peer or coworker ratings. Alternatively, researchers may also wish to obtain self-ratings of citizenship performance. Despite common criticisms, self-report measures of citizenship may be appropriate, depending on a study’s purpose, the logic underlying its proposed hypotheses, and its research design (Bolino, Turnley, Gilstrap, & Suazo, 2010). Self-reported performance measures have similarly been adopted in studies of employee mistreatment and counterproductive work behavior (e.g., Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Penney & Spector, 2005).

Concluding Remarks

This study demonstrates that affective commitment may serve as a generative mechanism that influences the relationship between workplace incivility and citizenship performance and that this relationship may be moderated by

conscientiousness. Although direct effects between workplace incivility and personality traits and employee attitudes have been examined, no previous study has attempted to understand the downstream effects of workplace incivility by jointly considering dispositional (i.e., conscientiousness) and attitudinal (i.e., affective commitment) influences on citizenship performance. In particular, we hypothesized and found support for a model linking workplace incivility to citizenship performance through the mediating effect of affective commitment and the moderating influence of conscientiousness. These findings broaden the focus of prior research by illustrating that the link between workplace incivility and citizenship performance is more complex than previously believed and, in doing so, contributes to the further development of an integrated model that explores the full impact of incivility's adverse consequences.

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