

THE PERPETRATOR EFFECT OF WORKPLACE INCIVILITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES

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This paper demonstrates that the factor structure of workplace incivility, and the relationships of workplace incivility with some valued organizational outcomes, is partially dependent on the type of perpetrator involved in the incivility and also to some extent the type of incivility activities they perpetrate. These two aspects, perpetrator type and type of incivility, have been neglected in many previous studies. Although this study is limited in its measures of workplace incivility and studies only two types of perpetrators, it demonstrates the usefulness of taking into account the type of incivility and the type perpetrator in the workplace.

This study is based on two sets of 14 self-reported incivility items, which were presented along with multiple other Quality of Work Life scales and items to all employees of a hospital system in Canada as a part of their employee quality of work life survey. In the survey, the two sets of incivility items were introduced as being perpetrated by (1) Co-workers and (2) Supervisors/Managers. Safety was measured by one set of items measuring staff general occupational health and another set of items measuring perceptions of the work culture preventing incivilities. Finally, five outcomes were selected to test for the effects of incivility impacts: Organizational Satisfaction, Job Satisfaction, Intentions to Quit, Co-worker Cohesion, and Supervisor Satisfaction. Out of 3700 surveys distributed, this study used a sample consisting of 929 valid responses.

Three factors structure of incivility among 13 of the 14 items used was found with strong factor loading and reasonable internal reliability. With minor differences, the factor structure of incivility appears to be consistent across the two perpetrators, Co-worker and Manager, tested in this study. This is somewhat surprising given the clear different power differential accorded to those in manager capacities in workplaces. There is also a pattern of relationship differences for the three incivility constructs with each perpetrator across the quality of work life outcomes. In tests for main effects and interactions of safety and civility culture with incivility types we have found several clear main effects as well as significant interactions.

This study demonstrates that the type of perpetrator and the local work culture (i.e., safety culture and civility culture) are important determinants of important organizational outcomes and that future research must take into account both these factors in order to clearly explain incivility effects in the workplace.

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