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## Incivility Unleashed: Understanding Workplace Deviance Through the Lens of Loneliness

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#### ABSTRACT

One subtle but widespread form of abuse that has a big impact on employee behavior and organizational results is workplace incivility. This study examines the relationship between workplace incivility and workplace deviance, with a particular emphasis on the mediating function of loneliness in the context of Pakistan's IT sector. The research, which is based on the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, suggests that rudeness saps workers' social and emotional reserves and causes loneliness, which in turn fuels abnormal workplace conduct. Data was gathered by means of a standardized survey administered to workers at Pakistani IT companies. According to the results, there is a positive correlation between deviance and workplace rudeness, and loneliness plays a substantial mediating role in this relationship. These findings highlight the crucial part that the depletion of social and emotional resources plays in forming unfavorable workplace habits. By extending COR theory to highlight the mediating role of loneliness and by offering cross-cultural insights into the dynamics of rudeness and deviance in a collectivist

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culture, the study provides significant theoretical contributions. Organizations must implement anti-incivility training to combat workplace incivility, encourage social connections to fight loneliness, and support employees' emotional health to lower workplace deviance, among other practical implications. These results provide practical suggestions for creating healthier work environments, raising employee satisfaction, and boosting productivity.

**Keywords:** Work Place Incivility, Workplace Deviance, Loneliness

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## INTRODUCTION

Uncivil behavior in the workplace is becoming more prevalent and has harmful impacts on workers' health and well-being (Liu et al., 2019), as well as major financial ramifications and bad repercussions on the businesses (Jawahar and Schreurs, 2018). Workplace incivility (WPI) includes actions such as making derogatory remarks, using insults, breaking the law, and other low-intensity behaviors that violate social norms and injure the targeted employees without having a clear malicious intent. Negative employee effects like counterproductive work conduct and lowered workplace attitudes are caused by such rude behavior. The performance of any service business depends on the work performance (Rahim and Cosby, 2016), creative performance (Sharifirad, 2016), and citizenship performance (Jawahar and Schreurs, 2018) of its personnel, all of which are decreased by WPI.

According to an analysis of current studies, workers who witness rudeness at work may react to it by taking damaging and destructive activities against their coworkers or the company as a whole (Pearson et al., 2005). Thus, more investigation is required to comprehend the extra pathways by which employees' deviant workplace behaviors are a result of perceived workplace incivility (Tamunomiebi and Ukwuije, 2021). Working incivility, according to Rahim et al. (2018), leads to deteriorating social interactions, which in turn causes organizational deviance, employees' counterproductive working behaviors, and employee withdrawal. Workplace deviance and incivility have a well-established association; research indicates that incivility can result in unproductive workplace actions. There is, therefore, a substantial knowledge vacuum regarding loneliness's function as a mediator in this interaction. The emotional and psychological aspects of professional loneliness are still not well understood, despite earlier study emphasizing interpersonal conflict as a mediator. One important but sometimes disregarded consequence of professional rudeness is loneliness, a subjective sense of social isolation. Employees may resort to deviant actions as a coping strategy because of this emotional state's potential to exhaust psychological resources.

We use COR theory as a foundation for our arguments regarding the impact of workplace deviance, loneliness, and rudeness. Sliter et al. (2012) assert that the COR model is highly effective in addressing social stressors, including rudeness. This approach emphasizes how important expected resource benefits are in reducing disruptive work practices. Hobbfol (1989). By eroding psychological well-being and

fostering feelings of isolation, workplace rudeness serves as a stressor and results in the loss of emotional and social resources. As social and emotional resources are further depleted, loneliness results from this loss. Because they lack the emotional support they need to manage, employees who are lonely face increased stress, which leads to a spiral of resource loss. People respond to resource loss by engaging in protective activities, according to the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. According to this approach, workplace deviance is a method for protecting resources, whereby workers act counterproductively to vent their frustration or protect themselves from additional injury. The COR hypothesis highlights the idea that resource loss has a greater influence than resource gain, and this dynamic feeds the connection between workplace misbehavior, loneliness, and rudeness.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Work Place Incivility and Workplace Deviance**

The majority of research on workplace incivility has focused on experienced incivility (Schilpzand et al., 2016), so the current study focuses on experienced incivility by coworkers. Workplace incivility is classified as experienced incivility, instigated incivility, and witnessed incivility by customers, supervisors, and coworkers (Jamal and Siddiqui, 2020). Workplace deviance, according to Robinson and Bennett (1995), is "voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both". Interpersonal deviance, which includes actions that harm other employees of an organization, such as sexual harassment and verbal and physical aggression, and organizational deviance, which includes actions that harm the organization, such as stealing, putting little effort into work, and sabotage, are the two categories into which workplace deviant behavior is divided. Various researchers as counterproductive conduct (Mangione and Quinn, 1975), aggressive behavior, workplace deviance and anti-social behavior referred to these behaviors

Low-intensity behaviors that violate the respectful norms of the workplace but do not clearly intend to cause harm to the target are considered workplace incivility. The purpose to cause harm distinguishes workplace incivility from other interpersonally aberrant actions. Yet, based on the degree of force used, workplace incivility is significantly different from other negative behaviors (such as workplace deviance, violence, and aggression) (Schilpzand et al., 2016). There is a favorable correlation between workplace deviance and workplace incivility, according to numerous studies (Moon and Hur, 2018). Itzkovich (2016) found that rudeness is a major factor in the rise in organizational deviance, as the victim may stop working, put in less time on tasks, steal from the company, resign, engage in work withdrawal sabotage, abuse, and production deviance

The notion of conservation of resources explains how rudeness at work causes workplace deviation. According to COR theory, workers avoid unsupportive environments in an effort to replenish lost resources, which can lead to job withdrawal, tardiness, and staying at home (Sliter et al., 2012). Accordingly, COR

theory might also be useful in comprehending the repercussions of rude behavior in the workplace (Giumetti et al., 2012).

### **H1: Workplace incivility has positive related to workplace deviance**

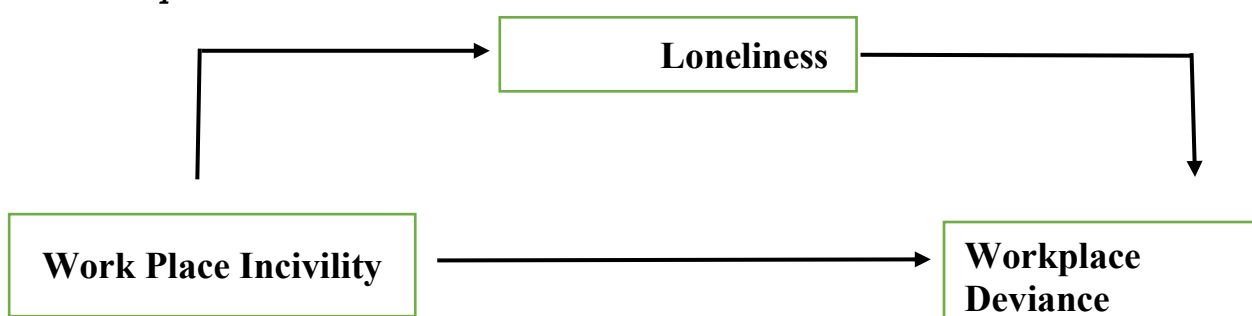
#### **Mediating Role of Loneliness**

In workplace studies, loneliness—a subjective sense of social isolation despite the presence of others—has become a crucial mediator, connecting organizational pressures to unfavorable results. It represents a mental condition in which people feel as though they do not have any meaningful relationships, which is especially important when trying to comprehend workplace dynamics (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). Feelings of alienation and loneliness can be exacerbated by workplace incivility, which is defined as low-intensity deviant behavior with unclear intent to hurt (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Being rude damages social ties trust, and support systems, which makes workers, feel more alone. Because of workplace rudeness, people lose their social and emotional ties, which increases their sense of loneliness, according to the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory.

When it comes to connecting rudeness to negative behavioral outcomes like workplace disobedience, loneliness is a crucial mediator. As a coping strategy to reclaim control or vent their frustration, employees who experience loneliness are more prone to act out (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). According to research, loneliness makes employees more susceptible to emotional stress and increases the risk of unproductive activities, which worsens resource depletion. According to research, loneliness increases the depletion of resources, making workers more susceptible to emotional stress and raising the risk of unproductive actions. For example, research has indicated that people who experience high degrees of loneliness at work are more likely to engage in behaviors such as deviance, retreat, and decreased collaboration (Heinrich & Gullone, 2006). Notwithstanding its importance, workplace research has paid little attention to loneliness's mediating role, especially in collectivist cultures where social relationships and group harmony are valued. In these cultures, the influence of workplace rudeness on loneliness and the ensuing deviant behaviors may be more noticeable because social connections are valued more highly.

### **H2: Loneliness mediates the relationship between workplace incivility and workplace deviance**

#### ***Conceptual Framework:***



## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study uses a cross-sectional survey and a quantitative research approach to investigate the connections between workplace deviance, loneliness, and incivility. The study examines the mediating function of loneliness among workers in Pakistan's IT sector in the relationship between workplace incivility and workplace deviance. Employees in Pakistan's IT sector are the study's target demographic. In particular, the study focuses on those working in startup companies and big IT companies in key cities like Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad at all levels, from young employees to senior management. The method used to choose participants was random sampling. We focused on 300 workers to make sure the sample reflects a range of positions and backgrounds in the IT industry.

### Measures:

**Workplace Incivility:** The seven-item workplace incivility scale (WIS), which was taken from Cortina et al. (2001), was used to measure workplace rudeness. Every item was ordinal, and a 5-point Likert scale from "never" to "daily" was used to measure it. Among the examples are "Put you down or was patronizing to you?" and "Gave your statement little thought or showed little interest in what you had to say?"

**Workplace Deviance:** A 19-item scale created by Bennett and Robinson (2000) and utilized by Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) was used to measure workplace deviance. A seven-point Likert scale, with "very strongly disagree" to "very strongly agree" as the extremes, was used to measure each ordinal item. "Made fun of someone at work" and "Said something hurtful to someone at work" are two examples. A 19-item scale created by Bennett and Robinson (2000) and utilized by Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) was used to measure workplace deviance.

The frequency of the following actions throughout the previous six months was asked of the respondents. A seven-point Likert scale, with "very strongly disagree" to "very strongly agree" as the extremes, was used to measure each ordinal item.

**Loneliness:** De Jong-Gierveld and Kamphuis (1985) developed the 11-item de Jong Gierveld Scale (dJG). There are two sub-scales on this scale. Six negatively written items make up the emotional loneliness subscale, whereas five positively phrased items make up the social loneliness subscale. Respondents are asked to rate the degree to which each statement (such as "I miss having a really close friend") resonates with their present circumstances.

### Results:

#### Results of descriptive statistics, correlation and reliability

Descriptive statistics, variable correlations, and Cronbach's alpha values are shown in Table 1. Significant correlations exist between each of the variables suggested in the conceptual model. Since all of the variable correlation coefficients were less than 0.70, the data was not multicollinear. Additionally shown on the diagonal are the reliability levels, which show that the data was trustworthy and appropriate for additional examination.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>WPI</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>.83</i>	<i>(.88)</i>		
<i>WPD</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>.97</i>	<i>.41**</i>	<i>(.79)</i>	
<i>Loneliness</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>.86</i>	<i>.47**</i>	<i>.45**</i>	<i>(.91)</i>

Notes: \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; N = 300. Italics are used to indicate Cronbach alpha.

### Statistical Path Analysis

Regression analysis was used to examine the direct connections between workplace incivility, workplace deviance and loneliness. Regression analysis results are shown in Table 2, showing that workplace deviance is positively and strongly predicted by workplace incivility (b = .09, S.E = .04) p < 0.01). Thus, hypothesis 1 is validated. Lastly, since zero falls within the lower and upper 95% CI limits (b=.63, SE =.05, LLCI=.52, ULCI =.57), indirect effects show that workplace rudeness influences workplace deviance through loneliness. Thus, the findings of the mediation analysis indicate that workplace rudeness mediates workplace deviance through loneliness to some extent. H2 is therefore supported.

<b>Direct Path</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
WPI → WPD	.09	.04	.00	.007	.18
WPI → Loneliness	.26	.09	.00	.08	.44
Loneliness → WPD	.80	.04	.00	.72	.88

### Mediation Analysis:

<b>Indirect Path</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
WPI → Loneliness → WPD	.63	.05	.52	.75

## DISCUSSIONS

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between workplace rudeness and workplace deviance by examining the mediating function of loneliness in Pakistan's IT sector. The study's findings shed important light on the connections between these factors and advance our knowledge of the interactions between personal emotions and workplace behaviors in corporate environments.

### Impact of Work place Incivility on Work Place Deviance

The results of this study support earlier studies on workplace misconduct and

deviant behavior by confirming that workplace incivility significantly reduces workplace deviance (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Workplace incivility refers to unpleasant, disrespectful, or insensitive behavior that frequently remains unreported or untreated yet has been shown to negatively impact employees over time. A hostile work atmosphere brought on by rudeness can lead to deviant behaviors by employees, such as sabotaging tasks, gossiping, or withholding effort (Pearson, C. M., & Porath, C. L. (2005). Despite being less obvious than more serious types of workplace malfeasance, these deviant behaviors greatly worsen workplace culture and productivity. By showing that the detrimental consequences of workplace rudeness extend to deviant behaviors, especially in sectors like information technology (IT), where high job expectations and fierce rivalry can worsen the impacts of workplace mistreatment, this study expands on earlier findings.

### **Mediating Role of Loneliness**

This study's discovery of loneliness as a mediator between workplace misbehavior and incivility is one of its original contributions. According to the findings, rudeness at work makes workers feel more alone, which in turn makes them more deviant. This result confirms earlier studies that relate emotional and social isolation to unpleasant employment experiences, such as rudeness. Employees who experience interpersonal maltreatment frequently become lonely because they feel isolated or unsupported at work (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). Additionally, loneliness's mediating influence emphasizes how critical it is to treat the psychological and emotional fallout from professional rudeness. The significance of loneliness highlights the necessity for organizations to establish supportive work environments that develop social ties and reduce isolation, even though the majority of studies concentrate on the direct effects of rudeness on employment outcomes.

### **Theoretical Implications**

By using the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) to explain the connections between workplace deviance, loneliness, and incivility, this study contributes. According to the COR hypothesis, people work hard to get, hold onto, and safeguard their priceless resources, such as psychological health, social ties, and emotional energy. Inconsiderate behavior at work depletes employees' social and emotional resources. Because they feel unsupported or cut off from their workplace, employees frequently experience feelings of loneliness and isolation because of this depletion. This study expands on COR theory by showing how deprivation of resources causes not just emotional distress but also deviant workplace actions as a coping mechanism or form of revenge, so proving that loneliness mediates the relationship between incivility and deviance.

By analyzing these processes in Pakistan's IT sector, this study also advances our understanding of workplace behavior across cultural boundaries. Interpersonal peace and social ties are highly prized assets in collectivist societies like Pakistan. Compared to individualistic societies, the impact of the loss of these resources because of rudeness could be more noticeable. This advances our theoretical knowledge of how resource loss, as defined by COR theory, may differ depending on

cultural and environmental factors. Furthermore, by highlighting loneliness as a mediator, the study broadens the scope of COR theory to encompass social and emotional resources, providing a more profound comprehension of the ways in which workplace abuse affects workers' psychological states and behaviors.

### **Practical Implications**

The study's conclusions also have important business applications, particularly in the IT sector where employee performance is greatly impacted by stress, rivalry, and interpersonal relationships. First and foremost, companies should prioritize fostering a respectful work environment, especially by implementing anti-incivility training initiatives and enforcing explicit policies that forbid impolite or disrespectful conduct. These initiatives have the potential to cultivate a professional and accountable culture. Second, as loneliness is a major factor in connecting workplace rudeness to deviance, it is imperative to treat it among employees. By encouraging social connections through employee resource groups, mentorship programs, and team-building exercises, organizations can lessen loneliness. Employees can also manage feelings of loneliness by having access to mental health resources like counseling or employee assistance programs. In this sense, supervisors are essential because they may foster a more inclusive atmosphere and mitigate the harmful consequences of rudeness. Additionally, loneliness and its behavioral effects can be lessened by fostering holistic employee well-being through the promotion of work-life balance, stress management, and open communication.

Implementing flexible work rules, such as remote or hybrid work alternatives, and developing strong onboarding programs to aid new hires in adjusting to the workplace are two specific recommendations for the IT industry. Surveys of employee engagement can also be useful for pinpointing the causes of rudeness and isolation and for directing remedial measures. Lastly, companies should put in place anonymous reporting systems so that workers can report instances of rudeness without worrying about facing consequences. Organizations can promote better work environments, lessen bad behaviors, and improve the general well-being of their employees by proactively addressing these concerns. The results of this study offer important insights for enterprises worldwide as they attempt to establish inclusive and positive work environments, as well as for the Pakistani IT sector.

### **Limitations and Future Direction**

Although this study advances our knowledge of the connection between workplace deviance, loneliness, and rudeness, there are a number of limitations to take into account. First, it is more difficult to determine causal correlations between the variables because of the cross-sectional nature of the study. To learn more about how workplace rudeness evolves over time and its long-term impacts on behavior and emotional health, future studies could use longitudinal designs. Secondly, the research was carried out in Pakistan's IT sector, which would restrict the findings' applicability to other sectors or areas. To determine whether these associations are universal and to find any cultural or contextual variations in the consequences of rudeness, it would be beneficial to conduct this study again in different sectors and

nations. Lastly, more mediators and moderators that might affect the connection between rudeness and deviance could be investigated in future studies. Employee perceptions and reactions to rudeness, for instance, may be influenced by individual variances in personality traits or emotional intelligence. Developing more focused interventions to combat workplace rudeness and stop deviant behavior may be made easier with an understanding of these aspects.

## CONCLUSION

In the context of Pakistan's IT sector, this study investigated the relationship between workplace rudeness and workplace deviance by examining the mediating function of loneliness. The results demonstrate that workplace rudeness is a strong predictor of workplace deviance, and that loneliness is a key mediating factor in this relationship. This study illustrates, using the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, how rudeness saps workers' social and emotional reserves, resulting in feelings of alienation and detachment. Employees may resort to deviant actions as a coping strategy or to regain perceived control over their workplace as a result of these emotional repercussions. The study also offers insightful information about the particular dynamics of the IT sector in Pakistan, where loneliness and rudeness may be exacerbated by professional constraints, competitiveness, and cultural elements like collectivism and hierarchical structures. It emphasizes how crucial it is to deal with workplace rudeness in order to safeguard workers' emotional health and avoid resource depletion, which can result in unproductive workplace practices. Overall, by extending COR theory to highlight the mediating role of emotional states like loneliness in explaining deviance, this research advances the theoretical explanation of workplace behavior. Practically speaking, the results provide organizations with doable suggestions for developing healthier, more encouraging work environments, such as encouraging polite interactions, encouraging social connections, and offering tools to deal with emotional distress. Future research should examine if these findings are applicable to different sectors and cultural settings in order to further our comprehension of the relationship among deviance, loneliness, and workplace rudeness.

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