

Exploring the relationship of workplace incivility, organizational commitment and turnover intention in the perspective of social exchange theory

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Abstract

Aim: To explore the relationship of workplace incivility with turnover intentions of charge nurses and to examine the mediating influence of organizational commitment between workplace incivility and turnover intention.

Background: Workforce issues have been explored in various professions while nursing workforce had been overlooked. Nonetheless, persistently nurses are being employed abroad and private hospitals. Understanding nursing workforce issues in public healthcare settings is extremely important for policymakers, employers and managers to grow and sustain this workforce in order to meet quality healthcare demands.

Method: A quantitative method was employed by using proportionate stratified random sampling technique.

Results: The results demonstrated a significant positive relationship between workplace incivility and turnover intention. Additionally, it also revealed a significant mediating influence of organizational commitment between the link of workplace incivility and turnover intention.

Conclusion: These study findings guide nursing managers to develop positive organizational climate and implement zero tolerance policies to retain the qualified nurses for providing quality healthcare services.

Implications for Nursing Management: The present study provides numerous noteworthy implications for nursing managers to comprehend the imperative factors directly or indirectly that influence the attitude and behavior of nursing staff.

Keywords: Workplace incivility, nursing workforce, public healthcare, organizational commitment, turnover intention.

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the previous decade, workplace incivility appeared as an important construct in the area of management literature. Workplace incivility has attracted a considerable attention from management practitioners and scholars in recent years (Huang & Lin, 2019), as it has been acknowledged as a widespread and severe phenomenon in several organizations around the world (Cortina et al., 2013). Porath, MacInnis, and Folkes (2010), indicated 96–99% of their survey respondents had witnessed or experienced incivility at the workplace. In an earlier study, Rahim and Cosby (2016) reported that 71% of respondents experienced uncivil behaviors during the previous five years. Some other studies reported 71% of court employees, 79% of law and enforcement employees, 75% of university employees, and 85% of the nurse's experienced uncivil behavior at the work place (Cortina & Magley, 2009). Another study performed in the UK reported that stress associated with uncivil workplace behavior generally costs the organizations as much as approximately 1.3 billion of Euros annually (Yeung & Griffin, 2008). In the past few years, managers and researchers raised their concerns regarding the rising level of workplace incivility and the acute devastation it causes to the societal fabric of organizations (Porath & Pearson, 2013).

Workplace incivility can be defined as “low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect” (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Such kind of incivility include rude and discourteous behavior, lack of respect for others, often include derogatory remarks, ignoring and making fun of others. An introspective dissection of this definition entails three basic components which are violation of norms at the workplace, ambiguous intent and low level of intensity (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Previous research verifies that workplace incivility is entrenched and established in all industrial and as well as non-industrial sectors like manufacturing (Wu, Zhang, Chiu, Kwan, & He, 2014), retailing (Kern & Grandey, 2009), financial services (Lim & Teo, 2009), universities (Cortina & Magley, 2009; Sakurai & Jex, 2012), federal courts (Cortina et al., 2002), restaurant industry (Sharma & Singh, 2016) and all other various professions (Schilpzand, De Pater, & Erez, 2016). However, the healthcare industry of Pakistan has previously been overlooked and less attention has been paid to overcome the problem of prevailing uncivil practices in the hospitals which further triggers nurse's intention to leave the organization. Such kind of state makes the situation worse where the country is already facing acute shortage of nurses to provide quality care.

Nursing is an important profession to study because nurses persistently play a significant role in the healthcare delivery system. Currently, the shortage of nurses is a critical problem faced by several countries around the globe. Turnover is the primary contributor towards the shortage of nurses. This phenomenon has significant implications for organizations about their effectiveness in general, especially for organizations in the healthcare industry (Fallatah, Laschinger, & Read, 2017). Studies of nurses in USA and Europe also reported the shortage of nurses due to low morale, job dissatisfaction, reduced level of commitment and have greater intentions of quitting their current organizations (Cheng, Bartram, Karimi, & Leggat, 2016). Likewise, Pakistan is currently no more different from other countries of the world which is also encountering the problem of acute shortage of nurses due to

significant amount of brain drain (Yasmin & Marzuki, 2015). High turnover of nurses negatively impacts on an organization's ability to meet patient's requirements and to provide quality healthcare (Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2010).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

Moreover, social exchange theory describes the nature of exchange relationships among employees and its ultimate impact on their attitudes and behaviors. Accordingly, the social exchange theory is based on the assumption that, employees, which are working in the particular organization have positive and negative feelings about their organization, which makes them committed or dissatisfied with the particular organization (Nawaz & Pangil, 2016). Likewise, the theory of social exchange has been applied to explain workplace incivility and other forms of mistreatment like workplace violence, bullying and turnover intentions (Munir, Ghafoor, & Rasli, 2016). In addition, uncivil behavior at the workplace negatively effects the employee's commitment with their organization and eventually leads to turnover intention and vice versa.

2.2. RELATIONSHIP OF WORKPLACE INCIVILITY WITH TURNOVER INTENTION

The experience of workplace incivility has been observed to be related with a number of various affective, cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Bateman, 2015). Workplace incivility has several detrimental outcomes on both individual victims and organizations (Doshy & Wang, 2014). At the individual level, employees suffer from psychological trauma due to disrespectful words and action (Estes & Wang, 2008). Furthermore, workplace incivility decreases individual focus, performance and organizational commitment (Estes & Wang, 2008), eventually leading the victims to quit from their job (Lim & Cortina, 2005). At the organizational level, workplace incivility results in lack of productivity, financial losses and higher turnover (Cortina & Magley, 2009).

Furthermore, Pearson et al. (2000) performed a study on half of the individuals who experienced uncivil conducts contemplated quitting their jobs. The decision to quit entails a considerable thinking and it generally indicates that the victim considers the situation as implausible to improve. In addition, Faheem and Mahmud (2015) conducted a study on healthcare settings and the data was collected from 200 nurses of public sector hospitals and found that, uncivil behavior directly harms the employees in the form of turnover and also decreases the overall organizational performance. According to Nazir and Ahmad (2016) workplace incivility has a significant likelihood to negatively influence the nurses job outcomes and he mentioned it as a major cause of the prevalent acute shortage of nurses. Nevertheless, this notion leads to more investigation of the phenomenon between workplace incivility and turnover intention.

H1: Workplace incivility positively influences the employee turnover intention.

2.3. WORKPLACE INCIVILITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Workplace Incivility has also been illustrated as obnoxious and intimidating behavior through which the recipients feel embarrassed and probably vulnerable (Eagar, Cowin, Gregory, & Firtko, 2010). The prevalence of workplace incivility is extremely disturbing as the cost is incurred by the targeted individuals, employers and the organizations (Lim & Cortina, 2005). In fact, all the employees expect suitable working environment in their organization, hostile and uncivil behaviors negatively impact on employee's outcomes such as, their commitment and turnover intent.

Uncivil behavior experienced by employees in the organization adversely affects their level of commitment with the organization (Smidt, De Beer, Brink, & Leiter, 2016). This notion is supported by the study findings of Dowden (2015) who reported that, 78% of employees who were victim of uncivil behavior at the workplace have lower level of organizational commitment. In line with this context, Brown (2014) conducted a study on a large metropolitan healthcare setting and reported a significant negative correlation between workplace incivility and organizational commitment. In other words, their correlation implies that with greater level of workplace incivility, the lower will be the employee's commitment with the organization. Therefore, the researcher can hypothesize that

H2: Workplace incivility negatively influences organizational commitment.

2.4. MEDIATING EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Within the context of a workplace, organizational commitment denotes the employees' emotional attachment with an organization (Taylor, Bedeian, & Kluemper, 2012). Noting that "social exchange relationships emphasize the obligations, attachments, and identification that employees feel toward their employers," Cropanzano, Rupp, and Byrne (2003), have utilized commitment in order to operationalize the social exchange relationship between employees and their employing organization. Social exchange theory postulates that individuals' attachment with their organization is basically a function of their understanding regarding interpersonal treatment (Taylor et al., 2012). Similarly, it is considered that if the norms of reciprocity are not violated, employees will uphold an emotional attachment with their employing organization (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Further research (Kamdar, McAllister, & Turban, 2006), illustrates 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 et al., 2010).

Despite the significant influence of workplace incivility on turnover intention, workplace incivility is comparatively understudied regarding through what mediating mechanism it usually affect turnover intention (Reich & Herscovis, 2015), , resulting in a significant research gap for the current study to fill. In response to the calls for further research into potential mediators for incivility (Schilpzand et al., 2016), this study proposes the mediating effect of organizational commitment in the development of employee's turnover intention based on the social exchange theory (SET).

H3: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between workplace incivility and turnover intention.

3. METHODS

3.1 PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

This study employed Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size, the adequate sample size would be 368. On the basis of previous response rate of various studies this study distributed 518 questionnaires in order to avoid the possibility of non-response bias. A total number of 386 questionnaires were finally used for statistical data analysis after outlier's detection and incomplete questionnaires. Data of study respondents demonstrate that there were 92.8% females and remaining 7.2% were males. 69% of respondents were married whereas 31% were unmarried. Since the present study was related to charge nurses of health department so 72.8% of nurses have graduation, 18.5% have under-graduate and 8.7% have post-graduation degrees in the field of nursing. Moreover, a proportionate stratified random sampling technique was utilized to target the population.

3.2. MEASUREMENT

3.2.1. WORKPLACE INCIVILITY

In the current study, workplace incivility is operationalized by using 12-items scale adopted from Cortina et al. (2013) to measure the construct of workplace incivility on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=moderately disagree, 3=disagree, 4=neutral, 5=agree, 6=moderately agree, 7=strongly agree). Faheem and Mahmud (2015), employed this instrument of workplace incivility and reported the Cronbach alpha value 0.813 as the reliability of this measure.

3.2.3. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

In the present study, organizational commitment is operationalized by using 6-items scale adopted from (Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005). Respondents were given the option from 1 as strongly disagree whereas 7 stands for strongly agree. Gould-Williams and Davies (2005), reported the Cronbach alpha value 0.74 as the reliability of this measure.

3.2.4 TURNOVER INTENTION

In this current study, turnover intention is operationalized by using 5-items scale adopted from the study of Lum, Kervin, Clark, Reid, and Sirola (1998) and Wayne, Shore, and Liden (1997) in order to measure employees intend to leave the organization. Respondents were given the options from 1 as strongly disagree to 7 which stands for strongly agree. Wayne et al. (1997), reported the Cronbach alpha value 0.92 as the reliability of this measure.

4. RESULTS

4.1 OUTER MODEL MEASUREMENT

The data is analyzed by employing the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Research data is transferred to the Smart PLS 3.2 software where individual item reliability, internal consistency reliability (CR), Cronbach's Alpha and Average variance extracted (AVE) were tabulated to check the validity. Table 1 demonstrates outer loadings of the research model, CR and AVE values. All the values of items loading are ranging from 0.634 to 0.824, CR values ranges in between 0.862 to

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0.906 and all the AVE values lies between 0.510 to 0.599 which are fulfilling the level of threshold as recommended by Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2016).

Table 1

Labeling Loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Cronbach's Alpha

Constructs	Codings	Loadings	CR	AVE	Alpha
WPI	WPI1	0.766	0.906	0.519	0.808
	WPI2	0.706			
	WPI3	0.699			
	WPI4	0.67			
	WPI5	0.675			
	WPI6	0.824			
	WPI8	0.648			
	WPI10	0.698			
	WPI12	0.778			
	OC	OC1			
OC2		0.634			
OC3		0.696			
OC4		0.692			
OC5		0.763			
OC6		0.706			
TI	TI1	0.794	0.882	0.599	0.832
	TI2	0.771			
	TI3	0.753			
	TI4	0.761			
	TI5	0.789			

WPI = Workplace incivility, OC = Organizational commitment, TI = Turnover intention

Moreover, the discriminant validity is assessed by employing the criteria recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The bold values show the square roots of AVE which are higher than the correlational values of all respective relationships (See Table 2).

Table 2

Discriminant Validity (N = 386)

Constructs	1	2	3
1. Organizational Commitment	0.714		
2. Turnover Intention	-0.413	0.774	
3. Workplace Incivility	-0.267	0.361	0.72

Note. Bold values are the square root of AVE

4.2 STRUCTURAL MODEL MEASUREMENT

As for the structural relationships (inner model) are concerned, workplace incivility significantly influences turnover intention ($\beta = 0.321$, $t = 4.58$, $f^2=0.23$) and organizational commitment ($\beta = -0.267$, $t = 6.721$, $f^2=0.17$). Similarly, organizational commitment significantly influence turnover intention ($\beta = -0.341$, $t = 9.108$, $f^2=0.39$). All the analyzed values confirmed the proposed hypotheses of the present study. Here the effect size or f^2 shows the relationships strength between the particular exogenous and endogenous latent constructs. It can be assessed by the criterion recommended by Cohen (1988), according to which the effect size would be small, moderate and large if the f^2 values are 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 respectively.

Table 3

Path Analysis (N = 386)

Paths	Beta	S.E	T-value	Decision	f^2	Q^2	R^2
OC -> TI	-0.341	0.043	9.108	Supported	0.39	0.26	0.45
WPI -> OC	-0.267	0.028	6.721	Supported	0.17		
WPI -> TI	0.321	0.031	4.58	Supported	0.23		

Note. Cohen (1988) suggested the effect size of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 as having small, moderate and large effect respectively. WPI = Workplace incivility, OC = Organizational commitment, TI = Turnover intention

In order to examine the mediating effect of employee's organizational commitment in the relationship between workplace incivility and turnover intention, specific indirect relationship was checked by employing SmartPLS 3.2. Findings demonstrate that organizational commitment mediates the relationship between workplace incivility and employees turnover intention. This particular indirect relationship is supported.

Table 4

Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment (N = 386)

Indirect Path	Beta	S.E	T-value	LLCI	ULCI	Decision
WPI -> OC -> TI	0.121	0.016	5.647	0.068	0.121	Mediation

5. DISCUSSION

The major aim of the present study was to determine the relationship of workplace incivility with turnover intention behavior of nurses with the mediating role of organizational commitment in the public sector DHQ hospitals of Pakistan. In this study, the relationship of workplace incivility with turnover intention behaviors was observed significant and positive as per previous studies (Faheem & Mahmud, 2015 Rahim & Cosby, 2016) but the f^2 is moderate. It means whenever nurses face uncivil, rude and discourteous behavior at the workplace they will tend to leave their position from the hospital. The findings of this study are in accordance with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which postulates that nature and process of exchange depends upon social interactions which molds the attitude and behavior of individuals accordingly.

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The second hypothesis of this study suggests the negative relationship of workplace incivility and organizational commitment among the nursing staff. This link was constituted on the basis of past studies (Reio & Trudel, 2013). The findings are aligned and observed significant positive. Similarly, it can also be explained on the basis of reciprocity norms (Gouldner, 1960), if the norms and values of the workplace are violated then it will eventually lead towards negative outcomes in form of lower level of commitment with the organization.

The third major hypothesis of this study investigated the mediating role of employee's organizational commitment in the relationship between workplace incivility and turnover intention behavior. This relationship was constituted on the basis of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) which states that, individuals attitudes and behavior are substantially influenced by perceptions of organizational commitment. Noting that "social exchange relationships emphasize the obligations, attachments, and identification that employees feel toward their employers," Cropanzano et al. (2003), have utilized commitment in order to operationalize the social exchange relationship between employees and their employing organization. Accordingly, if the norms and values of the workplace are violated then it will ultimately lead towards negative outcomes in form of lower level of commitment and greater employee's intention to leave the organization.

5.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher has undertaken this study in order to cover the contemporary and challenging issue of turnover intention among the healthcare professionals of Pakistan. The results of this study are established on the cross sectional data due to limited resources and time constraints. Contextually, the findings of the present study are only limited to the public sector therefore it might create the issue of generalizability of these findings upon the private sector. In addition, another limitation of this study is that the data is only collected from the nursing staff whereas other paramedical staff, doctors and patients are not included in this study. In future studies, obtaining the feedback from paramedical staff, doctors and patients will give better understanding of the situation encountered by the nursing staff.

5.2 FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the present study are determined on the basis of cross sectional data. Therefore, the future researchers should examine this theoretical model of the study with longitudinal approach in order to get more solid results. Furthermore, the researcher validated this instrument of workplace incivility, organizational commitment and turnover intention in the healthcare settings. Thus, in future literature, the researchers can validate this instrument in various work settings such as financial institutions, education and hospitality sector. Contextually, according to researcher observation different contextual factor like (Public image, economic condition and social status) also impact the employee's intention to leave. Further, the findings can be generalized to the public sector hospitals of other three provinces of Pakistan. In future, the researchers should address this central issue in the private hospitals in order to get a clear picture of turnover intention among the staff nurses. Furthermore, this study model can be further investigated on other stakeholders within the healthcare settings like doctors, administrative staff and paramedical staff to get a comprehensive picture of the environment in medical sector.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has empirically generated new evidence regarding the issue of workplace incivility among nurses and their turnover intentions both directly and indirectly. Whereas the findings demonstrate new insights and contribute to the existing body of literature, this is among one of few attempts to determine this issue within the public sector nursing workforce. Since the demand for nurses in public hospitals continues to escalate, our findings exhibit a need to analyze how workplace and working environment impacts commitment and quitting intention in such type of work settings. Taking into consideration of how nurse's role is endorsed and how they are facilitated to work up to the degree of their scope is necessitated to increase organizational commitment with staying decisions. The substantial and major group of healthcare respondents who were under decision making stage of their turnover intentions recommends a dire need to tackle the areas of workplace incivility identified in the present study with a view to encourage the nurses to remain employed within the public sector hospitals.

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING MANAGEMENT

The findings of the present study suggest some policies for the nursing managers to formulate such type of strategies which engages electronic, print and social media to initiate social awareness programs in order to create positive image of nursing as a noble profession in the society. Nursing management should officially announce and implement "zero tolerance policy" in all the public hospitals. According to Somani and Khowaja (2012), the zero tolerance policy implies that whenever nurses experience uncivil and unpleasant behavior at the workplace they will report such incident without fear. Furthermore, to make such policy successful, the Health Department should electronically develop complaint record system for immediate feedback and rapid action against those perpetrators. This system will increase the motivation of victimized nurses to report their unpleasant incidents with confidence.

Competing interest: There is no competing interest

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