

Workplace Incivility, Service Spirit and Gossips at Workplace: Perception of Nurses Working in Public Sector Hospitals of Pakistan

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Abstract

Bullying is a type of mental torture and it should be considered as violation of human rights across the globe. Verbal or nonverbal communicative behavior indicating disrespect for another person can bring drastic consequences for the organizations. This study was planned to dig out such consequences in the shape of low service spirit and gossips. For data collection female nurses working in the public sector Hospitals of Pakistani were considered as population of the study, and total 302 respondents participated in the survey. Data were analyzed using Smart PLS 2.0 software. The values of reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity were within the acceptable range. Path coefficients values showed that workplace incivility positively and significantly predicted job related gossips and non-job related gossips. Furthermore, the results showed that due to increase in incivility the service spirit of female nurses decreased. Additionally service spirit as mediating variable did not play its role and no mediation was found. Average respondents reported that they experienced incivility from doctors, patients and their attendants. From theoretical perspective this study contributed in the literature and proposed that in Asian culture, which is dominated by patriarchal culture, female nurses experience incivility at work; and, thus, may engage in negative gossips. Limitations and future directions are also given.

Keywords: Workplace incivility, Service spirit, Job related gossips, Non-job related gossips, Nurses

Introduction

Literature on workplace incivility and its related constructs is still under debate since the last three decades (Adams & Webster, 2013; Baron & Neuman, 1996; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011; Folger &

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Cropanzano, 1998; Harvey & Keashly, 2005; Miner- Rubino & Reed, 2010; Neuman & Baron, 1997; Reio & Ghosh, 2009; Schilpzand, De Pater, & Erez, 2016). Despite its pervasive occurrence, this phenomenon has not received much academic as well as managerial attention in the Asian context (Yeung & Griffin, 2008); especially in the perspective of Pakistan, only a few studies have been conducted (Somani & Khowaja, 2012). In the context of Pakistan, an under developing country, very limited work has been done on workplace incivility toward nurses; it's almost an unexplored area (Shahzad & Malik, 2014). Due to workplace incivility female nurses experience stress, reduced work performance, reduced job satisfaction, absenteeism and turnover intention (Shahzad & Malik, 2014). In Asian societies tendency to experience verbal violence is greater as compared to other forms of violence. Nurses are more vulnerable to incivility among all healthcare employees (Adib, Al-Shatti, Kamal, El-Gerges, & Al-Raqem, 2002), as they work closely with patients, patient's relatives, doctors, and other paramedics (Gerberich et al., 2005). For the delivery of quality healthcare services a healthy work environment is necessary in hospitals. Currently 99,228 nurses are registered all over the Pakistan (Pakistan Economic Survey 2016-17) and population per nurse ratio is 1 nurse per 2200 individuals. Quality of healthcare services can suffer greatly when nurses, who are already under a great deal of burden, experience workplace incivility. Lack of respect for nursing profession may trigger negative emotions among nurses forcing them to cope with this situation through gossips, creating a barrier for the potential entry of future nurses into this profession and putting a burden on the economy.

We sought to make several contributions to existing body of knowledge by conducting research on workplace incivility towards nurses. First, we provided empirical evidence for positive relationship between workplace incivility, job related gossips and non-job related gossips. Furthermore nurses' service spirit has also been tested empirically. More specifically, there is limited empirical research on the relationship of incivility and service spirit. Further previous studies have mostly used scales and measures which have been developed and tested in the western culture (Griffin, 2010; Lim & Lee, 2011) and hence, there was a need to test these instrument under socio-cultural perspective of workplace incivility on nurses in Asian societies in order to address uncivil behaviors at work in Asia (Ghosh, 2017). This study has responded research calls of researchers for systematic evaluation of employee work-related issues that can be overcome for quality service delivery (Ostrom, Parasuraman, Bowen, Patricio, & Voss, 2015), Investigating the phenomena of workplace incivility in individuals of

minority socio-cultural status may be very helpful to explore the incivility related negative outcomes. Further, what constitutes uncivil behavior in the western countries may not be considered uncivil in Asia (Ghosh, 2017) as it can be culture specific (Lim & Lee, 2011). Scale developed by Kuo, Chang, Quinton, Lu, and Lee (2015) pertaining to the positive and negative gossips either job related or non-job related was not tested in Asian context before this, thus this study has also validated the scale (negative gossips) in Asian context.

Theory and Hypotheses

This study is consistent with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), “as reciprocity exists when one individual reacts to other or others”. This reciprocity is based on the exchange of social and economic benefits; positive reciprocity engages the propensity to extend positive returns and negative reciprocity involves negative returns. As Asian cultures are patriarchal in general (dominated by males); thus, probability of experiencing incivility by females is high (Saleem, Rafiq, & Yusaf, 2017). In case of nurses, this is especially true based on the socio-cultural status of nurses (e.g., gender, caste, religion, and regional origin). Thus, nurses may experience disrespectful treatment and will not be in the position to defend them or act in the negative way due to patriarchal limits prevailing in Asian cultures, leaving them in a state where they will express their negative reciprocity by decreasing the service spirit and by increasing negative gossips either job related or non-job related. Theoretical pining of this study is also consistent with the affective events theory (AET). AET proposes that at workplace specific events trigger some specific emotions and individuals tend to react with affective reactions, such emotional reactions are the base for various attitudes and behaviors at workplace (Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Incivility within organizational circuits can trigger negative affective states, which decrease the motivation to exhibit high levels of service spirit. Further such negative affective events can reduce the individual’s resources (Leiter, 2013), thus, encouraging the nurses to cope with the perpetrators of incivility by spreading negative rumors or discussing the negative side of either job related issues or non-job related issues accordingly.

Similarly, victims of incivility tended to have reduced emotional and physical well-being, leading towards lower level of organizational commitment and, thus, reducing their service spirit (LeBlanc & Kelloway, 2002). Previous researchers have found that nurses tend to take their duties very seriously and provide best care to the patients. Moreover, they deal in a good way to the attendants of patients and their families. However, it has also been reported that in return to their

commitment to service and patients, they are not treated with dignity and their services are not valued (Anderson, 2002). Almost all female nurses experience incivility at workplace (Shahzad & Malik, 2014), however due to prevalence of patriarchic culture in Asian societies (Lim & Lee, 2011) and due to higher threshold for disrespectful behaviors, female nurses might tolerate incivility, thus, leaving the disrespectful behaviors unreported or underreported (Shahzad & Malik, 2014), even the events of violence are high in occurrence. Under such circumstances the only option left for female nurses is to reduce their service spirit and discussing the issues through gossips as coping strategy.

Discrimination and workplace incivility are two of the most extensively investigated aspects of mistreatment, and literature pertaining to these constructs is typically called on in discussing mistreatment or victimization (Aquino and Thau, 2009). In spite, no agreed definition exists in literature ;both bullying and discrimination are associated with negative behaviors (Cortina, 2008). Workplace incivility can also be in the shape of physical/ threatening behaviors, even much discrimination is now more concealed, ambiguous, and lacks the intensity of classic threatening acts of aggressive discrimination (Cortina, 2008). Cutting speakers off, and withholding information and friendliness in gender and/or racially targeted ways are examples of modern discrimination. Such behaviors have also been described as ‘bullying’ (Einarsen, et al.,2009). Bullying, sexual and racial types of harassment are thus closely related to workplace incivility (Cowie et al., 2002).The harm and costs associated with mistreatment mean that subjective experiences of even relatively minor covert behaviors matter within organizational circuits (Cortina, 2008).

Andersson and Pearson (1999) define workplace incivility as “low intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect” as cited by Ghosh (2017). Incivility has negative influences on those who directly experience uncivil encounters at work, as well as on those who witness uncivil behavior toward others (Montgomery, Kane, & Vance, 2004). Consequences in the shape of costs and negative behaviors due to incivility at work (even minor incivility) matter a great deal for patients, hospitals and even for delivery of quality health service (Cortina, 2008).

Incivility is generally linked with behaviors such as withholding information, work overload, delegation of menial tasks, alongside such personal behaviors as spreading negative information regarding job or discussing the personal/family issues of others or even discussing the negative image of hospitals (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011). While no agreed definition exists, incivility is associated with negative work/personal

behaviors directed at individuals which are harmful (Cortina, 2008). “In Pakistani culture, nurses are considered to be oppressed group and are very vulnerable to workplace violence (Somani & Khowaja, 2012)”. Thus female nurses working at hospitals have the propensity to receive less respect as the society has lack of respect toward the nursing profession (Shahzad & Malik, 2014) and due to this hospitals can be a place of uncivil behaviors for the female nurses. Thus, on the basis of above arguments we propose following hypotheses:

- H1. Workplace incivility is positively related with job related gossips
- H2. Workplace incivility is positively related with non-job related gossips
- H3. Workplace incivility is negatively related with service spirit.
- H4. Service Spirit mediates the relationship between workplace incivility and job related gossips
- H5. Service spirit mediates the relationship between workplace incivility and non-job related gossips.

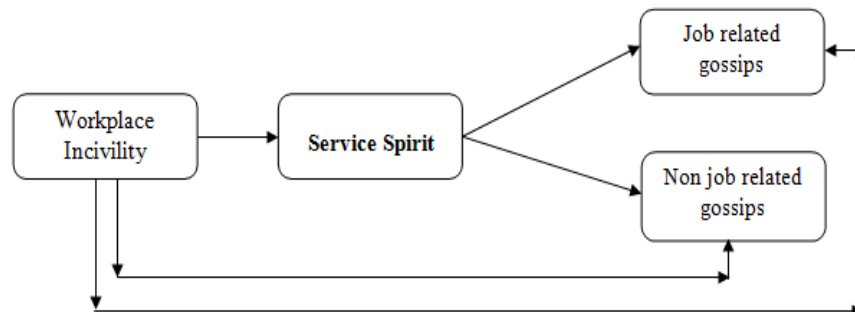


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Research Setting and Sample

Respondents in this study were female nurses working in the public sector hospitals in various cities of Pakistan. Data were collected in a cross-sectional study design through structured questionnaires. Non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to construct the sample. A sample of 350 nurses was approached, briefed about the study and questionnaires were administered to them by the research team. In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, “the respondents were instructed to complete the questionnaires, seal them in the return envelope, and put the finished questionnaires in a designated box located in the ward where they were working”. Of the returned questionnaires, 289 were completely filled, representing a response rate of 83 %. All the respondents were female (100%), most of them were under the age of 30

years, majority were married (65%). Similarly the distribution of experience showed that majority of the respondents had experience of 6-10 years, finally most of the nurses had graduation degree whereas 34 respondents had midwifery qualification. Screening questions were added in the instrument and average respondents reported that they experienced incivility from doctors, patients and their attendants.

Measures

All items of the research variables, presented below, “were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree, unless otherwise noted”. Workplace incivility was assessed using 8 items adapted from Cortina, Magley, Williams, and Langhout (2001). For each item, respondents were requested to indicate how often they have experienced incivility at work by reporting once or twice a year (1) once or twice a month (2) about once a week (3) Several times a week (4) Every day (5). A sample item is “In your hospital someone put you down or was arrogant to you in some way.” Service spirit was measured by 3 items questionnaire recently used by Ma, Wang, and Chien (2017). A sample item is “I like to participate in activities that can upgrade hospital's image”. Job related gossips and non-job related gossips were measured on the basis of questionnaire developed by (Kuo et al., 2015). Each dimension had 10 questions covering the aspect of positive and negative job and non-job related gossips. Keeping in alignment with the workplace incivility only negative side of job related gossips and non-job related gossips was followed and 5 items against each dimension were selected. A sample item is “Mostly at workplace I talked about My Colleague’s poor job performance (Job related gossips) and “Mostly at workplace I talked about My Colleague’s recent sorrowful life events such as illness or car accident (Non-job related gossips)”.

Data Analysis

SmartPLS v. 2.0 was used to estimate both measurement as well as structural model. PLS-SEM is an alternative approach to the CB-SEM where theory is under development and basis and fundamental purpose of using SEM is predicting outcome variables and explanation of variance (Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). Additionally PLS-SEM eradicates the tension regarding distributional assumptions being a non-parametric data analysis technique (Hair Jr et al., 2016) and finally it can handle complex models relatively well (Vinzi, Chin, Henseler, & Wang, 2010).

Results

Measurement Model

Measurement model was assessed on the basis of “reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha & composite reliability), convergent validity (Average variance extracted), and discriminant validity” (Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross loadings) of the scales (Hair Jr et al., 2016). All the “alpha coefficients, CR estimates, and average variance extracted (AVE) values were above their cutoff values”(Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013; Hair Jr et al., 2016). Outer loadings against all items of service spirit were greater than the threshold value of 0.708; whereas four items from workplace incivility, three from job related gossips and two from non-job related gossips had outer loadings less than 0.708, but these items were not dropped because items having outer loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 can be retained if AVE is within the acceptable range (Hair Jr et al., 2016).

Table-1 Indicator Reliability, Composite Reliability, Cronbach’s Alpha, Average Variance Extracted

Latent variable	Indicators	Indicator reliability	Composite reliability	Cronbach’s Alpha	AVE	Discriminant validity?
Workplace Incivility	WI1	0.867 ¹	0.89	0.85	0.52	Yes
	WI2	0.589				
	WI3	0.874				
	WI4	0.540				
	WI5	0.484				
	WI6	0.816				
	WI7	0.650				
	WI8	0.835				
Service Spirit	SS1	0.899	0.91	0.87	0.79	Yes
	SS2	0.841				
	SS3	0.919				
Job related gossips	JRG1	0.886	0.85	0.78	0.55	Yes
	JRG2	0.656				
	JRG3	0.608				
	JRG4	0.600				
	JRG5	0.896				
Non-Job Related Gossips	NJRG1	0.773	0.83	0.75	0.50	Yes
	NJRG2	0.757				
	NJRG3	0.747				
	NJRG4	0.618				
	NJRG5	0.630				

¹All factor loadings are significant at .01

Discriminant validity was established as the square root of AVE value for each scale was higher than the construct’s respective correlation with all other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981)(Table-2).

Together, the measurement model results provided evidence for satisfactory convergent and discriminant validity.

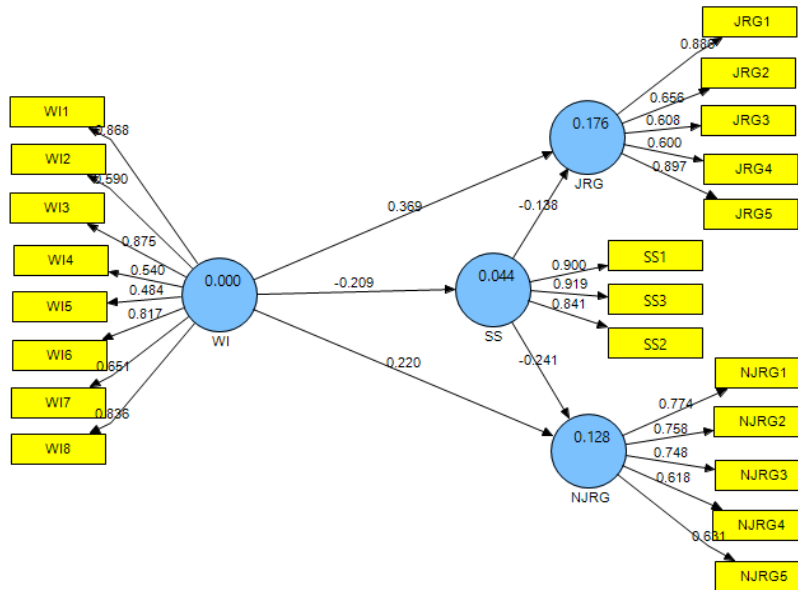


Figure-2 Path Coefficients of Relationships between Workplace Incivility, Service Spirit, Job Related Gossips and Non-Job Related Gossips

Table-2 Fornell & Larcker(1981) Criterion

Variables	Mean	SD	Job related gossips	Non-Job related gossips	Service Spirit	Workplace Incivility
Job related gossips	3.38	0.79774	0.742			
Non-Job related gossips	3.90	0.64574	0.317	0.709		
Service Spirit	1.84	0.54643	-0.215	-0.287	0.887	
Workplace Incivility	3.39	0.71966	0.398	0.270	-0.209	0.723

Note: Diagonal represents the square root of average variance extracted (AVE); while below the diagonal the estimated correlations are represented.

Structural Model Results-Model Predictive Capability

Path coefficients, their significance and percentage of variation (R^2) have been reported in figures 1 & 2. The results of the bootstrapping resampling technique (5000 runs), which is used in PLS to determine the significance of the paths, show that three paths are significant at $p < 0.001$ level (workplace incivility to service spirit, workplace incivility to job related gossips and workplace incivility to non-job related gossips) whereas two paths were significant at $p < 0.100$ (service spirit to job related gossips and service spirit to non-job related gossips). R^2 value for service spirit (endogenous construct) was 0.04, job related gossips was 0.176 and non-job related gossips was 0.128. Thus, it can be concluded that the hypothesized model is confirmed by the data. Here H1, H2 and H3 are accepted.

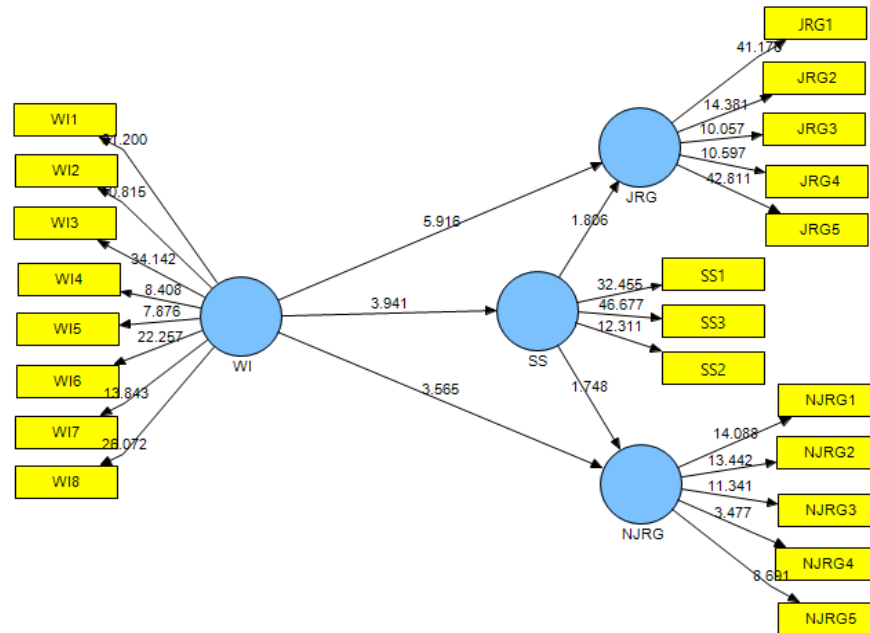


Figure-3 Significance of the Relationships between Workplace Incivility, Service Spirit, Job Related Gossips and Non Job Related Gossips

Additionally in order to confirm the model predictive relevance Blindfolding procedure was applied at omission distance of 7 to calculate Q^2 (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974). Here calculated Q^2 values for endogenous latent variables were greater than 0 confirming the predictive relevance (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009; Vinzi et al., 2010). Thus, it can be concluded that the hypothesized model is confirmed by the data and it is a satisfactory and substantial model.

Mediation paths (H₄ and H₅) were tested through variance accounted for (VAF) (Hair et al, 2014). The calculated value of VAF for the H₄ was 0.0723 (VAF <20%), similarly VAF for the H₅ was 0.1867 (VAF <20%) implying that no mediation occurred(Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014). Thus H₄ and H₅rejected.

Table-3 Structural Model–Hypotheses Test Results

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficient	Standard Error	t value	Results
H1	Workplace Incivility =>Job related gossips	0.3978*	0.057	6.97	Supported
H2	Workplace Incivility =>Non-Job related gossips	0.2701*	0.0564	4.78	Supported
H3	Workplace Incivility => Service Spirit	-0.2091*	0.053	3.94	Supported

Table-4Mediation Effect of service Spirit

H	Path	Product of Coefficients			VAF	Results
	IV=> MV => DV	Indirect effect (ab)	Direct effect	Total effect		
H4	WI => SS =>JRG	(-.1376)(-.2073*) = .0287	0.3691	0.3978	0.0723	Rejected
H5	WI => SS =>NRJG	(-.2407)(-.2073*) = .0503	0.2198	0.2701	0.1863	Rejected

WI=Workplace Incivility (Independent variable), SS=Service Spirit (Mediating variable) JRG=Job related gossips (Dependent variable), NRJG=Non job related gossips (Dependent variable)

Discussion and Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to examine the direct and indirect association between workplace incivility, job related gossips and non-job related gossips through service spirit as mediating variable by using quantitative research methods/design. Results of quantitative analysis showed that exposure to incivility increases the negative job related gossips as well as non-job related gossips and decreases service spirit among nurses. Results showed that nurses who experienced incivility are likely to involve in spreading negative sentiments regarding job related issues such as poor job performance, carelessness, poor work engagement, inexperience, poor job knowledge, or poor moral levels of their fellow beings either doctors or colleague nurses. Also results showed that nurses experiencing incivility tend to involve in discussing the non-job related issues of their fellow beings or doctors such as discussing the sorrowful life events (illness or sad incident), poor interaction of colleagues with their children, personal life issues like divorce separation and marital status and lying or betrayal of their

partners. However results showed a positive and strong relationship between workplace incivility and job related gossips ($\beta=.3978$) in comparison with non-job related gossips ($\beta=.2701$). Similarly the relationship of service spirit with non-job related gossips ($\beta=-0.2407$) was strong as compared to job related gossips ($\beta= 0.1376$) regardless of their significance level.

Theoretical Implications

Our findings have important implications both from managerial and theoretical perspectives. Our research has a few worth noting strengths. First, it added to the existing body of knowledge pertaining to workplace incivility towards nurses within Asian context. Second, we provided empirical evidence for positive relationship between workplace incivility, job related gossips and non-job related gossips. Nurses' service spirit has also been tested empirically in relations with job related and non-job related gossips. Further we have tested the scales and measures in Asian context which have been developed and tested in the western culture (Ghosh, 2017). Scale developed by Kuo et al. (2015) pertaining to the positive and negative gossips either job related or non-job related was not tested before this, so this study has added into the literature and tested this scale on the basis of negative side of job related gossips and non-job related gossips in Asian context, thus this study has also validated the scale (negative gossips) in Asian context. Although the predictive relevance of this study was statistically good (Q^2), the results might be generalized with care.

Managerial Implications

Regarding managerial implications, first and foremost, promotion of healthy workplace environment should be the prime responsibility by preventing the incivility within hospitals by proper legislation or policy formulation by the public service hospitals; simply zero tolerance policy for incivility should be introduced as a preventive measure (Malik, Sattar, Shahzad, & Faiz, 2017). Further specific training programs should be introduced to increase the service spirit of nurses in order to overcome the negative outcomes at individual and organizational level. Awareness campaigns must be launched to induce motivation for the promotion of healthcare environment for the delivery of quality healthcare services.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Despite several strengths, this study has also some limitations, due to shortage of time and cost constraints we could not cover the overall population and data were collected under convenience sampling technique which might not be good for generalization of results at large. Additionally, longitudinal studies may provide better results to make

inference regarding causality on the relationships tested in this study. Recording the male perspective on incivility can also provide important insights for future research. Respondents only reported sources of incivility as doctors, patients and their attendants; however a qualitative approach may bring important insights on the record. Also exploring the nature of gossips at workplace either it is job related or non-job related gossips are another avenue for future research.

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