

## **What a Rude Person! Emotional and Behavioural Reactions to Workplace Incivility**

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### **Abstract**

Organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) that promotes a supportive work environment and vital to ensure organizational functioning maybe jeopardised in the presence of workplace incivility. Research examining the consequences of workplace incivility on OCB is, nevertheless, limited. Thus, this study intends to address this gap. Using social exchange theory and affective events theory as underpinning theories, this study examined the relationship between workplace incivility and OCB with anger as a mediating variable and hostile attribution bias as a moderating variable. Data were collected from 348 employees in the Malaysian public sector via survey questionnaire. The study hypotheses were tested using PLS structural equation modelling. The results of the study showed that (a) workplace incivility had a significant indirect effect on OCB through anger and (b) hostile attribution bias did not moderate the relationship between workplace incivility and anger. Theoretically, this study adds to the body of knowledge by supporting the presence of tit-for-tat exchanges in cases of workplace incivility and emphasizing the need of examining emotions linked with experiencing workplace incivility incidents. Practically, this study provides understanding and awareness that workplace incivility is a costly problem for organizations. Several initiatives can be taken to reduce workplace incivility occurrence, including (a) increasing the awareness of the causes and consequences of workplace incivility and (b) taking incivility complaints seriously regardless of the perpetrator's position. To assist employees in managing their

negative emotions at the workplace, organizations may consider providing emotion-regulation workshops or integrating counselling services. In the future, this study can be replicated and extended by including other potential mediators and moderators to better explain the phenomenon of workplace incivility.

**Keywords:** *Anger, Co-Worker, Emotion, Hostile Attribution Bias, Incivility, Ocb, Voluntary Behaviour*

## Introduction

In recent decades, the focus of organizational behaviour studies has shifted towards negative workplace behaviour. Initially, the organizational behaviour literature was primarily concerned with investigating the damaging effects of negative workplace behaviour topics (e.g., deviance, aggression, bullying, harassment, and violence) on targets' work attitudes, behaviours and well-being. Later, the focus of researchers' attention shifted to a newly emerging problem in the workplace known as incivility. Workplace incivility, a rude and discourteous behaviour that violates norms of mutual respect is found to be more prevalent in the workplace than other forms of negative workplace behaviour (Han et al., 2022). As a result, workplace incivility has generated a great deal of research interest, and a number of studies have uncovered its impact, which is too overwhelming to be ignored.

Workplace incivility, a form of bad behaviour is not restricted to one geographic region. It is a global phenomenon that occurs across various industries and professions. Ranging from private firms to public companies, workplace incivility has been shown to not only create unpleasant office environments but also have detrimental effects on employees (see Schilpzand et al., 2016; Han et al., 2022). Nearly everyone who experiences workplace incivility reacts negatively. The published work on workplace incivility has shown that employees who experience uncivil behaviour are less satisfied with their jobs (Bunk and Magley, 2013; Parray et al., 2022), less motivated (Hur et al., 2016; Sakurai and Jex, 2012), less engaged with their job (Chen et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2020), less committed to their jobs (Kabat-Farr et al., 2018), lower in job performance (Rhee et al., 2017; Han et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020) and intent to exit the organization (Hassan et al., 2022; Mackey et al., 2019; Miner and Cortina, 2016; Namin et al., 2021; Parray et al., 2022).

Despite the growth in workplace incivility research, there are still gaps in the current literature that the present study aims to remedy. Because workplace incivility is a form of bad behaviour, studies have shown that employees who are targets of workplace incivility tend to engage in reciprocating behaviours such as counterproductive work behaviour (Lim and Teo, 2009; Mao et al., 2015; Welbourne and Sariol, 2017). This finding suggests that incivility in the workplace can lead to more intense forms of retaliatory aggressive behaviour following uncivil incidents. Although Andersson and Pearson (1999) proposed that workplace incivility can escalate into an intense form of retaliatory aggressive behaviour, there is also a possibility that employees may reciprocate the perceived incivility in another form of incivility, such as withholding organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Reciprocal behaviour in the form of withholding OCB is more likely to occur as the omission of voluntary behaviour is not subject to punishment (Zellar et al., 2002). Unfortunately, less attention has been paid to understand the impact of workplace incivility on OCB. Particularly, less is known about the mechanism through which workplace incivility affects OCB (Liu et al., 2019). For this reason, this study examines the underlying mechanism through which workplace incivility may affect OCB. Based on affective events theory (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996), we identified anger as a potential mediator in the relationships between workplace incivility and OCB. In addition, we

examined hostile attribution bias as a moderator in the relationship between workplace incivility and anger. Figure 1 summarizes the proposed relationships in our study.

Our study provides two contributions to workplace incivility literature. First, we integrated incivility literature with social exchange theory and affective events theory in an effort to further understand the influences of workplace incivility on OCB. Second, drawing from affective event theory, we include discrete emotions as a potential mediating mechanism as well as individual differences as moderating variables in order to extend our knowledge on employees' reactions to workplace incivility. To the best of our knowledge, no research has been conducted to examine the role of anger as an underlying mechanism in the relationship between workplace incivility and OCB. Similarly, previous studies have not yet examined the role of hostile attribution bias as a moderating variable in the relationship between workplace incivility and anger. Thus, the findings of this study are important for future researchers as a point of reference in understanding workplace incivility phenomena

## **Literature Review**

### ***Workplace Incivility and OCB***

In 1999, Andersson and Pearson introduced workplace incivility, which is a new topic of research within the discipline of negative workplace behaviour. Specifically, workplace incivility is defined as "low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviours are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others" (Andersson and Pearson, 1999 p. 457). According to Zauderer (2002), incivility can be simply defined as "impolitic behaviour or ill manners" (p. 37). In other words, workplace incivility refers to rude and disrespectful behaviours towards others that violate the norm of mutual respect.

Incivility in the workplace and other forms of mistreatment in companies each have their own unique characteristics. In contrast to other types of mistreatment, there are three important characteristics that differentiate workplace incivility from other forms of mistreatment (Andersson and Pearson 1999; Pearson et al., 2001). First, workplace incivility is characteristically ambiguous. That is, the intentionality of incivility in the workplace is not clear and can be called into question. Due to the ambiguity, workplace incivility is perceived differently depending on who the target is, who the perpetrators are, and who the witnesses are. Second, workplace incivility is a low-intensity deviant behaviour. The act of workplace incivility is not limited to verbal abuse, yet it also involves non-verbal rude behaviour such as avoiding, staring at, or excluding colleagues (Lim *et al.* 2008). Third, the act of workplace incivility violates workplace norms for mutual respect. In every workplace, mutual respect between employees has become the norm. However, the act of incivility interrupts mutual respect in the workplace, which enables employees to work together. These three characteristics, therefore, set workplace incivility apart from other related constructs of workplace mistreatment. Examples of workplace incivility include having one's credibility questioned in front of others, having one's opinion ignored, receiving silent treatment, and being treated with insulting or offensive language.

In the workplace, interactions between employees are not limited to positive exchanges but also include negative interactions that provide them with the opportunity to harm one another (Venkatarami and Dalal, 2007). The negative interactions, hence, increase the opportunity for employees to encounter negative events from organizational members, such as incivility that in turn may influence their voluntary behaviour, such as organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). In the present study, we focus on co-worker-initiated incivility

because of the high level of interaction that occurs among them (Chiaburu and Harrison, 2008). OCB, which refers to employees' voluntary behaviour that goes above and beyond their prescribed job responsibilities to help others in the workplace (Organ 1988), may therefore be jeopardized due to incivility incidents. Among organizational scholars and managers, OCB has received significant attention since it contributes to a better work atmosphere and increased employee productivity (Podsakoff et al., 2009).

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which emphasizes that an action by one party leads to response by another, motivates employees to believe that something has to be given and returned (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). The process of social exchange, which is guided by the norm of reciprocity, entails people responding to positive treatment with positive treatment and negative treatment with negative treatment. Andersson and Pearson (1999) argue that one may reciprocate the perceived incivility in a mutually negative manner. Using the tit-for-tat pattern, there is a possibility that the victim of incivility may respond to the perceived harm in another form of incivility, such as withholding OCB in order to maintain the balance of the exchange relationship. For instance, if someone behaves in a way that is impolite, disrespectful, or insensitive, the victim may choose not to offer their volunteer assistance to the person who behaved inappropriately in retaliation. Empirically, workplace incivility was found to be associated with employees' engaging in retaliatory behaviour (see Arshad and Ismail 2018; De Clercq et al., 2019; Ismail et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2018; Keratepe et al., 2019). In the present study, we propose that when employees are treated with uncivil manner, they will reciprocate by withdrawing OCB from those who treated them uncivilly. Therefore, we hypothesize the following

H1. Workplace incivility is negatively related to OCB.

#### *Anger as mediator*

Examining the black box underlying the relationship between workplace incivility and its consequences enhanced our understanding of the workplace incivility phenomenon. Drawing from effective events theory by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), which posit that an effective experience mediates the relationship between a work events and an affective driven behaviour, we proposed a potential mediating mechanism in workplace incivility-OCB relationship. That is, it is expected that a work event (e.g., workplace incivility) will elicit a discrete emotion (e.g., anger), which in turn, has an effect on an affective-driven behaviour (e.g., OCB).

Anger, an emotion that exists in every human is triggered when a person perceives a situation to be insulting, harmful or threatening, unpleasant, unfair, irresponsible, or when one's expectations are not met (Porath et al., 2010; Spielberger et al., 1995). Feeling angry, hence, signals one's displeasure with an action, blaming the other party for the situation, a challenged or threatened identity, as well as a bruised sense of self-worth (Barclay et al., 2005; Porath et al., 2010; Porath and Pearson, 2012).

In the workplace, uncivil behaviour by others can be an anger-inducing environment (Porath and Pearson, 2012). Because workplace incivility is a form of bad behaviour, targets of incivility may experience anger following incivility incident. Workplace incivility, which is perceived as uncomfortable, threatening, and blocking one's ability to achieve one's goals (Brotheridge and Lee, 2010; Porath et al., 2010) is likely to trigger anger. Importantly, workplace incivility may trigger anger against the perpetrator for violating the norms of mutual respect (Porath et al., 2010).

When employees are angry following workplace incivility incident, they may be less likely to engage in discretionary behaviour. Although anger is associated with aggression against the offender (Averill, 1983), employees may also take covert retaliatory action by withholding their OCB in response to anger. Moreover, because the omission of OCB is not subjected to disciplinary action, employees may be more likely to withhold OCB in an attempt to get even with the perpetrator in responding to the uncivil treatment (Fitness, 2000; Skarlicki and Folger, 1997; Zellars et al., 2002).

Empirically, Kabat-Far et al., (2018) demonstrate that employees reported feeling angry when experiencing workplace incivility. Bunk and Magley (2013) also reported similar finding that targets of workplace incivility experience anger following uncivil incidents. Meanwhile, Lee and Allen (2002) highlight that negative emotions affect employees OCB. The mediating role of anger has also received indirect support in previous research. Zhou et al., (2018) found that anger mediates the relationship between illegitimate task and counterproductive work behaviour. Kabat-Farr et al., (2018) also found that anger mediates the relationship between workplace incivility and work withdrawal. Based on affective events theory and some related empirical evidence, therefore, we hypothesize the following.

- H2. There is a direct positive relationship between workplace incivility and anger.
- H3. There is a direct negative relationship between anger and OCB.
- H4. Anger will mediate the negative relationship between workplace incivility and OCB.

#### *Hostile Attribution Bias as Moderator*

Affective events theory (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996) also specifies a moderation link between a work event and affective response. The characteristically ambiguous workplace incivility may cause target's interpretation of incivility to vary. Consequently, it provides a boundary condition for the effects of incivility. In this study, we posit that hostile attribution bias is likely to moderate the impact of workplace incivility on anger. Hostile attribution bias, which reflects distorted thinking in which people tend to blame others, may influence how one judges the behaviour of others (Wu et al., 2014). Particularly, hostile attribution bias refers to an individual's tendency to judge the behaviour of others as hostile (Adams and John, 1997).

Previous research has highlighted that people with higher hostile attribution bias tend to interpret the misbehaviour of others as intentionally hostile and harmful, even when it is not (Ye et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2021). Facing an ambiguous event such as workplace incivility, employees with a high hostile attribution bias tend to perceive the misbehaviour of others as intentional. Employees with a low hostile attribution bias, on the other hand, tend to justify others' misbehaviour. When experiencing workplace incivility, both high and low hostile attribution bias employees may feel anger. However, employees who have high hostile attribution bias are more likely to have a stronger negative affective response in responding to the uncivil treatment. In contrast, employees who have low hostile attribution bias may excuse the perpetrator's behaviour, and thus, minimizing the effect of workplace incivility experience. Previous research has shown that hostile attribution bias moderates the relationship between workplace incivility and its outcome (e.g., Wu et al., 2014; Zhou et al., 2015). However, it remains unknown if hostile attribution bias serves as a boundary condition

in the relationship between workplace incivility and anger. Therefore, we hypothesize the following.

- H5. The relationship between workplace incivility and anger is moderated by hostile attribution bias. Specifically, the effect of incivility on anger is stronger for those employees with a high level of hostile attribution bias compared to those employees with a low level of hostile attribution bias.

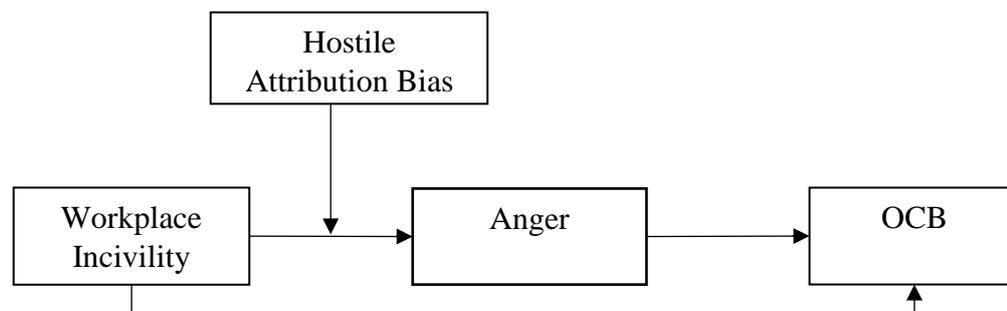


Figure 1: Proposed theoretical model

## Method

### *Participant and procedures*

Our sample consisted of 348 employees from a large public organization in Malaysia. Purposive sampling was used as this study required respondents to have at least one year of work experience with the current organization. Following ethical approval, questionnaire was distributed to all employees by the appointed person-in-charge. Employees were assured that their participation was voluntary and their responses would remain confidential. Of the 348 samples, the majority of the participants were female (69%), Malays (95.4%), married (82.2%), full-time employees (96.3%), and had worked with the current organization for more than 10 years (49.7%). Their average age was 36-40 years old ( $SD=1.4$ ).

### *Measures*

*Workplace incivility* was measured using a modified version of Cortina's et al. (2001) Workplace Incivility Scale. This scale consists of seven items that assess respondents' experiences with rude or disrespectful behaviour from co-workers at work. The period of recall being the target of incivility is reduced from 5 years to 1 year in order to prevent potential recall issues (Cortina and Magley, 2009). Using a seven-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always), respondents indicated the frequency of their experience of workplace incivility. A sample item is "My co-worker put me down or was condescending to me". The Cronbach's alpha reliability was 0.925.

*Anger* was measured using Buckley's et al. (2004) four anger adjectives. The respondents are required to indicate the frequency of experiencing these anger using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (every time). A sample item is "My co-worker has made me feel irritated". The Cronbach's alpha reliability was 0.914.

*OCB* was measured using a modified version of Williams and Anderson (1991). The modified OCB scale consisted of seven items that measured respondents' discretionary behaviours, particularly towards co-workers. Respondents indicated the extent of their agreement with each item on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always). A sample item is "I go out of my way to help this co-worker". The Cronbach's alpha reliability was 0.925.

*Hostile attribution bias* was measured using Adam and John (1997) scale with six items. This scale measures the level of hostile attribution bias in an individual. On a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), respondents are required to indicate the extent of their agreement with each item. A sample item is "People pretend to care more about one another than they really do". The Cronbach's alpha reliability was 0.815.

### ***Preliminary analyses***

The data were coded before being subjected to a preliminary analysis using the IBM-SPSS statistics version 21. The preliminary analysis involved checking the data for suspicious response patterns, improper data entries, and missing values. Next, the presence of univariate and multivariate outliers and normal or non-normal data distribution were checked at this stage. Last, violation of linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity assumptions were evaluated. The results show that there is a violation of the normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity assumption. Therefore, the PLS-SEM approach is employed for hypothesis testing.

### ***Hypothesis testing analyses***

Hypotheses were tested using partial least squares equation modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3.3.9. The data were assessed at two phases. In the initial phase, measurement model reliability and validity were evaluated by conducting PLS algorithm and bootstrapping procedures. In the second phase, the structural model was evaluated using PLS algorithm, bootstrapping and blindfolding procedures. Its primary objective is to answering the study hypotheses. The predictive relevance was then evaluated using PLS predict.

## **Findings**

### ***Measurement model assessment***

The PLS-SEM analysis was carried out according to the recommendation by Hair et al., (2017). The reflective measurement models are evaluated in terms of indicator loading, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Table 1 shows the results of reflective measurement model.

As shown in Table 1, the value of indicator loadings of all variables showed that the values range from 0.723 to 0.924. It signifies that the outer loading for all items exceeds the threshold value of 0.707, suggesting that the indicators are reliable. Two indicators loading for hostile attribution bias, nevertheless, fall below the threshold value. Hence, the problematic indicators were removed from hostile attribution bias one at a time so that its convergent validity would meet the threshold value of 0.50. As shown in Table 1, the average variance extracted (AVE) values for anger, hostile attribution bias, workplace incivility and OCB were above 0.50 threshold, suggesting that the presence of convergent validity in the reflective measurement model.

The internal consistency of the measurement model was high as shown in Table 1. The Cronbach's alpha values were 0.914, 0.815, 0.925, and 0.925 for anger, hostile attribution bias, OCB and anger. Similarly, the composite reliability values were high with values ranging from 0.878 (hostile attribution bias) to 0.940 (workplace incivility).

Table 1:  
*Reflective Measurement Models Results*

Construct	Item	Indicator Loading	Internal Consistency Reliability		Average Variance Extracted
			Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	
Anger	A1	0.866	0.914	0.939	0.795
	A2	0.924			
	A3	0.910			
	A4	0.865			
Hostile Attribution Bias	HAB3	0.759	0.815	0.878	0.642
	HAB4	0.814			
	HAB5	0.849			
	HAB6	0.780			
OCB	OCB1	0.866	0.925	0.937	0.681
	OCB2	0.880			
	OCB3	0.808			
	OCB4	0.833			
	OCB5	0.836			
	OCB6	0.723			
	OCB7	0.822			
Workplace Incivility	WI1	0.783	0.925	0.940	0.69
	WI2	0.792			
	WI3	0.849			
	WI4	0.848			
	WI5	0.892			
	WI6	0.857			
	WI7	0.788			

Note: A = anger, HAB = hostile attribution bias, OCB = organizational citizenship behaviour, WI = workplace incivility

The heterotrait-monotrait or HTMT criterion was used to assess discriminant validity. As shown in Table 2, the heterotrait-monotrait correlations were below 0.9 (Hair et al., 2017). This indicates that the measurement model has good discriminant validity.

Table 2:  
Discriminant validity of the measurement model

	OCB	Anger	Hostile Attribution Bias
OCB			
Anger	0.187		
Hostile Attribution Bias	0.131	0.424	
Workplace Incivility	0.146	0.871	0.439

### **Structural model assessment**

Following a reliable and valid measurement model, the structural model assessment was carried out at the second stage following the guideline provided by Hair et al., (2017). Each predictor construct has a variance inflation factor (VIF) value less than 3.3 (Kock, 2015) suggesting the absence of collinearity issue. The level of coefficient determination,  $R^2$  values showed that the research model explained 64.8% variation in the anger construct and 3.7%

variation in OCB construct. Hence, the model explained endogenous latent variables substantially well for anger and weak for OCB. The effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) of the predictors showed that workplace incivility on anger has a large effect size,  $f^2 = 1.280$ , whereas no effect detected for workplace incivility on OCB,  $f^2 = 0.000$ .

A bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resampling was used to evaluate the structural model path coefficients and its significance. Table 3 shows the path coefficients results of the study. As shown in Table 3, results revealed that there was no significant relationship between workplace incivility and OCB ( $p=0.927$ ,  $t=0.092$ ). Thus, H1 was not supported. However, the results revealed that there is a significant relationship between workplace incivility and anger ( $p=0.000$ ,  $t=25.470$ ), as well as there is a significant relationship between anger and OCB ( $p=0.019$ ,  $t=2.345$ ). Hence, H2 and H3 was supported. On the mediation relationship, anger was found to mediate the relationship between workplace incivility and OCB ( $p=0.020$ ,  $t=2.324$ ). Therefore, H4 was supported. We further identified the type of mediation by referring to Hair et al., (2017). The results revealed that full mediation was the type for the hypothesized relationship. On the moderation relationship, results of bootstrapping procedure showed that the path coefficient between the interaction variable and anger was not significant ( $p=0.221$ ,  $t=1.225$ ). Therefore, H5 was not supported.

Table 3:  
*Results of The Path Coefficients*

Relationship	P-Value	T-Value	Result
H1: Workplace Incivility → OCB	0.927	0.092	Not supported
H2: Workplace Incivility → Anger	0.000	25.470	Supported
H3: Anger → OCB	0.019	2.345	Supported
H4: Workplace Incivility → Anger → OCB	0.020	2.324	Supported
H5: Workplace Incivility*Hostile Attribution Bias → Anger	0.221	1.225	Not supported

Note: \* $p < 0.05$

The final assessment of structural model involved examining the Stone-Geisser's  $Q^2$  values and PLS predict  $Q^2$  values in assessing the model's capability to predict. The Stone-Geisser's  $Q^2$  values for all constructs in this investigation were larger than 0, suggesting that the structural model has predictive relevance. On the other hand, PLS predict  $Q^2$  resulted in only two value with larger than 0, which is anger ( $Q^2 = 0.642$ ) and OCB ( $Q^2 = 0.017$ ).

To clarify the predictive accuracy of our model, prediction values generated by PLS and a naïve benchmark, LM were compared. The comparison between the two values is shown in Table 4. Due to the errors were not normally distributed, yet was not highly non-symmetric, RMSE value was used as the base predictive power assessment. As shown in Table 4, five indicators in the PLS analysis had lower RMSE values than RMSE values in the naïve benchmark. Therefore, it indicates that the model has medium predictive power (Shmueli et al., 2019).

Table 4:

*Comparison Between PLS And Naïve Benchmark For Key Endogenous Construct*

Items	PLS	LM	PLS	LM
	RMSE	RMSE	Q <sup>2</sup> _Predict	Q <sup>2</sup> _Predict
OCB 6	1.754	<b>1.761</b>	-0.010	-0.018
OCB 7	1.674	<b>1.684</b>	-0.001	-0.012
OCB 5	1.616	<b>1.624</b>	-0.003	-0.013
OCB 1	1.571	<b>1.575</b>	0.005	-0.001
OCB 3	1.621	<b>1.626</b>	0.004	-0.002
OCB 2	1.541	<b>1.544</b>	0.006	0.001
OCB 4	<b>1.561</b>	1.557	-0.007	-0.002
A1	<b>1.058</b>	1.044	0.081	0.104
A4	<b>0.874</b>	0.862	0.056	0.082
A2	<b>1.093</b>	1.081	0.062	0.082
A3	<b>1.013</b>	1.000	0.048	0.072

*Note:* Bold values indicate higher prediction errors were observed in the naïve benchmark than prediction errors in RMSE.

### Discussion

The present study seeks to examine if workplace incivility predicts employees' likelihood to engage with OCB in response to uncivil events. Based on social exchange theory and norm of reciprocity, we proposed that negative exchange is likely to occur in the situation where employees behave in uncivil manner. Building on affective events theory we identified anger as a potential mediator in the relationship between workplace incivility and OCB. Using affective events theory, we also examine the relationship between workplace incivility and anger as well as the role of hostile attribution bias in moderating the relationship between workplace incivility and anger. The findings supported the hypothesized relationships, demonstrating that workplace incivility triggers feelings of anger, as well that anger acts as a mediator between workplace incivility and OCB. The present study contributes to the existing body of knowledge about workplace incivility phenomena.

### Theoretical implications

First, our findings demonstrated a new mechanism in explaining workplace incivility impact on OCB. The finding of anger as the new mediator between workplace incivility and OCB contributes to the literature by suggesting that discrete emotions as an additional mechanism in the relationship between workplace incivility and OCB. Consistent with affective events theory, the results demonstrated that anger (an affective experience) mediates the relationship between workplace incivility (a work event) and OCB (an affective-driven behaviour). In other words, when employees experience incivility at work, they are likely to feel anger, and when they feel anger they are unlikely to engage in OCB. The significant role of anger as a mediating variable thus, highlights the importance of examining the role of discrete emotions in explaining the relationship between workplace incivility and OCB. Additionally, the finding that anger acts as a mediator in explaining the workplace incivility-OCB relationship highlights the importance of examining emotions in organizational research. Despite that we found a significant indirect effect of workplace incivility on OCB through anger, we did not found significant direct effect between workplace incivility and OCB.

Similarly, Mao *et al.* (2017) also found no evidence of the proposed relationship between workplace incivility and OCB. Focusing on victim perspective, this finding suggests that the relationship between workplace incivility and OCB may be more complex and that workplace incivility is likely to affect employee OCB through mediating mechanisms. We believe that the findings of the present study add to the existing knowledge of workplace incivility phenomena and we recommend future research to continue examining potential underlying mechanisms of the relationship between workplace incivility and OCB.

Through the lens of affective events theory, our findings highlights that incivility in workplace can be an anger-inducing events. The significant relationship between workplace incivility and anger supports the proposition of affective events theory that workplace emotions are triggered by workplace events. Employees who experience incivility in the workplace are likely to feel anger in response to the incivility. This finding demonstrates that incivility is perceived as harmful behaviour and the perpetrator is held accountable for violating the norms of mutual respect, resulting in feelings of anger following incivility incidents. Because anger motivates one to get even with the offender (Averill, 1983), employees may engage in covert retaliation actions against the perpetrator by withholding their OCB.

In addition to moderating mechanisms, the present study did not find support for the moderating role of hostile attribution bias in the relationship between workplace incivility and anger. Essentially, both high and low hostile attribution bias employees feel anger when they experience workplace incivility. This finding is inconsistent with effective events theory, which proposes dispositional traits (i.e., hostile attribution bias) will moderate the relationship between work events (i.e., workplace incivility) and affective experiences (i.e., anger). There are two possible reasons that explain the absence of a moderating effect of hostile attribution bias in the present study. First, there is a strong relationship between workplace incivility and anger. Because moderation is usually introduced when there is a weak relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Baron and Kenny, 1986), including hostile attribution bias as a moderator did not affect the strength of the relationship between workplace incivility and anger. Second, there is a possibility that hostile attribution bias alone is not enough to moderate the relationship between workplace incivility and anger (Ismail et al., 2018). In other words, in the presence of another moderating variable, the moderating effect of hostile attribution bias could be detected.

### ***Practical implications***

The present study has implications for organizational practice. First, our findings highlight the necessity for organizations to determine if workplace incivility is prevalent inside their organization and if employees view workplace incivility as a problem. Our findings suggest that workplace incivility negatively affects employees. Hence, to manage workplace incivility among employees, responsible organizations may take steps to reduce its occurrence. For instance, because uncivil actions can create enormous annoyance and suffering among employees, employers should create awareness about incivility in the workplace, its causes, and consequences of the uncivil act. Some employees may not even realise they are being rude at work, and many employees may not notice when others are being rude. Hence, employers should educate employees and teach them what to do during job training sessions. Further, organizations should develop a safe and open environment for their employees by taking incivility complaints seriously and penalizing those who behave uncivilly regardless of the perpetrator's position. This will help employees feel protected and comfortable reporting any incivility experienced in the workplace. In order to ensure that everyone is on the same

page regarding what is expected of them while they are on the job, it is important for organizations to establish and communicate their rules clearly. By defining acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the workplace, makes it easier for employees to interact with each other. In addition, employers may encourage leaders (including immediate supervisors) to model good behaviour in inspiring those who work with them to be courteous and civilized. When the leader acts as an example of professionalism in the office, it highlights that this is the only behaviour that will be permitted and approved in the workplace.

Second, our findings highlight the need to manage employees' emotions. Because workplace incivility negatively affects employees OCB through anger, we recommend that organization actively acknowledge the importance of emotions in workplace. Recent research demonstrates that a competitive advantage (e.g., improving employees' organizational commitment and job performance) can be gained by organizations when they are good at assisting their employees to cope with their negative emotions (Humphrey et al., 2022). There are a few practical approaches that can be used to manage employees' negative emotions. First, organizations may provide emotion-regulation training that will train employees to cope with their negative emotions. For instance, training related to emotional intelligence may help employees manage their emotions. During such training, particular emphasis should be placed on providing employees with knowledge of the four types of emotional intelligence competencies identified by Goleman (2001), which are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Previous studies found emotional intelligence reduces burnout symptoms and mitigates the effect of negative emotion on burnout (Gerits et al., 2005; Görgens-Ekermans and Brand, 2012; Mikolajczak et al., 2007; Szczygiel and Mikolajczak, 2018). Second, organizations may assist employees in overcoming negative emotions by providing counselling services by qualified counsellors or psychologists. Third, organizations may introduce an employee assistance program that will assist employees with personal and work related problems. Finally, it is important for organizations to minimize the occurrence of events that trigger negative emotions among employees.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

There are some limitations in the present study that should be noted. The main limitation of the present study is that we employed cross-sectional data in which the data were gathered at a single point in time. Given the cross-sectional nature of the research design, caution is advised before making causal inferences as the present study did not capture causal variation. To address this limitation, future research may replicate the present study by incorporating a longitudinal design in data collection. Additionally, future research may replicate this study in other organizational settings with different samples of employees. The present study also did not comprehensively include other moderating variables in the research model. Therefore, we encourage future research to include other moderators to better explain the phenomenon of workplace incivility. For instance, future research may include potential moderators such as emotional intelligence that could serve as a moderator between work events and affective reactions, improving our model in a more robust way.

Another limitation of the present study is that the data used self-reported data, which may be subject to common method bias. Given that the present study focused on victim perspective, we argue that the use of self-report measures was most appropriate and relevant for assessing the primary variables in our study. Because workplace incivility was experienced directly by the victim and not always visible to others, it was unsuitable and questionable to rely on reports from other people (Hershcovis et al., 2012; Welbourne et al., 2016).

Furthermore, it is difficult for supervisors or co-workers to accurately report victims internal states, such as emotions. To reduce the potential common method bias in the present study, we followed Podsakoff et al., (2003) recommendation in reducing the possible threat. For instance, we ensured respondents' confidentiality and ensuring their participation was voluntary. Future studies, however, may use a different approach in collecting the data in order to minimize bias.

A final limitation of the present study is that we only focused on co-worker-initiated incivility. In the workplace, there are two internal sources of incivility, which are co-workers and supervisors. Particularly in the service industry, the interaction is not limited to co-workers and supervisors but also customers or clients. Due to the ambiguous intend of workplace incivility, there is a possibility that employees may appraise uncivil incident differently depending on who is the perpetrator and this may affect how they react. Therefore, it is beneficial for future research to distinguish the sources of incivility and examine the effect of workplace incivility on OCB as it may provide different results. In doing so, it will provide a better understanding of employees' reactions to uncivil experiences.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study provides empirical evidence of the connection between both emotional and behavioural reactions as a result of perceived workplace incivility. Although workplace incivility did not directly influence OCB in this study, it has significant impact through emotion. Specifically, this study found that angry employees who were treated with uncivil manner would choose to withhold their OCB. In addition, our findings imply that there was no moderating effect of hostile attribution bias on the connection between workplace incivility and anger, indicating that employees level of hostile attribution bias will not affect the impact of workplace incivility on anger.

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