




Article

Impact of Experienced Workplace Incivility (EWI) on Instigated Workplace Incivility (IWI): The Mediating Role of Stress and Moderating Role of Islamic Work Ethics (IWE)

Muhammad Ali Raza ¹, Noor Ul Hadi ², Muhammad Muazzem Hossain ², Ishtiaq Ahmed Malik ³,
Muhammad Imran ^{1,*} and Bahaudin G. Mujtaba ⁴

¹ Department of Management Sciences, COMSATS University Islamabad, Islamabad 45550, Pakistan

² College of Business Administration, Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University, Al-Khobar 34754, Saudi Arabia

³ Department of Business Administration, University of Chakwal, Chakwal 48800, Pakistan

⁴ College of Business and Entrepreneurship, Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314, USA

* Correspondence: m.imrankhan@comsats.edu.pk

Abstract: There has been an increase in uncivil behaviors in the 21st century workplace, emphasizing the need for discussion. The current study is aimed at extending the literature available on workplace incivility by examining the impact of experienced workplace incivility on instigated workplace incivility. The study proposes that stress mediates the relationship between experienced workplace incivility and instigated workplace incivility. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that Islamic work ethics moderates the relationship between experienced and instigated workplace incivility, and between stress and instigated workplace incivility. Data were collected at three-time lags from respondents (N = 258) working in the sustainable public service sector. Results supported the hypotheses that experienced workplace incivility impacts instigated workplace incivility. The results also supported mediation and moderation hypotheses, confirming that stress is a mediator, and Islamic work ethics is a moderator. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed followed by limitations.

Keywords: experienced workplace incivility; incivility; instigated workplace incivility; Islamic work ethics; workplace incivility



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1. Introduction

Ninety-five percent of the total workforce faces some form of workplace bullying or uncivil acts [1,2]. Workplace uncivil behaviors can have financial repercussions for the organization due to customer loss, bad reputation, low levels of creativity from employees, and high employee turnover intention [3]. Multiple forms of workplace incivility exist in organizations, including experienced workplace incivility and instigated workplace incivility [4]. Aggressive behaviors depicted in organizations often stem from generational issues, ranging from physical violence and harassment to comparatively milder behaviors such as psychological aggression, and adversely affect not only the organization's reputation but also employee performance [5–7].

In today's competency-driven era, organizations strive for the retention of a competent workforce. Employees' behavior depends upon the treatment they receive from their colleagues which acts as an antecedent for their outcome behaviors. Respectful and dignified treatment motivates employees to reciprocate with positive behavior, which consequently triggers a positive spiral in the organization [8]. On the contrary, negative behaviors shown to employees induce negative behavior, a term known as the incivility spiral [5]. Employees facing incivility from their colleagues build a tendency to respond with incivility, resulting in interpersonal conflict in the organization [9].

Employees being victims of experienced workplace incivility (EWI) may feel stress due to an unhealthy work environment and may ultimately respond with instigated workplace

incivility (IWI) [10]. Consequently, exposure to incivility can negatively impact employee performance [11,12]. That is, the culmination of experienced incivility and stress can induce employees to respond with their own uncivil acts [13]. However, there is a paucity of empirical evidence in this regard in the literature. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore the impact of EWI on IWI and examine the role of stress as a mediator between them.

Employees' behavior also depends on their religious ideology [14–17] as religion impacts both personal and professional lives [18]. Ethics and values based on religion assist employees to differentiate between desirable and undesirable behaviors and thereby impacting their performance [19]. Islamic work ethics stem from the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah (teachings and sayings of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him (PBUH)), which categorize hard work as an absolution of sins and a means of best-achieved sustenance of life [20]. Unlike protestant work ethics, Islamic work ethics (IWE) primarily focus on employees' intent [16,21].

The literature available on the EWI-IWI relationship is scant. Further investigation is required to understand this relationship. Only a few studies including [5,7] have explored the relationship between EWI and IWI. However, these studies have been conducted in the western context, and the impact of stress has not been addressed. Moreover, IWE is an important determinant in shaping behaviors in Islamically dominant societies. The extant literature provides little to no direction with regard to IWE. This study fills this void and posits that IWE acts as a shielding mechanism and diminishes the impact of EWI.

Incivility is a substantial problem in the contemporary work environment and results in the loss of resources and operational efficiency. Employees experiencing incivility respond by showing incivility, resulting in an incivility spiral at the workplace. Such a phenomenon once started is difficult to reverse and results in the wastage of resources, loss of talent, and lower operational efficiency. The purposes of this study are to empirically investigate (1) the impact of experienced workplace incivility on instigated workplace incivility, (2) the role of stress as a mediator between EWI and IWI, and (3) the impact of IWE as a moderator on the EWI-IWI and Stress-IWI relationships.

This research is significant in multiple ways. First, it aims at understanding the EWI-IWI relationship and its effect on employee performance. Second, it helps understand the impact of stress on employee behavior. Finally, it explains the importance and impact of IWE on the behaviors of employees at the workplace. Our motivation for this study is to understand the philosophy and reasons behind adverse behaviors and how these behaviors can be avoided to ensure smooth operations at the workplace. The impetus comes from the fact that there is an increasing trend of incivility in the workplace, especially in the context of public sector entities that contribute substantially to the employment sector.

2. Literature

2.1. Instigated Workplace Incivility

Instigated workplace incivility can be explained as “unconscious or subconscious low intent behaviors with the ambiguous aim of harming the target in violation of mutual respect norms of workplace” [9]. It can also be said that instigated workplace incivility is “inconsequential words and deeds that violate the conventional norms of workplace conduct” [3]. Examples of uncivil behaviors include sarcasm, unwelcomed jokes, cold behavior, hostile stares, denigrating tones, and silent treatments [22].

One of the first studies on incivility was conducted by Blau and Andersson [9]. Blau and Andersson collected data from respondents with different occupations including security officers, waitresses, paralegals, data entry operators, and caretakers. They posited that distributive and procedural injustice, emotional burnout, and job dissatisfaction can act as an antecedent for instigated workplace incivility [9]. When employees feel that they are being abused or not being treated fairly in the workplace, it starts an incivility spiral between the individuals instigating incivility and targets. Consequently, target employees reciprocate by engaging in incivility including theft, rule-breaking, and cyber-loafing [23].

Raza et al. [24] conducted a study in which they collected data from employees working in hotels. They also established that the perception of injustice leads to incivility in the workplace. [4,7,25–27] established in their studies that employees experiencing incivility from others including supervisors, subordinates and colleagues are prone to show some sort of counterproductive behavior. Moreover, these studies have included samples from both manufacturing and service sectors and collected both cross-sectional and longitudinal data eliciting the importance and impact of workplace incivility.

2.2. Experienced Workplace Incivility

Schilpzand et al. [28] conducted a meta-analysis of incivility, categorizing it into three sub-dimensions: experienced, witnessed, and instigated workplace incivilities. They found that majority of the studies have focused on experienced workplace incivility. Experienced incivility is becoming a towering issue at work. Employees experiencing incivility are more prone to depict rude behaviors as uncivil behaviors as in violation of fundamental norms including politeness and respect [5,29]. Social exchange and incivility [30], and incivility spiral [5] suggest that individuals' interactions are based on the philosophy of reciprocity and that employees behave in the context of their antecedent behaviors. Therefore, employees that experience uncivil behaviors reciprocate with uncivil behaviors towards the perpetrators since they view it as justified means of reciprocation [25].

Incivility can also lead to rude behaviors not only toward perpetrators but also towards other employees [31–33], and it does not need multiple occurrences. A single event of incivility can lead to a contagion incivility spiral [31]. Reaction to incivility can be immediately following the stimulus from perpetrators [31], or it can happen at some later time [34]. Employees experiencing incivility get caught in a spiral of incivility either to reciprocate with ambiguous intent or as a defense mechanism [28].

Employees facing incivility believe that the organization has built up a tolerance for rude behaviors; so, such actions are not checked thereby allowing employees to elicit such acts. Employees facing incivility tend to settle the score by reciprocating uncivil behaviors with similar reactions and these reactions can be more, less, or similar in intensity [5,7]. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that individuals experiencing incivility reciprocate by engaging in incivility.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Experienced workplace incivility has a significant positive impact on instigated workplace incivility.*

2.3. Stress

Job stress can be defined as the discomfort that an individual faces due to his or her work situation, which is a result of an imbalance between job demands and resources [35,36]. The reasons why employees show stress include the lack of autonomy, overwhelming job demands, interpersonal conflicts, and an uncomfortable work environment [37]. Spector and Fox [37] devised a model in which they linked stress with negative and counterproductive behaviors in the workplace. They postulated that employees evaluate and appraise events that occur in the organization and events that are perceived as threatening trigger emotional responses including workplace incivility [38].

Stress has been studied in the context of workplace incivility in a number of studies with numerous findings such as workplace incivility as a source of stress [39], family-to-work conflict due to stress [40,41], high stress level on uncivil treatment days [42], workaholics and higher level of stress [43], ostracism, incivility and stress [44], and witnessed incivility, stress, and job satisfaction [4,45]. The current accumulation of research provides strong support for the connection of incivility with stress both as an antecedent and consequence.

The literature proves that stress has a strong association with incivility and workers can feel stressed when they experience incivility which can become a cause of the incivility spiral. Employees going through stress because of experiencing incivility are more prone to

depict incivility [10,37,46]. Anjum and Ming [44] proposed that a toxic work environment not only creates uncivil reactions such as knowledge hiding but also becomes a reason for stress at work. Employees facing EWI go through various emotions before responding and such emotions include stress [47]. Uncomfortable with the treatment being received, employees are perplexed and experience negative emotions that may have a toll on their performance. For empirical investigation of the notion put forth, the proposed hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Stress mediates the relationship between experienced workplace incivility and instigated workplace incivility.*

2.4. Islamic Work Ethics

The concept of contemporary work ethics as we know them was explored by Weber [48] who advocated the philosophy of protestant work ethics. Weber [48] emphasized that protestant work ethics promote the concepts of hard work, individualism, discipline, and frugality. The work was carried out predominantly based on Protestant work ethics (PWE) and was in the western world. As time went on, scholars have recognized that societies based on PWE are different from the societies that do not follow PWE. So, it is safe to say that PWE is not applicable to societies that are not based on protestant religious ideologies and values [17,49]. Consequently, scholars have started to examine work ethics in different societies based on different religions including Hinduism, Confucianism, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism [14,16].

In addition to the work ethics identified, some scholars such as Ali and Yousef [20,50] have worked on the concept of Islamic Work Ethics (IWE). The baseline philosophy of PWE and IWE is similarly focusing on hard work, commitment, dedication to work, and avoidance of wealth accumulation through unnecessary means [16,24]. The main difference between PWE and IWE is that IWE focuses on intention rather than the outcome. The foundation of IWE is based on the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah as advocated by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who preached that the actions of individuals are recorded based on intentions and individuals will be rewarded or punished accordingly [21,50]. The importance of IWE is pivotal as Islam is the second largest religion in the world constituting 24.1% percent of the world population with 1.8 billion Muslims around the world [51].

IWE acts as a catalyst for steering behavioral patterns of individuals who follow Islam as their religious school of thought. Islam guides workers to exert optimum effort at their workplace [52]. Institutions that provide bread and butter hold a special sanctity as per Islamic teachings [53]. Islam propagates that employees should work for the benefit of their workplace and should refrain from any activities that might directly or indirectly become the cause of loss for the employer [54–56]. Islam also preaches that individuals should not only focus on the financial aspect and benefit but should also be on his or her best behavior at the workplace [57]. Employees should not be adversely affected by the negative behaviors of their colleagues, rather they should try to work towards making their workplace constructive and fruitful [52,58]. IWE is extracted from deep philosophical underpinnings, so they advocate similar notions.

Empirical investigations demonstrate that IWE stimulates positive work outcomes including job satisfaction, job involvement [16], knowledge-sharing behaviors [58], and helping behaviors [14] while having a diminishing effect on counterproductive behaviors [59] and turnover intention [16,60]. Based on the literature available on the positive effect of IWE, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 3a (H3a). *IWE moderates the relationship between EWI and IWI such that employees high on IWE would not show IWI even in the presence of EWI.*

Hypothesis 3b (H3b). *IWE moderates the relationship between stress and IWI such that employees high on IWE would not show IWI even in the presence of stress.*

The current study strives to contribute to the literature available on the incivility spiral proposed by [46] regarding the negative impact of EWI on IWI. The study also strives to contribute to understanding the stress phenomenon and the importance of IWE in work settings. Consistent with the literature review, we propose and test the research model presented in Figure 1.

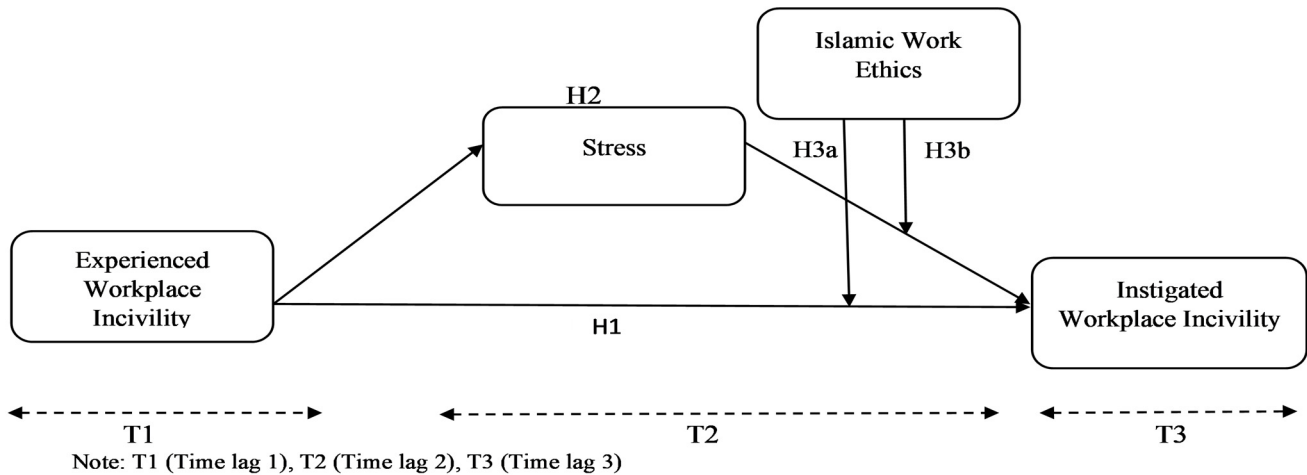


Figure 1. Research Model.

3. Research Methodology

The current research followed a quantitative approach as data was collected using a questionnaire. The nonprobability convenience sampling technique was used for data collection. The target respondents of the study were employees of sustainable public sector organizations in Pakistan, which include universities, the telecom sector, and commercial banks. For the collection of data, the human resource departments of the top two public sector universities based on QS rankings, two public sector telecom companies, and two public sector commercial banks were approached and only those employees were selected for data collection who volunteered. To ensure generalizability, an equal number of respondents were taken from all three sectors. Before the collection of data, the purpose of the study was made clear to the respondents and they were reminded that they did not have to continue this study as per the required Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols.

The research methodology used was the one used by [24,61,62] in a similar sector with similar study objectives. Based on the objective and philosophical construct of the study, the respondents were Muslims and only those individuals were selected for the purpose of data collection who had at least one year of work experience. Moreover, the participants were ensured that their responses would be kept confidential. Data were collected at three-time lags by keeping the ten days gap in each interval of time as used by Qasim et al. [63]. Demographic characteristics data were collected at Time 1 (T1) which includes age, gender, education, and work experience designation along with experienced workplace incivility. Data for the mediator stress and moderator Islamic work ethics were collected at Time 2 (T2) with a gap of 10 days. Lastly, data for instigated workplace incivility was collected at Time 3 (T3) after a gap of ten days from T2.

The data collected from employees were self-reported. For sample size calculation, G*Power (3.1.9.2) designed by Faul et al. [64] was used. G*Power is used for the determination of sample size and assessing sample adequacy. A default set of parameters given in the software with medium effect size (0.15), α level (0.05), and significance level (0.95) were used for sample size calculation as recommended by Faul et al. [64] and the number of predictors was set to 3 as suggested by [65].

The result of a priori power analysis showed that a sample of 112 would be enough to test the hypothesized model. As suggested by Qasim et al. [63], a post hoc power analysis was also carried out with the same parameters to examine the adequacy of our sample with

253 respondents. The post hoc power analysis generated a value of 0.9998, which is much higher than the recommended value of 0.80 as suggested by [66]. Based on the results of a priori and post hoc power analysis, a sample constituting of 253 respondents is sufficient for testing the proposed model. So, 350 questionnaires were floated at T1. Out of 350, only 27 were discarded due to incomplete responses at the end of T1. By the end of T3, total of 258 complete responses were available for analysis.

3.1. Measures

The current study is based on variables that have well-established measures. A 5-point Likert Scale was used to measure the variables with “1” representing Strongly Disagree and “5” representing Strongly Agree.

3.2. Experienced Workplace Incivility

Cortina et al. [67] used a seven items scale for measuring incivility in the workplace. Blau and Andersson [9] validated that the seven items scale can be used for measuring experienced workplace incivility. The lead-in phrase was “Someone at work (e.g., supervisor, co-worker, other employees) has done the following to you in the past year”. The items included “put you down or was condescending to you in some way”.

3.3. Instigated Workplace Incivility

Instigated workplace incivility was also measured using Cortina and colleagues seven items scale. In accordance with Blau and Andersson [9], a modification was made to the workplace incivility scale to measure IWI. The lead-in phrase used was “Have you exhibited the following behaviors in the past year to someone at work”.

3.4. Islamic Work Ethics

Islamic work ethics was measured using Ali’s [68] seventeen items scale. The items included “Laziness is vice”.

3.5. Stress

Stress was measured using Parker and Decotiis [69] twelve items. The same questionnaire has been used in recent studies including [70,71]. The items included “my job gets to me more than it should”.

4. Analysis and Results

AMOS (22) was used to conduct confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the distinctiveness of the variables of the current study. In addition to CFA, numerous model fit indices including GFI, CFI, RMSEA, PCFI, and PCLOSE were evaluated to assess the model fit of the measurement model. Common method bias is one of the most common issues faced with the collection of data from a single source and the remedy for it is to collect time-lagged data [72]; so, in order to avoid any bias, time-lagged data were collected. In addition, the Harman variance test was conducted to test common method bias and the variance by single factor was 37% which was well below the threshold of 50% proposed by [72]. In addition, moderation and mediation were tested using the PROCESS plugin provided by Hayes [73] for SPSS. Mediation was tested through Model 4 and moderated mediation was tested through model 15 [73]. Testing of moderation through Hayes [73,74] is a good technique as it provides the moderating effect at three different levels (Low = -1 SD, Medium = Mean, High = $+1$ SD).

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics. Out of a total of 258 respondents, 55.4% were male and 44.6% were female. 37.9% were 25 years old or under, 44.7% were between 26 to 40, 10.8% were between 41 to 55, and 7.36% were 56 years old or above. 1.93% had FSC/FA level education, 28.2 had bachelor’s degrees, 50% had master’s degrees, 6.97% had higher degrees than masters, and 12.7% had other education including vocational education and diplomas.

For experience, 31.3% had less than 3 years of experience, 41.8% had 3 to 5 years of experience, 15.8% had 6 to 10 years of experience and 10.8% had more than 10 years of experience.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

	Age ^b		Gender ^a		Education ^c		Experience ^d				
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
25 or under	98	37.9	Male	143	55.4	FSC/FA	5	1.93	<3 years	81	31.3
26 to 40	113	43.7	Female	115	44.6	Bachelors	73	28.2	3 to 5 years	108	41.8
41 to 55	28	10.8			Masters	129	50.0	6 to 10 years	41	15.8	
56 or above	19	7.36			Higher	18	6.97	>10 years	28	10.8	
					Other	33	12.7				
Total	258	100	Total	258	100	Total	258	100	Total	258	

^a Gender was coded as 1 = male and 2 = female. ^b Age was coded as 1 = 25 or under, 2 = 26 to 40, 3 = 41 to 55 and 4 = 56 or above. ^c Education was coded as 1 = FSC/FA, 2 = Bachelors, 3 = Masters, 4 = Higher and 5 = others (Vocational, diplomas and others). ^d Experience was coded as 1 = less than 3 years, 2 = 3 to 5 years, 3 = 6 to 10 years and 4 = above 10 years.

4.1. Correlation

Table 2 shows the mean, standard deviation, and correlation of the variables. Our results show that EWI has a significant relationship with IWI ($r = 0.16$, $p < 0.001$), and the impact was also in the expected direction. Results also show that stress has a significant relation with IWI ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$) and the correlation is in the expected direction. In addition, IWE has a significant correlation with IWI ($r = -0.19$, $p < 0.05$) substantiating the impact in the expected direction.

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation.

S.No		Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Gender	1.37	0.47	1							
2	Age	1.87	0.54	0.34	1						
3	Education	3.1	0.62	0.25	0.58	1					
4	Experience	2.7	0.45	0.27 **	0.66	0.32	1				
5	EWI	2.9	0.81	0.08	0.45	0.01	0.38	1			
6	WS	3.1	0.79	0.41	0.37	0.57	0.09	0.31 **	1		
7	IWE	2.2	0.96	0.53	0.05	0.34	0.52	0.11	-0.04	1	
8	IWI	4.0	0.48	0.47	0.61	0.65	0.03 **	0.16 *	0.18 **	-0.19 **	1

* $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.05$, EWI = Experienced workplace incivility, WS = Stress, IWE = Islamic work ethics, IWI = instigated workplace incivility.

4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The measurement model was evaluated through a comparison of four CFA models as shown in Table 3. For model one, a single factor was developed and all the items of EWI, Stress, IWE, and IWI were loaded on it. Two factors were developed for model two and all items of EWI and stress were loaded on one factor while the items of IWE and IWI were loaded on the second factor. For the third model, EWI was loaded on one factor, Stress on the second factor while IWE and IWI were loaded on the third factor. For the last model, four factors were developed, and items were loaded on their respective factors. Model four had the best fit with the data based on the criterion given by Hu and Bentler [75] with values of $\chi^2/df = 1.5$, CFI = 0.98, and RMSEA = 0.05.

Table 3 shows the factor loadings of items on their respective variables. Items having loadings equal to or greater than 0.6 were retained as suggested by [76].

To check the convergent and discriminant validities of the scales being used, the average variance extracted (AVE) and the mean shared variance (MSV) were calculated using the validity master Gaskin [77]. In addition, the composite reliability was also evaluated using the same tool. Table 4 shows that AVE was more than 0.5 for all the constructs along with the composite reliability values which were more than 0.7 establishing

convergent reliability for all measures. Moreover, MSV for all constructs was lower than AVE indicating that there were no issues related to discriminant validity. The results also show that the square root of the AVE of constructs was greater than the correlations with other variables fulfilling Fornell and Larcker [78] criterion and establishing good convergent and discriminant validity. Table 5 shows factor loadings of items on their respective variables. All items having loadings of 0.600 or above were retained.

Table 3. CFA summary.

Model	χ^2 (df), <i>p</i>	CFI	RMSEA	GFI	PCFI	PCLOSE
Model 1	7750.321 (325), <i>p</i> < 0.01	0.35	0.23	0.459	0.501	0.000
Model 2	4590.584 (321), <i>p</i> < 0.01	0.66	0.15	0.713	0.608	0.021
Model 3	3001.91 (329), <i>p</i> < 0.01	0.69	0.16	0.799	0.733	0.321
Model 4	384.069(269) <i>p</i> > 0.01	0.98	0.05	0.855	0.826	0.188

Table 4. Convergent and discriminant validity.

Variables	CR	AVE	MSV	WS	EWI	IWI	IWE
WS	0.888	0.534	0.118	0.730			
EWI	0.793	0.545	0.118	0.343	0.738		
IWI	0.903	0.575	0.058	0.552	0.577	0.758	
IWE	0.824	0.542	0.058	−0.044	0.454	−0.241	0.736

Table 5. Factor loadings.

Variables	Loadings			
	EWI	WS	IWE	IWI
Experienced workplace incivility				
EWI6	0.792			
EWI5	0.714			
EWI3	0.708			
EWI2	0.700			
EWI1	0.774			
Stress				
WS13		0.736		
WS12		0.755		
WS9		0.728		
WS8		0.698		
WS7		0.660		
WS6		0.881		
WS5		0.715		
WS3		0.652		
Islamic Work ethics				
IWE13			0.700	
IWE6			0.746	
IWE4			0.636	
IWE3			0.822	
IWE2			0.764	
Instigated workplace incivility				
IWI7				0.794
IWI6				0.600
IWI5				0.855
IWI4				0.680
IWI3				0.824
IWI2				0.695
IWI1				0.826

4.3. Mediation (Direct and Indirect Effects)

Table 6 shows the result for direct and mediating effects conducted through [73] PROCESS macros model no 4. Data shows the impact of EWI on IWI and stress and also the impact of stress on IWI. EWI significantly was associated with IWI ($\beta = 0.12, p < 0.05$) which supported hypothesis 1 pointing out that EWI has a significant impact on IWI. In addition, EWI was significantly related to stress ($\beta = 0.29, p < 0.01$), and stress was significantly related to IWI ($\beta = 0.11, p < 0.05$). The indirect effect proved that stress mediates the relationship between EWI and IWI (Indirect effect = 0.03, 95% CI LL = 0.027, UL = 0.112). Since the upper limit and lower limit do not contain zero between them, hypothesis 2 is accepted.

Table 6. Bootstrapping results for direct and indirect effects.

Direct Effects		Coefficients	SE	t
Experienced workplace incivility → instigated workplace incivility		0.12 *	0.09	2.13
Experienced workplace incivility → stress		0.29 **	0.08	3.47
Stress → instigated workplace incivility		0.11 *	0.09	2.20
95% bias-corrected confidence interval method				
Indirect effect	Effect	SE	LL	UL
Experienced workplace incivility → Stress → instigated workplace incivility	0.03 **	0.03	0.027	0.112

LL lower limit, UL upper limit, SE Standard error * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

4.4. Moderation

Hypotheses 3a and 3b were related to the moderation effect of Islamic work ethics. Hypothesis 3a was developed to test the moderation of IWE between EWI and IWI, and hypothesis 3b was designed for testing the moderation effect of IWE between stress and EWI. Results in Table 7 show that the interaction term between EWI and IWE was significant ($\beta = -0.52, p < 0.01$) thereby supporting the moderating effect of IWE on the EWI-IWI relationship. To further examine the nature of the moderation, the graph of interaction terms was plotted with one standard deviation above and one below the mean value [79]. Figure 2 depicts the relationship between EWI and IWI at different levels of IWE and illustrates that the positive relationship between EWI and IWI was weaker at higher levels of IWE ($\beta = -0.33, p < 0.05$) compared to the point where IWE was low ($\beta = 0.02, p < 0.05$). The results provided support for Hypothesis 3a.

Table 7. Moderation analysis.

Islamic Work Ethics (IWE)				
	β	SE	ΔR^2	
Independent variable = Experienced workplace incivility				
Constant	2.9			
Experienced workplace incivility → instigated workplace incivility	0.18 **	0.07		
Islamic work ethics → instigated workplace incivility	0.23 *	0.08		
Experienced workplace incivility × Islamic work ethics → instigated workplace incivility	-0.52 **	0.17	0.12	
Conditional effects of the moderator at $M \pm 1$ SD (slope test)				
	Effect	SE	LL95% CI	UL95% CI
Islamic work ethics low -1 SD (1.24)	0.16	0.14	-0.12	0.46
Islamic work ethics Medium (2.2)	0.17	0.09	0.02	0.35
Islamic work ethics High +1 SD (3.16)	0.28	0.03	0.09	0.41
Independent variable = Stress				
Constant	2.9			
Stress → instigated workplace incivility	0.21 *	0.04		
Islamic work ethics → instigated workplace incivility	0.23 **	0.08		
Stress × Islamic work ethics → instigated workplace incivility	-0.37 **	0.21	0.07	
Conditional effects of the moderator at $M \pm 1$ SD (slope test)				
	Effect	SE	LL95%CI	UL95%CI
Islamic work ethics low -1 SD (1.24)	0.06	0.04	-0.01	0.18
Islamic work ethics Medium (2.2)	0.03	0.03	-0.01	0.11
Islamic work ethics High +1 SD (3.16)	0.10	0.04	0.08	0.10

N = 258 LL Lower limit, UL Upper limit, CI Confidence interval, SD Standard Deviation, M Mean, SE Standard error * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

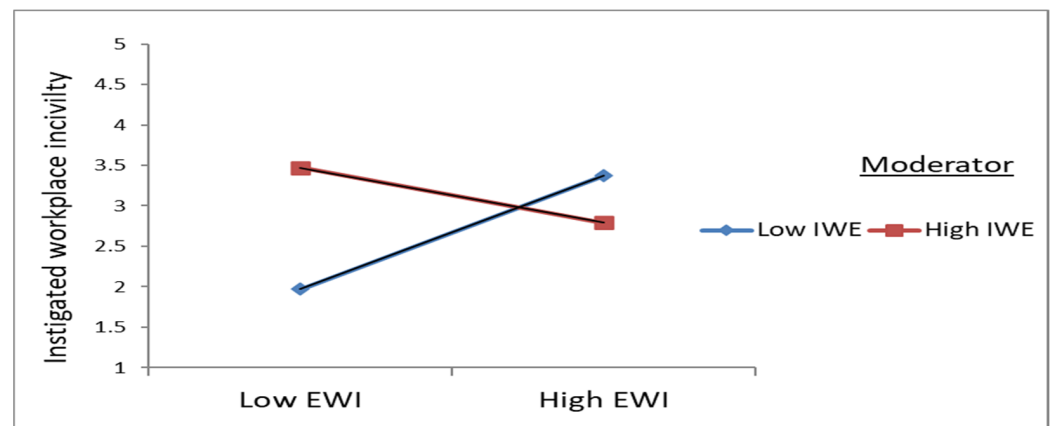


Figure 2. Interaction between experienced workplace incivility and Islamic work ethics on instigated workplace incivility.

Table 7 also shows the moderation effect of IWE between stress and EWI. Our results proved that the Stress \times IWE interaction term was significant ($\beta = -0.37, p < 0.01$), thereby providing support for hypothesis 3b. The interaction term graph in Figure 3 proved that the positive relationship between stress and IWI was weaker for higher levels of IWE ($\beta = -0.21, p < 0.05$) compared to the lower levels of IWE ($\beta = 0.03, p < 0.05$), reiterating the argument in support of Hypothesis 3b that IWE moderates the negative relationship between stress—IWI.

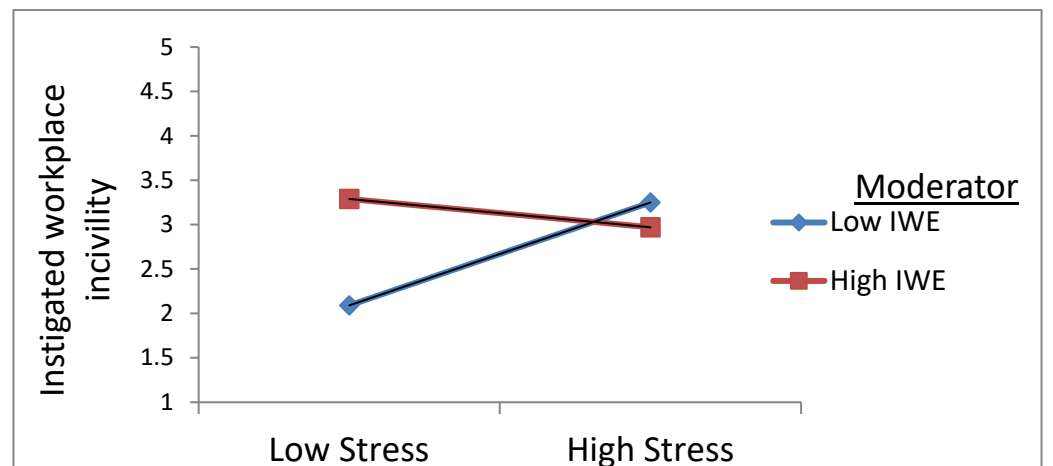


Figure 3. Interaction between stress and Islamic work ethics on instigated workplace incivility.

5. Discussion

Workplace incivility has become an important issue that requires immediate attention from management because of its adverse effects. Moreover, academic research is also required to further investigate the concept and suggest means of dealing with it. The current study aimed to extend the literature available on workplace incivility. The results provided support for our hypotheses that experienced workplace incivility (EWI) leads to instigated workplace incivility (IWI). The results of the study are consistent with the previous studies [9,10] suggesting that employees that experience uncivil behavior respond with uncivil behavior. The results are also consistent with previous research showing [4] employees who experience incivility are prone to act in an uncivil manner as a response thus creating a spiral of incivility at work.

Employees might show negative behavior as a defense mechanism to protect themselves from the uncivil behaviors of coworkers or they might feel that uncivil behavior is an acceptable norm and therefore depicting incivility has no adverse connotations. The incivility spiral can also have spillover effects as other employees witnessing incivility might also

replicate the same behaviors. Consequently, incivility encompasses the whole workplace inhibiting constructive and positive employee behaviors while also creating adverse work environments [80]. Employees experiencing uncivil behavior may feel that they are being instigated or provoked to reciprocate as negative behavior begets negative behavior.

Our study further supported the hypothesis that stress mediates experienced workplace incivility-instigated workplace incivility (EWI-IWI) relationship. It may be because the employee experiencing incivility shows certain unpleasant physical reactions to EWI. These reactions are evidence of the fact that the employee is not being treated properly in the organization and it ultimately manifests in employees showing uncivil behaviors. The study is philosophically in line with the findings of previous researchers [7] who found that burnout mediates the relationship between incivility and IWI. Our results proved that IWE moderates the EWI-IWI relationship. Employees following IWE are more likely to show positive behaviors [81] because religion teaches helpful behaviors at the workplace. Islam teaches individuals to demonstrate good behaviors to get rewards in this world and the hereafter. Islam also encourages righteousness as Bin Salauhdin [53] concluded that employees that are high on IWE are more loyal to their organizations. Employees facing EWI at work do not tend to reciprocate and show counterproductive behaviors as religion teaches individuals to show positive behaviors in the workplace [82].

The results also proved that IWE moderates the stress—IWI relationship. Employees that are low on IWE reciprocate EWI with IWI because they feel that their fundamental rights of respectful treatment are not being properly met [83,84]. Consequently, employees react by showing uncivil acts; however, employees that are high on IWE do not tend to reciprocate uncivil behaviors and treatments. Contrary to that, employees with higher IWE continue to exert optimum efforts as they believe that their religious ideology teaches them to exert efforts with full conviction at their jobs and refrain from uncivil and deviant behaviors at work [85]. Employees that follow the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah strive to exert optimum efforts at work even if it does not have ideal working conditions since religion teaches and conditions people to work with full conviction.

5.1. Theoretical Contribution

The current study aimed to add multiple contributions to the existing body of knowledge. The study started by extending the literature on the relationship of EWI with IWI. Reciprocity and incivility spiral propagate and then those employees respond to uncivil behaviors via uncivil behaviors, thereby leading to a destructive work environment; however, further empirical investigation was required. The literature on EWI and IWI is extended by testing the EWI-IWI relationship. Previous studies focused on one element of incivility and scarce research is available that taps into incivility domains including experienced and instigated workplace incivility. The current research contributes to the understanding of the incivility spiral in behavior. The study validated the incivility spiral by examining the EWI-IWI relationship.

The study also aimed to understand the role of stress as a mediator between EWI and IWI. Loh and Loi [10] used burnout as a mediator between experienced incivility and incivility; and apart from this, scarce data is available on the stress and incivility relationship. Thus, the current study aimed to contribute to the stress and incivility relationship. The third contribution of the study is IWE's impact on the EWI-IWI relationship. The study explored the importance of IWE and its impact on employees' behavior in case of negative stimuli. The fourth and last contribution of the study is the IWE impact on stress—IWI relationship. Work ethics play an important role in employees' behavior and their impact becomes more substantial when drawn from a religious ideology. The current study contributes theoretically by better understanding Islamic work ethics' (IWE) impact when employees are facing stress.

The current research also added to the literature on the incivility spiral and its impact, especially in an eastern setting. The study adds to the literature on stress and proposes that stress is an important factor and should not be ignored. Management must probe

employees from time to time regarding their emotional well-being and inquire about the stressors if any. Such practices can help management to diagnose issues at an early stage and deal with them before matters spiral out of control.

5.2. Practical Implication

The current study offers several implications for managers. Sustainable public sector organizations must make sure that they monitor their employees' behavior not only in the organization but also towards each other. Strong and substantial actions should be taken when employees are found showing uncivil behavior towards other employees. Organizations should communicate with employees that uncivil behaviors towards other employees including supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates are not acceptable and are not tolerated. Rather, organizations must ensure that they take notice of employees showing uncivil behaviors towards other employees and take strict actions against them; otherwise, employees might indulge in an incivility spiral.

Organizations should work on encouraging and motivating employees to adopt work ethics which can help in reducing the chances of uncivil behaviors. Training programs and workshops can be organized to shed light on certain relevant aspects and components of Islamic work ethics. In an Islamic country, managers must understand the importance and impact of IWE. Adoption of IWE at work in true letter and spirit can help managers to effectively manage employees and reduce the chances of uncivil behaviors.

The incivility spiral is a phenomenon witnessed in contemporary organizations and a major reason for it is uncivil behaviors either not being addressed or deliberately ignored to maintain peace in the workplace. Such issues when left unattended for long exponentially multiply and have a negative toll on an organization's performance. Moreover, due to no disciplinary actions from management, employees witnessing such behaviors consider them as being acceptable and have a higher probability to show them. This may lead to a domino effect that may have a negative toll on the overall organizational efficiency and performance. The current research proposes that management must take strict disciplinary actions as soon as any uncivil behaviors are noticed, and a strict message should be sent across the organization that such behaviors are not acceptable. Such actions can help not only reduce incivility but also diminish the chances of such behaviors in the future as well.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

The study is not free from limitations which offers room for improvement. The data collected for analysis was from a single source which might cause common method bias. Moreover, this research was conducted in the sustainable public sector and can be replicated in the private sector by future researchers. Longitudinal data were collected to cope with the issue; however, future researchers can include data from multiple sources. Furthermore, data can be collected from peers and supervisors to capture diverse perspectives from multiple viewpoints. The current study incorporated two facets of incivility (experienced and instigated). Future studies can be conducted by incorporating the "witnessed workplace incivility" (WWI) which is the third aspect of incivility [5]. In the current study, the respondents were Muslims; however, IWE components including hard work and work as virtue can be followed by individuals following different religions. So, future studies can be conducted by collecting data from individuals belonging to different religions. Moreover, data for IWE can be collected from Muslims and Non-Muslims to conduct a comparative study. Lastly, the study was conducted using nonprobability sampling to gather data through convenience. For future studies, data can be collected using probability sampling.

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