

## **Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Work-related Outcomes: Mediating Role of Workplace Incivility Victimization**

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The mediating effect of workplace incivility was examined in the relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived work-related outcomes (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intentions, and counterproductive work behaviors). One hundred and fifty university teachers completed measures of Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (Wong & Law, 2002), Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (Spector, Fox, Penney, Bruusema, & Kessler, 2006), Uncivil Workplace Behavior Questionnaire (Martine & Hine, 2005), Job Satisfaction Survey (Price & Mueller, 1981), Turnover Intentions Scale (Seashore, Lawler, Mirvis, & Cammann, 1982), and Affective Organizational Commitment Scale (Meyer & Allen, 1990). Results showed that workplace incivility emerged as a significant mediator in the relation between emotional intelligence and work-related outcomes. It was found that one way via which emotional intelligence had relationship to work-related outcomes was through its negative effects on workplace incivility. More specifically, emotional intelligence-based interventions may represent a parsimonious alternative to interventions that targets workplace uncivil behaviors in increasing the job satisfaction and

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organization commitment as well as decreasing the counterproductive work behaviors.

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There has been a steady increase in the study of emotional intelligence (EI) as an important workplace construct (Jordan & Troth, 2011). Within literature, two research streams can be identified: Ability EI and trait EI. *Trait EI* is defined as “a constellation of behavioral dispositions and self-perceptions concerning one’s ability to recognize, process, and utilize emotion-laden information. It encompasses . . . empathy, impulsivity, and assertiveness as well as elements of social intelligence . . . and personal intelligence” (Petrides & Furnham, 2003, p. 278). In contrast, *ability EI* is defined as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). Trait EI (rooted in personality attributes) is measured through self-report questionnaires, whereas ability EI is measured through performance based questionnaires (as in traditional intelligence tests) (Mayer & Salovey, 1993; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000). The ability EI approach has often been criticized on various grounds (see e.g., MacCann, Roberts, Matthews, & Zeidner, 2004). Various researches have well-documented the empirical differences between the two approaches (see e.g., O’Connor & Little, 2003; Warwick & Nettelbeck, 2004). The present study mainly concerns the first stream, that is, trait EI.

Within organizational settings, it is claimed that trait EI is an important predictor of workplace outcomes including job satisfaction (Carmeli, Yitzhak-Halevy, & Weisberg, 2009; Law, Wong, Huang, & Li, 2008), organizational commitment (Carmeli, 2003; Carmeli et al., 2009; Langhorn, 2004; Nikolaou, & Tsaousis, 2002), counterproductive work behaviors (CWB; Jung & Yoon, 2012), and turnover intentions (Chiu & Francesco, 2003; Jordan, & Troth, 2011). However, there is still a need for rigorous research to underpin what potential mediating processes can account for the relationships between EI and work-related outcomes. Knowledge of underlying mediating processes can further enhance our understanding of the construct of EI and can improve applied efforts of managers and practitioners to implement EI related interventions within organizational settings. A potential construct to mediate the

relationship between EI and work-related outcomes is workplace incivility (Kirk, Schutte, & Hine, 2009).

*Workplace incivility* can be generally described as “low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard of others” (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457). According to Andersson and Pearson (1999), workplace incivility is comprised of three characteristics including low intensity (compared to harassment, mobbing, bullying, and workplace aggression, it is of lesser severity), ambiguous intent (the perpetrator’s goals are not always clear to the victim), and violation of workplace norms (uncivil behaviors disrupt the acceptable interactional conduct among employees within organizational settings). Various researches have well-documented that employees who report high levels of workplace incivility experiences (being the target of uncivil behaviors), also report a number of negative work-related outcomes including decreased job satisfaction (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Kirk, et al., 2009; Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008; Miner, Settles, Pratt-Hayatt, & Brady, 2012; Penney & Spector, 2005; Tarraf, 2012; Taylor, 2010), increased withdrawal behavior (Cortina et al., 2001), increased retaliation against the organization like stealing from the organization) (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000; Taylor, 2010), decreased productivity (Johnson & Indvik, 2001), increased turnover and turnover intentions (Harvey, Stoner, Hochwarter, & Kacmar, 2007; Johnson & Indvik, 2001; Lim et al., 2008; Pearson et al., 2000; Tarraf, 2012), increased absenteeism (Sliter, Sliter, & Jex, 2012), and decreased organizational commitment (Tarraf, 2012; Taylor, 2010).

Various researches have well-documented that individuals high in EI tend to be prosocial (Lopes, Salovey, Cote, & Beers, 2005), develop high quality relationships with peers (Brackett, Rivers, Shiffman, Lerner, & Salovey, 2006; Fitness, 2000) and leaders (Jordan & Troth, 2011; Karim, 2011; Smith, 2006), are emotionally close to others, feel comfortable in both depending on others and having others depend on them (Kafetsios, 2004); and tend to be less antagonistic (Lopes et al., 2004; Mayer, Perkins, Caruso, & Salovey, 2001). In a conflict situation, individuals high in EI are less likely to misunderstand and misinterpret others’ emotions to be threatening and hostile, and are more adept at de-escalating the conflict (Quebbeman, & Rozell, 2002), thus decreasing the odds of becoming a target of uncivil behaviors. Later, Kirk et al. (2009) provided first evidence that individuals low in EI are likely to be victims of workplace incivility and are more likely to report higher rate of uncivil behaviors from

perpetrators than individuals high in EI. Likewise, Branch and Murray (2012) found that people high in EI are less likely to be victims of workplace bullying behaviors (high-intensity deviant behavior). The reason for this is because individuals with lesser ability to recognize, identify, understand, and manage emotions of others are less likely to accurately understand the emotional context of a situation and find it difficult to adapt to the situation. Moreover, individuals who have difficulties in understanding the perspectives of others (how others think and feel) are more likely to develop poor social skills and have difficulties with their peer relationships (Lomas, Stough, Hansen, & Downey, 2012; Robinson, 2010). Thus, targets of uncivil behaviors have lower levels of EI in comparison to nontargets and will tend to be seen as vulnerable by perpetrators.

The combined observations of workplace incivility's association with both EI and work-related outcomes support the idea that workplace incivility perceptions might mediate the relation between EI and work-related outcomes. However, this hypothesis has not yet been directly tested, therefore, it is the central objective of this study. The current study is a follow-up to the research on workplace incivility perceptions, EI, and work-related outcomes and contributes to the existing literature in following ways. First, EI and its associations with workplace incivility perceptions and work-related outcomes have rarely been studied in the literature (e.g., Kirk et al., 2009). Nevertheless, these associations could have multiple effects on individuals. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to fill this research void by testing the relationships among workplace incivility, EI, and work-related outcomes. Second, despite the growing interest, most of the previous researches have mainly focused on the consequences of workplace incivility perceptions, with little attention paid to its antecedents. This study focuses on the antecedents and consequences associated with the target of uncivil behaviors. Moreover, there is little evidence of personal or emotional factors directly associated with perceptions of workplace incivility. If our understanding of the workplace incivility is to advance, research is needed to strengthen the associations between emotional factors (such as EI) of the target and their perceptions of workplace incivility. Third, although a number of studies have looked at high-intensity workplace deviant behaviors (such as bullying, mobbing, aggression, or harassment) in academia (see e.g., Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994; Lipsett, 2006; Raskauskas, 2006), the construct of workplace incivility has rarely been studied in higher education settings. In Pakistani higher educational institutions, "incivility is an important concern that needs to be addressed" (Bibi, Karim, & Din,

2013, p. 319). Recently, Bibi et al. (2013), in their study conducted on university teachers in Pakistan, found a significant relationship between workplace incivility perceptions and CWB. As such, there is a need for researchers to study the nature of workplace incivility experienced by faculty members in higher education settings, as well as to identify promising ways of safeguarding faculty members from the negative effects of uncivil behaviors. Understanding the links between EI, workplace incivility, and work-related outcomes within university settings would assist in informing the development of interventions that could help university administration in reducing the negative effects of workplace incivility on faculty members' performance. Specifically, the main objective of this study is to test if perceived workplace incivility victimization will mediate the relation between emotional intelligence and perceived work-related outcomes.

### **Hypotheses**

1. Perceived workplace incivility victimization will mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction.
2. Perceived workplace incivility victimization will mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment.
3. Perceived workplace incivility victimization will mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and turnover intentions.
4. Perceived workplace incivility victimization will mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and CWB.

## **Method**

### **Sample**

A total of 300 surveys were delivered to teachers in different universities. The final sample consisted of 150 university teachers from four public and two private universities from various cities of Pakistan (50% response rate). Convenience sampling was used to select universities and participants for this study. Convenience sampling involves selecting at random those cases that are easiest to obtain for sample (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

The sample consisted of 63 women (42%) and 87 men (58%). The majority of the respondents were full time faculty members ( $n = 138$ , 92%), as compared to part time faculty members ( $n = 12$ , 8%). In

terms of education, 54 percent held master degrees ( $n = 81$ ), 34 percent held Master of Science degrees ( $n = 51$ ), and 12 percent had doctoral degrees ( $n = 18$ ). The average tenure in their current organization was 5.6 years ( $SD = 1.5$ ). The age range of participants was 22 to 63 years ( $M = 34.96$ ,  $SD = 8.44$ ).

## Measures

**Uncivil Workplace Behavior Questionnaire (UWBQ).** A widely used measure (Martine & Hine, 2005) consisted of 17 items was used to assess how often participants were the target of four types of uncivil behavior: Privacy Invasion, Gossiping, Exclusionary Behavior, and Hostility. Participants responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale (ranging from *never* to *always*). Respondents were asked to report uncivil behaviors exhibited by their coworkers or supervisors during the past 12 months. Sample items included “Talked about you behind your back”, “Gossiped behind your back”, and “Took items from your desk without prior permission”.

A total incivility victimization score (the mean of 17 items) was computed and used in this study. A higher score on the scale indicated a higher degree of incivility victimization. The UWBQ has been shown to have adequate reliability and validity (see Martine & Hine, 2005). In the current study, the Cronbach alpha for the overall scale was .93. Moreover, the reliability estimates for the UWBQ’s four subscales ranged from .71 to .80.

**Job Satisfaction Survey.** Job satisfaction was measured with three items of this Survey (Price & Mueller, 1981) that assessed respondents’ overall global feeling about their jobs: (1) I feel real enjoyment in my job; (2) Most days I am enthusiastic about my job; and (3) I feel well satisfied with my job. Responses ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The possible range of scores was 3 to 15.

A higher score on the scale indicated a higher degree of job satisfaction. This scale has been shown to have adequate reliability and validity ( $\alpha = .86$ ; Brooke & Price, 1989). Internal consistency for the three item scale in the present study came out to be .85.

**Turnover Intention Scale.** Three-item Turnover Intention subscale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Scale (Seashore et al., 1982) was used to measure turnover intentions of respondents: (1) I will actively look for a new job; (2) I often think about quitting; and (3) I will probably look for a new job by the next

year. Responses ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The possible range of scores were 3 to 15.

A higher score on the scale indicated a higher degree of turnover intentions. The scale has been shown to have adequate reliability and validity ( $\alpha = .93$ ; Valle, Harris, & Andrews, 2004). Internal consistency for this scale in the present study was found to be .91.

**Affective Organizational Commitment Scale.** Respondents' affective commitment was assessed with Meyer and Allen's (1990) 8-item Affective Organizational Commitment Scale. Responses ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include: I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization; I do not feel part of the family at my organization; and I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it. The possible range of scores was 8 to 40.

A higher score on the scale indicated a higher degree of affective organizational commitment. The scale has been shown to have adequate reliability and validity (see Allen & Meyer, 1996). Internal consistency for this scale in the present study was achieved as .71.

**Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB).** The 32-items Checklist (Spector et al., 2006) was used to assess the frequency with which respondents had engaged in various counterproductive behaviors in the last six months. Responses ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*daily*). Sample items include: Purposely did your work incorrectly; Purposely failed to follow instructions; and Ignored someone at work. The possible range of scores was 32 to 160.

A higher score on the scale indicated a higher degree of CWB. The Checklist has been shown to have adequate reliability ( $\alpha = .90$ ; Spector et al., 2006). Internal consistency for this scale found for the present sample was .95.

**Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS).** A 16-items scale (Wong & Law, 2002) was used to assess individuals' emotional abilities. The scale was based on the Salovey and Mayer's (1990) EI model and assesses four related EI abilities: Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA), Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA), Use of Emotion (UOE), and Regulation of Emotion (ROE). Global EI score (mean of 16 items) was computed and used in the present study. Participants indicated the extent of their agreement with each statement by means of 5-point Likert scale (ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). Sample items include: I have good control of my emotions; I am a self-motivated person; and I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others. The possible range of scores was 16 to 80.

A higher score on the scale indicated a higher level of emotional intelligence. The WLEIS subscales has been shown to have adequate reliability (.83 - .90; Wong & Law, 1996). Internal consistency of .89 was acquired for WLEIS in the present study.

### Procedure

Approval to conduct the research was obtained from the departmental heads in universities allowing access to teachers for participation in this research. The cover letters and surveys were hand delivered to teachers. We ensured respondents about the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses.

### Results

Descriptive statistics and inter-correlation coefficients for all study variables are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations for all Measures (N = 300)*

	<i>M(SD)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	34.96(8.44)	-								
2. Gender	-	.01	-							
3. Organization	-	.00	.12	-						
4. WI	2.17(.86)	.04	.26**	-.24**	-					
5. EI	4.03(.59)	.12	.00	-.01	-.26**	-				
6. JS	3.89(1.03)	.17*	-.09	.20*	-.42**	.34**	-			
7. OC	3.65(.88)	.18*	-.19*	.23**	-.47**	.47**	.48**	-		
8. TI	2.71(1.36)	-.11	.02	-.17*	.42**	-.03	-.52**	-.29**	-	
9. CWB	1.38(.58)	-.24**	-.03	-.23**	.37**	-.38**	-.21**	-.26**	.24**	-

*Note.* WI = Workplace Incivility; EI = Emotional Intelligence; JS = Job Satisfaction; OC = Organizational Commitment; TI = Turnover Intentions; CWB = Counterproductive Work Behaviors.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Findings presented in Table 1 show that EI is negatively related to workplace incivility and CWB and positively to job satisfaction and organizational commitment, however, the relationship with turnover intentions remains nonsignificant. Workplace incivility is negatively



related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment and is positively related to turnover intentions and CWB. According to Papadogiannis, Logan, and Sitarenios (2009), correlations  $< .50$  are considered minimal to moderate overlap between the variables, whereas correlations  $> .70$  indicate that instruments assess the same underlying constructs. Thus, in the current study, low to moderate correlations among the constructs provide evidence for the discriminant validity of these constructs.

Mediation analysis has traditionally been conducted using Baron and Kenny's (1986) three-step procedure or Sobel test (Sobel, 1982). However, various researchers (e.g., Mackinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002; Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008; Shrout & Bolger, 2002) have identified limitations associated with both Baron and Kenny's mediation test and Sobel test. For example, Baron and Kenny's (1986) method does not address the main question of whether the indirect effects are significantly different from zero or not. Therefore, in line with Preacher and Hayes (2004) recommendations, we used nonparametric bootstrapping method with 1000 bootstrap resamples to test the mediational model of workplace incivility as a mediator of the relationship between EI and work-related outcomes. Bootstrapping method is used to calculate the estimate of indirect effect and accompanying confidence interval from the empirically derived bootstrapping distribution of indirect effects. Mediation is significant if the confidence interval for the indirect effect do not include zero (i.e., the indirect effect is significantly different from zero at  $p < .05$ ). Literature on mediation tests urges to distinguish between partial and complete mediation. However, in this study we avoided the use of these terms because the distinction between the two types of mediation "has no substantive or theoretical meaning or value of any consequence" (for complete discussions see Hayes, 2012, p. 162).

We employed Preacher and Hayes's (2008) SPSS macro to calculate following estimates: (1) standardized paths from EI to workplace incivility, (2) standardized paths from workplace incivility to four outcome variables (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention, and CWB), (3) standardized paths from EI to four outcome variables, (4) total indirect effects, and (5) 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect.

As shown in Table 2, the true indirect effects of EI on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intentions, and CWB (through perceived work place incivility) were estimated to lie between desired 95% CI, so we can conclude that the indirect effects are significantly different from zero, and that, workplace incivility mediates the relationship between EI and work-related outcomes.

Table 2

*Mediating Role of Workplace Incivility Victimization in the Relationship between EI and Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Turnover Intentions, and CWB (N = 300)*

	Dependent Variables				
	WI	JS	OC	TI	CWB
Effect of EI (IV) on WI (MV)	-.39**				
Effect of WI on DV		-.43**	-.38**	.70**	.19**
Direct Effect of EI		.43**	.55**	.20	-.30**
Indirect Effect of EI (Through WI)		.16**	.14**	-.27**	-.07*
Total Effect (Direct + Indirect)		.55**	.70**	-.07	-.38**
95% Confidence Interval for Indirect Effect					
Lower Bound		.03	.04	-.53	-.14
Upper Bound		.36	.28	-.08	-.03

*Note.* WI = Workplace Incivility; JS = Job Satisfaction; OC = Organizational Commitment; TI = Turnover Intentions; CWB = Counterproductive Work Behaviors. EI = Emotional Intelligence; IV = Independent Variable; MV = Mediating Variable; DV = Dependent Variable.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## Discussion

The main objective of this study was to test if perceived workplace incivility victimization would mediate the relation between emotional intelligence and perceived work-related outcomes. In line with results of previous studies (e.g., Carmeli, 2003; Carmeli et al., 2009; Chiu & Francesco, 2003; Jordan & Troth, 2011; Langhorn, 2004; Law et al., 2008; Nikolaou, & Tsaousis, 2002), correlation analyses indicated that EI was negatively related to workplace incivility perceptions and CWB and positively to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Also supporting previous research (e.g., Branch & Murray, 2012; Kirk et al., 2009), perceived workplace incivility was found to be positively correlated with both CWB and turnover intentions and negatively with job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

These results provide evidence for the nomological validity of the EI and workplace incivility perceptions constructs. Nomological validity refers to correlations between constructs in accordance with some established theory (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). Beyond providing additional support for previous research, this study's major finding and contribution involved the role that workplace incivility plays as an important mediating link between EI and work-related outcomes of university teachers. Specifically, this study provides

initial evidence that together with EI, perceived workplace incivility may have a desired impact on university teachers' work-related attitudes.

Furthermore, the current findings indicate that the workplace incivility victimization perceptions are an important determinant in the EI-work related attitudes relationship. Our results show that self-workplace incivility victimization perceptions mediates the relationship between EI and work-related attitudes, suggesting that it is the subjective experience of being victimized (targets of mistreatment at work) that manifests itself in work-related outcomes. One explanation for this mediating effect may be related to MacCann, Fogarty, Zeidner, and Roberts (2011) assertion that individuals high in EI abilities are better able to cope with stressful situation which in turn leads to better outcomes. According to them, "skills to accurately perceive, understand, and manage their own and other peoples' emotions should result in better coping skills - EI can help individuals to deal with (or in certain instances, avoid) stress. These methods include: (a) avoidance of stressful encounters; (b) more constructive perceptions and situational appraisals; (c) adaptive management and repairing of emotions; (d) richer coping resources; and (e) use of effective and flexible coping strategies" (p. 62). Thus, emotionally intelligent individuals due to effective coping strategies are less likely to fall victim to peer mistreatment.

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

The limitations of this study can be recognized. First, given the cross-sectional nature of the study, the direction of causality cannot be established and will have to be confirmed using longitudinal research design (see Maxwell & Cole, 2007). As EI is developmental in nature (Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997), future studies could use longitudinal research designs to uncover the underpinning relationship between EI and workplace incivility. Second, the use of convenience sampling (a nonprobability sampling method) limits the generalizability of findings. It is recommended that future studies should use random samples. Third, we assessed all constructs via self-reported measures; the use of self-reported measures raises concern about common method bias (Spector, 2006). Fourth, the sample mainly consisted of full-time faculty members. Such over-representation of a particular group raises concerns about the generalizability of findings to other groups such as part-time faculty members. Fifth, we did not test for the mediating role of perceived workplace incivility in the EI-job performance relationship. Future

studies should test the mediating role of workplace incivility perceptions in the relationship between EI and job performance. Finally, this study has only focused on two aspects of workplace incivility perceived by targets, that is, being the target of top-down incivility (teachers' perceptions of uncivil behaviors from authority figures) and being the target of peer-to-peer incivility (teachers' perceptions of uncivil behaviors from other teaching faculty). As uncivil behaviors exhibited by students (bottom-up incivility) is an important phenomena within university settings (McKay, Aronold, & Fratzi, 2008), future studies should pay attention to the link between EI of university teachers and the perceptions of uncivil behaviors exhibited by students.

### **Implications**

In essence, notwithstanding the limitations of the study, the results of this study extends previous research by offering first evidence for the mediating role of perceived workplace incivility in the relation between EI and important work-related attitudes in a sample of university teachers. The current findings suggest that EI may act as an antidote to lessen the negative impact of workplace incivility. In terms of potential managerial implications, these findings suggest that EI-based interventions may represent a parsimonious alternative to interventions that targets workplace uncivil behaviors in increasing job satisfaction and organizational commitment as well as decreasing the CWB. Given that EI appears to underlie the negative impacts of perceived workplace incivility on outcome variables, promoting EI may be a promising approach against the prevalence of workplace incivility (Lomas et al., 2012). Universities should seek to select, place, and retain faculty members with high EI. As EI can be developed (Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997), it would be appropriate to develop anti-incivility programs that particularly focus on the development of EI abilities (i.e., self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion) in those who are at risk of being victimized. Moreover, in order to curtail uncivil behaviors and facilitate courteous interactions between faculty members, counseling and training sessions may be introduced to help faculty members to engage in constructive behaviors at work.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study showed that workplace incivility victimization perceptions mediate the relationship between EI and

work-related outcomes. Intervention programs designed to enhance EI at workplace may be applied to counter the problem of workplace incivility.

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