

# The Cope up Effect: The Effect of Workplace Incivility on Organizational Deviance through the Work Exhaustion with the Moderating Role of Personal Spirituality

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## Abstract

**Background:** Nurses are the indispensable part of any emergency ward of healthcare due to their effective intervention towards patient-care; which is directly related to the performance of healthcare organizations. Pakistani Nurses are facing serious challenges due to the lack of respect in the society for this profession and harming behavior of patients and fellow employees. This treatment threatens their well-being and invokes their deviant behavior at workplace. However, the existence of personal spirituality among nurses suppresses the impact of negative events experienced by them as well as it play as intervention to diminish the deviant acts.

**Aim of the study:** The aim of this study is to investigate the mediating role of work exhaustion and moderating role of personal spirituality between the uncivil interactions and employee deviant acts at workplace.

**Methods:** A time-lagged study was conducted using a survey based research design and primary data was collected in two times, through a well-structured questionnaires. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed and 231 usable responses were collected from time 1 and time 2, giving a response rate of 57.75%. Complete confidentiality was ensured to the participants of survey. The analysis was performed through structural equation modeling.

**Results:** Findings of this study shows that the deviant acts of nurses escalated due to the uncivil interactions encountered by them: while the personal spirituality suppresses the effects of uncivil interactions and plays as intervening role to reduces the organizational deviance (production and property deviance) of nurses.

**Keywords:** Uncivil interactions • Work exhaustion • Organizational deviance • Personal spirituality • Nurses • Healthcare • Quantitative analysis

## Introduction

Mistreatment is a phenomenon that harms the employee productivity and overall organizational performance. Harassment, aggression, violence and incivility are forms of interpersonal mistreatment. These violent behaviors adversely influence the employees' emotions and increase their deviant behavior at workplace which can be destructive.. Health organizations are considered the most important around the world as it generates the positive externalities for the society as a whole. Nurses are the valuable part of health organizations worldwide and appropriate care of the patient is not possible without their effective involvement [1]. Unfortunately, antisocial behaviors are commonly found towards

nurses by the hospital management, doctors and patients. Nursing profession is considered less respected which might be the reason of aggressions and workplace violence. This creates job dissatisfaction, mental disorder, turnover intention, and frustration and makes them to encountered deviant acts that can be risky for the patients' health. Therefore, workplace incivility is assumed to bring serious and destructive outcomes, which is unaddressed area among nurses from emergency ward of public sector hospitals of Pakistan. Moreover, this study is in line with the direction of Chirasha and Mahapa study on deviance which recommended the dimensional work needed for future studies on workplace deviance. Therefore, the first objective of this study is to examine that how uncivil interactions by colleagues and patients contribute towards the organizational deviance (production and property deviance) by nurses, as production

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deviance (bunking, wasting time in chitchat with coworkers and taking excessive breaks) and property deviance (theft, destruction and sabotage to organization or patient) which can be the cause of irreversible loss in emergency ward of hospitals. However, the affective interventions are important to improve the productivity, and suppress the stressors to reduce the workplace deviance of employees.

Therefore, personal spirituality at workplace is a noteworthy aspect; as it decreases the perception of stressors and brings the sense of positivity, honesty, moral values, fairness, encouragement and support. The spirituality at workplace enlarges the values and ethics of businesses. Furthermore, individuals work related interactions and outcomes are influenced by the values of workplace spirituality. As personal spirituality positively influences the employees work related interactions and outcomes; on the other side organizational deviance (production and property deviance) of employees escalated due to the experience of uncivil interactions. Thus, this is assumed that the existence of personal spirituality will cope up the effects of uncivil behavior towards nurses as well as their organizational deviance from workplace. Moreover, this assumption is in line with the directions to examine the constructive intervention to improve positivity and growth of individual. Second Objective was to examine the mediating role of work exhaustion between workplace incivility and organizational deviance (production and property deviance). Therefore, the third objective of this study is to investigate the suppressing effects of personal spirituality between uncivil interactions and organizational deviance (production and property deviance) of nurses in healthcare [2].

## Background Theory and Hypothesis

### Uncivil interactions

The uncivil behavior concept has been defined 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 for others”. Furthermore, Nicholson and Griffin (2016) stated the disregard and rudeness is a form of incivility which threaten the individual wellbeing at workplace. The concept of incivility at workplace among nurses is characterized as “hostile, aggressive, and harmful behavior by a nurse or group of nurses toward a coworker or group of nurses via attitudes, actions, words and/or behaviors”. A number of sources derived these uncivil interactions towards nurses at workplace for instance, by powerful groups of healthcare like physicians and administration, by patient and their family members, and by coworkers. A number of studies on nurses quoted multiple issues faced by nurses due to the uncivil interactions like, anxiety, depression, self-confidence lost, sleeping disorder, high blood pressure and low productivity that results vanished the patient health care.

### Deviant acts and uncivil interactions

Incivility is a low intensive behavior but on the opposite side is deviant behavior at workplace which is more destructive and harmful for organization, its stakeholders and its customers. Workplace

deviance is defined as “voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and, in doing so, threatens the well-being of the organization or its members”. A huge cost is borne by the organization due to workplace deviant behavior. Those who are involved in deviant acts such as theft, destruction, sabotage, misappropriation or bunking off are up to 75%. The utmost loss because of wrongdoings against business is the employee theft which is predominant. A study on US nurses by Lewis and Malecha quoted the annual productivity cost per nurse is \$11581 due to the workplace incivility [3].

Workplace incivility has a positive relationship with negative job outcomes. Extensive research work has been done in past to find out the consequences of various kinds of mistreatment towards employees and their effect on job outcomes. Biswas and Bhatnagar observed that the relationship between employee and supervisor creates engagement between them which can positively and negatively affect the job outcomes. Moreover, according to social exchange theory, individuals, in an attempt to keep balance in their social exchange are more prone to counter workplace behavior when they think that they are treated unfairly. Therefore, Theory of Social Exchange is the core foundation of predicting the outcomes of exchange relations. Additionally, Weiss and Cropanzano articulated in their affective events theory, events that occur on the job, influence the work behaviors generally through affective reactions and among these events, negative events are particularly influential.

### Mediating role of work exhaustion

Relax working environment has great importance in employee life satisfaction and workplace behavior. People prefer to work in that environment where they feel comfort and stress free because uncivil interactions can affect their daily functions, quality of life, social relations, mental aggression, workplace deviance and cognitive exhaustion of employees. Unfortunately, work exhaustion due to uncivil interactions at workplace is on the peak from previous few decades and will be higher in future. The concept of work exhaustion has been introduced and defined as a downfall of mental energy is perceived by an individual and that affects their daily and upcoming activities. Numerous researchers extensively acknowledged this definition of work exhaustion no other definition on this concept is universally accepted. Exhaustion is multi facet concept and studied in various research studies, typically exhaustion is defined as an experience of extremely and continuously tiredness cognitively or physically. Moreover, physiologically exhaustion as a feeling of weakness which create downfall in tissues, cells and level of stress is higher.

In nursing sector, the concept of work exhaustion is characterized as attention withdrawal, absentmindedness, and mind wondering behavior in nurses towards their patients and risk of life threat is higher in this profession if attitudes, actions, and behaviors are not taken at proper time. Many other behaviors are linked with work exhaustion like, social, psychological and behavioral towards organizations in the form workplace deviance, property deviance and productivity deviance, Isolation and difficulty in fulfilling work commitments. Research on work exhaustion at workplace indicates that when mental stress of employees increased in their job duties, they experience significant depressive symptoms at work. Research indicated that the workplace uncivil interactions is one of the major

causes of work exhaustion such as, workplace incivility with nurses and their experience of work exhaustion while bearing uncivil behaviors of their supervisors at workplace. When nurses at hospitals treated by disrespectful behavior by their supervisors, it may become more challengeable to focus on their work related tasks, because of their obsessions with their working situation and the related energy to respond become low.

Therefore, their sources of power become depleted, and they feel exhausted when they are at work. This statement is supported by affective event logic that has affective events can affect individuals cognitions and emotions which they experience in their lifespan and according to social exchange theory individuals personal resources proved helpful and cope up the situation. Moreover employee's experience to workplace incivility may drain their ultimate sources of energy, in that uncivil behaviors commentaries from working colleagues, supervisors, may create uncertainty about whether their efforts are acknowledged; that is work exhaustion may signal discard their cognitive care and wellbeing at workplace. Same as, if they experience mental exhaustion may feel less active, less productive, less concentrated, low will powered and dissatisfied in their life [4].

### Suppressing role of personal spirituality

Although the individuals' psychological and physical dimensions have been extensively studied at workplace, the dimension of individuals' workplace spirituality has been ignored in the literature in relation to the workplace outcomes. However the interest of academicians regarding workplace spirituality has grown enormously over the past years. Spirituality at workplace is considered to be a significant and noteworthy aspect of inquiry. The spiritual values have enlarged the relationship between business ethics and values. There is a need to give greater attention towards Spiritual values by the organizational leaders as it positively contributes towards employee's satisfaction and productivity. In case of emergency ward of health organizations, ethical and spiritual values should be on prior because their work is for the human capital and as a whole for the betterment of the society. A healthy workforce is largely responsible for greater productivity which ultimately holds a substantial impact on the economy. Personal spirituality is defined as "emphasizing connection-the association between him and the divine God and the acknowledgement of interconnections between all Being and Nonbeing".

Multiple studies found that the social support replenish the socio-emotional as it is negatively related with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and burnout and positively related with positive job outcomes even with organizational citizenship behavior. Another way to replenish the socio-emotional resources is a strong sense of faith or personal spirituality. Dhiman and Marques found that the individual spirituality contributes towards the sense of positivity thus reduces the negative intentions (individual deviance acts) as well as the perception of stressors (uncivil interactions towards individual) at workplace. Therefore, this study enlightened the existing literature through examining the suppressing effect of personal spirituality between incivility at workplace and organizational deviance of nurses in emergency ward of public health area of Pakistan.

## Research Methods

### Sample and data collection

The aim of this section is to cover the research design on which the endeavor of this study is based. Population of this study was the nurses from emergency ward of public health organizations working in the city of Lahore, because Lahore is the metropolitan city with maximum number of hospitals in Pakistan. Non probability, convenient sampling was used to collect data from the sample to avoid the common method biasness; we collected data in two waves. Thus, self-administered time lagged questionnaires were used for the data collection in two times series. The survey packages included a consent form and questionnaire. To deal with the social desirability or compliance biases complete consent form has been filled by all the participants. That form explained the purpose of the study and assured their complete confidentiality of responses, including the assurance that their responses would be only accessible to the researchers of this study. No individual level data would be made public only accumulated findings of the study would be available to the research world. Moreover we ensure them there is no judgment of their performance and we asked the respondents to answer the questions with honesty. These precautions helped us to fulfill the research ethics and made the respondents feel confident. The data collection was completed by two paper and pencil survey. One of which measured workplace incivility and workplace deviance and the second one measured personal spirituality [5].

Each public sector hospital was provided a personal locker with attached drop box to the nursing staff. The questionnaires were conveniently dropped in the drop box by hand with the help of superintendent of nurses with instructions of time and returning procedure with prepaid postage envelop. Although we have not sure that they filled in a given time but it was wonderful experience. A total of 7 working days were given to each hospital from the day of first questionnaire were dropped in the nurses drop box. For this study, the researcher has distributed the 400 questionnaires among the nurses working in emergency ward of public sector hospitals of Lahore and 327 completed surveys were returned. The second questionnaire was distributed only to the 327 respondents who returned the first survey. The final sample size after discarding incomplete questionnaires and matching the two-time data was 231, with a response rate of 7%.

## Results

### Demographic profile of respondents

The demographical information of the nursing staff was gained through questionnaires having queries about gender, qualification and experience. All the information that is retrieved is provided in the following table 1 which is placed at the end of references.

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	17	7.36%
	Female	214	92.64%
Age	Below 25	72	31.20%

	25-35	111	48.10%
	35-45	31	13.40%
Education	Intermediate	16	6.93%
	Diploma	113	48.92%
	Bachelor	48	20.80%
	Master	32	13.90%
	Other nursing degree	22	9.50%
Experience	Less than 5 years	51	22.10%
	5-10 years	104	45%
	10-15 years	45	19.50%
	15 years and above	31	13.40%

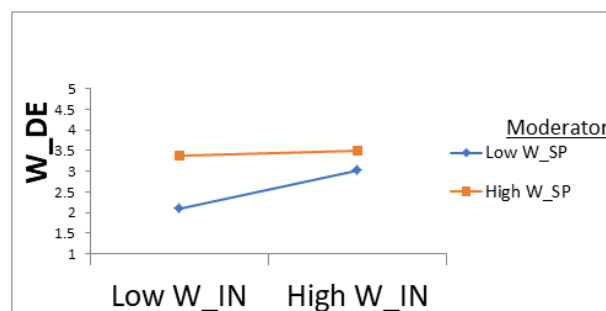
**Table 1.** Demographical information of the nursing staff.

In present study, the data is gathered from 231 respondents of nursing department of public sector hospitals in Lahore Pakistan. Majority of the respondents are female in 214 with the percentage of 92.64% and male respondents are 17 with the percentage of 7.36%. 111(48.1%) respondents belong to the age group of 25 To 35 years, 72(31.2%) were below 25 years of age, while just 31(13.4%) from 35 to 45 years of age and only 17(7.4%) were above 45 years of age. 113(48.92%) respondents were having nursing diploma, 48(20.8%) have bachelor’s degree, 16(6.93%) were having intermediate degree, while just 32(13.9%) have master’s qualification and only 22(9.5%) have other nursing education. In sample, 104(45%) respondents were having 5 to 10 years of experience, 51(22.1%) were having less than 5 years of experience, while just 45(19.5%) have 10 to 15 years of experience and only 31(13.4%) have more than 15 years of experience. 125(54.11%) are charge nurses, 84(36.4%) are student nurses and 22(9.52%) are head nurses.

### Hypothesis testing

Fulfilling all the preliminary assumption for structural equation modeling, the next step was to test hypotheses including estimation of coefficient scales and model fitness indices. For statistical testing, instrumental variables and maximum likelihood estimation methods were applied following recommendations of Kline. Below given figure shows the hypothesized structural model with hypothesized paths observed through SEM analysis. Results of this study are in line with the objectives, as first objective of present research was to investigate the effect of uncivil interactions at workplace that it escalate the organizational deviance of employees, and study finding are in line with the proposed hypothesis ( $\beta=0.296, P<0.01$ ). Second objective was to investigate the mediating role work exhaustion between workplace incivility and workplace deviance the results are in favor of our hypothesis ( $\beta=0.290, P<0.001$ ), Third research objective was to identify the effect of coping mechanism that is if spiritual values are high in individual he will not be actively engaged in organizational deviance even facing uncivil interactions by co-workers or customers. The results are in line with our proposed hypothesis, ( $\beta=0.293, P<0.001$ ). The nurses with high spiritual values have very less intentions towards organizational deviance as compare to those who have low spiritual intelligence even in the

exposed to workplace incivility as shown in Figure 1 which is placed at the end of references. This type of intelligence is highly important for nurses working in emergency ward of healthcare as their concerns and timely treatment to the patient is far important than any contextual misbehaviors faced by them.



**Figure 1.** The relationship of W\_SP weakens the positive relationship between W\_IN and W\_DE.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study was based on cross sectional data collected within single time frame to attain the objectives, where the first objective was to examine the organizational deviance (production and property deviance) of nurses working in emergency ward of public hospitals of Pakistan due to the negative behavior they faced by coworkers and patient. Negative behaviors in public hospitals of Pakistan include mistreatment and rape, sexual intentions, disgraceful remarks and harassment. The destructive outcome of such events escalates deviant acts of nurses. Current study findings confirm that the nurses working in emergency ward of public hospitals of Pakistan shows workplace deviance due to the uncivil interactions they encountered: As incivility influence the both form of organizational deviance (production and property deviance). These findings are offering consistent results compared to the past studies. These findings also supported by the affective events theory, which states that the employee’s cognitions and emotions react to the incidents happened to them at their workplace. Further this theory stated that the productivity of employee deteriorates due the negative events encountered at work settings. Moreover, according to social exchange theory, individuals, in an attempt to keep balance in their social exchange are more prone to counter workplace behavior when they think that they are treated unfairly.

Second purpose of this research is to investigate the mediating role of work exhaustion between workplace uncivil behavior and workplace deviance (production and property deviance) of health care professionals in health organizations. These results point out that work exhaustion influenced the relationship between workplace incivility and organizational deviance. Third objective of this study was to examine the suppressing role of personal spirituality between uncivil interaction by co-workers/patients and organizational deviance (production and property deviance) of nurses from emergency ward of public healthcare settings. The results highlighted that the existence of personal spirituality suppresses the effects of workplace incivility as well as decreases the deviant acts of nurses on workplace. Thus, these results substantiated with existing research as it is suggested that the individual spirituality at workplace

brings the exceptional feelings of perfection and high motivation in their work. Furthermore, Krishnan stated that the existence of personal spirituality at workplace has the potential to bring the extraordinary positive change. In addition, Walt suggested that personal spirituality within individual increases the tolerance level, positive self-esteem, capacity to coping with stress affectively and emotional intelligence.

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