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The Relationship Between Employee Power Trait and Instigated Workplace Incivility: Does Organizational Tenure Moderate the Effect?

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Abstract

This study builds upon the approach-inhibition theory of power to examine the relationship between an individual's power trait and instigated workplace incivility. This also proposes that organizational tenure mitigates the likelihood of incivility instigation towards peers by individuals possessing a power trait. To investigate these dynamics, a time-lagged multi-sourced survey involving 175 participants from diverse Pakistani service sector organizations was conducted. Our findings indicate that employee power traits significantly contribute to instigated workplace incivility. Furthermore, organizational tenure serves as a moderator in this relationship where individuals with high-power traits and shorter organizational tenure exhibit a heightened propensity for instigating uncivil behaviors.

Keywords: *Power trait, organizational tenure, approach-inhibition, instigated workplace incivility*

1. Introduction

Workplace incivility defined as a “low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect” (Anderson & Pearson, 1999) is a rampant and ongoing issue in organizations (Agarwal et al., 2023). Incivility is pervasive in organizations because it is ambiguous and low-intensity interpersonal abuse as compared to the more explicit forms of workplace mistreatment (Park & Martinez, 2022). Contemporary research indicates that approximately 70% of workers experience incivility at the workplace (Taylor & Locklear, 2022) which leads to a range of negative outcomes for individuals and organizations (Akella & Lewis, 2019; Cortina, 2017; Cortina et al., 2022; Lata & Chaudhary, 2020). At the individual level, incivility reduces employees' engagement, creativity, satisfaction, job performance, citizenship behavior, intention to stay, and psychological well-being (Schilpzand et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2013, etc.). On a large scale, it affects organizational productivity (Chen et al., 2013) and performance (Schilpzand et al., 2016). Given the widespread existence and detrimental consequences of incivility, scholars, and practitioners are increasingly interested in understanding the factors and conditions that contribute to this detrimental phenomenon and also the ways to mitigate it at the workplace. Literature generally segregates workplace incivility into two types, i.e., experienced incivility and instigated incivility. Experienced incivility refers to an individual's firsthand experience of uncivil or disrespectful behavior directed towards him/her by others in the workplace, such as being the target of rude comments or actions (Yao et al., 2022). In contrast, instigated incivility involves active engagement of an individual in uncivil behavior towards their colleagues or superiors, thus initiating or instigating disrespectful acts (Blau & Anderson, 2005; Park & Martinez, 2022). While experienced incivility pertains to being on the receiving end of such behavior, instigated incivility involves being the one who initiates or contributes

to uncivil interactions. Causes, mechanisms, and consequences of experienced workplace incivility have been investigated thoroughly. However, instigated workplace incivility has not been sufficiently explored yet (Lata & Chaudhary, 2020; Miranda & Welbourne, 2020; Park & Martinez., 2022). Accordingly, the main objective of this study is to explore the factors and conditions that specifically contribute to instigated workplace incivility.

Limited literature suggests that certain individual characteristics, including personality traits like the big-five personality (Milam et al., 2009), the dark triad personality (Lata & Chaudhary, 2020; Min et al., 2019), perfectionist orientation (Hussain et al., 2021), and expressions of anger and aggression (Miranda & Welbourne, 2020), are associated with a higher propensity for employees to initiate uncivil behaviors at workplace. Studies indicate that many employees often experience incivility from their colleagues and superiors who hold positions of power (Cortina et al., 2001; Galinsky & Magley, 2008). Building on these observations, we contend that employees' generalized sense of personal power, often regarded as a personality trait, can potentially drive them to engage in uncivil behavior toward their peers at workplace. Employee power, as a trait, refers to an individual's subjective sense of overall power and influence in life (Anderson et al., 2012) or a habitual belief in one's power (Schmidt-Barad & Uziel, 2020), which develops over time through life experiences (Popelnukha et al., 2021). High-power individuals are more prone to unethical decision-making (Dubois et al., 2015; Lammers et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2020) and socially inappropriate behaviors (Keltner et al., 2003) due to their less concern for the feelings and well-being of others. Both personal power (independence from others) and social power (exercising power over others) can motivate individuals to disregard social norms of respect in pursuit of their interests, regardless of the impact on others (Lammers et al., 2009). Given these theoretical foundations, we adopt the approach-inhibition theory of power proposed by Keltner et al. (2003) to posit a positive relationship between employees' power trait and instigated incivility at the workplace.

We also explored employee tenure as a potential boundary condition that can modify the relationship between power trait and instigated incivility. Employee tenure, which signifies an individual's duration of association with an organization, naturally entails the accumulation of experiences, insights, and relationships within the workplace (Fischer, 2008; Yao et al., 2022). The extant literature has yielded inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between tenure and incivility instigation, with studies reporting positive (Birkeland & Nerstad, 2016; Sears & Humiston, 2015), negative (Krishnan, 2016), and insignificant (Lata & Chaudhary, 2020) associations. Approach-inhibition theory of power predicts that certain conditions and events can trigger the inhibited tendency for powerful individuals that alter their affect, cognition, and behavior in disinhibited ways. Therefore, we theorized that longer tenure may buffer the impact of an employee's power trait on incivility instigation. We argue that over time, employees become more aligned with organizational norms, values, and role expectations. Their established relationships and deeper understanding of the workplace culture discourage uncivil behavior as they prioritize maintaining their social relationships and conforming to accepted cultural norms, thus potentially attenuating the effects of a strong power trait on instigated incivility (Kim, 2018).

This study makes some important contributions. First, by exploring the direct relationship between an employee's power trait and instigated incivility, this study provides insights into the drivers of instigated incivility. Second, by exploring the moderating role of organizational tenure this study offers a nuanced understanding of how organizational experience can either amplify or mitigate the impact of power trait on incivility instigations. Lastly, by understanding the interplay between power trait, tenure, and incivility in the Pakistani context, this study addresses a critical gap in the existing literature which primarily comprises studies from Western contexts. Conducting this research in Pakistan offers culturally relevant insights that apply to a developing country's unique socio-cultural and economic context.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Operational Definitions

2.1.1 Trait Power

Trait power is defined as “a generalized, habitual sense that one is powerful” (Schmidt-Barad & Uziel, 2020, p. 2). It can be derived from continuous encounters in which individuals feel powerful, constantly activating the thought process of power (Tost, 2015) or from individual dispositions (Anderson et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2009).

2.1.2 Instigated Workplace Incivility

Workplace incivility is defined as “a low-intensity deviant workplace behavior with an ambiguous intent to harm the target in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect” (Anderson & Pearson, 1999, p.457). In this study, we investigated incivility from an instigator perspective, so, we took instigated incivility as, the act of instigating uncivil actions toward colleagues at the workplace is referred to as instigated workplace incivility (Blau & Anderson, 2005).

2.1.3 Organizational Tenure

Organizational tenure is duration of association of an employee with the organization (Ng & Feldman, 2010) or the length of employment in the firms (i.e., McEnrue, 1988). It has been used as a proxy for to amount of work-related knowledge or work experience (Sturman, 2003; Quinones et al., 1995). We focused organizational tenure in terms of duration of association of an individual with his/her employer (Ng & Feldman, 2010), as logically organizational tenure can mitigate the individual power traits' propensity to instill incivility instigation toward others.

2.2 Theory and hypotheses

2.2.1 Approach-Inhibition Theory of Power

We draw on the approach-inhibition theory of power for our conceptual model. The approach-inhibition theory of power explains how individuals' experiences and perceptions of power influence their cognitive and behavioral patterns (Keltner et al. 2003). This theory highlights the nuanced ways in which power dynamics can shape human behavior suggesting that power has a dual effect on individuals, leading to both approach and inhibition tendencies. Particularly, it proposes that the experience of power involves a delicate balance between the drive to achieve and assert oneself (approach) and the need to protect one's position and avoid potential threats (inhibition) (Cho & Keltner, 2020; Keltner et al., 2003). When individuals feel powerful, they are more likely to engage in approach behaviors. This means they are more inclined to take action, pursue goals, and exhibit assertiveness. Feeling powerful can lead to a proactive and goal-oriented mindset. On the other hand, power can also lead to inhibition tendencies. Individuals in positions of power may become more focused on potential threats to their status, leading to increased caution and risk aversion. This inhibition can manifest as a desire to protect one's position and avoid potential challenges or losses (Cho & Keltner, 2020; Keltner et al., 2003; Lamertz & Aquino 2004). The theory accordingly asserts that individuals with power generally are in a context full of resources that signal more rewards and freedom. So, they are cognizant that they can act without any intrusions and surveillance of others. Contrarily, powerless individuals often experience negative emotions, are vigilant to threats, process-controlled information, and exhibit socially constrained behaviors (Cho & Keltner, 2020). Lack of power makes them prey to attacks of other individuals, so, they tend to get social acceptance for their security rather than cross social boundaries.

In current research, we advocate implementing the within-person perspective on approach inhibition to examine, whether employees' power traits create instigated workplace incivility helping understand when this relationship becomes more salient.

2.2.2 Employee Power Trait and Instigated Workplace Incivility

Trait power is derived from individual dispositions (Anderson et al., 2012). Research suggests a strong positive relationship between power trait and their action tendency to approach motivation (Körner et al., 2022) and impulsiveness. Consistent with the principles of the approach-inhibition theory of power (Keltner et al., 2003), powerful people are eager to achieve their preferred goals and use people as a tool for their achievement, negate key cues from others, and primarily act according to their mood and disregards others. Power increases individuals' sense of competence and confidence (Tost et al., 2012; Fast et al., 2012), which in turn liberates them from constraints and permits them to behave in an agentic way (Dubois et al., 2015).

From an interpersonal perspective, powerful individuals are susceptible to breaking rules and being involved in socially inappropriate behaviors. Power has been linked with self-serving (Welsh et al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2012), unethical decision-making (Dissanayake & Jayawardana, 2023), and search for proximity to menacing others (Mead & Maner 2012). Individuals with high power traits administer punishment by verbally abusing, criticizing, and ignoring others (Keltner et al., 2003). Powerful people (trait/state) will be ruder towards others because they are independent as compared to less powerful individuals (Lammers et al., 2015). Just as, powerful professionals conform their initial judgments mostly by discounting advice from others (Keltner et al., 2003). Anderson et al. (2012) opined that generally powerful individuals enforce their ideas in their social circle because they have greater control over other attitudes and behaviors. Approach-inhibition theory (Keltner et al., 2003) indicates that individuals with elevated power traits perceive independence from others, leading to more egotistic reflection and increasingly belittling others' perspectives (Kipnis, 1972).

Raised power increases the impact of individual traits on their behavioral outcomes (Cho & Keltner, 2020). Powerful people express their true selves in group gatherings and reinforce the association between trait parochiality and their empathic concerns (Côté et al., 2011). Similarly, self-identity demonstrates that powerful individuals have significant consistency within their self-concept and are generally more authentic (Kraus et al., 2011). Since powerful individuals activate more approach-seeking tendencies toward rewards and freedom (Keltner et al., 2003), they can act at their will without any interference (Weber, 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2011). Hence, high-power trait individuals impulsively proceed towards reward-relevant opportunities, and can easily violate polite communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987), become more talkative, more directive to others, and often interrupt others (DePaulo & Friedman, 1998). Disrupting the social norms of respect, i.e., unprofessional behavior, rude, and impolite communication falls under the umbrella of incivility. Power traits probably lead individuals to instigate uncivil encounters. In corroborating with the approach-inhibition theory of power, we assume that employee power trait predicts instigated workplace incivility. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H₁: Employee power trait is positively related to their instigated workplace incivility.

2.2.3 Moderating Role of Organizational Tenure

Organizational tenure is a critical determinant of human capital, which is referred to by the professional, educational, and personal experiences that improve job incumbent value at work and career growth (Nafukho et al., 2004). Generally, individuals at the early stage of their career gain the skills, values, anticipated behaviors, and social knowledge critical for supposing an institutional role and sharing as an institutional contributor (Louis, 1980). By growing with the institution, employees attain more social acceptance, self-efficacy, and task clarity (Bauer et al., 2007), become more knowledgeable about their role expectations, institutional cultural customs, and purposes (Chatman, 1991), and learn institutional-specific knowledge, skills, and

abilities (KSA) (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998). Long tenures strengthen employees' social networks within institutions (Steffens et al., 2014) which helps them acquire information to fulfill institutional roles and duties, overcome or avoid barriers, and be mindful of colleagues (Humphrey et al., 2009). Considering this, the organizational tenure of employees is expected to influence the extent of the relationship among employee power trait and instigated workplace incivility. Underpinning this assertion, the approach-inhibition theory of power given by Keltner et al. (2003) revealed the strong theoretical footing for the moderating role of organizational tenure for the relationship as mentioned above.

Many scholars have positioned organizational tenure as a boundary condition to forecast employee job behaviors (Sesen & Ertan, 2023; Chang et al. 2022). However, the interactive role of employee organizational tenure and employee power trait to predict incidence of instigated workplace incivility is overlooked in the existing literature. Hence, we build our argument concerning moderation organizational tenure on the approach-inhibition theory of power (Keltner et al., 2003) and suggest that the influence of employee power traits on the instigated workplace incivility may vary under the boundary condition of the length of their service employment in the organization.

Approach-inhibition theory (Keltner et al., 2003) emphasizes that power is not a static construct, rather it interacts with culture, individual differences, and contextual conditions for those who possess power and desire to bring about change. Keltner et al. (2003) predicted that events or conditions that inhibition (as constraints, uncertainty, threats) should alter the cognition, affect, and actions of powerful persons in some expected ways. They also state that events or conditions that trigger approach (e.g., freedom, rewards, impulsiveness, etc.) tendency should shift the effect, cognition, and behaviors of powerless people. Ironically, the individual power trait under certain conditions may act in the inhibited way. For example, the threat of social instability and a sense of accountability often act as a constraint for unchecked power (Keltner et al., 2003). Generally, senior employees have a feeling of such accountability, so they are more careful about social consequences and tend to regard others' interests (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). From a socialization perspective, employees with longer tenure have more opportunities to develop their loyalty, and commitment toward the organization and hold greater deliberation towards others because of their prolonged learning process (Kim, 2018). With growing organizational tenure, employees perceive more fit as they internalize institutional values and norms and meet the institutional demands to a greater extent (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Thus, they are predisposed to institutional interests such as collaborating with colleagues rather than engagement in uncivil conduct.

Experienced employees are more conscious about their social network, as they are well-educated on how to overcome obstacles, so, they don't want social instability as compared to new job incumbents, therefore, longer organizational tenure activates behavioral inhibit system (BIS) in employees with high trait power leading them to exhibit socially responsible behavior, therefore, they have less tendency to break social norms of respect. Contrarily, short-tenure individuals might feel a heightened sense of competition or urgency to establish themselves, contributing to a greater likelihood of instigated incivility. The brevity of their tenure may amplify the desire to assert power swiftly, as they navigate the complexities of a new workplace. The novelty of a new work environment often prompts a desire to make a rapid impact and assert one's position, potentially leading to a more assertive communication style. In their eagerness to prove themselves, employees with shorter tenure may perceive the workplace as a competitive arena, where displaying power becomes a means of gaining recognition and establishing a foothold within the organizational hierarchy.

Building on this reasoning and in line with the approach-inhibition principle, we theorize that lengthy organizational tenure acts as a constraint that activates the behavioral inhibit tendency for employee power trait, resulting, in buffering the effects of employee power trait on their

incivility instigation. In contrast, employees with shorter organizational tenure feel less accountable/responsible for social conduct therefore, it triggers the approach (freedom, impulsiveness, etc.) tendency for employee power trait, invigorating the relationship between employee power trait and incivility instigation. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H₂: Organizational tenure moderates the positive effect of employee power trait on instigated workplace incivility, such that the effect will be weaker when the organizational tenure is longer (vs shorter).

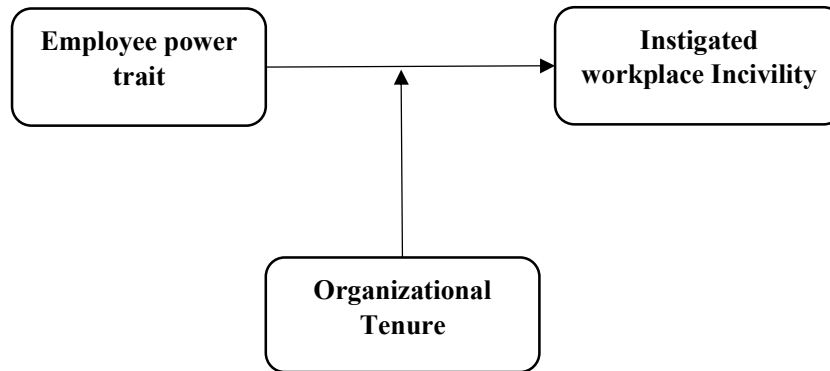


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Participants and Procedure

The sample comprised 175 participants from diverse service sectors namely health, hospitality, banks, telecom, and education from organizations located in different cities of Pakistan. This diverse sample increased the external validity of empirical findings via data heterogeneity. These firms were contacted through personal and professional links. Data were gathered by personal visits to these firms and questionnaires were distributed to the desired participants individually. The nature of this survey was completely voluntary, and anyone could withdraw his/her participation at any stage of the survey process. No prize/gift or monetary reward in response to the survey contribution was offered. The research objective was explained to participants at the start of the survey process to enhance their understanding and response rate. The survey members were asked to submit their questionnaire to the precisely mentioned drop box fixed inside their organization. Only researchers could open and collect their survey from this drop box.

The pen and paper survey in the English language was used as this is an official language for higher studies and professional code of conduct. This research used two time-lag research designs plotted as T1-lag [power trait (IV)] and T2-lag [instigated workplace incivility (DV)] to collect data. To minimize the self-report biases and social desirability effect, the data on the dependent variable (instigated workplace incivility) is coworker-rated, and the independent variable (power trait) is self-rated. To avoid data nesting, the coworkers who could not rate more than two colleagues' job behaviors were endorsed.

In the T1-lag 250, responses were received from 500 sets of questionnaires distributed among study participants in the first phase, suggesting a 50% response rate. After one-month (4 weeks later) the employee's (study participants) coworkers were asked to rate their colleague's job behavior, i.e., instigated workplace incivility. In the earlier phase of this survey, we already took the employees' (study participants) and their coworker's consent that they have no objection to this survey. At the end of the second term, we gathered 220 matched surveys out of which 45 were discarded due to deficient information. Finally, we got 175 accurate and complete responses. Table 1 details this demographic profile information.

3.2 Measurements

3.2.1 Employee Power Trait

Aderson et al. (2012) scale was used to measure employee power trait. It consisted of an 8-item scale. The sample item was “*I have a large amount of power*”. The participants were asked to rate how each statement described them from 1= strongly disagree, to 5= strongly agree. We eliminated item 4 of the power scale (Anderson et al. 2012) due to cross-loading issues, therefore, we used 7 items ($\alpha=0.73$).

3.2.2 Instigated Workplace Incivility

The instigated workplace incivility was derived from the work of Cortina et al. (2013) and comprised a 12-item scale ($\alpha=0.98$). The sample item was “*I have observed that Mr./Mrs./Ms.-----during the past month made jokes at a colleague's expense.*” The coworkers were asked to rate their colleagues’ job behavior on the five-point Likert scale as, 1= never, to 5=every day. We excluded some scale items, i.e., item 1, item 2, and item 4, to minimize the item redundancy effect (Cohen et al., 1996) due to their high correlation ($>.90$) with other items. Thus, we used a 9-item scale (Cortina et al., 2013) that showed good reliability ($\alpha=0.98$).

3.2.3 Organizational Tenure

Employee organizational tenure was measured in years. We requested study participants to indicate their years of service in the firm.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Analysis

Table 1. Demographic Information

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	140	80
	Female	35	20
Age	20-30	28	16%
	31-40	65	37%
	41-50	55	31.4%
	51-60	20	11.4%
	>61	7	4%
Education	14 years	43	24.6%
	16 years	77	44%
	18 years	42	24%
	>18 years	13	7.4%
Monthly Income (PKR)	50K-100K	12	6.86%
	100K-150K	40	22.9%
	150K-200K	93	53.1%
	>200K	30	17.14%
Sector	Education	9	5.1%
	Health	10	5.7%
	Banking	29	16.6%
	Hospitality	63	36%
	Telecom	43	24.6%
	Others	21	12%
Marital Status	Unmarried	110	62.86%
	Married	62	35.43%
	Divorced	3	1.71%
	Others	0	0

Note: K= 1000 Pakistan rupees; Sample size=175

4.2 Measurement model

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted in Amos 24 software to check the validity of our theorized model. A series of confirmatory factor analyses revealed the good fitness ($\chi^2/df = 4.0313$, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91, NFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.09, IFI = 0.92) of two-factor model (employee power trait and instigated workplace incivility) as compared to one-factor model as shown in table 2. All the items loaded significantly on their respective factors, thus establishing the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement scales.

Table 2. Measurement Model

CFA Model	CMIN/DF	CMIN	CFI	TLI	NNFI	RMSEA
Modified Model	4.013	469.559	0.924	0.911	0.901	0.093
Initial Model	13.586	1616.681	0.675	0.629	0.659	0.190

4.2 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Table 3 shows the composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and Cronbach Alpha values of the study's main constructs (employee power trait and instigated workplace incivility), which have good fitness according to their threshold criteria of construct validity (e.g., AVE > 0.5; MSV < AVE) (Gaskin, 2021). The instruments' reliability analysis through SPSS 25 suggested that power trait and instigated workplace incivility scales have good Cronbach alpha values of 0.726 and 0.984 respectively. Both scales meet the threshold criteria of $\alpha > 0.70$. (Hair et al., 2010). We have calculated the Average variance extracted and Composite reliability through an excel sheet. The results indicated that the composite reliabilities of power trait and instigated workplace incivility are 0.886, and 0.987 in line, and the Average Variance Extracted is 0.537 and 0.897 consecutively (Analysisinn.com). To achieve discriminant validity, we adopted the Fornell-Larcker Criterion method (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Both scales achieved the convergent validity acceptance criteria. The rule of thumb for this method approval is that the square root of the average variance extracted should be greater than the correlation among the two constructs. In this research, the square root of the average variance extracted from the power trait (square root AVE = 0.733) and instigated workplace incivility (Square root AVE = 0.947) are greater than the correlation between the constructs ($r = .393$). Accordingly, the convergent and discriminant validity of the main study constructs have achieved the threshold criteria of acceptance, hence there is no validity and reliability concern found in the data set.

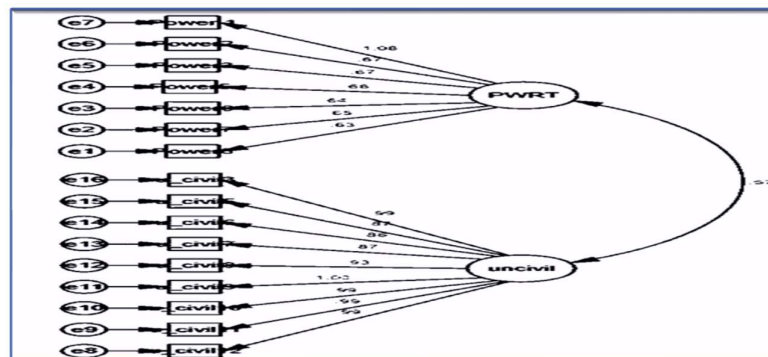


Figure 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

4.3 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation

The data were analyzed through the SPSS 25 version. Descriptive statistics (table 3) shows the list of study variables and explained the strength of association and direction among study variables via inter-correlation. We controlled the demographic variables, i.e., age, gender, status, sector, income, and education of employees in the analysis to get accurate and unbiased

findings. The demographic variables have no significant correlation with instigated workplace incivility. We found a moderate to high correlation between the main constructs.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	M	S.D	CR	AVE	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Gender	1.8	.40				1								
2 Age	3.5	1.1				-.00	1							
3 Education	2.1	.87				.11	-.03	1						
4 Income	3.8	.80				-.08	.18*	.08	1					
5 Sector	4.0	1.2				-.08	.02	-.09	.22	1				
6 status	1.3	.52				.18	-.07	.03	-.36**	-.10	1			
7 tenure	4.9	2.3				.00	-.03	.04	-.02	-.19*	.18*	1		
8 PT	3.5	.57	.886	.537	.726	.04	.12	-.01	.11	-.10	-.21**	-.03	1	
9 IWC	3.4	.89	.987	.897	.984	-.09	.00	-.06	-.02	-.04	-.01	.12	.39**	1

Note: M= mean; S. D= Standard deviation; CR= composite reliability; α = Alpha; MVS=Maximum shared variance; AVE= average variance extracted; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.01$ level; PT = Power Trait; IWC = Instigated Workplace Incivility.

4.4 Hypotheses Testing

We theorized a positive relationship between employee power trait and instigated workplace incivility. Table 4 demonstrates the significant positive association between employee power trait and instigated workplace incivility ($B=0.39$, $P<0.000$, $S.E=0.108$, $R^2=0.155$). Consistent with our prediction, employee personality trait power emerged as a significant predictor of instigated workplace incivility. Therefore, our first hypothesis of direct effects is supported.

Table 4. Direct Effects

Predictors	R ²	β	Instigated Workplace Incivility				
			SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Employee power trait	0.155	0.39	.108	5.624	0.000	.394	.821

Moderation Analysis

Besides the direct effect, we hypothesized that organizational tenure moderates the relationship between employee power trait and instigated workplace incivility towards others, such that the relationship will be attenuating (vs invigorating) under the condition of longer (vs shorter) organizational tenure. We used the Hayes Macro Process (2012) (model-1) to check the effects of moderation. The moderation analysis as seen in Table 5 shows that the employee organizational tenure significantly moderated the association between employee power trait and instigated workplace incivility towards others [power trait X organizational tenure $B=-.1130$, $P=0.0023$] as mentioned below (Table 5). The absence of zero between LLCI and ULCI has ensured the presence of moderation.

The interactional effect of employee power trait X organizational tenure was plotted for greater comprehension of conditional effects. According to our assumption, longer organizational tenure led to reducing instigated workplace incivility towards others for employees high on trait power. The findings indicate that employees' longer tenure (vs shorter) with the organization lessened the incidence of instigated workplace incivility for individuals exhibiting the trait power.

Table 5. Moderation Analysis

	β	Se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.4893	.0601	58.0136	.0000	3.3706	3.6081
Power trait	.6343	.1047	6.0576	.0000	.4276	.8410
Org. tenure	.0475	.0256	1.8533	.0656	-.0031	.0980
Power trait X Org. tenure	-.1130	.0365	-3.1003	.0023	-.1850	-.0411

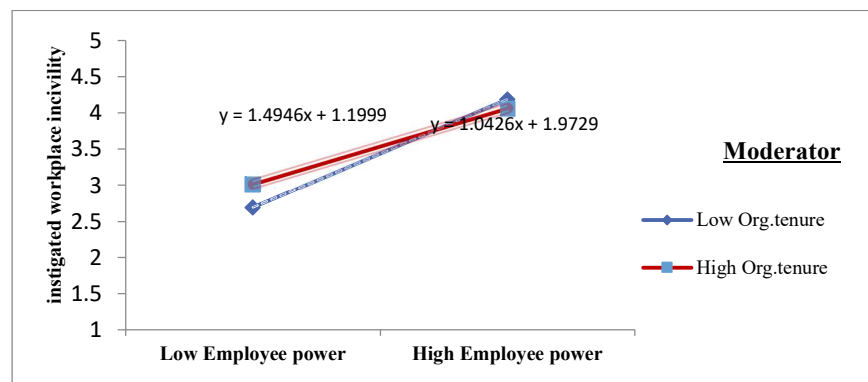
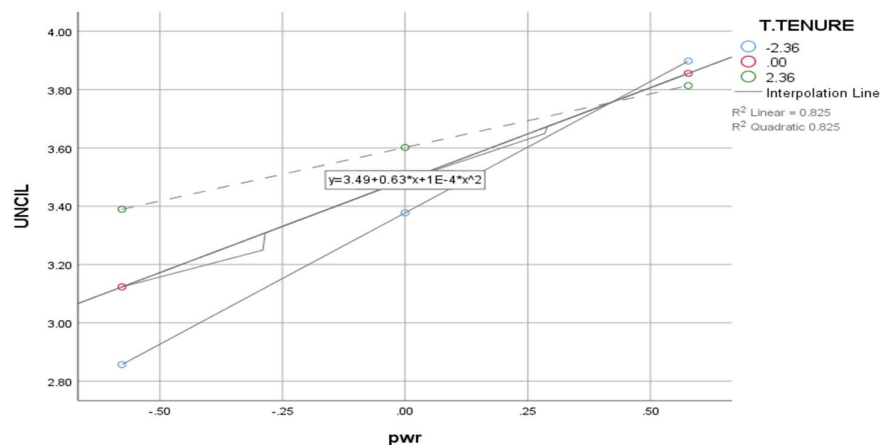
Conditional effects of the Employee Power Trait at values of the Moderator

Org. Tenure	β	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Low	.9013	.1397	6.4530	.0000	.6256	1.1770
Medium	.6343	.1047	6.0576	.0000	.4276	.8410
High	.3673	.1314	2.7962	.0058	.1080	.6266

Moderator value(s) defining Johnson-Neyman

Value	%Below	%Above
3.0351	91.4286	8.5714

Thus, the tendency to instigate incivility towards others buffered under high organizational tenure (vs shorter) conditions for employees high on trait power (figure 3). Likewise, figure 4 indicated the variation in effect of longer (vs shorter) organizational tenure at a mean of \pm standard deviation. So, these findings validated our moderation effect.

**Figure 3. Moderation Analysis****Figure 4. Moderating effects at Mean \pm SD**

5. Discussion

This study expands the limited literature on instigated workplace incivility by investigating its relationship with employee power traits. Our findings indicate that power trait is a significant determinant of instigated workplace incivility (H1). This is consistent with the previous studies that suggest a significant association between power and negative workplace behaviors (Anderson et al., 2012; Lammers et al., 2010; Dissanayake & Jayawardana, 2023; Mead & Maner 2012; Van Kleef et al., 2011). Accordingly, our findings support the contemporary theorization that challenges traditional notions of power as solely a constructive force within organizational settings. While power is often associated with leadership and influence (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009), our findings explore a darker side where an individual's power trait contributes to negative workplace behavior (Schattke & Marion-Jetten, 2022). This result prompts a re-evaluation of the conceptualization of workplace civility itself. It underscores that the propensity for incivility is not solely dependent on external factors or organizational structures but is intricately linked to individual characteristics. As such, conceptual frameworks exploring workplace behavior may need to incorporate a more individual-centric perspective, acknowledging the role of personal traits, such as power disposition, in shaping interpersonal interactions (Schattke & Marion-Jetten, 2022). This finding also highlights the need for a more nuanced and dynamic perspective on power and workplace behavior, recognizing that individual traits play a significant role in influencing how power is wielded and, consequently, its impact on the social fabric of the organization.

The finding that longer organizational tenure attenuates the tendency to instigate workplace incivility towards others among the employees high on power traits, offers important insights into the complex interplay between employee power traits, organizational tenure, and instigated workplace incivility. The results affirm our hypothesis that longer organizational tenure acts as a mitigating factor, reducing the likelihood of employees with high-power traits instigating workplace incivility toward their peers. This aligns with the notion that individuals with lengthy tenure are deeply embedded in the organizational culture, possessing the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities for their roles, as well as refined social skills that foster the display of socially responsible behaviors (Bruursema et al., 2011). Conversely, employees with shorter organizational tenure and heightened power traits appear to be more prone to engage in incivility, as they may prioritize achieving their goals over adhering to social norms of respect (Van Kleef et al., 2011). The observed freedom to express their true selves during the early stages of their career, coupled with a lack of established social capital, contributes to the display of covert forms of incivility.

This study underscores the importance of a nuanced approach in addressing workplace incivility, recognizing the interplay between employee power traits and organizational tenure. As organizations strive to foster positive work environments, acknowledging and managing these factors can contribute to the development of tailored interventions that promote respectful and collaborative workplaces. Only a few studies have described the construct of workplace incivility in developing countries, and the majority of the studies on this construct hail from developed countries (Schilpzand et al., 2016). This study highlights the vital information relevant to the complex connection between study variables in developing countries like Pakistan, thus expanding the knowledge in the scholarship of workplace incivility.

5.1 Theoretical implications

Our study broadly contributes to the existing literature on incivility scholarship. It is among the rare research that theorized individual power traits can elicit within an individual to instigate incivility towards others. Our research offered organizational tenure an important contextual moderator inside the nomological network of instigated workplace incivility. In this study we demonstrated that in certain circumstances individuals may provoke more or less

uncivil conducts. Employees power trait and their high organizational tenure together lessened their engagement in uncivil conducts. Pinned in the approach inhibition theory of power, we suggest that organizational tenure buffers the relationship between employee power trait and their instigated workplace incivility. As with the increment in organizational tenure employees improved their knowledge, skills and abilities, therefore employees with the personality power trait can professionally manage their social relationship and refrain from any unnecessary distressing situation that can damage their social capital.

5.2 Managerial Implications

Our findings encompass the practical implications too. It makes leaders and managers cognizant of the role of employee power traits in predicting their involvement in dubious forms of interpersonal mistreatment. Managers should be proactive in recognizing and managing the interpersonal dynamics associated with employees who exhibit a strong power trait. Training programs focused on interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution can play a pivotal role in helping employees channel their assertiveness in constructive ways (Ezerins & Ludwig, 2021; Pearson & Porath, 2005). Managers should be trained to identify early signs of incivility and address conflicts promptly to prevent escalation. Leadership development initiatives can incorporate strategies to guide individuals with a pronounced power trait toward more collaborative and inclusive leadership styles. Encouraging a culture of open communication and mutual respect within the organization can act as a preventive measure against the negative consequences of incivility.

The identification of organization tenure as a negative moderator, indicating that longer tenure mitigates the impact of the power trait on instigated incivility, has specific managerial implications. Organizations can leverage this insight by recognizing the potential stabilizing effect of longer tenure and fostering mentorship programs or initiatives that facilitate the integration of newcomers into the organizational culture. Encouraging positive relationships between new and existing employees may help alleviate the initial pressure and urgency associated with asserting power. Managers should also be attentive to the needs of employees with shorter tenure, providing additional support and guidance during the onboarding process. Understanding the role of organization tenure in moderating the power trait's impact on incivility allows for targeted interventions aimed at creating a more supportive and collaborative workplace environment, particularly for those in the early stages of their organizational tenure.

5.3 Limitations and Research Imperative

Regardless of vital contributions in the field of incivility and individual differences, this study has some limitations. Firstly, this study used the time lag-research methodology, yet it failed to represent the variation patterns in the construct of instigated workplace incivility over time. So, it is a good opportunity for future researchers to plot this study in a longitudinal pattern to comprehend instigated workplace incivility dynamism. Secondly, this study focused merely on one type of workplace incivility (instigated workplace incivility) ignoring other kinds, i.e., customer incivility, experienced incivility, witnessed incivility, and cyber incivility. It would be interesting to examine the association between trait power and other kinds of workplace incivility. Thirdly, there is the possibility that the direct relationship between power trait and instigated workplace incivility will be more vigorous through some psychological mechanisms such as entitlement. Therefore, future research should examine this research gap. Fourthly, we only introduced employee power traits as a predictor for instigated workplace incivility. Subsequent scholars can explore other possible predictors, i.e., employee arrogance. Fifthly, this study used organizational tenure as a moderator, and other demographic characteristics such as status, age, and gender that can intensify or buffer this relationship should be explored. Future research may explore how factors like emotional intelligence, personality types, or

cultural background interact with the power trait to influence incivility. The conceptual landscape of workplace dynamics could evolve to incorporate a more holistic understanding that considers the complex interplay of multiple individual characteristics in shaping behavior. Finally, although this research is important being conducted in a developing country, i.e., Pakistan, more research is needed from other developing countries to validate and compare the research discoveries.

5.4 Conclusion

In line with the Approach-Inhibition Theory of Power, this study confirms a positive link between employee power traits and instigated workplace incivility. The moderation finding underscores the buffering effect of longer organizational tenure. This study contributes to a nuanced understanding of workplace dynamics by highlighting the dual impact of power traits on incivility while emphasizing the mitigating role of organizational tenure, providing valuable insights for practical interventions and advancing theoretical frameworks.

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