

Does TMX affect instigated incivility? The role of negative reciprocity and psychological contract violation

TMX and
instigated
incivility

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Abstract

Purpose – Pervasive and rampant workplace incivility effects have called for more studies on antecedents and possible deterrents of the onset of negative organizational behaviors. Based on social exchange theory (SET), this study proposes a framework investigating the underlying mechanisms of team–member exchange (TMX) on instigated incivility.

Design/methodology/approach – The hypothesized model explores the combined effect of interventions on teams and organizational levels. Indeed, the personal norm of negative reciprocity (PNR) and the psychological contract violation (PCV) are hypothesized as mediating variables of such a relationship. The model is empirically tested using covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) on a sample of 330 employees of organizations with a team-based design. PNR and PCV resulted as a full mediating variable of the relationship between TMX and instigated incivility.

Findings – Findings suggest that, by encouraging high-quality TMX, human resource (HR) managers could reduce employees' willingness to instigate incivility toward colleagues other than team members. However, focusing only on TMX may be insufficient because of the role played by individual attitudes and organizational levers such as PNR and PCV.

Originality/value – The authors enrich current works on incivility by analyzing the role of positive sentiments in minimizing deviant behaviors. Further, the authors investigate negative organizational phenomena through a positive lens and contribute to building a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that might produce uncivil behaviors.

Keywords TMX, Reciprocity, Incivility, Psychological contract violation, Social exchange theory

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The detrimental and pervasive impact of incivility in organizations is well known in the literature (Gabriel *et al.*, 2018; Motro *et al.*, 2021; Reich and Hershcovis, 2015). According to Porath and Pearson (2013), 98% of workers experience uncivil behaviors at work, and about half of them report experiencing such conduct at least weekly. Examples of uncivil behaviors include talking down to others, using humiliating language, ignoring co-worker requests and making veiled threats (Reich and Hershcovis, 2015). Further, statistics show that the share of

Ethical approval: All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed consent: Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

