Behavioral Incivility And Leadership Styles: 
Assessing The Mediation Of Job Strain, 
Employment Insecurity And Relational 
Injustice: A Conceptual Model

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Abstract: This conceptual paper is intended to identify and understand behavioral incivility. Behavioral incivility has emerged as one of the most alarming aggressive behaviors as its unambiguous intent has made it a severe challenge for organizations. Such behavioral incivility is urged by various organizational attributes like job strain, employment insecurity, and relational injustice. Leadership has been found quite evident in motivating and discouraging incivility practices depending upon its various styles. This study has reviewed the literature on the relationship between passive leadership, servant leadership, job strain, employment insecurity, and relational injustice and behavioral incivility. This study has aimed to review the literature Furthermore, this study has aimed to propose a conceptual model to clarify the mediating role of job strain, employment insecurity and relational injustice in the context of the Pakistani manufacturing sector. In this paper, a systematic literature review method is adopted and it has been revealed that passive leadership increases behavioral incivility while servant leadership cured it by decreasing it. Based on several evidences, the Job strain, employment insecurity, and relational injustice are proposed as strong mediators in this regard.

Index Terms: Behavioral incivility, Employment insecurity, Job strain, Passive leadership, Relational injustice, Servant leadership.

1 INTRODUCTION

Workplace incivility is an emerging challenge for many organizations in this new globalized era. In 2013, 98% of the employees and around 47% of the supervisors were found affected by such uncivil behaviors [1]. Such type of workplace deviance has become the biggest problem for organizations as not only the employee productivity but the environment of an organization also gets affected. One dilemma is that when incivility is attached to the behavior of employees, it can involve the whole organization as a spiral [2-4]. Behavioral incivility refers to the extent to which people themselves engage in uncivil behavior. Modern business has witnessed that incivility is inflating and affecting the organizational behavior without any distinction of the sector. Yet, the workplaces in which employees come into interaction with each other on a regular basis are considered as the most heavenly places for incivility behavior. There can be several workplace practices that can create conflicts for an organization including bullying, cynicism, the boredom of employees and aggressive workplace behavior [5, 6]. However, incivility is worse than all of these practices as it has an ambiguous intent so it is difficult to know whether the person intentionally or unintentionally wants to harm others which can lead the organization toward many problems like a decline in performance, job burnout, and turnover intentions. It is evident that most of the workplace aggression is the outcome of poor leadership [7, 8] as supervisors or leaders become unable in such cases to induce their wisdom in order to identify the presence and the extent of incivility.

Passive leadership and servant leadership are the two renowned dimensions of supervisory behaviors among which the former can trigger the workplace incivility or aggressive behaviors up while the latter one can chain such behavior with much a pre-oriented approach [9-11]. Job strain, relational injustice, and employment insecurity are some of the organizational attributes which are also the part of this incivility saga as the studies have proved them distant antecedents of incivility. Meanwhile, the respective attributes can also be resulted from passive leadership due to a lack of interaction between supervisors and employees [9, 12, 13]. However, the workplace practices, and the organizational behavior, yet the deviant behavior towards passive leadership and servant leadership in order to cure incivility has not been found [14]. The researchers have been unable to find any study that has tried to relate passive leadership and servant leadership with the dilemma of incivility. There are limited studies that have tried to fill the above-mentioned gap especially the intervention of mediators like job strain, relational injustice, and employment insecurity. This is indicating a huge gap existing in the cure of workplace incivility especially in the manufacturing sector where the studies regarding such workplace deviances are quite rare. This research is going to explain the impact of passive leadership as well as servant leadership on behavioral incivility. We will also try to explore the mediating roles of job strain, employment insecurity and relational injustice in the relationship between leadership and behavioral incivility. These empirical relationships are going to be searched in the manufacturing sector of Pakistan in which three major industrial hubs of Pakistan have been targeted named as Gujranwala, Sialkot, and Faisalabad for the home appliances, surgical and textile industries respectively. Most of the incivility related studies have been conducted in the nursing sector in western cultures. The eastern cultures or countries have not made any serious attempt to find out the treatment of
aggressive behaviors like incivility, especially in the manufacturing sector. So this study is quite significant in terms of its mediated model as well as a sectorial notion that has not been raised by any prior study. The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 the present literature and hypothesis development in the field of passive leadership, servant leadership and workplace behavioral incivility. The proposed conceptual model is discussed in Section 3. Sample, data collection and measurements are presented in Section 4, while the discussion and conclusion are presented in Section 5.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Passive leadership
For analysis of passive leadership, it can be defined as oppressive, reluctant and abusive supervision. Researchers have argued that employees who perceive that their supervisors are having socially unacceptable and morally condemnable behavior are less satisfied with their jobs. Consequently, they have job insecurity, relational injustice and less commitment to their organization [8, 15, 16]. Although some researchers have argued that supervisors who practice relational justice inside their organizations are more likely to experience violent aggression from their employees. In contrast, some researchers have taken different routes to evaluate the above-mentioned phenomenon. They have argued that adaptation of contrastive behaviors leads to destructive behaviors. Therefore, the authors develop the two-dimensional leadership theory with “concern for people” (human oriented) and “concern for a task” (task-oriented) in which they describe four types of passive leadership styles, Laissez-faire leadership with low task-orientation and ineffective people. In contrast, the other type of leadership, the Tyrannical leadership has a high level of task-orientation but the employees have destructive behaviors toward their fellows [9, 13, 16, 17]. Yet the supervisors try to achieve their goals by using authoritarian rule over their employees which clearly depicts the abusive leadership [7, 18]. Nevertheless, by using a popular-disloyal leadership style a supervisor tries his level best to gain popularity for the task-oriented leaders. For this purpose, he presents himself as one of the group. While the most destructive type of leadership is called derailed leadership style with a leader who is disloyal to his work as well as with his employees. Although some researchers have extended this model yet the final results depict the clear picture that tyrannical, derailed and popular-disloyal leadership styles have employees with low job satisfaction and negative leadership style [12, 19]. However, the research has evoked that passive leaderships have a bad impact on its followers concerning their morale, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

2.2 Servant Leadership
For papers accepted for publication, it is essential that the Servant leadership provides foundations for the theories that emphasize the character of individuals and principles of human growth. Researchers have been arguing those servant leadership theories initially focus on the development of an individual and then achieve the organizational goal overall [20, 21]. Furthermore, the past studies have described that a servant leader is a servant as a leader, a leader who is a servant first. Researchers have argued that in servant leadership style a leader becomes a chief who is wiser, freer and more autonomous [22, 23]. A leader who is able to understand the problems of his employees, see things, know things, hear the needs of the bottom line, having empathy, kindness, decision making power and is able to focus on the retention of employee’s jobs. Research has been pointing out that the servant leadership model is derived from Jesus Christ and his practices. Jesus presented himself as the servant for his men. Researchers have argued that servant leadership is a mind shift which requires focusing on the followers instead of competing on the mindset of leadership [24-26]. So servant leadership requires just to change the attitude instead of skills. Behavioral theories have described 10 major leadership characteristics in Greenleaf’s writing: A servant leader has the characteristics of listening, healing, empathy, persuasion, conceptualization, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, foresight, awareness, and relationship building. Although many researchers have described the models for characteristics of servant leadership including pioneering, appreciating, and having vision, credibility, visibility, influence, persuasion, and being able to listen, encourage and teach. However, some researchers have concluded that servant leadership has a positive effect on the organizational improvement process and leadership role has a positive effect on society and culture. Furthermore, past studies have described that a servant leader has the responsibility of shared power among people as a means of affirmation and not to seek his own interests but of others [20, 21, 23]. This may result in a high level of followers’ motivation and followers may turn to their leader with high hopes of emotional healing.

2.3 Behavioral incivility
Uncivil and deviant behaviors have ambiguous intent to harm others with rude and discourteous behavior towards their co-workers [27, 28]. Since the uncivil behaviors have ambiguous intent so it is difficult to understand whether the person in charge intentionally or unintentionally wants to overlook or harm his co-workers. Past studies have described that the workplace deviant behavior creates disturbance in the organizational environment and causes aggression among the employees [6, 29, 30]. Today incivility is prevalent in organizations more than ever before. The more common type of uncivil behaviors may involve bullying, harassment ignoring a co-worker, being derogatory and indifferent to workers’ opinions. Incivility is at the low end of the workplace mistreatment continuum but when it will be overlooked it may result in deteriorating the conditions in the organization [2, 31, 32]. Research has concluded that uncivil behaviors among the employees may lead to absenteeism, low morale, and turnover of intentions. Furthermore, the spiral theory of incivility suggests that incivility spiral commences when one employee behaves with incivility with his co-worker [29, 33]. So one employee’s uncivil behaviors may draw more serious acts on the part of other parties. Such type of uncivil behaviors may lead to aggression and violence among the employees.

2.4 Passive Leadership and Behavioral Incivility
It is mentioned that passive leadership creates Job dissatisfaction among employees and makes them less committed to their organization. Yet when the employees would be unsatisfied to their job the passive leaders would behave aggressively with their subordinates. Past studies
have described that leaders who do not exhibit consideration might experience disrespectful manners among employees and they might behave negatively with other co-workers. Furthermore, researchers have argued that when an individual would behave aggressively towards the other it may be done unintentionally, not always with intent [34, 35]. The other person who would experience the negative behaviors might respond with uncivil behavior towards the innocent third party. In this way, behavioral incivility can spread throughout the workplace like a spiral. Past studies have described that passive leaders neglect the workplace problems and avoid decision making. Passive leadership encompasses the managers with “whatever” mentality; they neither punish the uncivil behaviors nor give rewards to the appropriate behaviors which ultimately allows the incivility to flourish. So the following hypothesis is going to be presented;

H1: Passive leadership has a significant influence on behavioral incivility.

2.5 Servant leadership and behavioral incivility
In contrast, past studies have described that servant leaders encourage trust, foresight, listening and having effective decision making. Servant leadership is an approach where the leader is a servant first and then is a leader [36-38]. Research has evoked that the workers who perceive their leaders as a servant are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. Researchers have described that when the employees are satisfied with their jobs and work environment they behave with cooperation with their co-workers which reduces workplace incivility [1, 28, 32]. Past studies have described that servant leaders have characteristics to take decisions on time and have the ability to listen, understand, foresee, spread awareness, have empathy, pioneer and appreciate. All these qualities, as a result, encourage employees to behave with civility to their co-workers. Researchers have argued that the leaders who exhibit civil and pleasant work environment, show that their co-workers and subordinates have appropriate norms, privileges, and honor in the workplace. Furthermore, researchers have also concluded that the more the attention is exhibited by the leaders the fewer the chances remain that an employee would behave rudely, disobey, or engage in uncivil behaviors. So the following proposition is stated:

H2: Servant leadership is significantly associated with behavioral incivility.

2.6 Job strain
In the existing literature, job strain and job stress are overlapped while past studies have described that job strain in the workplace has been defined as the “wear and tear itself” whereas the stress is defined as “cause of wear and tear” [39]. Researchers have argued that there is a common relationship between stress and strain [40]. Furthermore, there are four major assumptions of stress and strain. The first assumption is associated with the staff experience of unpleasant emotional feelings as a result of their work activity [16, 41]. The second assumption is associated with implying that job satisfaction and stress are at the opposite end of a continuum. This could be the reason for the lack of investigation at the same time. The third assumption was that job strain or stress can be measured with a single variable that in the absence of job satisfaction there would be job strain [42, 43]. The fourth assumption is associated with the negative characteristics of the workplace that might be a high turnover rate, less productivity, employee demoralization or increased absenteeism. However, the demand-control-support theory argues that the workers having jobs with high demand, low control and low support from their supervisor and co-workers may experience more job strain. However, some other researchers have argued that stress is caused by a larger system of interrelated elements instead of a single-dimensional element. Consequently, they have suggested that both positive and negative aspects of workers’ lives are important in order to gain more understanding about the complex interrelated relationship of negative and positive outcome of the workers’ wellbeing [40, 41, 44].

2.7 Employment insecurity
Past studies have described that job insecurity may be defined as the threat of losing job continuity when an organization is in crisis. Furthermore, researchers have argued that job insecurity does not necessarily lead to unemployment and they believe that the proportion of employees who feel job insecurity is greater than the proportion of persons who actually leave their jobs [45, 46]. In contrast, some researchers have argued that job insecurity can only exist when employees detect the loss of job, promotion, opportunities, loss of income or loss of career advancement. In general job insecurity related to quantitative job insecurity and qualitative job insecurity may include job turnover intentions, decrease in efforts and low quality of employment relationships [47, 48]. In contrast, qualitative job insecurity is related to job-related attributes such as pay promotion and job content. Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt’s theory of job insecurity [49] explained that job insecurity is based on individual perception and cognitive process that derives from subjectively experienced threats in the work environment. Moreover, the past studies have argued that the consequences of job insecurity lead to many unanswered questions [44, 46], but the most hazardous consequence caused by job insecurity is the perception of unfairness.

2.8 Relational injustice
Past studies have described relational justice as “the quality of interpersonal treatment that people expect to receive when procedures are implemented”. So the relational justice deals with a human side such as the importance of politeness, honesty, respect, and truthfulness as fairness criteria of interpersonal communication [50, 51]. Although it has been suggested that fairness does not only relate to the formal policies and procedures but the leaders are also considered a significant source of fairness with their employees. Leaders’ conveying messages, courtesy, and respect to their employees play a significant role. Furthermore, the researchers have argued that relational justice has two factors: informational justice and interpersonal justice. Informational justice is related to providing information about the procedures for distributing outcomes in a certain fashion. While interpersonal justice refers to the extent of treating the people’s graciousness regarding the distributive outcome they receive [47, 52, 53]. Past studies have described that relational justice is a very vital consideration in an organization due to its importance, individual’s feelings, attitude, and conduct toward the source of a particular treatment [53].
2.9 Mediating role of job strain, employment insecurity and relational injustice

Past studies have been describing that passive relationship has characteristics of neglecting the organizational environment, avoiding decision making and having “Whatever” mentality. Research in the past has concluded that in the presence of such types of leaders, employees behave aggressively towards each other as there would be no penalty for misconduct. Moreover, passive leadership promotes more job strain, employment insecurity and lowers the relational justice [54, 55]. Past studies have described that the employees who feel more job strain/ job stress are more likely to behave aggressively towards their co-workers. Research has also evoked that in the presence of passive leadership, organizational changes are more likely to occur and employees feel more insecure about their jobs [51, 56]. Furthermore, it has argued that relational justice is related to the different kinds of emotions of individual employees about the authority or leader who is involved in decision making; while due to having passive leadership the emotions and respect for the employees would be neglected which would create behavioral incivility among employees. In contrast, past studies have described that servant leaders have the characteristics, of listening, valuing the people, being more autonomous and more likely to become humble and selfless servants [44, 45, 57]. Researchers have argued that servant leaders listen and understand the problems of their employees which is more likely to reduce their job stress, employment insecurity and create an environment of fair conduct among the employees by promoting relational justice. Moreover, research has evoked that when the employees are satisfied with their organizational environment they are more likely to behave with civility along with their co-workers. This would ultimately reduce workplace incivility. So the following hypotheses are going to be presented:

H3: Job strain significantly mediates the relationship between passive leadership and behavioral incivility.

H4: Employment insecurity significantly mediates the relationship between passive leadership and behavioral incivility.

H5: Relational Injustice significantly mediates the relationship between passive leadership and behavioral incivility.

H6: Job strain significantly mediates the relationship between servant leadership and behavioral incivility.

H7: Employment Insecurity significantly mediates the relationship between servant leadership and behavioral incivility.

H8: Relational Injustice significantly mediates the relationship between servant leadership and behavioral incivility.

3 PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL MODEL

In consortium with the supports that have been identified from the prior literature, a theoretical framework is suggested to investigate the relationship between passive leadership, servant leadership, job strain, employment insecurity, and relational injustice and behavioral incivility as shown in Figure. 1. In this research, we evoked that passive leadership has a bad impact on its followers concerning their morale, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. While, servant leadership has the characteristics of listening, healing, empathy, persuasion, conceptualization, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, foresight, awareness, and relationship building. Literature supports that negative leadership increases aggressive behavior at the workplace [51, 56]. Moreover, there are limited studies that have tried to fill the above mentioned gap especially the intervention of mediators like job strain, relational injustice and employment insecurity [2]. A limited number of studies have tried to relate passive leadership and servant leadership with the incivility dilemma. The studies which have tried to fill the above mentioned gap were unable to make their studies directed as they did not involve any mediators like job strain, relational injustice and employment insecurity which is indicating a huge gap existing in the treatment of workplace incivility especially in manufacturing sector where the studies regarding such workplace deviances are quite rare.

4 METHODOLOGY

The expected survey respondents are brought from the manufacturing sector in Pakistan. The study population entails manufacturing companies in three industrial sectors (home appliances, textile and surgical), with a total of 302 respondents. The sample size of 302 is considered adequate for performing data analysis using Structural Equation Model-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) [58]. To foster collaboration, we will present a brief presentation related to our topic so that the workers may be able to understand the complexity and purpose of our research. In order to meet the objectives of this study, a survey questionnaire is designed to measure the constructs of passive leadership, servant leadership, job strain, employment insecurity, and relational injustice and behavioral incivility. PLS-SEM will be employed to test H1 to H8. SEM-PLS can determine the hypotheses and statistical properties of a conceptual framework, simultaneously [59]. It is prominently used in various management studies [60]. Overall, the nature of this study is cross-sectional with a positivist philosophy and a deductive approach.

5 CONCLUSION

The findings of this study will contribute to the existing literature on passive leadership, servant leadership, and behavioral incivility by linking the three mediating constructs.
This study establishes that passive leadership and servant leadership are related to behavioral incivility, job strain, employment insecurity and relational injustice mediating these relations. This study had two perspectives to analyze incivility behavior: i) negative perspective under passive leadership with the mediating variables of job strain, employment insecurity and relational injustice, ii) positive perspective under servant leadership with the mediating construct of job strain, employment insecurity, and relational injustice. This study is unique and significant due to its mediation model which has not been tested before with same variables but suggested only in a few of the past studies. The suggested model is still improvable despite the fact that it is beneficial considerably. There is still a need for modifications and practical studies towards the focus of this study so that it can be properly applied to the context of Pakistan based manufacturing organizations.

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7 REFERENCES

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