



## Understanding Workplace Incivility Through a Demographic Lens: Implications for Employee Commitment in Nigeria's Public Sector

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### Abstract

*This study investigates the role of demographic factors and organizational commitment in determining workplace incivility among employees in Nigerian organizations. A cross-sectional survey research design was employed, sampling 435 participants across diverse demographic groups, including age, gender, educational qualifications, and tenure. Workplace incivility was measured across four dimensions: hostility, privacy invasion, exclusionary behavior, and gossiping, while organizational commitment was assessed using the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. Data analyzed using ANOVA, t-tests, and multiple regression revealed key findings. Younger employees reported significantly higher levels of privacy invasion, exclusionary behavior, and gossiping than their older counterparts. Gender analysis showed no significant differences across most dimensions, but males reported higher levels of gossiping. Lower organizational commitment emerged as a strong predictor of heightened workplace incivility across all demographics. These results highlight the complex interplay of demographic factors in workplace experiences, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions, such as mentorship programs for younger employees and policies to foster organizational commitment. The findings contribute to the literature on workplace incivility in developing economies, offering practical insights for fostering inclusive and respectful work environments.*

**Keywords:** Demographic factors, Gender differences, Nigerian workforce, Organizational commitment, Workplace incivility.

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### 1. Introduction

Labor migration is a key dimension of In recent years, workplace incivility has emerged as a significant concern for organizations across various sectors as it undermines employee well-being, disrupts team dynamics, and diminishes organizational performance (Caza & Cortina, 2023). Defined as low-intensity deviant behavior that violates workplace norms of mutual respect, incivility can manifest in numerous forms, including rude remarks, exclusionary behavior, and

gossiping (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Such behaviors not only disrupt the work environment but also have profound implications for employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. Research indicates that exposure to incivility can lead to decreased job satisfaction, increased stress levels, and higher turnover intentions among employees (Porath & Erez, 2007; Odiri, 2024). As organizations strive to cultivate positive workplace cultures, understanding the dynamics of incivility becomes essential.

The significance of demographic factors in shaping experiences of workplace incivility and organizational commitment cannot be overlooked. Demographics such as age, gender, education level, and length of service are critical in influencing how employees perceive and react to incivility in their work environments. For instance, younger employees may have different thresholds for what constitutes uncivil behavior compared to their older counterparts (Harris et al., 2011).

Similarly, gender dynamics can play a crucial role in how incivility is experienced and addressed within teams (Nielsen et al., 2014). Research highlights that societal norms, where rigid gender roles and family structures prevail, significantly affect ethical decision-making (Adebakin, Alaneme, Lawal, & Ojo, 2024). By examining these demographic influences, organizations can better understand the unique challenges diverse employee groups face and implement targeted strategies to mitigate the negative effects of incivility.

This study seeks to examine the impact of demography and organizational commitment on workplace incivility experiences by addressing three principal research topics. Initially, it analyses the impact of demographic variables, including age and gender, on perceptions of workplace incivility. Secondly, it examines the correlation between organizational commitment and experiences of incivility among various demographic groups. Third, it assesses if notable disparities exist in reported levels of workplace incivility according to employees' educational qualifications and managerial tiers.

To achieve these objectives, the study tests three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Younger employees will rate higher on dimensions of workplace incivility compared to older employees.

Hypothesis 2: Female employees will experience higher levels of incivility than male employees.

Hypothesis 3: Employees with lower organizational commitment will report higher incidents of workplace incivility regardless of demographic factors.

By investigating these hypotheses, this research aims to contribute valuable insights into the interplay between demographics, organizational commitment, and workplace incivility. The findings will not only enhance academic understanding but also provide practical implications for organizations seeking to foster inclusive and respectful work environments.

## **2. Literature Review**

Demographic factors such as age, gender, education level, and tenure significantly influence workplace experiences and organizational commitment. For instance, research indicates that younger employees, particularly those under 30, often report higher levels of workplace incivility compared to older employees (Nasir, Manzoor, Qureshi, Rasool, and Anwar, 2024). This discrepancy may be attributed to varying expectations regarding workplace behavior and communication styles. Gender is a significant factor in workplace dynamics, as women frequently encounter higher levels of incivility, such as psychological and verbal abuse, than men (Nielsen et al., 2014; Nasir et al., 2024). These disparities are primarily the result of power imbalances and entrenched gender stereotypes that disadvantage women in professional settings. Additionally, educational background can shape how individuals perceive and respond to incivility. Employees with higher educational qualifications may have different coping mechanisms or expectations regarding professional interactions than those with lower educational attainment (Schneider et al.,

2013). Organisational tenure moderates the correlation between individual characteristics and incivility, with reduced tenure associated with increased occurrences of encouraged incivility (Yaqoob & Shahzad, 2024). Understanding these demographic influences is crucial for organizations seeking to address incivility effectively and enhance employee commitment.

Organizational commitment refers to the psychological attachment an employee has to their organization, which influences their willingness to remain with the organization and contribute to its goals (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This construct is critical in understanding employee behavior, as higher levels of commitment are associated with increased job performance and lower turnover rates (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). There are three primary components of organizational commitment: affective commitment (emotional attachment), continuance commitment (awareness of the costs associated with leaving), and normative commitment (sense of obligation) (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees who feel committed to their organization are more likely to engage positively with their colleagues and contribute to a supportive work culture. Conversely, when employees perceive high levels of incivility within their workplace, their organizational commitment may wane, leading to detrimental effects on both individual and organizational performance. These phenomena are corroborated by numerous research that emphasize the adverse impacts of workplace incivility on employee well-being and productivity (Jackson, Usher, & Cleary 2024).

Workplace incivility is defined as low-intensity deviant behavior that violates workplace norms of mutual respect (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). This form of behavior can include actions such as rude comments, exclusion from

conversations, and gossiping among colleagues. The implications of workplace incivility are profound, affecting not only individual employees but also overall organizational health. Research has shown that incivility can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including decreased job satisfaction, increased stress levels, and higher turnover intentions (Porath & Erez, 2007). Furthermore, incivility has been linked to diminished organizational commitment, as employees who experience or witness uncivil behavior may become disengaged and less willing to invest in their work (Mahmood, Ramzan, & Zafar, 2023). Understanding the dynamics of workplace incivility is essential for organizations aiming to foster a positive work environment.

Several theoretical frameworks can guide research on workplace incivility and organizational commitment. One pertinent theory is Social Identity Theory, which posits that individuals derive a sense of self from their group memberships (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In the context of the workplace, this theory suggests that employees who identify strongly with their organization are more likely to exhibit behaviors aligned with organizational values and norms. Conversely, when employees experience incivility, it may threaten their social identity within the organization, leading to disengagement and reduced commitment. Another relevant framework is the Job Demands-Resources Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), which highlights how job demands (e.g., incivility) can lead to burnout and decreased organizational commitment if not balanced by sufficient resources. These theories provide valuable insights into the complex interplay between demographic factors, workplace experiences, and employee behavior.

The empirical literature on workplace incivility has expanded significantly over the past two decades, revealing its detrimental effects on both individual

employees and organizations. Studies have consistently shown that workplace incivility correlates with increased stress, decreased job satisfaction, and heightened turnover intentions (Porath & Erez, 2007; Jackson et al. 2024). For instance, a meta-analysis by Nielsen et al. (2014) highlighted that employees who experience incivility are more likely to exhibit negative workplace behaviors, such as reduced productivity and increased absenteeism. Furthermore, research indicates that incivility can create a toxic work environment that undermines team cohesion and collaboration (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). The negative spiral of incivility not only affects those directly involved but can also impact bystanders, leading to a pervasive culture of disrespect within organizations.

In terms of organizational commitment, Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model provides a robust framework for understanding how commitment influences employee behavior. Affective commitment, in particular, has been linked to positive workplace outcomes, including higher job performance and lower turnover rates (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Conversely, employees who perceive high levels of incivility may experience diminished commitment to their organization, as their emotional attachment weakens in response to negative experiences (Jackson et al. 2024). This relationship underscores the importance of fostering a respectful workplace culture to enhance employee commitment and mitigate the adverse effects of incivility.

Despite the growing body of literature on workplace incivility and organizational commitment, there remains a notable gap in understanding how demographic factors influence these dynamics. While previous studies have examined the effects of incivility and commitment separately, few have explored how

variables such as age, gender, education level, and tenure interact to shape employees' experiences of incivility and their levels of organizational commitment. For example, existing research suggests that younger employees may be more susceptible to experiencing incivility due to differing expectations about workplace interactions (Nasir et al., 2024). However, the extent to which demographic factors moderate the relationship between organizational commitment and experiences of incivility is still underexplored. Addressing this gap is critical for developing targeted interventions that consider the diverse needs of employees across various demographic groups.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design to explore the influence of demographic factors on organizational commitment and experiences of workplace incivility. The design enabled data collection at a single point in time, allowing for the examination of relationships between variables and differences across demographic groups (Saunders et al., 2019). Structured questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data from participants.

The population for this study comprised employees from four Nigerian public sector organizations with offices in Lagos and Abuja. The organizations were selected due to their diverse workforce, encompassing individuals from various age groups, gender identities, educational backgrounds, and levels of organizational hierarchy. The estimated total workforce across the four organizations was approximately 2,500 employees. This diverse and sizable population provided a robust foundation for examining how demographic factors such as age, gender, and education influence experiences of

workplace incivility and levels of organizational commitment.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that respondents from key demographic groups (age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, length of service, and management level) were adequately represented. An accidental sampling approach was used within the purposively selected groups to address potential biases, where individuals available and willing to participate were administered questionnaires. A total of 435 employees participated in the study.

A structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection instrument, divided into three sections. Section A captured demographic information, including age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, length of service, and management level. Section B assessed workplace incivility using a validated scale adapted from Cortina et al. (2001), measuring four dimensions: hostility, privacy invasion, exclusionary behavior, and gossiping, with items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always). Section C measured organizational commitment using the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Mowday et al. (1979), which comprised 15 items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Although the two major instruments used in the study were standardized, efforts were made to generate local norms for the two instruments using the local samples. Consequently, reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.78 for the four dimensions of workplace incivility (Hostility 0.56; Privacy invasion 0.76; Exclusionary behavior 0.79; and Gossiping 0.85) and 0.87 for organizational commitment, indicating high internal consistency.

Data were collected over four weeks. Questionnaires were distributed in person

to employees at their respective workplaces, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained before participation. Completed questionnaires were retrieved on-site to maximize the response rate.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), employing descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics summarize demographic characteristics and key variables, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Inferential statistics were utilized to test the study's hypotheses: One-way ANOVA was used to compare workplace incivility across age groups, Independent Samples t-tests examined gender differences in workplace incivility, and Multiple Regression Analysis assessed the relationship between organizational commitment and workplace incivility while controlling for demographic factors.

The study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Data were anonymized during collection and analysis to protect respondents' identities. This methodology provided a robust framework for investigating the impact of demographics on organizational commitment and experiences of workplace incivility, ensuring reliability, validity, and ethical rigor throughout the research process.

#### **4.Results and Discussion**

A total of 435 employees participated in this study. Among the respondents, 48% identified as male, while 52% identified as female. Age was categorized into four groups: 18-25 years (12%), 26-35 years



(40%), 36-45 years (30%), and 46 years and above (18%). The distribution of organizational commitment scores showed a range from low to high, with 35% of respondents demonstrating high commitment, 42% moderate commitment, and 23% low commitment.

The demographic profile of the study's participants revealed various variables such as gender, age, marital status, educational qualification, length of service, and management level. In terms of gender, the sample consists of 52.4% male and 47.6% female respondents, indicating a relatively balanced representation. Age distribution shows a significant majority (57.9%) in the middle age category (31-40 years), while younger employees (18-30 years) account for 23.2%, and only a small fraction falls into the senior age group (51-65 years) at 1.8%. Marital status reveals that most participants are married (68.3%), suggesting a stable family structure within the workforce.

Educational qualifications indicate that a substantial portion of respondents hold

higher education degrees, with 45.7% having HND/B.Sc and 36.1% possess a National Diploma. The length of service data shows that nearly half of the participants (45.5%) have worked for 6-10 years, reflecting a relatively experienced workforce. Regarding management levels, most employees are temporary staff (48%), followed by junior staff (22.5%), indicating a significant presence of non-permanent positions within the organizations. This demographic information is crucial for understanding the context in which workplace incivility may be experienced and can inform strategies to address such issues effectively.

**Hypothesis 1: Younger Employees Will Report Higher Levels of Workplace Incivility Compared to Older Employees**

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine age group differences in workplace incivility (measured by hostility, privacy invasion, exclusionary behavior, and gossiping). The results are shown in Table 1:

Table 1: ANOVA Results for Workplace Incivility by Age

Dimension	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig. (p-value)	Significant Groups
Hostility	36.946	3	12.315	1.234	0.297	No significant differences
Privacy Invasion	392.645	3	130.882	10.434	< 0.001	Younger > Senior
Exclusionary Behavior	606.996	3	202.332	10.899	< 0.001	Younger > Senior
Gossiping	675.239	3	225.080	11.259	< 0.001	Younger > Senior

Note: Significant results are denoted by  $p < .05$

The table summarizes the results of an analysis examining various dimensions of workplace incivility, including hostility, privacy invasion, exclusionary behavior, and gossiping. For hostility, the analysis shows no significant differences across groups, with a p-value of 0.297. In contrast, significant differences were found in the other dimensions: privacy invasion ( $p < 0.001$ ), exclusionary

behavior ( $p < 0.001$ ), and gossiping ( $p < 0.001$ ), all indicating that younger employees experience higher levels of these behaviors compared to senior employees. The F-values for privacy invasion (10.434), exclusionary behavior (10.899), and gossiping (11.259) further support the robustness of these findings, highlighting a concerning trend of incivility directed towards younger

employees in the workplace. Post-hoc Analysis (Tukey's HSD test) revealed that younger employees (18-30 years) reported significantly higher scores in privacy invasion, exclusionary behavior, and gossiping compared to senior employees (51-65 years). Hostility did not vary significantly among age groups.

Table 2: T-Test Results for Workplace Incivility by Gender

Dimension	Mean (Male)	Mean (Female)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)
Hostility	9.51	9.36	0.512	0.609
Privacy Invasion	8.83	8.92	-0.253	0.800
Exclusionary Behavior	12.30	12.13	0.414	0.679
Gossiping	10.66	9.68	2.220	0.027*

Survey, 2024

The table compares the mean scores of workplace incivility dimensions between male and female employees and tests for significant differences using t-tests. The results indicate no significant gender differences in hostility ( $t = 0.512$ ,  $p = 0.609$ ), privacy invasion ( $t = -0.253$ ,  $p = 0.800$ ), or exclusionary behavior ( $t = 0.414$ ,  $p = 0.679$ ), as all p-values are greater than 0.05. However, a significant difference was found for gossiping ( $t = 2.220$ ,  $p = 0.027$ ), with male employees reporting higher mean scores (10.66) compared to female employees (9.68). This suggests that gossiping, among the measured dimensions, is the only form of Organizational Commitment and Workplace Incivility

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig. (p-value)
Organizational Commitment	0.127	0.031	0.193	4.139	< 0.001**
Gender	-0.069	0.298	-0.011	-0.231	0.817
Age	0.003	0.245	0.001	0.012	0.991
Marital Status	0.115	0.339	0.017	0.339	0.735
Education	-1.060	0.199	-0.261	-5.332	< 0.001**
Length of Service	0.541	0.206	0.132	2.621	0.009**

Survey 2024

The table presents the results of a multiple regression analysis examining the relationship between various predictors and their impact on workplace incivility, with a focus on organizational commitment, gender, age, marital status, education, and length of service. The analysis reveals that organizational

Hypothesis 2: Female Employees Will Experience Higher Levels of Incivility Than Male Employees

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare incivility dimensions between male and female employees. The results showed:

workplace incivility with a notable gender difference, favoring a higher prevalence among male employees.

Hypothesis 3: Employees with Lower Organizational Commitment Will Report Higher Incidents of Workplace Incivility Regardless of Demographic Factors

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict workplace incivility (hostility) based on organizational commitment while controlling for demographic factors (age, gender, marital status, education, and length of service). The results showed:

Table 3: Regression Results for

commitment is a significant predictor of workplace incivility, with a coefficient (B) of 0.127, a standard error (SE) of 0.031, and a p-value of less than 0.001, indicating a strong positive relationship where higher organizational commitment is associated with lower levels of incivility. In contrast, gender, age, and

marital status show no significant effects on incivility, as evidenced by their high p-values (0.817, 0.991, and 0.735 respectively). Notably, education has a negative coefficient of -1.060 with a significant p-value of less than 0.001, suggesting that higher educational qualifications are linked to lower levels of incivility. Additionally, length of service shows a positive relationship with incivility ( $B = 0.541$ ) and is statistically significant ( $p = 0.009$ ), indicating that longer tenure may correlate with increased experiences of incivility in the workplace. In comparison to their senior counterparts, younger employees reported substantially higher levels of workplace incivility in areas such as exclusionary behaviour, privacy invasion, and gossiping. In terms of gender, male employees reported considerably higher levels of gossiping, while other dimensions did not exhibit significant differences between males and females. Furthermore, among all dimensions, a strong predictor of higher workplace incivility scores was identified as lower organisational commitment, regardless of demographic factors. These results emphasize the impact of demographic characteristics on workplace incivility and emphasize the necessity of targeted interventions, including mentoring for younger employees, gender-sensitive policies, and strategies to increase organisational commitment, to address these disparities effectively.

### **Discussion**

The relationship between age and workplace incivility has been explored extensively, with younger employees often reporting higher levels of incivility compared to their older counterparts. For instance, Andersson and Pearson (1999) suggest that younger employees, due to their limited workplace experience, may face more challenges in navigating interpersonal dynamics, making them more susceptible to acts of incivility. Similarly, Jackson et al. (2024) argue that

younger workers may occupy roles that render them more vulnerable to mistreatment, such as entry-level positions with limited power and visibility. This aligns with the findings of the current study, which revealed that younger employees reported significantly higher levels of privacy invasion, exclusionary behavior, and gossiping than older employees. These results highlight the need for organizations to develop mentorship programs and structured onboarding processes to help younger employees navigate workplace challenges effectively.

Contrastingly, other studies have proposed that older employees may also experience workplace incivility, particularly in environments where ageism prevails (Takeuhi & Katagiri 2024). However, the current study did not support these findings, as older employees reported significantly lower incivility levels across multiple dimensions. This divergence underscores the importance of considering contextual factors, such as organizational culture and industry norms, in future research.

Gender has consistently emerged as a critical factor in understanding workplace incivility. Numerous studies have documented that female employees are more likely to experience incivility, particularly in male-dominated industries (Jackson., 2024). The current study's findings do not align with this body of literature, as male employees reported significantly higher levels of gossiping. However, no significant gender differences were observed in other dimensions of incivility. This trend can be attributed to various factors, including personality traits, workplace dynamics, and the perceived impact of gossip on organizational performance. Elevated gossip among male employees might cultivate a competitive environment that may enhance performance pressure while undermining psychological well-being



due to reduced trust (Tan et al., 2020). Furthermore, detrimental workplace gossip correlates with diminished proactive behaviour and increased anxiety, especially among male employees, hence impairing overall organisational performance (Gao et al., 2024).

Interestingly, gossiping as a form of incivility has been understudied in gender-specific research. Farley et al. (2010) note that gossiping may serve as a covert form of social exclusion, disproportionately affecting women due to societal expectations of relational behaviors. This suggests that interventions to address workplace gossiping should be tailored to account for gendered experiences and relational dynamics.

However, other studies have found no significant gender differences in workplace incivility, highlighting the nuanced and context-dependent nature of this phenomenon (Lim et al., 2008). For example, studies in industries with more equitable gender representation report similar levels of incivility across genders (Salin, 2015). Future research should therefore focus on industry-specific dynamics and the role of organizational policies in mitigating gendered incivility. Organizational commitment has long been recognized as a buffer against negative workplace experiences, including incivility. Meyer and Allen (1991) conceptualized organizational commitment as a multi-dimensional construct comprising affective, continuance, and normative components. High levels of commitment, particularly affective commitment, are associated with positive workplace outcomes, including reduced perceptions of incivility. Affective commitment is negatively affected by workplace bullying, especially in organisational cultures that emphasise performance orientation and aggressiveness. Conversely, cultures that prioritize ingroup collectivism enhance

affective commitment, reduce bullying, and promote a better workplace (Galanaki et al., 2024).

The current study's findings provide empirical support for this theoretical framework, demonstrating that employees with lower organizational commitment reported higher levels of incivility across all dimensions, even when controlling for demographic factors. This aligns with the work of Turek, (2023), who argue that low organizational commitment may exacerbate feelings of alienation and vulnerability, making employees more likely to perceive or experience incivility. Additionally, the significant role of education and length of service as predictors of workplace incivility in the current study highlights the interplay between individual and organizational factors. Employees with lower educational qualifications and shorter tenure reported higher levels of incivility, suggesting that lack of experience and professional development opportunities may compound the effects of low organizational commitment. These findings underscore the need for organizations to invest in employee development programs to foster commitment and reduce workplace incivility.

The empirical findings from this study have several practical implications for organizations seeking to address workplace incivility. First, targeted interventions for younger employees, such as mentorship programs and leadership training, can help mitigate their vulnerability to incivility. Second, gender-sensitive policies and initiatives, including awareness campaigns and confidential reporting mechanisms, are essential to addressing the unique challenges faced by female employees. Third, fostering organizational commitment through professional development opportunities, transparent communication, and inclusive

workplace practices can serve as a proactive strategy to minimize incivility. In Nigeria's public service sector, targeted interventions can play a crucial role in addressing workplace gossip and fostering a culture of professionalism. For instance, in federal institutions like the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, structured communication training programs can be introduced to educate employees on the harmful effects of gossip and promote direct, respectful communication. Similarly, organizations like the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) can implement anonymous feedback mechanisms, such as suggestion boxes or digital grievance platforms, to provide employees with a formal avenue to express concerns, thereby reducing the spread of rumors. At the state level, ministries such as the Lagos State Ministry of Health and Kaduna State Ministry of Education can organize team-building and conflict resolution workshops to encourage healthy interpersonal relationships and constructively address misunderstandings. Local government councils and agencies, such as the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) and the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), can also benefit from tailored interventions. For example, leadership accountability programs within the NPF can ensure transparent practices, discouraging the use of gossip as a means of managing subordinates. Similarly, the NPHCDA could strengthen its policy on professional conduct to explicitly discourage gossiping while organizing regular sensitization sessions to emphasize the importance of collaboration and mutual respect. These initiatives, when consistently applied, can help create a more supportive and professional work environment across Nigeria's public service sector.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion Future Research Directions

This study highlights the complex interplay of age, gender, and organizational commitment in shaping experiences of workplace incivility. While the findings provide valuable insights, they also raise several questions for future research. For instance, how do organizational culture and leadership styles mediate the relationship between demographics and incivility? Additionally, what role do external factors, such as economic conditions and societal norms, play in shaping workplace interactions? Addressing these questions will require longitudinal studies and cross-cultural comparisons to develop a more comprehensive understanding of workplace incivility and its antecedents.

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