

**Demographic Differences in Experiencing Workplace Incivility:  
Evidence from Public Sector Universities of Quetta**  
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**Abstract**

*Incivility at the workplace impacts individuals and organizations severely. As it affects the efficiency and effectiveness of the target and others, impacts social interactions, and impacts the organization's productivity. Yet most of the studies have investigated the predictors of incivility. This research discovers that how faculty experiences with incivility at work differ across demographic indicators precisely by their gender, age, job ranks, and job experience. Primary data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire from the faculty members of three public sector universities of Quetta. The independent t-test and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the data which revealed that male faculty members are experiencing more workplace incivility compared to females in public sector universities of Quetta. Furthermore, there were no significant differences found among faculty members in experiencing incivility concerning their age group. The findings also suggest that faculty working as assistant professors experienced more workplace incivility compared to lecturers, associate professors, and professors working in sample universities. Finally, a faculty member with work experience of 6 to 10 years experienced more incivility. Incivility can lead to conflict spiral and subsequent repercussions therefore each university's management body should implement programs and policies to mitigate its negative effects.*

**Keywords:** experienced incivility, t-test, ANOVA.

**Introduction**

In organizational behavior literature, the development of workplace negativity has emerged as a central topic. The literature mainly focused on topics such as workplace aggression, deviance, bullying, and harassment. Andersson and Pearson (1999) introduced a new domain in negative workplace behavior i.e., workplace incivility. Incivility was identified as impolite behavior or bad manners (Zauderer, 2002). Behaviors that have been abandoned in organizational research such as, ignoring someone, making demeaning or condescending comments, yelling or insulting someone, silent treatment, treating in unprofessional ways, and superseding decisions

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without giving any reason (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000).

The target of uncivil behavior has been studied that investigates the feelings, thoughts, and other associates of employees. Past work on experienced incivility identified the diversity determinants of receiving rude treatment, such as Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, and Magley (2013) studied racial minority as a reason for more frequent experiences of incivility, Lim and Lee (2011) identified younger employee experienced more incivility, and Milam, Spitzmueller, and Penney (2009) studied individual personality differences that are disagreeable and neurotic.

It is evident from the literature that increased workplace mistreatment is due to the factors associated with the targets and the instigators. A new insight into the perpetrator predation framework provided by Cortina, Rabelo, and Holland (2018) helps to explain the perpetrator's direct incivility based on the characteristics of possible targets. The fundamental concepts of perpetrator predation are that the perpetrators choose targets to avoid being accused or acted against and why particular situations may foster or repress perpetrators' incivility instigation.

A recent study conducted by Yao, Lim, Guo, Ou, and Ng (2021) examined demographics as antecedents of experienced incivility. This supports the study to examine the significant differences regarding the demographic characteristics of the faculty members. Previously, most of the work on incivility studied the nursing profession (Clark, 2008; Luparell, 2011), federal courts (Cortina et al., 2001), US military (Cortina et al., 2013), academicians (Bibi, Karim, & Ud Din, 2013). However, less research work has been done on academicians of the general university of the same city. Further, Bibi et al. (2013) suggested that incivility needs to be studied in higher educational institutions. This assists the researchers to study one of the increased workplace mistreatment at the academic workplace in Quetta.

Though many researchers have identified the diversity of target attributes as a cause of facing uncivil attitude in a different culture (Cortina, 2008; Cortina et al., 2013; Cortina et al., 2002; Cortina et al., 2001; Gabriel, Butts, Yuan, Rosen, & Sliter, 2018; Leiter, Price, & Laschinger, 2010; Lim & Lee, 2011; Milam et al., 2009; Sliter, Sliter, Withrow, & Jex, 2012; Smith, Hassan, Hatmaker, DeHart-Davis, & Humphrey, 2020; Yao et al., 2021), the question that whether all employees are facing the same uncivil attitude and behavior concerning dispositional target attributes needs to be evaluated.

This goal is particularly significant when we consider the role of power structures in our society and within organizations affecting the experiences of marginalized groups at work (Cortina et al., 2001). Within companies, power is distributed based on one's structural position as well as traits like gender and race, with women and people of color frequently receiving lower status and influence in the west (Acker, 1990; Tinkler & Zhao, 2020).

This study aims to examine how faculty experiences with incivility at work differ across demographic indicators precisely by their gender, age, job ranks, job experience, and affiliations. The data was collected from 323 faculty members of three public sector universities of Quetta.

Incivility is especially concerning for the public sector because public sector institutions are often expected to promote social fairness and serve a population that is becoming more demographically diverse (Ricucci, 2009; Frederickson, 1990; Vickers, 2006; Gooden, 2014; Rice, 2015). To serve a diverse community, it is critical to establish a diversified workforce (Mosher, 1982) and to guarantee that all employees are treated with decency and respect in the workplace, regardless of their color, gender, or personal experience (Rice, 2015). If incivility among employees of certain demographic groups rises, public organizations may find it more difficult to hire and retain diverse staff, promote social equity, and effectively serve all demographic groups.

### **Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

The concept of incivility was introduced by Andersson and Pearson in 1999. According to Andersson and Pearson (1999, p. 457), incivility is a “low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others.” This definition has three main characteristics that help to understand clearly the concept of workplace incivility; the violation of workplace norms, low intensity, and the intent is ambiguous (Pearson & Porath, 2004).

Incivility is considered low in intensity (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), but still, it is the host of negative outcomes for organizations and individuals. The results of a distinct study showed that incivility impacts individual and organizational performance (Cortina et al., 2001; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003; Pearson et al., 2000; Pearson & Porath, 2005). It was noticed that when an organization faces incivility, the employee efforts towards their work decrease, whereas they stop giving time to work, which results in the reduction of performance and production. Individuals when encountering uncivil behavior at work half will worry about how to interact with the

instigator and half will try to examine the possibility of changing jobs to avoid the recurrence (Pearson & Porath, 2005). The adverse psychological impact was also identified in several studies such as suicide, anxiety, and depression (Cortina et al., 2001; He, Walker, Payne, & Miner, 2021; Pearson & Porath, 2005).

The literature indicated several studies that examine the comparison of uncivil behavior faced by males and females (Cortina et al., 2013; Cortina et al., 2002; Cortina et al., 2001; Lim & Lee, 2011; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004; Montgomery, Kane, & Vance, 2004). Cortina et al. (2001) proposed that workplace incivility was influenced by power (for example, based on gender and position) such that those having social power is at less risk of being mistreated.

It was found that more women reported the mistreatment than men, especially in the male-dominant professions (Cortina et al., 2002). But more studies of the literature examine the relationship between experiencing incivility and gender showed a contradictory result. Lim and Lee (2011) stated that males reported more incivility experiences as compared to females, whereas, other studies revealed that females reported more uncivil behaviors than men (Cortina et al., 2013; Cortina et al., 2002; 2001).

A recent survey in Pakistan by Young, Hassan, and Hatmaker (2021) suggested that in public and non-profit organizations, women are more likely than men to be the victims of incivility. Several studies have found evidence of selective incivility towards women and persons of color, and power although a few have not.

The theory of selective incivility suggests that uncivil behavior can act as a hidden, modern indicator of gender and racial discrimination (Cortina, 2008). Moreover, a model was provided that the behavior of people might be selectively uncivil to certain people. This model includes societal and organizational norms, affective and cognitive factors. It was noticed that not only the incidents do differ in terms of their source (i.e., Co-worker, the supervisor, or the customer), they also differ concerning the type of incivility. The research on workplace incivility that is empirically tested has focused on the target's experience that faces such behavior (Cortina et al., 2001; Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001).

Another theory of social power states that society exerts its power on certain individuals based on norms, expectations, resource access, and political and social association (Raven & French Jr, 1958). According to Cortina et al. (2001), workplace incivility can be used to exert control. Low-power persons were found to be more vulnerable to power abuse (Carli, 1999; Johnson, 1976). Researchers have theorized about how targets' desire to reciprocate impolite behavior is affected by their position in the institutional hierarchy in the workplace incivility literature (Pearson et al., 2001; Pearson & Porath, 2004).

Similarly, Cortina et al. (2018) worked on the perpetrator predation framework which suggests that perpetrators choose targets to avoid being blamed/ accused or acted against, and explained how certain situations may foster or repress the instigator's instigation of incivility. It is suggested that instigators might target those individuals that are unlikely to defend themselves (Cortina et al., 2018). Employees who have been mistreated can protect themselves and retaliate in a variety of ways, including confronting the instigator and denouncing their misconduct to the company. Therefore, it is concluded that instigators might target those individuals that are weak or unwilling to defend themselves.

Finally, Smith et al. (2020) advocated that employees from a variety of demographic groups may be targets of incivility, but they may report fewer incidents because they utilize methods to avoid such contacts, perceive incivility as usual behavior, fear the consequences of reporting such incidents, or believe their efforts would be ineffective.

### *Hypotheses*

For the current study, two-tailed hypotheses are formulated to test the differences between variables under consideration. The first two hypotheses are tested using the *t*-test whereas the other two hypotheses are tested using one-way ANOVA. The following null hypotheses are postulated which suggests that there are no differences among variables of the study.

H<sub>1</sub>: All faculty members (male or female) experience the same amount of incivility.

H<sub>2</sub>: Faculty members of both age groups (young adults or middle-aged) experience the same amount of incivility.

H<sub>3</sub>: Faculty members holding different job titles face the same amount of incivility.

H<sub>4</sub>: Faculty members with different lengths of service face the same amount of incivility.

### **Method**

The population of the study includes the faculty members (male and female) from three public sector universities of Quetta city. The sampling frame consisted of faculty members who have experience of at least one year. Convenience sampling technique was applied and data were collected from 323 faculty members of three public sector universities of Quetta.

The minimum sample size for the study was calculated using the G-power (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996). A minimum sample size of ??? was derived by taking the effect size (*d*) as 0.5, probability of type-I ( $\alpha$ ) error as 0.05, and power as 0.99 which gives the minimum sample size of 294.

The Drop-off and Pick-up (DOPU) approach was used to obtain primary data from participants who completed a self-administered questionnaire. Riley and Kiger (2002) suggested DOPU increases the response rate. To keep the confidentiality of participants, the purpose of the study was explained before data collection from all the respondents.

Cortina et al. (2001) developed a scale to assess incivility in the workplace, which was adopted for this study, results indicate that the scale demonstrated good internal reliability of 0.90 (Table 1). Demographics for this study were respondent's gender (male versus female), their age group (young adults versus middle-aged), their job titles, and their length of service.

Data were analyzed using the independent *t*-test for the first two hypotheses since the *t*-test is categorized as inferential statistics that are used to check the significant differences between the means of two groups and the remaining two hypotheses are tested using one-way ANOVA which is used to test significant differences for more than two groups. The data is analyzed using the SPSS software.

### Results and Discussion

The internal consistency reliability and convergent validity have been reported in Table 1. Values for reliability and validity demonstrated a good score for incivility.

**Table 1- Reliability & Validity Analysis**

Variable	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Experienced Incivility	E1	0.74	0.62	0.92	0.90
	E2	0.76			
	E3	0.81			
	E4	0.83			
	E5	0.75			
	E6	0.82			
	E7	0.79			

The results of the first hypothesis after applying a *t*-test whether male faculty members significantly differ from female faculty in terms of incivility faced suggesting that on average, male faculty members experienced greater incivility ( $M=2.74, S.E=0.75$ ) compared to their female counterparts ( $M=2.52, S.E=0.74$ ) among the sample of 323 respondents (170 male, 153 female) of the present study (Table 2). The difference was statistically significant  $t(321)=2.049, p<0.05$ , which indicates male faculty members face more incivility as compared to their female colleagues. Cortina (2008) suggested that a new theory, selective incivility states that uncivil behavior can act as a

hidden, modern indicator of gender and racial discrimination. The hypothesis was significant that there are differences among males and females. The result is in line with the results of prior studies (Cortina et al., 2013; Cortina et al., 2001; Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008; Lim & Lee, 2011; Miner, Settles, Pratt-Hyatt, & Brady, 2012). The result indicates that males report a greater amount of incivility as compared to females. The results are aligned with the previous study of Lim and Lee (2011), men report experiencing incivility more frequently than women. Considering the social aspect of our society, females may face a greater amount of incivility but they might not be reporting it so males are facing more incivility in comparison based on the sample of this study.

**Table 2 - Independent Samples Test (Gender)**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig.
Incivility	Equal variances assumed	.713	.399	2.049	321	.041
	Equal variances not assumed			2.055	320.238	.041

The results for the second hypothesis presented in Table 3 reveal that on average, 56 faculty members in the middle-aged group ( $M=2.75, S.E=.133$ ) face greater incivility than 267 young adults ( $M=2.61, S.E=.057$ ) in the sample of the study. However, the difference is not statistically significant  $t(321)=-.999, p>.05$ . The results suggest that there are no significant differences among faculty experiences towards incivility in terms of their age groups in the present study.

**Table 3 - Independent Samples Test (Age)**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig.
Incivility	Equal variances assumed	.642	.423	-.999	321	.319
	Equal variances not assumed			-.966	77.274	.337

The results for the third hypothesis reported in Table 4 suggest that 185 participants working as lecturers in the universities had an average incivility score of 2.49 ( $SD = .89$ ), 101 participants working as assistant professors had an average incivility score of 2.85 ( $SD = .99$ ), 28 participants working as associate professors had an average incivility score of 2.82 ( $SD = 1.05$ ) and the remaining 9 respondents

working as professors reported an average incivility score of 2.50 ( $SD = 1.03$ ). The effect of incivility concerning job titles of faculty members was found to be statistically significant as presented in Table 4,  $F(3,319) = 3.711, p = .012$ . The statistical differences lie among the 2 groups' lecturer and assistant professor. It is concluded that the Assistant professors face more incivility in comparison to lecturers, associate professors, and professors for our sample in the study.

**Table 4 ANOVA (Job Title)**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.906	3	3.302	3.711	.012
Within Groups	283.864	319	.890		
Total	293.770	322			

According to the perpetrator, predation framework perpetrator might select those individuals that they feel are weak or unlikely to defend themselves. In the prevailing culture of our society, it might be possible that lecturers experienced more incivility as compared to other ranks, but they did not report the incident. It is one of the basic notions of this framework that supports the result of this study.

The results of the final hypothesis of the study ( $H_4$ ) formulated to test experienced incivility among faculty members with different lengths of service is reported in Table 5.

**Table 5 ANOVA (Length of Service)**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.175	3	3.058	3.428	.017
Within Groups	284.595	319	.892		
Total	293.770	322			

Out of a total of 323 respondents, 153 participants had experience for 1-5 years and their average incivility score was 2.47 ( $SD = .93$ ), 104 participants were working for 6-10 years who had an average incivility score of 2.85 ( $SD = .95$ ), 56 participants who are working for 11-15 years had average incivility score of 2.68 ( $SD = .909$ ) and finally, the remaining 10 participants working for more than 15 years had an average incivility score of 2.75 ( $SD = 1.19$ ). Table 5 indicates that the effect of incivility was statistically significant,  $F(3,319) = 3.428, p = .017$ . The faculty members with a job experience of 6-10 years face more incivility.

This result contradicts previous study findings that suggest that individuals that had less work experience are likely to be the target of incivility. The perpetrator predation framework which supports the notion that predator targets those individuals that are unlikely to defend themselves. It might be the case here as well, that the



employees that have lesser experience did not retaliate or complained about the wrongdoings of the instigator.

### **Conclusion**

Although incivility is a subtle stressor, the consequences of incivility are not. Primary data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire from the faculty members of three public sector universities of Quetta. The results direct that males experienced more incivility as compared to females. No significant differences were found among faculty members in experiencing incivility concerning their age group. The findings also suggest that faculty working as assistant professors experienced more workplace incivility compared to lecturers, associate professors, and professors working in sample universities. Lastly, employees with job experience of 6 to 10 years faced more incivility than others. In conclusion, demographic indicators do play a role in experiencing incivility. It was found that any individual in the organization might be experiencing incivility either in power or not which is supported by the perpedation predator framework.

### *Limitations and Future Recommendations*

While this study expands knowledge on experienced incivility in public sector universities of Quetta, it is not free from limitations and suggests new avenues for future research.

This study aims to discover that either faculty experiences with incivility at work differ across demographic indicators precisely by their gender, age, job ranks, job experience, and affiliations. the perspective of the instigator remains unexplored. Future research can explore demographic and organizational affiliated variables to study the instigator's perspective of instigating incivility.

It is recommended that future research should also consider addressing the group norms that are affected by group composition like gender and demographics. Furthermore, the survey questionnaire in this study addressed only experienced incivility, future researchers can examine how the employees get affected when they indirectly experience incivility when they observe it. Future studies can consider the role of gender and race in determining the extent to which an observer perceives incivility. This can be explored using qualitative methods like interviews or observation to better understand the spiral of incivility in workplaces.

This study can be replicated in different organizational contexts. The data were collected from faculty members of different universities. This study can be extended in the future by collecting the data on different organization hierarchical levels.

### Implications

Universities should be aware that the employees most vulnerable to workplace incivility are likely to be women, racial minorities, lower-ranked. They could be equipped with active self-protection strategies such as initiating positive interactions and seeking help from coworkers to cope with, minimize, and deter future incivility experiences. However, organizations should carefully avoid signalling explicit or implicit bias and discrimination that might exacerbate incivility.

Employees having qualities or attitudes such as violence working alongside employees with potentially conflicting characteristics can be flagged by managers and human resource management departments. Managers should also pay special attention to the work environment, as well as the organization's guidelines and practices concerning power, equal opportunity, and discrimination, to ensure that incivility is not being reinforced directly or indirectly.

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