

# CO-WORKER INCIVILITY AND TASK PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

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## Abstract

**How to cite this paper:** Aruoren, E. E., Igemohia, M., & Igemohia, F. (2024). Co-worker incivility and task performance: The mediating effect of psychological empowerment [Special issue]. *Corporate Governance and Organizational Behavior Review*, 8(2), 285–294.  
<https://doi.org/10.22495/cgobrv8i2sip4>

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**ISSN Online:** 2521-1889

**ISSN Print:** 2521-1870

**Received:** 25.01.2024

**Accepted:** 31.05.2024

**JEL Classification:** M10, M12

**DOI:** 10.22495/cgobrv8i2sip4

It is widely acknowledged that workplace incivility (WI) is a serious issue that negatively affects employee performance (EP). This study investigated whether psychological empowerment (PE) mediated the link between employees' task performance (TP) and co-worker incivility (CI). The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, with a population of 307 employees of two ministries in Delta State, Nigeria. Using Yamane's (1973) formula, 186 was determined as the sample size. After a week, 145 copies of the questionnaires were fully completed and retrieved. Hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM). The results showed that while CI was positive and significantly related to PE ( $\beta = 0.561$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), it was negative and significantly related to TP ( $\beta = -0.422$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). PE was positive and significantly related to TP ( $\beta = 0.133$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Moreover, a partial mediating role for PE was observed in the relationship between TP and CI. Based on these findings, it was recommended that the Delta State Civil Service Commission should put in place policies that will mitigate the occurrence of WI as it adversely affects EP. In addition, employees should be empowered psychologically to enable them to manage the detrimental effects of WI.

**Keywords:** Incivility, Employee Performance, Empowering Workers, Structural Equation Modeling

**Authors' individual contribution:** Conceptualization — E.E.A.; Methodology — E.E.A. and F.I.; Validation — M.I. and F.I.; Formal Analysis — E.E.A., M.I., and F.I.; Resources — E.E.A., M.I., and F.I.; Writing — Review & Editing — E.E.A., M.I., and F.I.; Supervision — E.E.A. and M.I.; Project Administration — E.E.A. and F.I.

**Declaration of conflicting interests:** The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Incivility at work is a problem that is increasingly noticeable and has drawn the interest of scholars and practitioners lately (Vasconcelos, 2020). It is described as incorrect behavior at a low intensity that may or may not be intended to cause harm.

Workers expect civil behavior at work in order to achieve corporate goals because they believe behaviors are far more essential than processes (Yang et al., 2022). Workplace incivility (WI) and other unfavorable conditions force employees to keep knowledge from others (Arshad & Ismail, 2018), lower morale (Jawahar & Schreurs, 2018) and make

employees feel less satisfied which increases their likelihood of quitting (Sharma & Singh, 2016). Since human resources play a crucial role in any business, the effectiveness and an organization's productivity are largely dependent on their performance. The result of an individual's work or the degree to which an individual does their work in carrying out their obligations and responsibilities is known as employee performance (EP) (Rusmiati et al., 2021), and this can be hindered by WI.

Researchers have found a positive correlation between psychological empowerment (PE) and workers' task, contextual, and innovative performance (Yi et al., 2015). PE is thus a crucial component in predicting positive organizational outcomes like commitment, engagement, work satisfaction, and task performance (TP). In their review paper on incivility, Schilpzand et al. (2016) pointed out that a number of studies have been conducted on the detrimental effects of negative workplace behaviors (workplace aggression, deviance, bullying, and abusive supervision) on the work attitudes, behaviors, and well-being of their targets. However, WI is a relatively new addition to undesirable workplace behaviors. Hence, organizational behavior specialists have recommended a detailed examination of WI (Jawahar & Schreurs, 2018). Likewise, studies on EP focus mostly on variables that facilitate high performance (Atatsi et al., 2019), and there is scant evidence about the role of factors such as incivility on worker's performance. Despite the fact that numerous studies have demonstrated the mediation effect of PE, the researchers were unable to find studies that examined its mediating influence on the association between TP and incivility at work. Closing this knowledge gap is the study's intention.

This article has the following structure. Section 2 explores the literature review, which includes the conceptual review, theoretical underpinnings, and empirical review. Section 3 provides the research methods, which included research design, population, sampling technique, measures, and model specification which guided the study. Section 4 outlines and discusses the results. Section 5 presents the conclusions as well as the recommendations.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DESIGN

### 2.1. Task performance

López-Cabarcos et al. (2022) assert that in the fields of industrial management and organizational behavior, EP is certainly the most significant and researched variable. This is owing to the impact it has on an organization's performance. EP can be described as individual conduct — that is, action that people engage in and that is visible — that adds value to the company and advances its objectives (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015). According to Borman and Motowidlo (1993), "the proficiency with which incumbents perform activities that are formally recognized as part of their jobs; activities that contribute to the organization's technical core either directly by implementing a part of its technical process, or indirectly by providing it with needed materials or services" (p. 71) is what is meant to be represented by EP. Thus, how well employees accomplish the precise tasks listed in their job description, which their employer then evaluates

and rewards is referred to as EP (Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004). One aspect of EP is its TP. The multifaceted concept of EP also includes adaptive performance (AP), counterproductive work behavior (CWB), and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB).

TP refers to an individual's ability to execute the fundamental, technical, or substantive activities that are essential to their duties at work (Campbell, 1990). Workload and attributes, job knowledge, and job skills are frequently employed as behaviors to characterize TP (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). TP is the process by which employees carry out their responsibilities effectively and efficiently. Because of this, TP affects all aspects of corporate operations, including output, efficiency and productive capacity of the company (Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). OCB is the willingness of employees to move far beyond their prescribed roles and to perform more than their official job descriptions (Fan et al., 2023). Common examples of OCBs include being kind and having a positive attitude, helping colleagues with work-related issues, putting in extra time without expecting praise, and providing outsiders with an informed account of the organization. The degree to which a worker adapts to changes in their position or surroundings is AP (Gorostiaga et al., 2022). According to Sweet et al. (2015), AP is the capacity of a person or group to adapt ideas and ways of acting to changing situations. Finally, CWBs are any employee-performed actions that disrupt the work environment and productivity, thereby harming the overall well-being of the workplace (Li et al., 2020). CWBs are characterized as covert or overt voluntary actions that directly harm the company or its members, such as consumers, clients, stakeholders, or co-workers (Fox & Spector, 2005).

### 2.2. Workplace incivility

Andersson and Pearson (1999) defined WI as "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect" (p. 457). Rude and disrespectful conduct to others is classified as uncivil behavior. From this definition, incivility consists of three characteristics: workplace norms' violation and respect, ambiguous intent, and low intensity. A breach of workplace convention is the first sign of incivility. While not all organizations function in the same way, they all have standards and expectations on appropriate employee behavior when interacting with one another. In an organization, collaboration is made possible by this shared understanding. Acts of incivility damage that comprehension and jeopardize the organization's sustainability. The second characteristic of incivility is ambiguous intent. It's possible that the target doesn't always comprehend the instigator's goals. Besides being the result of negligence, ignorance, or the instigator's nature, uncivil behavior can also be intentional. Nonetheless, the ambiguity may cause much stress for the victim since they might not be able to comprehend the circumstances and, thus, could not know how to react to the behavior. Low intensity is the term used to describe the third characteristic of incivility. Incivility is less serious than aggressive behaviors like bullying or harassment. Even in milder cases, uncivil behavior may result in resentment and heated arguments. In reality, encountering incivility can set off a chain reaction

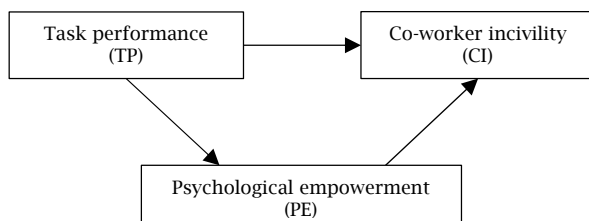
whereby an individual's impression of incivility prompts them to respond with additional incivility, which can ultimately culminate in more severe and violent forms of abuse (Pearson et al., 2000). Therefore, behaving in an uncivil manner could be detrimental to both the victim and the company. Andersson and Pearson's (1999) concept of incivility includes the "incivility spiral" as a fundamental component. The writers claim that someone who is the object of perceived incivility may react to it with similar or even more uncivil conduct, which occasionally leads to an increase in hostility or even violence. They imply that the likelihood of an escalation will increase due to social identity threats, rage, and retaliation desires and that this escalation may be broad and infectious.

At work, 98% of employees have faced disrespectful behavior on a regular basis, and 50% have encountered it at least once each week, based on the literature (Ugwu & Nnamah, 2022). Again, a study by Porath (2016) revealed that the proportion of workers who reported co-workers' negative behaviors at least once per month climbed by 13% between 1998 and 2016, reaching 62%. Incivility at work may emanate from supervisors or managers, co-workers or even customers.

### 2.3. Psychological empowerment

According to Wikhamn and Selart (2019), PE relates to the actions and mindsets of employees that foster excellent performance at work. Thus, it promotes good attitudes in employees towards the business to meet job needs (Llorente-Alonso et al., 2024). According to Prabowo et al. (2018), PE motivates employees to be self-reliant, proactive, and creative by enabling them to use their knowledge, skills, and abilities to accomplish organizational goals. Similarly, Al-Madadha et al. (2019) defined the concept as the process of enhancing followers' personal capacities by minimizing informal approaches and organizational practices that impede them. However, according to Kumari et al. (2020), the expression also refers to an employee's organizational orientation, boldness, confidence, self-reliance, and feeling of accountability for their duties at work. According to these definitions, PE refers to a tactic that motivates staff members to continue being functionally, psychologically, and cognitively engaged at work while also inspiring them to generate exceptional and innovative work. Employees who experience PE might experience a boost in confidence inside the company, have a more meaningful perspective on their work, have the opportunity to plan and fulfill their responsibilities and realize they have the power to influence decisions. Employees with PE can feel protected and valuable in the company. The conceptual framework shows how the variables are connected (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Conceptual framework



### 2.4. Theoretical framework

The study is anchored on social exchange theory (SET). SET was defined by Cropanzano et al. (2017) as: 1) an actor initiating interaction with the target, 2) a reciprocal attitude or behavior reaction from the target, and 3) the ensuing relationship. According to Blau (1964), SET is described as the "voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do bring from others" (p. 91). It's a connection that has benefits and costs for all parties involved. Because an individual's actions at work are frequently dependent upon those of others, it is seen as a reciprocal process wherein those who receive benefits are expected to give equivalent benefits in return (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

An employee's social exchange connection at work is disrupted by incivility, which is considered the main cause of stress at work (Meier & Spector, 2013). Incivility diminishes the reciprocal obligations and commitments between the exchanging parties and contradicts the norms of polite workplace treatment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Consistent with SET's reciprocity principle, an individual's contribution to organizational development is probably going to rise when they receive appropriate treatment at work (Charoensukmongkol & Pandey, 2023). On the other hand, if individuals receive unfavorable treatment (for example, incivility), they could respond by reducing their TP or even considering quitting their work (Han et al., 2016). SET is used in the research model (see Figure 1) since the researchers postulated that negative conduct, such as co-worker incivility (CI) toward a colleague, may result in a decrease in TP as a type of reciprocation. It also implies that the connection between TP and co-workers' incivility is mediated by PE.

### 2.5. Empirical review

Workplace incivility and many aspects of EP, such as TP, AP, CWB, and OCB, have been the subject of recent research. Aruoren and Ugbeghene (2023) selected 227 workers from local government councils in Nigeria, to investigate the link between WI and EP represented by TP, AP, CWB, and OCB. The linear regression analysis's findings revealed that WI affected TP and AP negatively, however, only the latter was found to be significantly affected. Additionally, it was discovered that WI positively correlated with both OCB and CWB, but this association was only significant for CWB. The impact of WI on TP and OCB was examined in Jawahar and Schreur's (2018) study to see if work engagement played a mediating role. 350 professionals from a variety of Midwestern United States (US) organizations took part. Ordinary least square regression results revealed that TP and OCB were both negatively associated with incivility. The association between WI and CWB among 215 Pakistani bank employees was examined in Butt and Yazdani's (2021) study. Regression analysis results showed that incivility at work is significantly and positively associated with CWB. Furthermore, by using data from 272 employees in Pakistani businesses, Jamal and Siddiqui (2020) investigated the connections between WI and OCB. Partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) results demonstrated a negative relationship between

instigated incivility and OCB. Nonetheless, the theory positing a negative correlation between experienced incivility and OCB was refuted.

Studies on PE show that it influences several employee outcomes. Rani et al. (2021) examined how 241 workers in Malaysia's automobile after-sales sector connected the four elements of PE to their job performance. The findings of a regression study showed a strong correlation between EP and PE. With psychological ownership acting as a mediating factor, Mehmood and Nazir's (2021) study sought to ascertain the effects of PE on worker performance. The survey included 151 employees from Pakistan's banking sector. Regression analysis coefficients showed that PE and EP had a positive and significant connection. An investigation of how PE impacted workers' performance was conducted among 286 Malaysian public sector employees by Ahmad et al. (2021). PLS-SEM results showed a significant and positive relationship between EP and PE. The connection between EP and PE was examined in the study conducted by Khan et al. (2021). There were 312 participants, all scholars from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan's southern division. Correlation analysis results indicated a significant connection between EP and PE. Furthermore, Juyumaya's (2022) study used a mediation-moderated model to examine the relationship between PE, age, work engagement, and TP. A total of 200 Chilean textile industry workers participated in the study. SEM results show that job engagement plays a role in mediating the positive effect of PE on TP among employees. Age significantly modulated the mediation effect.

SET indicates that employees who are supported more by their companies are likely to feel more obligated to "return" the organization's gratitude and respect by making their co-workers less uncivil at work. The research conducted by Shabana and Mohamed (2021) examined the impact of perceived organizational support on workplace civility using PE as a mediator. The participants consisted of 384 employees from Egyptian government departments. SEM results demonstrated that PE significantly reduced WI. In their research, Ren and Kim (2017) examined the connections among 366 Chinese nursing students completing clinical rotations between bullying experiences, conflict resolution strategies, PE, and psychological well-being. SEM results indicated a strong negative association between PE and experiences of bullying. The goal of Lyu et al.'s (2019) study was to ascertain how PE mediated the relationship between abusive supervision and nurses' perceived intention to quit their jobs. 1127 clinical nurses who worked in China's higher education system were the participants. Regression modeling results revealed that PE was significantly but negatively associated with abusive supervision. The study conducted by Oyeleye et al. (2013) investigated the connections between 61 acute care nurses working in hospitals in the US and their perceptions of WI, stress levels, burnout, intention to leave, and degrees of PE. Correlation analysis results showed that there was no relationship between PE and stress, burnout, or WI.

Some study indicates that PE acts as a mediator by helping people understand the value of their job and their own judgment. As people become aware of

how their work impacts the performance of the business, they perform better and are happier in their positions. Ahmed et al. (2023) examined the mediating effect of PE in the connection between dialogical leadership and organizational brilliance using survey data collected from 110 managers of Al-Rasheed Bank in Baghdad, Iraq. The SEM results attest to the mediation effect of PE. Mangundjaya (2019) examined the relationship between employees' perceptions of the external organizational environment and their commitment to organizational transformation using PE as a mediator and data gathered from 539 workers in Indonesia's two state-owned financial organizations. PE as a mediator had an indirect influence on a commitment to change, but organizational task environment and PE have a considerable impact on a commitment to change, according to SEM findings. Cheng et al. (2023) examined a model that proposes that PE acts as a mediator between transformational leadership and the promotion of emotional labor, using data collected from 436 employees in five contact centers in China. SEM results showed that the relationship between transformational leadership and employees' emotional labor is either completely or partially mediated by PE dimensions. The research conducted by Nguyen (2020) examined the significant role that PE plays in mediating the association between employee engagement and transformational leadership. Employees from companies in southern Vietnam participated in this study. Path analysis revealed that PE was a key mediating variable between the elements of employee engagement and transformational leadership. From these results, the following hypotheses are put forth:

*H1: Co-worker incivility is negatively related to task performance.*

*H2: Psychological empowerment is positively related to task performance.*

*H3: Co-worker incivility is negatively related to psychological empowerment.*

*H4: Psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between co-worker incivility and task performance.*

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a cross-sectional survey research design with a population of 307 employees of two ministries in Delta State, Nigeria. Yamane's (1973) formula was applied to determine 186 as the sample size. Thus, 186 copies of questionnaires were administered to civil servants in their offices and after one week, one hundred and forty-five copies were fully completed and retrieved. This amounted to a 77.96% response rate. The tool used for data collection was a structured questionnaire that consisted of items adopted from prior studies. Seven items adopted from Williams and Anderson (1991) measured TP and responses were via a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. Seven items adopted from Cortina et al. (2001) measured CI and participants indicated the frequency by which co-workers exhibited certain behaviors within the last year and they were the target, using a response scale ranging from 1 = Never to 5 = Very often. Furthermore, PE was assessed by twelve items adopted from Spreitzer

(1995) in which respondents described their behavior on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree.

The data analysis was made using Stata 13 statistical software. Frequency tables were used as tools for descriptive analysis, and SEM was done to assess the mediating effect of PE on the association between CI and employees' TP. The measurement model was assessed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), and discriminant validity. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to assess the dataset sufficiency for EFA. EFA was then used to assess the factor structure of the dataset. Only factors whose loadings were greater than 0.5 and eigenvalues more than 1.0 were retained for further analysis (Hair et al., 2010). Cronbach's alpha and CR were used to assess internal consistency, and the recommended threshold of 0.7 was adopted (Hair et al., 2010). Moreover, the AVE value should exceed 0.50 to affirm a measure's convergent validity. Furthermore, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was used to assess discriminant validity, which indicates the extent to which the study's constructs differ from one another empirically. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), comparing the square root of the AVE with the correlation coefficients of other variables can be used to assess discriminant validity.

Finally, a four-step SEM technique developed by Baron and Kenny (1986) was applied to assess the proposed relationships. Justifying the significant connection linking *ci* (predictor variable) and *tp* (criterion variable) is the first step. The second step is to offer evidence for the significant connection linking the *tp* (criterion variable) and *pe* (mediator variable). The third step provides evidence for the significant connection linking the mediator (*pe*) and *ci* (predictor variable). The fourth step concludes by providing evidence for why, once *pe* (mediator variable) is under control, *ci* (predictor variable) will no longer be significantly linked to *tp* (criterion

variable). While partial mediation is suggested by meeting the first three elements, full mediation is proven by meeting all four criteria.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic characteristics of the respondents indicated that 53.79% are males while 46.21% are females. Based on age, 6.90% of respondents are between 20 and 29 years old, 27.59% are between 30 and 39 years old, 34.48% are between 40 and 49 years old, 20.69% are between 50 and 59 years old, and 10.34% are above 60 years old. Based on marital status, 13.10% of respondents are single, 73.79% are married, 4.14% are divorced, 2.07% are widowed, and 6.90% are separated. Based on the highest educational qualification, 10.35% of respondents have qualifications below diploma certificates, 17.93% have National Certificate of Education/Ordinary National Diploma degrees, 53.10% have Bachelor's degrees, and 18.62% have postgraduate degrees. Finally, based on previous work experience, 15.86% of respondents have below 10 years of experience, 37.93% have between 10 and 19 years of experience, 35.86% have between 20 and 29 years of experience, while 10.34% have above 30 years of work experience.

In Table 1, the mean, standard deviation (SD), minimum value, and correlation coefficients were reported. The mean for *tp* and *ci* were 3.45 and 2.68, respectively. These values were above the mid-point of 2.50 on a 5-point Likert scale. Furthermore, the mean for *pe* was 5.34 and it exceeded the mid-point of 3.50 on a 7-point Likert scale. SD for *tp*, *pe*, and *ci* were 0.72, 1.64, and 0.70. These results reveal an adequate spread of participants' responses to the questionnaire items. The correlation coefficients indicate that *tp* was positive and significantly related to *pe* ( $r = +0.160$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), *pe* was positive and significantly related to *ci* ( $r = +0.259$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), however, *tp* was negatively related to *ci* ( $r = -0.233$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These results indicate the direction of the proposed hypotheses.

**Table 1.** Mean, standard deviation, and correlation matrix

Variables	Mean	SD	Min	Max	<i>tp</i>	<i>pe</i>	<i>ci</i>
<i>tp</i>	3.45	0.72	1	5	1.000		
<i>pe</i>	5.34	1.64	1	7	0.160*	1.000	
<i>ci</i>	2.68	0.70	1	5	-0.233*	0.259*	1.000

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ .

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Prior to testing the hypotheses with SEM, the measurement model was assessed using discriminant validity, CR, EFA, Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), and AVE. KMO value was applied to evaluate the dataset's sufficiency prior to performing EFA. A KMO value greater than 0.8 is strongly recommended. The current study's KMO value was 0.87, which met these criteria. The dataset is therefore adequate for this study. Additionally, a significant Chi-square value of 13.980 with a degree of freedom of 3 was found using Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $p = 0.003 < 0.05$ ). Thus, the dataset is sufficient for EFA, according to these results (Hair et al., 2010). Factor loadings less than 0.5 were disregarded, and only eigenvalues larger than 1 were employed for additional analysis (Hair et al., 2010). Table 3 demonstrates that the seven *tp* indicators

that were retained had an eigenvalue of 3.71, which explained 31.62% of the variation. With an eigenvalue of 2.85, which accounted for 24.35% of the variation, seven *ci* indicators were retained. Nevertheless, four *pe* indicators were removed since their factor loadings were less than 0.5. For *pe*, the remaining eight indicators were retained, and its eigenvalue of 4.67 explained 39.85% of the variation (see Table 3). In Figure 2, the extracted components from the EFA are shown as a scree plot. The point at which the slope of the curve leveled out indicated how many variables should be included in the study. The scree plot confirms that the three components that accounted for 95.82% of the study's total variance were retained.

The measurement model consists of 22 items (8 for *pe*, 7 each for *tp* and *ci*). Table 2 shows

the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), CR, and AVE for the study variables. The coefficients of all three latent variables ( $tp$ ,  $pe$ , and  $ci$ ) were above the 0.7 criterion for internal consistency, with respective values of 0.72, 0.95, and 0.88 (Lance et al., 2006). The CR scores for  $tp$ ,  $pe$ , and  $ci$  were 0.92, 0.97, and 0.96, respectively, and they were higher than the minimum value of 0.6 that Hair et al. (2010) recommended. Additionally, all three variables ( $tp$ ,  $pe$ , and  $ci$ ) had AVEs of 0.63, 0.80, and 0.77, respectively, above the 0.50 criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). To ascertain whether common method variance was a problem, Herman's single-factor test was applied (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Three components were retrieved whose eigenvalues

were greater than 1 (see Table 2). When combined, these variables accounted for 95.82% of the variation. Additionally, no variable accounted for more than 50% of the variation overall. This suggests that common method variance is not present. Comparing the square root of the AVE with the correlation coefficients of other variables can be used to assess discriminant validity, according to Fornell and Larcker (1981). The correlation coefficients (off-diagonal entries) of the other variables were less than the square root of the AVE (diagonal entries), as shown in Table 3. This attests to the study variables' discriminant validity. These results guaranteed the validity and reliability of the measures.

**Table 2.** Factor loading, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted

Questionnaire items	<i>tp</i>	<i>pe</i>	<i>ci</i>	$\alpha$	CR	AVE
<i>tp1</i> : At work, I adequately complete assigned duties.	0.88			0.72	0.92	0.63
<i>tp2</i> : At work, I fulfill the responsibilities specified in my job description.	0.73					
<i>tp3</i> : At work, I perform tasks that are expected of me.	0.77					
<i>tp4</i> : At work, I meet formal performance requirements on the job.	0.86					
<i>tp5</i> : At work, I engage in activities that will directly affect my performance evaluation.	0.78					
<i>tp6</i> : At work, I neglect aspects of the job I am obligated to perform.	0.77					
<i>tp7</i> : At work, I fail to perform essential duties.	0.75					
<i>pe1</i> : My job activities are meaningful to me.		0.79		0.95	0.97	0.80
<i>pe2</i> : I have mastered the skills to do my job.		0.94				
<i>pe3</i> : I care about what I do on my job.		0.87				
<i>pe4</i> : My work is important to me.		0.92				
<i>pe5</i> : My job is well within the scope of my abilities.		0.85				
<i>pe6</i> : I have freedom in determining how to do my job.		0.93				
<i>pe7</i> : I am confident about my ability to do my job.		0.92				
<i>pe8</i> : I have a great deal of control over my job.		0.93				
<i>ci1</i> : Your co-worker puts you down or is condescending to you during work.			0.83	0.88	0.96	0.77
<i>ci2</i> : Your co-worker pays little attention to your statements or shows little interest in your opinions.			0.91			
<i>ci3</i> : Your co-worker makes demeaning or derogatory remarks about you.			0.88			
<i>ci4</i> : Your co-worker addresses you in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately.			0.91			
<i>ci5</i> : Your co-worker ignores or excludes you during meetings, etc.			0.87			
<i>ci6</i> : Your co-worker doubts your judgment on matters for which you have responsibility.			0.86			
<i>ci7</i> : Your co-workers make unwanted attempts to draw you into discussions of personal matters.			0.86			
Eigenvalues	3.71	4.67	2.85			
% of variance	31.62	39.85	24.35			

Source: Authors' elaboration.

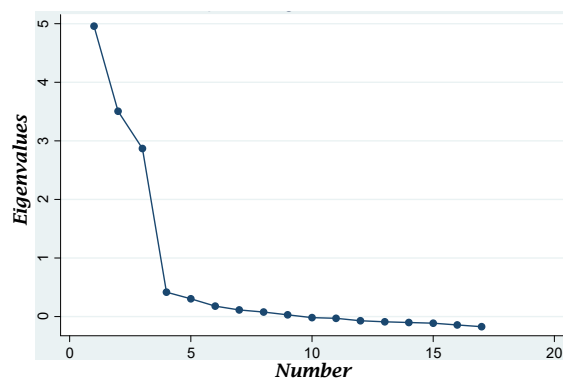
**Table 3.** Discriminant validity

Variables	<i>tp</i>	<i>pe</i>	<i>ci</i>
<i>tp</i>	(0.794)		
<i>pe</i>	0.160*	(0.894)	
<i>ci</i>	-0.233*	0.259*	(0.877)

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ .

Source: Authors' elaboration.

**Figure 2.** Scree plot of eigenvalues after factor



Source: Authors' elaboration using Stata 13 software.

The measurement model was also evaluated by comparing the estimated values with the suggested cutoff values using some goodness-of-fit indices, such as Chi-square/df ( $\chi^2/df$ ), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and adjusted GFI (AGFI). Three constructs (measured by 22 items) constitute the measurement model. Table 4 demonstrates an adequate model fit by comparing the estimated fit indices with the cut-off criteria specified by Ali and Naushad (2023).

**Table 4.** Goodness-of-fit indices

Fit indices	Recommended value	Estimated values	Decision
$\chi^2/df$	Less than 5	1.988	Acceptable
RMSEA	Less than 0.08	0.052	Acceptable
GFI	$\geq 0.9$	0.980	Acceptable
AGFI	$\geq 0.8$	0.899	Acceptable
CFI	0.8-0.9	0.963	Acceptable

Source: Authors' elaboration.

The four-step SEM technique developed by Baron and Kenny (1986) was applied to assess the proposed relationships. Table 5 revealed a negative and statistically significant effect of  $ci$

on *tp* ( $\beta = -0.422$ ,  $z = -3.15$ , and  $p = 0.002 < 0.05$ ). Consequently, *H1* cannot be rejected (step 1). This outcome is consistent with other studies by Jawahar and Schreurs (2018), and Aruoren and Ugbehene (2023). Therefore, it is stressed that although uncivil behavior is regularly seen in businesses, limiting and addressing these behaviors is equally crucial to the smooth operation of these organizations.

The connection between *tp* and *pe* is positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.133$ ,  $z = 2.39$ , and  $p = 0.017 < 0.05$ ). Therefore, *H2* cannot be rejected (step 2). This result is in agreement with earlier studies conducted by Juyumaya (2022), Rani et al. (2021), Mehmood and Nazir (2021), and Ahmad et al. (2021). Moreover, *pe* significantly and positively affects *ci* ( $\beta = 0.561$ ,  $z = 2.76$ , and  $p = 0.006 < 0.05$ ). Thus, *H3* was rejected (step 3). This finding contradicts those of Shabana and Mohamed (2021), Ren and Kim (2017), and Lyu et al. (2019), who established a negative association between *PE* and *WI*, while Oyeleye et al. (2013) showed no correlation

between these variables. Different cultural and societal orientations in different nations could be the cause of these contradictory outcomes. Cultural and national differences may exist in how incivility is seen in the workplace (Loh et al., 2021). Furthermore, Sobel's test was employed to resolve the significance of the indirect effect (see Table 6), because step 1 remained significant even after the mediator variable (*pe*) was controlled (Sobel, 1982). Table 6 indicates that, at  $p = 0.070 > 0.05$ , the indirect effect was not statistically significant. Therefore, *H4* cannot be rejected (step 4). *PE*, therefore, partially mediates the connection linking *CI* and *TP*. This result is consistent with the findings of other researchers, including Cheng et al. (2023), Nguyen (2020), and Ahmad et al. (2022). Through *PE*, *WI* therefore significantly influences *TP* indirectly. As such, *PE* has a significant association with both *TP* and *WI* and partially mediates this interaction. Figure 3 shows the path diagram indicating the results presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Path coefficients for direct, indirect, and total effect

Path	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect	Std. error	z	p >  z	[95% conf. interval]
<i>tp</i> → <i>ci</i>	-0.422*	-	-0.422*	0.134	-3.15	0.002	-0.159
<i>tp</i> → <i>pe</i>	0.133*	-	0.133*	0.056	2.39	0.017	0.243
<i>pe</i> → <i>ci</i>	0.561*	-	0.561*	0.203	2.76	0.006	0.958
<i>tp</i> → <i>pe</i> → <i>ci</i>	-0.422*	0.075	-0.347*	0.128	-2.70	0.007	-0.96

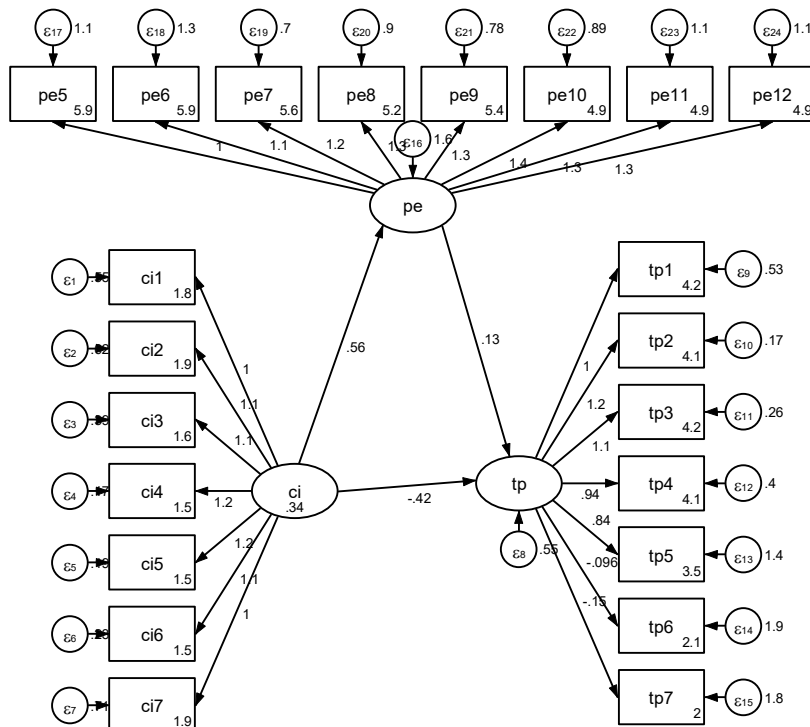
Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ .  
Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 6. Sobel's test for indirect effect

Estimates	Delta	Sobel	Monte Carlo
Indirect effect	0.075	0.075	0.077
Std. error	0.041	0.041	0.046
z-value	1.810	1.809	1.666
p-value	0.070	0.070	0.096
Conf. interval	-0.016, 0.156	-0.006, 0.156	0.015, 0.184

Source: Authors' elaboration using Stata 13 software.

Figure 3. Path diagram



Source: Authors' elaboration using Stata 13 software.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the mediating effect of PE on the nexus between CI and TP among public sector employees selected from two ministries in Delta State, Nigeria. Findings obtained from SEM revealed that PE partially mediated the connection between CI and TP. This implies that the negative impact of CI on employees' TP can be mitigated by psychologically empowering employees at work. Based on this conclusion, the study recommends that employees in the public sector should be psychologically empowered to enable them to enhance their level of TP while reducing the negative impact of CI. The study advances scholarly understanding by

demonstrating that PE plays a role in partially mediating, the relationship between WI and EP.

The study's main limitation was that respondents were drawn from just two ministries in the Delta State Civil Service Commission, which may limit the generalization of the findings. Future studies should consider a larger number of ministries. Furthermore, since a cross-sectional survey design was adopted in which data were collected at a single point in time, it may be difficult to make causal inferences. Future studies should consider longitudinal or experimental design. To enhance theoretical contribution, this study should be replicated with respondents from private sector organizations.

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