



RESEARCH PAPER

A Conservation of Resources (COR) Perspective on Counterproductive Behavior: The Role of Incivility and Social Undermining

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of workplace incivility and social undermining on counterproductive work behavior (CWB) among faculty in public-sector universities of Quetta, Pakistan. Workplace mistreatment can deplete employees' psychological resources and trigger harmful behaviors. In academia, such behaviors may impair teaching, research, and collegiality. Using the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, this study explores the link between social mistreatment and CWB. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with 330 academic staff using validated scales. Proportionate stratified random sampling was applied. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression, with reliability and regression assumptions confirmed. Both workplace incivility ($\beta = 0.356$, $p < 0.01$) and social undermining ($\beta = 0.361$, $p < 0.01$) significantly predicted CWB, explaining 41% of its variance. Findings support COR theory, showing that persistent mistreatment drains resources, fostering retaliatory or withdrawal behaviors. Universities should adopt preventive policies, leadership training, and confidential reporting channels, alongside support systems to reduce mistreatment and its negative outcomes.

KEYWORDS Conservation of Resources, Counterproductive Work Behavior, Workplace Incivility, Social Undermining

Introduction

In today's increasingly competitive and high-pressure work environments, the quality of interpersonal relationships plays a critical role in shaping employee behavior and overall organizational outcomes. Negative workplace interactions, such as workplace incivility and social undermining, have gained increasing attention from organizational researchers and practitioners due to their subtle yet destructive nature. These behaviors may seem minor in isolation, but when experienced repeatedly, they can seriously affect employees' mental health, motivation, and performance, often leading to counterproductive work behavior (CWB) (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). Unaddressed incivility or undermining can damage not only individual well-being but also organizational culture, team cohesion, and overall productivity.

Social undermining refers to intentional actions aimed at weakening someone's success, reputation, or interpersonal relationships in the workplace. These behaviors may include belittling others, spreading rumors, withholding critical information, or sabotaging someone's work (Duffy, Scott, Shaw, Tepper, & Aquino, 2012). The target of such behaviors often feels isolated, disrespected, and emotionally exhausted, which may prompt retaliatory or harmful behaviors directed back at the workplace. Workplace incivility, on the other hand, involves low-intensity deviant behaviors such as rudeness, ignoring others, or making dismissive remarks. Though incivility is often ambiguous in intent, it violates norms of respect and creates a toxic work atmosphere (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Schilpzand, De Pater, & Erez, 2016).

Both social undermining and incivility, while different in form and intensity, share a common thread: they undermine trust, damage relationships, and generate emotional strain. The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory offers a useful explanation that employees who are faced with consistent negativity use up their emotional and psychological resources, which may leave them unable or unwilling to continue behaving constructively (Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018). Instead, they may engage in counterproductive work behaviors, which are intentional acts that harm the organization or its members, such as taking unnecessary breaks, being late, spreading rumors, or purposely reducing work quality (Bruk-Lee & Spector, 2006). Supporting this, a study by (Young, Hassan, & Hatmaker, 2021) found that stressors like interpersonal mistreatment significantly increase the likelihood of employees displaying CWBs, especially among those with lower emotional stability. These results clearly show that when people have negative social interactions at work, it can drain their emotional resources. Once their emotional energy is drained, they might react in ways that can hurt their organization. Many earlier studies have already confirmed that negative interactions among employees strongly predict counterproductive behaviors for example, research by (Duffy et al., 2012) discovered that when employees face social undermining, it directly leads them toward harmful workplace actions, especially if they feel emotionally worn out. Similarly, (Liu, Zhou, & Che, 2019) noted that experiencing incivility at work can lead employees to feel burned out, which then makes them more likely to behave negatively on the job. All of these findings indicate that toxic relationships at work often create an ongoing cycle of stress, emotional exhaustion, and negative reactions.

Even though researchers have started paying more attention to this topic, there still isn't enough understanding of how social undermining and incivility together affect negative work behaviors, especially in non-western settings. Cultural expectations and traditional gender roles in places like Pakistan might influence how employees perceive and respond to workplace mistreatment. Previous studies have found that gender can influence how people react to negative workplace behaviors and that supportive leadership can lessen these negative impacts (Young et al., 2021).

By concentrating on organizations in Balochistan, the study sheds light on issues shaped by the region's own culture and working conditions. The observations can help HR staff, managers, and those in leadership recognize the importance of maintaining professionalism in everyday workplace interactions. These findings can be used as a guide for limiting harmful conduct and building an environment where employees feel valued and supported.

Literature Review

Workplace Incivility

Workplace incivility or Rudeness at work isn't always loud or obvious. It can be as small as talking over someone in a meeting, brushing off an idea without a second thought, or making a sarcastic comment that cuts a little deeper than intended. Even skipping basic courtesies like not greeting a colleague can leave its mark. On their own, these things might seem too minor to matter, yet they add up over time and can quietly erode at how people feel and work together (Schilpzand et al., 2016). Back in (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) described this as an "incivility spiral." One small offense leads to another, and soon enough, negativity becomes part of the culture. Cooperation drops, trust fades, and the whole team feels it.

The Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018) offers one explanation. When people have to deal with constant low-level disrespect, it drains the mental and emotional energy they need for their jobs. Without that energy, it's harder to concentrate, stay patient, or care about the quality of the work. The personal toll is no less serious.

Regular exposure to this kind of behavior can leave someone feeling stressed, anxious, or completely burned out, which makes it even harder to work well with others (Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013).

According to (Spector & Zhou, 2014), people who are subjected to persistent rudeness tend to retreat, take the bare minimum of action, or react subtly and passively. Similarly, (Strongman, 2013) adds that when it's a boss who behaves this way, the damage is worse it breaks trust and leaves employees feeling cut off from their work and the people around them.

Incivility at work is often connected to other harmful behaviors such as social undermining and counterproductive actions, with each one making the others more likely. What starts as a simple rude comment or a dismissive gesture can easily grow into bigger problems, including poor communication and ongoing conflict. (Lim & Lee, 2011).

Although significant progress has been made in studying workplace incivility, some important questions remain. For instance, we still know relatively little about how incivility plays out in different cultural settings. In countries like Pakistan, where power distance and hierarchy are often more pronounced, the experience and consequences of incivility might look very different from those in Western contexts.

Social Undermining

Social undermining occurs when individuals intentionally engage in behaviors aimed at weakening or harming another person's social status, self-confidence, and work effectiveness (Duffy et al., 2012). It involves negative actions such as openly criticizing, spreading harmful gossip, withholding necessary information, and deliberately undermining a colleague's efforts. Researchers commonly employ Social Exchange Theory to understand why social undermining hurts employees. According to this theory, a workplace functions based on mutual trust, respect, and fair treatment. When someone undermines a colleague, it breaks this trust, causing the affected individual to feel unfairly treated, stressed, and less engaged (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2017).

Another theory, the Stressor Strain Framework, suggests that social undermining acts as a stressor that causes emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction (Carlson, Ferguson, Hunter, & Whitten, 2012). When people at work are repeatedly undermined, they usually end up feeling less happy and less content in their jobs. If coworkers or managers keep acting negatively toward them, it can slowly break down their confidence, making them feel like they are not good enough or not valued. This often leads to employees pulling back, losing their motivation, or not doing their best at work. Many times, those who experience this kind of treatment start to feel worse about their workplace, which might show up as missing more work or not trying as hard as they used to (Khan, Malik, & Shahzad, 2022). Studies in recent years have made it clear that social undermining affects whole organizations, not just individuals (Khan et al., 2022). When this type of behavior goes on for a long time, it can cause serious burnout and make people much less effective in their roles. Social undermining is also connected to other problems at work, like rudeness and different kinds of unhelpful or harmful behaviors. Often, people who are treated badly start acting out in similar ways themselves, creating a back-and-forth pattern that hurts how everyone works together.

Additionally, (Mustafa, Durrani, & Durrani, 2023) also points out that gender makes a difference in how employees react to undermining, showing that men and women can be affected in different ways. Because of this, it's important to keep gender in mind when looking for ways to deal with social undermining (Mustafa et al., 2023). Even though more research is being done on this topic, there are still things we don't fully know. Most studies have focused on what happens right away, like stress or job dissatisfaction, while

not as many have looked at how these experiences affect people in the long run or how things might differ in other cultures. Paying attention to local differences or factors like support from the organization and leadership style could help us find better ways to reduce the harm caused by social undermining (Khan et al., 2022).

Counterproductive Work Behavior

Counterproductive work behavior (CWB) refers to actions by employees that harm the organization or the people within it. These behaviors can range from relatively minor things like taking long breaks or wasting time, to more serious actions such as stealing, lying, damaging property, or purposely working slowly. Even behaviors like gossiping, spreading rumors, or being rude to coworkers fall under this category because they hurt the workplace environment (Spector & Fox, 2002).

Researchers see CWBs as a response to frustration, stress, or unfair treatment at work. One of the most well-known explanations is the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis, which says that when employees feel blocked or mistreated, they may become angry and act out in negative ways. Another helpful theory is the Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that when employees feel they're not being treated fairly, like being disrespected, overworked, or underpaid, they may stop giving their best effort and instead engage in behaviors that harm the organization (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Studies have shown that counterproductive work behaviors are much more common in workplaces where things like good leadership, support, and fairness are missing. When people don't feel supported or are treated unfairly, it can wear them down emotionally and make them feel less connected to their jobs. It's also important to remember that CWB not only affects the organization, but it can also harm the person who engages in it. These behaviors can lead to regret, guilt, conflict with others, or even losing one's job. In these situations, employees might stop paying attention to the quality of their work or, in some cases, act out against their coworkers or the organization itself. It's also worth noting that these behaviors not only hurt the company but can also have negative effects on the people doing them. Engaging in counterproductive behaviors can bring feelings of regret, guilt, tension with others, and even job loss. Over time, these actions can harm relationships at work and make the overall environment much less healthy (Griffin & Lopez, 2005). Research further suggests that some individuals are more prone to such behaviors because of their personality. Employees who have trouble coping with stress, are quick to anger, or feel resentment are at a higher risk of acting out in negative ways (Bruk-Lee & Spector, 2006). Still, even those who usually have good intentions might slip into these patterns if they are stuck in a toxic or unsupportive workplace.

The relationship between Workplace Incivility and Counterproductive Work Behavior

Researchers have paid close attention to how workplace incivility and counterproductive work behavior, or CWB, are connected. Workplace incivility includes things like being rude, disrespectful, or ignoring others' behaviors that go against the expected standards of respect at work. These actions are often subtle, like cutting someone off in a conversation, ignoring what others say, or using sarcasm, but over time, they can cause a lot of harm (Schilpzand et al., 2016). People who are treated this way at work often end up feeling disrespected, emotionally worn out, and less motivated, which can lead them to act in ways that are harmful to their workplace (Porath & Pearson, 2013).

Counterproductive work behavior, describes any deliberate action by an employee that harms the organization or the people working in it. This could be as simple as showing up late or skipping certain duties, or as serious as damaging tools, behaving aggressively, or quietly making it harder for others to do their jobs. When someone has to deal with

ongoing rudeness or dismissive behavior at work, it can slowly wear them down. Over time, that loss of emotional energy can push them to react sometimes in small, subtle ways, and other times in direct acts that reflect their frustration with how they've been treated (Taylor & Kluemper, 2012).

Scholars often explain this link is through what's known as the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. The idea is fairly straightforward people only have so much emotional and mental energy to work with. If that energy keeps getting drained by dealing with rudeness, dismissive remarks, or other subtle forms of disrespect, there's less left for staying positive or focused on their tasks (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Social Exchange Theory gives another perspective, emphasizing that workplace relationships are built on fairness and respect. If employees feel they are not being treated fairly or with respect, they may feel justified in breaking their own part of the "social contract," which can show up as counterproductive actions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Recent studies back up this connection (Liu et al., 2019) found that workplace incivility can cause burnout, making it more likely for employees to act out. Similarly (Malik & Pichler, 2024, Cortina et al., 2001) found that workplace incivility can cause burnout, making it more likely for employees to act out. While not every employee reacts the same way, being around constant incivility usually makes the work environment more stressful and frustrating. Even people who usually follow the rules and behave professionally may eventually start slipping into negative behaviors. The link between these issues shows why it is so important for organizations to support respectful communication and deal with even small acts of rudeness before they become bigger problems (Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001).

H1: There is a positive relationship between Workplace Incivility and Counterproductive Work Behavior.

The Relationship between Social Undermining and Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB)

Researchers have increasingly focused on how social undermining in the workplace may contribute to counterproductive work behaviors. Social undermining is when someone deliberately acts in ways that harm a coworker's reputation, self-confidence, or ability to do well on the job. When staff experience this kind of treatment, they often end up feeling threatened, disrespected, and emotionally worn out. This stress sometimes pushes people to behave in negative ways, such as showing up late, putting in less effort, gossiping, or even purposely making mistakes (Khan, Quratulain, & Crawshaw, 2013).

The Stressor-Emotion Model explains that social undermining acts as a source of stress at work, causing negative emotions like anger, frustration, or anxiety (Bruk-Lee & Spector, 2006). If workers do not find healthy ways to manage these feelings, they may respond with harmful actions on the job. For example, a person who is always belittled by a colleague might react by avoiding their duties, spreading rumors, or intentionally doing tasks incorrectly. The Social Exchange Theory adds that work relationships should be based on fairness and mutual respect. When employees feel that this balance is disturbed by social undermining, they might react by "breaking the contract" themselves, perhaps by acting against the company or their coworkers (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In other words, being mistreated makes people less likely to cooperate and more likely to act out.

Recent research supports this connection (Duffy et al., 2012) found ongoing social undermining, especially from a supervisor be a powerful trigger for harmful workplace behavior. They also found that employees who deal with frequent undermining often become emotionally drained and lose self-control, making them more likely to do things

that go against the organization. The way people respond to undermining can also depend on personal and workplace factors. Those with less emotional support or resilience may be especially sensitive to negative treatment. A workplace that ignores or tolerates toxic behaviors can make things even worse. Similarly, a toxic work culture where such behaviors are ignored or accepted can make the problem even worse.

A study by (Mustafa et al., 2023) points out that gender matters here, too. Men and women may react to undermining in different ways, which could change both how often and what type of counterproductive behaviors take place. This shows that it is important to pay attention to gender, as well as social and cultural factors, when trying to understand and address these issues in the workplace.

H2: There is a positive relationship between Social Undermining and Counterproductive Work Behavior.

Theoretical Framework

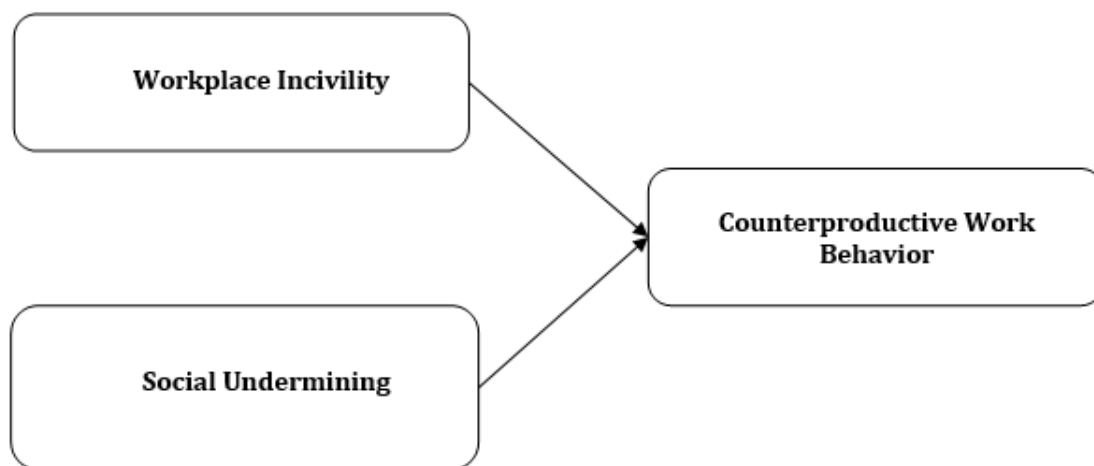


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Material and Methods

Research Design

This study employs a causal and quantitative research design. A cross-sectional approach was adopted to provide a snapshot of the variables of interest at a single point in time. While the design facilitates the identification of potential causal relationships, the cross-sectional nature of data collection limits the ability to establish causality definitively, as temporal sequencing cannot be verified.

Measures

Primary data were collected from a sample of 330 respondents across three higher education institutions located in Quetta City. A structured, closed-ended questionnaire was utilized for data collection. All measurement instruments were adapted from previously validated and reliable scales, ensuring the robustness and credibility of the constructs under investigation.

Workplace Incivility (WI)

We used a seven-item scale designed by (Cortina et al., 2001) to evaluate WI. A Likert-type scale was used to show agreement with each item, anchored by (1). Never, and

(5). Always. A specimen item is “How often in the past 30 days others at work put you down or were condescending to you.” Its Cronbach’s alpha was 0.896

Social Undermining (SU)

We used a thirteen-item scale designed by (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002) to evaluate Supervisor Social Undermining. Participants were asked to rate how often their immediate superiors exhibited a variety of behaviors. A Likert-type scale was used to show agreement with each item, anchored by (1). Never, and (6). Everyday. A specimen item is “How often has your supervisor intentionally hurt your feelings”. Its Cronbach’s alpha was 0.943.

Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB)

We evaluated CWB with a ten-item scale designed by (Fox & Spector, 2010). Items were measured, ranging from (1). Never to (5). Always, on a 5-point response scale. A specimen item is “How often have you purposely wasted your employer’s material on your present job?” Its Cronbach’s alpha was 0.935.

Sampling

The target population for this study comprised faculty members from public-sector universities in Quetta City, with a total population of 1,190 academic staff across three institutions: University of Balochistan (UoB) with 511 faculty members, Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIITEMS) with 450, and Sardar Bahadur Khan Women’s University (SBKWU) with 229. The required sample size was determined using Cochran’s (1977) formula for estimating population proportions with finite population correction (FPC), yielding a minimum required sample of 291. To ensure a robust dataset and account for potential non-responses or unusable entries, data were collected from 390 faculty members. After excluding 40 responses due to incompleteness or patterned answers (e.g., identical responses across all items), a total of 350 valid responses remained.

A stratified random sampling technique also referred to as proportional random sampling—was employed to ensure representativeness. This method involves dividing the population into mutually exclusive subgroups (strata) based on a shared characteristic (in this case, institutional affiliation), and then randomly sampling from each stratum in proportion to its size (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2000). To maintain proportional representation across the three institutions, an additional 20 responses were randomly removed (8 from UoB, 8 from BUIITEMS, and 4 from SBKWU), resulting in a final sample of 330 respondents. The sample distribution aligned with each university’s share of the total population: 142 from UoB, 125 from BUIITEMS, and 63 from SBKWU, accounting for approximately 27.7% of the total faculty population.

Research Analysis Tools

Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis have been applied to the data, and an analysis of the conceptual framework has been done on SPSS. Furthermore, Cronbach’s alpha was used to analyze the reliability of the research instruments.

Results and Discussion

The sample included participants from diverse demographic backgrounds in terms of age, gender, education, institutional affiliation, and professional tenure. In terms of age, the largest proportion of respondents (39.7%) were between 31 and 40 years old, followed by 36.1% who were aged 41 to 50. About 20.9% of the respondents were in the

51 to 60 age group, while only 3.3% were between 20 and 30 years old. Regarding gender distribution, the sample consisted of 58.5% male and 41.5% female faculty members. In terms of educational qualifications, the majority of participants held an MS or M.Phil. degree (59.1%), followed by 34.2% with a Ph.D., and a smaller portion (6.7%) with a bachelor's or master's degree. With respect to organizational affiliation, 40% of the respondents were from the University of Balochistan, 37.9% from BUITEMS, and 22.1% from SBKWU. As for tenure in the current profession, 38.8% of the faculty had between 6 and 10 years of experience, 34.5% had served for 11 to 15 years, 22.7% had more than 15 years of experience, and only 3.9% had been in the profession for 1 to 5 years.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlation Matrix.

	Workplace Incivility	Social Undermining	Counterproductive Work Behavior
Workplace Incivility	.896		
Social Undermining	.557**	.943	
Counterproductive Work Behavior	.559**	.570**	.935
Mean	3.8160	3.7263	3.6618
Standard Deviation	.88519	.93141	.89856

Note: * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$

Table 1 presents the results of the Pearson correlation analysis, along with the mean scores, standard deviations, and internal consistency reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha) for each of the study variables. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients, indicated diagonally within the matrix, reflect the reliability of the measurement scales used for workplace incivility, social undermining, and counterproductive work behavior. The results demonstrate high internal consistency for all three constructs, with Cronbach's alpha values of .896 for workplace incivility, .943 for social undermining, and .935 for counterproductive work behavior—exceeding the generally accepted threshold of .70, indicating that the scales are reliable.

The mean values and standard deviations for the study variables were as follows: workplace incivility ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.885$), social undermining ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.931$), and counterproductive work behavior ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.898$). These values suggest relatively high perceptions of the respective constructs among the respondents.

The correlation analysis revealed statistically significant and positive relationships among all variables. Specifically, workplace incivility was positively correlated with social undermining ($r = .557$, $p < .01$) and counterproductive work behavior ($r = .559$, $p < .01$). In line with the theoretical framework, social undermining also showed a significant positive correlation with counterproductive work behavior ($r = .570$, $p < .01$). These findings support the hypothesized associations among the constructs and indicate that higher levels of incivility and social undermining are associated with increased engagement in counterproductive behaviors.

Table 2
Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

Hypothesis	Coefficient (β)	SE	t	R ²	F	Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
1. WI→CWB	.356**	.052	6.85	.41	113.4**	.254	.458
2. SU→CWB	.361**	.049	7.31			.264	.458

Note: * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$. SE = Standard Error, WI = Workplace Incivility
SU = Social Undermining. CWB=Counterproductive Work Behavior

To test the proposed hypotheses regarding the impact of workplace incivility and social undermining on counterproductive work behavior (CWB), a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using unstandardized coefficients. The overall regression model was statistically significant, accounting for approximately 41% of the variance in counterproductive work behavior ($R^2 = .41$, $F(2, 327) = 113.4$, $p < .01$), indicating a meaningful predictive relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Hypothesis 1, which proposed that workplace incivility (WI) positively predicts counterproductive work behavior (CWB), was supported by the analysis. The unstandardized regression coefficient for workplace incivility was $\beta = 0.356$, $SE = 0.052$, $t = 6.85$, $p < .01$. This result implies that for each one-unit increase in perceived workplace incivility, the level of counterproductive work behavior increases by 0.356 units, holding social undermining constant. The 95% confidence interval for this coefficient ranged from 0.254 to 0.458, confirming the precision and reliability of the estimate. This finding supports the hypothesis and aligns with the theoretical expectation that incivility in the workplace fosters negative behavioral outcomes among employees.

Hypothesis 2, which posited a positive relationship between social undermining (SU) and counterproductive work behavior, was also supported. The unstandardized coefficient for social undermining was $\beta = 0.361$, $SE = 0.049$, $t = 7.31$, $p < .01$. This indicates that for each one-unit increase in perceived social undermining, counterproductive work behavior increases by 0.361 units, assuming workplace incivility remains constant. The 95% confidence interval for this coefficient was between 0.264 and 0.458, further confirming statistical significance and the strength of the effect.

These findings provide strong empirical support for both hypotheses, suggesting that both workplace incivility and social undermining are significant positive predictors of counterproductive work behavior among university faculty members. The results reinforce the notion that exposure to negative interpersonal dynamics in the workplace significantly contributes to undesirable employee behavior, highlighting the need for institutions to address such toxic work environments proactively.

Discussion

From the evidence gathered in this study, it's clear that both workplace incivility and social undermining have a strong influence on counterproductive work behavior among university faculty in Balochistan. This pattern fits well with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which basically says that when people keep facing unpleasant or hostile social situations, their mental and emotional reserves slowly get drained. Once that happens, it becomes easier for frustration to spill over into actions that hurt the organization or the people in it (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Facing social undermining at work whether it's through gossip, being cut off from important updates, or having one's reputation quietly undermined can turn the workplace into a place people dread. Over time, such treatment doesn't just sting in the moment; it builds into frustration that pushes some to withdraw from their peers or, in certain cases, push back in disruptive ways. When this kind of behavior becomes routine, many employees end up engaging in counterproductive acts, either to shield themselves or to subtly retaliate (Duffy et al., 2002).

At times, low-key acts of rudeness on the job, like talking over someone, ignoring a colleague's idea, or slipping a sarcastic remark into a conversation, don't look serious at first. However, these actions can get in the way of how well people work together and may leave others feeling tired or discouraged, as described by (Schilpzand et al., 2016) disrespectful behavior in the workplace often makes it difficult for people to work well

together and can leave individuals feeling mentally and emotionally drained. When this kind of stress builds up, it sometimes leads people to gossip, put in less effort, or even make mistakes on purpose. In this research, there was a clear link between incivility and counterproductive work behavior, suggesting that even small acts of rudeness can cause real and lasting problems in university settings.

The workplace atmosphere in Balochistan is shaped to a great extent by cultural expectations and social norms. People here tend to value harmony in the group and show a lot of respect for those in charge. Because of that, if someone feels mistreated at work, they might not want to bring it up openly. Instead, they often keep those feelings to themselves, which sometimes ends up coming out in their work as less effort or other negative actions. As (Lim & Lee, 2011) showed that in places where workers don't feel they can question authority, they might not confront problems directly, but instead miss work more often or simply do the bare minimum. For this reason, it's really important for HR policies to fit the local culture and be aware of how power is handled within organizations. There's also a lot to consider when it comes to how people's personalities and backgrounds affect the way they respond to problems at work. For instance, (Meier & Spector, 2013) found that those who can manage their emotions well tend to handle rude or undermining behavior better than more sensitive people. In Balochistan, traditional ideas about gender still play a big part in workplace life, so men and women often react to issues in different ways. This makes it a good area for future research. Another thing worth mentioning is that people who have worked at the same place for a long time might look at a difficult work environment differently. As noted by (Babar, Durrani, & Lateef, 2022), these employees sometimes see tough times as temporary and stay optimistic, especially if they have benefits like higher salaries or less demanding workloads.

Conclusion

This study makes it clear that when faculty members at universities in Balochistan face rude behavior or feel undermined by others at work, they are more likely to act in ways that are not good for the organization. Whether the mistreatment is direct or more hidden, it truly affects how people behave and how well the university runs. Because of this, it is really important for universities to make sure that everyone feels respected and safe. Ignoring these issues doesn't just harm the people involved; it can also make it harder for the university to succeed. If universities focus on good HR practices, help leaders learn how to support their teams, and put clear rules in place, they can lower the chances of these problems and make the campus a better place for everyone.

Practical Implications

The findings underscore the need for university leadership and HR departments to proactively address workplace mistreatment to safeguard faculty well-being and institutional effectiveness. By fostering a respectful work culture, providing targeted training, and establishing robust support mechanisms, universities can mitigate the resource depletion that fuels counterproductive behaviors. Such interventions not only improve individual performance and collaboration but also enhance the overall academic reputation and operational efficiency of higher education institutions.

Recommendations

Public-sector universities in Quetta should adopt integrated policies to prevent workplace incivility and social undermining. Key measures include clear conduct guidelines, leadership and faculty training on respectful communication, and confidential reporting systems for timely intervention. Regular climate assessments and well-being programs can help restore depleted psychological resources, thereby reducing counterproductive behaviors and enhancing institutional performance.

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