



## Dispositional mindfulness buffers against incivility outcomes: A moderated mediation model

Rima C. Tarraf<sup>a,\*</sup>, Matthew J.W. McLarnon<sup>b</sup>, Joan E. Finegan<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Health Systems Evaluation and Evidence, Alberta Health Services, Canada

<sup>b</sup> Department of Psychology, Oakland University, United States of America

<sup>c</sup> Department of Psychology, University of Western Ontario, Canada

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Workplace incivility  
Stress  
Forgiveness  
Mindfulness  
Moderated mediation

### ABSTRACT

Rude treatment at work can reduce employees' well-being, underscoring the need for ways to offset negative outcomes. The current study explored the role of dispositional mindfulness as a buffering mechanism that may mitigate the negative relation between incivility and well-being, and promote forgiveness toward the perpetrator via decreased rumination and negative affect. A cross-sectional sample of employed individuals ( $n = 288$ ) completed self-report measures of incivility, dispositional mindfulness, negative affect, rumination, stress, and forgiveness. Results of moderated mediation analyses showed that the mindfulness facets of non-judging and acting with awareness buffered against stress and promoted forgiveness via decreased negative affect. Additionally, being able to describe one's feelings, a facet of mindfulness, buffered against stress and promoted forgiveness via decreased rumination. Results provide support for adopting a multidimensional framework of dispositional mindfulness, as distinct facets differentially predicted outcomes. Non-judging, acting with awareness, and describing may serve as resources against the experience of rude treatment.

### 1. Introduction

Experiencing rude behavior from colleagues, supervisors, or subordinates is a common occurrence. Workplace incivility, or rude behavior at work, is a form of interpersonal mistreatment consisting of three characteristics: violation of workplace norms and respect, ambiguous intent to harm, and low intensity (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Examples include talking down to others, not listening when somebody is talking to you, and ignoring someone. One of the major outcomes of incivility is decreased well-being. Employees commonly report lower job satisfaction, greater turnover intentions, and higher burnout after experiencing incivility (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). Workplace incivility is also associated with embarrassment and greater perceived job insecurity (Hershcovis, Ogunfowora, Reich, & Christie, 2017). Consequences of incivility can also extend beyond the workplace; for example, Lim and Lee (2011) reported that incivility from one's supervisor was positively associated with work-to-family conflict.

Due to the many negative effects of incivility, researchers have explored ways to buffer against them. The current study further contributes to this endeavor by investigating the moderating role of dispositional mindfulness facets (defined below). Specifically, we examined whether dispositional mindfulness mitigates stress via

reductions in negative affect and rumination. Furthermore, previous researchers have often focused on negative reactions to incivility such as retaliation and/or revenge. But recent calls have been made to consider other potential reactions like forgiveness or reconciliation (Hershcovis & Cameron, 2011). As such, we also considered how mindfulness might promote forgiveness as a response to incivility.

#### 1.1. Theoretical background

The outcomes associated with incivility are often understood through resource-based theories like conservation of resource theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989). Drawing upon COR, incivility is considered a stressor that depletes employees' resources, and results in strain, which can take the form of increased distress and impaired functioning.

A crucial facet of COR is the importance of gaining resources and/or reducing stressors. Accordingly, research has explored moderating variables that can buffer against incivility. Moderators can serve protective functions for individuals experiencing incivility, which can allow for effective coping and reduced stress (Chen et al., 2013). In this study, we expected that several of the facets of dispositional mindfulness would moderate the negative effects of incivility.

\* Corresponding author at: Health Systems Evaluation and Evidence, Alberta Health Services, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

E-mail address: [RimaC.Tarraf@ahs.ca](mailto:RimaC.Tarraf@ahs.ca) (R.C. Tarraf).

## 1.2. Dispositional mindfulness

Dispositional mindfulness (hereafter referred to as mindfulness) is an inherent tendency to pay attention to and accept the present moment (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Rau & Williams, 2016). This is conceptualized as a trait that varies in the general population and is separate from cultivated (i.e., trained) mindfulness, which is more focused on skills and practice. It is necessary to distinguish between dispositional and cultivated mindfulness as failure to do so may confound operationalization, measurement, and interpretation of findings (see Grossman, 2011; Van Dam et al., 2018).

Mindfulness emphasizes the importance of awareness for maintaining well-being by helping individuals self-regulate. Employees who are mindful may respond non-aggressively or choose to exercise non-reactivity to their incivility experience, which might foster more positive responses (Peters, Eisenlohr-Moul, & Smart, 2016). Mindful individuals may feel less distress after experiencing incivility because they would dwell less on negative past experiences.

Past research has shown that mindfulness can reduce stress in the workplace, improve well-being, and increase engagement (e.g., Roche, Haar, & Luthans, 2014). Additionally, Long and Christian (2015) found that mindfulness buffered against experiences of injustice by reducing rumination and negative emotions. A limitation of this research, however, is that only a broad and unitary conceptualization of mindfulness was considered. Unidimensional measures of mindfulness may underestimate the complexity of the mindfulness construct (Grossman, 2011; Rau & Williams, 2016). Adopting a multi-faceted approach to the study of mindfulness might allow for a more nuanced understanding of its buffering role. Theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that mindfulness is a multidimensional construct (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006; Bishop et al., 2004) and recent calls have encouraged researchers to investigate relations at the facet level (Eisenlohr-Moul, Walsh, Charnigo, Lynam, & Baer, 2012; Rau & Williams, 2016).

Baer et al. (2006) discuss five components of mindfulness. *Observing* refers to focusing attention on external and internal experiences as they occur. *Describing* represents individuals' ability to label their experiences (e.g., worry, anger). Recognizing these experiences, but not attaching any value to them, reflects *non-judgment*. Individuals high in non-judgment do not blame themselves for having negative emotions or cognitions. *Acting with awareness* refers to being aware of the present moment, and functions to reduce anxieties about the past and future. Finally, *non-reactivity* refers to not being consumed by passing thoughts and emotions.

Individual facets of mindfulness have shown to differentially predict outcomes. For instance, Peters et al. (2016) found that only non-judging attenuated the relationship between rejection sensitivity and negative affect. Similarly, Ciesla, Reilly, Dickson, Emanuel, and Updegraff (2012) reported that only non-judging and non-reactivity were related to lower stress among adolescents.

Accordingly, some mindfulness facets may be more relevant in the context of workplace incivility. For example, non-judging may buffer against negative outcomes more strongly than observing. This is because individuals who are non-judging tend to accept their experiences, thoughts, and emotions without being self-critical. This implies that they would be less likely to get caught in a negative thinking pattern, resulting in less negative affect. In contrast, individuals demonstrating observing would merely attend to an uncivil event, but this would not be enough to foster adaptive functioning.

## 1.3. A moderated mediation model of dispositional mindfulness and stress

One reason why workplace incivility may be stressful is because of increased rumination and negative affect (Park, Fritz, & Jex, 2018). The facets of mindfulness, however, may mitigate these negative effects by targeting the psychological processes that cause rumination and

negative affect.

Negative affect, rumination, and stress mostly stem from maladaptive evaluative reactions (i.e., being unable to re-focus negative thoughts and feelings). This suggests that acting with awareness, non-judging, describing, and non-reactivity may help mitigate the negative outcomes of incivility. This is because individuals might be more focused on attending to stimuli in an accepting way. When people experience incivility, they may brood over the incident and experience negative emotions, which may translate into higher stress and a higher likelihood of retaliation against the perpetrator. If facets of mindfulness allow individuals to experience less rumination and negative affect, then this will in turn lower stress and increase the likelihood of forgiveness.

For instance, when individuals can label and express cognitive and emotional experiences (i.e., the facet of *describing*), they avoid getting caught in a negative thinking pattern. Individuals are less likely to be overwhelmed and consumed by an incivility experience and can continue with other activities (Baer et al., 2006; Pepping, O'Donovan, & Davis, 2013). Similarly, by refraining from being self-critical (*non-judging*) after an incivility experience, individuals may perceive the event impartially, rather than as a personal attack. Even if self-critical thoughts do result, they are temporary, such that individuals are not consumed by them (Peters et al., 2016). Individuals high on *acting with awareness* maintain awareness of the present moment without getting distracted by re-playing the incivility event or worrying about what it signals about their belonging or job security (Hershcovis et al., 2017). Finally, individuals high on the mindfulness facet of *non-reactivity* can allow thoughts and emotions to enter and leave awareness without dwelling on or resisting them (Baer et al., 2006). Following an incivility experience, individuals allow negative thoughts and emotions to enter and leave awareness without responding to them in a maladaptive way.

**Hypothesis 1.** Dispositional mindfulness facets (non-judging, acting with awareness, describing, and non-reactivity)<sup>1</sup> will moderate the indirect effect of incivility on stress through a) ruminative thoughts, and b) negative affect, such that the indirect effects are weaker (stronger) when mindfulness is higher (weaker; see Fig. 1).

## 1.4. A moderated mediation model of dispositional mindfulness and forgiveness

To date, the process of forgiving the incivility perpetrator has received little empirical attention. Since mindfulness can mitigate negative reactions, it may also promote positive ones. Forgiveness is a prosocial, positive attitudinal change toward a perpetrator (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). Forgiving entails the victim attempting to reinterpret the offense and actions of the perpetrator (Aquino, Grover, Goldman, & Folger, 2003). Forgiving also involves reducing ruminations about the incident.

In the case of incivility, a victim can forgive the perpetrator by reinterpreting the perpetrator's behavior as an unintentional slight, instead of an intentional transgression, or by providing situational attributions for the perpetrator's behavior. Thus, on a cognitive level, mindfulness can act as a resource to promote forgiveness through, for example, non-reactivity or non-judgment. Inasmuch, following an uncivil encounter, thoughts and feelings about the experience can enter and leave awareness without the victim ruminating, thereby increasing the likelihood of forgiveness.

<sup>1</sup> We focus our predictions (Hypotheses 1 and 2) on the facets of non-judging, acting with awareness, describing, and non-reactivity. The observing facet refers to the tendency for individuals to notice experiences, without regard to the quality of the attention, which we contend would not attenuate incivility outcomes. Nevertheless, we measured observing and analyzed it for exploratory purposes.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/11028793>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/11028793>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)