



# Family incivility, emotional exhaustion at work, and being a good soldier: The buffering roles of waypower and willpower

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## ABSTRACT

This study unpacks the relationship between family incivility and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), suggesting a mediating role of emotional exhaustion and moderating roles of waypower and willpower, two critical dimensions of hope. Three-wave data from employees and their peers in Pakistani organizations show that an important reason that family incivility diminishes OCB is that employees become emotionally over-extended by their work. Employees' waypower and willpower buffer this harmful effect of family incivility on emotional exhaustion though, such that this effect is mitigated when the two personal resources are high. The study also reveals the presence of moderated mediation, such that the indirect effect of family incivility on OCB through emotional exhaustion is weaker for employees high in waypower and willpower. For organizations, this study accordingly identifies a key mechanism by which family adversity can undermine voluntary behaviors; this mechanism is less forceful among employees who are more hopeful though.

## 1. Introduction

Previous studies emphasize the need to examine ways to stimulate employees' propensity to undertake organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), positive work behaviors that are not required by formal job descriptions, often referred to as being a "good soldier" (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Such behaviors benefit both organizations and employees, because when employees engage in voluntary work efforts, they improve their organizations' well-being and competitive advantage (Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009) and also improve their own position, in that their performance appraisals often are based on such efforts (Lievens, De Corte, & Schollaert, 2008). Although OCB sometimes entails helping behaviors targeted at individual members, which can contribute to organizational well-being indirectly (Deckop, Cirka, & Andersson, 2003), the focus of the current study is on voluntary work behaviors that contribute to the organization *directly*, such as work attendance above the norm, voluntary adherence to informal rules that increase organizational effectiveness, and a strict focus on job-related issues instead of personal matters during work hours (Spitzmuller, Van Dyne, & Ilies, 2008; Williams & Anderson, 1991). In light of the positive outcomes of OCB, previous studies examine a plethora of enabling factors, such as transformational leadership (López-Domínguez, Enache, Sallan, & Simo,

2013), perceived organizational justice (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001), constructive feedback (Sommer & Kulkarni, 2012), and positive job attitudes (Bowling, Wang, & Li, 2012).

Despite the many positive consequences of OCB, such behavior does not emerge automatically but instead requires significant personal investments of time and energy (Quinn, Spreitzer, & Lam, 2012; Trougakos, Beal, Cheng, Hideg, & Zweig, 2015). Notable in this regard is that employees' exposure to stressful situations may deplete their energy resources that otherwise would be available for OCB (Hobfoll, 1989). Accordingly, previous studies show how negative work conditions, such as role stress (Eatough, Chang, Miloslavic, & Johnson, 2011; Rodell & Judge, 2009), work overload and interpersonal conflict (Pooja, De Clercq, & Belausteguigoitia, 2016), despotic leadership (Naseer, Raja, Syed, Donia, & Darr, 2016), and psychological contract violations (Priesemuth & Taylor, 2016), might steer employees away from OCB. Relatively less research investigates how OCB can be inhibited by stressful situations *outside* the workplace though, with the exception of research on the harmful effect of family-to-work conflict (Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011). This oversight is important; to the extent that hardships experienced at home negatively interfere with organizational functioning, employees' propensity to allocate resources to voluntary activities may be thwarted (Leiter & Durup, 1996). Discretionary work efforts that are not formally required usurp significant

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energy resources (Podsakoff et al., 2009), so investigating how and when energy-depleting family conditions might turn employees away from OCB is critical for both scholars and practitioners.

A potential source of stress from outside the workplace is family incivility, or the extent to which employees are victims of rude and disrespectful behaviors by other family members (Lim & Tai, 2014). Family incivility can come in different shapes, such as when people are ridiculed by family members, receive demeaning remarks, or are simply ignored. Research attention to family incivility is scarce, yet its presence is a significant concern for many organizations, due to its tendency to compromise productive work outcomes (Bai, Lin, & Wang, 2016; Lim & Tai, 2014). Contrary to incivility that takes place within the workplace—which is governed by written procedures and sanctions—incivility at home tends to be more covert and implicit and therefore particularly emotionally draining for employees (Lim & Tai, 2014). Previous studies address how family incivility might undermine job performance (Lim & Tai, 2014) and spur deviant work behavior (Bai et al., 2016) but not how this personal stressor might steer employees away from OCB or which factors explain or influence this process. This study seeks to address these gaps.

In particular, we propose that family incivility leads to lower OCB because the precarious situation makes employees feel emotionally overextended (Maslach, 1993). This emotional exhaustion then functions as a key mechanism through which the family-induced stressor reduces OCB. We also posit that employees' waypower and willpower can function as buffers against the emotional exhaustion that results from family incivility (Hobfoll, 2001). These two personal resources are critical components of employees' sense of hope, reflecting their propensity to devise different pathways to achieve work goals (waypower) and their agency or determination to invest necessary efforts to achieve a goal (willpower) (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007; Peterson & Luthans, 2003; Rego, Machado, Leal, & Cunha, 2009; Snyder, 2000). To the extent that employees can draw on waypower and willpower, the harmful effects of family incivility on emotional exhaustion should be mitigated, with positive consequences for their OCB.

To anchor these theoretical arguments, we rely on conservation of resources (COR) theory, which postulates that employee behavior is driven by the desire to protect or maintain existing resource bases (Hobfoll, 1989). Because exposure to resource-draining situations depletes employees' energy reservoirs, they are motivated to avoid future resource losses by avoiding behaviors that do not seem absolutely necessary (Hobfoll, 2001; Priesemuth & Taylor, 2016). Similarly, if employees face adversity at home, in the form of family incivility, their motivation to prevent further resource loss might steer them away from undertaking work activities that are not formally required by their job descriptions. Moreover, COR theory predicts an important *buffering* role of employees' personal resources, which can help them cope better with situations that cause stress and are resource-draining (Abbas, Raja, Darr, & Bouckenoghe, 2014; Witt & Carlson, 2006). Consistent with this notion that depleted energy resources due to stress-inducing situations can be compensated for by personal resources (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), we propose that employees' waypower and willpower should mitigate the positive relationship between family incivility and emotional exhaustion.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, we seek to make several contributions with this study. First, previous research generally has devoted more attention to the positive factors that stimulate OCB, rather than to how resource-

<sup>1</sup> Formally, we focus on the roles of waypower and willpower in buffering the relationship between family incivility and emotional exhaustion, not the relationship between emotional exhaustion and OCB. The positive energy associated with these two personal resources should be especially potent in preventing stress that originates in one domain (family) from spilling over to another domain (workplace), rather than having an impact on how employees respond to the outcome of this spillover effect, that is, when they already have depleted energy resources at work (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002).

draining, negative factors may prevent employees' OCB. In the few studies that include negative factors, the focus is mostly on the workplace instead of the family sphere (e.g., Eatough et al., 2011; Pooja et al., 2016). In contrast, we investigate the effect of employees' exposure to rude and disrespectful behaviors in their homes, a critical stressor that resides outside the workplace and has not been explored in relation to OCB (Lim & Tai, 2014). The results then may provide deeper insights into how employees' experience of adversity at home makes them less inclined to undertake voluntary behaviors at work, which otherwise could contribute to organizational effectiveness.

Second, we postulate that an important reason that family incivility leads to diminished OCB lies in a sense of being emotionally overextended at work (Maslach, 1993). In line with COR theory, employees' exposure to adverse family circumstances should make them reluctant to engage in voluntary work behaviors, due to their energy depletion and associated propensity to *conserve* resources in their work efforts (Hobfoll, 2001; McCarthy, Trougakos, & Cheng, 2016). Previous studies show that employees' exposure to emotional exhaustion can function as a causal mechanism that connects adverse work situations, such as unfair organizational treatment (Cole, Bernerth, Walter, & Holt, 2010) or abusive supervision (Aryee, Sun, Chen, & Debrah, 2008), to work outcomes. However, we know of no investigation of its potential mediation of the relationship between family incivility and OCB. In this study, we propose that the negative influence of family incivility on voluntary work efforts may operate through employees' sense of being emotionally drained at work. Moreover, by focusing on the outcome of OCB, a manifestation of *extra-role* job performance (Williams & Anderson, 1991), we extend the scope of previous research that has considered how psychological distress mediates the relationship between family incivility and in-role job performance (Bai et al., 2016).

Third, we investigate how employees' waypower and willpower, two personal resources that underpin their sense of hope (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991), may mitigate energy depletion due to family incivility, which would reduce the likelihood that they engage in OCB. Conversely, in the absence of these two personal resources, family incivility may create a particular sense of energy depletion and thus lower OCB. People who are more hopeful are better able to cope with stressful life events, such as the death of a family member (Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2006) or caring for a chronically ill child (Horton & Wallander, 2001). Organizational research similarly notes that psychological capital, of which hope is a key component, mitigates the harmful effects of dysfunctional organizational politics on employee attitudes and performance (Abbas et al., 2014). Our specific focus on waypower and willpower, the two underlying dimensions of hope, is informed by the argument that *each* individually may protect employees against the harmful effects of stressful situations (such as family incivility), yet previous studies tend to lump these two dimensions together. That is, even if extant research indicates that waypower and willpower represent two distinct dimensions of hope (e.g., Babyak, Snyder, & Yoshinobu, 1993; Peterson & Luthans, 2003), their individual effects are typically acknowledged post hoc (Rego et al., 2009; Rego, Sousa, Marques, & Cunha, 2012). We instead develop separate hypotheses for how these personal resources mitigate the impact of family incivility on emotional exhaustion. In a more general sense, our focus on the moderating role of waypower and willpower extends previous research that has examined the buffering effect of other personal resources, such as core self-evaluation (Lim & Tai, 2014) and emotional regulation (Bai et al., 2016), on the negative outcomes of family incivility.

Fourth, previous studies recognize that OCB is culturally sensitive (Blakely, Srivastava, & Moorman, 2005; Chan & Snape, 2013) and call for investigations of this key employee behavior in diverse settings (Felfe, Yan, & Six, 2008; Pooja et al., 2016; Rurkkhum & Bartlett, 2012). Compared with many Western countries, Pakistan is characterized by uncertainty avoidance, in that people tend to avoid risk and might be particularly sensitive to the experience of resource-draining, stressful family conditions (Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, for our empirical study

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