

**CAPITAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY, ISLAMABAD**



**Impact of Despotic Leadership on Workplace
Incivility: Mediating Role of Workload and
Moderating Role of Distributive Justice**

by

Muhammad Ahsan Ali

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the
degree of Master of Science

in the

**Faculty of Management & Social Sciences
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You deserve all the praise, my entire family, because your role is the main reason why I am who I am. Finally, may ALLAH shield us with His protection and grant you all a healthy and long life.

AMEEN ALLAH



CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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Alhamdulillah For every there is no any math behind the miracles, just pure tawaqul on ALLAH; at every turn in life, where there are trials, the help of ALLAH is always present as well.

Nothing ever is bad; Nothing ever is good. Time is Magic Nothing is Forever

Some words to my supervisor Dr. S. M. M. Raza Naqvi

The way you speak,

The way you look,

The spark in your eyes,

The way you smile,

The brilliance of your polymath mind,

Each of these is a masterpiece in itself,

And finally, may ALLAH grant him a long and healthy life while keeping his shadow over us.

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(Muhammad Ahsan Ali)

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between despotic leadership (DL) and workplace incivility (WPI) within the higher education sector of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Specifically, it explores the mediating role of workload and the moderating role of distributive justice in this relationship. Grounded in the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, this research extends existing literature by elucidating how resource depletion and accumulation shape employee behaviour. A quantitative survey-based approach was employed, gathering responses from 381 employees. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS 22, utilizing reliability, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), ANOVA, descriptive statistics, correlation, mediation, and moderation analyses to test the proposed relationships. Findings indicate that despotic leadership significantly contributes to workplace incivility, primarily through increased workload. However, distributive justice serves as a mitigating factor, attenuating the adverse effects of workload on workplace incivility. The results confirm the mediating role of workload and the negative moderating influence of distributive justice. These insights underscore the necessity for organizational leadership to adopt more equitable and ethical management practices. Additionally, human resource policies should emphasize fairness and actively address complaints related to unfair treatment. Future research may explore cognitive dissonance as a mediator and psychological capital as a moderator to further enrich the understanding of these dynamics.

Keywords: despotic Leadership, Workplace Incivility, Workload, Distributive Justice, moderated mediation.

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Abbreviations

AMOS	Analysis of Moment
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
DL	Despotic Leadership
WL	Workload
DJ	Distributive Justice
IFI	Incremental Fit Index
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Index
WPI	Workplace Incivility

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Leadership is key and plays a significant role in shaping organizational success (Bass & Bass, 2009). Effective leadership promotes a process of beneficial social significance, which maximizes employee effort and dedication, benefiting both the organization and its employees (Haque, Nair, & Kucukaltan, 2019). Leaders must be able to influence subordinates to work towards the organization's objectives. This field has historically been idealized, focusing on the positive impact of leadership for followers and organizations while ignoring/neglecting its dark sides Schilling (2009). The present research has begun to examine the potential negative effects of leadership (Naseer, Raja, Syed, Donia, & Darr, 2016).

Leadership style plays a crucial role in shaping employee performance, particularly in Eastern countries where the "rule by man" approach, where authority is more personalized and central to decision-making, is more prevalent. Much of the research in these regions focuses on how good leadership can help organizations succeed (Nauman, Zheng, & Basit, 2021). However, there is less research on the negative side of leadership (Islam, Parray, & Shah, 2024), even though these negative behaviors are often more common in Eastern countries because of the strong power distance in these cultures (De Clercq, Fatima, & Jahanzeb, 2021). Negative leadership styles such as abusive, toxic, autocratic, and exploitative leadership have been identified (Islam et al., 2024), with despotic leadership being the

most harmful. Despotic leadership involves leaders who demand complete obedience, hold total power over their subordinates, and mistreat them (Mukarram, Hussain, & Khan, 2021). Although its harmful, despotic leadership is still under-researched, particularly in management and psychology, especially in countries with high power distance like Pakistan (Chaudhary & Islam, 2023).

Despotic leaders are often self-centered and unethical, putting their own interests ahead of their employees' well-being. Such leaders may manipulate their workers, lie, and even engage in dishonest behavior (Nauman et al., 2021). The financial costs of despotic leadership are huge, with estimates showing it costs \$23.8 billion each year and affects 13.6% of workers in the United States (Albashiti, Hamid, & Aboramadan, 2021). This shows that despotic leaders care more about their own gain than about their employees or organizations (Thoroughgood, Sawyer, Padilla, & Lunsford, 2018; Y. Zhang & Xie, 2017). In countries like Pakistan, where power distance and collectivism are high, employees often feel they must obey their leaders without question, and cultural norms accept power differences. Many workers in Pakistan also feel forced to put up with these conditions due to poverty and high unemployment. Due to these cultural values, employees in Eastern countries may tolerate despotic leadership (X. Zhou, Rasool, Yang, & Asghar, 2021). This shows that it's important to understand the harmful effects of despotic leadership in countries like Pakistan (Saher, Masih, & Raju, 2021). This study looks at how despotic leadership impacts workplace incivility in the higher education sector in Pakistan's Islamabad-Rawalpindi region.

Despotic leadership is characterized by authoritarianism and dominating behavior, which creates a stressful work environment by increasing pressure, micromanagement, and unrealistic demands. It is a style of leadership in which the leader is strict and overly controlling and doesn't care about employees' resources (Raza, Imran, & Hadi, 2023a; Naseer et al., 2016; House & Howell, 1992). These traits can potentially harm workers, increasing the risk of information distortion, manipulation, and other types of corruption within organizations (U. Raja, Haq, De Clercq, & Azeem, 2020).

The notion of "despotic leadership" is distinct since it only describes a particularly harmful form and pattern of exploitative, authoritarian, and dominating behavior

(Tepper, 2007; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Workers who are subjected to despotic leadership frequently feel high levels of stress, discontent, and emotional strain; this eventually results in emotional exhaustion, a crucial element of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

This leadership style, while clearly linked to negative employee outcomes, triggers complex behavioral responses. As Breckler (1984) notes, three things make up an attitude: conduct, affect, and cognition. Cognition refers to mental processes based on previous experiences, affect reflects the psychological aspect, and behavioral refers to the inclination to act in a specific way. These components interact with workplace stimuli, and together they shape employee responses, making it essential to consider the affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of attitude when analysing how despotic leadership influences employee behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000).

Workplace incivility is the result of stress and frustration from excessive workloads. It is a form of low-level misbehavior that breaks the norms of mutual respect (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Incivility can come from leaders, colleagues and subordinates, and it easily spreads throughout the organization, reducing trust, teamwork, and employee morale, ultimately affecting workplace environment (Emmanuel & Das, 2024; C. Porath & Pearson, 2013). Workplace incivility is a type of low-intensity deviant behavior that violates norms of mutual respect. It is characterized by subtle, often ambiguous, actions that may or may not be intended to harm others. Examples include behaviors such as rudeness, disrespect, ignoring or excluding coworkers, or undermining colleagues' contributions. Though less overt than bullying or harassment, Incivility can have catastrophic consequences for both individuals and organizations. Incivility can lead to job dissatisfaction, emotional exhaustion, and eventually increased employee turnover (Laschinger & Read, 2016). Furthermore, workplace incivility can lead to more serious types of workplace negativity, which contributes to a toxic work environment. This form of deviant behavior is often cyclical, with incivility begetting more incivility as employees retaliate or react negatively to being treated disrespectfully (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). Workplace incivility refers to low-level behaviors that can negatively impact others, even if there's no

clear intention to cause harm. These can include things like making rude or dismissive comments, ignoring someone's ideas, giving them the silent treatment, or even yelling or insulting them (Blau & Andersson, 2005). While similar to microaggressions and discrimination, incivility specifically involves breaking the unwritten rules of respect and politeness in the workplace (Smith & Griffiths, 2022). These behaviors can come from different people, including supervisors, coworkers, or clients (Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Magley, & Nelson, 2017). Studies reveal almost all employees in North America experience some form of workplace incivility, which highlights how common and concerning the issue is (C. Porath & Pearson, 2013).

Although workplace incivility is often seen as mild mistreatment, research over the years has shown that it can have serious long-term effects on employees' health and well-being (Chris et al., 2022; He, Walker, Payne, & Miner, 2021; Lim & Cortina, 2005). The impact of incivility, however, can vary depending on individual and workplace factors, meaning that not all employees be affected in the same way (Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013). Many studies have explored how even small disrespectful actions can lead to larger, more complex consequences for both employees and organizations (Beattie & Griffin, 2014; Cortina, Hershcovis, & Clancy, 2022; Schilpzand, De Pater, & Erez, 2016). This research emphasizes the importance of addressing workplace incivility to protect employees' resources and create a good work environment.

Under despotic leadership, characterized by authoritarian and controlling behavior, the workload of employees is often intensified due to unrealistic expectations and excessive demands. These leaders prioritize results over employees' well-being, pushing staff to work beyond their capacity. As a result, employees feel overwhelmed and unable to handle their task, which leads to increased stress, frustration, and negative emotions, which may ultimately contribute to workplace incivility.

Workload refers to the tasks and responsibilities assigned to an employee. When workload becomes excessive or unfair, it can negatively impact, behaviors, causing stress, fatigue, emotional strain, and health issues such as headaches and irritability. It may also lead to workplace incivility, reduced productivity, and increased employee turnover (Basar & Supiyadi, 2024). Workload means the number of tasks

and activities that companies ask employees to complete within certain time limits (Janib et al., 2021). In schools and universities, this can include teaching students, organizing activities, attending meetings, and doing research (Hosain, 2016). From an organization's point of view, giving workers a set amount of tasks can reduce laziness, which helps to increase productivity and teamwork (Inegbedion, Peter, & Harry, 2020).

However, if workers have too many tasks to complete, it can harm their physical and mental health (E. Diehl et al., 2021). There is still debate about how much workload is acceptable to improve productivity and teamwork without causing harm. A heavy workload can lead to incivility in the workplace. When employees are overloaded with tasks, it can drain their resources and result in negative behaviors (Judge & Robbins, 2017). Work-related stress occurs when employees find it difficult to cope with the demands placed on them (Kemp, Parto, & Gibson, 2005). One major factor that affects employee behavior is the unequal distribution of work, which can encourage incivility among colleagues (Holland, Tham, Sheehan, & Cooper, 2019).

Additionally, a heavy workload can lead to fatigue, which negatively impacts the work environment and the overall culture within the organization (Jyoti & Rani, 2019). The workload is often identified as a situational factor that influences workplace behavior, especially workplace incivility (P. R. Johnson & Indvik, 2001). A heavy workload is typically seen as a hindrance, and when employees feel unable to modify or control this workload, negative emotions can build up and potentially lead to aggressive behaviors toward coworkers (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Workplace incivility can manifest as rude or dismissive behavior, which is often a response to the overwhelming pressures caused by heavy workloads. However, this relationship is not straightforward. Some studies suggest that, under certain conditions, employees may view heavy workloads as challenges rather than obstacles, which can lead to positive outcomes (Korunka, Kubicek, Paškvan, & Ulferts, 2015).

Additionally, studies show that high job demands could force workers to dedicate all of their energy and time to their primary responsibilities, which might reduce their ability to participate in low-intensity aggressive behaviors like rudeness

(Kluemper, Taylor, Bowler, Bing, & Halbesleben, 2019). Nonetheless, when combined with stresses like job unhappiness and work tiredness, hefty workloads can result in bad behaviors like rule-breaking, stealing, or quitting the company. Feelings of distributive injustice, where employees perceive an unfair distribution of workload or resources, may amplify these negative behaviors, leading to increased frustration and workplace incivility (Giacalone, 1997).

Distributive justice refers to employees' perceptions of fairness regarding the outcomes they receive in the workplace. It focuses on their satisfaction with factors like workload distribution, salary, bonuses, promotions, and other resources, including psychological, physical, social, and material benefits (Astuti & Ingsih, 2019). According to Adams (1965), individuals evaluate fairness by comparing their inputs (e.g., effort, skills) to the outputs they receive (e.g., rewards, promotions). When employees perceive an imbalance, such as unequal treatment compared to their peers, it can lead to feelings of injustice. These perceptions often result in negative consequences, including emotional exhaustion and psychological withdrawal (Tepper, 2000). This type of justice significantly contributes to employees' overall sense of fairness. Such forms of justice—indeed, perceived fairness of the process, and interpersonal treatment—are more clearly linked with employee responses to supervisors and organizations than distributive justice.

When employees see injustice, they are more prone to engage in unethical behaviors such as retaliation, violating rules and regulations, or acting uncivil. Distributive justice is closely linked to the perception of how equitable or fair an organization's rewards and outcomes are. If employees feel they are not receiving what they deserve based on their contributions or are unfairly treated compared to others, they may take actions that undermine organizational norms. Retaliation against perceived unfair treatment is common as employees attempt to restore what they view as a lost balance between input and output. This behavior can manifest in various forms, such as sabotage, reduced effort, or even passive-aggressive actions that disrupt workplace harmony.

Moreover, distributive justice is a coping device during stressful periods, reducing the negative behavior induced by leadership and workload. In times of high stress, when employees experience high demands or negative leadership behaviors,

perceiving fairness in the distribution of rewards can act as a buffer. Employees who see fairness in distributed outcomes are likelier to cope with stress healthily. In contrast, those who perceive distributive injustice may feel that their efforts are underappreciated, exacerbating their stress and leading to negative coping mechanisms such as disengagement or poor performance (Tepper, 2000).

Members of an organization who see distributive injustice are likely to react negatively to exacerbate the effect of despotic leadership & heavy workload on workplace incivility. When employees perceive an unfair distribution of rewards or resources, this perception can magnify the negative impact of other organizational stressors, such as harsh leadership styles or overwhelming workloads. Employees who feel unjustly treated may interpret authoritarian leadership or unreasonable workloads as further confirmation of the organization's unfairness. This can lead to increased workplace incivility, including disrespect, refusal to collaborate, or undermining colleagues. The consequences of distributive injustice extend beyond individual reactions and can affect overall organizational health. When employees are dissatisfied with the fairness of outcomes, it can lead to a decline in motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction. As a result, organizations might experience higher turnover rates, increased absenteeism, and greater difficulty retaining top talent. Fostering a sense of fairness in the distribution of rewards and resources can, therefore, play a significant role in maintaining a positive organizational culture and promoting long-term success.

In conclusion, distributive justice is critical to how employees perceive fairness within an organization. When employees perceive injustice, they may engage in unethical behaviors, experience emotional exhaustion, or withdraw psychologically from their work. Ensuring fairness in the distribution of outcomes is essential for promoting a positive and productive work environment, mitigating the negative effects of leadership and workload stress, and preventing workplace incivility. In workplaces where distributive justice is lacking, employees can regard it as acceptable to resort to deviant behaviors, including being impolite, as a means of managing their perceived mistreatment. The presence of workplace incivility thrives on the toxic work environment in perpetuation through despotic leadership, heavy workloads, and lack of distributive justice. The relationship between

workload, distributive justice, despotic leadership, and workplace incivility reveals that despotic leadership escalates the workload to feed incivility at work. This relationship is governed by distributive fairness that lessens or enhances the impact of workload and leadership on workplace Incivility. This relationship is governed by distributive justice, which reduces or increases the impact of workload and leadership on workplace incivility. An awareness of these relationships may go a long way in creating methods to mitigate negative impacts of despotic leadership and workplace incivility maintain the workplace environment.

1.2 Research Gap

This study fill numerous contextual and theoretical gaps in the literature on despotic leadership and workplace incivility that previous studies have not addressed. In particular, there is a need to explore how despotic leadership affects employees' behavior. Leadership is a crucial part of employees' effectiveness in achieving organizational goals. Effective/Good leadership helps employees feel in Control and treated fairly; on the contrary, despotic leadership takes away that sense of Control and justice, which can lead to negative consequences.

According to research, despotic leadership causes people to feel dominated and controlled, resulting in a lack of justice. This often leads to increased frustration, stress, and negative emotions; if left unchecked, these types of issues turn into workplace issues like incivility in the workplace environment. These negative emotions can escalate into workplace incivility and even result in employees quitting their jobs due to distress (Tepper, Simon, & Park, 2017; Albashiti et al., 2021; De Clercq et al., 2021). All of these variables have been previously documented in the literature, yet they are not assembled in a single conceptual model. The current study modeled all of these variables by examining the impact of despotic leadership on workplace incivility, with workload as a mediating factor and distributive Justice as a moderator. Despite extensive research on despotic leadership and its negative impact on workplace incivility, several critical gaps remain.

First, while numerous studies have explored the direct effect of despotic leadership on workplace incivility, the mediating role of workload in this relationship has not

been adequately addressed. Excessive workload, which can create difficulties in employee well-being and performance, can significantly impact the extent to which despotic leadership leads to workplace incivility. (Saher et al., 2021).

Second, it has not been adequately investigated how distributive justice moderates the relationship between workload, workplace incivility, and despotic leadership. Research indicates that perceptions of fairness in resource distribution can significantly impact employee behavior, potentially reducing the negative effects of despotic leadership (L. Afshari, Hayat, Ramachandran, Bartram, & Balakrishnan, 2022). Understanding these relationships is crucial for promoting a positive workplace environment. Furthermore, research in the Pakistani higher education sector in the context of leadership is minimal. Accordingly, there is a pressing need to expand research in the sector by examining the negative impact of despotic leadership within Pakistan's higher education sector. This is particularly relevant for higher education, as the study examines the negative effects of despotic leadership. It highlights how such leadership can create an authoritarian/dominating atmosphere and lead to workplace incivility, ultimately increasing employee turnover intentions (Iqbal, Asghar, & Asghar, 2022).

This research offers information for organizations to support employees better. Knowing these dynamics can increase job performance, reduce turnover, and decrease workplace incivility in the face of despotic leadership and excessive workload. So, this study fill these gaps by examining the mediated moderation model with the impact of despotic leadership on workplace incivility via workload and distributive Justice used to reduce the negative effect of despotic leadership on workload in the higher Education Sector Islamabad/Rawalpindi.

1.3 Problem Statement

Recent reports highlight a rising prevalence of workplace incivility in higher education, particularly in Pakistan. Anwaar (2022) found that 71% of university faculty have encountered incivility, underscoring the severity of this issue. In recent years, despotic supervision has emerged as a critical concern within Pakistan's higher education sector, adversely affecting employees. Characterized by authoritarian and

hostile behaviours, this leadership style fosters a tense work environment, leading to negative outcomes such as increased workload, diminished perceptions of distributive justice, and heightened workplace incivility. The growing prevalence of despotic leadership has prompted increased scholarly attention to its role in exacerbating workplace incivility. According to the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Islamabad and Rawalpindi collectively house 36 universities, employing approximately 98,452 faculty members of whom 37,209 are female and 61,243 are male. Reports suggest that many employees in these institutions experience elements of despotic supervision, contributing to withdrawal behaviours, elevated stress levels, and increased absenteeism. These factors ultimately result in reduced efficiency, low morale, heightened anxiety, and unethical conduct. Given the profound implications of despotic supervision for professionals in Pakistan's higher education sector, it is imperative to examine its impact on workplace incivility. This study specifically investigates the mediating role of workload and the moderating role of distributive justice in this relationship. By analysing these dynamics, the research provides a strategic framework aimed at mitigating workplace incivility and fostering a more constructive and productive work environment.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Does the despotic leadership affect workplace Incivility.?
2. Does workload mediate the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility.?
3. Does distributive justice moderate the relationship between workload and workplace Incivility.?

1.5 Research Objective

1. To examine the positive effect of despotic leadership on workplace incivility.
2. To examine the impact of despotic leadership on employee workload.
3. To examine the relationship between workload and workplace incivility.

4. To examine the mediating role of workload in the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility.
5. To examine distributive justice positively moderates the relationship between workload and workplace incivility.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research pinpoint the impact of despotic leadership on workplace incivility in the higher education sector of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. This study examines crucial factors influencing this relationship, focusing on the mediating role of workload and the moderating role of distributive justice.

Therefore, using a theoretical perspective, this study provides the opportunity to examine how these variables play a role in the workplace environment. This research contributes to the existing body of literature by exploring the interplay of new mediating and moderating variables, offering fresh insights into their effects.

Next, this study has practical implications for organizational leaders who seek to create a more positive work environment and drastically reduce workplace incivility. To maintain employee productivity in despite complex workplace environment, managers must know how to address the negative consequences of despotic leadership and also handle the workload.

This research result in practical strategies, including ensuring distributive justice, equitable distribution workload, and facilitating such communication that minimizes the detrimental effect of despotic leadership and workplace incivility. This research contributes to making the working workplace healthier and more productive.

Finally, this study further adds to the existing literature on research surrounding the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory by exploring how despotic leadership and excessive workload affect workplace incivility. Researchers use the findings to explore the connection between leadership styles and employee behavior, as resource depletion can have negative outcomes. This research shows the need to address the workplace environment to enhance organizational effectiveness.

1.7 Supporting Theory

The Conservation of Resource (COR) theory supports all variables of the proposed research. The COR theory covers all the variables properly and provides both direct and indirect links between various variables.

This study examines the impact of despotic leadership on workplace incivility, focusing on the mediating role of workload and the moderating role of distributive justice. The COR theory helps explain the relationships between despotic leadership, workload, distributive justice, and workplace incivility, providing a clear pathway for understanding how resource depletion impacts employee behavior and organizational outcomes.

The COR (Conservation of Resources) theory, first proposed by [Hobfoll \(1989\)](#), is a theory of stress that explains the implications of stress and its management in life. In this theory, resources are things that employees value, like objects, conditions, or qualities that help them succeed. These resources can be psychological, physical, personal, social, or material [Hobfoll \(1989, 2001\)](#).

Stress happens when these resources are threatened, lost, or used up, especially in difficult work environments where leadership adds extra pressure. As a result, people try to get, protect, and keep the resources they need to handle stress.

If we relate the COR theory to the proposed research model, despotic leadership, characterized by authoritarianism and dominating behavior, often forces employees to handle excessive or irrelevant tasks, increasing their workload. This leads to a reduced perception of distributive justice due to the leader's despotic behavior, ultimately resulting in the depletion of employees' psychological resources. When psychological resources are depleted, employees may show bad behavior in the workplace, which, as a result, leads to workplace incivility.

In the absence of distributive justice, despotic leadership increases workplace incivility. When employees perceive an unfair distribution of resources and workloads, the negative effects of despotic leadership increase, leading to increased stress and strengthened workplace incivility. Thus, the current theory is an overarching theory for the proposed research model.

1.8 Thesis Organization

This research is structured into five chapters, following the format of a Cust thesis. Chapter one provides an introduction to the study, including its background, gap analysis, problem statement, research questions, objectives, significance, and the theoretical framework. Chapter two presents an in-depth review of relevant literature, explores the supporting theory, and discusses the formulation of research hypotheses and the study's conceptual model. In chapter three, the methodology is outlined, covering research philosophy, design, unit of analysis, setting, population, data collection methods, sampling strategy and justification, sample size, instruments used, ethical considerations, statistical techniques for analysis, respondent characteristics, pilot testing, reliability checks, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Chapter four is dedicated to data analysis, presenting results from descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, correlation analysis, regression models, as well as mediation and moderation effects in line with the conceptual framework. The final chapter, chapter five, highlights the key findings, discusses theoretical and practical implications, identifies study limitations, suggests directions for future research, and concludes the study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter offers a comprehensive literature review on the impact of despotic leadership on workplace incivility, with a focus on the mediating role of workload and the moderating role of distributive justice. Based on the gap analysis already outlined in the first chapter, as well as the literature review, through theory plotting and hypothesis development.

The chapter begins by clearly defining these key variables, elucidating how despotic leadership impacts attitudes and behaviors, particularly in the context of elevated workloads. It emphasizes how workload would exacerbate the damaging effects of despotic leadership on workplace incivility, but also converses on the possibility of distributive justice defined as perceptions of fairness in the distribution of resources to act as a buffer to those negative impacts.

To provide a comprehensive overview, the chapter concludes with a conceptual model that illustrates the interrelationships among these variables. In addition, it frames a few hypotheses to be further advanced soon, particularly in the case of higher education in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The theoretical and empirical research efforts are designed to enlarge the understanding of these dynamics and their consequences for workplace behavior and organizational performance in this regional context. By focusing on the distinct problems and opportunities faced by institutions in this area, the research seeks to offer insights that can inform effective management practices and foster a more positive work environment.

2.1 Definitions of Variables

2.1.1 Despotic leadership

Despotic leadership is characterized by authoritarianism and dominating behavior, which creates a stressful work environment by increasing pressure, micromanagement, and unrealistic demands. It is a style of leadership in which the leader is strict and overly controlling and doesn't care about employees' resources (Naseer et al., 2016; Raza, Imran, & Hadi, 2023b).

2.1.2 Workload

Workload refers to the tasks and responsibilities assigned to an employee. When workload becomes excessive or unfair, it can negatively impact, behaviors, causing stress, fatigue, emotional strain, and health issues such as headaches and irritability (Sutaryo, Santoso, Astuti, & Kusbandiyah, 2024).

2.1.3 Distributive Justice

Distributive justice refers to employees' perceptions of fairness regarding the outcomes they receive in the workplace. It focuses on their satisfaction with factors like workload distribution, salary, bonuses, promotions, and other resources, including psychological, physical, social, and material benefits (Astuti & Ingsih, 2019).

2.1.4 Workplace Incivility

Workplace incivility is the result of stress and frustration from excessive workloads. It is a form of low-level misbehavior that breaks the norms of mutual respect (Moon & Morais, 2022). A hostile work atmosphere can trigger a spiral of incivility, leading to emotional exhaustion, reduced productivity, and psychological distress, ultimately eroding the workplace environment. A hostile work atmosphere can trigger a spiral of incivility, leading to emotional exhaustion, reduced productivity, and psychological distress, ultimately eroding the workplace environment.

2.2 Despotic Leadership and Workplace Incivility

Despotic leadership is a leadership style that is characterized by dominating, unforgiving, and authoritarian behavior. In such leadership styles, leaders prioritize their interests over the interests of their followers. The primary goal of despotic leaders is to assert control, maintain power, and operate from a self-serving standpoint, often disregarding the needs of their subordinates (De Clercq et al., 2021). This leadership style is inherently oppressive, demanding that employees adhere to strict obedience and submission without room for questioning or dissent. The behaviors exhibited by despotic leaders are often authoritarian and morally unethical (Albashiti et al., 2021). They lack empathy, emotionally exploit their employees, and create an environment of unfair and irrational decision-making (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2018; Naseer et al., 2016).

In such environments, the employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and general workplace behavior suffer greatly. Employees under despotic leadership often report low job satisfaction and a reduced commitment to the organization, as they feel underappreciated, overworked, and exploited (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Tepper, 2000). These negative outcomes are compounded by workplace incivility, which manifests as low-intensity but disruptive behaviors such as sarcasm, lack of cooperation, and outright disrespect. Such behaviors erode the organizational culture and significantly undermine the workplace atmosphere (Schilling, 2009; Van Prooijen & De Vries, 2016).

Unlike other types of toxic leadership, despotic leadership is particularly harmful because it lacks even the most basic ethical standards and is driven by a personal agenda rather than the organization's greater good. Despotic leaders often intentionally manipulate the power-distance relationship between themselves and their subordinates to create an environment of fear and dependence (Aronson, 2001). In turn, they make arbitrary decisions, show favoritism, and undermine any form of collaboration, making the work environment emotionally and psychologically toxic (Shah, Afshan, Mirani, & Solangi, 2023).

Research consistently shows that despotic leadership significantly correlates with negative workplace outcomes. For instance, (D. Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012) demonstrated that employees under despotic supervision suffer from reduced creativity and innovation. Such leaders stifle independent thought and impose rigid structures that hinder creative expression. This suppression of creativity can devastate organizations that rely on innovation as a competitive advantage. Moreover, the destructive nature of despotic leadership is not limited to creative output but extends to employee well-being. Despotic leaders are often unempathetic, making them blind to their subordinates' needs and emotional states (Afshan, Shahid, & Tunio, 2021). This lack of empathy causes emotional distress and worsens feelings of alienation and powerlessness among employees, leaving them unable to engage fully with their work (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2018; Naseer et al., 2016).

The relationship between workplace incivility and despotic leadership is particularly concerning. As Moon and Morais (2022) argue, workplace incivility refers to low-intensity but disruptive behaviors that violate norms of mutual respect. Although seemingly minor, these behaviors can have long-lasting and cumulative negative effects on individuals and organizations alike. Employees subjected to incivility often become disengaged, less productive, and increasingly resentful toward their leadership and coworkers. Triggers in a toxic work environment significantly diminish organizational Culture (Emmanuel & Das, 2024; Akella & Eid, 2021).

Despotic leadership can also exacerbate bullying behaviors in the workplace, which often go hand in hand with workplace incivility. Bullying, a more severe form of uncivil behavior, is a direct consequence of a toxic organizational culture fostered by despotic leadership. Employees, feeling devalued and intimidated, might resort to bullying behaviors to cope with their feelings of stress and powerlessness (S. Ahmad & Sheehan, 2017; Akram, Khan, Akram, Ahmad, & Song, 2022; Tepper, 2000). This results in a vicious cycle, where stress and incivility reinforce each other, leading to more significant workplace deviance.

The lens of the theory of Conservation of Resources (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989) provides valuable insights into the impact of despotic leadership on employee outcomes. According to the COR theory, individuals possess valuable resources such as personal traits, social support, energy, and work conditions, which they use to

manage and cope with stress. When these resources are threatened or depleted, individuals experience stress and adverse psychological outcomes. Despotic leadership, by placing undue demands on employees, results in the depletion of these resources and creates a toxic environment that is not conducive to individual or organizational success (Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018; Demsky, Fritz, Hammer, & Black, 2019).

Despotic leaders, by being emotionally exploitative and creating overwhelming workloads, threaten employees' resources, which leads to stress, burnout, and the eventual rise of incivility (Islam et al., 2024). The stress that employees experience under despotic leadership forces them to engage in defensive behaviors, often turning to incivility as a coping mechanism (Hobfoll, 1989). This response is particularly common among newcomers or those with high ethical standards, as they may struggle the most under such leadership due to the mismatch between their values and the unethical behavior of their leader (Loh & Loi, 2018; Van Jaarsveld, Walker, & Skarlicki, 2010).

Moreover, employees suffering from emotional distress, stress, or burnout due to despotic leadership are particularly vulnerable to engaging in counterproductive behaviors such as bullying or other forms of workplace deviance (Blau & Andersson, 2005; Lim & Cortina, 2005). While initially serving as a form of self-protection, these behaviors often lead to increased workplace incivility, further exacerbating the toxic culture and creating a negative feedback loop where both individual well-being and organizational performance continue to suffer (Hobfoll, 1989). By this, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: Despotic leadership has a positive and significant impact on workplace incivility.

2.3 Despotic Leadership and Workload

Despotic leadership, characterized by authoritarianism, control, and dominance, often prioritizes leaders' personal interests over those of their subordinates (Albashiti et al. (2021); Islam et al. (2024)). Extreme obedience and submission are demands of despotic leaders, stretched beyond normative expectations to accommodate the

fulfilment of their ambition at the expense of their own subordinates' well-being (De Clercq et al., 2021). This kind of work environment could be really destructive to employees and influence their morale along with the overall outcome of an organization (H. Zhou, 2023).

The detrimental impact of despotic leadership is particularly evident when considering the workload and its consequences for employee well-being. Employee well-being encompasses the overall quality of job experience and includes both physical (e.g., headaches, muscle discomfort) and psychological aspects (e.g., anxiety, fatigue, depression) (Castaño, García, Nicholls, Guijarro-García, & Pérez-Ruiz, 2020; X. Zhou et al., 2021). Despotic leaders often increase job demands without considering the autonomy, input, or well-being of their subordinates, imposing unrealistic expectations and excessive workloads that lead to stress and burnout (Ullah et al., 2021).

Leiter and Maslach (2003) defined workload pressure as an overwhelming amount of work that consumes an individual's time and energy, often infringing on their personal values and well-being. This pressure involves performing multiple tasks simultaneously, working at an increased pace, or reducing break times, which can lead to burnout (L. Afshari et al., 2022). Some of them may also experience psychological and physiological strain, resulting from such pressure. Demerouti and Bakker (2011), argue that the pattern of chronic and intense mental and physical strain is likely to have negative consequences, such as emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and reduced productivity. In most cases, the prolonged and intense mental and physical efforts applied when trying to meet despotic leaders' demands lead to the undesirable outcomes mentioned above.

Despotic leaders, by nature, disregard employees' needs and well-being, creating an insecure job environment that amplifies employees' workload and exacerbates their stress levels. This relationship between despotic leadership and increased workload has been shown to significantly impact employee morale and productivity, as employees face challenges in coping with such high demands and feel pressured to meet unrealistic expectations (A. R. Afshari, Kowal, & Khorsand, 2023). The insecure environment cultivated by despotic leadership not only heightens feelings of overload and burnout among employees but also severely undermines their overall

well-being, leading to decreased job satisfaction and increased turnover intentions (Delanoëije, Verbruggen, & Germeys, 2019; Dettmers, Bamberg, & Seffzek, 2016; Tavares, 2017).

Research reveals that employees who work under despotic leadership often view their leaders as harmful and exploitative. This perception is supported by [Tepper \(2000\)](#), who defined despotic supervision as the subordinates' perception of their leaders engaging in hostile behaviors, both verbal and non-verbal, that include actions such as avoidance of physical contact, humiliation, and psychological pressure. Such damaging supervision influences a significant portion of the workforce, with studies estimating that 13.6% of employees in the U.S. experience despotic leadership, costing organizations approximately \$23.8 billion annually due to absenteeism, healthcare expenses, and lost productivity ([Tepper, 2007](#); [Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006](#)).

Such an autocratic management also affects employees' psychological functioning. Researchers have established that despotic supervision is associated with some consequences, which include depression ([Tepper, 2000](#)), anxiety ([Hobman, Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2009](#)), emotional exhaustion ([Grandey, Kern, & Frone, 2007](#)), and burnout ([Duffy, 2002](#)). These results portray the ill effects of autocratic leadership on the mental and psychosomatic well-being of employees. That's why despotic leadership is one of the serious social and organizational problems that needs further research to minimize its negative impact ([Aryee, Sun, Chen, & Debrah, 2008](#)).

Despotic leadership also indirectly contributes to workplace incivility through increased workload. In the context of high levels of despotic leadership, workers feel burdened because of having to satisfy unwarrantable demand set by their leaders ([Tepper, 2000](#)). According to studies, such overloaded workloads lead to stress and reduce the ability of employees to remain civil and friendly with their coworkers ([Nielsen, Hrivnak, & Shaw, 2009](#); [Kivimäki et al., 2006](#)). Overwhelmed employees are more likely to engage in reciprocating negative behaviors, leading to a cycle of workplace incivility ([Reich & Hershcovis, 2015](#)).

[Hobfoll \(1989\)](#), argue that a valuable framework for understanding this phenomenon is provided by the Conservation of Resources theory. This theory suggests that

individuals strive to protect their resources, such as time, energy, and well-being, to prevent stress and burnout. In environments characterized by despotic leadership, employees perceive a threat to their resources due to the increased workload and stressful work conditions. As they attempt to maintain their dwindling resources, employees may act counterproductively- for instance, through bullying or incivility- in trying to cope with or sidestep the stress they experience; they are trying to salvage some little part of their resource stores that are seriously being depleted. Thus, overloading employees and pushing them to their limits creates not only a direct mechanism for the expression of workplace behavior through despotic leadership but indirectly increases workplace incivility.

Despotic leadership significantly impacts employees' turnover intentions, with workload and work pressure being key contributors. Despotic leaders often exacerbate these challenges, increasing the likelihood that employees consider leaving the organization to cope with their stressful work environment (Chong, Huang, & Chang, 2020). Under despotic leadership, employees frequently experience high-stress levels due to unreasonable expectations, harsh criticism, and a lack of support, ultimately leading them to contemplate resignation. This type of leadership can trigger a cascade of negative effects, from diminished job satisfaction to feelings of powerlessness, which significantly contribute to the desire to leave the organization.

Burnout, driven by both high job demands and the adverse impacts of despotic leadership, has been identified as one of the most powerful factors behind the increase in turnover intentions (L. Afshari et al., 2022). Employees in such environments are often overwhelmed by the constant pressure to perform without the necessary resources or guidance, which leads to exhaustion and disengagement. The absence of support and the presence of a toxic leadership style amplifies this effect, leaving employees with little hope of improvement. The more employees feel burned out, the more likely they are to seek an exit strategy.

Furthermore, employees suffering from burnout and an excessive workload under despotic leadership are often left with no option but to leave the organization to escape the toxic atmosphere and recover their mental and emotional well-being (Barthauer, Kaucher, Spurk, & Kauffeld, 2020). The continuous strain, coupled

with the lack of a supportive and fair leadership approach, creates a vicious cycle where employees feel trapped, ultimately driving them to leave in search of a healthier work environment. As such, the role of leadership in fostering a supportive and understanding work culture becomes critical in reducing workplace incivility provide a positive environment in the organization for a competitive edge.

Despotic leadership directly influences workload and indirectly contributes to workplace incivility by creating a hostile and stressful environment that depletes employees' resources and well-being. Such leadership results in burnout, emotional exhaustion, and other types of negative outcomes-eroding morale, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

The negative impacts of a dictatorship at work underscore the need to deal with this particular issue in organizational culture as well for a healthier work environment and low workplace incivility.

H2: Despotic leadership has a positive and significant impact on workload.

2.4 Workload and Workplace Incivility

Workload refers to the number of tasks and responsibilities assigned to employees, which must be completed within a set time frame (Janib et al., 2021). In the academic setting, workload can involve teaching students, organizing events, attending meetings, and conducting research (Hosain, 2016). From an organizational perspective, assigning a reasonable amount of workload can reduce laziness, improve productivity, and foster better teamwork (Inegbedion et al., 2020). However, when the workload becomes too heavy, it can lead to stress, which may increase workplace incivility. Excessive workload can negatively affect employees' physical and mental health (L. Diehl & Carlotto, 2024). The amount of workload required to maintain productivity without triggering negative effects like incivility is still debated. As workload increases, employees tend to feel more stressed, which often results in workplace incivility, especially when they feel unable to meet the expectations or deadlines set by their leaders (Sadiq, 2022).

Some studies suggest that a balanced workload helps employees stay focused, reduce boredom, and improve their performance, as they do not feel overburdened (Inegbedion et al., 2020). On the other hand, too much workload leads to high anxiety, as employees worry about completing tasks on time, which could lead to frustration and incivility (Zhao, Qiu, & Zeng, 2023).

While some organizations may think that increasing workload leads to better productivity, it can, in fact, cause stress and insecurity among employees (Kumar & Mini, 2023). Furthermore, increased workload is strongly linked to burnout, with employees experiencing exhaustion from both physical and emotional efforts (Wulantika, Ayusari, & Wittine, 2023). This physical and emotional strain not only reduces productivity but also contributes to workplace incivility, as overworked employees are more likely to display negative behavior (Marcionetti & Castelli, 2023).

The relationship between workload and workplace incivility is significant, as heavy workloads cause stress and burnout, which negatively affect employee behavior. Literature suggests that employees under high stress tend to be more irritable and less cooperative with their colleagues, leading to increased workplace incivility (Freedman, Li, Liang, Hartin, & Biedermann, 2024; E. Diehl et al., 2021).

Workplace incivility is closely associated with various aspects of the psychosocial work environment. Research previous established a link of incivility with a variety of outcomes such as a job satisfaction decreased, job atmosphere is low, managerial support is lesser, general control at work, and coherence are all reduced (Clark, Ahten, & Macy, 2013; Cortina, 2008; Harold & Holtz, 2015; Leiter, Laschinger, Day, & Oore, 2011; Rodriguez & Zhou, 2023; Schilpzand et al., 2016; Torkelson, Holm, Bäckström, & Schad, 2016). Such studies underline the pervasiveness of workplace incivility, including both work environments and health impacts of workers. Another intrinsic element of job demands is workload. Workload has not been positively associated with workplace incivility in a consistent manner. This requires further research as workload continues to be considered as an integral part of job demands, and it has consistently been found to be related to numerous poor health outcomes and undesirable work conditions (Bowling, Alarcon, Bragg, & Hartman, 2015).

It is important to recognize that job demands as a whole have been consistently associated with workplace incivility (Koon & Pun, 2018; Torkelson et al., 2016). High job demands also form part of the list of risk factors for workplace incivility due to the likelihood that employees under pressure act negatively toward their colleagues or supervisors. This relationship highlights the role that job demands contribute to issues of workplace dynamics and employee relations. However, in the absence of any statistically significant relationship between workload and workplace incivility but with an association between job demands and incivility does indicate some limitation on how workload has been quantified in previous studies.

There is an explanation of why variability may exist in this aspect, which is in the measurement of workload. Hasson, Okazawa, and Villaume (2023), argue that there could be several reasons through which a unidimensional measurement of workload may fail to apprehend all aspects related to health and work-related outcomes. This argument portrays the thought that a one-dimensional measure will, at times, not take into account the diversity of the construct in terms of what may influence workplace behavior. The study, therefore, suggests that a better measure of workload should be two-dimensional in nature that encompasses both the positive and the negative dimensions. It may thus outline the expected association between workload and workplace incivility that has been ignored by the previous unidimensional measures.

The emphasis on workload in occupational health regulations, such as the Corin et al. (2021), further highlights its importance. Regulations often focus on "unhealthy workload" and its impact on employee well-being. Therefore, it is particularly striking that previous studies have not established a clear relationship between workload and workplace incivility, despite the significant emphasis on managing workload to promote health and safety. This suggests that workload, as previously measured, may be an insufficient indicator of health and stress-related outcomes in the workplace, which include incivility.

In addition, the findings indicate that even though workload was not directly related to incivility, the differences in the level of burnout between the employees who experienced incivility and those who did not were statistically significant.

Thus, according to such findings, if indeed workload constitutes a valid measure of stress and PSWE outcomes, in this case, there will be a strong association with incivility. Hence, the relation of workload to incivility is more complicated than previously known. It is very likely to require additional, even more sophisticated, and multidimensional measures to uncover its effects.

According to the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, individuals with depleted psychological resources may justify uncivil behaviors when faced with heavy workloads. Generally, inflated sense of self-worth enables them to rationalize immoral actions as responses to perceived injustices or burdens at work (Y. J. Lee, Kim, Im, Lee, & Kang, 2019). In such situations, excessive workloads and despotic leadership reinforce the belief that organizational norms do not apply to entitled individuals, fostering socially irresponsible behavior (W. Lee, Lin, Howard, & Bao, 2022; Yam, Klotz, He, & Reynolds, 2017).

Research shows that depletion of employees' psychological resources is linked to aggressive behaviors and workplace incivility. Handling increased responsibilities and work pressure can cause the people who have higher levels of resource depletion to act negatively by rudeness, financial impropriety and rule breaking (Campbell, Goodie, & Foster, 2004; W. Li, Li, Xie, & Chang, 2022; Qin et al., 2020). These behaviors often serve as coping mechanisms in response to unmet psychological needs or perceived challenges.

Workplace incivility is increasingly recognized as a detrimental issue in organizations, with far-reaching effects on employee morale, engagement, and productivity. One major driver of incivility is the pressure created by overwhelming workloads. When employees are subjected to high-stress levels due to excessive job demands, they may become frustrated, leading to negative behaviors toward their colleagues. These behaviors can be exacerbated by psychological entitlement, a mindset in which individuals feel they deserve special treatment or advantages, regardless of the effort they contribute. When combined, workload pressure and a sense of entitlement can escalate into uncivil actions that disrupt the workplace (Fu et al., 2024).

The link between workload stress and incivility is clear. Employees who feel burdened by an unmanageable workload may perceive their efforts as undervalued

or unrecognized. This sense of injustice can lead to frustration, especially when employees feel they are being unfairly tasked or neglected.

If an employee also holds an attitude of psychological entitlement, the perception of unfair treatment is intensified. They may feel that their expectations for recognition, support, or fair distribution of tasks are not being met, triggering anger and resentment. This is where the possibility of uncivil behavior arises (Ugwu, Ugwu, Nwali, Onyishi, & Okafor, 2024).

Uncivil behavior can take many forms, from subtle actions like ignoring or dismissing colleagues to overt acts such as gossiping, rude remarks, or undermining others. Employees might justify such behavior as a form of retaliation or as a way to defend themselves against what they perceive as mistreatment. For instance, they may feel entitled to a lighter workload or more recognition and see their uncivil actions as restoring balance or fairness in the workplace. In their view, these behaviors are acceptable and necessary to respond to their perceived mistreatment.

This cycle of workload pressure and incivility can quickly escalate, creating a toxic work environment. As employees experience stress and burnout, they may become more inclined to act out in ways that worsen the situation. Their negative behaviors can foster resentment and defensiveness among colleagues, leading to more tension and hostility. Over time, this toxic cycle can erode workplace culture, leaving employees disengaged, disillusioned, and less committed to their work and the organization (C. H. Liu et al., 2024).

In addition to individual consequences like burnout, the effects of workplace incivility extend to team dynamics and overall organizational performance. As employees become more disengaged due to both workload pressures and uncivil behavior, collaboration and productivity suffer. With declining morale and increased turnover intentions, the organization risks losing valuable talent, undermining its success. Organizations must take proactive steps to address the underlying factors contributing to incivility to break this harmful cycle. Leadership is key in managing workload expectations and addressing employee concerns fairly. Clear communication about expectations, regular recognition of employees' contributions, and a fair distribution of tasks are critical strategies to alleviate stress.

Additionally, fostering a culture of respect and empathy can help reduce the sense of entitlement and encourage positive behaviors. When employees feel heard, valued, and supported, they are less likely to resort to uncivil actions and more likely to contribute to a collaborative, productive environment.

Therefore, workload pressure can catalyze workplace incivility, mainly when it interacts with factors such as psychological entitlement. If individuals start to feel their entitlement is jeopardized or they have massive workload loads that they cannot manage, they may decide to become uncivil with others because it is justified as a punishment or self-defense. This behavior may contribute to a cycle of negativity and stress in the workplace, further deteriorating the work environment.

H3: Workload has a positive and significant impact on workplace incivility.

2.5 Workload mediates between Despotic leadership and Workplace Incivility

Based Workload serves as a mediator between despotic leadership and workplace incivility (Torkelson et al., 2016; Oladitan, Ajibua, Fashogbon, & Ajayi, 2014; Naseer et al., 2016). Despotic leaders, characterized by domineering and self-serving behaviors, often create a high-pressure work environment where employees experience increased job demands.

This excessive workload can lead to significant psychological strain and resource depletion, as outlined by the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). According to COR theory, individuals possess a variety of resources: emotional, psychological, physical, and social. They seek to conserve and protect when faced with stressors such as harsh leadership, job insecurity, or unethical workplace practices.

Despotic leadership refers to a work environment where leaders are overly controlling, putting significant pressure on employees (Michel, Lyons, & Cho, 2011). This can lead to a situation where employees feel forced to keep working, sometimes

sacrificing their personal and family time. In this scenario, workload plays a crucial role as a mediator, amplifying the effects of despotic leadership on employees' well-being and their interactions at work. According to previous studies, when employees' work demands interfere with their personal lives, their emotions and motivation at work are greatly impacted (Besagas & Branzuela, 2023). Repeated instances of workplace incivility can harm employees' mental health (Ali et al., 2021).

In an environment dominated by despotic leadership, employees often experience fluctuating workloads and extended work hours (Vickovic & Morrow, 2020), leading to emotional distress and heightened stress levels. Here, workload serves as a mediator, as the combined pressure of despotic leadership and heavy workloads can deplete employees' personal resources, making them more prone to stress and negative behaviors. The excessive workload created by despotic leadership fosters a stressful work environment, contributing to workplace incivility. Stress among employees becomes inevitable when high levels of workplace incivility are present in the organization (Aruldoss, Berube Kowalski, Travis, & Parayitam, 2022). Therefore, the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility is intensified by the mediating role of workload, as employees are pushed to their physical and emotional limits.

Despotic leadership often violates the psychological contract between employees and the organization. While the physical contract specifies job responsibilities and compensation, the psychological contract involves unspoken expectations of respect and fair treatment. Employees expect acknowledgment and dignity from their leaders (Batista & Reio Jr, 2019). When these expectations are not met, and employees are subjected to authoritarian and disrespectful behavior, they may perceive their increased workload as an unjust burden. This, in turn, contributes to emotional exhaustion, disengagement, and workplace incivility as a coping response.

Research supports that authoritarian leadership styles lead to elevated workload and, consequently, heightened emotional stress and incivility in the workplace (Islam et al., 2024). In such environments, employees often view organizational events as threatening, triggering emotional reactions (Spector & Jex, 1998). To

cope with the increased demands imposed by despotic leaders, employees may engage in counterproductive and uncivil behaviors. These reactions may be a way of managing the emotional toll caused by an overwhelming workload. Consequently, increased workload serves as a crucial link between despotic leadership and instigated incivility, as employees navigate the stress associated with excessive job demands.

An attribute of emotional exhaustion is the gradual build-up over time through continuous exposure to high workloads and despotic behaviors. Workload refers to the direct task demands imposed on workers. Emotional exhaustion, however, creates a state of psychic and physical depletion and promotes symptoms like anxiety, hopelessness, and frustration. When an employee continuously experiences high workloads without sufficient support and recognition, he or she typically becomes emotionally drained and feels helpless or becomes disengaged from his or her work.

Authoritarian and self-serving despotism, well known for its adverse impact on employee behavior and well-being across various contexts, including Pakistan (Adıgüzel & Kuloğlu, 2019; Harms, Wood, Landay, Lester, & Lester, 2018; Nauman, Fatima, & Haq, 2018), not only piles up the workloads but also fosters unhealthy work environments that augment the emotional burden as well as the likelihood of workplace incivility. Under this pressure, employees may turn out to be deviant or uncivil while showing acts of resistance as a form of defence. Understanding the mediating role of workload is crucial for organizations seeking to promote employee well-being and create a positive work culture. When organizations fail to address the excessive demands imposed by despotic leaders, employees are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion, which may manifest in counterproductive workplace behaviors. Therefore, effective interventions that mitigate the effects of high workloads and provide support to employees can play a significant role in reducing workplace incivility.

In this case, workload acts as a critical mediator between despotic leadership and workplace incivility. The increasing demands from both despotic leaders and the excessive workload deplete employees' personal resources, making them more vulnerable to stress and negative behaviors. As employees become overwhelmed

by work demands, they may begin to exhibit signs of workplace incivility, such as frustration, aggression, or withdrawal from colleagues. These behaviors not only affect team dynamics but also contribute to a culture of negativity and poor morale in the workplace.

Furthermore, as employees struggle to meet the high expectations placed on them, stress becomes inevitable. High levels of workplace incivility, driven by despotic leadership and excessive workloads, lead to emotional exhaustion and further stress (Aruldoss et al., 2022). This stress can cause employees to feel disillusioned with their work environment, leading to decreased productivity, strained relationships, and overall dissatisfaction with their roles. In this way, the combination of despotic leadership and excessive workload creates a cycle of stress and negative behavior, ultimately fostering a toxic work culture characterized by incivility.

Therefore, the connection between despotic leadership and workplace incivility is strengthened by the mediating role of workload. When employees are faced with excessive demands, both emotionally and physically, their ability to cope is stretched to the limit. This not only reduces their well-being but also intensifies the negative effects of workplace incivility. Employees, feeling stressed and unsupported, may resort to negative behaviors as a way of coping with the pressures they face, contributing to an ongoing cycle of workplace incivility. The findings suggest that addressing workload balance and promoting a more supportive leadership style could reduce the harmful effects of despotic leadership and workplace incivility, improving organizational environment.

H4: Workload mediates the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility.

2.6 Distributive Justice moderates the relationship between Workload and Workplace Incivility

Distributive justice pertains to employees' perceptions of fairness regarding the outcomes they receive in their organizational environment. It primarily focuses on

employees' satisfaction with their work outcomes, such as workload distribution, salary levels, bonuses, promotions, and other benefits (Astuti & Ingsih, 2019). A fair distribution of these resources are essential for enhancing organizational effectiveness and employee well-being. Distributive justice not only influences employee attitudes toward their work but also affects their behavior, which can either strengthen or weaken organizational performance.

Most employees compare to find out whether outcomes are fair or not. Such comparisons can take the form of workload distribution or some form of remuneration between coworkers. If employees perceive such outcomes as being fair, they become optimistic toward the organization. However, if an employee feels short-changed, he or she would feel disadvantaged, frustrated, and dissatisfied. Such perceived injustices can lead to tension and conflict and make these very insecure and prone to turf battles and mistrust. Hence, organizations must ensure that the employees perceive distributive justice in the distribution of resources and decision-making.

Sarwary, Banayee, Faiq, and Azimi (2023), distributive justice involves the fairness of the outcome's employees receive. Freire and Fernandes (2016) define it as the extent to which employees feel the distribution of resources and outcomes within their organization is fair. Employees determine the fairness of these distributions through comparisons with others, assessing whether they receive equitable treatment relative to their peers. This perception of fairness directly influences their attitudes and behaviors.

Workplace incivility is linked to negative organizational outcomes, such as decreased job performance, reduced work engagement, and higher absenteeism rates (C. L. Porath & Pearson, 2012; P. Y. Chen & Cooper, 2014; Sliter, Sliter, & Jex, 2012). Andersson and Pearson (1999) posited that workplace incivility can shape employees' perceptions of justice. Subsequent research has explored the connection between incivility and different aspects of justice. For example, Gryphon (2010) found that incivility negatively impacts perceptions of fair interpersonal treatment, while (Blau & Andersson, 2005) demonstrated that perceptions of unjust resource distribution are linked to increased incivility over time. Additionally, Sayers, Sears, Kelly, and Harbke (2011) observed that higher levels of incivility are associated with lower perceptions/injustice of distributive justice. These findings

suggest that when employees perceive unfairness in resource allocation, they may respond with uncivil behaviors, potentially as a form of resistance or retaliation. Distributive justice is applied to study different organizational behaviors, stressing its position among determinants of employees' attitudes. Perceptions of distributive justice influences the extent to which employees are convinced that the outcomes they obtain and their treatment in an organization is just, fair, and ethical. According to [Vermunt and Steensma \(2001\)](#), the perceived injustices at the workplace reduce the capacity of individuals to cope with the demands of work. In addition, ([Tepper, 2000](#)) stated that unfair treatment has been linked to greater psychological distress and low job satisfaction. Favoritism in both resources and promotion opportunities as well as in most organizational practices sends the message to the employees that the work they do is not worth much. This perception can lead to incivility due to how employees would react to an unconscionable system.

The author suggest that distributive justice moderates the relationship between workload and workplace incivility. Specifically, However, when employees believe their workloads are being distributed equitably across their teams, they are more likely to feel that they're being valued and compensated fairly to mitigate the adverse effects of high workloads ([Matsui & Onglatco, 1992](#)).

On the other hand, if employees perceive inequities in workload distribution, they are more likely to engage in uncivil behaviors as a response to the perceived injustice. This suggests that distributive justice acts as a buffer against the negative outcomes of high workloads, allowing employees to manage stress and avoid incivility.

[Hobfoll \(1989\)](#), offers insight into how distributive justice can moderate the impact of workload on workplace incivility. The COR theory supposes that people make efforts to acquire, protect, and retain valuable resources such as time, energy, and emotional well-being. The perceptions of distributive justice related to the distribution of workloads among employees tend to cause them to better handle job demands without depleting their resources. High perceptions of distributive justice tend to soften the negative effects of stressors because this gives an employee some kind of psychological security and fairness to fight interpersonal conflicts.

When employees face high workloads but perceive them as fair, their stress levels are likely to remain manageable, preventing the depletion of psychological and emotional resources. It is a perception of fairness that serves as a buffer while employees build up positive coping strategies and continue with their constructive interactions with their colleagues. On the contrary, when employees perceive inequities in workload distribution, their stress levels increase, leading to emotional exhaustion and a higher likelihood of engaging in uncivil behaviors.

The literature suggests that high perceptions of distributive justice are negatively related to stress (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Employees who perceive fairness in their workload are less likely to experience resource depletion, as they feel their efforts are valued and adequately rewarded. This sense of equity allows them to cope with high workloads more effectively, reducing the likelihood of incivility. Conversely, employees who perceive unfair workload distribution may experience heightened stress, as they feel their resources are being exhausted without adequate compensation. This imbalance can lead to frustration and incivility as a means of expressing dissatisfaction.

Hobfoll (1989) emphasizes that individuals are motivated to conserve and maximize their resources to prevent burnout. This motivation influences how employees react to the demands of their work. When employees feel that their workload is distributed fairly, they are more inclined to engage in behaviors that help protect and replenish their resources, even when confronted with heavy job demands. A sense of fairness in workload distribution reduces stress, allowing employees to cope with challenges more effectively.

For example, employees who believe their workload is equitably distributed are more likely to seek assistance from colleagues when feeling overwhelmed. This support can take various forms, such as sharing responsibilities, discussing tasks, or providing emotional support. By turning to their social support network, employees can reduce their mental and emotional strain, which helps to preserve their psychological resources. Additionally, those who perceive fairness in workload distribution are more likely to employ stress reduction techniques to manage job-related pressure. These techniques might include mindfulness practices, physical activity, or relaxation exercises that help employees cope with stress and recharge

their energy. Using these strategies enables employees to maintain their emotional well-being, helping them to avoid burnout.

Moreover, individuals who feel their workload is fairly distributed often prioritize their tasks more effectively. They organize their responsibilities in a way that minimizes stress and allows them to focus on the most important tasks first. This helps ensure their resources are used wisely, preventing exhaustion and the negative consequences that could lead to workplace incivility.

The combination of coping strategies seeking support, utilizing stress management techniques, and prioritizing tasks plays an essential role in reducing the impact of heavy workloads on workplace incivility. By effectively managing their resources, employees can handle job stress without resorting to negative behaviours that might contribute to a toxic work environment.

Ultimately, these coping mechanisms support both individual well-being and the overall health of the organization, fostering a more respectful and productive workplace. Distributive justice can be assessed through general perceptions of fairness ([Greenberg, 1990](#)) and specific evaluations related to workload equity ([Colquitt, 2001](#)). By fostering a perception of distributive justice, organizations can create a more supportive work environment where employees feel valued. When employees believe that their workload is distributed fairly, they are more likely to remain engaged and less likely to display incivility, even under pressure.

Organizations should prioritize enhancing practices that promote distributive justice, including transparent decision-making, equitable resource allocation, and clear communication about workloads ([Jiang & Probst, 2024](#)).

Studies indicate that when employees perceive fairness in these areas, it increases job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Transparent decision-making and fair task distribution can prevent perceptions of injustice, often linked to workplace stress and negative behaviors ([H. Li & Lin, 2024](#)).

Training programs for managers are also crucial for ensuring justice in workload distribution and aligning compensation with employees' efforts. Providing managers with the tools and knowledge to distribute tasks equitably fosters a fair

culture and helps mitigate employee dissatisfaction (Kuo & Lin, 2024). Fair treatment by managers enhances trust and motivates employees to perform better, leading to higher organizational engagement.

Additionally, ensuring equity in workload benefits employees' mental health, which is linked to reduced workplace incivility. Research by X. Chen, Zhao, and Li (2024) shows that employees who perceive fairness experience lower levels of stress and workplace conflict, which leads to higher productivity and a more positive work environment. By cultivating a culture of fairness, organizations can minimize the negative effects of incivility, fostering a more respectful workplace environment.

By implementing distributive justice in resource allocation and investing in fair practices and managerial training, organizations can create an environment where employees feel valued. This can lead to improved culture and reduced workplace incivility (T. Zhang, Chen, & Wei, 2024).

H5: Distributive Justice moderates the relationship between workload and workplace incivility; such that the relationship will be weakened when distributive Justice is high and vice versa.

2.7 Hypothesis Statements

H1: Despotic leadership has a positive and significant impact on workplace incivility.

H2: Despotic leadership has a positive and significant impact on workload.

H3: Workload has a positive and significant impact on workplace incivility.

H4: Workload mediates the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility.

H5: Distributive Justice moderates the relationship between workload and workplace incivility; such that the relationship will be weakened when distributive Justice is high and vice versa.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

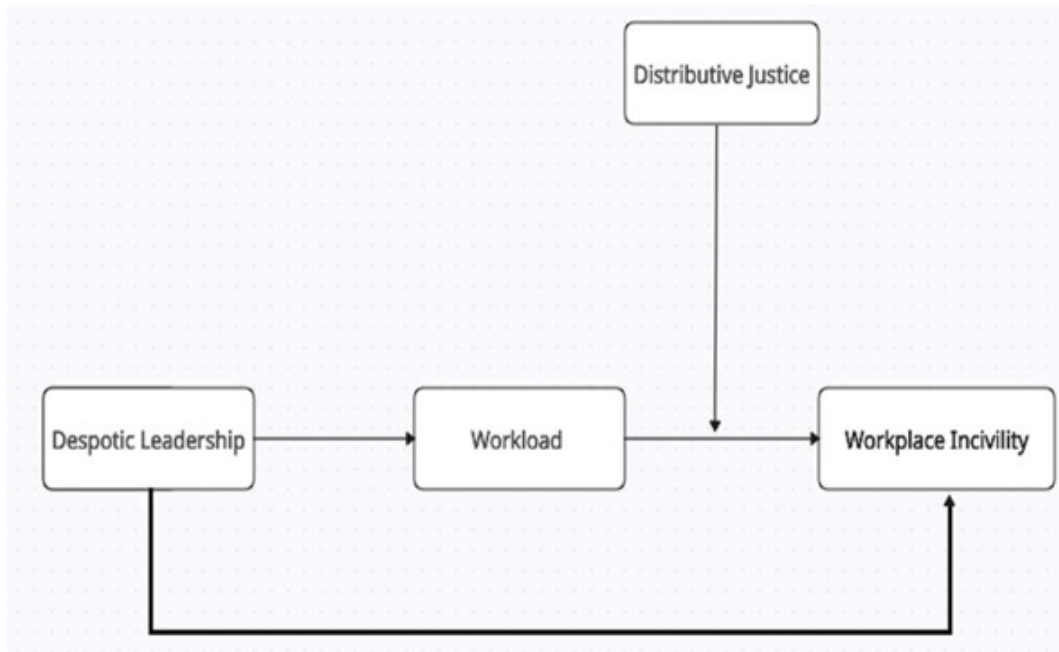


FIGURE 2.1: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study investigates the impact of despotic leadership on workplace incivility, with workload as a mediator and distributive justice as a moderator. Despotic leadership, defined by authoritarian control and high demands, is posited to increase employee workload, which in turn mediates the relationship between such leadership and workplace incivility. The rationale is that excessive demands heighten stress levels, contributing to uncivil behavior among employees.

Furthermore, distributive justice is examined as a moderating factor. It is hypothesized that when distributive justice is perceived as high indicating fair allocation of outcomes and resources. This perception can buffer the negative effects of workload on workplace incivility. Conversely, low perceptions of distributive justice may intensify the adverse impact of workload, resulting in a higher incidence of incivility.

This would give a more holistic understanding of the dynamics between leadership, workload, and perceptions of fairness for better input into how organizational variables could be tackled to facilitate reducing incivility in the workplace while sustaining a positive organizational climate.

2.9 Summary

This chapter has presented the literature review and hypotheses of the study. A total of four key variables despotic leadership, workload, distributive justice, and workplace incivility were identified based on the comprehensive literature review. The chapter discusses the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility, emphasizing the mediating role of workload in this relationship.

Furthermore, the moderating role of distributive justice has been brought into relief and thus serves crucially in determining the impact of workload on workplace incivility. The discussion underscored how perceptions of resource-allocation fairness can serve as a moderator in providing lessening effects against high workload stemming from despotic leadership.

In conclusion, hypotheses derived from the reviewed literature have been formulated.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

This chapter covers the research methodologies used in this study, including the analysis methods that examine how different variables are linked. It covers important elements such as the population, sampling methods, variables, chosen tools, data collection techniques, and analysis methods.

The main aim of this chapter is to clearly outline the steps done during the research process. The study examines how despotic leadership shapes workplace incivility, the mediating effect of workload and distributive justice moderation. It specifically looks at the higher education sector in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

This methodology addresses a gap in the research on the effects of despotic leadership especially in the higher education sector, it also explains how reliable and correct the ways of collecting and analyzing data are, which makes the study's results stronger. The chapter includes reasons for why certain methods were chosen, which adds to the credibility and detail of the research. This Chapter shows the results of the frequency of gender of respondents, age of respondent, experience of respondents and education of respondents, including pilot tests, reliability analysis, CFA analysis and target university list.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy defines how researchers investigate the research and analysis of phenomena. It is shaped by the practical implications and the researcher's

views about the relationship between knowledge and the problem under research (Saunders & Townsend, 2018).

This study uses a deductive method using specific patterns and theories tested through hypotheses and observations. The study follows a positivist philosophy, claiming true knowledge comes from observations and quantitative data. The positivist philosophy defines the significance of truthful descriptions from all participants and the use of quantitative approaches as the most effective way to solve problems in the social sciences.

3.2 Research Strategy

A strategy acts as a roadmap to achieve specific goals. In research, a well-defined strategy is essential for addressing the research objectives and answering the study’s questions. The choice of an appropriate research strategy depends not only on the research objectives and questions but also on the researcher’s perspective of what defines solid research. Practical factors, such as access to data and time constraints, also play a significant role in this decision. The research strategy used in my study is shown in Figure 3.1 and adopted from (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020).

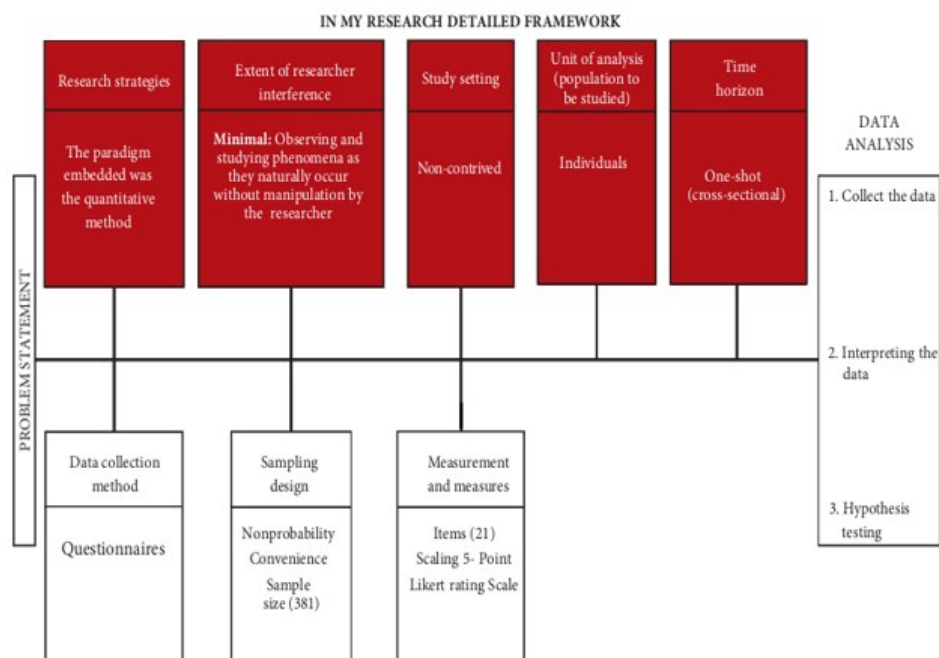


FIGURE 3.1: Detailed Frame Work

3.3 Research Design Study type and Justification

This research employs a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between despotic leadership, workplace incivility, workload, and distributive justice in the higher education sector in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The quantitative research technique is useful in making statistical analyses to test the hypothesized relationships that exist between these variables. Data was collected through a cross-sectional survey of department head deans and faculty members at a single point in time. This technique offers a snapshot of the current working environment in higher education institutions. This method is perfect for testing the hypothesized relationships using methods of statistical analysis. The cross-sectional method ensures an effective method and provides a clear picture of how all the variables interplay.

3.4 Unit of Analysis

In this study, the term "unit of analysis" refers to individuals working in the higher education sector at universities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, such as faculty members, heads of departments (HODs), and deans. This term has been used to refer to the individuals whose experiences and perceptions are being investigated in the context of the current research.

3.5 Study Setting

The study setting was non-contrived. The involvement of researcher was minimal. The data was collected in natural Settings.

3.6 Population and Sample of the Study

The population includes heads of departments/deans and faculty members/employees from 36 recognized universities in Rawalpindi Islamabad, covering both

the public and private sectors, as Table 3.1. This sector was chosen because of the significant levels of workplace incivility that employees face, which are mainly shaped by the presence of despotic leadership in this high-pressure and demanding environment. Morgan (1970) methodology was used to calculate the sample size for this study, ensuring that the sample accurately represents the target population. In these calculations, a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error were used, which indicates that the research findings are real.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Substituting the values:

$$n = \frac{98452}{1 + 98452(0.05)^2}$$

$$(0.05)^2 = 0.0025$$

$$98452 \times 0.0025 = 246.13$$

$$1 + 246.13 = 247.13$$

$$n = \frac{98452}{247.13} = 398.34$$

In this scenario

- n represents the sample size,
- N is the population size, and
- e is the margin of error (0.05 in this case)

Calculations suggested that a sample size of approximately 381 participants is enough for the statistical analysis and would provide accurate/good results with the target population.

Nonprobability sampling technique, convenience sampling was used to select the participants. The method is a survey of faculty members, department heads, deans, faculty, and employees who are readily available and ready to provide their opinions. Logistical challenges and limited access to higher education institutions in Rawalpindi and Islamabad led us to adopt this approach. The final sample comprised 381 employees, ensuring a wide range of roles, experience levels, and organizational affiliations.

TABLE 3.1: Characteristics and Sample of Respondents

University Name	Location
National Defence University (NDU)	Islamabad
Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU)	Islamabad
Capital University of Science and Technology (CUST)	Islamabad
COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT)	Islamabad
International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI)	Islamabad
National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST)	Islamabad
Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences (PIEAS)	Islamabad
Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU)	Islamabad
Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University	Islamabad
My university	Islamabad
Ibad Shah Internation University	Islamabad
Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science & Technology	Islamabad
Iqra University Islamabad	Islamabad
NUST University	Islamabad
Institute of Space Technology (IST)	Islamabad
Air University	Islamabad
Foundation University Islamabad	Islamabad
Al Hamd University Islamabad Campus	Islamabad
Abasyn University Islamabad Campus	Islamabad
Virtual University PWD	Islamabad
Bahria University E8	Islamabad
Zabist H8	Islamabad
Sarhad University Rawat	Islamabad
Numl University	Islamabad
Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi (AAUR)	Rawalpindi
Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU)	Rawalpindi
Foundation University Islamabad (Rawalpindi Campus)	Rawalpindi
University of Rawalpindi DHA 1	Rawalpindi
FAST National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences (Rawalpindi Campus)	Rawalpindi
Beaconhouse National University Rawalpindi Campus	Rawalpindi
Iqra University Rawalpindi Campus	Rawalpindi

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected via convenience sampling from department heads/deans and faculty members/employees at higher education institutions in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. To ensure a representative sample, a total of 600 self-administered structured questionnaires were distributed through, personal visits.

Out of the 500 questionnaires returned, 119 were discarded base on missing values and errors, remaining 381 responses used for analysis and conclusion. The response rate was 83.3%. According to [Frohlich \(2002\)](#), a high response rate reflects the relevance and rigour of the study. Respondents are likely to engage when they see the research as significant.

3.8 Sampling Technique and Rationale

Data collection can be conducted via many types of sampling techniques, which are broadly classified as probability or non-probability. Probability sampling gives each member of the population an equal chance of being selected in the sample. On the contrary, non-probability sampling does not ensure an equal chance of being selected. Convenience sampling is a common type of non-probability sampling in which data is collected from readily available people.

In this study, convenience sampling was used to collect data from department heads/deans and faculty members/employees at higher education institutions in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. While this strategy may generate biases due to its non-random character, it was chosen for its practicality in light of time restrictions and participant accessibility. The sample size was taken as dictated by rules that ensure result credibility and validity.

3.9 Instruments

Data collection used a structured questionnaire. The instrument was divided into four major sections: workplace incivility (WPI), workload (WL), despotic leadership (DL), and distributive justice (DJ). Instruments used in the study have been

adopted .

1. **Despotic Leadership (DL):** Six items developed by [De Hoogh and Den Hartog \(2008\)](#) for measuring Despotic Leadership were used. The sample item is 'My leader is punitive, no pity or compassion.'
2. **Workload (WL):** Assessment of workload was done with six items from the NASA-TLX (Task Load Index) developed by [Hart \(1988\)](#). One sample item, of course, is 'The tasks assigned by my leader challenge my cognitive or mental abilities.'
3. **Distributive Justice (DJ):** Distributive Justice was measured using five items developed by [Niehoff and Moorman \(1993\)](#). A sample item is, "My work schedule is fair."
4. **Workplace Incivility (WPI):** Workplace Incivility (WPI): Seven items developed by [Cortina et al. \(2001\)](#) were used to evaluate Workplace Incivility. An item "My colleagues always put me down or they are condescending to me."

This followed the use of a five-point Likert scale from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree' which allowed respondents to assert a degree of agreement or disagreement with each one of the items presented on the questionnaire.

TABLE 3.2: Scale Summary

Variables	Developed by	No. of Items
Despotic Leadership	De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008)	6
Workload	Hart (1988)	6
Distributive Justice	Niehoff and Moorman (1993)	4
Workplace Incivility	Cortina et al. (2001)	7

3.10 Ethical Protocols

Ethics governs aspects of behavior in society and ethics in research with the standards for responsible conduct ([Akaranga & Makau, 2016](#)). Those maximizing falsification, fabrication, and plagiarism were avoided strictly because of ethical

concerns. According to a cover letter accompanying the questionnaire, respondents were informed about it; participation was voluntary, and the respondents kept interviewers may have terminated it at any time.

Data was kept anonymous [Kaewkungwal and Adams \(2019\)](#) therefore ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and the following from the introduction of the survey indicated that data would only be used for research purposes. The study also adhered to the principle of beneficence, in which the participants did not face any problems.

The survey focused on employees' thoughts and experiences, i.e. without personal information about the people, allowing respondents to survey their comfort, for there was no risk of psychological, legal, or physical harm.

3.11 Advanced Statistical Methods for Data Analysis

Data from this study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is a software package that provides organizing the data, analyzing the data and interprets the data based on statistical analysis using simple commands. In this study, the following analyses were performed:

1. One-way Anova:
2. Reliability Analysis: Evaluate the consistency of measurement tools.
3. Descriptive Statistics: Summaries and characterize key elements of the dataset.
4. Correlation Analysis: Determines the strength and direction of correlation between variables.
5. Demographic Analysis: Examine the characteristics of the sample population.
6. Regression Analysis: Determines the association between variables.
7. Mediation Analysis: To investigate the hypothesized mediating effects.
8. Moderation analysis: Tests how the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable changes based on a moderator's influence.

3.12 Characteristics and sample of Respondents

3.12.1 Gender of the Respondents

Table 3.3 shows a big difference in gender among the 381 respondents. There were 326 males and 55 females, meaning males make up a much larger portion of the sample.

TABLE 3.3: Response Frequency by Gender Category

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	326	86.6%
Female	55	14.4%
Total	381	100%

3.12.2 Age of Respondents

Table 3.4 shows the age distribution of the 381 respondents. The largest group, 161 respondents, 42.3%, was in the 30.1 - 35 age range, followed by 62 respondents, 16.3%, in the 35.1 - 40 range, and 59 respondents, 15.5%, in the 40.1 - 45 range. Smaller groups included 57 respondents, 15.0%, in the 25 - 30 range; 24 respondents, 6.3%, in the 50.1 - 55 range; and 18 respondents, 4.7%, in the 45.1 - 50 range.

These results show that the most significant number of respondents are in the 30.1 - 35 age group, accounting for over 42% of the total sample.

TABLE 3.4: Frequency of Responses by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
25-30	57	15.0%
30.1 - 35	161	42.3%
35.1 - 40	62	16.3%
40.1 - 45	59	15.5%
45.1 -50	18	4.7%
50.1 -55	24	6.3%
Total	381	100%

3.12.3 Experience of Respondents

The table 3.5 shows the distribution of respondents by work experience. The largest group, 134 respondents (35.2%), had 3.1–7 years of experience, followed by 87 respondents (22.8%) with 1.1–3 years of experience, and 55 respondents (14.4%) with 7.1–10 years of experience.

Smaller groups included 48 respondents (12.6%) with less than 1 year of experience, 37 respondents (9.7%) with 10.1–13 years, and 20 respondents (5.2%) with 13.1–15 years of experience.

The data reveals that most respondents (58%) have between 1.1 and 7 years of experience, meaning most of the sample has some work experience.

TABLE 3.5: Frequency of Responses by Experience

Experience	Frequency	Percentage
<01 year	48	12.6%
1.1 – 3 years	87	22.8%
3.1 – 7 years	134	35.2%
7.1 – 10 years	55	14.4%
10.1 – 13 years	37	9.7%
13.1 – 15 years	20	5.2%
Total	381	100%

3.12.4 Qualification of Respondents

Table 3.3 presents the education levels of the 381 respondents. The largest group, 180 47.2%, held a PhD, followed by 115 respondents 30.2% with an MS degree and 77 respondents 20.2% who had completed an MPhil. A smaller proportion, 9 respondents, 2.4%, held an MBA degree. These results show that most respondents possess advanced degrees, with nearly half of the sample having a PhD. Table 3.6 Frequency of Responses by Qualification.

TABLE 3.6: Qualification-Wise Responses Frequency

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
MBA	9	2.4%
MS	115	30.2%
MPhil	77	20.2 %
PhD	180	47.2%
Total	381	100%

3.12.5 Pilot Test

A pilot study is conducted on a small sample to test the instrument before collecting data. It helps assess the validity of the variables and ensures that questions are clear and understandable to respondents (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

TABLE 3.7: Reliability Assessment of Pilot Test Results

Variables	Total number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Despotic Leadership	06	0.923
Workload	06	0.732
Distributive Justice	05	0.839
Workplace Incivility	07	0.810
N=38		

Typically, the pilot study is performed on 38 random respondents, and the reliability of responses is checked using Cronbach's alpha. According to Hair et al. (2006), Generally, a Cronbach's value of 0.7 or above is acceptable to ensure reliability. The results from the pilot study, with all Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7, indicate that the instrument is reliable, and further analysis can proceed with the entire sample of 381 respondents.

3.12.6 Reliability Analysis

Reliability checks the internal consistency of a variable's items. It tells us how closely related they are. The ideal reliability value, often measured by Cronbach's

alpha, should be 0.7 or higher (Hair et al., 2006). In other words, reliability is the accuracy of the data set that is tested for the research results.

If Cronbach's alpha has a value less than 0.7 (less than 0.7), it says that it is not reliable. All the values of the variables are shown in the table. Despotism Leadership has 6 items and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84. Workload has 6 items with an alpha of 0.83.

Distributive Justice has 5 items with an alpha of 0.80, and Workplace Incivility has 7 items with an alpha of 0.81. All of these values are above 0.7, which means they are acceptable. This shows that our data is reliable and can be used for further analysis.

TABLE 3.8: Statistical Analysis: Reliability Check

Variables	Total number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Despotism Leadership	06	0.848
Workload	06	0.803
Distributive Justice	05	0.808
Workplace Incivility	07	0.816
N=381		

3.12.7 CFA Confirmatory Factor Analysis

IBM Amos software was used to check if the model fits the data. It helps us decide whether the model is good enough for further analysis. First, we need to confirm that the constructs are valid, and then we can test the hypotheses. We looked at fit indices like chi-square, IFI, TLI, CFI, and RMSEA, which tell us whether the model fits well.

TABLE 3.9: Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Measurement Model Validation

	CMIN/ DF	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Initial model	1.779	0.789	0.899	0.879	0.046
Modified model	1.559	0.913	0.912	0.903	0.041

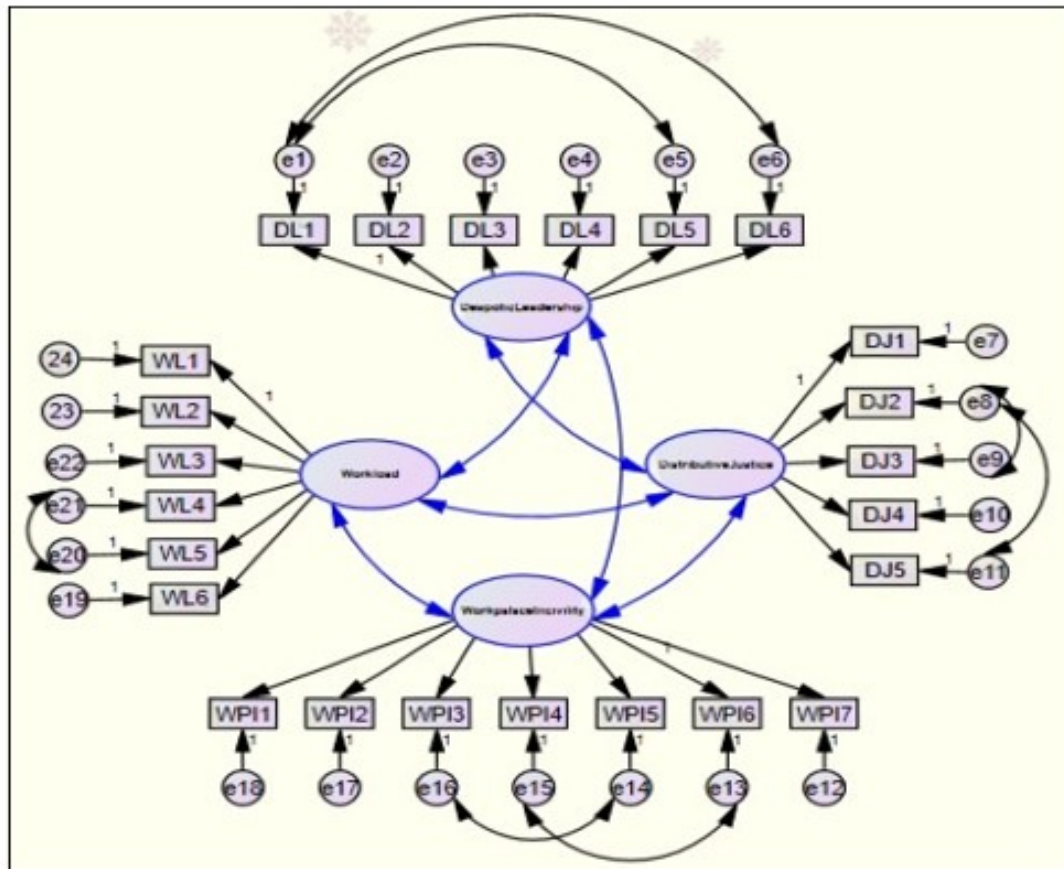


FIGURE 3.2: CFA Path Diagram Analysis

Gaskin and Lim (2016) explains that for a model to fit well, both the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) should be higher than 0.90.

These values compare the proposed model to a simple one, and higher numbers show a better fit. For the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), it should also be above 0.90, with 0.95 being ideal.

The Chi-square test checks how well the model matches the data, and a value below 2 or 3 is good. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) shows how close the model is too perfect, with values below 0.08 considered good, and below 0.05 even better. In this analysis, the model fit was not acceptable at first.

However, the fit improved after adding covariances, and the model was ready for further analysis without removing any items. Overall, the model fit is now good, and we can test if the different paths are significant.

3.13 Summary of chapter 3

This chapter described the process of data collection, including the population, sample, and measurement tools used for all variables in the research model. It also provided an overview of the data analysis process, which included testing the reliability of the scale using a pilot sample (10% of the total sample size, N=38). The results showed that the scale was reliable, with no issues identified. A reliability analysis conducted on the entire sample (N=381) revealed that all Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.70, with no items needing removal. IBM Amos software was used to assess how well the model fits the data, ensuring its appropriateness for further analysis. The model fit was found to be satisfactory, allowing for the testing of the significance of different paths. The coming chapter 4 will present the findings from the data analysis.

Chapter 4

Result and Analysis

This Chapter analysis and examines the relationships between despotic leadership and workplace incivility. Additionally, the researcher is determined to investigate the mediating workload and moderating role of distributive justice in reducing workplace incivility in the higher education sector in Islamabad Rawalpindi. This Chapter analysis the core research questions presented in Chapter 1, as listed below.

1. Does the despotic leadership affect Workplace Incivility.?
2. Does workload mediate the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility.?
3. Does distributive justice moderate the relationship between workload and workplace Incivility.?

This Chapter shows the results of the data analysis, including descriptive statistics analysis, one-way ANOVA, correlation analysis, regression analysis, mediation effects, and moderation effects, as per the conceptual model.

4.1 One-way ANOVA

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted in SPSS to check how control variables affect the dependent variable, workplace incivility. Demographic factors like age, gender, experience, and qualifications can influence the study's results (Allworth

& Hesketh, 1999). If these factors have a significant effect, they must be controlled to avoid affecting the studied relationships.

In my ANOVA analysis, all demographic factors (like age, gender, experience, and qualifications) were found to be insignificant because the p-values were much higher than 0.05. which means they do not have a meaningful impact on the dependent variable. As a result, there is no need to control these factors in the analysis. The analysis reveals that these demographic factors have no impact on the study's results.

4.2 Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis helps us deal realistically with large data sets (McDowall & Saunders, 2010). Descriptive statistics in research are primarily used to analyze and summarize the main characteristics of the data, breaking down the information into more manageable pieces. They are a fundamental tool for data analysis, helping to describe and interpret the distribution and patterns within a dataset.

Descriptive analysis helps to organize data into specific groups, providing a clear summary of the key characteristics. Here's what each term means:

- N: The number of responses or sample size.
- Min: The lowest value in the dataset.
- Max: The highest value in the dataset.
- Mean: The average value, which shows the central point of the data.
- Standard Deviation measures how spread the data is and how many individual data points differ from the mean.

TABLE 4.1: Descriptive Statistics Summary

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Despotic Leadership	381	1.40	5.00	4.17	0.71
Workload	381	1.50	4.83	4.14	0.59
Distributive Justice	381	1.00	5.00	1.89	0.78
Workplace Incivility	381	1.71	5.00	4.03	0.69

The Above table shows information regarding variables. The independent variable (Despotic Leadership) has a mean value of 4.17, and the standard deviation is .71. The mean of the mediator (Workload) is 4.14, with a standard deviation of .59. The moderator, Distributive Justice, has a mean value of 1.89 and a standard deviation of 0.78. The dependent variable, Workplace Incivility, has a mean value of 4.03 and a standard deviation of 0.69.

4.3 Correlation

The Pearson product-moment correlation is used to measure the relationship between two variables, showing how strongly they are related and in which direction. The correlation value ranges from -1 to +1. A value between 0.10 and 0.29 indicates a weak relationship, while values from 0.30 to 0.49 show a moderate relationship. A value between 0.50 and 0.80 suggests a strong relationship, and values above 0.80 mean the variables are very strongly related. When the correlation is too high (above 0.80), it can lead to multicollinearity, where the variables are so closely related that they may be treated as one. This can distort the results and needs to be addressed with additional tests to avoid affecting the relationships between other variables (Cohen, West & Aiken, 2014).

The correlation analysis below table shows a positive relationship between despotic leadership (IV) and workplace incivility (DV), with a correlation coefficient of 0.834** ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that higher levels of despotic leadership are associated with more workplace incivility. Workload (Med) acts as a mediator between despotic leadership and workplace incivility. The correlation between despotic leadership (IV) and workload (Med) is 0.526** ($p < 0.01$), suggesting a positive relationship. This means that higher despotic leadership increases workload, which in turn contributes to more workplace incivility.

Furthermore, distributive justice (Mod) moderates the relationship between despotic leadership (IV) and workplace incivility (DV). The correlation between despotic leadership (IV) and distributive justice (Mod) is -0.495** ($p < 0.01$), showing a negative relationship. This means that as despotic leadership increases, distributive justice decreases. The correlation between distributive justice (Mod) and

workplace incivility (DV) is -0.548^{**} ($p < 0.01$), indicating that higher distributive justice leads to lower workplace incivility.

TABLE 4.2: Correlation Matrix

Variables	DL	WL	DJ	WPI
Despotic Leadership (Iv)	1			
Workload (Med)	.526**	1		
Distributive Justice (Mod)	-.495**	-.617**	1	
Workplace Incivility (Dv)	.834**	.587**	-.548**	1

In conclusion, the results indicate that despotic leadership has a positive and significant impact on increasing workload and decreasing distributive justice. These factors, in combination, contribute to higher levels of workplace incivility.

4.4 Regression

Regression analysis examines the relationship effects between variables and determines how significantly each variable is influenced. It primarily focuses on analyzing the effect of independent variables on dependent variables. This study employed multiple regression to investigate and understand the relationships between these variables.

The study utilized Hayes and Scharkow's (2013) approach, explicitly leveraging the PROCESS macro for SPSS. Model 4 was applied to test the mediating role of workload in the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility.

Additionally, Model 14 was used to analyze the moderating effect of distributive justice between workload and workplace incivility. These models provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the mediation and moderation effects within the proposed relationships.

Table 4.3 The study's main results include p-values, regression coefficients, standard errors, and confidence intervals (LLCI and ULCI). It covers both direct and indirect relationships, focusing on mediation.

TABLE 4.3: Direct and Indirect Effect

Direct Effect		β	S. E	P	LLCI	ULCI
Despotic Leadership →	WPI	.809	.027	0.00	.755	.863
Despotic Leadership →	Workload	.439	.036	0.00	.367	.510
Workload →	WPI	.682	.048	0.00	.367	.510
Indirect Effect		β	S. E	P	LLCI	ULCI
Despotic Leadership →	Workload	.1046	.0261	0.00	.0583	.1595
	→ Workplace Incivility					

Hypothesis 1: Despotic leadership has a positive and significant impact on workplace incivility.

The regression analysis for Hypothesis 1 shows a significant positive relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility. The regression coefficient (β) is 0.80, and the p-value is 0.00, indicating a strong and significant relationship. The positive β value confirms that as despotic leadership increases, workplace incivility also increases. Based on these results, Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: Despotic leadership has a positive and significant impact on workload.

The regression analysis shows a positive relationship between despotic leadership and workload. The regression coefficient (β) is 0.43, with a positive sign, meaning that workload increases under despotic leadership. The p-value is 0.00, confirming that this relationship is statistically significant. Based on these results, Hypothesis 2 is accepted.

Hypothesis 3: Workload has a positive and significant impact on workplace incivility.

The regression analysis shows a positive relationship between workload and workplace incivility. The regression coefficient (β) is 0.68, and the p-value is 0.00, indicating that this relationship is statistically significant. Excessive workload can lead to increased workplace incivility. Based on these results, Hypothesis 3 is accepted.

Hypothesis 4: Workload mediates the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility.

The regression analysis shows that workload mediates the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility. The regression coefficient (β) for this relationship is 0.68, with a p-value of 0.00, indicating a significant positive relationship. This suggests that workload strengthens the positive relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility. The p-value of 0.00 confirms the significance of this relationship, leading to the acceptance of Hypothesis 4.

4.5 Moderation Analysis

Hypothesis 5: Distributive Justice moderates the relationship between workload and workplace incivility; such that the relationship will be weakened when distributive Justice is high and vice versa.

We examined the moderating effect of distributive justice using process andrew hayes Model 14. The results, as shown in the table below, indicate that distributive justice significantly acts as a moderator. The lower and upper bounds of the confidence interval (LLCI and ULCI) were calculated as -0.2187 and -0.0554, respectively.

TABLE 4.4: Moderation Effect

(Moderator variable: Distributive Justice)	B	S. E	P	LLCI	ULCI
Int-term WL*DJ	-0.137	.0415	0.001	-.2187	-.0554

$N=381$, $Workload \times Distributive\ Justice = int-term$

Our hypothesis suggests that increasing distributive justice weakens this relationship and the estimated effect of the moderator variable on the outcome. A negative value means the moderation effect is negatively associated with the outcome. The results show that distributive justice does weaken the positive relationship between workload and workplace incivility, with a coefficient of -.1371 and a p-value

of 0.001. The confidence intervals also support this finding. Based on these results, Hypothesis 5 is supported.

4.6 Inter-term Graph

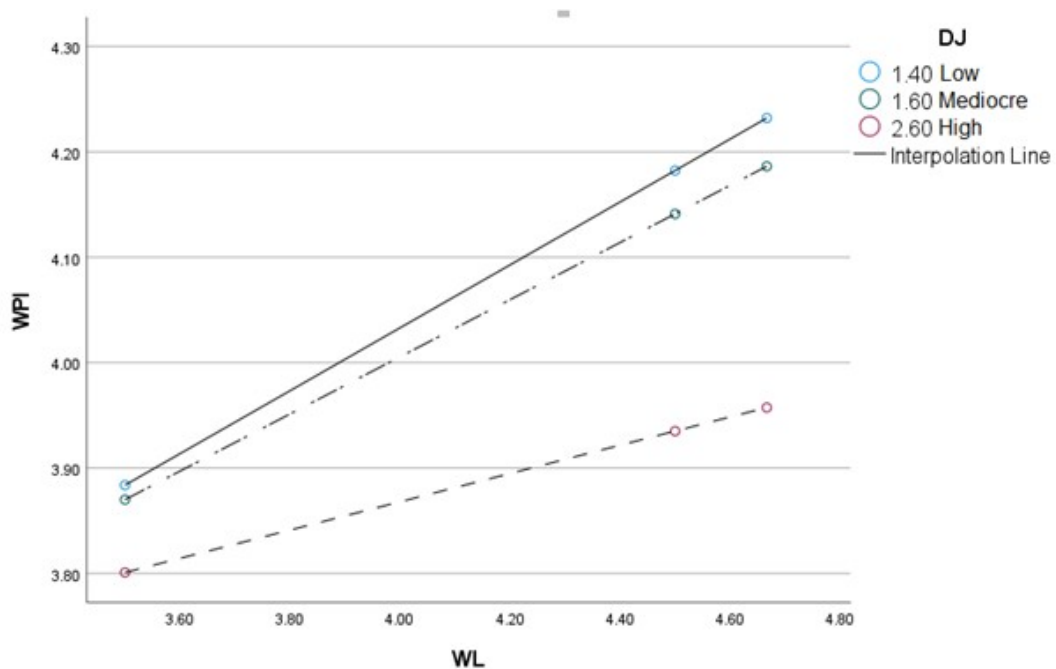


FIGURE 4.1: Inter-term Graph

Workplace incivility emerges not in isolation but as a consequence of underlying organizational dynamics. The findings suggest that as workload (WL) increases, workplace incivility (WPI) escalates, reinforcing the notion that resource strain fosters behavioural deviations. Yet, this relationship is neither uniform nor absolute.

Distributive Justice (DJ) functions as a critical moderator, altering the trajectory of this interaction. When DJ is low (1.40), the strain imposed by workload amplifies uncivil behaviours, as employees perceive inequitable resource allocation. In contrast, higher DJ (2.60) tempers this effect, diffusing the stress-induced spillover into workplace interactions. This pattern underscores the insidious nature of incivility subtle yet pervasive shaped by the interplay of structural fairness and job

demands. Left unchecked, incivility may propagate, reinforcing a cycle of disengagement and conflict. However, where fairness prevails, workplace interactions stabilize, mitigating the corrosive effects of escalating workload pressures.

TABLE 4.5: Summary of Hypothesis

Hyp.	Statements	Status
H1	Despotic leadership has a positive and significant impact on workplace incivility.	Supported
H2	Despotic leadership has a positive and significant impact on workload.	Supported
H3	Workload has a positive and significant impact on workplace incivility.	Supported
H4	Workload mediates the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility.	Supported
H5	Distributive Justice moderates the relationship between workload and workplace incivility; such that the relationship will be weakened when distributive Justice is high and vice-versa	Supported

4.7 Summary of chapter 4

In this chapter, the researcher employs various analytical techniques to identify statistical relationships within the data. These techniques illuminate the significant interplay among the relationships. The results of these analyses will be discussed in the next chapter, which will cover theoretical implications, conclusions, limitations, practical implications, and future directions. The conclusions

will summarize the main findings, the limitations will address any challenges encountered during the study, and the future directions will propose areas for further research or improvements.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Implications

This chapter discusses the main findings related to the proposed research model. The study examines how despotic leadership affects workplace incivility, with workload acting as a mediator and distributive justice acting as a mediator. Data was collected from the higher education sector in Islamabad and Rawalpindi to test the hypotheses.

The chapter explains the analysis results, supported by references to similar studies. It also includes practical and theoretical implications and research limitations and provides suggestions for future research.

The findings show that despotic leadership is linked to workplace incivility, with workload and distributive justice playing essential roles. This study's main focus was the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility in the higher education sector. The study also highlights how workload acts as a mediator in this relationship and how distributive justice moderates the effect of despotic leadership on workload.

The theoretical framework helped us form hypotheses about the relationships between the study's variables. The results show that despotic leadership affects workplace incivility, which is essential in creating it. The results also show that workload mediates the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility. Additionally, distributive justice was found to have a significant moderating effect between workload and workplace incivility.

In summary, this chapter reviews all the hypotheses and discusses the key findings of the research.

5.1 Hypothesis 1

Our findings support the first hypothesis of our study, which states that "Despotic leadership has a positive and significant impact on workplace incivility." This hypothesis aligns with previous studies showing how despotic leadership affects workplace incivility. Specifically, we used the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2001, 1989) to explain the direct link between despotic leadership and workplace incivility.

Y. Liu, Zhang, Zhao, and Liu (2023) Under despotic leadership characterized by authoritarianism and dominating behavior, leaders often force employees to handle excessive or irrelevant tasks, increasing their workload. According to (De Clercq et al., 2021; Islam et al., 2024), This results in a lower perception of distributive justice due to the leader's despotic behavior, which leads to the depletion of employees' psychological resources. When psychological resources are depleted, employees may display destructive workplace behavior, ultimately leading to workplace incivility. This link between the dark side of leadership and workplace incivility is well-documented in the literature. For example, O'Donoghue et al. (2016) found that despotic supervision negatively impacts workplace behavior. S. N. Raja et al. (2020) also identified a positive connection between despotic leadership and workplace incivility.

Nauman et al. (2021) pointed out the need to better understand the mechanisms through which despotic leadership triggers bullying behavior among employees (Mackey, Ellen III, McAllister, & Alexander, 2021), which ultimately impacts the overall workplace environment (F. Ahmad, Nikou, Ryan, & Cruickshank, 2021). Despotic leaders tend to create a climate of intimidation, fostering hostility among followers. Their negative actions, including domination and authoritative behavior, distract workers from their goals and create a toxic workplace atmosphere (De Clercq et al., 2021). This aligns with our study's findings and further underscores the harmful effects of despotic leadership on workplace incivility.

Hypothesis 1 posits that despotic leadership has a positive impact on workplace incivility. This finding aligns with (Jin, Kim, & DiPietro, 2020), who suggested that workplace incivility positively influences despotic leadership.

Our study extends (Jin et al., 2020) research by examining the workplace incivility-despotic leadership relationship in the higher education sector in Isb/Rwp, which is characterized by authoritarian elements within the workplace of the academic environment.

While despotic leadership and workplace incivility have been widely studied internationally in the past two decades (Schilpzand et al., 2016; Tepper et al., 2017), this study explores the cognitive processes involved in their relationship by examining them through the lens of resource depletion. Using COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), the study developed and tested a conceptual model that explains how despotic leadership leads to incivility at work. The results of H1 indicate a positive relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility.

This finding was supported by data collected from 381 employees in the higher education sector in Islamabad/Rawalpindi. It aligns with the theoretical framework of this study and contributes to the expanding body of knowledge on the intricate relationship between despotic leadership and individuals' self-regulatory resources (Baumeister and Vohs (2007); Mackey, Huang, and He (2020)).

Employees who face mistreatment from leaders often rely on their self-regulatory resources to manage stress, regulate emotions, and maintain professional conduct (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Christian & Ellis, 2011). Under despotic leadership, distributive justice and equity in workload, which are essential for managing workplace challenges, tend to decrease. Employees are then forced to invest their resources into understanding their supervisor's intentions, controlling frustration, and managing their emotional responses.

The observed positive relationship suggests that as employees face higher levels of despotic leadership, their finite self-regulatory resources are more likely to be depleted. This depletion reflects the psychological strain of dealing with the challenges caused by despotic leadership. Our results supported past literature, which suggests that under despotic leadership, employees feel frustrated due to unrealistic demands and excessive workload, ultimately leading to workplace incivility.

5.2 Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis of our study, which states that "Despotic leadership has a positive and significant impact on workload," is also supported. This finding is consistent with past studies, which suggest that under despotic leadership, the leader often places unrealistic demands on employees, leading to increased workload. Despotic leaders tend to be authoritarian and controlling, usually micro-managing and demanding excessive output from their subordinates. When the workload increases, employees engage in uncivil behavior. [Chaudhary and Islam \(2023\)](#) This could be due to several reasons: employees may be unable to leave work behind and focus on other activities, and there is injustice in resource allocations and workload equity. They may experience high frustration levels due to excessive and unrealistic demands from their leader, which is supported by our findings.

The findings of hypothesis are supported by previous studies, highlighting that such continuous strain can eventually lead to burnout, a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress. Employees who manage increasing workloads may also encounter workplace incivility, hostile behavior, or mistreatment. This combination of burnout and incivility can exacerbate employees' challenges, undermining their well-being and job satisfaction.

Increased work demands consume more of an employee's time and energy and have limited resources. As demands increase, employees are unable to fulfil their other activities, feeling depleted in personal resources such as psychological, physical, and social benefits resources that help them succeed. As a result, they may exhibit negative behavior, leading to workplace incivility.

Organizations are focusing on providing distributive justice and ensuring equity in workload distribution. When employees are given too much work by their leaders throughout the day, they feel pressured. This pressure makes it difficult for them to focus on home activities because most of their energy is spent dealing with work demands, leaving little for recovery activities ([Grawitch, Maloney, Barber, & Mooshegian, 2013](#)). As a result, employees use their resources to cope with the workload, leaving fewer resources for recovery ([Newman, Miao, Hofman, & Zhu,](#)

2014). Our findings aligned with previous research, which shows that despotic leadership often places unrealistic demands on employees, leading to an increased workload.

5.3 Hypothesis 3

The third Hypothesis in Our Study, which stated that "Workload has a positive and significant impact on workplace incivility," was supported by our findings. Our results are consistent with previous research, showing that increasing workloads force employees to put extra physical and emotional effort to meet deadlines and complete tasks. Over time, this pressure can lead to fatigue, with employees feeling extremely exhausted. For instance, [Marcionetti and Castelli \(2023\)](#) found that many employees reported high levels of physical tiredness after trying to manage workplace demands. This exhaustion drains their energy, affecting their ability to perform well in the following days.

If this stress continues, it can lead to burnout, which is feeling very tired mentally, physically, and emotionally because of long-term pressure. As employees try to manage larger workloads, they may also experience workplace incivility, which includes negative behaviors or mistreatment at work. Incivility can worsen employees' challenges and damage workplace environments.

Our results aligned with past literature that employees face more stress and pressure when workloads increase, leading to frustration and exhaustion ([Moon & Morais, 2022](#)). This makes it harder for them to stay calm and respectful, resulting in rude or unprofessional behavior. The more workload they have, the more likely they experience stress, negatively affecting their interactions with colleagues. Therefore, higher workloads can lead to more workplace incivility.

5.4 Hypothesis 4

The Fourth Hypothesis in Our Research, "Workload mediates the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility," is accepted. It supports prior

academic research that suggested that workload mediates the DL and WPI relationship, and increased workload under despotic leadership leads to stress. Additionally, employees who work under despotic leaders often have a heavier workload, which causes more stress (Mubarak, Khan, Bashir, & Safdar, 2023). Employees in such situations may feel tired all the time and emotionally drained. As a result, they are more likely to behave poorly at work, which can harm the organization. Despotic leaders contribute to stress, leading to more workplace incivility. The results support the premise of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which suggests that when employees experience a lack of personal resources, which can be of psychological, material, and social benefits, frustration builds up. This frustration can manifest in negative behaviors, ultimately leading to workplace incivility. Leadership has always been a critical determinant of organizational performance, which is why it has received significant attention. However, the dark side of leadership has been largely neglected, particularly in the higher education sector of South Asian countries (Islam et al., 2024).

Finally, the study highlights the negative effects of despotic leadership and its role in triggering negative employee behavior. Despotic leaders create feelings of discomfort, anxiety, and depression, which can lead employees to engage in workplace incivility, either consciously or subconsciously. Employees who exhibit uncivil behavior often feel that their leaders exploit them for personal gain, causing frustration that eventually results in incivility. It's also crucial to note that despotic leadership not only lowers employee performance (Khan, Gan, Khan, & Saif, 2023) but also negatively affects mental health. Despotism creates a sense of psychological contract violation, leading to stress, which in turn triggers bad behavior and incivility in the workplace. As a result, overall workplace incivility increases.

5.5 Hypothesis 5

The final hypothesis of the study suggests that, "Distributive justice moderates the relationship between workload and workplace incivility such that the relationship will be weakened when distributive justice is high and vice versa," is

supported. The findings align with previous studies, which suggest that a high level of distributive justice within organizations reduces workplace incivility. This is consistent with the research of [Romdani and Novawiguna \(2020\)](#) and [Kusuma and Piatrini \(2017\)](#), which demonstrate that distributive justice negatively impacts workplace incivility.

Employees who feel that the resources provided by management meet their expectations and needs are less likely to consider leaving the organization. Therefore, management must ensure fair resource allocation based on employees' responsibilities, which helps maintain a positive work environment. When rewards are perceived as fair, employees feel happier and more comfortable. On the other hand, despotic leadership, characterized by authoritarianism and dominating behavior, often forces employees to handle excessive or irrelevant tasks, increasing their workload. This leads to a reduced perception of distributive justice due to the leader's despotic behavior, ultimately depleting employees' psychological resources. Employees may exhibit negative behaviors when psychological resources are depleted, resulting in workplace incivility ([Mackey et al., 2021](#)).

In the absence of distributive justice, despotic leadership exacerbates workplace incivility. When employees perceive an unfair distribution of resources and workloads, the negative effects of despotic leadership are amplified, leading to increased stress and heightened workplace incivility. Unfair resource distribution can cause stress, ultimately contributing to workplace incivility ([Aghnadimohan, 2020](#)).

5.6 Research Implications

5.6.1 Theoretical implications

The proposed hypotheses have several theoretical implications in the context of higher education institutions in Islamabad/Rawalpindi.

Firstly, H1 implies that despotic leaders who adopt an authoritarian and domineering approach in academic institutions may create a work environment that fosters disrespectful behavior and interpersonal conflicts among staff and faculty members.

The despotic leader's approach to micromanagement and lack of consideration for employee welfare can contribute to an unhealthy academic environment, increasing workplace incivility. The H2 hypothesis highlights how despotic leaders, with their high demands and unrealistic expectations, often increase the workload of faculty in higher education institutions. This leads to heightened stress, anger, and reduced work-life balance, negatively affecting the overall workplace environment. H3 posits that reinforcing the idea that excessive work demands lead to higher levels of stress and dissatisfaction fosters negative behaviors in the workplace. A higher workload may lead to frustration and irritability, which can manifest as incivility in interactions among colleagues.

H4 introduces the notion that the impact of despotic leadership on incivility is, in part, facilitated by the increased workload imposed on employees. In other words, the more demanding the despotic leader is, the more likely it is that employees experience excessive workload, which ultimately leads to incivility in the workplace.

Finally, H5 indicates that distributive justice in resource allocations and workload distribution can weaken the negative effects of excessive workload on workplace incivility. When employees perceive workload distribution as fair, they may be less likely to engage in uncivil behaviors, even under high work demands under despotic leadership, and maintain a positive workplace environment in the context of higher education. Overall, these hypotheses provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex dynamics of despotic leadership, workload, and workplace incivility within the unique cultural and organizational context of higher education institutions in Islamabad/Rawalpindi.

COR theory is the underpinning theory for this study. COR theory, applied to the Higher education sector in Rawalpindi Islamabad, provides a theoretical underpinning for the proposed relationships. It suggests that people try to protect and keep their resources, like time, energy, and support. Despotic leadership forces employees to take on excessive tasks, draining their resources.

This creates a sense of unfairness in the distribution of workload, leading to a loss of psychological resources. When these resources are depleted, employees may act out, resulting in workplace incivility. This supports H1, as despotic leadership

creates an environment where incivility increases. COR theory also supports H2, showing that despotic leaders place excessive workload demands on employees, negatively affecting their mental well-being.

The depletion of resources leads to negative behaviors like incivility. H3 is aligned with the theory, as excessive workload from despotic leadership contributes to stress and incivility. H4 suggests that workload mediates the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility, showing how increased workload depletes resources and employees show bad behavior can lead to workplace incivility to negative behaviors. Finally, H5 highlights the role of distributive justice when employees feel resources are fairly distributed, the equity in workload, and lessening workplace incivility context of higher education institutions in Islamabad/Rawalpindi.

5.6.2 Practical Implications

Recent reports have raised concerns about workplace incivility in higher education, particularly in Pakistan. Research by [Anwaar \(2022\)](#) found that 71% of university faculty members have encountered high levels of incivility. Despite this, the darker side of leadership remains largely unaddressed. Despotic leadership is common in Pakistan due to the high power-distance culture, especially in higher education. This study shows how despotic leadership affects the workplace environment and stresses the need for action.

A key finding is that despotic leadership leads to resource depletion. Negative leadership behaviors require organizational intervention ([Aronson, 2001](#); [Naseer et al., 2016](#)). However, identifying despotic leaders can be difficult, as employees may fear retaliation ([Shah et al., 2023](#); [Schilling, 2009](#)). Organizations must take proactive measures, such as improving recruitment and promotion procedures to prevent despotic leaders ([Barry & Wilkinson, 2022](#)). Employees should be encouraged to report negative experiences through anonymous channels ([C. E. Johnson & Hackman, 2018](#)).

Another important finding is that despotic leadership creates excessive workload, leading to workplace incivility (WPI). Distributive justice (DJ) plays a key role

here. By ensuring fair workload distribution, organizations can reduce the negative impact of despotic leadership. HR should promote fairness and investigate complaints of unfair treatment. Training programs to promote respect and civility could help reduce WPI (Costantini et al., 2017).

Lastly, the negative effects of despotic leadership can be reduced by creating a supportive work environment that minimizes stress and aids employees in dealing with challenging situations (Nauman et al., 2018). Employees who perceive fairness in resource allocation and workload distribution are better at managing stress and maintaining a positive work environment. Those who feel mistreated need extra support, while those treated somewhat are better equipped to handle stress. This raises important questions about how recruitment can avoid despotic leaders and how distributive justice (DJ) can protect against workplace incivility.

5.7 Limitations

Our study has some limitations. We only collected data from the higher education sector in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, so the results apply only to this sector in these two cities. Future studies could include data from other cities in Pakistan to see if different working environments lead to different results. Since we focused only on Islamabad and Rawalpindi, the findings may not apply to other areas. Future research could look others sectors and global context.

Secondly, we used a method called convenience sampling to collect our data. This means we selected people who were easily available to provide the data, so the results might not represent everyone. As a result, it limits the generalizability of the findings to a larger group.

Thirdly, employees were often busy with their workload and were not always willing to provide data properly. Furthermore, many employees responded without properly reading the questions, resulting in low generalizability. Fourthly, we had limited time to complete our research, so we could only collect data from two cities. Research takes a lot of time, and due to resource constraints, it wasn't possible to visit other cities in person to gather more data. If the sample size needs to be larger, more time would be required.

Fifthly, Due to time constraints the study used a cross-sectional design, which means we collected data at only one point in time. This makes it hard to see changes or developments over time. Because of this, the findings might not show the full picture of the relationships being studied. Lastly, we used the SPSS tool to analyze our data. In future studies, researchers might consider using more advanced tools like Mplus, SAS Viya, Posit, JMP, Stata or SmartPLS to handle complex models.

5.8 Future Directions

First, The Future research could focus on exploring the effects of despotic leadership and workplace incivility across various organizational contexts, industries, and cultural settings to identify potential differences and similarities in outcomes. Second, valuable insights into the long term would come from longitudinal studies effects of despotic leadership on workplace incivility, capturing both immediate and delayed consequences on organizational culture.

Third, Additionally, future research could examine factors such as cognitive dissonance and neurotic tendencies as mediators in the relationship between despotic leadership and workplace incivility, expanding on the role of workload as a mediator. Fourth, future studies might examine other potential moderators of this relationship, including organizational climate, leader-member exchange (LMX), or individual employee traits like resilience and emotional intelligence, and psychological capital including hope, optimism, and self-efficacy to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play.

Fifth, researchers could focus on developing interventions and strategies to mitigate the negative impacts of despotic leadership, such as leadership training programs, conflict resolution strategies, and organizational practices that promote respect and civility.

Sixth, with the rise of remote work and digital communication tools, examining how despotic leadership and workplace incivility manifest in virtual settings, as well as the role of technology in either exacerbating or alleviating these effects, would be a meaningful direction. Seventh, investigating how despotic leadership

affects marginalized groups like women, racial minorities, and individuals with disabilities can help create targeted solutions for more inclusive and respectful workplaces. Cross-cultural studies can also provide insights into how different cultural norms influence the experience of bad leadership and workplace incivility, allowing organizations to adapt their leadership strategies for diverse global contexts. Lastly, this study employed non-probability and convenience sampling methods to gather data from the higher education sector in Islamabad and Rawalpindi to test the research hypotheses. For future research, it is advisable to utilize probability sampling methods, such as random or cluster sampling, to collect data from diverse sectors throughout Pakistan. This approach would enhance the effectiveness of comparisons and improve the testing of the research hypotheses.

5.9 Conclusion

Our current research study has shown how despotic leadership influences workplace incivility in the higher education sector of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. It also explored how workload acts as a mediator and how distributive justice as a moderator in the relationship between DL and WPI. By investigating these factors, the study provides new insights into workplace dynamics under despotic leadership, a critical issue in modern organizational settings.

The primary objective was to highlight how despotic leadership negatively affects workplace incivility. This study adds to the current body of knowledge on leadership in the higher education sector and provides practical implications for organizations. HR should investigate complaints of unfair treatment. Training programs should focus on ensuring equitable workload distribution and promoting distributive justice, thereby reducing workplace incivility and fostering a positive organizational culture. These measures can help create a healthier, more productive work environment.

While this study focused on the higher education sector in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, limiting the findings to this framework, future research should explore other regions for increased generalizability and validity.

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Appendix A

**CAPITAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
ISLAMABAD**

Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam,

I trust this questionnaire finds you in the best of health, by the grace of Almighty Allah. I am an MS scholar at Capital University of Science and Technology, researching “Impact of Despotic Leadership on Workplace Incivility: Mediating Role of Workload and Moderating Role of Distributive Justice.” By participating in this study, you will contribute to a deeper understanding of this relationship and its organizational implications.

To ensure your responses remain confidential, we confirm that:

- All information will be kept strictly confidential.
- No organizational data will be disclosed.
- Individual responses will not be identified in any published reports.

Please complete the attached questionnaire as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please get in touch with me: Email: mrahsan8577@gmail.com

Your time and input are greatly appreciated.

Regards,

Muhammad Ahsan Ali

MS Research Scholar

Responses are measured on a five-point scale: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither Disagree nor Agree, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly Agree.						
1	Despotic Leadership					
1.1	My leader is punitive; he has no pity or compassion	1	2	3	4	5
1.2	My leader acts like a tyrant or despot; imperious.	1	2	3	4	5
1.3	My leader expects unquestioning obedience from those who report to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
1.4	My leader is in charge and does not tolerate disagreement questioning or giving orders.	1	2	3	4	5
1.5	My leader tends to be unwilling or unable to relinquish control of projects or tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
1.6	My leader is vengeful; and seeks revenge when wronged.	1	2	3	4	5
Responses are measured on a five-point scale: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither Disagree nor Agree, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly Agree.						
2	Workload					
2.1	To what extent did tasks assign by your leader challenge your cognitive or mental abilities	1	2	3	4	5
2.2	How physically exhausting were the tasks and expectations set by your leader	1	2	3	4	5
2.3	How pressured or rushed did you feel to meet deadlines imposed by your leader	1	2	3	4	5
2.4	How successfully were you able to meet job performance standards under your leader's behavior or actions	1	2	3	4	5
2.5	How much effort was required to meet the expectations or demands of your leader	1	2	3	4	5
2.6	To what extent did you feel stressed, discouraged, or frustrated due to your leader's behavior or actions	1	2	3	4	5
Responses are measured on a five-point scale: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither Disagree nor Agree, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly Agree.						
3	Distributive justice					
3.1	My work schedule is fair.	1	2	3	4	5
3.2	I think that my level of pay is fair.	1	2	3	4	5
3.3	I consider my workload to be quite fair.	1	2	3	4	5
3.4	Overall, the rewards I receive here are quite fair.	1	2	3	4	5
3.5	I feel that my job responsibilities are fair.	1	2	3	4	5
Responses are measured on a five-point scale: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither Disagree nor Agree, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly Agree.						

“Since being employed in this organization, have you encountered any situation where any of your colleagues or superiors acted in an ineffective manner”											
4	Workplace Incivility										
4.1	My colleagues always Put me you down or they were condescending to me.	1	2	3	4	5					
4.2	My Colleagues always Paid little attention to my statement or showed little interest in your opinion.	1	2	3	4	5					
4.3	My colleagues always Made demeaning or derogatory remarks about me	1	2	3	4	5					
4.4	My colleagues always addressed me in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately.	1	2	3	4	5					
4.5	My colleagues always Ignored or excluded me from professional camaraderie.	1	2	3	4	5					
4.6	My colleagues always doubted your judgment on a matter over which I had responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5					
4.7	My colleagues always made unwanted attempts to draw you into discussing personal matters.	1	2	3	4	5					
Part (B) Select the option that provides the most accurate information											
Demographic Data											
Gender											
Male Female											
Age											
25 - 30		30.1 - 35		35.1 - 40		40.1 - 45		45.1 - 50		50.1 - 55	
Number of years of experience with your current organization											
<01		1.1 - 3		3.1 - 7		7.1 - 10		10.1 - 13		13.1 - 15	
Education											
MBA			MS		MPHIL		PHD				