

## Linking family incivility to workplace incivility: Mediating role of negative emotions and moderating role of self-efficacy for emotional regulation

Muhammad Naeem,<sup>1</sup>  Qingxiong (Derek) Weng<sup>1</sup> Ahmed Ali,<sup>1</sup> and Zahid Hameed<sup>2</sup>   
<sup>1</sup>School of Management, University of Science and Technology of China (USTC), Hefei, China, and <sup>2</sup>Department of Management Sciences, Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering & Information Technology, Pakistan

The research on work-related antecedents of workplace incivility (WI) is well-established, yet relatively less attention has been paid to non-work-related experiences as key antecedents to employees' incivility at work. Drawing upon the incivility spiraling framework and spillover theory, we use a moderated-mediation model to investigate the impact of employees' experience of family incivility on their behavioral WI through the mediation of negative emotions and the moderation of self-efficacy for emotional regulation (SEER). The multisource field data also demonstrate general support for the hypothesized relationships. Findings revealed that negative emotions carry the spiraling effect from family incivility to WI. In addition, SEER moderated the positive direct relationship of experienced family incivility and negative emotions, and indirect association with behavioral WI. These findings have implications for theory and management alike, further suggesting directions for future research.

*Keywords:* behavioral workplace incivility, experienced family incivility, incivility spiral, negative emotions

Workplace incivility (WI) is defined as “low-intensity deviant workplace behavior with an ambiguous intent to harm others” (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457). WI has been determined to be more prevalent than other types of negative behaviors. For example, in two successive studies, Porath and Pearson (2010, 2013) found that 98% of employees witnessed and 99% experienced incivility at work. These figures are predominately significant when we account for the negative consequences of WI. Considerable evidence has indicated that WI can fundamentally contribute to employees' emotional exhaustion (Kern & Grandey, 2009; Sliter, Jex, Wolford, & McInnerney, 2010), depression (Lim & Lee, 2011; Miner-Rubino & Reed, 2010), retaliatory behavior (Kim & Shapiro, 2008), reduced citizenship behavior, and diminished work productivity (Porath & Erez, 2009). Indeed, a great deal of research has explored the consequences of WI, but research on examining the drivers of WI in individuals is still scant. We believe that without a thorough examination of the predictors of WI, finding solutions to minimize the occurrence of such antisocial behavior is likely to prove elusive.

*Correspondence:* Qingxiong (Derek) Weng, School of Management, University of Science and Technology of China (USTC), Hefei, China. E-mail: wqx886@ustc.edu.cn

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Within the stream of research exploring antecedents of WI, scholars have illustrated that passive leadership (Harold & Holtz, 2015) and lack of reciprocity in the role of work (Meier & Semmer, 2013) are the reasons triggering uncivil behavior. Recently, Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez (2016) encouraged scholars to advance the WI literature by exploring the potential antecedents beyond the workplace boundary. Specifically, most measured non-work-related experiences are family stressors (e.g., work–family conflict, abuse, aggression) that influence one's job behaviors (e.g., Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Ford, Heinen, & Langkamer, 2007; Michel, Mitchelson, Kotrba, LeBreton, & Baltes, 2009). To advance the prior family–work stream of research, in the present study we propose employees experience of family incivility as a potential antecedent of their behavioral WI.

Unlike family stressors (e.g., abuse, aggression, or hostility), which typically involve intense misuse of power and physical violence, uncivil acts in the family are generally less intense, typically including rude and disrespectful behaviors (i.e., sarcasm, ignorance, oversight, or insensitivity) (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Lim, & Tai, 2014). Moreover, family incivility has ambiguous purposes, which stands apart from other constructs such as family undermining and aggression that involve intentional harmful actions (i.e., verbally or physically threatening behavior) (Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Kiewitz et al., 2012; Tepper, 2007). Recent

research has shown that the minor unfavorable events such as family incivility create daily hassles or anxiety, making the family environment toxic and posing an even greater impact on health and well-being of a targeted person (Bai et al., 2016; De Clercq et al., 2018; Lim & Tai, 2014). Considering these findings, it is worth studying individuals' exposure to incivility at home that drives their behavioral reaction.

According to the incivility spiraling framework (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), individuals who experience the incivility (i.e., the carrier) from the original source (i.e., the instigator) unconsciously misdirect their uncivil behavior to an innocent one (i.e., the third party). Despite considerable theoretical differences, extant research lacks an exploration of incivility spiraling interplay in the family–work boundary. Hence, this is the first study to examine that employees' uncivil situation at home leads to their uncivil behavior at work. For such examination, we integrate the incivility spiral framework (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) and spillover theory (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000), and argue that employees' negative emotions play a contributing role in creating the association between experienced incivility from family members (as an original source) and behavioral WI towards coworkers (as a third party). The assertion of spillover theory on the transfer of negative emotions from an employee's home to his or her work domain is consistent with the incivility spiraling process, which posits that increasing levels of negative emotions tend to propagate the victim's uncivil behavior across the boundary of a specific domain. Empirical research also has demonstrated that when individuals face antisocial behavior at home, they carry negative feelings and exhibit antisocial behavior in other contexts of life, such as their academic, social, and/or workplace relationships (Hoglund & Nicholas, 1995; Kiewitz et al., 2012; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2005).

In addition, we consider dispositional factors that might exacerbate or mitigate the proposed relationships between family incivility, negative emotions, and WI. According to the spiraling framework, individuals' personal factors make them (un)able to improve their emotional and behavioral reactions (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Milam, Spitzmueller, & Penney, 2009; Penney & Spector, 2005). This study includes self-efficacy for emotional regulation (SEER), which refers to one's belief in successfully regulating negative emotions (Wang, Liao, Zhan, & Shi, 2011; Wong & Law, 2002). We argue that employees who experience incivility at home and possess high levels of SEER are less likely to carry negative emotions to the workplace, resulting in exhibiting less uncivil workplace behavior.

In sum, the present study offers contributions to the existing literature in several aspects. First, we investigate

the incivility spiraling framework by examining the relationship between family incivility and WI. In so doing, this research provides an advanced understanding by identifying an antecedent of WI that originates outside the organization (i.e., family). Second, we add negative emotions as a mediating mechanism between experienced incivility in the family and behavioral incivility in the workplace. Third, we examine SEER as a moderator on the positive direct path of perceived family incivility and negative emotions (see Figure 1). Finally, we propose a moderated mediation model in which the interactive effect of family incivility and SEER is linked to WI via negative emotions.

## **Theoretical background and hypothesized relationships**

### **The incivility spiral framework and spillover theory**

In 1999, Andersson and Pearson established the incivility spiral framework that comprehensively demonstrated the relationships between experienced incivility, generation of negative affect (emotions), and behavioral incivility. The spiral starts when individuals encounter an uncivil situation and unconsciously engage themselves in an uncivil behavior as a result of triggered negative emotions (Blau & Andersson, 2005; Meier & Semmer, 2013). Based on the spiraling framework, a victim of incivility may misplace negative affect (emotions) to behave with incivility towards a third party. In other words, the incivility instigator tends to infect the target, who further infects the third party in a later interaction. For instance, Foulk, Woolum, and Erez (2016) found that experiencing an uncivil act (i.e., rudeness) had a contagion effect that predicted uncivil behaviors in future interaction with partners. It is reasonable to expect that the phenomenon of the incivility spiral may spread out from family to the workplace.

In the family–work perspective, the spillover theory posits that an unfavorable family event may elicit negative feelings that in turn spill over into the workplace in the shape of harmful behaviors (Googins, 1991). Indeed, after repeated exposure to negative behavior, the target is more likely to adopt such behavior towards others in similar or dissimilar situations. For instance, evidence has suggested that an individual encountering violent behavior in the family tends to exhibit violent behavior towards family members (Berkowitz, 1993; Garcia, Restubog, & Denson, 2010) and coworkers (Dietz, Robinson, Folger, Baron, & Schulz, 2003; Douglas & Martinko, 2001). Likewise, research has suggested that experiencing violations of family norms inflict the target to behave in a similar way in the family environment

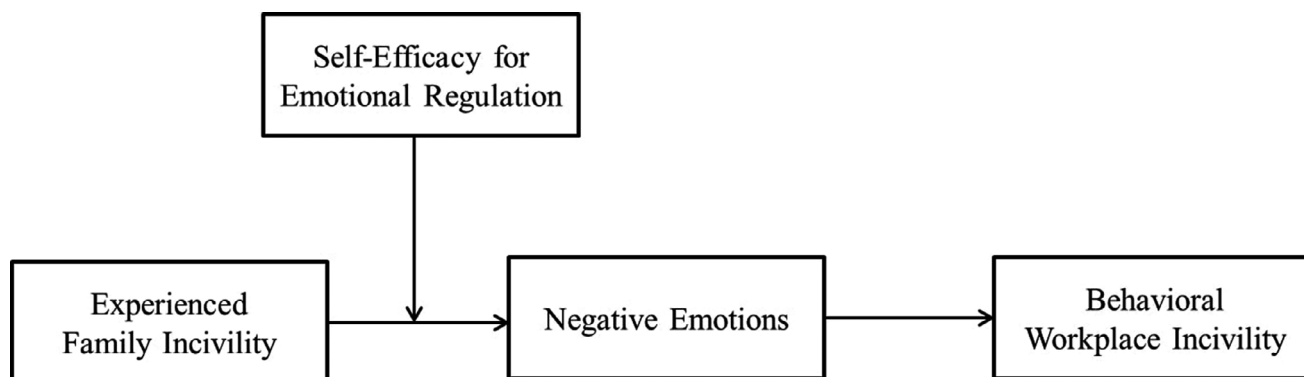


Figure 1 Conceptual model.

(Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980), and spill over into similar hostile tendencies that violate the workplace norms (Kiewitz et al., 2012). Combining the incivility spiral framework and spillover theory, we propose that individuals who experience uncivil interactions with family members may carry their negative emotions to the workplace and exhibit uncivil behaviors towards coworkers.

### Family incivility as an antecedent of negative emotions

Family incivility is defined as “low-intensity deviant behaviors with ambiguous intent that violate the norms of mutual respect in the family” (Lim & Tai, 2014, p. 351). A persistent breach of love ties with family members in the form of insults and exclusion from family events can invoke negative feelings in an individual. Generally, perceived incivility has been determined to be a source of chronic stress (Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008), and victims report relevant negative feelings and emotions over a long period of time (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). Therefore, after experiencing family incivility, it becomes difficult for the employees to confine the triggered negative feelings within the family boundary when they have to move to the workplace.

Literature has linked family incivility to psychological distress and states of poor self-esteem (Bai et al., 2016; Lim & Tai, 2014); thus, it is crucial to determine the potential association between employees’ perceived family incivility and negative emotions. Based on the incivility spiral framework, perceived incivility can be considered a potential antecedent of negative emotion (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Negative emotions are automatically triggered, as a part of an evolutionary process, in a target confronted with incivility. We argue that negative emotions are key emotional responses to perceived incivility from family members. In support of this

idea, empirical evidence and meta-analysis have suggested that the generation of negative emotion is inevitable when a target experiences the violation of norms and values of mutual respect (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Goldman, Slaughter, Schmit, Wiley, & Brooks, 2008). In line with the evidence, it is reasonable to suppose that an individual who suffers from a lack of regard or faces rudeness or condescension from family members is more likely to experience negative emotions. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

**H1:** Higher levels of experienced family incivility lead to higher levels of negative emotions.

### Experienced family incivility, negative emotions, and behavioral WI

Evidence has indicated that negative emotions tend to influence one’s workplace behavior. Sakurai and Jex (2012) determined that negative moods were associated with employees’ negative social interactions because stimulated emotions provoke one to exhibit similar behavior such as pay less attention to the politeness norms and display of minimal courteousness (Izard, 1991; Tedeschi & Felson, 1994). As noted, the emotion–aggression model explicates that negative affect in general and negative emotions in particular play significant roles in the origin of negative behavior (Spector & Fox, 2005). Notably, the direct association between negative emotions and antisocial behavior such as behavioral WI can be traced back to the original work of Berkowitz (1993). Specifically, Berkowitz et al. noted that the existence of negative emotions always leads to some form of unpleasant interactions. Moreover, Andersson and Pearson (1999) argued that a driving factor of uncivil behavior in the workplace could be negative emotions. The identical point in these studies is that triggering negative emotions can make individuals more susceptible to engage in uncivil behavior as a way of dealing with such

negative emotions. Such individuals are more prone to behave in a way that others perceive and report as incivility. Hence, consistent with these theories and studies, we contend that negative emotions could predict behavioral incivility in the workplace, and we hypothesize the following:

**H2:** Higher levels of negative emotions lead to higher levels of behavioral WI.

To complete our hypothesized model, we further predict that negative emotions play a mediating role in the association between experienced family incivility and behavioral WI. Generally, negative emotions tend to interplay in family–work domains (Story & Repetti, 2006). According to spillover theory (Williams & Alliger, 1994), perception of incivility by the target spills over negative feelings that result in agitated interactions with members in the next domain (Bai et al., 2016; Lim & Lee, 2011). In particular, Lim, Iles, Koopman, Christoforou, and Arvey (2016) investigated that WI is associated with a target's tense and unpleasant behavior at home via hostile emotions. A relatively vast literature has demonstrated the link between WI and subsequent negative affect, leading to a target's rude behavior towards family members, but little is known about how family incivility affects an employee's affective state and causes uncivil behavior for his or her coworkers. Furthermore, prior studies have examined the inter-domain spillover of negative experience and has focused on general outcomes such as job performance, marital satisfaction, work–family conflict, and counterproductive work behavior (Bai et al., 2016; Ferguson, 2012; Lim & Tai, 2014). However, extant research has not specifically examined whether employees' experiencing incivility in one domain (e.g., family) via generated negative emotions (as emotional responses) could lead to behavioral incivility in another domain (e.g., workplace). To address this gap, we propose that perceived family incivility increases negative emotions, which can spill over and cause behavioral incivility at work. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

**H3:** Negative emotions mediate the relationship between experienced family incivility and behavioral WI, such that family incivility leads to higher levels of negative emotions that in turn lead to higher levels of behavioral WI.

### SEER as a moderator

Andersson and Pearson (1999) explained the spiraling framework boundary conditions; by elaborating that, individuals' personal characteristics are the key factor in

commencing and completing the spiraling process. This study has suggested that SEER is a potential moderating factor to manage self-emotions. SEER refers to people believing in their ability to successfully regulate their evoked emotions (Wang et al., 2011; Wong & Law, 2002) in response to frustrating experiences (Caprara et al., 2008). Recent research has determined that in emotional based-mechanisms, people who believe in their emotional regulating abilities may be better at modifying negative emotions and adjusting the perception of any negative situation (e.g., perception of unfairness or disrespectful treatment) (Wang et al., 2011).

In the family–work context, an individual with a strong belief may modulate and adjust internal negative feelings and recover from the stressful familial situation. In fact, people with high self-efficacy regulation of emotions are more likely to recover from stressful situation in one domain and less likely to carry over the negative emotions (Harms & Credé, 2010; Salovey & Grewal, 2005) to another domain because they use better coping strategies and deal with aroused negative emotions in the incident domain (Gross & John, 2003; Lazarus, 1993). In contrast, individuals who do not have a belief in their ability to regulate their internal feelings are more likely to carry out and externalize inappropriate workplace behavior (Eisenberg et al., 2001). Thus, in line with theory and previous research, we propose that an individual with high (low) SEER ability is more (less) likely to develop a coping strategy for perceiving family incivility and controlling activated negative emotions that could spill over and propagate incivility in the workplace. Accordingly, we hypothesize the following.

**H4:** SEER moderates the relationship between experienced family incivility and negative emotions; this positive relationship is weaker when individuals' SEER is high rather than low.

**H5:** SEER moderates the mediated relationship between experienced family incivility and behavioral WI via negative emotions, such that the indirect effect is weaker when individuals' SEER is high rather than low.

## Method

### Participants and procedure

After ensuring confidentiality and participation, we invited 388 full-time Chinese employees who lived with their family members and provided contacts of their coworkers to participate in the survey. In the first part of the survey, employees rated perceived family incivility and other constructs. In the next part of the survey,

the same employees' behavioral WI was rated by their coworkers. We used a match data-set approach and collected data from each employee (family incivility target) and his or her coworker (WI target) that combined two parts of each survey and was included as one response in the database. Moreover, we assigned unique code numbers to responses of the employee and the coworker to match their questionnaires. In this way, we were able to combine data from the employees who reported family incivility and coworkers who reported WI of these employees. Specifically, employee self-rated perceived family incivility, SEER, negative emotions, control variables (e.g., gender, age, education, marital status, family–work conflict, work–family conflict, general job stress, and coworker-rated variable behavioral WI of the employee. This pattern of collecting data has been used in the domain of organizational psychology (Harold & Holtz, 2015; Lim & Tai, 2014). In total, 381 employees returned their surveys. We rejected 43 responses because of incomplete information provided by coworkers. Thus, the final sample contained 338 usable responses (response rate = 69.6%). These participants received free movie tickets at the end of each survey.

## Measures

We used the translation/back-translation procedure to manage the measures in the Chinese language (Brislin, 1986). All constructs mentioned are English scales translated into simplified Chinese scales by competent bilingual individuals. We conducted back-translation, and a full-time Chinese professor examined the results after comparing the original version and the back-translated version. No translation problems were found.

### Experienced family incivility

To assess the experiences with family incivility, the current research used the six-item scale of family incivility used by Lim and Tai (2014). An example item is “During the past month, how often you have been in a situation where any of your family members put you down or were condescending to you in some way?” Responses were rated on a scale of 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Most of the times*). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of this scale was .72.

### Negative emotions

To measure the target's negative emotions, we used the six-item scale drawn from the PANAS-X1 (Watson & Clark, 1994). Using a scale of 1 (*very slightly*) to 5 (*extremely much*), respondents indicated their emotional

state to measure the extent to which they specifically felt negative emotions in last 1 month. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of this scale was .84.

### Behavioral WI (coworker-reported)

The behavioral WI was measured by the five-item Incivility Scale developed by Blau and Andersson (2005). Specifically, rather than asking the target of family incivility to report data for this measure, the target's coworkers were asked to report how often the target had behaved with incivility in the workplace. For example, coworkers were asked how often the target “put you down and acted condescending to you in the last month.” Responses were rated on a scale of 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Most of the times*). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for this scale was .76.

### Self-efficacy for emotional regulation

To measure SEER, we used the Chinese version of the 4-item scale developed by Wong and Law (2002). The English translation of a sample item is “I have good control of my own emotions.” Participants were asked to respond on a scale of 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .80.

### Control variables

Following previous research on family–work context (Boles, Wood, & Johnson, 2003; Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989), participants' gender, age, education, and marital status were controlled. Further, the effects of family–work-conflict and work–family conflict, including four items for each (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000), were controlled and measured on the 5-point scale. In the work domain, we controlled for job stress to reduce the effect of general job stress that could influence the relationship between experienced family incivility and resulting behavioral WI. This job stress was measured with six items (Stanton, Balzer, Smith, Parra, & Ironson, 2001), which consisted of a list of adjectives that generally described the respondent's job (e.g., hectic, tense, calm).

## Results

This study assessed the construct validity through confirmatory factor analysis by using AMOS Version 21 (IBM, New York, NY, USA). The model's goodness of fit was measured by the model fit indices that consist of CMIN/*df*, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) (Byrne, 2013). Values of the

CFI and the TLI above .90 and the RMSEA score below .08 are considered the best fit (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 1998; Markus, 2012).

Initially, the results of the first model (applied to all items of four factors) showed relatively poor fit,  $CMIN/df = 2.46$ ,  $CFI = .86$ ,  $TLI = .87$ ,  $RMSEA = .09$ . The second model was tested after removing four low factor-loading items, and the model fit statistics improved significantly, reaching acceptable levels,  $CMIN/df = 1.64$ ,  $CFI = .95$ ,  $TLI = .95$ ,  $RMSEA = .05$ . Table 1 demonstrates the descriptive statistics, Cronbach's  $\alpha$ s, and the bivariate relationship. Internal consistency of all variables was acceptable (above .70). We included gender, age, education, marital status, family–work conflict, work–family conflict, and general job stress as control variables in all analyses. Moreover, we standardized all these measures before analyses. Family incivility had a positive and significant association with both negative emotions,  $r = .48$ , and behavioral WI,  $r = .15$ . These results support evidence of recent studies showing that family incivility influences the target's work life (Bai et al., 2016; Lim & Tai, 2014). Among the respondents, 45.3% were male, 54.7% were female, 50.4% were married, and more than 80% of the participants were at least 28 years old.

## Hypotheses testing

We applied hierarchical regression analyses to test H1 to H3. The control variables were age, gender, tenure, marital status, family–work conflict, work–family conflict,

and general job stress in all regression analyses of the first step. H1 predicts that higher levels of family incivility are related to higher levels of victim's negative emotions. The results in Table 2 show that perceived family incivility had a significant influence on negative emotions,  $\beta = 0.34$ ,  $p < .01$ . Thus, H1 was supported. H2 states that higher levels of negative emotions lead to higher levels of behavioral WI. Results (see Table 2) show that negative emotions were significantly related to behavioral WI,  $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < .01$ , providing support for H2. According to H3, negative emotions mediate the relationship between family incivility and WI. The results of mediation analysis (see Table 2) show that experienced family incivility was significantly and positively related to behavioral WI,  $\beta = 0.11$ ,  $p < .05$ . However, when both family incivility and negative emotions were included in the model, family incivility did not predict behavioral WI,  $\beta = 0.03$ , n.s., fulfilling the conditions of the full mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986). For testing indirect effects, we used the *PROCESS* macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). Results in Table 3 show that the indirect relationship between family incivility and WI was statistically significant, Estimate = .12,  $p < .01$ , 95% CI [0.06, 0.20]. Thus, H3 was accepted.

For testing the moderation hypotheses, we also used the *PROCESS* macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). H4 predicted moderation of SEER between experienced family incivility and negative emotions. Results in Table 4 show that the interaction of family incivility with SEER was significant in predicting the negative emotion,  $\beta = -0.23$ ,  $p < .01$ . As we argued in H4 that

Table 1  
Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , and Correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender	1.65	.43	–										
2. Age	1.73	.87	–.06	–									
3. Education	2.38	.65	–.02	–.12	–								
4. Marital status	2.44	.76	–.05	–.08	.07	–							
5. General job stress	3.76	.62	–.09	.06	.01	–.10	–						
6. W–F Conflict	3.89	.58	–.07	.18**	.06	–.20**	.09	–					
7. F–W Conflict	2.61	.62	–.01	–.03	.06	.09	–.19**	–.45**	–				
8. Family incivility	2.08	.54	.01	.02	–.09	.01*	.05	–.04	–.01	(0.72)			
9. SEER	2.41	.79	.01	.24**	–.02	–.16**	.14**	–.18**	–.08	.32**	(0.80)		
10. Negative emotions	2.13	.85	–.01	.11*	–.22**	–.24**	.12*	.12**	–.04	.48**	–.45**	(0.84)	
11. Workplace incivility	2.43	.46	.08	.08	–.12*	–.18**	.04	.05	–.02	.15**	–.21**	.35**	(0.76)

Note.  $n = 338$ . Internal reliability ( $\alpha$  coefficient) for the variables is mentioned in parentheses on the diagonal. For Gender, 1 = male, 2 = female. SEER = self-efficacy for emotional regulation, W–F conflict = work–family conflict, F–W conflict = family–work conflict. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 2**  
Results of Regression Analyses for Family Incivility, Negative Emotions, and Workplace Incivility

Predictors	Negative Emotions			Workplace Incivility		
	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Main effect: Family incivility						
Step 1						
Control variables		.09			.04	
Step 2						
Family incivility	0.34**			0.11**	.08	.04**
Main effect: Negative emotions						
Step 1						
Control variables					.01	
Step 2						
Negative emotions				0.35**	.13	.12**
Mediation: Negative emotions						
Step 1						
Control variables					.01	
Step 2						
Negative emotions				0.35**	.13	.12**
Step 3						
Family incivility				0.03	.13	.00

Note.  $n = 338$ . Control variables were gender, age, marital status, general job stress, family–work conflict, work–family conflict. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 3**  
Indirect Effect of Family Incivility on Workplace Incivility

Workplace Incivility	Point of Estimate	SE	BC 95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Total effect of family incivility	.11	.04	0.02	0.19
Direct effect of family incivility	.01	.05	0.07	−0.10
Indirect effect (via negative emotions)	.12	.03	0.06	0.20

Note.  $n = 338$ . Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. CI = confidence interval.

individuals’ high levels of SEER would mitigate the positive effect of family incivility on negative emotions, we examined the relationship at high and low values of SEER (1 SD below and 1 SD above the  $M$ , respectively). Table 5 shows that the relationship between family incivility and negative emotions was weaker when SEER was high,  $\beta = 0.11$ ,  $p < .05$ , and the same relationship was stronger when SEER was low,  $\beta = 0.47$ ,  $p < .05$ .

Figure 2 illustrates these trends. Thus, H4 was fully supported.

For moderated mediation (H5), we used Preacher and Hayes’s (2004) method to test the conditional indirect effect of family incivility on WI through negative emotions at high and low levels of SEER. Specifically, H5 predicted that the indirect effect of family incivility on WI is weaker when individuals’ SEER is high rather than low. Table 5 shows that the conditional indirect effect of family incivility on WI was weaker and insignificant,  $\beta = .06$ , CI =  $-0.01, 0.10$ , when individuals’ SEER was high, and the same relationship was stronger and significant when individuals’ SEER was low,  $\beta = 0.21$ , CI =  $0.12, 0.37$ . Thus, H5 was supported.

### Discussion

The present study constitutes a contribution to the literature of WI by identifying an antecedent outside the workplace context. We further corroborated that the incivility spiral is not limited to a specific domain but expands into two main domains of life (family or work) through spillover of misplaced negative emotions. Thus, we explored and examined the spiraling phenomenon of incivility through the relationship of perceived family incivility and behavioral WI. In the relationship, we

**Table 4**  
Moderation Results for Self-Efficacy for Emotional Regulations

Variables	Negative Emotions		
	$\beta$	SE	t
<b>Controls</b>			
Intercept	1.83	.20	8.81**
Gender	-0.01	.03	-0.43
Age	-0.01	.02	00.13
Education	-0.01	.02	-0.69
Marital status	0.01	.02	0.15
W-F conflict	0.02	.03	0.78
General job stress	0.01	.02	0.56
F-W conflict	0.01	.02	0.54
<b>Independent</b>			
Family incivility	0.34	.03	11.08**
<b>Moderator</b>			
Self-efficacy for emotional regulation	-0.18	.02	8.62**
<b>Interaction</b>			
Family Incivility $\times$ Self-Efficacy for Emotional Regulation	-0.23	.03	-8.92**

Note.  $n = 338$ . For Gender, 1 = male, 2 = female, W-F conflict = work-family conflict, F-W conflict = family-work conflict.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

investigated the mediating role of negative emotions and the moderating role of SEER. The results supported our hypothesized relationships that those who experience family incivility are more likely to experience negative emotions as emotional reactions and thereafter engage in behavioral incivility in the workplace.

Moreover, the analysis also revealed that the conditional effect on the direct path between perceived family incivility and negative emotions and the indirect path of perceived family incivility with behavioral WI through negative emotions. Specifically, the first-stage relationship of family incivility and negative emotions is weak (stronger), when the individual has high (low) SEER. It can be speculated that SEER could also moderate the second stage of the proposed model (negative emotions to behavioral WI); it is reasonable to believe that effect of SEER would already have moderated at the first stage (experienced family incivility to negative emotions). We found that SEER did not have a moderating effect on the second-stage relationship; extant research has lent support to this result, as it is difficult to control elicited intense negative emotions (Lim & Tai, 2014; Lim et al., 2016). There is a need to identify various other family-related experiences that affect the target's behavior and lead to

**Table 5**  
Conditional Direct and Indirect Moderating Effect of Self-Efficacy for Emotional Regulation

	SEER	Boot Effect	Boot	Boot
			LL	UL
95% CI				
Family	Low	.47	.36	.55
incivility $\rightarrow$ Negative emotions	High	.11	.03	.19
Indirect effect: Family	Low	.21	.12	.37
incivility $\rightarrow$ Negative emotions $\rightarrow$ Workplace incivility	High	.06	-.01	.10

Note.  $n = 338$ . SEER = self-efficacy for emotional regulation; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

WI. This research takes the first step in this novel direction.

### Theoretical implications

First, we make a potential contribution to the WI literature, which primarily has focused on investigating the consequences of WI (Kim & Shapiro, 2008; Lim & Lee, 2011; Sakurai & Jex, 2012). The current study contributes to an emerging body of organizational research that examines the impact of work-relevant events on employees WI (Harold & Holtz, 2015; Meier & Semmer, 2013). To this effect, our study demonstrates the value of an individual's experiences of non-work-related events as an antecedent to behavioral incivility in organizational settings. Moreover, early research has found that employees use positive family experiences as an effective tool to oppose the threats of their well-being at work (Michel, Mitchelson, Pichler, & Cullen, 2010; Shahar & Henrich, 2016). Notably, to date, no research in this context has considered the role of incivility occurring in the family domain, which exerts enduring demand and influences employees' emotions and behaviors in the work domain. Considering this line of inquiry, the findings of this research indicate the impact of uncivil acts at home (viz., being targeted through incivility by ones' family members) and their potential significance for engaging in behavioral incivility at work.

Second, the prior theorization explaining the impact of incivility on work outcomes has been developed through a displaced-aggression framework (e.g., Hoobler & Brass, 2006), which claims that the target of incivility intentionally behaves aggressively to a third party. Research has demonstrated that family incivility impacts an individual's behavior, resulting in high counterproductive work behaviors and low job performance (Bai

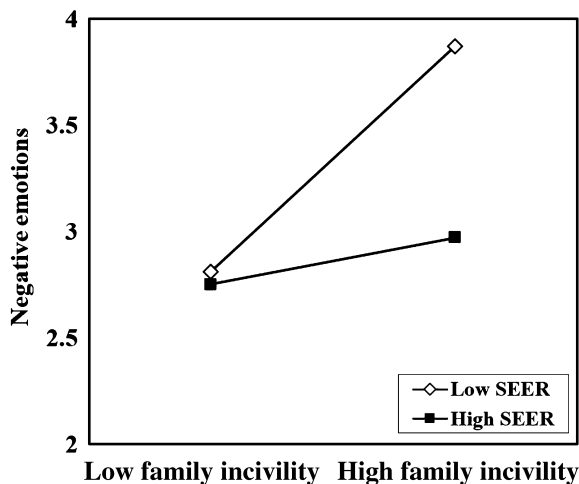


Figure 2 Interactional effect of experienced family incivility and self-efficacy for emotional regulation (SEER) on negative emotions.

et al., 2016; Lim & Tai, 2014). Our study extends prior research by introducing the incivility spiraling effect (Harold & Holtz, 2015; Van Jaarsveld et al., 2010) as an additional framework to investigate a family–work incivility context. This framework explains that the target of family incivility could unintentionally be involved in WI. Thus, based on novel theorizations, our results have highlighted the positive link of family incivility and WI.

Third, existing research has largely highlighted the mediating role of the family–work conflict (Ford, Heinen, & Langkamer, 2007; Michel, Mitchelson, Kotrba, LeBreton, & Baltes, 2009). The results of our study add to previously explored intermediary links by showing that negative emotions can also play a mediating role in uncivil events. These negative emotions provide a better understanding of an emotion-based mechanism in the context of family incivility and WI. As such, spillover theory postulates that the negative thoughts and feelings become a stressor for associates (Ferguson, 2012). The present study integrates the incivility spiraling process with spillover theory, and findings suggest that a victim of family incivility is more likely to experience negative emotions that have a spillover effect and become workplace stressors for coworkers in the form of WI. Thus, not only do our findings advance current research regarding family incivility experience as a distal antecedent but we also improve understanding of the underlying mechanism of negative emotions as a proximal antecedent of employees' behavioral WI.

Finally, Andersson and Pearson (1999) proposed the role of personality traits such as self-regulatory capacity, emotionality, and rebelliousness in the incivility

framework. The present study also advances this literature by identifying the moderating role of SEER in the spiraling process (e.g., experience to behavioral incivility). Our findings show that SEER mitigates the direct effects of family incivility on the target's negative emotions and the indirect effects of perceived family incivility on behavioral WI. In other words, individuals high on SEER have more capacity to deal with uncivil situations at home and are less likely to spill over negative emotions in the workplace. For example, one with a strong emotional-regulation belief may be able to avoid uncivil incidents at home and may be less likely to experience negative emotions that cause uncivil behavior at work. These moderation results are in line with previous research that SEER is helpful in adjusting negative emotions after encountering uncivil situations (Wang et al., 2011; Wong & Law, 2002).

### Practical implications

As mentioned, the current study suggests that the incivility spiraling phenomenon exists between family and work domains. Confronted with family incivility, individuals are more likely to engage in behavioral WI. Indeed, managers might notice the target's behavioral incivility in the workplace, but remain unaware that family incivility (as a predictor) began the spiral that ended up producing the target's uncivil behavior at work. Therefore, this study suggests that an organization might benefit from having increased awareness about the broader scope of the incivility spiral (e.g., family to work) and its potential to intrude in the workplace, ultimately causing damage to an individual's organizational behavior. Specifically, our results reveal that managers need to consider employees' (negative) emotional experiences at and beyond the workplace when managing their performance.

Further, organizations can also conduct seminars based on family-therapist guidelines to provide awareness about how and why such antisocial family experiences may cause negative behavior in the workplace. These seminars may help employees to develop self-coping and preventive strategies to deal with different stressful situations. In addition, in this study, SEER had a moderating effect on the first path (e.g., experienced family incivility to negative emotions) as well as the indirect path (e.g., experienced family incivility to behavioral WI). This effect suggests that it is worth measuring and considering high emotional-regulation abilities when hiring employees. High emotional-regulation capability not only assists them in regulating heightened negative emotions but also helps them to avoid transferring experienced and behavioral incivility between different domains.

## Limitations and future research

All research has limitations and strengths, and this study has also some limitations that should be discussed. First, we used a cross-sectional approach that may not allow the inferences of causality among the proposed variables. To address this limitation, future research should consider other potential research designs such as longitudinal and experience-based sampling to re-investigate findings of the current study. Second, we were interested in examining the incivility spiraling process from family to work, and misplacement of the incivility effect towards coworkers rather than family members. We suggest that future studies should compare the victim's behavioral responses both in the family and work domains. Third, the hypothesized relationships in the current study are based on the theoretical foundations of the incivility spiraling framework and spillover theory. Future research may incorporate other theoretical frameworks to advance our understanding of incivility in different domains. For example, social learning theory suggests that individuals learn negative behavior (incivility) by experiencing and then adopting the negative behaviors of others (Bandura & Walters, 1977; Kiewitz et al., 2012). Moreover, researchers may further extend outcomes of incivility by considering the displaced-aggression framework (e.g., Hoobler & Brass, 2006), which posits that the target of incivility intentionally behaves aggressively to a third party. Furthermore, it is equally important to introduce unique mediators to explain the relationship between incivility and displaced aggression. Thus, in future studies, researchers might find it beneficial to utilize different theoretical perspectives to discover alternative mechanisms.

Finally, we examined the moderating role of a personality trait (i.e., SEER), but it is possible that contextual factors play a role in alleviating the target's negative emotions. Although research has determined that an incivility victim in one domain is unlikely to seek social support from members of another domain (Lim et al., 2016). In contrast, some research has shown that having workplace social support buffers all kinds of negative experiences (Han, Bonn, & Cho, 2016; Ilies, Johnson, Judge, & Keeney, 2011). We expect that individuals with negative experiences in the family may seek support in their workplace. For instance, obtaining support (e.g., advice on dealing with the uncivil situation) from coworkers or a supervisor may help the targets to recover from the emotional consequences of experienced incivility (Cortina & Magley, 2009; Sakurai & Jex, 2012), thereby disengaging themselves from the incivility spiral. Further, the numbers of hours an individual faces family incivility might play an important moderating role in the hypothesized relationship. Thus, we suggest that future

research may consider the role of contextual factors that could reduce the impact of the incivility spiraling effect in the family-to-workplace perspective.

## Conclusion

In summary, this study determines the across-domain antecedent of WI and advances the incivility spiraling framework by examining the relationship between experienced family incivility and behavioral WI. It further explicates the role of negative emotions that provide an emotion-based mediating mechanism in this relationship. Finally, it also identifies the boundary conditions and promotes SEER as a self-influencing factor that moderates the positive connection between experienced family incivility and negative emotions, and influences the indirect relationship of perceived family incivility to behavioral WI through negative emotions. We hope that this theoretical model with empirical support will provide the foundation for investigating the spiraling phenomenon by exploring new directions such as the work-to-family or work-to-customer perspective.

## Conflict of interest

I declare that I have no conflict of interest.

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