

Workplace incivility and its demographic characteristics: a cross-cultural comparison between Chinese and Vietnamese working

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Abstract—Workplace incivility (WI) is defined as low-intensity negative behaviors in the workplace. While this topic is common in a Western context, a lack of research has been conducted in the Asian context, particularly in China and Vietnam. The purpose of this research is to investigate a cross-cultural study about WI, with an aim to focus on the linkage between demographic variables and WI. The research sample comprised 598 voluntary working adults in China and Vietnam. The data were calculated using Descriptive statistics and paired t-tests in SPSS. As a result, Chinese and Vietnamese experienced the same WI. In addition, males experienced more WI than females. This research is a pioneer cross-cultural study about WI in the Asian context and investigates the influence of demographic variables on WI in Chinese and Vietnamese working adults. This study also expresses some solutions to eliminate this issue in the workplace.

Index Terms—Workplace incivility, Demographic characteristics, Cross-cultural countries.

I. INTRODUCTION

While the well-known topic of negative workplace attitudes and behaviors (e.g., abusive leaders, workplace bullying, and work-family conflict) has been researched popularly, WI has only been studied recently [1]. In detail, WI is regarded as "a low type of destructive behavior that disrupts the standards norms of the organization" [2]. These uncivil behaviors in the workplace include gossiping about colleagues in an unprofessional way, directly or indirectly, criticizing or interrupting others, and insulting comments about someone [3]. The level of WI has been rising significantly, which affects an organization's working productivity [4][5]. WI has been popular in Asian countries, including China [6] [7]. A rise in uncivil behaviors makes Chinese organizations decrease working efficiency and employee morale. Thus, it motivates Chinese supervisors to find solutions to this problem at work. In addition, although no previous WI research has been conducted in Vietnam, negative workplace behavior was identified in this country [8][9].

The majority of WI studies have been conducted in the Western context, especially in the USA and European countries. In contrast, the Asian context, which suggests the high-intensity increase of uncivil behavior in the workplace, has little academic attention [2]. When national culture is confirmed to affect an individual's attitudes and behaviors, the results from the Western context are difficult to adapt to the Asian context because of the differences in social, cultural, and political factors. Western countries follow an indi-

vidualist culture, while most Asian countries towards collectivist culture [10]. In detail, individualism emphasizes the value of a person, so the coordination between members of society is modest when their self-determination is focused on themselves. In contrast, collectivism values the role of harmonious relationships in society [10]. In a collectivist society, an individual is ready to sacrifice his/her benefit for the community's benefit. This issue is even more severe in communist countries (e.g., China and Vietnam), which officially emphasizes the role of the socialist party in the society. Therefore, the concept of WI can differ between Western and Asian contexts. In detail, what is regarded as usual in the Western workplace would be seen as incivility in Asian counterparts and vice versa. This argument is supported by anonymized, which confirmed a positive correlation between the relationship among members and negative attitudes in Vietnamese workplaces. Loh et al. (2021) highlighted that WI is less negatively impacted by Singaporeans than Australians.

For the above reasons, it is necessary to have more research about WI in the Asian context, especially when cross-cultural uncivil behaviors literature is modest [11] [12]. Further, while the prior literature mainly focuses on the effect of WI on organizational factors (e.g., job satisfaction, commitment, performance, etc.), the link between WI and socio-demographic factors (e.g., gender, age, managerial experience, and working experience) is questionable. A few researchers added demographic variables in statistics; however, the scholars mainly label them as dependent factors; therefore, their role as an independent factor to incivility is under question (Cortina et al., 2001). To fulfill the above gap, cross-cultural data from working adults in China and Vietnam aims to explore socio-demographic factors' influence on WI, which solves the scarcity of research about WI in the Asian context.

In detail, this study aims to compare the WI between China and Vietnam. Moreover, we explore the relationship between age, gender, education, managerial experience, working experience, and WI in Vietnamese and Chinese working adults. Understanding the influence of demographic factors on WI will fill the gap in negative behaviors literature in the Asian context. Moreover, the findings will allow practitioners to have policies to reduce its harmful consequences for organizations and working adults.

H1. Chinese working adults would experience the same incivility behaviors as Vietnamese ones.

H2. Women would experience more incivility behaviors than men in Vietnamese and Chinese workplaces.

H3. Younger working adults would experience more incivility behaviors than older ones in Vietnamese and Chinese workplaces.

H4. Subordinates would experience more incivility behaviors than supervisors in Vietnamese and Chinese workplaces.

H5. Individuals with more working experience can reduce the frequency of incivility behaviors than those with less working experience in Vietnamese and Chinese workplaces.

II. METHOD

To avoid common method bias, we collected data at two different times, with a time gap of six months. In time 1, we collected data from voluntary Vietnamese working adults who have been working in three main cities: Hanoi (the capital in the North), Vinh (in the Middle), and Ho Chi Minh (in the South). The additional information about informed consent and guideline for fulfilling items were included in the questionnaire. As a result, 500 surveys were collected, and we removed 241 invalid surveys. Thus, 259 surveys (51.8%) were used in the analysis. In time 2, we collected data from voluntary Chinese working adults working in three main cities: Beijing (the capital), Shanghai, and Chongqing. A total of 705 questionnaires were received, and 339 valid questionnaires were used, with a response rate of 48%.

The detailed demographic information is displayed below in Table 1. The demographic information was coded for further data analysis, as follows: Age (Above 30 = 1 and Below 30 = 2), Gender (Male = 1 and Female = 2), Managerial ranks (Employee = 1 and Supervisor = 2), and Working experience (Below 10 years = 1 and Above 10 years = 2).

This research used SPSS to calculate the data. In detail, descriptive statistics and paired t-tests were conducted to explore the difference in WI in the nation, age, gender, working experience, and managerial level.

III. RESULTS

To examine the data's validity, Kaiser–Meyer–Oklin (KMO), exploratory factor analysis (EFA), Cronbach's Alpha, and total variance were analyzed in this study. Kaiser (1974) states that KMO must exceed 0.5 for further analysis. As a result, KMO in this study was 0.875, which passed the preliminary analysis. The detailed analysis is displayed in Appendix 1. In the next step, all items had a factor loading ranging from 0.840 to 0.866, which fulfills the minimum value of 0.4 for valid EFA (Nunnally, 1978). Further, Cronbach's Alpha was 0.904, which exceeded the requirement of 0.7. All items with eigenvalues higher than one were 72.62% of the total variance. Altogether, all statistics reach the standard condition, confirming the data's validity. The detailed characteristic is displayed in Appendix 2.

The first hypothesis compares the WI level between Chinese and Vietnamese working adults. As can be seen from table 2, although the score of China ($M = 1.411$) was less

TABLE I
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE VIETNAMESE AND CHINESE SAMPLE (N = 598)

	Frequency	Percentage
Vietnam		
Gender		
Male = 1	108	41.6
Female = 2	151	58.4
Age		
Above 30 = 1	138	53.2
Below 30 = 2	121	46.8
Managerial ranks		
Employee = 1	226	87.2
Supervisor = 2	33	12.8
Working experience		
Below 10 years = 1	164	63.3
Above 10 years = 2	95	36.7
Total	259	100
China		
Gender		
Male = 1	80	23.5
Female = 2	259	76.5
Age		
Above 30	50	14.7
Below 30	289	85.3
Managerial ranks		
Employee = 1	280	82.5
Supervisor = 2	59	17.5
Working experience		
Below 10 years = 1	288	84.9
Above 10 years = 2	51	15.1
Total	339	100

than Vietnam ($M = 1.488$), the difference is insignificant ($p = 0.376 > 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted, which confirms our prediction about the same level of WI in Vietnam and China.

TABLE II
COMPARISON OF WI BETWEEN CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE

Measure	Mean		t(df = 598)	p
	Chinese (n = 339)	Vietnamese (n = 259)		
WI	1.411	1.499	0.885	0.376

The second hypothesis compares the WI level between Chinese and Vietnamese men and women. As can be seen from table 3, the score of women ($M = 1.356$) was less than men ($M = 1.638$) in Vietnamese and Chinese workplaces, and the difference is significant ($p = 0.002 < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 2 is rejected. The third hypothesis aims to compare the level of WI between Chinese and Vietnamese younger and older working adults. Table 3 shows a difference between the two types of working adults, but this is insignificant ($p = 0.823 > 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 3 is rejected. The fourth hypothesis compares the WI level between employees and supervisors in Vietnamese and Chinese workplaces. Table 3 shows a difference in the organizational hier-

archy's WI, but this is insignificant ($p=0.823>0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 4 is rejected. The fifth hypothesis aims to compare the level of WI between higher experienced adults and lower ones in Vietnamese and Chinese workplaces. Table 3 shows a difference between the two types of working adults, but this is insignificant ($p=0.199>0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 5 is rejected.

The first hypothesis compares the WI level between Chinese and Vietnamese working adults. As can be seen from table 2, although the score of China ($M= 1.411$) was less than Vietnam ($M=1.488$), the difference is insignificant ($p=0.376>0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted, which confirms our prediction about the same level of WI in Vietnam and China.

TABLE III
WI IN GENDER, AGE, MANAGERIAL RANKS, AND WORKING EXPERIENCES DIFFER

No	Variables	Number	Mean	SD	t(df = 598)	p
1	Gender					
	Male	188	1.638	1.119	330.7	0.002 *
	Female	410	1.356	1.007		
2	Age					
	Above 30	427	1.451	1.017	285.2	0.823
	Below 30	171	1.429	1.134		
3	Managerial ranks					
	Employee	506	1.424	1.052	127.0	0.267
	Supervisor	92	1.557	1.043		
4	Working experiences					
	Below ten years	452	1.404	1.022	223.6	0.199
	Above 30 years	146	1.533	1.108		

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed)

Use either SI (MKS) or CGS as primary units. (SI units are encouraged.) English units may be used as secondary units (in parentheses). An exception would be the use of English units as identifiers in trade, such as "3.5-inch disk drive."

Avoid combining SI and CGS units, such as current in amperes and magnetic field in oersteds. This often leads to confusion because equations do not balance dimensionally. If you must use mixed units, clearly state the units for each quantity that you use in an equation.

IV. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This is the first cross-cultural study investigating WI in the Asian context, particularly in China and Vietnam. This study also supplemented the incomplete knowledge on WI and explored the influence of demographic factors on working adults' incivility behaviors. While we evaluated five hypotheses in this study, only the first one was accepted. In detail, the frequency of WI is not different between China and Vietnam, which suggests that the same cultural, political, and social characteristics can lead to the same uncivil behaviors in the workplace. This result provided several preliminary information concerning the cross-cultural empirical experiences of WI in collectivist cultures. Further, gender was

regarded as an essential factor in predicting the degree of WI in workplaces, and males experienced more frequencies of uncivil behaviors than females in Vietnam and China. This finding was contrasted with Western studies (Cortina et al., 2001) but in line with previous Asia literature (Lim and Lee, 2011). Therefore, this result accreted the WI's theory between the Asian and Western contexts.

For the rest of the demographic variables, they confirmed an insignificant difference in incivility behaviors between the categories of age, managerial ranks, and working experiences. This study broadened the limited theory about WI in the Asian context and identified the influence of national characteristics on workplaces' uncivil behaviors. These results also showed a remarkable contribution to organizations and supervisors in Vietnam and China. In detail, we suggest that supervisors should find ways to reduce uncivil behaviors in the workplace for male employees in two societies. One solution is to build a code of conduct to limit uncivil behaviors in the workforce. As Confucianism is a core traditional culture in China and Vietnam, supervisors can adapt to use critical values in this philosophy, such as respect, dignity, and harmony, to define the proper behaviors in the workplace. Individuals with positive behaviors might receive a tangible reward and vice versa.

The second solution is to recruit new employees with good behaviors and attitudes, which can eliminate WI from the beginning. However, it raises a question about how to select candidates who have positive attitudes and behaviors. The recruitment process would be the answer when organizations can use role-playing exercises that put candidates into conflict situations to determine their reactions. These individuals who have positive attitudes will deal with difficulties politely.

V. CONCLUSION

To sum up, this research provides empirical findings on the influences of demographic variables on WI in Vietnamese and Chinese contexts. The result confirms a significant association between gender and WI, with males experiencing higher uncivil behaviors than females. If WI still happens in the workplace, it will affect the organization's performance and stability in the future. Therefore, we have established several solutions to eliminate this issue. Finally, this study is expected to open the scope of WI in the Asian context, particularly in Vietnam and China.

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