

Workplace incivility and target's characteristics: insights from a cross-national study

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Previous research has found that there are certain personality characteristics that predict whether one is likely to become a target of workplace mistreatment, and that these characteristics provoke such behavior (Milam, Spitzmüller, & Penney, 2009). The present paper aims to replicate and expand Milam et al.'s paper by looking at workplace incivility in two parts of the world, the United States and Romania, and two types of sources (self and coworker) to see if this phenomenon is uniquely American, or if it is present in another, very different culture. Our findings indicate that in both countries, low levels of agreeableness and high levels of neuroticism are associated with individuals' reports of receiving higher levels of workplace incivility than their counterparts, and that from the coworkers' perspectives, this incivility is provoked by the targets of the mistreatment.

Keywords: workplace incivility, agreeableness, neuroticism, self- and coworker reports

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Workplace incivility, which typically manifests itself in the form of disrespect, condescension, and degradation (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Burnfield, Clark, Devendorf, & Jex, 2004; Robinson & Bennett, 1995), is both prevalent and detrimental for organizations and individuals alike (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langout, 2001). Workplace incivility contributes to poor job attitudes, malaise and job-related strain (Notelaers, Einarsen, De Witte, & Vermunt, 2006), reduced task (Porath & Erez, 2007) and contextual performance (Taylor & Kluemper, 2011), an increase in counterproductive work behaviors (Penney & Spector, 2005). The present paper aims to replicate and expand the work of Milam et al. (2009), which demonstrated that (in the United States) the experience of workplace incivility is influenced by the personality of the targeted person.

Our specific aim is threefold: First, we will consider the experiential phenomenon of workplace incivility, with an emphasis on personal antecedents as a culturally common experience, by examining workplace incivility in both the United States and Romania, a country which is relatively underrepresented in the literature on workplace mistreatment. Second, we wish to focus on both self- and coworker reports of those personal aspects in order to get a

more ample perspective on what role personal features play in incivility experiences.

Workplace incivility is considered to be “low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect” (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p.457). Workplace incivility typically results in behavior that is disrespectful, condescending, and degrading (Burnfield et al., 2004) and has been found to be both prevalent and detrimental. Cortina et al. (2001) found that 71% of U.S. respondents reported themselves to be targets of some form of workplace incivility during the previous five years. Recent research (Porath, MacInnis, & Folkes, 2010) indicates that even customers simply observing workplace incivility will react in retaliatory ways that will hurt the organizations. Taken at its face value, workplace incivility can be seen as relatively innocent, particularly compared to other counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) such as bullying or mobbing (Neuman & Baron, 2005). However, the reciprocal nature of workplace incivility (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2005), its effect on an organization's bottom line (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000), and its role as an antecedent to job strain (Cortina et al., 2001) make it a particularly important construct to empirically investigate.

We are also interested in geographically expanding the Milam et al. (2009) study. Typically, research regarding workplace incivility has been focused on the Western world, which tends to be highly individualistic, has low power distance, and typically presents high tolerance of others' opinions (Hofstede, 2012). With few exceptions (i.e., Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002; Leung, Wu, Chen, & Young, 2011), what we know about the experience, antecedents, and outcomes of workplace incivility is confined to cultures that are relatively similar. We aim to study workplace incivility in two very different corners of the world, the United States and Romania. Romania, largely cut off from the social science world for half a century, is an Eastern European country which is considered by some studies to be extremely collectivist (e.g., Hofstede, 2001; House, Hanges, Jarvidian, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Spector et al. 2001). Although there is some disagreement in the literature as to the extent of how collectivist present-day Romania is, compared to the rest of Europe (see Green, Deschamps, & Paez, 2005; Shulruf et al., 2011), the literature is clear that Romania is more collectivist than the U.S., which is the nature of the comparison in the present study.

We believe that by comparing the predictors of workplace incivility of these culturally dissimilar countries, we will better suited as a field to understand the extent to which personality plays either a culturally-common or culturally-specific role in such interpersonal transgressions. Specifically, we are interested in whether personality traits which may predict target-experienced workplace incivility in the U.S. will also have the potential to predict incivility in an area that is culturally dissimilar to populations that are typically represented in the work psychology literature. With the present study, we replicate and expand Milam et al.'s study (2009) by looking at another culture, Romania, and by examining another U. S. sample, in order to see if the phenomenon in question is generalizable to any other parts of the world. Meta-analytical research on workplace victimization (which is how targets of more intense forms of mistreatment are referred) has lamented the lack of research examining the role of personality characteristics in victimization (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). It is our objective to gain insights into the role that personality traits play in becoming a target of workplace incivility. Through this objective we hope to contribute to an understanding of the behavioral or perceptual expression of traits that may need to be altered if the experience of workplace incivility and its negative consequences for psychological well-being and health are to be avoided. Therefore, in order to gain a more accurate insight about the role of personality, we aim to replicate the approach of Milam et al.'s study (2009) by obtaining both self- and other- reports of personality traits, considering that reports from others provide unique information that is not grasped by only self-report (Hogan, Hogan, & Roberts, 1996; Lee, Ashton, Morrison, & Dunlop, 2008). Further, to guard against common-method variance, we will also obtain coworker reports of workplace mistreatment, so that we are able to capture both perceived and reputational perspectives on the target-focused mistreatment.

A review of the literature has established that the five-factor model of personality is a universally valid taxonomy of traits (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004), and that these factors are fundamental dimensions of personality that are

independent of culture (Kallasmaa, Allik, Realo, & McCrae, 2000; McCrae, 2000). The structure of personality has been established to be nearly identical in African, Asian, European, North American and South American cultures (De Fruyt et al., 2009), and even appears to enjoy a phenotypic, genetic status (Yamagata et al., 2006).

Although there has been a fair amount of research conducted regarding culture and personality, there is a relatively small amount of such research in the field of organizational/work psychology. However, one such study (Narayanan, Menon, & Levine, 1995) concluded that the cross-cultural robustness of the Big Five continues to accrue; thus we can determine whether personality dimensions are differentially related to such criteria as school or job performance across cultures. More evidence is needed to indicate that there are consequences and outcomes of personality in the workplace that are identical across cultures. We believe that there are traits and associated behaviors that are negatively received by one's coworkers. However, there are likely other personality-driven behaviors that are offensive in some cultures, and not others. We aim to pursue this idea with the present research.

Individuals who possess high levels of agreeableness tend to exhibit behaviors, such as cooperation, trust, and generosity, which are well-received by others (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Conversely, those who are low in the trait tend to act in ways that are considered by coworkers to be surly, stubborn, and disrespectful. This, according to Milam et al. (2009), tends to provoke, or unwittingly invite uncivil behavior from one's coworkers. Furthermore, low levels of agreeableness may relate to higher levels of both experienced and perceived workplace incivility. McCrae and Costa (1991) found that individuals who are high in agreeableness experience more positive affect and generally have higher levels of well-being. Individuals who are low in agreeableness are said to be mistrustful and skeptical (McCrae & Costa, 1987), thus, they may be more likely to see uncivil treatment, even when it is not present. McCrae and Costa (2003) also describe persons with low levels of agreeableness as being skeptical and having a tendency to behave in a condescending manner, to express hostility directly and to push limits, with respect to confrontation. In addition, Sava (2009) found that individuals with low levels of agreeableness were among those who presented higher levels of maladaptive schemas related to feeling disconnected and rejected, and having impaired boundaries. Such schemas have the potential to explain potential "invitations" of incivility among those who are low in agreeableness. Therefore, not only are individuals who are low in agreeableness likely to alienate their coworkers, which in turn invites actual incivility, but they are likely to process even neutral events as being uncivil. Milam et al. (2009) found this to be the case in the U.S., thus we should test the hypothesis that the same applies to Romania because although countries differ on their relative scores on Big Five traits such as agreeableness, there does not appear to be a case to be made that low agreeableness would be interpersonally adaptive; that is, there does not seem to be any evidence to suggest that there is a culture where coworkers would prefer the behavior that coincides with individuals who are low in agreeableness.

With respect to inviting uncivil behavior, we turn to the childhood bullying work of Bernstein and Watson (1997), which identifies a class of bullying victims who tend to be aggressive, invite bullying unto themselves, and are even viewed by others as “provocative” victims. We propose that similarly, some targets of workplace incivility (completely unwillingly and unwittingly) may invite mistreatment unto themselves through their behavior, which is a manifestation of their personality. To be clear, this is not akin to the present research as “blaming the victim”, but rather an attempt to get a complete picture of all variance that may be involved in the mistreatment of individuals in the workplace. It may be that individuals who tend to engage in workplace incivility actively seek out those whom they perceive as “deserving” the mistreatment. This in no way excuses the incivility, but does shed light on a possible antecedent of the incivility. In the case of agreeableness, we propose that individuals who have low levels of agreeableness will open themselves up to being treated uncivilly, by the behavior with which low levels of agreeableness is associated.

Hypothesis 1: There is a general negative relation between agreeableness and workplace incivility. That is, regardless of one’s culture, individuals who are low in (both self-reported and coworker-reported) agreeableness will report higher levels of (self-reported and coworker-reported) workplace incivility.

Hypothesis 1a: This relation is mediated by provocative status.

Neuroticism may also predict individuals’ experiences and perceptions of workplace incivility. Neuroticism, which is marked by worrying, insecurity, and being temperamental (McCrae & Costa, 1987) has been linked strongly to negative affectivity, which is a trait-based tendency to experience guilt, fear and anxiety (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), leading to pessimism (Steed, 2002), reduced organizational citizenship behaviors, withdrawal behaviors, and counterproductive work behaviors (Kaplan, Bradley, Luchman, & Haynes, 2009).

As negative affectivity (NA) often affects one’s mood (Clark & Watson, 1988), Affective Events Theory (AET; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) would predict that NA and neuroticism influence how an individual interprets interpersonal events such as rude treatment at work. According to AET, individuals who are high in NA have more intense reactions to negative events in the workplace than do individuals who are low in NA. Additionally, McCrae and Costa (1991) assert that those who are high in neuroticism experience more routine negative events, or hassles and fewer routine positive events, or uplifts. Similar to agreeableness, neuroticism manifests itself publicly in the form of behavior that is likely to provoke uncivil treatment, such as verbally worrying and conveying insecurity, acting fidgety, and generally making one’s problems known to others (Milam et al., 2009). This type of workplace behavior is not likely to be valued in any culture, as it tends to be distracting and counterproductive to a productive working environment. Taken together, we believe that regardless of culture, neuroticism will increase the likelihood of one becoming a target of uncivil workplace behavior.

Hypothesis 2: There is a general positive relation between neuroticism and workplace incivility in the U.S. and Romania. Regardless of one’s culture, individuals who are high in (both self-reported and coworker-reported) neuroticism will report higher levels of (self-reported and coworker-reported) workplace incivility.

Hypothesis 2a: This relation is mediated by provocative status.

We wish to utilize the same strategy as Milam et al. (2009) and obtain personality and incivility perspectives not only from employees, but from their coworkers as well. There is much to be gained by investigating both of these perspectives. First, there is the notion that in interpersonally-oriented studies such as the present study, personality can be operationalized as public, visible, and reputational, which can best be seen by one’s coworkers, or private, and more cognitive in nature, which is less visible, and best measured by self-report (Hogan, Hogan, & Roberts, 1996; McCrae & Costa, 1991). Additionally, by obtaining incivility reports from coworkers, we can move away from simply actor-related perception of mistreatment and get an observer’s perception of whether indeed the respective actors are targets of mistreatment.

Method

Participants

There were two samples used in the present study. Sample 1 was a U.S. sample and Sample 2 was a Romanian sample. The main participants in both samples were instructed to complete the survey and to give a second survey packet to one of their coworkers. The coworker sent the completed packet back to the respective researcher in that country.

Sample 1. Sample 1 consisted of 323 working undergraduates from a large U.S. university. The participants were employed in a variety of occupations and industries, such as education, finance, and healthcare. The sample was 75% female, and the age of participants ranged from 18 to 53, with a mean and median age of 24. Participants had worked for their respective organizations for an average of just over two years.

Sample 2. Sample 2 consisted of 141 working undergraduates from a large Romanian university. The participants were employed in a variety of similar occupations to those in Sample 1. The Romanian sample was 68% female, and the age of participants ranged from 20 to 58, with a mean and median age of 28. Participants had worked for their respective organizations for an average of three years. All measures administered in the Romanian sample were translated from English into Romanian by a professional translator, and then back-translated into English by a different translator. Any items that did not make conceptual sense after this process were discussed by the coauthors and modified to reflect the respective construct’s intent.

Measures

Workplace incivility. We obtained self and coworker reports of the seven-item Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS; Cortina et al., 2001), which is a general measure of workplace incivility ($\alpha = .93$ and $.88$ for self-reports in the U.S. and Romania, respectively; $.94$ and $.85$ for coworker

reports). This measure of workplace incivility is very common in the literature, and has been used in a variety of settings (Kern & Grandey, 2009; Reio & Sanders-Reio, 2011; Smith, Andrusyszyn, & Laschinger, 2010). Sample items include, “In the past year, have you been in a situation where your peers or coworkers put you down or were condescending to you?”.

Individual differences. For agreeableness and neuroticism, we employed the 10-item Big Five personality measures available in the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP; Goldberg, 1999). Items ask participants to rate their level of agreement for a series of statements beginning with the word “I...”. We also collected data from each of the main participant’s coworkers, with the main participant as the referent. Sample items for agreeableness include, “...make people feel at ease”, and “...have a good word for everyone” ($\alpha = .79$ and $.78$ for the U.S. and Romanian self-reports, respectively, and $.89$ and $.88$ for coworker reports). Sample items for neuroticism include, “...have frequent mood swings”, and “...panic easily” ($\alpha = .82$ and $.80$ for self-reports, $.80$ and $.75$ for coworker reports). The alpha for the Romanian coworker report of neuroticism was initially $.46$, so Item #7 (“My coworker seldom feels sad”) was removed from the scale. In order to maintain consistency across coworker-reports, as well as consistency across countries, we also deleted the item for analysis of the U.S. sample as well (“My coworker seldom feels blue” in the English version of the scale), which initially had an alpha of $.79$ for the coworker measure of neuroticism.

Provocative status. Finally, we used coworker reports of the three-item provocative victim scale that was employed in the Milam et al. (2009) study. This survey measures the extent to which one’s coworkers perceive study participants to be seen as provocative victims ($\alpha = .79$ and $.78$ for the U.S. and Romanian samples, respectively). The items in this scale were: “His or her coworkers argue with him/her frequently”, “He or she has a tendency to provoke (“piss off”) other people at work,” and, “When people at work are rude to him/her, it is usually because he or she deserves it”. Because this variable calls for an observer’s perspective, we only collected coworker reports of provocative status.

Results

We used hierarchical multiple regression to analyze our hypotheses, with gender included as a control variable in every step of the respective regression equations. This is due to the Goodwin and Gotlib (2004) notion that gender may affect both individual differences and the experience of workplace incivility. We also collected data on job tenure, age, level of education, and industry in which the participants were employed. None of these variables was significantly correlated with any dependent or independent variables, so we did not include them as covariates in the ensuing analyses.

Table 1. Intercorrelations between Variables in U. S. Sample.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	24.09	0.5	-								
2. Gender	-	-	0.11								
3. Agreeableness	3.85	0.54	0	-0.08							
4. Neuroticism	2.3	0.65	-0.12*	-0.13*	-0.43*						
5. Workplace incivility	2.34	1.08	0.11	.14*	-.18**	.16**	-				
6. Provocative status	1.72	0.84	0.11	.19**	-.19**	-0.02	.18*	-			
7. Coworker report of agreeableness	3.98	0.67	-0.11	-.18**	.26**	-0.02	-.17*	-.56**	-		
8. Coworker report of neuroticism	2.18	0.64	0.04	-0.02	-.21**	.23**	.26**	.40**	-.59**	-	
9. Coworker report of incivility	2.06	0.92	0.07	.19**	-0.13	0.05	.33**	.46**	-.45**	.33**	-

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 2. Intercorrelations between Variables in Romanian Sample.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	7.93	9.17	-								
2. Gender	-	-	-0.04	-							
3. Agreeableness	3.83	0.55	0.11	.24**	-						
4. Neuroticism	2.46	0.62	0.03	-0.07	-.36**	-					
5. Workplace incivility	2.27	0.8	0.04	0.08	-.28**	.23**	-				
6. Provocative status	1.93	0.84	0	-0.1	-.23**	0.13	0.03	-			
7. Coworker report of agreeableness	3.85	0.61	-0.01	-0.03	.41**	-0.15	-0.03	-.59**	-		
8. Coworker report of neuroticism	2.49	0.71	0	-0.11	-0.11	.23**	-0.12	.28**	.42**	-	
9. Coworker report of incivility	2.27	0.72	-.17*	0	-.20*	0.07	.31**	.38**	-.40**	.25**	-

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Hypothesis 1, which proposed that there would be a negative relation between agreeableness and workplace incivility in both the U.S. and Romania, was generally supported. Specifically, in the U.S., when we look at workplace incivility ($\beta = -.17, p < .01$), we found that low levels of self-reported agreeableness were associated with self-reported workplace incivility. This effect was much stronger when analyzing the relationship between coworker-reports of agreeableness and incivility directed

toward the main participant ($\beta = -.43, p < .01$). We also found a significant relation in coworker reports of agreeableness predicting self-reports of workplace incivility ($\beta = -.15, p < .05$).

In Romania, we found even larger effect sizes for the relationship between self-reported agreeableness and self-reported incivility ($\beta = -.28, p < .01$). As in the U.S. sample, we also found that coworker reports of agreeableness were negatively associated with coworker reports of incivility

($\beta = -.40, p < .01$). However, we found non-significant results for the relationship between coworker-related agreeableness and self-reported workplace incivility ($\beta = -.03, n.s.$), which prevents Hypothesis 1 from being completely supported.

Hypothesis 1a, which posited that provocative status would mediate the relation between workplace incivility and agreeableness found in H_1 , was also partially supported. As Milam et al. (2009) found this effect was found only when looking at coworker reports of agreeableness predicting coworker reports of workplace incivility. Specifically, controlling for gender, the bootstrap (Bollen & Stine, 1990; Shrout & Bolger, 2002) estimated indirect effect is $-.22$, with a standard error of 0.79 (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The 95% bias-corrected

bootstrap confidence interval (5,000 trials) is from $-.447$ to $-.023$, and because zero is not in the confidence interval, it is concluded that the indirect effect is different from zero. The percentage of the total effect that is mediated is 42.31% . For the Romanian sample, we also found that the hypothesis was supported only when investigating the relationship between coworker reports of agreeableness and coworker reports of incivility. Using bootstrapping, and controlling for gender, the estimated indirect effect is $-.19$, with a standard error of 0.78 . The 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval (5,000 trials) is from $-.334$ to $-.028$, and because zero is not in the confidence interval, we can conclude that the indirect effect is different from zero. The percentage of the total effect that is mediated is 33.80% .

Table 3. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Agreeableness Predicting Perceptions of Workplace Incivility

	USA sample (N = 323)				Romanian sample (N = 141)			
	Step1	SE	Step2	SE	Step1	SE	Step 2	SE
<i>Self-report of workplace incivility:</i>								
Gender	.35*	0.15	.32*	0.15	0.12	0.15	0.01	0.14
Self-report of agreeableness			-.34**	0.12			-.40**	0.12
R ²	0.02		.05**		0.01		.08**	
Gender	0.32	0.17	0.25	0.17	0.13	0.15	0.12	0.15
Coworker report of agreeableness			-.24*	0.11			-0.04	0.11
R ²	0.02		.04*		0.01		0.01	
<i>Coworker report of workplace incivility:</i>								
Gender	.39**	0.14	.37**	0.14	0.01	0.13	-0.06	0.13
Self-report of agreeableness			-0.19	0.12			-.27*	0.11
R ²	0.04		0.05		0		.04*	
Gender	.40**	0.14	0.24	0.13	0	0.13	-0.02	0.12
Coworker report of agreeableness			-.58**	0.09			-.47**	0.09
R ²	0.04		.22**		0		.16**	

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 4. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Neuroticism Predicting Perceptions of Workplace Incivility

	USA sample (N = 323)				Romanian sample (N = 141)			
	Step1	SE	Step2	SE	Step1	SE	Step2	SE
<i>Self-report of workplace incivility:</i>								
Gender	0.35	0.15	.41*	0.15	0.12	0.15	0.14	0.14
Self-report of neuroticism			.30**	0.1			.30**	0.11
R ²	0.02		.05**		0.01		.06**	
Gender	0.32	0.17	.33*	0.17	0.13	0.15	0.11	0.15
Coworker report of neuroticism			.43**	0.11			0.12	0.1
R ²	0.02		.09**		0.01		0.02	
<i>Coworker report of workplace incivility</i>								
Gender	.39**	0.14	.42**	0.14	0.01	0.13	0.02	0.13
Self-report of neuroticism			0.11	0.1			0.08	0.1
R ²	0.04		0.04		0		0.01	
Gender	.40**	0.14	.41**	0.13	0	0.13	0.05	0.13
Coworker report of neuroticism			.47**	0.09			.25**	0.09
R ²	0.04		.15**		0		.06**	

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Hypothesis 2, which proposed that there would be a positive relation between neuroticism and workplace incivility in both the U.S. and Romania, was generally supported. In the U.S. sample, we found a significant relation between self-reported neuroticism and self-reported workplace incivility ($\beta = .18, p < .01$). As with Hypothesis 1, the effects are even stronger when considering coworker-reported personality (i.e., neuroticism) in association with coworker reports of workplace incivility ($\beta = -.43, p < .01$). Finally, when we analyzed the relationship between coworker reports of neuroticism and self-reports of workplace incivility, we found a significant relation ($\beta = .26, p < .01$).

In Romania, we also found that self-reported neuroticism is associated with self-reported incivility ($\beta = .23, p < .01$), and that coworker reports of neuroticism similarly is associated with coworker reports of incivility ($\beta = .25, p < .01$). We did not, however, find a significant relation between coworker reports of neuroticism and self-reports of workplace incivility in the Romanian sample ($\beta = .11, n.s.$).

Hypothesis 2a was partially supported for provocative status mediating the relation between neuroticism and workplace incivility, with a similar pattern as Hypothesis 1a. Using bootstrapping, and controlling for gender, the estimated indirect effect of neuroticism on incivility is $.21$,

with a standard error of 0.59. The 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval (5,000 trials) is from .114 to .346, and because zero is not in the confidence interval, we can conclude that the indirect effect is different from zero. The percentage of the total effect that is mediated is 48.06%.

In Romania, we found the same partial mediation effect as in the U.S. Controlling for gender, we found an indirect effect of coworker-reported neuroticism on coworker-reported incivility, of .09, with a standard error of .06. The 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval (5,000 trials) is from .029 to .241, and because zero is not in the confidence interval, we can conclude that the indirect effect is different from zero. The percentage of the total effect that is mediated is 37.2%.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine the role that personality plays in experiences of workplace incivility, and to investigate if this phenomenon is uniquely found in traditionally individualistic countries, or if it may be present in a less traditionally-individualistic country, such as Romania. Specifically, we sought to determine whether or not the personality of workplace incivility targets is associated with the experiences of workplace incivility in two distinctly different countries, and if these targets may actually invite this sort of mistreatment through their behavior. We have added to the literature by looking at incivility in two different parts of the world, viewed by workers and their peers' perceptions of both personality and incivility that the workers are perceived to have experienced.

One notable finding of the present study is that there is a common phenomenon of agreeableness playing a role in one's perception of workplace incivility. In both the U.S. and Romanian samples, individuals who are low in self-reported agreeableness report more workplace incivility than those who are high in agreeableness. This is also the case with coworker reports of agreeableness leading to coworker reports of incivility. Taken together, this appears to indicate that in completely different corners of the world, being surly and argumentative will also be associated with rude behavior from others, whether viewed from an internal, cognitive perspective (self-report) or an outward, reputational perspective (coworker report) of agreeableness. This is in line with the findings of Milam et al. (2009), but noteworthy because we have demonstrated that this occurs not only in the U.S., but in Romania as well.

Further, we found that in both the U.S. and Romania, the low agreeableness of the target actually provokes the incivility. This finding is important because it suggests that coworkers may engage in some sort of low-intensity retaliation for the annoying behaviors that may be exhibited by people who are low on agreeableness. The fact that this effect was only found in coworker reports of agreeableness predicting coworker reports of incivility serves to underscore this notion, as coworker reports of personality are essentially reports of behaviors, rather than cognitions. These findings indicate that behaviors associated with low agreeableness, as seen by coworkers tend to result in uncivil behaviors toward the target, as perceived by the respective targets themselves.

The present study also indicates that in both the U.S. and Romania, individuals who are high in self-reported neuroticism experience workplace incivility with greater frequency than those who report less neuroticism. One explanation for this may be Weiss and Cropanzano's (1996) affective events theory (AET), which suggests that individuals who are high in neuroticism have more general negative evaluations of their surroundings. For these individuals who are characterized by worrying, nervousness, insecurity and self-pity, events which are innocuous to others may actually feel more like workplace incivility.

The phenomenon of individuals high in neuroticism being the targets of workplace incivility is found, regardless of whether neuroticism is viewed from the perception of the actor or peer. In addition, we found that provocative status mediates the relation between coworker-reported neuroticism and coworker-reported workplace incivility, which indicates that not only does the feeling of neuroticism color one's perception of mistreatment, as AET would predict, but perhaps the behaviors that are associated with neuroticism are the types of behaviors that engender workplace incivility.

The addition of workplace incivility as a construct within the workplace psychology domain has been relatively recent, and there is still much to be learned about the perpetrators, the targets, and the experience of being treated rudely, insensitively, and disrespectfully by one's peers. What we hope that we have done in the present study is highlight the notion that target behavior (as a result of one's personality) is a component that explains some of the variance in such treatment, and that there are some types of behavior that are likely to result in mistreatment by one's coworkers, and that this effect is not confined to the U.S., but occurs in Romania as well. In spite of much cultural dissimilarity between these two countries, the general pattern of those who are low in agreeableness and high in neuroticism being treated uncivilly by coworkers appears to occur in both of these countries.

The common findings in the present study are particularly notable as the present study has investigated this phenomenon from two disparate countries. The present study also underscores the notion that not all measures will indicate these types of relations, and that common-method variance may be at work in some of these findings. There is a common general pattern in both countries of self-reported personality leading to self-reported outcomes, and coworker-reported personality (behavior) leading to coworker-reported outcomes.

Limitations

In a study like the present study, with data collection efforts in different countries, and coworker as well as self-reports, there are likely several limitations that result. First, the measure of provocative status may not have been comprehensive enough to indicate mediating effects for neuroticism. Future studies should encompass a more thorough and complete measure of this construct. It may be productive to develop the construct further for the purposes of determining motivation for workplace mistreatment.

Second, although measures were carefully translated and backtranslated, there is a slight chance that some of the items were not interpreted in the way that they were intended. This is not likely the case, as all alphas were

generally in line with one another. Finally, the Romanian sample size was much smaller than the U.S. sample. This does not appear to have affected the pattern of results, although we would have preferred more equivalent sample sizes between countries.

Finally, there is a chance that the present findings may be inflated as a result of some sort of common-method bias due to having a common rater, via social desirability (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003) although we attempted to reduce such bias by assuring confidentiality and by instructing participants that there were no “right” or wrong” answers. In fact, although Meade, Watson, and Kroustalis (2007) report that the effects of common method bias are not typically large in magnitude, the reason we obtained data from our participants’ coworkers was to mitigate any role that common method variance may play in interpreting our results. We are confident that our results illustrate a complete picture of the phenomenon at work.

There are obviously some exceptions to these findings that need to be examined further, that frankly raise interesting questions for future cross-cultural and cross-national research. For example, coworker-reported neuroticism (i.e., behavior) does not significantly predict self-reports of incivility in any way in Romania. There could be a number of explanations that could explain these results. For example, it could be that neurotic behavior is not seen as particularly bothersome or offensive in Romania, at least not deserving of mistreatment. In this respect, the significant effects found for self-reports of neuroticism could entirely be explained by AET, and that the neuroticism is influencing the extent to which these individuals believe they are mistreated. However, there is also the possibility that there are cultural factors at play that allow neuroticism to be less visible of a personality trait than it is in the U.S.

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