

Effects of Perceived Workplace Incivility on Presenteeism Perceptions: A Research in Turkey

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ABSTRACT: There are many different presenteeism conceptualizations in the business literature, and despite some insights about underlying presenteeism factors, further research is still needed in this emerging area. One of such factors is claimed to be incivility within the business context. There is, however, not ample research about these factor's connections with presenteeism itself. Taking this gap into account, the aim of this study is to scrutinize any possible effects of business members' perceived workplace incivility on their presenteeism perceptions. Data are collected via questionnaires from the members of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ikitelli Organized Industrial Zone in Istanbul, Turkey. A total of 183 participants are contacted. There is a statistically significant connection between the participants' perceived incivility and presenteeism, implying that these two negative business aspects are actually related. This finding clearly points out that perceptions of undesirable, rude, and negative behaviors in the work context is a motivator of the participants' unwillingness to be present in their business environment. It is also noteworthy that the perceived incivility is a monolithic aspect, whereas the perception of presenteeism is composed of perceptions about negativities and resistance, both of which are related to issues in business context.

Keywords: Perceived presenteeism, perceived workplace incivility, small and medium sized enterprises, Istanbul, Turkey.

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational context involves many issues regarding the human side; and therefore, it is possible to talk about a vast variety of psychological, emotional, and social issues. The abundance of such issues gives rise to an enormous scientific interest; hence, there are various and sometimes perplexing paradigms, approaches, considerations, theories, and applications in the literature.

Despite this complexity, there is a room to generalize: all context-related humanistic issues could be considered as positive or negative. That is, it is convenient to claim that some of these issues could cause negative effects at individual, group, and organizational levels; whilst some others act in the opposite direction. It is furthermore noteworthy that this generalization is not universal – there is ample evidence in the literature that many positive or negative issues could reverse their effects once a specific threshold is reached. In other words, the previously mentioned humanistic issues are not absolute in terms of their effects; it is possible to state that each of these generally possesses a certain *tone* in terms of its effect when the organizational context is under the spotlights.

The current study takes this nature into account and emphasizes the negative domain of these issues. This domain involves many subjects; and thus, the need for a start. After a literature review, it is decided that two subjects, namely presenteeism and workplace incivility, could be considered simultaneously on many grounds. Presenteeism is intrinsically a negative subject in terms of its effects on individuals (Cocker et al., 2013; Lu et al., 2014), groups (De Beer, 2014; Karimi et al., 2015), and organizations (Johns, 2010; Lohaus and Habermann, 2019) overall; and moreover, it has many connections with other positive (e.g., Grinyer and Singleton, 2000; Karanika-Murray et al., 2015) and negative (e.g., Conway et al., 2016; Ferreira and Martinez, 2012; Gosselin et al., 2013) toned human-centered issues in organizational context.

The other end, incivility at work seems to be uncontrollable and has risen according to the literature. It is estimated that 98% of employees are exposed to workplace incivility and 50% experience such behavior at least once a week (Porath and Pearson, 2013). Organizations perceive workplace incivility as a catastrophic problem that has to be solved as it leads to negative consequences both individually and organizationally. Thereby, the problem of workplace incivility has gained a tremendous interest in various fields (Meier and Semmer, 2013).

With this in mind, this study has been prepared in order to provide researchers valuable information about the natures, components and features of workplace incivility and presenteeism. Moreover, the study seeks to find out whether and how workplace incivility could affect presenteeism at factor level and as being consider as monolithic concepts.

2. PRESENTEEISM: SIGNIFICANCE, EVOLUTION, AND DEFINITIONS

As being the global facts, survival and competitiveness are of utmost importance for businesses today. Achievement of these necessitate successful combinations of countless factors that can also pose situational and contextual fluctuations. Among many other aspects, an emphasis on these mentioned factors' humanistic side addresses a very distinctive, yet a broad issue: workers' wellbeing. It is attention taking in the literature that this issue is considered bilaterally from positive and negative sides as wellbeing and unwellbeing of workers.

A focus on the unwellbeing points out that presenteeism is one of the prominent subjects considered with a gradually increasing interest on many grounds. Presenteeism exists in various professions across many sectors and countries (Aronsson and Gustafsson, 2005; Biron et al., 2006), it is a multifaceted subject involving multiple components (Prater and Smith, 2011) and connections (Terry and Xi, 2010), and it could also incur great costs in financial (Goetzel et al., 2004), technical (Stewart et al., 2003), physical (Kivimaki et al., 2005) and psychological (Holden et al., 2011) terms.

It is also intriguing that the history of the word *presenteeism* dates to older times than anticipated. The oldest publications using the word regarding business environment involve research before 1950s such as *Everybody's Business* (Withers, 1931), and *Contemporary Unionism in the United States* (Dankert, 1948). A common point of these sources is the emphasis on a very simple definition: presenteeism is considered as literally being present in the workplace. This point is moreover evident in some other research in the very same era; Canfield and Soash (1955), for instance, claim presenteeism to be excellent work attendance.

Interestingly, this definition evolves and changes profoundly over time through scientific questioning. The first wave of this questioning belongs to 1970s and 1980s. In this era, the background of this *presence* in the workplace is scrutinized and the meaning expands towards an *unwilling* existence along with presenteeism-absenteeism comparisons (Proctor and Ditton, 1989; Smithy, 1970). The scope of interest expands by 1990s, and involves causes (Stum, 1999) and outcomes (Siu and Cooper, 1998) of presenteeism at various levels within organizational context. This expansion also results in two different streams of definitions. The most emphasized stream refers to physical health problems. These problems are further divided into two categories: tiredness and sickness.

As for tiredness, definitions generally stress working for a long time, and hence the loss of effectiveness. For example, one of the earliest definitions made by Cooper (1996) posits that other than being ill, presenteeism is the necessity to be at home rather than being at work due to tiredness that results from working for long hours while still going on working. In a similar array, Worrall and Cooper (2000) consider presenteeism to be physically, yet unfruitfully being in the workplace instead of resting. The other category referring to sickness is much more emphasized in the literature. Accordingly, presenteeism is designated as showing up at work despite the urgent need to rest due to sickness (Dew et al., 2005), working unwillingly and less productively because of medical problems (Lowe, 2002), and having mild physical health disorders such as headaches or allergies (Ceniceros, 2001), or chronic dry eye (Yu et al., 2011) that do not prevent a worker from tasking but that reduce productivity greatly.

The sole stress on physical health is unsurprisingly contestable, and hence, it gives rise to the consideration of mental problems within presenteeism. Examples involve Hensel's (2011) approach that considers presenteeism to be working ineffectively while physically or mentally not feeling well, Gartner et al.'s (2010) claim that presenteeism is the situation of tasking continuously while being mentally ill, and the definitions that refer to unhealthiness in general such as attending to work despite feeling unhealthy (Aronsson et al., 2000) and the reduction of effectiveness in work environment because of health problems (Turpin et al., 2004).

The other definitional stream stems from discussions regarding the sightedness of emphasizing physical or mental health problems solely; and thus, it insists on the acceptance of a peripheral approach that involves physical and psycho-social aspects within the domain of personal health and the working environment simultaneously. As could already be noticed, the prementioned definitions embed reasons; and therefore, a widened approach to presenteeism is expected to bring forth a mixture of even more reasons. The result, in this case, is the emerge of various multi-factor presenteeism definitions that are widely used in up to date research. There is also a common point among these definitions; they all emphasize the act of working unwillingly regardless of the combinations of underlying factors. More precisely, this unwillingness could originate from work-related psycho-social factors such as time pressure (Elstad and Vabo, 2008), low replaceability (Aronsson et al., 2000), undesirable working hours (Bockerman and Laukkanen, 2009), and job insecurity (Heponiemi et al., 2010); it could be the combined result of a negative physical working environment and unfavorable psycho-social context overall (Chatterji and Tilley, 2002); and there may also be a mixture of personal health problems with undesirable organizational psycho-social atmosphere (Patel et al., 2012). An aggregation of these findings implies the existence of the focus on the work context, followed by the focus on individual to a lesser extent. Nevertheless, the opposite order is also possible, i.e., it is appropriate to consider the individual-specific issues mainly rather than contextual negativities. An exemplification of such approach involves that of Loeppke et al. (2003), which claims presenteeism to be a time usage choice of workers in favor of their own personal issues rather than business matters in work environment, and Gilbreath and Karimi's (2012) conclusion that presenteeism is actually a low effectiveness level as a result of assigning own intellectual capacity to personal issues instead of addressing the necessary tasks in the business.

3. WORKPLACE INCIVILITY AND IT'S CONNECTIONS WITH PRESENTEEISM

Civility and incivility are very popular issues that have been researched profoundly in the last decades. Overutilized and often misunderstood, they both have lost some of their intended meanings. Civil behavior involves treating others with respect and dignity and taking others' feelings and social norms into account. The opposite term, incivility, is defined as a behavioral feature and it refers to behaving without good manners, unmannerly, rudely, impolitely and discourteously (Andersson and Pearson, 1999).

With more details, workplace incivility was introduced by Andersson and Pearson (1999) in the *Academy of Management Journal*. It has been the curiosity subject of countless research since that time. According to the original definition, workplace incivility is a low-intensity deviant behavior with an ambiguous intent to harm the target, thereby violating workplace norms and mutual respect (Andersson and Pearson, 1999). Another definition

that belongs to Burnfield et al. (2004) claims that it manifests itself in the form of disrespect, condescension, degradation, and so forth. A third and similar definition belongs to Pearson and Porath (2009) that considers workplace incivility to be the exchange of seemingly inconsequential words and deeds that violate conventional norms of workplace conduct. Compared with other deviant and negative behaviors in the workplace, despite being less disturbing, unintentional and low intensity, the continuity of uncivil behaviors could trigger other undesirable attitudes and behaviors such as demotivation (Danish, 2019), absenteeism (Zia-ud-Din et al., 2017), low performance (Estes and Wang, 2008), ostracism (Kumral, 2017), burnout (Rahim and Cosby, 2016), job dissatisfaction (Blau and Andersson, 2005) and even intention to quit (Cortina et al., 2001).

It is also intriguing that there are no specific criteria as to which behaviors could be incivil in a workplace. A more detailed approach regarding the definition of workplace incivility points out that some examples such as humiliating, isolating, disregarding, using a rude language, gossiping, information-hiding, ignoring, purposefully annoying, stealing and refraining from replying or tidying in a work environment could generally be considered as workplace incivility (Pearson and Porath, 2009).

A review of the literature regarding workplace incivility unearths that this issue is in fact a member of a greater family that involves other types of mistreatment in the workplace. Therefore, other members of this family could be aggression (Baron and Neuman, 1996), violence (Kinney, 1995), harassing (Marks and Nelson, 1993), physically abuse (Perlow and Latham, 1993) and antisocial behaviors (Giacalone and Greenberg, 1997). All these mistreatment behaviors have the purposeful intention to harm, but the certainty of this intention is more could vary depending on the type of the mistreatment behavior. The issue of certainty is the point at which workplace incivility get separated from the rest: it is not possible to say clearly whether there is a purposeful intention to harm in individual if the cases workplace incivility. For example, a person with an incivil behavior may or may not intend to harm another individual, but he or she may not even be aware of such an intent (Andersson and Pearson, 1999).

Workplace incivility threatens social identity in the workplace, increases the mismatch between organization members and organizational norms (Jimenez et al., 2015), causes stress and depletes organizational members' emotional resources (Leiter et al., 2015). These undesirable outcomes act as agents of connection between workplace incivility and presenteeism.

When confronted with stressful circumstances like being exposed to workplace incivility, individuals are expected to start behaviors that primarily aim to protect their personal resources or at least to prevent from potential resource losses. The act of attending to work unwillingly as a consequence of being ill, in other words presenteeism, may be considered as such a behavior, with its fundamental purpose of being protected from any potential harms to personal resources due to an aggravation of the incivility situation. Put other way, victims may in fact regard working unwillingly to prevent any adverse events that could compromise any negative situations in the work context, such as rumors or undesired work changes (Conway et al., 2016).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Aim, Scope and Data Collection Method

This research has a main and a side aim. The side aim is to find out statistical structures of workplace incivility and presenteeism, whereas the main aim is to scrutinize the possible effects of workplace incivility on presenteeism. In other words, this study mainly seeks to understand if and how business members' perceptions of workplace incivility could affect their perceptions about presenteeism, as suggested in figure 1.

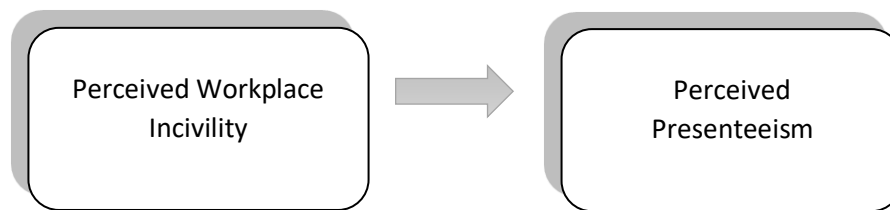


Figure 1. Proposed Research Model

In relation with the outcome of the literature review and the fact that there is no moderator or mediator variable considered, the hypothesis related to the proposed research model is as follows:

H₁: Participants' perceived workplace incivility has a positive effect on their perceived presenteeism.

Data from the members of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are collected as there are many approaches for SME definition, the formal definition that was published in official Gazette No. 30458 on 24th of June 2018 (Official Gazette, 2018) is used. Due to data collection and time limitations, SMEs in organized industrial zones (OIZs) are targeted, and therefore, the ones in one of the biggest OIZs in Turkey, the Ikitelli OIZ, is considered.

This OIZ contains more than 27.000 businesses and is divided into many cooperatives, and one of the biggest cooperatives is the Basaksehir with 650 businesses (Ikitelli OIZ, 2012). It is determined that one participant from each business is contacted, which in term, gives rise to a population size of 650 participants. The participants are selected to be the workers of these businesses. With %5 percent margin of error and %95 percent confidence level, the sample size is calculated to be 242. Briefly, 242 business members within the SMEs of Basaksehir cooperative in Ikitelli OIZ is considered as the participants of the research. Simple random sampling method is used to pinpoint these participants.

Questionnaires are used to collect data and they are composed of three sections. The first section deals with some demographics and work experience of the participants, while the second section consists of the participants' perceptions about workplace incivility. Finally, the last section involves the perceived presenteeism. The structure of the questionnaires used is formed by combining related previous questionnaires. In other words, the sources of the questionnaires used involve Cortina's (2001) questionnaire that investigates the perceived workplace incivility, while the perceived presenteeism depends on the scales used by Sanlimeshur (2018), and Ayrancı and Sanlimeshur (2019).

The questionnaires are applied by the professional consulting firm and the same firm also tabulates data collected. Although the sample size is calculated to be 242, there are only 183 fully filled questionnaires left at the end of the data collection process.

4.2 Participants' Demographics and Work Experiences

The participants are required to provide some information regarding their gender, age, marital status, education status as their demographics. The other end, work experience depends on their position in the business, tenure and average monthly income. Table 1. gives information about their gender, marital status, educational status and their position in their workplace.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Gender, Marital Status, Educational Status and Position

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	0.49	0.50
Marital Status	0.48	0.50
Educational Status	2.50	1.73
Position	0.42	0.49

N= 183

Table 1 shows that there are balanced distributions in terms of gender, marital status and the level of education. While just more than half of the participants (50.8%-93 people) are females, 90 participants are males. In terms of marital status (51.4%-94 people) are married, leaving the rest (48.6%- 89 people) as singles. It is moreover intriguing to see that the distribution of participants according to their levels of education seems to be balanced as well; a total of 93 participants (50.8%) have either graduated from a higher education institution or are currently being educated at higher education level. On the other hand, almost 50% of the participants hold a lesser degree of education in the form of primary school, high school or vocational school. A further look on the educational status reveals that 64 people (about 35% of total) claim that they are either getting or they are already holding master's or doctoral degrees. The overall conclusion so far is that besides being fairly distributed in terms of their genders, marital status and educational levels, the participants are generally highly educated. This fairness, however, ends if the position achieved is questioned: 105 participants (57.4%) claim that they are simply personnel of the business, and thus only 78 people (42.6%) posit that they are managers, which suggests that the data majority of the data belongs to the blue-collared and white-collared workers rather than decision makers.

Table 2, this time, shows the results regarding the rest of the demographics and work experience involving participants' age, tenure and monthly average income in Turkish Liras.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Age, Tenure and Monthly Average Income

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	17.00	60.00	38.89	12.12
Tenure (Year)	0.10	33.00	8.13	5.77
Monthly Average Income (TL)	900.00	6318.00	3747.77	1302.65

N= 183

Table 2 points out that the participants vary from 17 to 60 in terms of their ages with the mean of 38.8, which implies that there is general presence of mid-aged participants. The standard deviation (12.12 years) notes a volatile distribution of the participants' ages. The result about tenure reveals a solid outcome: The participants prefer to stay at their businesses (\bar{x} =8.13 years) though the high standard deviation (σ =5.77 years) suggests that this situation may not be possible all the time. As it is expected that some participants could be trainees, a minimum of 0.1 years is considered to be natural. The result about average monthly income, combined with participants' ages, also acknowledges this expectation; the minimum age is 17 and the minimum average monthly income is 900 Turkish liras (despite the minimum legal fulltime monthly wages in turkey is 2324 Turkish Liras (Official Gazette, 2019), implies the presence of possible trainees among the participants of the research. Similar to the cases with age and tenure, there is also very high level of volatility in terms of average monthly incomes (σ =1302 Turkish liras), while the mean income is 3747.77 Turkish Liras.

4.2 Statistical Structures and Reliabilities of Perceived Workplace Incivility and Presenteeism

Due to translations on workplace incivility scale items, it is decided that an exploratory factor analysis should be used to see how the items are statistically converged. Items with factor loadings less than |0.5| should be omitted. Results in Table 3 indicate that a one-factor structure with an aggregated 54.203% of total variance explained is formed. The overall reliability level (as measured by Cronbach's Alpha method) is 0.858.

Table 3. Statistical Structure and Reliability of Workplace Incivility Scale

KMO: 0.845. (Bartlett's test value is statistically significant at 5%)	
Variance Explained (%)	54.203
Cronbach's Alpha Value	0.858
<i>Please indicate how often you are...</i>	
Faced with demeaning or derogatory remarks.	0.800
Ignored when you tell your professional ideas.	0.773
Addressed with unpleasant expressions and gestures.	0.756
Faced with doubts in terms of your professional judgements.	0.733
Ignored or excluded as a co-worker.	0.731
Called using unprofessional terms.	0.705
Strived to be drawn into conflicts and discussions in terms of personal matters.	0.646

Please notice that the items have been reworded and been originally translated into Turkish during data collection.

Results of the analyses for Presenteeism Scale are given in Table 4, showing that there is a two-factor construct with an overall 59.506% of variance explained. The overall reliability level is 0.777.

Table 4. Statistical Structure and Reliabilities of Presenteeism Scale

KMO: 0.788. (Bartlett's test value is statistically significant at 5%)	Negativity	Resistance
Variance Explained (%)	32.768	26.738
Cronbach's Alpha Value	0.828	0.817
I have difficulties in coping with my business-related stress due to my physical health problems.	0.857	
I cannot sufficiently enjoy my job due to the problems with my work context.	0.836	
I have difficulties in coping with my business-related stress due to the problems with my work context.	0.715	
I even have difficulties in carrying out my daily business tasks due to my physical health problems.	0.713	
I even have difficulties in carrying out my daily business tasks due to the problems with my work context.	0.636	
I cannot sufficiently enjoy my job due to my physical health problems.	0.626	
I still accomplish difficult tasks in my business despite the problems with my work context.		0.861
I still find the energy to fulfill all my duties despite my physical health problems.		0.851
I focus on my professional career targets despite the problems regarding my job itself.		0.850
I focus on my professional career targets despite my physical health problems.		0.642

Please notice that the items have been reworded and been originally translated into Turkish during data collection.

4.3 Model Testing

The last section of the research process seeks to find out facts about the research aim, if and how participants' perceptions of workplace incivility could affect their perceptions about presenteeism. Due to the research aim and its accompanying hypotheses, it is decided that considers the macro (total) level effect of workplace incivility perceptions on presenteeism perceptions.

Table 5. Results of the Effect of Workplace Incivility Perceptions on the Perceptions about Presenteeism

Dependent Variable: Perceived Presenteeism					
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Workplace Incivility	1.258	1	1.258	5.421	0.021 ^b
Error	42.003	181	0.232		
Total	43.261	182			
a. R Squared = 0.029 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.024)					
b. Computed using alpha = 0.05					

Table 5 clearly shows that the participants' perceptions of workplace incivility affect their perceptions about presenteeism. In this case, the nature of this effects should be evaluated. The result of this evaluation given in Table 6.

Table 6. Results of the Effect of Workplace Incivility Perceptions on the Perceptions about Presenteeism

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.403	0.124		27.468	0.000
Workplace Incivility	0.103	0.044	0.171	2.328	0.021

According to Table 6, there is a positive effect. As per this finding, research hypothesis 1;

H₁: Participants' perceived workplace incivility has a positive effect on their perceived presenteeism, **is accepted.**

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The business context involves numerous positive and negative aspects. The variety of these aspects gives rise to various scientific studies. While some of this consider solely positive aspects, some studies take only the negative aspects into account. This abundance is also a factor for the studies that consider possible connections abundant positives and negative simultaneous. This study concentrates on the negative parts of this aspects and scrutinizes to prominent issues, namely presenteeism and incivility in the work context. It is important to recall that these two issues are absolutely perceptual, and thus, these perceptions are under the spotlight within this study.

The literature claims that there are connections between business members' perceptions of presenteeism and incivility. And that the connections could occur regardless of being a worker or a manager. This claim is tested in the study. With the expectation that the incivility perceptions in the work context should be a triggering factor for perceptions about presenteeism. This expectation mainly steams from the literature. And moreover, it is only natural to concluded that the workplace incivility should be and accumulating factor for negative feelings and attitudes to works tasking in the workplace, which in term renders into a negativity about being present in the work context.

The results achieved exactly acknowledge this afore mentioned expectations; the participants' perceived workplace incivility effects their presenteeism perceptions positively. In other words, when the participants perceive that they are facing rude behaviors incrementally or constantly in the workplace, they are prone to be less attached to their work context. This result is not only to evaluation of the literature, but it is also an implication for the decision makers to provide attention to words these negativities as well as their connections.

If some suggestions are to be provided for further studies the first point to consider should be extend of the model. Although this study considers the relationships between two negative aspects, future studies should involve other negative aspects as well. It is also important that these negative aspects could assume different roles. Such as being mediator or intervening variables. Future studies should also consider positive and negative aspects in their unique models simultaneously. Regardless of the aspects to be involved, reciprocal relationships should also be within the scope of upcoming studies. Another suggestion would definitely be the use of different samples or multiple samples simultaneously. All these potential actions could enable comparisons among the results of future studies.

Finally, some practical suggestions should be made. Decision makers and businesses should provide some incentives or some applications in order to avoid or at least lessen effects of negative aspects in work context. They should also pay attention to possible cause and effect relationships when these negative aspects are present.

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