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Self-efficacy to spur job performance

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Roles of job-related anxiety and perceived workplace incivility

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Abstract

Purpose – With a foundation in conservation of resources theory, the purpose of this paper is to unpack the relationship between employees' self-efficacy and job performance, investigating the mediating role of job-related anxiety and the moderating role of perceived workplace incivility.

Design/methodology/approach – Survey data were collected from employees and their supervisors in Pakistani organizations.

Findings – An important reason that employees' self-efficacy enhances their job performance is that they experience less anxiety while undertaking their daily job tasks. This mediating role of job-related anxiety is particularly salient to the extent that employees believe that they are the victims of uncivil behaviors.

Practical implications – Organizations should note that the anxiety-mitigating effect of self-efficacy is particularly strong for generating adequate performance to the extent that rude and discourteous behaviors cannot be completely avoided in the workplace.

Originality/value – This study establishes a more complete understanding of the benefits of employees' self-efficacy by revealing how reduced worries about their organizational functioning represent critical mechanisms that connect this personal resource to higher job performance, as well as by showing how employees' perceptions of workplace incivility invigorate this process.

Keywords Self-efficacy, Job performance, Workplace incivility, Conservation of resources theory, Job-related anxiety

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The presence of adverse work conditions is a significant source of health problems for employees (Judge *et al.*, 2012; Tang *et al.*, 2001) and a reason they are unable to complete their job tasks (Hobfoll, 1989; McCarthy *et al.*, 2016). Understanding employees' abilities to meet their performance requirements even in the presence of such unfavorable conditions thus is an important pursuit (Hall and Savery, 1987; Ng and Feldman, 2012). A critical aspect of work adversity is the perception of workplace incivility, such that employees believe that their co-workers are rude or disrespectful (Cortina *et al.*, 2001; Pearson and Porath, 2005). Workplace incivility permeates an increasing number of organizations (Cortina, 2008; Estes and Wang, 2008; Pearson and Porath, 2004), manifested in various ways, such as condescension, using demeaning or derogatory remarks, excluding others from professional camaraderie, or showing little interest in others' opinions (Cortina *et al.*, 2001; Pearson and Porath, 2005).

The experience of uncivil behaviors deprives employees of relevant organizational knowledge and hampers their ability to succeed in their work (Cortina *et al.*, 2001; Pearson *et al.*, 2000; Rahim and Cosby, 2016). Their resulting frustration may deplete



employees' resource reservoirs, generating negative outcomes such as emotional exhaustion (Cho *et al.*, 2016), job burnout (Rahim and Cosby, 2016), dissatisfaction with work (Lim *et al.*, 2008), less knowledge sharing (Sharifirad, 2016), and reduced work efforts (Pearson and Porath, 2005). Previous research notes that employees' personal resources might be particularly instrumental for their ability to fulfill their job requirements in the presence of significant workplace adversity such as incivility (De Clercq and Belausteguigoitia, 2017; Kroon *et al.*, 2015). Accordingly, we argue that an important catalyst of successful job performance, despite the challenge of workplace incivility, is employees' self-efficacy (Parker, 1998). As a complement to research that examines direct negative consequences of workplace incivility, we posit specifically that to the extent that some discourteous behaviors are unavoidable – especially in modern organizations that demand fast decision making, rely on impersonal modes of communication, or are complex (Estes and Wang, 2008; Pearson and Porath, 2005) – organizations can benefit greatly from leveraging employees' personal resource of self-efficacy to compensate for the resource-depleting effects of uncivil behaviors when these behaviors permeate the organization (Sliter *et al.*, 2012).

The likelihood that employees can meet their job requirements depends not only on the resources embedded in their work environment – such as supervisor support (Zhou *et al.*, 2016) or organizational justice (Aryee *et al.*, 2015) – but also on their personal characteristics, such as their personality traits (Thoresen *et al.*, 2004) and political skills (Liu *et al.*, 2007), as well as their self-efficacy (Alessandri *et al.*, 2015). As a personal resource, self-efficacy reflects employees' perceptions of their own abilities to execute their job tasks (Bandura, 1997; Coeurderoy *et al.*, 2014; Parker, 1998). Previous studies theorize and find that self-efficacy contributes positively to employee performance (e.g. Alessandri *et al.*, 2015; Judge *et al.*, 2007; Miraglia *et al.*, 2015), though less empirical attention has been devoted to the mechanisms that underpin this process (Tims *et al.*, 2014) or the circumstances in which self-efficacy might be most useful for spurring job performance (Judge *et al.*, 2007). By understanding the work conditions in which self-efficacy may be instrumental for spurring job performance, organizations can assess more accurately when employees' confidence about their personal capacities will have the greatest incremental value.

Conservation of resources (COR) theory

To anchor our arguments about the effect of self-efficacy on job performance, as well as the role of perceived workplace incivility in this process, we draw from COR theory. This theory highlights the relevance of anticipated resource gains for explaining performance-enhancing work behaviors (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). In particular, it postulates that the possession of personal resources exhibits a motivating effect, because these resources can spur the generation of additional resources (De Clercq and Belausteguigoitia, 2017; Hobfoll, 2001). In a general sense, employees' ability to meet their organization's performance targets is a critical path for future resource generation, in that this ability can facilitate access to desirable rewards, such as higher financial compensation or enhanced peer recognition (Bandura, 1997). On the basis of COR theory, we accordingly argue that employees' self-efficacy reflects a critical personal resource that stimulates their engagement in performance-enhancing activities, due to the associated resource gains.

Drawing from COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000), we further argue that one specific, understudied reason self-efficacy that might contribute to enhanced job performance is that this personal resource makes employees less anxious about their work. Job performance reflects employees' ability to meet their job requirements (Williams and Anderson, 1991); job-related anxiety reflects the strain they experience during the execution of their work tasks due to their worries about their organizational functioning and ability to meet employer expectations (Parker and DeCotiis, 1983; Xie, 1996). Previous research calls

for more empirical studies that investigate why self-efficacy fuels job performance (Gardner and Pierce, 1998; Tims *et al.*, 2014). Using COR theory, we argue that employees' self-efficacy contributes to their job performance in part because it limits their job-related anxiety, enabling them to conserve energy that they then can allocate to performance-enhancing activities (Hobfoll, 2001; McCarthy *et al.*, 2016).

Furthermore, organizations should benefit from understanding when the beneficial effect of self-efficacy on job performance, through the reduction of job-related anxiety, might be most potent (Judge *et al.*, 2007; Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998). According to COR theory, exposure to adverse work conditions generates a fear of resource losses among employees – as reflected in their concerns about their job situation or their tarnished job satisfaction, for example (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000) – but the possibility of leveraging relevant personal resources to achieve further resource gains may be instrumental for countering this fear (De Clercq and Belausteguigoitia, 2017; Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000). Similarly, we propose that when employees suffer from work conditions that feature poor co-worker relationships (Cortina *et al.*, 2001; Sharifirad, 2016), their self-efficacy may be particularly useful for enhancing their perceived ability to comply with employer expectations and thus for reducing the anxiety that they experience during the execution of their job tasks. Following the principles of COR theory (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000), we thus posit that the negative relationship between employees' self-efficacy and job-related anxiety is invigorated in the presence of high workplace incivility, which in turn has positive consequences for their job performance. Employees' perception of workplace incivility functions as a catalyst of their reliance on personal competencies to mitigate concerns about their ability to fulfill their job responsibilities.

Contributions

In summary, we seek to make two main contributions. First, consistent with the COR logic, we theorize that employees' self-efficacy leads to higher job performance because they experience less strain during the execution of their job tasks (Xie and Johns, 1995). To the extent that employees feel confident about their ability to meet work goals and address organizational problems, the resource gains they expect from working hard should reduce any worries about their ability to meet their job obligations. Extant research indicates that the experience of lower strain functions as a causal mechanism that connects work conditions, such as strong person-organization fit (Chen *et al.*, 2016) or limited conflict between work and family (Anand *et al.*, 2015), with positive work outcomes. Yet little attention has been devoted to the potential mediating role associated with self-efficacy effects, except for research that points to mediation by job crafting (Tims *et al.*, 2014) or organization-based self-esteem (Gardner and Pierce, 1998) in the connection between self-efficacy and job performance.

Second, we propose that workplace incivility, a resource-depleting work condition (Rahim and Cosby, 2016; Sliter *et al.*, 2012), invigorates the translation of self-efficacy into lower job-related anxiety, which then enhances the likelihood that employees perform adequately. According to COR theory, employees' exploitation of relevant personal resources can help them overcome the resource loss that they anticipate when they experience adverse work conditions (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000). For example, previous research indicates that employees' tenacity is a particularly forceful enabler of productive knowledge sharing behaviors in the presence of significant role conflict (De Clercq and Belausteguigoitia, 2017). Similarly, because perceptions of workplace incivility exacerbate employees' fear that they cannot fulfill their job obligations (Cortina *et al.*, 2001; Rahim and Cosby, 2016), they might increase the perceived value of leveraging personal abilities. By proposing an invigorating effect of perceived workplace incivility, we extend previous studies on its direct negative effect (e.g. Cho *et al.*, 2016; Lim *et al.*, 2008; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003; Pearson and Porath, 2005).

That is, we consider how a resource-draining work condition that reflects disregard and rudeness increases the anticipated usefulness of a critical personal resource (self-efficacy) for mitigating the experience of anxiety during work.

Proposed model

Our theoretical framework is summarized in Figure 1. The baseline hypothesis is the well-established, positive link between employees' self-efficacy and job performance. In turn, we propose that their reduced worries about their organizational functioning represent critical mechanisms pertaining to why self-efficacious employees enjoy higher job performance. We also predict that perceived workplace incivility serves as a moderator, such that the translation of self-efficacy into lower job-related anxiety, and subsequent higher performance, is invigorated when employees perceive high levels of workplace incivility.

Hypotheses

Self-efficacy and job performance

Based on COR theory, we expect a positive relationship between employees' self-efficacy levels and job performance. According to this theory, employees who can draw from valuable personal resources are motivated to engage in positive performance-enhancing behaviors, because they anticipate that these behaviors will generate further resource gains for themselves (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000). Employees marked by high self-efficacy levels believe that they have the capacity to exercise control over their work, likely are convinced that their job tasks and efforts are worthwhile, and sense that such efforts can improve their current job situation (Bandura, 1997; Litt, 1988). Accordingly, high levels of self-efficacy should lead to enhanced job performance, because employees' confidence that their task-related efforts will pay off motivates them to work harder, which creates new resource gains (Hobfoll, 2001), perhaps in the form of promotion opportunities or recognition by organizational peers (Bandura, 1997).

In addition to the resource gains that they anticipate through their performance-enhancing activities, employees with higher levels of self-efficacy are less likely to give up or halt their pursuit of their job duties. Self-efficacy grants employees the discretionary energy needed to persevere in their job endeavors, despite the presence of possible hurdles or bottlenecks (Bandura and Locke, 2003). Accordingly, with higher levels of self-efficacy, employees can recover more quickly from setbacks and remain committed to accomplishing their performance goals (Gist and Mitchell, 1992). Conversely, employees with low levels of self-efficacy are less likely to possess the energy needed to complete their job tasks or persist in meeting their job requirements. Existing meta-analyses affirm the strong evidence for a positive relationship between employees' self-efficacy and job performance (Judge and Bono, 2001; Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998). Thus:

H1. There is a positive relationship between employees' self-efficacy and their job performance.

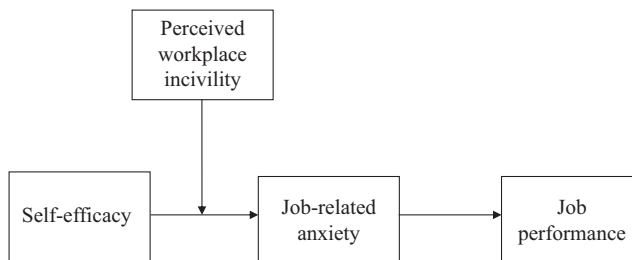


Figure 1.
Conceptual model

Mediating role of job-related anxiety

In addition to the aforementioned roles of anticipated resource gains and enhanced energy levels, this study explicitly investigates a hitherto unexplored factor that may explain the positive relationship between self-efficacy and job performance, namely, employees' reduced job-related anxiety. According to the premises underlying COR theory, employees' self-efficacy should diminish their job-related feelings of anxiety, because this personal resource reduces concerns that they cannot meet their job obligations (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000). Employees who exhibit higher self-efficacy can identify multiple pathways to complete their job tasks, because they tend to engage in more diverse knowledge processing activities to leverage their knowledge bases (Bandura, 1997; van Seggelen-Damen and van Dam, 2016; Yeo and Neal, 2006). The result is increased feasibility in terms of meeting employer expectations, which then should decrease the strain they experience when doing their job (Schwarzer and Hallum, 2008). Similarly, self-efficacy fuels employees' confidence that they can deal with information shortages they might experience in the pursuit of their job tasks (Bandura, 1997; Wood and Bandura, 1989). Such confidence increases the mastery employees have over their work, which should limit their stress levels about their organizational functioning (Hobfoll, 1989; Litt, 1988).

Moreover, employees with stronger confidence in their own competencies tend to experience higher levels of personal fulfillment during the execution of their job tasks (Lee and Akhtar, 2007). That is, highly efficacious employees derive positive feelings of accomplishment when undertaking their daily work activities, which should diminish the likelihood that they experience negative feelings of worry at work (Quinn *et al.*, 2012; Tims *et al.*, 2014). For example, previous research indicates that employees who exhibit high levels of self-efficacy not only are strongly motivated to resolve complex work problems but also find personal joy in this effort (Gist and Mitchell, 1992; Lee and Ashforth, 1990). The personal resource of self-efficacy thus should diminish the likelihood that employees worry about their organizational functioning and develop negative feelings of job-related anxiety:

H2. There is a negative relationship between employees' self-efficacy and their job-related anxiety.

We further predict a negative relationship between employees' job-related anxiety and job performance. The experience of job-related feelings of anxiety indicates that employees feel nervous as a result of their job and worry about their ability to meet their employer's expectations (McCarthy *et al.*, 2016; Mohr and Puck, 2007). According to COR theory, a critical mechanism that connects employees' job-related anxiety with their reduced job performance is their propensity to conserve energy resources when they are unhappy about their job situation (Hobfoll, 2001). That is, job-related anxiety diminishes job performance because employees engage in negative activities such as worrying and agonizing, which leaves them with less energy for productive performance-enhancing behaviors (Jamal, 1985; Xie and Johns, 1995). This energy-depleting effect of anxiety renders employees less able to fulfill their job duties (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000). Moreover, employees who experience significant anxiety during work tend to be less satisfied with their job situation (Chen *et al.*, 2016; Hon and Chan, 2013), which may hinder their job performance still further. Similarly, the experience of strain may be interpreted by employees as a signal that their organization does not care for their physical or mental well-being (Judge *et al.*, 2012), which fuels negative perceptions of the employer and reduces employees' willingness to fulfill job duties that otherwise would contribute to organizational effectiveness:

H3. There is a negative relationship between employees' job-related anxiety and job performance.

Combining these arguments, we predict a mediating role of job-related anxiety, such that employees' self-efficacy enhances their job performance because of their diminished

job-related anxiety. According to COR theory, employees who have greater confidence in their personal competencies and skills are more likely to meet their performance targets because their resource reservoirs are less likely to be depleted by negative thoughts about their organizational functioning, so they do not need to conserve energy while completing job tasks (Hobfoll, 2001):

H4. Employees' job-related anxiety mediates the relationship between their self-efficacy and job performance.

Moderating role of perceived workplace incivility

We further propose that the relative usefulness of self-efficacy for reducing job-related anxiety may depend on the adversity that employees encounter in their interactions with co-workers. A critical aspect of such adversity is the perception that they are the victims of rude or disrespectful behaviors (Cortina *et al.*, 2001; Pearson and Porath, 2005). Such workplace incivility increases the threat of future resource losses (Hobfoll, 1989; Sliter *et al.*, 2012), because it implies poor quality peer interactions and limited access to organizational knowledge that might address questions about how to fulfill job duties (Sharifirad, 2016). According to COR theory, the relative usefulness of relevant personal resources for diminishing stress levels during the execution of daily job tasks is greater to the extent that employees feel threatened by resource-draining work conditions (De Clercq and Belausteguigoitia, 2017; Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000). Similarly, efficacious employees should experience greater relative benefits of applying their personal competencies to their job tasks to the extent that they experience high levels of workplace incivility, because they need to reduce their fears about their organizational functioning or inability to comply with employer expectations due to uncivil behaviors by co-workers (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000).

Moreover, when employees encounter colleagues who are condescending and ignore their interests, a negative spiral may occur, such that employees retaliate and halt any communication with the instigators of this incivility (Andersson and Pearson, 1999; Rosen *et al.*, 2016). In turn, their need to rely on their personal competencies to deal with the stress of meeting their daily job requirements increases (Hobfoll, 2001). Conversely, in the absence of perceptions of workplace incivility, it is easier for employees to fulfill their job obligations (Rahim and Cosby, 2016; Sliter *et al.*, 2012), so the relative value of their personal resource of self-efficacy for mitigating the strain of job-related duties will be lower:

H5. The negative relationship between employees' self-efficacy and their job-related anxiety is moderated by their perceptions of workplace incivility, such that the negative relationship is stronger at higher levels of perceived workplace incivility.

Combining *H4* with *H5*, we also predict a moderated mediation effect (Preacher *et al.*, 2007), such that the resource-depleting condition of workplace incivility functions as a critical contingency of the indirect effect of self-efficacy on job performance, through reduced job-related anxiety. Such moderated mediation implies that the role of employees' reduced worries about their organizational functioning, as causal mechanisms that explain the positive relationship between their personal resource of self-efficacy and job performance, should be invigorated at high levels of workplace incivility. In particular, in the presence of resource-draining, uncivil work behaviors (Sliter *et al.*, 2012), the performance benefits achieved from self-efficacy, through the containment of job-related anxiety, should be higher (Bandura, 1997; Schwarzer and Hallum, 2008):

H6. The indirect relationship between employees' self-efficacy and job performance, through their reduced job-related anxiety, is moderated by their perceptions of workplace incivility, such that this indirect relationship is stronger at higher levels of perceived workplace incivility.

Method

Sample and data collection

The data for this study came from various Pakistani organizations, operating in multiple sectors, such as communication services, finance, and education. The data collection process consisted of three paper-and-pencil surveys: two surveys distributed to employees, using a time lag of three weeks between the two rounds, and a third survey administered to the employees' supervisors one week after the second survey. English is the official business language in most professional organizations in Pakistan, as well as the official teaching language in secondary and higher education, so the survey questions were written in English.

For all three surveys, the cover letters explained the purpose of the study and assured the participants of the complete confidentiality of their responses. In particular, they were told that the responses would be accessible only to the researchers, that no individual-level information would ever be made public, and that only aggregate data would be available to anyone outside the research team. Moreover, the surveys indicated that there were no correct or incorrect answers, and the participants were asked to answer the questions as honestly as possible, two measures that diminish concerns about social desirability or acquiescence biases (Spector, 2006). After completing these surveys, the participants placed them in sealed envelopes and returned them directly to one of the authors. Although they were informed that the insights generated from the findings would benefit their organization, the respondents did not receive any monetary or other incentive to participate.

To ensure the representativeness of the study's sample, the first survey asked a random selection of 1,000 employees about their self-efficacy and perceptions of workplace civility, and the second survey gauged their job-related anxiety. The third survey asked supervisors to rate the employees' job performance. Of the 1,000 surveys distributed, we received 454 complete sets of matched employee and supervisor surveys, for a response rate of 45 percent. Of the employee respondents, 26 percent were women[1], and their average organizational tenure was six years.

Measures

We assessed job performance with seven items from prior research on supervisor-rated job performance, using five-point Likert scales (e.g. Abbas *et al.*, 2014; Williams and Anderson, 1991). For example, two of the measurement items were, "This employee meets the formal performance requirements of his/her job" and "This employee fulfills the responsibilities specified in his/her job description" (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.885$).

We used five items of the job-related feelings of anxiety scale – developed by Parker and DeCotiis (1983) and used in other studies (e.g. Baba and Jamal, 1991; Xie, 1996) – to measure job-related anxiety, with five-point Likert anchors. The respondents indicated, for example, whether "I have felt nervous as a result of my job" and "Sometimes when I think about my job, I get a tight feeling in my chest" (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.748$).

To assess employees' self-efficacy, we applied six items based on previous studies, using a six-point Likert scale (Luthans *et al.*, 2007; Parker, 1998). Two example statements were "I feel confident helping to set targets/goals in my work area" and "I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management" (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.808$).

To measure employees' perceptions of workplace incivility, we applied seven items on five-point Likert scales from previous research (Cortina *et al.*, 2001; Lim *et al.*, 2008). Two example items are "My co-workers make demeaning or derogatory remarks about me" and "My co-workers show little interest in my opinions" (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.826$).

We also controlled for employees' gender (1 = female) and organizational tenure (in years) in our models, because women might experience higher levels of job-related

anxiety than men (Xie and Johns, 1995), and longer organizational tenure might increase anxiety due to enhanced job obligations (Chen *et al.*, 2016).

Cronbach's α s of each of the four focal constructs – job performance, job-related anxiety, self-efficacy, and perceptions of workplace incivility – exceeded the cut-off value of 0.70, indicating good reliabilities (Nunnally, 1978). With regard to the validity of these four constructs, the fit of a four-factor measurement model was excellent (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988): $\chi^2_{(262)} = 569.84$, Tucker-Lewis index = 0.91, confirmatory fit index = 0.93, and root mean squared error of approximation = 0.05. Moreover, the four constructs featured factor loadings that exceeded the cut-off value of 0.40 and were all strongly significant ($p < 0.001$; Anderson and Gerbing, 1988), in support of the presence of convergent validity (Table I). To assess the discriminant validity of the constructs, we compared the relative fit of different pairs of constrained models, in which the correlations between two constructs were set to equal 1, with that of their unconstrained counterparts, in which the correlations between constructs were freed (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Rahim and Wagner, 1995). Because the measurement model included four constructs, we performed this comparison

	Factor loading	t-Value
<i>Job performance</i>		
This employee adequately completes assigned duties	0.736 ^a	–
This employee fulfills responsibilities specified in his/her job description	0.657	15.432***
This employee performs tasks that are expected of him/her	0.740	17.942***
This employee meets formal performance requirements of the job	0.673	12.760***
This employee engages in activities that will directly affect his/her performance evaluation	0.648	12.378***
This employee neglects aspects of the job he/she is obligated to perform (reverse coded)	0.723	13.334***
This employee fails to perform essential duties (reverse coded)	0.691	12.755***
<i>Job-related anxiety</i>		
I have felt nervous as a result of my job	0.651 ^a	–
My job gets to me more than it should	0.63	10.013***
There are lots of times when my job drives me right up the wall	0.554	9.140***
Sometimes when I think about my job I get a tight feeling in my chest	0.659	10.284***
I feel guilty when I take time off from my job	0.577	9.420***
<i>Self-efficacy</i>		
I feel confident analyzing a long-term problem to find a solution	0.618	11.069***
I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management	0.701	12.193***
I feel confident contributing to discussions about the organization's strategy	0.610	10.949***
I feel confident helping to set targets/goals in my work area	0.707 ^a	–
I feel confident contacting people outside the organization (e.g. suppliers, customers) to discuss problems	0.498	9.158***
I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues	0.668	14.418***
<i>Perceived workplace incivility</i>		
My co-workers put me down or are condescending to me	0.516 ^a	–
My co-workers show little interest in my opinions	0.509	8.125***
My co-workers make demeaning or derogatory remarks about me	0.650	9.428***
My co-workers address me in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately	0.716	9.910***
My co-workers ignore or exclude me from professional camaraderie	0.716	9.911***
My co-workers doubt my judgment on matters over which I have responsibility	0.635	9.314***
My co-workers make unwanted attempts to draw me into a discussion of personal matters	0.699	9.795***

Table I.
Constructs and
measurement items

Notes: ^aInitial loading was fixed to 1, to set the scale of the construct. *** $p < 0.001$

for six pairs. For each pair, the constrained models showed a significantly worse fit ($\Delta\chi^2_{(1)} > 3.84$) than their unconstrained counterparts, which provides evidence for the presence of discriminant validity[2].

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Results

Table II contains the correlations and descriptive statistics; the regression results are in Table III. Models 1-3 predicted perceptions of job-related anxiety, and Models 4-5 predicted job performance. For each model, the variance inflation factor values were less than 10, so multicollinearity was not a concern (Aiken and West, 1991).

Model 5 indicated support for the baseline hypothesis, namely, that there is a positive relationship between employees' self-efficacy levels and job performance ($H1$, $\beta = 0.346$, $p < 0.001$). In support of the prediction in $H2$ that employees who have more confidence in their personal abilities worry less about their organizational functioning, we also find a negative relationship between self-efficacy and job-related anxiety in Model 2 ($\beta = -0.095$, $p < 0.05$). In turn, reduced worrying about organizational functioning enhances the likelihood that employees meet their performance requirements, as indicated by the negative relationship between job-related anxiety and job performance in Model 5 ($\beta = -0.091$, $p < 0.05$). To assess the presence of mediation by job-related anxiety ($H4$), we used the bootstrapping method recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2004), drawing on the "process macro" developed by Hayes (2013). This test provides confidence intervals (CIs) for indirect effects, thereby avoiding potential statistical power problems that might be caused by asymmetric and other non-normal sampling distributions (MacKinnon *et al.*, 2004). Using 10,000 random samples and replacement from the full sample (Shrout and Bolger, 2002), we found that the indirect effect of self-efficacy on job performance through job-related anxiety was significant ($\beta = 0.036$, $p < 0.05$), and the CI for this indirect effect did not include 0 [0.006, 0.104], in support of the presence of mediation.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Job performance	3.874	0.753						
2. Job-related anxiety	2.559	0.702	-0.141**					
3. Self-efficacy	4.534	0.854	0.436**	-0.124**				
4. Perceived workplace incivility	1.942	0.723	-0.255**	0.073	-0.150**			
5. Gender (1 = female)	0.260	0.439	0.046	0.052	-0.088	-0.055		
6. Organizational tenure	6.314	6.090	0.177**	-0.005	0.172**	-0.181**	-0.182**	

Notes: $n = 454$. ** $p < 0.01$

Table II.
Correlations and
descriptive statistics

	Job-related anxiety			Job performance	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Gender (1 = female)	0.085	0.083	0.097	0.139****	0.161*
Organizational tenure	0.001	0.004	0.003	0.024***	0.012*
Self-efficacy		-0.095*	-0.099*		0.346****
Perceived workplace incivility		0.063	0.048		-0.174***
Self-efficacy \times perceived workplace incivility			-0.115*		
Job-related anxiety					-0.091*
R^2	0.003	0.022	0.030	0.038	0.247
ΔR^2		0.019*	0.008*		0.209****

Notes: $n = 454$. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; **** $p < 0.10$

Table III.
Regression results

Next, we tested *H5* by assessing the self-efficacy \times perceived workplace incivility interaction term and its ability to predict job-related anxiety in Model 3. This interaction term was significant ($\beta = -0.115, p < 0.05$); the negative effect of self-efficacy on job-related anxiety was stronger at higher levels of workplace incivility, in support of *H5*. To clarify the nature of this interaction, we plotted the effect of self-efficacy on job-related anxiety at high and low levels of workplace incivility in Figure 2, combined with a simple slope analysis (Aiken and West, 1991). The negative relationship between self-efficacy and job-related anxiety was significant at high levels of workplace incivility ($\beta = -0.214, p < 0.01$) but not at low levels ($\beta = 0.016, ns$), in further support of *H5*.

The test for the moderated mediation effect in *H6* also relied on Preacher *et al.*'s (2007) procedure and Hayes's (2013) process macro[3]. The logic underlying moderated mediation pertains to whether the indirect effect of self-efficacy on job performance, through job-related anxiety, differs at varying levels of the moderator. Similar to the bootstrapping procedure to test for mediation, this procedure generates CIs rather than point estimates for the conditional indirect effects (MacKinnon *et al.*, 2004). The CIs refer to different levels of the moderator. The bootstrap 95 percent CI for the conditional effect of self-efficacy at the 75th and 90th percentile levels of the moderator did not contain 0 ([0.006, 0.108], [0.008, 0.152], respectively), but they did at the 10th and 25th percentiles ([-0.018, 0.073], [-0.003, 0.081]). That is, perceptions of workplace incivility functioned as invigorators of the positive indirect effect of self-efficacy on job performance, through job-related anxiety, in support of *H6*.

Discussion

This study extends previous scholarship by investigating the effect of employees' self-efficacy on their job performance, and particularly underexplored factors that inform this process. In line with COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000), job-related anxiety is a critical factor that connects employees' self-efficacy with enhanced performance. This mediating role of job-related anxiety is particularly salient in conditions marked by high perceived workplace incivility. Explicit investigations of anxiety reduction as a mechanism that connects the personal resource of self-efficacy with job performance are scant, let alone discussions of the circumstances in which this process might be most potent.

To address this gap, we identify an important reason that self-efficacy spurs job performance: employees worry less about their organizational functioning (Baba and Jamal, 1991; Parker and DeCotiis, 1983; Xie and Johns, 1995). In particular, reduced anxiety levels function as conduits through which employees' self-perceived competencies lead to higher job performance. The more confident employees are about their own capabilities, the less likely they are to feel overburdened by fears about their organizational functioning or ability to complete their job tasks successfully (Bandura, 1997; Schwarzer and Hallum, 2008), which

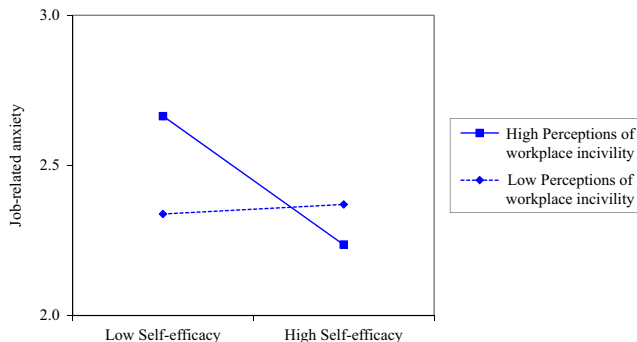


Figure 2. Moderating effect of perceived workplace incivility on the relationship between self-efficacy and job-related anxiety

frees up some of their energy to devote to positive performance-enhancing activities (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000; McCarthy *et al.*, 2016). Thus, lower anxiety, due to higher confidence in their own capabilities, is instrumental and enables employees to focus on the successful execution of their work tasks instead of being distracted by worries about their work.

The negative relationship between self-efficacy and job-related anxiety is also moderated by perceptions of workplace incivility (Cortina *et al.*, 2001; Estes and Wang, 2008). Consistent with COR theory, to the extent that employees are exposed to co-workers' disrespectful work behaviors, the personal resource of self-efficacy is particularly useful for mitigating the anxiety they experience regarding how to do their jobs successfully (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000). The interaction effect between self-efficacy and workplace incivility for predicting job-related anxiety thus aligns with the COR logic that efficacious employees view the exploitation of their personal skill sets to meet their job requirements as particularly useful in the presence of unfavorable resource-draining work conditions.

Our results also affirm moderated mediation, taking into account the negative effect of job-related anxiety on subsequent performance (Preacher *et al.*, 2007). That is, job-related anxiety connects self-efficacy with enhanced job performance more forcefully to the extent that employees believe that their daily functioning is threatened by others' rude behaviors. The positive indirect effect of self-efficacy on job performance through job-related anxiety becomes more salient to the extent that employees confront work conditions marked by high levels of incivility. In contrast, to the extent that employees with high self-efficacy believe that their organizational peers respect them, the experience of lower job-related anxiety offers less incremental benefit for their efforts to fulfill their job responsibilities (Bandura, 1997; Schwarzer and Hallum, 2008).

Overall, this study establishes a more complete understanding of the consequences of self-efficacy for employees' performance. In particular, it adds to extant literature by revealing how negative feelings and worries about organizational functioning (i.e. job-related anxiety) function as critical mechanisms that connect this personal resource to job performance. The scope of the tested model is purposefully narrow, in line with our goal to provide depth, rather than breadth, in revealing an unexplored mechanism through which self-efficacy enhances job performance. Previous research has investigated how self-efficacy might spur job performance by increasing people's ability to mobilize job resources (Tims *et al.*, 2014) or boost their self-esteem (Gardner and Pierce, 1998), but less attention has been devoted to how employees' perceptions of their own abilities contribute to their job performance because they experience less job-related strain during the execution of their work tasks. We show that employees' perceptions of available personal competencies spur their performance in the workplace in part because they are better at containing worries about their organizational functioning.

Moreover, the study's results extend previous investigations of the direct negative role of perceived workplace incivility for positive work outcomes (Cho *et al.*, 2016; Lim *et al.*, 2008; Pearson and Porath, 2005), by considering its triggering role for leveraging employees' personal resource bases. In particular, we add the insight that the beneficial role of anxiety containment, resulting from employees' self-efficacy, depends on how they are treated by their co-workers: to the extent that employees are victims of rude and disrespectful behaviors, their accompanying frustration serves as a catalyst, driving them to use their personal skills to cope with daily work stresses and invest in performance-enhancing behaviors.

Limitations and future research

Some limitations of this study also offer opportunities for research. First, we focused on the mediating effect of job-related anxiety on the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance; continued studies could compare the relative potency of this causal mechanism with other mechanisms that have been considered in previous studies, such as

job crafting (Tims *et al.*, 2014) or self-esteem (Gardner and Pierce, 1998). We also did not directly measure other causal mechanisms, such as those featured in the arguments leading to the baseline *H1* that might underpin the positive relationship between self-efficacy and job performance, including anticipation of resource gains in the form of desirable rewards or increased persistence in undertaking challenging job tasks. Further research could measure these mechanisms directly.

Second, we focused on how the usefulness of one specific personal resource, self-efficacy, depends on perception of uncivil behaviors. Further studies could consider other personal resources, such as employees' passion for work (Baum and Locke, 2004), creative self-efficacy (Tierney and Farmer, 2002), or emotional stability (Beehr *et al.*, 2015). Similarly, we investigated only one contingency factor, perceived workplace incivility, that invigorates the relationship between self-efficacy and job-related anxiety. Other contextual factors could function as triggers too, such as perceived psychological contract violation (Turnley and Feldman, 1998), excessive workloads (Avery *et al.*, 2010), or dysfunctional organizational politics (Chang *et al.*, 2009).

Third, despite the country-neutral arguments for the hypotheses, cultural factors might exert some effects. The national context for this study (Pakistan) is a high uncertainty avoidance culture, in which people tend to prefer less risk taking (Abbas *et al.*, 2014). Employees thus may be particularly sensitive to the presence of unfavorable work conditions and the uncertainty it creates for their work lives (Hofstede, 2001). The relative usefulness of self-efficacy for reducing job-related anxiety and spurring subsequent job performance in these conditions may be stronger than it would be in more risk-averse countries. Cross-country studies could provide deeper insights into the relative importance of adverse workplace conditions for leveraging relevant personal resources into higher job performance across distinct cultural contexts.

Practical implications

Despite these limitations, this research has some important practical implications. Although we did not include it in the conceptual framework, we found a strong negative relationship between perceived workplace incivility and job performance (Table III, Model 5), suggesting that organizations must seek to diminish uncivil behaviors among their employee bases, whenever possible. Yet the detection of workplace incivility might be challenging; many employees likely would be reluctant to report that they had been put down by others or excluded from professional camaraderie, to avoid perceptions that they are vulnerable or complain too much (Estes and Wang, 2008). Organizations thus must take the initiative to identify the presence of workplace incivility and investigate its sources, including excessive workloads, negative role models, or impersonal communication modes (Pearson and Porath, 2005). They also could create specific guidelines and etiquette for how organizational members should address one another, including avoiding derogatory remarks. For example, customized training sessions might focus on how employees should interact, both within and across department lines, to ensure that they are not perceived as demeaning or offensive.

Along with this recommendation that organizations should seek to diminish uncivil behaviors in the workplace, this study's theoretical framework and results offer perhaps even more value for organizations that cannot completely eliminate such adverse work behaviors, as might be the case when the organizational culture is characterized by high levels of complexity, strong internal rivalry, or impersonal decision making (Estes and Wang, 2008; Pearson and Porath, 2005). The results show in particular that employees who feel more confident about their personal competencies and skills are better prepared to cope with such workplace incivility; self-efficacy represents a critical personal resource that organizations can leverage to mitigate the job-related anxiety that occurs in situations in which some level of workplace incivility is unavoidable. To the extent that rude

and discourteous behaviors cannot be completely avoided, due to the organizational climate (Estes and Wang, 2008), organizations that are able to increase employees' confidence in their own strengths are better positioned to diminish excessive employee worries about their organizational functioning and help them cope with the challenge of reduced performance-enhancing contributions.

To boost employees' self-efficacy, organizations might showcase how healthy confidence in their personal capabilities enables them to overcome various workplace challenges, such as being the victim of unprofessional behaviors. To this end, organizations might highlight best practices for how to deal with disrespectful workplace behaviors through targeted educational efforts. Such efforts could include dedicated training programs that take place outside the workplace, structured on-the-job training efforts, or informal learning, all of which constitute valuable sources of employee development (Enos *et al.*, 2003; Jacobs, 2003). Another option would be to design appropriate reward systems; self-efficacious employees should be more motivated to apply their personal expertise to finding adequate solutions to work situations that include unavoidable exposure to others' uncivil behaviors when they receive formal recognition for these efforts, which ultimately can benefit the entire organization (Jacobsen and Bogh Andersen, 2017). Overall, any measure that stimulates employees' personal confidence in their job task execution should be particularly useful in the presence of workplace incivility, because employees with high levels of self-efficacy tend to use more effective coping strategies to meet their job duties when they are treated unfavorably by other members.

Notes

1. This percentage is representative of typical samples in Pakistani organizations. For example, research undertaken in the same country note that women account for 20 percent (Abbas *et al.*, 2014), 23 percent (De Clercq *et al.*, 2017), or 30 percent (Murtaza *et al.*, 2016) of their samples.
2. Further evidence of the reliability of the four constructs was apparent in the values of their composite reliabilities, calculated from the factor loadings in Table I (Lattin *et al.*, 2003). Each of these values exceeded 0.70 (0.87 for job performance, 0.75 for job-related anxiety, 0.80 for self-efficacy, and 0.83 for perceived workplace incivility).
3. Consistent with our proposed conceptual framework, we used Hayes's (2013) Model 7 to test for moderated mediation, which specifies a moderating effect of perceived workplace incivility on the relationship between self-efficacy and job-related anxiety but not on the relationship between job-related anxiety and job performance. A *post hoc* analysis showed that there was no significant interaction between job-related anxiety and perceived workplace incivility in predicting job performance.

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