
TEAM MEMBER INCIVILITY, COOPERATION, AND PERFORMANCE: THE MODERATING ROLE OF LEADER GENDER

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Synopsis:

The authors conducted a study of incivility and its effect on teams. Results show incivility is negatively associated with cooperation and performance. The gender of the head coach moderates these relationships.

Abstract:

AIMS AND BACKGROUND

Incivility refers to low-level interpersonal behaviors that are rude, disrespectful, and contrary to norms of respect (Anderrson & Pearson, 1999; Pearson & Porath, 2009). Incivility represents a subtle form of discrimination (Cortina, 2008) and, similar to overt forms of that behavior, is associated with a number of negative health- and workplace-related outcomes, including reductions in psychological attachment, stress, and heightened absenteeism and turnover (Cortina et al., 2013; Pearson & Porath, 2009). In one of the few studies to examine incivility within the sport setting, Cunningham et al. (2013) observed that player-coach racial dissimilarity was associated with increased felt incivility from the coach, which in turn, was associated with decreased commitment to the team. In this research, we seek to add to the extant literature in three meaningful ways. First, while most incivility research has focused on individual level outcomes (Walsh et al., 2012), we consider the effects of incivility within teams. Second, we examine the influence of incivility on team performance, and third, do so by including two key intervening variables: cooperation among team members and head coach gender. We examine these relationships in the context of American collegiate women's basketball.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

As incivility is considered a form of deviance (Walsh et al., 2012) and subtle form of discrimination (Cortina, 2008), it should negatively affect cooperation and performance (Lim et al., 2008; Sliter et al., 2010). We expected these effects, which researchers have observed at the individual level, to also be present at the team level. Within the basketball context (the setting for our research), this would mean that incivility among teammates would negatively

affect assists (a form of cooperation and sharing), which in turn, are associated with performance. Thus, we hypothesized that incivility would hold a negative relationship with team assists (H1), which in turn, were expected to hold a positive association with team performance (H2)

We suspect the gender of the coach might influence incivility on subsequent outcomes. There is some evidence that dissimilarity from the leader negatively affects team members (Tsui & Gutek, 1999) and this is particularly the case when incivility is present (Cunningham et al., 2013). There is also evidence that women are most likely to be mistreated (Cortina et al., 2013), and this is the case among players, coaches, and administrators (Cunningham, in press). Thus, we predicted head coach gender to moderate the negative relationship between incivility among team members and assists, such that the effects would be stronger when a man was head coach relative to when a woman led the team (H3).

METHODS

We collected data from 229 women's basketball players competing on 53 different NCAA collegiate teams. Data were collected via electronic survey, with email addresses gathered from university websites. We sent multiple reminders and also included the chance to win a \$100 lottery prize by completing the survey. In all, we collected data from 20% of the individuals surveyed and 54% of the teams surveyed, the latter of which was the unit of analysis for this investigation. The sample included 124 Whites (54.1%), 88 African Americans (38.4%), 5 Asian Americans (2.2%), 3 Hispanics (1.3%), and 9 persons who listed "other" or did not reveal their race. We measured incivility with a 19-item scale adapted from existing literature (e.g., Cortina et al., 2001). Head coach gender, average assists per game (the measure of assists), and winning percentage (the measure of performance) were gathered from team websites.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After aggregating the data (see Dixon & Cunningham, 2006), we tested the hypotheses through moderated mediation analysis (Preacher et al., 2007). Given the low sample size, we tested the hypotheses at the $p < .10$ level. Incivility was negatively associated with assists ($B = -1.07$, $p = .07$), thereby supporting Hypothesis 1, and in support of Hypothesis 2, assists were positively related to winning percentage ($B = .05$, $p < .001$). The incivility-by-leader gender interaction was also significant ($B = 1.66$, $p = .01$). Results indicate that when the head coach was a man, incivility was negatively associated with assists ($B = -1.07$, $p = .07$); however, when the head coach was a woman, incivility held a positive association with assists ($B = .59$, $p = .08$). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported. Results show that incivility negatively affects cooperation and performance among team members. This is particularly the case when the leader of all-women teams is a man. The findings highlight the importance of reducing incivility and other forms of subtle discrimination.

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