

# Rude to your coworker? Think of the children

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When people are rude to their coworkers or treat them badly, they probably don't realize the unintended victims in that encounter could be the coworkers' children. Women who experience incivility in the

workplace are more likely to engage in stricter, more authoritarian parenting practices that can have a negative impact on their children, according to research presented at the annual convention of the American Psychological Association.

"These findings reveal some previously undocumented ways that women, in particular, suffer as a result of workplace aggression," said researcher Angela Dionisi, Ph.D., of Carleton University. "In uncovering how this mistreatment in the workplace interferes with positive mother-child interactions, this research also speaks to a previously unacknowledged group of indirect incivility victims, namely children."

Workplace incivility is any behavior that is rude, disrespectful, impolite or otherwise violates workplace norms of respect. This behavior shows a lack of concern for others, according to co-author Kathryne Dupre, Ph.D., of Carleton University. Some examples of workplace incivility include ignoring or making derogatory remarks about someone, taking credit for the work of others, passing blame for your own mistakes, avoiding someone or shutting people out of a network or team.

"We now know, based on much empirical evidence, that the outcomes of workplace incivility are vast and negative," said Dupre. "For example, being on the receiving end of workplace incivility has been linked to lower levels of effort and performance on the job, higher levels of stress, and impaired attention, information processing and decision-making."

To better understand the effects of workplace incivility spillover at home, the researchers conducted an online survey of 146 working mothers and their spouses. Mothers were asked about their experience with incivility in the workplace as well as feelings of effectiveness as a parent. Their spouses were asked to report on the mothers' negative parenting behaviors, both authoritarian (strict and controlling) and permissive. They found a significant association between experiencing

rude behavior at work and authoritarian parenting by working mothers at home. There was no association found with permissive parenting.

Survey results also showed that incivility in the workplace was associated with mothers feeling less effective as parents, which could help explain the increased need to engage in strict, controlling parenting behaviors, said Dupre.

Authoritarian parents have high expectations of their children, with rules that they expect their children to follow unconditionally. At the same time, though, they provide very little in the way of feedback and nurturance and harshly punish any mistakes, said Dupre. They tend to have lots of regulations and micromanage almost every aspect of their children's lives, valuing discipline over fun.

"Research suggests that authoritarian parenting is more of a negative style of parenting as compared to other parenting styles. This style of parenting has been associated with a variety of negative child outcomes, including associating obedience and success with love, exhibiting aggressive behavior outside the home, being fearful or overly shy around others, having difficulty in social situations due to a lack of social competence, suffering from depression and anxiety, and struggling with self-control," she said.

One of the most interesting aspects of the findings was how widespread the negative effects of workplace incivility were, especially given that, unlike extreme acts of aggression and violence, these behaviors are generally considered to be low-intensity deviant behaviors, according to Dionisi. "This is a form of mistreatment that many likely dismiss as non-effectual. It's unpleasant, it's frustrating, but it may boil down to one seeing a coworker behaving as a jerk. Our findings, however, suggest that this low-intensity behavior can actually erode one's sense of parental competence, and as a result, may also be harming one's children in a

vicarious way."

Dionisi and Dupre hope that providing evidence that what happens at work influences the way people parent will provide the impetus for organizations to better understand and control a form of [workplace mistreatment](#) that may sometimes not be taken seriously.

"This research tells us much about the nature and scope of [workplace incivility](#), specifically its detrimental impact on mothering well-being and specific negative parenting [behavior](#). The vicarious impact of incivility on children should be used to inform choices about where and to whom to direct organizational interventions and supports," said Dionisi.

**More information:** Session 3257: "Uncivil Workplace, Uncivil Home: Workplace Incivility and Harmful Parenting Behavior," Poster Session, Saturday, Aug. 11, 1-1:50 p.m. PDT, Exhibition Halls ABC—South Building, Moscone Center, 747 Howard St., San Francisco, Calif.

Provided by American Psychological Association

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